

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT Part 1 & 2

Directorate	Deputy Chief Executive	Service Revenues and Benefits	Assessment carried out by	Chris Watchman		
Area being assessed	Draft Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Date of Assessment	September 2023	Is this a new or existing service/policy?	Existing	

PART 1 INITIAL ASSESSMENT

<p>1. What is the aim/ objective of the area being assessed?</p>	<p>Since 1st April 2013, the Council has maintained a local Council Tax Reduction scheme. This replaced the national Council Tax Benefit scheme, which ended on 31st March 2013. Council Tax Reduction helps provide support to Council Taxpayers who have a low income. It supports the taxpayers by providing a reduction in the actual amount in Council Tax payable.</p> <p>The Council has the ability to determine the level of support given to working age applicants only. The scheme for pension age applicants is determined by Central Government and therefore the ability of the Council to vary that part of the scheme is limited and can only enhance the national scheme in any event.</p> <p>The Current Scheme (2023/24)</p> <p>The current income banded scheme was introduced in 2019 and has been successful in that it is easy to understand and administer.</p> <p>All working age applicants are now required to pay a minimum of 20% towards their Council Tax and a minimum level has been set that prevents the granting of any reduction where the entitlement was less than £5 per week.</p> <p>Where applicants suffer exceptional hardship, they may apply for additional support under the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund which can grant additional Council Tax Reduction.</p> <p>The current income banded scheme is shown below:</p>
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Band	Discount	Passported	Single (weekly net income)	Couple (weekly net income)	Family with 1 child (weekly net income)	Family with more than 1 child (weekly net income)
1*	80%	Relevant Benefit	£0 to £112.39	£0.00 to £159.72	£0 to £218.89	£0 to £278.05
2	60%	N/A	£112.40 to £171.55	£159.73 to £218.89	£218.90 to £278.05	£278.06 to £337.21
3	40%	N/A	£171.56 to £230.72	£186.78 to £239.23	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39
4	20%	N/A	£230.73 to £289.90	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39	£396.40 to £455.55
5	0%	N/A	Over £289.90	Over £337.21	Over £396.39	Over £455.55

The Proposed Scheme (2024/25)

The proposed scheme basically introduces two changes only:

- a. To increase the overall level of support to working age applicants (up to 100%); and
- b. To remove the minimum reduction level so that **any** amount of reduction is will payable.

The proposed scheme grid is shown below;

	Band	Discount	Passported	Single (weekly net income)	Couple (weekly net income)	Family with 1 child (weekly net income)	Family with more than 1 child (weekly net income)
	1*	100%	Relevant Benefit	£0 to £112.39	£0.00 to £159.72	£0 to £218.89	£0 to £278.05
	2	60%	N/A	£112.40 to £171.55	£159.73 to £218.89	£218.90 to £278.05	£278.06 to £337.21
	3	40%	N/A	£171.56 to £230.72	£186.78 to £239.23	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39
	4	20%	N/A	£230.73 to £289.90	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39	£396.40 to £455.55
	5	0%	N/A	Over £289.90	Over £337.21	Over £396.39	Over £455.55
2. Who is intended to benefit from it and how?	<p>Both working age and pension age applicants, who have a low level of income will benefit from the scheme.</p> <p>The scheme for pension age applicants is determined by Central Government however the new scheme for working age applicants provides a higher level of support to those who have a low-level income or are on a legacy benefit such as Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) or Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based).</p> <p>The maximum will increase to 100% of the person's Council Tax liability for working age applicants. Pension age applicants will continue to receive up to 100% discount under the prescribed scheme set by Central Government.</p> <p>All applicants will have a greater certainty of entitlement with the removal of the minimum reduction level.</p>						

	The scheme will still have, as an essential part, the provision to award additional support, where required, where exceptional hardship is proven.
3. If your service uses contractors, do you ensure that they comply with the Council's equal opportunities policy and relevant legislation?	N/A
4. Do you know who your service users are by age/ race/ disability/gender etc.?	<p>Information held on the database is limited to that needed to process a claim for either housing benefit, CTR or both. The age of claimants and their gender can be obtained but not their race or details of their disability as this is not relevant to entitlement.</p> <p>There are 46,491 banded dwellings in the Rother District (at September 2023). The total number of CTR claimants at September 2023 is 6401 of whom 3648 are of working age and 2753 are pensioners. In percentage terms, 13.76% of households in Rother are claiming council tax reduction and of these claimants, 56.99% are of working age.</p>
5 a. How are service users views gathered? (This could be through results of recent consultations or surveys, information from groups and agencies directly in touch with particular groups or analysis of complaints) b. How do you use this information? c. Do you publish the results, and where?	<p>The legislation relating to Council Tax Reduction requires the authority to consult with major precepting authorities and the public.</p> <p>Both consultations will be used to determine the views of stakeholders.</p> <p>The consultations will take place w/c xxxxxx</p>

