



Community Advice for Barnet: Equalities Impact Assessment

A Research and Consultancy Report for the London
Borough of Barnet

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Equality Impacts Introduction

Overwhelmingly the Equality Impacts relate to the size of the budget available to deliver the service. The direct consequences of the changes to the budget are therefore considered first.

There are a great many equality consequences of specific proposals presented both in the outline for the proposed Community Advice Service and the Needs Assessment. These are looked at individually. Even where these have, of themselves, a positive outcome, the overall impact caused by a budget reduction cannot be ignored. These are however, as far as possible, examined on their own merits.

It is not possible to calculate precise impacts for three reasons:

- the data available on the current use of advice services is not sufficiently comprehensive or compatible
- further consequences of the budget reduction cannot be predicted with certainty. Current advice providers are independent organisations and will make their own decisions about whether they can or wish to continue providing advice with reduced or withdrawn funding from the borough.
- Other funders equally are independent organisations and will form their own view on the viability and desirability of continuing their own funding to organisations. This is discussed at some length in part 5.7 of the Needs Analysis. The borough needs to be aware of the potential for an unfortunate compounding of their own budget reductions caused by other funders' views of the stability, efficiency, quality assurance and financial viability of organisations continuing to offer advice services without the borough's core funding.

Ways of mitigating adverse effects have been looked at and are given below but the fundamental conclusion must be that whatever the undoubted merits of the proposed changes, a significant budget reduction will have an adverse effect on the borough's residents who need advice. Those who need advice tend to be from disadvantaged groups in the community and are in large measure covered by equality legislation.

For illustrative purposes only, quantitative calculations have been based on a 40 percentage point reduction in funding simply as this is the extreme high end of the range of overall public sector savings which the government is seeking nationally. Clearly a 40 percentage point reduction in funding does not always translate into 40 percentage points fewer individuals seen, but is used as a guide. We wish to make it absolutely clear that any budget reduction is driven by financial considerations and not by the declining need for advice in Barnet.

Detailed Impacts

(1) Development of the Service			
“This service is being tendered at a time of severe financial constraint and on a significantly reduced commissioning budget compared with recent years. It is anticipated that this will require re-focusing resources on specific aspects of local need rather than providing a more universal service”			
Existing service	New service to be tendered for	Equalities impact	Mitigation of that Impact
Existing budget	Budget reduced. Calculations in the next column are based on an illustrative 40% reduction.	<p>This is taking place when objective evidence suggests that disadvantage in the borough is growing (based on shift in Index of multiple deprivation scores 2004 to 2007). Local anecdotal evidence collected in research for the report suggests this trend continues. The extent of the impact depends primarily on the extent of the cut in budget. Many residents including people from all equalities groups will not be helped who previously were helped. Deprived communities contain disproportionate numbers of people from equality groups.</p> <p>Overall reduction of service at a time of growing need will impact on all groups.</p> <p>Specifically, current CAB core grant permits three days a week of home visiting. If lost, this will primarily impact on older people and disabled people for</p>	<p>The needs analysis is designed to identify groups who need help most and defines a more targeted service so resources are directed to them. However, this will still mean a reduction in services to equalities groups, as with others.</p> <p>The guiding principle adopted in MBARC’s Needs Assessment (para 6.2.1) is to make high quality advice accessible to all communities, rather than provide often unsustainable and small dedicated services for particular groups. That should maximise efficiency and impact and contain, to an extent, the adverse effect.</p> <p>Concentration of the service base and outpost locations in the areas of most intense need for advice will assist in meeting the needs of the most</p>

