SSA EQUALITY IMPACT AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

Directorate	Resources
Service Area	Revenues
Service/policy/function being assessed	Debt Management Policy
Which borough (s) does the service/policy apply to	Richmond
Staff involved in developing this EINA	Alix Wilson
Date approved by Directorate Equality Group (if applicable)	
Date approved by Policy and Review Manager	
All EINAs must be signed off by the Policy and Review	
Manager	
Date submitted to Directors' Board	

1. Summary

Debt Management Policy

Councils have a duty to recover outstanding debts and in doing so, ensure that its processes are fair to everyone, particularly in the current economic climate. With this in mind, the existing debt policies have been reviewed and an overarching Debt Management Policy has been created to formulate cohesive expected behaviors for Council services collection activities.

The Policy reflects current custom and practice, drawing on the robust procedures and good practice operating across Council services that help to ensure that the Council minimises debt and maximises rates of collection. The Policy helps to ensure that we are consistent in our approach but also recognises the importance of testing out new approaches and taking learning forward to improve the way we collect income and manage our debt. The policy also acknowledges that there is a difference between those that can and won't pay to those that can't pay and need additional support from the Council.

The policy provides the overarching corporate framework under which the operational income collection and debt recovery procedures for each debt type are maintained. The corporate policy sets the tone as a fair and compassionate borough, establishing general principles of governance supported by individual operational policies used at a local level by council officers.

A Debt Fairness Charter has been developed and forms part of the Debt Management Policy. This is aligned with Central Government Debt Management Function's own Debt Fairness Charter. The Charter demonstrates the Council's ongoing commitment to treat individuals and businesses in the borough fairly, providing guidance and support to those who have difficulty in repaying their debts.

This EINA looks at the impact of the Debt management policy on protected characteristics groups

The key findings from the EINA are:

 The council's debt management policy has, and will continue to have, a positive impact on residents with protected characteristics aimed at residents in debt and providing structured support and tailored financial advice. While the policy is available to any resident with council debt, the debt management policy and Debt Fairness Charter will help groups with protected characteristics achieve greater financial stability and reduce stress, particularly groups more at risk of debt including low-income groups, single parent families and those with disabilities.

There is little local debt data on protected characteristics

The following actions are proposed to mitigate the impact of the debt management policy

• The policy brings together current practice with no changes that will negatively impact debtors. There are some actions however in terms of how we ensure that we communicate and share the policy, particularly the Debt Fairness Charter including via key voluntary sector providers.

2. Evidence gathering and engagement

a. What evidence has been used for this assessment? For example, national data, local data via DataRich or DataWand

Evidence	Source
National data on Debt	Research Briefing - House of Commons Library - Debt
	(May 2024)
National Citizens Advice Data on Debt	<u>Citizens Advice Data on Debt</u>
Low income family Debt data	Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) Dashboard
Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Marriage	ONS Census
and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity,	
Religion and Belief, Sexual Orientation, and socio-	
economic characteristic groups.	
Deprivation	English Indices of Deprivation 2019
Carers	Carers UK
Deprivation	Health Foundation

b. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of your assessment?

Individuals/Groups	Consultation/Engagement results	Date	What changed as a result of the consultation

3. Analysis of need

Potential impact on this group of residents and actions taken to mitigate impact and advance equality, diversity and inclusion

Protected group	Findings	Findings		
Age	those age doing so, are most like mort are more National people th	The most up to date national data from the House of Commons Library states that hose aged 25-44 are most likely to hold consumer credit, with 80% of 25-34 year olds doing so, compared with only 18% of those aged 75 and over. High income households are most likely to hold debt, particularly property debt, because taking out large loans like mortgages requires a high income and savings. However, low-income households are more likely to be overindebted. National Citizens Advice data on debt as of September 2024 suggests that of the people they help, people aged 24 to 64 are more likely to be in negative budget and have debts than any other age group and over 65s least likely.		
		proportion of people helped by CA who are likely to be in debt (by		
	Age	age band)		
	65+	32		
	45-64	53		
	30-44	49		
	18-29	46		
	Richmon	d's Population		
		% of		
	Age	population		
	75+	7.3%		
	65-74	8.9%		
	55-64	12.4%		
	45-54	16.1%		
	35-44	15.9%		
	25-34	11.3%		
	15-24	10%		
	Under			
	14	19%		
	people ag	Richmond has a higher than London average of young people between 0-14 and old people aged 65. The borough has a significantly lower percentage of people aged between 14 and 65 compared to the rest of London.		
Disability			•	
-,			debt as of September 2024 suggests that within their client out a disability are more likely to be in a negative budget	

situation and be susceptible to debt. Many low-income households with a disability however, have higher costs including energy bills and this may impact on levels of debt

	% of CA client
	group who are
Disability	likely to be in debt
Disabled	47
Long term health issue	47
None	50

Approximately 12% of Richmond's population have a disability. Of these 4.5% of the population have disabilities which means activities are limited a lot and 7.6% have activities limited a little.

Age	%
65+	16.1
50-64	20.1
35-49	24
25-34	11.3
16-24	8.2
0-15	20.2

Of those in the borough with a disability the majority are between the ages of 35-49. Those with the lowest numbers of disability are those 16-24.

