

# Borough of Poole's Equality Impact Assessment on the Medium Term Financial Plan

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is a 3-year plan that is reviewed, updated and rolled forward on an annual basis to deliver the Council's priorities. It is fundamental to the Council's policy and service planning cycle. It outlines the likely challenges to be faced by the organisation and seeks to align resources to priorities in setting out the overall financial direction over the coming three years. The annual budget is produced in accordance with the parameters of the MTFP, with specific proposals for the year ahead. It is brought forward for Council approval in February each year.
- 1.2 During 2012/13, the Council has continued to undertake a substantial review of its MTFP as a result of Government policy, including their primary focus on reducing the national deficit and securing economic stability at a time of continuing uncertainty in the global economy.
- 1.3 The Council faces some of the most significant financial challenges for a generation. These include a 39% reduction in its core funding from 2011/12 to 2014/15 and reductions in specific grants which amount to £7.5m in the period to 2013/14. These Government cuts are however only part of the equation with constrained council tax increases, a decline in other income, rising costs and growing demand for many services also testing the council's financial management and resilience. In total the Council is required to deliver a further £13.4m of savings and efficiencies over its MTFP time horizon to 2016. The sheer scale of the unprecedented challenge is made all the more daunting when you factor in that the Council has already had to deliver in excess of £32m in the first 3 years of the current national spending review.
- 1.4 It is recognised that the cuts to both central and specific grants will have impacts on equality groups in Poole. Impacts were considered at different stages of the process as set out in Annex 1 to this report.
- 1.5 This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) identifies the action the Borough has taken to proportionately minimise the overall impact of the reduced resources available.

## 2.0 Our approach to minimising impacts

- 2.1 As well as universal services, such as bin collections and education, much of the Council's work is to provide services to the most vulnerable in the community. For example, providing support and care to older and disabled people, services to those suffering domestic violence, or to protect children from neglect and abuse.
- 2.2 In addition, some Council services aim to prevent people falling into difficulties and seeing a decline in their circumstances, for example, activities to reduce the isolation of older people or positive activities for young people. Clearly the more reliant people

are on our services the more affected they may be.

- 2.3 The priority for the Council in reducing its budget has been to protect the most vulnerable. Our ongoing approach has been to cut inefficiencies before cutting services and seek out opportunities for saving costs, for example, through efficiency reviews, developing partnerships and organisational restructuring. Over the past three years there has been a significant reduction in senior management in the Borough of Poole, which has safeguarded frontline services. In order to manage the risk of this reduction we will be doing a Test of Assurance in relation to Directors' statutory responsibility to ensure the new arrangements are robust.
- 2.4 Demographic change has also influenced budget setting. An increasing birth rate needs to take into account the need for more school places and services for children and young people. The growing numbers of disabled adults with more complex needs has led to proposals to increase the Adult Social Care budget.
- 2.5 To minimise impacts on equality groups the Council has:**
- a) Found efficiencies and made improvements, for example, through closer working with other organisations, changing management structures and process re-engineering<sup>1</sup>, making better use of our assets, and we will develop business opportunities to raise income to maintain key elements of service provision focused on vulnerable people. For example, we have significantly improved, including disability access, the Nuffield Household Waste Recycling Centre.
  - b) Where charges are being raised or introduced to generate income, or eligibility criteria have changed, services have researched and benchmarked others' practice, where appropriate consulted stakeholders, and recommended changes on that basis. For example, Lifeline's charge increase was kept to an absolute minimum and relates to the increased costs of new alarm units, repairs and maintenance and staffing cost increases.
  - c) Identified and is planning for key changes in partnership funding, such as in Public Health, Police and Crime Commissioner budgets, arts funding and the Designated Schools Grant, in order to put alternative arrangements in place where possible. Ongoing monitoring arrangements will assess the impact of these changes.
  - d) Negotiated with our suppliers to keep contract costs or fee increases down where possible. For example, there will be a nil increase in residential fees for children in care for 2012/13 and £449K savings in the waste disposal contract.
  - e) Begun to develop our approach to Localism. To support this, community development resources are being maintained and will focus in areas of highest deprivation and on Black and minority ethnic, disabled and older people. Some services are looking to make better use of volunteers and to harness skills and experiences in the community, voluntary and faith sectors.

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<sup>1</sup> For example the Efficiency Review of Revenues and Benefits has delivered a total savings of £263K to date.

- f) Sustained funding to Poole's Council for Voluntary Services, which supports the voluntary and community sector and advises them on funding opportunities; reviewed our approach to community engagement practices; and supported the Dorset Community Foundation to launch a Poole Communities' Fund. This coincided with the national Local Giving campaign, which enabled donations to be match funded by Government.
- g) Provided and will continue to provide funding to voluntary, community and faith organisations, including to Citizens Advice Bureau (see below), Shopmobility, Hamworthy Money Advice Service and Dorset Race Equality Council; and to promote the use of culture and arts and to support Dorset Advocacy's "Get a Voice, Got a Choice" campaign.
- h) Developed a new Local Council Tax Support Scheme to [minimise the impact](#) on some of the most vulnerable people in Poole. Poole CAB will receive an additional £50,000 over two years to specifically support residents affected by Government's Welfare Reforms, and we are developing plans to take on responsibility for the Social Fund and Crisis loans from April 2013.

*In addition, the Council will:*

- i) Continue to carry out Equality Impact Assessments on significant changes to services and new policies, such as the review of frontline access for Benefits and Housing customers and on further Welfare Reform;
- j) Investigate, review and respond to legitimate representations or complaints arising from the changes;
- k) Monitor and report related risks through the Corporate Risk Register, including that "Changes in the methods of delivery of benefits and reductions in the level of benefits could impact on the most vulnerable in the community and present a significant financial pressure to the Council (Ref: KCR030)";
- l) Continue to implement our Fairness for All policy and offer a range of corporate equality training. Equality objectives were mainstreamed into our new Corporate Strategy in 2012 and the FFA policy was reviewed and refreshed;
- m) Continue to monitor the make up of our workforce and address areas of under-representation and other issues that arise. For example, we are piloting Springboard, a women's development programme; continuing to participate in Stonewall's Diversity Champions; and are promoting Borough of Poole as an employer to BME people through a leaflet specific to these groups.
- n) Ensure that equality duties are addressed by revising contracts terms and conditions, using equalities in procurement guidance; the development of the Supplier Contract Management System and e-procurement technologies; and active engagement and education events with local suppliers;
- o) Continue to seek or facilitate external funding and investment into Poole, for example, to improve recycling; for coastal protection; for energy efficiency; through

the Community Infrastructure Levy; from the Department of Transport Grants. Examples range from £10K Town Team Partners grant; a £1 million National Lottery grant for the Bourne Estate to £12m for the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF);

- p) Ensure that any cost savings with regard to Elections specifically exclude any adaptations, enhancements or services which assist voters who need additional assistance;

2.6 Set out below is a summary of the ways specific groups will be affected and how we intend to minimise and mitigate the impacts.

## 3.0 Impact on people from different equalities groups

### 3.1.1 Demographic information about older people:

- a) Poole is a popular retirement town with an ageing population that is above the national average, particularly for those above 85 years old. Whilst many older people living in the Borough are classed as being affluent, 14% of older people can be described as living in poverty (Index Multiple Deprivation 2010).
- b) The majority of benefit and pension credit claimants live in the Poole Town, Newtown and Alderney wards, and nearly 9,000 households suffer from fuel poverty, particularly in Newtown, Oakdale, Alderney, Penn Hill and Parkstone. In some cases 'affluent' households may in fact reflect wealth tied up in a property, rather than disposable income.

