

EQUALITY ANALYSIS

Name of Policy/Decision or Activity: Benefits and Assessment Team

Equality Analysis completed by:

Name(s)/Job Title:
Lynsey Thurgood (Benefits & Assessment
Team Manager)

Date: 21 November 2012

Responsible Officer:

Name /Job Title:
Joan Reed (Strategic Change
Manager)

Date: 21 November 2012

Purpose and Scope

Purpose

In this section outline briefly what the policy, decision or activity is, what the intended outcomes/benefits (linked to the Corporate Outcomes Framework) are and over what period of time will the outcomes be achieved. Why does it need to be implemented or revised?

The Benefits and Assessment Team are responsible for carrying out financial assessments for recipients of social care service. The service offered includes a welfare benefit check and support in the maximisation of benefits.

We are working to encompass a number of principles into our service, including:

- SWOW – ensuring that our processes are efficient and offer the best and most appropriate service to our customer (this includes the findings from 2 service assessments – Information Advice and Guidance and Health Inequalities)
- Personalisation – ensuring that the service we offer fits well with the principles of personalisation – giving the customer has choice in terms of how their financial assessment is delivered and ensuring that they take as much control over this as they are able.

The outcomes identified for the team are as follows:

- A service offering early intervention for our customers who can seek information online relating to their potential future charges. This will allow them to make a decision whether they want to seek assistance from the Council in relation to the provision of any care they may need.
- A service that works towards the preventative agenda as customers will have the opportunity to maximise their income with disability benefits that will meet their care needs without necessarily needing to come to the Council for assistance and improve financial inclusion.
- A personalised, self directed service that offers customers choices in how their financial assessment is carried out, with the service offered being proportionate to their needs.
- An improved service, with customers streamed out to alternative services at the appropriate time.
- A service that fits within the SWOW approach in that it is efficient and works in partnership with other areas of the Council.
- Customers providing information to the council once, by only given the new sharing of information with other agencies.
- A productive workforce that is able to work flexibly on clearly defined tasks.

Scope

In this section consider who or where is the target for the policy or activity, this could be specific groups of people or organisations, individual wards, neighbourhoods or communities or the entire city. Links to, and overlap with, wider, local, sub-regional, regional or national priorities or activities should also be considered.

The team takes referrals from the personalisation services. Cases referred for a financial assessment are those most likely to require a social care service – either through a personal budget or the need for residential care.

All customers referred to the team have a likely social care need – by definition, this means that they are the most vulnerable or disabled people within the city. It does not impact to any greater extent on religious groups, race or sexual orientation.

Intelligence and Information

What sources of information have been used to inform this assessment/analysis? This should include but is not limited to consultations, resident/service user feedback and statistical data and intelligence.

Statistical data has also been used to inform this assessment – this was drawn from information held on current users of social care service – i.e. our current customer base as well as the results of a recent consultation completed relating to the new Contributions Policy – equality information was gathered from respondents to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to all current users of service (a total of just over 3,000 customers received the survey). It was also made available online for the general public. A total of 783 responses were received. The consultation also included attendance at a number of user groups offering attendees the opportunity to contribute.

Analysis of Impact on People

This section offers an opportunity to assess the intended and potential impact of the policy, decision or activity on the people of Sunderland. This includes specific consideration of the impact on individuals, groups with protected characteristics and communities of interest within the city. Please briefly outline any positive, negative or neutral impacts on the specific groups below. In this assessment it is important to remember the Council is required to give due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Characteristic	List of Impacts		
	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Age – 66% of the current customer base is over 65.		All customers are entitled to receive a financial assessment – this is carried out in a fair way so that everyone is assessed to pay no more than they can afford.	

Characteristic	List of Impacts		
	Positive	Neutral	Negative
	The nature of our customer base means that the majority are aged over 65 – those who are over 65, who have come to social care services due to their age and not due to a life long disability are more likely to be assessed to pay a higher charge. This is due to the fact that older people tend to have a higher level of income or savings as their disabilities probably started later in life, giving them greater opportunity to build up private pensions or capital.		
Disability – 34% (983) of the current customer base is under 65 with a disability (Physical Disability / Learning Disability / Mental Health)		All customers are entitled to receive a financial assessment – this is carried out in a fair way so that everyone is assessed to pay no more than they can afford.	
	Whilst the policy does apply only to those customers who have specific needs, either due to age or disability, customers who have additional expenses that relate directly to their disability or illness, disregards can be made for these when calculating the contribution they are required to make.		
Gender/Sex – 64% (1,853) of the current customer base is female, with 36% (1,050) being male.		All customers are entitled to receive a financial assessment – this is carried out in a fair way so that everyone is assessed to pay no more than they can afford.	
	The findings show that males tend to be assessed to pay a higher charge than females. This is more likely to be the case for older males who have either private pensions or capital in their own right. This is especially the case where the male is part of a couple, as the female is more likely to have a lower income level in their own right.		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		The work carried out by the team applies to all, regardless of marital status.	
Pregnancy and maternity		The work carried out by the team applies to all – pregnancy or maternity will not impact this at all.	
Race/Ethnicity		The work carried out by the team applies to all, regardless of race or ethnicity. 98.7% of the current customer base is recorded as White British. As a result, there is not enough information to accurately assess impact across groups.	
Religion/belief		The work carried out by the team applies to all, regardless of religion or belief.	

