

Record of Equality and Rights Impact Assessment

Part 1: Background and Information

(a) Background Details

Please list ERIA background details:

ERIA Title and Summary Description: Single Occupancy Discount Review

City of Edinburgh Council intends to procure a service to review our Council Tax single discount caseload. Of approximately 245,000 households in Edinburgh, approximately 90,000 have a single occupancy discount. This is a 25% discount awarded where there is only one adult occupant in the property.

Past reviews have shown that approximately 3.5% of discounts are incorrect, leading to a loss of revenue to the Council, which in turn impacts on the Council's ability to deliver essential services.

Review of single discounts represents enforcement of long established council tax legislation.

Service Area	Division	Head of Service	Service Area Reference No.
Resource	Customer	John McCann	2016R21

(b) What is being impact assessed?

Describe the different policies or services (i.e. decisions, projects, programmes, policies, services, reviews, plans, functions or practices that relate to the Corporate ERIA Title):

Policies and Services	Date ERIA commenced
Council Tax Single Occupancy Discount Review service	5/7/2016

(c) When is it due to be reviewed? (insert furthest away date if question relates to a number of review dates) **Apr 2021**

(d) ERIA Team

Please list all ERIA Team Members:

Name	Organisation / Service Area
Tam Pollard	City of Edinburgh Council/Transformation
Kate Stevenson	City of Edinburgh Council/Customer
Daniel De Vladar	Transformation Programme
Ruth Baxendale	City of Edinburgh Council/Strategy & Insight
Julia Sproul	City of Edinburgh Council/Strategy & Insight

Part 2: Evidence and Impact Assessment

(a) Evidence Base

Please record the evidence used to support the ERIA. Any identified evidence gaps can be recorded at [part 3a](#). Please allocate an abbreviation for each piece of evidence.

Evidence	Abbreviation
Local Government Finance Act (Scotland) 1992, as amended	LGFA
Council Tax Legislation Manual	
Council Tax Reduction Legislation	
Council Tax Reduction Manual	
Previous Single Occupancy Discount Reviews	

(b) Rights Impact Assessment – Summary

Please describe all the identified enhancements and infringements of rights against the following ten areas of rights. Please also consider issues of poverty and health inequality within each area of rights:

- Life
- Health
- Physical security
- Legal security
- Education and learning
- Standard of living
- Productive and valued activities
- Individual, family and social life
- Identity, expression and respect
- Participation, influence and voice

Please indicate alongside each identified enhancement or infringement the relevant policy or service (see [part 1b](#)) and relevant evidence (see [part 2a](#)).

Summary of Enhancements of Rights

By maximising the Council's revenue, the review will protect the Council's ability to deliver vital services. Not doing the review would result in further savings needing to be found elsewhere which could potentially impact negatively on the rights outlined.

Summary of Infringement of Rights

Can these infringements be justified? Are they proportional?

There are no infringements of rights as a result of a single occupancy discount review. Consideration of discount is based solely on the number of occupants in the property. It is not based on or targeted at a particular group. All customers will be treated fairly and in accordance with legislation.

Review will allow the customer to respond via a variety of channels, including post, online and phone.

Where a property is in receipt of Council Tax Reduction, and hence on a low income, the case will be referred back to CEC's benefit team for expert assessment in line with existing processes.

Where new (and increased) bills are issued as a result of the review, these will include reference to Council Tax Reduction support for people on a low income. This scheme is

also promoted to those on low income both on our website, and by our contact centre when people contact us who are having difficulty paying their council tax.

City of Edinburgh Council has conducted many reviews of its single discount caseload since the introduction of Council Tax in 1993. These include reviews with data matching, and fully outsourced reviews as under this procurement. There has been no evidence of infringement of rights from these past reviews.

Where a customer disputes the decision, they have the right to appeal to the contractor, and if they still dispute the decision, the right to appeal directly to CEC. If the customer is still disputes the decision, this can be taken to the Lothian Valuation Joint Board. If the customer is unhappy with the way they have been treated, as distinct from disputing the decision itself, they can make use of the council's complaints policy.