Sex

Sex	Borough Population
Male	48%
Female	52%

Citizens Advice data on debt as of September 2024 suggests that both men and woman are equally likely to be in debt.

	% of people who
	are likely to be in
Gender	debt (by gender)
Female	49
Male	48

Gender reassignment

Gender Identity	Borough Population
Gender identity the same as sex	94%
registered at birth -	

Not answered –	5.6%
Gender identity different from sex	0.1%
registered at birth but no specific	
identity given –	
Trans Woman –	0.1%
Trans man –	0.1%
All other gender identities –	0.1%

Data on gender identity of Debtors is not maintained

Marriage and civil partnership

Marital Status	Borough Population
Never Married and never registered a civil partnership	49.5%
Married or in a registered Civil	35.9%
Partnership	
Separated but still legally married or	1.9%
still legally in a Civil partnership	
Divorced or Civil Partnership dissolved	8.0%
Widowed or Surviving Civil partnership partner	4.7%

Data on marital status of debtors is not currently recorded.

Citizens Advice data on debt as of September 2024 suggests that within their client group, Single households with children are the most likely to have an income deficit and be in debt.

	% of people who are	
	likely to be in debt	
Household type	(Household type)	
Couple	44	
Couple with children	46	
Single Adult	49	
Single with children	51	

LIFT data shows that of the 1681 Richmond households in debt, the largest percentage are couples with children and they also have the largest average value of debt.

Currently this debt only includes Council tax and Housing Benefit overpayments:

Household type	%	
Couple		19
Couple with children		36
Single Adult		15
Single with children		28

Pregnancy and maternity	The 2021 Census recorded that in Richmond there were 19.2 births per 1,000 female (15-44). Data on pregnancy/maternity of debtors is not currently recorded.		
Race/ethnicity	Data on pregnancy/n	laternity of debtors	s is not currently recorded.
,	Ethnicity		Borough Population
	Asian / Asian British	or Asian Welsh -	17,467
	Black/ African/ Carib		3,687
	British	•	,
	Mixed/multiple ethr	nic group	10,662
	Other ethnic group		6,350
	White		157,111
		-	nber 2024 suggests that within their client cely to have an income deficit and be in de
		% of people who	
		are likely to be in	
		debt (by	
	Ethnicity	ethnicity)	
	White	44	
	Black/Black British	46	
	Mixed	49	
	Asian/Asian British	51	
Religion and belief,	ONS Census 2021		
ncluding non belief	Religion/Belief		Borough Population
	Buddhist		0.8%
	Christian		45.3%
	Hindu		2.1%
	Jewish		0.6%
	Muslim		4.3%
	Sikh		1%
	Other		0.7%
	No religion		38%
	Not Answered		7%
	Data on religion/he	lief of Debtors is no	t currently recorded.
	Data on Teligion, be		-
Sexual orientation	Sexual Orientation		Borough Population
Sexual orientation			Borough Population 89%
Sexual orientation	Sexual Orientation		

Data on sexual orientation of Debtors is not currently recorded.

Across groups i.e older LGBT service users or Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic young men.

Data across groups of Debtors is not currently recorded. <u>DataRich</u> – Population Explorer has some demographic data across characteristics (e.g. sex by ethnicity, age, disability etc.) – can be found by Ward.

The average IDACI and IDAOPI scores indicate that 7% of children (0-15) and 9% of older people (60+) in the borough are affected by income deprivation.

By providing debt management services this policy aims to maximise positive impacts on all groups and minimise negative impacts. Therefore, those individuals who are included in more than one protected characteristic group should be impacted positively by policy. For example, low-income, single parent families and those with disabilities.

Socio-economic status (to be treated as a protected characteristic under Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010) Include the following groups:

Deprivation

Income Level (by decile)	Percentage of working- age people (age 16–64) in households that are experiencing problem debt
1 (lowest)	17.3
2	10.2
3	7.2
4	4.5
5	4.2
6	3
7	3.1
8	1.6
9	1.8
10 (highest)	1

Deprivation (measured by the 2019 English Indices of Deprivation)

- Low-income groups & employment
- Carers
- Care experienced people
- Single parents
- Health inequalities

Refugee status

In Great Britain, those on the lowest income deciles are significantly more likely to have problem debt.

Richmond is a relatively affluent borough with low levels of deprivation. Only 0.9% of the population are in Decile 2 and 2.6% in Decile 3. Most residents are in Deciles 9 and 10 (36.5%).

Low-income Groups and employment

There were 8,394 households on Universal Credit in May 2024

Citizens Advice data on debt as of September 2024 suggests that self-employed people are the most likely to have an income deficit and be in debt:

	% of people who are
Employment Status	likely to be in debt

	(by employment status)
Self employed	65
Unemployed	59
Part time	49
Disabled	47
Full Time	40

LIFT data shows that of the 1681 Richmond households in debt, 47% of these are in work.

Carers

13,146 residents reported providing unpaid care, which is the 5th lowest proportion in London.

In England and Richmond, females reported providing more unpaid care than males, with majority aged 50-59 years.

