

Due Regard Record

This page shows **which groups of people are affected** by the subject of this report. It sets out **how they are affected** and how any **discrimination** they experience can be eliminated. It also includes information about how **access to the service(s)** subject to this report can be improved for the different groups of people; and how they can be assisted to **understand each other better** as a result of the subject of this report.

Local Council Tax Support Scheme

Background: The Local Council Tax Support Scheme is designed to help those of working age on a low income. If any changes are to be made to the Council's existing scheme, consultation must first be undertaken.

Report:

The scheme (not the consultation) is likely to impact on families with children of school age or disabled people who are more likely to have a fixed or lower income, and claimants from ethnic minorities whose families tend to be larger

If the level of Council Tax liability increases above affordable levels, there is a risk that people may have to leave their homes and move to cheaper properties, which may be some distance away. For children of school age this may mean they have to change schools which may cause disruption to their education; for disabled people this may mean that they are separated from their friends and families who may provide support and assistance to their daily lives; and for people from ethnic minorities who may also may be separated from their extended families. Some recipients may get into debt.

People may want to move to the District for a variety of reasons and, if a residency requirement is introduced for people of working age, there will be an impact on many groups of vulnerable people. These will include people fleeing domestic violence, people who become unemployed due to redundancy or ill health, people whose relationship has broken down, people who are bereaved, people fleeing domestic violence, asylum seekers who are not allowed to work, homeless placements and people relocated under a witness protection programme. There are also people from ethnic minorities, disabled people and single parents or families who want to be near a support network, either from their families or professionals. A residency requirement will also be a deterrent for people to move to the District to take up employment, particularly if the employment is low paid.

There are just over 4000 people of working age who would be affected by changes to

the current scheme. These include families with school age children, people with disabilities and people from ethnic minorities. It is not known how many people will be affected if a residency criteria is introduced.

A number of measures are being taken to mitigate the potentially negative impacts of the scheme:

- Consultation will not be restricted to certain groups. Anyone will be able to respond, including local taxpayers who are not LCTS recipients, and any organisation who provides support to vulnerable people.
- Additional resources have been directed towards people affected by providing them with information about alternative housing and help with financial management;
- The scheme spreads the changes as widely as possible to reduce inequalities;
- Consultation is being sought on whether certain vulnerable groups should be exempted from a residency requirement.
- The Exceptional Hardship Fund will assist people with the most exceptional circumstances.

Equality of opportunity is built into the system via The Exceptional Hardship Fund. Premiums for children and disabled persons are included in the calculation of entitlement, which provide some additional support to these groups.