

Title of proposed EIA	Cost of Living Programme Phase 2
Reference No	EQUA1138
EA is in support of	Amended Service
Review Frequency	Six Months
Date of first review	31/01/2024
Directorate	Strategy Equality and Partnerships
Division	Cost of Living
Service Area	
Responsible Officer(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Alison Muckersie
Quality Control Officer(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Nikki Murfitt
Accountable Officer(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Greg Ward
Purpose of proposal	To enable the continuation and development of a range of interventions aimed at supporting those residents most adversely affected by the Cost of Living crisis
Data sources	Consultation Results; Interviews; relevant reports/strategies; Statistical Database (please specify); relevant research
Please include any other sources of data	Population-linked data mapping using the City Observatory Evaluation framework for the CoL Phase 2 activities Programme level dashboard The City Observatory leads on the completion of the Evaluation Framework for the Cost-of-Living programme. Working with the Neighbourhood Advice Centres and Contact Centre, the Observatory will have access to anonymised data trends. Explorations are underway to establish how other external partners and bodies might join in this data collection and analysis.
ASSESS THE IMPACT AGAINST THE PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS	
Protected characteristic: Age	Service Users / Stakeholders; Employees; Wider Community
Age details:	Charity group St Basils facilitated a report for Loughborough University which reported that young people living

independently face the same costs regardless of age, yet the social security system provides a lower under 25 Universal Credit rate, with young people under 25 receiving £70 a month less Universal Credit than those who are 25 and over. The research reiterated that young people living outside the family home have to cover the same essential living costs, such as bills, food and transport regardless of age. Participants did not understand why the under 25 rate was lower - they felt it was unjustified and penalised them simply because of their age. The report also highlighted that the Universal Credit under 25 rate was inadequate at £265 a month - and could be even less after deductions, such as for repaying an advance to cover the initial 5 week wait. This level of income left young people with little choice in spending, having to prioritise and make sacrifices – 'surviving' rather than 'living'. Even where highly organised and disciplined with their budgets, their money could only stretch so far. The constant worry and stress of trying to manage on such a low income could be emotionally draining, alongside a feeling of missing out and being unable to do things that other young people their age could. Managing on Universal Credit alone meant focussing on getting by on a day to day basis and limited the possibility of trying to save for the future.

As workforces across the city age, new prospects for younger workers will rise significantly. The Cost of Living Phase 2 programme includes targeted actions to support vulnerable young people across Birmingham. These interventions, which go beyond the assistance available to all residents regardless of age, include:

- an Employment Charter which aims to diversity recruitment and increase youth recruitment across the city;

a recalibration of BCC's social value procurement to prioritise local employment and recruitment among target cohorts, including increasing apprenticeships; promoting apprenticeships more effectively to the directorates across the council - (within ten years, 50% of the Council staff will be at retirement age), assisting with skills gap analysis, career mapping and providing current employees with the skills needed to advance in their careers. The additional Cost of Living resource would also support liaison with over 400 schools to drive the apprenticeship programmes. The emphasis would be particularly on preventing and reducing the city's high youth unemployment rate.

Following a successful pilot funded by Department for Levelling Up, which saw local coach-mentors work with six schools in East Birmingham, the aim is to expand local collaboration with schools. This will include mentoring, inspirational employer collaboration, and connecting students and parents with further skills development; a proposal to improve careers advice and a delivery plan to establish an employment support service for young people ending full time education, building on the pilot in East Birmingham and the new powers in the devolution deal; a weekly Coding Club that will cater for those who are 17 or under; and to drive long-term investment in entrepreneurship for young people in Birmingham, the programme will also sponsor a Prince's Trust roundtable of young people and youth entrepreneurship providers.

Free School Meals for children and young people is a key benefit in supporting access to food for eligible

citizens. For example, it is estimated that taking Free School Meals can save eligible families around £400 per year. The Col Phase 2 programme will explore ways to increase the uptake of Free School Meals, liaising with schools around individual's Free School Meal eligibility.

