

Equality Analysis Summary Form

1. **What is the name of the service/function/policy/procedure (proposal) you have assessed?**

Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

2. **Please give a brief description and explanation of the proposal. What needs or duties is it designed to meet?**

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme is designed to assist working age charge payers on low incomes to pay their Council Tax. Pensioners are protected by a national scheme which is administered locally. The proposed new scheme replaces an interim scheme which was introduced for one year in April 2013 following the abolition of Council Tax Benefit. This interim scheme included a one off grant from Central Government of £600,000 which has now been removed.

3. **Please explain how the proposal was assessed for its likely effects on different groups, with clear references to the information and research used.**

The proposed policy will affect all residents of working age if they have a low income and are liable to pay Council Tax. It will also affect people who have a reduction in income in the future.

All working age people will be expected to pay at least 12% of their Council Tax liability. However, additional premiums and allowances will be used to assist those with the lowest incomes or are considered to have greater expenditure requirements such as those people who are disabled or have children.

Disability

44% of respondents to the consultation considered that disabled people were adversely affected by the proposals.

The council accepts that disabled people will receive less benefit as a result of these proposals. However, the proposals include additional premiums to assist disabled people and to continue to disregard Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments as income.

The Council also intends to introduce a Discretionary Discount Policy to assist people experiencing hardship.

Sex

Data from the 2011 census shown below shows the employment status for all lone parents irrespective of an existing claim for Council Tax Reduction.

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	% of Lone Parent Households	% of Lone Parents in part-time employment		% of Lone Parents in full-time employment		% of Lone Parents not in employment	
		W-ton	England	W-ton	England	W-ton	England
Male	8.8%	1.1%	1.4%	4.1%	5.1%	3.6%	3.2%
Female	90.3%	26.3%	32%	19.7%	20.9%	45.1%	37.4%

Women head the majority of one parent households and will be much more likely to claim a Council Tax Reduction due to either not working or working part-time. Women head 647 one parent households and will be affected by the proposal to take Child Benefit into account as income for second and subsequent children. This compares to 976 couples and 32 single parent households headed by men with two or more children.

The proposed scheme will disregard the following incomes for all parents;

- Child Benefit for the oldest child in full. Child Benefit is paid at two different rates £20.30 per week for the oldest child and £13.40 per week for subsequent children,
- Part of any earned income,
- Part of Working Tax Credit for lone parents if working over 16 hours per week,
- Part of Working Tax Credit for couples if working over 24 hours in total per week,
- Child Maintenance in full if paid by an absent parent.

In addition up to £300 weekly child care costs for working parents will be deducted from eligible earnings.

The proposed scheme also recognises the additional living expenses of families with children through the award of an addition to the needs allowance for each dependent child.

The council also intends to introduce a Discretionary Discount Policy to assist people experiencing hardship.

Ethnic Background

We hold data on the ethnic background of just over 50% of working age people currently receiving a Council Tax Reduction. Of those people who have provided information 69.6% are of a White British ethnic background, the other notable ethnic groups are Asian British people of Indian descent 7.5%, Black British people of Caribbean descent 7.2% and mixed White and Black British of Caribbean descent 4.4% . This compares to the 2011 census of the Wolverhampton population as a whole, white British 64.5%, Asian-British of Indian descent 12.9%, Black British of Caribbean descent 3.8% and mixed White and Black British of Caribbean descent 3.4%.

The council will attempt to obtain more comprehensive data from customers when initial contacts are made. As mentioned earlier approximately 25% of new claims are received electronically from the Department for Work and

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Pensions (DWP) but no information is provided in respect to ethnic background. The DWP will be reminded again that this information should be provided to enable the council to comply with its public sector duty as defined in the Equality Act 2010. However, the council has no control in this matter.

