

Initial Impact Assessment Template

Please use the following template to help determine whether a community impact assessment is required.

Name of Policy

Discretionary Housing Payment and Council Tax Support Hardship Payment Policy

Purpose and function of policy

(Please provide a brief description, for example, services affected)

To outline the entitlement and decision making process for Discretionary Housing Payment or Council Tax Support Hardship Payments.
--

This policy will help to mitigate the impact of the Government's Welfare Reform changes for the most vulnerable residents. The Government cuts have resulted in large numbers of working age people in receipt of Housing Benefit and or Council Tax Benefit (which was replaced by Council Tax Support from April 2013) having a cut to the benefits they receive to assist them paying their rent or Council Tax. The main cuts are:

Social Sector Size Criteria

A 14% reduction in the eligible rent used in Housing Benefit calculation for those renting in the social sector where they are deemed to be under occupying their home by 1 bedroom

A 25% reduction in the eligible rent used in Housing Benefit calculation for those renting in the social sector where they are deemed to be under occupying their home by 2 or more bedrooms.

Council Tax Support

With the exception of severely disabled residents those working age residents previously in receipt of Council Tax Benefit have seen the help they receive to pay their Council Tax cut by approximately 21% when Council Tax Benefit was replaced by local Council Tax Support.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) give extra financial assistance to those in receipt of Housing Benefit who are unable to afford the difference between the benefit they are entitled to and their eligible rent where they meet the criteria set out in the policy. Assistance is usually short term but due to changes in Housing Benefit legislation some awards will be longer term. Assistance may also be given with other Housing Costs including removal costs and rent deposits.

Council Tax Support Hardship Payments give extra financial assistance to those in receipt of Council Tax Support who are unable to afford the difference between the Council Tax Support they are entitled to and their Council Tax liability where they meet the criteria set out in the policy.

Who does this policy affect

Workforce / Employees		Service Delivery / Communities	X
------------------------------	--	---------------------------------------	----------

Author(s)
Rebecca Owen-Jones

Job title and Service Delivery Unit
Benefit Welfare & Assurance Group Manager Revenues and Benefits

Date completed: 31.1.13 Reviewed on 08/01/14

Sign off (line manager) and date A.J, Astley, Assistant Director, 31/01/2013
If signed off by e-mail please confirm by identifying when and by whom

A separate guidance note is available to support you through the completion of this assessment. You can find it on the intranet.

The general equality duty states that we must have due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different groups

Appendix B

Complete the table below, assessing the impact of your policy on people with protected characteristics, including employees and customers. You should also consider the elements of the above general duty.

Protected Characteristic	Positive impact		Negative impact			Reasons/evidence
	Yes	No	High *	Low #	No	
Age		X			X	Age has no impact on whether we will award a payment. People of Pension Credit age are not affected by Social Sector Size Criteria or Council Tax Support cuts. Those of Pension age may still however meet the criteria for one of the discretionary awards if they have a shortfall they cannot afford. Most people who are single and under 35 years of age renting in private sector receive less Housing Benefit. DHP's can mitigate this inequality in the regulations for a short period of time whilst applicant seeks to address their financial hardship.
Disability	X				X	Where a person is living in a property which has been adapted for their disability needs or the disability needs of an immediate family member but they have more bedrooms than they require and they meet the criteria for a DHP they are more likely to receive a longer term DHP

Appendix B

						award. This is in recognition of the difficulty in finding suitable properties (due to limited availability and the cost of adapting a property). Also where a person or their resident family requires an extra bedroom due to disability or illness and they meet the DHP criteria they are more likely to receive a longer term award.
Gender (Sex)	X				X	Whilst gender has no impact on whether or not an award will be made we do have a greater proportion of women claiming benefit assistance who will be impacted by the benefit rule changes (based on Council Tax Support Impact Assessment see appendix 1). It is anticipated that this scheme will support some of those women therefore it will have a positive impact.
Gender reassignment		X			X	Gender reassignment has no impact on whether or not a discretionary award is made
Marriage/civil partnership		X			X	The status of a couple e.g. whether or not they are married or in a civil partnership has no impact on whether or not a discretionary award is made.
Pregnancy/maternity	X				X	We will consider DHP for those who meet criteria 3 months prior

Appendix B

						to giving birth to help them to be able to afford suitable sized accommodation prior to giving birth.
Race		X			X	Race has no impact on whether or not a discretionary award is made.
Religion/belief		X			X	Religion or belief has no impact on whether or not a discretionary award is made.
Sexual Orientation		X			X	Sexual orientation has no impact on whether or not a discretionary award is made.
Deprivation (inc rural/urban)	X				X	These are discretionary awards which are designed to help the most financially vulnerable to be able to afford their rent or Council Tax. By helping a customer to take steps to reduce their financial hardship can help to reduce deprivation.

High – there is significant evidence of adverse impact or potential for adverse impact. The policy etc has consequences for or affects significant numbers of people and/or has the potential to make a significant contribution to advancing equality.

Low – there is anecdotal or little evidence to suggest adverse impact. The policy etc operates mainly within a small unit and affects few people.

Am I required to carry out an Community Impact Assessment?

If you have ticked negative impact as High, then a Community Impact Assessment will need to be completed, available on the intranet.

If a Community Impact is not required, you are required to monitor and review the proposed changes after implementation to check they work as planned and to screen for unexpected equality impacts. Please provide details of how you will

monitor evaluate or review your proposals and when the review will take place in the box below

Monitor and Review

Please provide details of how you will monitor evaluate or review your proposals and when the review will take place.

How will you monitor/review proposals?

Monthly and quarterly collection of data is to be undertaken by the Revenues and Benefits Service. The Department for Work and Pensions have also introduced twice yearly returns for the broad reasons why Discretionary Housing Payments are awarded.

Details of the broad reasons for awards and number of awards made will be reported within the Revenues and Benefits Quarterly monitoring report which is circulated to all Revenues and Benefits staff and the Assistant Director, Customer Services.

When will the review take place?

An update report on Local Council Tax Support is produced at the end of each year with further analysis of the actual impacts incorporating engagement with key stakeholders and detailing the effectiveness of the discretionary hardship fund..

APPENDIX 1

Current Council Tax Benefit Caseload Breakdown (from Council Tax Support Community Impact Assessment 2012)

1a. Breakdown by case group

Case Group	Number of Current Council Tax Benefit claims
Pension Age	7728
Working Age	10774

1b. Working Age claims breakdown by gender by the person claiming Council Tax Benefit

Gender	Number of claims
Female with partner	1607
Female without partner	5493
Male with partner	1464
Male without partner	2210

1c. Working Age claims breakdown by Parish area

Parish	Number of Council Tax Benefit claims
Dawley Hamlets Parish Council	288
Ercall Magna Parish Council	37
The Gorge Parish Council	112
Great Dawley Parish Council	1295
Hadley and Leegomery Parish Council	900
Hollinswood & Randlay Parish Council	425
Ketley Parish Council	269
Lawley & Overdale Parish Council	419
Lilleshall & Donnington Parish Council	886
Madeley Parish Council	1890
Newport Town Council	355
Oakengates Town Council	558
St Georges & Priorslee Parish Council	467
Stirchley & Brookside Parish Council	1047
Wellington Town Council	1332
Wrockwardine Parish Council	66
Wrockwardine Wood & Trench Parish Council	318
Others*	101

*Represents Parish areas with fewer than 20 claimants and have been combined to protect against the potential identification of individuals.

Information extracted from Telford & Wrekin Council Tax information management system
31 August 2012. The number of claimants can change daily so this information is only
accurate at the time of extraction