

Central Payment System

ID no: 1060

Equality impact assessment

13 July 2011

Equality Impact Assessment for Central Payment System

Introduction

The Department of Work and Pensions has carried out an equality impact assessment on the proposal to introduce the Central Payments System, assessing the proposal in line with the current public sector equality duties.

This process will help to ensure that the Department has paid due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups; and
- Foster good relations between people from different groups.

The equality impact assessment will show how the Department has demonstrated it has paid due regard when developing new services or processes to on the grounds of the protected characteristics. These are; race, disability, gender, age, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and marriage and civil partnerships (in terms of eliminating unlawful discrimination only).

As the Central Payment System is not a web based, self-service system for users to access and that with the exception of Local Payments, the majority of the Central Payment System is a 'pass through' system, it has no effect on customers directly and the scope of CPS does not change old processes. Therefore, a full equality impact assessment is not necessary.

Brief outline of the policy or service

DWP has introduced the Central Payment System which is a single integrated payment and accounting system. It issues payments to customers in their preferred method of payment (e.g. Direct Payment and Overseas Payments). These new systems also provide standard accounting, control and reconciliation functions for those payments, which were unavailable on the previous systems.

The Central Payment System provides:

- Greater control of benefit expenditure;
- Greater reporting flexibility;
- Faster production of monthly accounts;
- Greater accuracy of Departmental Resource Accounts; and

- Improved management information.

The Central Payment System solution has been in place since 18 April 2011.

Consultation and involvement

The Central Payment System is a key component of the Department of Work and Pensions's Enterprise IT Architecture. It provides a new integrated payment and accounting solution for the Department. It supports the processing of benefits and allowances paid to our customers. Central Payment System is based on the Oracle 11i E-Business Suite package, which is a Commercial Off The Shelf package.

At summary level, Central Payment System will include the following functionality:

- Process requests from the Department's business systems to make payments.
- Pay benefits, pensions and allowances to customers or their nominated representative.
- Make payments to third party creditors on behalf of Clients.
- Manage post-payment reconciliation processes.
- Provide full accounting information regarding payment transactions to ensure appropriate financial management and accounting of the Department's Benefit Expenditure.
- Account for recoveries of debt and payment and recovery of loans from a Client's benefit.
- Central Payment System Local Payments will enable the transmission of Faster Payments.

The Central Payment System benefits the Department and supports the processing of payments to customers. It also enables users to enter Faster Payments, ensuring that customers receive their payments on time. However, customers do not have any direct contact with the Central Payment System. Any customer queries, regarding benefit payments, are addressed by the particular department from which the payment instruction originated.

Impact of the Central Payment System

Impact on customers

Indirectly, the Central Payment System has a positive impact upon the Department of Work and Pension's customers because the System ensures continued delivery of secure, accurate and timely payments to the customer. In addition, it introduces a new, faster method of payment that is available to all benefits, which means customers are paid directly into their bank account. Customers who receive payment by alternative methods, such as cheques and payables order will not be affected by the implementation of Central Payment System. Release 1, in April 2011, delivered

core payment and accounting functionality by using existing functionality for payments - the current Common Payments Package notifications.

The Central Payment System provides a new payment system that is used by staff within Jobcentre Plus, Pension, Disability and Carers Service, the Department of Work and Pensions, Shared Services and the Northern Ireland Social Security Agency.

Release 2 functionality will include Central Payment System Local Payments and Manage Payment facility. Local Payments will allow users to process payments for both new and existing customers, whilst the Manage Payment functionality provides the facility for authorised users to manage and enquire on payments.

In addition, the Central Payment System does not have a direct impact upon any customers in terms of ethnicity, gender, disability, religion and belief or age there will be no change to services for customers. All outputs from the system are managed through current methods. DWP Customer notifications continue to be produced by each of the benefits, in requested alternative formats and payments continue in the requested method. Customers may request their remittance advice in any accessible format currently supported by the Department, for example, Large Print, Braille, or Audio. At Release 2, the Central Payment System provides the above mentioned alternative formats for Local Payments remittance advice only, by using the 'Centralised Print Management System.'

Release 2 includes the Large Print facility for Central Payment System. The Large Print font size is 16 point and this is the standard that is expressed in guidance provided by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB).

The Central Payment System complies with the Welsh Language Act and for the customer to receive any correspondence in Welsh, they must reside in Wales.

Notifications of payments for CPS Local Payments will be available in Welsh and available in standard 12 Font.

Alternative prints for Central Payment System Local Payments can be requested by the customer in Welsh, including Large Print, which will be in 16 Font. Alternatively, the customer can request an Audio Welsh version that will be available on CD. The customer can also request Braille but this is not available in the Welsh language, only in English.