### 3.1.2 Impacts on services for older people and actions to minimise these:

Where older people<sup>2</sup> access a range of services and activities they are more likely to be affected. We are working to minimise impacts by:

- a) Securing increased funding for the Adult Social Care budget for older people and disabled adults to the tune of £1.983 million for 2013/14 and proposing further growth of £3.218 million until 2015/16. The service is continuously reviewing and planning for increasing numbers of older and disabled people with more complex needs (see Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny MTFP report from 10<sup>th</sup> December 2012);
- b) Continuing to fulfil our duties in relation to adult safeguarding; statutory mental health functions; and to protect and ensure advocacy for people who lack mental capacity;
- c) Recruiting a contracts officer whose role will be to help reduce the costs of care contracts, and a practitioner to work with young people in transition to adulthood and adult services. In addition, we will recruit a specialist finance officer to work with

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<sup>2</sup> These are generalisations and will depend on individual circumstances – for example, older people on lower incomes and affected by poor health, living in Poole Old Town may be more affected than an affluent, silver surfer who is in good health living in Broadstone.

people who do not have the mental capacity to manage their own financial affairs;

- d) Making good progress on establishing a Health and Well-Being Board for Bournemouth and Poole and plans are in hand to develop and agree a Health and Well-Being Strategy by April 2013 (See Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012);
- e) Commissioning new Healthwatch services to provide an independent local voice and champion for people using health and social care services, signposting to information and support that will enable people to choose the services they require, and providing advocacy for making complaints regarding health services;
- f) Responding to Government's consultation on the Care and Support Bill and the "Caring for Futures" recommendations and to lobby Government for sufficient additional funding to cover the arising responsibilities for local councils;
- g) Commissioning four additional high dependency beds in care homes to provide short-term "reablement" support to enable people to return to their own home, and increasing the home equipment budget to support additional numbers of people being supported to live at home;
- h) Transferring high cost care needs of a group of people who would have been entitled to Continuing Healthcare funding to the NHS, and developing a new approach to managing hospital discharges and supporting more older people to remain independent at home (See Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on 5 November 2012). This project will reduce demand for homecare and residential care for older people;
- i) Continuing to monitor those affected by the rise in Adult Social Care's eligibility criteria to substantial and critical risk, and the Fairer Charging Policy, and actively signposting people to other services. If people's circumstances change they are encouraged to approach Social Services for new assessment of their needs and circumstances;
- j) Continuing to roll out the personalisation of Adult Social Care and increasing take-up of personal budgets and direct payments. This enables service users and carers to receive a personal response to their individual needs which takes into account issues relating to gender; disability; sexual orientation, ethnicity and religio/belief etc;
- k) Continuing to provide Source, an online resource with up to date advice, information and support for all adults in Poole, Bournemouth and Dorset, particularly those with care and support needs;
- l) Working to identify future housing needs of older people with long-term conditions and adults of working age with disabilities;
- m) Maintaining investment in Lifeline Services and providing 24/7 cover for Telecare and emergency responses;
- n) Providing a highly regarded Library service to care homes and to people with

disabilities who require a home delivery service;

- o) Increasing the numbers of people using buses, which particularly benefits older and disabled people. In 2011/12, Poole buses carried 9.6 million passengers, which is 80% more than in 2004/5. 24,000 Concessionary Fare Passes have recently been automatically reissued to Poole residents;
- p) Maintaining user satisfaction of the Dial-a-Bus service and have introduced a new service to the Hole's Bay Asda. An increasing number of people are joining the Scheme and are taking more journeys.

### **3.2.1 Demographic information about children and young people:**

- a) In 2010 there are 32,000 children and young people aged 0-19 were living in Poole. They represent 23% of the overall population. By 2015, overall numbers of children will not change significantly, but the age distribution will shift. Poole will have fewer older children (13-19 years) and an increase in the number of younger aged children (0-12 years).
- b) In 2010/11, 41% (13,400) children and young people required extra support. 3000 of these were vulnerable children with complex needs. Children with the poorest outcomes and most complex needs are polarised in small areas of Poole. The 'priority areas of need' are around Bourne Estate, Turlin Moor, Canford Heath East, Poole Town Centre. The Children's Services Information Tool (CSIT) provides data on these areas via the following link: [www.poolepartnership.info/csit](http://www.poolepartnership.info/csit). More detail can be found in the [Children and Young People's Theme Paper](#).

### **3.2.2 Impacts on services for children and young people and actions to minimise these:**

Children and young people are going to be directly affected by cuts to Children's Services budgets. The focus in these areas has been on creating back office savings and prioritising frontline services where possible. Children and young people's services are focusing on early intervention and prevention and the re-design of service interventions with complex families through the Families with Futures project. We are working to minimise impacts by:

- a) Fulfilling our statutory responsibilities, particularly for children in care and children who need safeguarding, as well as providing school places for every pupil; ensuring savings proposals are developed across a range of services in order not to impact severely on any particular service area or age group; and that staffing within Poole Children's Centres and the newly developed Targeted Team (Family Outreach Workers, Targeted Youth Support and support for teenage parents) is maintained at current levels and to continue to have an effective early help offer;
- b) Recruiting more Children's Social Care staff to reduce the job vacancy rates from 5% to 2.5% in order to maintain an effective level of service, and to support safeguarding and adoption work, 2.5 full time equivalent posts will become permanent;
- c) Undertaking detailed analysis of the increasing number of children in care and having robust operational checks and balances in place to ensure that children are in

care for the right reasons. We are also undertaking strategic work to ensure the effectiveness of early intervention and preventative family support work across Children's Services, in order to support children remaining or returning to their families wherever it is safe and in their interests to do so;

- d) Increasing foster care fees and allowances by 1% each to recognise cost of living pressures and to maintain a strong in-house fostering service in a competitive market;
- e) Increasing the Care Leavers Allowance from £1,500 to £2,000 for each young person in line with the recent Government Charter for Care Leavers;
- f) Funding Bournemouth and Poole's Young People's Substance Misuse Treatment Services and two specialist workers working with children whose parents misuse substances through the Troubled Families Programme;
- g) Considering a collaborative approach to school improvement through schools participating in a local Schools' Association and the Teaching School, which builds on the current arrangements. In addition, the Council has recognised the need to undertake additional analysis to help understand school performance and have capacity to respond in the event of school failure;
- h) Ensuring the reductions in the Early Intervention Grant will enable current levels of staffing to be maintained so that Poole can continue to provide early intervention and preventative services to those families who require them. (For further information on the changes to EIG see Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Report 4 December 2012 section 8.2.3);
- i) Developing Skills and Learning partnerships with schools for apprenticeship opportunities for young people not currently in education, employment or training and for apprenticeship opportunities within the Council;
- j) Developing usage of digital channels, such as Twitter and Facebook which is helping improve our reach, particularly to young people.

### **3.3.1 Demographic information about disabled people:**

- a) Over 27,200 people state they had a Limiting Long-term Illness (LLTI) – 18% of the Poole population (2011 Census). In 2002, 4,130 people in Poole were claiming Disability Living Allowance. This has risen to 6,120 as of February 2012 (Nomisweb).
- b) In the UK people with learning disabilities experience an increased risk of early death, and life expectancy is shortest for those who have the most support needs. They also experience a greater variety, complexity and range of health problems than the general population. People with a learning disability are particularly vulnerable to abuse. Also see Understanding Equality and Diversity: Disability Digest.

### **3.3.2 Impact on services and actions to minimise these:**

Where disabled people access a range of services and activities they are more likely to be affected. Some of these have already been identified above in the section about older people. We are working to minimise impacts by:

- a) Continuing the 'bespoke housing' scheme, which aims to meet some of the most challenging housing needs of disabled families via new build, conversion or property purchase. We will also meet the demand for disabled adaptations as long as the Government continues to fund their portion of the Disabled Facilities Grant.
- b) Offering a wider range of courses to ensure that adults can develop skills in literacy and numeracy and offer courses and support to people with learning and physical disabilities.
- c) Actively promoting and increasing the take up of Poole's Access to Leisure and Learning Scheme, a discount scheme that allows disabled people, people on low incomes and those in full-time education (aged 16 years and over) to take part in leisure and sports activities at reduced rates.
- d) Continuing to be able to reduce the harm caused by anti-social behaviour and supporting vulnerable victims, and leading the roll out of a new disability harassment reporting campaign.
- e) Reviewing our corporate arrangements so it is easier to access British Sign Language and Communications Support providers for our deaf residents.
- f) Continuing to consult with the 'Getting About Group', a group of older and disabled people about access to transport and how to improve their experience of getting around Poole. The group aims to ensure equality of access for all - by walking, cycling, public/community transport, mobility scooter and wheelchair.

Also see mitigating actions under older people.

### **3.4.1 Demographic information for people of different faiths or belief:**

- a) Little detailed data exists currently regarding different faith groups within the community. However, the 2011 Census provides top-level data on the population of Poole by religion. Almost two thirds of the population categorized themselves as Christian, 30% stated they had no religion, for 8% religion was not stated, and the remaining 2% belong to other denominations.

