

Screening/Scoping Pro Forma

Section	Revenues	Officer responsible for the screening/scoping	Donna Stacey
Name of Policy to be assessed	Housing & Council Tax Benefits	Date of Assessment	26/09/2008
		Is this a proposed new or existing policy/procedure/practice?	Existing
1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy/procedure/practice?	To provide Housing & C/Tax benefit payments to help those who cannot pay for it all themselves in order to provide the basic need of shelter.		
2. Are there any associated or specific objectives of the policy/procedure/practice? Please explain.	Ensure customers receive the right amount of benefit in the quickest time possible from receipt of their claim. Ensure customers are aware of benefits available from other agencies eg: tax credits & Job Seekers Allowance etc		
3. Who is intended to benefit from this policy and in what way?	All qualifying residents living within Guildford Borough Council. Landlords, businesses, other agencies as rent and c/tax recovery procedures reduced		
4. What outcomes are wanted from this policy/procedures/practice?	Reduce poverty within the borough. Provide Value for money service, while keeping costs to a minimum. Knowledgeable & professional officers. Compliance of Level 3/4 Performance Management Framework		
5. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?	Customers unaware the may be entitled to benefits. Much of the borough is rural so some customers may have difficulty in visiting the offices.		
6. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the policy?	Residents/Claimants, Businesses, Housing Associations, Landlords, DWP, Staff, Councillors, CAB, Magistrates Court	7. Who implements the policy, and who is responsible for the policy?	Central Government requirement actioned by GBC in line with legislation. This is a statutory service
8. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact on racial groups?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N	Please explain: Benefits does not discriminate on race, unless the legislation requires this.
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?	Some claimants from EU Accession countries eg Poland, are regulated by legislation with regard to eligibility to benefits. Payments to claimants outside the EU are regulated by the entries on their visas. Provide documents in alternative formats on request.		
9. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact due to gender?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N	Benefit is paid to eligible male & female claimants alike.

<p>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</p>	<p>Claims are processed & paid in the name of male & female claimants.</p>	
<p>10. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact due to disability?</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>Benefit is paid to able-bodied & disabled claimants alike.</p>
<p>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</p>	<p>Many disabled persons receive higher benefit premiums as a result of certain disability benefits as required by legislation. The counter is also equipped with a hearing loop and lower desk and chairs for those who have problems standing. In some circumstances, an officer will visit the claimants homes if they have problems getting into the office to complete a claim. Provide documents in alternative formats on request.</p>	
<p>11. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact due to sexual orientation?</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>Benefit paid to same-sex & heterosexual couples alike</p>
<p>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</p>	<p>With change in legislation, same-sex and heterosexual couples can now be assessed in the same way.</p>	
<p>12. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact due to their age?</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>There are certain restrictions in place for payment of benefit to those under 25 years of age, this is a legislative restriction</p>
<p>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</p>	<p>The legislation also makes different provisions if claimant of working/pension age. If a claimant has difficulty visiting the office due to age, then a home visit can be arranged. Recent project undertaken was to try and ensure that all pensioners were receiving the correct benefits & pension credits they were entitled to & help given to claim.</p>	
<p>13. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact due to their religious belief?</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>In general religion does not have any effect on how benefit is processed & paid. However, legislation allows for polygamous marriages to be recognised providing they were conducted in a country permitting them</p>
<p>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</p>	<p>The question is not asked on the claim as it is irrelevant in ascertaining eligibility for benefits</p>	
<p>14. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>Benefit is paid to eligible customers with/without dependants or caring</p>

<p>a differential impact due to them having dependants/caring responsibilities?</p>			<p>responsibilities. If they have difficulty visiting the office due to these responsibilities, a home visit can be arranged where possible.</p>
<p>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</p>	<p>Dependants etc are taken into account during assessment and can increase how much benefit the eligible customers will receive</p>		
<p>15. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact due to them have an offending past?</p>		<p>N</p>	<p>Benefit paid to ex & non-offenders alike. Assessed on present status not the past.</p>
<p>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</p>	<p>Close links with local agencies such as the drug/drink rehabilitation programmes and probation hostels.</p>		
<p>16. Are there concerns that the policy <u>could</u> have a differential impact due to them being Transgender or transsexual?</p>		<p>N</p>	<p>This is not a question asked with regard to benefits as does not affect how a claim is processed.</p>
<p>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</p>	<p>As above, question not asked as irrelevant to the process of benefits.</p>		
<p>17. Could the differential impact identified in 8-16 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact in this policy/procedure/practice?</p>		<p>N</p>	<p>The way benefit is promoted and processed is in line with the Council's policies of equality and improving the quality of life for it's residents.</p>
<p>18. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or any other reason?</p>	<p>Y</p>		<p>Please explain for each heading (questions 8-16) on a separate piece of paper. Any adverse impact on the grounds of gender, age etc are due to the restrictions placed on Benefits by the legislation and therefore cannot be seen to discriminate either negatively or positively.</p>
<p>Business improvement</p>			<p>Please explain: There is concern for all residents that they may not be receiving the Housing or Council Tax benefit they are entitled to.</p>

<p>19. Is there any concern that there are unmet needs in relation to any of the above groups?</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>- attempt to redress this by promoting benefits with an insert sent with every Council Tax bill, and training staff to spot potential claimants during telephone conversations and face-to-face visits.</p>
<p>20. Does differential impact or unmet need cut across the equality strands (e.g. elder BME groups)?</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Please explain N/A</p>
<p>21. If yes, should the full EIA be conducted jointly with another service area/contractor/partner/agency?</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Please explain N/A</p>
<p>22. Is there a missed opportunity to improve your business in relation to any of the policies, procedures or practices to promote racial, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief equality?</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Could promote language line availability more with posters in different languages at the customer service desk. An assessment has already been done by the Benefits Manager to ascertain what different languages are the most prominent within the borough. Promote & encourage use of the on-line & automated services. Service could be actively promoted in areas such as Day Centres, sheltered accommodation, doctors surgeries, the 3rd Sector etc to ensure maximum take-up. This has been considered in the past but does not always prove time or cost-effective.</p> <p><i>Consider the potential for equality monitoring to get the equality profile of benefit applicants.</i></p>

			Yes	No
24. If No, are there any changes required to the policy to improve it around the equality agenda?				
Promote language line and hearing loop facilities. Promote availability of visiting officers for those who have difficulties visiting the office for benefits purposes. If necessary, offer 'same gender' visitors. Promote existing electronic and on-line registration, amendment and payment facilities. Consider availability of leaflets etc in different languages or formats on request only, as not economically feasible to produce ad hoc.				

Signed
(completing officer)

Date September 2008

Signed
(Head of Section)

Date

Countersigned
(HR representative)

Date October 2008