

Shropshire Council Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)

Name of service change: *Review of Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief and Council Tax Discretionary Discounts*

Contextual Notes 2016

The What and the Why:

The Shropshire Council Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) approach helps to identify whether or not any new or significant changes to services, including policies, procedures, functions or projects, may have an adverse impact on a particular group of people, and whether the human rights of individuals may be affected.

This assessment encompasses consideration of social inclusion. This is so that we are thinking as carefully and completely as possible about all Shropshire groups and communities, including people in rural areas and people we may describe as vulnerable, for example due to low income or to safeguarding concerns, as well as people in what are described as the nine 'protected characteristics' of groups of people in our population, eg Age. We demonstrate equal treatment to people who are in these groups and to people who are not, through having what is termed 'due regard' to their needs and views when developing and implementing policy and strategy and when commissioning, procuring, arranging or delivering services.

It is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess the equality and human rights impact of changes proposed or made to services. Carrying out ESIIAs helps us as a public authority to ensure that, as far as possible, we are taking actions to meet the general equality duty placed on us by the Equality Act 2010, and to thus demonstrate that the three equality aims are integral to our decision making processes. These are: eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations.

The How:

The guidance and the evidence template are combined into one document for ease of access and usage, including questions that set out to act as useful prompts to service areas at each stage. The assessment comprises two parts: a screening part, and a full report part.

Screening (Part One) enables energies to be focussed on the service changes for which there are potentially important equalities and human rights implications. If screening indicates that the impact is likely to be positive overall, or is likely to have a medium or low negative or positive impact on certain groups of people, a full report is not required. Energies should instead focus on review and monitoring and ongoing evidence collection, enabling incremental improvements and adjustments that will lead to overall positive impacts for all groups in Shropshire.

A **full report (Part Two)** needs to be carried out where screening indicates that there are considered to be or likely to be significant negative impacts for certain groups of people, and/or where there are human rights implications. Where there is some uncertainty as to what decision to reach based on the evidence available, a full report is recommended, as it enables more evidence to be collected that will help the service area to reach an informed opinion.

Shropshire Council Part 1 ESIIA: initial screening and assessment

Please note: prompt questions and guidance within boxes are in italics. You are welcome to type over them when completing this form. Please extend the boxes if you need more space for your commentary.

Name of service change

Review of Council discretionary around non-domestic rate relief and council tax discretionary discount

Aims of the service change and description

The Authority has responsibility for the collection and administration of Business Rates and Council Tax revenues. There is complex legislation detailing how the amount due from Business Rates and Council Tax is calculated. Within the legislation and government guidelines, the Local Authority has certain discretions to award reliefs and discounts in certain circumstances. The current Business Rate Relief and Council Tax Discretionary Discount Policy was last considered by Council on 14 May 2015. At this time there was a commitment to review the policy every three years.

As part of the review of the policy currently taking place the following amendments are being proposed to take effect from 1 April 2019.

- *Qualifying criteria for discretionary top up relief (for charities that already receive 80% mandatory relief) that provide a benefit to the local community to be more clearly defined, and awarded in respect of the following types of organisation:*
 - *Community Centres, Village Halls, Meeting Rooms*
 - *Scouts, guides, cadets and youth clubs*
 - *Museums*
 - *Drop in/advice centres*
 - *Nursery/pre-schools*
 - *Sports/community centres providing sporting leisure facilities to the general public with no membership requirement*
 - *Organisations that provide care and support to vulnerable people*
 - *Organisations providing animal welfare, advancement of religion or the arts*

The net result of this amendment would be to remove the additional 20% top up relief for those Housing Associations that qualify for 80% mandatory relief. The estimated saving would be £97,000 (£47,530 to Shropshire Council).

- *Continue to award top up relief to Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCS) and Charity Shops (under certain conditions)*
- *Remove discretionary rate relief to Sports Clubs that are not registered as CASCS. The estimated saving would be £180,000 (£88,200 to Shropshire Council).*
- *Amend qualifying criteria for Social Enterprises/Community Interest Companies that are non-profit making, to only award relief where there is no provision to remunerate the directors of the company. It is not possible to estimate the cost*

saving of this change as qualification for relief under the new criteria would have to be established by the Business Rates Team undertaking a full review which will take place in the autumn.

- *Continue to award 100% relief to Village Halls, community centres and similar charitable organisations (Senior Citizen Clubs, Scouts/Guide Huts) where the emphasis is on recreational activity rather than social activity.*
- *Minor amendments to the criteria for reviewing discretionary council tax discounts*

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change

- *members of the public*
- *members*
- *members of the business community*
-

Evidence used for screening of the service change

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change

A consultation on the proposed scheme for 2019 ran from 5 July 2018 to 15 August 2018. Business groups and representative bodies were made aware of the consultation to allow them to respond.

All businesses that currently qualify for business rate discretionary relief have already been contacted in March 2018 to advise them that this review was taking place.

Potential impact on Protected Characteristic groups and on social inclusion

Using the results of evidence gathering and specific consultation and engagement, please consider how the service change as proposed may affect people within the nine Protected Characteristic groups and people at risk of social exclusion.

