

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - RESULTS

Title of policy/ practice/ strategy/ legislation etc.	Extending Council Tax exemption to Articulating Students
Summary of aims and desired outcome of policy	<p>This exemption seeks to support the Scottish Government's drive to widen access to higher education by removing potential barriers to participation.</p> <p>Articulation can help more college students see their learning count towards a university degree and ensure young people who show potential get the support and education they need to realise that potential.</p>
Directorate: Division: Team	<p>Local Government and Communities Local Government: Council Tax Team</p>

Executive Summary

The policy intention is to establish a means by which the exemption from council tax can be extended to articulating students. Articulating students are defined as those students progressing from Higher National Certificate (HNC) level or Higher National Diploma (HND) level to the second or third year of degree-level study respectively. The proposed extension of exemption seeks to support the Scottish Government's drive to widen access to higher education by removing potential barriers to participation.

Potential impacts upon the protected groups were considered as part of pre-consultation engagement with stakeholders, the formal public consultation exercise, and the equalities impacts framing exercise. None of the proposals were considered to give rise to the possibility of potential negative impacts on any of the protected groups or risk of those in the protected groups being treated any less favourably due to any of the protected characteristics. No changes have been made to the policy intention as a result of the equality impact analysis, it has assisted in identifying gaps in the data available on articulating students which could be addressed as the policy is implemented in order to help monitor and evaluate outcomes.

Background

This proposed extension of exemption from Council Tax to articulating students will support the Scottish Government's drive to widen access to higher education by removing potential barriers to participation. This policy will affect all students who are articulating from a Higher National course to an advanced stage of a degree-level course. Articulation can help more students see their learning count towards a degree qualification and ensure that more young people who show potential get the support and education they need to more fully realise that potential.

Obtaining definitive figures on levels of articulating students has historically been difficult due to single centralised data or statistical collection. However, the Scottish

Government does provide additional support to promote access to degree level study via Higher National education pathways. Included in this support are 1,031 additional funded places which have been allocated to expand the scale of the “2+2” or “1+3” guaranteed articulation partnerships between colleges and universities. Consequently, whilst we expect this cohort of students to be expanding, we also expect to be able to better identify and measure progress through this education route in future.

The Scope of the Equality Impact Assessment

The Scottish Government carried out a public consultation exercise which ran for 12 weeks, commencing on 23 August and closing on 15 November. The earlier engagement with stakeholders helped inform the methodology and questions in the public consultation paper. The consultation was posted on the Scottish Government consultation webpages and links to these pages were sent directly to a wide range of stakeholders including all colleges, universities and local authorities across Scotland.

As above, neither the pre-consultation engagement with stakeholders and consultation exercise itself, nor the equality framing exercise, identified any potential negative impacts on any of the protected groups or risk of those in the protected groups being treated any less favourably due to any of the protected characteristics. Some potential positive impacts were identified for some of the protected groups, which will be explored further during implementation. For these reasons, no changes were made to the policy as a result of the equality impact analysis but the exercise did assist in identifying gaps in the data available on articulating students which could be addressed as it is implemented. That in turn will assist in future monitoring and evaluation of outcomes, and ensure that any potential unforeseen negative equality impacts can be identified.

Key Findings

No potential negative impacts on any of the protected groups were identified as a result of the EQIA process, but some potential positive impacts were identified for some protected groups (age, disability, race). For these reasons, no changes have been made to the policy intention to develop a legislative means of extending Council Tax exemption to articulating students but equalities impacts will be reviewed and monitored as this is implemented.

Conclusion

No significant equalities impacts were identified within the EQIA and the process did not identify any potential negative impacts on any of the protected groups, although some potential positive impacts were identified for advancing equality of opportunity under age, disability and race.

Obtaining definitive figures on levels of articulating students has historically been problematic due to a single centralised data collection. In order to improve the available information on articulation, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) have been working to create a database of records relating to articulating students. This database has been used to inform this equalities impact assessment and will also

help inform evaluation of outcomes as the policy is implemented. The Scottish Government will continue to review data from this database during implementation, considering any potential equalities implications which may be identified, and will also consider how the lack of available data for some of the protected groups could be addressed.