

Swindon Borough Council Diversity Impact Assessment – Discretionary Council Tax Discounts 2016

1 What's it about?

Refer to equality duties

What is the proposal? What outcomes/benefits are you hoping to achieve?

A recent Tribunal ruling recommended that Councils should have guidelines to help in determining where it may be appropriate to grant discretionary discounts. According to the Tribunal this is necessary in cases where the payment of Council Tax is not possible or would cause exceptional financial hardship.

There may be other circumstances when the Council would wish to grant discretionary discounts and the Council is duty bound to consider all applications.

The Council Tax Empty Homes Premium is where an additional 50% Council Tax is payable on homes empty and unfurnished in excess of 12 months. It is designed to encourage such homes to be brought back into use, in order to reduce homelessness. It does bring in an additional amount of Council Tax income. There may be occasions where the owners of such properties may not be able to sell such properties and it may be appropriate to consider not charging the premium.

Who's it for?

It is for individuals who are not financially able to meet the Council Tax charge. Whilst Council Tax Support is available and helps many individuals to discharge their liability, many working age claimants are only entitled to a maximum of 80% support and may require further assistance.

How will this proposal meet the equality duties?

Those with a low standard of living or who may be disadvantaged due to their personal circumstances may be able to receive assistance with their Council Tax.

What are the barriers to meeting this potential?

The level of Council Tax income helps the Council meet its budget and thus provide local services. If the level of discounts increases significantly the Council may have difficulty meeting its budget and providing services to other residents

2 Who's using it?

Refer to equality groups

What data/evidence do you have about who is or could be affected (e.g. equality monitoring, customer feedback, current service use, national/regional/local trends)?

Council Tax is payable on all domestic properties by either the occupier or in the case of empty properties by the owner. The Council does not hold any equalities data regarding Council Tax payers. The Council cannot choose who takes up occupation or ownership of empty properties. Monitoring of Council Tax Support claims by age, disability and ethnicity is being undertaken and appears to be broadly representative of the community.

How can you involve your customers in developing the proposal?

When the Council Tax Support scheme was introduced, letters were sent to all Council Tax Benefit claimants and 10,000 other residents. This Policy is necessary to ensure that those that cannot claim 100% Council Tax Support, but do not have the ability to pay any remaining balance,

are assisted and not subject to significant financial hardship.

Who is missing? Do you need to fill any gaps in your data? (pause DIA if necessary)

Whilst those claiming Council Tax support appear to be broadly representative of the community as a whole, measuring significant financial hardship is difficult, as this would vary depending on an individual's circumstances and outgoings.

3 Impact Refer to dimensions of equality and equality groups

Show consideration of: age, disability, sex, transgender, marriage/civil partnership, maternity/pregnancy, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation
and if appropriate: financial economic status, homelessness, political view

Using the information in parts 1 & 2:

a) Does the proposal create an adverse impact which may affect some groups or individuals?
Is it clear what this is? How can this be mitigated or justified?

No adverse impacts will be created by this policy for any of the equality groups.

What can be done to change this impact?

As no adverse impacts will be created by this policy no action will be required..

b) Does the proposal create benefit for a particular group? Is it clear what this is? Can you maximise the benefits for other groups?

The proposal does not create benefit for any one particular equality group and is equally available to all Council Tax payers who may be experiencing significant financial hardship and who will benefit from any reductions which are granted under this proposal.

Council Tax payers may also benefit from the award of other discounts where this is appropriate..

Does further consultation need to be done? How will assumptions made in this assessment be tested?

No. Full records of any discounts granted will be maintained and an annual review will be undertaken in accordance with this proposal.

4 So what?

[Link to business planning process](#)

What changes have you made in the course of this DIA?

None, but another scenario where a discount or suspension of the Council Tax Empty homes premium is being considered.

What will you do now and what will be included in future planning? When will this be reviewed?

The proposal will be subject to annual review.

How will success be measured?

Success will be measured according to the number and value of Discounts awarded under this proposal. Monitoring to whom discounts are granted will be maintained, if significant.

For the record	
Name of person leading this DIA Andy Stevens	Date completed 1/12/15
Names of people involved in consideration of impact Andy Stevens & Greg Sheppard	
Name of manager signing DIA Stephen Taylor	Date signed

Diversity Impact Assessment – an inclusive business planning tool

1. What's it about? refer to equality duties

- What is the proposal? What outcomes/benefits are you hoping to achieve
- Who's it for?
- How will this proposal meet the equality duties?
- What are the barriers to meeting this potential?

2. Who's using it? consider all equality groups

- What data/evidence do you have about who is or could be affected? (e.g. equality monitoring, customer feedback, current service use, national/regional/local trends)?
- How can you involve your customers in developing the proposal?
- Who is missing? Do you need to fill any gaps in your data?

3. Impact consider dimensions and equality groups

Using information in parts 1 & 2:

- a) Does the proposal create an adverse impact which may affect some groups or individuals? How can this be mitigated or justified?
> What can be done to change this impact?
- b) Does the proposal create benefit for particular groups or individuals. Is it clear what this is? Can you maximise the benefits for other groups?
 - Does further consultation need to be done? How will assumptions made in this assessment be tested?

4. So what?

- What changes have made in the course of this DIA?
- What will you do now and what will be included in future planning?
- When will this be reviewed?
- How will success be measured?

Considerations

Our equality duties

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
2. Advance equality of opportunity
3. Foster good relations

Equality groups

For the following equality groups: age, disability, sex, transgender, marriage/civil partnership, maternity/pregnancy, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation.

Extended by SBC policy to include: financial economic status, homelessness, political view.

Dimensions of equality

How will the proposal affect Human Rights and life chances of different groups? Consider how the proposal affects

1. Longevity.
2. Physical security.
3. Health.
4. Education.
5. Standard of living.
6. Productive and valued activities.
7. Individual, family and social life.
8. Participation, influence and voice.
9. Identity, expression and self-respect.
10. Legal security.