

## Equality & Diversity Impact Assessments

<b>Directorate / Service / Department:</b>	Finance
<b>Person responsible for the assessment:</b>	Nicola Stephenson (Performance) Peter Francis (Welfare Rights) Julie Ryan (Training & Development) Rita Silcock (Fairer Charging)
<b>Name of (proposed) policy / function:</b>	<b>Welfare Rights – Central Team</b> New: Existing: ✓
<b>Process area Identifier (PID) / Name:</b>	Welfare Rights PID 189
(1)	<p>Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy / function:</p> <p>To enable all residents in Barnsley to receive their full entitlement from the Social Security system by providing a high quality, comprehensive and impartial advice and representation service. The core activities of the function are the freephone service and advice desks located within Barnsley, home visits, community liaison activities and area surgeries.</p>
(2)	<p>Are there any associated objectives of the policy / function?</p> <p>The Welfare Rights Service aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet the needs of all residents/service users and ensure they all have equal access to the service</li> <li>• Reduce poverty and improve living conditions</li> <li>• Give customers the information needed to make informed decisions</li> <li>• Maintain and improve working relationships with the voluntary, statutory and private sector</li> <li>• To campaign on social inclusion and anti-poverty issues.</li> </ul>
(3)	<p>Who is intended to benefit from the policy / function and in what way?</p> <p>All residents and hospital inpatients – by maximising their income. Barnsley – people tend to spend locally so the local economy also benefits. Voluntary Agencies such as the Credit Union and Alzheimer’s Organisation – Welfare Rights provide a consultancy service for their client groups.</p>
(4)	<p>What outcomes are expected from this policy / function?</p> <p>Benefits maximisation – The service helps people to receive their correct entitlement and acts to ensure that access to justice is available to all through the appeals systems. This method of maximising income helps to increase the quality of life for many.</p>

(5)	<p>What factors / forces could contribute to / detract from the outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance with Government Legislation</li> <li>• Local pressure in Budgets</li> <li>• Small team – often resulting in inability to provide cover for staff</li> <li>• Lack of co-ordination with other services and inadequate cover of front line services</li> <li>• Achieving the Community Legal Service Quality Mark and receiving help with Casework contributes to the outcome</li> <li>• Staff training and appraisal systems in place</li> <li>• In-depth knowledge on the subject matter plus specialist expertise.</li> </ul>
(6)	<p>Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the policy / function?</p> <p>Barnsley MBC, Clients, Government, Agencies and the Voluntary Sector</p>
(7)	<p>Who implements the policy and who is responsible for the policy / function?</p> <p>Peter Francis, Manager of the Welfare Rights Service</p>
(8)	<p>Is there any monitoring data available? (e.g. results from consultations, surveys, focus groups)</p> <p>Yes, postal and telephone surveys conducted in 2005.</p>
(9)	<p>Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a differential impact on <b>ethnic groups</b>? <b>No</b></p> <p><i>Please explain:</i></p> <p>The service actively encourages everyone to contact regardless of his or her background. The service may not necessarily be aware if an individual is from a particular ethnic background.</p> <p>The Tribunals Service provides interpreters in Appeal cases and like other BMBC functions the service has access to the National Interpreting Service.</p> <p><i>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</i></p> <p>From discussions with the Welfare Rights Manager. From complaints / compliments records kept.</p>

(10)	<p>Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a differential impact due to <b>gender</b>? <b>No</b></p> <p><i>Please explain:</i></p> <p>There would be no differential impact due to the gender of an individual. However, the team would take into account any special requests a client may make.</p> <p><i>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</i> Discussions with the Welfare Rights Manager.</p>
(11)	<p>Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a differential impact due to <b>disability</b>? <b>Yes</b></p> <p><i>Please explain:</i></p> <p>The impact on these groups is positive, particularly for someone who finds it difficult getting into the office. Offering the freephone service or carrying out the personal one-to-one visits can provide customers with disabilities the help/assistance they may require.</p> <p>Also, the service provides surgeries at venues away from the town centre for clients who may find it difficult getting into the office.</p> <p>Barnsley Welfare Rights team have now formed a partnership with Macmillan Cancer Relief and are to appoint two advisers to target benefits advice to all people in Barnsley diagnosed or affected by cancer.</p> <p><i>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</i> Discussions with Welfare Rights Manager. 2005 Consultation exercise confirmed that 50% of respondents had a disability that made it difficult for them to get advice. Viewing Welfare Rights Business Plan.</p>
(12)	<p>Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a differential impact due to <b>sexual orientation</b>? <b>No</b></p> <p><i>Please explain:</i></p> <p>The function would not treat individuals differently due to their sexual orientation. In some cases/referrals this issue would be known due to the new Civil Partnership Legislation.</p> <p>The service devised a newsletter to advise Members and BMBC officers on the introduction of the C P Legislation.</p> <p><i>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</i> Discussions with the Service Manager.</p>

