



## EQUALITY/COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<p><b>1.What is the name of the savings proposal and its current status?</b></p>
<p>CC113 - Review of Advice Services</p>
<p><b>2. Which Service is responsible for this proposal?</b></p>
<p>Customers and Communities</p>
<p><b>3. Does this proposal impact on other services or other service savings proposals and if so, have you discussed this proposal with the Service Directors from those other services?</b></p>
<p>This proposal does not impact on other services.</p>
<p><b>4.Please state the name of the officer leading the EIA</b></p>
<p><b>5. Who has been involved in undertaking this assessment e.g. list the stakeholder groups which have been involved?</b></p>
<p>The management of the Customer Access Team has been involved in this assessment, based on data from the current provider of employment and immigration legal advice. It will be further updated with input from the current provider and based on wider feedback that is received during the course of the consultation.</p>
<p><b>6. What is the scope of this assessment?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• -what is included in this assessment</li> <li>• -does this proposal link to any other proposals (i.e. previous or current). If so, please state</li> </ul>
<p>This assessment seeks to set out the potential impact of proposals to reduce the scope of council funded advice services, particularly on protected groups.</p> <p>Although budget reductions have been applied to advice services, previously there has been no reduction in the scope of the service provided.</p>
<p><b>7 a).What does the function currently do?</b>  <b>b).Describe the needs which this service meets?</b></p>
<p>The Council currently funds Rochdale Law Centre to provide employment advice, which covers the provision of advice and representation in relation to employment law, including supporting clients claiming unfair and constructive dismissal, chasing unpaid wages and related enquiries. The Council does not have a statutory duty to fund this service.</p> <p>In addition, the Council funds Rochdale Law Centre to provide immigration advice. This covers the provision of advice in relation to a wide range of immigration and asylum matters including representation and advocacy before the Immigration Adjudicator and at Immigration Appeal Tribunals. The Council does not have a statutory duty to fund this service.</p>

Both of these services meet the needs of people requiring support with legal matters relating to employment and immigration.

#### **8. What changes do you propose to make?**

Because of the significant financial challenge that the council faces, it is proposed that employment and immigration advice are removed from the scope of council funded advice services and that the overall advice budget is reduced. This proposal, coupled with the national decision to reduce the scope of funding provided by the Legal Services Commission means that it is unlikely that there will be free access to employment and immigration legal advice in the borough in the future.

However, by reducing the scope of service rather than simply reducing advice budgets pro rata, this means that the remaining budget can be spent on housing, debt and welfare benefits advice which the council considers to be a higher priority in the context of the significant changes being made to the welfare system.

The proposal seeks to:

- Remove £100,000 from total social welfare advice budgets, leaving a remaining advice budget in 2013/14 of £100,000, a reduction on the 2012/13 budget of just over 22%. (Currently approximately £100,000 of this is used to fund employment and immigration).
- Remove employment and immigration from the scope of Council funded advice services.
- Re-tender of remaining social welfare advice services with a reduced contract fee of not more than £100,000 in year one, to take effect from mid 2013 onwards, for a two year term.

The amount of funding available is broadly in line with the provision offered by neighbouring authorities.

#### **9. Who are the key stakeholders who may be affected by the changes proposed?**

- Current providers will be affected by the changes proposed and the Law Centre in particular will be affected by this proposal.
- Current recipients of employment and immigration services, along with potential future users of the service may also be affected.
- Immigrants (and their families) will be affected by this proposal.
- Providers in the commercial and not for profit sectors who also deliver these services may be positively affected by an increase in demand as a result of free provision ending.
- Customers seeking debt, housing and welfare benefit support may also be affected by this proposal. These services will be prioritised and re-commissioned as a result of this proposal.

#### **10. What impact will this proposal have on all the protected groups**

##### **Description of Service Users**

As there is currently no eligibility criteria, any member of the population is potentially a customer of the Internal Advice Team, Rochdale Law Centre and Citizens Advice Bureau.

