

Equality Impact Assessment

Introduction

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is required to ensure that equality is placed at the centre of policy development and review, as well as service delivery. The purpose of this EIA is to systematically analyse the likely impact of a service, policy or proposals on different community groups, and how the needs of such groups have been taken into account in developing those proposals.

The EIA can anticipate and recommend ways to avoid any discriminatory or negative consequences for a particular group, on the grounds of any protected characteristic. It provides the opportunity to demonstrate the potential benefits for equality target groups arising from a proposed policy or project.

The need for an EIA stems from the general duty placed on public authorities to eliminate unlawful discrimination in carrying out functions, and promote equality of opportunity. This is outlined in the Equality Act 2010, with specific public sector duties in place from April 2011.

1. Name of Policy or Service (existing or proposed)	
Localisation of Council Tax Support Scheme	
2. Responsible Manager	
Michael Fisher Ian Parker	
3. Date EIA completed	Review date
2 nd review 16 th January 2013	Post Council Meeting 1 year
4. Description and aims of policy / service (including relevance to equalities)	
To comply with a specific Government requirement to design and implement Localisation of Council Tax Support Scheme	
5. Who are the stakeholders?	
Benefit claimants of Working Age	
6. What outcomes do we want to achieve?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairness & Equity • Have a policy design in place and published January 2013 • Comply with legislation 	

- Essential components of the design
 - Protect Pensioners
 - Protect vulnerable people
 - Provide financial hardship protection
 - Support work incentives
 - Be simpler to administer

7. How will performance be measured?

- Financial performance measured via Capita IT Systems
- Policy performance measured by
 - Feedback
 - Review (1 year post go-live)

8. Brief summary of research and background data

Welfare Reform White Paper
 Relevant Legislation
 Public Consultation
 Cabinet / Council Report(s)

9. Methods and outcome of consultation

Public consultation included direct mailshot to Benefit recipients; consultation via SRBC website, postal and public meetings of Community Groups and Scrutiny. Feedback was received from around 1000 people.

Additionally, major preceptors were directly consulted. Lancashire County Council, The Police & Crime Commissioner for Lancashire and The Fire & Rescue Service.

	YES	NO
Q1 How do you think the council should deal with the reduction in funding relating to Council Tax Support		
<i>By cutting other council services to make up the shortfall</i>	35%	65%
<i>By increasing Council Tax to make up the short fall</i>	20%	80%
<i>By reducing the amount claimants get in their Council Tax Support</i>	61%	39%
Q2 Do you think working age claimants should make a contribution towards their Council Tax?	80%	20%
Q3 Do you think that such a contribution should be based on ability to pay? (Means Tested)	80%	20%
Q4 Do you think such a contribution should be based on the value of their home? (Council Tax Band)	57%	43%

10. Results of initial screening

The following questions have been considered in order to evaluate the various equality groups:-

Age – Is there any concern that these proposals could cause differential impact on the grounds of age? Pensioners are unaffected by these changes. The changes only apply to claimants of Working Age.

Disability – Is there any concern that these proposals could cause differential impact on the

grounds of disability? Disability is recognised under the Equality Act as ‘a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities.’ No

Gender Reassignment – Is there any concern that these proposals could cause differential impact on the grounds of gender reassignment? The Equality Act recognises this where a person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for changing sex. No

Marriage / Civil Partnership – Is there any concern that these proposals could cause differential impact on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership? Under the Equality Act, no such protection exists for single or unmarried people. No

Pregnancy / Maternity – Is there any concern that these proposals could cause differential impact on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity? No

Race – Is there any concern that these proposals could cause differential impact on the grounds of race? Race is recognised under the Equality Act as a person’s skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin. No

Sex – Is there any concern that these proposals could cause differential impact on the grounds of gender? Including men, women and transgender people. No

Sexual Orientation – Is there any concern that these proposals could cause differential impact on the grounds of sexuality? Including heterosexual, gay, lesbian and bisexual people. No

Religion or belief – Is there any concern that these proposals could cause differential impact on the grounds of religion or faith? All faiths recognised in the European Convention of Human Rights are included. No

A commentary has been provided for each policy where appropriate – see Appendix A

11. Decisions and / or recommendations (including supporting rationale)

It is proposed to recover a Flat Rate from claimants of working age. The rationale is based upon the fact that the means-testing element will remain unchanged. To take a further flat rate from claimants based on their income was favoured rather than a percentage deduction based upon property bands. This would see people in different properties paying different amount(s) despite having undertaken the same means-tested assessment (which is based on income).

12. Is an Equality Action Plan required?

No

Appendix A – Results of initial screening

Policy / service	Protected Characteristics									Commentary
	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage / civil p'ship	Pregnancy / maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual Orientation	
Localisation of Council Tax Support Scheme	O*	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	Age – Pensioners will be treated differently as per legislation. It is Working Age claimants to whom this new scheme will apply. There being no other changes to the assessment or qualifying criteria for Council Tax Benefit, all other protected characteristics are “Neutral” in impact

Symbol	Impact
+	Positive
O	Neutral / Negligible
-	Negative
P	Potential issue