

The background of the slide features a large, faint, light blue watermark of the City of Edinburgh Council crest. The crest is a shield divided into four quarters. The top-left quarter shows a castle tower, the top-right a stag's head, the bottom-left a sailing ship, and the bottom-right a lion passant guardant. Above the shield is a crown with four fleurs-de-lis. A banner at the bottom of the shield contains the motto 'ANE FOR A'.

Agenda Item 7

Enhanced Concessionary Sport, Leisure and Cultural Scheme

Falkirk Council

Title: Enhanced Concessionary Sport, Leisure and Cultural Scheme

Meeting: Executive

Date: 13 June 2023

Submitted By: Director of Children's Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Executive with recommendations to enhance the current Concessionary Card scheme for Leisure and Cultural services: the Go Card scheme.
- 1.2 This report aligns with the 2022/27 Council Plan by demonstrating the Council's commitment to the priorities of:
- (1) Supporting Stronger and Healthier communities;
 - (2) Promoting opportunities and educational attainment and reducing inequalities.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Executive:

- (i) note the work undertaken to align the eligibility criteria of the existing GoCard scheme with the Council's Concessions and Charges Policy;
- (ii) note the intention to launch a new scheme, to be called GoCard PLUS;
- (iii) agree to the benefits listed in paragraph 6.4 below being adopted;
- (iv) agree to allocate an initial £75,000 in 2023/24 to support this expanded scheme, with the Director of Children's Services to review this provision annually thereafter.
- (v) note that all existing benefits of the GoCard scheme are to be retained.

3. Climate Change Implications

- 3.1 The recommendations of this report do not give rise to any material implications for the Council's climate change targets and obligations. Officers' assessment is that the changes detailed in this report will not lead to changes in service provision or the deployment of resources that would increase or decrease the emission of carbon.

4. Background

- 4.1 The GoCard is a concessionary card which can be used throughout our leisure and culture facilities for free or discounted access to a range of services and activities.
- 4.2 As part of the Tackling Poverty in Falkirk report presented to the Executive on 21 June 2022, the following changes were agreed to the existing GoCard scheme:
- (1) GoCard membership eligibility be extended to include anyone in receipt of an income related benefit, bringing this in line with the Council's Charges and Concessions Policy.
 - a. Implemented on 1 October 2022.
 - (2) The benefits of the card be temporarily amended to include free access to casual swimming, for the card holder and their children, until 31 March 2023.
 - a. Implemented on 1 September 2022 (now extended for an additional 6 months).
- 4.3 It was recognised that the GoCard offers considerable support to people living on a low income, as well as benefitting Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing.
- 4.4 Officers were asked to consider further options to enhance the existing scheme or propose a suitable replacement.
- 4.5 This work was undertaken in line with the wider annual pricing review across Sport and Leisure services.

5. Considerations

- 5.1 The Council Plan states that the Council will:
- (1) help people participate in activities that improve Health & Wellbeing in a place that is appropriate for them – with particular focus on inclusivity and those who experience barriers to participation such as poverty, inequality, and disability;
 - (2) support care experienced children and young people to live and learn in their community.
- 5.2 The existing GoCard scheme was benchmarked against comparable schemes within our 'Family group' of Councils as designated by the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (Culture and Leisure Services).

Given the vast range of services and membership types on offer across each local authority, we used the percentage discount offered against Health and Fitness membership and the number of eligible groups for this discount as an indicative comparator.

The table below lists the percentage discount and the number of eligible groups, broken down by local authority. This shows that the concessionary scheme offered by Falkirk Council currently benchmarks favourably against our comparable local authorities.

