



Financial Year	2017/18
Proposal no.	NH-2017-310
Directorate	Neighbourhoods

Savings Programme Pre-consultation Report	
Subject:	Proposal to review the Legal Advice: Welfare, Debt and Housing support

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Members consider the proposal detailed in this report which sets out a reduction of 20% on funding for the Legal Advice: Welfare, Debt and Housing Contract as a basis for consultation.

Reason for recommendation

- 1.2 It is considered that advice services can be delivered more efficiently whilst achieving the same outcomes. To assess this we would look at all alternative models of delivery.

2 Background

- 2.1 Under current Housing Legislation, 1996 Housing Act Part VII, and the Code of Guidance 2006, Councils have a statutory duty to have a strategy to prevent homelessness in their district. The Housing element of this Contract contributes towards this statutory responsibility

- 2.2 The need for advice relating to housing, debt and welfare in the borough is at an unprecedented level. This is likely to increase further in coming years. Recent Welfare reforms have increased the amount of people in need of this service, and the severity and complexity of residents needs has also increased.
- 2.3 The Council’s Contract for “Legal Advice: Welfare, Debt and Housing Advice” has been awarded to Rochdale Citizens Advice Bureau since 2015. The numbers of clients they have dealt with has increased by more than 10% year on year.
- 2.4 Therefore there is a risk that funding reductions will lead to people in vulnerable situations will not receive the advice and support they need. That will need to be managed by more efficient service delivery.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The saving proposal is 20.2% of the total budget for the area of service affected.

Table 1 provides detail of the proposal to review the Legal Advice: Welfare, Debt and Housing Contract

	Savings 2017/18		Savings 2018/19		Total savings	
	£k		£k		£k	
	On-going	One off	On-going	One off	On-going	One off
Employees						
Other Costs	85				85	
Income lost						
Net savings	85				85	
Additional income generated						
Total savings	85				85	
Implementation costs						
Total savings less implementation costs	85				85	

4 Asset implications

4.1 There are no asset implications arising from this report.

5 Voluntary Sector impact

5.1 A reduction in funding will/may impact on the current provider.

6 Consultation

6.1 The Council must ensure that it remains open-minded throughout the consultation period to all alternative proposals and expressions of interest.

7 Alternatives considered

7.1 Members could decide not to take the proposal forward and identify alternative savings proposals

8 Risk Assessment Implications

8.1 There is an overall risk that as demand is increasing, reducing funding will have significant impacts upon the most vulnerable residents of the borough. This will need to be managed by more efficient service delivery.

9 Legal Implications

9.1 The Council will be able to continue to meet its statutory obligations in relation to this service.

10 Personnel Implications

10.1 There are no personnel implications

11 Equalities Impacts

Workforce Equality Impacts Assessment

11.1 There are no workforce equality issues arising from this report

Equality/Community Impact Assessments

11.2 The equality/community issues arising from the issues raised in this report are set out in Appendix 1.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR SAVINGS PROPOSALS

1. Please state the name of the officers leading the EIA
X XXXXXXXX
2. Who has been involved in undertaking this assessment?
X XXXXXXXX
3. What is the scope of this assessment?
To assess whether this proposal disproportionately impacts upon any of the protected equality groups.
4
a). What does the function currently do?
b) .Describe the needs which this service meets?
a) An element of the Contracted work is statutory. Under current Housing Legislation, 1996 Housing Act Part VII, and the Code of Guidance 2006, Councils have a statutory duty to have a strategy to prevent homelessness in their district. The Housing element of this Contract contributes towards this statutory responsibility. The Service provides Welfare, Debt and Housing Advice to residents and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Advice via the telephoneii. Face to face appointments at 10 venues across the boroughiii. Represents people in court for Welfare Benefit, Housing and debt matters, where there is benefit to the clientiv. Provides appeal submissions to welfare benefit casesv. Deals with in depth case work, for example rescheduling debt and bankruptcies, benefit appeals and housing eviction applicationsvi. Gives Personal Budgeting Support for Universal Credit claimants
8,818 unique individuals were helped in 2015-16. This was the highest level ever (increased by 10% compared to 2014-15) and more than double compared to 2012-13.

b) The need for Advice relating to housing, debt and welfare in the borough is at an unprecedented level. This is likely to increase further in coming years. Recent Welfare reforms have increased the amount of people in need of this service, and the severity and complexity of residents needs has also increased. The advice service provides advice to those with specific housing needs.

