

Equality Impact Assessment Form **Reference –**

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The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to

* eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
* advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and
* foster good relations between different groups

# Section 1: What is being assessed?

**1.1 Name of the proposal to be assessed.**

2% Social Care Precept

**1.2 Describe the proposal under assessment and what change it would result in if implemented.**

**Context**

The precept will raise funding to support the management of demands in Adult Social care in line with the expectations set out in the Government's Autumn Statement 2023.

The latest statistics from Projecting Older People Population Information (POPPI) and Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information (PANSI) project a 2% yearly increase up to 2030, in the number of people who will need support.

Like many areas, Bradford is facing the challenges of an ageing population – it is estimated that the 65 plus population will grow by over 50% to 116,800 people by 2041.

In Bradford, the Healthy life expectancy (a key measure of the quality of life years) on average for men is 77.7 years, with 17.3 of those in poor health, while for women on it is 81.6 years with 22 years. However, this varies considerably across the District, meaning that we have significant health inequalities in communities and the gap in how long people will live is stark. People in the most deprived areas of our district are living with more ill health and dying earlier. In terms of comparison, in Wharfedale, life expectancy is 87 years for women and 84 years for men, however as we move into central Bradford, this dramatically reduces. In the most deprived area, Manningham, people’s life expectancy here is around 10 years less than Wharfedale.

Increases in life expectancy have also meant there are continually more people in older age groups living with more complex needs (e.g. dementia) and increased numbers of people who are unable to self-care or undertake personal and domestic tasks required for daily living. Similarly, we are also expecting growth in residents aged 18-64 who require care and support due to complex health needs.

In addition to this demographic growth, the service is also facing pressures from other challenges which include:

* Meeting the more complex needs of older people, those with disabilities and mental health issues
* Continued additional demand arising from Covid related hospital discharge and long Covid support needs for those who already have siginifcant health and social care support requirements
* Managing the shift of resources to support prevention and early intervention
* Increasing cost of care packages for growing numbers of people, both older and younger adults with complex needs, and their families.
* Unstable independent care market
* Recruit and retain a skilled and caring workforce to meet existing and potential spikes in demand.
* Meeting our statutory duties to provide good quality of care.

**Proposal**

That as part of our wider Council tax proposals for 24-25, we are proposing an increase of 2% to the government’s Council Tax precept for adult social care to help fund the rising cost of providing adult social care services. Indicatively, a 2% Social Care precept will raise an additional £4.7m.

A 2% increase would result in an extra £32.42 a year per Band D property.

It needs to be noted that the amount charged and raised by the Council’s Social Care precept is lower than for many comparable authorities and is insufficient to keep pace with increasing demand and rising costs.

**Approach**

We are working with our partners within the Health and Social Care System to combine our collective resources to develop more integrated and aligned support solutions while promoting a culture that moves from a dependency model to one that promotes independence and resilience.

The additional funding secured from the precept will be used to maintain our support levels and most importantly provide assurance that:

* people are effectively discharged from the hospital and supported within their own homes and settings.
* people are supported effectively to regain skills and confidence to remain independent, and where appropriate enhance the use of technological solutions and other aids to support them
* we are able to reduce inequalities by co-producing culturally appropriate and sensitive needs-based support with communities and individuals
* we provide equal access to services regardless of age and disability
* we can increase access to community-based prevention and early intervention support solutions to reduce demand for Adult and Social Care support..
* we can implement a whole system to support and improve people’s mental health and wellbeing and address isolation/loneliness
* we can identify and proactively support those people who are at risk of declining health and wellbeing or at risk of safeguarding, through community-based support solutions.

**Background and statutory requirements:**

In 2016-17 the government introduced a separate adult social care precept that could be added to increases in Council Tax without the need for a local referendum, the increase allowed for the precept has varied in different years. The precept was introduced in response to the significant cost pressures facing local authorities with adult social care responsibilities and must be used to fund adult social care services.