(c) Equality Impact Assessment – Summary

Please consider all the protected characteristics when answering questions 1, 2 and 3 below. Please also consider the issues of poverty and health inequality within each protected characteristic:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender identity
- Marriage / civil partnership
- Pregnancy / maternity
- Race
- Religion / belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

1. Please describe all the positive and negative impacts on the duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Please indicate alongside each identified impact the relevant policy or service (see [part 1b](#)) and relevant evidence (see [part 2a](#)).

Positive Impacts

There are no positive impacts.

Negative Impacts

There are no negative impacts. The review will treat all people the same. It is based solely on the number of adult occupants of a property. All households with a single discount will be included in the scope of the review. It is not targeted any particular group. All customers will be treated the same regardless of their status, and in line with Council Tax legislation.

The contractor will be required to ensure the review is conducted in a manner that is accessible to, and supports, people with additional needs.

It is noted that people who are severely mentally impaired will not normally be included in the review as they qualify for a separate full exemption from Council Tax.

2. Please describe all the positive and negative impacts on the duty to advance equality of opportunity (i.e. by removing or minimising disadvantage, meeting the needs of particular groups that are different from the needs of others and encouraging participation in public life)?

Please indicate alongside each identified impact the relevant policy or service (see [part 1b](#)) and relevant evidence (see [part 2a](#)).

Positive Impacts
By maximising the council's income, the review will protect the delivery of vital council services. Not doing the review would require savings to be found elsewhere which could impact on council services which support the rights outlined.
Negative Impacts
There is no negative impact.
While the policy may increase the council tax bill for some people on low incomes, as noted above, in such cases this can be offset by the Council Tax Reduction scheme which is promoted on all bills and recovery correspondence, as well as by staff collecting council tax, and in our contact centre and front counter offices.
Cases which are already in receipt of Council Tax Reduction will be referred back to CEC for expert assessment under existing Council Tax Reduction and Council Tax procedures.

3. Please describe all the positive and negative impacts on the duty to foster good relations (i.e. by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding)? Please indicate alongside each identified impact the relevant policy or service (see [part 1b](#)) and relevant evidence (see [part 2a](#)).

Positive Impacts
There is no positive impact.
Negative Impacts
There is no negative impact.

Part 3: Evidence Gaps, Recommendations, Justifications and Sign Off

(a) Evidence Gaps

Please list all relevant evidence gaps and action to address identified gaps.

Evidence Gaps	Action to address gaps
Contractor's Equality Policy	Contractors to be asked to supply policy as part of tender.
Contractor's Customer Care Policy	Contractors to be asked to supply policy as part of tender.

(b) Recommendations

Please record SMART recommendations which may include actions to

- (i) eliminate unlawful practice or infringements of absolute rights;
- (ii) justify identified infringements of rights; or
- (iii) mitigate identified negative equality impacts
- (iv) further advance equality and rights, and promote good relations.

Recommendation	Responsibility of (name)	Timescale
Successful tenderer be required to have an equalities policy compliant with Equality Act (2010)	Tam Pollard, Kate Stevenson, Brian Murphy (procurement panel)	31/12/2016

Successful tenderer will be required to have their correspondence in plain English.	Kate Stevenson	31/12/2016
Review of complaints to be conducted after 1 year of contract, and appropriate action to be taken as required.	Kate Stevenson	30/6/18

(c) Sign Off

I, the undersigned, am content that:

- (i) the ERIA record represents a thorough and proportionate ERIA analysis based on a sound evidence base;
- (ii) the ERIA analysis gives no indication of unlawful practice or violation of absolute rights;
- (iii) the ERIA recommendations are proportionate and will be delivered;
- (iv) the results of the ERIA process have informed officer or member decision making;
- (v) that the record of ERIA has been published on the Council's website / intranet, or
- (vi) that the ERIA record has been reviewed and re-published.

Date	Sign Off (print name and position)	Reason for Sign Off (please indicate which reason/s from list (i) to (vi) above)
12/10/2016	John McCann, Head of Customer	i, ii, iii, iv