1. Have the intended audiences and target groups been consulted about:
 - their current needs and aspirations and what is important to them;
 - the potential impact of this service change on them, whether positive or negative, intended or unintended;
 - the potential barriers they may face.
2. If the intended audience and target groups have not been consulted directly, have their representatives or people with specialist knowledge been consulted, or has research been explored?
3. Have other stakeholder groups and secondary groups, for example carers of service users, been explored in terms of potential unintended impacts?
4. Are there systems set up to:
 - monitor the impact, positive or negative, intended or intended, for different groups;
 - enable open feedback and suggestions from a variety of audiences through a variety of methods.

5. Are there any Human Rights implications? For example, is there a breach of one or more of the human rights of an individual or group?
6. Will the service change as proposed have a positive or negative impact on:
 - fostering good relations?
 - social inclusion?

Initial assessment for each group

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have on a group, through inserting a tick in the relevant column. Please add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

| Protected Characteristic groups and other groups in Shropshire | High negative impact <i>Part Two ESIIA required</i> | High positive impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i> | Medium positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i> | Low positive or negative impact <i>Part One ESIIA required</i> |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group eg child for whom there are safeguarding concerns eg older person with disability) | | | | √ |
| Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV) | | | | √ |
| Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment) | | | | √ |
| Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment) | | | | √ |
| Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment) | | | | √ |
| Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller) | | | | √ |
| Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others) | | | | √ |
| Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment) | | | | √ |
| Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment) | | | | √ |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable) | | | | √ |
|--|--|--|--|---|

Guidance on what a negative impact might look like

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| High Negative | Significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place or no evidence available: urgent need for consultation with customers, general public, workforce |
| Medium Negative | Some potential impact, some mitigating measures in place but no evidence available how effective they are: would be beneficial to consult with customers, general public, workforce |
| Low Negative | Almost bordering on non-relevance to the ESIIA process (heavily legislation led, very little discretion can be exercised, limited public facing aspect, national policy affecting degree of local impact possible) |

Decision, review and monitoring

| Decision | Yes | No |
|----------------------------------|-----|----|
| Part One ESIIA Only? | √ | |
| Proceed to Part Two Full Report? | | √ |

If Part One, please now use the boxes below and sign off at the foot of the page. If Part Two, please move on to the full report stage.

| Actions to mitigate negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change |
|--|
| <i>This is the section where you can explain what the service area is already planning to do. Check: for the groups who may be affected, what actions will you now take to mitigate or enhance impact of the service change? For example, if you are reducing a service there may be further use you could make of publicity and awareness raising through social media and other channels to reach more people who may be affected.</i> |

| Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change |
|---|
| <i>This is the section where you can explain what actions the service area will be taking to review and monitor the impact of the service change, and with what frequency. Check: what arrangements will you have in place to continue to collect evidence and data and to continue to engage with all groups who may be affected by the service change, including the intended</i> |

audiences? For example, customer feedback and wider community engagement opportunities, including involvement of elected Shropshire Council councillors for a locality.

Scrutiny at Part One screening stage

| People involved | Signatures | Date |
|--|-------------------|--------------|
| <i>Lead officer carrying out the screening</i> | Phil Weir | 12 June 2018 |
| <i>Any internal support*</i> | | |
| <i>Any external support**</i> | | |
| <i>Head of service</i> | James Walton | 12 June 2018 |

**This refers to other officers within the service area*

***This refers either to support external to the service but within the Council, eg from the Rurality and Equalities Specialist, or support external to the Council, eg from a peer authority*

Sign off at Part One screening stage

| Name | Signatures | Date |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <i>Lead officer's name</i> | Phil Weir | 30 August 2018 |
| <i>Head of service's name</i> | James Walton | 30 August 2018 |

Shropshire Council Part 2 ESIIA: full report

Guidance notes on how to carry out the full report

The decision that you are seeking to make, as a result of carrying out this full report, will take one of four routes:

1. To make changes to satisfy any concerns raised through the specific consultation and engagement process and through your further analysis of the evidence to hand;
2. To make changes that will remove or reduce the potential of the service change to adversely affect any of the Protected Characteristic groups and those who may be at risk of social exclusion;
3. To adopt the service change as it stands, with evidence to justify your decision even though it could adversely affect some groups;
4. To find alternative means to achieve the aims of the service change.

The Part Two Full Report therefore starts with a forensic scrutiny of the evidence and consultation results considered during Part One Screening, and identification of gaps in data for people in any of the nine Protected Characteristic groups and people who may be at risk of social exclusion, eg rural communities. There may also be gaps identified to you independently of this process, from sources including the intended audiences and target groups themselves.

The forensic scrutiny stage enables you to assess:

- **Which gaps need to be filled right now, to help you to make a decision about the likely impact of the proposed service change?**

This could involve methods such as: one off service area focus groups; use of customer records; examination of data held elsewhere in the organisation, such as corporate customer complaints; and reference to data held by similar authorities or at national level from which reliable comparisons might be drawn, including via the Rural Services Network. Quantitative evidence could include data from NHS Foundation Trusts, community and voluntary sector bodies, and partnerships including the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Health and Well Being Board. Qualitative evidence could include commentary from stakeholders.