		<p>whom attending an office based interview may be impossible. Home visiting is very expensive and it is unlikely that the new contractor will be able to replicate this service.</p> <p>Due to incompleteness and incompatibility of available data, it is not possible to calculate an accurate impact. It is however possible to calculate the impact using data from CAB and Barnet Law Service only. While this is a significant underestimate of the total impact, it serves to give an idea of the scale of the impact and where the consequences would lie.</p> <p>Were a cut of 40% proposed, then each year 3,769 people may fail to receive a service. 1,598 would be men, 2171 would be women. 224 would be older people, 1,878 would be from BME communities and 622 would be disabled people.</p> <p>The impact falls disproportionately on women simply as they are the greater proportion of users. Some smaller centres have up to 58% male usage but overall women are more likely to seek advice than men. This may reflect choices made by couples as to which partner seeks advice and it may reflect some equality issues in terms of locations and opening times. Without a detailed local analysis of the reasons for this, we would not wish to</p>	<p>deprived members of all specified equality groups. For example Edgware, Burnt Oak and West Hendon have the most people from BME communities.</p> <p>It would however adversely affect older people overall as resources would be shifted away from areas with high populations of older people. Colindale and Burnt Oak have the least people over 75 years old. The ANARAK calculation uses people over 75 as an element in its calculation and so this is factored into the assessment of need. Additionally, the council has mapped the increase in deprivation among older people and confirmed that it shows a similar pattern to the increase in deprivation overall (with with some increase in Mill Hill as the only additional concern). We therefore conclude that the older people in the targeted wards are the most in need of advice. The proposed model reflects need in the older population even though it does not reflect their total numbers.</p> <p>The issue of gender is considerably more complex as it could be argued that current services are not sufficiently accessed by men though this is probably not too much of a concern (see left). The key issues in making the service as accessible as</p>
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		<p>comment further.</p> <p>Barnet’s population is 51% female in the 18-64 range and 56% in the 65-84 range rising to 68% in the 85¹ and over range. To an extent this pattern of use also reflects the population.</p> <p>No data is available on faith.</p> <p>Cuts on this scale whether applied across the board or targeted will threaten the viability of organisations. Should organisations close, the impacts are, of course, greater and investment into the borough by their other funders may be lost.</p>	<p>possible to all men and women alike are venues which are seen as safe, accessible (physically, by public transport and culturally) together with opening hours and methods of delivery which include access for people in full time “9-5” work.</p> <p>The approach adopted has been to focus on the parts of the community most likely to be in need of advice and not just to target specific groups.</p>
Existing service	New service to be tendered for	Equalities impact	Mitigation of that Impact
Grant funding for multiple organisations providing an advice service.	Single contract, (though may include sub-contractors).	<p>Smaller specialist organisations may not be able to provide as much service or may not be able to continue to operate. These include some helping specific ethnic / national groupings.</p> <p>Project funding may be harder to source if core funding is withdrawn which may impact disproportionately on equalities groups. Agencies losing significant core funding may not appear sufficiently</p>	<p>The primary mitigation is that the service is being re-specified through the needs analysis to bring target help to those who most need it. As above, the service must seek to make itself accessible to the whole community and must, for instance, have staff with language skills or sufficient access to interpreters (including British Sign Language). This involves an expense but the outline costings in the Needs</p>

¹ London Borough of Barnet, Insight Team, 2010

		<p>financially stable to attract the investment of other funders or potential funders. This can lead to a compounding effect whereby this is a loss in addition to borough's funding. Those agencies which currently disproportionately serve a particular community, such as the African Refugee Community and Iranian Community Centre, will be disproportionately affected. 900 people from BME communities, 58% of them men, would lose their service if these centres closed. It is not possible to predict the actions of independent sovereign agencies and it is therefore impossible to predict the actual impact.</p> <p>Barnet Council is not the only funder of advice in the Borough. In the absence of Council funding it will be for independent management committees in each organisation to decide the level of service (if any) they wish to provide utilizing other funding sources. Some reduction of choice is inevitable and a considerable reduction likely. This makes it particularly critical that the chosen supplier is able to deliver equality of access and is not seen as being run by, or for any particular part of the community e.g. more open to men or women or linked to a faith, ethnic group or age group.</p>	<p>Analysis take account of that.</p> <p>Active monitoring of the decisions of current advice providers will be needed - if for example, an existing service closes. Barnet CAB current grant conditions of funding include an outreach service marketed to residents in areas where organisations have made the Council aware that this may happen.</p> <p>Should a supplier be appointed who is seen as having links with a particular sector of the population (for instance a charity working with older or disabled people), a great deal of work will be needed to brand the Community Advice Service separately from the supplier's other activities.</p> <p>It cannot be denied that the services to disadvantaged residents will reduce and the best that can be achieved is to minimise the impact on disadvantaged groups by ensuring they have equal access to the Community Advice Service. That is an active process of service adjustment and marketing, not a passive one.</p>
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Existing service	New service to be tendered for	Equalities impact	Mitigation of that Impact
<p>Services are funded where they offer an appropriate service in their own right.</p>	<p>The service is being commissioned against a detailed specification. The Contractor should configure the service so that it complements other available services, both local and national.</p>	<p>By using the needs analysis, services should be more closely targeted at disadvantaged people most in need of advice. This approach permits a more active engagement with specific and changing needs and would have a positive impact on the equality agenda if the change were budget neutral.</p>	

