


## Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of Screening:13/03/2024	Directorate: People	Section: Early Help and Communities
1. Activity to be assessed	Household Support Fund Phase 5	
2. What is the activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing	
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Simon Ingle	
5. Who are the members of the screening team?	Simon Ingle, Katie Flint, Sharon Warner, Audrey Johnson.	
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	<p>Bracknell Forest Council have been allocated funding by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support financially vulnerable residents with cost-of-living pressures. The council has previously received and administered this funding in line with guidance as set out by the DWP. The guidance states that funding must be used to cover costs associated with food, energy (heating, cooking and lighting), wider costs, housing and advice. The current phase must be used between 01 April 2024 and 30 September 2024.</p> <p>The Household Support Fund has been established in a manner which gives local authorities discretion on how to administer support and determine eligibility. Any funding that is unused is to be returned to the Department of Work and Pensions at the end of the funding period.</p> <p>Specifically, the recommendation is to distribute the HSF phase five through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vouchers and direct payments worth £15 per week to households in receipt of free school meals during school holidays throughout the household support fund award period.</li> <li>• Application based support to help with energy and water costs, and household essentials through direct payments of up to £250.</li> <li>• Application based support for low-income families that would not automatically receive help with free school meals such as households with children under 5 or those receiving home schooling.</li> <li>• Grants to the Voluntary, Charity and Faith Sector to provide support in line with the requirements of the household support fund agreement.</li> <li>• Payments towards priority debts such as housing benefit overpayment and council tax arrears following a full financial assessment for targeted households recognised as facing significant financial hardship.</li> <li>• Payments to top up council-tax support for households receiving the highest levels of assistance through personal independence payments or disability living allowance.</li> </ul>	
7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	Households living in the borough who are experiencing financial hardship due to increased and unforeseen cost-of-living expenses. Households experiencing disadvantage due to low incomes.	

Protected Characteristics	Please tick yes or no	Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral, please give a reason.	What evidence do you have to support this? E.g., equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data
<p><b>8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and includes conditions such as dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.</b></p>	Y	It is predicted that this activity will have a positive impact upon this characteristic	<p>The numbers of people receiving disability benefits in the UK has risen by 26% since 2019. People with disabilities are much more likely to be economically inactive, experience unemployment and face additional costs of £975 per month in comparison to non-disabled persons. Consequently, poverty rates are much higher for households with a disability.</p> <p>Current funding from the household support fund is being used to directly support households with a disabled person, and this will continue.</p> <p>Targeted campaigns to utilise the Household Support Fund will also support households in receipt of the highest levels of personal independence payments to top-up council tax support.</p>
<p><b>9. Racial equality</b></p>	Y	It is predicted that this activity will have a positive impact upon this characteristic	<p>Poverty rates between ethnic groups in the UK vary significantly. Figures from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation show that poverty rates for Bangladeshi (51%) and Pakistani (44%) ethnic groups are much higher than that of white ethnic groupings (19%).</p> <p>When analysing these figures further, minority ethnic communities also experience higher rates of in-work poverty, child poverty rates, lower wages, and insecure employment. This makes minority ethnic communities especially vulnerable to experience the consequences of financial hardship.</p> <p>Funding from the Household Support Fund will be aimed at low-income households such as those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Work will be done with colleagues across the council and VCFS to ensure that awareness of the fund amongst communities is maximised.</p>

