

# **Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for Care Leaver Payment**

January 2026

# Equality impact assessment – Record

## **Title of policy/practice/strategy/legislation etc**

Care Leaver Payment

## **Minister**

Natalie Don-Innes MSP, Minister for Children, Young People and the Promise

## **Lead Official**

Aisha Pereyra

## **Officials involved in the EQIA**

Aisha Pereyra, Deborah Davies, Nicola Davidson – Care Leaver Payment team.

Cara Cooper – Unit Head, Children and Young People Unit

Karen Clyde – SGLD

## **Directorate: Division: Team**

Children and Families Directorate: Care Experience, Children's Services Reform and The Promise: Care Leaver Payment Team

## **Is this new policy or revision to an existing policy?**

New policy

## **Screening**

### **Policy Aim**

The Scottish Government recognises the challenges for young people with care experience who are moving on into adulthood and independent living. At any age and for any young person, moving on from home is a challenging time but when there are limited support networks in place, the challenge can be exacerbated.

Young people with care experience may have experienced adversity in their early life. The Independent Care Review highlighted and recognised the links between those with care experience and the increased risk of poor mental health, addiction, homelessness and exploitation. Care experienced people are reported to be over one and a half times more likely to experience financial difficulties and have more than double the chance of experiencing homelessness, mainly before age 30.

The Scottish Government is committed to keeping The Promise to all care experienced children and young people. In March 2022, the Scottish Government published the Promise Implementation Plan, which sets out the actions and commitments that will be taken across the Scottish Government to keep The Promise by 2030. This includes a continued commitment towards ensuring that young people moving on from care are provided with person-centred support to enable positive transitions from care to more independent living.

The Care Leaver Payment is a proposed one-off financial payment of £2,000 for young people transitioning out of care in Scotland. Its core purpose is to reduce the financial barriers that care leavers often face when moving into independent adulthood. Unlike many of their peers, care-experienced young people frequently lack informal support networks and family safety nets. This payment is intended to provide a financial foundation that supports stability and opportunity during a critical life stage.

The desired outcomes of the payment include easing financial pressure, promoting independence, and supporting positive transitions into adulthood. It also aims to reduce the inequalities that care leavers experience compared to their non-care-experienced peers. The proposed payment will complement existing supports such as Continuing Care, Aftercare, and the Care Experience Bursary.

The Care Leaver Payment contributes directly to several of Scotland's National Performance Framework Outcomes. These include tackling poverty by sharing opportunities and wealth more equally, promoting fair work and access to quality jobs, and upholding human rights and freedom from discrimination. The

payment supports Scotland's broader commitment to equity, wellbeing, and inclusive growth.

### **Who will it affect?**

The Care Leaver Payment would mainly affect young people in Scotland who are leaving care, such as foster care, residential care, or kinship care. These young people often move into independent living at a younger age than their peers and may not have the same financial or emotional support from family.

This support could have a positive impact on their wellbeing, helping to reduce stress and give them more confidence as they start adult life.

Other groups who may be indirectly affected include local authorities and support services, who may see reduced pressure if care leavers are more financially stable. The payment could also contribute to the wider national goal around supporting young people to thrive.

### **What might prevent the desired outcomes being achieved?**

A one-off payment may not be enough to meet the full range of needs care leavers face, including any financial issues that they may have as the payment is not intended to be used for daily living expenses.

There is a risk that the payment could be misused if care leavers do not receive guidance on how to manage it effectively.

## **Stage 1: Framing**

### **Results of framing exercise**

In this EQIA we looked at published evidence available and gathered so far under the protected characteristics as listed within the Equality Act 2010: Age, Disability, Sex, Pregnancy and Maternity, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation, Marriage or Civil Partnership, Race and Religion or Belief.

## **Age**

- The intended cohort for the Care Leaver Payment is for those who cease to be looked after on or after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and those who are no longer in Continuing Care. Eligible young people will be between the ages of 16-21 (as continuing care continues until age 21), although some may receive their payment after the age of 21 (by the time the delivery vehicle makes the payment).
- Young people who are looked after under the age of 16 will not be considered eligible until they cease to be looked after following their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, as per the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.
- Retrospective payments will not be made which will have unintended consequences for young people leaving care prior to the Care Leaver Payment being introduced on 1 April 2026 although it was felt that this is justified as the payment is to help as a young person leaves care and moves into independent living and for those people who have left care prior to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026, this transition has already taken place.

