

Midlothian Council Equality Impact Assessment Form



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Lead contact:

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Section A: Introduction

1. Title of policy, procedure or function being assessed

Council Report
Universal Credit in Midlothian – 2017 Update

2. Divisions/organisations/groups involved in doing this Equality Impact Assessment

Customer and Housing Services

3. Date started:

November 2017

Date completed:

November 2017

Section B: Information

4. Please describe the Policy, Procedure or Function you are impact assessing

The report provides an update to Council on the key issues related to the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) in Midlothian. It has previously been reported to Council of the Welfare Reform measures which resulted in significant changes introduced across a range of state benefits that have affected individual households from April, 2013.

5. What information and consultation data do you have to inform your assessment? What does it tell you?

Actions continue to be led by the Council and the Midlothian Financial Inclusion Network (MFIN) partnership to inform and support people about sources for those in hardship, such as foodbanks, Scottish Welfare Fund, Welfare Rights, Credit Unions and budgeting advice. Evidence indicates that claimants and the Council are experiencing effects of;

- Delays in payment to claimants
- Financial Hardship to households, with extra demand on the Scottish Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments
- Additional administrative burdens to the Council
- Increased rent arrears
- Impact on temporary accommodation for homeless households

6. Do you need more information or more consultation/engagement data?

- Do you need anything more:
 - i. to do this Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)
 - ii. to monitor or assess, in future, the impact of the policy/procedure or function you are EQIAing on people with different equalities characteristics
- Lack of data is not a sufficient reason to conclude there is no impact. It is insufficient to state that a policy will affect everyone equally without having considered the different barriers some people may encounter.

More information on particular needs households would be useful. There is a need to undertake research regularly in order that it remains relevant and trends can be monitored.

Section C: Assessment

Midlothian Council equality impact assesses on **all** of the characteristics in the shaded area below, so you should consider all of these in your assessment. If you want you can consider other groups as well.

Race (this includes ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality)

Disability (e.g. physical disabilities, sensory impairments, learning disabilities, mental health conditions or long-term illnesses)

Sex(male/female)

Age (all ages)

Sexual Orientation (gay man, gay woman/lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual/straight)

Religion or belief (including having no religion or belief)

Pregnancy and maternity (having just had a baby or being pregnant)

Gender reassignment or transgender status (a person who is proposing to undergo is undergoing or has undergone a process to change their sex)

Marriage and Civil Partnership

People experiencing poverty or at risk of poverty: (poverty may be simply defined as not having enough money to meet one's basic daily needs or to have the things that most people in the UK take for granted).

As you answer questions 7i. to 7iv. over the page:

a) Think about the policy, practice or function you are assessing and

- people with the above characteristics
- people associated with them (e.g. a parent or carer)
- people mistakenly assumed to have the above characteristics

Remember to consider impacts on staff as well as communities and customers.

Continued.../

b) Consider whether the above people are likely to have different needs, or be affected in different ways by what you are doing/proposing. e.g.

- People may need, or benefit from, information provided in a particular format, like large print or easy read.
- A queuing system which relies on people standing for long periods will make it very difficult for some people to use the service.
- Charging more for a service is likely to affect people from several of the groups in the shaded area above, as on average they have a lower income.
- Targeting an area of high poverty could leave people experiencing poverty outside the area even worse off in comparison

c) Consider the General Equality Duty requirements to pay due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, victimization, harassment or other local conduct that is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the characteristics listed in shaded area at the top of this page (except poverty)
- advance equality of opportunity between and foster good relations between people who share a characteristic in the shaded area and those who do not (except marriage and civil partnership and poverty)

7i. Note any positive impacts on the above equalities groups

N/A

7ii. Note any negative impacts on equalities groups

At an individual level welfare reform impacts many people in the main equalities groups, including those affected by poverty which Midlothian Council recognised as a further protected characteristic grouping. Making additional support available to equalities groups to mitigate the impact of welfare reform is therefore consistent with council policy.

7iii. How significant would this negative impact be, and what kind of numbers would be affected?

N/A

7iv. Note any opportunities for making a positive impact on equalities groups.

There is no change in the strategic approaches guiding Midlothian Council's

response to Welfare Reform, which is to mitigate against the impact of the effects within the capability and resources of the Council and its partners.

- Preventative Approach – While there is an inevitability that some of the responses will be reactive wherever possible opportunities will continue to be sought to take a proactive approach to prevent crisis intervention
- Co-ordinated Service Provision – Opportunities to co-ordinate service provision continue so people can receive information and advice from as wide a range of professionals as possible.
- Build individuals own / community capacity – Consistent with co-production approach work takes a capacity building approach where possible.
- Protecting Financial Position of Midlothian Council – Welfare Reform creates a financial exposure to Midlothian Council. Actions continue to be taken to mitigate this exposure where possible.

Section D: Actions and Outcomes

Questions 8 and 9 below ask about actions which have been taken, or will be taken as **a result** of this Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). Any pre-existing actions should be included in earlier sections.

8. Note any actions you will be taking as a result of this EQIA:

Think about what you can do to:

- minimise or remove any negative impacts, and
- maximise the opportunities for positive impacts

9. Please note any actions you have already taken as a result of this EQIA here.

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possible.

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10. How will you track/monitor that the actions you mentioned in 8. have been achieved?

e.g. by adding them to a work plan, service plan etc.

Report on action by performance reporting and through feedback from consultation and engagement activities.

11. If you have decided not to take any action please note why this is, and any justification, here.

A significant negative impact, even if it affects only a small number of people, should be addressed.

Welfare Reform is UK Government policy.

12. Is a more detailed assessment recommended?

No