

Argyll and Bute Council: Integrated Impact Assessment

About the proposal

Title of Proposal.

Benefits Team Restructure - Budget Saving

Intended outcome of the proposal.

The intended outcome of this proposal is to achieve a recurring budget saving through a reduction of 2 FTE posts within the Benefits team, enabled by the continuing decline in Housing Benefit caseload due to the managed migration to Universal Credit. By restructuring the team and removing a vacant assessor post and one team leader post, the service aims to align staffing levels proportionately to reduced workload while maintaining statutory performance standards, customer service levels, and efficient processing of remaining Housing Benefit claims.

How does your proposal align with strategy?

This proposal aligns with the Council's strategic objectives by contributing to the delivery of a balanced and sustainable budget through efficient use of resources. The reduction in staffing is directly linked to the ongoing national policy of managed migration from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit, which has resulted in a continuing decline in Housing Benefit caseload and a corresponding reduction in workload for the Benefits service.

The proposal supports organisational priorities around financial sustainability, service transformation, and continuous improvement by realigning staff levels with current and future operational requirements while maintaining statutory service delivery. It ensures that public funds are used effectively and that staffing structures remain proportionate, flexible, and responsive to changing demand.

Description of proposal.

This proposal relates to a budget saving within the Revenues and Benefits service, specifically the Benefits team. The saving will be achieved through the permanent removal of 2 FTE posts: one Benefits Team Leader (LGE9) and one Benefits Assessor (LGE6). The Benefits Assessor post is currently vacant and will be deleted from the establishment. The Team Leader post would be removed through voluntary redundancy where possible.

The reduction is enabled by the ongoing national managed migration from Housing Benefit (HB) to Universal Credit (UC) for working-age claimants. As the HB caseload continues to reduce, the volume of claims requiring assessment and supervision decreases proportionately. Process efficiencies, digital improvements, and productivity gains support the ability to maintain performance levels with a smaller resource base.

The proposal would reduce the Benefits team establishment from 2.0 to 1.0 FTE Team Leaders and from 14.7 to 13.7 FTE Benefits Assessors, delivering an annual recurring saving of £90,000 from 2026/27, with a part-year saving of £10,000 anticipated in 2025/26. Trade Union consultation and appropriate HR processes will be followed. No compulsory redundancies are anticipated.

The proposed change is not expected to impact service users directly, and performance standards and statutory obligations will continue to be met within the revised structure.

Lead and Appropriate Officers

Lead officer.

Fergus Walker

Lead officer job title.

Revenue and Benefits Manager

Lead officer service.

Financial Services

Appropriate officer.

Anne Blue

Appropriate officer Job title.

Head of Financial Services

Who will deliver proposal.

The proposal will be delivered by the Head of Financial Services working with the Revenues and Benefits Manager, supported by HR and Trade Union representatives through the appropriate consultation and organisational change processes. Implementation will follow established Council procedures for workforce restructuring, voluntary redundancy, and communication with affected staff.

Signed off by.

Date.

Evidence

Data – What data have you used to inform the IIA.

The assessment has been informed by a range of service performance, workforce and caseload management data, including:

Housing Benefit caseload statistics showing a continued reduction in working-age claims due to managed migration to Universal Credit.

Workload and productivity data from the Benefits processing system, including assessment volumes, automation levels and processing times.

Establishment and workforce structure information, including current FTE levels, vacancy data, job roles and team responsibilities.

Service performance indicators, such as new claim and change of circumstances processing times, accuracy rates and customer contact demand.

Financial monitoring and budget analysis detailing staffing costs and savings forecasts.

HR workforce profile data, including age, gender and employment status, to assess any potential equality impacts on affected staff.

National DWP Managed Migration rollout timetable to project future caseload trends.

This data collectively demonstrates that workload reduction and process efficiencies enable the proposed staffing changes without impact on service users.

Other information – This may include reference to reports by other people / organisations relevant to the impacts you identified.

The proposal is informed by external national policy direction and evidence relating to the transition from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit. Relevant sources include:

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Managed Migration Programme guidance and published timetable for the rollout of Universal Credit for working-age claimants, which confirms the expected continuing reduction in Housing Benefit caseloads nationally.

DWP statistical releases demonstrating the year-on-year decrease in the number of working-age Housing Benefit claims and the increasing proportion of households receiving support via Universal Credit.

COSLA and IRRV sector briefings regarding the impact of welfare reform across Scottish local authorities and expected workforce implications within Benefits services.

Internal performance and governance reports that track caseload changes, productivity and statutory processing compliance, supporting the evidence base that the service can continue to meet its obligations with reduced staffing levels.

These external references support the expected reduction in service demand and validate the rationale for realigning staffing to workload.