The evidence gathered from testing the functionality of system's software at this stage of the development suggests that there should be no negative impact on staff in terms of ethnicity, gender, disability, religion and belief or age. As the system is an Information Technology system, the Central Payment System Programme is actively working with the Corporate Information Technology Accessibility Test Team. This team advises all new IT projects on how they can deliver accessible solutions to be used by disabled staff having specialist technology to help them carry out their jobs. There are currently over 600 staff members within the DWP, who use assistive software technology.

Provision has been made and requirements have been captured to ensure that the System can be used by staff using Accessibility software including:

- Job Access With Speech software. This is a speech only programme which is primarily used by blind users. There is no use for a mouse or monitor, the user controls the software by using key strokes/commands and listening to the speech engine;
- Zoomtext and Supernova software. These are for users who are partially sighted. The software uses magnification and speech; and
- Dragon Naturally Speaking software which is for users with restricted physical movements and improvements for Dyslexia. This software uses voice/speech recognition activated commands.

In meeting the Department's requirement to comply with the Equality Act, the Central Payment System Programme ensures the accessibility of all human-computer activity. Release 1, Accessibility activity and testing evaluated Central Payment System Accessibility against the Departmental Accessibility Standards and received a Green rating at both Release 1 Technical Review and Operational Readiness Review gates. A record of this is evidenced in the baselined 1986 Accessibility End to End Final Test Report. Central Payment System, for Release 1, is accessible but improvements on 3 of the standards below are being addressed in Release 2, that will benefit Job Access With Speech, Supernova and Zoomtext high magnification users (greater than 6X magnification).

As there were no accessibility users identified for Release 1, there was no need for Model Office Testing at this stage. However, functionality is available for any employee who will need to use an Assistive Technology tool to work directly on the Central Payment System.

In terms of navigation and labelling, it is recognised that for Job Access With Speech and high magnification, some difficulty has been experienced. This has been addressed and will be resolved in release 2. As mitigation between Release 1 and Release 2, there is funding for support and additional training to ensure that users are able to use Central Payment System and an Accessibility Guide has been produced to provide additional support.

Release 2 improves 3 of the standards from Release 1 and addresses these in it's requirements:

- Improvements to logical tab order, aiding navigation
- Improvements to Labelling
- Improvements to overcome where colour is the only mechanism used to depict meaning or context.

Specifically, the Programme will ensure the accessibility of:

- Screens based operation and input for all user interfaces including new screens for Central Payment System Local Payments
- User guidance, training material and tools, information pages (for example, on the intranet) and support material.

In order to ascertain the roles and responsibilities of staff, a High Level Detailed People Impact Analysis and a series of Operational Impact Assessments have been carried out, which looked at the impact on job roles within different business areas, through interviews with staff in the businesses. Existing Department for Work and Pensions Human Resource Policy arrangements cover all issues raised with regards to equality. The policy covers, for example, workforce management, mobility of staff and making reasonable adjustments for disabled staff.

A Learning and Development Strategy has been developed to make sure that all staff will have sufficient training to use the Central Payment System.

There is no evidence at this stage to show that the introduction of the Central Payment System has a negative impact on customers or staff from any group.

Monitoring and evaluation

Central Payment System's accessibility capability has been reviewed with accessibility users. The Corporate Information Technology Accessibility Test Team and interested parties have been apprised of these findings. For suitably authorised users, Central Payment System is one of the more accessible systems in the Department.

Model Office testing ensures that the business processes, undertaken when using the Central Payment System, can be conducted to a satisfactory level. Tests also enable the identification and managing down of potential risks that could possibly affect the delivery and operability of Central Payment System. Model Office also assesses the training guidance and support material. Model Office Testing will be conducted before the Release 2 Operational Readiness Review. The Operational Readiness Review is a milestone progress review around the suitability of projects and programmes prior to implementation.

The Programme continues to monitor and evaluate its compliance with equality standards and regulations. Any risks or issues that are identified during the testing will be documented in a revised Equality Impact Assessment due to be completed post Release 2.

In addition, the impact on disabled staff will be monitored during the Post Implementation Review. This examines the results of the Implementation of Central Payment System over the go live period and will include a review of the actual activities versus the planned activities documented in the Project Implementation Plan. The results of the Post Implementation review will be documented in a future Equality Impact Assessment. This responsibility will be handed over to the business to handle during business as usual.

Next steps

Any future releases to the Central Payments System will be reviewed against the Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that the impacts have not changed.

Contact details

Michelle Kevill

Central Payment System

Operational Business Readiness

Room 8110

Norcross

Thornton-Cleveleys

FY5 3TA