Enfield Council

Retrospective Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) - Equality Analysis

REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICE
MARCH 2013
## Retrospective equality impact assessment/equality analysis template

Please complete this cover sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service / policy</th>
<th>Revenues and Benefits Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Officers completing the analysis</td>
<td>Steve Shadbolt, Lesli Gallivan and Geoff Waterton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone Number</td>
<td>4810</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team (if applicable)</td>
<td>Revenues and Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Finance, Resources and Customer Services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date impact analysis completed</td>
<td>March 2013</td>
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</table>
Section 1 – Aims and objectives

Q1. Please provide a brief description of the service or policy covered by this assessment/analysis

**Collection Services** - Collection of Council Tax, Business Rates or National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) and Benefits Overpayments to provide a primary source of the Council’s income to, in turn, pay for Council services.

**Benefit Services** - assessment and payment of Housing Benefit and Council Tax benefit to help local residents pay their rent and Council Tax and in turn to help alleviate poverty and prevent homelessness. This service makes a significant contribution to the social and economic wellbeing of the Borough, contributing to key strategies of the Council, and is at the heart of the Governments Welfare Benefit Reform Agenda.

We cater for a wide sector of the community including vulnerable people, elderly people, people with learning difficulty, people with physical difficulty and people for whom English is not their first language. We provide customer access at three outlets, by telephone and electronic means (including customer self service), and do home visits to customers who are unable to visit us. We also work closely with other Council Departments, Government agencies and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Q2. Please list the main stakeholders / beneficiaries in terms of the recipients of the service or the target group at whom the policy is aimed

**Customer Profile**
- Residents of the borough (Council Tax accounts & Benefit claimants)
- Business owners in the borough (NNDR accounts)
- Registered Social Landlords
- Private Landlords/Letting Agents
- Enfield Homes

**Other Key Stakeholders:**
- Valuation Office
- Job Centre Plus
- Staff
- (Section 151 Finance Officer)

**Key strategic partners**
- Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
- Department for Works and Pensions (DWP)
- The Pension Service
The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies. Links have been established with the voluntary sector, via the Welfare Benefit Forum, which meets bi-monthly. This has been particularly useful for explaining to the voluntary sector the impending welfare benefit changes and the impact it may have on the various communities represented. In addition, community events have been set up with the Congolese and Somali communities, where presentations have been made to these groups concerning the Benefit Cap, which is one of the Welfare Benefit reforms being brought in. It is intended to run a similar event for the Bangladeshi community in the near future. Contact details have been provided to their representatives for future contact.

A presentation for Turkish Community at a local school was also recently provided by a Turkish speaking member of staff, and a presentation has also been done for Enfield Racial Equality Council (EREC) on welfare reforms.

The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies. Links have been established with Enfield Disability Action (EDA), who regularly attend Welfare Benefit Forums. Home visits to customers can be arranged for those unable to attend one of the Council’s offices.

The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies. Customers can request to be interviewed by members of same sex if required, e.g. Enfield Women’s Aid.

Strong links exist with the Enfield Over Fifties Forum, pension service age forum, and Informed Families. The service also participates in a joint benefit visiting service with the Pensions Service to assist in maximising genuine benefit take up for our customers. Joint advice sessions are held weekly with the Over Fifties forum. Revenues staff have helped out with a welfare reform event hosted by Informed Families. Advice sessions for persons affected by the benefit cap have been held at children’s centres, for benefit claimants with young children.

A presentation has also been done for the Over Fifties Forum on welfare reforms. An arrangement has been made with Job Centre Plus for a weekly appointments service. The Job Centre arranges appointments and a Revenues member of staff attends to give advice on the benefit cap. In addition, all benefit claimants affected by the benefit cap have been written to individually, and extensive use has been made of the Newham translation services where requested.

The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies. The service promotes take up of Business Rate discretionary rate relief, relief available to all religions/faiths as appropriate.

