

Notice of Meeting of the

ASSEMBLY

**to be held on Wednesday, 31 January 2024
commencing at 7:00 pm in the
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Barking**



To all Members of the Council of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Councillors and senior officers are also invited to attend a briefing in the Council Chamber at 6.00 pm for an Inclusive Economy Update.

Date of publication: 23rd January 2024

Fiona Taylor
Chief Executive

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Please note that this meeting will be webcast via the Council's website. Members of the public wishing to attend the meeting in person can sit in the public gallery on the second floor of the Town Hall, which is not covered by the webcast cameras. To view the webcast online, click [here](#) and select the relevant meeting (the weblink will be available at least 24-hours before the meeting).

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declaration of Members' Interests

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Members are asked to declare any interest they may have in any matter which is to be considered at this meeting.

3. Minutes - To confirm as correct the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023 (Pages 5 - 9)

4. Death of Haji Mohammed Siddique, Freeman of the Borough (Pages 11 - 12)

5. Death of Former Councillor Albert Gibbs, Freeman of the Borough (Pages 13 - 14)

6. Minutes of Sub-Committees (Pages 15 - 18)

To note the minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel meetings held on 14 and 19 December 2023.

7. Leader's Statement

The Leader will present his statement.

8. Appointments

The Labour Group Secretary will announce any nominations to fill vacant positions on Council committees or other bodies.

9. BAD Youth Forum Annual Report 2023 (Pages 19 - 45)

10. Adoption Annual Report 2022/23 (Pages 47 - 86)

11. Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25 (Pages 87 - 221)

12. Motions

13. Questions With Notice

14. Any other public items which the Chair decides are urgent

15. To consider whether it would be appropriate to pass a resolution to exclude the public and press from the remainder of the meeting due to the nature of the business to be transacted.

Private Business

The public and press have a legal right to attend Council meetings such as the Assembly, except where business is confidential or certain other sensitive information is to be discussed. The list below shows why items are in the private part of the agenda, with reference to the relevant legislation (the relevant paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended). ***There are no such items at the time of preparing this agenda.***

- 16. Any confidential or exempt items which the Chair decides are urgent**

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Our Vision for Barking and Dagenham

**ONE BOROUGH; ONE COMMUNITY;
NO-ONE LEFT BEHIND**

Our Priorities

- Residents are supported during the current Cost-of-Living Crisis;
- Residents are safe, protected, and supported at their most vulnerable;
- Residents live healthier, happier, independent lives for longer;
- Residents prosper from good education, skills development, and secure employment;
- Residents benefit from inclusive growth and regeneration;
- Residents live in, and play their part in creating, safer, cleaner, and greener neighbourhoods;
- Residents live in good housing and avoid becoming homeless.

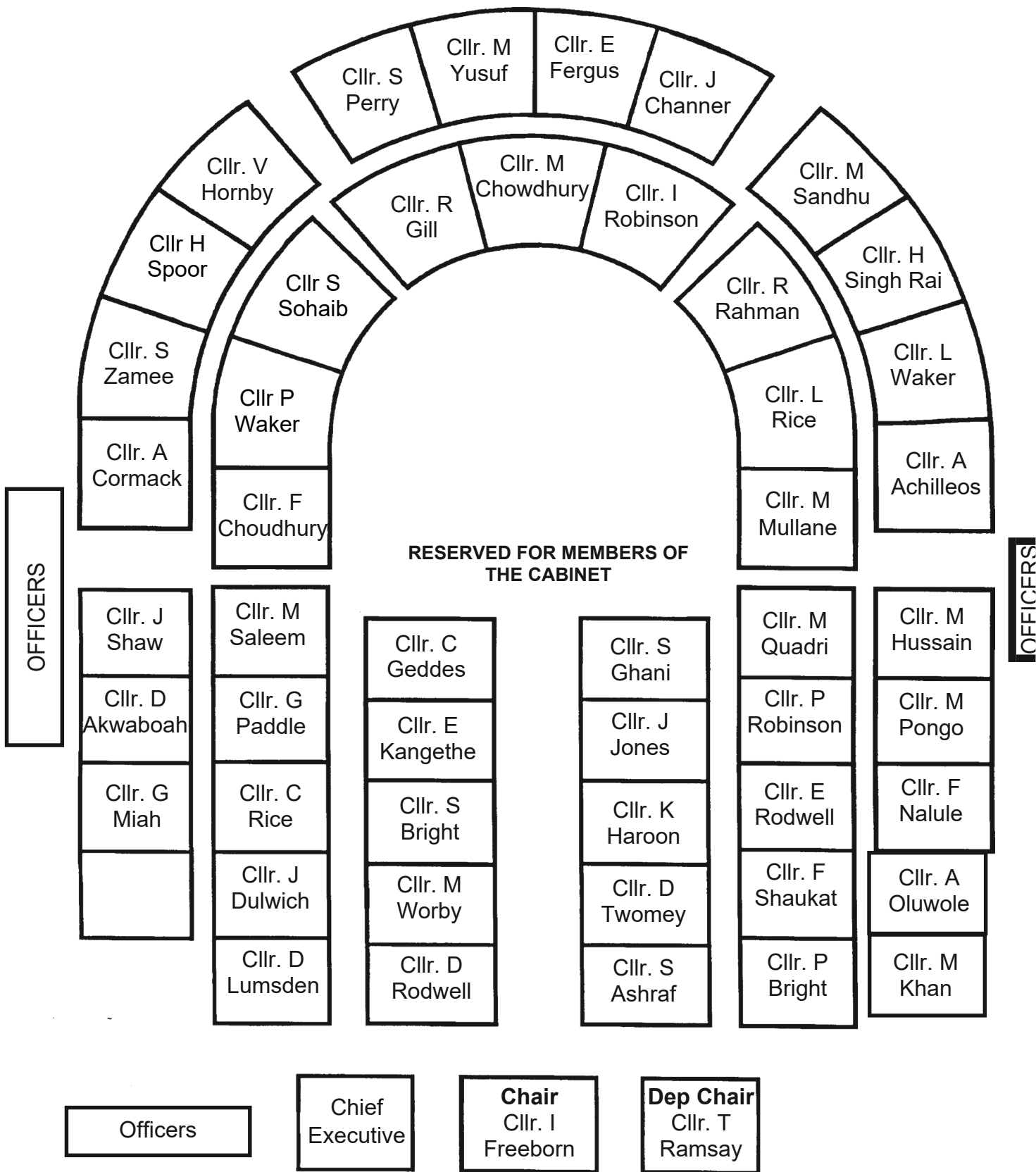
To support the delivery of these priorities, the Council will:

- Work in partnership;
- Engage and facilitate co-production;
- Be evidence-led and data driven;
- Focus on prevention and early intervention;
- Provide value for money;
- Be strengths-based;
- Strengthen risk management and compliance;
- Adopt a “Health in all policies” approach.

The Council has also established the following three objectives that will underpin its approach to equality, diversity, equity and inclusion:

- Addressing structural inequality: activity aimed at addressing inequalities related to the wider determinants of health and wellbeing, including unemployment, debt, and safety;
- Providing leadership in the community: activity related to community leadership, including faith, cohesion and integration; building awareness within the community throughout programme of equalities events;
- Fair and transparent services: activity aimed at addressing workforce issues related to leadership, recruitment, retention, and staff experience; organisational policies and processes including use of Equality Impact Assessments, commissioning practices and approach to social value.

BARKING TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER



SEATING PLAN FOR THE ASSEMBLY

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MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 22 November 2023
(7:00 - 7:52 pm)

PRESENT

Cllr Irma Freeborn (Chair)
Cllr Tony Ramsay (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Andrew Achilleos	Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah	Cllr Saima Ashraf
Cllr Princess Bright	Cllr Josie Channer	Cllr Faruk Choudhury
Cllr Muhib Chowdhury	Cllr Alison Cormack	Cllr John Dulwich
Cllr Edna Fergus	Cllr Cameron Geddes	Cllr Syed Ghani
Cllr Rocky Gill	Cllr Kashif Haroon	Cllr Victoria Hornby
Cllr Jane Jones	Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe	Cllr Mohammed Khan
Cllr Donna Lumsden	Cllr Giasuddin Miah	Cllr Margaret Mullane
Cllr Fatuma Nalule	Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole	Cllr Glenda Paddle
Cllr Simon Perry	Cllr Michel Pongo	Cllr Moin Quadri
Cllr Regina Rahman	Cllr Chris Rice	Cllr Lynda Rice
Cllr Ingrid Robinson	Cllr Paul Robinson	Cllr Darren Rodwell
Cllr Emily Rodwell	Cllr Muhammad Saleem	Cllr Muazzam Sandhu
Cllr Faraaz Shaukat	Cllr Jack Shaw	Cllr Summya Sohaib
Cllr Harriet Spoor	Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Lee Waker
Cllr Phil Waker	Cllr Maureen Worby	Cllr Mukhtar Yusuf

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Sade Bright	Cllr Manzoor Hussain	Cllr Hardial Singh Rai
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38. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

39. Minutes (27 September 2023)

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2023 were confirmed as correct.

40. Minutes of Sub-Committees - To note the minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel meetings held on 23 and 24 October 2023

The Assembly received and noted the minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel meetings held on 23 and 24 October 2023.

41. Leader's Statement

The Leader presented a verbal statement updating the Assembly on a range of matters since the last meeting, including:

Trouble and Violence in the Middle East: The Leader reflected on the trouble and violence in the Middle East and acknowledged the long road ahead for lasting peace. The loss of lives was truly heartbreaking, and the Leader called for more safe routes to be opened for humanitarian support, with a pause in fighting to allow for safe corridors out of Gaza for citizens and to allow humanitarian aiders to work in Gaza. The Leader praised fellow Councillors who had led by example as community leaders and were supporting their residents.

Autumn Statement: The Leader referred to the Autumn Statement, which had been released earlier in the day and the recent Government reshuffle, with the Prime Minister bringing back David Cameron into Government. The Autumn Statement included the unfreezing of the local housing allowance which was much needed; however this fell short of the support that Councils needed to help their residents through the winter months. The Leader advised that the unfreezing would not come in until the new financial year, and therefore would not help residents this year, despite the ongoing cost of living crisis. The Leader commented that London Councils alone were facing a £600m shortfall this year, resulting in a need for Council Tax to be increased once again.

Seoul Digital Foundation, Thames Freeport and Connected Places Catapult Agreement: In November, the Council agreed to a groundbreaking partnership with the Seoul Digital Foundation, Thames Freeport and Connected Places Catapult to launch a Smart Homes Innovation Hub in Barking and Dagenham. The agreement was seen as the start of a long-term relationship to collaboratively develop smart city and smart home technology, promoting sustainable living, connectivity and urban development.

Interfaith week and Trans day of Remembrance: In support of local communities, the Council celebrated Interfaith Week and reflected on Trans Day of Remembrance to support all residents in the borough. As part of the celebrations, the Council raised both flags outside of the Town Hall. The Leader was proud that LBBB celebrates all in the community.

Weavers Quarter: The Leader commented on the recent events at Weavers Quarter, Barking, where a balcony façade fell from the first floor. Thankfully no one was hurt and it had not affected the building infrastructure directly. LBBB owned the freehold and the land and since the incident Reside had investigated the incident and erected scaffolding and secured the balconies on site. Bouygues Construction advised that they had urgently carried out checks and conducted remedial work required as part of their 12-year contract with L&Q. The Leader assured residents that Bouygues and L&Q would be held to account.

The Leader thanked Ward Councillors for their support to their residents during this time. Councillor Cormack, Ward Councillor for Gascoigne Ward, made a short statement on Weavers Quarter, addressing the concerns of residents who felt let down by Reside, L&Q, Bouygues and the Council. It was acknowledged that there were outstanding issues across Weavers Quarter and there was an urgent need to make sure that all outstanding issues with balconies were resolved. Concluding his statement, the Leader expressed his gratitude to all Councillors of LBBB for their support of residents in the current climate and their continuing commitment to the borough.

42. Appointments

The Assembly **resolved** to appoint Councillor Sohaib to the Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

43. Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2022/23

Councillor Worby presented the Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) Annual Report for 2022/23.

Councillor Worby referred to the role of the SAB, its close relationship with the three statutory partners of the Council - the NHS North East London Integrated Care Board (NEL ICB) and the Police - and the key achievements of the SAB and its three committees during 2022/23. The SAB had established the following six main priorities for 2022/23, which were each supported by a range of actions:

- 1) Support for Hoarding and Self Neglect;
- 2) Implement a Learning and Development Committee to deliver joint multi agency learning;
- 3) Preparing for CQC regulation;
- 4) Joining up with children's social care on key cross cutting themes;
- 5) Develop governances, safeguarding and quality interfaces with NEL ICB;
- 6) Develop a community safeguarding offer and preventative offer for adults.

The Annual Report included data on enquiries under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014 relating to individuals experiencing, or at risk of, abuse and neglect. The data showed that Barking and Dagenham received 1,511 adult safeguarding concerns in 2022/23, 252 of which (17%) led to a Section 42 enquiry. Councillor Worby welcomed the relatively low level of referrals that resulted in a Section 42 enquiry, which also compared favourably with the overall national rate of 30%. However, she did express a slight concern at the low level of referrals from agencies such as the Police and also remarked upon a disproportionate level of white adults being referred in comparison to other ethnic groups, which suggested that more targeted information was needed to raise awareness amongst minority ethnic groups. A further observation was made relating to the low level (3%) of domestic abuse-related referrals.

The Assembly **resolved** to note the Local Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2022/23 at Appendix 1 to the report.

44. Treasury Management and Investment and Acquisition Strategy 2023/24 Mid-Year Review

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Core Services introduced a report on the mid-year review of the Council's treasury management activities and Investment and Acquisition Strategy (IAS) for 2023/24.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the main factors that had impacted on the Council's treasury management and IAS position, such as the current economic situation, interest rate rises and the Council's borrowing position, and advised that the current projection showed a deficit of circa £6m on the overall forecast for 2023/24. Other factors affecting the overall position included lost income from

delayed property lettings and performance issues amongst some of the Council's commercial entities, although the Cabinet Member was confident that the remedial measures being implemented would resolve those issues.

The Cabinet Member commented that successful treasury management and investment and acquisition activities underpinned much of the Borough-wide regeneration aspirations as well as everyday service provision. He stressed, however, that the Council's diligent and prudent approach to investments had never been more important due to the current economic situation and it may be that projects previously assessed as viable may need to be put on hold or even abandoned, to avoid placing even more pressures on the Council's finances.

The Assembly **resolved** to note:

The Assembly is recommended to note:

- (i) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement Mid-Year Review 2023/24;
- (ii) The economic update covering the increase in inflation and the Bank of England Base Rate increases;
- (iii) The pressures currently impacting Treasury and Investment and Acquisition Strategy (IAS) returns, including:
 - Significantly increased interest rates impacting on the Council's borrowing requirements to support cashflow and capital programme;
 - Delays to renting of Private Rental units and Disposal of Shared Ownership units developed by the Council for Reside Group of companies impacting on revenue income via lease payments;
 - Loss of income from commercial holdings due to delays in renting the assets and further increased borrowing costs due to debt used to deliver the commercial assets being held for longer than projected.
 - Loss of interest income from wholly owned companies including Be First and BDTP as they are unable to meet interest payments; and
 - Reporting and administrative delays from Reside to accurately forecast rental income back to the Council.
- (iv) That the value of the treasury investments and cash balances at 30 September 2023 totalled £38.2m at a rate of 4.2%;
- (v) That the value of the residential loans lent by the Council to Reside at 30 September 2023 totalled £190.3m at an average rate of 2.6%;
- (vi) That the total value of borrowing incurred for Private Rented Schemes, planned to be transferred to Reside, at 30 September 2023 was £105.7m;
- (vii) That the total of other loans which included loans to LEUK, Energy Loans and Working Capital Loans total £50.4m;
- (viii) That IAS borrowing at 30 September 2023 totalled £844.3m, with an additional £295.9m of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing and a further £135.4m of General Fund (GF) borrowing taking total borrowing

- position for the Council of £1.275.6bn;
- (ix) That HRA interest payable was forecast to be £11.033m against a budget of £10.742m, which represented an overspend of £0.291m;
 - (x) That IAS and GF borrowing was forecasting a gross interest payable amount of £21.33m, to be covered by capitalised interest of £10.231m and allocation of commercial rent to pay for interest costs of £6.141m, leaving a net interest payable charge of £5m against a budget of £10.139m which represented a surplus of £5.182m;
 - (xi) That interest receivable from loans, IAS and treasury activity was forecast to be £10.9m, split into £4.046m (non-IAS Council loans and GF investments) and £6.848m (Reside Loans, treasury investments and IAS treasury investments), against a budget of £6.5m, representing a surplus of £4.4m;
 - (xii) That IAS operational income was forecast to be £1.057m against a budget of £6.861m, representing a deficit of £5.8m;
 - (xiii) That the net surplus from the IAS was £207k and the net surplus from the GF treasury strategy was forecast to be £454k for a combined surplus of £661k, which would be added to the IAS reserve, increasing it to £31.6m by the year-end; and
 - (xiv) That in the first half of the 2023/24 financial year, the Council complied with all 2023/24 treasury management indicators.

45. Motions

There were no motions.

46. Questions With Notice

There were no questions with notice.

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ASSEMBLY

31 January 2024

Title: Death of Haji Mohammed Siddique, Freeman of the Borough	
Report of the Chief Executive	
Open Report	For Information
Wards Affected: None	Key Decision: No
Report Authors: Alan Dawson, Head of Governance & Electoral Services Mike Haywood, Head of Leader's Office	Contact Details: E-mail: alan.dawson@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Director: Deirdre Collins, Head of Law	
Accountable Executive Team Director: Fiona Taylor, Chief Executive	
<p>Summary</p> <p>The Assembly is asked to note with deep regret the recent passing of Haji Mohammed Siddique, Freeman of the Borough, aged 93.</p> <p>In 1955 at the age of 26, Haji arrived in the UK as an economic migrant, leaving behind his loved ones in Pakistan and a career as a teacher of mathematics and physical education. A short while later, he settled in Barking and Dagenham and held jobs at Ford's Dagenham and a local rubber factory before going on to be a supervisor at London Transport and ending his working career in the food industry.</p> <p>Having had instilled in him since a young age a strong Islamic faith based upon the service of others, Haji concentrated from the time of his arrival in the UK towards working to improve the lives of all, through integrating into and appreciating the opportunities provided by his host nation which had become his new home.</p> <p>Haji was instrumental in the development of the Pakistani Muslim Association and was the founding father of the Barking Muslim Association. Upon being elected Chairman of the Association, Haji restructured it into a charitable trust and grasped, at the time, the very visionary idea of promoting and working towards inter-community tolerance, integration and the development of good relations between all.</p> <p>Together with his loyal team of volunteers, Haji secured the support of local communities for the development of the Al Madina community complex in Victoria Road, Barking, which today not only houses the Al Madina mosque, an Ofsted-registered school and a regulated and developed supplementary school, but also offers a diverse range of services for the communities of the Borough ranging from talking therapies, community advisory services, outreach working targeting the homeless, care for the elderly as well as the provision of sports facilities and wedding and conference services. He also led the creation of a bereavement fund which, over the next 40+ years, supported families at their time of most need.</p>	

Haji's vision and commitment to helping others also extended beyond Barking and Dagenham. At the age of 82, he travelled to and led a team of volunteers in an international building programme in the Gambia which became instrumental in the provision of facilities and funding to provide 500 children from the poorest backgrounds with a meal every day - often their only meal.

Haji was bestowed the Freedom of the Borough in May 2016 for his commitment to community cohesion in the Borough, his work on behalf of the Pakistani Muslim community and his global charity work. Other accolades stemming from his work included the Al Madina mosque being awarded the prestigious 5 STAR Beacon Mosque status in 2018 and the organisation being recognised for its community capacity building and empowerment work programme at an international conference in Istanbul, which was adopted by the World Congress of Muslim philanthropists as a flagship project for roll out throughout the world.

A loyal and devoted husband, Haji was a loving father to five children as well as being a grandfather and great-grandfather. He was a highly respected leader amongst many communities and his work and legacy will undoubtedly continue to thrive in the activities and outreach work of the Al Madina Mosque. His funeral service took place on Wednesday 3 January at Al Madina Mosque and the Borough flag at the Town Hall, Barking was flown at half-mast throughout the day.

Recommendation(s)

The Assembly is asked to note the report.

ASSEMBLY

31 January 2024

Title: Death of Former Councillor Albert Gibbs, Freeman of the Borough	
Report of the Chief Executive	
Open Report	For Information
Wards Affected: None	Key Decision: No
Report Author: Alan Dawson, Head of Governance & Electoral Services	Contact Details: Tel: 020 8227 2348 E-mail: alan.dawson@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Director: Deirdre Collins, Head of Law	
Accountable Executive Team Director: Fiona Taylor, Chief Executive	
<p>Summary</p> <p>The Assembly is asked to note with deep regret that former Councillor and Freeman of the Borough, Albert Gibbs, sadly passed away on Saturday 23 December aged 98.</p> <p>Albert was born in Knotty Ash, Liverpool in 1925 and moved to Chadwell Heath when he was four years old. He attended Furze Infants, Warren Junior and Warren Senior schools and left school just as the Second World War started. He spent almost his entire life in the Borough, only moving away in recent years to be cared for by his family.</p> <p>In 1941 while working for Ilford Council, Albert joined the Home Guard to protect the Council's power plant before joining up for regular service in 1943, where he went through Normandy to Germany.</p> <p>Albert left the army in 1948 and met Win whom he married in 1950. They had three children, two daughters and a son, and celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary shortly before Win passed away in 2001.</p> <p>Albert had a variety of jobs, some twenty in all, until he joined the London Ambulance Service (LAS) in 1965. He was a founder member of the LAS Benevolent Fund in 1966, the first Ambulance Service Benevolent Fund in the UK, and retired in 1990, receiving a Bronze Communal Service award in recognition of 25 years' service.</p> <p>In May 1983, Albert was elected to represent Chadwell Heath ward at a by-election while he was on holiday in Austria. He continued to represent the area, becoming a councillor for Whalebone ward in May 2002 following a local boundary review, until May 2006 when he stood down. During his time on the Council, Albert represented the Chadwell Heath Residents' Association and served on numerous committees, including the Parks, Contractual Services, Planning and Technical Services Committees, and was a very active member of the Wellgate Community Forum which covered the Chadwell Heath and Whalebone ward areas. Another of Albert's passions was the town twinning between Barking & Dagenham and Witten, Germany, and he would regularly drive his minibus</p>	

over to Witten to help celebrate the longstanding relationship between the two towns. Albert was also a member of the Royal British Legion and received a Branch Certificate of Merit from them.

Albert was conferred the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough in 2004 in recognition of his service to the Council and the Chadwell Heath / Whalebone community in particular.

Albert's funeral took place on Wednesday 17 January at South Essex Crematorium. The funeral cortege passed in front of the former Council offices at the Civic Centre, Dagenham, where the Mayor, Councillor Donna Lumsden, the Leader, Councillor Darren Rodwell, and other Members and officers had gathered to pay their respects and present flowers. The Borough flag at the Town Hall, Barking was flown at half-mast throughout the day.

Recommendation(s)

The Assembly is asked to note the report.

MINUTES OF JNC APPOINTMENTS, SALARIES AND STRUCTURES PANEL

Thursday, 14 December 2023
(11:00 am - 3:00 pm)

Present: Cllr Saima Ashraf (Chair), Cllr Jane Jones, Cllr Muhammad Saleem and Cllr Maureen Worby

14. Appointment of Chair

Councillor Ashraf was appointed as Chair.

15. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

16. Private Business

It was resolved to exclude the public and press from the remainder of the meeting by reason of the nature of the business to be discussed which included information exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

17. Appointment of Director of Homes and Assets

The Panel convened to consider the papers that had been submitted in advance of the meeting, which included the job description and person specification for the post, the CV and supporting statement of the shortlisted candidates and the findings from the external technical assessment and psychometric personality test.

The Panel discussed the findings from the external technical assessment and psychometric personality test and agreed the interview questions to be asked of the candidates.

Following the interviews, Members discussed the candidates' responses to the questions and the supporting information. After careful consideration, the Panel **resolved** not to appoint to the post of Director of Homes and Assets at the present time and to readvertise the post at a later date.

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MINUTES OF JNC APPOINTMENTS, SALARIES AND STRUCTURES PANEL

Tuesday, 19 December 2023
(3:13 - 3:47 pm)

Present: Cllr Darren Rodwell (Chair), Cllr Saima Ashraf, Cllr Muhammad Saleem, Cllr Dominic Twomey and Cllr Phil Waker

18. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

19. Private Business

It was resolved to exclude the public and press from the remainder of the meeting by reason of the nature of the business to be discussed which included information exempt from publication by virtue of paragraphs 1 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

20. Senior Leadership Interim Review and Appointment to Vacancies

The Chief Executive presented a report on proposals relating to senior management vacancies and interim restructure proposals pending a more detailed review over the coming months.

The Chief Executive referred to the current challenges being faced by the Council due to the wider pressures in the national economy following the pandemic and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis that had led to unprecedented demand for 'people' services. To ensure that the Council could balance its budgets while continuing to deliver statutory and critical services, a number of reviews were being undertaken across the Council, including at senior management level.

By Minute 6 (8 November 2022), the JNC Panel had agreed several interim appointments and the intention was to extend those appointments for up to a further six months while permanent recruitment processes were conducted. In respect of the Director of Enforcement and Regulatory Services post, it was further proposed that the line management move under the Strategic Director, My Place.

The Chief Executive also referred to proposals relating to the post of Director of Homes and Assets within My Place, which had remained vacant despite two recent recruitment drives, and the reallocation of some other service areas to better align with the Council's new localities model. Furthermore, it had become apparent over recent months that the Council needed to create additional capacity within strategic corporate finance to support a more robust approach towards the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. To that end, the Chief Executive proposed the creation of a new post of Director of Financial Services, reporting directly to the Strategic Director of Resources, which would be funded from the deletion of the vacant post of Commercial Director.

The Panel discussed the merits of the Chief Executive's interim restructure proposals and whether it would be more appropriate for them to be considered as

part of the detailed review due to be presented to the JNC Panel in the Spring. The Chief Executive confirmed that the proposals put forward to this meeting were integral to the longer-term plans and stressed the importance of them being progressed without delay, to enable appropriate consultation arrangements to commence.

After careful consideration of the proposals and having regard to all of the views expressed, the JNC Panel **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree the arrangements for recruitment to the following senior leadership posts on a permanent basis, with the recruitment being undertaken internally and externally at the same time and a package of support for internal applicants:
 - Strategic Director, Resources
 - Director of Homes and Assets
 - Director of Enforcement and Regulatory Services
 - Director of Adults Care and Support
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to progress arrangements to extend the existing secondment arrangements for relevant posts for up to a further six months, while arrangements to fill the posts on a permanent basis were progressed;
- (iii) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director, My Place to appoint an interim Director of Homes and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement;
- (iv) Agree the deletion of the vacant post of Commercial Director, Inclusive Growth;
- (v) Agree the service restructure proposals as detailed in the report, including the potential deletion of posts referred to in paragraph 3.2 of the report subject to appropriate consultation with the affected staff and Trade Union representatives; and
- (vi) Approve the creation of the new permanent JNC-level post of Director of Financial Services, to be funded from the deletion of the Commercial Director post, and delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Core Services, to determine the job description, person specification and grade of the post, and to progress the recruitment and selection process.

ASSEMBLY

31 January 2024

Title: BAD Youth Forum Annual Report 2023	
Report of the Jane Hargreaves, Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Disabilities	
Open Report	For Information
Wards Affected: None	Key Decision: No
Report Author: Sally Allen-Clarke, Senior Youth Worker, Participation, Opportunity and Wellbeing	Contact Details: Tel: 07971 111 532 E-mail: sally.allen-clarke@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Director: Jane Hargreaves, Commissioning Director, Education	
Accountable Strategic Leadership Director: Elaine Allegretti, Director for People and Resilience	
<p>Summary</p> <p>This report details the projects, campaigns and achievements of the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum in 2023. The report highlights young people's outcomes and the impact their work has had.</p> <p>In January 2023, 30 new young people joined the 22 returning members, making this our biggest cohort of young people since before the pandemic. Schools supported the nomination process by showing our promotional film in assemblies and form time, as well as inviting us in to promote the Youth Forum face to face with students.</p> <p>Similar to other years, the Youth Forum split into 2 sub-groups. The 2 groups were the Community Action sub-group and the Young Mayor sub-group. Young Inspectors remained within the Youth Forum with young people completing independent inspections once they had completed their training with Youth Forum staff.</p> <p>The Community Action sub-group takes responsibility for focussing on issues that are most important to young people in the borough in each Youth Forum year. The group tackles issues that others find hard to talk about, discussing how the issues affects young people and what the Youth Forum would like to do to address it. In 2023, the focus has been on addressing the issue of sexual harassment and sexual assault and the normalisation of this behaviour amongst many young people. The Forum was also successful in securing £12,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support their campaign and volunteer work.</p> <p>The Young Mayor sub-group agreed their chosen charity and focussed their year on raising money and awareness of the charity. The group also focussed their efforts on giving back to the community via a foodbank volunteering day.</p>	

<p>Recommendation(s)</p> <p>The Assembly is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Note the work and achievements of the BAD Youth Forum in 2023 (ii) Provide direction to the Forum to ensure that it continues to inform and shape Council policy and delivery going forward.
<p>Reason(s)</p> <p>The BAD Youth Forum was created in 2001 to give young people a formal and recognised platform to express their views and make a positive impact in their community. It serves as the borough's Youth Parliament.</p> <p>The Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum support the Council's vision to empower people and to encourage citizenship and participation, specifically encouraging civic pride and social responsibility. The Forum supports young people to be pro-active, empathetic, resilient residents with a good skill set transferrable to everyday life. Through consultation and campaign work, young people regularly meet with local decision makers. By doing this young people ensure policies and strategies that most affect the lives of young people are reflective of their needs. Young people gain an understanding and appreciation for participation, recognising they have the right to express their views and be listened to, and that their voices count.</p>

1. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Kofi Adu - Finance Manager

- 1.1 BAD Youth Forum is managed and funded by the council's Integrated Youth Service from cost centre F17400, the service is funded by a combination of general fund and external funding from Public Health. The service is not reporting any estimated break even position.

In 2023, the Youth Forum secured £12,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This money has been used to enhance the work of the Youth Forum which is highlighted in the main report. The Youth Forum will receive a further £12,000 in 2024 to support volunteering opportunities for 50 young people.

2. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Nicola Monerville, Principal Solicitor, Children and Adult Safeguarding and Education.

- 2.1.1 This report is for review and consideration and the Assembly is recommended to note the work and achievements of the BAD Youth Forum in 2023 and provide direction to the Forum to ensure that it continues to inform and shape Council policy and delivery. It does not require a decision for which a legal implication would arise.

2.2 Section 1 to 6 of the Localism Act 2011 provides the local authority with a wide range of powers which includes the power to embark on projects for the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident or present in its area. It also provides rights and powers for local communities (social enterprises, groups and forums) to change how things are done in the borough.

2.3 The Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum plays a very important role in giving young people a platform and voice to participate and engage in very important issues that affect young people in the borough. This has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on all young people involved. It is therefore an important project that contributes to the overall benefit of the Council and its residents.

3. Other Implications

3.1 Corporate Policy and Equality Impact –

3.1.1 The Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum support the Council's vision to empower people and to encourage citizenship and participation, specifically encouraging civic pride and social responsibility. The Forum supports young people to be pro-active, empathetic, resilient residents with a good skill set transferrable to everyday life. Through consultation and campaign work, young people regularly meet with local decision makers. By doing this young people ensure policies and strategies that most affect the lives of young people are reflective of their needs. Young people gain an understanding and appreciation for participation, recognising they have the right to express their views and be listened to, and that their voices count.

3.1.2 Young people have seen change as a result of their participation, and where this was not possible, they understand why. This work aims to ensure that as young people grow into adulthood, they are active citizens who contribute to the local community. Please refer to full report, in particular the Additional Forum events section which details the range of consultations the Forum has been involved in and the impact of their involvement.

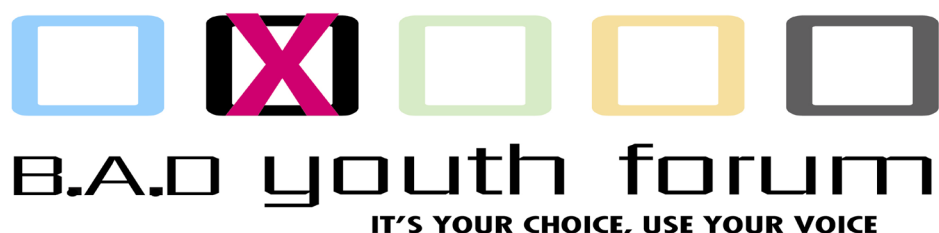
Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of appendices:

- **Appendix 1: BAD Youth Forum Annual Report 2022**

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Overview 2023



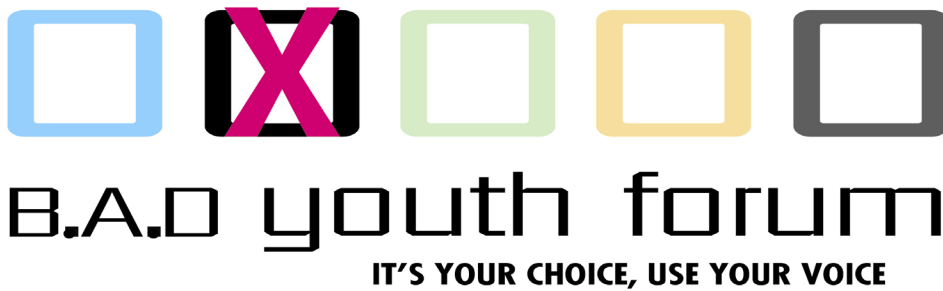
Introduction and background

The BAD Youth Forum was created in 2001 to give young people a formal and recognised platform to express their views and make a positive impact in their community.

In 2023, the Youth Forum saw a return to larger numbers with greater participation from young people. Without the restrictions of Covid, Youth Workers were able to visit schools at the end of 2022 to promote the Youth Forum and encourage young people to nominate themselves. A total of 52 young people participated in the Youth Forum throughout 2023, which is our biggest number since 2019. Returning members demonstrated great leadership skills at the start of the Youth Forum year, welcoming new members and leading the initial team building activities.

At the start of the year the whole Youth Forum met on three occasions, before splitting into smaller sub-groups. The young people participated in a team building event first, followed by a Full Forum meeting to understand the Youth Forum better and lastly, an election session where the Chair, Deputy Chair and Young Mayor was elected. During the Full Forum meeting young people discussed a range of issues that they felt were important to themselves and other young people across the borough. Some of these issues included: sexual harassment, gangs, cost of living, mental health awareness, crime, education, and health inequality. As always, the Youth Forum attracted a diverse group of people in 2023. The numbers of SEND young people participating increased to 5, with some members having significant needs. Youth workers adapted to meet these needs, ensuring participation and inclusion throughout the year.

Community Action Sub-group achievements 2023




Introduction and background

Sexual harassment and sexual assault

At the start of the Youth Forum year, young people were concerned about the rise of Andrew Tate and his social media presence, as well as other misogynistic material across social media platforms. Young people felt this was having damaging effects on young people. Living in a borough with high rates of domestic abuse and domestic violence, young people are already aware of the negative view some young people have of what a healthy relationship is. From the very beginning of the year, the young people felt passionate about discussing this issue and addressing it.

There is widespread feeling amongst young people that sexual harassment and sexual assault is acceptable amongst many other young people, and has become so normalised that young people have come to expect it and often do not challenge it. Youth Forum members felt deeply dissatisfied with that and wanted to understand young people's thoughts, feelings and experiences better. In order to capture this information, young people designed a survey which was hosted on the One Borough Voice platform.



B.A.D youth forum
 IT'S YOUR CHOICE, USE YOUR VOICE
Sexual harassment and sexual assault questionnaire
 This questionnaire is confidential and anonymous

The members of the Barking and Dagenham (BAD) Youth Forum feel there is an increase in sexual harassment and sexual assault in the borough, young people are often a victim of these crimes. We would like to raise awareness of this and ask you for your thoughts on it. The information young people give us will be shared with schools, local Councillors and the Council so it can be addressed and effectively dealt with. The survey is completely anonymous, we do not ask for your name or contact details. We would appreciate you taking 2 minutes to complete this questionnaire. Thank you!

What defines sexual harassment:

The Equality Act 2010 says someone sexually harasses another person if they:

'Engage in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and the conduct has the purpose or effect of either violating the other person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. This unwanted sexual conduct can happen in person, on the phone, by text or email, or online. Both the harasser and the victim or survivor can be of any gender.'

This includes:

- ☞ Sexual gestures.
- ☞ Leering, staring or suggestive looks. This can include looking someone up and down.
- ☞ Sexual innuendos or suggestive comments.
- ☞ Unwanted sexual advances or flirting.
- ☞ Sexual requests or asking for sexual favours.
- ☞ Intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life.
- ☞ Someone discussing their own sex life.
- ☞ Commenting on someone's body, appearance or what they're wearing in a sexual manner.
- ☞ Spreading sexual rumours.
- ☞ Standing uncomfortably close to someone without actually touching them.
- ☞ Displaying images of a sexual nature.
- ☞ Taking a photo or video under another person's clothing – what is known as 'upskirting'.

What defines Sexual Assault:

When someone touches another person in a sexual manner without their consent. Or when someone makes another person take part in a sexual activity with them without that person's consent. It includes unwanted kissing and sexual touching.

This also includes:

Can you please take two minutes to answer the following questions?:

Age:
 11yrs 12yrs 13yrs 14yrs 15yrs 16yrs 17yrs 18yrs 19yrs

Gender:
 Male Female Prefer not to say Other

1. Have you experienced, or know someone who has experienced, any form of sexual harassment or sexual assault? Please refer to the previous list for examples of harassment and sexual assault (if answered NO or NOT SURE then jump to question 4)

YES NO NOT SURE

2. Where did this happen? (You can list more than one location in the box)

3. Has it had an effect on your mental health?
 YES NO NOT SURE

4. How are offenders of sexual harassment and sexual assault dealt with in your school and any youth groups you attend? (Please write in the box below)

5. Which gender do you think sexual harassment or sexual assault happens to the most?
 Male Female Other

6. Why do you think sexual harassment or sexual assault happens? (Please write in the box below)

7. What more can be done in schools, youth groups and the community to prevent sexual harassment or sexual assault towards young people?

8. Would you feel comfortable enough to report any incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault?
 YES NO NOT SURE

9. Would you know how or where to report any incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault?
 YES NO NOT SURE

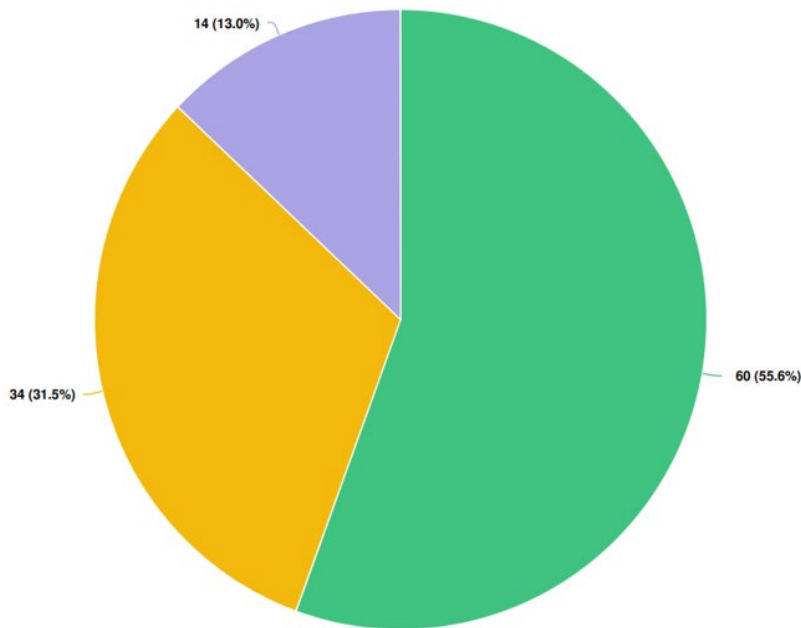
10. Are you aware of the support available and who to talk to if you have experienced any form of sexual harassment or sexual assault?
 YES NO NOT SURE

We appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey – Thank you! 😊

If you have been affected by completing this survey, please contact the support services below:

The survey questions were quite powerful, ensuring they were clear questions young people could answer honestly. The survey was distributed via all schools, with Youth Forum members hoping to speak to their peers and encourage young people across the borough to complete the survey. Very few responses were received, therefore young people opted to speak to their peers in the community and at youth centres to capture their views. A total of 108 responses were collated, here are some charts and tables highlighting responses from young people:

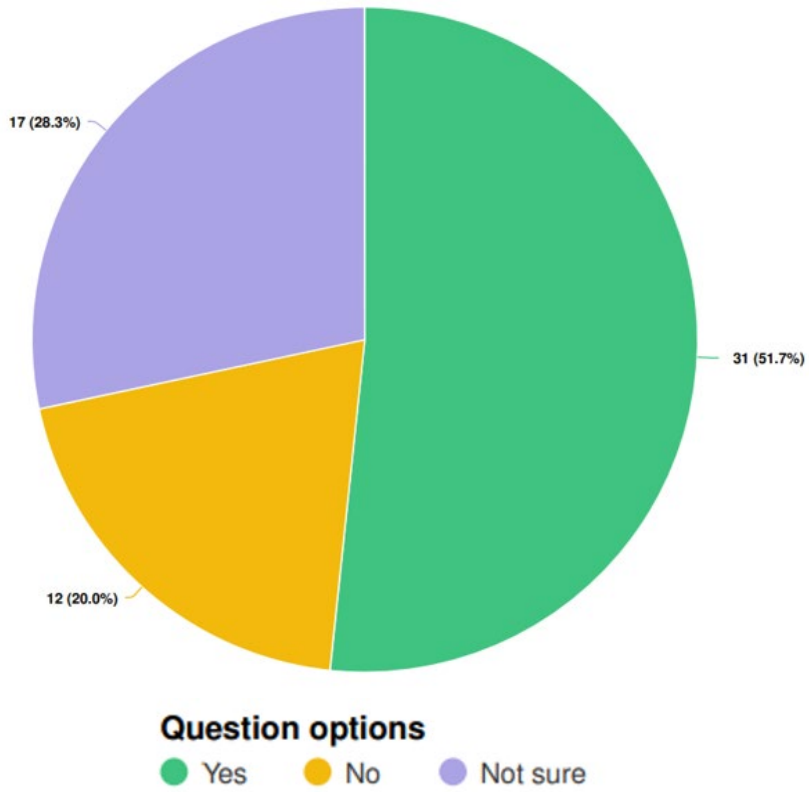
Have you experienced, or know someone who has experienced, any form of sexual harassment or sexual assault?



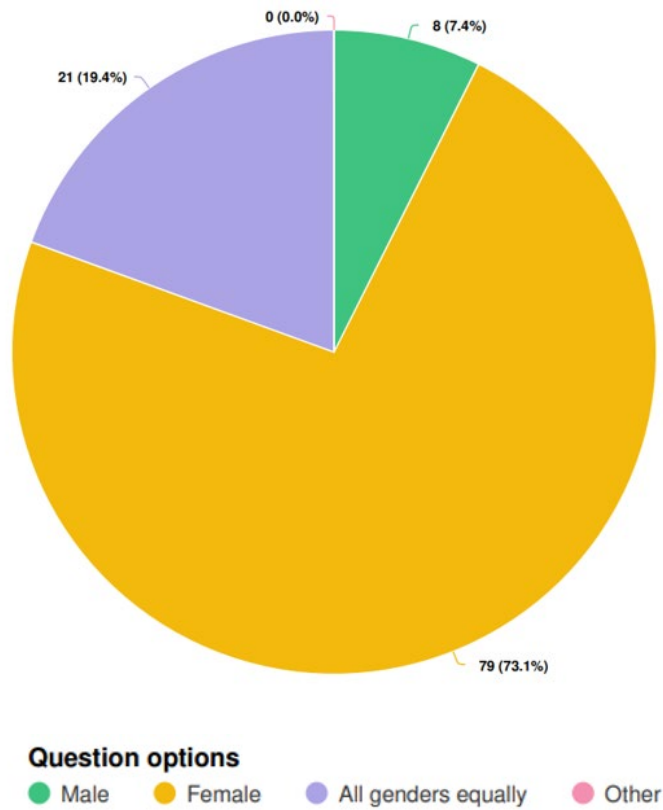
Question options

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

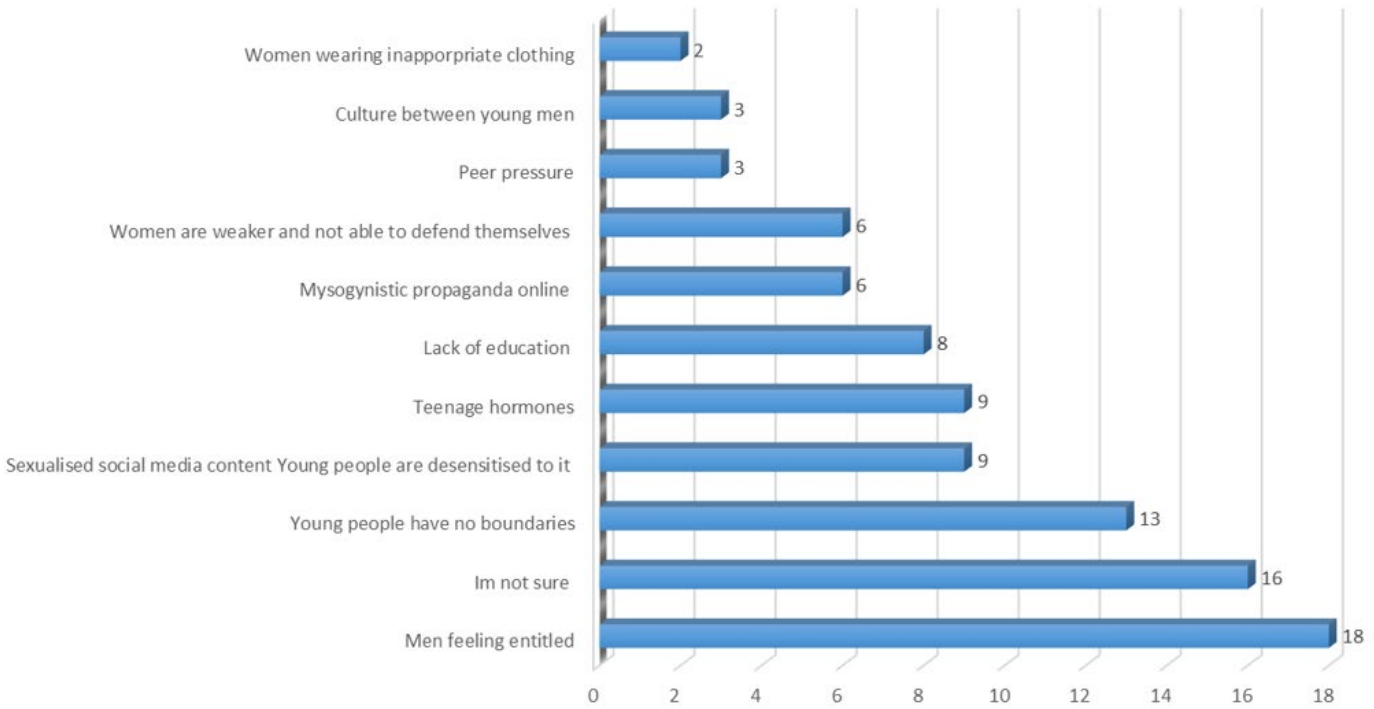
Has it had an effect on your or their mental health?



