**Equality Impact Assessment / Equality Analysis**

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| **Title of service or policy**  | Exemptions to Council Tax for care Leavers & Foster Carers |
| Name of directorate and service | Resources – Revenues and Benefits |
| **Name and role of officers completing the EIA** | Peter Campbell, Louise Murphy, Ian Savigar |
| Date of assessment  | 11/01/2017 |

Equality Impact Assessment (or ‘Equality Analysis’) is a process of systematically analysing a new or existing policy or service to identify what impact or likely impact it will have on different groups within the community.  The main aim is to identify any discriminatory or negative consequences for a particular group or sector of the community, and also to identify areas where equality can be better promoted.  Equality impact Assessments (EIAs) can be carried out in relation to service delivery as well as employment policies and strategies.

This toolkit has been developed to use as a framework when carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) or Equality Analysis on a policy, service or function. It is intended that this is used as a working document throughout the process, with a final version (including the action plan section) being published on the Council’s and NHS Bath and North East Somerset’s websites.

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| **1.**  | **Identify the aims of the policy or service and how it is implemented.** |
|  | **Key questions** | **Answers / Notes** |
| **1.1** | Briefly describe purpose of the service/policy e.g* How the service/policy is delivered and by whom
* If responsibility for its implementation is shared with other departments or organisations
* Intended outcomes
 | This proposal is to use the Council’s power as a billing authority to reduce to nil the amount of council tax payable by young people leaving care and to apply a 25% discount to council tax payers acting as Foster Carers as permitted by section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 from 1 April 2018 |
| **1.2** | Provide brief details of the scope of the policy or service being reviewed, for example:* Is it a new service/policy or review of an existing one?
* Is it a national requirement?).
* How much room for review is there?
 | This is a new proposal.  |
| **1.3** | Do the aims of this policy link to or conflict with any other policies of the Council? | No. This compliments our Corporate Parenting duty toward Care Leavers and compliments our improvement and development plan for increasing Foster Care provision within our own services which will reduce our agency dependence.  |
| **2. Consideration of available data, research and information** |
| Monitoring data and other information should be used to help you analyse whether you are delivering a fair and equal service. Please consider the availability of the following as potential sources: * **Demographic** data and other statistics, including census findings
* Recent **research** findings (local and national)
* Results from **consultation or engagement** you have undertaken
* Service user **monitoring data** (including ethnicity, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation and age)
* Information from **relevant groups** or agencies, for example trade unions and voluntary/community organisations
* Analysis of records of enquiries about your service, or **complaints** or **compliments** about them
* Recommendations of **external inspections** or audit reports
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|  | **Key questions** | **Data, research and information that you can refer to**  |
| **2.1** | What is the equalities profile of the team delivering the service/policy?  |  |
| **2.2** | What equalities training have staff received? | Staff in the team can access training on equalities via the corporate training programme.  |
| **2.3** | What is the equalities profile of service users?  | Foster Carers represent a wide cross section of our population, including age, gender, ethnicity and home ownership status. Of our 64 household, 24 of these are single carers. This is significant in that many will already qualify for a discount (single person at 25%) on their Council Tax. For this policy to be fair and equitable these carers should qualify for a further 25% discount. There are a total of 160 Care Leavers between the ages of 18 and 25. They live in various parts of the region, with a number engaged in higher education, employment, training or unemployed. Many live independently, with an increasing number living in shared housing. B%NES has a lower than England average of Care Leavers not in education, employment or training. We have a higher number in Education. The Care Leaver cohort is typically 55% male and 45% female. There is quite a wide range of ethnicity, including Asylum Seekers.   |
| **2.4**  | What other data do you have in terms of service users or staff? (e.g results of customer satisfaction surveys, consultation findings). Are there any gaps?  | * B&NES Council is a registered Foster Care agency which was rated Outstanding by OFSTED
* The Fostering Team currently has 64 households who provide fostering services to our children. Thirty nine of these are within B&NES. The remaining twenty five households are in the South West, with half of them being in Wiltshire.
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| **2.5** | What engagement or consultation has been undertaken as part of this EIA and with whom?What were the results? | We have considered the professional opinion of those involved with Care Leavers and we have looked at the national picture on this issue and there is consensus that applying this relief will support a key vulnerable group and ultimately be of benefit to the whole community. |
| **2.6** | If you are planning to undertake any consultation in the future regarding this service or policy, how will you include equalities considerations within this?  | A new government requirement to commence in April 2018 is to present a Care Leaver offer. This Council Tax initiative will form a crucial part to this, but this and subsequent developments will include consultation with a Care Leavers council which is being formed.  |
| **3. Assessment of impact: ‘Equality analysis’** |
|  | Based upon any data you have considered, or the results of consultation or research, use the spaces below to demonstrate you have analysed how the service or policy:* Meets any particular needs of equalities groups or helps promote equality in some way.
* Could have a negative or adverse impact for any of the equalities groups
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|  |  | **Examples of what the service has done to promote equality** | **Examples of actual or potential negative or adverse impact and what steps have been or could be taken to address this** |
| 3.1 | **Foster carers in general** | The Council recognises that it needs to support residents who offer Foster Caring support to young people. Children who are looked after are extremely vulnerable and often have complex behavioural issues which mean that the role of the Foster Carer can at times be very demanding. In addition to the emotional resilience which is required by the role, there can also be financial challenges associated with caring for looked after children | Could this discriminate against carers who live in other LA areas?Children’s Services will need to consider ways to equally support those living outside the area so that all our foster carer households benefit from Council Tax relief. This will ensure all will benefit from a valued form of support and receive an incentive to continue fostering with B&NES.  |
| **3.2** | **Gender** – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on women and men.  | None identified.  | None identified.  |
| **3.3** | **Pregnancy and maternity**  | None identified.  | None identified  |
| **3.4** | **Transgender –** – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on transgender people | None identified.  | N/A |
| **3.5** | **Disability** - identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on disabled people (ensure consideration both physical, sensory and mental impairments and mental health) | Certain groups with disabilities are exempt from Council Tax. This would be a small proportion of the cohort.  | Information about the process of applying for Council tax reductions will need to be provided in an easy to understand and accessible format. |
| **3.6** | **Age** – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on different age groups | Council Tax exemption may be an incentive for some care leavers to become engaged with us / remain in touch.  | Council Tax relief for Care Leavers must be available to all the children we have been a Corporate Parent to.  A number of our Care Leavers live outside of B&NES (often to pursue employment or training opportunities or as part of a relationship). Longer term, we would hope that all Local Authorities will commit to Council Tax relief for all Care Leavers living in their area. Until this is so, our own Care Leavers living in another area are at risk of being discriminated against.Consideration will also have to be given to who is an eligible Care Leaver. Categories in Legislation are clear, and those eligible for Council Tax Relief until age 25 would only be *former relevant young people* (Children Leaving Care Act 2000)*.* This would ensure that only those who have been in our care as part of an endorsed care plan and for a minimum period of time are eligible.  |
| **3.7** | **Race** – identify the impact/potential impact on different black and minority ethnic groups  | None identified | N/A |
| **3.8** | **Sexual orientation -** identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual people | None identified | N/A |
| **3.9** | **Marriage and civil partnership –** does the policy/strategy treat married and civil partnered people equally? | None identified | N/A |
| **3.10** | **Religion/belief** – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on people of different religious/faith groups and also upon those with no religion. | None identified | N/A |
| **3.11** | **Socio-economically disadvantaged\*** – identify the impact on people who are disadvantaged due to factors like family background, educational attainment, neighbourhood, employment status can influence life chances**(this is not a legal requirement, but is a local priority).** | A Children’s Society campaign that has identified a range of disadvantages care leavers uniquely experience. In particular care leavers are a vulnerable group for council tax debt. By introducing a care Leavers relief schemes the Council is reducing the financial burden on care leavers within its area. |  |
| **3.12** | **Rural communities\*** – identify the impact / potential impact on people living in rural communities | None identified. | N/A |

