

Introduction of new products and services for children claiming DLA

20 October 2011

Equality impact assessment for the introduction of new products and services for children claiming DLA

Introduction

The Department for Work and Pensions has carried out an equality impact assessment on the proposal to introduce processes to specialise the decision making on claims to DLA for children under the age of 16 years and to support this by introducing products specific to children, 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).

Brief outline of the policy or service

Pensions, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) and Health, Work and Wellbeing Directorate (HWWD) have made significant improvements for people of working age to:

- claim forms; and
- replace the Disability Handbook with new web-based impairment specific, medical guidance to support decision makers.

As part of the Departmental objectives, PDCS main driver is to improve our customer service and the quality and efficiency of decision making for all customers and we've now developed a package of improvements for children.

We recognised children form a significant proportion of our workload due to the complexities of the legislation and child developmental and disability knowledge we needed to consider how we process child claims.

Parents and carers of children find the current claiming process unwieldy and difficult to understand. Anecdotal evidence also suggests they also tend to understate the needs of their child. Direct feedback from parents of disabled children and Child welfare groups has confirmed our initial assumptions in this area.

We have developed a package of products which are, designed to improve the child new claim process including:

- Claim Form – Including comprehensive notes and a diary;
- Replacing the Disability Handbook with new web-based impairment specific, medical guidance to support decision makers.

From 28 September 2009, a dedicated Child Test Team tested these products.

The full rationale for these changes is included in the Impacts/Benefits within this paper.

Following successful testing of the products and service the Department has decided to roll out the products and specialise child claims across the whole of the business.

Consultation and involvement

We've consulted the PDCS Advisory Forum about all the changes. The products to support these changes have been agreed by all stakeholders.

Claim form

We met with parents and carers of disabled children as well as the PDCS Advisory Forum and Family Carers Group to find out the issues with the current claim form and claiming process.

We worked with a nominated design group made up of PDCS, National Autistic Society, Family Fund, National Deaf Children Society and CAB to develop a form; we held the first workshop in November 2008.

We issued the draft form, notes and diary to the design group for comment in January 2009 and following amendment we presented them to the PDCS Advisory Forum and Family Carers Group at the end of January for their comments.

We then further developed the claim form, notes and diary ready for customer research.

Between 27 April and 22 May 09, an external social research company completed qualitative research on key areas, to establish:

- if it was easy to complete;
- if it was easy to understand;
- if the notes helped customers fill it in; and
- If the diary helped customers fill it in

We were presented with the initial findings on 04 June 09.

We continued development following research findings and issued for Quality Assurance and sign off by internal stakeholders in July 09.

Following that we developed the process, plans and critical success factors for testing the claim form. The first forms were released to a targeted Geographical area in September 2009.

The form has been tested in a small area of the business that deal with new claims for the geographical area of Sutton.

Child Guidance

HWWD have developed web-based age and impairment specific medical guidance with Paediatricians, Specialist doctors, Health Visitors and groups with interests in specific impairments like RNIB, National Autistic Society (NAS), and National Deaf Children Society (NDCS). The NDCS representative attended the medical expert group to develop Hearing guidance for children. The guidance is evidence based and reflects the latest understanding of impairments including:

- background information of the medical condition
- interpreting clinical information
- explaining medical terms and tests
- medical factors as indicators of likely severity of functional loss
- likely care and mobility needs for a child of a particular age; and

- prognosis and duration.

The guidance available covers:

- Allergies
- Asthma
- Eczema
- Epilepsy
- Learning Disability
- Diabetes
- Hearing Impairment
- Cerebral palsy
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- ADHD
- Hydrocephalus
- Spina bifida
- Visual Impairment
- Malignancies;-
 - Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia
 - Acute Myeloid Leukaemia
- Wilms Tumour
- Neuroblastoma
- Brain Tumour
- Haemophilia
- Coeliac disease
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Nocturnal Enuresis
- Perthes disease
- Prematurity in babies
- Normal Development & disability in Children
- Sickle cell Anaemia
- Speech and Language disorders
- Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis

Dedicated teams handling all aspects of DLA child claims

Parents and carers of disabled children, the Standards Committee, PDCS Advisory Forum, the Child Working Group and Policy have explicitly asked if the business will have a Children's Unit with specialist decision-makers who understand the range of child specific impairments and DLA child legislation.

Having specialist child units will:

- improve impairment knowledge for decision –makers
- lead to more efficient processing
- reduce handoffs
- reduce variations of service
- increase the quality

Impact of the Introduction of new products and services for children claiming DLA

Impact

It is the intention to assess child claims, regardless of the disability, race, gender, age, religion and belief and sexual orientation, in the same way therefore without discrimination.

Monitoring and evaluation

There has been extensive monitoring and evaluation carried out during the lengthy testing and it is therefore felt that further monitoring and evaluation is not required. However, the business as usual monitoring of customer service, customer complaints and staff survey will be in place.

Next steps

The EIA will be reviewed a year after publication.

Contact details

Steve Broom
Operational delivery
Pensions, Disability and Carers Service
Warbreck house
Blackpool
Tel 01235 337331