

Community impact assessments – for services, policies and projects

What is a community impact assessment? 1

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What is a community impact assessment?

A community impact assessment is an important part of our commitment to delivering better services for our communities. The form will help us find out what impact or consequences our functions, policies, procedures and projects have on our communities, as well as employees and potential employees.

By undertaking an impact assessment, we are able to:

1. Take into account the needs, experiences and circumstances of those groups of people who use (or don't / can't use) our services.
2. Identify any inequalities people may experience.
3. Think about the other ways in which we can deliver our services which will not lead to inequalities.
4. Develop better policy-making, procedures and services.

Background

Name of service / policy / project and date	Revenues and Benefits. Discretionary Housing Payment Policy 2024
Lead officer	Jayne Gilpin, Head of Revenues and Benefits

Other people involved in completing this form	David Wyatt, Deputy Revenues and Benefits Manager
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Step 1 - About the service / policy / project

What is the aim of the service / policy / project and what outcomes is it contributing to	The Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme is designed to provide further financial assistance to recipients of Housing Benefit and Universal Credit where the housing costs element is included in their current award. It is payable where additional help with housing costs is required with awards being made under the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 which provide Local Authorities with broad discretion on the amount of money paid out and the way the scheme is administered.
Who are the primary customers of the service / policy / project and how do they / will they benefit	<p>The primary customers for this service are those who are in receipt of either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, where the housing costs element is included in their current award. All other applicants are excluded from the scheme.</p> <p>If an applicant has a shortfall in the level of Housing Benefit or UC housing element, they can be awarded a DHP if they meet one or more of the qualifying conditions. If an award is made the applicant will benefit financially and will be in a better position to meet their rent liability.</p>
How and where is the service / policy / project implemented	The Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme is administered within the Revenues and Benefits Service.
What potential barriers might already exist to achieving these outcomes	If the person requiring help does not make a DHP application and/or engage with the Benefits Service when requests for further information are made.

Step 2 – What do you know already about your existing / potential customers

What existing information and data do you have about your existing / potential customers e.g. Statistics, customer feedback, performance information	<p>Every applicant making a Discretionary Housing Payment application provides the following personal information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the date of birth, sex and nationality of each person in the household • the income of each person in the household, including non-dependants (for example grown up children) • the capital of each person in the household • whether any person has a disability • whether the person is in a same sex relationship
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	<p>The information provided by the customer is not for statistical purposes. The information is obtained only to be able to determine a DHP entitlement. No data is held on the system relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual orientation • ethnicity and/or race • religion or belief <p>Information may be held, subject to the customer volunteering it on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pregnancy and/or maternity/paternity • gender reassignment
<p>What does it tell you about who uses your service / policy and those that don't?</p>	<p>People are accessing the service as they do not have enough household income to pay their rent. The reason for claiming assistance is purely financial. There are no other advantages. It tells us that those who do not claim assistance and pay their rent from their household income do not require the same level of financial support as those that do.</p> <p>The information and data held tells us the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the age of the customer and others in the household • the number of men and women claiming a DHP • the number of customers who have responsibility for a child or children • the number of people in the household • whether there are any disabilities • the household income • whether any capital is held
<p>What have you learnt about real barriers to your service from any consultation with customers and any stakeholder groups?</p>	<p>No adverse feedback has been provided from customers, advice agencies and stakeholder groups.</p> <p>The service is made widely available to ensure that all members of the community can access it. Application forms are available and can be emailed or posted to customers. The application form is also available to be completed on line.</p> <p>There are various other options available in the town centre for people to take advice on claiming a DHP, including CAB.</p> <p>Customers identified as having difficulties in paying their rent are also invited to make claims for council tax support, to ensure that they maximise the welfare benefits available to them.</p>

If not, who do you have plans to consult with about the service / policy / project?

Not applicable.

Step 3 - Assessing community impact

How does your service / policy / project impact on different groups in the community?