5. What proposed changes do you wish to make?

Reducing the budget available by 20% which will require the service to be provided in a more efficient way. A review will be undertaken to consider re-tendering the contract or bringing all or some elements in house.

6. Who are the key stakeholders who may be affected by the proposed changes?

Citizens Advice Bureau and other advice providers

Citizens with housing, welfare and debt advice needs

7. What impact will this proposal have on all the protected groups?

There is a risk that the current service level will be reduced. However, this could be mitigated by a more efficient delivery model.

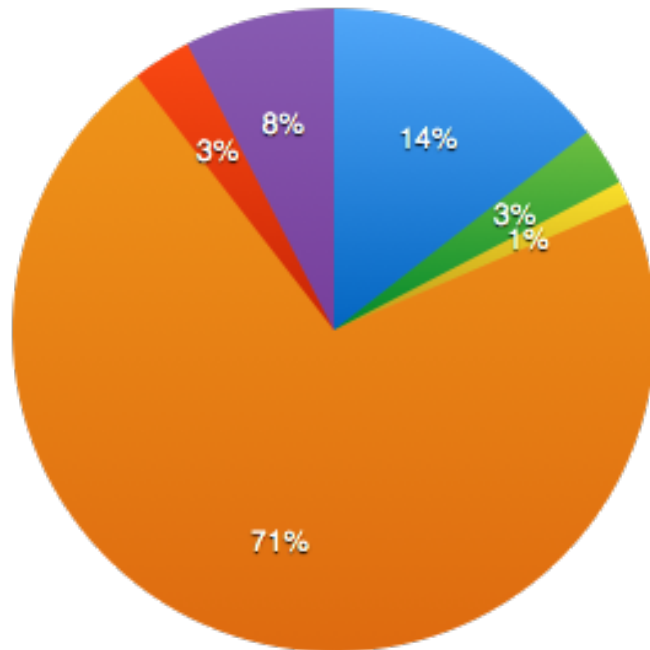
There is a risk that the increasing levels of demand will combine with the funding reduction to make it possible that some clients will not receive high-quality advice.

Race Equality

In relation to Rochdale Borough, the 2011 Census confirms the following data on ethnicity. The overall population of Rochdale Borough is 211, 699. Of these, 166, 481 are classified as white British (79%); and 45,218 (21%) as BME. BME groups now account for a greater proportion of the population than was the case in 2001. Pakistani is the largest population among the BME groups and now accounts for 10.5% (22,265) of the total population in 2011, having grown by over 40% over the past decade.

Figures relating to the ethnicity of current provider clients were last received for 2014-15. They are as follows:

● asian ● black ● mixed ● white british ● white other ● other

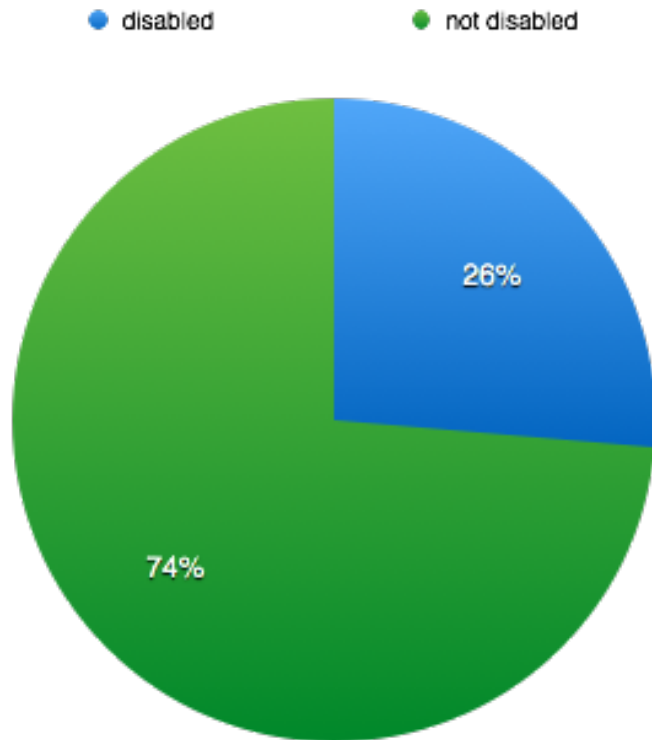


At 25%, the number of ethnic minority clients is slightly, but not significantly higher than the borough's population. Therefore there is no reason to consider that this group will be disproportionately affected by the proposal.

