

# DWP Employee Assistance Programme Equality Impact Assessment

DWP Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team

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# Equality impact assessment for DWP Employee Assistance Programme

## 1. Purpose and aim(s) of the DWP Employee Assistance Programme

The purpose of the DWP Employee Assistance Programme is to provide a confidential support service for all employees. It is an integral part of the Department's employee benefits package and a central component of the health and wellbeing strategy.

DWP has always had an Employee Assistance Programme in place. The previous contract expired on 30 June 2010. A procurement exercise took place which secured Right Corecare as the supplier of a new 3 year contract which started on 1 July 2010. Right Corecare was the supplier of the previous Employee Assistance Programme.

The Employee Assistance Programme provides a range of services including:

- A 24 hour a day, 365 day a year confidential telephone advice and information line covering a wide range of issues including work, personal and family related issues. This can be accessed either at work or outside work
- One to one counselling - either face to face or telephone
- Support for managers, including confidential individual support and awareness sessions
- Legal advice helpline
- Website providing signposting to help and to a wide range of information on health related issues.

The contract sets out at Schedule 8 the minimum diversity and equality requirements which apply to the provision of the contract. It includes compliance with legislation, the requirement to prepare a Diversity and Equality Delivery Plan, evidence used in developing the Plan and information on the contractor's own workforce monitoring.

### **How the Employee Assistance Programme was put into practice**

DWP has had an Employee Assistance Programme for a number of years. As outlined above, the previous supplier, Right Corecare secured the new contract which started on 1 July 2010. Much of the service remained the same but there are some new elements, including telephone counselling where this is appropriate and agreed with the client.

The Employee Assistance Programme was put into practice as follows:

- The DWP Contract Management Team in conjunction with Commercial Directorate managed the implementation of the new contract
- Right Carecare had an implementation plan to ensure the service was fully operational by 1 July 2010
- The Contract Management Team engaged with other DWP stakeholders including IT, security, accessibility and privacy teams to ensure all DWP standards and requirements were met
- DWP Communications team have developed a communications plan to ensure all staff are aware of the new contract and the services it offers.

## 2. Consultation and involvement

The following stakeholders have been involved in and consulted on the development of the Employee Assistance Programme:

- DWP Accessibility Solutions
- Legal Group
- Business Continuity
- Communications
- Corporate Human Resources
- Financial & Business Control Practices
- Risk Assurance Division
- Diversity & Equality
- DWP Businesses, Corporate Centre and Shared Services representing DWP users
- Departmental Trade Unions
- Other government departments involved in the contract
- Departmental Security
- DWP Corporate IT
- Privacy
- Sustainable Development
- Welsh Language Unit
- Commercial Directorate
- DWP Finance.

A Working Group of DWP customers and Departmental Trade Unions helped to define the Employee Assistance Programme specification. The governance process also involved a wide range of stakeholders in defining the Programme and ensuring it was fit for purpose and followed DWP requirements.

## Departmental Trade Unions

DTUS have been involved in the development of the programme through the Working Group. They have been updated on developments throughout the governance and procurement processes.

## 3. Impact of the Employee Assistance Programme

- The Employee Assistance Programme is available for all DWP employees regardless of disability, race, gender, sexual orientation, working pattern, age, religion or belief.
- The new contract provides the same service as the previous contract (with some enhancements). Evidence collected from the previous supplier shows that the existing Employee Assistance Programme has met the needs of its customers (DWP employees).
- As the Employee Assistance Programme is a service which has been in place for a number of years and diversity has been monitored throughout, there is no need to pilot the service to check for adverse effects.
- All DWP employees have the opportunity to use the service. It is accessible through the Department's intranet and Right Corecare's website (also available via home/ off-site PCs) and is promoted to all staff through Headline News. Measures are in place to ensure people have equality of opportunity in using the service eg. there is alternative provision for disabled people.
- There is no evidence that any part of the service could discriminate unlawfully against people from different groups. Right Corecare has demonstrated its ability to provide the service to people from different groups during the previous contract.
- Participation is entirely voluntary, the service is confidential and employees contact Right Corecare directly to request support.
- Provision of the service is based on individual need so it will provide different outcomes for individuals.
- As the Employee Assistance Programme is mainly a service for individuals, it is unlikely to affect relations between different groups.
- The Right Corecare Employee Assistance Programme is also governed by 2 separate ethical codes – the Employee Assistance Professionals' Association and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. These ethics charge Right Corecare with creating a service environment in which users feel confident that their privacy is being respected, that their sensitive personal information is handled with great care and within the law and that the fact of their access to the service is not disclosed to their employer.
- Right Corecare has its own diversity and equality policies for its staff.

- The Employee Assistance Programme promotes equality of opportunity:
- There is a “Right Corecare supports diversity” statement on the website homepage
- Information on the website homepage to support people with different needs eg. text size; information in Braille/ large print/ audio; textphone users
- Statement on website that “every effort will be made to accommodate diverse needs”
- Promotional material will promote equality and diversity.

## **Disability**

The Employee Assistance Programme is available for all employees regardless of disability. Based on the information available about the current Employee Assistance Programme, there are no apparent adverse impacts on employees with disabilities.