### **3.4.2 Impacts on services for people of different faiths or beliefs and actions to minimise these:**

- a) We will continue to work in partnership with the Bournemouth and Poole Prejudice Free Group to improve hate crime reporting and support to victims. This work particularly applies to people of different faith/beliefs, Black and Minority Ethnic people, disabled people and gay and trans people;

- b) We are continuing to fund Faith Links, an interfaith project, by £5K for the next two years. They promote a positive exchange between people of different faiths and those who do not belong to a faith community, and aim to develop a better understanding of the issues that are important to local faith groups to feed into our service planning.

### **3.5.1 Demographic information about women and men in Poole:**

- a) Of the 147,600 residents in Poole, 49% are male and 51% female. From ages 0-19 boys outnumber girls, but from 40+ females outnumber males because of the higher mortality rate of older males.
- b) In 2012, nationally 80% of offenders sentenced for criminal offences were male. Men, particularly aged 16-24, are more at risk of violence from strangers and acquaintances. Women have a higher risk of domestic violence.
- c) In Poole, in 2011, there were 3,596 lone-parent households, most of whom are women and lone parents account for nearly half (45%) of all Council Tax Benefit claimants. In 2012, gross weekly pay for resident full-time workers in England was £553 for men and £453 for women. Women's median pay was 82% of that for men.

### **3.5.2 Impacts on services aimed at women and men and actions to minimise these:**

Where men or women are more likely to use a service they may be affected by forthcoming changes. We are working to minimise this by:

- a) Prioritising addressing the harm caused by domestic and sexual abuse by continuing to invest in existing and new services for victims and their families at least until 2015;
- b) Working with partners to reduce reoffending rates of Domestic Violence perpetrators and quickly identify serial offenders and tackle their behaviour appropriately;

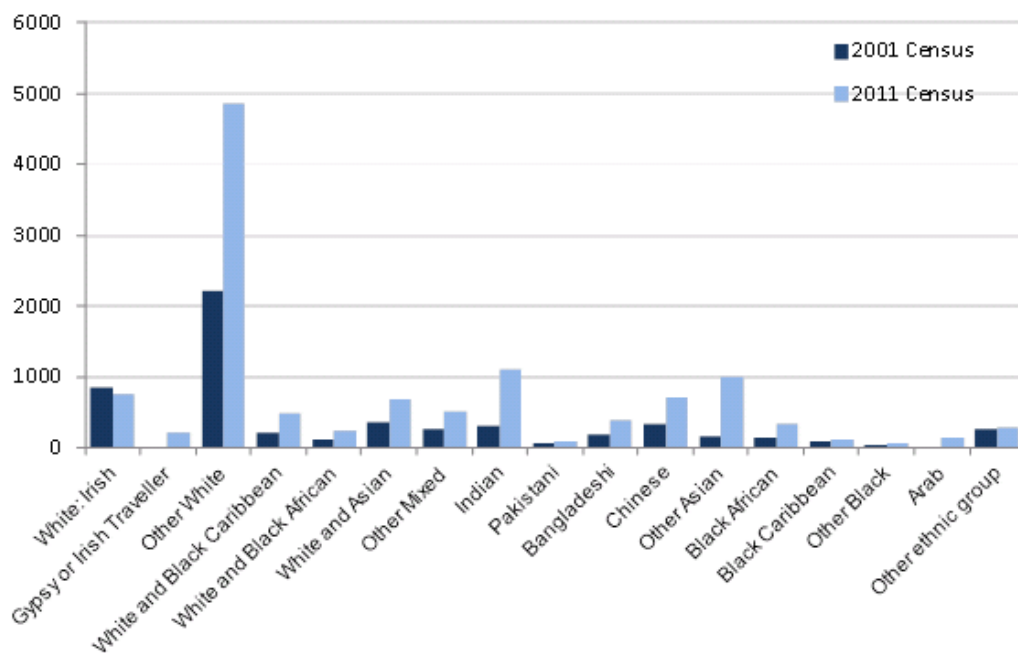
Also see the mitigating actions under socio-economic groups and the Local Council Tax Scheme [Equality Impact Assessment](#).

### **3.6.1 Demographic information on Black and minority ethnic people:**

- a) In 2011, 11,947 residents in Poole were from Black and minority ethnic groups<sup>3</sup>, comprising 8% of the total population. Since the 2001 Census, the BME population in Poole has more than doubled.

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<sup>3</sup> Gypsy or Irish Traveller and Arab are new ethnic group categories introduced into the 2011 Census that were not included in the previous 2001 Census.



### 3.6.2 Impacts on services for Black and minority ethnic people and actions to minimise these by:

- a) Continuing to fund Dorset Race Equality Council and work with them and other BME groups to celebrate diversity and promote access to our services. For example, undertaking a communications campaign using translations to encourage BME people to access advice on private rented housing to reduce exploitation by rogue landlords.
- b) Reviewing and furthering our engagement with BME groups to make sure that we are better able to respond to their specific needs. This has resulted in a community group providing their own 'English as a second language classes', raising awareness of children's safeguarding and supporting the first Thai Festival in Poole.
- c) Continuing to work in partnership with the Bournemouth and Poole Prejudice Free Group to improve hate crime reporting and support to victims.
- d) Continuing to support and manage Poole's Gypsy and Traveller residential site.

### 3.7.1 Demographic information about LGB and T people:

- a) The government uses the figure of 5-7% of the national population, which is considered a reasonable estimate of the LGB community. Recent research revealed that over half of gay male respondents (51%), 61% of lesbians and 25% of bisexual people felt that they had experienced disadvantage as a result of their sexual orientation. Examples given varied widely, but included issues relating to neighbourhoods, experiences at school and universities, problems with family, living in secret and openly homophobic verbal and physical abuse (Beyond Tolerance, 2009, Equality and Human Rights Commission). See [Understanding Equality and Diversity: Sexual Orientation Digest](#).

### **3.7.2 Impact on services for LGB and T people and actions to minimise these:**

- a) Continuing to fund SPACE Youth Group to reduce the isolation felt by some LGB and T young people and encourage their participation.
- b) Continuing our commitment to the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme, which addresses LGB equality issues in our workplace.
- c) Continuing to support the work of the Prejudice Free Group on hate crime reporting and events in the community such as International Day Against Homophobia and at Bourne Free (an annual Pride event). This has included supporting a specific project about tackling homophobia in sport to coincide with the Olympics.

### **3.8.1 Demographic information on socio-economic groups:**

- a) In Poole there is a much higher proportion than of UK residents generally in Mosaic Group L “Active elderly people living in pleasant retirement locations” and this group is ranked 11 of 15 for deprivation. There are also higher proportions Group B “Residents of small and mid-sized towns” (12/15 for deprivation) and Group H “Couples & Young singles in modern starter homes” (8/15 for deprivation).
- b) According to the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index for 2010, there were 2 Super Output Areas (SOAs) in Poole that fell within the worst 10% in England, in Alderney and Hamworthy East. A further 10 SOAs fell within the worst 25% of SOAs nationally. There were in Alderney, Branksome West, Newtown, Canford Heath West, Hamworthy West and East and Poole Town.

### **3.8.2 Impact on services for people from socially and economically excluded groups and the actions to minimise these:**

Where people from socially and economically excluded groups access a range of services and activities they are more likely to be affected. We are also aware that there is likely to be an impact for people with lower and moderate incomes where charges or thresholds of eligibility criteria move to a higher level. We are working to minimise by:

- a) Working with partners to develop a better coordinated approach to helping people obtain support to access employment and better understand and address the gaps in service provision;
- b) Extending the Families with Futures project, which works with the most troubled families in the Borough to help them to address their own difficulties in a positive and sustainable way;
- c) Working with Bourne Estate Neighbourhood community members to build a more active, confident and resilient community;

- d) Ensuring the Council can continue its statutory responsibilities, particularly in relation to homelessness and anti-social behaviour;
- e) Continuing to identify land for affordable housing and to fast track sites to enable new homes to be built; preparing a programme of infill site development with PHP; and developing an extra care housing scheme;
- f) Working intensively to prevent homelessness and to manage the increasing number of people who need bed and breakfast accommodation and to find onward private rented accommodation;
- g) Considering how to continue to fund successful initiatives, such as the under-occupation scheme which relies on a small grant to under-occupying tenants to enable them to move to smaller homes and free up larger homes for re-letting to those in greatest need;
- h) Referring people to Coastal Credit Union and “Your Money” project, both support vulnerable individuals who would otherwise struggle to manage their money or hold a bank account;
- i) Providing extensive programmes through library, museum and arts services to promote children’s reading, learning and enjoyment and work closely with schools and Children’s Services.
- q) Developing a new Pan Dorset Public Health Service that will be led by local Councils and focus on the priorities set out in the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis.

