

Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment 00908 (Version 1)

SECTION ONE: ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Service & Division:	Social Work Adult Services None	Lead Officer Name:	Clair Devlin
		Team:	Social Work Adult Services
		Tel:	07843 022 623
		Email:	clair.devlin@falkirk.gov.uk
Proposal:	2025/26 Savings Proposal SAV07 - MECS - Charge all users a Flat Rate (remove means testing)	Reference No:	

What is the Proposal?	Budget & Other Financial Decision	Policy (New or Change)	HR Policy & Practice	Change to Service Delivery / Service Design
	Yes	Yes	No	No

Who does the Proposal affect?	Service Users	Members of the Public	Employees	Job Applicants
	Yes	No	No	No

Other, please specify:

Identify the main aims and projected outcome of this proposal (please add date of each update):

01/04/2025	Remove means testing for MECS alarms charges and charge all users a flat rate of £5 per week from 2025/26 financial year. There is approximately 2453 users of MECS alarms, 2164 already pay the full charge therefore would only be affected by the inflationary uplift of 25p per week. As the charges were previously part of the capped charge a number of people were paying the maximum within the capped amount. An additional 140 people will move from having no charge to being charged due to removal of the means testing.

SECTION TWO: FINANCIAL INFORMATION

For budget changes ONLY please include information below:			Benchmark, e.g. Scottish Average
Current spend on this service (£'0000s)	Total:		
Reduction to this service budget (£'0000s)	Per Annum:		
Increase to this service budget (£'000s)	Per Annum:		
If this is a change to a charge or concession please complete.	Current Annual Income Total:	£0.633m	Benchmarking carried out via IJB CFO network with the lowest charge per week being 0.00 (Orkney) and the highest £6.10 (Argyll and Bute) in comparison to the current charge of £4.75 per week in Falkirk. Of the 17 IJBs who responded, 12 of those do not means test alarms and apply a flat rate.
	Expected Annual Income Total:	£0.687m	
If this is a budget decision, when will the saving be achieved?	Start Date:	01/04/2025	
	End Date (if any):		

SECTION THREE: EVIDENCE Please include any evidence or relevant information that has influenced the decisions contained in this EPIA. (This could include demographic profiles; audits; research; health needs assessments; national guidance or legislative requirements and how this relates to the protected characteristic groups.)

A - Quantitative Evidence This is evidence which is numerical and should include the number people who use the service and the number of people from the protected characteristic groups who might be affected by changes to the service.

There are approximately 2453 users of MECS alarms. As the charges were previously part of the capped charge a number of people were paying the maximum within the capped amount. An additional 140 people will move from having no charge to being charged due to removal of the means testing.

Approximately 316 users are affected by both this proposal and the main charging policy proposals set out in EPIA 00891

B - Qualitative Evidence This is data which describes the effect or impact of a change on a group of people, e.g. some information provided as part of performance reporting.

Social - case studies; personal / group feedback / other

Of the 2453 users of MECS alarms, 2164 already pay the full charge therefore would only be affected by the inflationary uplift of 25p per week.

15 people pay less than the full charge at present and would potentially have an increase up to £2.05 per week.

140 people who do not pay for alarms at present would start paying for the service at £5 per week.

As noted above 316 users would also be affected by the main social care charging proposals

Best Judgement:

Has best judgement been used in place of data/research/evidence?	No
Who provided the best judgement and what was this based on?	
What gaps in data / information were identified?	There are some gaps in the data in relation to protected characteristics, however data is not recorded or held in this way in relation to MECS users.
Is further research necessary?	No
If NO, please state why.	A proportionate consultation and information gathering has taken place in relation to this proposal

SECTION FOUR: ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with individuals or organisations affected by the policy or proposal must take place

Has the proposal / policy / project been subject to engagement or consultation with service users taking into account their protected characteristics and socio-economic status?	Yes	
If YES, please state who was engagement with.	Public consultation exercise taking place for budget proposals between 17th January and 25th February 2025. Engagement with Carer's voices, Happy Mondays, ADP AVG group, drop in sessions at three libraries amongst others taking place. Extract of information to date for social care charging proposals provided within this EPIA	
If NO engagement has been conducted, please state why.		
How was the engagement carried out?	What were the results from the engagement? Please list...	
Focus Group	No	
Survey	Yes	Participate Plus 17th January to 25th February 2025. Results to date included here as at 7th Feb 2025.
Display / Exhibitions	No	
User Panels	No	
Public Event	Yes	Public engagement for overall proposals was undertaken in Library sessions with two held to date and another to take place week beginning 10th Feb 2025
Other: please specify	Results have not been fed back to participants as yet. Once consultation closes Participate plus will be updated with results for info, and those who requested feedback will receive it.	
Has the proposal / policy/ project been reviewed / changed as a result of the engagement?	No	
Have the results of the engagement been fed back to the consultees?	No	
Is further engagement recommended?	No	

SECTION FIVE: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

Equality Protected Characteristics: What will the impact of implementing this proposal be on people who share characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 or are likely to be affected by the proposal / policy / project? This section allows you to consider other impacts, e.g. poverty, health inequalities, community justice, carers etc.

