

Community impact assessments – for services, policies and projects

What is a community impact assessment? 1

 Background 1

 Step 1: About the service, policy or projectError! Bookmark not defined.

 Step 2: What do you already know about your existing and potential customers?Error! Bookmark not defined.

 Step 3: Assessing community impact.....Error! Bookmark not defined.

 Step 4: What are the differences?.....Error! Bookmark not defined.

 Step 5: Taking things forward.....Error! Bookmark not defined.

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. Council Tax Support Fund from 1 April 2023.
Lead officer	Jayne Gilpin, Head of Revenues and Benefits
Other people involved in completing this form	David Wyatt, Deputy Revenues and Benefits Manager

Step 1 - About the service / policy / project

What is the aim of the service / policy / project and what outcomes is it contributing to	<p>Council Tax Support is provided to around 6,500 households in Cheltenham at an annual cost of just over £6.5m. This includes working and pension age claimants. Approximately 68% of these households are of working age. The cost of the Council Tax Support scheme is met by this council and the precepting authorities who are the county council and the police. The share of the cost is the same as the share of the Council Tax.</p> <p>On 19th December 2022 the Government announced the Council Tax Support Fund for local authorities to support the most vulnerable households with 2023/24 Council Tax bills. Funding has been allocated based on the Council's share of Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) claimants. Cheltenham Borough Council has received a grant of £173,493.00. The Government expects Councils to use the majority of funding to provide all recipients of Local Council Tax Support at the start of the financial year 2023-24 with a further reduction in their annual Council Tax bill of up to £25. The Council can use its remaining funding allocation to award higher amounts to Council Tax Support recipients and support other economically vulnerable households.</p> <p>The Government expects the Council to provide the support using its discretionary powers under s13A (1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.</p>
Who are the primary customers of the service / policy / project and how do they / will they benefit	<p>In the main, the scheme will apply to customers who currently receive Council Tax Support or apply in the future for help to have their Council Tax discounted. The scheme will apply from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 or until the funding is fully utilised, whichever is earlier.</p> <p>The Council is required to reduce the Council Tax liability of all Local Council Tax Support recipients with an outstanding balance at the start of the 2023/24 financial year. It can decide how to allocate the remaining funding. There will be an application process for those who do not currently receive Local Council Tax Support but whose circumstances meet the policy criteria.</p>
How and where is the service / policy / project implemented	<p>The Revenues and Benefits service, based at the Municipal Offices provides the service to customers and the Council Tax Support Fund will be implemented from there.</p>

What potential barriers might already exist to achieving these outcomes	None
--	------

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

<p>What existing information and data do you have about your existing / potential customers e.g. Statistics, customer feedback, performance information</p>	<p>Every applicant making a claim for council tax support 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 <p>The information obtained from the customer is not for statistical purposes. The information is obtained only to determine a council tax support entitlement which will then inform whether a person is entitled to a payment from the council tax support fund. 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 Council Tax. 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 council tax 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 council tax support • 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

What have you learnt about real barriers to your service from any consultation with customers and any stakeholder groups?	No adverse feedback has been provided from consultation with customers and stakeholder groups for the council tax support scheme. No consultation is required for the council tax support fund scheme.
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 from black and minority ethnic groups	No specific benefits to this group	No specific disadvantages to this group	There is no requirement to do things differently to benefit this group	No specific impact identified
People who are male or female	No specific benefits to this group	No specific disadvantages to this group	There is no requirement to do things differently to benefit this group	No specific impact identified
People who are transitioning from one gender to another	No specific benefits to this group	No specific disadvantages to this group	There is no requirement to do things differently to benefit this group	No specific impact identified
Older people / children and young people	Council Tax Support Fund is awarded to any age group (over 18) if their financial position warrants help. This includes people of working age and pension age	No specific disadvantages to this group	There is no requirement to do things differently to benefit this group	No specific impact identified
People with disabilities and mental health challenges	Council Tax Support Fund is awarded to any age group (over 18) if their financial position warrants help. This includes people of working age and pension age.	No specific disadvantages to this group	There is no requirement to do things differently to benefit this group	No specific impact identified
People who have a particular religion or belief	No specific benefits to this group	No specific disadvantages to this group	There is no requirement to do things differently to benefit this group	No specific impact identified
People who are attracted to their	No specific benefits to	No specific disadvantages	There is no requirement to	No specific impact

