

# EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

**TITLE: Council Tax Support Scheme – Consultation and Revision**

## VERSION CONTROL

<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Description of Changes</b>
<b>15.6.21</b>	<b>1 DRAFT</b>	Alison Edwards	
<b>1.7.21</b>	<b>2</b>	Alison Edwards	<b>Corrections</b>
<b>7.7.21</b>	<b>3</b>	Alison Edwards	<b>E&amp;D suggestions</b>
<b>12.7.21</b>	<b>4</b>	Alison Edwards	<b>Updated E&amp;D</b>
<b>26.10.21</b>	<b>5</b>	Alison Edwards	<b>Updated following consultation</b>

**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**Stage 1 Description:** Fact finding (about your policy / service /

<b>Department</b>	Corporate		<b>Lead officer responsible for assessment</b>		Alison Edwards	
<b>Service</b>	Benefits		<b>Other members of team undertaking assessment</b>			
<b>Date</b>	15.6.21		<b>Version</b>		1	
<b>Type of document (mark as appropriate)</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Plan</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Service</b>
<b>Is this a new/ existing/ revision of an existing document (please mark as appropriate)</b>	<b>New</b>		<b>Existing</b>		<b>Revision</b>	
<b>Title and subject of the impact assessment (include a brief description of the aims, outcomes, operational issues as appropriate and how it fits in with the wider aims of the organisation)</b>  <b>Please attach a copy of the strategy/ plan/ function/ policy/ procedure/ service</b>	<p>Council Tax Support Scheme</p> <p>The Cheshire East CTS scheme for working age residents is intended to help those on low income/low earnings meet their Council Tax liability, reducing debt and poverty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To incentivise those who can work to do so</li> <li>• To reward those who are in work, on a low wage</li> <li>• For those with capital to meet the liability</li> <li>• To encourage those on low income to downsize and move to more affordable housing (lower banded)</li> </ul> <p>The original scheme came into place on 1 April 2013 and was revised from 1 April 2020 following review and consultation</p> <p>Further changes are proposed for 2022/23 onwards and consultation will be shared with partners, stakeholders, and residents in July 2021.</p> <p>The changes proposed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the cap on the maximum award from band B to band D</li> <li>• Increase the maximum award to 100% for passported benefit recipients and 80% for those on lowest income bands</li> <li>• Disregard as income, Industrial Injuries Disablement benefit and Industrial Death benefit</li> </ul>					

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow deductions from Universal Credit for childcare awards</li> <li>• Adjust the income bands</li> <li>• Increase non-dependent deduction</li> <li>• Reduce earnings deduction</li> </ul> <p>The purpose of these proposals is to provide more support to those on low income or who are struggling to balance financially in the aftermath of the pandemic. We aim to mitigate these changes by making our awards more generous within the boundaries of the council budgets.</p> <p>No public engagement has been undertaken prior to the consultation taking place. The proposals have gone before committee for debate. Full details of the proposals can be found in the minutes of the corporate policy committee meeting 06/07/21.</p>
<p><b>Who are the main stakeholders and have they been engaged with? (e.g. general public, employees, Councillors, partners, specific audiences, residents)</b></p>	<p>The proposals for the changes to the scheme are to be consulted on with all our stakeholders and partners. General public, Councillors, Welfare Groups, employees, local charities.</p>
<p><b>What consultation method(s) did you use?</b></p>	<p>The consultation was available online and as a paper survey form.</p> <p>It was shared with the community via the Cheshire East website, the Cheshire East Digital Panel Consultation and via the Partnerships Team in the Connected Community Centres.</p> <p>Partners and stakeholders were invited to participate via meetings and direct contacts.</p> <p>Members of the Welfare Rights Forum discussed the consultation at the meeting on 14.7.21 and were able respond with their individual views direct. The Gypsy, Roma community and Body Positive were asked to support in sharing the consultation with their contacts/supporters.</p> <p>Direct invitation was made by email to current recipients of Council Tax Support.</p> <p>Face to face consultation was unable to take place due to the current restrictions of Covid 19.</p>

