

Budget EqIA 1: Information and Advice

This is an Equality Impact Assessment of the Information and Advice saving in the budget. Under equality legislation, the Council has a legal duty to pay 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and
- foster good relations between different groups.

The duty to pay 'due regard' is required to be demonstrated in the decision making and the implementation process. Assessing the potential equality impact of proposed projects that are part of the programme is the means by which we show 'due regard'.

1. The Decision

The contract for provision of information and advice is due to end Oct 2015. The service will not be re-commissioned. Options for how information and advice will be available are being explored, in line with the Care Act requirements.

2. Key Issues

This assessment will review the main changes in the policy.

2.1 How likely is it affect people with protected characteristics?

It is likely to adversely affect some people. The decision will decrease the amount of advice available to people. Those that require this advice are not from one section of the community. Nor is advice sought on one particular issue. However, it is unlikely to affect a person with a protected characteristic more than any other person.

2.2 Are there alternatives?

Yes. Forty percent of advice of this commission service is for benefits and housing issues. For homeless issues the council is able to provide more specialist advice. Similarly on benefits and council tax issues the council provides advice and most often a resolution. In line with the Care Act requirements options for information and advice are being explored, this will take into account that many people with a disability approach - CIL and older people - Age UK MK.

2.3 Having considered the main areas of advice what may be lost?

The main attraction of this advice service is its independence from statutory bodies and this will mean that some independent capacity in the advice market will be lost.

3. Recommendation

It is likely that this decision will adversely impact some people who rely on advice from this commissioned service. However, there are more organisations where advice is given, who are not supported and it may be important for those who have problems, with housing or benefits, for example, to contact the council directly. Consideration has been made to the main areas of advice.