- **Which gaps could be filled within a timeframe that will enable you to monitor potential barriers and any positive or negative impacts on groups and individuals further along into the process?**

This could potentially be as part of wider corporate and partnership efforts to strengthen the evidence base on equalities. Examples would be: joint information sharing protocols about victims of hate crime incidents; the collection of data that will fill gaps across a number of service areas, eg needs of young people with learning disabilities as they progress through into independent living; and publicity awareness campaigns that encourage open feedback and suggestions from a variety of audiences.

Once you have identified your evidence gaps, and decided on the actions you will take right now and further into the process, please record your activity in the following boxes. Please extend the boxes as needed.

Evidence used for assessment of the service change: activity record

How did you carry out further research into the nine Protected Characteristic groups and those who may be at risk of social exclusion, about their current needs and aspirations and about the likely impacts and barriers that they face in day to day living?

And what did it tell you?

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change: activity record

How did you carry out further specific consultation and engagement activity with the intended audiences and with other stakeholders who may be affected by the service change?

And what did it tell you?

Further and ongoing research and consultation with intended audiences and target groups for the service change: activity record

What further research, consultation and engagement activity do you think is required to help fill gaps in our understanding about the potential or known affect that this proposed service change may have on any of the ten groupings and on the intended audiences and target groups? This could be by your service area and/or at corporate and partnership level.

Full report assessment for each group

Please rate the impact as you now perceive it, by inserting a tick. Please give brief comments for each group, to give context to your decision, including what barriers these groups or individuals may face.

| Protected Characteristic groups and other groups in Shropshire | High negative impact | High positive impact | Medium positive or negative impact | Low positive or negative impact |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group eg child for whom there are safeguarding concerns eg older person with disability) | | | | |
| Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV) | | | | |
| Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment) | | | | |
| Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment) | | | | |
| Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment) | | | | |
| Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller) | | | | |
| Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others) | | | | |
| Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment) | | | | |
| Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment) | | | | |
| Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable) | | | | |

ESIIA Full Report decision, review and monitoring

Summary of findings and analysis - ESIIA decision

You should now be in a position to record your decision. Please highlight in bold the route that you have decided to take.

1. To make changes to satisfy any concerns raised through the specific consultation and engagement process and through your further analysis of the evidence to hand;
2. To make changes that will remove or reduce the potential of the service change to adversely affect any of the Protected Characteristic groups and those who may be at risk of social exclusion;
3. To adopt the service change as it stands, with evidence to justify your decision even though it could adversely affect some groups;
4. To find alternative means to achieve the aims of the service change.

Please add any brief overall comments to explain your choice.

You will then need to create an action plan and attach it to this report, to set out what further activity is taking place or is programmed that will:

- *mitigate negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change,*
- AND**
- *review and monitor the impact of the service change*

Please try to ensure that:

- *Your decision is based on the aims of the service change, the evidence collected, consultation and engagement results, relative merits of alternative approaches and compliance with legislation, and that records are kept;*
- *The action plan shows clear links to corporate actions the Council is taking to meet the general equality duty placed on us by the Equality Act 2010, to have due regard to the three equality aims in our decision making processes.*

Scrutiny at Part Two full report stage

| People involved | Signatures | Date |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| <i>Lead officer</i> | | |
| <i>Any internal support</i> | | |
| <i>Any external support</i> | | |
| <i>Head of service</i> | | |

Sign off at Part Two full report stage

| Signature (Lead Officer) | Signature (Head of Service) |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | |
| Date: | Date: |

Appendix: ESIIA Part Two Full Report: Guidance Notes on Action Plan

Please base your action plan on the evidence you find to support your decisions, and the challenges and opportunities you have identified. It could include arrangements for:

- continuing engagement and involvement with intended audiences, target groups and stakeholders;
- monitoring and evaluating the service change for its impact on different groups throughout the process and as the service change is carried out;
- ensuring that any pilot projects are evaluated and take account of issues described in the assessment, and that they are assessed to make sure they are having intended impact;
- ensuring that relevant colleagues are made aware of the assessment;
- disseminating information about the assessment to all relevant stakeholders who will be implementing the service change;
- strengthening the evidence base on equalities.

Please also consider:

- resource implications for in-house and external delivery of the service;
- arrangements for ensuring that external providers of the service are monitored for compliance with the Council's commitments to equality, diversity and social inclusion, and legal requirements including duties under the Equality Act 2010.

And finally, please also ensure that the action plan shows clear links to corporate actions the Council is taking to meet the general equality duty placed on us by the Equality Act 2010, to have due regard to the three equality aims in our decision making processes.

These are:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations

Note: Shropshire Council has referred to good practice elsewhere in refreshing previous equality impact assessment material in 2014 and replacing it with this ESIIA material. The Council is grateful in particular to Leicestershire County Council, for graciously allowing use to be made of their Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHRIAs) material and associated documentation.

For further information on the use of ESIIAs: please contact your head of service or contact Mrs Lois Dale, Rurality and Equalities Specialist and Council policy support on equality, via telephone 01743 255684, or email lois.dale@shropshire.gov.uk.