Characteristic	List of Impacts		
	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Sexual Orientation		The work carried out by the team applies to all, regardless of sexual orientation.	
Trans-gender/gender identity		The work carried out by the team applies to all, regardless of gender identity.	

Other individuals or groups impacted on.

The policy or action may also have an impact on other groups or individuals which are not covered by the statutory requirements. Please outline any additional individuals or groups which have not already been covered. This could include socio-economic groups, voluntary and community sector, carers or specific communities which face additional challenges (such as former coal mining areas or areas of high deprivation)

It is possible that carers, particularly parent carers of young adults with a Learning Disability who live at home, will be impacted upon by the financial assessment. This is because the income received by our customer is part of the household income. This is negated by the fact that part of the financial assessment process is to offer assistance with benefits that will ensure that everyone in the household is in receipt of everything to which they are entitled.

Gaps in intelligence and information

Having undertaken the analysis are there any areas of intelligence or information which need to be improved? Please outline and areas where the current information is not complete enough to take a decision. Addressing this gap should be covered in the action plan.

The majority of social care users are recorded as White British (98.7%), with a similar number responding to the consultation questionnaire, leaving only a very small number of our customer base / respondents from which to gather any information relating to the impact of the policy. The information gathered cannot be used as a basis from which to make any assumptions.

There is no information relating to sexual orientation or gender identity as this information has not been part of the data set for long and most of our customers have not been asked for this information. The question was asked as part of the consultation; however 96.3% of respondents either selected "do not wish to say" or did not respond at all to the question.

In spite of these gaps in information, it is known that the financial assessment is applied in the same way to all individuals – aside from the fact that all of our customers are either vulnerable or disabled – financial status will determine the impact on the customer. Those who are better off – either through savings or private income such as occupational pension – will be assessed to pay a greater charge. This is not affected by marital status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Policy/Decision Activity Title: Benefits and Assessment Team

Responsible Officer: Joan Reed

Summary of Impacts and Response to Analysis

Please provide a summary of the overarching impacts that have been highlighted through the analysis process through the three questions below. It is important to recognise that individuals may belong to one or more of these characteristic groups and the combined impact could be greater than any single impact.

Who will the policy/activity impact on and who will benefit?

Financial Assessments for social care only apply to individuals who are vulnerable or disabled, their disability does not have any impact on the outcome of their financial assessment (except for where additional disregards are made which would reduce their contribution) as this relates entirely to their financial circumstances. Any impact on equality groups is negated because the policies applied are non discriminatory, as they purely relate to financial circumstances and not any of the equality characteristics.

Who doesn't benefit and why not?

The financial assessment and the policies applied do not either benefit / not benefit any groups as they are non discriminatory. They impact more on those who have higher levels of savings or income.

Who should be expected to benefit and why don't they?

The policy does not aim to benefit any groups.

Response to Analysis, Action Plan and Monitoring Arrangements

In this section please outline what actions you propose to take to minimise the negative, and maximise the positive, impacts that have been identified through the analysis. By considering and implementing these actions the policy or action can be refined to make sure that the greatest benefits are achieved for the people of Sunderland. The performance monitoring process should also be set out to explain how ongoing progress is going to be followed to make sure that the aims are met.

From the analysis four broad approaches can be taken, (No major change, continue with the policy/action despite negative implications, adjust the policy/decision/action or stop the policy/action). Please indicate, using the drop down list below which is proposed.

No major change

Action Plan and Monitoring

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS
Benefits & Assessment Team Redesign – Phase	Benefits & Assessment Team Manager	From August 2012	

One (Process, Structure, Roles and Responsibilities)			
Benefits & Assessment Team Redesign – Phase Two (Information Sharing, Outreach, Residential Charging Policy Review)	Benefits & Assessment Team Manager	From October 2012	
Benefits & Assessment Team Redesign – Phase Three (Self Serve)	Benefits & Assessment Team Manager	From April 2013	
Review INRA	Benefits & Assessment Team Management Team	Annually	