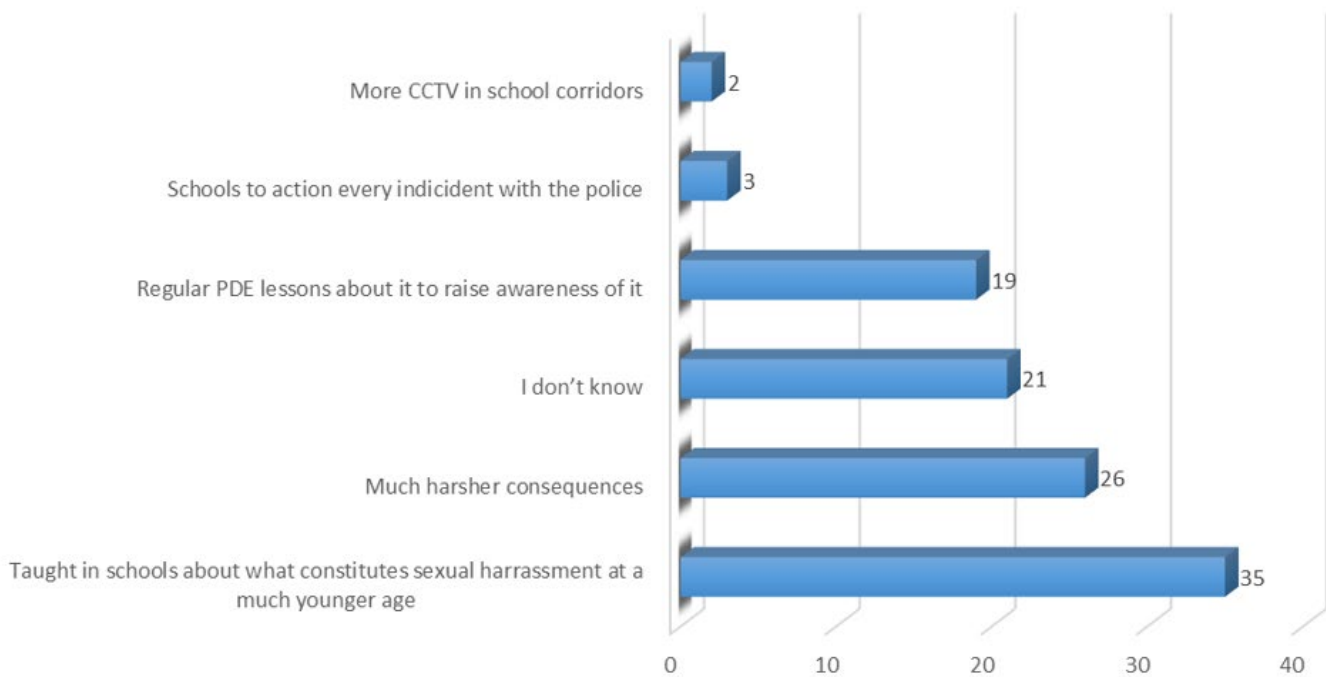
Which gender do you think sexual harassment or sexual assault happens to the most?



Why do you think sexual assault or sexual harassment happens?



What more can be done in schools, youth groups and the community, to prevent sexual harassment or sexual assault towards young people?



Whilst waiting for survey responses to come in, the group decided to create some products they could give to young people as a way of highlighting the issue of sexual harassment and sexual assault, hopefully instigating conversation and providing a way to educate their peers. The groups discussed various options, but ultimately agreed on oyster card holders, lip balms, rulers and banner pens. Funding that the Forum secured from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was used to pay for all of the products. Each item displays a QR code taking them to the Rape Crisis support website, specifically to the 'What is sexual harassment?' page. Here are some photos of the items:



As part of the 16 days of activism, the group handed these products out and will encourage other young people to volunteer their time to share this important message.

Having collated the information from the survey, two representatives from the group presented at a Women's Safety Forum meeting, chaired by Councillor Worby. The group shared their findings and spoke about their plans for the future, including during 16 days of activism. This was well received by the Safety Forum, with members of the Forum being very impressed with young people's innovative response to this issue. Young people would like to see support from local decision makers to address this issue and, most importantly, improve education for young people about healthy relationships, understanding the definition of sexual harassment and sexual assault and know how to report it and get help.

Elevate Her



The group participated in a workshop with Elevate Her. The focus of the workshop was sexual harassment and unwanted attention. This workshop helped the group to understand the issue from other people's perspectives and appreciate how big the issue is in our borough and across the country.

Tender workshop

Tender Education & Arts visited the group to ask for feedback on a tool kit they will be sharing with schools to raise awareness of gender-based violence. The group discussed their own experiences and experiences of their peers of sexual harassment and sexual assault, they viewed the content of the tool kit and gave feedback for improvements.



BD Money - Money Matters

The group were invited to create a Young Persons tab on the Council's BD Money webpages, to ensure there was information relevant to young people. They specifically wanted to include information on the financial process when applying to university, banks accounts, bursaries and scholarships. They ensured the language was young people friendly and the information was helpful and appropriate. Young people contributed lots of ideas which were taken away by the team, the final page was presented at a later session, which young people were happy with. Young people hope this proves to be a useful resource to other young people.

Young Mayor

Sub-group achievements

2023



B.A.D youth forum
IT'S YOUR CHOICE, USE YOUR VOICE



The Barking and Dagenham Young Mayor is supported by a sub-group of the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum. The group work alongside the Young Mayor, supporting their fundraising efforts throughout the year.

In 2023, a student of Eastbrook school Regina Mudibo Pamba was elected to be the borough's 9th Young Mayor. Regina has been a passionate member of the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum for 4 years before being elected as Young Mayor. Regina was keen to take on a new challenge within the Youth Forum and develop new skills. After delivering a powerful speech to her peers, Regina was delighted to be elected!

Choosing the Young Mayor's charity

Every year the Young Mayor sub-group work together to shortlist charities to fundraise for that go out to a youth vote. In 2023, the shortlisted charities were:

- Sickle cell society
- Barking Foodbank and
- Centrepont

The voting was very close. with more discussion from the group, they opted to fundraise for Centrepont and support the Barking Foodbank with volunteering hours too.

At the start of the year, the group deliberated the complexity of fundraising in a cost of living crisis. Young people understood the difficulties residents of the borough were facing and knew they needed to factor this into their planning.



To understand the charity better, the group invited a Fundraising Officer from the charity to one of our sessions. They spoke about the reasons why young people become homeless and the charities aim to end youth homelessness by 2037. The group asked questions about fundraising and started to explore ideas.

Given the cost of living crisis, the Forum knew that fundraising would be a challenge this year.

Group Sleepout



Many of the group members had exams in May/June, so the first event was in August. The group slept outside at the Vibe Youth Centre, with just a sleeping bag on the floor. The group felt it was important to experience this for themselves. During the evening they wrote postcards to homeless young people, created message boards to be displayed around them and most importantly recorded content for a short film telling others they were sleeping out to raise money and to encourage other donations. The group enjoyed the experience and



gained an appreciation of how hard rough sleeping can be as the night got colder. **The event raised a total of £373.**



After the sleepout event, the Council's Comms team edited our video content and added a short message from the Leader of the Council. This was distributed on all council social media platforms and by the Leader himself. The video can be viewed here -

https://youtu.be/hAoZ5mUj_bw

This raised a further **£38.**

The young people were proud of this piece of work, they planned the event themselves with support from Youth Workers and worked hard to gather donations.

Dagenham and Redbridge Football Club

Every year the group are given permission to bucket shake at a football match, we are always grateful for this opportunity. Our long standing member, and passionate DRFC supporter, James, led the fundraising efforts on the day. The group spent 3 hours speaking to fans, moving around the bars and function room to gather as many donations as possible. **In total the young people raised £142.32**



Broadway Theatre bucket shakes

In December, Broadway Theatre kindly offered to have donation buckets available at all of their public performances to raise money for the Young Mayor's charity. **This raised a total of £32.38.**

During 2023, the Young Mayor sub-group raised £585.38.

Foodbank volunteering

As part of the group's commitment to giving back to the community, the group opted to volunteer at Barking Foodbank in their warehouse. The group spent the whole day sorting and weighing donations, ensuring everything was in date order and arranged by product into boxes. The group heard about struggles local people are facing and how this is affecting them. They were challenged to

understand stereotypes and

misconceptions of the people who use foodbanks. They learnt about the increase of foodbank usage nationally and who is now using them. Physically the group found the work challenging but also rewarding. They were praised for their hard work and positive attitude to supporting their community.



Wellbeing bags

As the year was drawing to a close, the group wanted to use some of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund we had been allocated to support local homeless people. Youth workers made contact with the Rough Sleeper Worker and Homeless Outreach Worker to ensure the bags could be distributed to 18-25 year olds who are rough sleeping or living in hostels. The group thought hard about the items that would be most useful, and ensured there was a focus on mental health. After a shopping trip to buy some of the products and lots of ordering online, the group were ready to pack the bags. The bags contained a power bank, re-usable water bottle, gloves, warm socks, deodorant, notebook, sexual harassment and sexual assault promotional products from the Community Actions sub-groups work (pen, oyster card holder and lip balm), condoms, information about the c-card scheme and how to register. A total of **160** bags were made and distributed to local people.



Young Mayor events

Broadway Theatre



The Mayor and Young Mayor were invited to the Broadway Theatre to officially announce the 2023 pantomime. They also enjoyed a tour of the building.



Women's Empowerment Month awards



Regina enjoyed the opportunity to attend the WEM awards and introduce one of the acts on the night. Regina found the experience inspiring and exciting.

UKON Careers Project launch

Regina loved having the opportunity to attend this youth focussed event, she officially opened the event and participated in activities with other young people.



Mayor Making and Civic Parade



Regina attended the Mayor Making event and Civic Parade in May 2023. Regina enjoyed attending the events and witnessing this prestigious event for herself. Regina was excited to deliver her speech and meet Councillors and other guests from across the borough.

Transgender Remembrance Day



On 20th November, Regina attended the Transgender Remembrance Day. Regina attended the flag raising and the event that followed, speaking during an open mic part of the event to demonstrate her allyship with Transgender people.



Young Carers events

Regina was invited to participate in 2 Young Carer's events this year. The invitations came through after hearing Regina speak at an event and due to the Mayor fundraising for Young Carers. Regina enjoyed connecting with Young Carers and their workers. She attended their prom event and also a sponsored 5k walk.

Partnership for Young London



This campaign was orchestrated by the Mayors Fund for London, the nonprofit organisation that is patroned by the Mayor of London, to help and improve diversity within the built sector in London.

Regina got involved as part of her ongoing work for Partnership for Young London, an impartial, youth led and youth run research group in the Guildhall. Regina says “Writing an evaluation on this campaign really interested me, so I asked whether I could take part, I did an interview and I was selected along with three other people! It is a three month long process, we started in October and my first work for this evaluation project was attending an event at City Hall and collecting information on people that were willing to take part in the research!” At the conclusion of the campaign, Regina wrote a blog which was shared across London by Partnership for Young London.

Cultural Education Partnership Annual Conference

In November, Regina was invited to the Cultural Education Partnership conference as a guest speaker. Regina presented about leadership and what this looks like to young people in the borough. Regina’s speech was inciteful and well received. Regina enjoyed the opportunity to participate in this exciting opportunity.



Colin Pond Scholarship Awards

Regina attended the 7th Colin Pond awards, handing out awards to the highest achieving GCSE students in the borough who have chosen to stay in borough at post-16. Regina enjoyed the opportunity to celebrate their success.

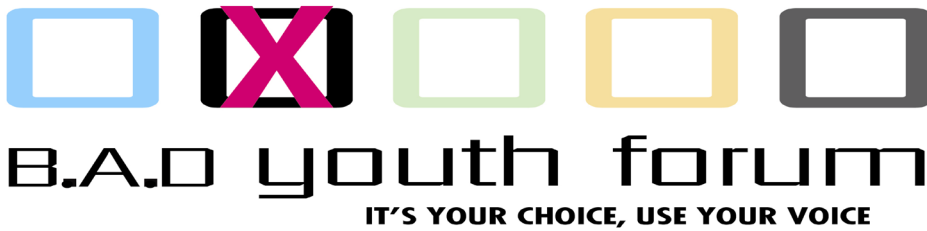


Metropolitan Police Service Choir Service at Westminster Hall

Regina was invited by Superintendent David Rhodes to the Metropolitan Police Service carol service at Westminster Abbey as his personal guest. Regina enjoyed the event and meeting police officers.



Additional Forum activities 2023



Participation and consultation

In 2023 young people participated in a large number of additional events and benefitted from a range of new experiences and opportunities. These opportunities are important for developing young people's interests, skillset and their confidence. During the year young people had the opportunity to participate in the following opportunities:

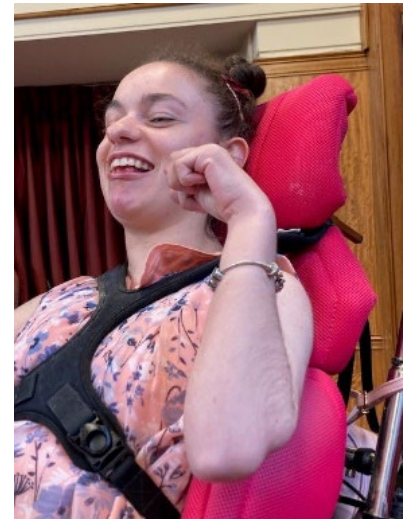
- Young Inspectors programme
- Full Forum meeting in Barking Town Hall with Councillors
- Youth Independent Advisory Group meetings with Police
- Visit to the Houses of Parliament, hosted by Jon Cruddas MP
- Ben Kinsella workshop
- Contribute to a Peer Review of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership
- Kooth mental health workshop
- Community police meeting
- Special Educational Needs and Disability website development meeting
- Race and Social Justice discussion
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings
- Creating a promotional film for the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum
- Trip to Stubbers Outdoor Activity Centre
- 16 days of activism contribution

Young Inspectors

The opportunity to be a Young Inspector of the C-Card young people's condom distribution service is offered to all Youth Forum members and has been in place for many years. In 2023, 17 young people opted to be trained, they each went on to complete independent inspections of pharmacies that offer the service throughout the year. A total of **76** inspections were completed. Every inspection report was shared with the Youth Health Programmes Co-ordinator, who then contacted the pharmacy to give them feedback and training where needed. Responses from pharmacies were shared with the Young Inspector, ensuring a continuous cycle of quality assurance throughout the year. This cycle is important to ensuring services are fit for purpose and young people friendly, and the service is the best performing in London.

By providing top quality contraceptive services to young people across the borough, it has contributed to a further decrease in teenage pregnancy figures for the borough which has been faster than seen nationally. The latest annual figures (for all of 2021) show, that despite a rise nationally in teenage pregnancy rates, Barking and Dagenham saw figures fall to 12.5 per 1000 young women under 18, compared with 2020 figures of 16.5 per 1000 young women. There is a great deal of work that contributes to ensuring teenage pregnancy figures keep reducing, and Young Inspectors and their collaborative working with the Youth Health Programme Co-ordinator is an important part of this.

Full Forum meeting at Barking Town Hall



Youth Forum members were keen to engage with Councillors and speak about local priorities. This was an action for last year's presentation at Council Assembly. Some of the Cabinet Members met with the Forum and participated in a Question and Answer session. The young people enjoyed the experience of being in the Chambers and speaking with local decision makers. After the meeting, young people feedback their thoughts and feelings about the event and agreed to hold this annually.

Youth Independent Advisory Group meetings

Every year the Youth Forum, hold regular meetings with Police. The young people choose the focus of the meeting and the Chair and Deputy Chair facilitate the meeting. In line with the Community Action sub-group's focus, one of the meetings focussed on violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment and sexual assault. A detailed discussion was held about how this issue is dealt with in schools and the community, by police officers. The group were promised some action around greater involvement with schools' officer and were given information about police initiatives to keep young people safe. The young people enjoyed being asked questions by the police and having the opportunity to ask questions themselves. This ranged from representation in the police service, people's rights to protest, what to do when a situation has been handled badly by a police officer and generally how to stay safe in the community.



Houses of Parliament

During October half term, Youth Forum members participated in a visit to the Houses of Parliament. The group had a tour of the building, learning about its history and significance. Following this, young people met with Jon Cruddas MP. The meeting always has a Question and Answer feel to it, which allows young people the chance to ask questions important to them.



This year, the group focussed on littering and the environment, the MP's top priorities for the borough, regeneration, improving youth aspiration and opportunities for young people and also asking for Jon Cruddas' views on sexual harassment and sexual assault. The young people came away from the meeting with a clearer sense of where the borough is headed, the work that Jon Cruddas is focussing on and how that will positively impact young people and best of all a commitment to speaking with services and schools about the issue of sexual harassment and sexual assault in schools. The Deputy Chair of the Youth Forum led the meeting and has written to the MP, at his request, to continue this conversation.

Ben Kinsella workshop



Having visited the workshop last year, the Youth Forum felt it was important that new members participated in this powerful and thought-provoking workshop. Young people engaged well in the session and gained a better understanding of the devastating impacts of knife crime, as well as, how to administer first aid to anyone who has been stabbed.

Local Government Association Peer Review

Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Children Partnership invited the LGA to undertake a peer challenge review within LBBDD to focus on the borough's safeguarding children's partnership arrangements. The Youth Forum were invited to participate in the Peer Review with a specific focus on how the Safeguarding Children Partnership arrangements could better receive feedback from children, young people, and their families. Youth workers assembled a representative group of young people from the Youth Forum, Skittlz (the children and young people in care council), Peer Support Group and Flipside (the borough's LGBTQIA group). A total of 27 young people attended. The meeting was very insightful and young people demonstrated great confidence in sharing their experience of living in the borough. The young people were praised for their contribution, offering a perspective about the borough that no-one else could.



Kooth Mental Health workshop

In response to the growing need for mental health support, young people opted to engage in a workshop with Kooth (and online mental health platform) to understand the support available to young people in the borough. The young people learnt how to register, gathered information about what they can access on the site and how to look after their mental health. Part of this was understanding signs and symptoms of poor mental health and what options are appropriate for dealing with any issues they are experiencing. 5 young people signed up to Kooth as a result, and others confirmed feeling confident to use the site if they ever feel they need it.



Community Police meeting

Youth Forum members were invited to attend a community meeting by Superintendent David Rhodes. The meeting had many other members of the community in attendance and focussed on the New Met for London plan.



Young people spread across various tables working with other

people in the community. They discussed the plan, how it will be implemented and collated questions to ask of Assistant Commissioner Louisa Rolfe. Young people gained clarification about areas of policing that will affect them in the future and appreciated being able to ask questions.



Special Educational Needs and Disability website development meeting

Two of the Youth Forum members with SEND participated in a meeting with the Council's SEND Family and Co-Production Lead to discuss the borough's Local Offer webpage. Young people gave insight into the information that should be included, useful sites they regularly use and explored what the priorities are for young people with SEND. The young people's views were captured and incorporated into the new Local Offer webpage.

Race and Social Justice (RSJ)

Since the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, young people in the Youth Forum have been interested in exploring schools' role in educating young people about Black history, seeing better representation in the curriculum and the staff team who works with them. The Youth Forum had the chance this year to meet with Education's Strategy, Commissioning & Intelligence Lead and the Inclusion Adviser from the Barking and Dagenham School Improvement Partnership (BDSIP). They presented the RSJ work that is taking place with schools to the Youth Forum, detailing progress and achievements to date. The group then shared their experiences from school, both positive and negative.

It was a lively discussion with young people bringing challenge and thoughtful insight. The Youth Forum were tasked with ways to move forward with the issues they raised and have been offered the opportunity to present at a Headteachers' meeting. These positive steps help young people to feel in control of the change they feel is necessary and is equipping them with new skills such as presentation, appropriate challenge, improved communication skills and confidence.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings

Millie Kiseke (Chair) and Humayra Uddin (Deputy Chair) have attended OSC meetings throughout the year. They have brought challenge to the meetings, asking questions from a young person's perspective and sharing their views and experiences. They have been praised for their contributions and thoughtful questions. The RSJ Youth Forum session came from Millie and Humayra attending an OSC meeting and requesting BDSIP to work with the Youth Forum.



Created a promotional film for the Barking and Dagenham Youth Forum

Using the UK Shared Prosperity Funding that had been allocated to them, the Youth Forum decided to make a promotional film to recruit new young people to join in 2024. Young people contributed to the content of the film and helped with suggestions on the day. Young people viewed and agreed the film before the final edit. We hope this attracts many more young people to the Youth Forum! To view the video visit <https://vimeo.com/877449714?share=copy>



Trip to Stubbers Outdoor Activity Centre



Every year the Youth Forum enjoy a day trip to Stubbers. It gives young people a chance to socialise with each other, step out of their comfort zone, build rapport with their peers and develop their confidence.



16 days of activism

As our contribution to the 16 days of activism, young people took the sexual harassment and sexual assault products into schools, youth groups and the community to educate other young people about what defines sexual harassment. The products were well received. Youth workers distributed products during nomination sessions in schools during this 16 day period too. In addition, a display board at the Vibe Youth Centre was dedicated to sharing positive messages and information about where to access support. These messages were the same messages distributed 2 years previously when the Young Mayor at the time was fundraising for Refuge.



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ASSEMBLY

31st January 2024

Title: Adopt London East Annual Report 2022-23	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care & Disabilities	
Open Report	For Information
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: No
Report Author: Sarah Johnson, HoS Adopt London East Joanne Tarbutt, HoS Corporate Parenting Permanece Vikki Rix, Head of Performance and Intelligence	Contact Details: Tel: 020 227 5807 E-mail: joanne.tarbutt@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Director: April Bald, Director of Operations, Children's Care and Support Elaine Allegretti	
Accountable Strategic Leadership Director: Elaine Allegretti, Strategic Director Childrens and Adults	
<p>Summary</p> <p>All Local Authorities were required to join a Regional Adoption Agency by April 2020. Ofsted reports on Local Authorities with adoption services delivered regionally have been universally positive.</p> <p>Adopt London East is a regional adoption agency, hosted by Havering, providing adoption services for Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Tower Hamlets, and Newham. Adopt London East (ALE) formally commenced on the 1 October 2019 and has now been in place for 4 years.</p> <p>The Annual Report for ALE is attached as Appendix A. The report has been produced by the Head of Service for the ALE and all four Local Authorities receive this report. The ALE report provides a comprehensive overview and evaluation of adoption activity for 2022-23 in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and training of adopters. • Family finding for children with an adoption plan; and • Post adoption support to children, adoptive families, and birth families. <p>Some key highlights from the 2022/23 ALE report are as follows; adoption preparation training continues to be developed and improved. In 2022-23 a total of 21 households were approved, which included 1 foster carer wishing to adopt. Just over a quarter of those adopters wanted to be approved as Early Permanence Carers.</p> <p>Adopt London East continue to offer all four boroughs' consultations to support the care planning for adoption. There was an increase in the number Adoption Plans being made by the ADMs - a total of 43 made across ALE, with 6 being LBBB children. As far as</p>	

possible, ALE places children with inhouse adopters or from the Adopt London pool to ensure quality of assessment and preparation support to families.

Across ALE, 25 children were placed with 8 being from LBBD. 76% of the children were between the ages of 0-2 years with the oldest child being matched was 5 years old. Of the 25 children placed, 10 were placed via Early Permanence.

Support to adopted adults is another area of responsibility for ALE although there is no national collection of Adoption Support Data. This is a priority for ALE in 24-25 so that tracking and performance of this area becomes more robust.

The demand for adoption support remains high and many of the cases are complex. In 2022/23, there were a total of 239 new referrals to the service. The Family Connections Team support maintaining relationships between birth families and adoptive families, and this is an of national interest and therefore likely to grow over the coming years.

Key recommendations for 2024-25 building on the progress made to date include: the Black Adopters Project, increasing the number of approvals of prospective adopters, increasing the use of Early Permanence and reducing the barriers, adoption support and continue to work as part of Adopt London.

Participation in the Black Adopters project will be important for LBBD given our diverse population. The project thus far has been focussed on scoping and initial research in response to the disparities facing Black children with plans for adoption – compared to children of other ethnicities. In summary they are:

- Less likely to be adopted after having a Placement Order made
- More likely to have 'adopters could not be found' as the reason for an adoption plan being rescinded.
- Spend 6.5 – 8 months longer on a Placement Order before moving in with an adoptive family
- Black prospective adopters are more likely to drop out during the assessment process and not go on to adopt a child.

LBBD Children's services were subject to an Ofsted ILACS inspection in July 2023 – they set out the following finding:

'Barking and Dagenham works closely with the regional adoption agency to ensure that the agency understands the needs of the children in the borough and finds adoptive parents for them. Early permanence planning is increasingly embedded and successful. However, some children who need adoption wait too long for decisions to be made about where they will live.'

The ALE plan for 2024-25 will support the improvement work that Children's services are embarking on, ensuring more timely permanence plans are achieved for all our children in care.

Appendix B sets out Barking and Dagenham's specific adoption performance information (2022/23).

In 2022/23, 4 children achieved permanence through adoption (a decline on 2021/22 which is a national trend. This represented 2% of all children leaving care - below

London (4%), national (9%) and similar areas (12%). 26 children (11%) had become subject to special guardianship orders (SGOs) up by 1% on the previous year and higher than London (7%) and statistical neighbours (10%). These are permanent care arrangements with reduced likelihood of breakdown compared to children who remain in long term care of the local authority.

Our adoption scorecard performance is variable year on year, but overall trend is one of improvement against a challenging set of targets set by the DfE. Many factors impact on timeliness of adoption such as length of court proceedings, complexity of children's needs and identifying a suitable match to a family. The average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family for children adopted increased from 549 days in 2021/22 to 656 days in 2022/23. Our 3-year rolling average, therefore, increased from 492 days (2019-2022) to 515 days (2020-2023) and performance is 89 days above the DfE threshold of 426 days.

Conversely, the average time between the Local Authority receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match to an adoptive family decreased from 224 days in 21/22 to 206 days in 22/23. This decreased our 3-year rolling average from 219 days (2019-2022) to 198 days (2020-2023). Performance is now 77 days above the DfE threshold of 121 days.

The Children's Care and Support Performance Board and Permanence Taskforce continues to keep oversight of adoption and the adoption scorecard indicators. Improving adoption timelessness remains a priority area.

Recommendation(s)

The Assembly is recommended to note the report.

Reason(s)

The Council is the corporate parent to all of our children in care and care leavers, including children awaiting adoption.

1. Financial Implications

- 1.1 As it is a report of past performance it does not give rise to any future financial implications beyond the agreed annual contributions from Local Authorities including LBBD,

2. Legal Implications

- 2.1 A child may be looked after during care proceedings by virtue of an interim care order (s.38 Childrens Act 1989) and on conclusion, a care order (s.31(1)(a)) or outside of care proceedings (s.20 Childrens Act 1989).
- 2.2 If the care plan for the child is to be placed for adoption a placement order must be granted at the conclusion of proceedings (s.21 Adoption and Children Act 2002) this order authorises the local authority to place a child with prospective adopters, alternatively if a child's parents have relinquished care they may consent to the

adoption however the Local Authority remains responsible for the child until the adoption order is granted (s.46 Adoption and Childrens Act 2002).

- 2.3 Adopt London East via functions delegated to it act as an adoption Agency on behalf of the Local Authority. Local Authorities who act as an adoption agency must recruit, assess and approve suitable prospective adopters (section 3A, ACA 2002) Page 112
- 2.4 The Report is for note only and the contents of the report do not raise any issues that fall outside of the powers of the council and the report does not require a decision for which a legal implication would arise

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of appendices:

- Appendix A - Annual Report for ALE
- Appendix B – LBBD Adoption Performance Information (2022/23).

Annual Report

April 2022 – March 2023



**ADOPT
LONDON
EAST**

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About Adopt London East

Context and responsibilities

In 2015 the Government set out its vision and commitment to deliver an adoption system where adoption agencies would come together regionally to deliver adoption services. In 2016 the Education & Adoption Act brought this into effect with Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA's) arrangements being put into place. London RAA's were launched in 2019.

Adopt London East is a partnership between the London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Newham and Tower Hamlets.

The adoption functions of the four boroughs officially became part of Adopt London East (ALE) on 1st October 2019, hosted by the London Borough of Havering as the lead partner. The ALE Partnership Agreement covers the legal and financial terms of the arrangement. There is shared oversight of the RAA through a Governance Board.

Adopt London East has responsibility for all adoption led services, delivering these on behalf of the local authorities. These include:

- Recruitment and assessment of adoptive parents
- Family finding for children in need of adoptive parents

- Adoption support to adoptive families, adopted adults, and others impacted by adoption
- ADM advice for children's plans for adoption (SHOPA)

Responsibility for the child (including corporate parenting responsibilities) remain with the local authority. Each borough is therefore responsible for the progress of the child's case through the court system and for decisions in respect of care and adoption planning.

Governance arrangements

All service functions and partnership arrangements are detailed within the partnership agreement. The agreement includes:

- Governance
- Finances and budget setting
- Data sharing agreement
- Dispute resolution
- Termination of agreement

The Adopt London East Governance Board has Director level representation from each of the four partner boroughs and has responsibility for all partnership decisions that need to be made



above Head of Service level, and for monitoring performance and the budget.

The Adopt London East Operational Board has membership of Heads of Service, Service Managers and Team Managers. The group monitors performance across the service and considers best practice innovations.

Staffing

Adopt London East employs around 30 members of staff who work across the service in differing teams areas. The service is managed by the permanent Head of Service, with direct reports of 3 Team Managers and an Adoption Panel Advisor. Michelle Bakay the Recruitment and Assessment Team Manager applied for an opportunity within Adopt London to become the Matching Manager, she took this post up in January 2023. In May 2023 Luke Scillitoe started as the new Recruitment and Assessment Team Manager for Adopt London East. There were two temporary workers within the service, they both moved back to their substantive posts.

Recruitment took place and these posts were both appointed to and the new workers started this year.

The Business Support Review has continued to take place within the host Borough of Havering. Adopt London East will now be responsible for managing its own administration functions and staff. As part of a wider reorganisation recruitment is yet to take place as the grading of the posts is currently being reviewed. It is anticipated that recruitment will take place from October 2023. In addition to core staff there are a small pool of sessional social workers to increase casework capacity in a flexible way.

Inspections

ALE support and participate in the adoption elements of any partner local authority inspection including ILACS and focused inspections looking at permanency or children in care. In 2022/23 ALE were involved in the ILACS inspection that took place for Barking and Dagenham.



As adoption inspection regulations have not been updated to reflect the creation of RAAs and local authority inspections only look at some areas of adoption work, the Department of Education and Ofsted have announced plans to pilot direct inspections of Regional Adoption Agencies towards the end of 2023. Ofsted have recently published an inspection framework, entitled Thematic Inspections of Regional Adoption Agencies. They intend to inspect six RAAs nationally as part of the pilot, and to publish one composite report which focuses on emerging themes rather than naming findings in relation to individual RAAs. When the pilot

is complete Ofsted and the DfE will consider possible regulatory change to normalise RAA inspections.

Outcomes

Adopt London East is focused on improving outcomes for children who have a plan for adoption and those living in adoptive families in the following specific ways. The linked sections in this report provide more information about the work that is happening in these areas.

2021-22 Adopt London East Priorities

Finding prospective adoptive parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the percentage of children adopted from care Reduce the number of children for whom the permanence plan has changed from adoption
Preparing and approving adoptive parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve timescales for adopter assessments Ensuring fewer prospective adopter approvals are rescinded Increase more timely matching of approved adopters
Planning for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving timescales for placing children with adoptive families Supporting more children placed in an early permanence placement
Placing children with adoptive parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring a higher conversion rate from enquiry to approval
Providing support to adoptive families and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resulting in fewer adoption placement disruptions

Financial spend 2022/23

The total financial spend for ALE in 2022/23 was £1.859m. This was fully funded by contributions from all the ALE partnership boroughs with some additional funding from securing local adopters for other LAs. The contributions from the partner agencies have remained the same since go live in October 2019. In light of this a review will be completed in 2023/24 to ensure that the RAA is adequately funded in an equitable way.



National adoption landscape

National RAA Leaders Group

The 32 Regional Adoption Agencies in England work together under the umbrella of 'The National RAA Leaders Group', soon to be rebranded in autumn 2023 to 'Adoption England'. The Leaders Group has a Strategic Lead and several project leads focused on developing particular areas of practice nationally and coordinating the work of RAAs. The Leaders Group has been tasked by the Department of Education (DfE) with developing the priorities it identified within its adoption strategy 'Achieving Excellence Everywhere' (2021). The DfE have provided funding to progress this work. These priorities focus on developing national standards in recruitment, matching, and support; looking at alternative models of matching practice; increasing the use of early permanence placements; developing multi-disciplinary support; and considering models for national and pan-regional commissioning in adoption support. In addition, the Leaders Group is focused on raising the voices of those with different lived experiences of adoption, and on increasing representation of all forms of diversity within adoption services. Whilst much of this work is being progressed nationally, Adopt London have also been successful at accessing grant funding from the National RAA Leaders Group to progress priorities that align with the DfE strategy.



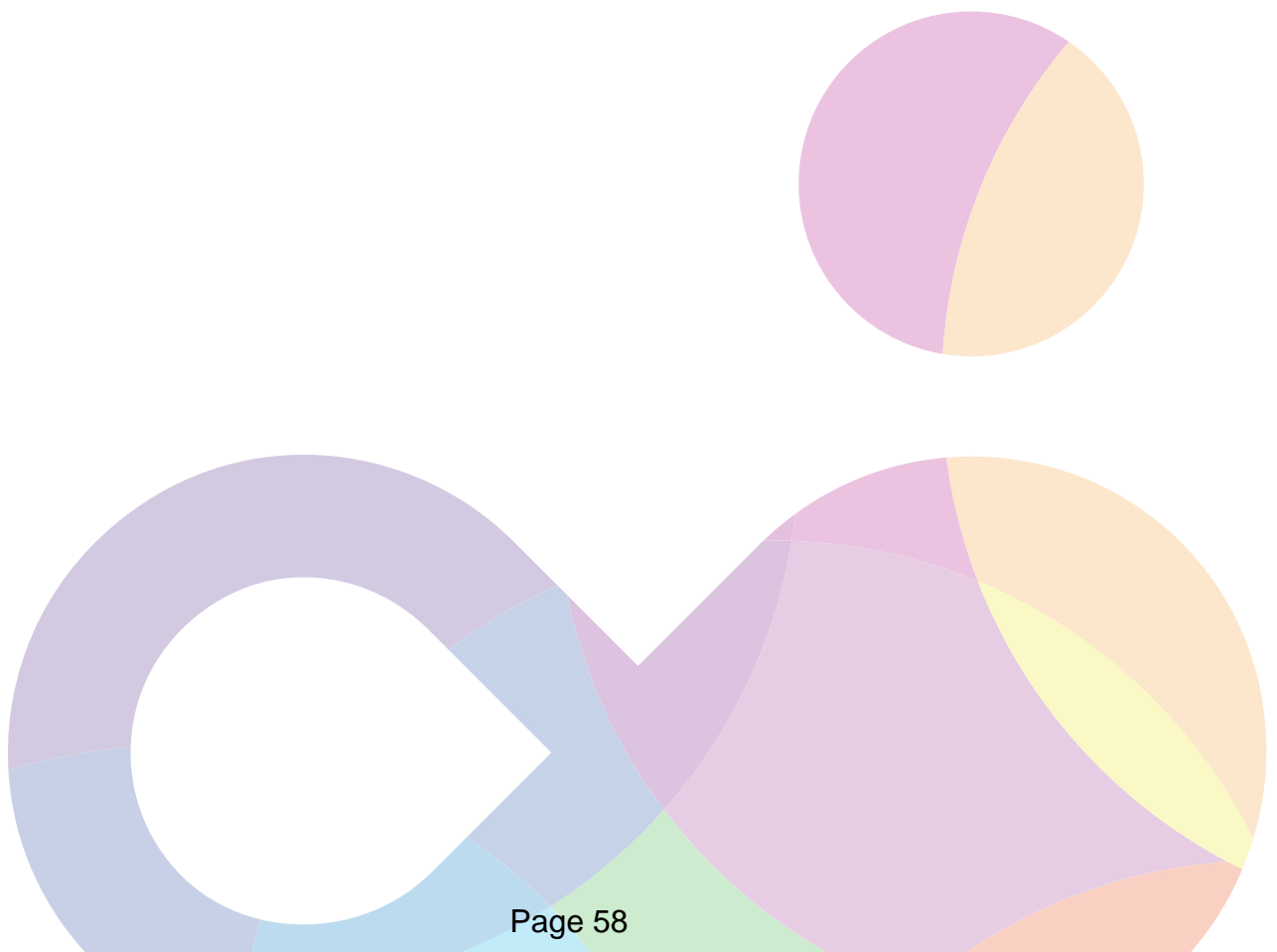
regional
adoption
agencies



Death of Leiland-James Corkill in Cumbria

Leiland-James was placed for adoption aged 7 months in August 2020. He had been removed from his birth family through care proceedings and placed with foster carers from the age of 2 months. In January 2021 Leiland-James died as a result of a catastrophic head injury at the hands of his prospective adoptive parents. In May 2022 the prospective adoptive mother was found guilty of murder. During the trial she was found to have lied about her alcohol use, mental health, physical health, family debts, and attitude to physical chastisement. In July 2022 Cumbria Safeguarding Children's Partnership published their report following a Child Safeguarding Practice Review, and recommendations for Regional Adoption Agencies have recently been published. There is significant learning from this tragic case and RAAs are working collectively to implement changes to practice which will reduce the risk of a similar set of circumstances occurring in future. These changes include:

- Ensuring medical practitioners understand their safeguarding responsibilities in adoption cases, and that updating information is sought from medical records at different stages of the process.
- Providing opportunities to listen to the voice of the child at different stages of the adoption process (in this case the adoptive parents had a birth child who would have been old enough to speak with social workers and might have provided some insight).
- Letting personal referees know that they have a safeguarding responsibility and should make contact with the adoption agency if they have concerns.
- Ensuring more strenuously seeking references from therapeutic providers with an emphasis on their role in safeguarding, as some providers refuse to provide a reference on the grounds of patient confidentiality.



Adopt London



Adopt London structure

The Four RAAs work closely together under the Adopt London umbrella covering the different geographic regions in London, and providing services to 24 boroughs in total. Adopt London are unique nationally in working in such a close partnership across a large number of local authorities.

Through this partnership we aim to develop a London-wide profile for the recruitment of adoptive parents, improve services that benefit from economies of scale, and share and standardise best practice. The host boroughs for Adopt London are Islington, Southwark, Havering, and Ealing. Heads of Service, Service Managers, Team Managers, Panel Advisors, and Marketing & Communications leads all work closely with their peers across Adopt London to develop shared services and practice standards.

Heads of Service and the host borough Directors and Directors of Children's Services meet quarterly as the Adopt London Executive Advisory

Board chaired by a non-host partner DCS. The Executive Advisory Board oversees the joint project work of Adopt London, supports with problem solving, and considers Adopt London issues that need the support of other senior leaders to resolve.

In 2021 the Executive Advisory Board wrote to all member boroughs to request agreement to work towards an Adopt London legal partnership agreement linked to local agreements. This agreement would formalise the responsibilities of the Executive Advisory Board and protect the ownership of the Adopt London shared brand and online resources. This work was paused in 2022/23 due to legal complexities and capacity, but is hoped to restart during 2023/24.



Adopt London activity

The Adopt London Heads of Service work towards a strategic work plan that is supported by the Executive Advisory Board. The plan covers governance and commissioning arrangements; operational and practice development of priority areas including opportunities to access national funding; marketing and communications arrangements; and the voice of adopters, adopted children, adopted adults, and birth family members. A pooled budget is held to fund shared activity. The following were some of our shared areas of work in 2022/23:

Matching project: Adopt London have been awarded funds from the National RAA Leaders Group to test methods for improving shared practice for matching children in need of adoption with adoptive families. This has led to the creation of Adopt London Matching Manager and Matching Coordinator posts to lead the shared work.

Early Permanence: We have also been awarded funds to strengthen Early Permanence practice across London, working across Adopt London and another non-Adopt London RAA. In 2022/23 a research report was prepared looking at the barriers to Early Permanence in London, which included interviews with Family Court Judges, managers from CAF/CASS, local authority Agency Decision Makers and legal advisors, and RAA practice leads.

Black Adoption Project: We completed the first phase of this large, long-term project to improve adoption for Black children and families and have started preparing to initiate and evaluate practice pilots.

Adult adoptee support: We are working with adult adoptees to expand the availability of support groups in London. A new group specifically for transracially adopted adults was set up in this period in partnership with the Transracial Adult Adoptee Network (TAAN).

Agency Decision Maker workshops: Funded by the National RAA Leaders Group, Adopt London ran a development workshop for London Agency Decision Makers to reflect on case law, guidance, and best practice around Best Interests Decisions.

Adopt London choir: Founded during the 2020 pandemic, the choir is made up of London adoptive parents who meet weekly online to sing and network, and sometimes meet in person to perform at events. The choir has proven to be a strong source of support for many parents. Watch some of their videos on the Adopt London YouTube channel.

Marketing & Communications: Our marketing and communications leads pool their time and resources to provide a shared Adopt London public presence, including our website and social media. A single public profile is particularly effective for the recruitment of prospective adoptive parents.

Adopt London staff event: We hosted our second annual in-person event for 150 Adopt London members of staff to increase relationships and co-working across the Adopt London RAAs. The event focused on the importance of our use of language in our work.

We Are Family: We continue to have a strong partnership with adopter peer network charity We Are Family, which provides support groups across London, a specialist webinar programme, and podcast.

In addition to continuing work in these areas, our priorities for further shared work in 2023/34 are:

Adopter voice: We are developing a strong mechanism for gathering and responding to adoptive parent feedback, and for consulting with parents on service developments.

Adopted children and young people's groups: We are planning to expand social groups for adopted children and young people across the Adopt London area to provide social opportunities and invite participation.

Shared commissioning arrangements in adoption support: We have received funding from the National RAA Leaders Group to scope potential improvements to commissioning arrangements, particularly in relation to provision under the Adoption Support Fund. In the long term this work could increase the efficacy of current arrangements whilst reducing the currently extensive administration.

The Black Adoption Project



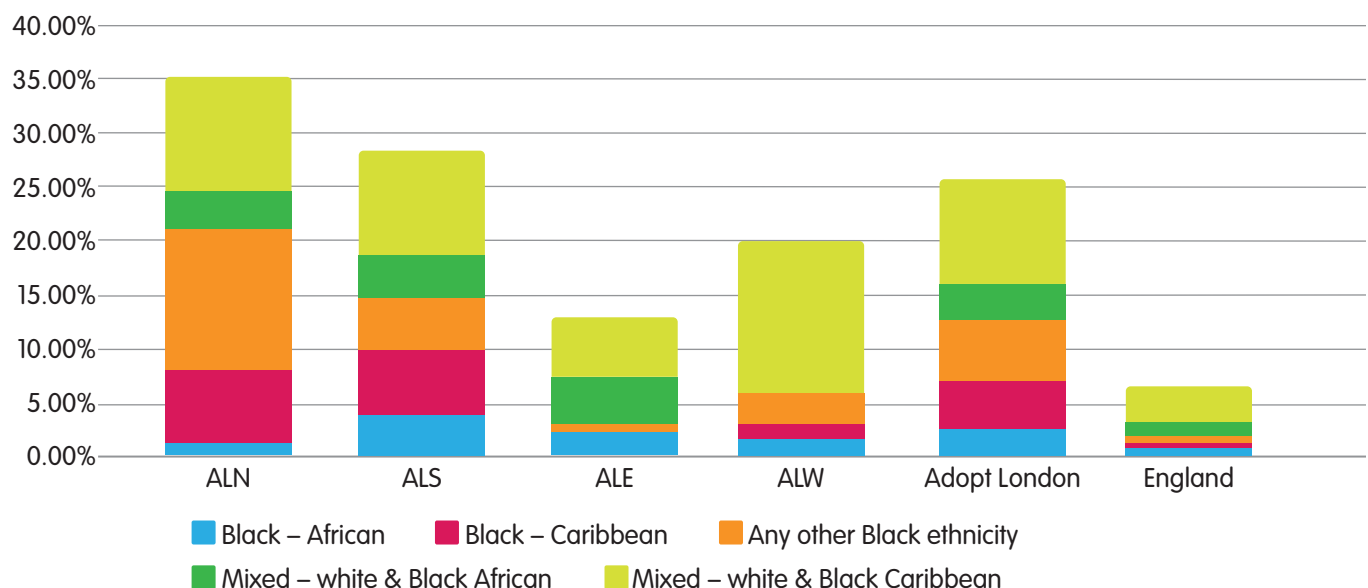
The Black Adoption Project aims to improve adoption for Black children and families and is a partnership project between Adopt London and Laurelle Brown Training & Consultancy. We have now completed phase 1 of the Project and have a strong governance structure established with a wide range of representatives covering professional, community, and lived experience of Black adoption – including adult adoptees, care experienced adults, and adoptive parents.

Our initial research is detailed in our Phase 1 Report, which evidences the disparities for Black children in the adoption system and pinpoints where these disparities are occurring. It also looks at the experiences of Black prospective adoptive parents, and Black community

perceptions of adoption. Some of our key findings are:

- Black children who have a plan of adoption agreed by the court are much less likely than other children to go on to be adopted, and this seems to be most often because suitable adoptive parents couldn't be identified.
- Black children who are adopted wait much longer to move into their adoptive family.
- Black prospective adopters are more likely to drop out during the assessment process and not go on to adopt a child.
- Some of the most significant barriers to adoption for Black prospective adopters are financial factors, negative experiences

Black children placed for adoption as a proportion of all children placed for adoption in the 5 years from 2016/17 – 2020/21



or perceptions of the assessment process, the need for more support after adoption (including culturally informed support), and the impact of racism.

Across Adopt London on average 25.8% of children placed for adoption were of Black or mixed Black ethnicity backgrounds. We found that Black children with a Placement Order were 20% less likely to have been successfully placed for adoption than children of other ethnicities. Black Caribbean children particularly were 12 times more likely than other children to have 'prospective adopters could not be found' given as the reason for a change of care plan away from adoption. When other factors were held constant, Black children spent on average 6½ – 8 months longer in the adoption process before moving in with their adoptive family, and the most substantial delays occurred during the family finding process – again suggesting that significant delay is caused by difficulties identifying suitable prospective adopters.

Within the research we also looked at the journey for Black prospective adoptive parents and found that Black-only households were 5-6 more likely than white-only households to leave the adoption process without adopting a child, indicating that there are difficulties during the assessment phase that need to be considered further.

During 2022/23 we organised workshops with a wide range of stakeholders, including adopted young people, to develop a Theory of Change – a document which articulates the things that aren't working currently, and the goals of the project. The research findings and Theory of Change process led directly to some options for creating change. The

pilot proposals target different areas of practice including:

- Services to increase retention of Black prospective adopters both at the initial enquiry stage, and later during the assessment process.
- Exploring ways to reduce the economic barriers to adoption.
- Specialist learning and development programme for adoptive parents of Black children.
- Community-led approach to raise awareness of adoption and ultimately to recruit more Black adoptive parents.
- Research into the significance and availability of Black therapists providing support under the Adoption Support Fund.
- Social, participatory, and educational groups for Black adopted young people.

