

## Appendix C – equalities analysis

### Local Welfare Assistance – Equalities Analysis

#### Department & Person Responsible

Regeneration and Growth Andy Monkley

#### Created Last Review

13th January, 2015 13th January, 2013

#### Status Next Review

Assessed 13th January, 2016

#### Screening Data

1. What are the objectives and expected outcomes of your proposal? Why is it needed? Make sure you highlight any proposed changes.

Brent's Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) Scheme was introduced in April 2013 following the abolition of certain aspects of the Social Fund. The Social Fund had previously been administered by the Department for Work and Pensions and each Local Authority was subsequently given funding to devise and administer its own Local Welfare Assistance Scheme. It was a requirement of any scheme that funding should be concentrated on those facing greatest difficulty in managing their income, and to enable a more flexible response to unavoidable needs.

The LWA scheme has now been in existence for 20 months and although it has broadly met the requirement as described above, there are elements that have not worked so well. These shortcomings are addressed in the amendments to the scheme for 2015/16. An Equalities Impact Assessment was performed in January 2013 (and is attached).

The proposed changes to the scheme are:-

1. Increase the maximum period for a Crisis Payment award to up to 14 days or exceptionally up to whenever the customer will receive their next regular income where appropriate;
2. Align the calculation of Crisis Payment awards to a percentage of the Housing Benefit Applicable Amounts (rather than Council Tax Supports Applicable Amounts);
3. Allow discretion outside of the eligibility criteria in exceptional circumstances;
4. Expand the list of qualifying criteria for eligibility, and;
5. Removal of two specific restrictions currently placed on customer eligibility (namely, a customer may be eligible for an award if they are eligible for a Short Term Advance and a customer on bail may be eligible - presently, both of these scenarios are excluded).

2. Who is affected by the proposal? Consider residents, staff and external stakeholders.

As the eligibility criteria have been extended, residents are only affected in so much as in some circumstances, residents who may not previously have been eligible to claim may be eligible from 01 April 2015.

Staff and other stakeholders are only affected in so far as needing to have an awareness of the new eligibility criteria.

3.1 Could the proposal impact on people in different ways because of their equality characteristics?

Yes

If you answered 'Yes' please indicate which equality characteristic(s) are impacted

Disability

3.2 Could the proposal have a disproportionate impact on some equality groups?

No

3.3 Would the proposal change or remove services used by vulnerable groups of people?

No

3.4 Does the proposal relate to an area with known inequalities?

No

3.5 Is the proposal likely to be sensitive or important for some people because of their equality characteristics?

No

3.6 Does the proposal relate to one of Brent's equality objectives?

No

**Recommend this EA for Full Analysis?**

Yes –see below.

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### **Impact Assessment Data**

5. What effects could your policy have on different equality groups and on cohesion and good relations?

5.1 Age (select all that apply)

Neutral

The proposed changes to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme have no specific effect on this equality group.

5.2 Disability (select all that apply)

Positive

The eligibility criteria have been expanded so that residents receiving the following benefits are now eligible to claim an award from the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme:-

- Disability Living Allowance;
- Personal Independence Payment;
- Disabled Person's Tax Credit;
- Attendance Allowance;
- Constant Attendance Allowance;
- Severe Disablement Allowance;
- Incapacity Benefit;
- Employment and Support Allowance (support component)
- Carer's Allowance.

This positively impacts on disabled residents as they would not have previously been eligible to claim unless they were also receiving one of the following benefits:-

- Income Support
- Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based)
- Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related)
- Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Universal Credit

5.3 Gender identity and expression (select all that apply)

Neutral

The proposed changes to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme have no specific effect on this equality group.

5.4 Marriage and civil partnership (select all that apply)

Neutral

The proposed changes to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme have no specific effect on this equality group.

5.5 Pregnancy and maternity (select all that apply)

Neutral

The proposed changes to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme have no specific effect on this equality group.

5.6 Race (select all that apply)

Neutral

The proposed changes to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme have no specific effect on this equality group.

5.7 Religion or belief (select all that apply)

Neutral

The proposed changes to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme have no specific effect on this equality group.

5.8 Sex (select all that apply)

Neutral

The proposed changes to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme have no specific effect on this equality group.

5.9 Sexual orientation (select all that apply)

Neutral

The proposed changes to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme have no specific effect on this equality group.

5.10 Other (please specify) (select all that apply)

Neutral

The proposed changes to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme have no specific effect on this equality group.

6. Please provide a brief summary of any research or engagement initiatives that have been carried out to formulate your proposal. What did you find out from consultation or data analysis? Were the participants in any engagement initiatives representative of the people who will be affected by your proposal? How did your findings and the wider evidence base inform the proposal?

Initially, views were sought from the Welfare Team within Brent Council to gauge what was and what was not working within the current scheme. Comments were also requested from the Welfare Reform Network Group, a group of 30 members consisting of staff, councillors and external stakeholders (registered providers of social housing, the CAB and local community groups).

The proposals were then put out to consultation but as only 6 people responded, limited conclusions can be drawn from the exercise especially as the views were mixed in terms of the proposed changes.

However, there is an additional proposal to fundamentally review the scheme in advance of 2016/17 and there will be a full consultation process which it is hoped will attract a wider response.

7. Could any of the impacts you have identified be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010? Prohibited acts include direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation and failure to make a reasonable adjustment.

No

8. What actions will you take to enhance the potential positive impacts that you have identified?

Our publicity and communications plans will be reviewed and extended in order to seek greater take up of the scheme by those who need it with specific mention of the extended eligibility criteria. The plan will primarily be via targeted publicity e.g. to those affected by other welfare reforms. The methods will include email and text messages and also involve front line staff in promoting the scheme more. We also plan to work more closely with internal and external stakeholders to identify applicants at point of crisis wherever they present.

9. What actions will you take to remove or reduce the potential negative impacts that you have identified?

There are no negative impacts.

10. Please explain how any remaining negative impacts can be justified?

Not applicable.

### **Comments**

A full analysis will be carried out when the scheme is fundamentally reviewed for 2016/17.