

Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit (from May 2012)

Section 1: Your details

EIA lead Officer: Tim Games

Email address: timgames@wirral.gov.uk

Head of Section: Malcolm Flanagan

Chief Officer: Peter Timmins

Department: Finance

Date: 2/11/12

Section 2: What Council proposal is being assessed?

The introduction of a new, localised scheme of welfare assistance to be administered from April 2013. The scheme will aim to provide emergency support to people who have insufficient resources to meet their own or their families short term needs, which if not met would pose a serious risk to their health and wellbeing, or would put at risk their ability to remain or establish themselves in the community.

In October 2011 the Department for Work and Pensions completed a national EIA considering Local welfare assistance replacing Social Fund Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for general living expenses.

www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/eia-social-fund-localisation-wr2011.pdf

Section 2b: Will this EIA be submitted to a Cabinet or Overview & Scrutiny Committee?

Yes

If 'yes' please state which meeting and what date

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 27th November 2012
Cabinet 24th January 2013

Please add hyperlink to where your EIA is/will be published on the Council's website

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/finance>

Section 3: Does the proposal have the potential to affect..... (please tick relevant boxes)

- Services**
- The workforce**
- Communities**
- Other** - Partners, Voluntary & Community Sector

If you have ticked one or more of above, please go to section 4.

- None** (please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for publishing)

Section 4: Does the proposal have the potential to maintain or enhance the way the Council (please tick relevant boxes)

- Eliminates unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advances equality of opportunity
- Fosters good relations between groups of people

If you have ticked one or more of above, please go to section 5.

- No** (please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for publishing)

Section 5:

Could the proposal have a positive or negative impact on any of the protected groups (race, gender, disability, gender reassignment, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership)?

You may also want to consider socio-economic status of individuals.

Please list in the table below and include actions required to mitigate any potential negative impact.

Which group(s) of people could be affected	Potential positive or negative impact	Action required to mitigate any potential negative impact	Lead person	Timescale	Resource implications
Socio-Economic Status;	Positive – 1) Families under exceptional pressure approaching local authority for welfare assistance will receive a holistic review of needs e.g. Benefit check, Welfare advice & Housing information (Property Pool Plus). 2) Corporate channels commitment to signposting to relevant support organisations e.g. CAB, DWP, Child Poverty Organisations, HMRC (Tax Credits) Negative – 1) Potential for high demand of local welfare assistance in areas of existing deprivation and poverty.	Review eligibility criteria periodically- to see if support is being targeted effectively at people in need.	Nicky Dixon	Ongoing	

Religion/belief	<p>Negative</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Particular religious dietary requirements may be difficult to cater for from food banks 	<p>Discussions with the Food bank ongoing regarding capacity & requirements.</p> <p>Food banks are one of a range of options being considered to provide welfare assistance.</p>	Vicki Booth / Toni Bosworth	December12	
Disability	<p>Service Users accessing Council Offices</p> <p>Positive</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All of Wirral Council OSS sites can be accessed by those with a disability. 2) Voluntary Sector Orgs will be able to apply on behalf of users who are unable to attend Council Offices. 				
Age	<p>Positive</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) People of all ages approaching local authority for welfare assistance will receive a holistic review of needs e.g. Benefit check, Welfare advice, Social Services. 2) Post needs assessment there is an authority commitment to signposting to relevant support organisations e.g. Age UK & Pensions Service; Response Service. <p>Negative</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Qualitative evidence indicates that older people have been cautious in respect of seeking assistance from the Social Fund and tend to underestimate their needs. DWP initiatives to promote take up with older people has had limited success, making the challenge 	<p>Communications strategy will consider engagement with older people.</p> <p>Assistance from Voluntary Sector Orgs such as Age Concern will be able to</p>	<p>Diane Eusoof</p> <p>Vicki Booth / Toni Bosworth</p>	<p>December 12</p> <p>March 13</p>	

	for local authorities to succeed in engagement considerable.	inform older people in need and apply on their behalf. Data monitoring used to review engagement.		Ongoing	
Race	Marketing of LWA scheme Negative 1) Individuals in need who do not have English as first language may be unaware of assistance program.	Engagement with BME groups e.g Wirral Change and Wirral Multicultural Organisation Use of language line facility in OSS & Call Centre	Nicky Dixon Julie Williams	Ongoing Ongoing	

<p>All Groups</p>	<p>Positive-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All protected groups approaching local authority for welfare assistance will receive a holistic review of needs. 2) Corporate channels commitment to signposting to relevant support organisations 3) Local Authority accessibility to services offer a commitment to equality and diversity as 'integral to delivering excellent service, responsive to reaching all our customers'. <p>Negative-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Funding arrangements are cash limited and any proposed new scheme may be unable to provide financial assistance as previously available through the national scheme (this will not however disadvantage one protected group over another). 	<p>Clear access routes and applications process for a local scheme.</p> <p>Robust monitoring of applicants and awards to ensure funding is available across the financial year to all groups avoiding discrimination.</p> <p>Regular engagement with internal & external stakeholders to ensure capacity to provide support and assistance is ongoing.</p> <p>Signposting to other internal/external funding & assistance</p>	<p>Vicki Booth / Toni Bosworth</p> <p>Nicky Dixon</p> <p>Nicky Dixon</p>	<p>March 2013</p> <p>Ongoing from April 2013</p> <p>Ongoing from April 2013</p>	
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			Vicki Booth / Toni Bosworth	March 2013	
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Section 5a: Where and how will the above actions be monitored?

A monitoring group will review monthly.

Policy will be reviewed quarterly during 1st year to ensure scheme is meeting the needs of service users.

Section 5b: If you think there is no negative impact, what is your reasoning behind this?

N/A

Section 6: What research / data / information have you used in support of this process?

Research

National and local statistics for discretionary social fund loans provided by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have been reviewed.

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/local-authority-staff/social-fund-reform/>

Liaison with related Council service areas and key external organisations to identify priorities and design options.

Benchmarking with neighbouring authorities.

INetwork Knowledge Hub – Local Welfare Assistance Network

Section 7: Are you intending to carry out any consultation with regard to this Council proposal?

Yes - Completed

If 'yes' please continue to section 8.

If 'no' please state your reason(s) why:

(please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for publishing)

Section 8: How will consultation take place and by when?

Stage 1 - Consultation with local stakeholders including Age UK, Wirral CAB, NHS Wirral and other groups who provide support and assistance to those who access current Social Fund Scheme was undertaken on 26/9/12. Information obtained from this consultation was used to develop a draft Policy.

Stage 2 – Consultation event held with internal Council staff from related service areas on 19/10/12.

Stage 3 – Stakeholders involved in Stage 1 & 2 were invited to comment on the draft policy using an online survey. The results of this survey led to amendments to the Policy.

Before you complete your consultation, please email your preliminary EIA to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk via your Chief Officer in order for the Council to ensure it is meeting it's legal requirements. The EIA will be published with a note saying we are awaiting outcomes from a consultation exercise.

Once you have completed your consultation, please review your actions in section 5. Then email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for re-publishing.

Section 9: Have you remembered to:

- a) **Add appropriate departmental hyperlink to where your EIA is/will be published** (section 2b)
- b) **Include any potential positive impacts as well as negative impacts?** (section 5)
- c) **Send this EIA to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk via your Chief Officer?**
- d) **Review section 5 once consultation has taken place and sent your completed EIA to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk via your Chief Officer for re-publishing?**