

## Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

<b>Date of Screening:</b>	<b>Directorate: People</b>	<b>Section: Early Help and Communities</b>	
<b>1. Activity to be assessed</b>	Distribution of Household Support Fund and the procurement process for purchasing the supermarket vouchers.		
<b>2. What is the activity?</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change		
<b>3. Is it a new or existing activity?</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing		
<b>4. Officer responsible for the screening</b>	Claudia Trott, Katie Flint		
<b>5. Who are the members of the screening team?</b>	Claudia Trott, Katie Flint, Sarah Gee, Sharon Warner, Chris Taylor		
<b>6. What is the purpose of the activity?</b>	To provide support to the most vulnerable in Bracknell, with help with essential food and living costs.		
<b>7. Who is the activity designed to benefit/target?</b>	<p>Local authorities were allocated funding, based on population size and deprivation, to support vulnerable residents particularly affected by the pandemic throughout the winter period (to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022) with the cost of food, energy (heating, cooking, lighting) and other essentials. At least 50% of the total funding is ring-fenced to support households with children and up to 50% to other households experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, hardship as a result of the pandemic.</p> <p>Local authorities are responsible for the routes of distributing the funding and have been given significant discretion for setting up the support and determining eligibility. Any funding not spent by the end of the period must be returned to the Department for Work and Pensions.</p> <p>The recommendation is to supply supermarket vouchers to free school meal children and equivalent under 5s as well as supermarket vouchers for low-income households on the council tax reduction list. The purchase of vouchers is expected to be approximately £450,000 from the Household Support Fund and we have previously spent approximately £500,000 with our current supplier therefore we would exceed the maximum threshold thus a new contract is required to supply the supermarket vouchers.</p>		
<b>Protected Characteristics</b>	<b>Please tick yes or no</b>	<b>Is there an impact?</b> 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.	<b>What evidence do you have to support this?</b> 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
<b>8. Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and</b>	Y	N	<p>This support will have a positive impact to this characteristic group.</p> <p>The Councils Covid-19 Residents Survey (April 2021) highlights that the impact of the pandemic on the wellbeing of certain population groups may</p>

<p>includes conditions such as dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.</p>				<p>require more support than others to recover from the experience of the pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents with a disability are more likely than other residents to have contacted the council, 46% did so since the start of November 2020, compared with 30% of non-disabled residents</li> <li>51% of clients accessing the Bracknell Citizens Advice for support (as of 20/09/2021) had a disability or Long-term health condition.</li> </ul> <p>This evidence shows disabled residents are more likely to be in financial hardship due to COVID-19. This scheme seeks to alleviate some of this hardship.</p> <p>Disabled residents who are unable to work may be considered eligible linked to the benefits they receive or the wider vulnerability to financial hardship.</p> <p>Proactive communications will aim to reach the whole community, disabled residents are particularly likely to be reached through a leaflet drop to people who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) which includes an overview of the scheme. Council services and the VCS will also work with residents with disabilities and promote the information, such as through our adult social care teams for adults with learning disabilities, disabilities and mental health issues.</p> <p>The information about the scheme has been designed to be accessible through a number of methods; alternative formats for the information will be available. The main details of the scheme are on the website which offers a number of accessibility functions including reading text aloud. Partner organisations are also aware of the scheme and will be supporting those who may have difficulty in accessing services via the website.</p> <p>The Council's Covid-19 Residents Survey (April 2021) highlights that 77% of disabled residents are confident accessing services online, compared with 89% of non-disabled residents. Any resident with a disability receiving a supermarket voucher can also call the Council and a member of staff</p>
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				<p>can complete the redemption process for them over the phone. The process will also enable someone working with a vulnerable customer to contact us on their behalf if necessary.</p>
<p><b>9. Racial equality</b></p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>This support will have a positive impact to this Characteristic group.</p>	<p>National and local data confirms that the impact of the pandemic on the wellbeing of people within this characteristic group require more support than others to recover from the experience of the pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longstanding inequalities (structural and societal environments, and socio-economic factors) indicate that the COVID-19 Pandemic has had a disproportionately negative effect on the BAME community's health and economic wellbeing. (Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups PHE June 2020)</li> <li>• During July to September 2020 the UK unemployment rate (ONS Data) was 4.4% for people from a white ethnic background and higher 8.5% when compared for people from minority ethnic backgrounds,</li> <li>• A Runnymede Trust survey found that 32% of BAME groups reported losing some income compared to 23% of people from a white background.</li> <li>• White British or Irish residents are more likely to contact the council: For example, 35% of White British or Irish residents contacted the council compared with 23% of Black, Asian or residents of other ethnic backgrounds. (April 2021 residents survey)</li> </ul> <p>This evidence shows some ethnicities are more likely to be in financial hardship due to COVID-19. This scheme seeks to alleviate some of this hardship.</p> <p>Residents who are unable to work or who have lost their job may be considered eligible linked to the benefits they receive.</p> <p>Proactive communications will aim to reach the whole community, a number of communication methods will be</p>