Also see the Local Council Tax Scheme [Equality Impact Assessment](#) Mitigating Actions (see Appendix 2).

**Responsible officer**

Jan Thurgood  
Strategic Director

**Contact:**

Emma Leatherbarrow  
Strategy Team Manager

**January 2013**

## **Annex 1**

### **MTFP Equality Impact Assessment Process**

- a) Since 2009, equality implications have been required to be considered and documented for future growth and saving proposals as part of the MTFP process, and an EQIA was required from all Service Unit Heads.
- b) All services have access to intelligence about our community make up in Poole.
- c) More detailed EQIAs have been undertaken on significant service changes, such as the Council Tax Support Scheme and the Skills and Learning Merger with Dorset. In addition, some services undertook risk assessments related to specific areas of work, e.g. Tourism and Town Centre Management.
- d) Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee was consulted on the emerging budget and the equality implications for their service areas.

## Appendix 2: Full Local Council Tax Support Scheme EQIA

### Section 1:

**Service:**

Financial Services

**Title of strategy, policy or service:**

Local Council Tax Support Scheme

**Officers involved in the EQIA:**

Pete Stratford, Corporate Research Manager.

**Type of strategy, policy or service (delete below as appropriate):**

New/proposed

**Q1 – What is the aim of your strategy, policy, project or service?**

Introduce a local Council Tax Support Scheme from April 2013, in place of the current National Council Tax Benefit Scheme that will be abolished on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

**Q2 – Who is it going to benefit and how? If this is a changing function state who will be affected or no longer benefit**

Some working age residents who are entitled to Council Tax Benefit from April 2013 will be affected. There will be a financial impact for these residents who will be required to make a contribution (or increased contribution) towards their Council Tax.

The Council's proposed local scheme means that some categories of working age claimants will not be affected.

- People who are severely disabled.
- People with a disability who receive certain disability benefits.
- Parents or guardians with a disabled child who receives Disability Living Allowance.
- Carers who receive Carer's Allowance and care for someone full time.
- People receiving war disablement, war widows or widowers pension.

**Q3 – What outcomes do you want to achieve?**

Ensure financial support is directed to the most vulnerable while not providing a disincentive for people to earn income from paid employment.

**Q4 – Are there barriers to doing this?**

The introduction of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme will be supported by a Government grant set at 90 percent of the current grant paid for the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme. Therefore there is a potential cost of £1.034 million to Poole if the Council introduced a Local Council Tax Support Scheme that matched the existing National Council Tax Benefit Scheme (the default scheme).

**Q5 – How will you put this into practice?**

The local Council Tax Support Scheme will be designed to protect the most vulnerable while being delivered within budget.

**Section 2: Information gathering and judging impact**

**Q6 - What existing information and data do you have?**

A report has been prepared, 'Local Council Tax Support – Impacts and Mitigations' (attached).

An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for Dorset Councils (attached).

**Q7- What does this tell us about the likely impact on different groups?**

**General/all equality groups**

Working age claimants with caring responsibilities and War pensioners would not be affected by the Council's proposed Council Tax Support Scheme.

**Age**

Claimants of pensionable age are not affected.

Children in claimant households that will pay (pay more) Council Tax will be affected by reduced financial resources.

About two thirds (2,978) of affected claimant households have children. 1,728 children under five years old live in claimant households that will be affected by the change to Council Tax Support. That is 1 in 5 (21 percent) of all children under five years old living in Poole.

Working age claimants who are not in a protected group will pay (pay more) Council Tax.

### **Disability**

Claimants in receipt of a disability benefit or who have a child with a disability will be protected.

### **Pregnancy and maternity**

Claimant households with new born children not in a protected group will pay (pay more) Council Tax.

### **Sex**

Single parents (99 percent of whom are women) not in a protected group will pay (pay more) Council Tax.

Lone parents account for nearly half (45%) of all claimants.

878 claimant households are lone parents with one or more children under 5 years of age. Lone parents who have at least one child aged less than five years account for 19 percent (1 in 5) of all affected claimant households. More than 1 in 5 (22 percent) of these have earned income from employment.

Local research undertaken for the Council's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment has shown that childcare costs continue to be an issue for parents. The numbers of households who do not use childcare because "it is too expensive" increased between 2007 and 2010. These households were more likely to be from the more deprived areas in Poole, and to have children aged less than 5 years. Childcare costs are one of the main reasons for dissatisfaction with childcare. It should be noted however that the Council is implementing the Government funded scheme to provide free childcare for two year olds in families with lower incomes.

### **Socially excluded groups**

High concentrations of affected claimant households are in areas defined as being areas of deprivation.

11% of the affected claimants live in Poole's three most deprived 'small areas'. These areas are Turlin Moor in Hamworthy West Ward, part of Poole Town Ward and Bourne Estate in Alderney Ward. A small area adjoining Bourne Estate in Alderney Ward also has a large number of claimants.

### **Q8 - Is there any potential for direct or indirect discrimination? Yes**

Single adults in the latter stages of pregnancy or single parents with a new born child will not be able to obtain earned income from employment unless they are in employment and have Maternity rights.

**If yes, please use the action plan below to say how this will be mitigated**

### Section 3: Action planning

Issue	Objective/ Intended outcome	SMART action	Performance Target	Lead	Deadline
Pregnancy and maternity	Consideration will be given to how to mitigate any adverse impact for individual households where women are in later stages of pregnancy or have very young children.	Consider the use of the exceptional hardship scheme to support individual households on a case by case basis.	Research will be undertaken to understand any adverse impacts on this group to develop any appropriate mitigations as part of the future development of the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme.	Benefits Service Research and Intelligence Team	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2013

**EQIA approved by:**

**Date:**

**Contact number:**

**Review date:**

Send a copy of your completed screening to your Unit's [Equality Rep](#) and the [Corporate Equality Officer](#) for publication




APPENDIX 5

APPENDIX 5



### Introduction

This paper provides information on impacts and mitigations relating to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Poole.

A separate Equality Impact Assessment has been produced with Bournemouth Borough Council and Dorset County Council and is available at [www.boroughofpoole.com/counciltaxsupport](http://www.boroughofpoole.com/counciltaxsupport).

Consultation is currently open on the proposed changes. Details of the consultation are available at [www.boroughofpoole.com/counciltaxsupport](http://www.boroughofpoole.com/counciltaxsupport).

### Summary

Approximately 12,000 households claim Council Tax Benefit (September 2012).

Of those about half are pensioner households which will not be affected by the change to a Council Tax Support Scheme.

The Council proposes that a further 1,500 vulnerable claimant households (including those with a disability and recognised caring responsibilities) will also be protected.

Therefore approximately 4,500 claimant households are expected to be affected by the change to a local Council Tax Support Scheme.

The average (mean) weekly financial impact for affected claimant households will be £1.38 per week, £70.72 per annum.

The primary impact will be a reduction in disposable income for households where income is already sufficiently low enough to entitle them to Council Tax Benefit. Some of these households are concentrated in small areas of Poole. In these areas there are likely to be local economic impacts, with a reduction of spending in local shops and businesses. About £1.1 million per annum will be removed from Poole's local economy as a result of the change to a local Council Tax Support Scheme.

The mitigations for affected households will be to increase income by obtaining paid employment, working increased hours or obtaining higher paid employment.

As the responsible local authority for Poole, the Council already takes action to support vulnerable people and communities. The Council will seek to mitigate the effects of reducing disposable income by providing support for those who want to find paid employment, helping to develop the local economy and the creation of new jobs and supporting those communities where the impact of these changes are concentrated. Alongside these actions the Council continues to support the provision of services designed to help people manage on low incomes.

### Equalities Characteristics

We have analysed our administrative data to help us understand local impacts. Administrative data is not available to assess the impact of people by ethnicity, faith or sexuality. Claimant households with a recognised disability are protected from the changes. Pensioner Households are also protected. Therefore the focus for this impact assessment is on social inequalities including local area impacts, age and gender.

