

Harlow District Council

Equality Impact Assessment – Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26

Name of service, function or policy being assessed	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26 This Equality Impact Assessment has been developed in view of the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1st April 2025.
Service/Department	Finance / Revenues and Benefits
Names and roles of officers completing the assessment (indicate Lead officer)	Donna Beechener, Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits (Lead Officer)
Contact telephone number of Lead officer	01279 446245
Date assessment completed	August 2024

1. Aims of the policy/service/function and how implemented

	Key Questions	Notes
1.1	Is this a new policy/service/function or a review of an existing one?	This is a review of an existing policy and function
1.2	Briefly state the main purpose of the policy/service/function?	To make changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age applicants in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better assist low income households; • reduce administration as the current scheme is inefficient when dealing with Universal Credit cases; and • Make the scheme easier to understand for customers
1.3	Briefly state the main activities of the policy/service/function?	The Council Tax Reduction Scheme provides support to low income households within the district. The changes are proposed to the working age scheme. The scheme for pensioners is prescribed by Central Government.
1.4	Who are the main beneficiaries? Whose need's is it designed to meet?	Working age Council Tax Reduction applicants who have a low income and have difficulty meeting their Council Tax liability
1.5	Which staff carry out the policy/service/function?	Revenues and Benefits staff

2. Information Gathering and Data Collection

	Key Questions	Notes	If further data collection is needed – state by whom, when and how is it going to be done?
2.1	<p>What quantitative (numerical) data do you already have (e.g. national and local demographic data, equality monitoring data, employee data, customer profile data etc) about those who use or will use the policy or service? What gaps are there in the data? What else do you need?</p> <p>NB. Attach copies of the relevant data that you are using for this assessment</p>	<p>Full modelling of the proposed scheme has been undertaken (and will continue to be undertaken) on the existing working age caseload</p>	<p>Modelling will continue throughout the financial year.</p>
2.2	<p>What qualitative data do you already have (e.g. results of customer satisfaction surveys, results of previous consultations, staff surveys, analysis of customer complaints/comments, feedback from community groups or individuals etc) about those who use or will use the policy or service? What gaps are there in the data? What else do you need?</p>	<p>The proposals are to change the working age scheme with effect from 1st April 2025. The legislation requires the Council (prior to its implementation) to consult with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • major preceptors; and • the public. <p>The consultation will take place over the summer / autumn time and the new scheme will need to be approved by full Council.</p>	

3. Consultation

Please state below what formal or informal consultation has taken place or that you are planning to hold with appropriate stakeholders in relation to this policy/function			
	Key Questions	Notes	If further consultations are needed/ planned – state with whom, by whom, when and how is this going to be done?
3.1	What consultations have been held and with whom did you consult? What were the main issues raised?	Full consultation will be carried out in line with the legislation	
3.2	What consultations were held specifically with the equality target groups? What were the main issues raised?	All affected taxpayers (and taxpayers generally) will be requested to give their views on the new scheme in line with Schedule 1A (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992	
	Key Questions	Notes	If further consultations are needed/ planned – state with whom, by whom, when and how is this going to be

			done?
3.3	<p>Is the Council working in Partnership with other organisations to implement this policy/function?</p> <p>Should this be taken into consideration? (E.g. Agreeing the equalities monitoring categories)</p> <p>Should the partnership arrangements have an EIA?</p>	<p>The proposed scheme is in line with similar changes being implemented by a large number of English local authorities and by a number of Essex authorities.</p>	

Note

- It is a legal requirement that consultation takes place with appropriate stakeholders as part of the EIA process.
- You must ensure that you record all the main areas of concern raised by equality and customer groups during consultations and how you aim to address these concerns.

4. Assessment of Impact

Based on the data you have analysed and provided, and the results of the consultation or research you have undertaken, list below how the policy or function will or does work for each of the following equalities groups.

Identify any differential impact and consider whether the policy/function meets any particular needs identified for each of the six equalities groups.