The Benefits Operations Manager acts as a contact point to Stonewall Housing, who offer specialist support to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) clients in housing need.
The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies.

Bailiff services in the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates.
- Equita
- Jacobs
- Marsdens

Enfield’s Corporate Contract procurement rules require all service providers to comply with the Council’s Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy. Monitoring forms part of regular meetings with service providers, e.g. bailiffs.

Policies are reviewed annually or sooner if major changes to service are planned, and updated accordingly, where appropriate. The Benefits Service is at the forefront of the Governments Welfare Reform Agenda.
Predictive equality Impact assessments/analyses have recently been done in connection with the Council Tax Benefit Locally Defined Support Scheme, which has replaced Council Tax Benefit, the Discretionary Housing Payments policy, and the emergency support scheme. The DHP is the policy followed when awarding additional awards to customers where their rent liability is not fully covered by benefit award. The Council Tax support scheme assessment is available on the Council’s website, and the DHP assessment will be on the website in the near future.

Section 2 – Consultation and communication

In the past year (2012-13) there has been extensive consultation activity with customers and the voluntary sector on impending Welfare Benefit reform changes. Please see numerous examples listed in answer to question 3. An ongoing bi-monthly Welfare Benefit Forum has been established and will be continued. In addition there is a landlords forum which is also ongoing. Extensive consultation was also undertaken on the Council Tax support scheme, which replaced Council Tax Benefit from 1st April 2013. A predictive equality impact assessment/analysis was undertaken during 2012-13 and is available on the Council’s website. There are also bi-annual stakeholders meetings held and it is intended to continue to undertake an annual benefits satisfaction survey, and satisfaction surveys in respect of Council Tax and Business Rate customers.
Q8. Please state what action you have taken as a result of these consultation exercises

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<tr>
<td><strong>R</strong></td>
<td>A Council Tax support scheme to replace Council Tax Benefit, and details of a Social Fund, to assist those affected by benefit reforms, have been formulated, and approved by Council. Benefit advice has been given at various forums as indicated in answers to Q3 to keep customers and the voluntary sector up to speed with current and future changes. An annual Benefits satisfaction survey is now undertaken. An online benefit claim form is up and running. The claim form is tailored to the individual’s circumstances, which cuts down on the amount of form filling required by the customer, and assists in speeding up the assessment process. Evidence of dissatisfaction with services will inform decisions about the need for a service review.</td>
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Q9. Please state how you have publicised the results of these consultation exercises

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<td><strong>R</strong></td>
<td>Results of the Benefits Satisfaction survey are published on the Council’s website. Specialised telephone access numbers have been given to key representative groups for queries. Key welfare benefit information posters have been produced and are on display in reception areas. Details of the Council Tax support scheme and consultation undertaken have been published on the website, and have been publicised at forums attended by representatives from the voluntary sector. All customers identified as being affected by new benefit cap rules have been written to individually outlining new rules and options available to them.</td>
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<td><strong>P</strong></td>
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**Q10. Please identify areas where more information may be needed.** Identify the action needed to obtain this data in the action plan.

**R** Further analysis of the impact of the Council Tax support scheme and other welfare benefit reforms. See action plan at end of assessment.

**Q11. Please state how you consult with members of your staff about your service or policy.** If you do not, please identify what action you intend to take to remedy this, and include it in your action plan.

**R** Service Centre Planning, one-to-one meetings, Performance Assessment Reviews, staff team meetings, team briefings, Intranet, staff surveys/questionnaires, Finance Department open days.
Q12. Please describe how you carry out equalities monitoring of the take-up and use of your service – if you do not carry out equalities monitoring, please explain why.

R  Equalities information is captured, where given, for benefits new claims, with limited success. To support this, we make use of Experian Mosaic software, which is then compared with latest borough profile. Where this reveals mismatches, benefit take-up is targeted accordingly. Our front line service, under the management of the Operational Services Centre, acts for both services in relation to Translation and Interpretation needs for the service. A comparison using Mosaic software was also undertaken for those customers who were affected by new benefit cap regulations. This identified some communities being more prevalent than others, and these community representatives were targeted for additional assistance, e.g. the Congolese, Somalian, Bangladeshi communities.