In the next phase of work we will be initiating a number of pilot projects across these different areas of practice, and evaluating the impact these changes have on Black children and families.

Alongside the research and practice change is activity focusing on the importance of workforce development and support for Black staff members. We have been running

monthly 'Safe Space Sessions' for Black staff to reflect on their work within adoption and discuss experiences that impact and shape the workplace and practice. We have run whole-staff development training, and a series of workshops focused on learning from Black adoptees on their experiences of adoption. In the next phase of work we will be developing more ongoing programmes of support for staff to help create and embed change.

Black Adoption Project goals

- Levelled playing field for Black **families**.
- Reimagined **system** for Black children.
 - Black **communities** understand and care about adoption.
 - Black adopted **children** have the support they need.
 - Confident, anti-racist and culturally-competent **workforce**.

The Adoption Panel

Structure of the Adoption Panel

Adopt London East run one central Adoption Panel which oversees all:

- Matching decisions relating to the choice of adoptive family for a child
- Best Interests Decisions for voluntary adoption (relinquished babies)
- Approval of prospective adoptive parents
- Review or rescindment of approval of prospective adoptive parents

Panel recommendations relating to individual children are presented to the Agency Decision Maker in the child's borough for a decision. Prospective adopter approval and review of

approval decisions are presented to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) in ALE.

The ALE Panel meets twice per month, with capacity to run additional meetings if required. There are two independent Panel Chairs and central list membership to ensure consistency of decision making and robust oversight of the work of ALE. The independent Panel membership is diverse in terms of their experiences of adoption, their age, gender, relationship status, and ethnicity. The Panel have regular training and there is a programme of annual appraisals. The Panel provide quality assurance feedback to ALE and the relevant local authority for every case they consider.



Training for local authority social workers

ALE continue to offer informal training and support particularly around the writing of CPRs and care planning for adoption.

ALE are currently planning to roll out group training programme around the preparation of CPRs and planning for a care plan for adoption across the partnership

“I found the session helpful, making me think around the purpose of the CPR.”

Havering ISS social worker



Finding prospective adoptive parents

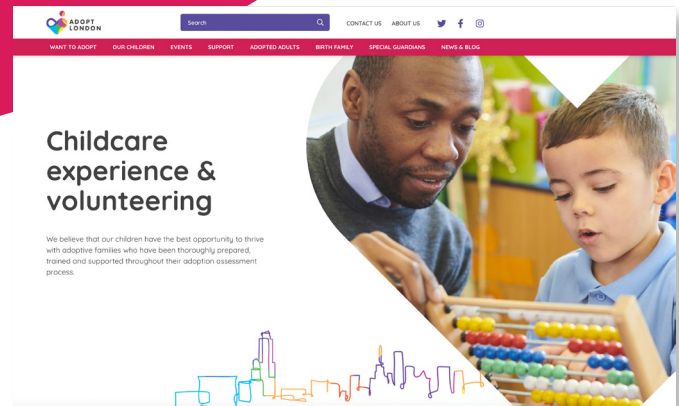
Adopt London brand

Our single Adopt London public face is successful at making Adopt London easy to find for anyone considering adoption in London and provides prospective adopters with a clear and transparent choice between agencies. Pooling communications resources means that Adopt London can spend less whilst still maintaining a professional, creative, and current online presence.

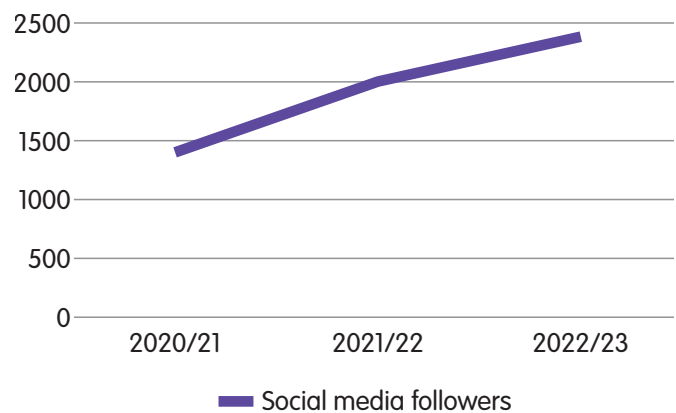
We have a shared recruitment and communications strategy. Through the Adopt London brand we aim to celebrate the diversity of London, to demonstrate that London children are central to our agencies, and to highlight a range of voices impacted by adoption.

The **website** is at the heart of Adopt London's communication and usually the first contact point for people considering adoption. Articles, blogs, news, and up-to-date information is accessible on the website with several new pages and content reviews being introduced during the year. In 2022/23 we undertook significant development work in the systems side of the website to ensure it is compliant with local government standards and began a programme of work to improve accessibility.

Visits to the website are most often initiated by an organic search online (50% of visits), people entering the address directly into the browser (27%) and through links from other websites (20%). In total there were 46,647 website sessions during the year, a decrease from 58,696 in 2021/22. Other website engagement measures



Social media followers



such as number of new users and page views were also reduced this year. This may be due to our focus on systems development this year with deliberately less promotion of new articles and features on the site as we have tried to manage high demand in our Recruitment & Assessment Team; but also may in part reflect wider patterns in adoption recruitment driven by the 'cost of living crisis'.

The Adopt London social media channels post regularly to communicate and inform a range of audiences impacted by adoption. Our social media followers continue to organically increase and using these channels can be an effective way to engage and support people in London who are considering adoption but not yet ready to begin an assessment.

For the second year we have produced an original podcast series 'Adoption Shared' in partnership with We Are Family, our adopter peer support partners. In 2022/23 we published the third season, with episodes focused on Black adoption from different perspectives. The podcast has been successful at providing another way for us to engage, support, develop, and build loyalty with those considering adoption who are not yet ready to begin an assessment. Episodes are also used in preparing and training prospective adopters and in building community for adoptive parents.



The first three seasons of Adoption Shared have now been downloaded 8,284 times. A fourth

season is being prepared for release in 2023/24 focused on adoption experiences for children with additional support needs.

Enquiries and providing information

We have continued to run Information Sessions virtually this year due to the positive feedback we have received about these sessions being easier to access and effective at sharing a large amount of information. However, throughout 2022 there was a lack of assessment capacity and high demand. To respond to this we reduced the number of Information Events and have a waiting list for assessment. ALE has planned recruitment activity to ensure that people have a smooth progress as possible between stage 1 and 2.

"...really informative, thank you very much for putting the event together, and Matt was amazing and very articulate to explain their journey to adoption."

"It was really great to have an Adopter give his experience. It gave a great insight of the process itself and explained some of the issues one should expect (and in some cases how to tackle them)."

"Myself and my husband are at the beginning of our adoption journey, this session was our first ever interaction with the adoption world. We're aware it may be a long road ahead but this session was very comforting, touching and useful, thank you."

ALE have continued to run Foundation Days at regular intervals, these are day long sessions to support prospective households make an informed choice as to whether they are in

position to progress to the adoption process. The training is co-delivered by social work staff and adoptive parent.

"I'd like to thank the training team for making the foundation day a positive experience and putting everyone at ease. I found it a draining day but an uplifting one and I'm excited to continue our journey with Adopt London East."

"It was great hearing about adoption of an older child and a successful adoption with full transparency and openness. I now have a better understanding of the process and likely timeline. A better understanding of the losses a child, adopter and birth family will face as well as the gains."

Preparing and approving adoptive parents

After an increase in 2021/22, the number of approvals of new adoptive families has decreased this year primarily due to capacity challenges within the Recruitment & Assessment Team, alongside increased demands from other areas of work. In addition there has continued to be a change, reflected nationally, in the average complexity of assessments since the Covid-19 pandemic. This appears to be due to increased difficulty and challenge in family life – for example more applicants have experience of mental health difficulties, disordered eating, fertility treatment which has been cut short, recent bereavement, and redundancy. These

Adoptive household approvals

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
18	19	24	21

complexities impact the assessment process in different ways but can mean that the assessment needs to be slower, that families might need to take a break or drop out of the process, or that professional counselling support may be needed before an assessment can progress.

Assessments have continued to be of a high standard as evidenced by the quality assurance feedback from our Adoption Panel, and most





adoptive parents are matched soon after approval. At the end of March 2023, only 2 approved adoptive households not on hold were not matched with a child. ALE make a high number of placements between ALE adopters and children. This demonstrates that the adopters who are approved are usually suitable for the needs of our ALE children.

ALE has continued to receive referrals from boroughs for adoption assessments of foster carers and connected people (who wish to adopt children known to them or already in their care). In 2021/22 there was 1 assessment of a foster carer. Foster carer assessments tend to be particularly complex and often encounter delays.

On behalf of the boroughs, ALE are legally required to provide advice and assess any resident who wishes to privately apply for an Adoption Order for a child in their care (non-agency adoption). This can include adoption by a step-parent, by a same-sex partner where both partners were not registered as parents

on the birth certificate, in surrogacy cases, for Special Guardians who wish to convert to an Adoption Order, and in some family care arrangements. A high proportion of these cases involve international elements because an Adoption Order is often advised by solicitors as being a way to formalise the legal status of a family arrangement when resolving immigration difficulties. Many of these cases are extremely complex legally.

ALE offer meetings with those who enquire about non-agency adoption to advise on the suitability of an adoption application and in many cases to suggest alternative ways of gaining the legal security needed. Despite this, there are an increasing number of cases which do go on to require allocation for full assessment.

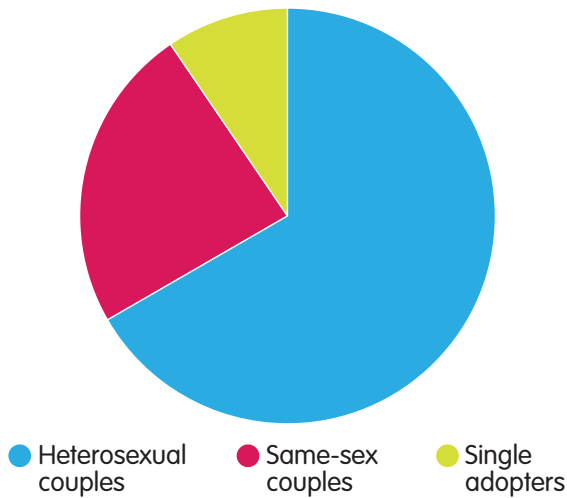
New non-agency assessments started each year

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
0	1	1	5

Characteristics of approved adopters

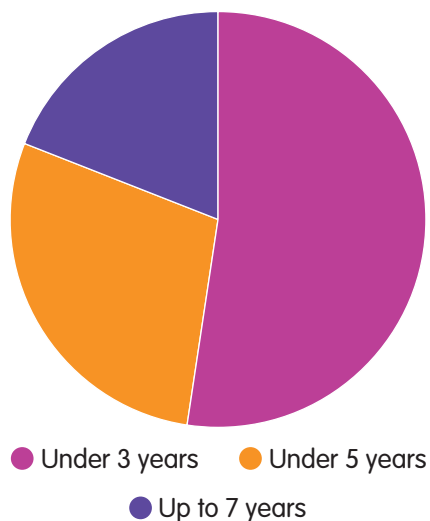
Approved adoptive households were diverse in terms of family structure, with 67% being heterosexual couples, 24% same-sex couples, and 9% single adopters.

Family structure

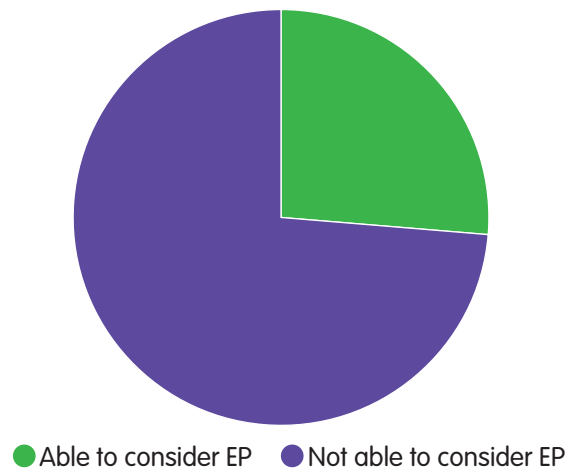


In total 52% of approved households wanted to consider children up to the age of 3 years, 28% up to the age of 5 years, and 20% up to the age of 7 years.

Approval criteria – age of children

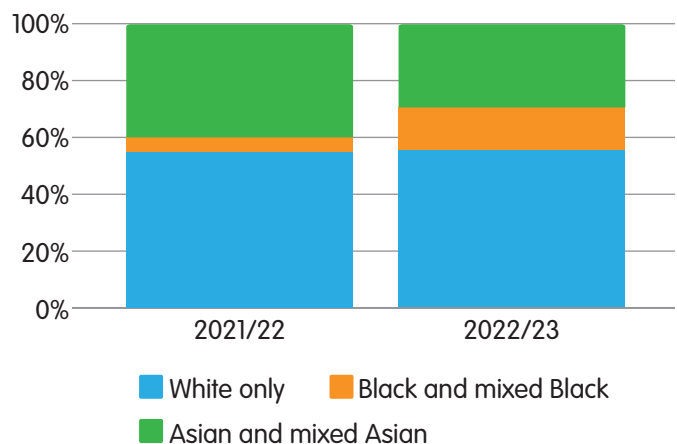


Approved adopters able to consider early permanence



This year 57% of households had adopters only of white British or other white ethnicities. Only 15% of households were from a Black Global majority with 28% from an Asian global majority. Our research undertaken within the Black Adoption Project highlighted how Black individuals are statistically more likely to be unable to adopt due to socio-economic factors, which is of particular concern in the current 'cost of living crisis'. Whilst increasing overall numbers of approved adopters remains essential, it is critical that we use the learning and pilots from the Black Adoption Project to ensure the proportion of approved Black adopters increases significantly.

Ethnicity of approved households



Planning for children

Adoption permanency planning

Each partner borough is responsible for permanency planning and tracking of their children. Family Finding Social Workers from ALE offer consultation meetings and are able to attend planning meetings, to provide advice and guidance about adoption plans. Referrals for children are made to ALE when the plan is likely to be adoption and the case is allocated at the point that early Family Finding work can begin, usually around the time the Best Interests Decision is made by the borough Agency Decision Maker.

Children with a plan for adoption

After a reduction in 2021/22 in the number of adoption plans being formalised by the borough Agency Decision Makers (ADM), there has been an increase from 2022/23. Placement Orders have also increased although have not been as high as seen in 2020/21. This could mean that a lower proportion of ADM Best Interests Decisions are resulting in Placement Orders, or that care proceedings with Decisions made in the second half of 2022/23 have not yet concluded. Significant court delays have now been a feature



particularly in adoption cases since 2020, and these delays complicate the picture that the data shows.

This year the ASG national adoption data collection have provided data showing the proportion of children taken into care before turning 5 who go on to have a Best Interests

Decision made. These figures suggest that the proportion of children within ALE who come into care under the age of 5 and go on to have a Best Interests Decision has been reducing annually, however given the increased Best Interests Decisions in 2022/23, this figure may increase when data for the most recent year is available.

Best Interests Decisions (Adoption Data Insights Data)

Agency	Total ADM Best Interests Decisions (BID)			% children taken into care before turning 5 with an ADM BID		
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Adopt London East	43	42	43	31%	28%	24%
Newham	12	16	25	23%	34%	34%
Tower Hamlets	16	6	7	39%	38%	23%
Havering	9	8	5	38%	30%	26%
Barking & Dagenham	6	12	6	27%	38%	23%
England	3855	3397	3822	36%	33%	31%

Placement Orders Granted (Adoption Data Insights Data)

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
B&D	19	7	3	7
Havering	2	7	0	3
Newham	12	8	9	14
Tower Hamlets	16	12	6	2
ALE	49	34	18	22

Placing children with adoptive parents

Family finding

Strong connections between the Recruitment & Assessment team and the Family Finding team mean that by the time a Placement Order is made we can establish whether there is a potential in-house adoptive family available. If an in-house family may be a good match for a child, they will be considered initially before the search is broadened to look for prospective adopters from other RAAs and Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs).

Within the Adopt London matching project we are exploring ways to build stronger and quicker family finding links between the four RAAs – this includes regular networking meetings where practitioners can share profiles of children and adopters, Adopt London play sessions where prospective adopters can informally meet and play alongside children and their foster carers, and enhanced Adopt London profile booklets to ensure information about potential Adopt London adopters is readily available to family finders.

Regular family finding review meetings are held between the family finder and the borough social work team after a Placement Order is granted to monitor and progress family finding decisions.

In-house placements

There are a number of reasons why it is a priority for ALE to place as many children with our own adoptive parents as possible. Firstly, we can be confident that in-house adopters have been assessed, trained, and approved to a

high standard. We cannot guarantee the same standards when considering external adopters and in many cases we find there have been significant gaps in their preparation. Secondly, we understand the strengths, weakness and vulnerabilities of our own adopters. This means we can carefully link children and adopters with a greater level of understanding than is often possible with external adopters. Thirdly, it is easier to problem-solve and escalate issues when concerns arise about a child being placed with in-house adopters. We have strong relationships between supervising social workers and family finders which enable difficulties to be identified and supported. Fourthly, it is easier and quicker to provide support to in-house adopters when this is needed in the early placement stage. Where our own adopters have experienced difficulties, we have been able to identify the need and provide support quickly and effectively, preventing the escalation of concerns. For all these reasons, in-house placements are more stable and less likely to experience early disruption. All the disruptions that have occurred in ALE prior to an Adoption Order have been for children placed externally. None of our adoptive parents have been involved in a disrupted placement. Over a period of 3½ years across Adopt London's 24 boroughs, only 1 adoptive placement out of 12 total disruptions was with in-house adopters. Finally, there is also a high financial cost to external placements, with the cost of VAA placements rising each year.

We have been successful in increasing a high proportion of in-house placements this year, 68%



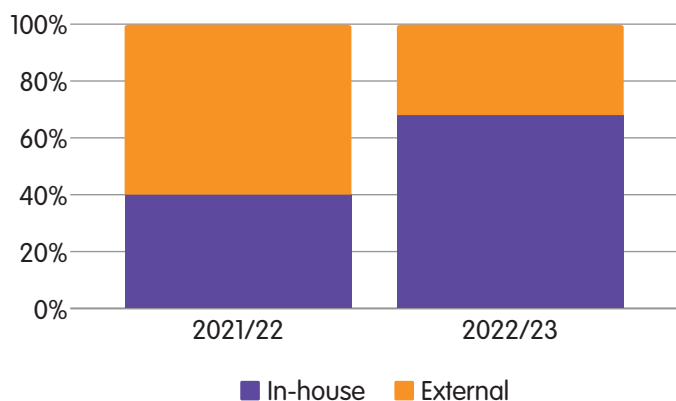
of children matched during 2022/23 went to live with an in-house family. This compares to 40% in 2021/22.

To increase in-house placements further we need to ensure we assess the adopters who are most likely to be matched with our children and talk to them from the earliest stages about the benefits of waiting for a link internally. We know that not every adopter will be matched in-house and we therefore support adopters who are ready to begin family finding on a wider basis, particularly where they have very specific matching requirements. However the majority of adopters appreciate the benefits of an in-house placement and are prepared to wait.

Location of placements

Regardless of whether an in-house placement is possible, we aim to place as many children as we can within London and the South East. This enables Adopt London and the child's social workers in the borough to provide the best possible support and to quickly pick up any difficulties that arise post-placement. We do not create delay for children by only considering local placements before looking at placements further afield. We consider the location of a placement as an important factor when weighing up the strengths or vulnerabilities of potential adoptive families. This year 88% of children matched for adoption went to live with adoptive families in London and the South East.

Type of adoptive placement for children matched



Location of adoptive placements



Children waiting for an adoptive family

The family finding team and children’s social work team in the borough meet regularly for Family Finding review meetings for each child to closely monitor progress, provide updates, and to ensure the plan for adoption remains right for the child. ALE are also invited to attend tracking meetings in the borough to provide information for senior managers who are monitoring permanency planning. ALE and borough senior managers speak regularly to escalate delays or concerns.

Adoptive matches made

The number of children who went to live in an adoptive placement has reduced again this year. The 2022/23 reduction in matches was expected as there were only 18 Placement Orders made in 2021/22. The overall number of matches for ALE provides a better indication of placement trends than the number of matches in each borough, which can seem volatile due to small numbers when viewed for a single year. As there were 22 Placement Orders made in 2022/23 and an increase in Best Interests Decisions, it is possible that adoptive matches may increase slightly in 2023/24.



Number of adoptive matches for all boroughs

2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
55	47	29	44	35	25

Children placed by borough

Borough	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
LBN	5	10	14	12	9
LBTH	10	7	14	11	6
LBH	11	4	4	4	2
LBBD	21	8	13	8	8
Total	47	29	45	35	25

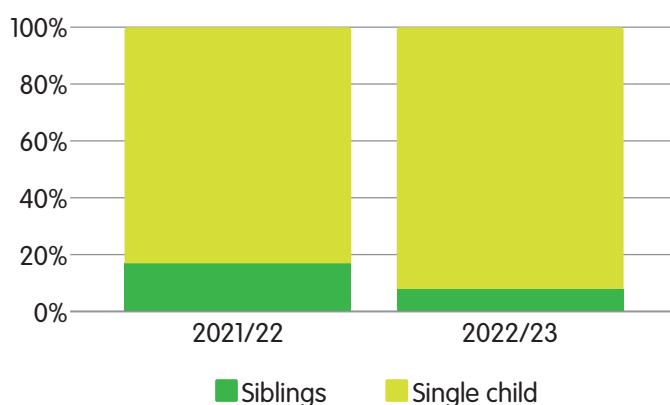
Characteristics of children matched for adoption

There has been a significant drop in the proportion of children who were matched for adoption with a sibling in 2022/23 compared to previous years, with only 1 sibling group being matched for adoption compared to 3 sibling groups in 2021/22. These figures do not include children who were matched with the adoptive parents of a sibling who had already been earlier placed for adoption. It is unclear why this number has reduced however, there are not a high number of sibling groups waiting for a match.

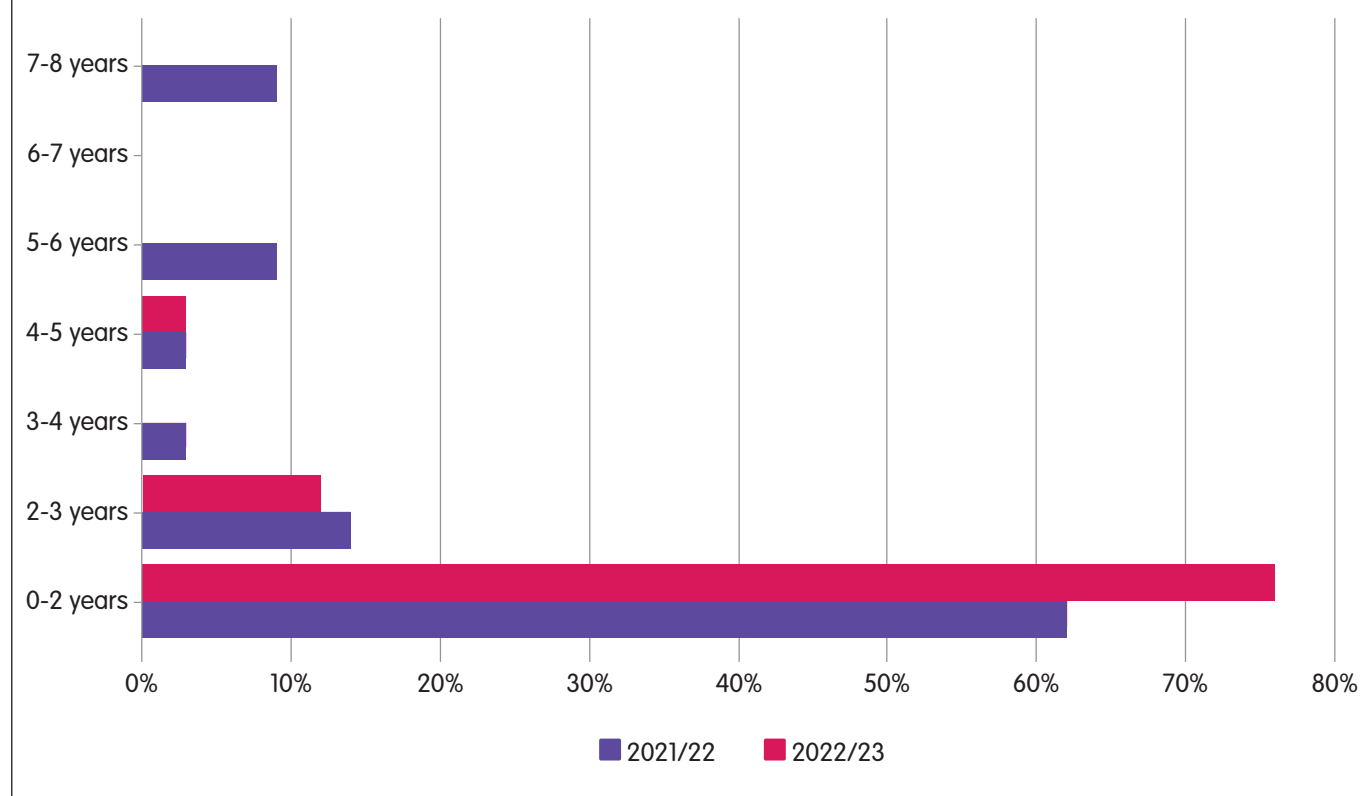
There are some changes this year in the ages of children matched for adoption, with an increase in the overall proportion of younger children. 76% of children matched fell within the 'under 2 years old' compared to 62% in 21/22. The oldest child to be matched was 5 years old, in 21/22 it was 7 years old. The majority of the children were placed under the age of 3 years old.

In this data children's ethnicities have been grouped into broader categories to illustrate the types of adoptive placements that are needed for us to be able to consider placements for children that are not fully trans-racial. There has been a reduction this year in the number of children of Black and mixed Black ethnicity matched for adoption and an increase in children from white ethnic backgrounds. However, these remain the most prominent ethnicities with Asian and mixed Asian ethnicity children making up a small proportion. When we look at the ethnicities of the children waiting for a match with a Placement Order, 42% of these children are from white backgrounds, 42% are from Black and mixed Black backgrounds, and 16% are from Asian and mixed Asian backgrounds – this suggests that the proportion of Black children may not

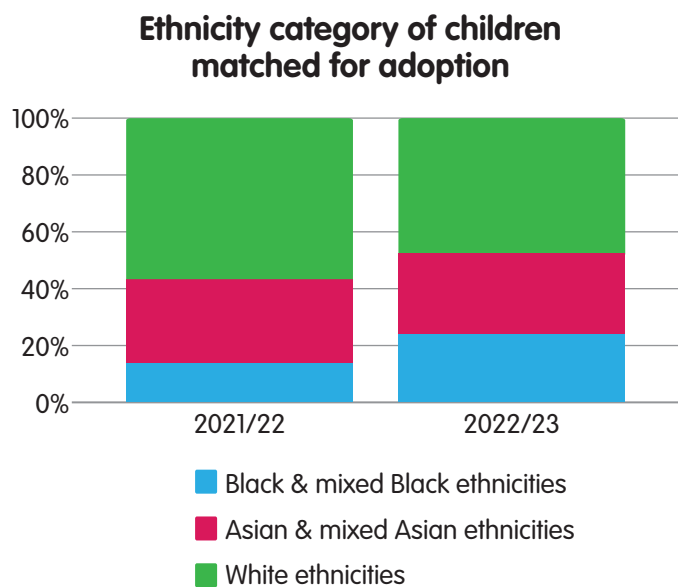
Children matched for adoption in sibling groups



Age of children placed



be significantly reduced from previous years, however these children are more likely than children from White backgrounds to be waiting for an adoptive match.



Early Permanence placements

There were 10 children placed for Early Permanence with prospective adoptive parents during 2022/23, 2 more than the previous year. There has been a significant increase in referrals for Early Permanence in early 2023-24. It is anticipated that these numbers will continue to rise. All of the Early Permanence placements that have concluded their court processes have resulted in the children remaining with their Early Permanence carers for adoption. However all adoptive parents are trained and prepared for the possibility that the outcome of care proceedings may be for the child to return to live with birth parents or a connected person.

As part of the London Early Permanence project, research has been undertaken into the barriers to Early Permanence in London. The researchers carried out 41 interviews with those involved in Early Permanence decision-making in London, including Agency Decision Makers, Heads of Service, legal representatives, members of the judiciary, CAFCASS Guardians, and Regional and Voluntary Adoption Agencies. The research highlighted that London is consistently the region with the lowest use of both adoption and Early Permanence in England, but also used Special Guardianship Orders below the national average – suggesting low levels of adoption are not directly related to high levels of Special Guardianship placements. Some of the key barriers to Early Permanence identified in the research were:

- Low levels of confidence in Early Permanence practice partially because adoptions themselves are so rare.
- Care proceedings delays which are acute in London increase the uncertainty and risk in Early Permanence placements.
- The strong emphasis on adoption as a last resort within London courts has an impact on both adoption and Early Permanence rates.
- Gaps in case tracking and Early Permanence planning can result in missed opportunities for the use of Early Permanence.
- A shortage of Early Permanence carers ready for placements, so not all referred children can be placed through this route.

A number of recommendations have been made which will be taken forward in the next phase of the project, including workshops for borough staff and engagement with judiciary and CAFCASS.

Providing support to adoptive families and others



The Adoption Support Team provide support to adoptive families and adopted adults living within one of the 4 boroughs or who were in the care of one of the 4 boroughs if post commencement regulations apply. Access to adoption support is through the duty service who will carry out an initial assessment and are also able to offer short-term support such as referring for counselling from PAC-UK and access to specialist training delivered through the core offer. Families requiring longer-term or more complex social work support are allocated to a social worker for a comprehensive assessment of their needs and recommendations for support.

For a number of families requiring longer-term social work support there maybe safeguarding issues and the risk of family breakdown. Every attempt is made to assess families as soon as possible in order to provide support and prevent family breakdown. For the period 2022/23 239 referrals were received by the duty service which is an average of 4.6 new referrals per week.

The Family Connections Team facilitate and support maintaining relationships between adoptive families and birth families for all adopted children and young people that were previously in the care of one of the 4 boroughs. The number of direct contacts (family time) episodes is 150 with 68 being facilitated by Adopt London East and of those, 52 are supervised (6 by 2 Family Connections Coordinators).

The demand for Adoption Support Services remains high and we have seen a rise in the

complexity of need.

The Adoption Support Service has also extended its core offer to work directly with young adults up until the age of 26. This includes the Family Connections Team who now carry out a review when a young person reaches 17 to plan the transition to them for any ongoing relationship with their birth family. This is complex work with multiple risk factors but has highlighted the need for ongoing support post 18 years.

The number of referrals from adopted adults has increased to 162 for the year with 86 of these progressing for a comprehensive assessment. The waiting list for adopted adults (access to record requests) has proved challenging to reduce. However, progress has been made in reducing the waiting period through having a designated worker who with the team manager reviews all adopted adults waiting allocation on a monthly basis. Due to Post Commencement Regulations and the decision for Adopt London East to provide Adoption Support to young adults the complexity of the work has significantly increased.

Despite the pressures within the service, many families do value the support that they receive from the team and have increased confidence and the necessary skills in managing their individual family circumstances.

Examples:



'Whilst I thanked you in person for all your help in obtaining my Court Records and discussing them with me I want to pass on my thanks in writing, your dedication and patience in helping me is much appreciated'

(feedback from adopted adult)

'I'd like to thank you for your patience and willingness to go the extra mile, it's very much appreciated'

(feedback from birth relative)

'Thanks for helping with the Letterbox over the last SIXTEEN years. We really appreciated it'

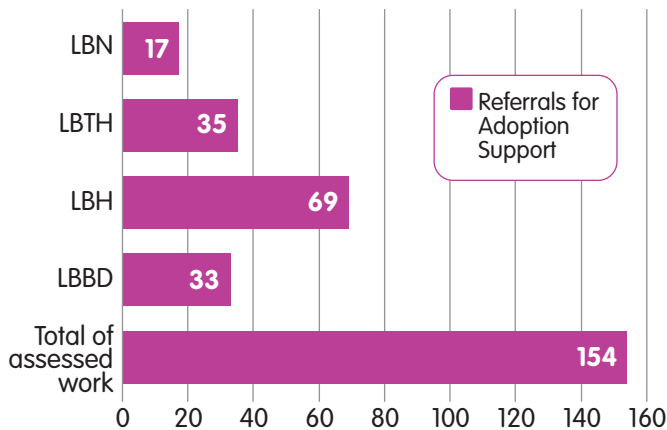
(feedback from adoptive parent).

The below graphs show the breakdown of work completed in Adoption Support:

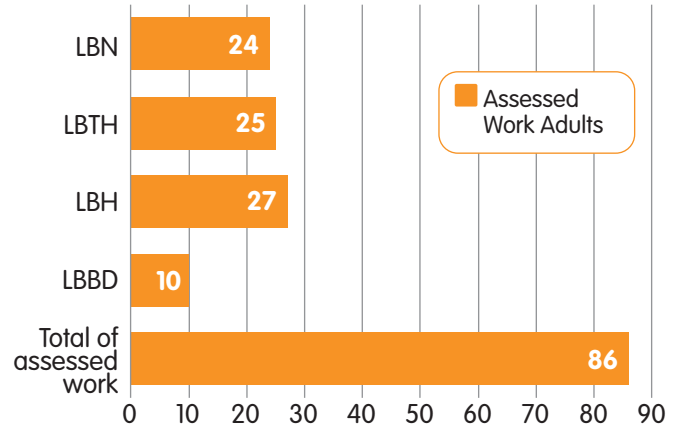
Unassessed work usually comes through to the Adoption Support Social Worker via duty. All cases are subjected to an Initial Assessment and the Team Manager then makes a decision as to the outcome of the assessment. At times advice and signposting is given whilst other cases will await further allocation for a comprehensive assessment, such cases are regularly reviewed by the Team Manager and if there are any urgent issues these are picked up by duty. Cases are allocated as soon as possible.

Once an Initial Assessment is completed by the Duty Social Worker adult cases needing a comprehensive assessment are placed on a waiting list to await allocation. However these are reviewed monthly by the team manager and a designated social worker.

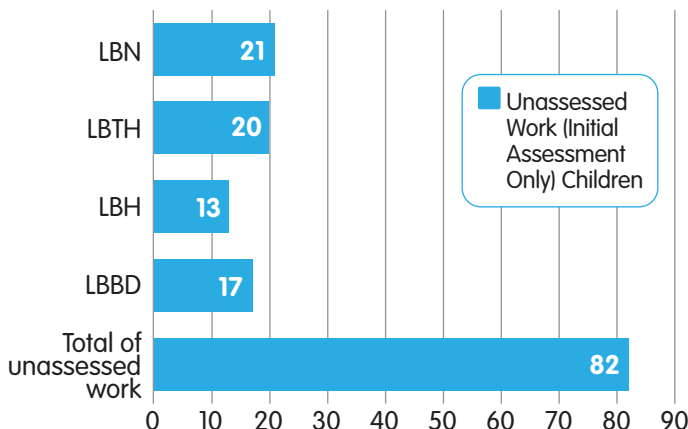
Assessed Work Children 2022/23



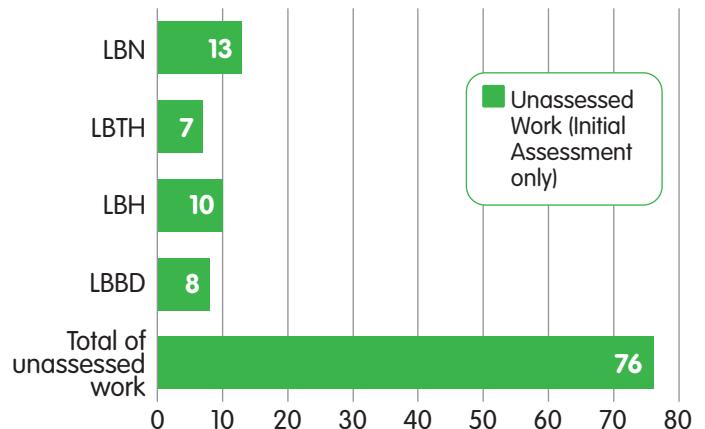
Assessed Work Adults 2022/23



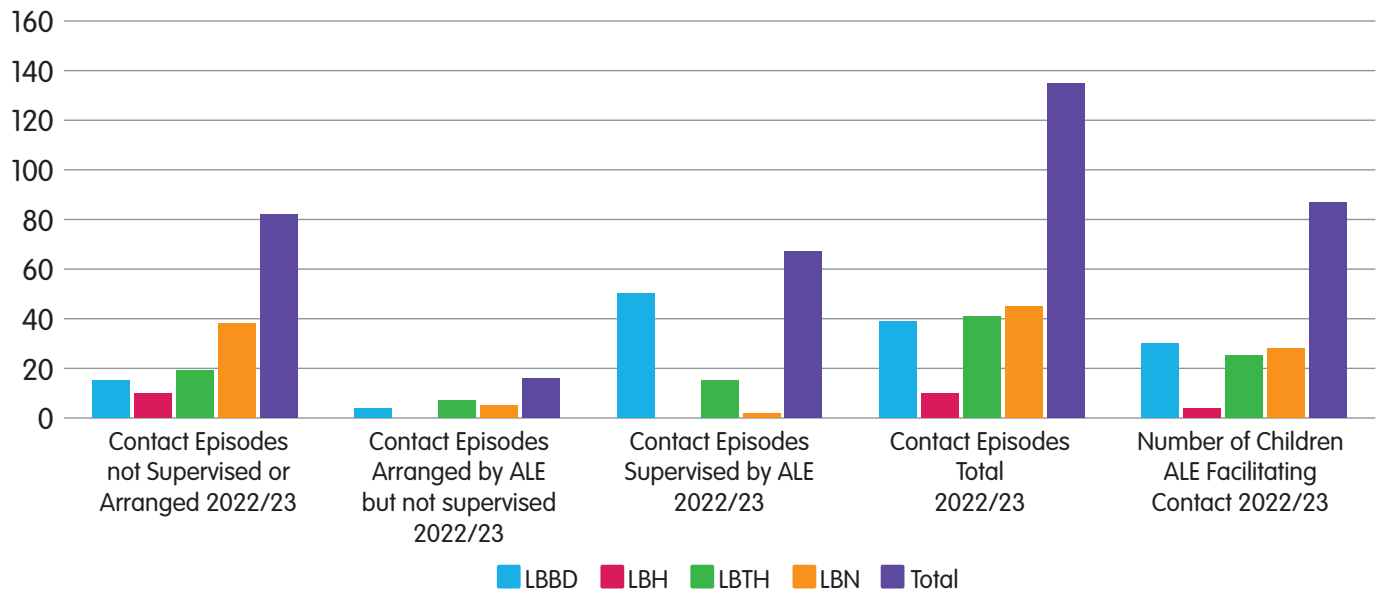
Unassessed Work (Initial Assessment Only) Children 2022/23



Unassessed Work (Initial Assessment Only) Adults 2022/23



Direct Family Time Contact



The total number of episodes of Family Time has increased from 95 in 2021/22 to 135 in 2022/23 and children who are maintaining relationships with their birth family has increased from 70 to 87. One explanation for this is likely the service extending its service to a young adults 26th birthday. However we are aware these figures could be higher due to a number of children not being referred to the service. A new procedure has since been put in place to address this.

LBBB continue to have the most Family Time sessions facilitated by Adopt London East including 6 episodes which need to be supervised by 2 Family Connections Coordinators. All supervised family time is subject to an annual review, so that wherever possible the supervision is stepped down.

Adoption Support Fund 2022/23

Number of Applications	Total Spend	Average Spend per Application
103	£281,047.50	£2,728.60

ASF applications have increased this year from 96 in 2021/22 to 103 in 2022/23 and the total spend from £246,377.14 to £281,047.50.

Alongside individual work, Adopt London East offer other group work programmes including Birth Mothers Group, Birth Father's Group, Adoptive Families Group and a Teenage Group. These groups are well attended and effective at offering support.

We continue to support adopters to access other support services such as those provided by 'We are Family' and PAC-UK in order to ring-fence support services for those families most in need. Our duty service and advice line provides an immediate source of support for our adoptive families prior to allocation.

Most families receiving direct support from Adopt London East have high levels of need. Adopt London East social workers work in partnership with workers from a range of organisations to support children on the edge of care and in need of safeguarding. In many cases Adopt London East social workers take a lead role in provision of direct support.

Recommendations

Review of 2022/23 recommendations

Identifying, preparing and approving adoptive parents

1. Further develop the Black Adoption Project to better understand the needs of Black and mixed Black ethnicity adopters, and to improve our services to them for the long term.

The Black Adoption Project has grown and become further established in 2022/23 and is now ready to begin piloting and evaluating changes to our practice, which will include improving services to Black prospective adopters.

2. Build Adopt London reach and engagement on social media.

Social media reach has increased this year, although due to the capacity issues in our assessment service we have used this to focus on raising awareness rather than increasing numbers of people making enquiries about adoption.

3. Re-design stage 1 of the Adoption process for adopters and review preparation training.

There is now a clear process in place for stage 1, the prep group has been subject to ongoing review and it will be further extended in 2023-24 to ensure that adopters are well prepared.

Planning for children

4. Implement recommendations from the Early Permanence in social work teams, to increase the use of EP for adoptive children.

Awareness has been increasing of Early Permanence, evidenced by an increase in referrals and an indication that Early Permanence placement levels are likely to be higher in 2023/24. Research into the barriers to Early Permanence in London will lead to further targeted work in this area in 2023/24.

Placing children with adoptive parents

5. Continue to focus on the number of children who move to in-house and local adoptive families.

The proportion of children who move to live with in-house adopters has increased this year. The proportion of children who go to live with adoptive families in London and the South East has increased also.

Providing support to adoptive families and others

6. **Increase access to support resources for everyone impacted by adoption through development of the Adopt London website.**
Updates and improvements on all major sections of the site have been completed this year. Significant work on the systems side of the website has been completed to prepare the site for structural changes in 2023/24 that will assist us in making the site more user-friendly for all clients, not just prospective adopters.
7. **Implement regular monitoring of adoption support work so that changes in demand can be reported.**
A regular snapshot audit of adoption support casework has now been in place for 12 months and is providing us with useful monitoring data and insights into the needs within the service so that support can be designed to target the most significant areas. This work is being completed across London.
8. **Launch the ALE Adoption Advice Line.**
This has now been established and is working well.

Working as part of Adopt London

9. **Strengthen arrangements through a legal partnership agreement for Adopt London.**
The legal partnership agreement has stalled this year due to complexity and capacity in the legal department leading on this work. It is hoped this can be progressed further in 2023/24.



Recommendations for 2023/24

Finding prospective adoptive parents

1. Continue to progress the aims and objectives of the Black Adoption Project, including implementation of new pilot projects to improve services to Black prospective adopters.
2. Re-establish strong adopter information sessions and enquiry processes as the capacity in the assessment team increases.

Preparing and approving adoptive parents

3. Through greater capacity in the assessment team, increase the number of approvals whilst maintaining high standard of assessments. There is a target of 25 approvals.

Planning for children

4. Implement recommendations from the Early Permanence research report into barriers to Early Permanence in London.

Placing children with adoptive parents

5. Continue to focus on the number of children who move to in-house and local adoptive families.

Providing support to adoptive families and others

6. Implement changes to the website which make it more accessible to all those accessing support, including adult adoptees, birth parents, and families with adopted children.
7. Begin to use audit data for Adopt London to compare and understand different levels of demand and models of adoption support to improve services across Adopt London.

Working as part of Adopt London

8. Strengthen arrangements through a legal partnership agreement for Adopt London. The legal partnership agreement has stalled this year due to complexity and capacity in the legal department leading on this work. It is hoped this can be progressed further in 2023/24.

