

Equality Impact Assessment / Equality Analysis

(Updated December 2022)

Item name	Details
Title of service or policy	Local Council Tax Support scheme income band yearly increases from April 1 st 2025
Name of directorate and service	Finance, Welfare Support
Name and role of officers completing the EIA	Robert John, Welfare Support Team Leader
Date of assessment	25.10.2024

Equality Impact Assessment (or 'Equality Analysis') is a process of systematically analysing a new or existing policy or service to identify what impact or likely impact it will have on different groups within the community. The main aim is to identify any discriminatory or negative consequences for a particular group or sector of the community, and also to identify areas where equality can be better promoted. Equality impact Assessments (EIAs) can be carried out in relation to services provided to customers and residents as well as employment policies/strategies that relate to staffing matters.

This toolkit has been developed to use as a framework when carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) or Equality Analysis. **Not all sections will be relevant – so leave blank any that are not applicable.** It is intended that this is used as a working document throughout the process, and a final version will be published on the Council's website.

1.1 Identify the aims of the policy or service and how it is implemented

Key questions	Answers / notes
<p>1.1 Briefly describe purpose of the service/policy e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How the service/policy is delivered and by whom ● If responsibility for its implementation is shared with other departments or organisations ● Intended outcomes 	<p>This is a support scheme for low-income households to help with council tax. All Local Authorities must have a Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme, and whilst some features of the scheme are prescribed by legislation, for example, how support should be delivered to Pensioner households, the LA has discretion over the amount of support provided to working age households. Responsibility for the Administration of the scheme sits within the Welfare Support Service, specifically the Benefit Assessment team.</p> <p>In April 2024, the LCTS scheme was changed to help residents who benefit from this support. However, we need to adjust the income bands for LCTS to align with potential increases to the Universal Credit standard allowance. Universal Credit normally increases each year in line with inflation. The changes we need to make will ensure that those currently receiving support won't see a decrease in their benefits simply because of any inflation, or changes in Universal Credit allowances. We need to make these changes to the LCTS income bands to maintain the level of assistance vulnerable households currently receive.</p> <p>If the income bands are not increased, in some cases, residents may no longer be eligible for support because their income might surpass outdated thresholds, even without a real increase in disposable income.</p>

	If we do not increase the LCTS income bands in line with Universal Credit standard allowance, our residents could face a reduction in their Council Tax Support from 1st April 2025.
<p>1.2 Provide brief details of the scope of the policy or service being reviewed, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it a new service/policy or review of an existing one? • Is it a national requirement?). • How much room for review is there? 	<p>The proposal is to review and increase Council Tax Support income bands on a yearly basis in line with yearly increases to the Standard Allowance of Universal Credit.</p> <p>Council Tax Support is a locally designed scheme, that all local authorities must make available to their residents, the LA has discretion over the amount of support provided to working age households.</p>
1.3 Do the aims of this policy link to or conflict with any other policies of the Council?	No

2. Consideration of available data, research and information

Key questions	Data, research and information that you can refer to
2.1 What equalities training have staff received to enable them to understand the needs of our diverse community?	All Council staff are required to undertake mandatory Equalities training.
2.2 What is the equalities profile of service users?	The current caseload for Working Age claimants who receive Universal Credit is 5088, so this is scope of those who will be affected, 3599 or 70% are female, 1469 or 29% are male and 20 or 1% have no recorded gender. 2447 or 44% are responsible for children or a young person and of this 2097 or 93% are lone parents. 1402 or 28% are considered to be disabled, as they receive disability benefits which mean they qualify for the Disability premium of Universal Credit.

<p>2.3 Are there any recent customer satisfaction surveys to refer to? What were the results? Are there any gaps? Or differences in experience/outcomes?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>2.4 What engagement or consultation has been undertaken as part of this EIA and with whom? What were the results?</p>	<p>A consultation is due to open on the 11th November 2024 and will end on the 15th December 2024, the consultation will open to all residents of Bath & North East Somerset council.</p>
<p>2.5 If you are planning to undertake any consultation in the future regarding this service or policy, how will you include equalities considerations within this?</p>	<p>The consultation will be available online and accessible formats will be made available on request. In consideration of digital exclusion, a phone number and email address will be provided to enable consultation feedback directly to the team. Alternatively, residents can access a hard copy of the consultation from B&NES One Stop Shops and libraries.</p>

3. Assessment of impact: ‘Equality analysis’

Based upon any data you have considered, or the results of consultation or research, use the spaces below to demonstrate you have analysed how the service or policy:

- Meets any particular needs of equalities groups or could help promote equality in some way.
- Could have a negative or adverse impact for any of the equalities groups

Key questions	Examples of what the service has done to promote equality	Examples of actual or potential negative or adverse impact and what steps have been or could be taken to address this
<p>3.1 Issues relating to all groups and protected characteristics</p>	<p>The proposed change will have a positive impact on all protected groups. Residents</p>	<p>The proposed change will not have any negative or adverse impacts, in-fact if we</p>

	who are socio-economically disadvantaged and currently receiving support won't see a decrease in their benefits simply because of any inflation, or changes in Universal Credit allowances	fail to make the proposed change all groups could see a negative and adverse effect.
--	--	--

*There is no requirement within the public sector duty of the Equality Act to consider groups who may be disadvantaged due to socio economic status, or because of living in a rural area. However, these are significant issues within B&NES and have therefore been included here.

** The Equality Act does not cover armed forces community. However, the Armed Forces Bill (which came in on 22 Nov 2022) introduces a requirement to pay 'due regard' to make sure the Armed Forces Community are not disadvantaged when accessing public services.

4. Bath and North East Somerset Council Equality Impact Assessment Improvement Plan

Please list actions that you plan to take as a result of this assessment/analysis. These actions should be based upon the analysis of data and engagement, any gaps in the data you have identified, and any steps you will be taking to address any negative impacts or remove barriers. The actions need to be built into your service planning framework. Actions/targets should be measurable, achievable, realistic and time framed.

Issues identified	Actions required	Progress milestones	Officer responsible	By when
None				

5. Sign off and publishing

Once you have completed this form, it needs to be 'approved' by your Divisional Director or their nominated officer. Following this sign off, send a copy to the Equalities Team (equality@bathnes.gov.uk), who will publish it on the Council's website. Keep a copy for your own records.

Signed off by: C. Thomas-Roberts, Head of Financial Services (Divisional Director or nominated senior officer)

Date: 25/10/2024