

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - RESULTS

Title of Policy	The Education (Schools Lunches) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2013
Summary of aims and desired outcomes of Policy	The policy aim is to maintain access to free school meals to ensure that anyone who would have been eligible to claim free school meals under existing arrangements does not lose entitlement during the early stages of its roll out
Directorate: Division: team	Learning Directorate: Strategy and Performance: Support and Wellbeing Unit

Executive summary

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been undertaken to support the Education (Schools Lunches) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2013, which were laid on 25 February 2013.

The policy aim of these Regulations is to maintain access to free school meals following the introduction of Universal Credit. The intention is to ensure that nobody who would have been eligible to receive free school meals under the current arrangements in Scotland loses entitlement during the early stages of the roll out of Universal Credit in the Greater Manchester area.

Framing discussion took place regarding the profile of potential pathfinder claimants of Universal Credit and the evidence available regarding the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.

Due to the small numbers involved in the pathfinder, it was not possible to identify robust data regarding equality groups or the likely impacts on them.

It is recommended that a further EQIA is carried out when more clarity is available about the roll out of Universal Credit (post October 2013) or when the substantive arrangements for free school meals are put in place, whichever comes first.

Background

Universal Credit will be introduced as part of the UK Government's programme of welfare reform. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are taking a phased approach to the roll out of Universal Credit between April 2013 and 2017. The initial introduction will take place during a pathfinder phase in the Greater Manchester area which will run from April 2013 - October 2013.

Eligibility to the pathfinder is set out in the Universal Credit (Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2013. The Education (School Lunches) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2013 will only have an effect if any one of the single, unemployed people on the pathfinder moves to Scotland during the period it is taking place. This assumes that the claimant has recently formed a new benefit unit with a parent or carer with a child of school age, or a young person who attends school, and an application for free school meals is subsequently made.

The Scope of the EQIA

The profile of potential pathfinder claimants was considered against the evidence that we hold/have access to regarding the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.

The scope of the EQIA was limited to cover the period of the pathfinder phase, which will run from April 2013 - October 2013.

Key Findings

The Regulations which prescribe Universal Credit as a qualifying criteria for free school meals may have the impact of affecting children, young people and their parents/carers.

Claimants would almost certainly have met the income related qualifications for free school meals in Scotland. Therefore, the Regulations are expected to have almost no impact on free school meal eligibility in Scotland.

Due to the small number of people involved in the pathfinder, it was not been possible to identify robust data regarding the equality groups, or likely impacts on them at this point.

A lack of awareness that the receipt of Universal Credit is an eligibility criterion for free school meals amongst delivery partners (local authorities) and claimants might prevent the desired outcomes being achieved.

Recommendations and Conclusion

An Equality Impact Assessment should be carried out when more clarity is available about the roll out of Universal Credit in Scotland (post October 2013) or when the substantive arrangements for free school meals are put in place, whichever comes first.

Changes to legislation should be publicised to raise awareness and ensure as far as possible, that the desired outcomes are achieved.