

# DWP Proposal for Closures of Willesden and Kilburn Jobcentres

Since 2011, we have significantly fewer colleagues working within the department, we have found that many of our offices had spare space, In addition more and more of our services are being delivered on line. , We want to make sure that the offices which we work from continue to meet the changing needs of the people that use our services and that we deliver our services in an efficient and cost effective manner.

The changes we are making are not just within the borough of Brent but across the UK, as part of our continued drive to improve how we deliver public services for less money to the taxpayer. It does not mean we are reducing the support we offer to our customers.

Our priority remains the same – to make sure that our customers get the best possible support to get them into work.

Our overall strategy is to have fewer, but larger, offices. Across our operational network we plan to retain over 700 existing offices and open some new ones, meaning that overall the total number of offices we operate from is expected to reduce from over 900 to around 790.

In our jobcentres that means we are merging more offices, enabling us to offer our full range of services to claimants throughout our opening hours and so give them greater support in finding work. That is why in some cities we are merging smaller jobcentres into larger existing ones. We are also taking opportunities to co-locate jobcentres with local authorities and partner organisations where that makes sense.

We consulted claimants and external stakeholders on some of our plans for changes to jobcentres. Where proposals involved moving jobcentre services over three miles and 20 minutes away by public transport we conducted an online public consultation, through GOV.UK, before we made a decision. We did not consult the public about proposals for merging sites or co-locations where jobcentre services were being transferred to a location within the same area

We are committed to retaining a Jobcentre Plus network and to serving people in all areas of the country, to make sure they can continue to access the services they need. Increasingly people access many of our services online. This includes claiming benefits, looking for jobs and keeping us informed of their efforts to find work. We tailor our service so that face-to-face contact can be focused on those who need extra support from us.

We want to make sure that we can respond better to our customer needs, support the move towards Universal Credit and increase our ability to deliver services across the full working day.

The aim is to provide a better service in all jobcentres. We will move the IT equipment to the new office.

Jobseekers who have been claiming Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance for more than 13 weeks can apply for a [Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card](#). This

halves the cost of rail travel (all operators) and gives discount on some pay-as-you-go bus fares (subject to operator participation).

Furthermore, the Flexible Support Fund is also used to help with travel costs of carrying out various work search activities (for example, formal training) or job interviews.

If a jobseeker needs to attend the new jobcentre, we can [reimburse travel costs](#) if they are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit and are required to attend the jobcentre for appointments other than mandatory fortnightly appointments. For those claiming Employment and Support Allowance or Income Support, they are not required to attend the local jobcentre on a regular basis. Therefore, we will reimburse travel costs for each appointment you need to attend.

# Equality Analysis

## Evidence and Analysis

### Potential impact on members of the public, external stakeholders or partners

**Race or Ethnicity** – what potential impacts have been identified and how are they to be addressed

	Ethnic Minority	White
London Borough of Brent	63.73%	36.27%
National	24.60%	75.39%

Source: Census 2011 QS201EW (Ethnic group)

The percentage of ethnic minorities in the London Borough of Brent area is significantly higher than the national average.

Despite this variation, no evidence has been presented to suggest that the proposal would have an adverse impact on members of the public because of their race or ethnicity. It should be noted that all claimants should receive personalised tailored support, taking account of individual circumstance recognising capability (including health conditions), disability, language barriers and caring responsibilities. Claimants, including those who are vulnerable, are only asked to agree reasonable steps appropriate to individual circumstances.

DWP must make suitable provision to communicate with claimants and customers who do not speak English or Welsh (for people residing in Wales), or who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired. Where the client has no-one who can support them (or for new JSA claimants considered to be in a vulnerable situation) then staff may use the contracted interpreting services: Telephone interpreters are provided by the Big word. Face to face interpretation using the contracted supplier, Prestige, is also available but normally only used in a limited number of circumstances (primarily fraud interviews and interviews that require British Sign Language or non-spoken languages.)

DWP acknowledges that the proposals may increase travel time and costs for claimants when they are required to attend Harlesden JCP and Wembley JCP. This will be particularly so for those who currently live within easy reach of Willesden JCP.

The reimbursement of travel costs, out with mandatory attendance, is considered on an individual basis in line with DWP regulations nationally. This is not new and is the case for any claimant required to attend a jobcentre throughout the UK.

Concern about public transport is an everyday issue and will continue to be considered on an individual basis. However, DWP recognises that some claimants will be taking an unfamiliar journey: Work coaches will support claimants, using interpreting services as appropriate, over the transition period until they become familiar with new travel arrangements.

Claimants can also choose to attend a jobcentre that is closer to their home. Work coaches will help sign post claimants in such circumstances. There is no anticipated impact on members of the public, either in respect of those who share this protected characteristic or those who do not.

**Disability** – What potential impacts have been identified and how are they to be addressed

	Day-to-day activities limited a lot	Day-to-day activities limited a little	Day-to-day activities not limited
London Borough of Brent	6.96%	7.46%	85.58%
National	8.5%	9.4%	82.00%

Source: Census 2011 QS303EW (Long-term health problem or disability)

The percentage of the public in London Borough of Brent with a disability that limits day to day activities is similar to the national average. The data does not provide a breakdown of the types of disability or specific details on the type of impact that would be experienced. It is likely that those with a physical or mental impairment that affects either their mobility or ability to change site will be impacted by this proposal.

