

Equality Impact Assessment

Service:	Revenues
Officer(s) completing the assessment:	Michael Fisher
Date:	November 2019
Name of service, strategy, policy, project or function being assessed:	Council Tax Support Scheme for Working Age Applicants

1.	<p>What are the aims, objectives, outcomes, purpose of the service, strategy, policy, project or function that you are assessing?</p>	<p>The Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme provides support for certain taxpayers who have a low income. Where entitled, the scheme provides a reduction in liability for Council Tax.</p> <p>2019/20 saw the introduction of a 90% CTS cap for most working-age claimants. This was a significant change that has resulted in a number of households being asked to pay an element of their Council Tax charge, where previously they had not been required to do so.</p> <p>The proposals being considered for the 2020/21 scheme are less significant and are focused on simplifying the scheme for users. If implemented, less information will be required from applicants before a claim can be processed and CTS applied to an account.</p> <p>The replacement scheme is designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce the significant administrative requirements for applicants who are in receipt of Universal Credit within the area • reduce the time taken to process CTS claims. <p>The intention is to introduce the new scheme for working age applicants from 1st April 2020.</p> <p>The changes will not affect Pension Age applicants.</p>
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2.	<p>Who implements or delivers the service, strategy, policy, project or function?</p> <p>State if this is delivered by more than one service or team, including any external partners.</p>	Revenues Service
3.	<p>Who will be affected by the service, strategy, policy, project or function?</p>	<p>A small number of existing working age claimants of CTS. All potentially affected residents have been written to as part of the consultation process. There will be both positive, negative and neutral impacts.</p> <p>The changes will not affect Pension Age applicants who are protected under the Central Government Prescribed Scheme</p>
4.	<p>What are the likely positive impacts for the protected groups (see above)?</p> <p>Are any particular groups more affected and why?</p>	<p>Working Age applicants could be affected positively as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Residents living with a non dependent will either see their non dependent deduction remain the same or reduced. The deduction will be capped at £4 per week. 2. Residents would not need to provide evidence of non-dependant income to support their claim. This should speed up the time take to process claims.
5.	<p>What are the likely negative impacts for the protected groups (see above)?</p> <p>Are any particular groups affected more and why?</p>	<p>Working Age applicants could be affected negatively as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Working age applicants who have savings between £6,000 and £16,000 will see their entitlement to CTS end. 2. Working age claimants who currently receive Council Tax discount due to a 2nd adult living on a low income in the property. They will see their entitlement end, potentially increasing council tax payments by up to 25%. <p>This change is likely to affect, for example, lone parents with grown up children. The liable person will either have sufficient income to pay their Council Tax or will still be eligible under the main scheme to receive support with their Council Tax payments.</p>
6.	<p>What consultation and engagement has taken place (or is planned) with the affected groups and other</p>	<p>Consultation was carried out in accordance with the legislation. Major preceptors have been consulted as well as the public and interested groups.</p>

	interested parties?	<p>An open consultation process was undertaken for eight weeks regarding these changes to the CTS scheme. This has been publicised on the Council's website and social media channels. Test Valley Citizens' Advice also encouraged its customers to respond to the consultation.</p> <p>In addition, those directly affected by the proposed changes have been written to. The letter detailed the proposed changes and invited them to take part in the consultation process.</p> <p>1,000 publicity flyers were included with letters and notifications issued from the Revenues department during the consultation period.</p> <p>The results of consultation have been analysed and are detailed elsewhere in this report.</p>
7.	What plans do you have in place, or are developing, to mitigate the likely negative impacts, i.e. how will you reduce the impact on the protected groups?	The Council will use existing policies to alleviate any hardship caused by these changes.
8.	Please summarise or provide links to the information, data, research used in this assessment	<p>Outcome of the original consultation which sets out the Government priorities for CTS Schemes</p> <p>https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8467/2053712.pdf</p> <p>Previous CTS Schemes - Also know as Council Tax Reduction are published on the Council's website</p> <p>http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/benefitsandcounciltax/benefits/test-valley-borough-councils-council-tax-support-s</p>

What course of action does this EQIA suggest that you take? (tick one of the following options)	
<p>Outcome 1: No major change required The EQIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.</p>	

Outcome 2: Adjust the policy to remove barriers identified by the EQIA or better promote equality. Are you satisfied that the policy adjustments will remove the barriers identified?	
Outcome 3: Continue the policy despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality identified. You should ensure that the EQIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with the policy. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact	X
Outcome 4: Stop and rethink the policy when the EQIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination	

Summary of your proposals - copy and paste into any report for Cabinet, Council or General Purposes Committee	
What are the key impacts - positive and negative?	
What course of action are you advising as a result of this EQIA?	
Are there any particular groups affected more than others?	
It is proposed that the current Council Tax Support scheme for working age applicants is changed with effect from 1 st April 2020 as follows:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That non-dependant reductions will be fixed at £4 per week irrespective of the level of income. 2. Working age applicants who have saving in excess of £6,000 will no longer be entitled to claim Council Tax Support. 3. The removal of entitlement to 2nd Adult Rebate from the CTS scheme. 4. Remove entitlement to extended payments under the scheme (no claimants affected by this amendment) 	

Head of Service sign off (name):	Carl Whatley Head of Revenues
Date:	25 th November 2019