				<p>used including through social media, website content and the community information champions. But specially in relation to race equality, the Council will contact BAME community organisations and faith groups to proactively promote the scheme and can make translated materials available. Communications about the scheme will be led by Council staff, the voluntary and community sector and other professionals who are working with BAME communities.</p> <p>The information has been designed to be accessible through a number of methods. The main details of the scheme are on the website which can be translated into other languages.</p>
<b>10. Gender equality</b>	Y	N	Neutral	<p>There is no anticipated impact to this characteristic. There may be some disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on women who are more often in lower wage jobs. Low income is considered as part of the eligibility for this scheme which seeks to address any inequality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-2018 population estimate shows the population in Bracknell Forest has:49.6% male to 50.4% female split and will have equitable access to the support</li> </ul>
<b>11. Sexual orientation equality</b>	Y	N	Neutral	<p>There is no anticipated impact to this characteristic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to the Annual Population Survey in 2015 1.8% of the population defined themselves as being lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) and will have equitable access to the support.</li> </ul>
<b>12. Gender re-assignment</b>	Y	N	Neutral	<p>There is no anticipated impact to this characteristic.</p>
<b>13. Age equality</b>	Y	N	This support will have a positive impact to this characteristic group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households receiving other forms of assistance are not excluded from receiving support through this grant.</li> </ul>

				<p>This scheme seeks to alleviate some of this hardship for families with children who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Many families may have experience additional financial costs during the pandemic where children have been off school and home schooled. At least 50% of the funding is to be spent on families with children.</p> <p>Children will be specifically identified for support via their schools, early years providers, the health visiting service and through current Bracknell Forest caseload information. Their families will be provided with support with food for the school holidays for the period covered by the grant, for the additional mealtimes where children will be at home.</p> <p>Proactive communications will aim to reach the whole community, a number of communication methods will be used including through social media, website content and the community information champions. Schools, early years providers, the health visiting team and voluntary sector organisations will be key communication channels to contact low-income households that will be receiving support through the Household Support Fund and ensure that we reach all age groups.</p> <p>The results of the Councils Covid-19 Residents Survey (April 2021) highlights perhaps not surprisingly, confidence to access services online is related to age, with younger residents more confident than older residents.</p> <p>For older residents who do not have access to or are not confident in accessing services online will be able to call the Council and can be supported through the redemption process of their supermarket voucher by a member of staff completing the online form for them and then posting this to their home.</p>
<b>14. Religion and belief equality</b>	Y	N	Neutral	There is no anticipated impact to this characteristic.

15. Pregnancy and maternity equality	Y	N	Neutral	There is no anticipated impact to this characteristic.
16. Marriage and civil partnership equality	Y	N	Neutral	There is no anticipated impact to this characteristic.
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.	<p>Residents that look after family members, friends, neighbours or others for 35-49 hours a week are more likely to remain unemployed and less likely to have accessed or received support (Covid-19 Residents survey). They may benefit from this scheme if they have low income. The scheme will be proactively promoted to carers through the council's carers team and The Ark voluntary organisation who run the 'Signal for Carers' support contract.</p> <p>When accessing services online 89% of residents said they are confident to access services online (Bracknell Forest Council COVID-19 Residents' Survey April 2021). Additional measures will be in place to support those vulnerable residents who may be digitally excluded to access elements of the service that require an online application form to be completed. For example, the form can be completed on behalf of the household by a family member or close friend, alternatively a professional can make a referral for this. The voucher codes that will be issued to schools can be redeemed online or printed for parents directly by the school if they are not able to access this online. Similarly, for those that can't get this support from family/schools they can contact the council who will ensure the vouchers are printed and posted out as a hard copy to the resident.</p>			
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?	No adverse or negative impacts have been identified.			
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?	<p>There are disparities in impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on certain characteristic groups (detailed above) who require more support than others to recover from their experience of the pandemic). This support will help to ensure that there is more equity across service users through a consistent eligibility and application process.</p> <p>The scheme is likely to positively impact thousands of households across the borough who are in financial hardship. It is estimated that the parents of around 2,600 pupils and under 5s will be receiving support for food during the holidays. As well as around 4,800 low-income households on the council tax reduction list receiving support through supermarket vouchers. There will be a wider opportunity for those who need support to apply for this through the council's Local Welfare Scheme</p>			
20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?		N		
21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?	The council is required to monitor and report to the DWP how the funding is allocated and spent. Given the disparities in the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on particular groups of residents, targeted equality data will be collected to ensure that the funding delivers a fair, equitable and accessible service to those eligible households having the greatest need.			
22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?	Y	N	A full impact assessment is not required as it has been evidenced above that there are no negative impacts to particular groups within the community and actions have been identified to proactively	

			promote the scheme and ensure that the food voucher distribution and online redemption process is accessible to all residents.
<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?</b> Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Milestone/Success Criteria</b>
To ensure the procurement specification supports the inclusive use of vouchers.	November 2021	Claudia Trott	The awarded supply will provide vouchers that are user friendly to redeem.
To ensure the opportunity for wider support through the Local Welfare Fund is promoted across the community including through existing networks	December 2021	Claudia Trott / Harjit Hunjan	Those who are in need of financial support can access this.
<b>24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?</b>	Financial Hardship Officer Group		
<b>25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?</b>	Recommendations build on learning from previous DWP grants, to establish effective solutions.		
<b>26. Assistant director's signature.</b>	Signature: Sarah Gee		Date: 08/11/2021