

Equality Impact Assessment

Carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will help the County Council to meet its Public Sector Equality Duties (Equality Act 2010).

The duties which need to be considered when making decisions are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Failure to assess the equality impact may increase the risk of making an unfair decision which could potentially be discriminatory. It also prevents us from identifying opportunities to promote equality and therefore leaves the County Council open to potential legal challenge.

Using this EIA template will help to ensure that a decision is made in a fair way, based on evidence. It provides a clear and structured method to assess the potential impact on protected groups.

Title of policy or proposal

Council Tax Support Scheme 2019-20

Briefly describe the aims of the policy change, decision or proposal, the likely outcomes and the rationale for it

In line with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan commitments the level of assistance provided to working age council tax support claimants will reduce by 8% so that the maximum level of support available will be 92%.

The reduction in the level of support will reduce the cost of the Council Tax Support Scheme to the Council. The scheme will still be a means tested discount based on the ability to pay.

Pensioner caseload will remain protected and existing levels of support will continue.

Consider the potential impact on any member of staff or member of the public with the following protected characteristics:

Age, Disability, Gender identity/Gender reassignment, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation, Women who are pregnant or have recently had a baby.

Also, for issues affecting staff, consider employees who are married or in a civil partnership.

What information is already held or have you obtained through consultation or engagement activity?

(For each protected characteristic:
What do you know about our employees, service users or anyone else who potentially could be affected by the proposal? Who has been consulted? If you have gaps in your evidence or data you may need to carry out targeted engagement activity and/ or consider information from local or national research.)

Certain information is collected as part of the council tax support assessment process. This source data shows that:

- Working age caseload is made up of 61.3% female and 38.7% male claimants
- There are 5,700 council tax support claimants who receive a disability based premium which equates to 36.9% of the working age caseload
- All working age claimants are aged between 18 and state pension age.

Information on the race, religions or beliefs, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity is not collected.

A six week consultation process was undertaken with regard to this change from 24 September to 2 November 2018. The consultation was open to all council tax payers and council tax support claimants through a number of initiatives. There were 512 responses to the consultation received and 51% were in support of the proposed change to the scheme; with 42% against; and, 7% undecided.

Equality data was collected as part of that process from those responders who were prepared to provide the requested information. 72% of responders provided information as follows:

- 50% respondents were male with 47% female, 2% preferred not to say and 1% used an alternative term
- 97% of respondents have the same gender as they were born with 1% not and 2% preferring not to say
- The age profile of respondents was as follows:
 - 18 to 24 years - 1%
 - 25 to 44 years - 16%
 - 15 to 64 years - 49%
 - 65 to 74 years - 21%
 - 75 to 84 years - 8%

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Over 85 years - 3% ● Prefer not to say - 2% ● 55% of respondents were either married or in a civil partnership with 40% not and 5% not prepared to say ● 13% of respondents considered that they had some form of disability ● 23% of respondents had caring responsibilities with 27% caring for children; and, 73% caring for someone ill or disabled
<p>After considering the information, which protected groups may potentially be affected? (Delete those not likely to be affected)</p>	<p>The following protected groups will potentially be affected by the change:</p> <p>Age - working age claimants aged 18 to state pension age</p> <p>Disability - 36.9% of the caseload have a disability.</p> <p>Gender identity/Gender reassignment - information is not recorded however it is not anticipated there will be a disproportionate impact on people who fall under this heading</p> <p>Race - information is not recorded but it is probable that this group will be affected by the change</p> <p>Religion or belief - information is not recorded but it is probable that this group will be affected by the change</p> <p>Sex - 61.3% of the caseload claimants are female with 38.7% male</p> <p>Sexual orientation - information is not recorded but it is probable that this group will be affected by the change</p> <p>Women who are pregnant or recently had a baby - information is not recorded but it is probable that this group will be affected by the change</p> <p>People who are married or in a civil partnership - information is not recorded but it is probable that this group will be affected by the change</p>
<p>Using the information you have, give details of any potential positive and negative impacts on protected groups likely to</p>	<p>Age - working age claimants will be negatively affected by this change as the reduction in entitlement applies to this group only</p> <p>Disability - disabled claimants will be negatively</p>

