



Council Tax Support Consultation Strategy 2020/21

August 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Council Tax Support replaced Council Tax Benefit on 1 April 2013 and forms part of the Government's continuing wider reforms of the welfare system.
- 1.2 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 and the Welfare Reform Act 2012 gave Local Authorities in England until the 31 January 2013 to introduce a Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme to be implemented on 1 April 2013. Local Authorities were compelled before this deadline to conduct a public consultation exercise on their proposed schemes.
- 1.3 The same legislation, as amended, also included provision for Local Authorities to make changes to their LCTS schemes annually providing that they conduct a public consultation exercise on any proposals and publish a final scheme by 31 March in any given year.
- 1.4 This document sets out Hyndburn Borough Council's Council Tax Support Consultation Strategy for 2020/21.

2. Consultation 2020/21

- 2.1 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 sets out that billing authorities must:
 - consult any major precepting authority, and then;
 - publish a draft scheme, and then;
 - consult those people who have an interest in how the new scheme will operate.
- 2.2 Consulting with interested parties will ensure that we better understand the impact of any proposals on individuals and certain groups. We will consider the feedback we receive together with all suggestions for improving the draft scheme before we decide upon any final scheme for 2020/21.

- 2.3 We will conduct a fair, balanced and open consultation which will provide as many people as possible with the opportunity to respond to proposals for Hyndburn's Council Tax Support Scheme.
- 2.4 This consultation aims to meet our statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and we will take steps to meet the differing needs of people with protected characteristics. Details on how we will take protected characteristics into account during this consultation are outlined on page 3.

3. Method

- 3.1 We recognise that the rate of subsidy in Council Tax Support is not just an issue for those in receipt of these subsidies, but impacts on all local residents as they are contributing to the subsidiary via the taxes they pay. Our consultation will therefore include tax payers as well as those in receipt of the benefit and other interested parties including the main preceptors.
- 3.2 Consultation will be multi-faceted and will vary in its methods so that we provide a range of opportunities to allow as many people as possible to have their say.
- 3.3 Our methods for consultation will include:
- Online consultation
 - Postal surveys to current Council Tax Support claimants
 - Postal surveys to a selection of Council Tax taxpayers not in receipt of CTS
 - A web link on all emails sent to customers during the consultation period
 - Email surveys to recipients of Council Tax Support and taxpayers not in receipt of CTS
 - Telephone surveys for those unable to access the web or portal form
 - Survey response boxes in our main offices
- 3.4 We will advertise our consultation using:
- press releases to local newspapers,
 - our website,
 - leaflets sent out with other Council correspondence,
 - our telephone queue messages,
 - social media,
 - email

4. Equality Target Groups

4.1 The consultation and advertising methods in this strategy are wide ranging and we aim to consult with as many people as possible while giving different groups the opportunity to respond.

4.2 The methods available to us will be used to consult with:

- Current Council Tax Support claimants
- Current Council Tax payers
- Working age people
- Pension age people
- Groups who support people with financial advice
- Local Charities, Women’s Groups, local Churches and Mosques

This list is not exhaustive.

4.3 We recognise that this consultation will not be fully effective unless it takes into account the different marketing tools and consultation methods which have the most impact on people in certain groups – failure to do so can contribute to greater inequality and a poorer outcome. Some groups can be harder to reach than others and the table below illustrates some of the methods we will use with the aim of reaching a specific group.

| Target Group | Consultation Methods to suit group | Advertising Methods to suit group |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Age – working age from 18-65 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postal • Online • Email • Telephone • Face to face | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online • Social media • Telephone messages • Post |
| Age – older people 65+ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post • Online • Telephone • Face to face • Large print available | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone messages • Post • Social media |
| People with a disability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online • Telephone • Face to Face • Large Print Available on request • Web-reader available • Appointments available for help with responses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online • Social media • Telephone messages • Post |
| Black and Minority Ethnic groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postal • Online • Email | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mosques • Community Centres • Online |

Council Tax Support Consultation Strategy 2020/21

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|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Telephone (including some other languages via translation services)• Face to face | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social media• Telephone messages• Post |
| Homeless people or those under threat of homelessness | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Face to Face• Housing advice appointments | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing Advice team to promote the consultation• Community Groups and local charities |

5. Length of Consultation

5.1 This consultation will run for 12 weeks from 13th September to 5th December 2019.

6. Responses

6.1 We will publish our responses on our website and in documentation produced when our scheme is finalised and published.

6.2 Responses received will be considered when finalising a new scheme, if one is to be implemented.

7. Public Sector Equality Duty and Privacy Statement

7.1 The survey will include an optional section to gather equalities monitoring data. This data will be used to ensure that our consultation has reached as many different people as possible as well as to analyse results.

7.2 Hyndburn Borough Council is committed to providing services which are fair and accessible for all. This consultation has considered the public sector equality duty throughout the project and a comprehensive Customer First Analysis has been completed and is available at www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport or by request.

7.3 All responses will be anonymous and no personal data that could be used to identify an individual will be gathered as part of this consultation.