

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Section 75 Equality and Good Relations Screening

Part 1. Information about the activity/policy/project being screened

FREE Firewood Pilot Scheme for community groups, foodbanks and churches

Is this activity/policy/project – an existing one, a revised one, a new one?

This is a new activity.

What are the intended aims/outcomes the activity/policy/project is trying to achieve?

1. To dispose of wood product from pruning and felling LCCC trees in the most cost effective manner.
2. To assist those residents of Lisburn & Castlereagh in financial hardship to tackle fuel poverty.
3. To support local foodbanks, churches and community groups in supplying their membership with a sustainable fuel source.

Throughout the year it is necessary to prune and occasionally fell trees within the Council estate. This wood used to be disposed of by the contractor at a cost to the ratepayer. In 2021 Parks and Amenities began to retain all useable wood to process it for firewood thus achieving two aims:

- Saving to the ratepayer
- Contributing to tackling fuel poverty within the Council area.

The wood has been cut into small logs suitable for most domestic fireplaces. Although not kiln dried, it has been drying indoors for most of the year so is ready to burn.

In a new pilot scheme, the Council is now reaching out to local community groups, foodbanks and churches to invite them to avail of free firewood to distribute to those within their community who are struggling with the cost of home heating and have an open fire or wood burning stove. Attempts have been made to contact all 125 churches of all faiths across the council as well as a number of community groups and local foodbanks and this has been universally welcomed.

All targeted organisations will be offered a small supply of firewood for distribution. Any allocations that are not taken up will be redistributed to interested groups.

The scheme is being piloted in 2022-23 and depending on the outcome may be continued in future years.

Who is the activity/policy/project targeted at and who will benefit? Are there any expected benefits for specific Section 75 categories/groups from this activity/policy/project? If so, please explain.

This scheme is targeted at community groups, foodbanks and churches in the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area. Groups will be encouraged to distribute the free firewood to clients/contacts who have been identified as most in need of help. As it is intended to benefit those who experience fuel poverty, it is likely that beneficiaries will include lone parents, older people, disabled people and families.

Who initiated or developed the activity/policy/project?

Parks and Amenities Service Unit

Who owns and who implements the activity/policy/project?

Owned by LCCC Leisure & Community Directorate; to be implemented by Parks and Amenities Unit.

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the activity/policy/project? If yes, give brief details of any significant factors.

Yes, lack of budget for equipment, machinery and staff to cut, chop and bag firewood. Unable to store wood for drying and lack of resources to get out to local communities.

Although LCCC will specify the objectives of the free firewood scheme, the success of the scheme is dependent on take-up from groups and churches and we

will not have direct control over eventual beneficiaries and will be relying on groups to distribute fairly.

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the activity/policy/project will impact upon? Delete if not applicable

Staff – Yes, staff will prepare bags so they are ready for collection.

Service users – Yes – end beneficiaries will be residents who are identified as being in fuel poverty

Other public sector organisations – N/A

Voluntary/community/trade unions – Yes - community groups, foodbanks and churches are being targeted

Other – N/A

Other policies/strategies/plans with a bearing on this activity/policy/project

Name of policy/strategy/plan	Who owns or implements?
1. Making Life Better 2013-2023	Department of Health NI
2. Health & Safety Policies	LCCC
3. LCCC Equality Scheme and associated action plans	LCCC
4. LCCC Local Biodiversity Action Plan	LCCC
5. Community Plan	LCCC

Available evidence

What evidence/information (qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered or considered to inform this activity/policy? Specify details for each Section 75 category.

In developing the pilot scheme, we have considered available research and evidence about poverty, including fuel poverty (for example research to inform the DFC Anti-Poverty Strategy, evidence from advice organisations, Commissioner for Older People, Disability groups, community and voluntary sector groups) and

explored the range of groups in the LCCC area who could assist in distributing the free firewood.

Section 75 Category	Details of evidence/information
Religious Belief	<p>2021 Census data recorded that 27% of the LCCC population were brought up in the Catholic religion; 58% were brought up in the Protestant & Other Christian religions; 2% other religions; and 13% declared no religion.</p> <p>There is no evidence to suggest any particular religious group is more or less likely to experience fuel poverty. All households have been affected by recent rises in cost of living, including hikes in fuel costs, regardless of religious belief.</p>
Political Opinion	<p>Based on the most recent local government elections (2019), the majority political opinion in LCCC district is Unionist.</p> <p>There is no evidence to suggest that that people of any particular political opinion are more or less likely to experience fuel poverty. All households have been affected by recent rises in cost of living, including hikes in fuel costs, regardless of political opinion.</p>
Racial Group	<p>Census 2021 data indicates that around 4% of the LCCC population were from a minority ethnic group (similar to the NI population) and 6% were born outside the UK or Ireland.</p> <p>We do not have data to suggest whether racial background is a factor relevant to fuel poverty. All LCCC citizens have been affected by rises in cost of living, including increases in fuel costs, and this will include minority ethnic groups. However, newcomer communities and those who do not have English as a first language may experience</p>