Local Authority	Falkirk	City of Aberdeen	City of Glasgow	North Lanarkshire	City of Dundee	City of Edinburgh	East Dunbartonshire	West Dunbartonshire
Discount offered on full price H&F	33%	15%	25%	32%	18%	25%	17%	40%
Eligible Categories	12	12	6	11	8	5	12	12

- 5.3 A significant piece of work is undertaken annually within the service to review all prices within Culture and Leisure services, taking into consideration current prices against competitors, both private and public. Local and national benchmarking¹ is also conducted along with the prevailing wider economic climate.
- 5.4 Consultation with the Falkirk Champions Board and colleagues from the Fairer Falkirk team has repeatedly highlighted the importance of being able to access our Sport and Leisure services. While there isn't enough data nationally to measure activity levels of care experienced young people, we know from the lived experience of these young people that they often feel excluded and less able to participate in sport and physical activity, with cost being highlighted as a significant barrier to participation.
- 5.5 There is a wealth of research nationally which demonstrates that people from the most deprived areas are less active, with people living in the most deprived 20% of our communities being least likely to meet the recommended daily activity levels or to participate in sport or physical activity. This leads to poorer mental health outcomes and long-term health conditions associated with inactivity.²

¹ [Charges for sports facilities \(sportscotland.org.uk\)](https://sportscotland.org.uk)

² [Poverty and Low Income \(sportscotland.org.uk\)](https://sportscotland.org.uk)

6. Proposals on the Way Forward

- 6.1 Considering the ongoing cost of living crisis, it was decided that now was not the correct time to remove or reduce any elements of the existing benefits of the GoCard as this would effectively introduce a price increase for our lowest income households at a time when they can least afford this.

We aimed to provide a concessionary leisure membership scheme that considered the needs of our communities; providing support to those living in poverty, our care experienced children and young people and asylum seekers housed in the authority. We have taken steps to not only retain but enhance the range of benefits available to members and a replacement scheme, to be known as GoCard PLUS, will be created.

We have also made recommendations that support a Whole Family Approach. Specifically, by ensuring the GoCard PLUS included a more family centred range of benefits by removing or reducing barriers to participation and providing access to core life skills for children and tackling inequality.

Given the financial challenges faced by the Council, we have taken steps to ensure any new benefits are directed specifically towards the communities and groups identified as a priority in the Council Plan.

- 6.2 An overview of the proposed benefits to GoCard PLUS membership is listed below:
- a. All care experienced young people living in Falkirk be eligible for free GoCard PLUS membership including full health and fitness membership.
 - b. Asylum seekers living in Falkirk are provided with free GoCard PLUS membership.
 - c. The current temporary offer of free casual swimming for GoCard members is retained as an ongoing benefit for GoCard PLUS members.
 - d. Free places are allocated within Falkirk Council's Sports Development Programmes to the children of GoCard PLUS members.
 - e. Free sessions are provided within the Active Forth Programme for GoCard PLUS members.

6.3 The table below lists the key changes we are recommending to the concessionary membership scheme.

<i>Benefit</i>	<i>GoCard</i>	<i>GoCard PLUS</i>
Casual swim Covers card holders' children.	£1	<i>Free</i>
Sports Development Classes Including - Learn to Swim, Athletics, Basketball, Badminton, Football, Gymnastics, Mini- Gym, Netball classes	29% Discount	<i>Free*</i>
Active Forth Classes Falkirk's Physical Activity referral programme.	29% Discount	<i>Free**</i>
GoCards provided for Cladhan residents.	X	✓
Health and Fitness Membership	33% Discount	<i>33% Discount</i>
Sports Facility Hire Including Badminton, Conditioning Room, Squash, Table Tennis, Short Tennis, 5-a-sides, Basketball, and Volleyball.	50% Discount	<i>50% Discount</i>
Savings on Culture Activities Concession Prices (where applicable), on cinema and theatre tickets.	✓	✓

*4800 classes, representing 10% of all places within the programme will be offered free of charge to children of GoCard PLUS holders.

**2500 classes, representing 25% of all places within the programme, will be offered free of charge to GoCard PLUS holders.

