

Appendix 4

Initial Equalities Impact Assessment

1. Within the aims and objectives of the policy or strategy which group (s) of people has been identified as being potentially disadvantaged by your proposals? What are the equality impacts?

The Discretionary Housing Payment policy is intended to support those who are disadvantaged by changes to Housing Benefit rules, specifically the under occupation rules in the social sector, the Benefit Cap and the changes to Local Housing Allowance rates. The under occupation rules disproportionately impact older residents (from 45 to pension age) and people with a disability. The Benefit Cap affects mainly households where there are lots of children (and in most cases a single parent). The Local Housing Allowance changes impact mainly on households with children. As such, if the DHP policy is not applied correctly, these groups could be disadvantaged.

2. In brief, what changes are you planning to make to your current or proposed new or changed policy, strategy, procedure, project or service to minimise or eliminate the adverse equality impacts?
Please provide further details of the proposed actions, timetable for making the changes and the person(s) responsible for making the changes on the resultant action plan

The Welfare Reform team have developed strong partnerships with a wide range of support organisations. Where financial support cannot be provided, residents will be referred to appropriate organisations for support. This includes the advice organisations funded by the council, a range of providers of housing support, and mental health organisations.

As the policy is discretionary people who are in groups at risk of being disadvantaged can still receive DHP awards if to do so meets the policy's broader objectives.

3. Please provide details of whom you will consult on the proposed changes and if you do not plan to consult, please provide the rationale behind that decision. Please note that you are required to involve disabled people in decisions that impact on them

We have not consulted formally on the change to the DHP policy, although we have asked partners for their views. The changes to the DHP policy are minor in nature, and in any case all applications are considered on their own merits, and any award made is at the discretion of the Council. As such the process of consultation may raise unrealistic expectations and would be an unproductive exercise at this point, as it would not generate any information

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that the Council hasn't already anticipated or did not know. In the event that significant changes were planned to the DHP policy, a formal consultation exercise would be carried out.

4. Can the adverse impacts you identified during the initial screening be justified without making any adjustments to the existing or new policy, strategy, procedure, project or service?
Please set out the basis on which you justify making no adjustments

As this policy is discretionary, all applications will be considered on their merit. Where an application meets the aims of the policy, it is intended to provide support.

The policy is a fairly straightforward one to apply. Cabinet should note that, as it is a discretionary payment the Council are not intending to set out any circumstances in which we definitely wouldn't support someone. If an application meets various policy aims, it will be successful.

5. You are legally required to monitor and review the proposed changes after implementation to check they work as planned and to screen for unexpected equality impacts.
Please provide details of how you will monitor/evaluate or review your proposals and when the review will take place

A 10% check of applications will be carried out to ensure consistency of decision making. This will be done for both successful and unsuccessful applications. Monitoring will be carried out on a monthly basis, and this will also include the reason for the application being made.