The Employee Assistance Programme will ensure it meets the needs of disabled people by:

- Providing information to disabled users to enable access to the service eg. information on the website for people with hearing and visual impairments
- Alternative provision for disabled people eg. textphone service as alternative access to the helpline
- Telephone counselling for people with mobility problems
- Face to face counselling in premises which are accessible for disabled people.

The DWP Accessibility Solutions Framework ensures that employees with particular needs are provided with specialist IT software and equipment (Assistive Technology), for example JAWS and Supernova (audio versions used by blind and visually impaired users) and Dragon (voice activated for users who cannot use keyboards).

Right Corecare’s Employee Assistance Programme website has been tested by the DWP Accessibility Solutions Team. Test results show that the website meets DWP Accessibility Standards, the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and is fully accessible for users of JAWS, Zoomtext and Supernova Assistive Technologies.

## **Gender**

The Employee Assistance Programme is available to all employees regardless of gender. Evidence from the current DWP Employee Assistance Programme shows that proportionally more women than men use the face to face counselling part of the service. Right Corecare recognise that the situation in DWP reflects a common scenario across the counselling industry where usage by men is much lower. Research has shown that men prefer telephone counselling to face to face counselling and as a result, Right Corecare will provide telephone counselling as part of the new contract to encourage more men to use the counselling part of the service.

## **Race**

The Employee Assistance Programme is available to all employees regardless of race. Based on the information available about the current Employee Assistance Programme, there are no apparent adverse impacts on employees from different racial groups. However, the Employee Assistance Programme will continue to collect and monitor data on race to ensure the service meets the equality needs of different races.

## **Sexual orientation**

The Employee Assistance Programme is available to all employees regardless of sexual orientation. Based on the information available about the current Employee Assistance Programme there are no apparent adverse impacts on employees of different sexual orientation. However, the Employee Assistance Programme will continue to collect and monitor data on sexual orientation to ensure the service meets the equality needs of people of different sexual orientation.

## **Religion or belief**

The Employee Assistance Programme is available to all employees regardless of religion or belief. Based on the information available about the current Employee Assistance Programme, there are no apparent adverse impacts on employees of different religions or beliefs. However, the Employee Assistance Programme will collect and monitor data on religion and belief to ensure the service meets the equality needs of people of different religions and beliefs.

## **4. Removing or reducing impacts**

- No negative or disproportionate impacts have been identified.
- Where an adverse impact had been identified in the previous Employee Assistance Programme, measures were put in place to remove the impact eg. as outlined above, the introduction of telephone counselling to encourage more men to use the counselling service.
- In order to identify any impacts on particular groups Right Corecare will collect, monitor and evaluate diversity and equality information.
- If any impacts are identified from either the Management Information or from other sources, then action will be taken by Right Corecare or by the Department as appropriate. Impacts will be mitigated by:
  - Ensuring contractual requirements are met
  - Reviewing Right Corecare's own equality policies
  - Communications to staff to ensure all groups are aware of the Employee Assistance Programme.

## 5. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation will include:

- Regular Contract Review meetings with Right Corecare, led by the DWP Senior Responsible Officer with Commercial Directorate support to review the service including diversity and equality issues
- DWP contract management team will review Right Corecare's Equality and Diversity Delivery Plan annually
- DWP can request full equality policy and procedure documents at any time
- DWP will monitor the diversity and equality information and compare this with overall DWP diversity and equality information
- Information on complaints is forwarded to the DWP contract management team who will check for any diversity related issues and take action as appropriate
- Feedback from users via Business Units or individuals.

### **Collection of diversity and equality information**

As the Employee Assistance Programme is a confidential service the full range of diversity information will not be collected for all parts of the service. This is because it is not appropriate to ask callers to the helpline to answer numerous personal questions when they may be in distress.

#### **1. Telephone helpline and telephone counselling**

A limited range of diversity and equality information is requested when people call the helpline or access telephone counselling. This includes questions on:

- Gender
- Disability
- Age.

When people phone the helpline they are asked for some personal information but do not have to disclose anything, even their name, if they choose not to. If a person chooses not to disclose their personal information the service they receive from Right Corecare will not be affected in any way. Right Corecare has included the questions on personal information in the initial telephone call to meet DWP's requirement to collect and monitor diversity and equality information. Not all diversity and equality information is collected during the telephone call because it is not appropriate to ask numerous questions when a caller may be in distress.

The prime responsibility of Right Corecare is to help the caller; their secondary responsibility is to collect management information. To maintain confidentiality of users, the only information that Right Corecare provides to DWP is statistical in nature and does not include the personal information of anyone who has used the service.

## **2. Face to face counselling**

The full range and breakdown of diversity and equality information (as recommended by DWP Diversity and Equality ) is requested following face to face counselling via a questionnaire which is given to all people who have had counselling.

## **6. Next steps**

- The Employee Assistance Programme will be monitored as outlined in section 5 above throughout the duration of the contract.
- The Equality Impact Assessment has been reviewed 6 months from the contract start date and will be reviewed again at the 12 month stage.

## **7. Contact details**

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