

Equality Impact Assessment Templates

Quick Guidance Notes

Stage 1. Screening Stage

Stage 1 of the template is classed as the Screening Stage. This should always be completed. **Remember it should be an integral part of policy development not a last minute thought.**

At this stage you should be assessing obvious negative/positive impact or gaps in knowledge about likely impact. It should be a relatively short process which makes use of any previous consultation results, any differences in user satisfaction among groups, personal knowledge and experience, research, reports, existing equality data about service usage, internet searches, internal and external specialist advice, employees with previous experience of similar work, known inequalities etc. **If the likely impact on a particular group is unknown, then action should be taken to acquire this information.**

If the impact is positive (i.e. the outcome will benefit an Equality Group) then no further action is required. If no positive or negative impacts are identified then no further action is required. If the activity has the potential to cause adverse/negative impact or discriminate against different groups in the community it will require a full impact assessment (Stage 2).

In some cases it might be easy to put in place simple adjustments to eliminate any negative impact while you are working through the screening process, especially if you already have clear evidence/consultation and the process is an integral part of your policy development. It should only be done if you are absolutely confident that no other impact will be identified. If you choose to do this you should clearly document the reasons/evidence and put in place monitoring to ensure action is taken if unanticipated impact occurs.

Stage 2. Full Equality Impact Assessment Report

Stage 2 of the EIA process guides officers through the full impact assessment process, ensuring that research/consultation with relevant equality groups has been carried out and leads to an action plan aiming to minimise the negative impact/s.

Consultation involves engaging with representatives from equality groups who are likely to be affected by the activity. It could involve engaging with employees and Members, trade unions, other public bodies, voluntary and community groups. It is important to ensure sufficient time and resources are dedicated to the consultation process to encourage full participation. You should refer to the Consultation Toolkit to ensure your consultation follows good practice. The Focus system should also be used and is able to give you information relating to other consultation activities across the council as well as existing groups/volunteers you may be able to access.

Take a Proportionate Approach

Your approach to assessing the equalities impact of a policy, strategy or service should be proportionate to the likely impact it will have. Issues you should consider include:

- the number of people likely to be affected

- the size of the budget/amount of money involved
- the extent of the proposed change
- wider public policy implications

This means you will assess more rigorously policies which are likely to have a significant impact on the local community.

Additional guidance notes to help you through the process are available in the Equality Impact Assessment Guidance Document.

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Stage 1 and 2 Equality Impact Assessment Templates

Directorate: Finance
Benefits

Service: Revenues &

Accountable Officer: Andrew Hatcher

Telephone & e-mail: 01303 853348 / andrew.hatcher@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Date of assessment: 22/06/18

Names & job titles of people carrying out the assessment:
Andrew Hatcher (Revenues & Benefits Strategic Manager)

Name of service/function/policy etc: Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Is this new or existing? Replacement of existing scheme

Stage 1: Screening Stage

1. Briefly describe its aims & objectives

The Council Tax Reduction scheme provides support for certain taxpayers who have a low income.

Where entitled, the scheme provides a reduction in liability for Council Tax.

The replacement scheme is designed to overcome the significant administrative complications with the introduction of Universal Credit within the area. The main issues are;

- The current scheme is too reactive to the constant changes in Universal Credit. With the frequent changes in liability, taxpayers receive multiple Council Tax demands which in turn has a negative effect on the taxpayers ability to manage their finances and on collections levels;
- There is a need to make the scheme simpler and for taxpayers to be encouraged to claim a reduction;
- The scheme needs to be future proofed to avoid constant amendments.

2. Are there external considerations? (legislation/government directive etc.)

Yes – the legislation (Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended) allows the Council to amend the scheme for working age applicants only.

The scheme for pension age applicants is prescribed by Central Government and cannot

be amended.

Schemes must be amended by 11th March of the financial year preceding the year of implementation.

All changes to schemes are subject to consultation with both precepting authorities and the public.

3. Who are the stakeholders and what are their interests?

The stakeholders are:

- Working age Council Taxpayers who have a low income (who may make an applicant for reduction);
- The District Council who is responsible for administration of the scheme and also receives a proportion (15%) of Council Tax receipts to provide services for local residents;
- The Major Precepting Authorities (Kent CC; Police and Fire & Rescue) who receive the majority of Council Tax receipts to provide services for local residents;

4. What outcomes do we want to achieve and for whom?

Any new scheme must:

- Minimise any potential loss to existing applicants;
- Reduce administration costs which will occur through the roll out of Universal Credit;
- Ensure that collection rates are maintained in respect of Council Tax; and
- Prevent future changes in schemes

5. Has any consultation/research been carried out or relied upon?

Yes

Consultation is to be carried out in accordance with the legislation.

