

**Equality Impact
Assessment
Council Tax Reduction
Scheme (CTRS)**

Service Area	Revenues & Benefits Service
Policy/Service being assessed	Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Is this is a new or existing policy/service?	Existing Policy
If existing policy/service please state date of last assessment	21 August 2015
EIA Review team – List of members	Council Tax Reduction Project Group
Date of this assessment	3 December 2019
Signature of completing officer (to be signed after the EIA has been completed)	Head of corporate finance
Name and signature of Head of Service (to be signed after the EIA has been completed)	Chief Finance Officer

Form A1

INITIAL SCREENING FOR STRATEGIES/POLICIES/FUNCTIONS FOR EQUALITIES RELEVANCE TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AND PROMOTE EQUALITY



High relevance/priority



Medium relevance/priority



Low or no relevance/ priority

Note:

1. Tick coloured boxes appropriately, and depending on degree of relevance to each of the equality strands
2. Summaries of the legislation/guidance should be used to assist this screening process

Policy - CTRS	Relevance/Risk to Equalities																							
State the Function/Policy /Service/Strategy being assessed:	Gender			Race			Disability			Sexual Orientation			Religion/Belief			Age			Socio-economic			Priority status For EIA		
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
CTRS – Maintain the current maximum level of council tax reduction for protected working age groups (those in receipt of severe disability premium, carers allowance and families with a child under the age of 5) at 84% - so that taxpayers have to pay at least 16% of the council tax charge.			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓
CTRS – Maintain the current maximum level of council tax reduction for the non-protected working age group at 80% so that			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓

Policy - CTRS	Relevance/Risk to Equalities																							
State the Function/Policy /Service/Strategy being assessed:	Gender			Race			Disability			Sexual Orientation			Religion/Belief			Age			Socio-economic			Priority status For EIA		
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
taxpayers have to pay at least 20% of the council tax charge.																								
			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓		✓	
CTRS – Maintain the current Band C restriction so that working age taxpayers living in properties above a Band C continue to have CTR calculated on the Band C liability			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓		✓	
CTRS – Maintain the current capital limit for CTR entitlement at £6k so that working age taxpayers who have capital of £6k and above would not be entitled to CTR (capital is defined as savings or property owned but not the property the taxpayer lives in or personal possessions)			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓		✓	

Stage 1 – Scoping and Defining (1) What are the aims and objectives of policy/service?	The Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) has been in place since 01 April 2013 and replaced the National Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme. CTRS is a locally determined system of council tax support. The aim of the CTRS scheme is to provide financial assistance to council taxpayers who have low incomes.
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	Persons who are of state pension age (persons who have reached the qualifying age of State Pension Credit) are protected under the scheme in that the calculation of the reduction they are to receive has been set by Central Government. For working age applicants however the reduction they receive is to be determined by the local authority. This equality impact assessment looks at the potential for not only protecting pensioners (as required under the legislation) but also retaining a large amount of the protections already present for working age within the existing CTR scheme carried forward from the CTB scheme. Where a working age claimant applies or continues to receive Council Tax Reduction, it is proposed that the reduction will be calculated on the same rules as the current CTRS scheme as follows; • Maintain the current maximum level of council tax reduction at 84% for protected working age groups , those being in receipt of severe disability premium, carers allowance and families with a child under the age of 5, working age so that taxpayers have to pay at least 16% of the council tax charge • Maintain the current maximum level of council tax reduction for the non-protected working age group at 80% so that taxpayers have to pay at least 20% of the council tax charge. • Maintain the current Band C restriction so that working age taxpayers living in properties above a Band C continue to have CTR calculated on the Band C liability • Maintain the current capital limit for CTR entitlement at £6k so that working age taxpayers who have capital of £6k and above would not be entitled to CTR (capital is defined as savings or property owned but not the property the taxpayer lives in or personal possessions)
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	These parameters will apply from 01 April 2020. Central Government has not been prescriptive in how an authority should protect vulnerable groups, but points to the Council's existing responsibilities including the Child Poverty Act 2010, the Disabled Person Act 1986 and the Housing Act 1996 as well as the public sector equality duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The current level of assistance of 11,092 claimants and average council tax reduction per week of £18.98 per claimant is provided.
(2) How does the policy/service fit with the council's wider objectives?	All persons within the Council's area who have a low income may apply for support and assistance with their Council Tax. By making an application, providing evidence of their income and household circumstances, their potential entitlement for support will be calculated in line with Central Government prescribed requirements for the Council Tax Reduction scheme. The maintenance of a full reduction scheme within the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme fits with the Corporate objectives in that it meets, as far as possible, equality and sustainability. The reduction scheme assists the local economy and also ensures, as far as possible within the constraints on a reduced budget, that persons on a low income will be able to meet their Council Tax liability.
(3) What are the expected outcomes of the policy/service? Who is intended to benefit from the policy/service and in what way?	The desired outcomes are as follows; Pension Age Claimants • That all pensioners receive the level of support required by regulations set by Central Government (Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations 2012); • That all pensioner claimants or existing working age claimants who