A consultation survey is being undertaken that will collect personal data on equalities characteristics (not sexuality or faith). In addition all equalities groups are being consulted for their views on the impacts of changes via our network of known agencies.

An early provisional analysis of 827 responses to the survey up to 8<sup>th</sup> October 2012) shows that;

67 percent are women, we know 70 percent of affected claimants are women

55 percent are aged 45 years and over

10 percent are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups

52 percent have a Limiting Long Term Illness

The Borough of Poole has previously published and maintains a series of [Equalities Reviews](#) that will inform the mitigating actions.

### **Financial Impact**

The average (mean) weekly financial impact will be £1.38.

The weekly financial impact ranges from 1p to £3.94.

For 1 in 10 claimant households the financial impact will be less than 0.61p per week.

The financial impact will be more than £2.10 for 1 in 10 claimant households.

### **Work status**

Approximately 2 in every 5 (38 percent) affected claimants have earned income from employment.<sup>1</sup>

When we match affected claimants to Mosaic lifestyle data we find that one in four are from just one of the 15 Mosaic Groups<sup>2</sup>. Group H (Couples and Young Singles in Small Modern Starter Homes). Typically most are owner-occupied and their household finances are often stretched. Most households in this group will have someone in employment.

607 (13 percent) affected claimants are unemployed and claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and are therefore available for and seeking employment<sup>3</sup>.

### **Families with Children**

1,728 children under five years old live in claimant households that will be affected by the change to Council Tax Support. That is 1 in 5 (21 percent) of all children under five years old living in Poole<sup>4</sup>.

About two thirds (2,978) of affected claimant households have children. 2,088 of these are lone parents. Lone parents account for nearly half (45%) of all claimants.

878 claimant households are lone parents with one or more children under 5 years of age<sup>5</sup>. Lone parents who have at least one child aged less than five years account for 19 percent (1 in 5) of all affected claimant households<sup>6</sup>. More than 1 in 5 (22 percent) of these have earned income from employment<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Datatank © and Borough of Poole 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012

<sup>2</sup> More information about Mosaic Public Sector is available [here](#).

<sup>3</sup> Datatank © and Borough of Poole 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012

<sup>4</sup> Datatank © and Borough of Poole 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012 and 2010 Mid Year Population Estimates.

<sup>5</sup> Datatank © and Borough of Poole 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012

<sup>6</sup> Datatank © and Borough of Poole 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012

<sup>7</sup> Datatank © and Borough of Poole 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012

Childcare costs continue to be an issue for parents<sup>8</sup>. The numbers of households who don't use childcare because "it is too expensive" increased between 2007 and 2010. These households were more likely to be from the more deprived areas in Poole, and to have children aged less than 5 years. Childcare costs are one of the main reasons for dissatisfaction with childcare, both in this survey, and as stated by parents in the [childcare focus groups](#).

7 out of 10 claimants are women (70 percent) and nearly all single parent claimants are women (99 percent). The cost of child care combined with low pay especially for women will make it a difficult choice to take up paid employment.

Median pay (full time) for women resident in Poole is around 84% of that for men in Poole. The gross weekly pay for resident full-time workers in Poole during 2011 was £517.90 for males and £435.56 for females.

The Council has identified 153 families which meet Government criteria for 'troubled families' (locally referred to as 'families with futures'). Of this cohort, 75 will be affected by the change to a Council Tax Support Scheme.

Families with futures are those that meet at least two of the following criteria:

- Young people involved in crime or anti-social behaviour

- Household affected by truancy or exclusion from school

- Have an adult on Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) out of work benefits

- Have a child with assessed emotional or behavioural difficulties

### **Area impacts**

Nearly half (43 percent) of the affected claimants are residents in the four Wards of Alderney, Poole Town, Newtown and Hamworthy West. Poole has 16 Wards in total<sup>9</sup>. The four Wards with the lowest number of claimants are Broadstone, Canford Cliffs, Merley and Branksome East, together they account for 12 percent of claimant households<sup>10</sup>.

Local impact can also be measured for Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LLSOAs - which for ease of reading, will be referred to as 'small areas' in this report). There are 91 'small areas' in Poole, which are communities of approximately 1,500 households.

11% of the affected claimants live in Poole's three most deprived 'small areas'. These areas are Turlin Moor in Hamworthy West Ward, part of Poole Town Ward and Bourne Estate in Alderney Ward. A small area adjoining Bourne Estate in Alderney Ward also has a large number of claimants.

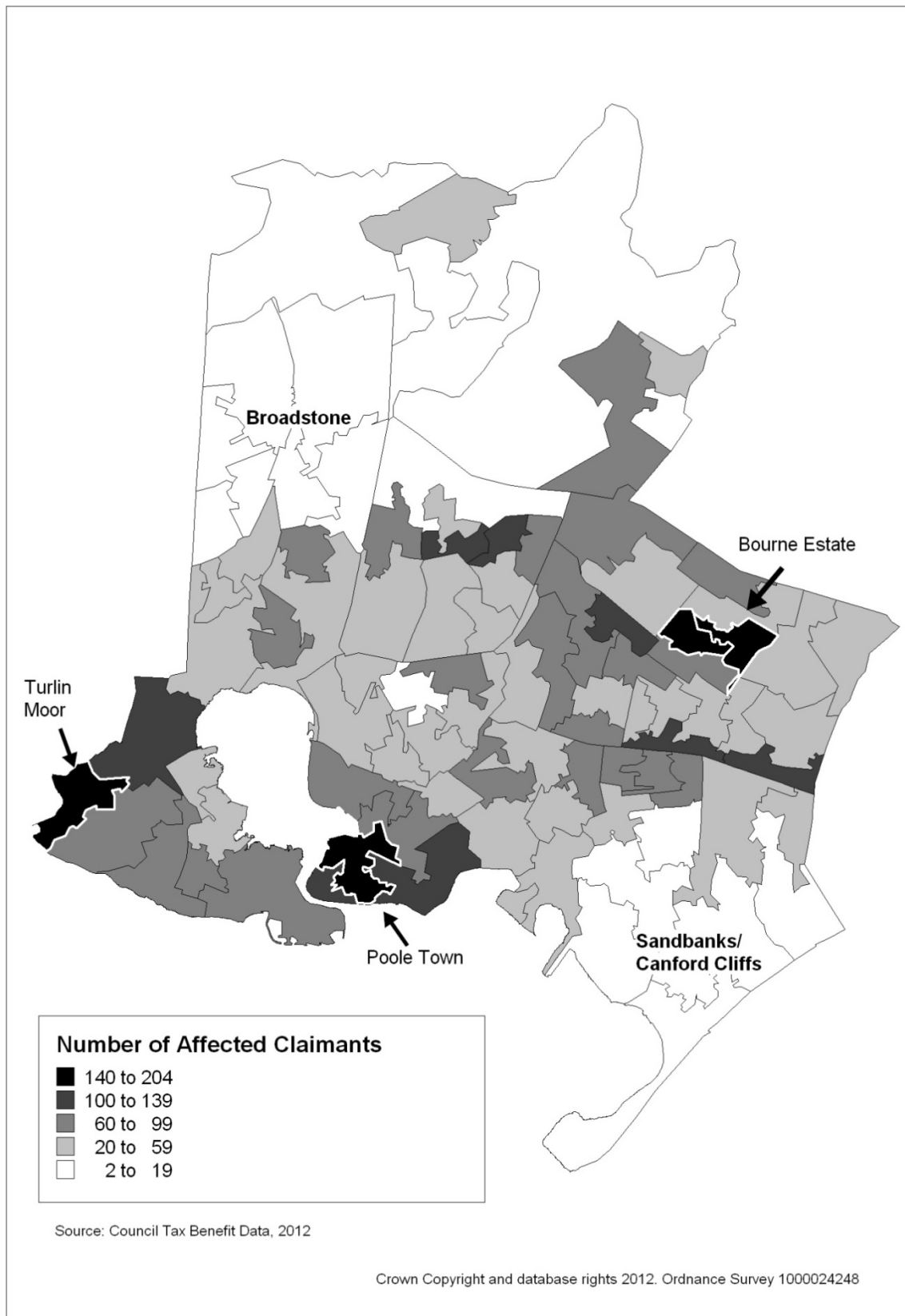
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<sup>8</sup> [Childcare Sufficiency Study 2010](#) Corporate Research Team, Borough of Poole, on behalf of Children's Services.