Consultation – What consultation / engagement have you carried out to inform the IIA? Informal engagement has taken place with the affected members of staff to discuss the proposed changes and gather initial feedback. The proposal has also been discussed internally with the Head of Financial Services, the Revenues and Benefits Manager, and HR colleagues to assess feasibility and potential impacts.

Formal consultation with affected staff and Trade Union representatives is scheduled to begin next week, in line with the Council's organisational change procedures. This process will provide an opportunity for staff and Trade Unions to comment on the proposal, ask questions, and explore voluntary redundancy options where applicable.

As the proposal relates solely to internal staffing and does not involve any changes to service delivery or customer access, no public consultation has been required.

Gaps in evidence.

There are no significant gaps in the current evidence base supporting this proposal. Strong and reliable data exists regarding Housing Benefit caseload levels, workload trends, productivity information, performance indicators and workforce costs.

The managed migration of working-age Housing Benefit claimants to Universal Credit is scheduled to be completed by 31 March 2026, which provides a clear and predictable basis for forecast reductions in workload for that segment of the caseload.

However, there remains uncertainty regarding the future processing arrangements for pension-age Housing Benefit claims. The UK Government has not yet confirmed whether these cases will continue to be administered by local authorities, be transferred to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), or potentially be delivered through an alternative model. Until a national decision is announced, longer-term planning assumptions for this part of the caseload cannot be confirmed.

Additional insight may also emerge through the forthcoming formal consultation with staff and Trade Unions, which will be considered in finalising implementation plans.

Knock on affect.

Yes

Knock on affect details.

The proposal is expected to have limited internal knock-on effects relating to workload distribution and management capacity within the Benefits team following the removal of a Team Leader post. Responsibilities will need to be realigned across the remaining management structure to ensure continuity of supervision, quality assurance, and staff support.

There are no knock-on effects anticipated for service users, as the proposal is based on reduced caseload and efficiency improvements rather than changes to service access or performance standards.

Monitoring – How will you monitor the impacts of your proposal.

The impacts of this proposal will be monitored through established performance, workforce and governance processes within the Revenues and Benefits service. This will include:

Regular monitoring of Housing Benefit caseload volumes and trends to ensure staffing levels continue to align with demand.

Tracking of key performance indicators, including new claim and change processing times, accuracy levels and customer service response times, to ensure service standards are maintained.

Workload and productivity monitoring across the Benefits team to ensure tasks are appropriately balanced and manageable.

Ongoing review through management meetings, including service performance reviews and budget monitoring.

Monitoring feedback from staff via one-to-one meetings, supervision and through the formal consultation process.

Regular reporting to senior management and escalation if risks or pressures emerge.

If monitoring shows a negative impact on performance or service quality, mitigation actions will be considered and implemented as appropriate.

Fairer Scotland

No impact justification.

This proposal does not require a Fairer Scotland Duty or Consumer Duty assessment because it relates solely to an internal staffing efficiency measure within the Benefits service and does not involve any change to policy, eligibility criteria, access to services, or outcomes for customers. The reduction in posts is driven by a forecast decrease in Housing Benefit caseload due to the nationally led managed migration to Universal Credit. There is no impact on service users, including those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, as performance standards and service delivery arrangements will remain unchanged. The proposal does not alter customer pathways, introduce new charges, reduce entitlement, or restrict access to support. It therefore does not constitute a major strategic decision that would trigger the Fairer Scotland Duty, nor does it involve any consumer rights considerations under Consumer Duty. Any impacts relate only to internal workforce restructuring and will be managed through formal consultation and HR processes.

Consumer duty

No impact justification.

This proposal does not require a Consumer Duty assessment because it relates solely to an internal staffing change within the Revenues and Benefits service and does not affect consumers, small businesses, or individuals in their capacity as service users. The proposal does not change service policy, customer access, entitlement criteria, processing arrangements, response channels, fees, or the quality or safety of services provided.

The staffing reduction reflects a decline in Housing Benefit caseload due to the national managed migration to Universal Credit and can be accommodated without altering the level of service delivered to customers. There will be no change to how individuals apply for benefits, receive support, or interact with the Council, and no negative impact on vulnerable or financially disadvantaged households.

Therefore, there is no consumer detriment and no requirement for a Consumer Duty impact assessment.

Children rights and wellbeing

No Impact Justification

A Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment is not required for this proposal. The proposal relates solely to an internal staffing efficiency within the Benefits service and does not involve any changes to policies, processes, eligibility, access to services, or support provided to children, young people, or families.

There is no direct or indirect impact on children or young people, including those up to the age of 18, as the proposal does not affect services used by them, nor does it change the way support is delivered to households with children. Housing Benefit administration will continue to operate to statutory requirements, and customers will continue to receive services in the same way.

For these reasons, the proposal has no implications for children's rights, wellbeing, or outcomes, and therefore a CRWIA is not necessary.

Island Community

No Impact Justification.

