

PART A - Initial Impact Assessment

Proposal Name: Council Tax Reduction Scheme

EIA ID: 2362

EIA Author: Jon West (Finance)

Proposal Outline: In 2013 the Government abolished the national Council Tax Benefit scheme and required all councils to implement their own Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). The Council is required to review the CTRS on an annual basis. The CTRS provides support towards Council Tax costs, to some of the most financially vulnerable households in the city, and it is the Council's recommendation that the CTRS remains unchanged in 2024/25, meaning we are able to continue to provide support towards Council Tax costs to these households. The report also recommends that the Council Tax Hardship Scheme (CTHS) is continued in 2024/25, which can provide further assistance to households who are unable to meet their reduced Council Tax costs.

Proposal Type: Non-Budget

Year Of Proposal:

Lead Director for proposal: Philip Gregory (FINANCE)

Service Area: Revenues and Benefits

EIA Start Date: 01/04/2024

Lead Equality Objective: Break the cycle and improve life chances

Decision Type

Committees:

Sub-Committees

Portfolio

Primary Portfolio:

Strategic Support Services

EIA is cross portfolio:

No

EIA is joint with another organisation:

No

Overview of Impact

Overview Summary:

By maintaining the CTRS the Council will continue to be able to provide assistance towards the Council Tax costs for households on a low income. Further, by maintaining CTHS for 2023/24, the Council will be able to provide further assistance to households who are experiencing financial hardship as a result of their reduced Council Tax costs.

Impacted characteristics:

- Age
- Health
- Disability
- Race
- Carers
- Poverty & Financial Inclusion

Consultation and other engagement

Cumulative Impact

Does the proposal have a cumulative impact: No

Impact areas:

Initial Sign-Off

Full impact assessment required: Yes

Review Date: 31/03/2025

PART B - Full Impact Assessment

Health

Staff Impacted: No

Customers Impacted: Yes

Description of Impact: By maintaining the CTRS and CTHS in their current form, the Council is able to continue providing assistance to the Council Tax costs of vulnerable households, reducing stress, and freeing up money that be used to contribute to the health and wellbeing of the household.

Name of Lead Health Officer:

Comprehensive Assessment Being Completed: No

Public Health Lead signed off health

impact(s):

Age

Staff Impacted:

No

Customers Impacted:

Yes

Description of Impact:

The CTRS for pension age households is set by Government and eligible people in this age group have continued to receive support to their Council Tax costs as they would have under the former Council Tax Benefit regime and can receive support covering up to 100% of their Council Tax costs. Whilst working age households have the amount of support that can be met by CTS limited to 77% of their net Council Tax liability, the Council's recommendation to maintain the CTHS means that those households who are experiencing financial hardship as a result of their Council Tax costs can apply for additional assistance to their Council Tax costs. The CTRS provides additional assistance in the form of additional allowances and premia where a single person has dependent children, and these increase in line with how other benefits are calculated. Council Tax is charged to anyone over the age of 18, and single occupants are able to claim a Single Person's discount irrespective of their age. Where a CTRS recipient is a single person, their award reflects their eligibility to the Single Person's Discount.

Carers

Staff Impacted:

No

Customers Impacted:

Yes

Description of Impact:

CTRS is a sophisticated means tested Council Tax discount and takes account of a number of different factors, and awards additional premia where the applicant or their partner have caring responsibilities and receive an award or have an underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance. Further to this, there is also a separate Carer's disregard where the person liable for Council Tax has caring responsibilities and

meets certain criteria. Where the taxpayer is eligible for the Carer Disregard, they can receive a reduction in the amount of Council Tax they are due to pay of up to 50%.

Disability

Staff Impacted:

No

Customers Impacted:

Yes

Description of Impact:

The CTRS provides additional assistance to in the form of additional allowances and premia where a CTS recipient receives certain disability benefits. The allowances and premia, which are included in the both the pension age and working age schemes mean that they are able to receive a higher level of income before the amount of CTS that are eligible to receive, is reduced. Further to this, where the applicant or their partner receives an award of Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance, the income they receive from this benefit is disregarded in the CTS calculation, recognising that this payment is intended to meet additional expenses that they incur due to their disability. Further to the CTRS, which provides assistance to households on a low income who are disabled, there are additional non-means tested Council Tax discounts that can reduce the amount of Council Tax a disabled person has to pay. These are:

- Disabled persons discount – Where a property which is the main home of a disabled person has been adapted to meet the disablement needs of the disabled person the liable person is eligible for a disabled person's discount, which is equivalent to re-banding the property into the next lower Council Tax band. The reduction for Band A properties will be the equivalent of one 9th of Band D.
- Severe Mental Impairment discount or exemption – A person is considered severely mentally impaired for Council Tax purposes if they have a severe impairment of intelligence and social functioning (however caused), which appears to be permanent. If someone lives alone and has a severe mental impairment, they will be exempt from paying Council Tax. Where there are 2 adults in the property, and one of the occupiers is considered to have a mental impairment, they may be eligible for a discount in their Council Tax charge.

Poverty & Financial Inclusion

Staff Impacted:	No
Customers Impacted:	Yes
Description of Impact:	CTRS provides assistance towards Council Tax costs to households on low incomes, and if they receive an award of CTS and are still having difficulty meeting their Council Tax payments, they may be able to receive further assistance from the Council Tax Hardship Scheme. Further to this, CTRS is a sophisticated means tested Council Tax discount and takes account of a number of different factors, and awards additional allowances and premia where the household includes household members with disabilities, and also includes additional allowances for dependent children.

Race

Staff Impacted:	No
Customers Impacted:	Yes
Description of Impact:	Studies have shown disparities in unemployment and income levels in some BAME communities. CTRS provides assistance towards Council Tax costs to households on low incomes, and if they receive an award of CTS and are still having difficulty meeting their Council Tax payments, they may be able to receive further assistance from the Council Tax Hardship Scheme. Further to this, CTRS is a sophisticated means tested Council Tax discount and takes account of a number of different factors, and awards additional allowances and premia where the household includes household members with disabilities, and also includes additional allowances for dependent children.

Action Plan & Supporting Evidence

Outline of action plan:	Page 98 As part of any future marketing campaigns we will ensure that consideration is given to ensuring that
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diverse communities are reached and able to access the service. • We will continue to engage with our software supplier, who also provides our online application from to consider how we can collect equalities data from our applicants, and how we can record this information. • We will engage with our software supplier to ensure that our online application form meets the minimum accessibility standards that are required. • We will review how the service considers the eligibility of awarding a Single Person's Discount when the Council Tax Service is made aware of the death of the taxpayer, or another resident. • We will make contact with colleagues in the Disabled Facilities Grants Team to ensure that they are aware of the scheme, and can signpost their clients to us. • We will make contact with the Mental Health Team to ensure that they are aware of the scheme, and can signpost their clients to us. • Representatives from the Benefits Service will regularly attend the Supporting Vulnerable People group, which is a Council run meeting, but has an open invitation to the Council colleagues, key stakeholders and the voluntary sector in the city, and also attend the Welfare, Poverty and Housing network meeting, which is chaired by Citizens Advice Sheffield to ensure the CTRS is promoted.

Action plan evidence: n/a

Changes made as a result of action plan:

Mitigation

Significant risk after mitigation measures: No

Outline of impact and risks:

Review Date

Review Date: 31/03/2025

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