<p>6. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on racial groups?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The Council Tax Reduction scheme does not preclude people from receiving support based on their race. Under the current and proposed new scheme, entitlement is solely based on the applicant's income, household composition and liability to pay Council Tax.</p> <p>The new proposed scheme will provide more support to low income households and to those who receive only a small amount of reduction.</p>
<p>7. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to their gender?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The gender of the claimant is irrelevant when deciding a claim for and making an award of Council Tax Reduction.</p>
<p>8. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to their disability?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The revised Council Tax Reduction scheme applies the basic principles as the previous scheme in that it disregards any disability related income.</p>
<p>9. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to their sexual orientation?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The Council Tax Reduction scheme does not exclude claimants on the basis of their sexual orientation</p>
<p>10. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to their age</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council Tax Reduction scheme is essentially made up of two parts. The scheme for working age is determined by the Council and the scheme for Pension Age applicants is determined by Central Government.</p> <p>By design the Council Tax Reduction scheme for pension age applicants is based largely on the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme. As such pension age applicants are protected from any changes or reductions in entitlement.</p>
<p>11. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to their religious or other belief?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme does not preclude people from receiving support based on their religious belief. Under the scheme, entitlement is solely based on the claimant's income, household composition and liability to pay Council Tax.</p>
<p>12. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to them having dependants/caring responsibilities?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>The proposed changes maintain the level of support to both households with dependants and to carers. In reality it may increase support levels by removing the minimum levels and increasing the maximum support levels.</p>

13. Could the area being assessed have a differential impact on people due to them being transgendered or transsexual?	No	The Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme does not preclude transgendered or transsexual claimants from receiving help towards paying their council tax
14. Is there any evidence that people from different groups may have different expectations of the areas being assessed?	No	<p>The Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme applies to two distinct groups: pension age applicants and those of working age. The scheme for pension age applicant is determined by Central Government. The Council determines the level of income for working age applicants.</p> <p>It is possible that working age applicants may receive the same level of support as pensioner applicants.</p> <p>All current Council Tax Reduction applicants will be contacted prior to their migration to the new scheme to explain any differences and to offer help and advice.</p> <p>Details of the new scheme will be published on the Council's website.</p>
15. Is the policy likely to affect relations between certain groups, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular group or denying opportunities to another?	No	The proposed changes align the potential (total) level of support for both working age and pension age.
16. Is the policy likely to damage relations between any particular groups and the Council?	No	The Council will need to be aware that working age applicants may experience changes in their support from the current scheme. However, all changes proposed are positive.
17. Could the differential impact identified amount to there being the potential for adverse impact in this strategy/policy/service/procedure?	No	

<p>18. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or any other reason?</p>	<p>N/A</p>	
<p>19. Do your staff know who the contact is for equalities issues within your directorate?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	
<p>20. Have all your staff attended an equality awareness training session?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	
<p>21. Have you set any equality performance indicators or objectives for your service?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The service will monitor the effect of the new scheme on a monthly basis through the first year of implementation and identify any potential unintended consequences</p>
<p>22. Actions arising from Part 1 of the Initial Assessment</p>	<p>No</p>	

23. Should this Initial Assessment proceed to Part 2?	Yes	
24a. As a result of Part 1, is a Full Assessment necessary?	No	
24b. If Yes, on what evidence should this assessment proceed to a Full Assessment?	N/A	
25a. Date on which Full Assessment to be started by	N/A	
25b. Date on which Full Assessment to be completed by	N/A	

Signed (Completing Officer): _____ Signed (Lead Officer): _____ Date: _____

PART 2 - INITIAL CONSULTATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT					
26. In what areas are there concerns that the strategy/policy/procedure could have a differential impact?	Race No	Gender NO	Disability NO	Sexual Orientation NO	Age YES
	Religion or Belief NO	Dependants/ caring responsibility NO	Transgendered or Transsexual NO		
27. What concerns are there that the area being assessed could have a differential impact on relevant groups? Please explain (continue on a separate sheet if necessary).	<p>As mentioned in Part 1, the changes relate to Working Age applicants only. Pension age applicants will continue to be assessed under the prescribe requirements set by Central Government.</p> <p>The level of discount potentially available to working age cases will increase to 100%.</p>				
28. What are the risks associated with the area being assessed in relation to differential impact?	There are no risks with the implementation of these changes.				
29. Are there any experts/relevant groups who you can approach to explore their views on the issues?	YES		30. Please list the relevant groups/ experts	Major Preceptors, the Public and the Advice Sector	

31. How will the views of these groups be obtained?	Letter Y Meetings Interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone <input type="checkbox"/> Workshops <input type="checkbox"/> Forum Questionnaires Y Other Full Consultation	32. Date on which each group/expert was contacted	Dd/mm/yyyy
33. Please explain in detail the views of the relevant groups/experts on the issues involved (continue on a separate sheet if necessary).	To be completed		
34. Taking into account the views of the groups/experts and/or the available evidence, please clearly state the risks associated with the strategy/policy/procedure weighed against its benefits (continue on a separate sheet if necessary).	To be completed		
35. Actions arising from Part 2 of the Initial Assessment	To be completed		

36. As a result of Part 2, is a Full Assessment necessary?		NO (please sign below)	36a. Date on which Full Assessment to be started	N/A	36b. Date on which Full Assessment to be completed	N/A
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Signed (Completing Officer): _____ Signed (Lead Officer): _____ Date: _____