

**Impact Assessment – Race Relations Act**

**1<sup>st</sup> Stage – Initial Screening**

**Sutton DBC Closure Impact Assessment**

**March 2005-03-24**

This Impact Assessment is an update to work performed in October 2003, when an initial screening of the proposal to close Sutton DBC was made. At that time no final decision had been made and only the preliminary screening was completed. A copy of the paper is attached at Appendix 1 (DN Steve do we want to include? If so insert no later)

## **Introduction**

### **Disability and Carers Service (DCS)**

DCS is based nationwide in Disability Benefit Centres (DBC) units that are organised on a broad regional network; the purpose of the units is to process claims to Attendance Allowance (AA) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA). The Disability Benefit Unit (DBU) on the Fylde Coast is responsible for the maintenance of the claims when they are over three months old.

Our customers are disabled people and their carers. Carers Allowance (CA) is processed at the Carers Allowance Unit (CAU) in Preston.

DWP businesses have and continue to undertake a thorough review of all functions based in London and the South East, this is necessary following the Review of Public Sector Relocation that states that functions should only be based in London and the South East where it was absolutely essential for their delivery.

DCS' proposal to relocate work is made in response to the Public Sector Relocation Project and seeks to reflect the principals established in guidance issued in July 2003.

Following the DCS review Sutton DBC was identified as the only unit within the area that was potentially suitable for relocation to the North West; the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) put this proposal forward to the Lyons Review Team, together with proposals from the other Departmental Agencies.

The document is an Impact Assessment on the implications of this policy. Its aim in assessing the policy is to ensure that DCS not only understands the impact of the policy but also neither directly or indirectly discriminates against members of any ethnic or racial group.

The impact assessment is in line with the DWP Diversity Strategy and has been carried out in accordance with emerging guidance from DWP Diversity & Equality Division and CRE regarding the requirements of both the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA) and the DWP Race Equality Scheme

The assessment is being completed for Sutton DBC but there is an acknowledgement that a further updated document will be required to take in the impact of other DWP office redeployment across South London, the work will need to be completed within the next financial quarter.

## **INITIAL SCREENING**

### **1. Policy Aims**

The purpose of the policy is to relocate work from London to the North West. The outcomes that are required from this policy are as follows:

- To comply with the Review of Public Sector Relocation Project and Lyons Report
- To maintain and improve on the level of service provided to our customers. DCS is embarking on a transformation of our customer service delivery, with the introduction of improved, technology-enabled processes delivering a more efficient and effective customer experience. The implication for the business is that this will require a reduction in numbers of staff to administer the processes and this will also enable a reduction in estate.
- Savings- To reduce DWP estate costs, no ongoing costs for Sutton estate when six month vacation period served, this equates to an annual saving of £1.8 million No additional estate costs will be incurred by moving work to North West, as reorganisation of the existing estate will deliver the required accommodation. There will be minor costs in setting up the accommodation, but there will be significant re-use of current equipment.
- Staff currently based at Sutton will be offered redeployment to Wembley DBC, Fylde Coast and assisted to find positions in other DWP and OGD organisations. A voluntary severance package will also be provided. (DN
- To provide efficiency savings in line with the Governments Headcount reduction requirement
- A significant number of DCS staff surpluses in the Fylde/Preston area resulting from the IS/IT strategy will be absorbed by the relocation of functions from Sutton to the North West. Other DWP surpluses will also be transferred into these posts.

A project team has been set up to manage the transition process of moving the work from Sutton to Fylde, and training is progressing for staff taking on this work. The Disability Benefit Unit currently provides services for customers nationally as the DBC's deal with customer's claims for the first three months only. The DLA/AA Helpline based at Warbreck House in Blackpool also provides services for customers nationally and this will continue.

### **How does the policy fit into the wider business of the organisation?**

DWP has a requirement to meet Ministerial objectives. These include:

- The requirement to maximise the efficient use of DWP estate and other resources
- The wider Government agenda, including the Chancellors Budget announcements in April 2004, Government Spending Reviews, and the Gershon and Lyons Reports.

In addition:

The Department's aim is 'to promote opportunity and independence for all'. DCS plays a significant role in helping make this aim a reality by supporting the Department in the delivery of its objectives, which are to:

- Ensure the best start for all children and end child poverty by 2020;
- Promote work as the best form of welfare for people of working age while protecting the position of those in greatest need;
- Combat poverty and promote security and independence in retirement for today's and tomorrow's pensioners;
- Improve rights and opportunities for disabled people in a fair and inclusive society; and
- Ensure customers receive a high quality service including levels of accuracy.