NB:If you do identify any adverse impact you must:

- a) **Seek appropriate advice as to whether it is highlighting unlawful discrimination or is potentially discriminatory, and**
- b) **Identify steps to mitigate any adverse impact**

Include any examples of how the policy or function helps to promote race, disability, age and/or gender equality.

		State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote equality
4.1	<p>Gender – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on women, men and transgender people And/or Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	<p>None identified - the Council Tax Reduction Scheme does not discriminate on gender.</p> <p>When additional support is required, applicants may apply to the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund.</p>
		State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote equality

4.2	<p>Disability – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on disabled people (ensure consideration of a range of impairments including visual and hearing impairments, mobility impairments, learning disability etc) And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	<p>The new scheme will continue to provide support to households where a member(s) is disabled by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing to fully disregard disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Armed Forces Independence Payments (AFIP) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA); • where the household contains a disabled person, a further income disregard will be applied. <p>The above ensure that the new scheme continues to protect vulnerable households.</p> <p>When additional support is required, applicants may apply to the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund.</p>
4.3	<p>Age – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on different age groups And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	<p>The new scheme affects working age applicants only. The scheme for pension age applicants is prescribed by Government and cannot be changed by the Council.</p> <p>Should additional support be required, applicants may apply to the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund.</p>
4.4	<p>Race – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on different black and minority ethnic groups, including Gypsy and Traveller communities And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	<p>None identified - the Council Tax Reduction Scheme does not discriminate on race.</p> <p>When additional support is required, applicants may apply to the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund.</p>
		State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote

		equality
4.5	<p>Sexual orientation – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on lesbians, gay men, bisexual and heterosexual people</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	<p>None identified - the Council Tax Reduction Scheme does not discriminate on sex.</p> <p>When additional support is required, applicants may apply to the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund.</p>
4.6	<p>Religion/belief – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on people of different religious/faith groups and also upon those with no faith</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	<p>None identified - the Council Tax Reduction Scheme does not discriminate on religion or belief.</p> <p>When additional support is required, applicants may apply to the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund.</p>
4.7	<p>Socio-economic disadvantage – identify any impact on those who have a low income, or whose family circumstances/history may affect their ability to access services e.g. carers and the cared for; pensioners; single-parents; long-term unemployed; history of abuse/domestic violence; benefits claimants; housebound; chronically ill;</p>	<p>The impact of the proposed scheme will be felt most by those of working age who are not disabled, some of the affects will be mitigated by more generous incentives to work.</p> <p>The Council has an exceptional hardship fund to assist those in extreme need.</p>

4.8	<p>Any other groups, if appropriate e.g. children leaving care; pregnant or breast-feeding mothers; carers etc</p>	<p>The new scheme will continue to disregard child benefit and child maintenance. The income levels (to receive the same level of support) are higher where the household contains dependants</p> <p>The Council has an exceptional hardship fund to assist those in extreme hardship.</p> <p>The above helps to “advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.”</p>
		<p>Notes</p>
4.9	<p>Are there any additional measures that could be adopted to further equality of opportunity in the context of this policy/service/function and to meet the particular needs of equalities groups that you have identified?</p>	<p>None identified.</p>

5. Summary Overview of EIA

As a summary overview of information and findings provided in the earlier sections of this Equality Impact Assessment, please tick the relevant boxes as appropriate to denote the OUTCOME of this process for each of the Equality Characteristics.

Equalities category	No adverse impact AND promotes equality and diversity <i>Please tick ✓ if appropriate</i>	No adverse impact BUT equality and diversity NOT promoted <i>Please tick ✓ if appropriate</i>	Evidence of adverse impact <i>Please tick ✓ if appropriate</i>
Gender and transgender	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Age			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Religion and belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Socio-economic disadvantage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

NB: Tick relevant box as appropriate and based on information provided in section

Signed
Project Manager

Countersigned
Head of Service

Print Name

Print Name

Date

Date

Under the Freedom of Information Act, this completed EIA form will be placed on the Harlow web and be available on request to the general public.