<sup>9</sup> Datatank © and Borough of Poole 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012

<sup>10</sup> Datatank © and Borough of Poole 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012

Map showing the number of affected claimants by small area (LLSOA).



The table below shows the estimated annual loss for those four 'small areas', assuming Council Tax Support can be claimed on 80% of the Council Tax bill.

Annual financial loss per claimant and for area<sup>11</sup>

*(Figures have been rounded to nearest pound)*

<b>Area (LLSOA Code)</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Area total</b>
<i>Part of Poole Town Ward (E01015469)</i>	204	£6	£419	£152	£31,134
<i>Turlin Moor in Hamworthy West Ward (E01015430)</i>	160	£15	£258	£168	£26,839
<i>Area adjoining Bourne Estate in Alderney Ward (E01015382)</i>	153	£3	£258	£157	£23,949
<i>Bourne Estate in Alderney Ward (E01015384)</i>	140	£28	£358	£183	£25,600

The English Indices of Deprivation report is also available for 'small areas' in Poole<sup>12</sup>. The areas identified above are some of the most deprived small areas in England.

- Turlin Moor and part of Poole Town Ward are within the most deprived 10 percent of all 'small areas' in England for Multiple Deprivation.
- Part of Poole Town Ward is within the most deprived 10 percent in England for the Employment Deprivation domain (involuntary excluded from labour market).
- Turlin Moor is within the most deprived 10 percent of all 'small areas' in England for Income Deprivation Affecting Children sub-domain (living in income deprived households).
- Bourne Estate is in the most deprived 10 percent in England for the Skills Deprivation sub-domain (low or no qualifications) and for Income Deprivation Affecting Children sub-domain (living in income deprived households).

Children with the poorest outcomes and the most complex needs are concentrated in some of the same small areas of the Borough<sup>13</sup>. The priority areas of need for children and young people are: Bourne Estate (Alderney); Turlin Moore (Hamworthy West); Sherbourne Crescent Area (Canford Heath East); and Poole Town Centre (Poole Town).

### **Impact Mitigation**

The Council has for some time been aware of the impact of the rising cost of living coupled with the relatively low wage economy in Poole. A number of programmes have been initiated by the authority and by other agencies which will help mitigate the impact of the change in the Local Council Tax Support Scheme. These mitigations are summarised here under the two main headings of, 'supporting people to obtain employment' and 'supporting people with low incomes'.

<sup>11</sup> Capita © July 2012

<sup>12</sup> [Deprivation Report, 2011, Corporate Research Team, Borough of Poole](#)

<sup>13</sup> Children and Young Peoples Needs Analysis 2008/09 Report <http://www.boroughofpoole.com/your-council/how-the-council-works/research/children-and-young-peoples-needs-analysis-2008-09/>

## **Supporting People to Obtain Employment**

### Welfare to Work Schemes

There are a number of 'welfare to work' schemes operating in Poole which aim to help people who have been living on benefits to move into sustainable employment. These range from 'Get Britain Working' which is managed by Job Centre Plus, to the 'Work Programme' which is a 'payment by results' programme managed in Poole by Bournemouth and Poole College. Through the Employment and Skills Board of the Local Enterprise Partnership, a mapping exercise is being completed to ensure that the various schemes are meeting needs in the area and that specific groups are receiving effective support. In addition, the Council is now working on creating pathways to ensure it is easy for people who need support to navigate through what is a complex range of services in a way which most effectively meets their needs.

The Department for Work and Pensions launches 'Universal Jobmatch' in November. This new free online service matches jobseekers CVs and skills to jobs. The system includes a number features to speed up the job search and recruitment processes, including a notification process for employers to see jobseekers that match their requirements.

### Families with Futures

Families with Futures will work with the most complex families in the Borough to help them to address their own difficulties in a positive and sustainable way. Accessing employment is a key outcome identified by Government and will attract a results payment. The Council, along with its partners on the Poole Partnership, has given this programme a high priority and additional funding. The programme is focused on helping families find and keep jobs – 'Working Families Everywhere' assigns assertive key workers to families to help remove barriers to employment and a European Social Fund project run in Poole by a private sector company will support families to develop employability skills through training. Families impacted by welfare changes have been identified and will be prioritised through the programme.

### Families with Children

Poole Partnership and Poole Children's Trust have produced a Child Poverty Strategy<sup>14</sup>. The aim of Poole Child Poverty Strategy is to reduce the effects of child poverty in targeted areas and among targeted vulnerable groups. The strategy tasks identified agencies including the Borough of Poole with specific actions that will support people to obtain skills and employment, maximise income and improve family and life chances.

One of the Borough of Poole actions within the Child Poverty Strategy is to support parent's return to work by maintaining sufficient childcare provision to meet the needs of families returning to employment. The Poole Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan 2011- 2014<sup>15</sup> details progress against delivery of specific actions designed to ensure there is sufficient childcare of right type and quality to meet the needs of Poole residents. This includes the provision of funded childcare places. The priorities and action plan are informed by a comprehensive assessment of childcare supply and demand<sup>16</sup>.

Children and Young People Integrated Services are developing the web based Family Information Directory to include a section on money and welfare. This will be used by family

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<sup>14</sup> [Reducing the Impact of Child Poverty in Poole 2011 to 2014](#).

<sup>15</sup> [Childcare Sufficiency Action Plan](#), Borough of Poole. 2011

<sup>16</sup> [Childcare Sufficiency Assessment](#), Borough of Poole. 2011

outreach, pastoral care, special educational needs coordinators and parent champions to support families affected by welfare reforms. All these front line staff are being made aware of the welfare reforms and their likely impacts and will ensure this knowledge is shared with others working with children and families. The web based Directory will be available to those who have access to the internet.

### Employment and Worklessness Action Group

There is a significant amount of activity designed to help Poole residents into employment. To ensure the various actions, services and initiatives have maximum possible effect a task and finish group of senior Borough of Poole Officer and relevant external agencies has been established to;

Develop a better coordinated approach to helping people obtain support to access employment.

Build a sound understanding of gaps in service provision and produce proposals to address these gaps.

### **Supporting People with Low Incomes**

In addition to supporting people to find employment, Poole Housing Partnership (PHP) has led on a financial inclusion project which has supported people living on a low income. Through the 'Your Money' project they have helped more than 1,200 households in Poole to maximise their income and reduce outgoings. The project helps ensure people are claiming their entitlement to benefits, including improving access to financial products through, for example, promoting the Credit Union. The estimated annual gain to Poole residents from the 'Your Money' project is £113,470. The Council also invested with PHP in solar panels which provide practical cost savings on energy bills for people on limited incomes on their energy costs. The Council has continued to support the Citizens' Advice Bureau which has seen demand for its services rise significantly over the past few years with additional funding provided this year to support people impacted by changes to their benefits.

### **Area Impacts**

In addition to the support provide to individuals and families, the Council recognise the need to support communities where the impact of these changes is concentrated. The Council and Poole Partnership have been proactive in funding a neighbourhood management project in one of the most deprived community in Poole. The Bourne Estate Neighbourhood Management Project has encouraged community members to become more active and built confidence and resilience within the community. The Council continues to invest in community development support for other areas of deprivation including Poole Town and Turlin Moor.

### **Monitoring**

Ongoing monitoring of the new Council Tax Support Scheme will be required to ensure the Council can respond with the right support to the right people at the right time. Going forward it will be important to monitor our Council Tax Support administrative data so we know;

- who is applying for Council Tax Support
- who no longer requires Council Tax Support
- who requires more or less Council Tax Support

With this information we will know if our mitigation actions are effective for all, some or none of the affected groups.

This work is in addition to the monitoring of specific actions referred to in this report that are already being monitored for their effectiveness.

For further details or queries about this report please contact Pete Stratford,  
Tel 01202 633306, or email p.stratford@poole.gov.uk  
Corporate Research, Strategy Team, Borough of Poole October 2012

## Step 2: Scoping – what are you impact assessing?

### Service and lead officer:

David Barnes, Project Sponsor  
Strategic Director, Christchurch and East Dorset

### Officers involved in the EqIA:

Katie Bickley, Project Co-ordinator, Dorset County Council  
Julie-Ann Wyatt, Business Support Manager, Borough of Poole  
Judi Hatchard, Customer Service and Financial Assessment Manager, Borough of Poole

### What are you impact assessing?

Existing:

New/proposed:



Changing/Update/ revision

Other, please list

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### What is the title of your service / strategy / policy / project?