The Government has allowed Local Authorities to continue to charge the additional social care precept and this was confirmed by the [Chancellor in his Autumn Statement](https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/provisional-local-government-finance-settlement-202425-day#:~:text=In%20the%20Local%20government%20finance,from%20the%20sector%20for%20stability.) made in December 2023.

# Section 2: What the impact of the proposal is likely to be

* 1. **Will this proposal advance equality of opportunity for people who share a protected characteristic and/or foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those that do not? If yes, please explain further.**

Yes, the funding generated from the Social Care Precept will enable the Adult Social Care Department to continue to provide and commission support and services to the most vulnerable groups across the district, while ensuring the provision of support meets the person care needs and outcomes in line with the duties set out within the Care Act. These groups include older adults and adults with physical and/or learning disabilities.

The provision of needs-based more cost-effective and sustainable services will facilitate the integration of people into the community and will enable them to gain greater access to community services and resources. It will enable them to participate in the broader social networks outside their homes and so improve their opportunities to access services (including services that may lead to employment) and foster good relations between different groups of people and communities by ensuring equality and transparency of service access and with the local community

* 1. **Will this proposal have a positive impact and help to eliminate discrimination and harassment against, or the victimisation of people who share a protected characteristic? If yes, please explain further.**

Yes, discrimination and harassment may include unintended exclusion from opportunities or isolation from family, friends, and the community. The additional funding will enable the service to provide and secure ongoing equally accessed support for vulnerable people who share a protected characteristic to retain their independence within their own home (or supported living) while enabling them to continue to actively engage in their wider community. The approach we are taking should help reduce the potential for such exclusion and isolation.

* 1. **Will this proposal potentially have a negative or disproportionate impact on people who share a protected characteristic? If yes, please explain further.**

Yes. Raising the amount of Council Tax payable on a property could have a disproportionate impact on people on low incomes.

**2.4 Please indicate the level of negative impact on each of the protected characteristics?**

(Please indicate high (H), medium (M), low (L), no effect (N) for each)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Protected Characteristics:** | **Impact**  (H, M, L, N) |
| Age | L |
| Disability | L |
| Gender reassignment | L |
| Race | L |
| Religion/Belief | L |
| Pregnancy and maternity | L |
| Sexual Orientation | L |
| Sex | L |
| Marriage and civil partnership | L |
| **Additional Consideration:** |  |
| Low income/low wage | M/L |

**2.5 How could the disproportionate negative impacts be mitigated or eliminated?**

(Note: Legislation and best practice require mitigations to be considered, but need only be put in place if it is possible.)

We are proposing a number of measures will be put in place to help mitigate the impact of Council Tax and Adult Social Care precept increases – these include:

**Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

Those applying for Bradford’s Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme and who meet the scheme’s criteria can receive:

* 100% reduction in Council Tax for pensioners or a partner of a pensioner
* Up to a maximum 70% reduction on a Band A property charge for those of working age (and not a partner of a pensioner).

The scheme is means tested.

**Single Person Discount** – is a 25% discount against the Council Tax payable on a property available to those who are the sole adult living in a property.

**Care Leavers -** Young people who were being looked after by Bradford Council at the point they turned 18, and have now left care, are exempt from paying Council Tax up to the age of 25. Care leavers are disregarded for the purpose of assessing the number of adult residents in a property for the calculation of Council Tax, so if they live with another person, a 25% discount will apply.

**Other discounts** are available based on a range of personal circumstances, such as reductions in the Council Tax payable on properties adapted to meet the needs of a disabled resident or for those who are severely mentally impaired. More information is available about this on the Council’s website at: <https://www.bradford.gov.uk/council-tax/apply-for-discounts-reductions-and-exemptions/other-council-tax-discounts/>

**Free School Meals** – the Council administers Free School Meals for low-income families who meet the Governments current eligibility criteria.

**Discretionary Housing Payments** are directed at low-income households who need extra help with housing costs.

**Cost of living Bradford** website and booklets. This details a wide-ranging offer ranging from advice about wellbeing and debt. Much of this support is aimed at those on low incomes which includes those in receipt of CTR.

