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| Jobcentre Plus South London District | |
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| | Opening of new Adviser Service Centre as part of Jobcentre Plus services within the Croydon area |
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Equality impact assessment for the Opening of a new Adviser Service Centre and the movement of Adviser Services within the Croydon area.

This document is an equality impact assessment for the opening of new Adviser Service Centre as part of Jobcentre Plus services within the Croydon area. The purpose of the assessment is to ensure that in opening this new service and moving some of the current advisory service we do not discriminate unlawfully on the grounds of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and/or religious belief on either on either customers or staff.

Aims and objectives of the change

Policy aims

South London Jobcentre Plus district is undertaking a review to ensure all its offices and services continue to meet customers' needs and provide value for money. This policy helps to make sure that the best possible service is delivered to the greatest number of customers with the resources we have available.

Background

South London Jobcentre Plus district last year came to the end of a five year transformation programme. The changes delivered provide our customers with a wide choice of ways to access our services including by telephone and internet so they no longer have to visit our offices to apply for jobs or make a claim to benefit. We also offer specialised advisory help for people with significant barriers to work, Europe's largest job bank and specialist tailored services for employers.

Customers do not have to visit a Jobcentre in order to access and apply for our vacancies. These can be accessed through our website or through our telephone-based service. The vacancies are the same as those available via the Jobpoints inside our offices. Our website www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk and the Government's website www.direct.gov.uk also provides additional information on our services and benefits.

The review of our Service Delivery plan is aimed at ensuring that customers experience the best route to our services and that our business can live within its means at this time of increased demand.

The new Advisers Service Centre will be based in Concord House, London Road, Croydon and incorporate adviser services for customers from both Croydon and Thornton Heath Jobcentre Plus. It will offer an advisory only service to customers by appointment, with all other services being undertaken at Croydon and Thornton Heath Jobcentre Plus offices as now. We have already increased the desk capacity available at both offices to assist with the increase in demand; however there is now no further scope available to increase customer accessible areas. This new facility will give us 26 additional interview desks allowing us to undertake another 208 advisory service interviews per day in the Croydon area. We have explored travel patterns for customers within this area and Concord House would prove a suitable option for customers as it sits within the middle of these two Jobcentres and would require a similar amount of travel by customers.

What is the purpose of the change?

To ensure all customers have equal access to the full range of services provided by Jobcentre Plus on a daily basis.

Who will benefit from it and how?

Customers will be able to continue to:

- Access the full range of services and specialist advisors from a local Jobcentre Plus office location including the new Advisers Service Centre within daily travelling distances of their homes.
- Access services through our websites and telephone-based services.

Locally, Jobcentre Plus will be working with interested partners and organisations to support our customer needs and provide a holistic service where opportunities present themselves. A central feature of the new arrangements for support to our customers in these areas will be through ensuring we continue to develop, implement and review flexible service delivery options, working with partners in the area.

It is just over 1 mile from Concord House to either Croydon Jobcentre Plus or Thornton Heath Jobcentre Plus. There are excellent transport links by bus and/or train. Moving customers within these areas will result in the same travelling time as now to the Jobcentre for the majority of customers, while a few (CR0 4TQ, CR9 2RG and CR7 8EL) will need to travel for up to an additional 15 minutes (by bus). Whilst we recognise that some customers may have longer to travel and costs may be slightly higher these will still be within the normal guidelines which cover travelling times for customers.

It is approximately 7 miles from the furthest parts of the Croydon Jobcentre Plus area to Concord House; however customers from the New Addington area will continue to be seen at either the New Addington Adviser Service Centre or at Croydon Jobcentre Plus which ever is appropriate. The longest bus journey would be within an hour and costs no more than £3.90 using the Oyster Travel Card (Daily Price Cap will apply). However the journey is shorter for the majority of customers and will cost no more than £2.40.

