



Cambridge City Council Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

This tool helps the Council ensure that we fulfil legal obligations of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) to have due regard to the need to –

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Guidance on how to complete this tool can be found on the Cambridge City Council intranet. For specific questions on the tool email Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer at equalities@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223 457046. Once you have drafted the EqIA please send this to equalities@cambridge.gov.uk for checking. For advice on consulting on equality impacts, please contact Graham Saint, Strategy Officer, (graham.saint@cambridge.gov.uk or 01223 457044).

1. Title of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service:
Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Local Scheme
2. Webpage link to full details of the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service (if available)
3. What is the objective or purpose of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?
<p>Council Tax Benefit, a central government benefit, ended 31 March 2013 and Local Authorities had to define a scheme to support working age households pay their Council Tax. For pensioners, this support remains defined by central government.</p> <p>The current local Council Tax Reduction scheme has been in place since April 2013 and has worked extremely well alongside Housing Benefit.</p> <p>However, as the number of Housing Benefit recipient declines (due to claimants moving to Universal Credit), there are issues with the interaction between Universal Credit and the Council Tax Reduction scheme that will cause serious complications for customers, and issues in terms of administration of the scheme.</p> <p>This EqIA relates to a review of our Council Tax Reduction Scheme to seek to deliver three primary objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move towards a scheme that is more adaptable to Universal Credit regulations. • Provide clarity to Universal Credit claimants as to what their entitlement to Council Tax Reduction will be. • Mitigate against expected reduction in Government administration grants for processing Council Tax Reduction claims.
4. Responsible Service
Revenues and Benefits

<p>5. Who will be affected by this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick those that apply)</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Residents of Cambridge City</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Visitors to Cambridge City</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Staff</p>
<p>Please state any specific client group or groups (e.g. City Council tenants, tourists, people who work in the city but do not live here):</p> <p>Local Council Tax Reduction only applies to working age households who are on a low income.</p> <p>Universal Credit (UC) replaces 6 legacy benefits for working age claimants (under 67 currently) only and replaces housing benefit; CTR significantly supports this age group.</p>
<p>6. What type of strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service is this? (Please tick)</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> New</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Major change</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minor change</p>
<p>7. Are other departments or partners involved in delivering this strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service? (Please tick)</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Please provide details):</p>
<p>8. Has the report on your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service gone to Committee? If so, which one?</p>
<p>Strategy and Resources 1 July 2019. This policy will now be going to the Strategy and Resources Committee on 7 October 2019.</p>

9. What research methods/ evidence have you used in order to identify equality impacts of your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service?

Extensive modelling has taken place to look at the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) from October 2018 on households. It was evident that the monthly changes automatically reported by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will cause uncertainty for claimants in the amount they have to pay towards their Council Tax.

Any small change will currently result in a reassessment of Council Tax Reduction (CTR), causing a new bill to be issued.

A consultation was carried out from 5 July 2019 to 8 September 2019, setting out a proposal for CTR for UC households to be assessed based on earnings bands so some changes in earnings will not cause entitlement to be recalculated.

76% of those surveyed believed the existing scheme need to be changed for UC claimants and believed that a banded scheme based on earnings was appropriate.

10. Potential impacts

For each category below, please explain if the strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service could have a positive/ negative impact or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is. Consider impacts on service users, visitors and staff members separately.

(a) Age

Note that this refers to any group of people of a particular age (e.g. 32 year-olds) , or within a particular age range (e.g. 16-24 year-olds) – in particular, please consider any safeguarding issues for children and adults at risk

Local Council Tax only applies to working age households and is currently based on a household needs analysis (applicable amounts and premiums, some of which are based on age) compared to household income and capital.

Universal Credit (UC) replaces 6 legacy benefits, including housing benefit, for working age claimants (under 67 currently) only. Pensioner only households are not impacted

Young persons aged under 25, who have been looked after by a Local Authority (Care Leavers) will be classed as vulnerable and will be protected by inclusion in the vulnerable group, as will families with dependent children under age 5. This protection means that entitlement to CTR will be based on 100% of Council Tax liability should this reduce and if they transition to UC and fall under the new UC CTR scheme, and see a reduction in entitlement from April 2020, will have up to 12 months transitional protection.