There is no requirement within the public sector duty of the Equality Act to consider groups who may be disadvantaged due to socio economic status, or because of living in a rural area. However, these are significant issues within B&NES and haver therefore been included here.

**4. Bath and North East Somerset Council & NHS B&NES**

**Equality Impact Assessment Improvement Plan**

Please list actions that you plan to take as a result of this assessment/analysis. These actions should be based upon the analysis of data and engagement, any gaps in the data you have identified, and any steps you will be taking to address any negative impacts or remove barriers. The actions need to be built into your service planning framework. Actions/targets should be measurable, achievable, realistic and time framed.

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| **Issues identified** | **Actions required** | **Progress milestones** | **Officer responsible** | **By when** |
| How can we support those living outside the area so that all our foster carer households benefit from Council Tax relief | Our Fostering Team will identify those households in other LA areas and arrange for them to receive a sum equivalent to 25% of their Council Tax | Carers already receive finance from the dept for services, so the payment method is already in place. Fostering team staff will obtain and provide to finance team a copy of the annual Council Tax. Estimated cost would be circa £10k per year (20 households x £500).  | Manager of Fostering Team |  |
| A number of our Care Leavers live outside of B&NES (often to pursue employment or training opportunities or as part of a relationship). Longer term, we would hope that all Local Authorities will commit to Council Tax relief for all Care Leavers living in their area. Until this is so, our own Care Leavers living in another area are at risk of being discriminated against. | For those Care Leavers we have contact with we will support them to claim and receive all the benefits they are entitled to. Those liable for Council Tax will be supported to pay the sum they owe on a monthly basis. (This cohort can typically move regularly or have changes in employment so we would not want to pay the whole year in advance). This would need to be funded from the existing Care Leavers budget.  | Identifying those in this cohort that are required to pay Council Tax.Establishing with Finance team a suitable model of payment.Supporting the Children’s Society Campaign which aspires for Care Leavers under 25 to have exemption throughout the Country.  | Manager of Care Leavers services |  |
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**5. Sign off and publishing**

Once you have completed this form, it needs to be ‘approved’ by your Divisional Director or their nominated officer. Following this sign off, send a copy to the Equalities Team (equality@bathnes.gov.uk), who will publish it on the Council’s and/or NHS B&NES’ website. Keep a copy for your own records.

**Signed off by**: (Divisional Director or nominated senior officer)

**Date:**