The Cabinet's decision to allocate £5m of the Household Support Fund (HSF) to the Council's cost of living activity provides opportunity to enhance other areas of support to vulnerable young people. For example, the Birmingham Playcare Network provides beds and cots to vulnerable families. Using new HSF funding to schools and linking to the cost-of-living benefits maximisation activity, if any school or nursery identifies a need, these beds will be provided, and then the team will monitor subsequent school attainment through the Observatory's evaluation framework. Additional funding for a complete set of bedding from mattresses to pyjamas will also be provided if needed.

There is a clear case for codesigning further plans for tackling the causes of poverty amongst our young people, particularly those young people who have a lived experience of deprivation, school exclusion or the youth justice system. CoL resources will be targeted at this codesign process, and a further set of proposals will be worked up before being reported back to relevant Cabinet Members for review.

Support for older residents of the city, beyond the wider cost-of-living interventions, will include a new "Warm Welcome @ Home" initiative which will provide direct support to residents who are isolated or vulnerable, including the provision of warm packs for those who cannot access warm spaces themselves. Tailored IT courses will also be aimed at those aged 55 plus and delivered across city libraries.

Protected characteristic: Disability

Service Users / Stakeholders;
Employees; Wider Community

Disability details:

Disabled individuals and their households have, on average, lower incomes than their non-disabled counterparts. They often incur additional costs related to the treatment and mitigation of their disability. Disabled people are less likely to be employed than the wider population. As reported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the employment rate for disabled people is 54%, compared to 82% for non-disabled people. Furthermore, disabled people that are employed are typically paid less. The 'disability pay gap'—the gap between median pay for disabled employees and their non-disabled counterparts—was 13.8% in 2021, meaning that disabled people earn almost £2 per hour less on average. Disabled people and their households also tend to spend more on essential goods and services, such as heating, food and travel. These extra costs associated with disability vary depending on the type of impairment. However, analysis by the disability equality charity Scope estimated that the extra costs faced by disabled people average £583 a month, with one in five disabled people facing extra costs of more than £1,000 a month. The IFS said that, in 2019/20, 29% of people on disability benefits suffered from relative income poverty, relative to 20% for working-age adults in general. Moreover, the IFS suggests that these figures understate the rate of poverty among disabled people, given that the extra income received through disability benefits—which nominally boosts the income of disabled people—is in practice absorbed by 'extra costs', rather than acting as a material boost to disposable income.

The Cost of Living Phase 2 programme, which includes funding to the Heart of England Foundation, will provide

additional infrastructure across the adult social care and NNS commissioned pathways. Heart of England will set up and manage a grant programme where they will broker and manage the activity provided by community-based organisations, with an aim of working with organisations linked to currently under-represented communities, and with communities facing the greatest need across Birmingham. Small, medium, and larger organisations will be able to apply for this funding. Where appropriate, these agencies may refer on into other specialist advice support agencies e.g., Tribunals service. Commissioned services and community-based organisations will be aware of intersectionality, providing support where a mixture of discrimination (racism, gender, transphobia, homophobia, etc) is present. They will work with other services, through partnership boards and steering groups; joining pathways to help contest the many forms of discrimination which are preventing vulnerable adults from thriving. The funding is being used to provide income maximisation related Information Advice and Guidance. A proactive approach is being taken, to help avoid a reliance on client walk-ins, and to extend reach to those who find engagement out of the home difficult, due to disabilities and other issues. Cost of Living supported employability interventions will also include the targeting of disabled adults to help diversify the city's workforce and provide improved employment opportunities for this cohort of the city's residents. As with the first phase of the Cost-of-Living work, this programme will be underpinned by diverse communication activity, which will include messaging in ten Birmingham languages, braille and deaf speak.

