
Equality Assessment**1. Name of the project:**

Continuous Measurement of Incapacity Benefit

2. Name and contact details of the officer responsible for the assessment:

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3. Purpose and aim(s) of the proposal or change:

As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR07) the Department has a Departmental Strategic Objective (DSO) to pay our customers the right benefit at the right time. One of the indicators of the Department's performance in this area is the proportion of benefit expenditure overpaid or underpaid due to fraud and error. It is necessary to expand the current continuous measurement process to cover more benefit expenditure to enable reporting against this global target.

The first step in this expansion is to include the continuous measurement of Incapacity Benefit (IB), because it is responsible for a large proportion of the Department's expenditure, (£6.6 billion) and the level of fraud and error has not been reviewed since 2001. It will also help the Department to better understand the amount of benefit being paid incorrectly, and the reason for the incorrectness.

The continuous measurement of IB will be carried out in the same way as the existing measurement process used for Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance and State Pension Credit. A one-off review of IB was carried out in 200/01 following this process using a methodology agreed following consultation with an number of customer groups and the same process is being used in this exercise.

During 2008/09 trained staff will be used to carry out interviews with a random sample of 1,000 IB cases selected from the 10,000 cases which makes up the current official error sample, which itself is a sample of the 2.4 million IB cases.

The check is an independent check of the accuracy of the information the Department holds.

The intended outcomes of the change are:

- The provision of IB data to Information Directorate (IFD) to enable them to publish National Statistics twice a year
- The best possible estimation of the monetary value of fraud and error in IB to assist in reporting progress against the new global Departmental target to reduce fraud and error in all benefits by 2011 (DSO6)

4. Who will be the main beneficiaries from this change?

- IFD will be provided with additional and up to date data on a wider range of benefit expenditure to enable them to publish national statistics twice a year,
- The Permanent Secretary will benefit from this change as the data produced will enable him to report progress against the new Departmental target to reduce fraud and error in all benefits by 2011 (DSO6)
- NAO will benefit from this change as it will provide them with more comprehensive estimates on the level of fraud and error in the benefit system

5. Equality impact of the policy

Interaction of the change with individual members of the public is limited to visiting a random selection of IB customers. This selection of cases is from the liveload of IB recipients. Race, gender and disability are not criteria for the selection, so no group will be represented disproportionately on average.

The reviews are carried out in a methodical way, following a strict protocol and there is no reason to believe that individuals are treated differently according to their race, gender or disability.

There is no evidence the process discriminates directly or indirectly against people from some racial, gender or disability groups, nor can it be seen to favour one racial, gender or disability group over another. The policy has a neutral impact on equality.

6. Scale of the change

- *No. of people affected:* 1,000 customers will be randomly selected from the 10,000 official error sample, which is selected from the 2.4 million customers in receipt of IB – minor impact

- *Scale and cost:* Delivered within current resources and minor changes to IT - minor impact.
- *'Profile' of proposal:* IB could be seen as a 'sensitive' benefit at the moment due to the introduction of Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and the recent media interest. However this change is not linked to either of these, it is an independent check of the correctness of the benefit. Customer Representative Groups have been informed of this change and are content with the introduction – therefore minor impact
- *Nature of the proposal and its overall impact on people:* The proposal is to expand the current fraud and error measurement system to include IB. IB has been chosen because it is responsible for a large proportion of the Department's expenditure and as part of the global measurement. The change will result in an additional 1000 visits to IB customers. – minor impact

7. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome:

- The methodology for the IB review follows that used in the one-off review of IB carried out in 2000/01, which was discussed and agreed with customer representative groups.
- Cases for review are selected at random by IFD from the IB liveload
- There is no reason to believe that different group(s) of people could be negatively or disproportionately affected by the proposal or change.
- The random selection of cases will mean that disabled people, men/women and people from different racial groups will be included in the sample
- There will be nil impact on relations between different groups. The sample does not favour any particular group
- There is no evidence that any part of the proposed policy should discriminate unlawfully, directly or indirectly, against people from different groups

8. Conclusion:

This screening stage of this equality impact assessment has identified that there is no direct or indirect adverse impact on customers on the grounds of race, disability or gender and there is no evidence of any disproportionate effect as a result of these changes.

For this change it is not necessary to carry out a full equality impact assessment.