Adopt London East

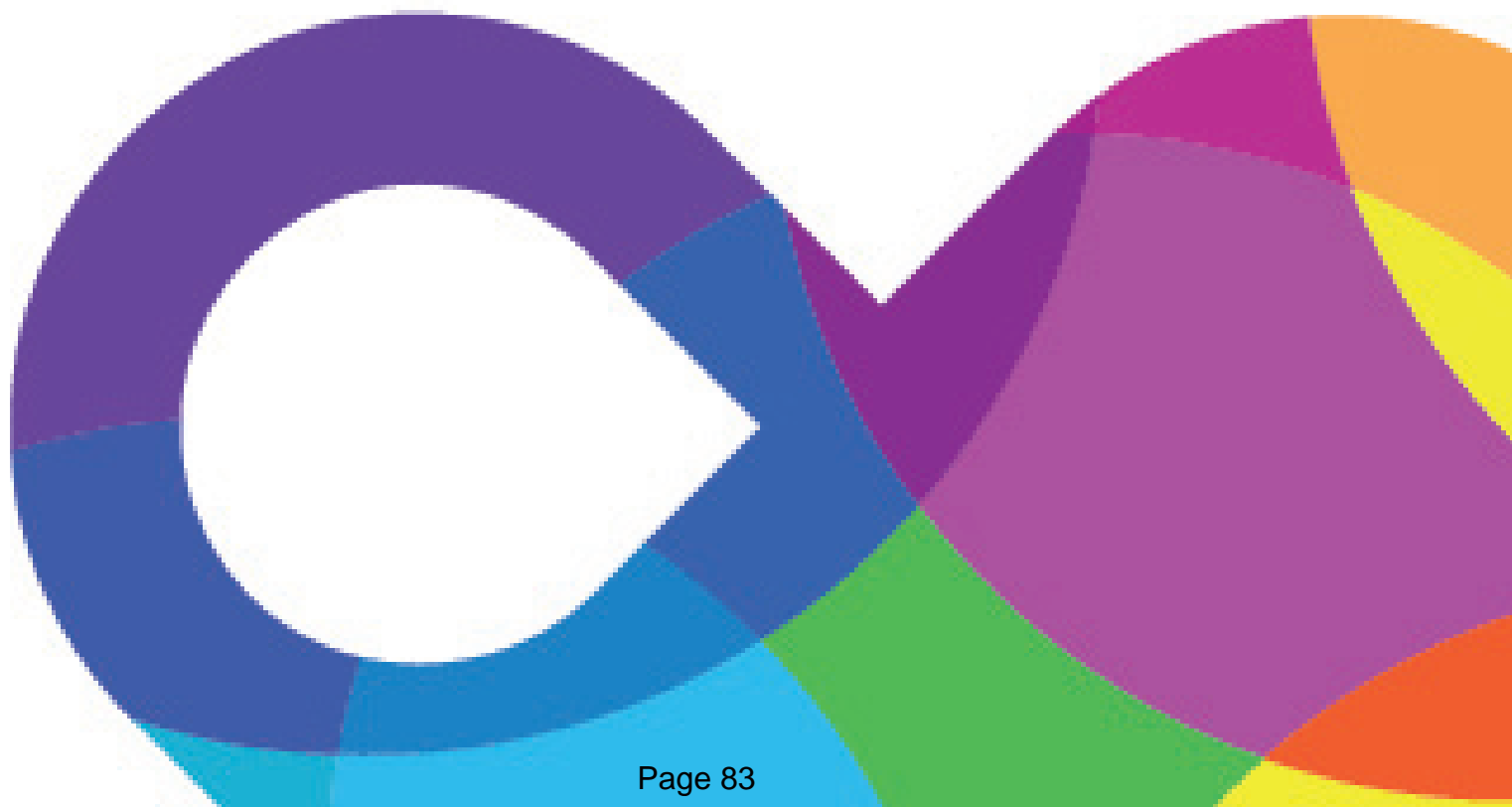
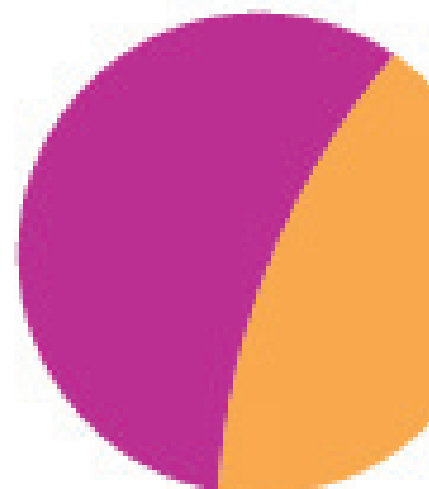
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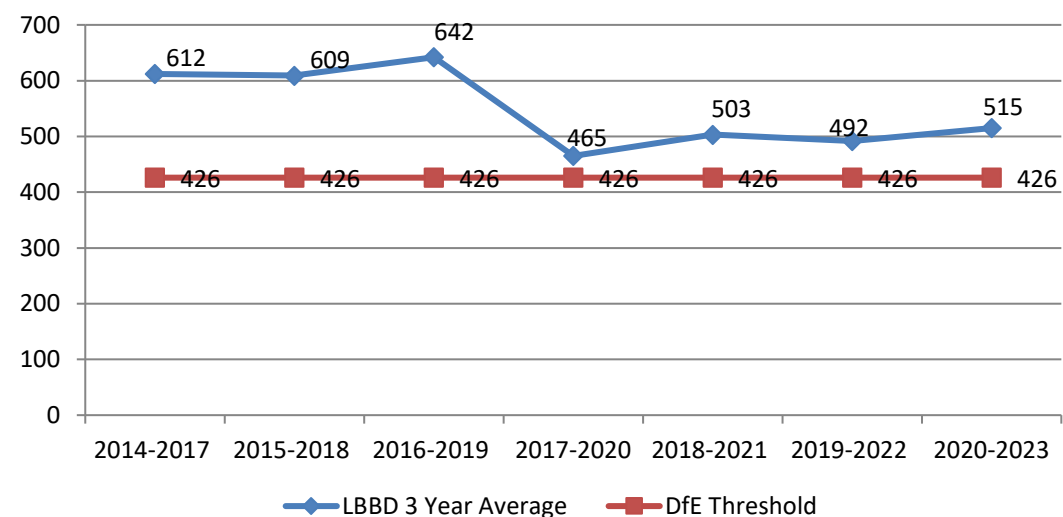


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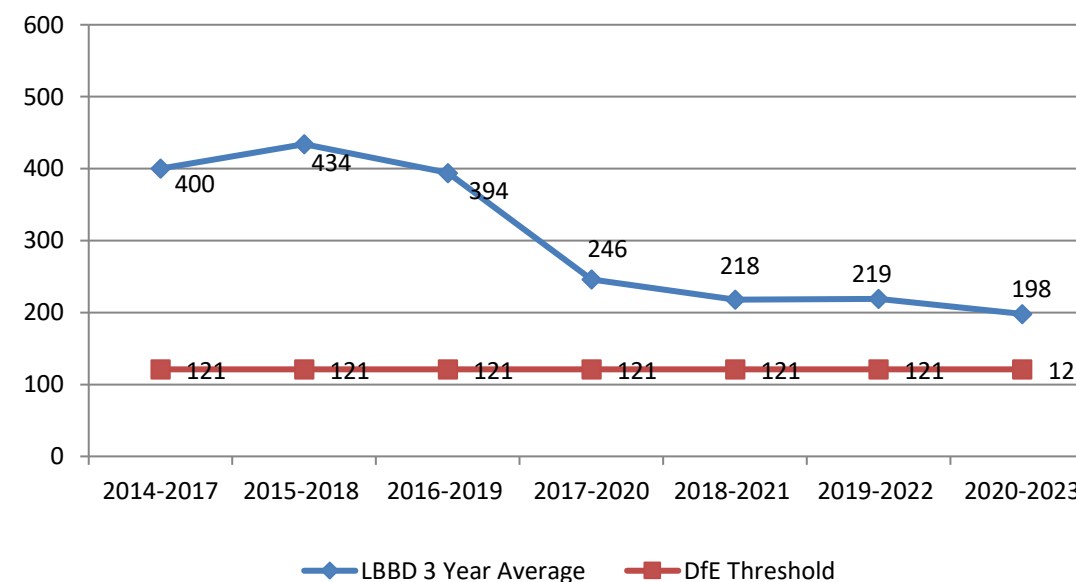
A10 Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)	LBBB 3 Year Average	DfE Threshold
2014-2017	612	426
2015-2018	609	426
2016-2019	642	426
2017-2020	465	426
2018-2021	503	426
2019-2022	492	426
2020-2023	515	426

A2 Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)	LBBB 3 Year Average	DfE Threshold
2014-2017	400	121
2015-2018	434	121
2016-2019	394	121
2017-2020	246	121
2018-2021	218	121
2019-2022	219	121
2020-2023	198	121

A10 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)



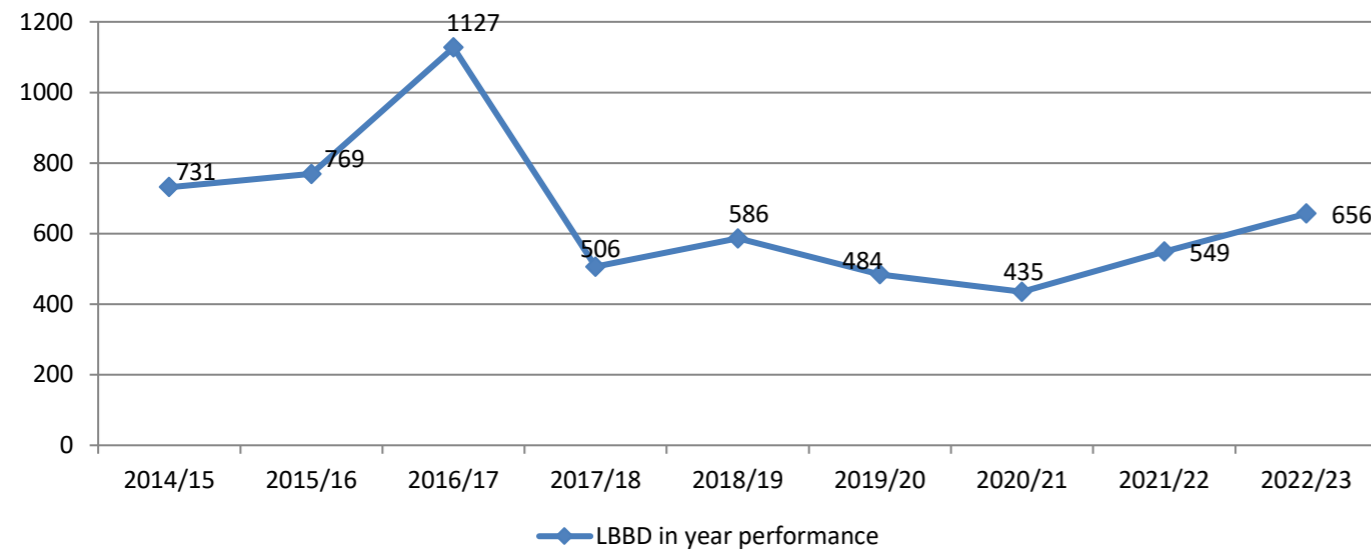
A2 - Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)



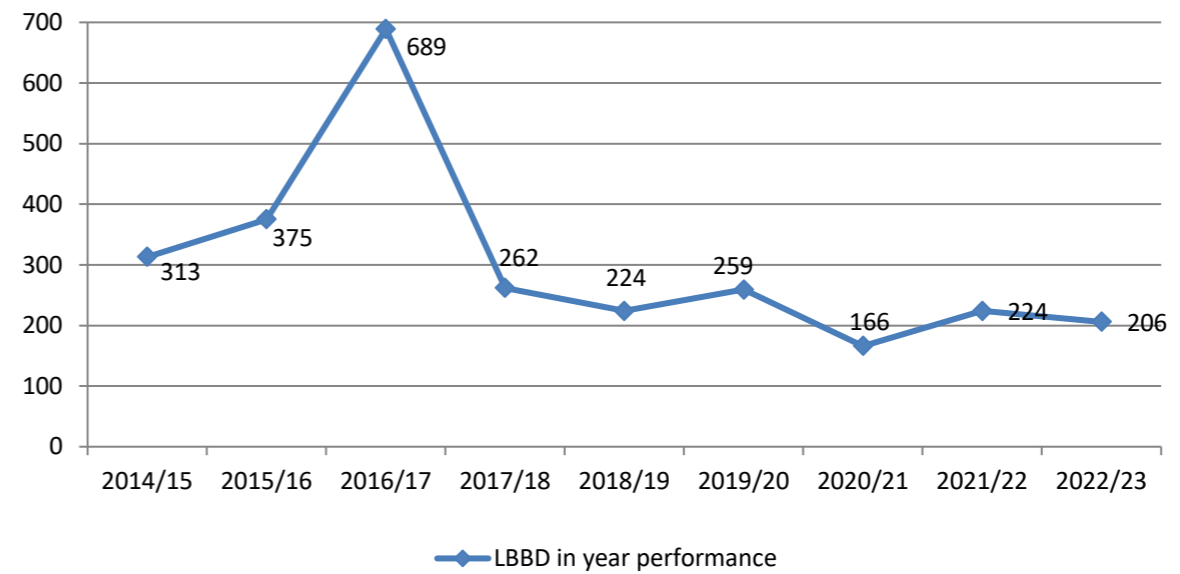
A10 Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)	LBBB in year performance
2014/15	731
2015/16	769
2016/17	1127
2017/18	506
2018/19	586
2019/20	484
2020/21	435
2021/22	549
2022/23	656

A2 Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)	LBBB in year performance
2014/15	313
2015/16	375
2016/17	689
2017/18	262
2018/19	224
2019/20	259
2020/21	166
2021/22	224
2022/23	206

A10 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)



A2 - Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)



ASSEMBLY

31 January 2024

Title: Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25	
Report of the Cabinet Members for Finance, Growth and Core Services and Community Leadership and Engagement	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: Yes
Report Authors: James Johnston, Welfare Service Manager & Donna Radley, Head of Welfare	Contact Details: james.johnston@lbbd.gov.uk donna.radley@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Director: Stephen McGinnes, Director of Support & Collections	
Accountable Executive Team Director: Fiona Taylor, Chief Executive	
<p>Summary</p> <p>The Council has a statutory duty to consider annually whether to revise its Local Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for working age recipients, replace it with another scheme or retain the current scheme. This excludes the scheme that exists for pension age recipients which is a nationally prescribed scheme and cannot be varied locally.</p> <p>At its meeting on the 17 October 2023 (Minute 47 refers) the Cabinet agreed to support the recommended 'income banded discount' CTS scheme (Model 1) as set out in sections 1.20 – 1.22.22 of this report, as the Council's draft proposed replacement CTS scheme for 2024/25 and agreed to the commencement of a public consultation on these proposals.</p> <p>Due to the changes proposed to the CTS scheme, it was necessary for a public consultation to be undertaken in advance, which was carried out between 23 October 2023 and 23 November 2023.</p> <p>This report updates on the outcome of the public consultation and provides final recommendations for the replacement of the CTS scheme 2024/25.</p> <p>A detailed analysis of the responses to the CTS consultation is set out at Appendix 1. This reflects support for the proposal to implement a replacement CTS scheme for 2024/25 as set out.</p> <p>The Assembly has a legal duty to approve the CTS scheme by 1 March 2024 each year.</p> <p>The Cabinet is to consider this report at its meeting on 23 January 2024 (the date of publication of this Assembly agenda). Any issues arising from the Cabinet meeting will be reported at the Assembly meeting.</p>	

Recommendation(s)

The Assembly is recommended to:

- (i) Agree, in light of the positive response to the public consultation, to adopt Model 1 as set out in sections 1.17 – 1.20 of the report as the Council's replacement Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024/25; and
- (ii) Agree the carry forward of £250,000 Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Funding, provided within the Welfare Reserve, from 2023/24 to 2024/25.

Reason(s)

To support the Council in how it delivers and supports low-income residents with a fair and equitable approach to the management of their Council Tax costs through the core financial support provided by the CTS scheme through the implementation of a replacement scheme ensuring its effective and efficient administration that is fit for purpose in future years.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Welfare Reform Act in 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from April 2013 and, in its place, support took the form of a local Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS). For working age customers, the scheme is determined by the Billing Authority and for those of pension age it is prescribed by legislation. The scheme that exists for pension age recipients is a national scheme and this cannot be varied at a local level. Prescribed regulation changes to the pension age scheme must be applied every financial year. The national pension age scheme and the default CTS scheme very much mirrors the former means tested national benefit scheme.
- 1.2 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 contains provisions for the setting up of local support schemes. The current scheme in Barking & Dagenham has been based around the default CTS Scheme and has been ratified by Assembly.
- 1.3 The Council must consider whether to revise or replace its CTS scheme each financial year, in accordance with requirements of schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for working age recipients. However, it does not actually have to revise or replace its scheme and can choose to retain the scheme unchanged from the prior financial year.
- 1.4 In order to change its scheme, the Council is required by law to:
 - Consult with the major precepting authorities.
 - Consult with other persons it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme including with the public on any draft scheme.
- 1.5 Local schemes must take account of and support the following principles:
 - Work incentives and avoid disincentives for those moving into work.
 - The Council's duties to protect vulnerable people (under the Equality Act 2010, the Care Act 2014, the Child Poverty Act 2010 and the Housing Act 1996).

- The Armed Forces Covenant.

1.6 The current CTS scheme in operation retains many of the core components of the former means tested national benefit scheme (CTB) and remains aligned with the remaining Housing Benefit (HB) caseload and its administration, with a number of local provisions applied:

- The support for claimants is based on each individual's ability to pay through a means tested approach.
- Pensioners are protected under the nationally prescribed pension age CTS scheme and must be able to receive up to a 100% reduction under the national scheme rules.
- A "minimum payment" of 15% of their Council Tax liability is required for all working age claimants in Barking & Dagenham irrespective of their financial circumstances. This means maximum support is limited to 85% of the Council Tax bill.
- Those who fall under the working age scheme and with capital in excess of £10,000 are not eligible for CTS under this scheme.
- Limiting CTS to 2 children born after 1 May 2017 for all Universal Credit (UC) claimants in line with welfare reform.
- Note the 2 children limit does not currently apply to claimants on older legacy benefits within the current CTS scheme which does not apply a restriction. This creates an inequitable approach dependant on the type of benefit received.
- Accepting a new application for Universal Credit (UC) as an application for CTS without the requirement for a separate application made to the Council.

1.7 The main benefits of keeping the scheme aligned with HB administration were:

- HB & CTS was processed from one application form.
- The rules and calculations between HB & CTS were similar for both staff and residents.
- Administration costs were shared and relied on the HB administration grant via the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP).
- Award notices were generated as one notification due to being processed together.

1.8 The Council went to live to 'Full Service Universal Credit' in December 2018. From this date no new claims for HB have been accepted from working age claimants (excludes temporary & specified accommodation). This means that the main benefits of keeping the scheme aligned to HB have increasingly been lost and the link with administration of HB broken.

1.9 New claimants and those who experience a 'triggering' change in circumstances must now apply for UC. This is administered by the DWP and includes an amount towards housing costs, and they must apply to the Council for CTS separately.

1.10 Managed migration of the remaining Legacy Benefit case load to UC is now scheduled to commence in April 2024. This will increasingly affect the administration of the CTS scheme.

1.11 The impact of UC on the administration of the current CTS scheme can be summarised as follows:

- Lower support (CTS award)
 - A higher volume of changes (CTS award)
 - Repeated changes to Council Tax instalments for payment
- 1.12 The requirement to consider a replacement CTS scheme means the Council should now consider the implementation of an income banded discount CTS scheme to address some of the issues that arise with the retention of the current CTS scheme.
- 1.13 An income banded discount scheme provides support based on bands of income and provides a percentage discount off the Council Tax bill (the CTS award). The number of discount bands, the level of discount and income thresholds can all be varied. Income banded discount schemes can be designed to be as simple or as complex as desired, can be made more or less generous and designed to support protected groups if required. Re-assessment of cases will only be required if income crosses one of the income band thresholds.
- 1.14 An income banded CTS scheme can be designed to assist households with low incomes and ensure that their Council Tax liability is manageable and fair varying support based on a targeted approach to residents in line with Council objectives and Borough manifestos.
- 1.15 The scheme will be reviewed annually to reflect changing levels of demand, changes in the wider welfare system and to ensure that it remains affordable to the Council.
- 1.16 This paper sets out an overview of the current scheme, the impact of retaining the current scheme, proposals to implement an income banded discount scheme and the impact of this replacement scheme.
- 1.17 **The proposed approach for the 2024/25 Council Tax Support scheme**
- 1.17.1 In view of the issues with the retaining of the current scheme into 2024/25 as set out in the October Cabinet paper and taking account of the drivers for change, it is proposed that an alternative approach be taken for a replacement scheme in 2024/25.
- 1.17.2 The main objectives of this scheme change can be summarised as follows:
- Is affordable and maintains a fiscally cost neutral position (within tolerance) from natural increases in the cost of retaining the current scheme into 2024/25.
 - Simplifies the scheme making it easy for residents to understand and access.
 - Provides and protects the maximum level of support for all low-income households.
 - Removes the requirement to continually make changes in awards making support more consistent and provides stability on managing household budgets.
 - Improves how the scheme works with the UC system.
 - Creates a scheme that remains fair and equitable to all residents, requiring a fair contribution towards Council Tax from those who can pay while protecting the most vulnerable.

- Encourages and incentivises employment.
- Builds in capacity to better manage an increase in demand for the scheme (increased automations and more efficient administration).

1.17.3 This approach will fundamentally redesign the scheme.

1.18 The proposed income banded discount scheme for 2024/25 (Model 1)

1.18.1 The key characteristics of the proposed income banded discount scheme for 2024/25 can be summarised as follows:

- Income band thresholds based on all household income with a set discount % reduction in the Council Tax bill (the CTS award).
- The maximum award is set at 85% (in line with the current scheme) requiring a 15% minimum payment for all applicants.
- The following incomes are disregarded in-full from the assessment of total household income:
 - Housing Benefit
 - UC Housing costs
 - UC Childcare support
 - UC limited capacity for work
 - UC Carers element
 - UC disabled child element
 - Child Benefit
 - War Pensions
 - Personal Independence Payment (PIP) & Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
 - Armed forces compensation payments
 - Child maintenance
 - Guardian/Fostering allowance
- All other household incomes are taken into account.
- Flat rate non-dependant adult deductions of £7.50 per week (maintaining no deduction for those in receipt of disability benefits to mirror the current scheme) are applied.
- Household size allowance is restricted to 2 children (to mirror UC and welfare reform). This aspect will be addressed in the Equalities Impact Assessment.
- The capital limit for eligibility to the scheme is reduced to £6,000 (currently £10,000).

1.18.2 The scheme proposes the following income bands thresholds and discounts:

Band	Discount	Single (Weekly net income)	Couple (Weekly net income)	Single 1+ Children addition	Single 2+ Children addition	Couple 1+ Children addition	Couple 2+ Children addition
1	85%	£0-£96	£0-£164	£0 - £184	£0 - £284	£0 - £252	£0 - £352
2	70%	£96 - £140	£164 - £208	£184 - £228	£284 - £338	£252 - £296	£352 - £406
3	55%	£140 - £168	£208 - £238	£228 - £262	£338 - £382	£296 - £334	£406 - £456
4	40%	£168 - £188	£238 - £260	£262 - £296	£382 - £426	£334 - £370	£456 - £506
5	25%	£188 - £208	£260 - £282	£296 - £320	£426 - £460	£370 - £396	£506 - £542
6	15%	£208 - £240	£282 - £316	£320 - £376	£460 - £506	£396 - £452	£542 - £605

- 1.18.3 Income band thresholds and discounts are balanced against scheme affordability and overall scheme objectives.
- 1.18.4 The current scheme applies a means tested approach to non-dependant (ND) adults in the household that requires significant administration.
- 1.18.5 The application of a flat rate non-dependant deduction of £7.50 per week, while maintaining the current exemptions due to receipt of disability benefits, will significantly simplify the administrative process required.
- 1.18.6 This change will increase the level of the deduction applied compared to the anticipated deductions from the current scheme into 2024/25. This represents a cost saving in expenditure on the scheme.
- 1.18.7 The capital limit threshold is reduced to £6,000. Any applicant with capital that exceeds £6,000 will not be eligible for the scheme. This simplifies the approach with the majority of applicants holding capital under the threshold and the £6,000 limit continues to protect applicants with low levels of capital that will not require verification. Calculations for assumed tariff incomes from capital held will no longer be required.

1.19 The impact of the proposed income banded discount scheme (Model 1)

- 1.19.1 Model 1 is a banded income discount scheme which takes into account all household income (excluding disregarded incomes) and size (restricted to 2 children).
- 1.19.2 Model 1 compared to the current scheme in 2023/24 (Internal modelling (Capita Academy modelling tool)):

Household Type	Number of cases	Current scheme Expenditure 2023/24	Proposed income banded scheme Expenditure 2023/24	Saving	Saving %
Elderly	4503	£5,362,681.46	£5,370,851.26	£8,170.02	0.15%
Couple	419	£480,286.19	£446,603.01	-£33,683.20	-7.01%
Couple & 1 Child +	290	£274,670.87	£314,399.96	£39,729.08	14.46%
Couple & 2 Child +	1102	£1,158,991.53	£1,159,386.69	£395.15	0.03%
Single	2300	£2,156,829.67	£2,098,220.49	-£58,609.22	-2.72%
Single & 1 Child +	1292	£1,174,619.68	£1,182,138.84	£7,519.13	0.64%
Single & 2 Child +	2171	£2,069,571.99	£2,080,318.67	£10,746.62	0.52%
Passported	3047	£3,404,175.48	£3,423,135.89	£18,960.38	0.56%
Grand Total	15124	£16,081,826.87	£16,075,054.80	-£6,772.04	-0.04%

- 1.19.3 The income banded scheme has been modelled against a balanced cost neutral Position (within a tolerance) based on a comparison with current scheme expenditure.
- 1.19.4 This has been modelled at an approximate cost saving of £6,772.04 were the Scheme to have been implemented within the current financial year.
- 1.19.5 This provides a breakdown of the current CTS expenditure by household type as a comparison against the proposed income banded scheme.
- 1.19.6 The 'passported' household type refers to those claimants in receipt of old-style legacy benefits such as Employment Support Allowance or Income Support which 'passport' the claim award to the maximum amount of 85% automatically.
- 1.19.7 The proposed scheme has a fiscally neutral cost against the current scheme expenditure within the current financial year and this would be expected to be replicated into the 2024/25 financial year balanced against the expected expenditure if the current scheme were to be retained, taking account of natural variations in expenditure due to demand.
- 1.19.8 External modelling by our third party partner Policy & Practice has been used to forecast the anticipated cost of retaining the current scheme into 2024/25 as this cannot be modelled internally, and is set out at Appendix 4.
- 1.19.9 This forecast modelling has also been used to model the impact of implementing the proposed income banded discount scheme into 2024/25.

	Model 1 cost 2024/25	Current scheme projected cost 2024/25	Comparison to current scheme 2024/25	Change
All working age	£11,371,562.00	£11,334,081.00	+£37,481.00	0.33%
Pension age	£5,677,251.00	£5,677,251.00	£0	0%
Total	£17,048,813.00	£17,011,332.00	+£37,481.00	0.22%

All working age (breakdown)	Model 1 cost 2024/25	Current scheme projected cost 2024/25	Comparison to current scheme 2024/25	Change
Group	£/annum	£/annum	Change (£/annum)	Change (%)
UC	£6,635,703.00	£6,556,492.00	+£79,211	1.21%
Legacy Benefits	£4,735,860.00	£4,777,590.00	-£41,730	-0.87%
Total	£11,371,562.00	£11,334,081.00	+£37,481	0.33%

- 1.19.10 Model 1 increases total scheme costs by £37,481 in comparison to the projected current scheme expenditure in 2024/25. This is 0.22%.

- 1.19.11 This sets the implementation of the proposed scheme within a tolerance of the cost neutral position against anticipated expenditure were the current scheme to be retained.
- 1.19.12 Internal modelling has demonstrated a fiscally neutral position for model in comparison with current expenditure 2023/24. This position is expected to be maintained into 2024/25 and is substantiated by the external modelling.
- 1.19.13 Variances in external modelling due to the type of modelling engine used and interpretation of data sets are an accepted risk and may result in actual expenditure being higher or lower than projected.
- 1.19.14 Increased demand and expenditure on the scheme into 2023/24 may also result in higher than forecasted expenditure figures.
- 1.19.15 Expenditure figures and forecasting for 2024/25 are based on June 2023 CTS caseload and expenditure.
- 1.19.16 Further analysis on the impact of the proposed replacement scheme is contained in the Policy & Practice report (Appendix 4) and Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 3)
- 1.19.17 The overall impact of the proposed new scheme increases support as an average for 94% of the existing caseload. Legacy benefits on average will see slightly lower levels of support (-0.18%) however the scheme will provide greater support than the current scheme for UC claimants (+1.21%)
- 1.19.18 An average reduction in support for existing legacy benefit claimants should be considered in light of planned migration to UC that will reduce and end receipt of these benefits during 2024 (with some exemptions for ESA claimants).
- 1.19.19 A scheme that better supports claimants on UC, while protecting the most vulnerable is recommended.
- 1.19.20 The simplicity of the proposed new scheme approach will help to address some of the problems associated with the administration of the current scheme as set out in the October Cabinet paper.
- 1.20 Transition to the new scheme and the exceptional hardship scheme (Council Tax Discretionary Relief - CTD)**
- 1.20.1 The Council must acknowledge that any scheme changes and transition to a new scheme will result in changed awards for some applicants.
- 1.20.2 The Council must consider with any revision to the scheme that has the effect of reducing or removing a deduction for claimants whether any transitional protection is applicable as it sees fit. This is a statutory obligation under schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- 1.20.3 A CTD scheme supports the Council position that no transitional protection is required for the scheme changes proposed as an option to support applicants affected by the change is available.

- 1.20.4 Although the new scheme has been designed to protect the most vulnerable there will be some applicants who gain support, and some who lose support.
- 1.20.5 Agreement will be required on any level of funding for the DCTR scheme.
- 1.20.6 A loss of funding for the CTDR scheme will result in the Council having less available means to mitigate issues that arise for applicants who suffer a loss of award from the change in scheme.
- 1.20.7 The Council has determined that no transitional protection is required for the scheme change.
- 1.20.8 It is recommended that the Council agree a provision of funding for the CTDR scheme to ensure mitigations are available through the scheme to support affected applicants during the 2024/25 financial year.
- 1.20.9 The Council made a significant investment into the CTDR fund for 2023/24 from the welfare reserve fund. It is proposed that a % of this fund is ring fenced and utilised in 2024/25.
- 1.20.10 This will ensure sufficient support is available to support applicants affected by the scheme change while ensuring support also remains available for other residents struggling with their Council Tax costs.

2. Consultation Process

- 2.1 Prior to the implementation of any change to the CTS scheme the Council is required to consult with the residents of the borough. The guiding principles that have been established through case law for fair consultation are as follows:
- The consultation must be carried out at an early stage when the proposals are still at a formative stage.
 - Sufficient information on the reasons for the decision must be provided to enable the consultees to carry out a reasonable consideration of the issues and to respond.
 - Adequate time must be given for consideration and responses to be made.
 - The results of the consultation must be properly taken into account in finalising any decision.
- 2.2 There is also a duty to consult with the major precept authorities who are statutory consultees.
- 2.3 The aims of any consultation should be to:
- Inform residents and help them understand the impact of the proposals.
 - Confirm why the proposals are being made.
 - Detail any alternative proposals.
 - Give purposeful consideration to realistic alternative proposals presented.
 - Obtain feedback on whether residents support the proposals.

- 2.4 A consultation on proposed changes to the CTS scheme was run between 23 October 2023 and 24 November 2023.
- 2.5 The consultation was run through an online survey form and was available and open to all Barking & Dagenham residents and stakeholders with an interest in the operation of the CTS scheme. Paper forms were also available on request.
- 2.6 The survey provided residents with an overview of the proposals to change the scheme and provided a separate policy document with further detail. It asked residents and stakeholders their opinions and views on replacing the current scheme with an income banded discount scheme for 2024/25 (Model 1).
- 2.7 The consultation covered the following:
- **Part 1:** The introduction of an income-based banded discount scheme (the income bands)
 - **Part 2:** Disregarding certain benefits, incomes and elements of Universal Credit.
 - **Part 3:** The household size will be limited to a maximum of two dependent children allowances for all applicants within the scheme when calculating the CTS award.
 - **Part 4:** Introducing one deduction amount of £7.50 per week for all adults in the household removing different levels of deductions.
 - **Part 5:** Reducing the capital and savings limit to £6,000 and removing the assumed income from capital (tariff income) from the calculation of CTS.
 - **Part 6:** Sending notification letters.
 - **Part 7:** Making the Council Tax Discretionary Relief fund available for residents to apply for additional financial support if they are affected by the change in the scheme.
 - **Part 8:** Alternative options to changing the CTS scheme.
 - **Part 9:** Final comments and suggestions on the proposed CTS scheme
- 2.8 The survey was run through the Citizens Alliance website.
- 2.9 The consultation was widely promoted on the Citizens Alliance Network website alongside the main Council website. Social media was used to promote and advertise the consultation on Council Facebook and Twitter pages with additional paid promotions to increase the reach. Promotion was also undertaken on the BD collective to ensure that other organisations were aware of the proposals. E-newsletters and press releases were issued.
- 2.10 Direct engagement was sought with key voluntary sector partners CAB & DABD and their responses are available in Appendix 1 & 2. This ensured their engagement in the consultation process.
- 2.11 Key internal teams such as Homes & Money Hub were consulted on the proposals.
- 2.12 All CTS claimants were written to directly (including Pensioners) to explain possible changes to their CTS award due to the proposed scheme change for 2024/25. This provided a basic overview of the proposed changes and a before/after CTS calculation to show how their actual award might change under

the new scheme. The letter invited consultation and feedback on the proposed changes.

- 2.13 All CTS award notification letters were amended to promote the consultation.
- 2.14 Two public workshops were held at Barking & Dagenham Learning Centre to enable residents to engage with the proposals in person and these sessions were widely promoted to ensure visibility and attendance. A total of 57 residents were seen at these workshops. The workshops provided a good opportunity to engage with residents to explain the proposals and discuss how the changes affected them individually.
- 2.15 Outreach support was available to support any residents with the completion of the survey who were digitally excluded and unable to complete the survey online.
- 2.16 The welfare Service was also open for any other enquiries or support that was required to complete the survey.

3. Consultation Feedback

- 3.1 A total of 368 completed surveys were received.
- 3.2 Appendix 1 the 'Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25 Consultation Report' provides a detailed analysis of the responses to the consultation.
- 3.3 The consultation had:
 - 7,550 visits
 - 5,772 visited at least 1 page.
 - 1,059 visited multiple pages.
 - 12,238 page views
 - 305 downloaded the policy document.
 - 725 visited the policy section.
- 3.4 The outcome of the consultation survey results can be summarised as follows:
 - 72% of respondents were in receipt of CTS
 - 56% of respondents identified as disabled or having a health issue
 - 66% of respondents were female
 - 38.5% of respondents were from an ethnic background
 - 79% of respondents read the background information on the change proposed
 - **Part 1:** 44% of respondents agreed with the income thresholds for the income bands. The remaining % did not know or disagreed.
 - **Part 2:** 63% of respondents agreed with disregarding certain benefits and incomes. The remaining % did not know or disagreed.
 - **Part 3:** 51% of respondents agreed with limiting the household size to a maximum of 2 children. The remaining % did not know or disagreed.
 - **Part 4:** 53% of respondents agreed with introducing a flat rate non-dependant deduction. The remaining % did not know or disagreed.
 - **Part 5:** 49% of respondents agreed with reducing the capital limit to £6,000. The remaining % did not know or disagreed.

- **Part 6:** 65% of respondents agreed with sending less notification letters. The remaining % did not know or disagreed.
 - **Part 7:** 73.1% of respondents agreed with making a DCTR fund available. The remaining % did not know or disagreed.
 - **Part 8:** 50.5% of respondents agreed with the implementation of the replacement CTS scheme. The remaining % did not know or disagreed.
- 3.5 A significant number of comments were made by respondents. Those who completed the survey and agreed with the proposals tended to make less comments than those who disagreed.
- 3.6 Questions were raised against the overall level of the income band thresholds with concern that these were too low and would not sufficiently support low income and vulnerable residents.
- 3.7 The proposed scheme makes significant provision to disregard elements of Universal Credit to support vulnerable residents, including the Carer Element, no further disregards are applied for Carers Allowance and the impact on Carers received several comments expressing concern at support for this demographic.
- 3.8 A removal of disability premiums present within the current scheme (means testing) which may reduce the award under the proposed scheme was raised and will affect some claimants with protected characteristics.
- 3.9 The simplification of the scheme received positive comments.
- 3.10 As part of the feedback received from the consultation it is recommended that further household income disregards be applied.
- 3.11 It is proposed that child maintenance payments, guardian allowances, fostering allowances and military compensation payments are now disregarded as household income. This will mirror UC rules and further support households in receipt of these incomes.
- 3.12 109 cases were identified as currently in receipt of child maintenance. the cost of disregarding this income is costed at £8,734.12.
- 3.13 13 cases were identified as currently in receipt of fostering/guardianship allowances. The cost of disregarding the income is costed at £5,920.02.
- 3.14 No cases were identified with military compensation payments. There is no current financial implication.
- 3.15 As the cost of implementing these further disregards is low as part of consultation feedback it is recommended this be adopted as part of the proposed scheme.
- 3.16 Feedback was received from our key voluntary sector partners. DABD were supportive of the proposals as a whole but raised concern over the 2-child and capital limits. CAB provided feedback on the online form and also in a separate document. This raised significant concerns over the detail and impact of the scheme on those who may lose support. CAB disagreed with the loss of the means tested approach (the current scheme) and did not recognise the reasons to

change the scheme as set out. A response on behalf of the Council has been issued and is awaiting further feedback.

- 3.17 A greater majority of respondents agreed with each part of the consultation than disagreed with the proposals.
- 3.18 50.5% agreed with implementing the proposed scheme with only 21.2% disagreeing. 28.3% did not know.
- 3.19 The consultation has confirmed that overall a majority of those residents / organisations who completed the survey were supportive of the Council's proposal to implement a replacement scheme as set out. Opposition to implementing the scheme was significantly less.
- 3.20 The Cabinet is to consider this report at its meeting on 23 January 2024 (the date of publication of this Assembly agenda). Any issues arising from the Cabinet meeting will be reported at the Assembly meeting.

4. Options Appraisal

- 4.1 The options appraisal now considers the following options for the CTS scheme for 2024/25.
- Maintain the current scheme with no changes.
 - Implement a replacement income banded discount scheme (Model 1).
- 4.2 The retention of the current scheme in to 2024/25 is not held to address the administrative issues with the scheme as outlined in the October Cabinet report.
- 4.3 A retention of the current scheme will not provide as an efficient and effective scheme for residents of the borough into 2024/25.
- 4.4 Model 1 is held to address the administrative issues with the retention of the current scheme, while maintaining the levels of support provided for the lowest income residents by protecting the majority of applicants in band 1 at an 85% discount comparable to the current scheme. The model provides better levels of support for UC claimants in employment, incentivising employment. This is balanced against the financial cost to the Council, against the anticipated cost of retaining the current scheme into 2024/25.
- 4.5 The implementation of a banded scheme has been designed to safeguard & support our most vulnerable residents. The scheme will be reviewed annually to reflect changing levels of demand, changes in the wider welfare system and to ensure that it remains affordable to the Council.
- 4.6 For the reasons outlined above, Model 1 is the recommended proposal.

5. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Nurul Alom – Finance Manager

- 5.1 The Council is required to maintain a CTS Scheme. This is now funded as part of the Council's overall funding settlement and so any increases or decreases in take up or cost fall upon the Council's budget (rather than being provided for by a grant) and becomes a cost to the authority's budget in the following financial year.
- 5.2 The Council made a significant investment into the CTS scheme for 2023/24 by reducing the minimum payment from 25% to 15%. This increased the scheme costs from £14.6m (2022/23) to £16.01m (2023/24), an additional cost of £1.5m. Overall, the Scheme cost has increased. The modelling was completed by Policy & Practice (specialist external advisor) as outlined in the above report.
- 5.3 The Council identified c£1.3m from reserve to fund the increase in cost for 2023/24, this estimated was based on a 2.99% Council Tax increase for 2023/24. However, the increase was 4.99% and the Welfare Reserve was reprofiled and the Council updated its estimate to £1.5m. There is no in-year pressure associated with the current scheme in 2023/24. However, the forecast cost of the scheme has increased from £16.01m to £16.46m and the deficit on Council Tax into 2024/25 will now increase by a further £0.45m, due to increase in CTRS caseload in 2023/24.
- 5.4 As part of the 2023-2027 MTFS process Community Solutions proposed a new methodology for the application of the CTRS scheme, to achieve a more flexible and administratively suitable model to accommodate the cost-of-living crisis and the move nationally to Universal Credit. The cost of the proposed model was submitted in the MTFS cycle and is contained in the below table. This was based on a 2.99% Council Tax increase as was known at the time.

Growth requests approved	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
CTS 2.99%	2,072,052	503,162	518,256
CTS 4.99%	2,572,052	803,162	818,256
Additional pressure on MTFS (estimated on 4.99% uplift, not 2.99% previously assumed)	500,000	300,000	300,000

- 5.5 The modelling above was completed on 2.99%. If we apply an assumed uplift of 4.99% instead then we would require an additional estimated £0.5m in 24/25, and an estimated £0.3m in 25/26 and 26/27. This is all subject to Council Tax uplifts and therefore is subject to change.
- 5.6 There is no funding identified to fund the additional 2%. This would need to be subject to growth in the MTFS. Although, it should be noted that the impact of the scheme would not be a direct cost to the service but a direct impact on the Collection rate of the Collection Fund and the reduced collections.

CTS Scheme	2024/25
15% Contribution scheme (existing Scheme)	£17.5m
Banded Scheme (Model 1)	£17.5m

5.7 The cost of either scheme will increase by £1m into 2024/25 against the current expenditure for 2023/24, in-line with the wider increase in Council Tax (estimated at 4.99%).

5.8 Risks to Financial Assumptions of cost:

- Assumed CTAX increase of 4.99%
- LBBD Modelling
- Outcome of Public Consultation
- Increase in caseload.
- Impact of Cost of Living
- Impact inflation/interest
- Impact of transition to Universal Credit
- Government Policy (General Election 2024/25)

5.9 Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Funding of £500k was earmarked from the Welfare Reserve for 2023/24. It is proposed to carry forward £250k into 2024/25 to support the transition from the current scheme to Model 1.

6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Dr Paul Feild, Principal Standards and Governance Lawyer

6.1 The Council is required to maintain and annually review its CTS scheme in accordance with Section 13A and schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme is an Assembly function.

6.2 Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to make any revision to its scheme or any replacement scheme no later than 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect.

6.3 As the CTS scheme is being proposed to be replaced with a new scheme it is a statutory requirement for the Council to carry out consultation on the changes as set out by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 Schedule 1A paragraph 5 and that paragraph 3 of the said Act.

6.4 This paper sets out the consultation and responses in the final decision-making process regarding the proposed change to implement a replacement CTS scheme.

6.5 Since the introduction of CTS schemes there have been a number of legal challenges in relation to the consultation undertaken. Most of these challenges have been in relation to the consultation undertaken in the sense of it being

meaningful and to have due regard to equality impact assessments. As determined by a Supreme Court ruling in 2014 in the case R (Moseley) v London Borough of Haringey, consultation is critical when there is a possibility of an adverse outcome.

- 6.6 With regard to the recommended proposal the outcome is to maintain the level of support for the lowest incomes. However, due to the wider impact of replacing the scheme, potentially some claimants will gain support, and some claimants may lose support. Some claimants will see their awards unchanged. There is therefore an adverse outcome for some claimants.
- 6.7 Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (revisions to and replacement of scheme) also requires the Council to consider providing transitional protection whereby the scheme change has the effect to reduce or remove entitlement from any class of person entitled as the Authority sees fit.
- 6.8 The provision of a DCTR fund provides mitigation for those classes of persons entitled who may see a reduction in their award due to the scheme change by providing an option to apply for additional financial assistance to support their increased Council Tax costs through the fund.

7. Other Issues

7.1 Risk Management

- 7.1.1 The Council has now procured the software required through the Capita Academy system, used to administer the current CTS scheme, for the implementation of an income banded discount scheme.
- 7.1.2 User acceptance testing will be required for the new scheme/system and will require planned time and resources to undertake.
- 7.1.3 The end of year process must be commenced on time and will require support on testing, implementation, and time frames to ensure the new scheme is correctly installed for end of year processing. A decision to retain the current scheme, after consultation, and not implement the proposed Model 1 may jeopardise the completion of the end of year process. Due to timings end of year testing must commence in December 2023 and must be done on the proposed banded scheme and the current scheme pending ratification of the final agreed scheme. This may require additional planned time and resources to undertake.
- 7.1.4 The Council has relied on its external partner Policy & Practice (who have national expertise in modelling CTS schemes) to model both the projected expenditure on retaining the current CTS scheme into 2024/25, and the projected costs for a replacement discount income banded scheme. Their report is at Appendix 4.
- 7.1.5 A fiscally neutral cost for the replacement discount income banded scheme has been based upon projected costs for retaining the current scheme into 2024/25, with a natural increase in cost due to Council Tax increases, Benefit uprating and variance in demand. This has not been modelled through the Capita Academy system due to system limitations and therefore a risk is raised that the projected cost of the scheme is more or less than anticipated.

- 7.1.6 This risk has been partly mitigated by internal modelling for the replacement scheme against the current scheme in 2023/24. This has demonstrated a fiscally neutral expenditure position within the current financial year and supports the extension of this position into 2024/25.
- 7.1.7 With the costs of the CTS scheme determined by demand, there remains a risk that future fluctuations in demand could place an additional financial burden on the Council. The expenditure figures and modelling were based on a CTS caseload extract from June 2023. Current expenditure figures to date (November 2023) show an increase in current scheme expenditure of c£0.45m caused by an increased demand on the scheme and welfare take up initiatives. As a consequence, the expected cost of the CTS scheme into 2024/25 is expected to be higher than originally forecast.
- 7.1.8 Changes to the CTS scheme will result in changes to the level of some CTS awards, with some residents receiving higher awards, some residents receiving lower awards and some residents seeing their award unchanged. This is because the replacement scheme will not exactly match the current scheme and will apply different levels of discount compared to household and income.
- 7.1.9 The Council is protecting the maximum level of the discount at 85% to ensure the most vulnerable low-income residents in the borough remain protected however modelling has demonstrated that 14% of current applicants may be worse off under the new scheme. A total of 1501 claims have been identified as at risk of receiving lower support in 2024/25 if the scheme is implemented.
- 7.1.10 A total of 169 claims were identified as losing all support (100%) of their current award. This represents a small percentage of the overall case load. This is raised as a risk due to the significant impact on some applicants during a period of high cost of living however is balanced against 1501 claims identified as receiving higher support and 7631 claims remaining unchanged. The EIA will also identify negative impacts on applicants with protected characteristics. Claims with disability benefits, Carers, and those with ill health and sickness benefits may in some cases receive lower awards and be adversely affected by the scheme change.
- 7.1.11 The proposed scheme has been modelled to take account of the future full migration of the remaining legacy benefit case load to UC. Consequently, the scheme has been designed to provide greater support to these claimants than would have been afforded if the current scheme was retained. However, modelling has demonstrated the proposed new scheme may see reductions in support for some legacy benefit claimants. Managed migration is now scheduled to commence in April 2024 mitigating this risk. Should the timetable for the commencement of managed migration be delayed the proposed scheme change may detrimentally affect some existing legacy benefit claimants pending the final migration to UC and is raised as a risk.
- 7.1.12 The timetable for managed migration also exempts certain categories of legacy benefit claims from the migration process, such as certain Employment & Support Allowance claims. These cases will remain as legacy benefit claims.

- 7.1.13 To support applicants adversely affected by the scheme change the Council has contracted a voluntary sector partner (DABD) to work with identified high loss and disabled claims who have been adversely affected by the scheme change. Additional support will be provided on income maximisation, benefit checks, income and expenditure and debt advice.
- 7.1.14 The Council Tax Discretionary Relief (CTDR) fund may be used to mitigate some of the impacts of the scheme change on applicants who lose support. A loss of funding for this scheme will reduce the available mitigation. A significant loss of funding available will affect the support the Council can provide to mitigate the losses experienced by some applicants as we transition between schemes. This is raised as a considerable risk given the number of affected applicants who may lose as part of the change.
- 7.1.15 The outcome of the consultation has been majority supportive of the proposed scheme change however this was not unqualified with concerns being raised over key component parts of the proposed scheme.

7.2 Corporate Policy and Equality Impact

- 7.2.1 There is a requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the equality act 2010) to have due regard to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups.
 - Foster good relations between people from different groups.
- 7.2.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposal to replace the CTS scheme for 2024/25 has been undertaken and reviewed by the Strategy team and is attached in Appendix 3.
- 7.2.3 The report has identified there is potential for adverse impact on some protected characteristics from Model 1. There will be a positive impact on some and a negative impact on other working age claimants. Pension age claimants, who also have protected characteristics will not be affected as they are protected under the prescribed pension age scheme. This is demonstrated in the EIA.
- 7.2.4 A reduction in funding for the CTDR scheme will affect mitigations available against any potential issues that may arise from the EIA. The Council will have reduced means to mitigate against any potential issues that arise from the scheme change on applicants who may lose part or all of their award, who hold protected characteristics.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

- “Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25 – Options and Consultation” report to Cabinet 17 October 2023 (<https://modgov.lbbd.gov.uk/Internet/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=180&MId=12957&Ver=4>, Minute 47)
- “B&D Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-23” report to Assembly 30 January 2019

(<https://modgov.lbbd.gov.uk/Internet/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=179&MID=10014>,
Minute 48)

- “B&D Joint Strategic Needs Assessment” report to Health & Wellbeing Board 13 September 2022

(<https://modgov.lbbd.gov.uk/Internet/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=669&MID=12758>,
Minute 19)

List of appendices:

- **Appendix 1:** Council Tax Support scheme 2024/25 – Full consultation report
- **Appendix 2:** CAB response to the consultation
- **Appendix 3:** Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)
- **Appendix 4:** Policy & Practice localised CTS Final Report

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Proposed replacement Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25

Public Consultation Report

Author

James Johnston

Welfare Service

Support & Collections

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Introduction and background

The Welfare Reform Act in 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from April 2013 and, in its place, support took the form of a local Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS).

Council Tax Support is currently a means tested discounts for Council Tax. The amount of the discount awarded is based on the income and size of the household. A means test is applied, and an award granted for those eligible. This discount is applied directly to the Council Tax account to reduce the amount to be paid.

