Shropshire Council
Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA)
Stage One Screening Record 2026

Please note that part A and part B of this document should be completed.

A. Summary Sheet on Accountability and Actions

Name of proposed service change
Council Tax Support Scheme Proposal to disregard Child Benefit as an income in the calculation of Council Tax Support for working age claimants Considered by Cabinet on 9 September 2026 Council tax Support Scheme - Cabinet 9 September 2026

Name of the officer carrying out the screening
Philip Weir

Decision, review, and monitoring

Decision	**Yes**	**No**
Initial (Stage One) ESHIA Only?	Yes	
Proceed to Stage Two Full ESHIA or HIA (part two) Report?		No

If completion of a Stage One screening assessment is an appropriate and proportionate action at this stage, please use the boxes above, and complete both part A and part B of of this template. If a Full or Stage Two report is required, please move on to full report stage once you have completed this initial screening assessment as a record of the considerations which you have given to this matter.

Assessment of likely neutral, negative impact or positive impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations
The proposal is to disregard child benefit as an income in the assessment of Council Tax Support, for working age claimants. This change benefits low-income families with children. It does not directly negatively impact cohorts outside of these claimants and there are no plans at this stage to reduce entitlements to other groups. There is an overall cost of this change estimated at £800k per year (78% of the cost to Shropshire Council and 22% to other precepting authorities)

Assessment of likely neutral, negative or positive impact of the service change in terms of health and wellbeing considerations

This change will benefit low-income families with children who claim Council Tax Support only. This may lead to potential increase in discretionary income improving financial resilience against future shocks.

The overall cost is estimated at £800k (78% of the cost to Shropshire Council and 22% to precepting authorities) which will be picked up by the wider Council Taxpayer. The total Council Tax debit for 2026-27 is £311.5 million. This additional cost represents around 0.25% of the total Council Tax Debit for 2026-27.

It should be noted that there are other factors that impact the applicable amount for other household types and other income disregards and deductions that feed into the overall assessment of need. Also, pensioners continue to have their Council Tax Support assessed against a continuation of the former Council Tax Benefit rules which continues to be a more generous assessment.

There is no proposal to reduce benefit entitlement for other groups. Instead, the proposal is to increase the support for low-income families with children. This is additional support to an existing policy.

Shropshire's demographics trend older than national averages, and this programme is targeted at younger cohorts with children, potentially helping them to remain in the county longer-term.

Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change in terms of equality, social inclusion, and health considerations

This is continuation of the existing Council Tax Support scheme with a beneficial change for resident in receipt of Child Benefit.

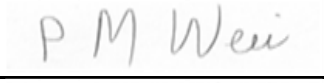
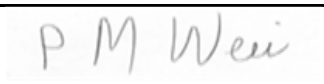
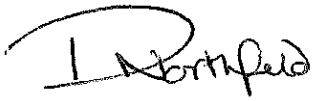
The proposed change to disregard Child Benefit as an income for working age claimants will ensure that low-income families with children receive additional support with their council tax.

This will align the Council with the majority of other local Council Tax Support schemes and with other national benefits such as Housing Benefit that continue to disregard Child Benefit as an income.

Associated ESHIAs
None

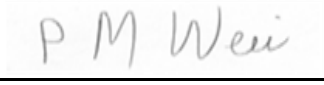
Assessment of likely neutral, negative or positive impact, and actions to review and monitor overall impacts, with regard to climate change impacts and with regard to economic and societal impacts
Climate change N/A ***Economic and societal/wider community*** Increases in discretionary income to affected families will support financial resilience and allow funding to support wider cost-of-living pressures.

Scrutiny at Stage One screening stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
Philip Weir		22/10/2026
Philip Weir		22/10/2026
*External support** **Phillip Northfield** *Integration & Inequalities Officer – Public Health*		23/10/2026

This refers to support external to the service and within the Council, e.g., the Senior Insights and Research EDI specialist, the Integration & Inequalities Officer – Public Health, other Insights and Research or Public Health colleagues, the Feedback and Insight Team, Climate Change specialists, etc.