14% of carers nationally are in debt because of caring

Care Experienced People

At the end of March 2019, 115 children and young people were looked after by the authority, of 25 per 10,000 of the populations.

Single Parents

Richmond has 7,078 Lone Parent families in the borough. – see above re household status. Citizens advice data on debt suggest that single parents with debt are the most likely to have negative budgets and be in debt than any other household type.

Health Inequalities

Richmond borough has generally better health than London and England averages. With life expectancy higher than the national average.

Refugee Status

Refugee status - There are 842 people with refugee status outside of the Hong Kong BNO scheme currently living in Richmond (04/2024).

Scheme	Richmond
Richmond Syrian	Six families (32 people)
Resettlement scheme	
(2015- date)	
Afghan Resettlement scheme (2021 – date)	Four families (19 people)
Homes for Ukraine scheme (2022 – Date)	765

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children	26
Hong Kong BNO scheme	No exact data available, but proxy data shows 497 School Applications from Hong Konger and 985 people indicated they were born in Hong Kong in the 2021 Census

Data gaps

Data gap(s)	How will this be addressed?
Sex, Gender Reassignment, Marriage/Civil Partnership,	The information is not collated although may be in
Pregnancy and Maternity, Race/Ethnicity, Religion,	part for some debt types. We do not currently have
Sexual Orientation, Refugee Status	single view of debt but could look at how we capture
	this data as part of this project as this progresses.

4. Impact

Protected group	Positive	Negative
Age	Those working aged are more likely to be impacted by debt and are therefore more likely than other age groups to see the positive benefits of the councils' debt management policy. However, this policy is available to anyone in debt regardless of age. The Debt Fairness Charter provides positive support to anyone who owes debt to the council, not just households with protected characteristics. Provision is built into current operational debt management policies about dealing with older vulnerable people who are known to Adult Social Care. This is reflected in the Policy and Debt Fairness Charter.	The Debt Management Policy is a new policy based on current council practice and does not have any negative impact on this group.
Disability	As those with disabilities are more likely to be in debt, this policy may have a bigger positive impact on this protected characteristic than those without disabilities. However, the	None identified

	nolicy is applicable to appear	
	policy is applicable to anyone	
	regardless of disability.	
Sex	Since debt likelihood does not vary	None identified
	significantly by gender, this policy is	
	expected to have a similar impact on	
	both men and women in the borough.	
Gender reassignment	While we do not collect data on debt	None identified
	and gender re-assignment and there is	
	limited national data, this policy is	
	applicable to anyone regardless of	
	gender reassignment.	
Marriage and civil	As above	None identified
partnership		
Pregnancy and maternity	As Above	None identified
Race/ethnicity	As those Asian/Asian British are more	None identified
•	likely to be in debt, this policy may	
	have a bigger positive impact on this	
	group. However, the policy is	
	applicable to anyone regardless of	
	race/ethnicity.	
Religion and belief,	While we do not collect data on debt	None identified
including non belief	and religion and there is limited	Trone identified
merading non zener	national data, this policy is applicable	
	to anyone regardless of religion or	
	belief.	
Sexual orientation	As Above	None identified
Socio-economic status	Deprivation & low-income groups and	Refugee status:
(to be treated as a	employment	Refugee status.
protected characteristic	As those in debt are more likely to be	
under Section 1 of the	from lower-income groups they are	
Equality Act 2010)	therefore more likely to benefit from	
Include the following	the council's debt management	
-	policies than other income groups. The	
groups:	debt management policy and Debt	
Deprivation (massured by the	Fairness Charter aims to support	
(measured by the	those who have difficulty in repaying	
2019 English Indices of	their debts.	
Deprivation)	their debts.	
Low-income groups &	Carors	
employment	Carers Although we do not gather specific	
• Carers	Although we do not gather specific	
Care experienced	data on carers and debt, unpaid carers	
people	are generally at risk of financial	
Single parents	difficulties. This policy will support	
 Health inequalities 	LUDDAID CAPORE WHO MAY BO MORO	
- Health inequalities	unpaid carers who may be more	
Refugee status	vulnerable to debt.	
·		

As above	
Single parents	
Given that single parent families are more prone to debt, this policy will	
offer substantial support to them.	
Refugee status	
People with No Recourse to Public	
Funds are unlikely to be paying for services from the Council and have any	
Council debts. However, for specific groups, and if in any exceptional	
circumstance they do require debt management services, this policy can	
be applied to them.	

5. Actions to advance equality, diversity and inclusion

Action	Lead Officer	Deadline
Advertise Debt Fairness Charter to residents via Council web page,	Alix Wilson	
Council Newsletter, local press and twitter		
Briefing sessions to Front line and back-office staff regarding the Debt	Alix Wilson	
Management Policy and Debt Fairness Charter to be able to better advise		
residents on support.		
Share the Debt Fairness Charter with key voluntary sector partners	Alix Wilson	
including Citizens Advice.		
To review data collected for each debt type as part of the single view of	Alix Wilson	
debt project.		

6. Further Consultation (optional section – complete as appropriate)

Consultation planned	Date of consultation