Existing service	New service to be tendered for	Equalities impact	Mitigation of that Impact
Broad grant conditions.	Regular performance management and monitoring with agreed indicators.	<p>This can only help to drive up sustainable quality for those who can be helped. Proper and consistent monitoring of service use provides information to assist in appropriately responding to both failures to reach particular groups as well as the changing demographics.</p> <p>The change of approach would have a positive impact on the equality agenda if the change was budget neutral.</p>	

Existing service	New service to be tendered for	Equalities impact	Mitigation of that Impact
Open to all within the parameters of the service provided.	Tenderers and contractors are encouraged to target resources in line with the objectives set out for the service and the Needs Analysis. This may mean not dealing with all enquiry types or all levels of the 'hierarchy' of advice.	This does not disadvantage any equalities groups. If anything it can be considered a positive impact as the active seeking out of clients would be targeted at those who need it most, which would disproportionately favour equalities groups. Again the change of approach would have a positive impact on the equality agenda if the change were budget neutral.	
Existing service	New service to be tendered for	Equalities impact	Mitigation of that Impact
Generally, clients are left to approach the services at will.	Contractor to build in a preventative approach, both in configuring the service and in resource allocation. This may mean moving resources 'upstream'. Contractor to be clear on approach to encouraging residents to seek advice early.	This does not disadvantage any equalities groups. If anything it can be considered a positive impact as actively seeking out of clients would be targeted at those most in need, which would disproportionately favour equalities groups.	
Clients are increasingly triaged to make best use of resources.	The Contractor will take a robust approach to encouraging self-help, building confidence and providing the tools to support this, while ensuring help <i>is</i> available to those who most need it.	By definition, this is designed to maximise help to those who most need it within available resources, many of which will be people in the equalities groups.	
Existing service	New service to be tendered for	Equalities impact	Mitigation of that Impact

<p>Services tend to be provided face-to-face, but increasingly via telephone</p>	<p>Services will move to cheaper channels including e-mail and online where appropriate for the customer. This is consistent with the Council's approach to customer service.</p>	<p>This will allow more people to be helped per unit resource and may also expand access to equalities groups. It has a number of impacts:</p> <p>Positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May increase contact with home-bound clients who can use ICT. This is a radical approach and needs to be monitored to provide evidence of success or failure. The growth of ICT use among older people should not be underestimated • MBARC's experience suggests that refugee communities and immigrant communities are disproportionately high users of ICT as email provides contact with communities they have left. There is some evidence that users of self help packs whose first language is not English find on-line support better than telephone support². • Some people with disabilities, such as sensory, speech and mobility disabilities may be empowered by better access to email or on-line services. 	<p>Active engagement will be needed with agencies representing the potentially disadvantaged groups including the borough's own Social Care providers to identify specific solutions. This applies particularly to the initial contacts. Effective triage will ensure that those with real and significant need for advice will receive it in a manner which benefits them.</p> <p>The service should monitor the drop out rate after triage to see if a particular part of the community is more prone to not being able to take up the available advice.</p> <p>The real barrier is being able to make the initial contact. This will require the engagement of community organisations and statutory services that are able to support that first step.</p>
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² Still to be published research on an assisted self-help debt package

