

<b>Service area</b>	Housing and Council Tax Benefits
<b>Date of assessment</b>	December 2010
<b>Name of strategy/policy/function/service to be assessed</b>	Housing Benefit Overpayment Policy
<b>Is this a new or existing strategy/policy/function/service?</b>	Existing
<b>Name of manager responsible for strategy/policy/function/service</b>	
<b>Names of people conducting the assessment</b>	
<b>Step 1 – Description of strategy/policy/function/service</b>	
Describe the aims; objectives and purpose of the strategy/policy/function/service (include how it fits in to wider aims or strategic objectives).	<p>The main objective of this policy is to set out how the Council will deal with the administration of Housing Benefit overpayments. Much of the policy is based on the appropriate benefit legislation but it also makes reference to the importance of effective overpayment recovery which benefits the Council as a whole.</p> <p>The Council has a number of practices, policies and procedures to ensure that the administration of Housing Benefit is as sound as possible. However, it is inevitable that overpayments will occur.</p>

	<p>This strategy contributes to some of the aims and objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan – 'Growing Success':</p> <p>Community Aim – Housing that meets local needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To achieve a low level of homelessness</li> <li>• To process Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims accurately and efficiently</li> </ul> <p>Community Aim – To improve our systems and practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To make it as easy as possible for customers to access our services and get appropriate information</li> <li>• To provide high quality customer service</li> <li>• To be good at communicating with and listening to people and organisations and be clear about what we can do and aspire to achieve</li> <li>• To maintain high levels of probity, governance and ethics</li> </ul> <p>Community Aim – To learn and develop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure that employees and members have appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviours and develop a culture of innovation</li> <li>• To strengthen our commitment and capacity to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion</li> </ul>
<p>Are there any (existing) equality objectives of the strategy/policy or function/service</p>	<p>There are no specific equality objectives. However, this policy is not intended to discriminate against any members of society – all benefit customers (including landlords) are to be treated equally but within the benefit regulations laid down by government. The rate of recovery of the overpayment is normally carried out in line</p>

	with DWP legislation. However, the amount can be reduced if it would cause the claimant hardship. The individual circumstances of the claim are taken into account when considering this.
Who is intended to benefit from the strategy/policy/function/service and in what way?	Benefit claimants, landlords and officers – by ensuring that the administration of Housing Benefit overpayments is carried out consistently and within the regulations and Council policy. Residents and HDC - efficient collection of money assists the financial probity of the Council.
What are the intended outcomes of this strategy/policy/function/service?	To ensure that Housing Benefit claims are dealt with in accordance with legislation and the most appropriate method of recovery is used to maximise income to the Council.
<b>Step 2 – Data</b>	
What baseline <b>quantitative data (statistics)</b> do you have about the strategy/policy/function/service relating to equalities groups (e.g. monitoring data on proportions of service users compared to proportions in the population), relevant to this policy?	None
What <b>qualitative data (opinions etc)</b> do you have on different groups (e.g. comments from previous consumer satisfaction surveys/consultation, feedback exercises, or evidence from other authorities undertaking similar work), relevant to this strategy/policy/function/service?	None
<b>Step 3 – Policy impact</b>	
Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>different racial groups</b> ?	There are no concerns that this policy could have a differential impact on racial groups. Housing Benefit is administered within

<p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>regulations and guidance provided by the government.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>gender, including transgender people</b>?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>There are no concerns that this policy could have a differential impact on grounds of gender. Housing Benefit is administered within regulations and guidance provided by the government.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>disabled</b>?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>There are no concerns that this policy could have a differential impact on disabled people. Housing Benefit is administered within regulations and guidance provided by the government. Depending on circumstances, an appointee can take over responsibility for the claimant's benefit claim. This means that the administration of the claim including the duty to notify the local authority of changes in circumstances would become the responsibility of the appointee.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>lesbian, gay, or bisexual people</b> compared with heterosexual people?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>There are no concerns that this policy could have a differential impact on lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Housing Benefit is administered within regulations and guidance provided by the government.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>younger or older people</b>?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>There are no concerns that this policy could have a differential impact on younger or older people. Housing Benefit is administered within regulations and guidance provided by the government. Depending on circumstances, an appointee can take over responsibility for the claimant's benefit claim. This means that the administration of the claim including the duty to notify the</p>

	local authority of changes in circumstances would become the responsibility of the appointee.
Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on grounds of <b>religion or belief</b> ?  What evidence do you have for your answer?	There are no concerns that this policy could have a differential impact on grounds of religion or belief. Housing Benefit is administered within regulations and guidance provided by the government

<b>Action plan and timetable</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Target/Timetable for completion of</b>
To ensure that all requests for a reduced recovery rate are dealt with consistently.	To monitor the requests received requesting a reduction in the weekly recovery rate against data we hold on sex, age disability and (where available) race. This may inform whether any groups appear to be being treated differently compared to the caseload mix.	March 2011 and annually
To ensure that staff are aware and trained on equality and diversity issues.	To ensure that staff attend appropriate equality and diversity training courses in line with HR guidelines.	March 2011 and annually