Project: Localisation of Council Tax Support in Dorset

### Q2. What is the aim of your service / strategy / policy / project?

#### Background

In the 2010 spending review the Government announced its plans to abolish Council Tax Benefit and localise support for Council Tax from 2013-14, reducing expenditure by 10 per cent. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 contains provision for the abolition of Council Tax Benefit and The Local Government Finance Bill includes proposals for billing authorities to construct Local Council Tax Reduction schemes by 31 January 2013 for implementation by April 2013. DCLG guidance indicates that major precepting authorities and those who have an interest in the scheme must be consulted before a decision is taken on what scheme to adopt. Currently Council Tax Benefit is a means tested benefit which compares claimants income with a needs assessment of how much the claimant needs to live on with 100% of any benefit awarded reimbursed by Government subsidy.

#### Local aims

The project aims to develop a single scheme or as few schemes as possible to administer council tax support locally in Dorset, whilst managing a 10 per cent cut in Government grant to fund this.

The Project Group, consisting of representatives from each district billing authority, the Borough of Poole, Bournemouth Borough Council, and a representative for Dorset's major preceptors has been established to design a scheme that:

- eliminates the potential for a "postcode lottery", and helps promote a positive reputation of local government,
- is simple to operate and easy to understand for customers,
- takes account of the impacts on vulnerable groups and non protected groups,
- is consulted on in a coordinated manner and communicated clearly,
- ensures that equalities are considered.

Where possible schemes across Dorset will share common principles and operate within the same legal framework.

The Project Group are working to ensure that the scheme design has regard to the following underlying principles, as set out by DCLG:

- Localised schemes should provide support for the most vulnerable, although protection for pensioners will be set out in a national framework.
- Localised schemes should deliver incentives at a local level to reduce benefits dependency and encourage the unemployed back in to work.

### **The Proposed Process for establishing support**

It is proposed that the assessment of need in setting an individual's living allowance, used to calculate the amount of extra support required to pay the council tax charge, be based on rules applied in the calculation of the 'Applicable Amount' used in the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme. In the main, the same applicable amounts are used by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to calculate Income Support (IS), income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA(IB)) and income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA(IR)) although there are some minor variations.

The applicable amount includes a personal allowance. Different amounts apply according to age and whether the applicant has a partner or is legally married to more than one partner (polygamous marriage).

For people claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) there are different personal allowances depending on their age and their capability to work. The capability to work is judged by the DWP through a Work Capability Assessment. After the assessment is complete the individual is placed in one of two groups:

- **Work-Related Activity Group**  
If placed in the Work-Related Activity Group, they will be expected to take part in work-focused interviews with their personal adviser. They will get support to help them prepare for suitable work. In return, they will receive a work-related activity component in addition to the basic rate.
- **Support Group**  
If the illness or disability has a severe effect on the individual's ability to work, they won't be expected to work, but they can work on a voluntary basis if they want to.

Premiums are also added to the personal allowance where the individuals meet the

conditions for them to be applied. It is considered the additional premiums and increased allowances provide increased financial support for vulnerable groups such as families; children and people with a disability.

The new Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be able to take a number of these premiums into account when determining which groups will be protected from changes to entitlement due to vulnerability. These are briefly explained under the relevant protected characteristics.

### **Q3. Who does/will it have an impact on? eg. public, visitors, staff, members, partners?**

Reducing the cost of support for Council Tax locally contributes to the national programme for deficit reduction. Depending on the design of the local scheme adopted, all, some or none of the 10% reduction in Government funding will be directly or indirectly passed on to Dorset residents. This could occur through changes to existing levels of entitlement and allowance, restrictions to maximum benefit receipt, changes to the discounts and reductions received by some residents, or by adopting a principle that everyone should contribute something toward their council tax bill.

#### **The Public**

Where a proportion or all of the 10% reduction in direct Government funding is not incorporated into the design of a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, authority budgets will be required to manage the reduction by other means. Managing this gap in funding in other service areas would affect the delivery of critical services to the public, including Fire and Police services. This would affect a wider range of different service users to an unknown degree, not simply those claiming support for council tax.

#### **a) Pensioners claiming support**

The Government has considered the situation for low income pensioners who would currently be eligible for support with their council tax bill. Unlike most other groups, pensioners cannot be expected to seek paid employment to increase their income. Central Government has therefore indicated that as a vulnerable group, low income pensioners should be protected from any reduction in support as a result of localising council tax support. This will have a 'gearing' effect on the remaining population in Dorset because of the high percentage of older people in the County.

#### **b) Working age claimants**

The Project Group is committed to protecting the most vulnerable in the community through the design of a local scheme. As per DCLG guidance, the final scheme will have regard to:

- Those affected by the Child Poverty Act 2010 provisions where local authorities have a duty to reduce and mitigate the impact of child poverty in their area
- Persons who fall within the definition of a being a disabled person in accordance with the Disabled Persons Act 1986 and the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Persons who within the requirements of the Housing Act 1986 are included within the duty of a Local Authority to prevent homelessness
- Persons who would be affected by section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, which

lists the protected characteristics and outlines the public sector equality duty.

To identify which claimants form a 'core' group of vulnerable individuals the project will aim to assess individual means, as a gauge of how well a person's resources meet their needs. Circumstances or conditions that make an individual vulnerable will affect their ability to work, and the 'core' group of vulnerable people should be incapable of work.

People outside this core vulnerable group may be affected by greater change to their existing level of support. It will be important to consider the effect of wider welfare reform alongside changes to council tax support, as the cumulative impact of reforms across the benefit system could inadvertently disadvantage some individuals the most.

#### c) Non-claimants

In an effort to meet the 10% funding, the Project Group also expect to model the effects of changes to reductions given to certain classes of property, discounts applicable to some residents and alterations to the council tax charge across the board.

This could negatively impact residents who do not currently claim council tax support, by increasing the charge they are liable to pay for council tax.

### **Partner Organisations**

The 10% reduction in direct Government funding will be managed across district councils (billing authorities), The County Council, Police and Fire (major preceptors) to varying degrees. Depending on the proportion of the 10% that is incorporated into the design of a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, there could be a significant financial impact on partners' budgets and this could have an effect on other services provided by these authorities.

### **Staff**

When the new scheme is introduced there will be an impact on staff administration duties and some retraining required. Depending on the efficiencies gained by the design of the new scheme these administration duties could be greater or smaller.

## **Q4. Are there any potential barriers to implementing changes to your service / strategy / policy / project? eg. capacity or financial issues**

The barriers to implementing the final scheme are namely:

#### 1. Timescales

The timescale for designing and implementing a scheme is very short and must be balanced against the requirements of consultation and decision-making processes. DCLG have indicated that the extent and duration of consultation should be tempered against the level of change from existing arrangements, i.e. where a reduction scheme proposes fundamental changes to all aspects of current arrangements, then the consultation may need to provide greater detail of its impacts. They are clear, however, that all interested parties should be able to give their view and influence the design of schemes, and that major precepting authorities should be involved in shaping the proposals through consultation.

#### 2. Resource Constraints

In order to deliver a scheme by the required deadline there is a considerable amount of concerted effort required by those with technical expertise and other staff needed to provide a properly evidenced set of recommendations for consideration by Members. The reliance on key individuals is a risk, exacerbated for example, by the requirement for staff in the West of the County being required to support the organisational arrangements of the Olympic Games. The project group have identified external resources available to support elements of the work, but

there could also be a need to back fill resource if key individuals are required to work intensively on the project for a period of time. Other resource pressures include the funding required to make the necessary software changes to key ICT systems (software suppliers are well aware of the DWP grant funding made available to Local Authorities), cost of consultation exercises and training of staff.

### 3. Potential for legal challenge

Insufficient communication and consultation to raise awareness of the changes and receive feedback on their likely affects could lead to public backlash, damage the Council's reputation and incite a judicial review of the decision to endorse a particular option. This would delay implementation of a scheme through the course of legal action and incur the Council legal costs. It could also mean that central government's default scheme would have to be adopted and the 10% funding reduction absorbed, affecting other council services, or result in a requirement for the Council to conduct fresh consultation on a new proposal.