## **Disability**

- The current intention is that the payment will be automatically granted to young people, following conversations with their social worker about timing and what best meets their needs.
- The design of the service by local authorities will need to take into account different communication styles, including accessibility for people who are blind / visually impaired as current understanding is that communication will primarily come in the form of emails or letters.

## **Sex**

- Whilst there is a larger proportion of male (54%) young people who were looked after than female (46%), sex will not impact on a young person's ability to be eligible for and receive the payment.

## **Pregnancy and Maternity**

- We have not identified any particular barriers resulting from our policy approach which may affect people with the protected characteristic of pregnancy and maternity.

### **Gender reassignment**

- We have not identified any particular barriers resulting from our policy approach which may affect people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment.

### **Sexual Orientation**

- We have not identified any particular barriers resulting from our policy approach which may affect people with the protected characteristic of sexual orientation.

### **Marriage or Civil Partnership**

- We have not identified any particular barriers resulting from our policy approach which may affect people with the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership.

### **Race**

- We have not identified any particular barriers resulting from our policy approach which may affect people with the protected characteristic of race.
- The current intention is that Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Young People will be able to receive the payment, provided they were looked after by a Scottish local authority on or after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, appropriate measures will be required to ensure that these young people are supported.

### **Religion or belief**

- On 31st July 2020, of the estimated 14,458 children who were looked after in Scotland, 11.8 per cent were recorded as having a religion, while 26.1 per cent had no religion. However, the majority of children, 62.1 per cent, had an unknown religion<sup>19</sup>.
- While the provisions in the CLP regulations will have no adverse impact on care leavers regardless of their religion or belief, the Scottish Government understands that ensuring equality of access and support for children and young people of all religions is essential.
- In relation to the sector as a whole, understanding religion and the importance of maintaining cultural links for looked after children and young people is vital.

## **Extent/Level of EQIA required**

It is likely that the Care Leaver Payment will have a proportionate impact on people with protected characteristics, however, it is expected that this will have a positive impact on eligible young people.

Consultation has been carried out with the general public, via a public consultation from November 2023 – January 2024, with further targeted consultation undertaken in Spring 2025.

Following the results of the framing exercise, it was determined that a full EQIA was required.

## Stage 2: Data and evidence gathering, involvement and consultation

Include here the results of your evidence gathering (including framing exercise), including qualitative and quantitative data and the source of that information, whether national statistics, surveys or consultations with relevant equality groups.

Characteristic <sup>1</sup>	Evidence gathered and Strength/quality of evidence	Source	Data gaps identified and action taken to address the data gaps
<b>Age</b>	<p>The Care Leaver Payment regulations will be used to provide financial support to care leavers from when they transition out of the care system and become a 'care leaver'. This will be from the age of sixteen up to twenty-one.</p> <p>The Independent Care Review highlighted and recognised the links between those with care experience and the increased risk of poor mental health, addiction, homelessness and exploitation.</p>	<a href="#">Independent Care Review</a>	N/A
<b>Disability</b>	<p>It is understood that representation of disability within the care experienced cohort is slightly above that of the overall population. As such the assistance</p>	<a href="#">Looked after children - Children's Social Work Statistics: Looked After Children</a>	A gap in data exists as 26% of looked after young people are not assessed to determine

<sup>1</sup> Refer to Definitions of Protected Characteristics document for information on the characteristics

	<p>is anticipated to have a positive impact on young people who are both care experienced and have a disability.</p> <p>In 2024, 8% of looked after children were reported to have a disability and 26% not yet assessed.</p>	<a href="https://www.gov.scot">2023/24 - gov.scot</a>	<p>whether they have a disability. This is hopefully something that will be rectified in future.</p>
<b>Sex</b>	<p>There is a larger proportion of male (53%) young people who were looked after than female (47%).</p> <p>The assistance will have no adverse impact on young people, regardless of their sex, as they will be able to benefit from the assistance if they meet the specified eligibility criteria of the scheme(s) set out by way of regulations.</p>	<a href="https://www.gov.scot">Looked after children - Children's Social Work Statistics: Looked After Children 2023/24 - gov.scot</a>	N/A
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<p>The payment will have no adverse impact on care leavers, with regards to pregnancy and maternity, as they will be able to benefit from the assistance if they meet the eligibility criteria of the scheme, which will be set out by way of regulations.</p>	N/A	N/A