<p><b>10. Gender equality</b></p>	<p>Y</p>		<p>It is predicted that this activity will have a positive impact upon this characteristic</p>	<p>In the UK research has found that females face significant economic disadvantage to comparative males. This is due to a wide range of factors – such as the gender pay gap, the higher proportion of females in part-time work, childcare commitments, and the higher proportion of unpaid female carers in the UK.</p> <p>During the previous HSF award period, around 65-70% of applicants to Bracknell Forest Council identified as female – representative of the wider financial disadvantage. The fund whilst having no specialised focus upon females is expected to be applied for by females and therefore will help to address this inequality.</p>
<p><b>11. Sexual orientation equality</b></p>		<p>N</p>	<p>Neutral, no significant positive or negative impact is expected.</p>	<p>There is no anticipated direct impact to this characteristic.</p>
<p><b>12. Gender re-assignment</b></p>		<p>N</p>	<p>Neutral, no significant positive or negative impact is expected.</p>	<p>There is no anticipated direct impact to this characteristic.</p>
<p><b>13. Age equality</b></p>	<p>Y</p>		<p>It is predicted that this activity will have a positive impact upon this characteristic</p>	<p>Aspects of the distribution of the funding will directly support families with children where poverty rates are highest. This includes through the distribution of supermarket vouchers to eligible school children. Other households will be able to apply for support if in receipt of eligible benefits.</p> <p>Low-income families with children under five in an education setting can specifically apply for additional support via a fast-track process. Alternatively, those not in an education setting can access the wider Local Welfare Scheme to apply for support through this funding.</p> <p>It is also recognised that pension age households can experience greater levels of poverty. There are already several national initiatives to support this, but the current recommendations also propose proactive support for this cohort.</p>

<b>14. Religion and belief equality</b>		N	Neutral, no significant positive or negative impact is expected.	There is no anticipated direct impact to this characteristic.
<b>15. Pregnancy and maternity equality</b>		N	Neutral, no significant positive or negative impact is expected.	Whilst the fund is expected to have a positive impact upon gender inequality there are no current ways of recognising any significant impact upon pregnancy and maternity equality.
<b>16. Marriage and civil partnership equality</b>		N	Neutral, no significant positive or negative impact is expected.	There is no anticipated direct impact to this characteristic.
<b>17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders, armed forces communities) and on promoting good community relations.</b>	This scheme is primarily targeted at cohorts with low or no income. This funding can also be accessed by carers, a group that is prone to have reduced household income and experience financial hardship. By using the Household Support Fund to support the VCFS, funds may also have a greater reach for other communities that the council is not fully aware of.			
<b>18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?</b>	No adverse or negative impacts have been identified. All payments will be made on the criteria of financial need and where a household does not qualify for one funding stream, they are able to apply for others under the Household Support Fund, this ensures that no group is excluded.			
<b>19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?</b>	The scheme is likely to positively impact hundreds of households across the borough who are in financial hardship. It is estimated that around 2,600 pupils will receive support for food during the holidays. It is estimated that a further 1,500 households across the borough will receive direct financial support through the scheme.			
<b>20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?</b>		N	No	
<b>21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?</b>	As a requirement of the funding received from the DWP, a quarterly report which details how the funding is allocated must be compiled. This report includes a breakdown of cohorts which includes households with children, households with a pensioner and households with a disabled person. This will be the fifth round of funding and further data regarding the distribution of the funds can be accessed from previous Household Support Funds.			
<b>22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?</b>		N	A full impact assessment is not required as it has been evidenced above that no negative impacts upon equalities will occur as a result of the distribution of this funding	
<b>23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.</b>				

Action	Timescale	Person Responsible	Milestone/Success Criteria
Promotion of the application based element of the scheme across different cohorts and linking to the community engagement team	30 Sept 2024	Welfare Team	Diverse applicants for support
Continued review of the uptake of the initiatives and amending the policy as needed.	30 Sept 2024	Welfare Team	Full distribution of all funding to low income households
Offer support to those who many not otherwise be able to access the support e.g. through telephone appointments and through the provision of support through the VCFS.	30 Sept 2024	Welfare Team	Full distribution of all funding to low income households
<b>24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?</b>	Welfare Service - Early Help and Communities		
<b>25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?</b>	This work aims to target the most vulnerable residents, as stated above are more likely to be affected by financial hardship. We will monitor the dispersal of funds to ensure there is no under representation and disparity in our practice.		
<b>26. Assistant director's signature.</b>	 <p data-bbox="936 909 1142 965">Signature: Date: 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024</p>		