

Appendix B: Full Equality Impact Assessment Pro Forma

Service Department: Revenues and Benefits	Date started: 07/09/12
Name of policy to be assessed: Local Support for Council Tax	
Is this a new or existing policy? New – being developed	
Lead Officer: Robert Walker	
Officers involved in initial impact assessment process	
Name	Job Title
Sharon Hammond	Revenues and Benefits Manager
James Edwards	Performance Team

1) Scope the assessment and identify the aims of the policy.

a) Briefly describe the aims, objectives or purpose of the policy.

The Government announced as part of its Spending Review in 2010, that it would localise support for Council Tax from 2013/14, with an expectation government funding would be reduced by 10%.

The Welfare Reform Act contains provision for Council Tax Benefit in its current form to be abolished for the whole of Great Britain. A major change impacting on local authorities is the replacement of Council Tax Benefit with a localized Council Tax Support scheme.

Local authorities are required to introduce a new support scheme by January 2013 which will take effect from April 2013.

b) Who will be affected by this policy?

Working Age claimants who receive Council Tax Benefit.

As at 16th August, the Council Tax Benefit caseload of 7,423 is split between elderly and working age as follows: -

CTB Caseload		
Elderly	4,294	57.85 %
Working Age	3,129	42.15 %
	7,423	

c) Who is intended to benefit from this policy and in what way?

The legislative protection for pensioners will result in no difference for this group.

The national Council Tax Benefit scheme means that an individual may get Council Tax Benefit if they pay Council Tax and their income and capital (savings and investments) are below a certain level. Individuals may apply whether they rent or own their home, or live rent-free. They could qualify if they are out of work, or in work and earning a wage.

The current CTB scheme makes a wide range of provision that recognises the needs of vulnerable groups.

Whilst these core features will be retained in the proposed local scheme, working age claimants will receive less support than under the previous CTB scheme and are highly likely to be worse off.

d) What outcomes are required from this policy and for whom?

New regulations will provide councils with flexibility to set up their own local arrangements. The Government has expressed a clear intention in relation to certain aspects of a local scheme. These include :

- For pensioners there should be no change in the current level of awards as a result of this reform. This includes both existing and new benefit claimants.
- Councils should also consider ensuring support for other vulnerable groups
- Local schemes should support work incentives, and in particular avoid disincentives to move into work.

e) Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the policy?

Working Age Council Tax Benefit recipients.
Major and local precepting authorities.

Support and Advocacy groups. See list at Section 4b.

f) Who implements the policy, and who is responsible for the policy?

South Holland District Council.

2) Consider the evidence and information available/required

- a) How is the policy relevant to equalities legislation or the Equality Standard for Local Government?

Changes to Council Tax Benefit are likely to directly impact on some people identified in the Equality Act 2010 who share protected characteristics. Nationally, the government has decided that those of pensionable age will be protected, but has left it to the discretion of individual local authorities to identify whether it wishes to make provision for other specific groups of people.

This impact analysis considers the impact of South Holland's Local Council Tax Support scheme proposal on those covered by the Equality Act 2010 and on the wider community in the context of the prevailing economic climate.

- b) What data or monitoring information do you have or require, in order to make a judgement on the level or type of impact the policy makes? Is there qualitative and quantitative data available which relates to this policy?

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The current CTB scheme makes a wide range of provision that recognises the needs of:

- Those with children: through the applicable amount, disregards child benefit and disregards childcare costs.
- Those with disability: by premiums in the applicable amount, disregarding DLA etc.
- Those with caring responsibilities: by premiums in the applicable amount.

Whilst these core features will be retained in the proposed local scheme, working age claimants will receive less support than under the previous CTB scheme and are highly likely to be worse off.

To meet the SHDC portion of the funding gap, a 0.5% reduction in Net Revenue Expenditure, or a 1.6% increase in council tax would be required. This approach would place considerable risk and financial pressure on major precepting authorities as they would bear the majority cost of the overall shortfall. To reduce services or increase council tax to meet the shortfall would mean that all council taxpayers, c38,000 in SHDC would be adversely affected.

Whilst the Government have assessed risk and protected pensioners under the changes, this introduces a disproportionate, negative, impact on working age. The full impact of the whole saving of £594k would need to be borne through the working age Local Council Tax Support scheme, however SHDC is proposing to reduce the funding gap through realising additional income through the Governments proposals to give billing authorities greater discretion in some empty homes exemptions and discounts. Through this additional revenue raising, the funding gap can potentially be reduced down to £338k, to be saved through the new local scheme.

		This Council's share £'000's
Funding Gap	594k	66
Potential additional revenue from the Council Tax Exemption and Discount changes	256	28
Remaining Funding Gap	357	40

The potential cost of increasing awards of support for vulnerable groups has been considered as part of the work to date. Any decision to include additional support in a final scheme will increase the cost and result in further savings requirements for the Council which would have to be funded elsewhere. In turn this could create a disproportionate effect on another group as an unintended consequence.

Through the consultation process we will seek views from individuals and support groups on the impact of these proposals on these vulnerable groups.