<b>Gender reassignment</b>	The payment will have no adverse impact on care leavers who undergo gender reassignment, as they will be able to benefit from the assistance if they meet the eligibility criteria of the scheme, which will be set out by way of regulations.	N/A	N/A
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	The payment will have no adverse impact on care leavers regardless of their sexual orientation, as they will be able to benefit from the assistance if they meet the eligibility criteria of the scheme, which will be set out by way of regulations.	N/A	N/A
<b>Race</b>	<p>It is understood that the largest ethnicity recorded as being looked after in Scotland is white (91%) with 5% of young people belonging to other ethnic groups. Approximately 4% of looked after children have an unknown ethnicity.</p> <p>The payment will have no adverse impact on care leavers regardless of their race, as they</p>	<a href="https://www.gov.scot/Topics/children-social-work/statistics/looked-after-children/2023-24">Looked after children - Children's Social Work Statistics: Looked After Children 2023/24 - gov.scot</a>	N/A

	will be able to benefit from the assistance if they meet the eligibility criteria of the scheme, which will be set out by way of regulations.		
<b>Religion or belief</b>	The payment will have no adverse impact on care leavers regardless of their religion, as they will be able to benefit from the assistance if they meet the eligibility criteria of the scheme, which will be set out by way of regulations.	N/A	N/A
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b> (the Scottish Government does not require assessment against this protected characteristic unless the policy or practice relates to work, for example HR policies and practices - refer to Definitions of Protected Characteristics document for details)	The payment will have no adverse impact on care leavers, with regards to marriage and civil partnership, as they will be able to benefit from the assistance if they meet the eligibility criteria of the scheme, which will be set out by way of regulations.	N/A	N/A

### Stage 3: Assessing the impacts and identifying opportunities to promote equality

Having considered the data and evidence you have gathered, this section requires you to consider the potential impacts – negative and positive – that your policy might have on each of the protected characteristics. It is important to remember the duty is also a positive one – that we must explore whether the policy offers the opportunity to promote equality and/or foster good relations.

**Do you think that the policy impacts on people on the grounds of their age? Either directly or indirectly?**

Age	Positive	Negative	None	Reasons for your decision
Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	No	No	Yes	-
Advancing equality of opportunity	Yes	No	No	Care experienced people are over one and a half times more likely to experience financial difficulties and have more than double the chance of experiencing homelessness, mainly before age thirty. The intention of the Care Leaver Payment is to help reduce some of the financial barriers that young people face whilst moving on from care and to improve outcomes.
Promoting good relations among and between different age groups	No	No	Yes	-

**Do you think that the policy impacts disabled people? Either directly or indirectly?**

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Reasons for your decision</b>
Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	No	No	Yes	-
Advancing equality of opportunity	Yes	No	No	<p>Care experienced people are over one and a half times more likely to experience financial difficulties and have more than double the chance of experiencing homelessness, mainly before age thirty.</p> <p>It is understood that representation of disability within the care experienced cohort is slightly above that of the overall population.</p> <p>The intention of the Care Leaver Payment is to help reduce some of the financial barriers that young people face whilst moving on from care and to improve outcomes.</p>
Promoting good relations among and between disabled and non-disabled people	No	No	Yes	-

**Do you think that the policy impacts on men and women in different ways? Either directly or indirectly?**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Reasons for your decision</b>
Eliminating unlawful discrimination	No	No	Yes	-
Advancing equality of opportunity	No	No	Yes	-
Promoting good relations between men and women	No	No	Yes	-

**Do you think that the policy impacts on women on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity? Either directly or indirectly?**

<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Reasons for your decision</b>
Eliminating unlawful discrimination	No	No	Yes	-
Advancing equality of opportunity	Yes	No	No	<p>Care experienced people are over one and a half times more likely to experience financial difficulties and have more than double the chance of experiencing homelessness, mainly before age thirty.</p> <p>Care leavers that are pregnant and/or parents will be eligible to receive the payment.</p> <p>The intention of the Care Leaver Payment is to help reduce some of the financial barriers that young people face</p>

				whilst moving on from care and to improve outcomes.
Promoting good relations	No	No	Yes	-

**Do you think your policy impacts on people proposing to undergo, undergoing, or who have undergone a process for the purpose of reassigning their sex? Either directly or indirectly?**

**(NB: the Equality Act 2010 uses the term ‘transsexual people’ but ‘trans people’ is more commonly used)**

<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Reasons for your decision</b>
Eliminating unlawful discrimination	No	No	Yes	-
Advancing equality of opportunity	No	No	Yes	-
Promoting good relations	No	No	Yes	-

**Do you think that the policy impacts on people on the grounds of their sexual orientation? Either directly or indirectly?**

<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Reasons for your decision</b>
Eliminating unlawful discrimination	No	No	Yes	-
Advancing equality of opportunity	No	No	Yes	-
Promoting good relations				-