Major preceptors will be consulted as well as the public and interested groups.

Consultation will be carried out over the summer time and the results will be analysed and taken into account when the scheme is decided by full Council.

6. Are there any concerns at this stage which indicate the possibility of inequalities/negative impacts? (Consider and identify any evidence you have - equality data relating to usage and satisfaction levels, complaints, comments, research, outcomes of review, feedback and issues raised at previous consultations, known inequalities) If so please provide details.

Major changes to the scheme as proposed may affect applicants. Modelling of scheme options will be undertaken throughout 2018 up to the adoption by the Council.

Initial modelling indicates that the number of working age applicants will remain broadly the same (currently 4902 ; new scheme 4889). Whilst most applicants will experience a minimal change to their entitlement between £0.00 and £0.45 per week, certain applicants with more than two children may experience a reduction in support by up to £1.14 per

week.

The Council maintains an Exceptional Hardship Payment Scheme which can be applied for by any applicant. Where any applicant experiences exceptional hardship, further support can be given.

7. Could a particular protected characteristic be affected differently in either a negative or positive way? (Positive – it could benefit, Negative – it could disadvantage, Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact or Not sure?)

	Type of impact, reason & any evidence
Disability	Neutral
Race (including Gypsy & Traveller)	Neutral
Age	Only working age applicants will be affected
Gender	Neutral – based on current modelling both male and female applicants can either receive increased or decreased support
Transgender	Neutral
Sexual Orientation	Neutral – sexual orientation has no bearing on the scheme
Religion/Belief	Neutral – religion or belief orientation has no bearing on the scheme
Pregnancy & Maternity	Neutral – although it should be noted that a third or subsequent child will not affect entitlement
Marriage/ Civil Partnership Status	Positive- couples or persons in Civil Partnerships / relationships are able to have a higher level of income than singles to receive the same level of support.

8. Could other socio-economic groups be affected e.g. carers, ex-offenders, low incomes?

Carers - positive		
Persons in receipt of Support Component of ESA positive		
Low income taxpayers – will be able to apply as in the current scheme - neutral		

9. Are there any human rights implications?

No

10. Is there an opportunity to promote equality and/or good community relations?

Yes – the new scheme will make applying for support easier and will treat all working age applicants equally.

11. If you have indicated a negative impact for any group is that impact legal? (not discriminatory under anti-discrimination legislation)

Yes

12. Is any part of this policy/service to be carried out wholly or partly by contractors?

No

Please note that normally you should proceed to a Stage 2: Full Equality Impact Assessment Report if you have identified actual, or the potential to cause, adverse impact or discrimination against different groups in the community. (Refer to Quick Guidance Notes at front of template document)

13. Is a Stage 2: Full Equality Impact Assessment Report required?

Yes

14. Date by which Stage 2 is to be completed and actions

1 December 2018

Please complete

We are satisfied that an initial screening has been carried out and a full impact assessment **is /is not required*** (please delete as appropriate).

Completed by: Andrew Hatcher

Date: 22/06/18

Role: Revenues & Benefits Strategic Manager

Countersigned by Head of Service

Date: 22/06/18



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Stage 2: Full Equality Impact Assessment Report

15. Summarise the likely negative impacts for relevant groups identified in the screening process (Refer to Stage 1, Questions 7-8, start to think about possible alternatives)

	Type of impact, reason & any evidence
Disability	Neutral
Race (including Gypsy & Traveller)	Neutral
Age	Only working age applicants will be affected
Gender	Neutral – based on current modelling both male and female applicants can either receive increased or decreased support
Transgender	Neutral
Sexual Orientation	Neutral – sexual orientation has no bearing on the scheme
Religion/Belief	Neutral – religion or belief orientation has no bearing on the scheme
Pregnancy & Maternity	Neutral – although it should be noted that a third or subsequent child will not affect entitlement
Marriage/ Civil Partnership Status	Positive- couples or persons in Civil Partnerships / relationships are able to have a higher level of income than singles to receive the same level of support.
Carers	Positive effect as Carers Allowance will be disregarded as an income under the scheme
Persons in receipt of Support Component of ESA	Positive effect as the Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance will be disregarded as an income under the scheme
Low income taxpayers – will be able to apply as in the current scheme	Neutral effect as low income applicants can still apply for a support under the scheme
Applicants who have more than two dependants	The scheme will provide additional support to families up to and including two dependants. No additional support will be provided to a third or subsequent dependant. This is in line with Central Government benefits such as Housing Benefit, Tax Credits and Universal Credit
Applicants who have non dependants	No changes from existing scheme.
Disabilities	Positive effect as all applicants who receive a disability benefit such as DLA, PIP etc will have the income disregarded and a further disregard of £40 per week will be taken from their net income potentially allowing further support to be granted

