

Jobcentre Plus South London District	
	Movement of Croydon Local Authority SE19 postcodes from Thornton Heath Jobcentre Plus to Forest Hill Jobcentre Plus

Equality impact assessment for movement of Croydon Local Authority SE19 postcodes from Thornton Heath Jobcentre Plus to Forest Hill Jobcentre Plus

This document is an equality impact assessment for the proposed movement of some SE19 postcodes (and current and future customers with these postcodes) from Thornton Heath Jobcentre Plus and Forest Hill Jobcentre Plus. The purpose of the assessment is to ensure that in moving these postcodes 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

London Jobcentre Plus region is undertaking a review to ensure all its offices 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

London Jobcentre Plus has come 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.

Thornton Heath Jobcentre Plus is a stand alone site offering the full range of Jobcentre Plus services. We have increased the front of house space available to maximum allowed by the site infrastructure. A postcode move would allow us to alleviate the space issues on site as there is no scope to increase customer accessible areas. We have explored travel patterns and Forest Hill would prove a suitable option to take over 23% of Thornton Heath's catchment area. Thornton Heath Jobcentre Plus's current customer liveload is 3652 Income Support, 2900 Incapacity Benefit and 2145 Jobseekers Allowance customers (figures from February 2009).

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. The district has reviewed its postcode catchment areas and Forest Hill Jobcentre Plus is as convenient for customers whose postcode is SE19.

Who will benefit from it and how?

Customers will be able to continue to:

- Access the full range of services/specialist advisors from Forest Hill Jobcentre Plus office 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. At present we are able to offer outreach facilities via booked appointments within SE19 at the Children's Centre, Coxwell Road, and Upper Norwood.

It is 4.2 miles from Thornton Heath Jobcentre Plus to Forest Hill Jobcentre Plus. There are excellent transport links by bus and/or train. Moving customers with this postcode to Forest Hill will result in the same travelling time to the Jobcentre for the majority of customers living in SE19, and the remainder within an hour. Whilst we recognise that some customers may have longer to travel and costs may be slightly higher these will still be within the rules and regulations which cover travelling of customers.

It is approximately 4 miles from the furthest part of SE19 to Forest Hill Jobcentre Plus. The longest bus journey would be within an hour and costs no more than £3.30 Daily Price Cap using Oyster (travel card), however the journey is shorter for the majority of customers. The train journey takes 9 minutes and costs £2.70 return off peak.

The journey to Thornton Heath Jobcentre Plus is approximately 2.2 miles, with a travel time of 30 – 45 minutes via Bus (no train available) and costs £2.00 via Oyster (travel card). This change will mean that some customers within SE19 will have to travel 1 to 2 miles longer, this will mean an extra 20 minutes walk, or 15 minutes by bus at a cost of £1.65 (return fare calculated as half of the £3.30 Daily Price Cap using Oyster travel card). However the majority of customers within SE19 will have no change to the current travelling times and costs.

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. If any customer had to travel over one hour to their nearest office we would consider postal signing.

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 moving SE19 postcodes. 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, with the only change being the small increase in travel time to Forest Hill for some of the SE19 customers, however while slightly longer is still an hour.

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

Staff will not be required to move from Thornton Heath to Forest Hill Jobcentre. Staff have been consulted and appropriate Health and Safety risk assessments will be carried out.

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 postcode move from Thornton Heath to Forest Hill Jobcentre will have any diverse impact on any group. Both sites are 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 these areas will be through ensuring we continue to develop, implement and review flexible service delivery options and working with partners in the area.

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 office will have the same opportunities and services as customers throughout the London Boroughs of Croydon and Lewisham – which is within South London District.

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

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