**Debt advice** Front line officers refer those struggling with debt to the Council’s commissioned VCS Welfare and Debt advice providers and to national free, regulated, and impartial support through the Money Advisor Network.

**Benefits/Pensions increase 2024/25** The Chancellor announced in the Autumn Statement that the state pension will rise by **8.5%** from April 2024 under the 'triple lock' guarantee, meaning millions of people will receive a weekly increase of up to £17.35. Certain benefits, including Universal Credit, will also rise from April by 6.7%.

**Breathing Space** The Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space moratorium and Mental Health Crisis Moratorium) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020enables a standard breathing space to anyone with problem debt. It gives them legal protections from creditor action for up to 60 days. The protections include pausing most enforcement action and contact from creditors and freezing most interest and charges on their debts. A mental health crisis breathing space is only available to someone who is receiving mental health crisis treatment, and it has some stronger protections. It lasts as long as the person's mental health crisis treatment, plus 30 days (no matter how long the crisis treatment lasts).

**Section 3: Dependencies from other proposals**

**3.1** **Please consider which other services would need to know about your proposal and the impacts you have identified. Identify below which services you have consulted, and any consequent additional equality impacts that have been identified.**

The departmental leadership team within Adult Social Care has consistently engaged with our partners within the Health and Social Care System to develop and refine our plans. No additional issues of equality impacts have been identified from these conversations.

# Section 4: What evidence you have used?

**4.1 What evidence do you hold to back up this assessment?**

Poppi and Pansi data

ONS population projections.

Carers feedback

Feedback from people who receive support or their carers/advocats.

**4.2 Do you need further evidence?**

# Section 5: Consultation Feedback

**5.1 Results from any previous consultations prior to the proposal development.**

*The proposal will allow increased/improved provision based on the assessed need of the client. No consultation has been undertaken, other than the normal feedback mechanisms already in place.*

**5.2 The departmental feedback you provided on the previous consultation (as at 5.1).**

**5.3 Feedback from current consultation following the proposal development (e.g. following approval by Executive for budget consultation).**

A number of respondents commenting on this proposal stated there would be an impact on low income households, carers, older people and those struggling due to the cost of living crisis.

Suggestions made by respondents that they felt would reduce the level of Social Care Precept needed or mitigate the impacts against these groups were:

* Charge businesses more
* People on benefits shouldn’t have to pay
* Exempt carers, low income households, and the vulnerable from paying at the moment
* Incentivise prompt payment of the council tax (social care precept)

**5.4 Your departmental response to the feedback on the current consultation (as at 5.3) – include any changes made to the proposal as a result of the feedback.**

The Council has implemented many mitigations to reduce or remove any disproportionate negative impact. These are provided at 2.5 above.

In relation to suggestions made to reducing the impact on those on low incomes, carers, older people and those struggling due to the cost of living crisis:

* Business Rates are charged nationally according to legislation so we are unable to vary charges locally
* We have a local council tax reduction scheme that can reduce payments for people on benefits and for many people who may be on low incomes – such as carers or those with vulnerabilities. Many people on benefits pay nothing or their bill is reduced. Funding for the scheme comes from the Council budget and it not possible to apply a 100 percent reduction to all households in receipt of benefit. The council tax reduction scheme is reviewed regularly to ensure it targets those most in need. Some groups are currently exempt or receive extra discounts, see this list at <https://www.bradford.gov.uk/council-tax/apply-for-discounts-reductions-and-exemptions/information-about-council-tax-discounts-reductions-and-exemptions/>
* Incentivising prompt payment is not considered useful in reducing the impact of increased Council Tax and the Social Care Precept on low income families and others as it would give discounts to those who are already able to pay on time. Although the introduction of a discount may improve cash flow for the Council, this measure would not increase the eventual amount collected overall. Additionally, any discount granted would mean that Council Tax and Social Care Precept would need to be increased for all taxpayers to cover any discounts granted.