D  The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies. Information on disability is captured within Benefit application forms and Disabled Rate relief claims in collection of Council Tax.

G  The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies. Information on gender is captured within Benefit application forms, however neither payment of Benefit or collection of Council Tax is dependent on gender.

A  The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies. Information on age is captured within Benefit application forms, however neither payment of Benefit or collection of Council Tax is dependent on age.

F  The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies. Information on Faith is not captured as it is not relevant in either the payment of Benefit or the Collection of Council Tax.

S  The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies. Information on Sexuality is not captured as it is not relevant in either the payment of Benefit or the Collection of Council Tax.

T  The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies. Information on Transgender is not captured as it is not relevant in either the payment of Benefit or the Collection of Council Tax.

M  The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies. Information on marital status is captured within Benefit application forms, however neither payment of Benefit or collection of Council Tax is dependent on marital status.

P  The service promotes equal opportunities in its day-to-day work and policies. Information on pregnancy and Maternity is not captured as it is not relevant in the Collection of Council Tax, and is not relevant in the payment of benefit until the child is born.

Q13. How are the results of any equalities monitoring analysed?

R  Results are analysed at senior level within the Division to ensure that the service is heading in the right direction, and that any appropriate adjustments to service are taken where possible.
Q14. Does an analysis of your customers against baseline population figures show that you are reaching all disadvantaged groups? If not, state the action you plan to take to address this in your action plan.

R
Yes, this is addressed within the review of service strategies. Where there are any exceptions identified, communities will be targeted as appropriate through outreach work, as part of the benefit take-up strategy. The Benefit Cap task force has identified specific community groups disadvantaged by the Cap, particularly those with large families, and have targeted specific support groups to offer advice and guidance.

D As R above.

G As R above.

A As R above.

F Not undertaken as not relevant to the service.

S Not undertaken as not relevant to the service.

T Not undertaken as not relevant to the service.

M Not undertaken as not relevant to the service.

P Not undertaken as not relevant to the service.

Q15. Please describe how you carry out equalities monitoring of the satisfaction of customers using your service – if you do not carry out equalities monitoring, please explain why.

R
Annual customer satisfaction surveys are undertaken for Benefit customers and Council Tax and Business Rate customers. A random sample of customers is taken from the appropriate database, and they are sent questionnaires about the service to complete and return. Once returned, the responses are entered onto a spreadsheet and results are then analysed and reported on the Council’s website. Any suggestions for improvement are looked at and implemented where appropriate e.g. an online tailored benefit application form is now available for customers.

D As R above.

G As R above.
Q16. What does this customer satisfaction data tell you?

R
The satisfaction surveys for Council Tax and Business Rate customers have only just commenced, and it is too early to comment on these. The Benefits satisfaction survey has been undertaken for a number of years and shows high satisfaction levels with year-on-year improvements in satisfaction levels for what are considered key aspects of the service.

Q17. Please list any performance targets relating to equality that your service or policy includes

R
Following on from the predictive equality impact assessment/analysis undertaken in respect of the Council Tax support scheme, a number of targets have been identified and have been included in the action plan at the end of this impact assessment. Other targets are to assist in maintaining the corporate excellent level accreditation against the Equality Framework for Local Government, and to achieve any targets set as a result of this impact assessment/analysis for the service.
Q18. Please list any plans you have to introduce new targets for equality in your service or policy – this could be as a result of identifying best practice in other authorities. Include this in the action plan:

R  Please see answers to Question 17 above.
D  Please see answers to Question 17 above.
G  Please see answers to Question 17 above.
A  Please see answers to Question 17 above.
F  Please see answers to Question 17 above.
S  Please see answers to Question 17 above.
T  Please see answers to Question 17 above.
M  Please see answers to Question 17 above.
P  Please see answers to Question 17 above.

