

Diversity Impact Assessment

DBU Restructure

Part 1: Screening

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1. DIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT - DBU RESTRUCTURE

1.1. Introduction

The analysis on diversity for the change of working practice is to inform the DCS Executive Management Team (EMT) decision on the DCS Disability Benefit Unit (DBU) Restructure.

'Diversity' builds upon Equal Opportunities. It is about respecting and valuing the differences between us all. We are all covered by the term 'diversity', regardless of what we look like, how we operate, our age, sexuality, gender, working patterns, ethnic group, religion or grade. Basically, we are all individuals in our own right. Our diversity policies aim to maximise the potential and contribution to the Department of every member of staff by offering each individual respect, support and encouragement. As an equal opportunities employer, DWP promotes fairness to all.

In order to ensure the DCS meets its legal requirements, a proposed change of working practice must be examined for the impact on Diversity within the DCS. DCS must ensure that the following impact assessments take place:

Race Impact Assessment (to comply with the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 (RRAA2000)

Disability Impact Assessment (to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005): and

Gender Impact Assessment (to comply with the Gender Equality duty, part of the Equality Bill due to become law in 2006).

1.2. Screening

The provisions of the RRAA2000, the DDA 2005 and the Equality Bill make it mandatory for all public authorities to assess all of their policies and functions.

All proposed policies that are to be introduced or reviewed by public bodies must be screened for relevance to race equality duty. The duty states that public authorities must have 'due regard' to:

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- Eliminate sex discrimination
- Eliminate Disability discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good race relations between people from different racial groups

Screening the DBU Restructure and its working practice policy will assist in identifying if there may be:

- Differential impact on certain groups
- If some groups may have special requirements
- Whether groups may have particular needs (example: because of disability)
- If the policy may hinder equality of opportunity
- If the policy may promote equality of opportunity

- The policy may damage good race relations
- The policy may improve race relations

1.3. The DDA 2005

The provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 work by obliging authorities to think proactively. The obligations that Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) as a public sector authority already has under the DDA 1995 will be strengthened by the 'General Duty' to promote disability equality under the terms of the new Act.

All proposed policies that are to be introduced or reviewed by public bodies would have to be screened for relevance to disability equality duty.

DWP aims to ensure that its processes and policies are 'impact assessed' for disability. By demonstrating commitment across the whole business, by allocating resources and by actively challenging and removing barriers to disabled people, the Department aims to become an exemplar in the field of disability.

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 will require authorities to demonstrate that disabled customers can access their services without difficulty and that there are no significant differences in the ways that disabled and non-disabled employees are affected by internal policies and procedures.

The requirement to impact policies is not legally required until 2006, in order to demonstrate commitment to the new legislation Disability and Carers Service have begun to impact assess policies for possible disability discrimination and disadvantage now.

1.4. Gender

The Gender Equality Duty will require public bodies to identify the big issues for sex equality in their services, employment and policy making. The key issues are:

- What are the priority issues for women and men in the services DCS provide?
- Do they have significantly different needs within some services?
- Are we paying men and women on our staff differently?
- Do DCS policies provide an opportunity to disadvantage women or men?

The consultation document on the final wording of the Gender Public Duty was published on 4th October 2005; the above issues will almost certainly be included in the Act.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is currently required by Cabinet Office to set specific equality targets in the areas of gender i.e. proportion of women (as advised by Cabinet Office), race and disability as part of the Modernising Government agenda, to ensure certain groups of staff within particular grades are fairly represented.

The Department has recently taken part in the annual Opportunity Now Benchmarking Exercise as a means of assessing departmental progress towards gender equality and diversity.

The DWP Diversity and Equality Centre of Expertise were responsible for completing the survey with the help of DWP Policy Teams and individual business units in producing a collated response for the Department.

We have now received results from this exercise. This essential information will help to identify where we are making most progress and where future efforts should be placed. DWP have been awarded the 'Gold' standard for this year, moving up from 'Silver' last year. DWP's overall score has improved by 13% in comparison to last year's results.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Disability and Carers Service (DCS)

DCS is based nationwide in Disability Benefit Centres (DBC's) that are organised on a broad regional network; the purpose of these units is to process claims to Attendance Allowance (AA) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA). The Disability Benefit Unit (DBU) Warbreck House/Norcross is responsible for the maintenance of the claims over three months old and the new claims work that transferred from Sutton DBC.

The DBU deal with the full range of maintenance work including payability cases, appeals and renewal claims. The majority of this work is set up within the DBU as specialist teams. Only a limited number of staff with the knowledge and expertise performs these duties.

3. THE FUTURE ORGANISATION

DCS will move into contact centres with end-to-end processing of the DCS benefits, DLA, AA, Vaccine Damage Payment (VDP) and Carers Allowance (CA), within separate management units.

The aim in assessing the decision on DBU Restructure is to ensure that DCS understands the impact of the decision but also neither directly or indirectly discriminates against gender or members of any ethnic or racial group or disabled people.

3.1. DBU Restructure

Restructuring the DBU into 5 discrete geographical units represents the first step towards transformation. It provides an opportunity to deliver on the long-standing strategy of moving all DBU operations work and staff to Warbreck House, which from an accommodation aspect is a suitable site for a future contact centre operation.

DBU Restructure was an Executive Management Team decision.

The DBU Restructure is the start of transforming service delivery, looking at how we deliver our services and how we are organised.

The DBU will be replaced by discrete geographic units – Disability Contact Processing Units (DCPUs), which are aligned with specific DBC boundaries.

The DCPUs will deal with the full range of maintenance work including payability cases, appeals and renewal claims for their particular geographic areas. The DCPU dealing with South of England will also be used as a 'pathfinder' unit to test new processes, systems and ways of working as we prepare for the future.