The Local Government Finance Act 2012 contains provisions for the setting up of local support schemes. The current scheme in Barking & Dagenham has been based around the Default Council Tax Support Scheme

The Council has a statutory duty to consider annually whether to revise its Local Council Tax Support scheme for working age recipients, replace it with another scheme or retain the current scheme. This excludes the scheme that exists for pension age recipients which is a nationally prescribed scheme and cannot be varied locally.

The final scheme must be approved by Assembly.

The Council is proposing to replace the existing CTS scheme with a new simplified scheme for working age residents by introducing income bands rather than looking at precise household income to calculate the CTS award (the means test).

The scheme operates by offering a reduction in the payable Council Tax based on the income level of the applicant (and partner) and its household size. There is no complex means testing calculation applied.

Income can increase within an income band and have no effect on the amount of discount awarded, unless the change means household income is now in a different income band. This limits the number of changes that are required to be made.

Residents can use their total household income and household size to easily calculate the level of discount that will be awarded against their Council Tax bill based on the Council Tax band.

The simplicity of the proposed new scheme approach will help to address some of the problems associated with the current scheme.

The purpose of this report is to set out the Council Tax Support scheme 2024/25 consultation process and key consultation findings.

The results of this consultation will help to determine the final Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024/25 with full details of the new scheme to be published in February/March 2024.

The proposed changed scheme would come into effect from the 1 April 2024.

Methodology

Barking & Dagenham Council undertook a consultation on proposed changes to the Council Tax Support scheme 2024/25 between the 23 October 2023 and 23 November 2023.

The consultation questionnaire and survey along with consultation policy documents was published online and was available through the Citizens Alliance Network website.

Residents were also able to email their views on the consultation to the Benefits department directly.

The survey was available and open to all Barking & Dagenham residents and stakeholders with an interest in the operation of the Council Tax Support scheme.

The consultation was promoted on the Citizens Alliance Network website alongside the main Council website. The BD collective was also used for promotion. Social media was used to promote and advertise the consultation on Council Facebook and Twitter pages. Results from social media promotion are available later in the report. Press releases were also issued.

Internal newsletters were also issued to promote the survey to staff within the wider Council.

The consultation was also directly promoted with key voluntary organisations.

All residents in receipt of CTS (15,000) were written to individually to advise of the proposed change to the CTS scheme and the potential impact on their CTS award with current/proposed award details to show the possible impact of the scheme change. This included pension age claimants who are not directly affected by the scheme change.

Workshops were held on site at both Barking & Dagenham Learning centres to support residents with any questions or comments on the scheme, and to support the completion of the survey. These were promoted in all available comms. Paper forms were also available on request.

Notification letters for all current Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims were also inserted with paragraphs promoting the consultation.

Results for the consultation will be made available through the Council website.

Summary of results

A total of 368 residents/voluntary organisations responded to the consultation survey.

This is a significant increase on the consultation survey from the 2022/23 scheme change (86 completed surveys).

Historically Council Tax Support consultations have had low engagement from residents.

Respondents did not have to answer every question so the total number of responses for each question may vary.

Every effort was made to promote and ensure visibility of the survey for residents/stakeholders to engage with the proposals.

No direct emails were received from residents regarding the consultation.

2 enquiries were received via Councillors directly in response to consultation letters issued to confirm the possible impact on a current CTS award.

Completed paper forms were converted to the online survey to ensure consistency in the results.

43 residents attended BLC and 14 residents attended DLC as part of the onsite workshops. Various sets of circumstances (higher/lower/unchanged awards under the proposed scheme) were seen from residents with advice and guidance provided. Both working age and pensioners were consulted with. 13 paper forms were issued to residents with 4 returned.

Survey summary outcomes:

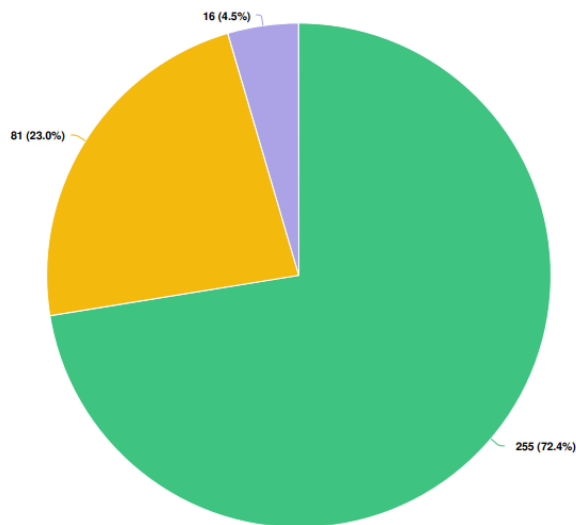
- 72% of completed survey respondents were in receipt of CTS
- 44% agreed with the proposed income band thresholds
- 51% ultimately agreed with the implementation of the proposed scheme

The proposed scheme had higher positive responses on average for all the survey questions asked with a majority of residents supporting the proposals.

Survey Demographics

Respondents were asked a range of demographic questions about themselves to help us understand the characteristics of the people who took part in the consultation.

Q3 Do you currently receive Council Tax support?



Question options
● Yes ● No ● Don't know

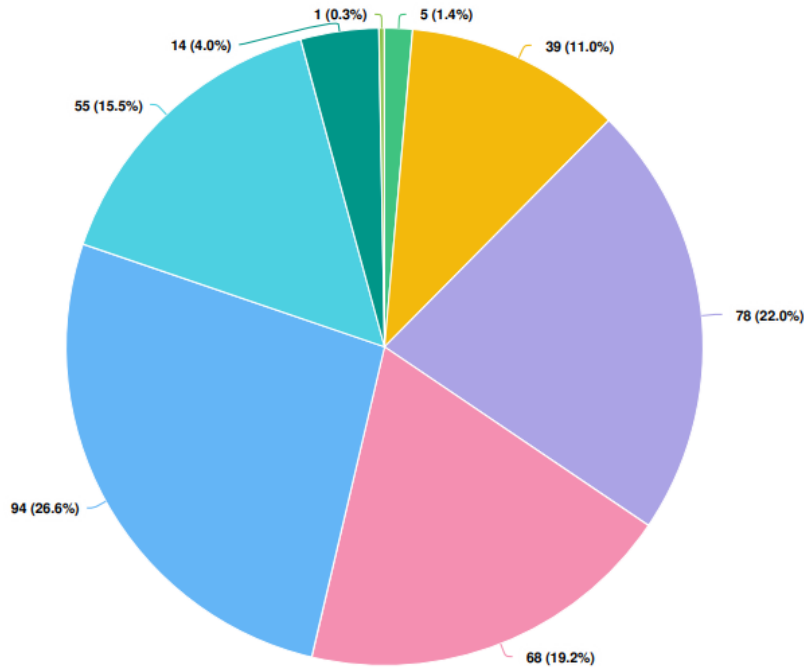
Optional question (352 response(s), 16 skipped)

In receipt of CTS	Number of residents	Percentage
Yes	255	72.4%
No	81	23%
Don't know	16	4.5%

A significant majority of respondents were in receipt of CTS and therefore had an active interest in the administration of the scheme.

Despite this 23% of respondents were not in receipt of CTS which provides some balance to the outcome of the responses received.

Q4 Which age band are you in?



Question options

- Aged 18 to 24
- Aged 25 to 34
- Aged 35 to 44
- Aged 45 to 54
- Aged 55 to 64
- Aged 65 to 74
- Aged 75 to 84
- Aged 85 or over

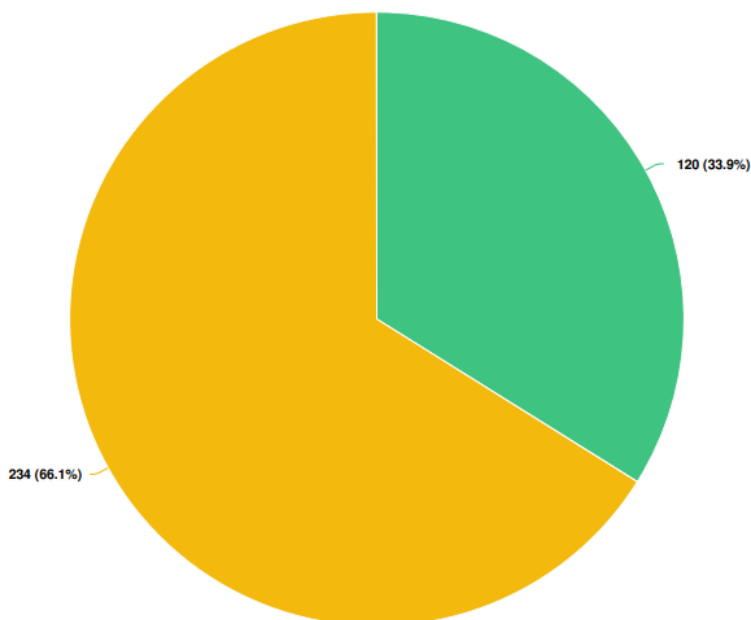
Age	Number of residents	Percentage
18-24	5	1.4%
25-34	39	11%
35-44	78	22%
45-54	68	19.2%
55-64	94	26.6%
65-74	55	15.5%
75-84	14	4%
85+	1	0.3%
Prefer not to say	0	0%

The largest demographical group to be represented in the survey was aged between 55-64. This is the second largest demographical group for the working age CTS scheme. The largest age demographical group in the CTS scheme is 35-44 and this had the second highest response rate.

The largest borough age demographic is 30-39.

Pension age claimants (65+) still contributed to the survey despite not being directly impacted by the change.

Q5 What is your sex?



Question options
 ● Male ● Female

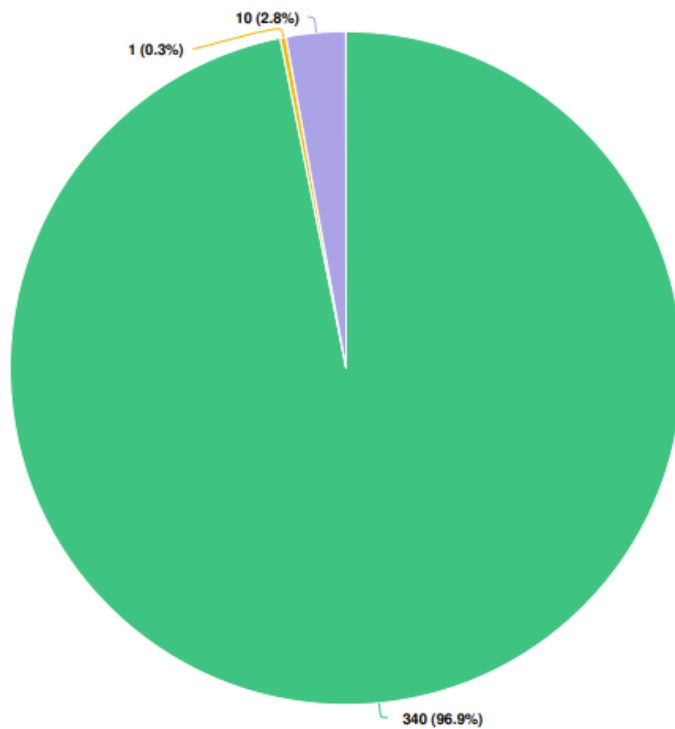
Gender	Number of residents	Percentage
<i>Male</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>33.9%</i>
<i>Female</i>	<i>234</i>	<i>66.1%</i>

A significant majority of the respondents were from female residents with 66.10% coming from this demographic.

This is comparable to the CTS case load as a whole which is 66.88% female.

This is comparably higher than the borough demographics of 51.5% of residents identifying as female.

Q6 Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

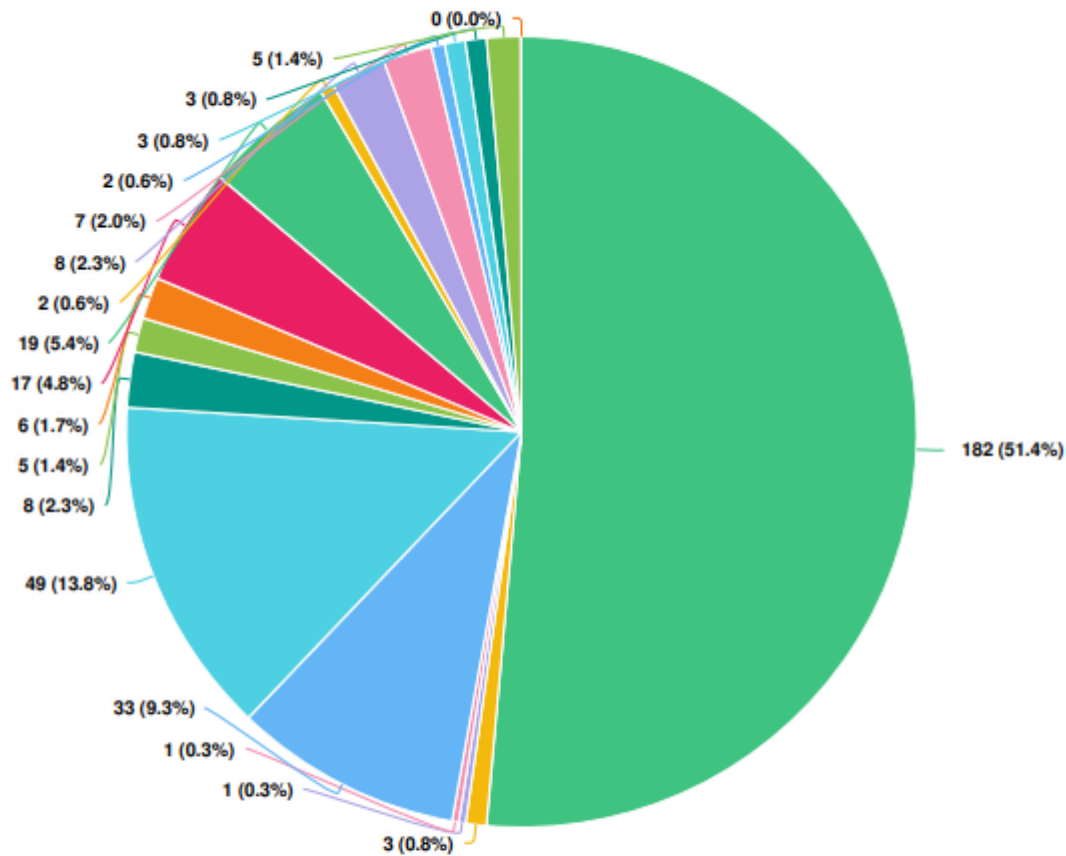


Question options

● Yes ● No ● Prefer not to say

Gender identification	Number of residents	Percentage
Yes	340	96.9%
No	1	0.3%
Prefer not to say	10	2.8%

Q7 | What is your ethnic group?



Question options

- White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
 ● White - Irish
 ● White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- White - Roma
 ● Any other White background
 ● Black / African / Caribbean / Black British - African
- Black / African / Caribbean / Black British - Caribbean
 ● Any other Black / African / Caribbean background
- Asian / Asian British - Indian
 ● Asian / Asian British - Pakistani
 ● Asian / Asian British - Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian background
 ● Mixed / Multiple Ethnic background - White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed / Multiple Ethnic background - White and Black African
 ● Mixed / Multiple Ethnic background - White and Asian
- Any other Mixed / Multiple Ethnic background
 ● Other ethnic group - Arab
 ● Any other ethnic group
- Asian / Asian British - Chinese

Ethnic group	Number of residents	Percentage
<i>White – English</i>	<i>182</i>	<i>51.4%</i>
<i>White - Irish</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0.8%</i>
<i>White – Gypsy or Irish traveller</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0%</i>
<i>White - Roma</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0%</i>
<i>Any other white background</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>9.3%</i>
<i>Black / Black British - African</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>13.8%</i>
<i>Black / Black British Caribbean</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>2.3%</i>
<i>Asian / Asian British - Indian</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>1.7%</i>
<i>Asian / Asian British - Pakistani</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>4.8%</i>
<i>Asian / Asian British - Bangladeshi</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>5.4%</i>
<i>Any other Asian background</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0.8%</i>
<i>Mixed / Multiple ethnic background – white and black Caribbean</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>2.3%</i>
<i>Mixed / Multiple ethnic background – white and black African</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>2.3%</i>
<i>Mixed / Multiple ethnic background – white and black Asian</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>2.0%</i>
<i>Any other mixed background</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0.8%</i>
<i>Other ethnic group – Arab</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0.8%</i>
<i>Any other ethnic group</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>1.4%</i>
<i>Asian / Asian British - Chinese</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0%</i>

A majority of residents identified themselves as being from a white background with 60.7% identifying. This is significantly higher than the current borough wide demographics confirming 44.9% of residents identifying as coming from white backgrounds.

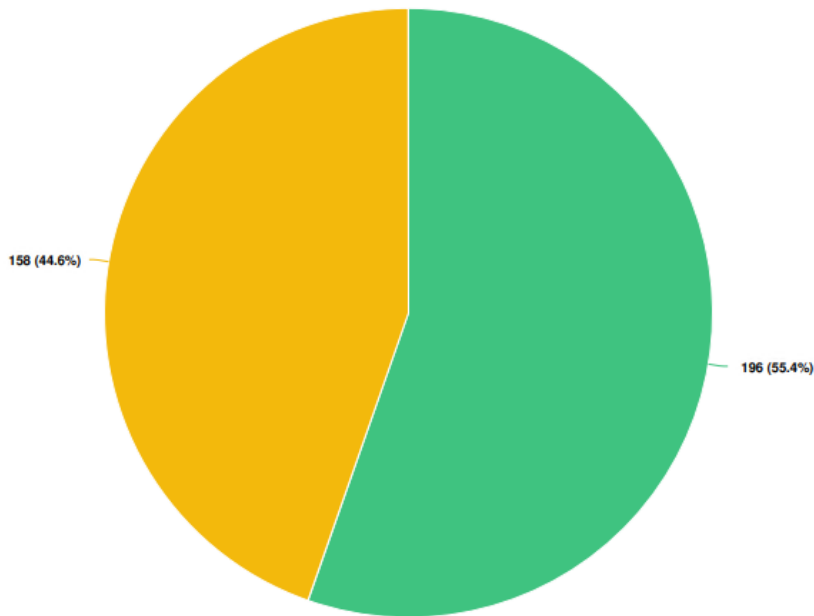
The next highest ethnic group was Black / Black British – African with 13.8% identifying.

This is lower than the current borough wide demographics confirming 21.4% (this includes Black British Caribbean).

Ethnic minorities are significantly under represented against current borough wide demographics from the 2021 census which shows 69.1% of the borough now identifies as coming from black and ethnic minority back grounds.

There is no data on the ethnic make up of the CTS scheme as this information is not required for the administration of the scheme and therefore cannot be accurately collected under the current/proposed schemes.

Q8 Do you have a health problem or disability that limits your day to day activities?



Question options

● Yes ● No

Illness/Disability	Number of residents	Percentage
No	196	55.4%
Yes	158	44.6%

A majority of residents identified themselves as having a health problem or disability.

13.2% of the population is registered as disabled under the Equality Act and 29.8% of households have at least one person in the household who identifies as disabled in the borough.

Currently 6.6% of residents in the borough are claiming disability benefits.

6,436 current CTS claims have either a disabled benefit or a limited capacity to work element of Universal Credit.

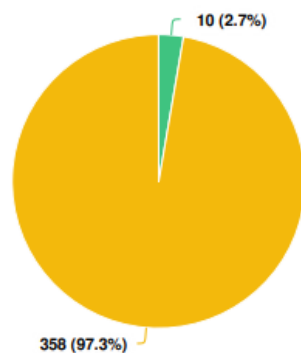
A response of 55.4% of those surveyed with a health problem or disability is over represented against borough demographics suggesting an interest in the proposals from this cohort of residents.

Residents with ill health and disability are often vulnerable with low income who require more financial support.

Survey results and analysis

The following analysis provides a breakdown of the survey results.

Q1 Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?



Question options

● Yes ● No

Mandatory Question (368 response(s))
Question type: Radio Button Question

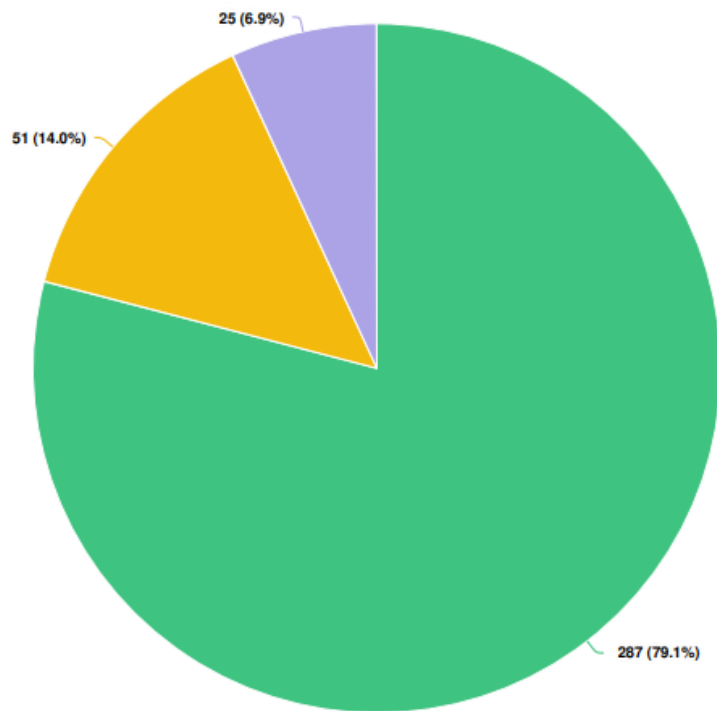
	Number of residents	Percentage
<i>Resident of the borough</i>	358	97.3%
<i>Other organisation</i>	10	2.7%

Other organisations
LBBB
LBBB – Homes & Money HUB
DABD
CAB
Royal British Legion

The majority of responses received were from residents in the borough.

Responses were received from our key voluntary sector partners CAB & DABD.

Q9 Have you read the background information about the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme?



Question options

● Yes ● No ● Don't know

Background information	Number of residents	Percentage
<i>Yes</i>	<i>287</i>	<i>79.1%</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>14%</i>
<i>Don't know</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>6.9%</i>

A majority of the responses received confirmed they had read the background information policy document. This is important to ensure that residents were provided with basic information on how the proposed scheme will work and why the Council is proposing to make this change.

Part 1: The introduction of an income-based banded discount scheme (the income bands)

The introduction of an Income banded discount CTS scheme to replace the current scheme for all working age applicants from 01 April 2024.

It is proposed that a simple income banded CTS scheme based on household income will replace the existing scheme.

The Council is not looking to reduce the overall cost of the scheme. However, the change will mean some people may get more support, and some may get less support. Most residents will receive the same support next year.

What are we proposing?

We are proposing a simplified income banded scheme.

Table 1 shows the level of discount that will be available.

Table 1:

Band	Discount	Single (Weekly net income)	Couple (Weekly net income)	Single 1 children addition	Single 2+ children addition	Couple 1 children addition	Couple 2+ children addition
1	85%	£0-£96	£0-£164	£0 - £164	£0 - £284	£0 - £252	£0 - £352
2	70%	£96 - £140	£164 - £208	£164 - £228	£284 - £338	£252 - £296	£352 - £406
3	55%	£140 - £168	£208 - £238	£228 - £262	£382 - £426	£334 - £370	£406 - £456
4	40%	£168 - £188	£238 - £260	£262 - £296	£426 - £460	£370 - £396	£456 - £506
5	25%	£188 - £208	£260 - £282	£296 - £320	£460 - £506	£370 - £396	£506 - £542
6	15%	£208 - £240	£282 - £316	£320 - £376	£460 - £506	£396 - £452	£542 - £605

The scheme for pension age (aged 66 and over) households is set by government and will continue to operate in the same way as it does currently.

Possible benefits and disadvantages

The possible benefits of introducing an income-based banded discount scheme are:

- Provide up to 85% support (the maximum award) for residents on the lowest incomes.
- Some households will receive greater support

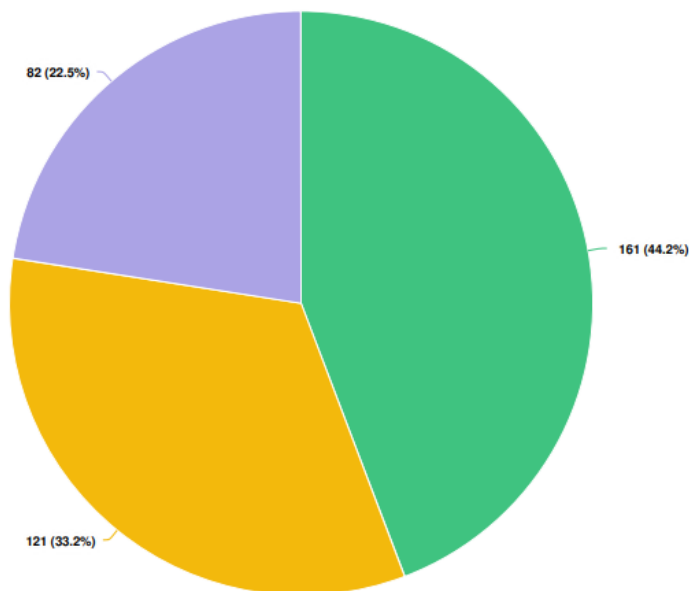
- Be easy to understand for residents.
- Provide greater stability to residents in receipt of CTS by reducing the number of Council Tax demands during the year, preventing multiple changes to monthly instalments helping residents to budget.
- Will work better with the Universal Credit system.

The possible disadvantages of introducing an income-based banded discount scheme are:

- Some households will receive less support.
- Some households with more than 2 children are likely to receive less support.

Survey response

Q10 Do you agree with introducing an income-based banded discount scheme as shown above?



Question options

Yes No Don't know

The consultation provided the proposed income banding grid where the proposed levels of income and discount (the CTS award) were confirmed.

Income banding grid	Number of residents	Percentage
<i>Yes</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>44.2%</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>33.2%</i>
<i>Don't know</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>22.5%</i>

A majority of respondents supported the proposed income bands although this was not unqualified with approximately a third disagreeing with the proposed income band thresholds. Concerns were raised that the thresholds and levels of award were too low.

Free text comments

135 individual comments were made on part 1.

“This is an unfair scheme which will further disadvantage unpaid carers leaving them with higher bills to pay when we are already struggling”

“From the table provided although I am in receipt of ESA Support Group, Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit my income from benefits would mean I would receive a 55% discount? Now I receive the maximum discount. How can I afford to pay £80- £100 per month while on benefits. Also some households will be penalised for having children How is that fair in relation to paying council tax? If I am private renting liable for council tax earning an average wage with 4 children then my new big expense will be council tax which will overtake my energy bill??”

“The income band is too narrow and doesn't reflect the cost of renting or mortgaging your home and paying for other essentials such as water and energy”.

“I am in Band 5 . i have multiple children and used to receive £23 per week and now its changed to £8 per week that doesn't not make sense at all. this is not suitable at all”

Part 2: Disregarding certain benefits, incomes and elements of Universal Credit.

By moving to an income banded discount CTS scheme some incomes and benefits will not be included in the calculation of the total household income. This helps to protect residents who need support the most including disabled households.

What are we proposing?

We are proposing that the following benefits and income are not counted when assessing the household income:

- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment

- War Pensions

To help to protect households with children:

- Child Benefit

For residents in receipt of Universal Credit:

- Housing costs element
- Limited capability for work element
- Disabled child element
- Carer element
- Childcare costs element

Possible benefits and disadvantages

The possible benefits of not counting these incomes are:

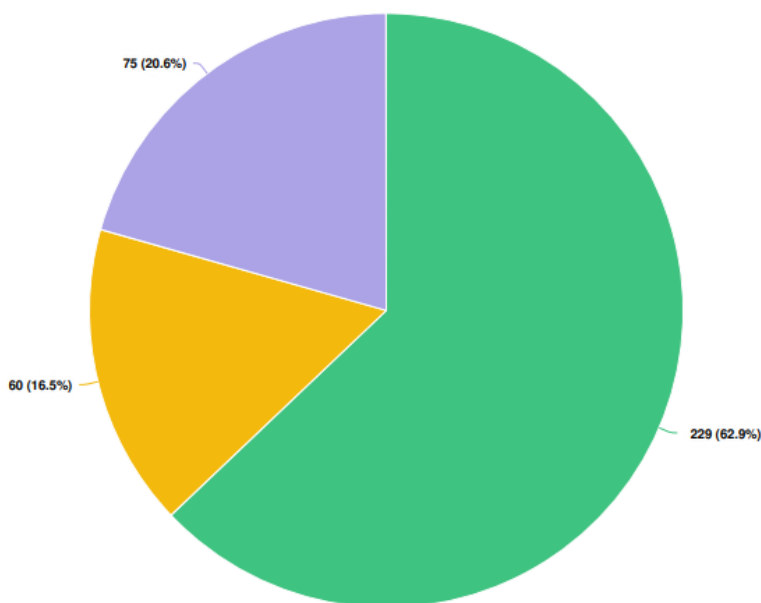
- It will help residents who need support the most.
- It will help to support families.
- It will encourage families with child care costs into work.
- It will maintain the Council's commitment to supporting members and former members of the armed forces.
- The proposed changes are easy to include within the proposed scheme.

The possible disadvantages of not counting these incomes are:

- The proposal will increase the overall cost of the scheme and has to be balanced against the final cost of the proposed scheme.
- There are no disadvantages to residents who qualify for the CTS scheme.

Survey response

Q11 Do you agree with disregarding certain benefits, income and elements of Universal Credit as shown above?



Question options

Yes No Don't know

The proposed scheme will disregard certain benefits and elements of Universal Credit to ensure that some incomes received due to disability or ill health for example are not counted as income to protect vulnerable claimants.

Disregarding incomes	Number of residents	Percentage
<i>Yes</i>	<i>229</i>	<i>62.9%</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>16.5%</i>
<i>Don't know</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>20.6%</i>

A significant majority of respondents supported this proposal and the reasons why these incomes should be disregarded.

A low proportion of respondents were opposed to this approach.

Free text comments

61 individual comments were made.

'Carers allowance should also be a disregarded income'.

'I am saying yes because it seems my benefits are dismissed from calculations. I obviously don't know how it will effect others'.

'I am VERY concerned you are going to include Carers allowance as Means tested benefit and Penalise people on this benefit'.

'It is good that the benefits above have been disregarded, but there is concern that the additional disability premiums have been lost within the calculation even though the disability benefits do have a disregard. This could mean that disabled people are adversely affected. Also there is no mention of a child maintenance disregard, this may have been overlooked, but if this is the case then it just provides an argument, as previously demonstrated with the UC, HB and CTS £20 disregard which was changed and replaced with a full disregard due to absent parents using this as an excuse to not pay child maintenance and cause other social impact on the child in respect of contact etc'.

'I think child benefit should be taken into consideration as those who work hard and try to do the right thing should not be punished by having their services reduced for those that do not consider their actions and are too busy having multiple children they cannot support'.

Part 3: The household size will be limited to a maximum of two dependent children allowances for all applicants within the scheme when calculating the CTS award.

In the current CTS scheme, applicants who have children are awarded a dependant's addition (an extra amount you can get if you have children) within the calculation of their needs allowance. There is no limit to the number of allowances currently applied within the current CTS scheme for applicants in receipt of old legacy benefits. Applicants in receipt of Universal Credit may be subject to the restriction.

From April 2017 the Government scheme limited dependants in Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and Tax Credits to a maximum of two. Some applicants were protected where they made a claim before that date and already had more than two dependants.

What are we proposing?

The new scheme will be based on an income band which considers the number of dependent children within the household; however, it will be limited to two, for all applicants.

This will ensure all applicants are treated the same.

Child benefit continues to be paid for every dependant, and this will not count towards the applicants' household income.

Possible benefits and disadvantages

The possible benefits of restricting the child allowance to a maximum of 2 are:

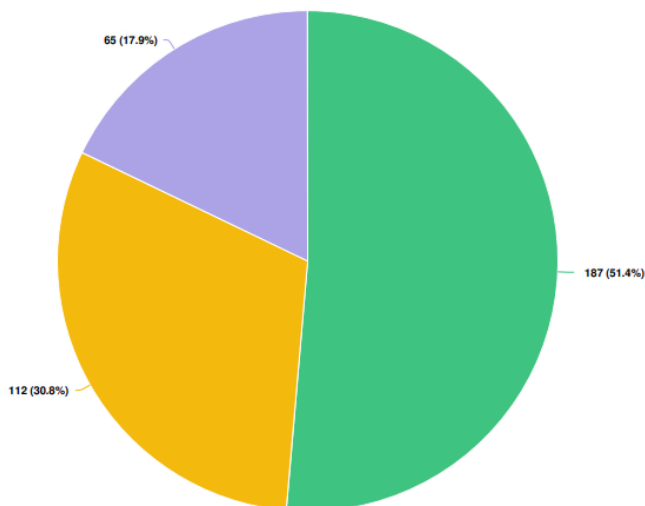
- CTS will be brought into line with all other welfare benefits.
- All applicants will now be treated the same with no difference based on the type of benefit received.
- The allowances are simple and easy to understand for applicants.
- The allowances proposed for 2 children are more generous than the current allowances.
- Child Benefit continues to not be included.

The possible disadvantages of restricting the child allowance to a maximum of 2 are:

- Applicants with three or more dependent children may now receive less CTS. This may affect larger families in the borough.

Survey response

Q12 Do you agree with limiting the household size to a maximum number of two dependent children allowances as shown above?



Question options
● Yes ● No ● Don't know

Limiting household size	Number of residents	Percentage
<i>Yes</i>	<i>187</i>	<i>51.4%</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>30.8%</i>
<i>Don't know</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>17.9%</i>

A majority of residents supported the proposal to restrict the household size (two children) in line with welfare reform with just under a third being opposed to the proposal.

Free text comments

85 individual comments were made.

'This change will leave families in hardship'.

'It concerns me with those who got more children who will struggle more'.

'Households on a low income will ultimately suffer the most with the 2 child rule. I appreciate we need a fair system but please understand that the children of those households will be affected by any change to the household purse'.

'As previously mentioned the loss to larger families will be significant and we propose an additional band for 3 or more children or some kind of transitional protection in the short term. This will alleviate the impact particularly to those who already have a sanction with the benefit cap where collection will be unlikely'.

'You should limit it to one child. Then those that have more pay. I think this proposal should be adopted, if the wider proposal is not one I agree with so that CTS is limited to include one child, but if not that then definitely two rather than unlimited as it is now'.

Part 4: Introducing one deduction amount of £7.50 per week for all adults in the household removing different levels of deductions.

The current scheme applies non-dependent deductions for other adults living in the property over the age of 18.

The current deductions range from £0 - £14.15 per week depending on the circumstances of the non-dependant adult.

The CTS award is then reduced by the amount of the deduction.

Protections for applicants who receive disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payments are in place which means no deductions are taken for any adult in the property.

Currently, to understand what the right level of deduction is, we have to ask applicants for lots of information. And we have to review this regularly.

What are we proposing?

We are proposing to remove the different levels of deductions and replace these with one deduction for all non-dependant adults.

Possible benefits and disadvantages

The possible benefits of introducing a flat rate non-dependant deduction are:

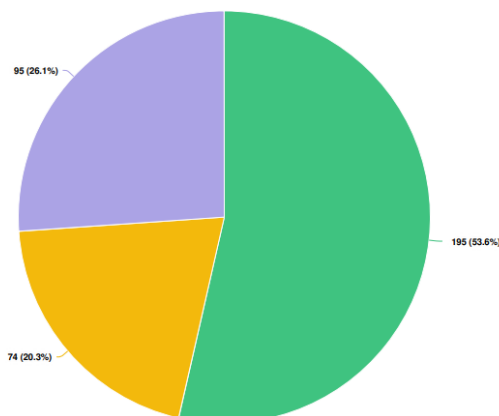
- Simplifies the scheme.
- Requires less information to be provided.
- Existing protections remain for those in receipt of disability benefits.
- Small increase for those paying the lowest deduction.
- Deductions required from those with non-dependants in receipt of income that are not currently receiving a deduction is fair.
- Some applicants will have reduced deductions.

The possible disadvantages of introducing a flat rate non-dependant deduction are:

- By not setting the level of the deduction against the income of the non-dependant adult those with higher incomes will have the same deduction as those with lower incomes.
- Some applicants will have increased deductions.

Survey response

Q13 Do you agree with introducing a flat rate non-dependant deduction of £7.50 while keeping existing protections in place?



Question options
● Yes ● No ● Don't know

Flat rate Non-Dependant charge	Number of residents	Percentage
Yes	195	53.6%
No	74	20.3%
Don't know	95	26.1%

A majority of residents supported the proposal to introduce a flat rate non-dependant deduction.

A significant number of respondents were unsure of the proposal but a low number disagreed with the proposal as a whole.

Free text comments

58 individual comments were made.

'Most younger non dependents would not be earning a decent amount of money, so just deducting £7.50 a week off the council tax would put even more financial pressure on the parent, because no doubt they would still be topping up their young adults income to some extent despite no longer getting any support for them. You don't stop supporting your children just because they have left education '.

'The mean tested method is fairer and ensure that those with higher incomes pay more and those with lower incomes pay less. This way not one person is more disadvantaged than the other'.

'It will only punish the resident who might have to pay for the non-dependant themselves, as it's not guaranteed the non-dependant will want to pay the extra to pay the resident will have in their new bill, even though it's actually the non-dependant who should pay'.

Part 5: Reducing the capital and savings limit to £6,000 and removing the assumed income from capital (tariff income) from the calculation of CTS.

The current scheme has a capital and savings limit of £10,000.

Currently for every £250 of savings over £6,000 and up to £10,000 an additional income of £1 (tariff income) is added to an applicants assessed weekly income.

What are we proposing?

We are proposing that the capital and savings limit is reduced to £6,000 and no tariff income will be calculated. Any capital and savings under £6,000 will be ignored.

Any applicants who currently have capital and savings of more than £6,000, will no longer be granted a Council Tax Support discount.

Currently, most current CTS applicants do not hold capital and savings over £6,000.

Possible benefits and disadvantages

The possible benefits of reducing the capital and savings limit to £6,000 are:

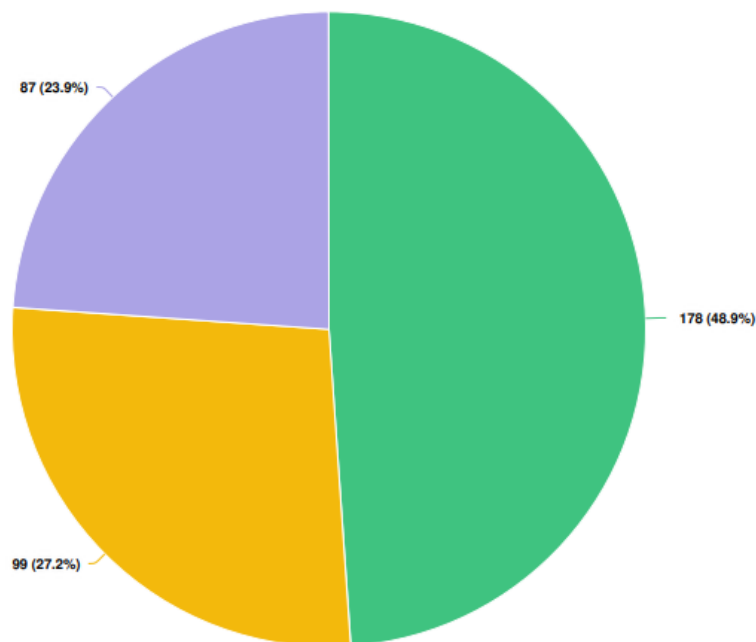
- The £6,000 limit protects those applicants with relatively low levels of capital and savings.
- Tariff income is no longer calculated.
- Most current applicants are unaffected.

The possible disadvantages of reducing the capital and savings limit to £6,000 are:

- Any applicants who currently have capital and savings of more than £6,000 will no longer be granted a CTS discount.

Survey response

Q14 Do you agree with reducing the capital and savings limit from £10,000 to £6,000 as shown above?



Question options

Yes No Don't know

Capital threshold	Number of residents	Percentage
Yes	178	48.9%
No	99	27.2%
Don't know	87	23.9%

A majority of residents supported the proposal to reduce the capital threshold from £10,000 to £6,000.

A significant number of respondents were unsure of the proposal but a low number disagreed with the proposal as a whole.

Free text comments

71 individual comments were made.

'I am not in this bracket at all, but just think it may make it hard on people saving for a house deposit etc'.

'Think people need some savings for life's unexpected events'.

'This will affect people who have savings between 6k-10k. People may now not qualify if they have an amount between this'.

'Don't feel this will have a big impact although there will be some who will lose out who are just at £6k or slightly above but does add simplicity of the overall model'.

'Their savings should be used before all benefits kick in . This was my case decades ago - my savings was used'.

'People are living from their savings (who had any) and they should not be punished by holding on to their tiny little savings for emergency. They taxed that amount, they worked for it, nobody has anything to do with that money'.

Part 6: Sending notification letters

What are we proposing?

A banded income discount scheme means no changes to the CTS award are required unless a change to the household income or household size results in income falling into a different discount band.

If we have a banded scheme for CTS we don't want to send you letters unless you move band and the amount you have to pay changes,

Possible benefits and disadvantages

The possible benefits of not sending notification letters unless there is a change in the discount band are:

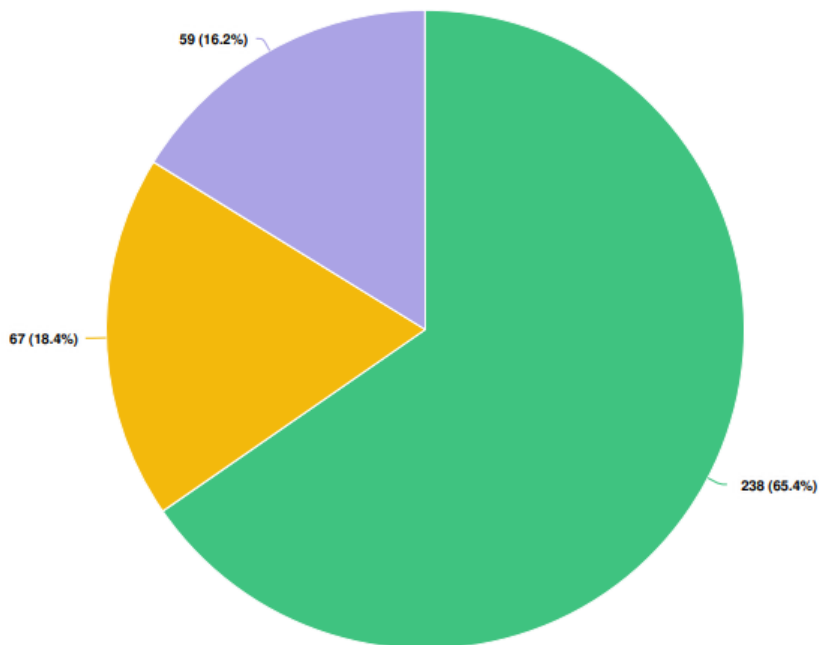
- Applicants receive less notifications and only if there is an actual change to the discount band.
- We reduce our printing and postage costs.
- We reduce our carbon footprint and protect the environment.

The possible disadvantages of not sending notifications are:

- We do not see any disadvantages from this change.

Survey response

Q15 Do you agree with not sending notifications as shown above?



Question options

● Yes ● No ● Don't know

Sending notification letters	Number of residents	Percentage
Yes	238	65.4%
No	67	18.4%
Don't know	59	16.2%

A significant majority of residents supported the proposal to reduce the number of notification letters being sent, only sending a notification when a genuine change occurs.

A low number disagreed with the proposal as a whole.

Free text comments

47 individual comments were made.

‘People need to be kept up to date on things like this’.

‘Sometimes letters get misplaced and we need them for certain proof for help with certain things. Like vet treatment. We need letters through’.

‘Every few months, I set a budget using available financial data, if I get no notification I will forget what payments need to be made. I strive on constant reminders - less reminders will result inconsistent and late payments’ .

‘If no changes happen then no need for extra letters as long as you can see your account online’.

Part 7: Making the Council Tax Discretionary Relief fund available for residents to apply for additional financial support if they are affected by the change in the scheme

The Council currently offers a Discretionary Council Tax Relief fund for residents who are suffering from financial hardship and may be struggling to pay their Council Tax costs.

Applications for support can be made and are considered on an individual basis.

We can make awards to reduce the amount of Council Tax due.

What are we proposing?

We want to continue to make this fund available for residents of the borough to make an application for further support, including for those who may lose support as part of the scheme change.

Possible advantages and disadvantages

The possible benefits of having a Discretionary Council Tax Relief fund are:

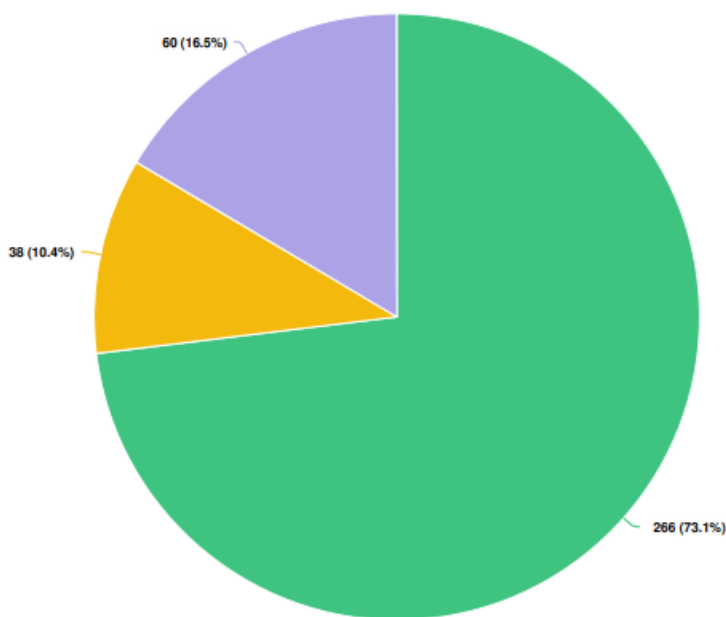
- The scheme offers residents who need support the most a way to apply for it..
- The scheme provides an option to apply for additional support for residents who are affected by the change to a new CTS scheme.

The possible disadvantages of having a Discretionary Council Tax Relief fund are:

- The Council has to use its own funds to support the scheme and this may have an effect on the Council's wider budget and financial planning. .
- There are no disadvantages for applicants who qualify for CTS.

Survey response

Q16 Do you agree with the Council making a Discretionary Council Tax Relief fund available as shown above?



Question options

• Yes • No • Don't know

A significant majority of respondents were very supportive of the proposal to ensure a Discretionary Council Tax Relief fund was made available. Very few respondents opposed this proposal.

Free text comments

37 individual comments were made.

'Do agree that this needs to be accessible, although the number supported will be determined by the amount in the fund. Is there any opportunity for a transitional fund to those who are the biggest losers which is automatically given so the resident does not need to rely on an application'.

'More people will be applying for the fund, because your increasing their bills. Makes no sense'.

'There are residents on my street claiming benefits and able to work. The council needs to tighten on giving out handouts and reduce the burden on the taxpayer'.

'This applications are complicated and are rejected for no reason. This discretionary funds are not easy to access even when one is struggling. It is like applying for a mortgage'.

'It will affect council other services because council may have to cut other vital services, save money to provide this extra funds'.