16. What consultation/involvement activities have taken place or will need to take place with groups/individuals from each relevant protected characteristic or equality group? (refer back to Stage 1, Question 5)

The scheme has been subject to consultation as follows:

- Major precepting authorities – the County Council, Fire & Rescue Service and the Police and Crime commission has been consulted on the new scheme. No objects have been received;
- A full public consultation has been undertaken between 30/07/2018 and 21/10/2018.

17. What other research has been or will need to be carried out to help you with the assessment?

Modelling of the scheme will continue to be undertaken until final approval by full Council.

18. Results of research/consultation (what does it tell you about the negative impacts?)

The Council should be mindful of the responses shown at Appendix 1. It should be noted that overall, the responses were favourable to the changes proposed from the public consultation and session held for local agencies.

Should the Council keep the current Council Tax Reduction scheme? (Should it continue to administer the scheme as it does at the moment?)

Yes: 77%

No: 23%

Do you agree that the following changes should be made to the scheme?

The introduction of an Income Grid scheme to replace the current scheme for all applicants of working age?

Yes: 70%

No: 19%

Don't Know: 11%

To limit the number of dependant children within the calculation for Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two for all applicants?

Yes: 76%

No: 16%

Don't Know: 8%

To remove Non-Dependant Deductions from the scheme?

Yes: 67%

No: 22%

Don't Know: 11%

Changing the claiming process for all applicants who receive Universal Credit?

Yes: 91%

No: 5%

Don't Know: 4%

Removing the current earnings disregards and replacing them with a standard £25 disregard irrespective of a person's circumstances?

Yes: 76%

No: 14%

Don't Know: 10%

Disregarding a further £40 per week where the applicant, partner or dependant receives Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP)?

Yes: 81%

No: 11%

Don't Know: 8%

Disregarding Carer's Allowance which is currently taken into account as income?

Yes: 84%

No: 8%

Don't Know: 8%

Removing the conditions that prevent certain students from claiming Council Tax Reduction?

Yes: 80%

No: 11%

Don't Know: 9%

Removing the Extended Payment provision?

Yes: 73%

No: 15%

Don't Know: 12%

Any change in circumstances which changes Council Tax Reduction entitlement will be made from the date on which the change occurs, (rather than on a weekly basis as at present)?

Yes: 92%

No: 4%

Don't Know: 4%

Simplifying the capital rules but leaving the capital limit in line with the current scheme (£16,000)?

Yes: 72%

No: 16%

Don't Know: 12%

19. Conclusions & Action Planning

You should explain what and how negative impacts have been reduced or removed and how positive impacts are to be improved or included.

Your final decisions or recommendations may include making immediate changes, stopping or proceeding with a new policy, justifying a decision or adding objectives/targets to the service development plan/equality scheme (long term changes).

You could use the template below to record your conclusions/actions. You should also make reference to any additional monitoring or research that is still required, or was not

retrievable at the point of assessment, but will be required in subsequent reviews or in order to complete actions.

Impact/Issue	Action/Objective/Target or Justification	Will this remove negative impact?	Resources	Lead Officer & Timescale
Reductions in support	The Council will operate an Exceptional Hardship Fund. Any applicant who receives less support, may apply for additional support. A careful examination will be made of their circumstances (income and essential expenditure). Where it is determined that they are experiencing exceptional hardship, further support may be granted	Yes	Staff have been fully trained to administer the Exceptional Hardship Fund	Andrew Hatcher Revenues and Benefits Strategic Manager

20. How will you monitor, evaluate and check the policy in the future?

The scheme will be monitored on an ongoing basis after implementation in April 2019

21. When will a review take place?

Continually.

Please complete

We are satisfied that a full impact assessment has been carried out.

Completed by: Andrew Hatcher

Date: 2/11/18

Role: Revenues & Benefirs Strategic Manager



Countersigned by Head of Service:

Date: 8/11/18

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