

7<sup>th</sup> January 2013

Agenda Item: 8

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR PERSONAL CARE AND SUPPORT (YOUNGER ADULTS)**

### **SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE EFFICIENCY PROJECT**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report informs the Committee of the work completed on an activity analysis relating to adults social care staffing and seeks approval for a further piece of work to identify efficiency savings within the Social Work establishment.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. As part of the Organisational Redesign project, an activity analysis was undertaken to identify areas where a more efficient use of social care workers' time could be identified in order to ensure that a smaller staff establishment would be able to meet the increasing demand for services in the future.
3. Phase one of the social care workforce analysis has provided some useful insights into the time being spent by social workers on their core, support and diversionary activities during the course of their working day.
4. However, the current approach and resources available are unable to generate sufficient volume of observations to provide a reliable sample size.
5. The first phase of the research indicated a number of areas for further exploration as they offered opportunities for time and cost savings. These include:
  - Reallocation of core and non-core tasks
  - Potential for reducing travel time
  - Improving Frameworki navigation, processes and data quality.
6. The extended analysis will provide a more robust and representative basis for investigating each of these areas in more depth, as well as potentially identifying further areas of opportunity through a thorough analysis of the activities of social workers within each service area and across each region within the county.
7. The research is to be conducted within a single one month period to ensure that the observations are made under consistent conditions. Spreading the research over a longer period in a highly changeable environment could skew the results. Roles other than social

workers are not to be included within the analysis but the learning and efficiency gains achieved will be replicable across other staff groups.

8. The proposed scope will ensure that the data gathered reflects any statistically significant variances between service areas and geographies in the:
  - Mix of activities performed and the spread between core processes and professional support.
  - Way in which processes are applied through the social care pathway.
  - Extent to which the findings of the work performed to date are confirmed and the validity of the potential opportunities described above.
  - Identification of opportunities for process improvement and cashable benefits.
9. It is proposed to utilise social care students to shadow front line social care staff and record activity types, volumes and timings. The Research Officer would lead research and provide training and templates to capture the details of the observations. The observations would be performed over the course of one month. It is assumed that the university would release the students to work as unpaid interns on the basis that the research activity would be a valuable learning exercise and could count towards their qualifications. An approach is being made to Nottingham University to establish the availability of the students with a response expected by 21 December 2012. It is planned to commence the research in February 2013.
10. The advantage of this approach is that the students would have a good level of understanding of the workings of a social care department and familiarity with the nature of the work to be observed. Additionally the students are likely to be engaged by the nature of the research and see connections with their own studies and professional development, and data gathering will be through an impartial source.
11. However the students are likely to require considerable support and training to ensure that they collect relevant and comprehensive data. The existing temporary Research Officer post which has undertaken the initial pilot work will require further extension in order to provide support for this project. The incremental costs for the Research Officer would be approximately £14,000 (plus on costs) for a six month period, covering the set-up, monitoring and evaluation of the research.

## **Other Options Considered**

12. The department has considered hiring agency staff to conduct the research in the same manner as described above. The incremental costs for the agency workers would be in the region of £98,000 for the period of data collection. The incremental costs for the Research Officer would be approximately £14,000 (plus on costs), as stated above. The advantages of this approach would be that suitable resources are likely to be readily available in the current employment climate, and data gathering will be through an impartial source. However, the disadvantages are that the level of costs is significantly higher than for the recommended option, the agency workers would be likely to need far more initial training and familiarisation. It may be more challenging to motivate agency staff to be scrupulous in their recording over the course of the research period, and there is a higher potential for misreporting by a data gathering team who have little or no knowledge of the subject matter.

13. Consideration was also given to self reporting by staff. The Research Officer would develop recording templates and guidance to equip front line social care staff to record their activities during the course of a month. The advantages of this approach would be that it is a low cost and relatively straightforward option to implement quickly. However, the disadvantages are that staff have already expressed concern that they are working to full capacity and this approach would create additional workload pressures. Previous experience of self reporting has resulted in inconsistent and poor recording resulting in low quality data, and self-recording tends to involve some subjectivity in what is and what is not recorded, by staff who may have a conflict of interest.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

14. The proposed option is considered to be the superior solution for the following reasons:

- It requires a comparatively low level of investment compared to the use of agency staff
- The students will have a higher level of interest/engagement in the research
- Less training and familiarisation effort will be required in preparation
- The research will be more objective and reliable than would be the case with self-recording
- It will have less impact on the working patterns of those workers who are the subject of the research than the self-recording or agency staff options.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Human Resource Implications**

16. The current temporary post of Research Officer Hay Band A would be extended for a period of six months to oversee the analysis and develop an efficiency savings plan. This post is based at County Hall and is subject to an approved car user allowance.

### **Finance Implications**

17. The extension of the temporary Research officer post will require additional funding of £14,318 (plus on costs). In addition funding may be required to provide either hourly rate to the students or travel and expenses. It is estimated that the cost of an hourly rate payment would be £45,000 or alternatively the cost of travel and expenses only would be £10,000. These costs will be funded by the Improvement Programme.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

It is recommended that the Adult Social Care and Health Committee approve:

- 1) The engagement of social care students to undertake the further analysis and research of Social Worker activity under the supervision of the Research Officer.
- 2) The extension of the temporary post of Research Officer, Hay Band 'A' (£24,646-£28,636 per annum) for a period of six months from the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013 until 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013 and the post be allocated approved car user status.

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### **Constitutional Comments (LMC 20/12/2012)**

18. The Adult Social care and Health Committee has delegated authority to approve the recommendations in the report.

### **Financial Comments (NDR 20/12/12)**

19. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 17 of the report.

### **Background Papers**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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