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### Stage 2 Initial Screening

<p><b>Who is affected and what evidence have you considered to arrive at this analysis? (This may or may not include the stakeholders listed above)</b></p>	<p>The proposals will only affect those of working age resident within Cheshire East who have a Council Tax liability. 12,827 claims as at 31.5.21, caseload has been rising as the effects of the pandemic hit.</p>
<p><b>Who is intended to benefit and how?</b></p>	<p>The scheme is designed to benefit those of working age who have low income or low earnings. Due to the impact of the pandemic, the make-up of our service users has changed considerably. Not only are those in low income housing in receipt of support, previous higher earners who have suffered financial loss due to changes in employment, furlough or job losses are affected. The consultation will be shared as widely as possible to ensure that feedback is received from a broad section of the population, residents who receive CTS and those who don't. Anyone paying Council Tax to Cheshire East has the potential of becoming a recipient of this support due to a change of circumstance. The effects of the changes proposed are modelled against the current CTS caseload to provide an insight into the benefits to our residents and the cost to the council. There is no targeted take up of the support and applications are open to all.</p>
<p><b>Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups?</b></p>	<p>Some groups may be affected differently – specific assistance is being targeted towards those in receipt of disability benefits, Carer's allowance and working – proposal to improve support for recipients of Industrial Injury benefits and working parents who have to pay for child care.</p>
<p><b>Does it include making decisions based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances?</b></p>	<p>Each CTS decision is made specifically on the circumstances of the individual claimants.</p>
<p><b>Are relations between different groups or communities likely to be affected? (e.g. will it favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others?)</b></p>	<p>It is unlikely that this scheme will have any effect on relationships between different groups or communities. The scheme is open to any resident in the borough with a council tax liability and is assessed on their household income.</p>
<p><b>Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality? Is there a history of unequal outcomes (do you have enough evidence to prove otherwise)?</b></p>	<p>The scheme will consider the household income of those applying for support. Each claim is considered based on its own merits. There is no history of unequal outcomes and the individual characteristics of a claimant do not impact the decision to award support. The only recognisable characteristics from the CTS application form are age, gender (as stated) marriage/civil partnership and disability if in receipt of relevant benefits. There is no targeted take up of the support and</p>

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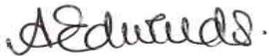
	<p>applications are open to all.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that some protected characteristic groups are often found within low-income households. For example, the 2019 LGBT national survey concluded that trans people are more likely to be out of work and therefore have low income and require additional financial support such as CTS.</p> <p>Whilst an individual's characteristics do not impact the levels of support, they may form a higher than other cohort of applicants. Their support will be met in the same way as any other applicant based on actual household income.</p> <p>The consultation questionnaire will include a section with equality monitoring specific questions. This area will be reviewed throughout the consultation period to ensure we receive a fair and equitable response. If areas of misrepresentation are highlighted, we will be able to specifically target them with the help and support from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Research teams.</p>
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**Is there an actual or potential negative impact on these specific characteristics? (Please tick)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Marriage &amp; civil partnership</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Religion &amp; belief</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Pregnancy &amp; maternity</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>

<b>What evidence do you have to support your findings? (quantitative and qualitative) Please provide additional information that you wish to include as appendices to this document, i.e., graphs, tables, charts</b>							<b>Consultation/ involvement carried out</b>	
<b>No negative impact on any group, there are positive impacts for age and disability – working age group receive the assistance through this scheme – additional disregards from income for those in receipt of disability benefits.</b>							<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Age</b>	The scheme only affects working age residents – pension age applicants are still protected under the original national Council Tax Benefit scheme					<b>Yes</b>		
<b>Disability</b>	There are specific disregards against disability benefits in the current scheme, the proposals are expanding the support to those receiving Industrial Injuries benefits which in turn is promoting a positive impact to residents in this category					<b>Yes</b>		
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	No affect in relation to gender reassignment					<b>Yes</b>		