Age

People of pensionable age are excluded from this policy as Council Tax Support will continue as a national scheme for this group. However, people of working age will all be affected as the proposed restrictions and exclusions apply to all residents of working age. Single people under the age of twenty five have a lower needs allowance and therefore would be expected to pay a larger proportion of their income towards their Council Tax Liability if they are not receiving means tested benefits such as Income Based Job Seeker's Allowance. This reflects the current situation in relation to Council Tax Support, Housing Benefit and other state benefits.

Gender Reassignment

People who have had their gender reassigned or are proceeding towards this will have their Council Tax support assessed in the same way as claimants not in this group.

Pregnancy and Maternity

All claimants irrespective of pregnancy or maternity will be affected by these changes. There is no evidence that the proposed scheme adversely affects this group.

Religion or Belief

All claimants of working age irrespective of religion or belief will be affected by these changes. There is no evidence that the proposed scheme adversely affects this group. A person's religion or belief has no bearing on the assessment process and no information is collected.

Sexual Orientation

All claimants irrespective of sexual orientation will be affected by these changes. A person's sexual orientation has no bearing on the assessment process and no information is collected.

The Wolverhampton LGBT group submitted comments as part of the consultation process suggesting that LGBT people were much more likely to live in single person households. They had found that 60% of people who had responded to a survey said they lived alone and they would be adversely affected by the proposal to restrict Council Tax liability to 88% before any other discounts are calculated such as a Single Person Discount if they were claiming Council Tax Support.

The 2011 census did not collect data about sexual orientation. Therefore, we are unable to determine the percentage of people who live alone and are

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LGBT compared to those who live alone and describe themselves as Heterosexual. There is no evidence that the proposed scheme adversely affects this group.

However, the council also intends to introduce a Discretionary Discount Policy to alleviate hardship.

4. Is there any evidence to suggest that the proposal could affect some groups of people differently? Is there an adverse impact? What are the reasons for this adverse impact?

The proposals have an adverse effect on all people of working age on a low income as they will all lose some support. However, pensioners are protected from any reductions by a national scheme.

5. If the service, function, policy or procedure does have an adverse impact, can that impact be justified?

The adverse impact is as a direct result of the abolition of Council Tax Benefit as a national scheme and the removal of £3.2M Central Government subsidy.

6. Give a brief description of the consultation methods used (if appropriate), and a summary of the overall findings.

The consultation was extensive and involved sending a copy of the council's proposals to every residential property in the city. Road shows were arranged in shopping centres and markets and the proposals were advertised extensively in public buildings, the council's website and via social media. Staff were made available to visit and talk to any groups who expressed an interest.

The council's website included a simple to use on-line calculator that allowed any resident to check and compare their entitlement under the current and proposed schemes

There were 806 formal responses:

- 48% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the overall proposal (rising to 60% when those who replied 'don't know' or 'no opinion' are removed)
- 33% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the overall proposal (rising to 40% when those who replied 'don't know' or 'no opinion' are removed)
- 20% of respondents neither agreed or disagreed or didn't know.

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7. What conclusions were reached through the analysis and consultation as to the likely ability of the proposal to meet each part of the equality duty?

The proposals adversely affect all working age people on a low income. Vulnerable groups, which are likely to have higher expenditure such as disabled people or families with children are awarded additional premiums and allowances.

8. Were any modifications to the proposal introduced as a result of the analysis and consultation?

Yes, based on the consultation, not the equality analysis.

9. Please explain whether and how the adopted proposal differs from the original proposal.


The amended proposals increase the amount of capital that may be held by £3,000 to £6,000 before all assistance is withdrawn.

10. What equality actions have you identified?

Greater emphasis to be placed on collecting the ethnic background information of customers when they make initial claims. However, 25% of claims are received directly from DWP where equalities information is not shared with local councils. The DWP will be reminded of their responsibilities to share the information it holds so that the council can meet its public sector duty as defined by the Equalities Act.

11. What plans do you have for monitoring the proposal when it is put into effect?

The policy will be reviewed twelve months following its implementation to monitor its impact on equalities.

Signature of the lead officer undertaking the analysis	
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Dated	4 December 2013