Sign off at Stage One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
Philip Weir		22/10/2026
Philip Weir		22/10/2026

This may either be the Head of Service or the lead officer

B. Detailed Screening Assessment

Aims of the service change and description
Prior to 2013 there was a national council tax benefit scheme to support council taxpayers on low income. This was funded through a government subsidy. With effect from 2013 each billing authority was required to design and implement its own scheme for working age residents on low incomes. At the same time government funding for the system reduced by 10%. Pensioners still have council tax support awarded against former council tax benefit rules From 2013-14, Shropshire Council's scheme continued with a tapered reduction scheme, with 100% support for the financially most vulnerable. The main changes in 2013 were as detailed below, including the decision to remove the Child Benefit income disregard: - • Removal of second adult rebate • Reduction of the capital limit from £16,000 to £10,0000 • Removal of earnings disregards • **Removal of child benefit disregard** • Increase in non-dependant deductions The proposal is to reverse the change made in 2013 and disregard Child Benefit as an income which will be beneficial to low-income families with children and will be more in line with practice nationally and other benefits.

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change
All Shropshire Council Taxpayers

Evidence used for screening of the service change
Cost of the change has been estimated through analysis of the Council Tax base calculations for 2027-28

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

There is a legal requirement to consult in relation to any changes to the Council Tax Support scheme and the Council has undergone a six-week public consultation from 10 September 2026 to 22 October 2026. Major precepting authorities have been advised of the actual impact on the overall taxbase following the running of the taxbase reports in October 2026.

We received 385 responses to the public consultation

227 (59%) opposed the proposal. 147 (38%) supported the proposal. (10 3%) were unsure.

The main reasons in support of the proposal

- Child Benefit is intended for children
- Cost of living and child poverty
- Fairness and consistency
- Direct personal impact
- Wider disregard requests

The main reasons given in opposition

- Affordability and Funding
- Child Benefit is income
- Perceived unfairness to other households
- Priority to other services
- Work incentives and personal responsibility

While the consultation outcome does not support the proposal the following should be taken into consideration in forming a decision.

- The consultation reflects the views of just 385 residents out of a population of over 330k. Only 227 residents opposed the proposal.

- Consultations of this type may over represent people with stronger held views

- Child Benefit was disregarded as an income in the national Council Tax Benefit scheme (which was abolished in 2013) and this proposal is to reverse Shropshire Councils decision in 2013 to no longer disregard Child Benefit when it first developed its local Council Tax Support scheme.

- Most other Councils continued to disregard Child Benefit in their local Council Tax Support schemes.

- Child Benefit continues to be disregarded in other welfare benefits such as Housing Benefit, this proposal would simplify the application process for impacted residents.

- Some people in opposition stated that the proposal was not fair to other households such as single people, couples without children, working families above benefit thresholds and pensioners. It should however be noted that there are other factors that impact the applicable amount for other households and other income disregards and deductions that feed into the overall assessment of need. It should also be noted the proposed additional support for all claimants impacted by the 20% minimum payment from the Crisis and Resilience Fund. Also, pensioners continue to have their Council Tax Support assessed against a continuation of the former Council Tax Benefit rules which continues to be a more generous assessment.

- While Child Benefit is an income, it is not means tested until income exceeds £60k and is designed to provide support to children.

- The Councils Welfare Team (who do not currently provide support for Council Tax) currently provide considerable support to financially vulnerable families with children from the Crisis and Resilience Fund which evidences why low-income families with children require further support. From April 2026 to September 2026 the Welfare Team supported 237 households with children with a total spend of £147k. The proposed change would go some way to reduce the financial pressure on low-income families with children and reduce child poverty.

- While several comments opposed to this change stated that it was not affordable at this time, and that resources could be diverted to other areas such as roads, social care, waste services, local amenities it should be noted that the overall cost to Shropshire Council is relatively low (£624k), and that providing additional support to low income families through Council Tax Support is a preventative measure in relation to social care need and future cost, and will reduce overall Council Tax collection costs.

Initial equality impact assessment by grouping (Initial health impact assessment is included below this table)

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have for a grouping, through stating this in the relevant column, including if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact).

Please also record in here your headline rationale for the ratings you have given.

Protected Characteristic groupings and other groupings locally identified in Shropshire	**High negative impact** *Stage Two ESHIA required*	**High positive impact** *Stage One ESHIA required*	**Medium positive or negative impact** *Stage One ESHIA required*	**Low positive, negative, or neutral impact (please specify)** *Stage One ESHIA required*

Age (please include children, young people, young carers, young people leaving care, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group e.g., a child or young person for whom there are safeguarding concerns e.g., an older person with a disability)			Low income working age families will benefit positively from this change	
Disability (please include cancer; HIV/AIDS; learning disabilities; mental health conditions and syndromes; multiple sclerosis; neurodiverse conditions such as autism; hidden disabilities such as Crohn's disease; physical and/or sensory disabilities or impairments)				None
Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				None
Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				None
Pregnancy and Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				None
Race (please include ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller)				None
Religion or Belief (please include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Nonconformists; Rastafarianism; Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, Veganism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)				None
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				None
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				None

Other: Social Inclusion (please include households in poverty or on low incomes; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable; people with health inequalities; refugees and asylum seekers; rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness; and rural communities)				None
Other: Carers (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities)				None
Other: Veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families (as per Armed Forces Act 2023)				None
Other: Young people leaving care				None

Initial health and wellbeing impact assessment by category

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have with regard to health and wellbeing, through stating this in the relevant column, including if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact).
Please also record in here your headline rationale for the ratings you have given.

Health and wellbeing: individuals and communities in Shropshire	**High negative impact** *Part Two HIA required*	**High positive impact**	**Medium positive or negative impact**	**Low positive negative or neutral impact (please specify)**
Will the proposal have a *direct impact* on an individual's health, mental health and wellbeing? For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation? .				Low income families with children will receive additional support with Council Tax
Will the proposal *indirectly impact* an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing? For example, will it affect their ability to be physically active, choose healthy food,				Low income families with children will receive additional support with Council Tax,

reduce drinking and smoking? .				increasing their discretionary income and financial resilience.
Will the policy have a *direct impact* on the community - social, economic and environmental living conditions that would impact health? For example, would it affect housing, transport, child development, education, employment opportunities, availability of green space or climate change mitigation? .				Low income families with children will receive additional support with Council Tax
Will there be a likely change in *demand* for or access to health and social care services? For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health, Local Authority services including Social Services? .				No

Initial health equity assessment	
For the following categories, please complete with the expected impacts of this service change on wider inequalities, not just those that are health-related (whether positive, negative, or neutral) – include any additional information you feel is pertinent or useful. **Consider and record which you can control, which you can influence, and which may be out of your control**.	
Which population groups/demographics will face health impacts as a result of this change (if any)? • Socio-Economically Deprived	Low income families with children will receive additional support with Council Tax, increasing their discretionary income, and helping to improve financial resilience.

• Geographic Deprivation (inc. Rurality) – *if so, where?* • Inclusion Health & Vulnerable Groups[1] • Other	
What mitigations/enhancements are already in place, or what mitigations/enhancements do you plan to include for the foreseeable consequences of these changes?	*None*

1- *Inclusion health is an umbrella term used to describe people who are socially excluded, who typically experience multiple overlapping risk factors for poor health, such as poverty, violence, and complex trauma. This includes people who experience homelessness, drug and alcohol dependence, vulnerable migrants, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, sex workers, people in contact with the justice system and victims of modern slavery. Health impacts for this wide grouping will therefore potentially be the same as those recorded under the Social Inclusion category in the equality impact table.*

Guidance Notes

1. Legal Context

It is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess the equality and human rights impact of changes proposed or made to services. It is up to us as an authority to decide what form our equality impact assessment may take. By way of illustration, some local authorities focus more overtly upon human rights; some include safeguarding. It is about what is considered to be needed in a local authority's area, in line with local factors such as demography and strategic objectives as well as with the national legislative imperatives.

Carrying out these impact assessments 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.

These screening assessments for any proposed service change go to Cabinet as part of the committee report, or occasionally direct to Full Council, unless they are ones to do with Licensing, in which case they go to Strategic Licensing Committee.

Service areas would ordinarily carry out a screening assessment, or Stage One equality impact assessment. This enables energies to be focussed on review and monitoring and ongoing evidence collection about the positive or negative impacts of a service change upon groupings in the community, and for any adjustments to be considered and made accordingly.

These screening assessments are recommended to be undertaken at timely points in the development and implementation of the proposed service change.

For example, a Stage One ESHIA would be a recommended course of action before a consultation. This would draw upon the evidence available at that time, and identify

the target audiences, and assess at that initial stage what the likely impact of the service change could be across the national Protected Characteristic groupings and our additional local categories. This ESHIA would set out intended actions to engage with the groupings, particularly those who are historically less likely to engage in public consultation eg young people, as otherwise we would not know their specific needs.

A second Stage One ESHIA would then be carried out after the consultation, to say what the feedback was, to set out changes proposed as a result of the feedback, and to say where responses were low and what the plans are to engage with groupings who did not really respond. This ESHIA would also draw more upon actions to review impacts in order to mitigate the negative and accentuate the positive.

Meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty through carrying out these ESHIAs is very much about using them as an opportunity to demonstrate ongoing engagement across groupings and to thus visibly show we are taking what is called 'due regard' of the needs of people in Protected Characteristic groupings.

If the screening indicates that there are likely to be high negative impacts for groupings within the community, the service area would need to take advice on whether or not to carry out a full report, or Stage Two assessment. This is resource intensive but will enable more evidence to be collected that will help the service area to reach an informed opinion.

In practice, Stage Two or Full Screening Assessments have only been recommended twice since 2014, as the ongoing mitigation of negative equality impacts should serve to keep them below the threshold for triggering a Full Screening Assessment. The expectation is that Full Screening Assessments in regard to Health Impacts may occasionally need to be undertaken, but this would be very much the exception rather than the rule.

2. Council Wide and Service Area Policy and Practice on Equality, Social Inclusion and Health

This involves taking an equality and social inclusion approach in planning changes to services, policies, or procedures, including those that may be required by Government. The decisions that you make when you are planning a service change need to be recorded, to demonstrate that you have thought about the possible equality impacts on communities and to show openness and transparency in your decision-making processes.

This is where Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessments (ESHIAs) come in. Where you carry out an ESHIA in your service area~~,~~ this provides an opportunity to show:

- What evidence you have drawn upon to help you to recommend a strategy or policy or a course of action to Cabinet or to Strategic Licensing Committee.
- What target groups and audiences you have worked with to date.

- What actions will you take in order to mitigate any likely negative impact upon a group or groupings, and enhance any likely positive effects for a group or groupings; and
- What actions you are planning to monitor and review the impact of your planned service change.

The formal template is there not only to help the service area but also to act as a stand-alone for a member of the public to read. The 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.

There are nine Protected Characteristic groupings defined in the Equality Act 2010. The full list of groupings is: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion or Belief; Sex; and Sexual Orientation.

There is also intersectionality between these. Eg a young person with a disability would be in the groupings of Age and Disability, and if they described themselves as having a faith they would then also be in the grouping of Religion or Belief. 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.

For the individuals and groupings who may be affected, ask yourself what impact do you think is likely and what actions will you currently anticipate taking, to mitigate or enhance likely impact of the service change? If you are reducing a service, for example, there may be further use you could make of awareness raising through social media and other channels to reach more people who may be affected.

Social inclusion is then a wider additional local category we use in Shropshire, in order to help us to go beyond the equality legislation in also considering impacts for individuals and households with regard to the circumstances in which they may find themselves across their life stages. This could be households on low incomes, or households facing challenges in accessing services, such as households in rural areas, or people that we might consider to be vulnerable, such as refugee families or rough sleepers.

Please note that veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families are a grouping to whom we are required to give due regard under Armed Forces legislation, although in practice we have been doing so for a number of years now.

We also identify two further distinct separate local groupings due to their circumstances: care leavers, as vulnerable individuals, and carers, due to the support they give and the support they need.

When you are not carrying out an ESHIA, you still need to demonstrate and record that you have considered equality in your decision-making processes. It is up to you what format you choose.-You could use a checklist, an explanatory note, or a document setting out our expectations of standards of behaviour, for contractors to read and sign. It may well not be something that is in the public domain like an ESHIA, but you should still be ready for it to be made available.

Both the approaches sit with a manager, and the manager has to make the call, and record the decision made on behalf of the Council.

Carry out an ESHIA:

- If you are building or reconfiguring a building.
- If you are planning to reduce or remove or reconfigure a service.
- If you are consulting on a policy or a strategy.
- If you are bringing in a change to a process or procedure that involves other stakeholders and the wider community as well as particular groupings

Carry out and record your equality and social inclusion approach:

- If you are setting out how you expect a contractor to behave with regard to equality, where you are commissioning a service or product from them.
- If you are setting out the standards of behaviour that we expect from people who work with vulnerable groupings, such as taxi drivers that we license.
- If you are planning consultation and engagement activity, where we need to collect equality data in ways that will be proportionate and non-intrusive as well as meaningful for the purposes of the consultation itself.
- If you are looking at services provided by others that help the community, we need to demonstrate a community leadership approach

3. Council wide and service area policy and practice on health and wellbeing

This is an area to record within our overall assessments of impacts, for which we ask service area leads to consider health and wellbeing impacts, and to look at these in the context of direct and indirect impacts for individuals and for communities.

A better understanding across the Council of these impacts will also better enable the Public Health colleagues to prioritise activities to reduce health inequalities in ways that are evidence based and that link effectively with equality impact considerations and climate change mitigation.

Health in All Policies – Health Impact Assessment

Health in All Policies is an upstream approach for health and wellbeing promotion and prevention, and to reduce health inequalities. The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is the supporting mechanism

- Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is the technical name for a process that considers the wider effects of local policies, strategies and initiatives and how they, in turn, may affect people's health and wellbeing.
- Health Impact Assessment is a means of assessing both the positive and negative health impacts of a policy. It is also a means of developing good evidence-based policy and strategy using a structured process to review the impact.
- A Health Impact Assessment seeks to determine how to maximise health benefits and reduce health inequalities. It identifies any unintended health consequences. These consequences may support policy and strategy or may lead to suggestions for improvements.
- An agreed framework will set out a clear pathway through which a policy or strategy can be assessed and impacts with outcomes identified. It also sets out the support mechanisms for maximising health benefits.

The embedding of a Health in All Policies approach will support Shropshire Council through evidence-based practice and a whole systems approach, in achieving our corporate and partnership strategic priorities. This will assist the Council and partners in promoting, enabling and sustaining the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities whilst reducing health inequalities.

Individuals

Will the proposal have a *direct impact* on health, mental health and wellbeing?

For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation?

Will the proposal directly affect an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?

This could include the following: their ability to be physically active e.g., being able to use a cycle route; to access food more easily; to change lifestyle in ways that are of positive impact for their health.

Provision or change to a service that allows greater reach to those most in need, this can involve relocation, pooling of resource/efficiency changes, or digitisation of some provision. It may also involve greater opportunities for employment, decreasing socio-economic inequality. Physical alternatives to be made available (where practical) to be offered wherever possible to avoid digital exclusion and reduce social isolation. These changes can be either positive or negative depending on the proposal.

An example of this could be that you may be involved in proposals for the establishment of safer walking and cycling routes (e.g., green highways), and changes to public transport that could encourage people away from car usage. and increase the number of journeys that they make on public transport, by foot or on bicycle or scooter. This could improve lives. It could also involve virtual support sessions/appointments to avoid unnecessary travel and provide greater flexibility

with individuals work schedules. It may involve greater internet connectivity, to improve remote working opportunities and air pollution concerns, or improved communications coverage through closer partnership working – targeting those most in need of specific information.

Will the proposal *indirectly impact* an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?

This could include the following: their ability to access local facilities e.g., to access food more easily, or to access a means of mobility to local services and amenities? (e.g. change to bus route)

Similarly to the above, an example of this could be that you may be involved in proposals for the establishment of safer walking and cycling routes (e.g. pedestrianisation of town centres), and changes to public transport that could encourage people away from car usage, and increase the number of journeys that they make on public transport, by foot or on bicycle or scooter. This could improve their health and wellbeing.

Communities

Will the proposal directly or indirectly affect the physical health, mental health, and wellbeing of the wider community**?**

A *direct impact* could include either the causing of ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation, or the promotion of better health.

An example of this could be that safer walking and cycling routes could help the wider community, as more people across groupings may be encouraged to walk or engage in active travel. Increasing physical activity and minimising the time spent sitting down helps to maintain a healthy weight and reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and depression. The UK Chief Medical Officers recommend that adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, each week. At a wider level, reductions in vehicular emission lead to better air quality, and a reduction in NO_2 in the atmosphere.

An *indirect impact* could mean that a service change could indirectly affect living and working conditions and therefore the health and wellbeing of the wider community.

An example of this could be: an increase in the availability of warm homes would improve the quality of the housing offer in Shropshire and reduce the costs for households of having a warm home in Shropshire. This can reduce the risks of cold related health effects, as well as reduce the financial burden on the population, whose ability to shoulder these costs can vary. Often a health promoting approach also supports our agenda to reduce the level of Carbon Dioxide emissions and to reduce the impact of climate change.

Please record whether at this stage you consider the proposed service change to have a direct or an indirect impact upon communities.

Demand

Will there be a change in demand for or access to health, local authority and social care services?

For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health and Social Services?

An example of this could be: a new housing development in an area would affect demand for primary care and local authority facilities and services in that location and surrounding areas. If the housing development does not factor in consideration of availability of green space and safety within the public realm, further down the line there could be an increased demand upon health and social care services as a result of the lack of opportunities for physical recreation, and reluctance of some groupings to venture outside if they do not perceive it to be safe.

For further advice: please contact
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or
Phil Northfield via email Phillip.Northfield@shropshire.gov.uk