

Appendix 1
EQUALITY SCREENING

Equality Impact Assessment guidance should be considered when completing this form.

POLICY/FUNCTION/ACTIVITY	LEAD OFFICER
Financial Inclusion and Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery	Linda Norman

A. What is the aim of this policy, function or activity? Why is it needed? What is it hoped to achieve and how will it be ensured it works as intended? Does it affect service users, employees or the wider community?

To have a more holistic and collaborative approach to debt recovery whilst being aware of an individual's financial circumstances and their propensity to pay. The Council will be embarking on a 12-month pilot to employ a dedicated resource to analysis the current level of Housing Benefit debt and then work collaboratively with other service areas to identify multiple debts to avoid duplication of effort and harassment of the customer.

B. Is this policy, function or activity relevant to equality? Does the policy, function or activity relate to an area in which there are known inequalities, or where different groups have different needs or experience? Remember, it may be relevant because there are opportunities to promote equality and greater access, not just potential for adverse impacts or unlawful discrimination. The Protected Characteristics are; Sex, Age, Disability, Race, Religion and Beliefs, Sexual Orientation, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity.

This will be relevant to equality as the Council will be engaging with various individuals across the Borough who may owe the Council money for various reasons such as non-payment of Council Tax, Housing Benefit overpayment, rent arrears, parking fines and sundry debt invoices. Some of these individuals may have protected characteristics and as such, should be treated in a fair and transparent manner.

If the policy, function or activity is considered to be relevant to equality then a full Equality Impact Assessment may need to be carried out. If the policy function or activity does not engage any protected characteristics then you should complete Part C below. Where Protected Characteristics are engaged, but Full Impact Assessment is not required because measures are in place or are proposed to be implemented that would mitigate the impact on those affected or would provide an opportunity to promote equalities please complete Part C.

C. If the policy, function or activity is not considered to be relevant to equality, what are the reasons for this conclusion? Alternatively, if there it is considered that there is an impact on any Protected of Characteristics but that measures are in place or are proposed to be implemented please state those measures and how it/they are expected to have the desired result. What evidence has been used to make this decision? A simple statement of 'no relevance' or 'no data' is not sufficient.

A full impact assessment is not required as it is anticipated that this pilot will have a positive impact on those with protected characteristics as the Council will be providing a more collaborative and holistic approach to debt recovery, treating debtors as individuals. Access to third part data including those that have registered on the Vulnerability Registration Service (VRS) will enable the Council to take into account an individual's circumstances ensuring they are in receipt of all benefits and discounts they are entitled to and providing individual bespoke support to assist vulnerable residents in managing their finances and breaking the 'cycle of debt'

This screening assessment will need to be referred to the Equality Group for challenge before sign-off.

Date completed: 06.11.23

Sign-off by senior manager: Linda Norman