

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) form

General Information

Name of policy/proposal	Postgraduate Social Work Student Covid-19 Hardship Fund
Responsible department	Development and Innovation
Date	14 May 2020

Aims of the proposal

<p>What do you hope to achieve? Why is the policy/proposal needed, for example is there currently a gap in service delivery?</p>	<p>To develop and administer a new Hardship Fund, using specific funding from the Scottish Government £129k, to support postgraduate social work students who are experiencing financial hardship and are currently not eligible for a postgraduate bursary or only receive tuition fees through the postgraduate bursary scheme, for the period April 2020 to June 2020.</p> <p>Purpose and Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To provide short term support that helps postgraduate students who are experiencing financial hardship during the current economic situation due to COVID-19 and to provide assistance to those who may be in the process of applying for benefits
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- To minimise any shortfall in qualified social workers entering the workforce
- To promote the take up of this fund to those who are entitled to it but perhaps are not aware that they can claim.
- To provide support to students experiencing hardship in managing their wider personal finances to enable them to remain on their course

Eligibility criteria:

- Hardship funding is for fulltime PG Social Work students. They are the only group we are authorised to make payments to on behalf of Scottish Ministers.
- Those students who are already receiving a postgraduate bursary from us (maintenance grant) will not receive further funding at this time.
- Those students receiving tuition fee support only, and who are experiencing financial hardship, can apply for maintenance support.
- The residency criteria have been relaxed to allow those normally not eligible, as they haven't stayed in UK for three years and/or don't have settled status, to now apply, including those nominated this year and refused on these grounds. This includes international students.
- The current eligibility criteria does not include work-based students.
- Students currently in receipt of a bursary will be able to access repeat placement funding in future through the normal process, if required.

Assessment criteria:

- Allocation of funds will be determined by a student’s living situation and number of dependents. We have categorised the funding and set out the weekly rates in the table below:

	Weekly rate
	£
Students living independently	115
Students living in parental home	55
Childcare (80% of cost upon providing a valid receipt/invoice from CI registered provider):	
1 child (max)	154
2 or more children (max)	226
Extra food allowance per child	11.25

In determining the rates, we based the allowances on the following assumptions:

- We used the weekly postgraduate bursary maintenance allowance and the weekly practice placement payments as a starting point for calculating the amount we could pay per student, per week from the Hardship Fund. We maximised payments for students while balancing the need to remain within the available budget. This was based on the maximum number of potential eligible students.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We modelled the payment rates using the assumption that 80% of eligible students will apply. We assumed 10% of eligible students will have childcare requirements during lockdown. (Note, we can only make payment upon production of a valid receipt from a CI registered childcare provider). - Childcare weekly payments are based on bursary childcare maximum allowances, adjusted for affordability. - We based the extra food allowance on the amount five local authorities are paying for school meals per week. <p>Applicants will be able to apply for the fund via an online form which we will promote through engagement with universities and directly with students. Any students unable to access this form can be provided with a paper copy.</p>
<p>How will it contribute to the SSSC's strategic objectives and/or priorities?</p>	<p>The information in this report links to:</p> <p>Outcome 2: The SSSC supports and enhances the development of the registered workforce to deliver high standards of practice and drive improvement.</p> <p>Outcome 3: Our workforce planning activities support employers, commissioners and policy makers to deliver a sustainable, integrated and innovative workforce.</p>
<p>Equality duties and protected groups Who will it affect (either positively or negatively)?</p>	<p>We have had regard to equality legislation and the protected groups in developing this policy. The effect of the implementation is explained in further detail below.</p>

Data and evidence gathering, involvement and consultation

(Please include any evidence or relevant information that has influenced the decisions contained in this IA)

<p>Please include details of all evidence used (qualitative and quantitative) you have included. This should include, where relevant, numbers of children and young people and their views/experiences and how this will affect them.</p>	<p>As part of the Scottish Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Sponsor department, the Office of the Chief Social Work Advisor (OCSWA), asked the SSSC to develop a Hardship Fund for postgraduate social work students who are not normally entitled to a bursary and are experiencing financial hardship. There are potentially 114 students who may be eligible to access this funding.</p> <p>Our evidence in support of creating this fund arises from the Scottish Government identifying a need for it.</p>
<p>Has the proposal been the subject of relevant engagement and/or consultation?</p> <p>If yes, please say who with.</p> <p>If no, please say why none took place.</p>	<p>Yes, we have engaged with Scottish Government (OSCWA), the HEIs and SAAS to understand the potential demand, other funding routes available to students and to agree the eligibility criteria and process for administering the Hardship Fund.</p>
<p>Engagement and/or consultation carried out</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from Scottish Government • Feedback from HEIs • Feedback from SAAS
<p>What were the results? Please include any consultation report/engagement results</p>	<p>In developing the fund, we have consulted with Scottish Government, the HEIs who deliver the social work programmes and SAAS. HEIs provided feedback on the various scenarios being faced by their students and the difference that additional funding would make to help support them at this time i.e. those now unable to pick up part time work, caring for families</p>