		<p>Negative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in need of advice whose first language is not English find the telephone a difficult means of communication as it has no non-verbal cues. This disadvantages BME communities and indirectly some faith groups. • Despite the comment above ICT is not a solution for many older people and the reduction of home visiting will impact adversely on both perceived quality and access to advice • Some people with disabilities will similarly be disadvantaged if there is no ICT which supports their disability or they lack the skills to use it. • People with some mental health issues may be particularly disadvantaged by the lack of immediately available face to face drop in advice. <p>Correctly delivered, the reduction in the proportion of work carried out does not, of itself, adversely affect equality groups. However, the reduction in overall capacity of the service will adversely affect equality groups as discussed above.</p>	
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Existing service	New service to be tendered for	Equalities impact	Mitigation of that Impact
Providers operate primarily from their own premises (with outreach as appropriate).	Contractor aims to co-locate with other public services (with outreach as appropriate).	<p>While there are no negative impacts as a result of this in principle, the likely reduction in the number of locations from which advice is available will impact particularly on older and disabled people who need face to face advice but find travel difficult.</p> <p>Choice of locations and opening hours is a critical access issue for many groups such as women, particularly those from certain faith groups. Well lit and welcoming premises must be chosen.</p>	<p>This can be mitigated by providing services in a few carefully chosen locations where priority groups of people naturally go about their regular business.</p> <p>The temptation to provide regular multiple locations should be resisted as the travel time for advisors seriously impacts on the time available for advice giving and thus on overall capacity.</p>
Existing service	New service to be tendered for	Equalities impact	Mitigation of that Impact
The Council provided 'second tier' welfare benefits advice to other advisers (until February 2010).	The Contractor acts as the lead provider and local expert on welfare benefits and provides second tier advice and training on a range of topics.	<p>The equalities impacts of the loss of the Welfare Benefits Unit were considered at the time and some mitigating action taken. These are not looked at again here.</p> <p>The needs analysis envisages the Community Advice Service delivering second tier support to other professionals who are advising their own client.</p> <p>It also envisages the service taking the lead on informing the general public and professionals on the coming changes to the benefit</p>	

		<p>system.</p> <p>It does not, however, see the service taking on the role of delivering specialist level consultancy to other trained welfare rights advisors. That role should lie with specialist providers such as Barnet Law Service.</p> <p>Given the willingness of other professionals to use the service in this way rather than trying to refer on every welfare rights related issue, this should disproportionately help people in equalities groups and as long as the balance of resources is appropriate, this can be viewed as a positive impact.</p>	
(2) Impacts of Proposals in the Needs Assessment for Configuration of the Community Advice Service			
n/a	Specialist work should be done only when there is no specialist to refer on to (6.2.3.ii).	<p>This proposal is aimed at maximising the number of people who can be served by the service and achieving the maximum outcomes for disadvantaged people in the borough.</p> <p>Simply, specialist work takes more advisor time and within a restricted budget decisions need to be taken about the most effective focus for the service. There will be cases where because of a permutation of the lack of a specialist supplier, the</p>	<p>At a strategic level, the availability of specialist advice needs to be monitored.</p> <p>At a specialist level a greater distance of travel is acceptable (or at least for many inevitable) and services physically outside the borough need to be included in this assessment provided they are available to and accessible to the borough's residents.</p>

		<p>sum involved and the importance of principle and precedent for others that some specialist work will need to be done.</p> <p>While it should have an overall positive impact on equality groups, it will disadvantage some individuals who are unable to have their specialist needs met. The issue is one of the volume of available resources not the chosen approach.</p>	<p>Should this prove to be a significant problem the service design needs to be re-examined but one specialist case typically costs a little over three more straightforward cases in advisor time.</p> <p>Hard choices are needed about where precious resources are allocated.</p>
<p>Advice is provided on a demand led basis</p>	<p>Focus resources on welfare benefits advice and basic debt advice (6.2.3.v).</p>	<p>Welfare benefits issues are key to many equality groups. Older people and disabled people have specific benefit issues as do people from abroad and indirectly some faith groups.</p> <p>Within the available budget this should focus more resource on equalities groups and provide the greatest contribution to the economic well being of the borough.</p> <p>It needs to be emphasised that this is the focus for the council funded contribution to advice services aimed at ensuring an effective and efficient use of the borough's money. It is not a prescription for all advice services in the borough.</p> <p>Nonetheless, this has the effect of</p>	<p>At a strategic level, the availability of advice in other areas needs to be monitored.</p> <p>It is possible that this may be provided by the same agency or firm as that holding the contract to deliver the Community Advice Service using other sources of funding.</p> <p>As above, if the other services are not available, hard choices are needed and the greatest impact on the economic well being of the borough's residents may be considered the over-riding factor in the allocation of resources and would seem to be justifiable on equality grounds.</p>