Each DCPU will initially have multi functional teams with a view to training each individual to be multi functional in all duties. To identify individual skills, a skills audit was produced. As a result of this audit, staff have been relocated within Warbreck House according to their skills, ensuring that the new DCPUs had equally balanced multi skilled teams. This data will also be used to design a formal training programme ensuring that, over a longer period of time, we are able to establish teams of multi skilled individuals.

Helpline will continue as a discrete unit with overflow for peak periods being provided, as now, by the deployment of 'turrets'.

4. INITIAL SCREENING

4.1. DBU Restructure Purpose/Aim

The change is necessary to:

- Prepare the business for the future
- Reduce or eliminate the number of unnecessary hand-offs
- Improve workflow management and avoid bottlenecks
- Improve the customer experience
- Create less frustrating jobs for staff

4.2. Who is affected by it?

Customers

We are committed to providing the same or improved level of customer service in the new DCPUs organisation.

The main channels for contacting the DCPUs remain the same. Customers should contact us via the Customer Care Helpline as they do now.

Staff

Staff have moved around within the DCPUs to enable creation of multi skilled teams. The aim is to provide consistent/evenly balanced, skilled teams. This is the start of providing all staff with the tools to ensure a consistent approach to the work flow process within a consistent/structured environment. As stated, the intention is that all staff in the future will be trained multi-skilled individuals, which will allow flexibility within the business and an increase in job satisfaction.

Multi skilled teams/staff will provide one point of contact.

All staff will be located at Warbreck House 'under one roof' which will improve staff relations. Previously, some operations staff had been located at Norcross.

4.3. Who will benefit from it?

Customer

Customers will benefit from a more efficient and effective customer experience as staff forge closer working relations and interaction between DCPUs and DBCs. New organisational design of the business will be underpinned by contact centre working that will improve and expand the channels that customers can use to access DCS services.

Customers and Staff will benefit from increased business efficiency as a result of reduced hand offs and improved workflow management.

Staff

Staff will benefit from closer working relations with DBC colleagues and external customer representatives within the specific geographical area they are dealing with i.e. Citizens Advice, Social Services, and Welfare Rights etc.

Introduction of Decision Maker (DM) managers will drive up the standard of decision making, support quality and consistency of decisions within the DCPUs and provide a stepping-stone towards Professionalism in Decision Making and Appeals (PIDMA).

Staff will benefit from full training in areas they are unfamiliar with. An increase in their skills and benefit knowledge will provide:

- Increased job satisfaction.
- Reduce or eliminate monotony.
- Create greater consistency in staff performance.
- Support the Professionalism in Decision Making and Appeals (PIDMA) Process.

5. ASSESSING THE IMPACT

5.1. Is there a disproportionate impact on any group, either customers or staff?

5.1.1. Disability

Customer

We are committed to providing the same or improved level of customer service either by telephone, mail or in the future other channels such as e-service.

Staff

DBU consists of two sites, Warbreck House and Norcross, both within close proximity to each other. To ensure that staff needs were taken into account, every member of staff completed a work place support template. This involved providing a full run down of individual's work place requirements.

Requirements of staff were fully taken into account to ensure they were not adversely impacted when relocated to their new place of work. All special needs/equipment identified were recreated in their new location. Any specific requirements staff highlighted, medical or otherwise, that would have a detrimental affect on their health, were also taken into account and accommodated.

Managers were given a DSE risk assessment form for each staff member ready for completion on the first day in their new location. Prior to Restructure, managers attended a meeting to ensure they understood their role and the importance of completing DSE on day one.

Prior to Restructure, respective managers dealt with any staff hardships identified. Normal hardship procedures were followed and dealt with according to individual circumstances.

A process is in place to address any issues highlighted post restructure and as pre-restructure, issues are dealt with by managers according to individual circumstances.

For example, steps were put in place to ensure members of staff with special requirements such as, needing ground floor access, special desks or natural light etc. made managers aware of their requirements so that this could be escalated and resolved. Arrangements were also made to ensure that members of staff requiring a workplace assistant (buddy) were placed together within the new structure.

5.1.2. Gender

Customer

DWP are pro-actively progressing gender policies as part of its wider diversity strategy. The department's Diversity and Equality policy statement specifies gender as an area where DWP "will provide equality of opportunity and will not tolerate discrimination on the grounds of Gender".

Staff

The DBU Restructure involved relocation of all current DBU staff. Prior to this, staff were advised to raise any personal queries or issues through their line manager. This policy remains in place post Restructure.

Any issues are dealt with following normal procedures and according to individual circumstances.

For example, staff with childcare issues would raise this through their line manager who would consider options, in conjunction with Business Partners, such as change in working pattern, change of job etc.

5.1.3. Race

The impact of DBU Restructure does not vary between different ethnic groups.

Customer

DBU Restructure is aimed at providing customers with improved work consistency and increased business efficiency. The aim is to continue to provide the same or improved customer service. There is no intention of hindering equality of opportunity and/or damage good race relations, all customers, irrespective of their background, will be treated with due respect. DCS staff will engage with customers as they do now.

Staff

From a staff perspective, DBU Restructures remit is to prepare for the future by ensuring a consistent approach to the work flow process within a consistent/structured environment.

6. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The legal requirements are that the DCS considers Race, Disability and Gender as part of the analysis on Change in organisation.

Age, Religion and work/life balance are not legal requirements, but any adverse impact needs to be considered holistically.

DCS need to analyse whether the changes have a disproportionate impact on any particular group. There is no evidence to suggest that DBU Restructure could disadvantage any group in respect of staff or customers.

7. CONCLUSION

Following the considerations outlined in this initial screening. The DBU Restructure does not have any adverse impact/relevance to race, disability or gender equality. Consequently, there is no requirement to conduct a full Diversity Impact Assessment.