An Island Communities Impact Assessment is not required for this proposal. The proposal relates solely to an internal staffing reduction within the Benefits team and does not involve any changes to service delivery arrangements, access routes, or policy affecting customers across Argyll and Bute, including island communities.

The administration of Housing Benefit is delivered centrally and digitally and is not dependent on geographical location. Customers on islands will continue to access services in exactly the same way as at present, and the proposal will not alter entitlement, application processes, service availability, or response times.

Therefore, the proposal has no differential or disproportionate impact on island communities, and no mitigation measures are required.

Equality impact

Equality impact on service users

Service users	Impact
Disability	No Impact
Race	No Impact
Marriage and civil partnership	No Impact
Religion or belief	No Impact
Sex	No Impact
Pregnancy and maternity	Don't Know
Age	No Impact
Sexual orientation	No Impact
Gender reassignment	No Impact

Impact on service users.

The proposal has no direct impact on service users and all identified impacts relate solely to staff within the Benefits team. There are a number of potential positive and negative impacts arising from the proposed reduction of 2 FTE posts.

One positive impact is the opportunity for voluntary redundancy for the affected Team Leader (LGE9), which may be welcomed by an employee seeking to leave the organisation through a planned exit route. The proposal also supports the realignment of staffing levels with the reduced Housing Benefit caseload, helping the service to operate more efficiently and sustainably. As processes continue to be streamlined and workload reduces because of managed migration to Universal Credit, the restructure may also enable clearer distribution of responsibilities across the team and continued focus on productivity and service improvement.

However, there are negative impacts to consider. The proposal creates a risk of potential redundancy for one employee if voluntary options are not confirmed, which may cause uncertainty, anxiety and stress for the affected individual and their colleagues. The removal of one Team Leader post may temporarily increase pressure on the remaining management resource, placing additional demands and responsibilities on the remaining post holder during the transition period. The change may also impact staff morale, as workforce reductions can lead to concern about job security and increased workload perception. Changes to task allocation and team structure may require adjustments in working arrangements and support from management and HR.

These impacts are internal and will be managed through structured consultation, fair HR processes, and ongoing monitoring of workload, wellbeing and service performance. No negative or disproportionate impacts have been identified for any protected characteristic groups at this stage.

Don't knows identified.

At this stage, there are no known impacts on service users, and no evidence to suggest disproportionate effects on any protected characteristic groups within the workforce. However, there remains some uncertainty regarding the future national decision on who will administer Housing Benefit for pension-age claimants, which could affect longer-term service design and workforce requirements once announced. Until further information is received from the Department for Work and Pensions, the full implications cannot be confirmed.

Additionally, outcomes from the formal staff and Trade Union consultation, which has not yet commenced, may identify impacts or considerations not currently known. Any issues raised through consultation will be assessed and mitigated as appropriate and may require updates to this assessment.

Equality impact on service deliverers

Service deliverers	Impact
Disability	Don't Know
Race	No Impact
Marriage and civil partnership	No Impact
Religion or belief	No Impact
Sex	No Impact
Pregnancy and maternity	Don't Know
Age	Don't Know
Sexual orientation	No Impact
Gender reassignment	No_Impact

Impact on service deliverers.

Don't knows identified.

At this stage, some equality impacts are recorded as 'don't know' because the full implications will depend on the individual circumstances of the affected employees and the outcome of the forthcoming formal consultation process. Until equality profile information for the specific posts is reviewed and discussions with affected staff take place, it is not possible to confirm whether any protected characteristic groups—such as age, disability, pregnancy and maternity or sex—may be disproportionately affected by the proposed staffing reduction.

Further information will become available once detailed HR data is considered and feedback is received through consultation with staff and Trade Union representatives. If any potential disproportionate impacts are identified at that stage, mitigation actions will be put in place to ensure compliance with equality duties and fair treatment of all employees.

Due regard.

In considering this proposal, due regard has been given to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. The proposal does not change access to services or customer outcomes, and therefore has no equality implications for service users. For staff, the proposal is being managed in line with the Council's organisational change and equality policies to ensure that it is implemented fairly and does not disadvantage individuals with protected characteristics.

To support the elimination of discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity, the process will include a transparent and structured formal consultation, with access to HR advice, Trade Union representation, and opportunities for staff to raise concerns or request reasonable adjustments where needed. The option of voluntary redundancy has been included to avoid compulsory redundancy where possible, helping to reduce negative impacts. Workforce equality data will be reviewed to identify whether any protected characteristic groups could be disproportionately affected, and mitigation actions will be applied if required.

Although some equality impacts are currently recorded as 'don't know' pending consultation and HR data analysis, any identified issues will be addressed through appropriate support mechanisms such as workload planning, wellbeing support and flexible working where appropriate. This approach supports fair treatment, fosters good relations within the team, and ensures that the proposal does not disproportionately impact any particular group.

Classification: OFFICIAL