Protected characteristic: Sex

Service Users / Stakeholders;
Employees; Wider Community

Gender details:

Services providing support will be non-gender specific and there will be a positive impact as services recognise the wider range of gender identity that is emerging, whilst ensuring that everyone has the same opportunity to access appropriate support. The Cost of Living Phase 2 interventions are accessible to all genders with a commitment to addressing their personalised support needs and applying a holistic approach to their wellbeing.

A proactive approach to the provision of benefits maximisation is being taken, to help avoid a reliance on client walk-ins, and to extend reach to those who find engagement out of the home difficult, due to caring responsibilities and other issues.

The focus on employment activity within Phase 2 of the programme is likely to impact on female workers, who make up the majority of employees in low paid roles across the health and care and catering sectors in particular.

Protected characteristics: Gender Reassignment

Gender reassignment details:

Service Users / Stakeholders;
Employees; Wider Community

Gender reassignment is not a barrier to accessing support. The Services commissioned will ensure all people using services who identify as transgender, non-binary or intersex are treated with respect and dignity throughout their support and will be able to access the same support, and be offered the same opportunities whilst ensuring they have a personalised approach as any other gender.

Protected characteristics: Marriage and Civil Partnership

Marriage and civil partnership details:

Service Users/ Stakeholders;
Employees; Wider Community

Marital Status will not act as a barrier when accessing the services. Both single

and couples can access the assessment for support as those who are married or have a civil partnership

Protected characteristics: Pregnancy and Maternity

Service Users / Stakeholders;
Employees; Wider Community

Pregnancy and maternity details:

More than one in five women develop a mental illness during pregnancy or after giving birth, and this level is likely to increase with additional stresses linked to cost of living pressures.

Cost of Living funding is being used to provide income maximisation related Information Advice and Guidance, enabling advice to be provided to those communities in greatest need across Birmingham. A proactive approach is being taken, to help avoid a reliance on client walk-ins, and to extend reach to those who find engagement out of the home difficult, due to caring responsibilities and other issues.

The CoL Phase 2 programme will look to increase uptake of the Healthy Start initiative across the city [What is Healthy Start | Healthy Start | Birmingham City Council](#). This programme supports pregnant women and their families to eat well and get the vitamins they need for healthy development.

Protected characteristics: Race

Service Users / Stakeholders;
Employees; Wider Community

Race details:

The cost-of-living crisis has significantly impacted those already living in poverty. Within Birmingham there is a concentration of poverty amongst certain ethnic groups, including the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities, and those impacted by multiple disadvantage,

Minority ethnic workers are disproportionately paid the lowest wages in the UK, Data in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Labor Force Survey, and re-weighted to the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings,

reported that 33% of Bangladeshi workers, 29% of Pakistani and 25% of Black workers are paid below the real Living Wage, compared to 20% of White British workers. Further data from the ONS reveals that: 4 in 10 (44%) White adults reported finding it difficult to afford their energy bills. This proportion appeared to be higher among Black or Black British adults (69%) and Asian or Asian British adults (59%). A quarter (28%) of White adults reported finding it difficult to afford their rent or mortgage payments. This proportion also appeared higher among Black or Black British adults (52%) 1 in 25 (4%) White adults reported being behind on their energy bills. This proportion appeared higher among Black or Black British adults (21%). 1 in 50 (2%) White adults reported being behind on their rent or mortgage payments. This proportion appeared greater among Black or Black British (9%), Mixed or Multiple ethnic group (9%) and Asian or Asian British (8%) adults.

The Cost of Living Phase 2 programme is targeted at helping the most vulnerable communities across Birmingham. The programme, which includes funding to the Heart of England Foundation, will provide additional infrastructure across the adult social care and NNS commissioned pathways. Heart of England Community Foundation will set up and manage a grant programme where they will broker and manage the activity provided by community-based organisations, with an aim of working with organisations linked to currently under-represented communities. Small, medium, and larger organisations will be able to apply for this funding. The funding would be to provide Cost of Living income maximisation related Information Advice and Guidance, enabling advice to be provided to communities of greatest need across Birmingham. Where appropriate, these agencies may refer on into other specialist advice support agencies e.g., Tribunals service. The inclusive strategy