Group	What are you already doing to benefit this group	What are you doing that might disadvantage this group	What could you do differently to benefit this group	No impact on this group
People belonging to race, cultural and ethnic groups	No specific benefits identified for this group	No specific disadvantages identified for this group	Nothing identified	No specific impact identified
People who are male or female, non-binary or other	No specific benefits identified for this group	No specific disadvantages identified for this group	Nothing identified	No specific impact identified
People who intend or plan to undergo or who are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment	No specific benefits identified for this group	No specific disadvantages identified for this group	Nothing identified	No specific impact identified
People of different ages, including children and older people	The policy may provide support to people who are care leavers or those that are older	No specific disadvantages identified for this group	Nothing identified	No specific impact identified
People with disabilities and/or mental health conditions	The policy may provide support to people with disabilities, mental health conditions or long term health challenges	No specific disadvantages identified for this group	Nothing identified	No specific impact identified
People who have a religion or belief, or who do not	No specific benefits identified for this group	No specific disadvantages identified for this group	Nothing identified	No specific impact identified
People who are who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual	No specific benefits identified for this group	No specific disadvantages identified for this group	Nothing identified	No specific impact identified
People who are married or in a Civil Partnership	No specific benefits identified for this group	No specific disadvantages identified for this group	Nothing identified	No specific impact identified
People who are pregnant or subject to maternity arrangements	No specific benefits identified for this group	No specific disadvantages identified for this group	Nothing identified	No specific impact identified

Other groups or communities

The policy may provide support to people on low incomes, domestic violence victims and refugees

No specific disadvantages to these groups or communities

The policy allows for a DHP to be paid to people of these groups where specific criteria is met

No specific impact identified

Step 4 - what are the differences

<p>Are any groups affected in different ways to others as a result of the service / policy / project?</p>	<p>The policy allows for certain groups, who fit specified criteria, to have awards made to them. The policy is advantageous to the priority groups listed below. This includes the elderly, people with disabilities and those applicants who are fleeing domestic violence.</p>
<p>Does your service / policy / project either directly or indirectly discriminate?</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p>If yes, what can be done to improve this?</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>Are there any other ways in which the service / project can help support priority communities in Cheltenham?</p>	<p>Yes. The proposed draft scheme has been designed to protect where possible and provide greater financial assistance to priority communities. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting people who out of necessity are temporarily occupying accommodation which is unaffordable from their benefits, such as foster carers between fostering placements • supporting young people and care leavers as they transition to adult life • supporting people who are in unaffordable tenancies but cannot move to more affordable accommodation due to particular reasons such as health, disability or child protection • supporting domestic violence victims who need to move to a place of safety • helping applicants through personal crisis and challenging life events • supporting applicants or their partners who are due to reach State Pension age which means they will no longer be subject to an under-occupation reduction • assisting working age customers in receipt of UC where a dual liability for rent is unavoidable, including those who have fled their main home because they are a victim of domestic abuse • supporting people who are refugees who need to maintain stability in their financial and housing circumstances • supporting disabled people who receive informal care and support in their current neighbourhood from family and friends, which would not be available in a new area. In this respect, also consider families who have a child with an impairment who rely heavily on local support networks

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting the elderly or frail who have lived in the area for a long time and would find it difficult to establish support networks in a new area • supporting people with health or medical problems, either physical or mental, who need access to local medical services or support that might not be available elsewhere • supporting families with a social services intervention, for example highly dependent adults, children at risk or involvement in a family intervention project • supporting disabled people who need, or have had, significant adaptations made to their property, or where they are living in a property particularly suited to their needs. This includes properties which have been adapted for other members of the household, such as disabled children or non-dependants • supporting people with shared care arrangements; the person who does not receive the Child Benefit will not receive calculations for the children in their housing entitlement
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Step 5 – taking things forward

What are the key actions to be carried out and how will they be resourced and monitored?	<p>Discretionary Housing Payments have been in existence since 2001. The current policy is being updated to reflect the needs of residents. Dedicated staff within the Revenues and Benefits Team will administer the applications, deal with disputes and make payments where awards have been agreed.</p> <p>Since April 2013, DWP has monitored how DHPs are being used to support claimants affected by the Welfare Reforms. This monitoring information continues to improve the department's understanding of how DHPs are being used. The department requests information on DHPs at specific times during the financial year, including expenditure and number of awards. Some of this information, such as the financial forecast and actual expenditure at mid-year and end of year, is mandatory. Other information is voluntary.</p>
Who will play a role in the decision-making process?	<p>Nominated Benefits Service team members; Deputy Revenues and Benefits Manager Head of Revenues and Benefits Section 151 Officer</p>
What are your / the project's learning and development needs?	<p>Full training will be provided to Revenues and Benefits staff, responsible for the administration of the DHP Policy.</p>

How will you capture these actions in your service / project planning?

The proposed changes will to be introduced from 1 April 2024. The activities required to implement the changes to the policy will not impact on service delivery. The implementation of the changes will be overseen by the Head of Revenues and Benefits and the Deputy Revenues and Benefits Manager.