Disabled People

The 2011 Census confirms that 21% of the Borough consider themselves to be disabled or their activities are limited due to a health-related issue. This is an increase of 4.8% from 2001. Rochdale Borough has higher rates of residents noting a long-term health problem or disability when compared to Greater Manchester or England and Wales. In general terms, therefore, the levels of disability and associated health issues are acknowledged to be of relevance to this Borough.

Figures relating to whether CAB clients consider themselves to be disabled were last received for 2014-15. They are as follows:



At 26%, the number of ethnic minority clients is slightly, but not very significantly higher than the borough's population.

One of the most common enquiries dealt with by CAB is supporting Personal Independence Payment claims and appeals. These are needed by disabled people.

Therefore there is a risk that disabled people will be disproportionately affected. To mitigate this risk the Council will ensure that such enquiries are a prominent part of the service specification (whatever the delivery mechanism), to ensure a high level of support in this area is provided.

Carers

There is no data to suggest that this group will be disproportionately affected by this proposal.

Gender

The 2011 Census provides the following breakdown of figures for the Borough:

- there are 103,642 males (an increase of 3.9% from 2001, when there were 99,705); and
- there are 108,057 females (an increase of 2.3% from 2001, when there were 105,652).

This seems to indicate a relatively even split between male and female residents of the Borough

In 2014-15 58% of clients were female and 42% were male. This is fairly similar to the borough's population.

There is no data to suggest that this group will be disproportionately affected by this proposal.