of NNS and commissioned support providers ensures that all funded assets are designed to be inclusive and welcoming to all people regardless of ethnicity, and other protected characteristics (Ethnic Minority Groups Supported by NNS and P&C, BVSC April 2021). Commissioned services and community-based organisations will be aware of intersectionality, providing support where a mixture of discrimination (racism, gender, transphobia, homophobia, etc) is present. They will work with other services, through partnership boards and steering groups; joining pathways to help contest the many forms of discrimination which are preventing vulnerable adults from thriving. Cost of Living supported employability interventions will also help diversify the city's workforce and provide improved employment opportunities and fairer pay for a wider cohort of the city's residents. This programme will be underpinned by diverse communication activity, which will include messaging in ten Birmingham languages.

Protected characteristics: Religion or Beliefs

Religion or beliefs details:

Service Users / Stakeholders;
Employees; Wider Community

Data provided by the Council's Data Observatory will be used to highlight areas of the city where there are so-called "deserts of service provision". These include parts of East Birmingham where there is a high percentage of people from the city's Muslim community. Work is underway to consider alternative routes to engaging with this community, in recognition of the limited effectiveness of the current somewhat transactional approach.

Religion or beliefs will not be seen as a barrier when accessing Cost of Living funded services. Faith-based organisations are key partners in the NNS. NNS has raised awareness of their contribution. They bring organisations representing different faiths and beliefs

into local partnership arrangements. NNS capacity-building, equality and diversity training ensure that partnerships and organisations work in a way, which is inclusive and respectful of different faiths and beliefs, and that local activities are inclusive of the needs of faith-based communities.

The grant schemes for food bank provision in Phase 1 of the Cost of Living programme highlighted a lack of provision in East Birmingham so in Phase 2 there will be targeted work to increase sustainable capacity for food provision in this part of the city. This will include support for mosques and other community assets to purchase equipment to increase their capacity to provide nutritious, and culturally appropriate food.

Protected characteristics: Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation details:

Service Users / Stakeholders;
Employees; Wider Community

Sexual orientation will not be a barrier when accessing the services. With the strong link required to community assets by Cost of Living supported services local groups for LGBTQ+ citizens can be identified and accessed. In addition, providers will be expected to deliver equality and diversity training where appropriate, ensuring that local assets and support will be accessible to LGBTQ+ citizens and inclusive of their needs.

Socio-economic impacts

The Cost of Living programme initially concentrated on immediate actions to alleviate hardship. However, in many ways, this has been tackling the symptoms rather than the causes. The reason there is a cost of living emergency is that too many people in Birmingham do not share fully in Birmingham's dynamic economy and, consequently, household incomes for the most vulnerable households are too low.

Even before the emergency the big challenges in the city were all linked to poverty and economic inequality:

- Low rates of employment (especially amongst the young);
- Low productivity;
- Big earnings gap between Birmingham's workers (often commuters) and residents; and
- Social exclusion.

In turn, these challenges drive poor health outcomes and housing conditions, demand for statutory services and they also have the potential to exacerbate community tensions.

In the second phase of the Cost of Living programme, the overall challenge is to move from the immediate actions already taken, to creating the conditions for more inclusive economic growth. Continued support to help alleviate fuel and food poverty, through proactive engagement on preferential energy and broadband tariffs, will be enhanced with interventions to help manage the Cost of Living crisis more sustainably in the future. The ambition is to seek to put the poorest households on a higher, lifetime income trajectory. This is through a combination of benefit maximisation and by helping more of the city's poorest people into sustainable jobs and careers – sometimes through developing their own entrepreneurial skills.

