

## EQUALITY ANALYSIS

You must complete this in conjunction with reading Equality Analysis Guidance

**Name of Policy/Decision/Project/Activity:**

Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2019/20

Date: 27/12/18

Version Number: v1

Equality Analysis completed by:

Name/Job title: Sharon Holden (Revenues Manager)

Responsible Officer or Group:

Name/Job title: Paul Wilson (Head of External Funding,  
Revenues and Commercial Finance)

Is the Activity:

New/Proposed ( )

Changing/Being Reviewed (x)

Other ( )

# 1. Purpose and scope

## Purpose

In this section outline briefly:

- what the policy, decision or activity is and what the intended outcomes/benefits are (linked to the Corporate Outcomes Framework)
- over what period of time the outcomes will be achieved
- why it needs to be implemented or revised
- what populations are affected by the proposal
- who is expected to benefit and how, i.e. young people, older people, carers, BME groups, ward areas/communities, etc
- whether there are any overlaps with regional, sub-regional, national priorities.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished the Council Tax Benefit system and replaced it under the Local Government Finance Act 2012 with the Local Council Tax Support scheme from 1st April 2013, thereby transferring responsibility from central to local government. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 also legislated that pensioners must receive protection, in that they must receive the same levels of entitlement under the new local Council Tax Support scheme as they had received under the old Council Tax Benefit scheme.

The scheme requires that all working age households contribute towards their council tax bill. The Sunderland Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) for 2018/19 continued with a reduction in Council Tax Support by 8.5% for all working age claimants (e.g working age on lowest income paid a minimum of £1.27 per week (single people), and £1.69 per week (couples/families)).

In addition, following consultation and subsequent approval in January 2018 the previous LCTSS has been updated to align with government changes to Housing Benefit policy and also other welfare benefits and in order to make the LCTSS easier to understand for claimants and more administratively efficient. The LCTSS implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 included the following features:

- **Universal Credit**  
Treat a notification of Universal Credit as an indication of a claim under the LCTSS. This will assist claimants in accessing the LCTSS.
- **Backdating Rules**  
Reduce the period for which LCTSS claims can be backdated to one calendar month (currently 6 months). This is to mirror Housing Benefit regulations and will improve the administration process.
- **Temporary absence**  
Align the LCTSS rules to Housing Benefit scheme so a claimant will not be entitled to council tax support if they are temporarily absent from Great Britain for a period which is likely to last more than 4 weeks (exceptions apply to certain groups for example if a claimant is in hospital). This would apply to both working age and state pension credit age claimants.

- **Family Premium**

The family premium was removed from the LCTSS calculation for new applicants from April 2018. This will have no impact on existing recipients (unless they have a break in their entitlement). The change will make the LCTSS consistent with Housing Benefit regulations and will aid administration.

- **Two child limit**

There will be no personal allowance for any third or later child born after 6 April 2017, unless special circumstances exceptions apply for example if the child was born as part of a multiple birth. This change aligns with the changes to Housing Benefit regulations and will again aid administration.

The Council must approve its LCTSS for 2019/20 by 11 March 2019. The Council is not proposing any changes to the current LCTSS and, therefore, it is proposed that the existing scheme **continues to apply** for the year commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. Subject to approval by 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019, the LCTSS will come into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

The LCTSS will be reviewed each year and any impacts or unintended consequences will be assessed and reviewed when considering the LCTSS for 2020/21 alongside any implications from the full rollout of Universal Credit which commenced in Sunderland in July 2018.

None of the protected groups are restricted from claiming council tax support. Their eligibility is determined by their financial and personal circumstances. The current caseload is 33,047 of which 13,872 are pensioners and 19,175 are working age claimants.

## Intelligence and Analysis

Please describe:

- What sources of information have been used to inform this assessment/analysis (this should include but is not limited to consultations, resident/service user feedback and statistical data and intelligence)
- **What the information is telling you** – this should be broken down by each of the protected characteristics or other identified groups which could be disadvantaged. Each of the aims of the equality act should be considered in relation to each of the protected characteristics.