		rise to pension age are able to receive Council Tax Reduction in line with the regulations; and - That all pensioner claimants continue to receive the correct level of council tax reduction at all times. Working Age Claimants - That all working age claimants are still able to receive Council Tax Reduction ; and - That all working age claimants continue to receive the correct level of council tax reduction at all times.		
Does this policy/service have the potential to directly or indirectly discriminate against any particular group? Please identify all groups that are affected and briefly explain why	RACE NO The reduction support scheme does not take race into account when calculating the level of support	AGE YES The reduction support scheme takes into account age when calculating the level of support available. Pensioners will not see any reduction in the support paid (as they are protected under regulations set by central government). Working age claimants will not be affected due to the current scheme being maintained for 2020/2021	GENDER NO The reduction support scheme does not take gender into account when calculating the level of support	
	RELIGION/BELIEF NO The reduction support scheme does not take religion or belief into account when calculating the level of support	DISABILITY NO The reduction support scheme continues to have in-built protections for disability in the form of; - the award of additional premiums for disablement; - disregarding higher levels of income where a claimant is in remunerative work and is disabled; and - there is no requirement to have non dependant deductions where a claimant is disabled	SEXUAL ORIENTATION NO The reduction support scheme does not take sexual orientation into account when calculating the level of support	

(5) Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service?	No – customers will continue to access the reduction scheme in an identical means to the existing Council Tax Reduction scheme. The approach of the Council has been to provide a range of options for claiming and customers are encouraged to make a claim at any time. Universal credit claimants are directed to make a council tax reduction claim by their department of work and pensions key worker contact.
(6) How does the policy/service contribute to promotion of equality?	The Council Tax Reduction scheme provides essential help towards the Council Tax liability for all claimants on a low income. By continuing to assess entitlement on a mean tested basis, similar to the national approach to means tested benefits, the scheme is equitable.
(7) Does the policy/service have the potential to promote good relations between groups?	Due to the maintenance of the existing CTR scheme all working age claimants will see a continuation to their current entitlement. The Council is maintaining the means test, which allows the most vulnerable to receive a higher level of support

<u>Stage 2 - Information Gathering</u>	
(1) What type and range of evidence or information have you used to help you make a judgement about the policy or service?	Extensive modelling from existing data. Modelling information has included number of working age claimants and amount of council tax reduction paid (<i>5,375 claimants and average amount per week of £17.40 per claimant</i>), claim numbers and reduction paid across council tax bands, range of income types and household make-up.
(2) What consultation/ information has been used? What new consultation, if any, do you need to undertake?	No consultation required due to maintaining the council's existing CTR scheme.

<u>Stage 3 – Making a Judgement</u>	
(1) From your data and consultations is there any adverse or negative impact identified for any particular group? Is there any evidence of needs not being met? e.g. language or physical access barriers; lack of appropriate resources or facilities	• No - the impact on the working age group is consistent
(2) If there is an adverse impact, can this be justified?	• N/A
(3) What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact?	• Assistance in meeting payments – 12 monthly instalments / payment arrangements to prevent recovery process • Advice of the Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Scheme for customers experiencing exceptional hardship
(4) Is there any positive impact? Does it promote equality of opportunity between different groups and actively address discrimination?	• The existing scheme is being maintained for 2020/2021

<u>Stage 4 – Action Planning, Review & Monitoring</u>	
If No Further Action is required then go to – Review & Monitoring (1) Action Planning – Specify any changes or improvements which can be made to the service or policy to mitigate or eradicate negative or adverse impact on specific groups, including resource implications.	
(2) Review and Monitoring State how and when you will monitor policy and EIA Action Plan	Full monitoring of scheme implementation will be undertaken on a monthly basis in line with the accepted project plan. The Revenues and Benefits Service will undertake monthly and quarterly collection of data. The Council will review the policy annually. It is expected that where there are changes in legislation and funding, that the level of Council Tax Support available will change.