	barriers to information about and access to support schemes.
Age	<p>The LCCC population recorded in Census 2021 totalled 149,106: 19% (0-15 years); 30% (16-39 years); 33% (40-64 years); 18% (65+ years).</p> <p>The LCCC area has a slightly higher than national average percentage of older people. We know from public and community sector research that some older people are more likely to experience fuel poverty and be impacted by cost of living increases as they are on low/fixed incomes. Government policy recognises the need to support older people through winter fuel payments. Research also suggests that a significant percentage of children are growing up in households that experience poverty/fuel poverty. This has been exacerbated by recent increases in cost of living generally and fuel costs in particular.</p>
Marital Status	<p>For the 16+ population in relation to marital and civil partnerships, Census 2011 data: 30.65% single; 53.78% married; 0.10% same sex partnership; 3.27% separated; 5.52% divorced; 6.68% widowed.</p> <p>There is some evidence that people who live alone will be more severely impacted by increases in the cost of living, including fuel costs.</p>
Sexual Orientation	<p>The ONS published in 2017 data indicating that 1.2% of the household population in NI identified as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual. There is no evidence to suggest that sexual orientation is a relevant factor in relation to fuel poverty.</p>
Men & Women Generally	<p>The LCCC population (2021) was 51% female and 49% male. This reflects the overall NI position. Females outlive males (their life expectancy is</p>

	<p>longer) and therefore there will be slightly more females in the older population. Older females who live alone are among the groups most likely to experience fuel poverty.</p>
Disability	<p>Census 2011 data (most recent available) indicated that 18.29% of the LCCC population had a long-term health problem or disability. This is in line with the national picture.</p> <p>Disabled people are more likely to be on low/fixed incomes (for example, social security benefits) and are therefore more likely to be impacted by increases in the cost of living, including fuel costs. Disabled people may also have conditions which require them to spend more of their income on energy costs. For example, people with lung conditions need to keep warm to keep well and many disabilities require powered equipment.</p>
People with and without Dependants	<p>People with dependants may have personal responsibility for the care of a child (or children), a person with a disability, and/or a dependent older person. Census data for LCCC 2011 found 46.3% of residents had dependants.</p> <p>There is some evidence that families with a dependent older person, disabled person or young children may face particular challenges when living costs increase and are more likely to experience poverty/fuel poverty.</p>

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation

to the particular activity/policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories

Section 75 Category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious Belief	In relation to this scheme, it is important to ensure that people of all religions (and none) have the opportunity to potentially benefit from the offer of free firewood. The scheme therefore needs to be available to churches of all denominations and include other organisations – community groups and foodbanks – that serve everyone in the community and are not linked to religious affiliation.
Political Opinion	The scheme needs to be available to potentially benefit people regardless of political opinion.
Racial Group	The scheme needs to potentially benefit people regardless of racial group. Newcomer communities may need to be specifically targeted as they may be less aware of support available from the council and community groups.
Age	Older people are more likely to experience fuel poverty as they may need to spend a higher proportion of their fixed income on energy costs. They therefore should be key targets to benefit from this free firewood scheme.
Marital Status	Some people who live alone may have higher fuel costs/energy bills and may be a key target for this support scheme.
Sexual Orientation	No particular needs identified for people of different sexual orientation.
Men & Women Generally	Both men and women may experience poverty/fuel poverty but more women than men, especially in the

	oldest age categories, may be in need due to low income.
Disability	Disabled people will be affected disproportionately by the recent increases in cost of living, including fuel costs and should be key targets for the free firewood scheme.
People with and without Dependents	Some families with dependants will be affected disproportionately by recent increases in fuel costs and should be key targets to benefit from the scheme.

Part 2. Screening questions

1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this activity/policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?

Section 75 Category	Details of likely impact – will it be positive or negative? If none anticipated, say none	Level of impact - major or minor* - see guidance below
Religious Belief	As the free firewood scheme will be offered to all local churches and a range of community groups that cater for people of all religions and none, there should be no differential impact.	None
Political Opinion	No differential impact identified	None
Racial Group	No differential impact identified	None
Age	As the scheme is intended to benefit those most in need, some older people may	Minor - positive

	benefit from the provision of free firewood	
Marital Status	Some people who live alone (for example older people or those on benefits) may be beneficiaries if they are identified as most in need of help with fuel costs	Minor – positive for some
Sexual Orientation	No differential impact identified	None
Men & Women Generally	Slightly more women in the oldest categories may be identified as in fuel poverty as women are more likely to live longer	Minor – positive – for older women
Disability	Disabled people are among the groups identified as most likely to experience fuel poverty and should benefit from the provision of free firewood.	Minor - positive
People with and without Dependants	Some people with dependants will be identified as more likely to be in fuel poverty and may potentially benefit from the provision of free firewood.	Minor - positive

* See Appendix 1 for details.

2(a) Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?

Section 75 Category	IF Yes, provide details	If No, provide details
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<p>Religious Belief</p> <p>Political Opinion</p> <p>Racial Group</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Marital Status</p> <p>Sexual Orientation</p> <p>Men & Women Generally</p> <p>Disability</p> <p>People with and without Dependents</p>		<p>In this pilot phase, we have not identified opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity.</p> <p>The scheme is intended to benefit those most in need, regardless of Section 75 category, and we are targeting all churches and a range of other community organisations to ensure equality of opportunity.</p> <p>The pilot will be reviewed and changes made for the future if issues or better ways to operate the scheme are identified.</p>
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Equality Action Plan 2021-2025

Does the activity/policy/project being screened relate to an action in the Equality Action Plan 2021-2025? Yes/No If yes, specify which action.