This equality analysis has been informed by

- Collection stats
- Consultation with the Revenues Manager, Benefits Manager, colleagues from Legal Services

It should be noted that as Government has legislated that pensioners must not be adversely affected by the changes, any assessment will be regarding **working age recipients only**.

However, the proposal makes no changes to the current LCTSS which is to continue for 2019/20, therefore, there is expected to be no impact on customers of any group/protected characteristic.

### **Gaps in intelligence and information**

Having analysed the information available to you:

- are there any gaps in intelligence or areas where understanding needs to be improved? Please describe what these are and what actions you intend to take to obtain/improve the information. These actions should be covered in the action plan.
- are there any groups who should be expected to benefit who do not? Please describe why not and whether you will amend the decision to change this outcome. This should also be covered in the action plan.

Not applicable.

### **Additional Impacts**

The policy or action may also have an impact on other groups or individuals which are not covered by statutory requirements. Please outline any additional individuals or groups which have not already been covered. This could include socio-economic groups, voluntary and community sector, carers or specific communities which face additional challenges (such as former coal mining areas or areas of high deprivation).

Not applicable.

## 2. Analysis of impact on people

In this section you must **review the intelligence described above and summarise the intended and potential impact of the policy, decision or activity** on the people of Sunderland. This includes specific consideration of the impact on individuals, groups with protected characteristics and communities of interest within the city. Please briefly outline any positive, neutral or negative impacts on the specific groups below. Please note that any negative impacts should have a corresponding action in the action plan in the page below.

In this assessment it is important to remember the **Council is required to give due regard to:**

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

**Each of these aims must be summarised in turn in relation to the groups outlined below.**

Characteristic	List of Impacts		
	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Age	Pensioners continue to be protected under the scheme and are still eligible to receive up to 100% council tax support		
Disability		There are no proposals to change the Scheme and there is no significant impact relative to other groups.	
Gender/Sex		There are no proposals to change the Scheme and there is no significant impact relative to other groups.	
Marriage & Civil Partnership		There are no proposals to change the Scheme and there is no significant impact relative to other groups.	
Pregnancy and maternity		There are no proposals to change the Scheme and there is no significant impact relative to other groups.	
Race/Ethnicity		There are no proposals to change the Scheme and there is no significant	

		impact relative to other groups.	
Religion/belief		There are no proposals to change the Scheme and there is no significant impact relative to other groups.	
Sexual Orientation		There are no proposals to change the Scheme and there is no significant impact relative to other groups.	
Gender identity		There are no proposals to change the Scheme and there is no significant impact relative to other groups.	

**Please add any additional groups mentioned in “additional impacts” above to this table.**

### 3. Response to Analysis, Action Plan and Monitoring

In this section please outline what actions you propose to take to minimise the negative, and maximise the positive, impacts that have been identified through the analysis. By considering and implementing these actions the policy or action can be refined to make sure that the greatest benefits are achieved for the people of Sunderland. The performance monitoring process should also be set out to explain how ongoing progress is going to be followed to make sure that the aims are met.

From the analysis four broad approaches can be taken, (No major change; continue with the policy/action despite negative implications; adjust the policy/decision/action; or stop the policy/action). Please indicate, using the list below, which is proposed.

No Major Change (X)

Continue Despite Negative Implications ( )

Adjust the Policy/Decision/Project/Activity ( )

Stop ( )

## Action Plan

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	Monitoring Arrangements
Monitor the impact through payment and arrears statistics	Sharon Holden (Revenues Manager)	Quarterly	As part of routine Council Tax performance monitoring
Monitor impact on claimants	Sharon Holden (Revenues Manager) and Loraine Nelson (Benefits Manager)	Ongoing	In conjunction with Benefits team. Feedback from customers.
Review of scheme	Sharon Holden (Revenues Manager)	September 2019	Consultation exercise including workshops with the residents of Sunderland where any changes are proposed for 2020/21.