own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	this group	to this group	do things differently to benefit this group	identified
People who are married or in a Civil Partnership	No specific benefits to this group	No specific disadvantages to this group	There is no requirement to do things differently to benefit this group	No specific impact identified
People who are pregnant or who are on maternity leave	No specific benefits to this group	No specific disadvantages to this group	There is no requirement to do things differently to benefit this group	No specific impact identified
Other groups or communities	No specific benefits to these groups or communities	No specific disadvantages to these groups or communities	There is no requirement to do things differently to benefit these groups	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>Yes. Councils became responsible for designing their own local council tax support scheme for <u>working age people only</u>. The Government also reduced the funding given to Councils to pay for the scheme. Cheltenham Borough Council introduced its local council tax support scheme in April 2013 which more or less replicated the council tax benefit scheme. <u>Council tax support for pensioners was not localised and continues to be provided for by a national scheme.</u></p> <p>As a result of this people of working age are affected by a Local Council Tax Support scheme. The Government produced its own Equality Impact Assessment in 2012 prior to the introduction of localised support being introduced. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8464/2063707.pdf</p> <p>In localising support for Council Tax, the Government believes that local schemes should provide support for the most vulnerable, including vulnerable pensioners. The Government has concluded that support for vulnerable pensioners should be delivered through a national framework of criteria and allowances. Local authorities already have clearly defined responsibilities in relation to, and awareness of, the most vulnerable groups and individuals other than pensioners in their areas. This includes, for example, through their responsibilities under:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Child Poverty Act 2010, which imposes a duty on local authorities to have regard to and address child poverty and their partners, to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty in their local areas; • The Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, and Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, which include a range of duties relating to the welfare needs of disabled people; • The Housing Act 1996, which gives local authorities a duty to prevent homelessness with special regard to vulnerable groups.
<p>Does your service / policy / project either directly or indirectly discriminate?</p>	<p>The Council Tax Support scheme is intended to support only people of working age with low incomes. However the Government's view is that by giving local authorities a significant degree of control over how a reduction in expenditure is achieved, allowing councils to balance local priorities and their own financial circumstances. Reducing the costs of support for Council Tax is a contribution to the Government's vital programme of deficit reduction. Giving local authorities a financial stake in the provision of support for Council Tax and so a greater stake in the economic future of their local area, so supporting the Government's wider agenda to enable stronger, balanced economic growth across the country. This reform creates stronger incentives for councils to get people back into work and so support the positive work incentives that are being introduced through the Government's implementation of Universal Credit.</p> <p>The Council Tax Support Fund will however provide assistance to those people of pension and working age, so with this fund people of working age are not directly discriminated against.</p>
<p>If yes, what can be done to improve this?</p>	<p>The most financially impacted people in the borough will be supported by the Council Tax Support Fund. Awards will be made automatically to current recipients of LCTS and an application process made available to those residents who do not currently receive LCTS but have a low income, which is specified in the Policy.</p>

<p>Are there any other ways in which the service / project can help support priority communities in Cheltenham?</p>	<p>Yes. The LCTS scheme has already been designed with the following elements to ensure that within the scheme certain priority communities face less of an impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child benefit and maintenance payments made in respect of children are wholly disregarded • a weekly disregard of up to £175 (for one child) or £300 (two children or more) will apply to customers who pay child care and who fit the qualifying conditions • an additional £100 weekly disregard will apply for each disabled child living in the household • an earnings disregard of £10 per week will apply to those customers who fit the qualifying conditions • Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Disability Living Allowance, the Limited Work Capability element paid within Universal Credit and War Pensions will be wholly disregarded • customers who receive Job Seeker’s Allowance, Income Support and Employment and Support Allowance will continue to receive up to 100% support ensuring that they continue to pay no (or very little) council tax <p>The Council Tax Support Fund will provide further financial assistance to the priority communities in Cheltenham to negate the impact of cost of living increases.</p>
--	---

Step 5 – taking things forward

<p>What are the key actions to be carried out and how will they be resourced and monitored?</p>	<p>Civica, the software provider for Open Revenues has provided software to enable the awards from the Council Tax Support Fund scheme to be made and administered alongside the LCTS. The software allows us to estimate how many scheme recipients there will be so that we can determine what level of awards can be made.</p> <p>The software provides reports to enable the Head of Revenues to monitor the actual spend against the Government funding provided to Cheltenham BC.</p>
<p>Who will play a role in the decision-making process?</p>	<p>Government has provided the funding for the Council to provide the support using its discretionary powers under s13A (1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992</p> <p>Council is being asked to approve a policy on 20 February 2023, which sets out how awards will be made and the scheme administered</p>
<p>What are your / the project’s learning and development needs?</p>	<p>Full training will be provided to Revenues and Benefits staff ahead of the annual billing exercise in March 2023 which will reinforce the scheme conditions.</p>
<p>How will you capture these actions in your service / project planning?</p>	<p>The proposed scheme to be introduced from 1 April 2023 is not expected to impact on service planning. However the scheme implementation forms part of the annual Council Tax and uprating of benefits exercise. This exercise is carried out during February 2023 and will be overseen by the Head of Revenues and Benefits and the Deputy Revenues and Benefits Manager.</p>