Q19. Have you received any complaints about your service or policy in respect of equality issues? If so, please give a brief description:

R  We have not received any complaints in respect of equalities issues that have been upheld. We support staff vigorously where our staff have been victims of abuse.
D  As R above
G  As R above
A  As R above
F  As R above
S  As R above
T  As R above
M  As R above
P  As R above

Section 4 – Assessment of impact

Q20. Please list any evidence / results of research you have of the service or policy having an adverse impact on different disadvantaged groups. If there is any adverse impact, please identify actions you intend to undertake to remedy this in your action plan:

R  The recent Equality Impact Assessment/Analysis on the Council Tax support scheme identified that there was an apparent under-representation of some communities, e.g. Somali, Bangladeshi communities in the consultation exercise. The representative community groups have already been targeted for additional advice/guidance, and it is the intention to review the impacts of the Welfare Benefits reform, due to the scale of the changes, during 2013/14
and is included in the action plan at the end of this assessment.

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<td><strong>Q21. What are the potential or known barriers to participation for the different disadvantaged groups?</strong> Please identify actions you intend to undertake to remedy this in the action plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Translation and Interpretation services are used by Revenues staff as appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>A home visiting service is offered to those customers unable to visit us. Enhanced access arrangements through the Enfield Deaf Association, is available for deaf customers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Same sex interviews or contacts are available if required e.g., Enfield Women’s Aid.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>We operate a joint visiting team with DWP for welfare benefits advice for people of pensionable age. A home visiting service is offered to those elderly customers unable to visit us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>No specific barriers identified.</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>The Benefits Operations Manager acts as a contact point to Stonewall Housing, who offer specialist support to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) clients in housing need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>No specific barriers identified.</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>No specific barriers identified.</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>No specific barriers identified.</td>
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**Q22. Could the service or policy discriminate, directly or indirectly, according to the accompanying definitions?** Please refer to the guidance notes under the *Useful Definitions*

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**Q23. If so, is it justifiable under the legislation?** Please refer to the guidance notes under the *Useful Definitions*    |

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<td>N/A</td>
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Q24. Could the service or policy have an adverse impact on relations between different groups/community cohesion? If so, please describe below. Identify actions you intend to undertake to remedy this in your action plan

No

Section 5 – Tackling socio-economic inequality

Q25. Does your service in any way specifically assist communities disadvantaged through the following socio-economic factors? Please explain below. If it does not, please state how you intend to remedy this (if applicable to your service), and include it in the action plan

Communities living in deprived wards/areas

A welfare benefits reform taskforce has been established to help families affected by the forthcoming Government changes to the Welfare Benefit system, consisting of Council Officers and strategic partners of Job Centre Plus and the Citizens Advice Bureau. The focus will be on helping families being significantly impacted by welfare reform changes including those losing Council Tax Benefit amongst reductions in other entitlements, to find work, move to affordable accommodation and avoid financial crisis and homelessness. The taskforce will actively signpost all individuals affected to appropriate advice and guidance. A review of the impact of changes is to be undertaken during 2013-14 (see action plan at end of this assessment/analysis).

People not in employment, education or training

See answer to first part of this question above.

People with low academic qualifications

See answer to first part of this question above.

People living in social housing

See answer to first part of this question above.

Lone parents

See answer to first part of this question above.

People on low incomes

See answer to first part of this question above.

People in poor health

See answer to first part of this question above.

Any other socio-economic factor

See answer to first part of this question above.

Section 6 - Miscellaneous
Q26. How does your service plan address equalities issues? Please explain below. If it does not, please state how you intend to remedy this, and include it in the action plan.

Equalities issues are built into service planning, and there is a section for equalities within the service centre plan for the Division. Any actions identified in the action plan from this assessment/analysis, will be included in our service plan.

