

Service being assessed	Sundry Debts and Housing Benefit Overpayments
Who will be involved in completing this assessment?	Stuart Brabben, Service Manager Enforcement (Revenues)
Date of Review	9 June 2011
Date of Next Review	9 June 2012
What is the purpose of the service?	To bill and collect debts on behalf of all Council services and overpayments of Housing Benefit
Is this assessment being undertaken because of changes to the service? If so what are they?	Assessment being undertaken as part of Council's annual review of equalities information, not because of change to service/policy.
<p>The purpose of this assessment is to understand how services can help the Council to meet its duties under Equalities legislation. The duties can be summarised as</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eliminate discrimination 2. Advance equality of opportunity 3. Foster good relations between different parts of the community 	<p>This team has only recently taken over the running of the Sundry Debts collection service on behalf of the Council. It is forming new working practices and policies and will undertake an equality impact assessment during this process. The service will offer a debt collection service for any Council service and work with the debtors to set up reasonable repayment schedules based on their ability to pay / requirement to pay.</p>

<p>How does this service help the Council to do this, in particular in relation to the categories specifically mentioned in legislation - Race, Gender/Sex, Disability, Age, Religion/Belief, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation, Pregnancy & Maternity and in respect of Duty 1 only – Marriage and Civil Partnerships?</p>	<p>Housing Benefit overpayments are operated under a Council policy and each case is assessed individually on how the overpayments will be paid back. The amount of overpayments arising has decreased due to the improvements to the service through the Lean thinking intervention which worked towards paying the right benefit to the right person, right first time.</p>
<p>How will you know that service is working as it should?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit overpayments – collection targets and recovery rates • Customer complaints / compliments / feedback • Feedback from internal services about level of debts being recovered
<p>What data have you used to help you make this assessment?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and procedures • Legislation • Performance information – targets and indicators including collection rates • Customer feedback / analysis • Reports gained from interrogating the Sundry Debt processing system – Integra Finance System and the IBS Open Revenues HB Overpayment system. For example, payment schedules
<p>What is, or what do you expect to be the impact of the way you work on different parts of the community, including those covered by equality legislation?</p>	<p>Who benefits?</p> <p>The Borough / community as Housing Benefit overpayments eat into Council reserves if they cannot be recovered from the claimant.</p> <p>Who should be expected to benefit but don't – Why not? Not applicable.</p>

<p>On the basis of what you have found out, which of these options will you now follow</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major changes (to Housing Benefit Overpayments) • Adjust the policy • Continue the policy • Stop and remove the policy
<p>Say how the new policy will be reviewed to assess the impact</p>	<p>This is a review – not a new policy or service. As and when it is proposed to change the service or policies, new assessments will be completed.</p>
<p>What now needs to be done and by who?</p>	<p>The Sundry Debt service is being redesigned at present and will include an equality impact assessment as part of the design.</p>
<p>Signed off by</p>	<p>Stuart Brabben, Service Manager Enforcement (Revenues)</p>