No

2(b) DDA Disability Duties (see Disability Action Plan 2021-2025)

Does this policy/activity present opportunities to contribute to the actions in our Disability Action Plan:

- to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?
- to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?

No

3 To what extent is the activity/policy/project likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good Relations Category	Details of likely impact. Will it be positive or negative? [if no specific impact identified, say none]	Level of impact – minor/major*
Religious Belief Political Opinion Racial Group	No direct impact as not directly relevant to the promotion of good relations. The scheme will potentially benefit people from all these groups if they are identified as being in need of support with fuel poverty.	No different impact

*See Appendix 1 for details.

4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good Relations Category	IF Yes, provide details	If No, provide details
Religious Belief Political Opinion Racial Group		No opportunities identified - the scheme is not directly relevant to the promotion of good relations.

Multiple identity

Provide details of any data on the impact of the activity/policy/project on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

Council is aware that everyone has multiple identities. As an example, in relation to Free Firewood pilot scheme, there is the potential to benefit older women or

older people with disabilities who may be identified as experiencing most fuel poverty.

Part 3. Screening decision/outcome

Equality and good relations screening is used to identify whether there is a need to carry out a **full equality impact assessment** on a proposed policy or project.

There are 3 possible outcomes:

- 1) **Screen out** - no need for a full equality impact assessment and no mitigations required because no relevance to equality, no negative impacts identified or only very minor positive impacts for all groups. This may be the case for a purely technical policy for example.
- 2) **Screen out with mitigation** - no need for a full equality impact assessment but some minor potential impacts or opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified, so mitigations appropriate. Much of our activity will probably fall into this category.
- 3) **Screen in for full equality impact assessment** – potential for significant and/or potentially negative impact identified for one or more groups so proposal requires a more detailed impact assessment. [See Equality Commission guidance on justifying a screening decision.]

Choose only one of these and provide reasons for your decision and ensure evidence is noted/referenced for any decision reached.

Screening Decision/Outcome	Reasons/Evidence
<p>Option 1</p> <p>Screen out – no equality impact assessment and no mitigation required [go to Monitoring section]</p>	<p>As this is a pilot scheme and all potential impacts are likely to be minor and positive for the target groups identified as most likely to experience fuel poverty, we do not feel a full EQIA is warranted.</p> <p>The scheme is being offered to a representative range of churches, community groups and foodbanks to ensure equality of opportunity. The scheme will be evaluated and if issues arise they will be considered in any future rollout of the scheme.</p>

<p>Option 2</p> <p>Screen out with mitigation – some potential impacts identified but they can be addressed with appropriate mitigation or some opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified [complete mitigation section below]</p>	
<p>Option 3</p> <p>Screen in for a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)</p> <p>[If option 3, complete timetabling and prioritising section below]</p>	

Mitigation (Only relevant to Option 2)

Can the activity/policy/project plan be amended or an alternative activity/policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

If so, give the **reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative activity/policy and ensure the mitigations are included in a revised/updated policy or plan.

N/A

Timetabling and prioritising for full EQIA (only relevant to Option 3) N/A

If the activity/policy has been ‘**screened in**’ for full equality impact assessment, give details of any factors to be considered and the next steps for progressing the EQIA, including a proposed timetable.

Is the activity/policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? Yes/No. If yes, please provide details.

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

Effective monitoring will help a public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the activity/policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and activity/policy development.

What will be monitored and how? What specific equality monitoring will be done? Who will undertake and sign-off the monitoring of this activity/policy and on what frequency? Please give details:

Implementation of the pilot will be monitored by the Community Engagement Officer in Parks & Amenities, reporting to the Head of Service.

Evaluation will include a review of targeting, take-up, feedback from groups and churches who accept the invitation to distribute free firewood, and any feedback from beneficiaries.

If issues are identified to suggest that the scheme has not succeeded in benefitting a cross-section of the community, they will be addressed in any future roll out.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

	Position/Job Title	Date
Screened by: Stephen Croft	Community Engagement Officer Parks & Amenities	13.12.22
Reviewed by:	Equality Officer	15.12.22
Approved by: Ross Gillanders	P&A Head of Service	19.12.22

Note: On completion of the screening exercise, a copy of the completed Screening Report should be:

- approved and ‘signed off’ by a senior manager responsible for the activity/policy
- included with Committee reports, as appropriate
- sent to the Equality Officer for the quarterly screening report to consultees, internal reporting and publishing on the LCCC website
- shared with relevant colleagues
- made available to the public on request.

Evidence and documents referenced in the screening report should also be available if requested.

Appendix 1 – Equality Commission guidance on equality impact

*Major impact:

- a) The policy/project is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality matters are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

Minor impact

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;

- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

No impact (none)

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations;
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Revised Template @ April 2022