	<p>etc. Work is underway to consult further with students on the financial impact of COVID-19 as we move through the phases of lifting the lockdown restrictions. This will include work by the Social Work Education partnership to assess any health and safety issues and environmental issues that impact on student placements.</p>
<p>Have you used best judgement (officer/practitioner knowledge and experience) in place of data/research/evidence?</p> <p>If yes, who provided this best judgement and what was this based on?</p>	<p>In conjunction with OCSWA, our own bursaries and social work programme data and feedback from the HEIs, we used our best judgement to inform the development of this initiative.</p> <p>We used our best judgement based upon experience of administering the postgraduate bursaries scheme.</p>
<p>What gaps (if any) did you find in your data?</p>	<p>No gaps were identified.</p>
<p>Is further research necessary?</p> <p>If yes, what will you do, for example a further consultation, conduct a survey, engage with specific groups of people etc?</p>	<p>This fund is in place to address a welfare need at a time of crisis. It is intended as a short-term measure and over the life of the policy being in place, we will consider if further research is required at review points. The provision of the fund will be reviewed in June 2020 to determine if this support should continue, any changes are required and if the SSSC should continue to administer the fund.</p>

ASSESSING THE IMPACTS AND IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE EQUALITY

Having considered the data and evidence you have gathered; you need to consider potential impacts – negative and positive that your proposal might have on each of the protected characteristics. It is important to remember the duty is also a positive one – this means we must explore whether the proposal offers the opportunity to promote quality and/or foster good relations. Under each protected characteristic please consider how your proposal achieves the following:

- eliminates discrimination, harassment, victimisation or any other prohibited conduct
- advances equality of opportunity by having due regard to:
 - removing or minimising disadvantage
 - meeting the needs of particular groups that are different from the needs of others
 - encouraging participation in public life
- fostering good relations – tackling prejudice, promoting understanding.

Gender – does the proposal take account of different roles and responsibilities? Does it assume, perhaps wrongly that men have no caring responsibilities? Is the proposal flexible enough to provide a service that everyone can access?

Positive impact	Neutral impact	Negative impact	Reasons for your decision
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Hardship fund has been created to support students experiencing financial hardship from the current economic situation who are not normally entitled to a bursary. The assessment criteria will ensure that we distribute funds fairly to those who apply.</p> <p>The overall impact of this policy is not yet known as it is new. It will be reviewed following the initial 3-month period of the fund. This will include assessment of any unintended consequences. Based on the manner that it will be distributed, however, there is no evidence we are aware of at present which demonstrates that</p>

			the administration of the fund would have any impact on this group.
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Ethnicity – have you covered all minority ethnic groups? Consider the impact your proposal has on someone from a minority ethnic group and remember this impact may differ depending on the gender, disability, faith, sexual orientation or ethnicity of the person as different cultures have different views on what is acceptable. Consider language and format.

Positive impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Negative impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Reasons for your decision Please see previous comment under Gender.
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Disability – a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person’s ability to carry out day-to-day activities. How does this proposal affect disabled people? Are there any impairment groups who are unfavourably affected by the policy?

Positive impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Negative impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Reasons for your decision Please see previous comment under Gender.
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Sexual orientation – what are the issues for this group in terms of your proposal? Does it meet the needs of this group?

Positive impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Negative impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Reasons for your decision Please see previous comment under Gender.
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Gender reassignment – does your proposal include people of different gender identities? Will your proposal impact transgender individuals in any way?

Positive impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Negative impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Reasons for your decision Please see previous comment under Gender.
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Age – remember different age groups have different concerns. When considering age remember that some individuals are more vulnerable or have issues that may need additional consideration.