The expansion of the Cost of Living programme in Phase Two will include elements of the enhancement of employment and enterprise opportunities for the most vulnerable communities in Birmingham. Included in the programme will be support for existing employer partnerships to develop a "Good Employment" Charter. The charter will secure commitment to the best employment practices from Birmingham's key employers, sectors, and businesses. Aimed at improving the quality, availability, and access to jobs for underrepresented residents in the labour market, the charter will seek to

	<p>address inequalities and improve equity amongst the city's wide workforce. There will also be a drive to increase employer commitment to the number of accredited Living Wage employers headquartered in Birmingham. Currently, twenty percent of Birmingham's workers still do not receive the Living Wage.</p>
Please indicate any actions arising from completing this screening exercise.	Any impacts have been mitigated by actions in the Report to Cabinet on 25 July 2023.
Please indicate whether a full impact assessment is recommended	NO
What data has been collected to facilitate the assessment of this policy/proposal?	Consultation Results, interviews, Meetings with stakeholders and providers, performance data, contractual data, Census data, health data, POPPI and PANSI data and market intelligence from existing providers and service users.
Consultation analysis	See Report to Cabinet on 25 July 2023.
Adverse impact on any people with protected characteristics.	Actions as outlined above and as described in report to Cabinet on 25 July 2023
Could the policy/proposal be modified to reduce or eliminate any adverse impact?	Ongoing impact of interventions will ensure the reduction or elimination of any adverse impacts
How will the effect(s) of this policy/proposal on equality be monitored?	<p>The Cost of Living programme evaluation framework was approved by Cabinet on 25 April 2023. Work is ongoing to enhance this framework to reflect additional activities being undertaken in Phase 2, working closely with the City Observatory who are developing a Cost of Living dashboard to highlight impact to date.</p> <p>In addition, Heart of England will monitor the activity of the providers and the Adult Social Care, Prevention and Communities Team will monitor the reporting of Heart of England Community Foundation and quarterly</p>

reports will be shared with the Cost-of-Living Strategic Response Group. Regular reporting on activity and impact will be built into the forward programme of the CoL Strategic Response Group, which has delegated responsibility for governance and oversight of the programme. In addition, further updates will be reported to Cabinet.

What data is required in the future?

The Cost of Living programme evaluation framework was approved by Cabinet on 25 April 2023. Work is ongoing to enhance this framework to reflect additional activities being undertaken in Phase 2. In addition, Heart of England will monitor the activity of the providers and the Adult Social Care, Prevention and Communities Team contract manager will monitor the reporting of Heart of England Community Foundation and quarterly reports will be shared with the Cost-of-Living Strategic Response Group. Heart of England Community Foundation will be required to produce an evaluation report at the end of the funding period that will form part of the evaluation of the wider impact made in Birmingham relating to the Cost-of-Living Crisis and proposed recommendations for future advice services in the city.

Are there any adverse impacts on any particular group(s)

No

If yes, please explain your reasons for going ahead.

Initial equality impact assessment of your proposal

The Cost-of-Living programme aims to reduce the impact of food, fuel and economic poverty on the most vulnerable households and on those with protected characteristics.

Consulted People or Groups

Details covered in Report to Cabinet on 25 July 2023

Informed People or Groups

Details covered in Report to Cabinet on 25 July 2023

Summary and evidence of findings from your EIA	Details covered in Report to Cabinet on 25 July 2023
QUALITY CONTORL SECTION	
Submit to the Quality Control Officer for reviewing?	Yes
Quality Control Officer comments	Reviewed on 28th of June 2023. No changes needed.
Decision by Quality Control Officer	Proceed for final approval
Submit draft to Accountable Officer?	Yes
Decision by Accountable Officer	Approve
Date approved / rejected by the Accountable Officer	28/06/2023
Reasons for approval or rejection	This is a comprehensive and positive assessment of this programe
Please print and save a PDF copy for your records	Yes
Content Type: Item Version: 124.0 Created at 17/05/2023 10:36 AM by <input type="checkbox"/> Alison Muckersie Last modified at 28/06/2023 05:07 PM by Workflow on behalf of <input type="checkbox"/> Alison Muckersie	<div>Close</div>