
Written Ministerial Statement

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Social Development

Social Security Agency: Customer First Evaluation Decision and Commencement of Roll-out

Published at 4.00pm on Wednesday 9 March, 2011

The Minister for Social Development

(Mr Attwood): I wish to update the Assembly on the outcome of the Social Security Agency's Customer First Pilot in North District, Evaluation and commencement of roll-out.

Members will recall that the Customer First initiative had been brought forward by my predecessor, Margaret Ritchie and that a pilot of the proposed changes has been operational in a number of SSA local offices for almost 12 months now. During that time a robust evaluation has been carried out. I have given the outcomes of this careful consideration and today I can confirm and report to the Assembly that the evaluation report has concluded that from an Equality perspective no differential impacts for any of the S75 groupings have been identified for either customers or staff as a result of the new service delivery arrangements. Indeed, it is my view that this initiative is proven to deliver service improvements.

Therefore today, I am agreeing with the positive Evaluation report and have accepted the Agency's recommendation to proceed with roll-out commencing with the Agency's Belfast West and Lisburn District. The implementation arrangements for these offices and rollout to other areas will now be an operational matter for the Agency and further details will be available from them shortly.

Full details of the outcomes of the Evaluation can be found in the Customer First Evaluation Report (the report can be accessed at: <http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/ssa/sbr/sbr-publications.htm>).

I am grateful to all who contributed to the success of this initiative.