It is approximately 2.8 miles from the furthest parts of the Thornton Heath Jobcentre Plus area to Concord House. The longest bus journey would be within an hour and costs no more than £3.90 using the Oyster Travel Card (Daily Price Cap will apply). However the journey is shorter for the majority of customers and will cost no more than £2.40.

Facilities will remain at both Croydon and Thornton Heath Jobcentre Plus offices to undertake work focused interviews for customers who would encounter difficulties in attending a work focused interview at Concord House.

There are long established rules for reimbursing Jobseekers Allowance customers attending a Work Focused Interview, particularly where the interview does not fall on the normal signing day. For normal fortnightly attendance to sign on, customers are expected to meet the cost of their journey to the office. Customers in receipt of Income Support, Incapacity Benefit and Employment and Support Allowance can claim for the reimbursements of their expense in a similar way.

What data on the diversity of both your customers and staff is available to you?

We have reviewed the ethnicity, gender and disabled customers data available for Croydon Ward's customers affected by the opening of the new Advisers Service Centre and movement of some Advisers. Detailed information is not available down to selected postcodes. Please see below data for the London Borough of Croydon sourced from the 2001 Census, in which this postcode sits. Further information concerning customer numbers within the postcode sourced from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Neighbourhood Statistics and NOMIS (software package used to collect official Labour Market Statistics).

| 2001 Census data | London Borough of Croydon | % |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| White British | 210,515 | 63.7 |
| White Irish | 7,130 | 2.16 |
| White other | 14,242 | 4.31 |
| Mixed White and Black Caribbean | 4,721 | 1.43 |
| Mixed White and Black African | 1,352 | 0.41 |
| Mixed White and Asian | 3,480 | 1.05 |
| Mixed Other | 2,743 | 0.83 |
| Asian Indian | 21,246 | 6.43 |
| Asian Pakistanis | 7,429 | 2.25 |
| Asian Bangladeshi | 1,765 | 0.53 |
| Asian Other | 6,940 | 2.1 |
| Black Caribbean | 26,065 | 7.88 |
| Black African | 14,627 | 4.42 |
| Black Other | 3,384 | 1.02 |
| Chinese | 2,212 | 0.67 |
| Chinese other | 2,678 | 0.81 |
| TOTAL | 330,587 | 100% |

Workforce Data: 29.84% non white, 70.16% white

Data available shows that no group is adversely or disproportionately impacted by this change. Both Jobcentres provide the full range of services to our customers, the only change being the relocation of some Adviser interviews to the new Adviser Service Centre.

We have informed our customers, local MPs, local Citizen Advise Bureaux, Connexions and local Councillors of the proposed change. There was no negative feedback reported from this and we continue to work with them to make sure that customers will continue to receive a service which is acceptable to them.

Staff

Some staff will be required to move to Concorde House. To support our staff, using DWP Workforce Management guidance and the advice from our HR Business Partner:

- Staff have been consulted and appropriate Health and Safety risk assessments will be carried out

- Staff consultation will be ongoing to address any issues/concerns they have with the proposed move
- Staff have been informed of the advice and counselling support available from Right Core Care
- All staff requiring access to reasonable adjustments including the consideration of excess fares and travel to work arrangements, and specialist IT or furniture will have these available on the day they move so they can undertake their duties from day one

Does collected data show that there may be a disproportionate or adverse impact on either customers or staff?

It is not envisaged that the implementation of the new Adviser Service Centre will have any diverse impact on any group. It is fully compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Locally, Jobcentre Plus will continue to work with interested partners and organisations to support our customer needs and provide a holistic service where opportunities present themselves. A central feature of the new arrangements for support to our customers in this area will be through ensuring we continue to develop, implement and review flexible service delivery options and working with partners organisations.

Conclusion

In view of the information available it is not considered that either customers or staff will be unduly or adversely affected by this change, or that the change could discriminate unlawfully on the grounds of race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religious belief. Customers currently serviced by this new Adviser Service Centre will have the same opportunities and services as customers throughout the London Borough of Croydon, which is within South London District.

Name and contact details of the officer(s) responsible for the assessment

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