Part 8: Alternative options to changing the CTS scheme

The Council has considered several other options for the CTS scheme for 2024/25, including replacing the scheme and keeping the current scheme unchanged.

There are a number of issues with the current CTS scheme that need to be looked at so that the Council has a CTS scheme that continues to:

- Provide the greatest support to low-income households.
- Reduce the administrative burden allowing for the scheme to run well.
- Provide a simple system for residents.

The Council believes the proposed income banded discount scheme will meet these objectives and this is the recommended new scheme.

An alternative income banded discount scheme is not being proposed.

The Council retains the option of keeping the current CTS scheme unchanged for 2024/25.

Possible advantages and disadvantages

The possible advantages of keeping the current CTS scheme unchanged are:

- Means testing allows support to be focused on those most in need financially and continues to protect these households.
- Pension age and working age claimants are assessed under the same scheme.

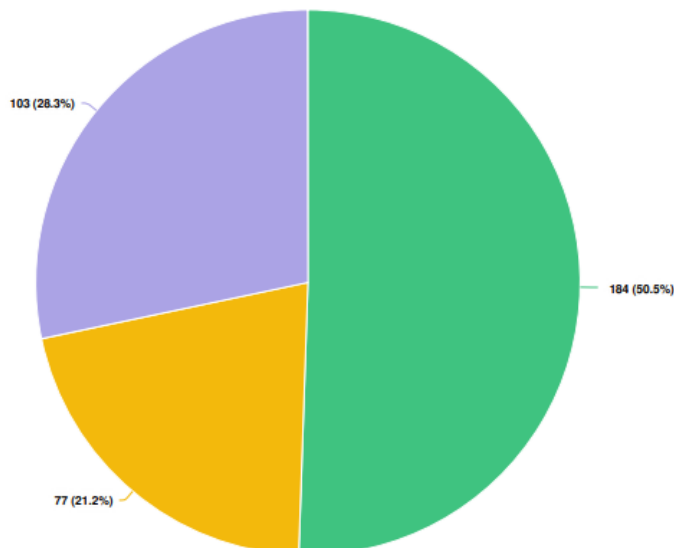
- Does not impact disproportionately on any equality group.

The possible disadvantages of keeping the current CTS scheme unchanged are:

- Highly complex calculation of awards.
- Reactive to minor changes generating higher volumes of work, adjustments to awards and multiple Council Tax bill adjustments.
- Complex administration for staff & complex for applicants to understand.
- Difficult to simplify.
- The impact of Universal Credit on administration of the scheme.
- Difficult to change the levels of support to different types of applicant.

Survey response

Q17 Do you agree that the Council should implement a replacement scheme as proposed in this consultation?



Question options

Yes No Don't know

This survey response was important as based on the proposals above this question asked for final approval of the scheme proposals taking account all aspects consulted on.

A majority of respondents (50.5%) ultimately agreed with the proposals to change the scheme.

However a significant number of respondents remained unsure with more than a quarter (28.3%) selecting don't know. This suggests that there remains a lack of understanding of the proposals.

Only 21.2% of respondents formally disagreed with the proposals for the scheme.

The main response on alternatives was to leave the scheme unchanged and continue the means tested approach.

Free text comments

64 individual comments were made.

'Leave the scheme as it is for now until the cost of living crisis gets better. The majority of families especially unpaid carers are already struggling with food and bill costs without any further changes to support levels'.

'You are removing support from those who need it the most, deliberately placing them in further financial difficulty than they're already suffering due to the cost of living crisis'.

'To be honest I feel this is in the interest of the council and not residents'.

'It is quite obvious that no system implemented either now or before was ever ideal or perfect I take the view that if this will save from duplication of administration and by extension money and make it simpler and easier for an applicant to claim. Then it wise from time to time to review the effectiveness of any scheme and in a Morden 21st century it is right to look at modal change in accordance with central government law'.

'Because the current system is fairer and is also mean tested meaning support is targeted at the right group of people. I think the council should focus on the admin side of things, and how they can simplify and reduce cost that way instead. The alternative will cause havoc for single income households and other unidentified vulnerable people'.

'We do agree in principle for the change to happen as there are a lot of positives i.e., simplicity, cost, reduction in notifications and the bulk of people being either better off or staying the same. However, there are adverse effects that need to be borne in mind and we believe with a few tweaks i.e., additional band for 3 and over children or transitional payment and no non dependent deduction for those on basic benefits i.e., UC and legacy. We do not believe that this will lose the simplicity of the model. We do appreciate that this will increase cost, but could this be covered from Discretionary Funds'?

'Because you are making people like us carers and disabled people pay £663 a year more disgusting'.

'How is this council even considering this very unfair change forced on some people and find it remotely acceptable. As I would be worse off £284.96 without any change of circumstance obviously I'm going to vote no, just like all the other residents who will lose out big. I can understand it would be better for the council, but for me £284.96 is a lot of money I can't afford to lose. My suggestion is only working couples who are well off and not struggling financially should be made to lose out by a lot. Thank you'.

'Whilst agreeing that a more simplified system is needed I'm not sure how families that will be worse off will cope as most (including myself) are struggling in the cost of living crisis'.

'Although the current scheme is reactive to any income change, it does provide the greatest equality, as no group is bearing the burden of the proposed change'.

'More consultations required'.

'Keeping an element of means testing to focus on those most in need of financial support is vital. It provides a degree of fairness both to those receiving and to the tax payer'.

Part 9: Your final comments and suggestions on the proposed CTS scheme

The Council is proposing to move to an income banded discount CTS scheme.

The proposed replacement CTS scheme will simplify the approach and work better with the Universal Credit system.

The maximum award will be protected at 85%.

There will be some residents who receive higher awards and some who receive lower awards. Many residents will have no change to their current award.

Free text comments

128 individual comments were made.

A broad range of comments were received with concerns expressed on the financial impacts of the proposed scheme change.

The simplification of the scheme received positive comments.

'Unpaid carers need to be protected. We are already struggling with food and bill costs. Any changes to the existing scheme could impact peoples mental health and wellbeing'.

'It seems quite simple and an advantage to me'.

'I think this is a good scheme for those with low income'.

'You cannot please all of the people all of the time and some will object & some will accept - with the majority rule wins for all changes - it seems very complex and far too much to take in & understand without in depth explanations therefore i expect the changes will go ahead'.

'It will simplify the approach and work better with U.C'.

'The current scheme is extremely complicated and difficult to understand. I received over 10 15page letters in a two month period when there was a change to my PIP and it took months to rectify with the assistance of BDCAB causing a lot of stress and anxiety. A scheme that is standard across the board will be much easier for residents to understand and the council to manage'.

'Not every claimant receives Universal Credit. The current system assesses each family by their financial means and this proposed new system will detrimentally effect families on other benefits during a cost of living crisis'!

'I don't agree with any changes because people with disabilities will not be able to afford it'.

'To keep the whole process as simple and fast as possible. Disabled residents like myself are highly dependent on prompt financial help with the least complex applications /procedures'.

'Those not working, claiming full benefits will qualify for 85% discount. Those who are struggling as a single parent, who work full time, and do not get any other benefits only child benefit will get the lowest discount. Makes you not want to work full time, you feel worse off'.

'The recent change is going to affect my household as I won't be able to afford if my council tax support gets decreased, please could you kindly consider and cancel the new changes'.

'Although I agree with the new system it should be reviewed after 2 years to see how much the cost has risen, (Can we afford it) also I am concerned that if the new system is too rigid those who would receive less help than before could be too badly disadvantaged. Would this be monitored?'

'CTS should be based on individual households as people like me could be worse off especially as the cost of living has gone up massively, I only have one child living with me but for others who have 2+ kids I think would be cruel on the children to penalise the parents on having additional kids'

'People are already struggling. if the scheme makes them worse, it is not fit for purpose'.

'This changes should not be implemented at all not especially when we are going through the universal credit switch'.

'Any scheme that risks moving residents into (further) hardship is not a good scheme. How long is the discretionary fund available, as some residents may need a permanent top up'.

'Although I agree with the new system it should be reviewed after 2 years to see how much the cost has risen, (Can we afford it) also I am concerned that if the new system is too rigid those who would receive less help than before could be too badly disadvantaged. Would this be monitored?'

'People on very low income should get 100% Council tax support'

'This calculation being capped at 2 kids is not fair. If we have more than that the we are always going to be broke and begging for food as things get too expensive especially food. It should be looked at and extended. Its not easy these days as bills are going up. I could just stay home and depend on benefits but as a role model for 4 kids, a single parent and I'm a part time nurse trying hard to put food on the table and buy essentials for the home. Its really difficult!'

'In my view it's important to keep help all low income people and single mother , in Barking and Dagenham, we really need help'.

'We have already provided alternative suggestions and we do hope that these will be considered. We do feel the way the consultation has been presented is very good and has provided the opportunity to better understand the proposals'.

'We disagree that maximum award will be protected at 85%'

Survey responses from internal teams

Homes and Money HUB

Part 1: The introduction of an income-based banded discount scheme (the income bands)

'Due to significant losses for larger families who previously have received the benefit, it is too much to take away at a single time. You refer to other benefits who have adopted the 2 child rule, but this is in relation to children born after April 2017, so there is a disregard for older children. You have not made any provision for these families apart from where you point out that the allowances for the first two children are more generous. We do get the simplicity of the scheme as a benefit but is there any provision for an additional band i.e, for 3 or more children that will reduce the loss, even slightly or a transitional allowance that will cushion the change, even for a short period. Also bearing in mind a lot of larger families are already benefit capped, this just adds another penalty which is unlikely to be collected and may result in large debts, Court fees etc'.

Do you agree? No

Part 2: Disregarding certain benefits, incomes and elements of Universal Credit.

'It is good that the benefits above have been disregarded, but there is concern that the additional disability premiums have been lost within the calculation even though the disability benefits do have a disregard. This could mean that disabled people are adversely affected. Also there is no mention of a child maintenance disregard, this may have been overlooked, but if this is the case then it just provides an argument, as previously demonstrated with the UC, HB and CTS £20 disregard which was changed and replaced with a full disregard due to absent parents using this as an excuse to not pay child maintenance and cause other social impact on the child in respect of contact etc'.

Do you agree? Yes

Part 3: The household size will be limited to a maximum of two dependent children allowances for all applicants within the scheme when calculating the CTS award.

'As previously mentioned the loss to larger families will be significant and we propose an additional band for 3 or more children or some kind of transitional protection in the short term. This will alleviate the impact particularly to those who already have a sanction with the benefit cap where collection will be unlikely'.

Do you agree? No

Part 4: Introducing one deduction amount of £7.50 per week for all adults in the household removing different levels of deductions.

'This is contrary to the housing situation currently as it discourages people to remain in the family home which is required due to the current housing crisis. It doesn't seem fair to expect someone on Universal Credit to contribute the same as someone in full time employment. If someone on Universal Credit was looking to get their own property they would likely pay less, however this is not an option in the current climate due to lack of housing in the borough and beyond. This could also potentially cause conflicts within households and family members thrown out of the property and then becomes a homeless problem. We do get that again it does simplify the system so that non-dependents do not need to provide evidence etc. which in itself can cause conflict and hardship when this is not

provided. Perhaps by providing a disregard for those non-dependents on non-working Universal Credit or any other basic legacy benefit would create a fairer system’.

Do you agree? No

Part 5: Reducing the capital and savings limit to £6,000 and removing the assumed income from capital (tariff income) from the calculation of CTS.

‘Don't feel this will have a big impact although there will be some who will lose out who are just at £6k or slightly above but does add simplicity of the overall model’.

Do you agree? No

Part 6: Sending notification letters.

‘This is a good thing. We often see residents who are frustrated with the number of letters they receive when they had thought they had the situation sorted and we have to explain that this is just the system generating letters, so appreciate this change and will cut down significantly on the cost of postage’.

Do you agree? No

Part 7: Making the Council Tax Discretionary Relief fund available for residents to apply for additional financial support if they are affected by the change in the scheme.

‘Do agree that this needs to be accessible, although the number supported will be determined by the amount in the fund. Is there any opportunity for a transitional fund to those who are the biggest losers which is automatically given so the resident does not need to rely on an application’.

Do you agree? No

Part 8: Alternative options to changing the CTS scheme.

‘We do agree in principle for the change to happen as there are a lot of positives ie., simplicity, cost, reduction in notifications and the bulk of people being either better off or staying the same. However, there are adverse effects that need to be borne in mind and we believe with a few tweaks ie., additional band for 3 and over children or transitional payment and no non dependent deduction for those on basic benefits ie., UC and legacy. We do not believe that this will lose the simplicity of the model. We do appreciate that this will increase cost, but could this be covered from Discretionary Funds?’

Do you agree? No

Part 9: Your final comments and suggestions on the proposed CTS scheme

‘We have already provided alternative suggestions and we do hope that these will be considered. We do feel the way the consultation has been presented is very good and has provided the opportunity to better understand the proposals’.

Survey responses from voluntary sector organisations

DABD

Part 1: The introduction of an income-based banded discount scheme (the income bands)

No comment.

Do you agree? Yes

Part 2: Disregarding certain benefits, incomes and elements of Universal Credit.

No comment.

Do you agree? Yes

Part 3: The household size will be limited to a maximum of two dependent children allowances for all applicants within the scheme when calculating the CTS award.

'Residents with larger families may have already made long-term budgeting decisions regarding employment and childcare. Its also possible that this proposal would adversely affect some communities and ethnic groups more than others.'

Do you agree? No

Part 4: Introducing one deduction amount of £7.50 per week for all adults in the household removing different levels of deductions.

No comment.

Do you agree? Yes

Part 5: Reducing the capital and savings limit to £6,000 and removing the assumed income from capital (tariff income) from the calculation of CTS.

'Low-income families should be encouraged rather than discouraged to save. This change feels like it penalizes financially prudent residents. It could also impact those that have temporary savings (such as from the sale of a vehicle which would be used against a replacement, or money received as compensation).'

Do you agree? No

Part 6: Sending notification letters.

No comment.

Do you agree? Yes

Part 7: Making the Council Tax Discretionary Relief fund available for residents to apply for additional financial support if they are affected by the change in the scheme.

No comment.

Do you agree? Yes

Part 8: Alternative options to changing the CTS scheme.

No comment.

Do you agree? Yes

Part 9: Your final comments and suggestions on the proposed CTS scheme

‘Provided there is full communication/engagement with clients with regards to options available to improve their income and outgoings. Services available to help with benefit checks/finding work/applying for grants available etc. Offering areas like libraries to connect both online and in person with people to support clients. Staff fully trained with the IAG to give to the clients, then this will be a great scheme going forward’.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

CAB have provided an extensive response to the consultation separately which is added as Appendix 2 to the consultation.

CAB requested further information concerning analysis and the Equalities Impact Assessment which is publicly available from the October Cabinet papers for their reference.

Currently CAB have disagreed with the loss of the means tested approach (the current scheme) and they do not recognise the reasons to change the scheme as set out.

A response on behalf of the Council has been issued and is awaiting a further response from CAB.

Royal British Legion

‘The Royal British Legion (RBL) welcome that Barking and Dagenham Council's proposed new CTS is already disregarding as income all War Pensions. As detailed in Appendix 1.

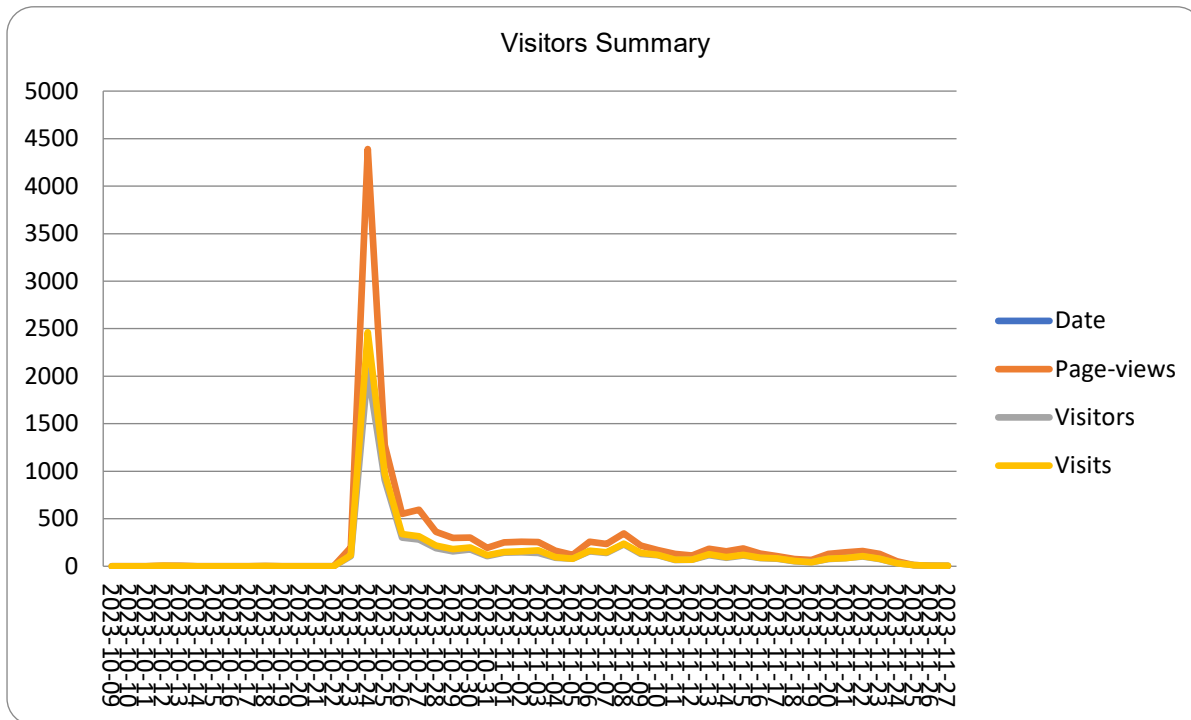
However, we note with concern that the consultation paperwork and survey only refers to one form of military compensation, War Pensions. It is essential that all forms of military compensation, including War Pensions, Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, Service Invaliding Pensions (SIPs) and Service Attributable Pensions (SAPs) are disregarded in full, and this is highlighted in relevant policy.

RBL also recommends that the Council seeks to introduce these same disregards in relation to all other locally administered benefits’.

RBL also recommend that the Council Tax Support scheme proposals should operate in line with Universal Credit guidance and consider SIPs and SAPs as compensation, and not income’.

Consultation statistics and social media promotion

The consultation had wide engagement.



A majority of views and visits were during the opening of the consultation.

The consultation had:

- 7,550 visits
- 5,772 visited at least 1 page
- 1,059 visited multiple pages
- 12,238 page views
- 305 downloaded the policy document
- 725 visited the policy section
- 368 completed surveys

These statistics demonstrate that although only 368 surveys were completed in full a significant number of residents viewed the pages and were therefore aware of the proposals to change the scheme.

CTS consultations have historically low engagement rates for all Local Authorities. The completion rate for this consultation is considered to be above expectations.

A majority of residents found out about the consultation through social media promotion.

Social media stats (posts on Facebook and Twitter):

- Posts reached – 33,528
- Had impressions (how many times it was shown on someone’s screen) – 37,589

Paid social media promotion delivered impressive results with over 30,000 posts and impressions generated.

This helped to significantly promote the consultation.

Final conclusions

The demographics of those residents surveyed was not reflective of the overall demographics of the borough. Female residents, residents with long-term illness or disability and those with a white ethnic background were all over represented within the survey. Ethnic minorities and male residents were all under represented within the survey. The age demographic also did not match the largest age brackets in the borough.

A large majority of those who completed the survey were in receipt of CTS and therefore had a direct interest in the administration of the scheme.

The approval rates for the proposed scheme was variable dependant upon which part of the proposal was consulted on and ranged from 44-71%.

Disagreement rates ranged from 10-33%.

More respondents supported each of the individual proposals than disagreed however support was not unqualified.

Those who completed the survey and agreed with the proposals tended to make less comments than those who disagreed. As a consequence a significant number of comments were received that were critical and disagreed with the proposals.

Questions were raised against the overall level of the income band thresholds with concern that these were too low and would not sufficiently support low income and vulnerable residents. This is a legitimate response in light of the context of the low-income demographics of the borough. **33% disagreed with the income bands which was the highest disagreement rate against any of the proposals and should be noted.**

The proposed scheme makes significant provision to disregard elements of Universal Credit to support vulnerable residents, including the Carer Element however no further disregards are applied for Carers Allowance and **the impact on Carers is highlighted as a concern.** The scheme makes no further provisions for Carers.

A removal of disability premiums present within the current scheme is also a legitimate issue raised and will **affect some claimants with protected characteristics which is highlighted as a concern.** This is addressed within the Equalities Impact Assessment.

30% of respondents disagreed with the 2-child limit. This reflected concern over support for larger families. Barking & Dagenham has a higher proportion of larger families than the Greater London average, however the average household size in the borough is 2.96 residents per household. Child allowances have been set higher than the child elements of Universal Credit to mitigate the restriction however **larger families may see significant losses of award and this is highlighted as a concern.**

The introduction of a flat rate non-dependant deduction, a reduction in the capital limit and sending less notifications had a positive response with 48% -53.6% agreeing with these proposals.

Making a Discretionary Council Tax Relief (DCTR) available was very popular with 73% agreeing on this proposal. This should be duly noted for consideration.

An overall majority agreed with implementing the proposed scheme (50.5%).

only 21.2% disagreed with implementing the scheme however a significant number 28.3% were unsure.

The consultation has confirmed that overall a majority of those residents/organisations who completed the survey were supportive of the Council's proposal to implement a replacement scheme as set out. Opposition to implementing the scheme was significantly less.

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Response to LBBB Council Tax Support Scheme change proposals consultation

Who are we?

Citizens Advice Barking & Dagenham is a charity that has worked in the justice space for 85 years.

Welfare rights debt and housing are always the 3 top areas of advice demand and across the 300 other local offices that make up the Citizens Advice movement.

Our mission is to provide the advice people need for the problems they face and to influence and challenge negative policies and practices that affect people's lives. We are here for everyone but focus our resources on those most vulnerable in our Borough.

Our work amongst other aims is focused on reducing poverty and inequality including in relation to disability and child poverty.

CABD routinely delivers advice and casework in welfare rights (benefits/social security) alone to over 3000 residents a year. This includes income maximisation up to the social security appeal upper tribunal.

CABD leads the BD Advice Plus Network of advice agencies which include DABD, Independent Living Agency and BD Carers, local charities whose missions and services are focused on disabled and long term ill residents, families and households.

We work closely with LBBB as both a committed partner to meet Borough ambition and ensure No one is left behind.

We are respected as a critical friend and have a strong relationship with the council of mutual respect.

What we say below does not take away from our deep insight into the level of effort and commitment LBBB has in meeting its ambition for residents. Indeed we have due to time constraints left out the great benefits and improvements we know LBBB has made in recent years and that have seen at first hand, benefit and progress our own charitable mission.

We recognise that the very challenging and difficult environment for residents and local authorities is significantly driven by central government policy over many years.

However as set out below there is a lot more work that needs to be done by LBBB as regards the shaping and proposals for a change in the current CTS scheme.

Council Tax Support Scheme change proposals

We have read your consultation policy document 'Have your say on proposed changes to the Council Tax Support scheme 2024/25'.

A. Universal Credit relationship to your CTS scheme proposals

Your policy document: On page 2 you explain the current CTS scheme is less compatible with the UC scheme. What appears to be suggested here is that the UC scheme '*awarded monthly...results in lots of changes to income ...up to 12 changes per year*' So they '*effect the amount ..you need to pay and...make it difficult for residents to budget*'. In administrative terms for LBBB, this also results increased administration (inc. printing and postage) and staffing costs. As more people move onto UC and away from legacy benefits the new CTS scheme needs to change the way it is administered and to meet increased future demand.

The points we would make here are:-

(i) There has always been a need to respond to resident's change of circumstances whether in 'income' or 'needs' (see our point regarding needs further below).

In our experience since the government started to reform the welfare social security system from 2010 onwards, the level of 'changes in circumstance' were much greater under the legacy system before UC was introduced. UC was not largely in the system but in recent years is increasingly so. There has been a higher administrative burden on LBBB due to the need to administer CTS with both the legacy and UC schemes running parallel with each other. No doubt this has had additional operational resource burdens for LBBB.

The government reform to replace legacy system with the UC system is based on the core premise is that it 'administratively simplifies the social security' system and in our experience we do accept that it does achieve this aim regardless of a number of problems with it.

As you recognise the DWP UC managed migration in Barking and Dagenham over the next period will mean more residents moving over to UC. Over the next 2.5 years the old legacy system will be largely abolished.

We have to question the concern that you have about rising demand.

Residents currently on legacy benefits are largely the recipients of CTS and this would quite rightly continue. By virtue of low incomes these residents do need to continue to rely on this additional element of social security support. In this situation

there is no significant 'greater demand' argument. If there is what is the data that supports your policy argument in relation to this segment of residents?

Aside from this segment, who are the ever greater numbers of residents moving into UC i.e. what is your data forecasting and assumptions here as there is no detail. i.e. who are these residents and why?

We can of course imagine that there is may be a real issue of greater demand but without more information we cannot feedback on this.

See conclusion to this section.

(ii) We accept that in government welfare to work reforms have driven a rise in precariat gig economy, low pay and variable incomes that have forced changes in circumstance. The system became very complex because it was extremely difficult for residents and the council to keep administration smooth.

For many years in welfare reform the drivers for advice in this regard were all due to a complex system leading to backlogs, poor administration, delays in administration. It led to huge rises in overpayment decisions, claw backs and residents having to challenge these decisions. These problems are resolving themselves through technology and system simplification and due to progress over time in the past few years.

There are other problems but this one does seem to be receding. This is the case even though residents are still struggling with the system impacts of historical debt.

See conclusion to this section.

Conclusion

Reduce administration pressures of changes in circumstance: Whilst UC presents a number of social security problems for those who are 'losers' when migrating to UC, the UC system itself simplifies administration so one could assume that this therefore simplifies the CTS administration as a natural consequence without a further need to change the whole current CTS scheme.

The level of 'income' changes forcing 'increased' administration is less (see above). The Tax credit regime is receding as part of UC simplification and that in itself together with 'real time information' appeared to drive past problems.

The issue of residents struggling and failing across 3-4 schemes to notify relevant changes in circumstance created huge problems for them and for the scheme administration.

This is receding through a 'simplified' UC system. The need to administrate CTS across 2 schemes legacy and UC is also receding.

Residents and independent advice welcomes an easier ability to understand when they need to apply, file changes in circumstance etc. the technology improvements as regards My Account are now more settled and stonger habits and routines have been formed by residents. This itself makes administration both for residents and LBBDD easier.

i.e. The administrative system for residents and LBBDD is much simpler now than it has been and will be simpler again through managed migration from legacy.

So we need more information to understand the administrative pressures. The reasons you have set out to support a change the scheme don't seem to add up.

Simpler administration will be better able to cope with rising demand: Currently in terms of what has been set out we cannot see the detail – if at all - of why UC drives greater administration costs for CTS directly tied to rising demand.

We accept that there are transitional administrative costs of moving CT support to those on legacy to UC. But as said above the numbers should more or less stay the same and not increase demand.

This means we ask to ask for more information of the modelling of the projected rises in demand that you set out (from £16.1M to £17.2M) and what the specific drivers for that?

In conclusion, our feedback in this section appears to directly contradict a main plank of the policy rationale. By natural evolution of social security system change there will be greater streamlining and greater simplification overall for both residents and LBBDD.

There is no acknowledgement in the policy document of the larger system change and without that there is no robust argument made out for the need to change the CTS scheme on the basis you have set out.

We appreciate that you may have detailed data and internal information that might contradict in turn what we say above. We request more information so we can understand this area more and feedback further as needed.

B. Disproportionate focus 'means – income' and very little focus on resident & household 'needs'

We are extremely concerned that the new CTS scheme proposals do not make sufficiently clear the reductions that can and will occur for many low income households.

The policy document as drafted provides no detail that we can engage with in a meaningful, measured or more constructive way than what we have had to set out below.

Currently however your CTS proposals and policy rationale will have a significant negative impact on the poorest and most vulnerable households in the borough.

The level of this negative of impact may be significantly disproportionate to and could directly affect and set back any ability to meet your overall stated policy aims (see policy aims below).

It may be that the assertions we making from what we have read (see below) are not correct and that all things we set out have been catered for. We do sincerely hope that in whole or part this is the case.

However we are minded by the fact that even the case studies you yourselves provide in Appendix 2 reflect our concerns here. The resident scenarios in 66% of the case studies demonstrate a significant negative impact for those residents and households.

So as to explain our assertion above more clearly we need to provide a brief summary of the approach to the current CTS scheme.

CTS is a means-tested benefit. The 'whole means test' is not purely about income it is a test balancing *needs* of the applicant household versus 'means – income'.

Your document mentions a lot about 'means – income' but not nearly enough about needs. .

The 'whole means calculation' has been settled for a great many years and is designed to directly incorporate standard amounts to reflect 'needs'. These are called 'applicable amounts' and 'premiums'.

The steps to take 'needs' into account are logically within the calculation so as to reach a final end 'income' figure of 'income' from which the amount of CTS to be paid can be identified.

(i) There is nothing in your policy document that speaks to 'applicable amounts' or 'premiums' so they have been removed?

These are the set amounts to reflect 'needs'. The decision of how CTS benefit an applicant gets depends on a comparison of what someone 'needs' with their 'means' (income). But without you explaining what your treatment is of these as regards your new CTS scheme we can only assume that you have removed them.

If you are removing these elements from the new CTS scheme there are grave implications for low income and vulnerable residents – CTS is reduced.

Under the current CTS scheme, entitlement is calculated using the same applicable amounts used for HB award calculation:-

HB/CTS applicable amount is made up:-

- personal allowances (single/lone parent/couple)
- children allowances

Plus premiums depending on an applicant's family circumstances and any disabilities

- Disabled child
- Disability
- Enhanced disability
- Severe disability
- Carer

We need to see a sufficient policy rationale for any removal of the above or what is still within the new CTS scheme and where within any new proposed calculation.

Without this information we cannot see the extent to which the 'needs' of the applicant household have been taken into account by you in the new proposals. Currently on the face of it there is a huge change and a significant removal of the recognition of needs of the applicant/household.

(ii) Income - vague and have earning disregards been removed?

Earnings are taken into account after tax and NI contributions i.e. it is Net. There are **standard earning disregards** –

- E.g. for a single parent regardless of how many hours working the disregard is £ 25 a week
- E.g. for a couple regardless of children or hours worked its £20
- for those getting WTC or working enough hours for WTC entitlement will get £17.10

Some benefits as regards disability are fully disregarded and we welcome that you have retained this approach in your current CTS proposals.

In the final stage of the calculation – when you compared the applicable amount with the total income, if the income exceeded the applicable amount for CTS you would take the weekly CT liability (minus eg 25% single person discount) and would apply a deduction of 20% of their excess income – if even the 20% of excess income was higher than the weekly CT liability, the a person was not entitled to CTS.

Also, under the current scheme, if someone is on UC or PC and apply for CTS within one month of applying for UC/PC, the date of the CTS application is the date of the UC/PC benefit claim.

Without sufficient information we cannot understand the extent to which the new calculation changes the old calculation approach. On the face of it if it is an entirely different type of calculation that can cause huge negative impacts on applicant households.

(iii) The definition of Income in the new CTS proposals is not clear. How 'income' is defined. Is it Net or Gross? Is it income 'weekly' or 'monthly'?

Your 'Have you say' guide says that it includes 'some benefits, pensions and other incomes' however it does keep the old rules of CHB, PIP/DLA and UC disability and carer elements disregarded in full?

We understand and cautiously welcome the suggestion that you are aligning to the old scheme by disregarding PIP, DLA and disability element on UC and child benefit. However we do not have enough information in the document as to what Income means for you so it is difficult to give robust feedback at this stage.

But we cannot see the extent of negative affects of the change without further information.

(iii) Approach to Backdating in current scheme: In addition, if someone on UC or on all other means tested benefits (IS, ib-JSA, irESA, PC) applies for CTS within a month of becoming liable of pay CT for the first time, the date of their application is the date they became liable for CT - so basically it was backdated one month).

Can you clarify the situation regarding the approach to backdating in the new CTS scheme proposals? If the current approach is not included in the new scheme there will be further reductions and impacts on applicants.

(iv) Introduction of 'Non-dependents' into the new calculation approach: there never was a non-dependent deduction on CTS. It applies in the HB and UC schemes. People on legacy or UC already have non-dependent benefit reductions so as to arrive at a final figure. Your introduction of this in the new CTS scheme appears to 'double' the non-dependent deduction already affecting households on low incomes. The issues of non-dependents in squeezed and low income households is translated on the ground into stress within the family household relationships leading at worst to family breakdown and homelessness of the adult non dependent. This is particularly the case with the transitional 16-17 year old and under 24 year old adults in a welfare reform environment where anyone under 35 has had their social security levels eroded to an extent that it is impossible to move out and live independently.

Some modelling on the impact on current CTS recipients will have been done and we would like to see this along with the forecasts of the impact of this introduction of non-dependents into the calculation.

(v) Significantly limiting of the means test in relation to 'needs' – the '2 child cap' proposal

Your proposals restricting the children allowances to maximum two when previously it was based on the number of children in the household.

Taking into account the 'means' part and significantly limiting the 'needs' part means that you are only taking into account if someone is single or living in a couple and how many children they have with a 2 child cap.

In this way a family with three or four children or above is seen as having the same 'needs' as a family with two.

(vi) Narrowing Capital thresholds to CTS eligibility

The reduction from 10,000 to 6,000 in the poorest London Borough may have minimal impact on the majority of current CTS recipients. We do not know what the forecast savings may be from this change in the eligibility threshold. However working families who have saving habits and longer term planning ambitions will be disadvantaged through this reduction. It would be helpful to understand this as we assume it is based on future forecasts.

The current wicked environment for residents and households

Everyone has seen the worst fall in living standards since records began. The cost of living crisis has been present in B&D for many years. Your own cost of living research data is showing that residents struggling last year are now unable to cope. Despite the fall in fuel prices, the high cost of food and other household essentials is set to remain for the foreseeable future. On top of these rises are increases in rents that disproportionately affect residents in the private rented sector and in service charges of council owned accommodation.

These costs must be made up from income and social security regime falls significantly short in terms of any contribution -if at all - towards them. Residents and households are also in a welfare to work regime within a stagnant economy of low growth and jobs that do not pay. The rises in living or London living wage falls on employers and is not mandatory. The low levels of literacy and skills in the borough do not lend themselves in the foreseeable period to improve income to cover costs or council priority debts.

Conclusion

As you may be aware despite the winners in UC the significant losers are within these households and communities.

Every penny counts right now and reductions in entitlement have a knock on affect that can create debts both to council tax and rent or increasing levels of acute poverty and household stress leading to rises in domestic abuse, homeless or eviction for instance.

In your policy document you refer to the current scheme as 'an old fashioned means tested benefit. But this appears to be an intentional denigration of a rationale system that was designed to balance income and needs as set out.

In terms of what is at risk of disappearing from the current CTS calculation as against what may be protected in the new CTS scheme there is simply not enough information.

In a just and fair society there must be a minimum income to cover what public sector big or local government considers someone needs to live on according to their

personal/family circumstances. The 'applicable amounts & premiums' are set in the current CTS scheme calculation to guide the importance of recognising 'need'.

Child Poverty Action, Citizens Advice and other national anti-poverty charities have seen and commented on the central government erosion of the definition of poverty and minimum income to get people out of poverty. The end poverty now and end child poverty coalitions have been up against it hence the importance of these campaigns.

C. Policy aims stress tested and Equality Impact Assessment required

There is a real need for us to have an understanding of the level of stress testing you have done of the new CTS scheme proposals against higher Policy Aims upwards to the Borough Manifesto and No one left behind

In your policy document you reference the Corporate Plan 2023 to 2026 and include priorities

- Residents supported during the current cost of living crisis
- Residents are safe, protected and supported at their most vulnerable
- Residents avoid becoming homeless

We cannot see how the proposals as set out robustly meet these priorities? On the face of it we think the policy proposals are detrimental and run counter to meet them.

Currently even on your own case studies 66% of working age residents will be worse off and these will be those on the poorest incomes and the most vulnerable.

We do not have sufficient information to robustly raise a concern regarding the impact across all residents and communities who are protected in law.

We cannot see evidence in the policy document that an EIA has been done. If one has been done then we would like to see a copy of it?

There is a real need for a robust EIA to inform the impact of the CTS proposals across all residents who have protected characteristics.

e.g. Black and Minority ethnic households form the majority in private rent sector housing and are worse affected currently by income shocks and may ordinarily be more affected by the changes in the proposed scheme.

e.g. Women whether in those communities or not either as lone parents or the main parent carer of children in a couple household may face barriers to work and so that sub-segment might ordinarily be more affected by the changes in the proposed scheme.

e.g. UC may make working families better off but the losers in UC are most vulnerable. They include very specific households who have protected characteristics and not just the disabled and long-term ill.

Conclusion

We are all experiencing the worst fall in living standards since records began. Barking and Dagenham is the poorest London Borough. Despite the reduction in fuel inflation, inflation in food and other household essentials is set to stay with us for the foreseeable future.

There is a level of low literacy and language skills across low income residents. There is a lack of available work that pays as well as numerous other barriers that are part of every day life e.g. children or disability. There are rising levels of unaffordable rents. All of this means that any schemes that squeeze incomes further can have catastrophic affects.

It in this vein that we have to set out our feedback. It matters a lot what may happen with any new scheme.

D. Further feedback, case studies and scenarios from us post additional information being received from you

We are happy to meet with you to understand the new scheme in more detail. We need to know much more as indicated.

In this way we can more clearly set out any concerns we have and also do our own stress testing and impact assessments as against our own data.

Thank you. If you have any questions or queries please contact Pip Salvador-Jones, our chief officer – cab.director@bdcab.org.uk . We look forward to hearing from you.

Citizens Advice Barking and Dagenham 23.11.23.

Community and Equality Impact Assessment

As an authority, we have made a commitment to apply a systematic equalities and diversity screening process to both new policy development or changes to services.

This is to determine whether the proposals are likely to have significant positive, negative or adverse impacts on the different groups in our community.

This process has been developed, together with **full guidance** to support officers in meeting our duties under the:

- Equality Act 2010.
- The Best Value Guidance
- The Public Services (Social Value) 2012 Act

About the service or policy development

Name of service or policy	Replacement Council Tax Support scheme 2024/25
Lead Officer	James Johnston (Service Manager) & Donna Radley (Head of Welfare)
Contact Details	James.johnston@lbbd.gov.uk Donna.radley@lbbd.gov.uk

Why is this service or policy development/review needed?
<p>The Welfare Reform Act in 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from April 2013 and, in its place, support took the form of a local Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS). The Local Government Finance Act 2012 contains provisions for the setting up of local support schemes.</p> <p>The current scheme in Barking & Dagenham has been based around the default CTS scheme.</p> <p>The CTS scheme helps residents on low incomes to pay their Council Tax. Under the current scheme, a working-age household (Working age is anyone under Pension Credit age) liable for Council Tax could get up to 85% of the charge paid through the scheme, resulting in a minimum payment of 15% for all claimants, dependent upon their circumstances.</p> <p>The council must consider whether to revise or replace its CTS scheme each financial year, for working age recipients. However, it does not actually have to revise or replace its scheme and can choose to retain the scheme unchanged from the previous financial year.</p> <p>Pensioners are protected under the nationally prescribed pension age CTS scheme and must be able to receive up to a 100% reduction under the national scheme rules and this cannot be varied at a local level. Prescribed regulation changes to the pension age scheme must be applied.</p> <p>This EIA is required for the proposals to implement a replacement CTS scheme for the financial year 2024/25 for working age households.</p> <p>A new simplified version of the scheme is being proposed changing the scheme from the current means tested default scheme to an income banded discount scheme.</p> <p>The current scheme has a number of disadvantages which can be summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly complex calculation of entitlement and legislative based assessment processes • Reactive to minor changes in circumstances generating higher volumes of work, adjustments to awards and multiple Council Tax bill adjustments • Complex administration for staff & complex for applicants to understand • Difficult to simplify with little flexibility in the scheme available • The impact of Universal Credit (UC) on administration and awards • Difficult to vary and change the levels of support for different types of applicant <p>The current default CTS scheme is less compatible with UC.</p>

Why is this service or policy development/review needed?

The impact of UC on the administration of the current CTS scheme can be summarised as follows:

- Lower entitlement (CTS award)
- A higher volume of changes

UC claimants on average have less entitlement to CTS than existing legacy benefit claimants due to the design of UC.

The current CTS scheme is highly reactive to change. Administration costs are higher for UC claimants due to the monthly re-assessment of UC awards requiring processing and the adjustment of CTS. This results in claimants receiving up to 12 revised Council Tax bills and adjustment notices in the financial year. This may impact on Council Tax collection with amended Council Tax bill's being issued with rescheduled instalments. This creates confusion for the Council taxpayer and may contribute to increased Council Tax arrears.

Managed migration of the existing legacy benefit case load (with some exceptions for claimants in receipt of Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) to UC is scheduled to be undertaken in 2024.

This will have a significant impact on the existing case load.

If the current scheme is retained, it may not adequately support residents and this may act as a disincentive/barrier to work.

The existing scheme is too reactive to change and may not be viable in the long term due to the migration to UC.

In view of the issues with the retaining of the current scheme and taking account of the drivers for change it is proposed that an alternative approach be taken for a replacement scheme in 2024/25.

The main objectives of this CTS scheme change can be summarised as follows:

- Is affordable and maintains a cost neutral position from natural increases in the cost of retaining the current scheme into 2024/25
- Simplifying the scheme making it easy for residents to understand and access
- Provide the maximum level of support for all low income households
- Remove the requirement to continually make changes in awards making support more consistent and provide stability on managing household budgets
- Improve how the scheme works with the UC system
- Create a scheme that remains fair and equitable to all residents, requiring a fair contribution from those who can pay while protecting the most vulnerable
- Encourages and incentivises employment
- Builds in capacity to better manage an increase in demand for the scheme (increased automation and more efficient administration)

An income banded discount scheme provides support based on bands of income and provides a percentage reduction off the Council Tax bill (the award). The number of discount bands, the level of discount and income thresholds can all be varied. Banded schemes vary in the types of income taken into account, what circumstances are considered and the % of the discount awarded. Income banded schemes can be designed to be as simple or as complex

Why is this service or policy development/review needed?

as desired, can be made more or less generous and designed to support protected groups if required. Re-assessment of cases will only be required if income crosses one of the income band thresholds.

This approach will fundamentally redesign the scheme.

Income banding has the following advantages:

- Simplified and easier for applicants to understand
- Removal of complex means testing
- Simplified administration
- Reduced requirement to report changes in circumstances for applicants (workload)
- Significantly reduced number of claim adjustments and therefore Council Tax bill changes
- Reduced print & post costs due to reduced numbers of changes
- Targeted support at the most vulnerable (or other priority groups) (flexible scheme design)
- Easier to automate changes through existing IT platforms
- More compatible with Universal Credit

The [B&D Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-23](#) includes an outcome that when residents need help, they can access the right support, at the right time in a way that works for them.

As a simplified Scheme that is easier for applicants to understand with fewer barriers to access should support this outcome, since the proposed scheme is less reactive to minor changes in circumstances than the current Scheme, enabling residents with fluctuations in their household circumstances (e.g. to time off work for ill-health or caring) to financially plan.

This EIA will consider the impact of introducing a banded income discount scheme in 2024/25.

Note this decision has not been taken.

This EIA analysis is based on a proposed draft CTS scheme to be considered by Cabinet.

There are a number of mitigations as set out in the report to support those who may be impacted.

The Strategy team has reviewed this EIA.

1. Community impact (this can be used to assess impact on staff although a cumulative impact should be considered).

What impacts will this service or policy development have on communities?
Look at what you know. What does your research tell you?

Please state which data sources you have used for your research in your answer below

Consider:

- National & local data sets
- Complaints
- Consultation and service monitoring information
- Voluntary and Community Organisations
- The Equality Act places a specific duty on people with 'protected characteristics'. The table below details these groups and helps you to consider the impact on these groups.
- It is Council policy to consider the impact services and policy developments could have on residents who are socio-economically disadvantaged. There is space to consider the impact below.

Overall borough wide demographics

- **Local communities in general**

Barking & Dagenham is a diverse borough with significant levels of deprivation as outlined by the following demographic trends below.

- **Population & Households**

Barking & Dagenham currently has a total population of 218,900.

The population size has increased by 17.7% from around 185,900 in 2011. This is higher than the overall increase for England of 6.6% and the 2nd highest in greater London and demonstrates the growth in population in the borough. Nearby boroughs such as Havering saw growth of only 10.4%.

In 2021 Barking & Dagenham ranked 80th for total population in Local Authority areas moving up 15 places since 2011.

There are currently 73,900 households in the borough.

This is broken down as follows:

- 1 person in household 23.7%
- 2 people in household 22.5%
- 3 people in household 18.9%
- 4 or more people in household 34.9% (London average 24.1%)

Single family households make up 62.9% of the household composition, higher than the London average of 58%.

The average household size is 2.96 the 4th highest average in England & Wales.

Barking & Dagenham therefore has a higher proportion of larger households and a higher proportion of single family households than the London average.

The population is expected to grow another 42% to 309,000 by 2041.

- **Age**

Of this population currently 57,150 are aged under 16. This is the highest proportion in England and Wales.

Of this population currently 142,700 are aged 16 – 64, and 19,050 aged over 65.

The largest age group bracket is age 35 – 39 with 8.5% (18,606) of the borough.

The average age in the borough is 33. This is lower than the London average of 35.

Barking & Dagenham has a significantly higher age profile between 0-19 than the London average.

The age profile has seen a decrease of 1.7% in people aged 65 and over, with an increase of 20.8% of people aged 15-64. The age profile for children under 15 has also increased by 17.3%.

57,100 (26.1%) of residents were aged under 16 on Census day, the highest proportion in England & Wales.

This demonstrates the changing profiles of the age of the population in Barking & Dagenham.

- **Disability**

Currently 13.2% of the population is registered as disabled under the Equality Act.

Barking & Dagenham currently has 4,790 people of working age (16-64) claiming Disability Living Allowance & 9,687 claiming Personal Independence Payment.

29.8% of households have at least one person who identifies as disabled, the highest proportion in London.

The [B&D Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) highlight that people with a disability are at particular risk of disadvantage in all its forms, as they are more likely to be living on a low income, be unemployed or in unsuitable housing, putting their health at additional risk of further decline

(DWP Stat-Xplore - 31.05.2022)

(Census 2021)

- **Gender reassignment**

9 in 10 Barking & Dagenham residents' gender identity was the same as sex registered at birth (90.4%)

Of all English & Welsh local authorities, Barking & Dagenham had the:

- highest proportion of trans women (0.25%)
- 3rd highest proportion of trans men (0.24%)
- 5th highest proportion of people whose gender identity was different but no specific identity given (0.64%)
- 17th highest who did not answer the gender identity question (8.4%)

- **Marriage & civil partnership**

Barking & Dagenham currently has 42.8% of the population married or in a civil partnership, up from 42.1% in 2011. The number of people who were married increased and fell across England.

41.8% of the population were never married or registered in a civil partnership.

8.1% are divorced or in a dissolved civil partnership.

12.8% of households were lone parents with dependant children the highest proportion in England & Wales.

(Census 2021)

- **Pregnancy & maternity**

There are currently 64.2 births per 1000 women of childbearing age the highest in London.