Protected Characteristic	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide evidence of the impact on this protected characteristic.
Age			✓	Of 86 respondents, 8 were over 65 and the remainder under 65. Older people are more likely to experience financial difficulty statistically and also be in receipt of a community alarm service therefore may be impacted negatively by this proposal.
Disability			✓	64 respondents completed the information in relation to disabilities, with 34 noting they have a disability. Of those 11 identified there may be a significant impact, 14 some impact and 9 no impact. People with a disability are more likely to be in receipt of benefits and therefore may be impacted negatively by the proposal.
Sex			✓	66 respondents completed the information for this section with 52 females and 14 males. 18 people indicated a significant impact, 29 some impact and 19 no impact
Ethnicity	✓			66 people completed the ethnicity section. The majority (58) indicated they were White Scottish ,
Religion / Belief / non-Belief	✓			66 people completed this section with 34 indicating they had no religion, 16 Church of Scotland and the others spread over a number of other religions/beliefs
Sexual Orientation	✓			Of 62 respondents, 59 indicated they were straight/heterosexual, and the remainder were gay/lesbian
Transgender	✓			There were no respondents who indicated they were transgender
Pregnancy / Maternity	✓			None
Marriage / Civil Partnership	✓			The majority of respondents were married 40/66 with an overall 20 indicating significant impact, 28 some impact, 18 no impact
Poverty			✓	57 people completed the section in relation to benefits with 41 indicating they do not receive or have no recourse to public funds. Overall 16 people indicated a significant impact, 26 some impact and 15 no impact

Public Sector Equality Duty: Scottish Public Authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance quality of opportunity and foster good relations. Scottish specific duties include:

Other, health, community justice, carers etc.	✓			Carers, - 43 respondents indicated that they were Carers, with 12 indicating a significant impact, 15 some impact and 16 noting no impact from this category
Risk (Identify other risks associated with this change)	There could be a risk that referrals for income maximisation may cause some pressure on staff in this area with 1.0 WTE dedicated to this function at present. This will require to be closely monitored. There may be a risk of non collection of charges should the proposal be approved. A 20% allowance has been made in this regard.			

	Evidence of Due Regard
Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination (harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct):	Support will be available for income maximisation and users will be able to request a financial assessment for charges to arrive at the affordable amount in relation to their income. A waiver process will be available for anyone in particular financial difficulty on production of appropriate information.
Advance Equality of Opportunity:	
Foster Good Relations (promoting understanding and reducing prejudice):	

SECTION SIX: PARTNERS / OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Which sectors are likely to have an interest in or be affected by the proposal / policy / project?		Describe the interest / affect.
Business	No	
Councils	Yes	Other authorities will also be considering similar proposals. Benchmarking has been carried out via IJB CFO network.
Education Sector	No	
Fire	No	
NHS	No	
Integration Joint Board	Yes	IJB proposals
Police	No	
Third Sector	Yes	Our third and voluntary sector have been asked to take part in the consultation with information sharing regularly taking place
Other(s): please list and describe the nature of the relationship / impact.		

SECTION SEVEN: ACTION PLANNING

Mitigating Actions: If you have identified impacts on protected characteristic groups in Section 5 please summarise these in the table below detailing the actions you are taking to mitigate or support this impact. If you are not taking any action to support or mitigate the impact you should complete the No Mitigating Actions section below instead.

Identified Impact	To Who	Action(s)	Lead Officer	Evaluation and Review Date	Strategic Reference to Corporate Plan / Service Plan / Quality Outcomes
Negative	MECS alarms users	Notify all of those affected with 4 weeks notice of any changes being implemented. Income maximisation will be available on request. Waiver available where significant financial impact (to be approved by Head of Service and CFO)	Marie Keirs	13/12/2025	

No Mitigating Actions

Please explain why you do not need to take any action to mitigate or support the impact of your proposals.

Are actions being reported to Members?	No
If yes when and how ?	

SECTION EIGHT: ASSESSMENT OUTCOME

Only one of following statements best matches your assessment of this proposal / policy / project. Please select one and provide your reasons.

No major change required	No	
The proposal has to be adjusted to reduce impact on protected characteristic groups	No	
Continue with the proposal but it is not possible to remove all the risk to protected characteristic groups	Yes	Some negative impacts have been indicated. The overall assessment in relation to benchmarking data shows that Falkirk is in line with a number of other authorities charges and approach.
Stop the proposal as it is potentially in breach of equality legislation	No	

SECTION NINE: LEAD OFFICER SIGN OFF

Lead Officer:

Signature:	<i>Marie Keirs</i>	Date:	11/02/2025
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SECTION TEN: EPIA TASK GROUP ONLY

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF EPIA:	Has the EPIA demonstrated the use of data, appropriate engagement, identified mitigating actions as well as ownership and appropriate review of actions to confidently demonstrate compliance with the general and public sector equality duties?	Yes
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ASSESSMENT FINDINGS	EPIA has demonstrated use of data as the proposal was part of public engagement on budget.	
If YES, use this box to highlight evidence in support of the assessment of the EPIA		
If NO, use this box to highlight actions needed to improve the EPIA		

Where adverse impact on diverse communities has been identified and it is intended to continue with the proposal / policy / project, has justification for continuing <u>without making changes been made</u>?	Yes	If YES, please describe: Although there is a potentially negative impact, no changes have been made as such. Income maximisation will be available upon request and waivers where there is a significant financial impact (must be approved by Head of Service and CFO).
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LEVEL OF IMPACT: The EPIA Task Group has agreed the following level of impact on the protected characteristic groups highlighted within the EPIA

LEVEL		COMMENTS
HIGH	Yes / No	
MEDIUM	Yes	The number of people using MECS and the potential negative impacts, however this is offset by modest increases and appropriate mitigations
LOW	Yes / No	

SECTION ELEVEN: CHIEF OFFICER SIGN OFF

Director / Head of Service:			
Signature:	<i>Marie Keirs</i>	Date:	12/03/2025