Q27. Please list any staff training issues on equality arising from this assessment/analysis. Include this in your action plan.

All new staff attend induction training that covers equalities. Equality impact assessment/analysis training is available to managers required to undertake assessments. Equalities objectives are built into staff appraisal and supervision.

Q28. How do you plan to publicise the results of this assessment/analysis? Include this in your action plan.

The action plan from this assessment will be published on the Council's website, and the full assessment made available on request.

Q29. Does your service or policy result in any financial support being given to disadvantaged groups within the voluntary and community sector. If 'yes', please list organisations and amounts.

Discretionary and Charitable Business rate relief is granted to various organisations/charities within the borough. Full details are held by the Business Rates team – some examples shown below.
Enfield Mental Health Carers
Islamic Relief Worldwide
Enfield Asian Carers Consortium
Federation of Enfield Community Associations Ltd
Hindu Tamil Cultural Association
London North Learning and Skills Council
UK Ethnic Minority Partnership.

Q30. When and how do you intend to review this assessment/analysis? Include this in your action plan.

This assessment/analysis will be undertaken again in 2015/16 as part of the Council's three-year rolling programme, or sooner if the need arises.
13. Action plan template for existing services or policies

Service or policy covered by this assessment/analysis: Revenues and Benefits Service

Team: Benefits and Collection teams. Department: Finance, Resources and Customer Services

Service managers: Lesli Gallivan and Geoff Waterton.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Action required</th>
<th>Lead officer</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review of policies affecting provision and delivery of services.</td>
<td>Annual review of Benefits and Collection policies to ensure no adverse effect on any sections of the community.</td>
<td>Lesli Gallivan/Geoff Waterton</td>
<td>April 2013 and ongoing</td>
<td>Staff time</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Consultation with disadvantaged groups</td>
<td>Annual benefits, Council Tax and Business rates customer satisfaction surveys.</td>
<td>Lesli Gallivan/Geoff Waterton</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Cost of survey Staff time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welfare Reform work</td>
<td>Coordinate with other welfare reform, mitigation work and child poverty and regeneration initiatives</td>
<td>Kate Robertson</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>Within existing resources</td>
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<td>Issue</td>
<td>Action required</td>
<td>Lead officer</td>
<td>Timescale</td>
<td>Costs</td>
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<td>Ensure welfare reform advice services are in place - Staff training Systems Staff allocation</td>
<td>Implement planned advice services</td>
<td>Head of Customer Service</td>
<td>15.3.2013</td>
<td>Within existing resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitor impact of Council Tax benefit locally defined support scheme data collected on all relevant protected characteristics Review impact of scheme and need to adjust discretionary help.</td>
<td>Quarterly equalities monitoring reviewed. Results built into scheme to be prepared for 2014/5.</td>
<td>Head of Benefits</td>
<td>Quarterly from July 2013</td>
<td>Within existing resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investigate reducing those communities with significant over-representation in Council Tax Benefit/Support Caseload</td>
<td>Research over-representation and ways of reducing caseload. Identify programme for caseload reduction with other Council services/agencies</td>
<td>Head of Benefits and strategic adviser</td>
<td>15.9.2013</td>
<td>Dependent on way forward.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Action required</td>
<td>Lead officer</td>
<td>Timescale</td>
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<td>Plans for publicising results of impact assessment/analysis</td>
<td>The action plan from this assessment will be published on the Council’s website, and the full assessment made available on request. Equalities action plan will form part of service plan.</td>
<td>Martin Garnar</td>
<td>April 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repeat assessment/analysis</td>
<td>This assessment/analysis will be undertaken again in 2015/16 as part of the Council’s three-year rolling programme, or sooner if required.</td>
<td>Lesli Gallivan/Geoff Waterton</td>
<td>2015-16</td>
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APPROVAL BY THE RELEVANT ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - NAME K Robertson SIGNATURE...