

# Cambridge City Council Equality Impact Assessment



Completing an Equality Impact Assessment will help you to think about what impact your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service may have on people that live in, work in or visit Cambridge, as well as on City Council staff.

The template is easy to use. You do not need to have specialist equalities knowledge to complete it. It asks you to make judgements based on evidence and experience. There are guidance notes on the intranet to help you. You can also get advice from Suzanne Goff, Strategy Officer on 01223 457174 or email [suzanne.goff@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:suzanne.goff@cambridge.gov.uk) or from any member of the Joint Equalities Group.

## 1. Title of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service:

Discretionary Housing Payments

## 2. What is the objective or purpose of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) were introduced in July 2001 as a mechanism for Local Authorities to provide further financial assistance with housing costs. Introduction of Welfare Reforms from April 2013 has increased the number of requests for DHP's.

Traditionally, Discretionary Housing Payments are not viewed as long term solutions but a short term financial assistance until a more permanent solution is found. Until the Welfare Reforms of 2013, the usual period of a DHP award was 3 months. From April 2013, awards relating to Spare Room Subsidy can be for the whole financial year or longer where the property has been especially adapted to meet the needs of a disabled household member.

DWP notifies Authorities annually how much the Government Contribution will be and therefore awards are linked to financial years or part thereof.

From November 2016, a reduction in the Benefit Cap from £26,000 per year to £20,000 for authorities outside London. Whilst this does not impact on large numbers of households (100-130 at any one time), the weekly shortfall is approximately £60 per week. A High number of households affected have children and many form single parent households.

The period of an award needs to be balanced to ensure there is sufficient funding to the end of the financial year for new applications during the year but also to provide financial security for those whose personal circumstances mean there is little they can do to change their situation, particularly the elderly, families and the physically or mentally disabled.

Requests for information are not intrusive and an holistic approach is taken to identify need and additional signposting for additional support is given. Such as applying for additional benefits, help in managing finances and accessing appropriate accommodation through Housing Options Team. With the change in the Benefit Cap from November 2016, additional support is given to assist household in to work as appropriate as this can exempt them from the cap.

**3. Who will be affected by this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick those that apply)**

Residents

Visitors

Staff

A specific client group or groups (please state):

Claimants to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit with housing costs element.

**4. What type of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service is this? (Please tick)**

New

Revised

Existing

**5. Responsible directorate and service**

Directorate: Customer and Community

Service: Revenues and Benefits

**6. Are other departments or partners involved in delivering this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?**

No

Yes (please give details):

## 7. Potential impact

Please list and explain how this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service could **positively** or **negatively** affect individuals from the following equalities groups.

When answering this question, please think about:

- The results of relevant consultation that you or others have completed (for example with residents, people that work in or visit Cambridge, service users, staff or partner organisations).
- Complaints information.
- Performance information.
- Information about people using your service (for example whether people from certain equalities groups use the service more or less than others).
- Inspection results.
- Comparisons with other organisations.
- The implementation of your piece of work (don't just assess what you think the impact will be after you have completed your work, but also think about what steps you might have to take to make sure that the implementation of your work does not negatively impact on people from a particular equality group).
- The relevant premises involved.
- Your communications.
- National research (local information is not always available, particularly for some equalities groups, so use national research to provide evidence for your conclusions).

**(a) Age** (any group of people of a particular age, including younger and older people – in particular, please consider any safeguarding issues for children and vulnerable adults)

Requests for DHP can come from claimants of any age. However, as the Welfare Reforms are mostly impacting on working age customers, this is the highest group.

**(b) Disability** (including people with a physical impairment, sensory impairment, learning disability, mental health problem or other condition which has an impact on their daily life)

Disabled people are impacted by the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy and Local Housing Allowance criteria. DHP's have been made to support disabled customers stay in their homes until alternative accommodation can be found if appropriate. Generally speaking, DHP's are made for longer periods of time where the household lives in specially adapted accommodation. Typically these can be up to two years and will have a light touch review at the start of the financial year.

Changes in legislation have meant an easement for overnight carers for the claimant and or partner but not for a disabled child which is one group of households that may need a DHP. Expenses due to disability are taken in account when deciding an award as these households often have higher expenses than non-disabled household's and need supporting as appropriate.

Disabled benefit households are not impacted by the Benefit Cap.

**(c) Gender**

There is little impact on gender although there higher numbers of single parent families where the claimant is female than male particularly where affected by the Benefit Cap .

**(d) Pregnancy and maternity**

Households where a family member is pregnant may be impacted by the LHA and Spare Room Subsidy regulations until the baby is born. Expected date of confinement data is gathered so an informed decision on entitlement can be made. DHP's are sometimes claimed to cover the shortfall until the baby is born and these restrictions cease or are reduced.

**(e) Transgender (including gender re-assignment)**

No impact on an individual's transgender

**(f) Marriage and Civil Partnership**

No impact as all couples are treated the same.

**(g) Race or Ethnicity**

No specific impact on race or ethnicity, although some families may tend to have larger families depending on their ethnicity and may therefore be impacted by the Benefit Cap.

**(h) Religion or Belief**

No impact on an individual's religion or belief.

**(i) Sexual Orientation**

No impact on an individual's sexual orientation.

**(j) Other factors that may lead to inequality – in particular – please consider the impact of any changes on low income groups or those experiencing the impacts of poverty (please state):**

From November 2016, the £26,000 cap is reduced to £20,000 for households outside of London. The incomes that make up the cap include child benefit and child tax credit so families and single parent families are particularly affected as it is more difficult for single parent families to work and be exempt from the cap.

## 8. If you have any additional comments please add them here

DHP's are available for households that receive support with their housing costs. A claim does need to be made but it does not need to be made in writing. A small number of officers process applications and they are skilled in obtaining sufficient information to support an application without it being intrusive. Officers have had training on supporting customers with mental health issues. Quarterly meetings are arranged to discuss overall decision making, although claims must be dealt with on an individual basis.

Often, additional support is signposted or a referral to another Council department or external agency as appropriate to fully support these vulnerable households.

An appeal process is in place but no requests for an appeal have been made in recent years. This would indicate that the process in place and monitoring and reviewing processes are working.

## 9. Conclusions and Next Steps

- If you have not identified any negative impacts, please sign off this form.
- If you have identified potential negative actions, you must complete the action plan at the end of this document to set out how you propose to mitigate the impact. If you do not feel that the potential negative impact can be mitigated, you must complete question 8 to explain why that is the case.
- If there is insufficient evidence to say whether or not there is likely to be a negative impact, please complete the action plan setting out what additional information you need to gather to complete the assessment.

All completed Equality Impact Assessments must be emailed to Suzanne Goff, Strategy Officer, who will arrange for it to be published on the City Council's website.

Email [suzanne.goff@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:suzanne.goff@cambridge.gov.uk)

## 10. Sign off

Name and job title of assessment lead officer:

Naomi Armstrong – Benefit Manager

Names and job titles of other assessment team members and people consulted:  
N/A

Date of completion: February 2017

Date of next review of the assessment: February 2019

## Action Plan

**Equality Impact Assessment title:**

**Date of completion:**

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Age</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Disability</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Transgender</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Race or Ethnicity</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Religion or Belief</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Equality Group</b>	<b>Sexual Orientation</b>
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	

<b>Other factors that may lead to inequality</b>	
Details of possible disadvantage or negative impact	
Action to be taken to address the disadvantage or negative impact	
Officer responsible for progressing the action	
Date action to be completed by	