

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Director of Education
to Cabinet
of 29 November 2022**

**Subject: Scottish Child Payment – Doubling of December 2022
Bridging Payment**

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with information relating to the Scottish Government's final, December 2022, Child Payment 'Bridging Payment' and to request approval for the use of uncommitted Covid-19 reserves, to facilitate an increase of this payment to a wider group of young people.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Cabinet approves the use of £172,380.00 of currently uncommitted Covid-19 support reserves, to fund an increase in the payment of the Scottish Government's final, December 2022, Child Payment 'Bridging Payment' to families in receipt of a qualifying benefit for school Clothing Grants.**

3. Background

- 3.1 On 27 August 2021, the Scottish Government confirmed arrangements regarding four, seasonal, £130.00 Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payments in 2022 for all young people of school age, who are enrolled in primary school and who meet certain eligibility criteria.
- 3.2 The Scottish Government fund these payments for the children of families who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit for [Free School Meals](#), as a result of an assessment of income. This includes families in receipt of Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit where the household income is £7,920.00 or less. There are currently, circa 2,800 South Ayrshire young people who meet this eligibility criteria.
- 3.3 On 15 February 2022, [Leadership Panel](#) considered a proposal for the use of available Scottish Government, financial insecurity funding and approved the use of this funding to extend the payment of the 2022 Bridging Payments to a wider group of young people as detailed in 3.4.
- 3.4 To further support low-income households in South Ayrshire, the eligibility criteria for the four, 2022, £130.00 Bridging Payments was extended to families in receipt of a qualifying benefit for school Clothing Grants, where families are in receipt of Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit, and the household income is £17,005.00 or less. This has benefited the families of an additional circa 1,300 young people.

- 3.5 On 10 October 2022, the First Minister announced that the Scottish Government would double the final Child Bridging Payment due to be made in December 2022, increasing the amount to be paid, for each eligible child, from £130.00 to £260.00, for which the Council will receive additional Scottish Government funding.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 As the Scottish Government eligibility criteria for these payments extends only to families entitled to Free School Meals, the shortfall in funding required to double the final 2022 Bridging Payment, using the Council's pre-approved, wider eligibility criteria for these payments, is £172,380.00.
- 4.2 Following Leadership Panel's approval to extend the eligibility criteria for these Bridging Payments earlier in the year, the alternative, of issuing the double payment of £260.00, only to those families eligible for Free School Meals, while issuing a £130.00 payment to those families eligible for Clothing Grants, may impact adversely on these families, and on the Council's reputation, during the current cost of living crisis.
- 4.3 It is currently the Council's responsibility to administer these payments. However, with the Child Bridging Payments programme concluding at the end of 2022, the responsibility for administering future Child Payments is transferring to Social Security Scotland in 2023.
- 4.4 Parents and carers will have to submit new applications to Social Security Scotland, rather than the Council, and therefore a similar situation for the Council should not arise in the future. The level of earned income in conjunction with other qualifying benefits received by families will determine whether they will be eligible to receive the new Child Payment and those working families currently entitled to Clothing Grants may not be eligible for the new Child Payments.
- 4.5 It is proposed that £172,380.00 of currently uncommitted Covid-19 support reserves is used to fund a doubling of the December 2022 Bridging Payment, in line with the First Minister's recent announcement, to families in receipt of a qualifying benefit for school Clothing Grants.
- 4.6 If the recommendations above are approved by Cabinet, a £260.00 Bridging Payment will be issued to the wider group of young people in early December.

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Total funding of £172,380.00 is required to facilitate an increase of the final, 2022 Child Bridging Payment to families in receipt of a qualifying benefit for school Clothing Grants.
- 6.2 Funding can be met from the Council's currently uncommitted Covid-19 support reserves.

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 Not applicable

8. Risk

8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations*

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

8.2 *Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations*

8.2.1 Rejecting the recommendations may impact on the reputation of the Council.

9. Equalities

9.1 This report provides an update on progress of a recent Leadership Panel report which was assessed for potential equality impacts, and the relevant documentation is attached as [Appendix 1](#).

10. Sustainable Development Implications

10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. Options Appraisal

11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. Link to Council Plan

12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Commitment 2 of the Council Plan: Closing the Gap/Reduce poverty and disadvantage.

