



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - RESULTS

Title of Policy	Care Experienced Bursary (CEB) Introduction.
Summary of aims and desired outcomes of Policy	<p>Relevant National Outcomes: "We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation." "Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens."</p> <p>At present, care experienced students in Higher Education (HE) access the standard student support package of bursary and loan.</p> <p>The desired outcome is to introduce a non-repayable CEB of £7,625 to Care Experienced students in HE under the age of 26.</p>
Directorate: Division: team	Advanced Learning and Science Directorate: Higher Education and Science: Student Support Review Team.

Executive summary

A review of the introduction of the CEB was carried out, of which this EQIA forms a part.

The EQIA identified that the introduction of the CEB in general, is seen as a positive change for all equality groups as it helps to break down the financial barriers faced by Care Experienced students throughout their education and beyond and will support retention for those currently accessing a university place.

The EQIA identified a potential negative impact with regards to the protected characteristic of 'Age'. Students above the age of 26 would not see an increase in the support available to them in the form of a CEB, as they did not meet the eligibility criteria. In addition, those aged 16-19 may be adversely affected due to the CEB causing a potential reduction in the funding received from their Local Authority.

The impact on this group of students was assessed as part of the Equality Impact Analysis and any outstanding risks were mitigated.

Background

At present, Care Experienced students in HE access the standard undergraduate support package of bursary and loan.

The Commission On Widening Access's (COWA) final report 'A Blueprint for Fairness' was published in March 2016 and made three specific recommendations for those with care experience in respect of: university places; student support, and identification across learning. In relation to student support the report recommended that living-cost loans should be replaced with a non-repayable bursary for learners with care experience from Academic Year 2017/18.

The Commission on Widening Access observed that the challenges faced by those with care experience, both in nature and magnitude, set this group of learners apart from others. The Commission said: "Our message to those with care experience should emulate that of a positive parent: we believe in you, we'll do all we can to support you and if things don't go to plan, we'll help you to get back on track."

The Commission's recommendations for this group of students were designed not only to provide tangible support but also to provide a clear message and incentive to potential students of the future.

The CEB was introduced for HE students as a non-income assessed, non-repayable grant of £7,625.

This contributes to the following national outcomes:

- We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.

- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens

The Scope of the EQIA

The policy has relevance to the protected characteristic of age.

As the introduction of the CEB is intended as a positive change for all prospective care experienced students, it is considered a concise and focussed Equality Impact Assessment is proportionate in these circumstances.

Data provided by SFC shows that in the academic year 2017/18, there were 1,210 care experienced students in HE, 865 of those students were aged 26 and under.

The EQIA considered key data regarding the age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion/belief of the care experienced students in HE in the academic year 2017/18.

However, the introduction of the CEB will apply to all eligible care experienced students, irrespective of the protected characteristics and is therefore seen as a positive change for all.

Key Findings

The EQIA identified that there are gaps in the information available relating to the protected characteristics of Pregnancy and Maternity and Gender Reassignment, and therefore the impact that the increased bursary level will have on those protected characteristics.

However, introducing the CEB in HE, in general, is seen as a positive change for all equality groups.

The EQIA identified a potential negative impact with respect to the protected characteristic of Age. Students above the age of 26, would not see an increase in the support available to them, as this group do not meet the eligibility criteria for the CEB. In addition those aged 16-19 may be adversely affected due to a potential reduction in the funding received from their Local Authority.

The impact on this group of students was assessed as part of the Equality Impact Analysis, which highlighted that for those over 26, the position was justified. This was on the basis that the age cut off for eligibility was given careful consideration and was based on a range of evidence and discussions with stakeholders, which highlighted that the age 26 cap aligns with related legislation for care leavers to provide 'continuing care' to care leavers up to the age of 26 – a provision that received cross-party support in the Scottish Parliament.

Section 30 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 gives Local Authorities the power to provide financial assistance towards the education or training expenses of young care experienced people. As section 30 gives Local Authorities a power rather than a duty to provide financial assistance, the Scottish Government is limited as to how it can direct Local Authorities in their implementation of this legislation.

However, the risk of students aged 16-19 receiving a reduction in funding offered by their Local Authority was mitigated by sending a Policy Note from the Deputy First Minister, to Local Authority Chief Executives, explaining that the policy intention of the CEB was not to replace any other financial support given to this group, rather to add value to the existing support provided by Local Authorities and asked that this was cascaded to front line practitioners.

In addition, the Scottish Government, COSLA and CELCIS also collaborated to produce a FAQs document on the CEB, to be issued to front line practitioners. The FAQ provides clear and concise information on the CEB policy, including the policy rationale, the overall policy intention and our corporate parenting duties towards students with experience of care.

Recommendations and Conclusion

In conclusion, positive impacts as a result of introducing the CEB, have been identified for care experienced students in all equality groups. Any adverse impacts have been mitigated by the distribution of the Policy note from the Deputy First Minister and the CEB FAQ document produced by COSLA, CELCIS and Scottish Government officials.

SAAS and SFC will continue to gather statistical data on student applications for bursaries and we will be able to monitor the impact of the changes to the CEB on relevant groups going forward.

The HE and FE student support package in Scotland will be subject to ongoing monitoring by the Colleges, Young Workforce and SFC Sponsorship division and the Higher Education and Science division

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