The Department has therefore considered the type of impact in the worst case scenario whilst recognising that in some cases the impact may be positive – for example, where the journey involves less time, distance or changes for the individual. It is recognised that the change of office can amount to a considerable difficulty for a disabled person either in walking this extra distance, or the change it will cause to their journey.

The Department considers that any negative impact can be mitigated as part of business as usual at the new building by applying existing policies and practices where a customer has difficulty attending the building. These policies and practices advance equality of opportunity by ensuring the disabled person can access the Department’s service. For example the Department can consider whether personal attendance is necessary at all or if a home visit can be arranged.

The Department has also taken into account that some disabled customers will have needs in relation to accessibility (e.g. wheelchair users). The new office building will be compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

**Gender** – what potential impacts have been identified and how are they to be addressed.

	Male	Female
London Borough of Brent	50.28%	49.72%
National	49.17%	50.82%

Source: Census Data 2011 QS104EW (Sex)

The proposal will have an impact on those with caring responsibilities (either children or disabled people) which is likely to contain a higher proportion of women.

The Department has considered the worst case scenario in assessing potential impacts of the proposal. In some cases the additional distances will result in a small increase in journey time for customers that can affect their caring responsibilities. For example, a mother will have to pick up their child from school at fixed times.

The Department considers that any negative impacts can be mitigated as part of business as usual at the new office by applying existing policies and practices where a customer has difficulty attending the office. For example the Department can be flexible about appointment times to accommodate caring arrangements. There are policies and procedures in place which will help to mitigate against possible impacts which largely affect females.

For those with young children, lone parents with children under the age of one are not required to attend a work coach interview but may choose to do so on a voluntary basis and any contact can be conducted by telephone or email.

Lone parents whose youngest child is between the age of 1 and 3 are required to attend mandatory interviews every 6 months, but may choose to engage more frequently on a voluntary basis. Once the youngest child reaches the age of 4 the claimant is required to attend work coach interviews quarterly, again they may choose to engage with their work coach more frequently on a voluntary basis.

Once the youngest child reached the age of 5 the claimant will claim Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) and attend on a fortnightly basis, travelling costs will be their personal responsibility. Travelling expenses can be refunded for any additional interviews that may be necessary. Claimants must be offered postal status when they have caring responsibilities and are unable to make arrangements for short-term care to cover their attendance, for example for a child during school holidays.

**Age** – what potential impacts have been identified and how are they to be addressed.

	16-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30-44	45-59	60-64
London Borough of Brent	3.53%	3.36%	11.21%	16.08%	35.35%	24.78%	5.69%
National	3.83%	4.02%	10.49%	10.57%	31.74%	30.01%	9.31%

Source: Census Data 2011 KS102EW (Age)

There is no evidence to suggest that the proposal would have a disproportionate negative impact on any age grouping, or affect the other aims of the equality duty in relation to this protected characteristic. There is no anticipated impact on members of the public, either in respect of those who share this protected characteristic or those who do not.

**Religion / Beliefs** – what potential impacts have been identified and how are they to be dealt with.

	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Other Religion	No Religion	Religion not stated
London Borough of Brent	41.48%	1.38%	17.82%	1.40%	18.65%	0.55%	1.21%	10.62%	6.90%
National	58.86%	0.15%	0.16%	0.04%	0.75%	0.33%	0.21%	32.66%	6.85%

Source: Census Data 2011 KS209EW (Religion)

The statistics for the London Borough of Brent show that there are a lower than national average Christians but higher than average Hindu and Muslims. Despite the differences from the national average, no issues have been identified as regards this protected characteristic. There is no anticipated impact on members of the public, either in respect of those who share this protected characteristic or those who do not.

### **Other protected characteristics**

#### **Sexual orientation, Gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership**

No data is collected on these protected characteristics.

The Department does not envisage that the proposal would have a particular adverse impact on those with any of these protected characteristics, or affect the other aims of the equality duty in relation to these groups. There may be a need for additional room for confidential conversation; DWP will provide this provision for this possibility.

There is no anticipated impact on members of the public, either in respect of those who share this protected characteristic or those who do not.

**Any Other Equality Impacts** – what potential impacts have been identified that are not covered by the above categories and how are they to be addressed – None

### **DWP Outreach and Co-Location:**

We will continue to provide support to through our troubled families advisers, currently co-located within Brent LA alongside the social work team, providing employment and skills support.

We have a work coach working with the care leaver team again within Brent local authority providing employment and skills support to care leavers including appropriate access to relevant benefits. We have part funded specialist support for care leavers in particular for those with multiple barriers to employment.

For those with health conditions, the government has recently devolved funding to local authorities nationally to commission the Work and Health Programme, the Programme has been commissioned by West London Alliance with significant input from Brent Council Officers. The programme will provide tailored employment and skills support for those with health conditions; multiple barriers and long term unemployed. The programme will commence on 26.02.18 in Brent.

In addition West London Alliance have received part funding through DWP to deliver the Mental Health Trailblazer which has been live since April 2017, providing bespoke employment support to those with mild to moderate mental health conditions. The Programme is delivered by Twinings Enterprise on behalf of West London Alliance.

More recently DWP are match funding the employment team who are going to deliver employment advice and guidance through community hubs which will be located in Willesden, Kilburn, Harlesden and St. Raphael's Estate. DWP will provide

employment and skills support alongside the employment team managed by the council, with the aim of having a more holistic support offer working in partnership with housing, health and financial inclusion advice and support.