Positive impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Negative impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Reasons for your decision Please see previous comment under Gender.
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Marriage and civil partnership – it is unlawful discrimination for people who are married/civil partnership/same-sex couple to be treated less favourable in employment than those who are not married/civil partnership/mixed-sex couple.

Positive impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Negative impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Reasons for your decision Please see previous comment under Gender.
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Pregnancy and maternity – protection against maternity discrimination covers 26 weeks after giving birth – this includes treating a woman unfavourable because she is breastfeeding.

Positive impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Neutral impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Negative impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Reasons for your decision Please see previous comment under Gender.
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Religion/belief/non-belief – does your proposal take into account different festivals, holidays, religious days and traditions? Will the different faith beliefs impact on women from that group and exclude or prevent them from using the service?

Positive impact	Neutral impact	Negative impact	Reasons for your decision
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please see previous comment under Gender.
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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EQUALITIES GROUPS LIVING IN AN ISLAND COMMUNITY

This section considers the impact or effect of your proposal on an island community and whether this could be significantly different from its effect on other communities. Your proposal should be developed and delivered to improve or reduce any negative impact(s). Please consider each of the protected characteristics and complete the table below highlighting your evidence and justification for your response.

Is the impact positive, negative or no impact? Give comments	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Reasons for your decision
Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The distribution criteria of the fund and the online, accessible application form enable people from island communities to apply for funds. As such, it is not considered that the policy will impact individuals from island communities.
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	As above.
Promoting good relations among and between	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	As above.

CHILD RIGHTS AND WELLBEING

This section considers the impact of your proposal on children and young people, or specific groups of children and young people, in Scotland. The UNCRC (The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) has four general principles which you should consider as you develop your proposal.

1. **Non-discrimination** children should not be discriminated against in the enjoyment of their rights. No child should be discriminated against because of the situation or status of their parent/carer(s).
2. **Best interests of the child** every decision and action taken relating to a child must be in their best interests.
3. **Life, survival and development** every child has a right to life and to develop to their full potential.
4. **Respect for the views of the child** every child has a right to express their views and have them given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. Children should be provided with the opportunity to be heard, either directly or through a representative or appropriate body.

Please identify the individual rights you consider most relevant to your proposal and highlight the potential impact.

Is the impact positive, negative or no impact? Give comments	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Reason for your decision
Civil rights and freedoms (Children have a right to access and to move freely in public spaces, and to meet up and spend time with others. Children have a right to think and believe what they like, to access information)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy has no impact on this criteria.

<p>and to speak their mind, so long as this is not harmful to others. They have a right to keep personal matters and communications private.)</p>				
<p>Violence against children (Children have a right to be protected from inhuman or degrading treatment in every setting.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>The policy has no impact on this criteria.</p>
<p>Family environment and alternative care (Children have a right not to be separated from their parents, unless this is in their best interests. Where children must live apart from their families, they have a right to be well cared for. If the child's parents are living apart, the child has the right to maintain</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>The policy has no impact on this criteria.</p>

<p>contact with both, if that is safe and in their best interests. Children should have a say when adults make decisions about where they live and how they should be cared for, and those placements should be subject to regular review.)</p>				
<p>Disability, basic health and welfare (Disabled children are children first and have a right to the same opportunities as every child. That means removing the barriers - whether social, cultural, attitudinal or physical which impede their inclusion in education, play and recreation, and society, and providing whatever protective measures, health and social care services</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>A number of eligible postgraduate students will have dependents. By providing access to this fund to all postgraduate students, those successful applicants with children can benefit from an additional source of funding to support them with their wider finances.</p> <p>The schedule of rates for funding includes provision for applicants who have dependents, assistance with the cost of meals for children not currently in school and</p>

<p>they might need. It also means promoting their equal rights and protecting them from discrimination. To fully take part in these opportunities, disabled children and their families sometimes require special care and assistance which should, where possible, be delivered free of charge.)</p>				<p>also, where applicable, a contribution to childcare costs.</p>
<p>Education, leisure and cultural activities (All children, no matter what their ability, interests or background, have a right to an education that will help them achieve their potential without discrimination. Education should be child-centred and empowering. It should strengthen their</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>The policy may have a positive impact on this criteria as a contribution to childcare with a registered childcare provider is available.</p>

<p>capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights as well as promote human rights values. Children should be able to express their views, and encouraged to participate in preschool, school and college life. Children have a right to learn about human rights. Children also have a right to play and recreational activities, to rest and leisure, and to take part in cultural life.)</p>				
<p>Special protection measures (There are groups of vulnerable and marginalised children who require special protection and these are often the children who are most at risk of having their rights</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The policy has no impact on this criteria.</p>