<p>(13)</p>	<p>Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a differential impact due to <b>age</b>? <b>Yes</b></p> <p><i>Please explain:</i></p> <p>Every referral or enquiry is acted upon, regardless of age. However, due to the nature of the service and dealing with the more ‘vulnerable’ groups (older people and/or disabled) it may be necessary to have other people present when carrying out a home visit or surgery appointment – ie a social worker or family member.</p> <p>The service carries out various take-up campaigns targeting different groups ie people of pensionable age.</p> <p><i>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</i></p> <p>Discussions and viewing the business plan.</p>
<p>(14)</p>	<p>Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a differential impact due to <b>religion or belief</b>? <b>No</b></p> <p><i>Please explain:</i></p> <p>Customers are not asked to reveal this; there is no requirement.</p> <p><i>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</i></p> <p>Written documentation proves this is not asked.</p>
<p>(15)</p>	<p>Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a differential impact on people due to them having <b>dependants/caring responsibilities</b>? <b>Yes</b></p> <p><i>Please explain:</i></p> <p>The service aims to have a positive effect on people with caring responsibilities, it encourages benefit take-up for carers e.g. Carers Allowance.</p> <p>The take-up activities are partly carried out by community liaison, some of this work is to make organisations, such as Age Concern, aware of the benefits available for their client groups and assist in claiming them.</p> <p><i>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</i></p> <p>Discussions with WR Manager.</p> <p>Welfare Rights procedure manual.</p>

(16)	<p>Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a differential impact due to their <b>offending past</b>? <b>No</b></p> <p><i>Please explain:</i>  Officers would not be aware of this unless a client raised it as an issue. With regard to benefit fraud, the service cannot get involved due to the confidentiality policy, but will inform the client of the consequences of not proving up-to-date/correct information to the benefit provider.</p> <p><i>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</i>  Written procedures.</p>
(17)	<p>Are there any concerns that the policy/function could have a differential impact on <b>Trans</b> people? <b>No</b></p> <p><i>Please explain:</i>  In most cases, the adviser would not be aware, unless it had been noted on the referral/case records, if someone had previously deemed it appropriate/important for the advisers to know.</p> <p><i>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</i>  Discussions with Welfare Rights Manager.</p>
(18)	<p>Could the differential impact identified in 8-16 amount to there being the <b>potential</b> for adverse impact in this policy or function? <b>No</b></p> <p><i>Please explain:</i>  The differential impacts identified were of a positive nature and in accordance with the objectives of the function.</p> <p><i>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</i>  Discussions with Team members and Manager. Thorough written procedures. Business Plan. Customer survey results. Number of service/adviser compliments received from satisfied clients.</p>
(19)	<p>Are the differential impacts caused by unlawful discrimination? <b>No</b></p> <p><i>Please explain:</i>  The function satisfies all current legislative requirements.</p>

(20)	<p><b>Findings</b></p> <p>Overall we did not consider this function to have negative impacts on the equality target groups and believe the service considers equality issues when carrying out its business. Major policies and documents, for example the Business Plan and procedures, have been compiled within the last 18 months and will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis. We found these documents to be well written and detailed.</p> <p>When the Service receives enquiries, the team take into account each individual's circumstances that are relevant and provide comprehensive and impartial advice. This ensures that the service given is professional, equitable and of high quality.</p>
(21)	<p><b>Action Points</b></p> <p>To continue promotion of the service, exploring further alternatives.</p> <p>Gathering/obtaining of diversity information that may be available i.e. through the service's relationships with the voluntary, statutory or private sector, through its community liaison activities or GP surgeries.</p>
<p>Completed by: N Stephenson <span style="float: right;">Date: 22/5/06</span></p>	