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<b>Marriage &amp; civil partnership</b>	No direct affect in relation to marriage or civil partnership – scheme considers single, lone parents and couples and their specific income		<b>Yes</b>	
<b>Pregnancy &amp; maternity</b>	No affect in relation to pregnancy or maternity		<b>Yes</b>	
<b>Race</b>	No affect in relation to race – decisions not impacted by race		<b>Yes</b>	
<b>Religion &amp; belief</b>	No affect in relation to religion/belief – decisions not impacted by either		<b>Yes</b>	
<b>Sex</b>	No affect in relation to sex – the income of single applicants regardless of sex is used		<b>Yes</b>	
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	No affect in relation to sexual orientation – this information has no impact to an application		<b>Yes</b>	
<b>Proceed to full impact assessment? (Please tick)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Date</b> 15.6.21	
<b>Lead officer sign off</b>		<b>Date</b> 13.7.21		
<b>Head of service sign off</b>		<b>Date</b> 14.07.2021		

If yes, please proceed to Stage 3. If no, please publish the initial screening as part of the suite of documents relating to this issue

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### Stage 3 Identifying impacts and evidence

This section identifies if there are impacts on equality, diversity and cohesion, what evidence there is to support the conclusion and what further action is needed

Protected characteristics	<p>Is the policy (function etc....) likely to have an adverse impact on any of the groups?</p> <p>Please include evidence (qualitative &amp; quantitative) and consultations</p> <p>List what negative impacts were recorded in Stage 1 (Initial Assessment).</p>	<p>Are there any positive impacts of the policy (function etc....) on any of the groups?</p> <p>Please include evidence (qualitative &amp; quantitative) and consultations</p> <p>List what positive impacts were recorded in Stage 1 (Initial Assessment).</p>	<p>Please rate the impact taking into account any measures already in place to reduce the impacts identified</p> <p><b>High:</b> Significant potential impact; history of complaints; no mitigating measures in place; need for consultation</p> <p><b>Medium:</b> Some potential impact; some mitigating measures in place, lack of evidence to show effectiveness of measures</p> <p><b>Low:</b> Little/no identified impacts; heavily legislation-led; limited public facing aspect</p>	<p>Further action (only an outline needs to be included here. A full action plan can be included at Section 4)</p> <p>Once you have assessed the impact of a policy/service, it is important to identify options and alternatives to reduce or eliminate any negative impact. Options considered could be adapting the policy or service, changing the way in which it is implemented or introducing balancing measures to reduce any negative impact. When considering each option you should think about how it will reduce any negative impact, how it might impact on other groups and how it might impact on relationships between groups and overall issues around community cohesion. You should clearly demonstrate how you have considered various options and the impact of these. You must have a detailed rationale behind decisions and a justification for those alternatives that have not been accepted.</p>
Age				
Disability				
Gender reassignment				
Marriage & civil partnership				
Pregnancy and				

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<b>maternity</b>				
<b>Race</b>				
<b>Religion &amp; belief</b>				
<b>Sex</b>				
<b>Sexual orientation</b>				
<p><b>Is this change due to be carried out wholly or partly by other providers? If yes, please indicate how you have ensured that the partner organisation complies with equality legislation (e.g. tendering, awards process, contract, monitoring and performance measures)</b></p>				

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**Stage 4 Review and Conclusion**

<b>Summary: provide a brief overview including impact, changes, improvement, any gaps in evidence and additional data that is needed</b>			
<b>Specific actions to be taken to reduce, justify or remove any adverse impacts</b>	<b>How will this be monitored?</b>	<b>Officer responsible</b>	<b>Target date</b>
<b>Please provide details and link to full action plan for actions</b>			
<b>When will this assessment be reviewed?</b>			
<b>Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?</b>			
<b>Lead officer sign off</b>		<b>Date</b>	
<b>Head of service sign off</b>		<b>Date</b>	

Please publish this completed EIA form on the relevant section of the Cheshire East website