<p>ignored or infringed. They include asylum-seeking and refugee children, child victims of trafficking or exploitation, and children in trouble with the law. Asylum-seeking children and child refugees are entitled to special protection and all the other rights in the UNCRC. They must not be the victims of discrimination or stigmatisation. If they arrive unaccompanied by any parents or other family members, they should be well cared for. They should not be deprived of their liberty.</p> <p>Institutions where children are detained should treat them in a manner which takes into account their age,</p>				
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capacity and individual needs.)				
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HEALTH AND WELLBEING AND HEALTH INEQUALITIES

This is about physical, mental health and wellbeing and includes for example, participation, creativity and developing potential. It also covers all aspects of poverty including income and fuel poverty. The Fairer Scotland Duty requires us to actively consider how we can reduce inequalities in any major decision we make. Think about health and the different causes of health inequalities:

- fundamental causes like macro-economic position, societal values about fairness and equity
- wider environmental influences like availability of jobs, physical environment for example, availability of services
- individual experiences like mental health and wellbeing, family income, ability to navigate services, connectedness
- socio-economic disadvantage like low income, low wealth, material deprivation and area deprivation.

Think about the different causes and types of poverty.

- Will this proposal provide services that meet the needs of people experiencing poverty?

Will the information and services be easy to access?

Is the impact positive, negative or no impact? Give comments	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Comments
Remove inequalities and increase access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy has no impact on this criteria.

to opportunities for improving health and wellbeing				
Advance opportunities for increasing health and wellbeing across the sector	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The existence of this fund is to directly address and support students and their dependents, from an economic perspective in order to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their finances. On this basis, it is possible that this policy will have a positive impact in relation to this criteria.
Foster good practice for sector wide health and wellbeing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy has no impact on this criteria.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

This is about pay, employment opportunities, valuing and supporting voluntary work. It also covers some areas of poverty including individual and community resilience. The Fairer Scotland Duty requires us to actively consider how we can reduce inequalities in any major decision we make.

How will your proposal impact on social status, employment (paid or unpaid), encourage investment in skills and training, assist people on low incomes or support other disadvantaged groups in any way, the impact of delivery of services for people living rurally?

How will your proposal work in rural areas where the existing infrastructure is typically less developed or where infrastructure does not exist, for example there's no fast broadband connections?

Is the impact positive, negative or no impact? Give comments	Positive impact	Neutral impact	Negative impact	Reason for your decision
Removes disadvantage of inequality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy has no impact on this criteria. Applicants will have to investigate whether the policy has an impact on benefits.
Advance opportunities for individuals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The existence of this fund is to directly address and support students from an economic perspective in order to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 lockdown on their finances. On this basis, it is possible that this policy will have a positive impact in relation to this criteria. Funding to support childcare costs is available.
Foster good relations and	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy has no impact on this criteria.

sustainability of communities				
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DECISION MAKING

Which one of the following statements best matches your assessment of this proposal? Please give your reasons.	
No major change – proposal is robust, evidence shows no potential for discrimination, all opportunities to promote equality have been taken	
The proposal needs to be adjusted to remove barriers or better promote equality	
Proceed with proposal despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunity to promote equality (not possible to remove all the risk protected characteristic groups)	✓
Stop and remove the proposal – shows actual/potential unlawful discrimination/in breach of equality legislation	

MONITORING AND REVIEWING

How will you monitor the implementation of the proposal? For example, customer surveys.	We initially considered an equal opportunities survey of students who applied for funding but have decided against this as we believe the impact and benefit would be limited. We do still have a broad range of information on the diversity of the student population. (updated October 2020)
How will you use the results of the monitoring to develop the proposal? (This information will be useful when you review the policy.)	The policy has been implemented as an emergency interim measure. Our ongoing discussions with OCSWA and affected stakeholders will enable us to develop our proposal if the need arises. We will be able to monitor the uptake of the fund and work with the HEIs to determine what the impact has been.
When and how will you review the proposal? (Please also give details of who is responsible.)	This will be reviewed as part of a wider review of how the SSSC responded to the Coronavirus challenge.

SIGN OFF

Name	Phillip Gillespie
Title	Director of Development and Innovation
Date Approved	27/05/2020 (revised 01/10/2020)