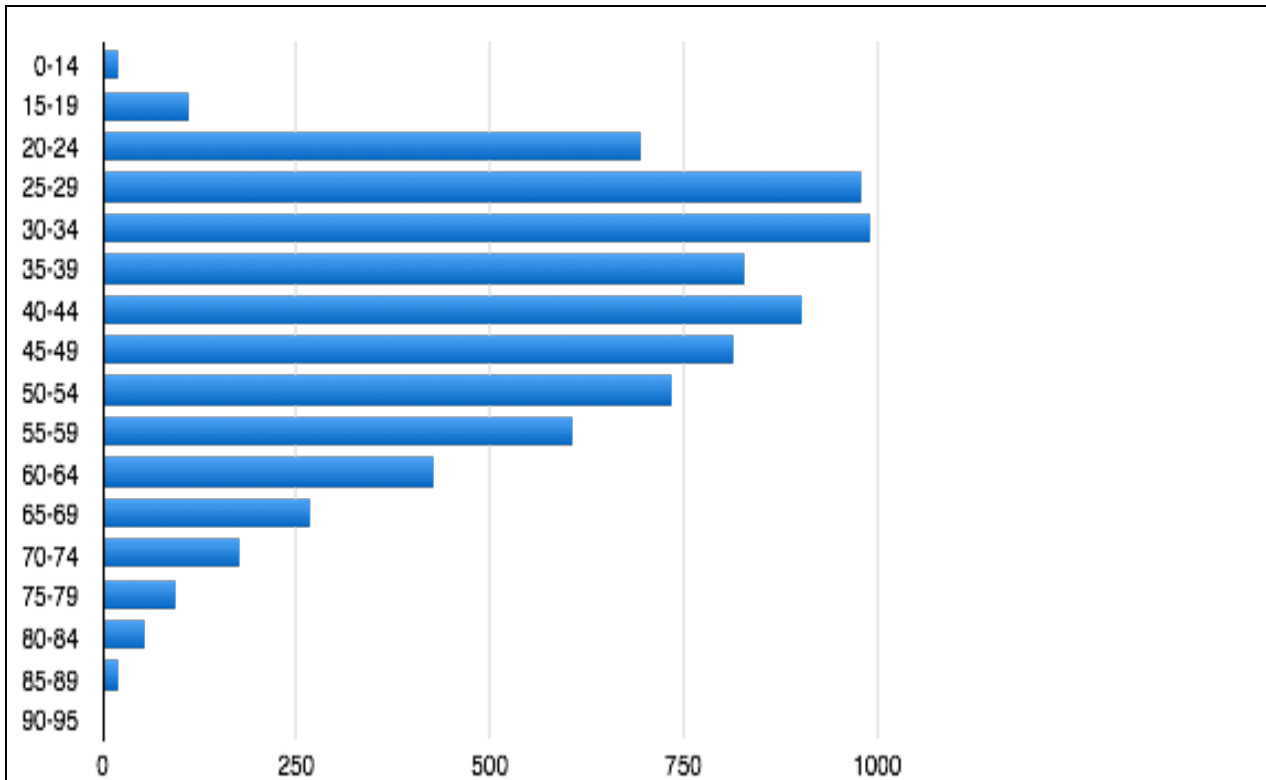
Age

The Census 2011 gives the following breakdown of the Borough's population by age:

Age group	No in 2011	%age in 2011	Proportional change from 2001
0 – 14	41,827	19.7	-1.7%
15 – 29	42,541	20.1	+1.5%
30 – 44	42,914	20.3	-1.8%
45 – 64	53,601	25.4	+1.8%
65+	30,816	14.6	+0.3%
Totals	211,619		

These figures indicate that the Borough has a growing number of (i) young adults and (ii) persons aged 45 – 64.

The following table lists the age ranges of Citizens Advice Bureau in 2014-15.



The clients are spread over the adult age population in a similar proportion to the borough's population.

There is no data to suggest that this group will be disproportionately affected by this proposal.

Armed Forces and Ex-Armed Forces Personnel

There is no data to suggest that this group will be disproportionately affected by this proposal.

Religion or Belief

The 2011 Census confirms the following religious groups in the Borough:

- Christian (128,186, or 60.6%, a decrease of 11.5% since 2001)
- No religion (40,014 or 18.9%, an increase of 8.1% from 2001)
- Muslim (29,426 or 13.9%, an increase of 4.5% from 2001)

Rochdale's proportion of Muslim residents exceeds the comparative figure for Greater Manchester (8.7%) and also England and Wales (4.8%).

There is no data to suggest that this group will be disproportionately affected by this proposal.

Sexual Orientation

The 2011 Census does not record this data directly. There is no reason to think that this Protected Group is particularly affected by this proposal.

Gender Reassignment

The 2011 Census does not record this data directly. There is no reason to think that this Protected Group is particularly affected by this proposal.

Pregnant Women or Those on Maternity Leave or Those who have given Birth in the Previous 26 weeks

The 2011 Census does not record this data directly. There is no data to suggest that this protected group is at particular risk.

Marriage or Civil Partnership

The 2011 Census shows that there are now fewer people in the Borough living as a married couple. In 2001, 40.3% of the population were not living as a couple and that figure has risen to 44.4% in 2011. The prime reason for this is that a higher percentage of people are now living as single, the number of people living as single has risen by 23.8% over the past decade and increased by 3.9% proportionally.

There are now 5,625 fewer people in the Borough living as a couple in a married or civil partnership than in 2001; this equates to a drop of 7.4%. This is a proportionally greater decrease than across Greater Manchester (3.1%) and England and Wales (1%).

There is no data to suggest that this protected group is at particular risk.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

What are the main conclusions and recommendations from this analysis?

The advice contract is not specific to any group and the conclusion is that this proposal would not disproportionately disadvantage any specific group based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief. The Council will take steps to ensure services to disabled people will continue to be prominent in future service delivery.

9. In the box below please provide details of who you will consult with on the proposals, when you consult, and the methods which you will use to consult. In the box below

<i>The Consultation and Inclusion Methodology Used</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific meetings with the Citizen's advice bureau • Public consultation through the Council's web site

10. Produce an action plan detailing the mitigation measures that you propose to put in place to address any adverse impacts.

Mitigation Measure	Action	Responsible Officer	Implementation Date	Review Date	Evaluation Measure
Reassessment of the service delivery through consideration of how the service is provided	Workshop with Members to look at the advantages of an in-house service or tendering the service	xxxxxx xxxxx	August 2016	March 2017	Efficient and effective service delivery
Include Personal Independence Payment claims and appeals in the service specification	Include Personal Independence Payment claims and appeals in the service specification	xxxxxx xxxxx	February 2017	March 2017	Service delivered for PIPs