<p>be affected by the policy change, decision or proposal (For each protected characteristic where there could be a potential impact, consider the following: Could people from any protected groups be positively or negatively affected? Could anyone’s ability to take part in public life be affected? Could this policy change, decision or proposal affect public attitudes towards any protected group? Could any groups become more or less likely to be at risk of harassment or victimisation as a result of this policy change, decision or proposal? Are there opportunities to create positive impacts?) <i>(remember that the law permits disabled people to be treated equally or better than other groups this is to enable reasonable adjustments to be made).</i></p>	<p>affected by the reduction in entitlement. However, the scheme will continue to disregard the income from Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments.</p> <p>Gender identity/Gender reassignment - This group will be negatively affected by the reduction in entitlement.</p> <p>Race - This group will be negatively affected by the reduction in entitlement.</p> <p>Religion or belief - This group will be negatively affected by the reduction in entitlement.</p> <p>Sex - 61.3% of the claimants are female and will be disproportionately affected by this change.</p> <p>Sexual orientation - This group will be negatively affected by the reduction in entitlement.</p> <p>Women who are pregnant or recently had a baby - This group will be negatively affected by the reduction in entitlement.</p> <p>People who are married or in a civil partnership - This group will be negatively affected by the reduction in entitlement.</p> <p>This change should not result in affecting anyone’s ability to take part in public life or make it more or less likely that protected groups will be at risk of harassment or victimisation.</p> <p>Disregarding Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments provides a positive impact for disabled people. Disregarding child benefit and maintenance payments provides a positive impact for the majority of the caseload who are female.</p>
<p>Give details of any Human Rights implications and actions that may be needed to safeguard Human Rights.</p>	<p>There are no implications for Human Rights with this change.</p>
<p>Give details of any actions that can be taken to promote equality or to lessen any potential adverse impact on</p>	<p>Disregarding Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments provides a positive impact for disabled people. Disregarding child benefit and maintenance payments provides a positive impact for the majority of the caseload who</p>

protected groups.	are female.
What plans are there to monitor and review the actual impact of the policy change, decision or proposal on equality of opportunity?	<p>The effect of change will be monitored on an annual basis by the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on council tax collection rates • Review of recovery action for council tax on those receiving council tax support • Monitoring of outstanding council tax levels • Feedback from partners and voluntary sector organisations
When will follow up review be done?	A review will be carried out using the monitoring information during the planning for the 2020-21 Council Tax Support Scheme.
Based on a consideration of all the potential impacts, mark one of the following as an overall summary of the outcome of this assessment:	
	The equality analysis has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.
	The equality analysis has identified risks or opportunities to promote better equality; the change, decision or proposal will be adjusted to avoid risks and ensure that opportunities are taken.
X	The equality analysis has identified risks to equality which will not be eliminated, and/or opportunities to promote better equality which will not be taken. Acceptance of these is reasonable and proportionate, given the objectives of the change, decision or proposal, and its overall financial and policy context.
	The equality analysis shows that the change, decision or proposal would lead to actual or potential unlawful discrimination, or would conflict with the Council's positive duties to an extent which is disproportionate to its objectives. It should not be adopted in its current form.
Explain how the judgement above was reached and summarise	The reduction in entitlement to council tax support will disproportionately affect all working age claimants. However, the change is reasonable and

steps which will be taken to reduce any negative or to enhance any positive impacts on equality	proportionate in the context of the Council's overall financial position and its commitments in the medium term financial plan.
Name(s) and job title(s) of person (people involved in) carrying out this assessment	Graeme Barnes - Revenues and Benefits Manager Mark Penfold - Benefits Manager
Authorising director or head of service	Barry Scarr
Date authorised	
The completed equality impact assessment must be attached to the report that will be considered by the decision maker or decision makers to enable them to give due regard to the impact of the policy, decision or proposal on protected groups	
Please send a copy to keith.thompson@northumberland.gov.uk and irene.fisher@northumberland.gov.uk	