

Work Together

Equality Impact Assessment

April 2011

Revised May 2012

Equality Impact Assessment for Work Together

Introduction

1. The Department for Work and Pensions has conducted the following equality impact assessment for Work Together, assessing the proposal in line with the current public sector equality duties.
2. 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.
3. The equality impact assessment will show how the Department has demonstrated it has paid due regard when developing new services or processes 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).

Policy description

4. Work Together form part of a wider menu of additional support options known as Get Britain Working measures, which is a nationwide initiative that can be used by Jobcentre Plus to encourage all unemployed and inactive people to consider volunteering as a way of improving their employment prospects while they are looking for work.
5. Through the delivery of Work Together, Jobcentre Plus is encouraging unemployed and inactive benefit recipients to take up volunteering by;
 - strengthening volunteering messages given to claimants from the start of a new claim;
 - helping more claimants to find out about and take-up volunteering through the use of 'volunteering enablers' (including volunteer centres, on-line support such as Do-it and local volunteering networks);

- giving its Personal Advisers access to on-line volunteering databases in England, Scotland and Wales to help claimants find opportunities more easily; and
 - Engaging voluntary and community sector organisations to support the delivery of Work Together.
6. Jobcentre Plus' key responsibility is to signpost unemployed and inactive claimants who would benefit from volunteering, to key volunteering enablers to help connect them to opportunities, from the start of a new claim and before they enter the Work Programme.
 7. The range of volunteering enablers are likely to vary from location to location to reflect the availability of local support, but are expected to include:
 - online volunteering databases such as Do-it, Volunteer Scotland and Volunteering Wales;
 - volunteering centres; and
 - local volunteering partnerships and networks.
 8. Jobcentre Plus also have a key role to play, through its Partnership Managers in developing local awareness of volunteering enablers as well as networks with voluntary sector organisations and volunteer involving organisations.
 9. The promotion of volunteering through Work Together is not limited to Jobseeker's Allowance customers. All benefit recipients can benefit from the information available from Jobcentre Plus and there is the potential that every claimant will be able to benefit from the Work Together initiative.
 10. No-one will be required to take-up volunteering as part of the Work Together initiative. This initiative is about encouraging people to consider volunteering as a way of developing and enhancing their employment prospects, while they are looking for work.
 11. All claimants are able to access Work Together on a voluntary basis but must continue to meet with the relevant conditionality requirements to receive their benefits from Jobcentre Plus. There is no intention to set targets or gather official statistics for claimant referral and attendance.

Consultation and Involvement

12. The Department for Work and Pensions has worked closely with the Office for Civil Society to engage a range of internal and external stakeholders to help inform the development and delivery of Work Together.

13. Externally, we have engaged a variety of organisations from the voluntary and community sector, including Volunteer England, YouthNet, BTCV and The Princes Trust, to ensure that the development of Work Together reflects the support that is available from the sector. Engagement with the sector has also helped ensure that we do not place additional burdens on those local organisations that are less able to support the Work Together offer.
14. The Devolved Administrations have played a key role in the development of the Work Together offer, reflecting the devolved responsibilities they have for voluntary sector funding and delivery. This has particularly helped strengthen the focus on local engagement and delivery between Jobcentre Plus and organisations.
15. Other Government Departments have also been engaged in the development of Work Together which is reflected in the role that Work Together has in delivering the Government's Big Society.
16. Internally the Department has engaged delivery colleagues from Jobcentre Plus to develop the Work Together offer to ensure that it responds to the varying needs of our customers and to identify other delivery related issues.

Impact of Work Together

17. As the aim of Work Together is to assist all claimants interested in volunteering to take up opportunities, every effort will be made to ensure this does not exclude anyone. Organisations that will be involved with Work Together are usually already conscious of these issues and work to address them.
18. Work Together will aim to provide the same outcome for all in that Jobcentre Plus and voluntary organisation staff will be seeking to involve all interested claimants in appropriate voluntary activity as a way of improving their employment prospects while they are looking for work.
19. Many voluntary organisations cater for particular disadvantaged groups and their participation will be sought and welcomed in order to help such claimants to overcome obstacles they encounter in the jobs market.
20. There is no indication that any part of the Work Together measure will discriminate against different groups of people either directly or indirectly. In addition most, if not all, voluntary organisations engaged with will already have their own Equality policies which can be consulted if necessary.
21. To assess the equality impact of Work Together we have considered data on the number of JCP claimants who are likely to be affected by the programme. For an indication as to the likely take-up, we have used data on the take-up of the volunteering option under the Six Month Offer for the unemployed.

Age

22. Access to the programme will not differ by age as the programme will be available for all age groups. There is evidence that participation in volunteering varies by age. People aged below 25 are less likely to participate in regular formal volunteering than older people, but more likely to participate in informal volunteering¹.
23. Evidence from the Six Month Offer suggests that young people are under-represented in volunteering activity – 14% of participants in the volunteering option were under 25² compared to around 32% of JSA claimants reaching six months³. However, due to the fact that claimants will have equal access to advice and information on volunteering from Jobcentre Plus, we do not expect a negative equality impact.

Disability

24. Most disabled claimants claim either incapacity benefits or Employment and Support Allowance, however many JSA claimants consider themselves to have a disability. Evidence suggests that, overall, disabled people were less likely than non-disabled people to engage in formal volunteering (21% compared with 27% of non-disabled people)⁴.
25. Evidence from the volunteering element of the Six Month Offer shows that the proportion of participants who considered themselves disabled was 28%⁵ compared to 23% of JSA claimants reaching six months⁶. Disabled claimants are slightly more likely to engage in volunteering activity, which can increase their employability skills and confidence⁷.
26. Claimants who are interested in volunteering will be signposted to further information and opportunities irrespective of disability.