Barking & Dagenham saw England's joint second largest % rise in the proportion of households including a couple with dependant children from 20.9% in 2011 to 24.1% in 2021.

There are 9,4000 (12.8%) lone parent households with dependent children, the highest proportion in England & Wales.

Teenage pregnancy rates are 16.1 per 1000 females aged 15-17.

(Census 2021)

(Borough data explorer)

- **Race and ethnicity**

The proportion of the borough population identifying as coming from black and minority ethnic backgrounds has increased from 19.1% to 50.5% between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, and is now at 69.1%, the 10th highest in the country.

In 2021 25.9% of residents identified their ethnic group as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, up from 15.9% in 2011. This 9.9% increase was the largest increase among high level ethnic groups in this area.

44.9% of residents identified as white compared with 58.3% in 2011.

21.4% of residents identified as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean of African compared to 20% in 2011.

Ethnic diversity has increased between 2011 and 2021 with the percentage of non-white British residents rising by 18.6% over the decade.

The most common language of residents whose main language is not English is Romanian (4.8%) followed by Bengali (3.1%).

2 in 5 residents were born outside of the UK.

Barking & Dagenham has become increasingly ethnically diverse in the last 10 years.

(Census 2021)

- **Religion**

45.4% of the population identify as Christian, down from 56% in 2011.

18.8% identify with no religion.

24.4% of residents identify as Muslim, up from 13.7% in 2011. This rise of 10.7% was the largest increase in religious groups in Barking & Dagenham.

These groups are the predominant religion in the borough with the next highest identifying as Hindu at 3%.

(Census 2021)

- **Sex/Gender**

Currently 51.3% of the borough's residents are female, and 48.7% are male.

This is broken down by population:

- Male – 106,548
- Female – 112,202

(Census 2021)

➤ **Sexual orientation**

Nearly 9 in 10 Barking & Dagenham residents described their sexual orientation as Straight or Heterosexual (88.6%

Of all English & Welsh local authorities, Barking & Dagenham had the:

- 4th highest proportion who described their sexual orientation as all other sexual orientations (0.07%)
- 23rd highest proportion who described their sexual orientation as Pansexual (0.38%)

➤ **Socio-economic disadvantage (deprivation in the borough)**

In April 2023 the updated poverty indicator tracker for Barking & Dagenham held the:

- 34th (worst) average rank (combining the 10 indicators of poverty) against all 309 English Local Authorities
- 32nd highest unemployment rate
- 5th highest rate of Universal Credit claimants in employment (previously 5th in the 2021 census)
- 7th highest proportion of households claiming Housing Benefits
- 70th highest proportion of households living in fuel poverty
- 63rd highest proportion of children under 16 living in relative low income families.

This compared to April 2022:

- 18th (worst) average rank (combining the 10 indicators of poverty) against all 309 English Local Authorities
- 2nd highest unemployment rate
- 2nd highest rate of Universal Credit claimants in employment (previously 5th in the 2021 census)
- 5th highest proportion of households claiming Housing Benefits
- 17th highest proportion of households living in fuel poverty
- 34th highest proportion of children under 16 living in relative low income families.

This showed a:

- Falling unemployment rate
- Reduction in fuel poverty (data remains pre cost of living crisis)
- Reduction in children living in relative low-income families

Within London the borough has the highest rates of:

- Universal Credit claimants in employment

The 3rd highest rate of

- Children aged under 16 living in relative low income families.

The 4th highest rate of:

- Households living in fuel poverty
- Income Support claimants

Barking & Dagenham has dropped from the 18th lowest (worst) to 34th lowest (worst) combining the 10 indicators of poverty. This is the first time Barking & Dagenham has:

- Featured outside of the top 20 (worst) Local Authorities since February 2020
- Not been the most impoverished borough (3rd)

Although these poverty indicators have improved Barking & Dagenham remains a very impoverished borough.

The 2021 census also provided data on poverty indicators:

- 46,100 (62.4%) of households have at least one measure of deprivation.
- 46% of children are estimated to live in poverty the 3rd highest in England & Wales.
- The borough also had an economically inactive rate of 35.9%, higher than the London average of 33.8%.
- 7% of the population were providing unpaid care.
- 58.5% of residents are economically active in employment, lower than the London average of 61.4%.
- 16.1% were employed in professional occupations with 15.9% employed in elementary occupations.

- The largest socio-economic classification was lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations at 15.3%, lower than the London average of 20.6%.
- 11.4% of the population were engaged in part time work of 15 hours a week or less, higher than the London average of 10.7%.
- 22.7% of the population hold no formal qualifications, higher than the London average of 16.2%.
- The number of residents renting privately has increased by 412% since 2001.
- 18,100 (24.5%) of households rent from the Council, the 3rd highest in England & Wales.
- 17.8% of households are living in a property without enough bedrooms, the 2nd highest proportion in England & Wales.

Income (and debt) is the greatest determinant of health, in a positive way enabling people to afford factors that support healthy living (e.g. diet, physical activity, housing, etc.) and in a negative way driving poor health (e.g. mental health, unhealthy behaviours, etc.).

The proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25 should have an overall positive impact on health and wellbeing and the reduction of health inequalities, including for those with health issues or barriers.

The socio-economic indicators in the borough highlight high levels of deprivation, poverty and issues with housing and present a challenging outlook for the Council.

Council Tax Support - Case load and demographics:

Case load:

There are currently 15,126 live CTS cases¹:

- 10,625 working age (16-64) (70.24%)
- 4501 pension age (65+) (29.76%)

The CTS working age caseload is currently 7.4% of the working age population of the borough.

The CTS pension age caseload is currently 23.6% of the pension age population of the borough.

Case load breakdown by demographic types²:

The CTS case load can be broken down by age, household size and other characteristics such as disability.

¹ CTS case load extraction June 2023

² Policy & Practice localised CTS Final Report

*Case load statistics may vary dependent upon the date of the data set.

Age range	CTS claimants (main claimant)	Claims with disability (PIP/DLA/LCW)	Carers (receiving carers allowance)	Claims by household type			
				Single no children	Couple no children	Family with 1 child	Family with 2+ children
	All claimants	Total					
16-24	187	21	16	53	7	88	39
25-34	1,888	479	304	349	20	531	988
35-44	2,959	912	569	501	37	610	1,811
45-54	2,861	1,383	549	1,085	188	578	1,010
55-65	2,897	2,082	453	2,037	464	245	151
66+	4,496	1,559	255	3,624	811	39	22

3

Age band	Barking & Dagenham population 2021	% of total population by age bracket	Council Tax Support claimants	% of total
0-9	35,536	16.25%	0	0%
10-19	33,328	15.24%	6	0.01%
20-29	28,435	13.00%	824	2.89%
30-39	36,691	16.77%	2672	7.28%
40-49	31,986	14.62%	2891	9.03%
50-59	25,140	11.49%	2793	11.10%
60 -69	14,536	6.65%	2568	17.66%
70-79	8,027	3.67%	2203	27.44%
80+	5,071	2.32%	1457	28.73%

CTS expenditure (cost):⁴

CTS expenditure for the financial year 2023/24 is currently £16,081,826.87

CTS expenditure by age:

Of this expenditure £10,722,852.64 (66.67%) is against working age claimants and £5,358,974.33 (33.33%) is against pension age claimants.

³ Policy & Practice localised CTS Final Report

⁴ CTS expenditure extraction June 2023

Working age claimants currently make up 65.10% of the population and account for 70% of the CTS caseload and 66.67% of the total CTS expenditure.

Pension age claimants currently make up 8.70% of the population and account for 30% of the CTS caseload and 33.33% of the total CTS expenditure.

CTS case load by gender:

The current case load is split as follows⁵:

Male – 5,105 cases (33.12%)

Female – 10,309 cases (66.88%)

CTS case load by ethnicity & race:

The Council does not collect this information about this characteristic as it is not a mandatory requirement for the processing of CTS.

There is currently no monitoring data available within the CTS case load data to distinguish claimant's by race or ethnicity.

CTS case load by religion:

The Council does not collect this information about this characteristic as it is not a mandatory requirement for the processing of CTS.

There is currently no monitoring data available within the CTS case load data to distinguish claimant's by religion.

CTS case load by sexual orientation:

The Council does not collect this information about this characteristic as it is not a mandatory requirement for the processing of CTS.

There is currently no monitoring data available within the CTS case load data to distinguish claimant's by sexual orientation.

CTS case load by Gender reassignment:

The Council does not collect this information about this characteristic as it is not a mandatory requirement for the processing of CTS.

There is currently no monitoring data available within the CTS case load data to distinguish claimant's by gender reassignment

CTS case load by Marriage and civil partnership:

⁵ CTS case load extract September 2023

The Council does not collect this information about this characteristic as it is not a mandatory requirement for the processing of CTS.

There is currently no monitoring data available within the CTS case load data to distinguish claimant's by marriage and civil partnership.

CTS case load by Pregnancy and maternity:

The Council does not collect this information about this characteristic as it is not a mandatory requirement for the processing of CTS.

There is currently no monitoring data available within the CTS case load data to distinguish claimant's by pregnancy.

Maternity can only be identified by those claimants in receipt of a Maternity Allowance benefit from the DWP. This will not account for claimants on paid maternity leave, in receipt of other benefits, or neither.

Potential impacts	Positive	Neutral	Negative	What are the positive and negative impacts?	How will benefits be enhanced and negative impacts minimised or eliminated?
Local communities in general					-
Age				<p>Working age claimants will be affected by the proposed replacement scheme. Some claimants may have increased awards and some claimants may see reduced awards.</p> <p>Although the impacts may differ by age group the calculation of CTS is not related to a person's age for the working age scheme.</p> <p>A claimant must be of working age to be affected by the scheme change.</p> <p>Any differences in entitlement will be as a result of other factors such as differences between the current means test and the new</p>	<p>It is not feasible to mitigate any potential adverse impacts on the basis of age alone.</p> <p>The following mitigations are in place to support claimants adversely affected by the proposed changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident consultation <p>Consulting residents about the proposed changes and asking for their views on how to mitigate any impact.</p> <p>Public forums will be available to residents at</p>

		<p>proposed income band thresholds, or the introduction of a flat rate non-dependant charge.</p> <p>No scheme changes are proposed for the pension age scheme which remains centrally prescribed.</p> <p>Pension age claimants are protected and will continue to receive full support, inclusive of outreach services.</p>	<p>various locations for face to face surgeries.</p> <p>The LA will also look at what contact it can make with those financially impacted by the proposed scheme to look at income maximisation option, better off calculations for UC, referrals into Work and Skills & discretionary funding opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax Discretionary relief (CTDR) <p>Maintaining a discretionary Council hardship fund open for applications from all residents and ensuring this is promoted so residents are aware of the scheme.</p> <p>Section 13A of the Local Government Finance act 1992).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government funded hardship schemes and local welfare assistance <p>If applicable - Maintaining an open application process for all residents for the Household Support Fund (HSF) and any other government funded discretionary schemes, including Council funded schemes, to support the wider costs of living for vulnerable residents, helping to assist with financial support and therefore the payment and collection of Council Tax.</p>
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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Homes & Money HUB & Welfare Service <p>Services supporting vulnerable residents to maximise their income including welfare benefit take up, advice and support on debts and budgeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying the Council's debt management policy <p>Ensuring the fair and ethical collection of Council Tax and assisting residents who are experiencing financial difficulty.</p>
-					
Disability	X	X	X	<p>Working age claimants with disabilities will be affected by the proposed replacement scheme. Some claimants may have increased awards, some claimants may see reduced awards and some claimants will have no change to their existing award.</p> <p>The proposed income banded scheme will continue to disregard income received from qualifying disability benefits (DLA or PIP). This will mirror the current scheme and will protect disabled claimants.</p> <p>The current scheme provides additional premiums for some claimants in receipt of qualifying disability benefits. Premiums allow a claimant to have a higher level of income before the means test taper is applied to reduce the</p>	<p>It is not feasible to mitigate any potential adverse impacts for claimants with disability on this basis alone.</p> <p>The following mitigations are in place to support claimants adversely affected by the proposed changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident consultation <p>Consulting residents about the proposed changes and asking for their views on how to mitigate any impact.</p> <p>Public forums will be available to residents at various locations for face to face surgeries.</p>

		<p>CTS award based on household income.</p> <p>The proposed income banded scheme does not contain premiums. As a consequence claimants with a qualifying disability who would have been entitled to a disability premium may see a reduced award as more of their income will be taken into account to calculate the CTS award.</p> <p>This will primarily affect claimants with qualifying disability benefits with higher incomes in receipt of existing legacy benefits. This may affect claimants in work or with other benefits such as Carers Allowance.</p> <p>The loss of disability premiums may detrimentally affect claimants with qualifying disability benefits under the new scheme.</p> <p>Premiums are not contained within UC and therefore claimants in receipt of this type of benefit will not be affected.</p> <p>Disabled claimants in receipt of legacy benefits are likely to be disproportionately affected as these claims may have disability premiums currently awarded.</p> <p>Disabled claimants currently in receipt of the maximum award under the current scheme due to low incomes are likely to remain in band 1 under the proposed scheme and would therefore remain unchanged.</p> <p>Some disabled claimants will benefit from the proposed change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax Discretionary relief (CTDR) <p>Targeted work could be added if scheme available specifically to mitigate this impact</p> <p>If applicable - Maintaining a discretionary Council hardship fund open for applications from all residents and ensuring this is promoted so residents are aware of the scheme.</p> <p>Section 13A of the Local Government Finance act 1992.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government funded hardship schemes and local welfare assistance <p>If applicable - Maintaining an open application process for all residents for the Household Support Fund (HSF) and any other government funded discretionary schemes, including Council funded schemes, to support the wider costs of living for vulnerable residents, helping to assist with financial support and therefore the payment and collection of Council Tax.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Homes & Money HUB & Welfare Service <p>Services supporting vulnerable residents to maximise their income including welfare benefit take up, advice and support on debts and budgeting</p>
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		<p>Claimants in receipt of UC will not lose out due to a loss of disability premiums.</p> <p>The limited capacity to work element of UC and the Carers element are disregarded as income and not counted. This helps to support disabled claimants who are often in receipt of these additional awards.</p> <p>Disabled claimants in receipt of UC who are in employment may benefit from more generous awards for the calculation of household income for UC employed earners under the proposed scheme.</p> <p>The scheme also proposes to implement flat rate non-dependant deductions of £7.50 per week. The proposed scheme will continue to disregard these deductions where a claimant or partner are in receipt of a qualifying benefit (DLA or PIP at the middle of higher rates) ensuring the protections that were previously in place under the current scheme will remain.</p> <p>2,807 households have at least 1 non-dependant charge. Of these 1,570 are exempt from deductions due to receipt of disability benefits and will remain protected.</p> <p>There will therefore be no negative impact from the change to a flat rate non-dependant charge for claimants in receipt of qualifying disability benefits.</p> <p>Claimants not in receipt of qualifying disability benefits could be affected by this change.</p> <p>The implementation of a capital limit of £6,000 may impact on a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying the Council's debt management policy <p>Ensuring the fair and ethical collection of Council Tax and assisting residents who are experiencing financial difficulty.</p>
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COMMUNITY AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

			<p>disabled claimant with capital over this threshold.</p> <p>No scheme changes are proposed for the pension age scheme which remains centrally prescribed.</p> <p>Pension age claimants are protected and will continue to receive full support, inclusive of outreach services.</p>
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Disability analysis:

Internal modelling against the current financial year (2023/24)⁶ has considered the impact of the proposed scheme on claimants with a qualifying disability benefit (PIP/DLA).

Figures are considered to indicative only and are not a precise measurement of impact.

Household type	Worse off Cases	Total £	Average Per case
Working Age - Non-Passported - Couple	84	£43,948.74	£523.20
Working Age - Non-Passported - Single	135	£48,261.78	£357.49
Working Age - Non-Passported - Couple & 1 Child +	16	£5,816.62	£363.54
Working Age - Non-Passported - Couple & 2 Child +	88	£59,461.47	£675.70
Working Age - Non-Passported - Single & 1 Child +	45	£16,280.40	£361.79
Working Age - Non-Passported - Single & 2 Child +	94	£45,073.23	£479.50
Working Age - Passported - Other	1	£250.98	£250.98
	463	£219,093.22	£473.20

A total of 463 cases were identified as potentially having lower awards with a qualifying disability benefit on the claim. The average lost award was £473.20 per year.

	Better off Cases	Total £	Average Per case
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⁶ Appendix 2 – Internal modelling (financial and impact analysis) (Capita system)

COMMUNITY AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

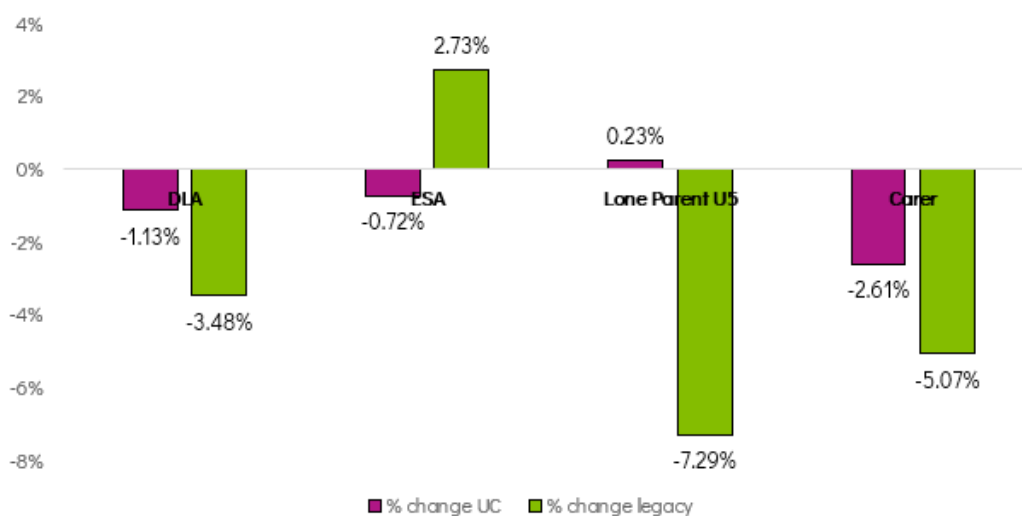
Working Age - Non-Passported - Couple	29	£5,896.98	£203.34
Working Age - Non-Passported - Single	55	£19,079.34	£346.90
Working Age - Non-Passported - Couple & 1 Child +	19	£7,257.38	£381.97
Working Age - Non-Passported - Couple & 2 Child +	50	£18,060.68	£361.21
Working Age - Non-Passported - Single & 1 Child +	39	£10,893.01	£279.31
Working Age - Non-Passported - Single & 2 Child +	71	£14,233.48	£200.47
Working Age - Passported - Other	112	£57,153.20	£510.30
	375	£132,574.07	£353.53

A total of 375 cases were identified as potentially having higher awards with a qualifying disability benefit on the claim. The average increased award was £353.53 per year.

Although only indicative this modelling demonstrates the potential impacts on applicants with disability and protected characteristics from the proposed scheme and should be noted.

Policy & Practice⁷ have modelled the impact analysis for 2024/25 of the proposed scheme on claimants with barriers to work.

Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme retained into 2024/25, by barriers to work



Modelled scheme: change in average CTS award, by barriers to work

⁷ Appendix 1 – Policy & Practice localised CTS Final Report

This demonstrates overall a slight reduction in the CTS award as an average for claimants in receipt of qualifying disability benefits (DLA/PIP). This may be due to some of the reasons as outlined above.

Legacy benefits as a whole are generally disproportionately affected with a greater loss.

The financial impact of these changes on the CTS award is relatively small and demonstrates a marginal impact as an overall average⁸.

Within this average change of the CTS award some claimants will see greater or smaller losses with this replicating for those that gain.

Barriers to work	Current scheme	Income banded scheme
	2024/25	2024/25
DLA or Similar	£22.52	£22.03
ESA or similar	£22.08	£22.33
LP child under 5	£19.71	£19.55
Carer	£23.54	£22.66

Gender reassignment	X	<p>There is no CTS data held for this specific category.</p> <p>The scheme will not treat people of different genders any differently.</p> <p>The proposed changes to the CTS scheme will not have a differential impact on people who are proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process (or part of a process) to re-assign their gender.</p>	<p>No impact.</p> <p>No mitigations are required.</p>
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⁸ Appendix 1 – Policy & Practice localised CTS Final Report

COMMUNITY AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	
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		X		
Marriage and civil partnership			<p>There is no CTS data held for this specific category.</p> <p>The scheme will not treat people either married or in a civil partnership any differently.</p> <p>The proposed changes to the CTS scheme will not have a differential impact on people who are married or in a civil partnership.</p>	<p>No impact.</p> <p>No mitigations are required.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity		X	<p>There is no CTS data held for this specific category.</p> <p>Pregnancy does not affect the claimant's assessment of CTS unless there is a change in financial circumstances.</p> <p>The scheme will only treat people who are on maternity leave differently in so far as considering a change in their circumstances for income & household with regards to the income band discount awarded.</p> <p>The proposed changes to the CTS scheme will not have a differential impact on women who are pregnant or recently had a baby.</p>	<p>No impact.</p> <p>No mitigations are required.</p>
Race (including Gypsies, Roma and Travellers)		X	<p>There is no CTS data held for this specific category.</p> <p>There are ethnic inequalities in health, some of which are associated to economic deprivation.</p>	<p>No impact.</p> <p>No mitigations are required.</p>

COMMUNITY AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

			<p>The scheme will not treat people of different ethnicity or race any differently.</p> <p>A claimant's entitlement to CTS is decided in accordance with set criteria such as recourse to public funds and immigration status.</p> <p>The proposed changes to the CTS scheme will not have a differential impact on people because of their race or ethnicity.</p>	
Religion or belief		X	<p>There is no CTS data held for this specific category.</p> <p>The scheme will not treat people of different religion any differently.</p> <p>The proposed changes to the CTS scheme will not have a differential impact on people because of their religion or belief.</p>	<p>No impact.</p> <p>No mitigations are required.</p>
Sex	X	X	<p>Working age claimants will be affected by the proposed replacement scheme. Some claimants may have increased awards and some claimants may see reduced awards.</p> <p>Although the impacts may differ by sex the calculation of CTS is not related to a person's gender for the working age scheme.</p> <p>Any differences in entitlement will be as a result of other factors such as differences between the current means test and the new proposed income band thresholds, or the introduction of a flat rate non-dependant charge.</p>	<p>It is not feasible to mitigate any potential adverse impacts on the basis of sex alone.</p> <p>The following mitigations are in place to support claimants adversely affected by the proposed changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident consultation <p>Consulting residents about the proposed changes and asking for their views on how to mitigate any impact.</p> <p>Public forums will be available to residents at various locations for face to face surgeries.</p>

		<p>This information is recorded within a claimant's personal details.</p> <p>The case load is 33.12% male and 66.88% female for the lead claimant. Any changes that sees reduced awards will disproportionately affect female claimants as they are the majority.</p> <p>Changes in the proposed scheme are not gender specific. The same income threshold and discounts apply to all claimants.</p> <p>Childcare could be a potential barrier for a single parent looking to secure employment or increase their hours and may disproportionately affect woman.</p> <p>By disregarding the childcare element of UC the proposed scheme will support claimants and this may proportionately benefit female claimants.</p> <p>Childcare payments made through the childcare element of Child Tax Credits cannot be disregarded in the proposed scheme. This creates an inequitable approach with childcare elements disregarded for UC and not for existing legacy benefits.</p> <p>The full migration of the remaining legacy benefit claims to UC will remove this inequality.</p> <p>Pension age claimants are protected and will continue to receive full support, inclusive of outreach services.</p> <p>The proposed changes to the CTS scheme will not have a differential impact on people because of their sex or gender.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax Discretionary relief (CTDR) <p>Maintaining a discretionary Council hardship fund open for applications from all residents and ensuring this is promoted so residents are aware of the scheme.</p> <p>(Section 13A of the Local Government Finance act 1992).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government funded hardship schemes and local welfare assistance <p>If applicable - Maintaining an open application process for all residents for the Household Support Fund (HSF) and any other government funded discretionary schemes, including Council funded schemes, to support the wider costs of living for vulnerable residents, helping to assist with financial support and therefore the payment and collection of Council Tax.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Homes & Money HUB & Welfare Service <p>Services supporting vulnerable residents to maximise their income including welfare benefit take up, advice and support on debts and budgeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying the Council's debt management policy
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COMMUNITY AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

					Ensuring the fair and ethical collection of Council Tax and assisting residents who are experiencing financial difficulty.
Sexual orientation		X		<p>There is no CTS data held for this specific category.</p> <p>The proposed changes to the CTS scheme will not have a differential impact on people because of their sexual orientation.</p>	<p>No impact.</p> <p>No mitigations are required.</p>
Socio-economic Disadvantage	X	X	X	<p>Working age claimants will be affected by the proposed replacement scheme. Some claimants may have increased awards, some claimants may see reduced awards and some claimants will see their awards unchanged.</p> <p>Any differences in entitlement will be as a result of factors such as differences between the current means test and the new proposed income band thresholds, or the introduction of a flat rate non-dependant charge.</p> <p>1,501 (14%) households have lower awards in the model (2024/25).</p> <p>1,597 (14%) households have higher awards in the model.</p> <p>7,631 (72%) households will see their awards remain unchanged.</p> <p>The proposed scheme is as an average more beneficial for claimants on UC than existing legacy benefits, recognising the</p>	<p>It is not feasible to mitigate any potential adverse impacts on the basis of socio-economic disadvantage alone.</p> <p>The following mitigations are in place to support claimants adversely affected by the proposed changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident consultation <p>Consulting residents about the proposed changes and asking for their views on how to mitigate any impact.</p> <p>Public forums will be available to residents at various locations for face to face surgeries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Tax Discretionary relief (CTDR) <p>If applicabl;Maintaining a discretionary Council hardship fund open for applications from all</p>

		<p>planned migration for all remaining legacy benefits to UC in 2024.</p> <p>There remains a risk that any delay to managed migration to UC would see some legacy benefit claimants lose support until migrated to UC.</p> <p>Some claims will retain lower levels of support even after migration to UC.</p> <p>There are currently 2,807 households with a non-dependant deduction under the current scheme 2023/24.</p> <p>1,570 households remain exempt from the charge due to receipt of disability benefits. This will be mirrored under the proposed scheme and this protection will remain.</p> <p>Of the remaining 1,237 households 890 will have higher deductions from the introduction of a flat rate deduction and 347 will have lower deductions.</p> <p>Flat rate non-dependant deduction changes will affect all household types and economic status.</p> <p>The overall impact of the scheme change is positive with 86% retaining the same level or an increased level of support but there remains some households who will lose support, and some will lose up 100% of their current award.</p> <p>No scheme changes are proposed for the pension age scheme which remains centrally prescribed.</p>	<p>residents and ensuring this is promoted so residents are aware of the scheme.</p> <p>Section 13A of the Local Government Finance act 1992.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government funded hardship schemes and local welfare assistance <p>If applicable - Maintaining an open application process for all residents for the Household Support Fund (HSF) and any other government funded discretionary schemes, including Council funded schemes, to support the wider costs of living for vulnerable residents, helping to assist with financial support and therefore the payment and collection of Council Tax.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Homes & Money HUB & Welfare Service <p>Services supporting vulnerable residents to maximise their income including welfare benefit take up, advice and support on debts and budgeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying the Council's debt management policy <p>Ensuring the fair and ethical collection of Council Tax and assisting residents who are experiencing financial difficulty.</p>
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COMMUNITY AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

			Pension age claimants are protected and will continue to receive full support, inclusive of outreach services.
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Appendix 1 provides analysis of the impact of the proposed replacement CTS scheme.

CTS is in the main targeted at low income households that are financially disadvantaged to support the payment of Council Tax and therefore any change to the scheme will impact these households with some gaining support and some losing support.

Model 1 is a banded income discount scheme which takes into account all household income and household size (restricted to 2 children).

The scheme considers the total income of the household to calculate the level of Council Tax discount applied.

Some incomes are disregarded from overall household income and are not counted such as Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and some elements of Universal Credit such as Limited Capacity for work, Carer Element, Disabled Child Element and Child Care Element. Child Benefit and war pensions are also not counted as income.

These incomes must be deducted from the household income used to calculate the band and discount. An additional allowance is granted for children in the household. In line with national welfare policy this is restricted to a maximum of +2 children. Any household with more than +2 children will not receive any additional allowances which will be restricted to a maximum of +2 children.

Non-dependant adults in the household are charged a flat rate deduction of £7.50 per adult irrespective of their status or income. This reflects that most non-dependants have income either through employment or welfare benefits. It also reduces the requirement for applicants to provide evidence of the status of household members.

Current protections against non-dependant deductions for disabled households in receipt of Personal Independence Payments and Disability living Allowance (for care at the middle or higher rate) remain resulting in no deductions being applied for these households.

Non-dependant partners and full-time students will also not be subject to a deduction mirroring the current scheme.

A capital limit of £6,000 is being proposed. This reduces the limit from £10,000 under the current scheme. Any resident with capital over £6,000 will not be eligible for the scheme.

The scheme proposes the following income thresholds (bands) £.

Income banding table

Band	Discount	Single (Weekly net income)	Couple (Weekly net income)	Single 1+ children addition	Single 2+ children addition	Couple 1+ children addition	Couple 2+ children addition
1	85%	£0-£96	£0-£164	£0 - £184	£0 - £284	£0 - £252	£0 - £352

COMMUNITY AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

2	70%	£96 - £140	£164 - £208	£184 - £228	£284 - £338	£252 - £296	£352 - £406
3	55%	£140 - £168	£208 - £238	£228 - £262	£338 - £382	£296 - £334	£406 - £456
4	40%	£168 - £188	£238 - £260	£262 - £296	£382 - £426	£334 - £370	£456 - £506
5	25%	£188 - £208	£260 - £282	£296 - £320	£426 - £460	£370 - £396	£506 - £542
6	15%	£208 - £240	£282 - £316	£320 - £376	£460 - £506	£396 - £452	£542 - £605

The impact of the proposed model as a comparison with the current scheme if retained into 2024/25

Band	No. households	% households	Average weekly CTS Model 1 2024/25	Average weekly CTS Current scheme in 2024/25
1	8,829	82.3	£22.22	£22.10
2	301	2.8	£19.17	£15.60
3	556	5.2	£16.15	£11.03
4	489	4.6	£11.42	£9.68
5	213	2.0	£7.24	£10.22
6	150	1.4	£4.39	£11.89
No longer eligible	169	1.6	£0	£14.55
Total	10,729			

The model increases the average level of support for 10,175 households (94%) of the caseload demonstrating its overall positive impact between bands 1-4 for residents with the lowest incomes.

The main reductions in support are for those claimants in higher bands (5-6) with higher household incomes. These see more significant drops in support.

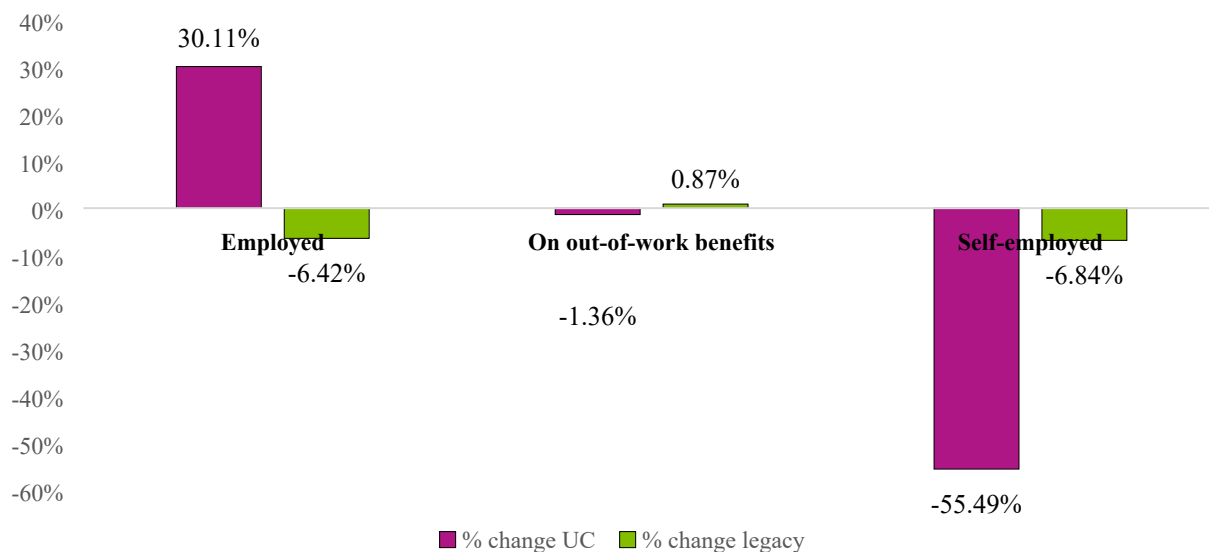
169 households lose 100% of their current award. This will be a substantial impact for these claimants with potentially large financial losses.

For households that lose out the majority are due to falling into income bands that give an award lower than the earnings taper in the current scheme (employed), as well as due to the introduction of flat rate non-dependant deductions.

The restriction of the children addition to two children will also impact households with larger families and result in lower awards.

This impact can also be modelled against employment status:

Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme retained into 2024/25, by economic status



This modelling demonstrates a positive impact of the new scheme on UC claimants in employment against the retention of the current scheme.

Employed households under the old legacy benefits lose out. This is because of a different calculation of household income under the income band for these cases and may also be due to non-dependant deductions.

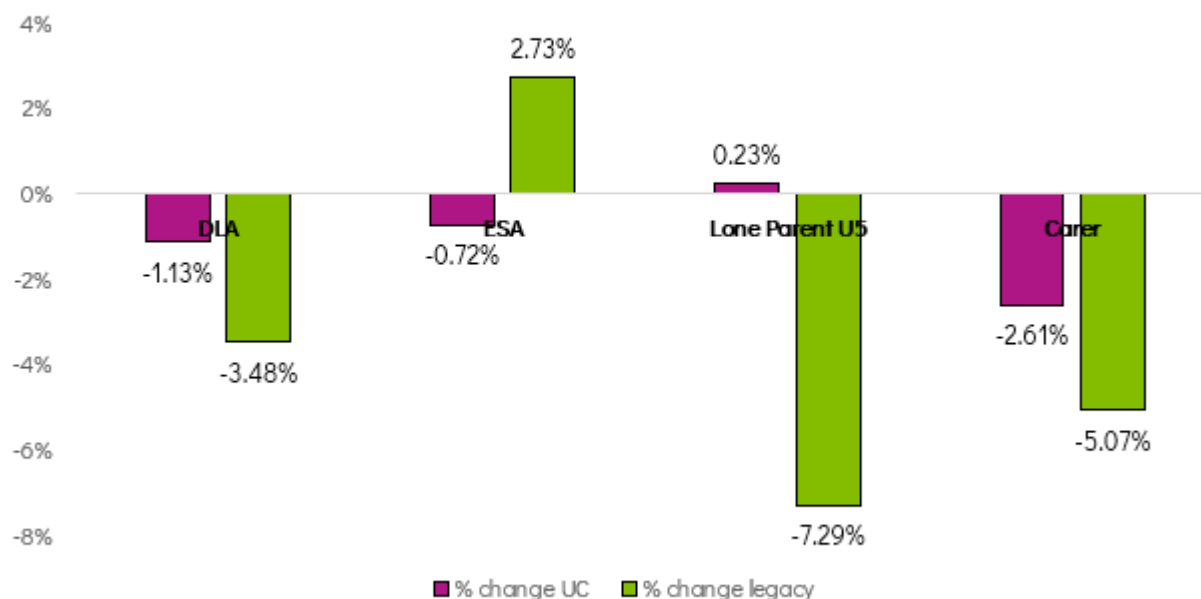
These awards are evened out in the model, meaning UC households gain more compared to the current scheme in 2024/25.

The proposed scheme provides better support for employed earners on UC than the current scheme and therefore supports employment and does not disincentivise work.

This is important in the context of managed migration of the remaining legacy benefit case load to UC which is due to commence in 2024.

The data set identified for self-employed claims on UC is very small due to the way UC is reported. The large drop in support for these households is skewed by the small sample size and is not taken as representative.

Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme retained into 2024/25, by barriers to work



Modelled scheme: change in average CTS award, by barriers to work

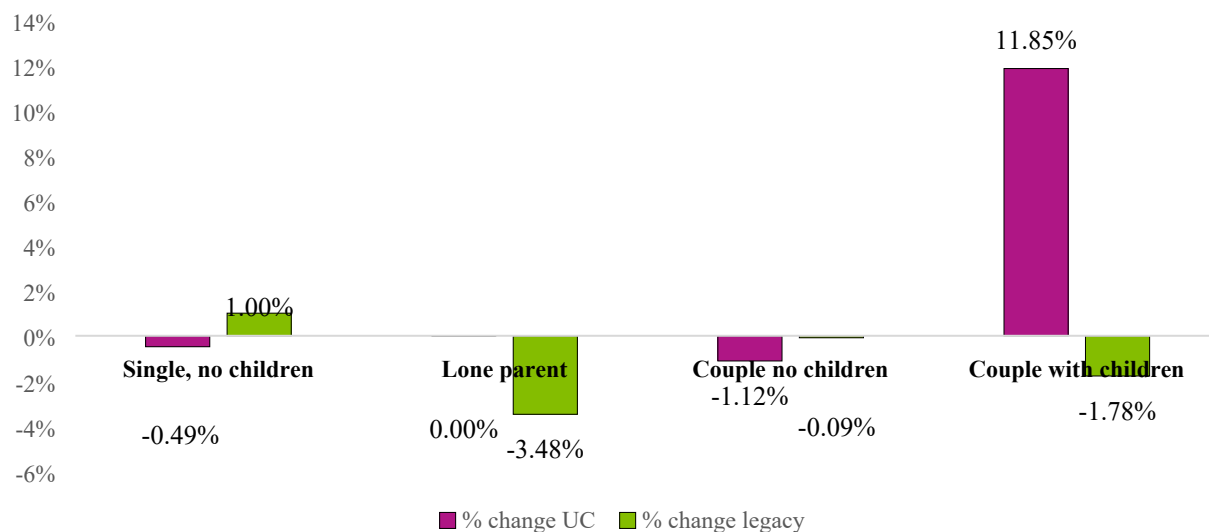
Disabled claimants (DLA) see a slight reduction as an average. This can be attributed to a loss of disability premiums from the current scheme that are not contained in Model 1 and a difference of support from the income band threshold against the current means test.

The proposed scheme protects the level of support (band 1) where some claimants with barriers to work fall, compared to the current scheme.

Reductions in support can also be attributed to non-dependant deductions for households not in receipt of qualifying disability benefits that were not previously payable now being applied due to the change to a flat rate deduction.

Legacy benefits are again more adversely affected than UC maintaining this trend as an average.

Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme retained into 2024/25, by household type



The modelling demonstrates a broadly flat impact on most households with small variations as an average percentage change to the CTS award.

Couples with children on UC are benefiting. These households tend to be in employment and will benefit from more generous awards as UC employed.

A scheme that better supports UC claimants is recommended due to the managed migration of the remaining legacy benefit case load to UC, due to commence in 2024. However should the migration be delayed some legacy benefit claimants may see reduced awards.

The proposed scheme mirrors welfare reform and UC by restricting the allowance for dependant children to two.

The Welfare Reform bill implemented a two child restriction from the 6 April 2017 where families were limited to financial support to their first two children.

The government’s reasoning for limiting support to the first two children in a family is that those claiming benefits should face the same financial choices about having children as families who are supporting themselves solely through work.

The current scheme currently treats legacy benefit claimants differently to UC claimants. Restrictions on the child allowance applied within the UC award are also applied within the means test restricting the allowance unless exemptions are granted within the UC award.

Legacy benefit claimants do not currently have any restriction and are granted an allowance for all household dependants.

This has created in inequitable system where claimants are treated differently depending on the type of benefit they receive in the current scheme.

A restriction of the allowance to the first two children will disproportionately affect remaining legacy benefit claimants who are not subject to the restriction however this will align the scheme to how UC claimants are currently treated.

Children allowances have been set at £88 for the first child and £100 for the second child. A higher amount of Child Benefit is awarded for the first child and is disregarded in the scheme. Reducing the allowance for the first child and increasing it for the second child aligns the overall incomes received consistently.

The child element in UC is currently £62.26 per week. By setting the children allowances at a higher level although restricted to two children for one child the allowance is higher and for two children is equivalent to three children within a UC award.

This alleviates some of the impact of restricting the allowance to two children.

Barking & Dagenham has demographics in which 34.9% of households have four or more people in the household.

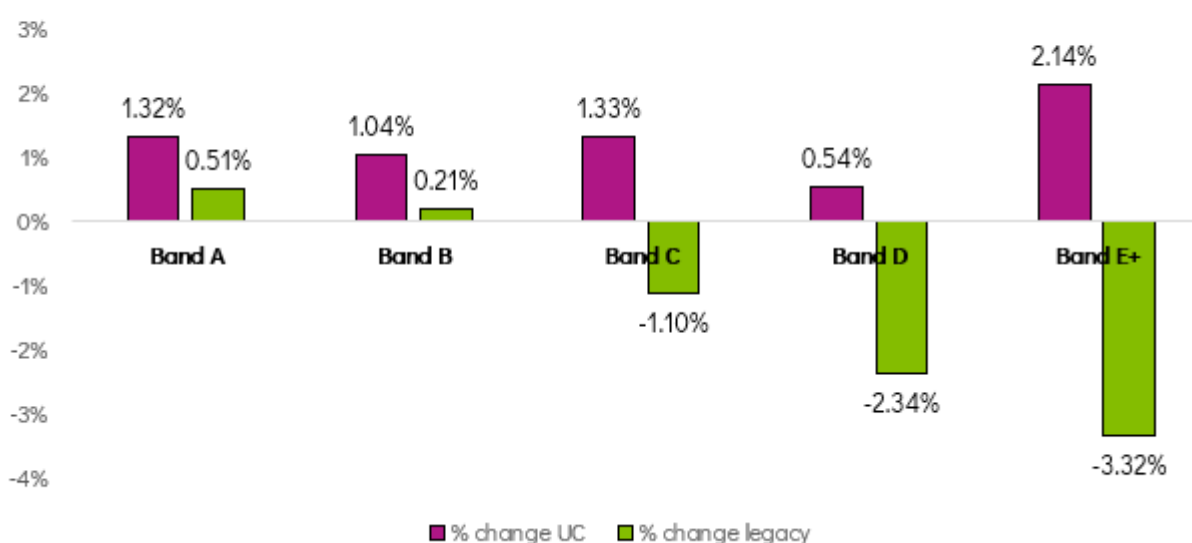
However the average household size in Barking & Dagenham is 2.96 residents per household which remains lower than the restriction to a couple and two children (four person).

It is acknowledged that due to a number of larger families in the borough that are not currently subject to a restriction through receipt of legacy benefits there may be an impact through lower awards due to this restriction being applied, and this may also impact larger families on UC as an ongoing concern.

Some household with three of more children may see significant losses of awards, in some cases this may result in 100% of an award being lost and is raised as a risk.

A removal of this restriction would have significant financial implications for the overall affordability of the proposed scheme.

Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme retained into 2024/25, by council tax band



Legacy benefit claimants lose out based on their Council Tax band which reflects overall lower levels of support for legacy benefit claimants.

UC claimants see a positive impact.

Introducing flat rate non-dependant deductions

The current practice of means-testing all non-dependants is inefficient with significant amounts of information required from claimants, and ongoing reviews to ensure accuracy and changes in circumstances are applied.

Introducing a flat rate non-dependant charge reduces administration by simplifying the process and requires less information from the resident.

Currently households with non-dependants in receipt of UC (without earnings) have no deduction while non-dependants in receipt of comparable legacy benefits have a deduction creating an inequitable system. A change to the scheme requiring a fair contribution is recommended.

A majority of households that currently have a non-dependant charge have no deduction or a minimum deduction of £4.60. Deductions are prescribed and applied in line with yearly regulatory updates to the current 'default' CTS scheme and have not been set by the Council.

Any increase in the minimum deduction will therefore affect a majority of the deductions currently applied.

As a majority of deductions are at the minimum rate a means test to establish the correct deduction rate is only required for a smaller number of claims.

As a consequence the means testing of non-dependant income is significantly inefficient in its administration of the scheme.

There are 2,807 households in the caseload that have at least one non-dependant. Of these 1,570 are exempt from non-dependant deductions as they receive a qualifying disability benefit. The scheme will continue to disregard these deductions where a claimant or partner are in receipt of DLA or PIP at the middle or higher rates as a qualifying benefit, ensuring the protections that were previously in place will remain.

Protections also remain for non-dependants who are full time students and partners of a non-dependant are also not charged a separate deduction. This mirrors the current scheme.

Of the remaining 1,237 households, 890 households will have higher deductions and 324 will have lower deductions after the introduction of a flat rate deduction of £7.50 per week.

The average increase in deductions is £5.60 per week, whilst the average decrease in deductions is £5.49 per week.

Total number of new deductions

Weekly non-dependant deduction	Number of households
£7.50	985
£15	216
£22.50	34

£30

2

Households with an increase in deduction of £5 per week or more:

Household type	Number of households
Couple with children	46
Couple without children	38
Lone parent	171
Single	194

Economic status	Number of households
Employed	75
out of work benefits	352
Self-employed	22

The implementation of flat rate non-dependant charges will see a majority have increased charges and will affect all household types and economic status.

Single claimants and out of work households are the largest demographic type to see an increase in deductions.

Households losing out

Working age claimants will be affected by the proposed replacement scheme. Some claimants may have increased awards and some claimants may see reduced awards. Many claimants will see their award unchanged.

Any differences in entitlement will be as a result of factors such as differences between the current means test and the new proposed income band thresholds, or the introduction of a flat rate non-dependant charge.

1,501 households have lower awards in the proposed model than the current scheme in 2024/25 (with a tolerance of a difference in award of 10p).

749 households lose support due to having higher non-dependant deductions.

There are currently 10,729 households resulting in 14% of households losing support.

169 households lose all support with 51 of these due to having capital over the reduced capital threshold of £6,000.

Economic status	Number of households	Average loss of support £ per week
Employed	557	£7.18
Out of work	770	£6.62
Self-employed	174	£8.06

The largest majority of households that will lose support are households out of work.

Of the households losing out that are employed, the majority lose out due to falling into income bands that give an award lower than the earnings taper in the current scheme, as well as due to the introduction of flat rate non-dependant deductions.

Of those out of work, the majority is due to the introduction of flat rate non-dependant deductions.

Household type	Number of households	Average loss of support £ per week
Couple with children	341	£8.07
Couple without children	105	£8.57
Lone parent	609	£6.92
Single	446	£5.90

Lone parent households are the largest household overall that loses support.

169 households losing all support (100% of their current award)

Economic status	Number of households	Average loss of support £ per week
Employed	105	£11.28
Out of work	49	£20.20
Self-employed	15	£18.97

Household type	Number of households	Average loss of support £ per week
Couple with children	39	£15.03
Couple without children	15	£14.43
Lone parent	72	£13.79
Single	43	£15.41

The impact of losing all support is considerable and should be noted.

Employed households are the largest household to lose all support.

However this represents only 1.57% of the total case load.

The implementation of an income banded CTS scheme in replacement for the current means tested scheme will always result in winners and losers. It is not possible to exactly replicate a means tested scheme while removing the element of means testing.

Income band thresholds and the discounts granted will differ resulting in differences in the new CTS award.