		<p>reducing the available funding for consumer and general legal advice, employment, housing and immigration advice.</p> <p>Evidence of people Not in Employment or Training (NEET) suggests lack of employment advice will impact adversely on the white British community. Anecdotal evidence and experience elsewhere suggests it will also impact on workers from abroad. Any reduction in the availability of employment advice may adversely affect women and BME communities who are more likely to be discriminated against in the workplace.</p> <p>Housing advice is subject to a separate tender for the borough's funding. However, it should be noted that the separation of housing advice in this way will impair the prospects for holistic advice to individuals and this could disadvantage some groups - for instance victims of domestic violence who are mainly women and may need housing and benefit advice simultaneously. The relationship between the services delivered by these two funding streams and the impact on individuals needs to be considered.</p>	
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		<p>Immigration is considered below.</p> <p>Lack of consumer and general legal advice affects all whose resources are such that they cannot afford to engage a private solicitor. As such it will impact adversely on all low income groups and thus impact on most equality groups.</p>	
As above	All immigration work should be avoided unless the provider is already a qualified and OISC registered provider. (6.2.3.v)	<p>This follows on from the above with the additional concern over the complexity and potential consequences of immigration advice.</p> <p>Again, it concerns what is done with the council's money not what service the provider offers from their overall resources.</p> <p>Clearly any reduction in immigration advice impacts on BME communities almost exclusively. The impact is not calculable as it depends on how advice providers, be they the Community Advice Service Provider or not, choose to allocate their other resources.</p> <p>However it should be noted that Of the 15,582 lines of Barnet CAB data provided, 552 have enquiry type coded as "immigration and nationality" and</p>	<p>In significant measure the need for immigration advice at a specialist level should be catered for by the LSC's contracts with advice agencies and solicitors.</p> <p>The need for lower level immigration advice should be monitored.</p> <p>If the contractor for the Community Advice Service were to be an agency or firm already providing immigration advice, the decision about whether and how much immigration advice the service should give is a choice about the allocation of resources.</p>

		<p>538 have Part 1 Description coded as IMM (immigration). This accounts for approximately 3.5% of all cases³. Of Barnet Law Service's 2009/20010 cases, 125 clients (36%) had immigration matters. In addition, smaller services interviewed whose core funding is being ended give some immigration advice. 5.6% of East Finchley's advice is Immigration, African Refugee Community and Iranian Community Centre who between them see about 180 people (20% of advice work). However two thirds of these are referred on in the case of the African Refugee Community. Similar figures are not available for the Iranian Community Centre, nor is it possible to track whether these referrals appear in Law Service or CAB figures.</p> <p>It must again be stressed that the Council is not the only funder of this work. Nonetheless, unless other funders step in or agencies are able to divert other resources to this work, some of these people who come mainly from BME communities would, at best, have to travel further to obtain advice.</p>	
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³ As analysed by London Borough of Barnet.

		At worst advice would not be available to them at all.	
(3) Specific Issues Raised by Stakeholders During Consultation			
	The draft report overlooks impacts on ethnicities not covered in census segmentation, e.g. Iranian, Arab-speaking nations, Romanians, Poles, etc.	These are impossible to quantify as reliable population data and predictions do not give this level of detail. Populations from the EU accession states particularly tend to have a high level of churn making effective planning to meet their needs almost impossible. Communities likely to be in poorly paid employment, prevented from working by immigration status will undoubtedly be impacted by any reduction in employment and immigration advice and probably disproportionately so. They will also suffer from any reduction in welfare benefits advice, particularly at the specialist level as their entitlements or otherwise are complex.	The advice network in the borough should work with the council's planning staff to monitor the population movements and consider adaptation of services. Once more, all the services which are needed will not be able to be provided and priority choices have to be made.
	Not doing specialist work impacts on people with the severest difficulties as there is not (as LSC maintains) adequate provision. Impacts are particular acute on income-poor people, due to LSC's restrictive criteria. It will affect the ability to follow through with clients if generalist advisers	Again, this point is accepted. The individuals affected are more likely to come from disadvantaged parts of the community and from the statutory equality groups. Despite the steps proposed to mitigate the impact, individuals will be left without the specialist advice	Within the limited budget, choices have to be made. One average case pursued at specialist level is a little over three average matters not pursued at a casework level and a less calculable number of pro-active, preventative early interventions.