Ethnicity

27. Survey data on the proportion of people from different ethnic groups participating in volunteering shows differences between groups, with people from minority ethnic groups less likely to engage in formal volunteering. In

¹ 2008-09 Citizenship Survey (2010) p14.

² Six Month Offer Official Statistics, January 2011.

³ Source: National Benefits Database. Cohort of new JSA claims in 2008/09. The statistic is calculated by linking individual level data from the National Benefits database and the LMS Client Evaluation extract.

⁴ 2008-09 Citizenship Survey (2010) p14.

⁵ Six Month Offer Official Statistics, January 2011.

⁶ Source: National Benefits Database. Cohort of new JSA claims in 2008/09. The statistic is calculated by linking individual level data from the National Benefits database and the LMS Client Evaluation database, and is based on 3.1 million new JSA claims of which 520,000 have declared a disability during a Jobcentre Plus interview.

⁷ Institute for Volunteering Research (2009) *Volunteering and Employment: What is the link for unemployed volunteers?*, http://www.ivr.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/D5F25AD2-F79E-4031-95F8-267C5BA71DBA/0/Vol_employ.pdf

particular, participation is low among Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups (the proportion of these groups involved in formal volunteering each month is 18%, 20% and 21% respectively compared to 26% of white groups⁸).

28. The evidence from the volunteering element of the recent Six Month Offer suggests that ethnic minority claimants are not under-represented on the volunteering option compared to the eligible group. 16% of the participants in the volunteering option were from an ethnic minority background⁹ compared to 15% of the claimants reaching six months on JSA¹⁰.
29. Work Together will be made available to claimants regardless of their ethnicity. It will be up to individual claimants to decide whether volunteering will provide them with additional support and help them move closer to work.

Gender

30. Survey data suggests that women are slightly more likely to volunteer regularly than men (28% of female respondents reported engaging in formal volunteering at least once a month compared to 23% of men¹¹). Data from the volunteering element of the Six Month Offer shows that 41% of participants were female¹², compared to 24% of the JSA claimants reaching six months on JSA¹³.
31. All jobseekers will have access to Work Together, irrespective of gender. It will be up to individual claimants of both genders to choose whether they think the programme will provide the most appropriate support for them.

Gender Re-assignment

32. There is no data on the sexual reassignment of claimants who will be impacted by Work Together. Claimants will be treated fairly and equally regardless of their gender.

Sexual Orientation

33. The Department does not hold data on the sexual orientation of claimants who will be impacted by Work Together. However, it is not anticipated that the sexual orientation of claimants will affect their eligibility or take-up because advisers will offer support tailored to the individual. Claimants will be encouraged to volunteer through the Work Together initiative irrespective of their sexual orientation.

⁸ 2008-09 Citizenship Survey (2010) p73.

⁹ Six Month Offer Official Statistics, January 2011.

¹⁰ Source: National Benefits Database. Cohort of new JSA claims in 2008/09. The statistic is calculated by linking individual level data from the National Benefits database and the LMS Client Evaluation extract.

¹¹ 2008-09 Citizenship Survey (2010) p13.

¹² Six Month Offer Official Statistics, January 2011.

¹³ JSA customers between 26 and 39 weeks duration, December 2010. Source: Nomis(www.nomisweb.co.uk).

Religion and Belief

34. The Department does not hold data on the religion or belief of customers who will be impacted by Work Together. Evidence from the Labour Force Survey suggests that unemployment rates are significantly higher for Muslims than for members of other religious groups or those with no religious affiliation, with unemployment rates for Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and no religious affiliation also above average¹⁴.

35. Claimants will not be asked to undertake any activity which goes against their beliefs and allowances will be made to reflect religious holidays and practices. It is not anticipated that the religion or belief of claimants will affect their ability to take-up volunteering and they will be equally encouraged to consider volunteering through the Work Together initiative.

Pregnancy and Maternity

36. No data is available to assess if Work Together will have an equality impact relating to pregnancy and maternity. However, due to the fact that claimants will have equal access to advice and information on volunteering from Jobcentre Plus, we do not expect a negative equality impact.

Monitoring and Evaluation

37. Jobcentre Plus is working with voluntary, community and public sector organisations, both locally and nationally, to strengthen the delivery of this initiative ensuring that interested people can take up volunteering opportunities.

38. As every area and community is different, the Department is not prescribing how Work Together should be delivered in each area, reflecting the principles of the Big Society. This approach will help ensure that Work Together is delivered in a way that best reflects local conditions and services.

39. To able us to review and refresh delivery of Work Together, as appropriate, the Department is committed to undertaking a high level preliminary evaluation in Autumn 2011 This process will support us to review the Work Together initiative and ensure that it continues to meet the needs of unemployed and inactive people.

40. At a local level, Jobcentre Plus customers can raise issues arising out of the volunteering they are undertaking during one of their regular Jobcentre Plus interventions. Advisors would be able to report any issues to Partnership managers who will be engaging with local volunteer opportunity providers.

¹⁴ Annual Population Survey, January 2004 to December 2004, Office for National Statistics.
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=979>

41. Furthermore, the project does not involve increased handling of personal data about individuals or changes in the handling of personal data about large numbers of individuals and may see a reduction in the amount of data supplied to Jobcentre Plus. It is intended that there will be no transmission or sharing of personal information by Jobcentre Plus with voluntary organisations or reporting back to Jobcentre Plus by voluntary organisations of customer details or activity.

Next steps

42. This EIA will be kept under review and updated, where necessary.

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