6.4 Comparison Between GoCard & proposed GoCard PLUS Eligibility

Eligibility Criteria	GoCard	GoCard PLUS
Looked After or under Kinship Care/guardianship order	X	✓
Refugee & Asylum Seekers (Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999)	Added 1st October 2022	✓
Health and Fitness Membership to those housed in Cladhan Hotel.	X	✓
Income-based Job Seekers Allowance	✓	✓
Any Income related element of Employment and Support Allowance	✓	✓
Carers Allowance	✓	✓
Disability Living Allowance	✓	✓
Personal Independence Payments	✓	✓
Incapacity Benefit	✓	✓
Severe Disablement Allowance	✓	✓
War Disablement Pension	✓	✓
Pension Credit	✓	✓
Widowed Parents Allowance	✓	✓
Those aged 65+	✓	✓
Full time Students	✓	✓***
Savings on Library Activities Concession Prices (where applicable), on Library Events and Activities - for adults and children.	✓	✓

***Full Time students under the age of 25 will qualify for the new Fitness Unlimited Young Adult Health and Fitness membership. At a cost of £22 per month this delivers a further monthly saving of £2.10 per month.

6.5 Communication and Promotion

The scheme will be re-launched as the GoCard PLUS, which will replace the current GoCard scheme. This will be done in partnership with the Council's Communications and Marketing team, the aim of which will be to further raise the profile of the scheme and achieve a wide circulation of the benefits associated with it. This will include website and social media outlets as well as information provided within specific Council venues. We will develop closer working relationships with our colleagues across the Council, particularly those that work closely with the target groups. Libraries are identified as a key service to enhance the reach of the scheme to those who will benefit most from the enhanced scheme.

7. Implications

Financial

- 7.1 If the recommendations at 2.1 are agreed, costs are anticipated to be approximately £75,000 for 2023/24.

Finance for this will come from the carry forward from 22/23 concessionary card scheme to fund 2023/24. However, additional funds will be required to enable the scheme to continue beyond this financial year.

The uptake and cost of these changes would be carefully monitored. Officers will then assess the usage and make provision for ongoing funding from within existing budgets.

Resources

- 7.2 It is anticipated that there will be no implications on Sport and Leisure staff as a result of adopting these changes, with Officers incorporating this into their existing work plans.

Legal

- 7.3 There are no legal considerations or implications in agreeing this proposal.

Equalities

- 7.4 A full Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) has been completed in relation to this proposal. The EPIA is available in Appendix 1.

The assessment showed a positive impact on Age, Disability, Poverty & Care Experienced Young People and Asylum Seekers.

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 The current concessionary membership scheme provides valuable support and reduces the barriers faced by a significant number of eligible Falkirk residents.

We have identified a series of cost-effective enhancements to the scheme which, if agreed, will be relaunched under the new name GoCard Plus.

Use of the additional benefits of GoCard Plus will significantly improve the support available to families living in poverty; care experienced young people; asylum seekers; and those living with long-term health conditions.

It details further work to fully implement our approach to tackling poverty and support people with increasing living costs. This shows our continued commitment to supporting those in greatest need.

***pp* Director of Children's Services**

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Date: 25 May 2023

Appendices

Appendix 1 EPIA

List of Background Papers

None

SECTION ONE: ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Service & Division:	Children's Services Education	Lead Officer Name:	Cameron Reid
		Team:	Sport and Leisure
		Tel:	07577969207
		Email:	cameron.reid@falkirk.gov.uk
Proposal:	<p>The current GoCard, the council's concessionary membership scheme, is to be upgraded,</p> <p>A number of additional benefits are being added, which will provide eligible groups with greater savings, against a wider range of services.</p> <p>This has been done to ensure that scheme remains as inclusive and equitable as possible. With steps taken to ensure the offer closer meets the needs of our communities, and supports the council's priorities of supporting those living in poverty, and the services Whole Family Approach.</p>	Reference No:	GoCard2023

What is the Proposal?	Budget & Other Financial Decision	Policy (New or Change)	HR Policy & Practice	Change to Service Delivery / Service Design
	Yes	No	No	Yes
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):	
19/05/2023	To introduce a range of enhancements to the existing concessionary membership scheme to for Leisure and Culture within Falkirk Council. Expanding the range of people who can access the scheme, while providing more support and benefits to those who can access the scheme.