13. Results of Consultation

13.1 There has been no public consultation on the contents of this report.

13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Stephen Ferry, Portfolio Holder for Education, and Councillor Ian Davis, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Human Resources and ICT, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

13.3 Consultation has taken place with officers from relevant services involved in administration of Child Bridging Payments.

14. Next Steps for Decision Tracking Purposes

14.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Director of Education will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the

Cabinet in the 'Council and Cabinet Decision Log' at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Due date</i>	<i>Managed by</i>
Ensure that the doubling of the final, 2022 Child Bridging Payment, to £260.00, is extended to lower income families in receipt of a qualifying benefit for school Clothing Grants	9 December 2022	Service Lead - Education Support Services

Background Papers **Report to Leadership Panel of 15 February 2022 - [2022 Scottish Child Payment - Bridging Payments](#)**

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Date: 18 November 2022

South Ayrshire Council Equality Impact Assessment Scoping Template

Equality Impact Assessment is a legal requirement under the Public Sector Duty to promote equality of the Equality Act 2010. Separate guidance has been developed on Equality Impact Assessment's which will guide you through the process and is available to view here: <https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/equalities/impact-assessment.aspx>

Further guidance is available here: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/assessing-impact-and-public-sector-equality-duty-guide-public-authorities/>

The Fairer Scotland Duty ('the Duty'), Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force in Scotland from 1 April 2018. It places a legal responsibility on Councils to actively consider ('pay due regard to') how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions. See information here: [Interim Guidance for Public Bodies](#) in respect of the Duty, was published by the Scottish Government in March 2018.

1. Policy details

Policy Title	2022 Scottish Child Payment - Bridging Payments
Lead Officer (Name/Position/Email)	Mike Newall Assistant Director - People mike.newall@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

2. Which communities, groups of people, employees or thematic groups do you think will be, or potentially could be, impacted upon by the implementation of this policy? Please indicate whether these would be positive or negative impacts

Community or Groups of People	Negative Impacts	Positive impacts
Age – men and women, girls & boys	n/a	yes
Disability	n/a	n/a
Gender Reassignment (Trans/Transgender Identity)	n/a	n/a
Marriage or Civil Partnership	n/a	n/a
Pregnancy and Maternity	n/a	n/a
Race – people from different racial groups, (BME) ethnic minorities and Gypsy/Travellers	n/a	n/a
Religion or Belief (including lack of belief)	n/a	n/a
Sex – gender identity (issues specific to women & men or girls & boys)	n/a	n/a

Sexual Orientation – person’s sexual orientation i.e. LGBT+, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, heterosexual/straight	n/a	n/a
Thematic Groups: Health, Human Rights & Children’s Rights	n/a	n/a

3. What likely impact will this policy have on people experiencing different kinds of social disadvantage? (Fairer Scotland Duty). Consideration must be given particularly to children and families.

Socio-Economic Disadvantage	Negative Impacts	Positive impacts
Low Income/Income Poverty – cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing	n/a	n/a
Low and/or no wealth – enough money to meet Basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future	n/a	yes
Material Deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure/hobbies	n/a	n/a
Area Deprivation – where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of transport)	n/a	n/a
Socio-economic Background – social class i.e. parent’s education, employment and income	n/a	yes

4. Do you have evidence or reason to believe that the policy will support the Council to:

General Duty and other Equality Themes Consider the ‘Three Key Needs’ of the Equality Duty	Level of Negative and/or Positive Impact (High, Medium or Low)
Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Low
Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not	Low
Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. (Does it tackle prejudice and promote a better understanding of equality issues?)	Low
Increase participation of particular communities or groups in public life	Low
Improve the health and wellbeing of particular communities or groups	Medium
Promote the human rights of particular communities or groups	Low
Tackle deprivation faced by particular communities or groups	Medium

5. Summary Assessment

Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? (A full Equality Impact Assessment must be carried out if impacts identified as Medium and/or High)	YES NO
Rationale for decision: Although the recommendations within the report, if approved, will benefit the families of lower income households in 2022, who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit for school Clothing Grants, any decision does not have a specific or significant, long-term positive or negative impact on groups of people with protected characteristics.	
Signed: Mike Newall, Assistant Director - People Date: 21 January 2022	