

Draft Equality Impact Assessment – Taxi Vouchers

1. Introduction

1.1 Service:	Community Partnerships
1.2 Name of proposal, policy, strategy or project:	Withdrawal of taxi voucher scheme
1.3 This is:	A change to an existing activity (including ceasing that activity)
1.4 Completing officer's name:	Justine Chatfield
1.5 Date initially completed:	08/11/2021

2. About the proposal

*** Note that the term 'proposal' is used here to include any new services proposed for introduction, changes to an existing service, withdrawal of an existing service, any new policy or strategy or change to an existing policy or strategy, and any project ***

2.1 What is the main purpose of the proposal? <i>Please explain in one or two short paragraphs</i>
The taxi voucher scheme provides access to subsidised taxi travel for low income, poor mobility and isolated residents, predominantly of pension age although terminally ill residents are also eligible to seek taxi vouchers if they meet the other criteria. The scheme is undersubscribed every year. Currently circa 140 residents receive taxi vouchers. The scheme has a budget of £43k.

2.2 Why is it being introduced / reviewed / changed now? <i>This could be, for example, because of new government legislation or guidance, because of changing service user needs, or for financial reasons.</i>
It is proposed to pause this scheme for 2022/23 due to budgetary pressures, meaning that vouchers will not be available for current or new service users

2.3 Who is the intended audience or target group(s) for the proposal?
Internal audience or group: N/A
External audience or group: Residents who use a particular service (please specify below)
<i>If other, please specify. Please also use the section below to provide more details about the audience or target group(s):</i> As well as impacting on existing and potential future taxi voucher users, there may also be impacts on referrers into this scheme and in some instances the services that they use the taxi vouchers to enable them to access – e.g. health appointments, voluntary sector activities to combat isolation, etc.

3. Assessment of potential impact

Information about the protected characteristic groups as defined by the Equality Act is available [here](#). You should also use this assessment to consider impacts on other vulnerable groups such as those on low incomes.

In undertaking your assessment, please think about every stage of your process, including the design phase, any consultation, the delivery phase and once the proposal is up and running.

Who could be affected by your proposal?

3.1 Will the proposal affect people - service users, employees or the wider community?	Yes	<i>If yes, please identify which group(s):</i> Service users
3.2 Will the proposal introduce a change which will significantly affect how services or functions are delivered?	Yes	<i>Please briefly explain your answer:</i> Service will be paused for 2022/23 meaning that taxi vouchers will no longer be available for current or new users of the service

Data and evidence

In undertaking this assessment, you will need to consider relevant data and evidence, depending on the people the proposal will affect, for example:

- Relevant information about service users held by your service
- Relevant information about staff (eg, the workforce equality information published on the [website](#), staff surveys etc)
- Relevant information about borough residents (eg the borough equality information published on the [website](#), service user surveys etc)
- Relevant information published by third party organisations (eg data, research studies etc)
- Feedback or information from organisations representing target equality groups

<p>3.3 Please list the evidence / data sources you have considered in assessing the likely impact of your proposal</p>	<p>All the current 140 taxi voucher recipients are of pension age, on a low income, struggling with mobility and isolated. Recipients need to evidence these criteria in order to access the vouchers. We know that there is limited and patchy provision of alternative community transport options (only few specific organisations have minibus provision to their sessions and there is one good neighbour scheme in the borough (supporting the Merstham area) so the withdrawal of vouchers (even temporarily) is likely to have a direct impact on the current recipients. Borough-wide information about the equalities characteristics of residents is available via an annual report published on the website.</p>
<p>3.4 Are there any significant gaps in the evidence base that mean it is difficult to assess the likely impact of your proposal?</p>	<p>No</p>

Potential impact

<p>3.5 Does your proposal relate to a service or function which information indicates is important to those with protected characteristics?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><i>If yes, please outline the issues – these could include (for example) access to information or ability to use or access a service.</i> Removes access to a service for elderly/disabled/deprived residents</p>
<p>3.6 Will the proposal intentionally target any particular protected characteristic group?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p><i>If yes, please identify the group and explain the reason for this and what the intended impact is.</i> While the proposal does not intentionally target any protected characteristic group, the eligibility requirements to receive vouchers (elderly, low income (receive a means tested benefit), disability (residents must have poor mobility to access the scheme), isolated) means people with these characteristics will be negatively impacted.</p>
<p>3.7 Will the proposal intentionally exclude any particular protected characteristic group?</p>	<p>No</p>	
<p>3.8 Will the proposal be able to be equally accessed by all at every stage of the</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>	

process? Or are there barriers that might inhibit access for some people?		
3.9 Does the proposal have the potential to reduce inequalities or improve outcomes for protected characteristic groups?	No	<i>Please briefly explain your answer.</i> Proposal to remove taxi vouchers is likely to worsen outcomes for the impacted group.

3.10 Considering the above information, please summarise the likely impact on [protected characteristic groups](#) (within the organisation, outside the organisation or both) This may be direct, indirect or differential impact. Use the above link for definitions, and consider issues such as physical access to services, different cultural or social practices and how people are able to access information.