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

SECTION TWO: FINANCIAL INFORMATION

For budget changes ONLY please include information below:			Benchmark, e.g. Scottish Average
Current spend on this service (£'0000s)	Total:	0	Cost associated with this scheme are currently absorbed within the wider operational budget for the service. £60'000 is the estimated annual cost of extending the free swimming offer.
Reduction to this service budget (£'0000s)	Per Annum:	0	
Increase to this service budget (£'000s)	Per Annum:	75	This is based on the direct costs, and associated reduction in income, in providing these additional services. Specifically the provision of Health and Fitness memberships to all Care experienced young people, and providing approximately 4400 sessions within Sports Development and 2500 sessions within the Active Forth programmes,
If this is a change to a charge or concession please complete.	Current Annual Income Total:	£30	GoCard swimming currently generates approx. £31'000pa. It is impossible to estimate the income derived from Care Experienced Young People as this is not currently an identified user group within our membership categories.
	Expected Annual Income Total:	0	
If this is a budget decision, when will the saving be achieved?	Start Date:	01/08/2023	
	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.

Breakdown of the number of Falkirk residents that will be eligible for GoCard PLUS.

Existing Groups - To retain eligibility.

Over 65's 30'655

Linked to Benefits 14'520

(ESA & Incapacity 7'640)

(Disability 910)

Students circa 6'000

New Groups - To gain eligibility

Care Experienced circa 250

Asylum Seekers circa 100

Currently around 7% of eligible residents hold a GoCard, and can take advantage of the discounts this provides.

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	
<p>The consultation and engagement sessions conducted as part of the Strategic Property review highlighted the importance our communities place on having access to Sport & Leisure activities, particularly in relation to swimming, and in the significant role these activities play in their Physical and Mental Health. survey, household, ss activity report.</p> <p>Consultation with the Falkirk Champions Board and colleagues from the Fairer Falkirk team has repeatedly highlighted the importance this group place on being able access our Sport and Leisure services. While there isn't enough data nationally to measure activity levels within care experience young people, we know from the lived experience of these young people that they often feel excluded and less able to participate in sport and physical activity, with cost being highlighted as a significant barrier to participation.</p> <p>5.6 There is a wealth of research nationally which demonstrates that people from the most deprived areas are less active. With people living in the most deprived 20% of our communities being least likely to meet the recommended daily activity levels, or to participate in sport or physical activity. This leads to poorer mental health outcomes and long-term health conditions associated with inactivity.</p> <p>sportscotland Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolbox - Poverty and Low Income Report</p>	
Best Judgement:	
Has best judgement been used in place of data/research/evidence?	Yes

<p>Who provided the best judgement and what was this based on?</p>	<p>Cameron Reid - Team Leader Sports Development.</p> <p>Through previous engagement from Care Experienced Young People we know that gaining access to Sport and Leisure facilities is regularly raised as a barrier to their participation. Which in turn can negatively impact their physical and mental wellbeing. Addressing this specific inequality has been a longstanding aim of the service.</p> <p>There is a wealth of evidence nationally and internationally around the links between poverty and the long term impacts of physical and mental health. Considering this it was decided that removing groups of people who were eligible for the GoCard currently would adversely impact them, both in the short and longer term.</p> <p>These changes align with the 2022/27 Council Plan by demonstrating the Councils commitment to the priorities of:</p> <p>(1) Supporting Stronger and Healthier communities, (2) Promoting opportunities and educational attainment and reducing inequalities.</p>
<p>What gaps in data / information were identified?</p>	<p>Due to the limitations in our membership software we are unable to identify the numbers of current GoCard members who fall within each eligible group.</p>
<p>Is further research necessary?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>If NO, please state why.</p>	<p>We have taken into account information conducted on a national and local level around Physical Activity levels - From the sportscotland Physical Activity Report.</p> <p>This supports the Council's priorities of Supporting Stronger and Healthier communities, Promoting opportunities and educational attainment and reducing inequalities.</p>