**Do you think the policy impacts on people on the grounds of their race?  
Either directly or indirectly?**

<b>Race</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Reasons for your decision</b>
Eliminating unlawful discrimination	No	No	Yes	-
Advancing equality of opportunity	No	No	Yes	-
Promoting good race relations	No	No	Yes	-

**Do you think the policy impacts on people on the grounds of their religion or belief? Either directly or indirectly?**

<b>Religion or belief</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Reasons for your decision</b>
Eliminating unlawful discrimination	No	No	Yes	-
Advancing equality of opportunity	No	No	Yes	-
Promoting good relations	No	No	Yes	-

**Do you think the policy impacts on people on the grounds of their marriage or civil partnership? Either directly or indirectly?**

<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Reasons for your decision</b>
Eliminating unlawful discrimination	No	No	Yes	-
Advancing equality of opportunity	No	No	Yes	-
Promoting good relations	No	No	Yes	-

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<sup>2</sup> In respect of this protected characteristic, a body subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (which includes Scottish Government) only needs to comply with the first need of the duty (to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010) and only in relation to work. This is because the parts of the Act covering services and public functions, premises, education etc. do not apply to that protected characteristic. Equality impact assessment within the Scottish Government does not require assessment against the protected characteristic of Marriage and Civil Partnership unless the policy or practice relates to work, for example HR policies and practices.

## **Stage 4: Decision making and monitoring**

### **Identifying and establishing any required mitigating action**

- Have positive or negative impacts been identified for any of the equality groups?

**Positive impacts for equality of opportunity have been identified throughout. The purpose of the Care Leaver Payment is to help reduce some of the financial barriers that young people leaving care face whilst moving into adulthood and more independent living.**

- Is the policy directly or indirectly discriminatory under the Equality Act 2010<sup>3</sup>?

The policy may indirectly discriminate on the grounds of age.

- If the policy is indirectly discriminatory, how is it justified under the relevant legislation?

The payment focuses on care leavers, which will naturally only include young people of a certain age. This is justified as the power taken within the Social Security (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2025 allows us to focus on financial assistance for people with care experience. This particular policy aims to capture a specific part of the care experienced population, those who are about to leave care on or after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday or those leaving Continuing Care.

- If not justified, what mitigating action will be undertaken?

N/A

### **Describing how Equality Impact analysis has shaped the policy making process**

The EQIA has found that the Care Leaver Payment will have a positive impact on young people as they leave care, many of whom come from areas of higher deprivation. The Care Leaver Payment has been considered in the context of the public sector equality duty and it has been assessed that the payment may indirectly discriminate against

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<sup>3</sup> See EQIA – Setting the Scene for further information on the legislation.

people on the grounds of age. However, this is justified as the power taken within the Social Security (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2025 allows us to focus financial assistance for people with care experience. The policy rationale aims to provide young people leaving care with additional financial assistance as they move on from care and captures a specific part of the care experienced population, ie, those who are about to leave care or Continuing Care, between the ages of 16-21.

Overall the EQIA has identified no significant negative impacts associated with the Care Leaver Payment and the Scottish Government has concluded that no changes to the policy are necessary as a result.

### **Monitoring and Review**

In this section, explain how you will monitor and evaluate this policy to measure progress on equality issues identified in the EQIA. Include information on when the monitoring and evaluation will take place, and who is responsible for undertaking it. This should be part of the regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms you devise for your policy.

**Once the payment is underway, an evaluation of the impact of the payment will be undertaken, the details of which are to be confirmed.**

### **Stage 5 - Authorisation of EQIA**

Please confirm that:

- ◆ This Equality Impact Assessment has informed the development of this policy:  

Yes                       No
- ◆ Opportunities to promote equality in respect of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation have been considered, i.e.:
  - Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation;
  - Removing or minimising any barriers and/or disadvantages;
  - Taking steps which assist with promoting equality and meeting people's different needs;

- Encouraging participation (e.g. in public life)
- Fostering good relations, tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Yes  No

- ◆ If the Marriage and Civil Partnership protected characteristic applies to this policy, the Equality Impact Assessment has also assessed against the duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in respect of this protected characteristic:

Yes  No  Not applicable

## Declaration

I am satisfied with the equality impact assessment that has been undertaken for the Care Leaver Payment Regulations and give my authorisation for the results of this assessment to be published on the Scottish Government's website.

Name: Gavin Henderson

Position: Deputy Director

Authorisation date: 15 January 2026



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