The council has sought to mitigate the impact of the change through the design of the scheme to reduce the overall number of claimants who will lose against their current award.

The highest level of discount (band 1) has been protected at 85% to continue to ensure the lowest income households retain the highest level of support compared to the current scheme.

A total of 1,597 households will benefit from an increased award with an average weekly increase of £7.03.

This is balanced against 1,501 household who lose on average £6.99 per week.

Based on this outcome the scheme change will be neutral or beneficial to 86% of the current case load.

Any community issues identified for this location?		X	No issues recognised	No impact
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2. Consultation.

Provide details of what steps you have taken or plan to take to consult the whole community or specific groups affected by the service or policy development e.g. on-line consultation, focus groups, consultation with representative groups.

If you have already undertaken some consultation, please include:

- Any potential problems or issues raised by the consultation
- What actions will be taken to mitigate these concerns

Prior to the implementation of any change to the CTS scheme the Council is required to consult with the residents of the borough. The guiding principles that have been established through case law for fair consultation are as follows:

- The consultation must be carried out at an early stage when the proposals are still at a formative stage.
- Sufficient information on the reasons for the decision must be provided to enable the consultees to carry out a reasonable consideration of the issues and to respond.
- Adequate time must be given for consideration and responses to be made.
- The results of the consultation must be properly taken into account in finalising any decision.

There is also a duty to consult with the major precept authorities who are statutory consultees.

The aims of any consultation should be to:

- Inform residents and help them understand the impact of the proposals.
- Confirm why the proposals are being made.
- Detail any alternative proposals.

COMMUNITY AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Provide details of what steps you have taken or plan to take to consult the whole community or specific groups affected by the service or policy development e.g. on-line consultation, focus groups, consultation with representative groups.

If you have already undertaken some consultation, please include:

- Any potential problems or issues raised by the consultation
- What actions will be taken to mitigate these concerns

- Give purposeful consideration to realistic alternative proposals presented.
- Obtain feedback on whether residents support the proposals.

The Council will be required to consult extensively on the proposals to change the CTS scheme due to the significant change to the scheme proposed.

The consultation will be primarily web based through an online survey form.

The survey will inform residents of the proposals to change the scheme and ask residents and stakeholders their opinions and views on:

- Replacing the current scheme with an income banded discount scheme for 2024/25 (Model 1)
- Retaining the current scheme unchanged.
- Any other comments

The survey will be run through the Citizens Alliance website and will require promotion across the Council webpages, social media channels, E-newsletter, press releases & CTS award notification letters.

Current CTS claimants affected by the proposals will be contacted directly to explain possible changes to their award (before/after) due to the changed scheme for 2024/25, to invite consultation and feedback on the proposed changes.

It is also anticipated that public workshops will be held at various sites throughout the borough, supported by outreach officers, to enable residents and stakeholders to engage with the proposals in person and these sessions will need to be widely promoted to ensure visibility and attendance.

Consideration will be given to the communication strategy for inclusion to ensure all residents have equal access and uptake given the links between exclusion in respect to communication given the link between exclusion and poor health (e.g. digital exclusion, non-English speakers, those engaged with community groups but not statutory authorities, etc.).

Direct engagement with voluntary partners and stakeholders will be required with the support of the relevant internal teams to ensure a broad section of these partners are engaged in the consultation process.

CTS scheme consultations historically have poor response rates from residents and the Council will need to ensure it widely promotes the consultation to ensure engagement in the proposals.

The outcome of the consultation will be reported to Cabinet.

3. Monitoring and Review

<p>How will you review community and equality impact once the service or policy has been implemented? <i>These actions should be developed using the information gathered in Section 1 and 2 and should be picked up in your departmental/service business plans.</i></p>		
Action	By when?	By who?
Impact of change monitoring by reviewing Council Tax collection rates and the number of CTS claims made and ongoing expenditure against the CTS scheme.	Ongoing	James Johnston
Regular monitoring based on performance frameworks	Ongoing	James Johnston

4. Next steps

It is important the information gathered is used to inform any Council reports that are presented to Cabinet or appropriate committees. This will allow Members to be furnished with all the facts in relation to the impact their decisions will have on different equality groups and the wider community.

Take some time to summarise your findings below. This can then be added to your report template for sign off by the Strategy Team at the consultation stage of the report cycle.

<p>Implications/ Customer Impact</p> <p>The current CTS scheme has numerous ongoing issues with its administration that highlights the need for the Council to consider a replacement scheme in order to effectively administer and provide support to residents through the core support of the CTS scheme.</p> <p>The requirement to consider a replacement CTS scheme means the Council should now consider the implementation of an income banded discount CTS scheme to address some of the issues that arise with the retention of the current CTS scheme.</p> <p>An income banded discount scheme provides support based on bands of income and provides a percentage discount off the Council Tax bill (the CTS award). The number of discount bands, the level of discount and income thresholds can all be varied. Income banded discount schemes can be designed to be as simple or as complex as desired, can be made more or less generous and designed to support protected groups if required. Re-assessment of cases will only be required if income crosses one of the income band thresholds.</p> <p>An income banded CTS scheme can be designed to assist households with low incomes and ensure that their Council Tax liability is manageable and fair.</p> <p>It is difficult to vary the current CTS scheme to adopt or target different levels of support at a range of applicants. An income banded discount scheme gives the Council the opportunity to vary support based on a targeted approach to residents in line with Council objectives and Borough manifestos.</p>

The draft proposed replacement income banded discount CTS scheme for 2024/25 can be summarised to have the following equality impacts on current CTS claimants:

- **Age** - Scheme changes will affect all working age claimants but are not related to a person's age beyond the criteria to be working age.
- **Disability** – Some claimants will be better off and some worse off. Legacy benefit claimants are more likely to be affected. Protections against non-dependant deductions remain. The EIA highlights negative impacts on this group.
- **Gender re-assignment** – No impact
- **Marriage and civil partnership** – No impact
- **Pregnancy and maternity** – No impact
- **Race (including Gypsies, Roma and Travellers)** – No impact
- **Religion or belief** – No impact
- **Sex** – Impacts may differ by sex but the calculation of CTS is not related to a persons gender.
- **Sexual orientation** – No impact
- **Socio-economic Disadvantage** – Some claimants will see increased awards, some reduced award and some will see awards unchanged. All types of household and income status will be affected. The impact of the changes will not always be consistent.

The replacement CTS scheme will help the Council to meet key objectives contained in its corporate plan 2023 to 2026 which can be summarised as follows:

- **Putting residents at the heart of what we do**
 - Delivery on a new CTS scheme
 - Creates a scheme that remains fair and equitable to all residents, requiring a fair contribution towards Council Tax from those who can pay while protecting the most vulnerable.
 - Simplifies the scheme making it easy for residents to understand and access when/if required.
 - Looking at our risk management while we consider replacing our scheme
 - Making every contact count (reducing avoidable contact & providing better customer service)
 - Innovation to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow
 - Provides the borough with a CTS scheme that has recognised the need for change and provided a scheme that is fit for purpose into the future
 - Building service capacity for the future and Improving the efficiency of support available
 - Making it easier to get support
 - Being evidence lead and data driven on why we are changing our scheme
 - Providing value for money in how we administer our scheme
 - Cost neutral helping to support our medium term financial strategy and wider Council budgets and therefore does not require cuts to additional services to fund its cost.
 - Help to improve Council Tax collection rates
 - Reductions in printing/post costings
- **Support the big issues of poverty, unemployment, debt & inequalities**
 - Provides and protects the maximum level of support for all low income households.

- Supporting residents through the cost of living crisis
- Better financial resilience, stability and security
- Support against unsustainable debt
- Supporting the most vulnerable residents
- Supporting, encouraging & incentivising employment and a return to employment
- Help to live independent lives
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion at heart of decision making.**
 - Fundamental to how we approach a change in our scheme with a responsibility to the Equality Act.
 - Completing an EIA to assess the impact of our decisions on those with protected characteristics and to implement mitigations for adverse impacts where possible. EIA at the heart of decision making.

This EIA demonstrates a variable impact of the proposed draft CTS scheme change against equalities, diversity and the protected characteristics from the Equalities Act.

Some groups with protected characteristics will be affected and lose support.

Some low income groups will be affected and lose all support.

The level of losses is variable on each case.

Some groups will be better off from the change and this will benefit all types of characteristics.

Overall the impact of the scheme for 86% of current claimants is either neutral or positive.

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Localised Council Tax Support

Final report

September 2023

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Executive Summary

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham has commissioned Policy in Practice to provide an assessment of the current Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme and to examine possible future working-age scheme options.

Council objectives

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham council's core objectives for changing their CTS scheme are:

- Simplify the scheme to make it easier for residents to understand and access.
- Provide the maximum level of support for all low-income households.
- Reduce the need for frequent changes in awards, making support more consistent.
- Improve how the scheme interacts with Universal Credit.
- Create a scheme that is fair and equitable to all residents.
- Build in capacity to better manage an increase in demand for the scheme.
- Maintain a cost neutral position against the modelled spend for retaining the current scheme in 2024/25.

Wider objectives and council priorities related to CTS scheme design include:

- Support residents through the cost-of-living crisis.
- Make every contact count (reduce avoidable contact, improve customer service etc.).
- Build service capacity for the future.
- Improve council tax collection rates.
- Ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of decision making.
- Support residents into employment.
- Support vulnerable residents.

How do the proposed changes meet council objectives?

The CTS scheme model presented in this report is an income banded scheme, which divides residents into bands based on their overall household income and applies a set discount to their council tax bill. This type of scheme can reduce administration costs compared to the current means-tested scheme as changes in income only trigger a recalculation of award when they cross one of the band thresholds.

The scheme also allows for the maximisation of automation of applications for households on Universal Credit, using the Universal Credit Datashare (UCDS). This is

achieved through the introduction of flat rate non-dependant deductions (because the UCDS does not include information on non-dependant income).

Automating CTS applications for households on UC saves on the cost of processing manual applications. It also increases take-up amongst households migrating to UC from legacy benefits and prevents the build up of Council Tax arrears that can be caused by a delay in applying.

Introducing flat rate non-dependant deductions

Introducing flat rate non-dependant deductions of £7.50 per week reduces total annual scheme costs by £117,500 per year. It also reduces administration costs by simplifying award calculations and requiring less information from the resident. This aligns the scheme to maximise the administration of Universal Credit claims, as no information on non-dependant income is present in the UCDS.

The current practice of means-testing all non-dependants is inefficient. However, households with non-dependants on a passported benefit or with a low-income will lose out, as they will either see a deduction for the first time or their deduction will increase from the current rate of £4.20 to £7.50 per week. Existing exemptions remain for households in receipt of disability benefits.

There are 2,807 working-age households in the caseload that have at least one non-dependant. Of these, 1,570 are exempt from non-dependant deductions as they receive a disability benefit or because the non-dependant is a full-time student. Of the remaining 1,237 households, 890 have higher deductions and 347 have lower deductions after introducing flat rate non-dependant deductions of £7.50 per week.

The average increase in deductions is £5.60 per week, whilst the average decrease in deductions is £5.49 per week. These changes in overall CTS awards are taken into account in the reports on impact of each model.

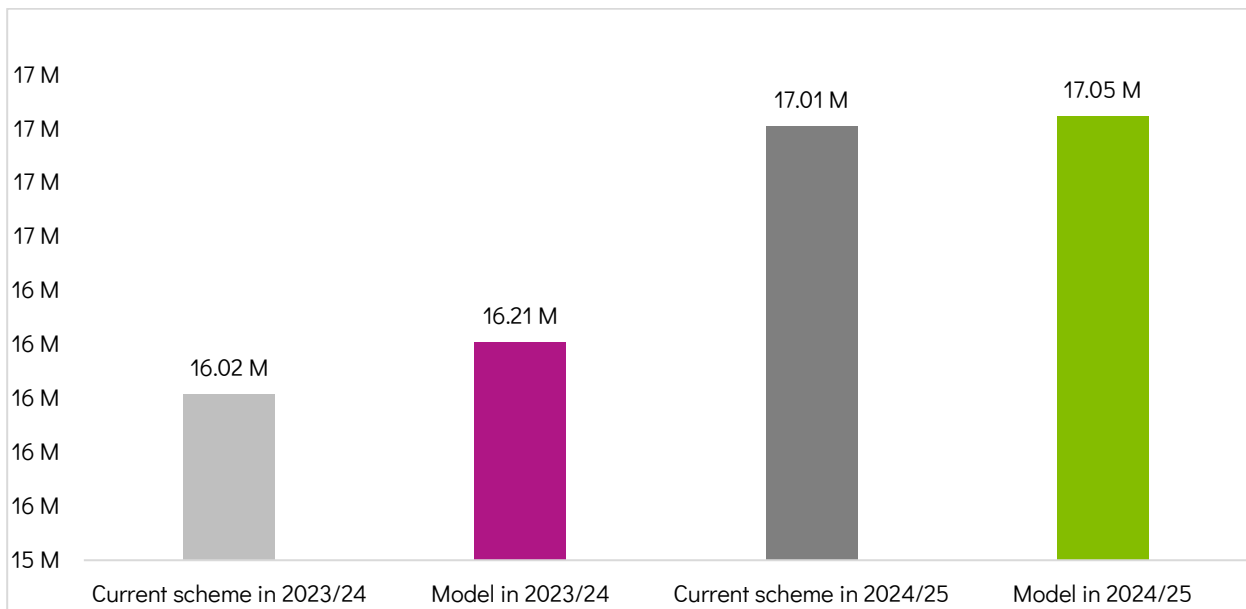
Weekly non-dependant deduction	Number of working age households
£7.50	985
£15	216
£22.50	34
£30	2

Households with an increase in deduction of £5 per week or more

Household type	Number of working age households
Couple with children	46
Couple without children	38
Lone parent	171
Single	194

Economic status	Number of working age households
Employed	75
On out of work benefits	352
Self-employed	22

Total annual cost of options



Cost of current scheme, current scheme retained into 2024/25, model in 2023/24 and model in 2024/25.

Average weekly award under options

Comparison of council tax support (£/week)				
	Current scheme in 2023/24	Model in 2023/24	Current scheme in 2024/25	Model in 2024/25
All working age	£19.13	£19.48	£20.19	£20.25
Legacy benefits	£19.47	£19.65	£20.50	£20.32
Universal Credit	£18.89	£19.35	£19.97	£20.21
CT Band				
A	£15.45	£15.68	£16.26	£16.42
B	£17.49	£17.78	£18.45	£18.58
C	£19.87	£20.28	£20.98	£21.04
D	£22.25	£22.48	£23.54	£23.37
EFGH	£28.57	£29.22	£30.14	£30.18
Tenure type				
Council tenant	£19.70	£19.83	£20.74	£20.75
Private tenant	£17.52	£18.79	£18.55	£19.28
No HB	£21.39	£21.17	£22.54	£22.20
Supported housing	£18.84	£18.35	£19.81	£19.03
HA tenant	£20.24	£20.46	£21.38	£21.40
Temporary accommodation	£17.56	£15.41	£18.55	£15.70
Tenure Unknown	£17.14	£17.73	£18.11	£18.56
Household type				
Single	£18.82	£18.91	£19.81	£19.86
Lone Parent	£18.47	£18.54	£19.46	£19.27
Couple no children	£23.44	£23.52	£24.73	£24.59
Couple with children	£19.74	£21.48	£21.04	£21.89

Economic status				
Employed	£11.48	£14.03	£12.41	£13.72
Out-of-work benefits	£20.81	£20.71	£21.88	£21.77
Self-employed	£18.31	£18.14	£19.62	£18.17
Barriers to work				
DLA or Similar	£21.42	£21.04	£22.52	£22.03
ESA or similar	£21.00	£21.26	£22.08	£22.33
LP child under 5	£18.72	£18.75	£19.71	£19.55
Carer	£22.35	£21.63	£23.54	£22.66

Average award under current scheme, current scheme retained, and two models, £/week.

Methodology

Modelling was carried out by running Barking and Dagenham's Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit administration data from the month of May 2023 through Policy in Practice's policy microsimulation engine, which models the full application of the national and local benefit system at a household level. The engine was carefully calibrated in advance to match the outputs of Barking and Dagenham's current CTS scheme.

The engine was then recoded to apply the changes relevant to each model, as well as annual uprating and inflation adjustments to provide accurate forecasts for 2024/25. Modelling was carried out using actual CTS caseload data from May 2023. Current scheme and modelled costs and forecasts represent the caseload as of this month and do not take account of any potential changes in the caseload.

Caseload breakdown

Age range	CTS claimants (main claimant)	Claims with disability (i.e. PIP/DLA/ESA)	Carers (receiving carers allowance)	Claims by household type			
				All claimants	Total	Single (no children)	Couple (no children)
16-24	187	21	16	53	7	88	39
25-34	1,888	479	304	349	20	531	988
35-44	2,959	912	569	501	37	610	1,811
45-54	2,861	1,383	549	1,085	188	578	1,010
55-65	2,897	2,082	453	2,037	464	245	151
66+	4,496	1,559	255	3,624	811	39	22

Age band	Barking & Dagenham population 2021	% of total	Council Tax Support claimants (incl. partners and children)	% of total
0-9	35,536	16.25%	5,819	2.66%
10-19	33,328	15.24%	7,082	3.24%
20-29	28,435	13.00%	952	0.44%
30-39	36,691	16.77%	3,365	1.54%
40-49	31,986	14.62%	3,774	1.73%
50-59	25,140	11.49%	3,372	1.54%
60-69	14,536	6.65%	3,017	1.38%
70-79	8,027	3.67%	2,529	1.16%
80+	5,071	2.32%	1,541	0.70%

Current scheme retained into 2024/25

Maintaining the current scheme into 2024/25 would increase costs from £16.02m to £17.01m, an increase of £996k or 6.22%. This increase is driven by a projected increase in Council Tax liability by 4.99% and benefit rates by 7.5%.

Annual CTR in current scheme retained into 2024/25, compared to current scheme			
Group	£/annum	Change (£/annum)	Change (%)
All working age	£11,334,081	£593,830	5.53%
Pension age	£5,677,251	£402,362	7.63%
Total	£17,011,332	£996,191	6.22%

Maintaining current system into 2024/25: annual cost

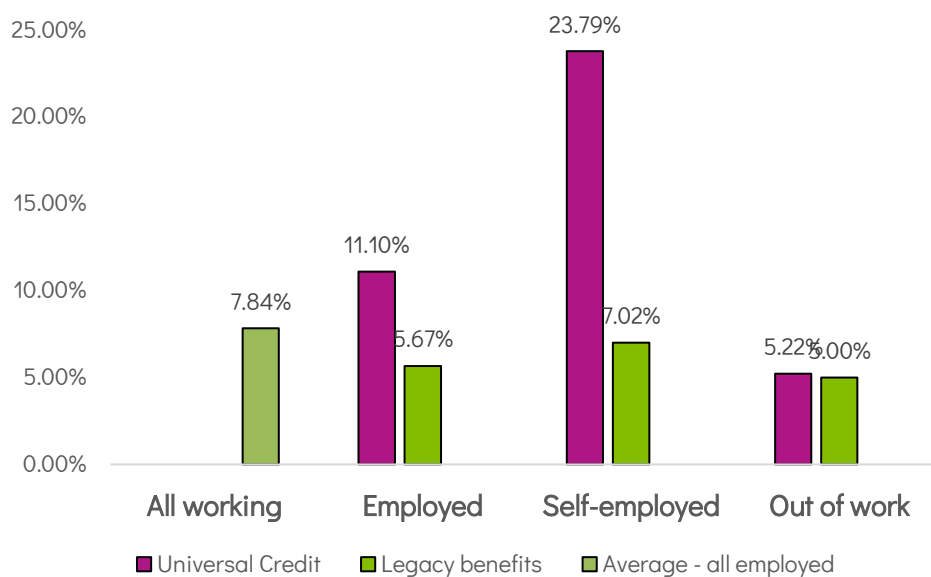
Costs would increase by 5.53% for working-age households and 7.63% for pension-age households.

Households on Universal Credit will see their awards increase by £1.08 per week on average. Working age households on legacy benefits would see their awards increase by £1.03 per week.

Average weekly CTR awarded in current scheme retained into 2024/25, compared to current scheme			
Group	Upated current scheme (£/week)	Change (£/week)	Change (%)
All working age	£20.19	£1.06	5.53%
<i>UC</i>	<i>£19.97</i>	<i>£1.08</i>	<i>5.70%</i>
<i>Legacy benefits</i>	<i>£20.50</i>	<i>£1.03</i>	<i>5.29%</i>
Pension age	£24.31	£1.72	7.63%
Total	£21.40	£1.25	6.22%

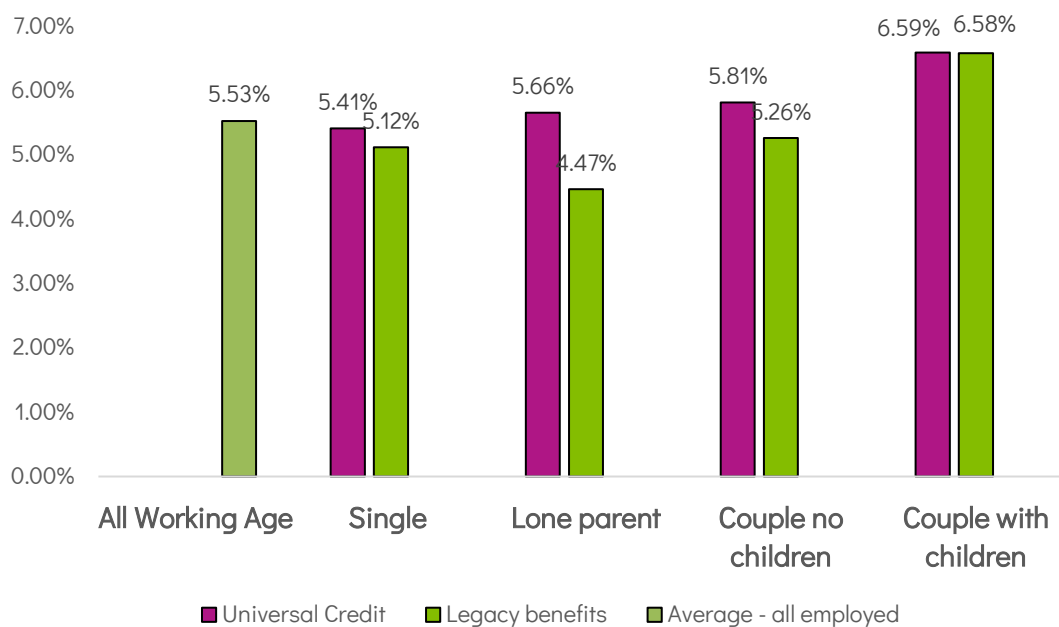
Maintaining current system into 2024/25: weekly support levels

% Change in Council Tax Support, by economic status - current scheme in 2024/25



Maintaining current system into 2024/25: % change by economic status

% Change in Council Tax Support, by household type - current scheme in 2024/25



Maintaining current system into 2024/25: % change by household type.

Modelled scheme – key characteristics

The modelled scheme is a banded scheme, taking into account all income, with the following elements disregarded:

- Housing benefit / UC housing element
- Childcare support
- Personal Independence Payment / Disability Living Allowance / UC limited capability for work element
- UC child disability element
- Child benefit

Flat rate non-dependent deductions are introduced at £7.50 per week.

The capital limit is reduced from £10,000 to £6000.

Income Thresholds (£, weekly)							
Band	Discount	Single	Couple	Single, 1 child	Single, 2+ children	Couple, 1 child	Couple, 2+ children
1	85%	0-96	0-164	0-184	0-284	0-252	0-352
2	70%	96-140	164-208	184-228	284-338	252-296	352-406
3	55%	140-168	208-238	228-262	338-382	296-334	406-456
4	40%	168-188	238-260	262-296	382-426	334-370	456-506
5	25%	188-208	260-282	296-320	426-460	370-396	506-542
6	15%	208-240	282-316	320-376	460-506	396-452	542-605

Modelled scheme in 2023/24 – comparison

Cost and average CTS

Modelled scheme compared to current scheme in 2023/24

Group	Modelled scheme cost	Comparison to cost of current scheme in 2023/24	
	£/annum	Change (£/annum)	Change (%)
All working age	£10,934,167	£193,916	1.81%
UC	£6,354,158	£151,299	2.44%
Legacy benefits	£4,580,009	£42,617	0.94%
Pension age	£5,274,890	£0	0.00%
Total	£16,209,057	£193,916	1.21%

Table 1: Modelled scheme in 2023/24, Total cost of model (£/annum)

The modelled scheme in 2023/24 is £194k more than the current scheme. Average Council Tax Support for working age households under the modelled scheme increases by 1.81% compared to the current scheme (Table 1). Costs for UC households increase by 2.44%, whilst costs for households on legacy benefits increase by 0.94%.

Average support for households on legacy benefits is £0.30 per week more than for households on UC in the modelled scheme, compared to £0.58 per week more in the current scheme.

Group	Average household support	Comparison to cost of current scheme	
	£/week	Change (£/week)	Change (%)
All working age	£19.48	£0.35	1.81%
<i>UC</i>	<i>£19.35</i>	£0.46	2.44%
<i>Legacy benefits</i>	<i>£19.65</i>	£0.18	0.94%
Pension age	£22.59	£0.00	0.00%
Total	£20.39	£0.24	1.21%

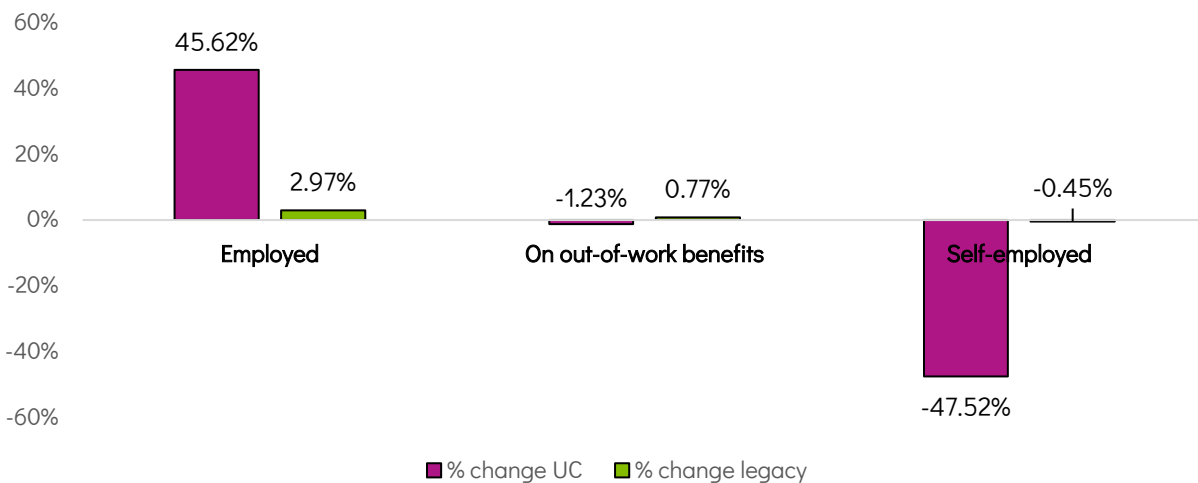
Table 2: Modelled scheme in 2023/24, average weekly council tax support (£/week)

Household breakdown by income bands

Band	No. households	% households	Average weekly CTS – Modelled scheme in 2023/24	Average weekly CTS – Current scheme in 2023/24
1	8,883	82.8	£21.13	£21.01
2	394	3.7	£18.53	£12.90
3	567	5.3	£15.29	£9.42
4	466	4.3	£10.93	£8.76
5	139	1.3	£6.73	£9.44
6	139	1.3	£4.14	£10.74
Losing support	141	1.3	£0	£13.89
Total	10,729			

Household impact

Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme retained into 2023/24, by economic status



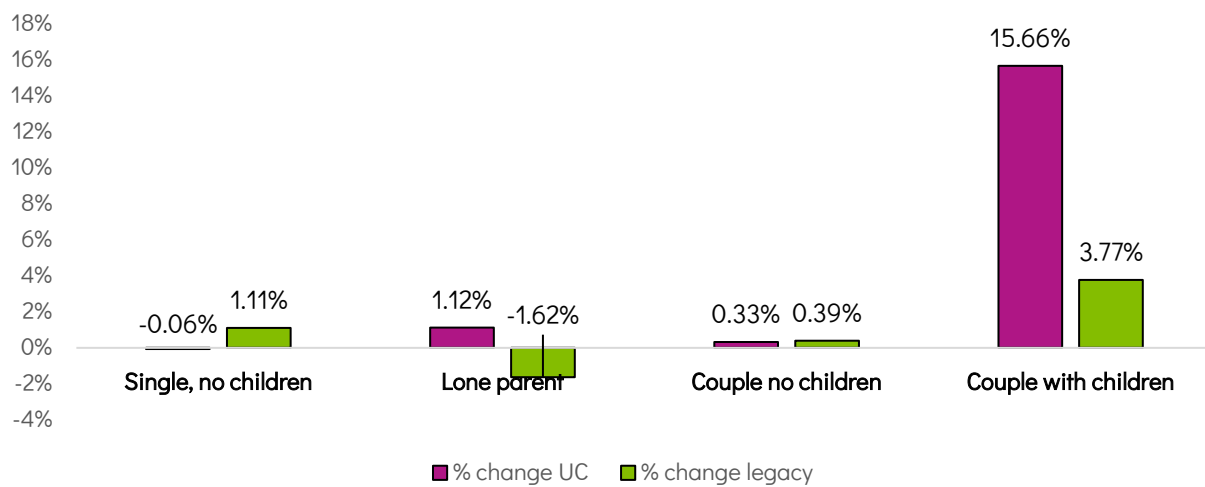
Modelled scheme in 2023/24: change in average CTS award, by economic status

Employed households on UC gain more than those on legacy. This is because the average award for employed households on UC in the current scheme in 2024/25 is lower than that for

legacy claimants. This means that awards in the current scheme for employed households who are migrated from legacy to UC may drop. These awards are evened out in the model, meaning UC households gain more compared to the current scheme.

There are only 5 households on UC identified as self-employed in the dataset, so the large average drop in support for these households is skewed by the small sample size. This small sample may be because it is not always possible to determine if UC households are self-employed in the data used for this analysis.

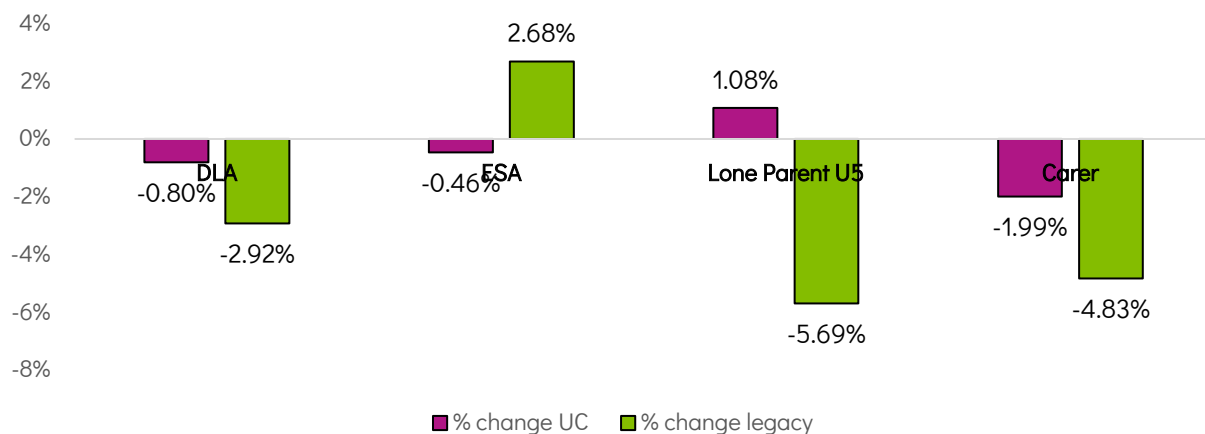
Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme in 2023/24, by household type



Modelled scheme: change in average CTS award, by household type

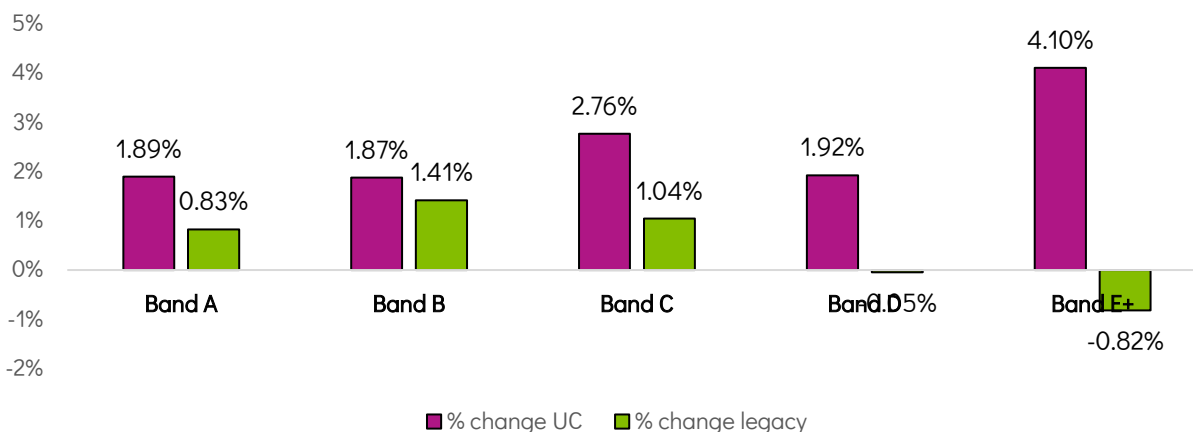
Couples with children on UC gain more as they are more likely to be employed.

Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme retained into 2023/24, by barriers to work



Modelled scheme: change in average CTS award, by barriers to work.

Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme in 2023/24, by council tax band



Modelled scheme: change in average CTS award, by council tax band.

Households losing out

1,367 households have lower awards in this model than the current scheme in 2023/24 (with a tolerance of 10p per week), with an average weekly loss of £6.65, whilst 1,740 households have higher awards (with a tolerance of 10p per week), with an average weekly increase of £7.37.

Households lose out due to falling into income bands that give a lower award than the earnings taper in the current scheme, or due to having higher non-dependant deductions under the flat-rate rules. 749 households lose out due to having higher non-dependant deductions than in the current scheme.

141 households lose all support. 51 of these lose all support due to having savings over £6000.

Households with lower awards, by economic status and household type.

Economic status	Number of households	Average weekly decline in support
Employed	468	£6.79
Out of work	758	£6.40

Self-employed	141	£7.53
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Household type	Number of households	Average weekly decline in support
Couple with children	292	£7.04
Couple without children	96	£8.42
Lone parent	545	£6.86
Single	434	£5.72

Households losing all support, by economic status and household type.

Economic status	Number of households	Average weekly decline in support
Employed	82	£10.02
Out of work	47	£19.49
Self-employed	12	£18.36

Household type	Number of households	Average weekly decline in support
Couple with children	27	£15.39
Couple without children	15	£13.15
Lone parent	61	£12.69
Single	38	£15.03

Modelled scheme in 2024/25 – comparison

Cost and average CTS

Model 2 compared to current scheme and current scheme in 2024/25

Group	Modelled scheme cost in 2024/25	Comparison to cost of current scheme in 2023/24		Comparison to current scheme retained into 2024/25	
	£/annum	Change (£/annum)	Change (%)	Change (£/annum)	Change (%)
All working age	£11,371,562	£631,311	5.88%	£37,481	0.33%
UC	£6,635,703	£432,843	6.98%	£79,211	1.21%
Legacy benefits	£4,735,860	£198,468	4.37%	-£41,730	-0.87%
Pension age	£5,677,251	£402,362	7.63%	£0	0.00%
Total	£17,048,813	£1,033,672	6.45%	£37,481	0.22%

Table 1: Model 2, Total cost of model (£/annum)

Costs for the modelled scheme in 2024/25 are £37.5k more than the current scheme in 2024/25. There is a smaller increase in 2024/25 than 2023/24 as wages and benefit income have been uprated by projected inflation, whilst the income thresholds have not.

Average Council Tax Support for working age households under the model increases by 0.33% compared to the current scheme maintained into 2024/25 (Table 1). Costs for UC households increase by 1.21%, whilst costs for households on legacy benefits decrease by 0.87%.

Group	Average household support	Comparison to cost of current scheme		Comparison to current scheme retained into 2024/25	
	£/week	Change (£/week)	Change (%)	Change (£/week)	Change (%)
All working age	£20.25	£1.12	5.88%	£0.07	0.33%
UC	£20.21	£1.32	6.98%	£0.24	1.21%
Legacy benefits	£20.32	£0.85	4.37%	-£0.18	-0.87%

Pension age	£24.31	£1.72	7.63%	£0.00	0.00%
Total	£21.45	£1.30	6.45%	£0.05	0.22%

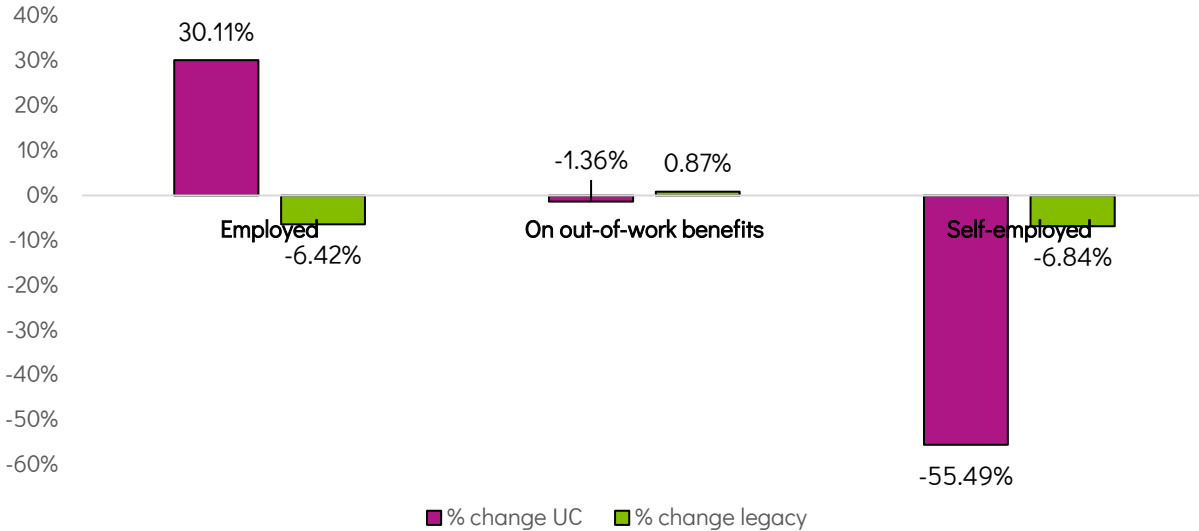
Table 2: Model 2, average weekly council tax support (£/week)

Household breakdown by income bands

Band	No. households	% households	Average weekly CTS – modelled scheme in 2024/25	Average weekly CTS – Current scheme in 2024/25
1	8,829	82.3	£22.22	£22.10
2	301	2.8	£19.17	£15.60
3	556	5.2	£16.15	£11.03
4	489	4.6	£11.42	£9.68
5	213	2.0	£7.24	£10.22
6	150	1.4	£4.39	£11.89
Losing support	169	1.6	£0	£14.55
Total	10,729			

Household impact

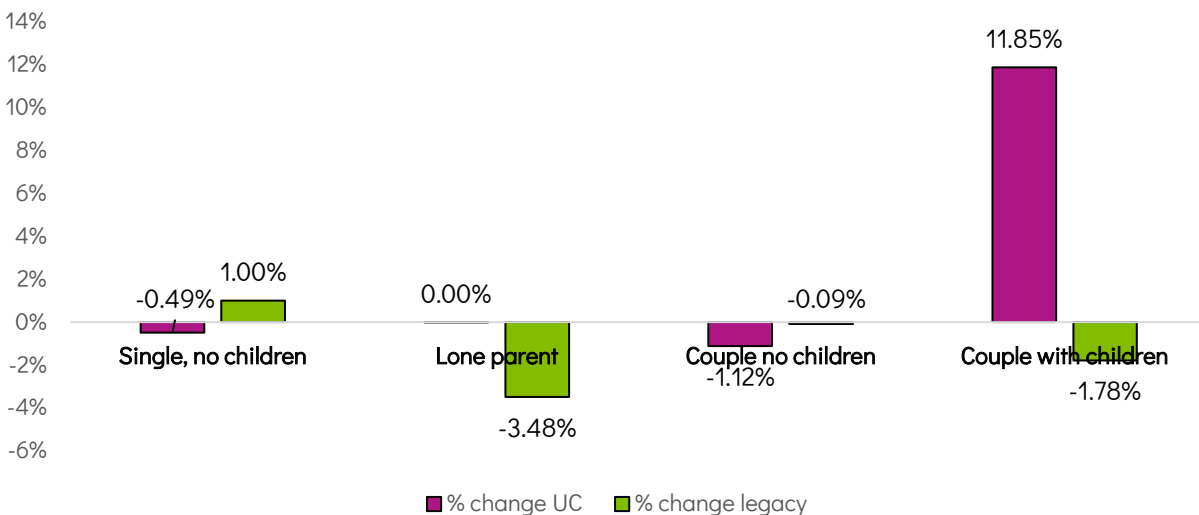
Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme retained into 2024/25, by economic status



Modelled scheme: change in average CTS award, by economic status

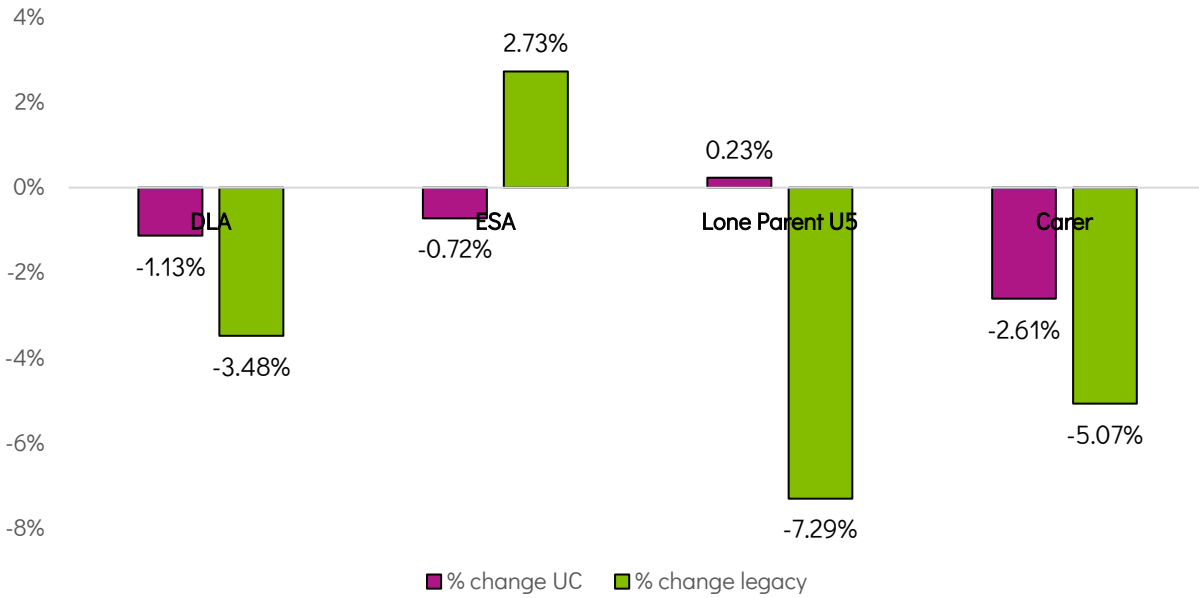
There are only 5 households on UC identified as self-employed in the dataset, so the large average drop in support for these households is skewed by the small sample size. This small sample may be because it is not always possible to determine if UC households are self-employed in the data used for this analysis.

Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme retained into 2024/25, by household type



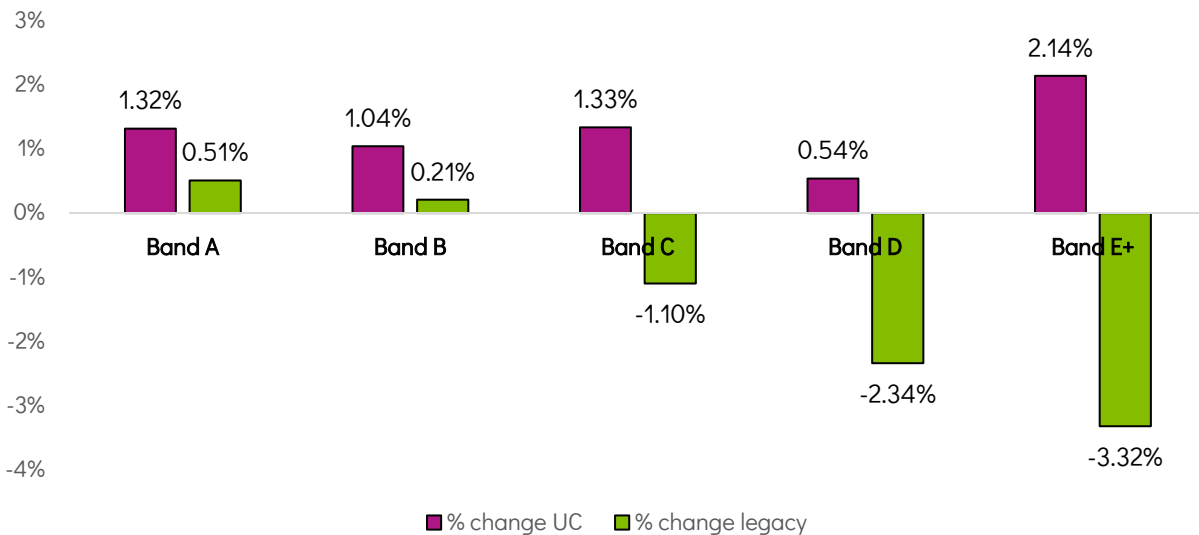
Modelled scheme: change in average CTS award, by household type

Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme retained into 2024/25, by barriers to work



Modelled scheme: change in average CTS award, by barriers to work

Percentage change in weekly CTR compared to current scheme retained into 2024/25, by council tax band



Households losing out

1,501 households have lower awards in this model than the current scheme in 2024/25 (with a tolerance of 10p per week), with an average weekly loss of £6.99, whilst 1,597 households have higher awards (with a tolerance of 10p per week), with an average weekly increase of £7.03.

Households lose out due to falling into income bands that give a lower award than the earnings taper in the current scheme, or due to having higher non-dependant deductions under the flat-rate rules. 749 households lose out due to having higher non-dependant deductions than in the current scheme.

169 households lose all support. 51 of these lose support due to having savings over £6000.

Households with lower awards, by economic status and household type.

Economic status	Number of households	Average weekly decline in support
Employed	557	£7.18
Out of work	770	£6.62
Self-employed	174	£8.06

Household type	Number of households	Average weekly decline in support
Couple with children	341	£8.07
Couple without children	105	£8.57
Lone parent	609	£6.92
Single	446	£5.90

Households losing all support, by economic status and household type.

Economic status	Number of households	Average weekly decline in support
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Employed	105	£11.28
Out of work	49	£20.20
Self-employed	15	£18.97

Household type	Number of households	Average weekly decline in support
Couple with children	39	£15.03
Couple without children	15	£14.43
Lone parent	72	£13.79
Single	43	£15.41

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