### 4. Agreement among Partners

If partner authorities cannot agree a way forward with the new scheme there could be a breakdown in relations and different outcomes for residents across the six districts. This could result in a 'postcode lottery' effect and cause problems for major preceptors' financial planning with regard to the tax base in each area.

## **Q5 . Who else will be involved in implementing this service /policy...**

The Project will require the expertise of Revenues and Benefits Unit staff and managers in designing and implementing a final scheme.

Associations such as the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils, Dorset Community Action, and local advice agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau will be used to disseminate information about scheme proposals to interested parties and will provide a link through which their views can be further articulated. Advice agencies and voluntary community groups will also provide support for claimants in understanding the new system of support for council tax once during the consultation and once implemented.

Software suppliers will be required to implement system alterations based on the parameters of the final scheme for administering council tax support.

## **Step 3 : Information gathering – what do you need to know about your customers?**

### **Q6. What data do you already have about your service users, or the people your policy or strategy will have an impact on, that is broken down by equality strand?**

#### **List here:**

According to the Single Housing Benefit Extract, as at January 2011, there were 3.1million Council Tax Benefit Claimants under 65. The Family resources Survey data shows 48% of Council Tax Benefit recipients aged under 65 may have at least one adult or child who is disabled. In the same survey 18% of under 65's reported caring responsibilities.

Local data on people currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit including the number of vulnerable claimants and level of award received has been extracted from revenues and benefits records. This can be broken down across to inform the design work. The data can be broken down into groups with particular characteristics, e.g. by claimant also in receipt of a disability premium.

Each authorities scheme EQIA will use the data held on current claimants during modelling. Each authority will use this data to assess the impact across different equality strands.

**Q7. Do you need any further information broken down by equality strand to inform this EqIA?**

**Yes / -No**

**If yes, list here and add actions to gather this data to your action plan at step 5):**

Some demographic forecasting work will be undertaken to create a picture of the changing demographic profile of Dorset over the next three years and its impact on the scheme.

e.g. a sharp rise in the number of pensioners who are eligible for council tax support in the County could lead to a more significant gearing effect on other claimants and non-claimants, as pensioners continue to receive protection from scheme changes under a national framework.

## **4. Making a judgement about impacts Protected Characteristics**

### **Age**

#### **Young People**

Under Council Tax law the following groups are not included or are treated differently in the Council Tax calculation.

- Children under 18yrs old
- People on apprenticeship schemes
- 18 and 19yr olds in full-time education
- Full-time college and university students
- People under 25yrs old receiving funding from the Skills Funding Agency or Young People's Learning Agency

The scheme will have regard to The Child Poverty Act 2010, as well as the local authority's duty to address child poverty, and to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty in their local areas.

Where a household is in receipt of Disabled Child Premium they may be considered for protection from changes to entitlement under the new Scheme. This is a flat-rate premium which may be awarded for each disabled child in the household and can be included with any other premiums. The child is considered disabled if they are registered blind or receiving Disability Living Allowance.

#### **Older People**

The entitlement of individuals who have reached state pension age are protected and are not affected by any of the alterations to eligibility and entitlement made by the introduction of a localised scheme.

### **Disability**

Under Council Tax law the following groups are not included or are treated differently in the Council Tax calculation.

- People who have a severe mental disability
- Live-in carers who look after someone (not partner, spouse or child)

The scheme will have regard to The Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 and Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, which include a range of duties relating to the welfare needs of disabled people

The scheme may seek to identify vulnerable disabled individuals by linking criteria to existing benefits or premiums the applicant is in receipt of and from this, identifying claimants that are in a core vulnerable group that will be protected. The scheme will give recognition to those with physical impairments, long term or terminal illnesses, and severe learning disabilities. For disabled individuals who do not fall into the 'Core Vulnerable Group' each case will be assessed on its own merits and treated on an individual basis.

If in receipt of the support component of Employment and Support Allowance claimants can be considered vulnerable and their entitlement protected, as they are unable to work to support their needs.

Individuals in receipt of Disability Premium, Enhanced Disability Premium or Severe Disability Premium will be considered for protection from changes to their entitlement.

In cases where a Carer Premium is awarded, this may also be considered for protection if either the applicant or their partner(s) are looking after a disabled person and

- receive Carer's Allowance
- or would be entitled to, but for an overlapping benefit

### **Gender and Transgender**

The scheme will not unfairly directly impact those having gone through gender reassignment. Provision can be made for those undergoing the gender reassignment process with regard to their ability to work during this period.

If in receipt of the support component of Employment and Support Allowance claimants can be considered vulnerable and their entitlement will be protected.

Single parents are likely to be female and may fall into an unprotected group and have their entitlement reduced however. Child benefit and Child maintenance may be excluded from any income calculations

### **Pregnancy and maternity**

The reduction scheme will take into account income during this period through existing statutory/employer maternity pay or maternity allowance. If in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance and in the support group claimants may be considered most vulnerable and a form of provision will be made.

### **Race**

The design of a local scheme for council tax support will not directly discriminate against race. There may be potential for indirect discrimination however we do not currently collect ethnicity.

### **Religion or belief**

Members of religious communities are not included or are treated differently in the Council Tax calculation under Council Tax law e.g. a nun who has no income or capital of their own and is dependant on the Community. They will not be liable for a council tax charge.

Polygamous marriages will be recognised by the scheme.

### **Sexual orientation**

The design of a local scheme for council tax support will not discriminate against sexual orientation. Same sex couples and civil partnerships will be recognised in the scheme in the same way as heterosexual couples and marriages.

### **Socially excluded groups**

The Project Group is committed to designing a scheme that does not inadvertently damage or reinforce Socially excluded groups. The scheme will have regard to The Housing Act 1996, which gives local authorities a duty to prevent homelessness with special regard to vulnerable groups.

Through consultation with local advice and support agencies, discussion will focus not only on the impacts of suggested changes to council tax support, but whether these agencies will be able to provide a wider support network for those affected.

## **5. Action planning**

### **Q8. Is there any potential for direct or indirect discrimination?**

**Yes                  No                  Don't Know**

**If yes, please explain how you are going to change this?**

*Expand box as necessary*

The Government's decision to exclude pensioners from the scope of proposed changes to entitlement locally means that other claimants of council tax support will be directly discriminated against based on their status as a working age claimant. The high numbers of pensioners in Dorset means that a localised council tax reduction scheme could have a significant gearing affect on the liability of working age claimants.

The Project Group are committed to protecting the most vulnerable in the community by offering protection to these individuals under the new Scheme. The Scheme will include measures to encourage and support claimants back into work, so that individuals can work to support their own needs.

Data modelling will be used to devise the fairest and most reasonable scheme for Dorset residents, supported by consultation with the public on the proposed changes, and an assessment of the social and equality impacts of options for each Authority will be carried out.

**Step 4: Improvement plan – what are you going to change?**

*Expand boxes as necessary*

Issue	Action	Performance Target (what difference will it make)	Lead	Achieved	Difference made
<p>The design of the final scheme could potentially disproportionately impact specific group of people who hold a protected characteristic</p>	<p>When presenting draft final scheme options to Members the impacts will also be presented.</p> <p>When the final scheme is put forward for approval, a full record of where Equality has been taken into consideration in the design of the final scheme and consultation will be included in the final EQIA.</p>	<p>Members will have sufficient information to select a draft scheme</p> <p>Equalities issues will be considered at each stage of the process</p>	<p><b>EL</b></p> <p><b>JW</b></p>		

**EqIA approved by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Review date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Appendix 3: Background papers**

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2012/13 – 2014/15  
(Including Budget & Council Tax 2012/13 (Council February 2012))

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2013/14 – 2015/16 Update Report  
(3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012 Cabinet)

See Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on 10<sup>th</sup>  
September 2012

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2013/14 – 2015/16 Update Report  
(16<sup>th</sup> October 2012 Cabinet)

Medium Term Financial Plan 2013/14 – 2015/16 October/ November  
Overview and Scrutiny Reports to each Committees

Medium Term Financial Plan 2013/14 – 2015/16 November/ December  
Overview and Scrutiny Reports to each Committees

Quarterly Review of Corporate Risk Register Audit Committee 21<sup>st</sup> January  
2013

Please note this EQIA does not include the Human Resource implications for  
the Authority due to relatively small number of redundancies anticipated as a  
result of MTFP projections.