#### **Who will benefit from the policy?**

- DCS will benefit due to the outcome of the policy providing savings in estate and staffing costs and will comply with ministerial requirements.
- Customers will benefit from a more efficient and effective customer experience with improved technology and telephony.
- Staff will benefit from more interesting jobs that will include clear career progression routes and accreditation

## **2 Data Collection**

### **Who will be involved in information gathering?**

- Sutton Management Team
- HR Business Partners
- Diversity Team
- Trade Unions
- Staff
- External Stakeholders

### **What existing quantitative data is available?**

Information held by the location strategy and DCS Transformation teams  
Staffing:

In addition the following specific data is available about the ethnicity of our staff:

Ethnicity data for all staff in DCS broken down to unit level is available (Appendix 2)

Customers:

DN: what is available for customers? Only information I have is LMS from JCP

### **External information**

Information regarding the ethnic makeup of the Borough of Sutton compared with the national average is available at Appendix 3

Information regarding the ethnic makeup of Economic Activity in the Borough of Sutton compared to national average is available at Appendix 4

### **Is there a need to generate primary data?**

No, we know the ethnicity of 89.05% of all DCS employees and the ethnicity of 90.38% of our staff at Sutton DBC.

### **3 Assessing the Impact**

**Is there a disproportionate impact on any racial group, either customers or staff?**

#### **For Customers**

No. The service provided by Sutton DBC is not a local service; there is no face-to-face contact, although there is a limited drop-in facility and visiting service, which will continue. Our partners Job Centre Plus and The Pensions Service will undertake direct access interventions on our behalf.

We are committed to providing the same level of telephone customer service from the new location.

There should not be any adverse impact on customers; claims are only dealt with at the DBC for the first three months before being transferred to become the responsibility of the DBU in the North West.

A dedicated resource has been put in place to ensure that the migration plan is in place and has begun to be implemented to manage the smooth transition of work from Sutton to the DBC in Blackpool.

#### **For Staff**

Staff based at Sutton are from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Although Sutton does employ 9.16% of staff from an ethnic minority background, it is not in the top three of our most ethnically diverse units, the ethnic makeup of the population of Sutton is very similar to that of the national average.

The Borough of Sutton has a lower rate of unemployment than the national average and at 4.1% is also one of the lowest in London. 80% of the borough's working age population are economically active, compared to the London average of 74.6%.

A major developer has recently announced plans to create 1,000 jobs within Sutton, building two new hotels, 300 flats and a new leisure centre. It may not be sensitive to mention this if the RIA will be in the public domain - the development plans are actually for Sutherland house.

54% of the population are employed outside the borough; public transport journeys into central London are frequent and fast, taking less than an hour. A taxi card service scheme is employed for people living in London that allows those with a mobility impairment that prevents them from using buses or trains to travel in black cabs at subsidised rates.

To support our staff we have maintained a Human Resources presence at the site since the announcement of the closure was made. All staff have been provided with 1-2-1 interviews to help staff explore their options. Work has continued since the announcement including:

- Redeployment to Wembley DBC or relocation to the Fylde with the work. (A series of visits to Wembley and Blackpool by any staff interested in transferring has been underway for some time)
- Voluntary Redeployment to other vacancies either within DWP or to other Government departments is also underway.

- A voluntary early release scheme is being run for staff in bands A to C; 180 staff have expressed an interest in the scheme which closed 29<sup>th</sup> March; estimates are being provided and staff will then be asked to confirm their intentions
- Staff have been provided with assistance in how to complete C.V.'s and application forms to ensure that they have the best possible opportunity to success in obtaining re employment either within the Civil Service or the private sector.
- Interviews have also been used to listen to individuals concerns and issues and try to provide answers.
- A further round of 1-2-1 interviews is planned for April/May 2005 to discuss Redeployment and start matching surplus staff to jobs.
- Advice and counselling support is being provided by Core care

**Is there an adverse impact?**

No, the impact will not be adverse. The Human Resource aspects of the changes will be managed in line with DWP workforce management policy. The policy requires us to consider legal and corporate commitments to Diversity and Equality.

A percentage of headcount savings within DWP as announced in the budget of 2004 are the responsibility of DCS, however we intend to only use redundancy as a last alternative and are working with staff to provide as much opportunity for redeployment as we are able.

DCS are already consulting with TUS and there is a national agreement with the Trade Union to avoid redundancies where possible which DCS is adhering to. The voluntary early release scheme which is currently being run, will assist in avoiding compulsory measures

Redundancies will only be considered as a last resort where all other options of redeployment and voluntary release options have been exhausted, and will be subject to full consultation with Trade Unions.

**Is the policy directly or indirectly discriminatory?**

No

**Can any adverse impact or indirect discrimination be justified?**

There is no adverse impact or indirect discrimination.