	<p>cannot refer on because of inadequate specialist provision.</p>	<p>they need and cannot afford to buy privately.</p>	<p>It is not contested that specialist services are necessary nor that the proposed model will fail to meet the need for them.</p> <p>Rather the view taken is that by trying to prevent matters reaching that stage a greater amount of effect can be had across the community.</p>
	<p>Disability access, hearing difficulties, physical access etc. seem not to have been taken into account. In particular, the report needs to include the DabB home visiting service as this is a key part of enabling disabled people to access the service.</p>	<p>A reduction in the overall level of service will, as discussed above, impact adversely on people with a whole range of disabilities.</p> <p>A capacity for home visiting where absolutely necessary must be maintained or this impact will be unacceptable.</p>	<p>The Community Advice Service must develop a creative approach to try to minimise this impact.</p> <p>Work with groups of people to stimulate, for instance, benefit take up and support proper completion of forms at the outset can prevent the need for individual casework.</p> <p>The second tier function of providing support to other professionals who are working with clients face to face must be used.</p> <p>Work must also be done to see what means of communication people can use rather than what they would prefer to use. This will see a reduction in customer satisfaction and some loss of effectiveness.</p>

	<p>The needs of the many clients with mental health problems seem not to be taken into account.</p>	<p>Any reduction in time available with clients and particularly instantly accessible drop in services will impact adversely on people with mental health problems.</p> <p>Impact will be particularly felt by people with relatively low level mental health problems, particularly anxiety related issues.</p>	<p>Some level of mitigation can be achieved for people who are in touch with other statutory and voluntary services by use of the second tier advice.</p> <p>Similarly good liaison with voluntary and professional caring organisations and the ability to provide high quality second tier advice quickly will to a limited extent mitigate this impact.</p>
	<p>The recommendation is to specialise in welfare benefits / etc but a holistic approach to helping is needed otherwise some problems / people are missed.</p>	<p>This may have an equalities impact in that people who find it difficult to access advice would be better served by a service which can deal holistically with their problems. There are however few agencies which can effectively and efficiently deal with all issues at all levels without either wasting precious specialist time on simple matters or risking negligent advice for advisors out of their depth.</p>	<p>The ability to limit this impact is dependent on two things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effectiveness of the triage system in identifying all the problems a person has and referring them on as appropriate. • The availability of the other types of advice which are needed. <p>Given both of these, the impact could actually be positive but within the likely budgetary constraints. Limiting the negative impacts is likely to be the aim.</p> <p>The issue here is about the focus and effectiveness of a relatively small resource in the Community Advice Service.</p>
	<p>A 'mainly-phone' service will be</p>	<p>Using the telephone as the most</p>	<p>'Mainly-phone' must not be allowed</p>

	<p>difficult for people with poor English.</p>	<p>common means of making first contact will undoubtedly disadvantage those whose first language is not English and this will impact on BME groups and indirectly on faith groups.</p>	<p>to mean 'only phone'. There is no doubt that the telephone is an efficient method of delivery for advice providers and increasingly for the public.</p> <p>There is beginning to be evidence of the effectiveness of email for some people from abroad as it gives them time to organise and compose answers and questions which they would not have face to face.</p> <p>Access to service must be maintained and interpreters used where necessary and the advice costings used in the needs analysis reflect this.</p>
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A note on LGBT communities

The advice service at the HIV clinic which might disproportionately affect gay men is run by Camden CAB and is thus unaffected by these proposals. There are no specialist LGBT advice services impacted by the funding changes proposed here. Examination of over 15,000+ lines of anonymised Barnet CAB data for 2009-10 shows only one case coded as discrimination relating to sexual orientation; and none of the domestic violence cases coded as being related to LGBT relationships⁴. This does not exclude the possibility that there are others uncoded, but suggests their numbers are few. Provided any resident identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender can still approach any new provider on matters specifically related to LGBT people or any other matter, then we are unable to see any other specific impacts beyond the overall reduction in the level of service. Accordingly no more detailed analysis is offered.

⁴ As analysed by London Borough of Barnet.