	Nature of impact	Please briefly explain your answer
Age <i>including children, young people or older people</i>	Negative	Removal of subsidised travel for elderly residents who are on low income and have mobility issues. This is direct removal of vouchers from 140 residents and no scheme for additional eligible residents to be referred to in future. There are limited alternative transport options across the borough for these residents and those that do exist mostly have limited flexibility in terms of types of journey taken, whereas taxi vouchers allow for all journeys.
Disability <i>including physical, sensory or learning disability or long-term health impairment</i>	Negative	Removal of subsidised travel for elderly residents with poor mobility, including those who are eligible for attendance allowance, have poor eye sight and/or significant health issues. This is direct removal of vouchers from 140 residents and no scheme for additional eligible residents to be referred to in future. There are limited alternative transport options across the borough for these residents and those that do exist mostly have limited flexibility in terms of types of journey taken, whereas taxi vouchers allow for all journeys.
Gender reassignment	Neutral	
Marriage and civil partnership	Neutral	
Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral	

Race or ethnicity	Neutral	
Religion or belief	Neutral	
Sex	Neutral	
Sexual orientation	Neutral	
Deprivation	Negative	Removal of subsidised travel for those already with low income, those who receive vouchers are eligible if they receive a means tested benefit e.g. housing benefit, council tax reduction or pension credit. This is direct removal of vouchers from 140 residents and no scheme for additional eligible residents to be referred to in future.
Other vulnerable group	Neutral	

3.11 Has there been any consultation with relevant interested parties or is any consultation planned?
<i>This could include consultation, further evidence gathering or changing or amended the proposed approach. Give consideration to both consultation within the Council (eg staff) and outside the Council (eg residents).</i>
Yes, planned
<i>If yes, please explain the nature of the consultation that has been undertaken or is planned. If no, please explain why consultation is not considered necessary. How were protected characteristic groups consulted or how will they be consulted?</i>
8-week consultation with telephone and paper-based response mechanisms due to the demographics impacted.

3.12 What actions have been, or could be, taken to increase the positive impacts for people with protected characteristic(s) or other vulnerabilities? <i>This could include changing or amending the proposed approach.</i>
One options would be not to remove the scheme in its entirety, continue providing vouchers to only those already on the scheme. This would allow residents already receiving vouchers to continue receiving the support and ensure they can maintain the independence vouchers provide. There may also be other alternative solutions for example continuing to encourage and support local communities to deliver Good Neighbour Schemes, however these may take longer to develop the ‘critical mass’ to support existing service users.

3.13 What actions have been, or could be, taken to reduce potential negative impacts on people with protected characteristic(s) or other vulnerabilities? *This could include changing or amended the proposed approach, or allowing the proposal to be tailored to fit different individual circumstances*

Do not remove the scheme in its entirety, continue providing vouchers to only those already on the scheme. This would allow residents already receiving vouchers to continue receiving the support and ensure they can maintain the independence vouchers provide. There may also be other alternative solutions for example continuing to encourage and support local communities to deliver Good Neighbour Schemes, however these may take longer to develop the 'critical mass' to support existing service users.

3.15 Are there any remaining negative impacts for people with protected characteristic(s) or other vulnerabilities? *For example, physical, cultural or information access issues that cannot be resolved.*

This question will be considered taking into account the outcomes of the consultation when this equalities impact assessment is finalised

3.16 Is any remaining negative impact legal or intended? *The Equality Act says discrimination can be justified if it can be demonstrated that this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim (for example, see [here](#)). However, this should always be a last resort.*

This question will be considered taking into account the outcomes of the consultation when this equalities impact assessment is finalised

IMPORTANT:

Any remaining negative unintended impacts must be drawn to the attention of the decision-maker (for example, the relevant Board or Committee).

The following must be considered by decision-makers before any final decision is made:

- **Does the assessment indicate any direct discrimination? If yes, the proposal would be unlawful and must be rejected.**
- **Does the assessment indicate any indirect discrimination? If yes, the proposal should be rejected unless it can be justified under legislation, for example:**
 - It is necessary to the Council effectively carrying out its function
 - The Council has been unable to find an alternative method of achieving its aims and objectives with a decreased discriminatory effect
 - The decision-maker considers that the means employed to achieve its aims and objectives are proportionate, necessary and appropriate.

In the event that there are negative impacts remaining and it is concluded that the proposal should still be agreed/implemented, it is highly recommended that consultation is carried out (including with representatives of the affected group) before the final proposal is agreed.

4. Monitoring and review

4.1 How do you propose to monitor and review the impact of your proposal? *Please outline how you will monitor the impact of your proposal, once implemented, on protected characteristic groups, and what the mechanisms for review are (for example if any negative impact is found to be occurring)*

Maintain contact with referrers (including Community Centres, Older People's Services etc) to keep track of resident transport needs in the borough.
Monitor incoming enquiries in future about transport requirements.