

Equality Impact Assessment

Directorate: RHR	
Service: Finance & Audit	
Name of Officer/s completing assessment: Jackie Adams	
Date of Assessment: 06.01.2016	
Name of service/function or policy being assessed: Council Tax Support Scheme 2016-17	
1.	<p>What are the aims, objectives, outcomes, purpose of the policy, service change, function that you are assessing?</p> <p>The <u>changes</u> to the local Council Tax Support scheme 2016-17</p> <p>The local Council Tax Support scheme only affects customers of working age, customers of pension age are assessed under the national regulations.</p> <p>The legislation requires that all Local Authorities must approve a Council Tax Support scheme by 31st January proceeding the financial year that the scheme relates to.</p> <p>The changes made for 2016-17 include the announcements made by the Chancellor in the Autumn 2015 statement as well as the welfare reforms already announced.</p>
2.	<p>Who implements or delivers the policy, service or function? State if this is undertaken by more than one team, service, and department including any external partners.</p> <p>The policy is delivered in the first instance by our partner arvato, whose role it is to accept all applications, analysis them, request such supporting information as they see fit and assess how much local council tax support a person will be entitled to within the bounds of the scheme. If the Customer disagrees with the assessment they have the right to ask arvato as our partner to review their decision and if the decision stands the Customer has a right to appeal to an independent panel managed and set up by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA)</p>
3.	<p>Who will be affected by this proposal? For example who are the external/internal customers, communities, partners, stakeholders, the workforce etc. Please consider all of the Protected Characteristics listed (more information is available in the background information). Bear in mind that people affected by the proposals may well have more than one protected characteristic.</p>

	<p>All working age Council Tax Payers could potentially be affected by this proposal as they could all potentially claim Council Tax Support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o Age – the Government legislation has stated that those of pension age will be protected and their assessment for Council Tax Support will continue to be made under the national regulations and not under the local Council Tax Support scheme therefore they will not be affected by this policy.o Disability – the government legislation states that those that are considered by the local Authority to be vulnerable should be protected but no definition of vulnerable is provided. We have decided to protect all families where the householder and /or their partner receives a level of disability allowance or that one or more children in the household receives a level of disability allowance. This means that there will be no change to the support that they receive to assist them paying their council tax. <p>The following have not been prescribed under the regulations to be protected and therefore the changes will directly affect the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o Gender Reassignmento Marriage and Civil Partnershipo Pregnancy and maternityo Raceo Religion and Beliefo Sexo Sexual orientationo Other <p>In addition, those leaving care will have their Council Tax Support protected until they are 22 years of age .</p> <p>A Hardship fund has been developed to assist those who are experiencing financial difficulty because of the change.</p>
4.	<p>What are any likely positive impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above? You may wish to refer to the Equalities Duties detailed in the background information.</p> <p>All Pensioners and all households who have a member of the household in receipt of a disability premium/allowance as well as those applicants leaving care are identified within the protected groups and this will ensure that they can claim up to 100% Council Tax Support.</p>

5.	<p>What are the likely negative impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above? If so then are any particular groups affected more than others and why?</p> <p>The changes to the scheme mirror the changes announced in the Welfare Reform bill, and the Chancellors Autumn statement in November 2015 which include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the amount of time a claim can be backdated apart from specified exceptions • Removing Family premium for new families from May 2016 • Uprate the premiums and applicable amount in line with government uprating • Introduction of an estimated minimum weekly income for working age self employed people who have been trading more than 12 months as outlined above. • Clarify the assessment for people on Universal Credit
6.	<p>Have the impacts indentified in (4) and (5) above been assessed using up to date and reliable evidence and data? Please state evidence sources and conclusions drawn (e.g. survey results, customer complaints, monitoring data etc).</p> <p>The changes to the scheme for 2016-17 will mirror that of the Housing Benefits and national Council Tax Support scheme, this will include the fact that premiums and applicable amounts will be frozen for the next 4 years. This will mean that various income assessments will not necessarily increase with inflation. The intention of this is to keep the level of Council Tax Support received by claimants to a comparatively similar level to the previous scheme.</p>
7.	<p>Have you engaged or consulted with any identified groups or individuals if necessary and what were the results, e.g. have the staff forums/unions/ community groups been involved?</p> <p>A full consultation was carried out with all members of the public via the Budget simulator on the Council's website between the end of October 2015 and the beginning of December 2015</p> <p>We also publicised the consultation to local groups who support the residents of the borough as well as businesses who may work with residents.</p> <p>176 Responses were received to the specific consultation questions on Council Tax Support – a large increase from the 14 responses received the last time a consultation took place on the scheme</p>

	<p>40% of the respondents supported the proposed scheme which included changes to bring the scheme in line with</p> <p>13% supported the current scheme which would have cost additional monies and would have had to be funded from a reducing in other services</p> <p>10% supported protecting all customers and reducing services in other area's of the council to do this</p> <p>16% supported the current scheme but instead of reducing services in other area's to use reserves to fund the scheme</p>
8.	<p>Have you considered the impact the policy might have on local community relations?</p> <p>n/a</p>
9.	<p>What plans do you have in place, or are developing, that will mitigate any likely identified negative impacts? For example what plans, if any, will be put in place to reduce the impact?</p> <p>The Council has a hardship policy in place to support those in financial hardship</p>
10.	<p>What plans do you have in place to monitor the impact of the proposals once they have been implemented? (The full impact of the decision may only be known after the proposals have been implemented). Please see action plan below.</p> <p>Once the proposals are accepted they must stay in place for one year, the authority must then review the scheme and obtain member agreement for the scheme for the following year, during each year the scheme is evaluated and then has the option to review and amend the scheme, during this year we will continue to monitoring the impact of the scheme on our customers.</p>

What course of action does this EIA suggest you take? More than one of the following may apply	✓
Outcome 1: No major change required. The EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken	X
Outcome 2: Adjust the policy to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better promote equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers identified? (Complete action plan).	
Outcome 3: Continue the policy despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality identified. You will need to ensure that the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact (see questions below). (Complete action plan).	
Outcome 4: Stop and rethink the policy when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (Complete action plan).	

Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation

At this stage a timetabled Action Plan should be developed to address any concerns/issues related to equality in the existing or proposed policy/service or function. This plan will need to be integrated into the appropriate Service/Business Plan.

Action	Target Groups	Lead Responsibility	Outcomes/Success Criteria	Monitoring & Evaluation	Target Date	Progress to Date

Name:

Signed:Jackie Adams(Person completing the EIA)

Name:Joseph Holmes

Signed:(Policy Lead if not same as above)

Date: 6th January 2016