(b) Disability

Note that a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Of the consultation responses, 47% indicated they were in a household identified as vulnerable with the most widespread being a disabled household. UK statistics indicate that disabled adults in working-age families are much more likely to be in poverty than those who are not disabled – 39% compared with 18%. This is because disabled people are less likely to be in work or more likely to be in low-paid employment.

Additional expenses relating to disability are recognised by the addition of disability premiums and disregarding some disability benefits when calculating CTR and UC.

Signposting and support to claim other reductions of Council tax liability are also done when CTR is applied for. One reduction can be if specified adaptations have been made to assist a disabled person live in their home and the other is where a charge payer is suffering from a Severe Mental Impairment. Moreover, transitional protection will apply where support drops by more than £5 per week and this is enhanced from 6 months to 12 months for households where the claimant, their partner or their dependent children have disability benefits

(c) Gender reassignment

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

(d) Marriage and civil partnership

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

(e) Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy and maternity are a financially difficult time and although generally additional personal allowances in CTR and UC are not given during pregnancy they may be if the mother is unable to work during pregnancy.

Over the last five years, poverty rates for children in lone-parent families have risen by around twice as much as those for children in couple families, information around budgeting support is widely available and referrals can easily be made for this and to organisations who can provide additional funding at this time.

Moreover, transitional protection will apply where support drops by more than £5 per week and this is enhanced from 6 months to 12 months for families with dependent children aged under 5.

(f) Race

Note that the protected characteristic 'race' refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

UK statistics find that Bangladeshi and Pakistani families have experienced much greater rates of poverty than all other ethnic groups and this has been the case for 20 years. Poverty rates are higher among all ethnic minority groups compared with those among the majority White British, therefore it could be that there are proportionally higher numbers of claims from some ethnic minority groups than others when compared to the proportion in population.

The calculation of entitlement to CTR does not make reference to race and is not impacted by it.

(g) Religion or belief

No direct impacts identified specific to this equality group, however some families may be larger than others due to their beliefs.

(h) Sex

There are more women in receipt of benefits as single parents than male single parents, 1270 female single parent households compared to 53 male single parent households of the current Council Tax Reduction benefit cohort.

APPENDIX C

(i) Sexual orientation

No impacts identified specific to this equality group.

(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

Effectively running two Council Tax Reduction (CTR) schemes side by side may seem confusing but each works well with other Welfare Benefits, current CTR works well with Housing Benefit as the incomes and needs are assessed the same. The new CTR scheme for households on UC will remove the introduced complexities or marginal fluctuations in earnings impacting UC and in turn CTR.

It important that families on a low income who are often less able to budget are clear about the support they will receive.

Moreover, transitional protection **will** apply where support drops by more than £5 per week **and this is enhanced from 6 months to 12 months for** households where the claimant or their partner have war pensions or Armed Forces Independent Payment incomes.

11. Action plan – New equality impacts will be identified in different stages throughout the planning and implementation stages of changes to your strategy, policy, plan, project, contract or major change to your service. How will you monitor these going forward? Also, how will you ensure that any potential negative impacts of the changes will be mitigated? (Please include dates where possible for when you will update this EqIA accordingly.)

This Eqia will be reviewed in 3 years allowing for changes in the scheme and caseload demographics to be fully realised.

12. Do you have any additional comments?

13. Sign off

APPENDIX C

Name and job title of lead officer for this equality impact assessment:

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

Date of EqIA sign off:

Date of next review of the equalities impact assessment: 01 October 2022

All EqIAs need to be sent to Helen Crowther, Equality and Anti-Poverty Officer. Has this been sent to Helen Crowther?

Yes

No

Date to be published on Cambridge City Council website: