

**East Renfrewshire Council
Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit**

SCREENING DATA

Policy name Discretionary Housing Payments (Impact of changes to the Benefit Cap)

Step 1 of 3

Preceding Statement

The word '**policy**' will be used throughout as shorthand for policy, service or proposal.

Question 1.

→ What is the policy? (Name/description of the policy)

Answer: Discretionary Housing Payments Policy

East Renfrewshire Council has mainly used Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to mitigate the effects of the spare room subsidy on local residents. We have also used local discretion to award DHP to individuals who are struggling with rent payments.

Question 2.

→ What is the aim, objectives or purpose of the policy? Why is it needed?

Answer:

In the main the support of a DHP award is for a period of 13 weeks to allow individuals to review their circumstances and take financial advice. To date, all DHP awarded by the Council has been covered by funding from the Scottish Government and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

Question 3.

Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community, and therefore potentially have an effect in terms of equality?

Answer

(delete as appropriate)

→ 1. Yes it can affect a mixture of service users - At November 2016, East Renfrewshire Council had 32 households adversely affected by these changes to the benefit cap. These are a mix of social sector households; some in the Council's temporary accommodation; some in Connor Road and just under half live in private sector accommodation.

Question 4.

Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?

Answer

→ *(delete as appropriate)* Yes From April 2013, the UK Government introduced a cap on the total amount of certain benefits that working-age people can receive. This was to ensure that households on out-of-work benefits would no longer receive more in welfare payments than the average weekly wage for working households. The government also introduced changes to the spare room subsidy and this has been fully mitigated until now by Scottish Govt and DWP DHP funding.

Question 5.

Will it have a significant effect on how other organisations operate (for example, a national strategy, an inspection framework or criteria for funding)?

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Answer

→ Yes In line with the Scottish Government's policy choice, East Renfrewshire Council has mainly used Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to mitigate the effects of the spare room subsidy on local residents and this is national policy

Step 2 of 3

Question 6.

Does it relate to functions that previous involvement activities have identified as being important to particular protected groups?

Answer

(delete as appropriate)

→

No

Question 7.

Does it relate to an area where your department or the Council has set equality outcomes?

Answer

(delete as appropriate)

→

No

Question 8.

Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities? (For example, disabled people's access to public transport; the gender pay gap; racist or homophobic bullying in schools, etc.)

Add an action

Answer

(delete as appropriate)

→

No

Question 9.

Which protected groups are or could be particularly affected by the policy? Please give reasons

Guidance Notes

Could the policy outcomes differ between protected groups identified by: disability, race, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership? This analysis can be extended beyond the basic protected groups to other grounds such as socio-economic status or caring responsibilities where these are relevant given local needs and circumstances.

→

(Place 'x' where appropriate)

X	Age
X	Disability
X	Gender
X	Gender reassignment
X	Pregnancy and maternity
X	Race

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X	Religion or belief
X	Sexual orientation
X	Marriage and civil partnership (with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment)



Further Details

Please provide reasons in space below:

The policy could provide support to all service users.

Question 10.

Which parts of the public sector duty is the policy relevant to?

Add an action

Guidance Notes

The aims of the public sector duty are to

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and another conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- Foster good relations between people from different groups



Answer: The Scotland Act 2016 (Discretionary Housing Payments and New Benefits) & Local Govt Finance Act 1990.

Step 3 of 3

Question 11.

Does it relate to a policy where there is significant potential for reducing inequalities or improving outcomes? (For example, improving access to health services for transsexual people, or increasing take-up of apprenticeships by female students.)

Answer

(delete as appropriate)



No

Question 12.

What data do you have to facilitate the screening of this policy?

Add an action

Guidance Notes

- You may find the following types of information useful:
 - Comparisons with similar policies in other departments or authorities to help you identify relevant equality issues
 - Analysis of enquiries or complaints from the public to help you understand the needs or experiences of different groups
 - Recommendations from inspections or audits to help you identify any concerns about equality matters from regulators
 - Information about the local community, including census findings to help you establish the numbers of protected groups in your area
 - Recent research from a range of national, regional and local sources to help you identify relevant equality issues
 - Results of engagement activities or surveys to help you understand the needs or experiences of different groups
 - Information from protected groups and other agencies, such as equality organisations and voluntary or community organisations providing services to the public to help you understand the needs or experiences of different groups

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→ **Answer:**

At the moment we are dealing with a very small affected caseload as highlighted by the DWP (Benefit Cap cases 32). These claimants have been in dialogue with DWP and assessed for any particular requirements and these would be highlighted to benefits and employment advisors within ERC.

Question 13.

What consultation information do you have regarding this policy? Who has been consulted and what were the outcomes?

→ **Answer:**

As above – liaison with DWP, 3rd Sector groups, ERC service departments is ongoing.

Question 14.

Are there any information gaps (data and/or consultation)?

Answer

(delete as appropriate)

→ No

Further Details

If yes, please give details:

→

N/A

SCOPING THE ASSESSMENT

Policy name - Discretionary Housing Payments (Impact of changes to the Benefit Cap)

Step 1 of 3

Question 1.

What are the aims of the policy?

Answer:

→

In the main the support of a DHP award is for a period of 13 weeks to allow individuals to review their circumstances and take financial advice. To date, all DHP awarded by the Council has been covered by funding from the Scottish Government and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

Question 2.

Which aspects of the policy are particularly relevant to the duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.

Answer:

→

N/A

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Question 3.

Please tick the boxes which apply

→ **Answer** (*Place 'x' where appropriate*)

<input type="checkbox"/>	There is evidence to indicate that the policy may result in less favourable treatment for particular groups
<input type="checkbox"/>	There is evidence to indicate that the policy may give rise to indirect discrimination
<input type="checkbox"/>	There is evidence to indicate that the policy may give rise to unlawful harassment or victimisation
<input type="checkbox"/>	There is evidence to indicate that the policy may lead to discrimination arising from disability
<input type="checkbox"/>	There is evidence to indicate that the policy may build in reasonable adjustments where these may be needed

Further Details

If there is evidence, please give details here:

→

N/A

Question 4.

Which aspects of the policy are particularly relevant to the duty to have due regard to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

Answer:

→

N/A

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Question 5.

Please tick the boxes which apply
Add an action

→ **Answer** (*Place 'x' where appropriate*)

<input type="checkbox"/>	There is evidence to indicate the policy will remove or minimise disadvantage
<input type="checkbox"/>	There is evidence the policy will meet the needs of different groups
<input type="checkbox"/>	There is evidence the policy will encourage increased participation of particular groups
<input type="checkbox"/>	There is evidence the policy will take account of disabled people's needs

Further Details

Please give further details:

→ N/A

Step 2 of 3

Question 6.

Which aspects of the policy are particularly relevant to the duty to have due regard to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

→ **Answer:**

None

Question 7.

(*Place 'x' where appropriate*)

→ **Answer** N/A

<input type="checkbox"/>	There is evidence the policy will help you to tackle prejudice
<input type="checkbox"/>	There is evidence the policy will promote understanding between different groups

Further Details

→ **Please give further details:**

Question 8.

What evidence is already available about the needs of relevant groups, and where are the gaps in evidence?

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→ **Answer:**

N/A

Question 9.

What data will be required in the future to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of this policy?

→ **Answer:**

Statistical data returns to Scottish Govt at year end and DWP, monitoring ERC's crisis and Mart's interventions.

OUTCOME OF THE ASSESSMENT

Question 10.

Having considered the potential or actual impacts of the policy, what should be done?

Question

Option 1 : No major change

Add an action

Answer

(delete as appropriate)

→ Yes DHP Policy has already been agreed by cabinet and this is an update to Council by means of drawdown for more funds from welfare contingency fund.

Question 11.

Option 2 : Adjust the policy

Answer

(delete as appropriate)

→ No

Further Details

If you answered "yes" to option 2, please outline your plans to: - remove or change the aspect(s) of the policy that create(s) any negative or unwanted impact identified; - remove barriers, to better advance equality or to foster good relations and; - to introduce additional measures to reduce or mitigate any potential negative impact.

Answer

→ N/A

Question 12.

Option 3 : continue the policy despite the potential for adverse impact

Add an action

Answer

(delete as appropriate)

→ No adverse impact expected by the policy implementation

Further Details

If you answered "yes" to option 3, please give the reasons why and how you believe that decision is compatible with your obligations under the duty.

Answer

N/A

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Question 13.

Option 4 : Stop and remove the policy

Add an action

Answer

(delete as appropriate)

→ No

Further Details

If you answered "yes" to option 4 please give your reasons

→

ORGANISATIONAL SIGNOFF

Policy name **Discretionary Housing Payments (Impact of changes to the Benefit Cap)**

Step 1 of 3

Question 1.Aim of the policy?

Answer

→

In the main the support of a DHP award is for a period of 13 weeks to allow individuals to review their circumstances and take financial advice. To date, all DHP awarded by the Council has been covered by funding from the Scottish Government and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

Question 2.Priority?

(Place 'x' where appropriate)

→

Answer

X	High
	Medium
	Low

Question 3.Tick areas of equality relevance

Answer

(Place 'x' where appropriate)

→

X	Age
X	Disability
X	Gender

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X	Gender reassignment
X	Pregnancy and maternity
X	Race
X	Religion or belief
X	Sexual orientation
X	Marriage and civil partnership (with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment)

Question 4. Risk of adverse impact

→ **Answer**

N/A

Question 5. Data used (including assessment of reliability and validity)

Add an action

→ **Answer**

Yes

Question 6. Assessment of adverse impact

→ **Answer**

N/A

Question 7. Consultation carried out (methods, target groups consulted, etc)

→ **Answer**

As above – liaison with DWP, 3rd Sector groups, ERC service departments is ongoing.

Question 8. Proposed method to reduce or eliminate Adverse Impact (including reasons chosen)

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→ **Answer**

N/A

Question 9. Conclusions and recommendations for amendments to the policy. Please state who/which group or committee considered the options and took the decision on what action would be taken. If a number of options were considered, summarise these and the reason for selecting one option over any others. If no further action is required as a result of the EQIA, please explain.

→ **Answer**

N/A

Question 10. Timescale for implementation

→ **Answer**

2016/17 & 2017/18 financial years

Question 11. Methods of publication

→ **Answer**

Website, Revenues team internal communications

Question 12. Monitoring arrangements

→ **Answer**

Will be reviewed if there are any substantial legislative changes.

→ Comments

N/A

→ Next Review Date

N/A

Chief Officer's Signature:

Steven Skelly
Revenues & Business Support Manager