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?	No	
If YES, please state who was engagement with.		
If NO engagement has been conducted, please state why.	<p>These recommendations were produced following Elected Members request. Recommendations were sought around widening the existing concessionary membership scheme, or replacing this if required.</p> <p>The aims of this proposal align with the Council's priorities. The recommendations align with, and meet the needs, of previous consultations undertaken by officers.</p>	
How was the engagement carried out?		What were the results from the engagement? Please list...
Focus Group	No	
Survey	No	
Display / Exhibitions	No	
User Panels	No	
Public Event	No	
Other: please specify		
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		✓		The Scottish Health Survey indicates that physical activity levels reduce as we age. By incorporating free swimming, and access to free Active Forth sessions we will be removing the barrier of cost to this group.
Disability		✓		Scottish Government statistics highlights that a disproportionate number of people living with a disability are unemployed, or living in poverty. With very few meeting the recommended level of daily physical activity. By incorporating free swimming, and access to free Active Forth sessions we will be removing the barrier of cost to this group.
Sex				
Ethnicity				
Religion / Belief / non-Belief				
Sexual Orientation				
Transgender				
Pregnancy / Maternity				
Marriage / Civil Partnership				
Poverty		✓		sportscotland's reporting demonstrates that those living in poverty are far less likely to meet the recommended daily activity rates. With significantly lower levels of those living in poverty participating in sport. By incorporating free swimming, and access to free Active Forth sessions we will be removing the barrier of cost to this group. Adding free places within our sports Development classes to the children of GoCard PLUS holders we will be taking steps to tackle this inequality and removing cost as a barrier to participation.

Other, health, community justice, carers etc.		✓		<p>Care Experienced Young People and Asylum Seekers gaining free GoCard PLUS memberships.</p> <p>While there isn't enough data nationally to measure activity levels within care experience young people, we know from the lived experience of these young people that they often feel excluded and less able to participate in sport and physical activity, with cost being highlighted as a significant barrier to participation.</p>
Risk (Identify other risks associated with this change)				

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:

	Evidence of Due Regard
Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination (harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct):	This proposal aligns with the councils concessions policy, as such no risks have been identified.
Advance Equality of Opportunity:	This proposal aligns with the councils concessions policy, as such no risks have been identified. It positively impacts these protected groups.
Foster Good Relations (promoting understanding and reducing prejudice):	This proposal aligns with the councils concessions policy, as such no risks have been identified. It positively impacts these protected groups.

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	No	
Education Sector	Yes	These recommendations align with the Whole Family Approach. Specifically, by ensuring the GoCard PLUS included a more family centred range of benefits by removing or reducing barriers to participation, and providing access to core life skills for children and tackling inequality.
Fire	No	
NHS	Yes	These recommendations provide 2500 free places with the Active Forth referral scheme. This scheme is ran in partnership with the NHS. By removing the cost it will ensure these sessions are more accessible and removes significant barrier to participants in the long term.
Integration Joint Board	No	
Police	No	
Third Sector	No	
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
Age	Residents above the age of 65.	Changes to the GoCard will be promoted widely.	Cameron Reid		Aligns with the 2022/2027 Council Plan.
Disability	Residents in receipt of incapacity and disability living allowance. Those referred to Active Forth by their GP.	Changes to the CoGard will be promoted widely.	Cameron Reid		Aligns with the 2022/2027 Council Plan.
Poverty	Residents in receipt of income support.	Changes to the GoCard will be promoted widely.	Cameron Reid		Aligns with the 2022/2027 Council Plan.
Other.	Care Experienced Young People and Asylum seekers living in Falkirk.	Changes to the GoCard will be promoted widely.	Cameron Reid		Aligns with the 2022/2027 Council Plan.

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?	Yes
If yes when and how ?	Recommendations are being presented to members in the upcoming executive meeting.

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	Yes	These recommendations will provide a positive outcome for a large number of residents living in Falkirk, with none adversely impacted.
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	No	
Stop the proposal as it is potentially in breach of equality legislation	No	

SECTION NINE: LEAD OFFICER SIGN OFF

Lead Officer:

Signature:		Date:	22/05/2023
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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 / No
ASSESSMENT FINDINGS		
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 / No	If YES, please describe:

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 / No	
LOW	Yes / No	

SECTION ELEVEN: CHIEF OFFICER SIGN OFF

Director / Head of Service:			
Signature:		Date:	24/05/2023