By the nature of immigration work, which the Rochdale Law Centre deals with, there is a disproportionate level of service users from ethnic minorities. The current statistics from the Law Centre indicate that of all enquiries (not only employment and immigration), approximately 60% were from people of White British heritage, 12 – 14% Black and 24% Asian or Asian British. This suggests a disproportionate impact on the BME community. Data is not collected on other protected groups such as disability, carers, gender, age, religion/belief etc.

Data indicates that the use of the CAB is broadly in line with the demographic make up of the borough.

##### **Race Equality**

It is expected that there will be an unequal outcome on people of Black and Minority ethnic origin. The nature of immigration work means that by its nature, it will be more likely to be provided to this group.
<b>Disabled People</b>
It is expected that there may be an unequal impact on this group, although this is not possible to determine conclusively. The nature of the employment work done by the Law Centre includes handling discrimination issues, which may mean that people with a disability are more likely to use the service. However because this data is not routinely collected it is not possible to validate this potential impact.
<b>Carers</b>
It is expected that there may be an unequal impact on this group, although this is not possible to determine conclusively for the reasons stated above.
<b>Gender</b>
There is no evidence of an unequal impact on these groups
<b>Older and Younger People</b>
There is no evidence of an unequal impact on these groups.
<b>People who are Socio-Economically Disadvantaged</b>
It is expected that there will be an impact on people who are socio-economically disadvantaged. The proposal would mean that the council no longer funds free access to employment and legal advice services which would mean that these services will need to be paid for. However there are low cost providers in the market, including a new Community Interest Company set up by the Law Centre for this purpose.
<b>Religion or Belief</b>
This information is not captured, however the potential unequal impact highlighted under the protected characteristic of race may indicate that there would be an unequal impact on certain religious groups.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>
This information is not captured. It is not possible to determine whether there would be an unequal impact.
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>
This information is not captured. It is not possible to determine whether there would be an unequal impact.
<b>Pregnant Women or Those on Maternity Leave or Those who have given Birth in the Previous 26 weeks</b>
It is expected that there may be an unequal impact on this group, although this is not possible to determine conclusively for the reasons stated above.
<b>Marriage or Civil Partnership</b>
It is not considered that there would be an unequal impact on this group.

<b>11. What are the main conclusions arising from this analysis?</b>
The main conclusions are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There will be definite impact on people of BME origin, particularly in respect of immigration cases/enquiries.</li> <li>- There may be an impact on other protected groups, but this is inconclusive due to a lack of available data.</li> <li>- This impact of the withdrawal of employment and immigration from the scope of council funded advice services can be part mitigated by the provision of low cost alternatives within the market.</li> </ul>
<b>12. What measures do you propose to put in place to mitigate any adverse impacts?</b>

Possible Adverse Impact	Mitigation Measure
Impact on protected groups as stated above.	Ensure that the commissioned provider of advice services provides signposting, where required, to alternative providers of low cost employment and immigration services.

**What evidence do you have which demonstrates that these measures will be effective?**

There is an existing market for employment and immigration services. The Law Centre has itself set up a new Community Interest Company which charges a small fee for the provision of both employment and immigration advice.

**13. Please attach a copy of your consultation action plan.**

**Please briefly outline below who has been consulted and which consultation methods were used.**

We will consult with stakeholders as follows:

- Online via [www.rochdale.gov.uk](http://www.rochdale.gov.uk)
- Directly with existing advice service providers – Rochdale Law Centre and Rochdale and District CAB
- Directly with alternative providers to seek their views
- Directly with service users – a meeting will be set up in each township with senior service representatives present. These meetings will be advertised directly and via the existing providers.
- Reports will be available at each of the borough's libraries

**14. Please complete the mitigation action plan below.**

***Mitigation Action Plan***

Mitigation Measure	Action	Responsible Officer	End Date	Status
Ensure that the commissioned provider of advice services provides signposting, where required, to alternative providers of low cost employment and immigration services.	Regular liaison meetings			

**15. Equality impact analysis sign off by the Director of Service, and an Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Representative**

Name	Position	Date
		13 <sup>th</sup> August 2012
		4 <sup>th</sup> September 2012