- c) If there are any gaps in information or data, how do you propose to address this in the future and monitor any likely impact of the policy?

We will be receiving feedback through the consultation process.

- d) How does the current policy meet the needs of individuals or groups around race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and age?

The requirements placed on local authorities to protect Pensioners will mean a disproportionate impact on all working age claimants regardless of gender, disabled, race, etc given that the new scheme must be delivered in a financial envelope.

All working age claimants will therefore pay more Council Tax. The scheme proposals seek to spread the effect of the cut in benefit across all claimants.

Existing protections, i.e. recognising disability, those with children, and those with caring responsibilities, as contained in the current CTB scheme will be carried forward into the new local scheme under these proposals, but it is not possible to separate out individual levels of need that arises. Every circumstance will have additional needs

Young people, up to the age of 17 might be disadvantaged indirectly if their parents have to pay more Council Tax as a result of this policy.

People over 18 of working age, and responsible for council tax will be required to pay more.

e) Have issues or concerns been expressed by staff, Members, customers, partners or the wider community regarding this policy or service area previously?

We will be receiving feedback through the consultation process.

3) Equality issues and differential impacts

a) What are the equality issues or factors that have been identified? Have any adverse impacts or positive impacts been identified?

- Anyone currently entitled to Council Tax Benefit other than those of pensionable age
- Young people of working age and their parents
- People with disabilities who have previously been eligible

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b) Does the policy or the implementation of the policy, exclude any specific equality groups?

Updated 28/12/12. No groups are specifically excluded within the local policy.

c) Does the policy fail to promote equality of opportunity, community cohesion or diversity?

Updated 28/12/12. No.

d) Are there issues or concerns about how people can access the policy or service and does this affect the aims or benefits the policy was developed for in regard to some equality groups?

Updated 28/12/12. Existing claimants will transition from CTB to CTS without having to make a new application (as provided in legislation). There are no emerging concerns around any equality group.

e) Is the policy unlawful?

Updated 28/12/12. No.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 provides for the current CTB scheme to be abolished. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 provides the framework for all billing authorities to develop their local CTS scheme.

4) Consultation

a) What previous consultation has taken place previously on this policy or specifically for this EIA?

Consultation to begin September

Updated 28/12/12. Consultation ran from 28th September to 16th November (7 weeks).

b) Who has been consulted? What information or material has been collated and analysed?

In terms of a stakeholder map and list of consultees, the main aim is that the consultation is promoted far and wide. There will be a paper based mailing to those directly impacted.

In addition consultees to be contacted: -

- email to parish councils
- Lincs Police
- Churches
- Working age

- We will also carry out the following activities:
- Press release
- Promotion through SHDC homepage
- Tenants newsletter - depending on timing TBC
- Promote to staff through SHINE
- Paper copies at Market House
- Paper copies at libraries
- Paper copies at SHDC reception
- Promotion on TV screen at SHDC reception
- Promotion to those of working age through locals businesses
- Promotion to landlords through letting agents
- Spalding Access group and Spalding Action group (learning disabilities)
- Promotion to migrant worker community through letting agents and Catholic church

[Updated 28/12/12. Responses have been analysed. A full consultation report is available.](#)

c) Does any of the consultation provide information on why the policy might be having a negative impact or a positive impact?

Yes. The background for the change is contained in consultation documentation.

d) What changes have been proposed following the results of the research, consultation or data analysis?

[Updated 28/12/12. No changes are proposed.](#)

5) Decisions on the policy

- a) Have any adverse impacts or positive impacts been identified? If yes, can any of these be justified?

Updated 28/12/12. Themes emerging from responses were around concerns for those on low incomes, poverty, and for the disabled.

Discussions will take place with support organizations, including CAB, to ensure that appropriate support and budget management advice is available.

Retention of the features of the current CTB scheme will continue to recognise the additional needs of the disabled (along with households with children, and carers).

- b) If a negative adverse impact has been identified, what planned changes to the policy are proposed? For instance, to ensure that the policie's aims and objectives are legal under anti-discriminatory law?

- c) Are there any changes to the policy that will provide an opportunity to promote equality, equal opportunity and improve relations between groups and individuals? For instance, a positive impact.

- d) Are there any budgetary implications for change? If so, what are they?

Updated 28/12/12. Along with the major precepting authorities, LCC and LPA, South Holland DC will receive a council tax support grant from central government as part of the financial settlement. As CTS will be a discount reduction rather than a benefit on the council tax bill, it also becomes a tax base issue for 2013/14. The amount of the CTS grant will be less than the current CTB expenditure.

(Please note that if an adverse impact is found to be unlawful then the policy must be immediately addressed, which would mean that it should be changed or ceased to be used. If an adverse impact is found, but it is not unlawful, then you should consider what changes are required. However, you would not have to implement any changes if you were sure you could prove it was justifiable).

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Web Summary completed Date: _____

Completed form signed off by Head of Service:
Signed: _____ Date: _____

Completed form sent to lead Equality and Diversity Officer. Date: _____

EIA sent to Corporate Equality Working Group. Date: _____

Policy scheduled for presentation to Committee/Council Date: _____