



REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR HR AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

**REVISED STAFFING STRUCTURE FOR THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING SERVICE**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Member approval to changes in the structure of the Council's Occupational Health and Well-being Service within the HR and Customer Services division of the Environment and Resources Department.

Information and Advice:

Background

2. The Council's Occupational Health Unit provides the full range of occupational health functions and health surveillance; including meeting statutory requirements and those of the Local Government Pension Scheme. It also plays a lead role in the strategic response to reducing sickness absence across the organisation. In addition, it operates as a sold service to schools, academies and external clients generating income for the Council. The unit also works in partnership with externally commissioned companies providing physiotherapy and counselling services.
3. The in-house service was subject to a previous formal service review and substantial savings on staffing and efficiencies in working practices were realised. As part of the ongoing process of ensuring best value for money, the potential to outsource the service to an external provider has been fully researched and it has been firmly established that the costs associated with this would considerably exceed those of the revised model. A mixed economy of service delivery now represents the best value for money available.
4. The delivery of the service has been affected by a national shortage of qualified Occupational Health Nurses and the inflation in market rates that this has generated, combined with the fact that many Occupational Health Nurses now choose to work on a free-lance or agency basis, means that they can obtain attractive pay rates.
5. The Council has experienced a significant rate of turnover amongst occupational health nurses in recent years and has found it difficult to recruit and retain suitably qualified practitioners. This has created a degree of reliance on agency workers at an inflated hourly rate which is £11 per hour higher than that cost of the Council's directly employed nurses. During 2014/15 this equated to around £9,000 of additional spend against the Occupational Health staffing budget.

6. Demand for services has steadily increased, including a rise in sold services to schools and other external customers, whilst the service has regularly carried unfilled vacant hours. This has created capacity issues which have led to an increase in waiting times for Occupational Health appointments in recent months and is beginning to impact on managers' ability to respond quickly to long term sickness absence cases.

Staffing Proposal

7. In order to maximise the planning and deployment of resources more effectively from an appropriately qualified clinical overview and increase customer responsiveness, thereby reducing waiting times, it is necessary to ensure that day to day operational decisions are made at the point of service delivery. The creation of a Senior Occupational Health Nurse Advisor post will ensure that service demand is forecast in advance and where this exceeds internal capacity, appropriate external services can be commissioned on a needs led basis.
8. The proposal set out in this report will also support the implementation of the Action Plan to deliver the Employee Health and Well-being Strategy and strengthen the operational delivery, responsiveness and sustainability of the Council's Occupational Health service through a mixed economy of internal and commissioned provision.
9. The current clinical nursing establishment is 2 fte post on Band B, plus a market factor supplement, which was approved by Pay Board. This was required due to continued difficulty in recruiting and retaining permanent Occupational Health Nurse Advisors within the context of the national shortage of suitable qualified and experienced nurse advisors.
10. Both Occupational Health Nurse Advisor posts and the Business Support Officer are currently managed by a Senior HR Business Partner, based at Trent Bridge House, see **Appendix 1**. The proposal seeks to convert one of the clinical Nurse Advisor posts into a Senior Occupational Health Nurse Advisor, with overall day to day responsibility for all Occupational Health staff and the deployment of resources at the unit. The senior post will continue to report direct to the Senior HR Business Partner. See **Appendix 2**.
11. The new structure will also ensure that clinical management of resources is closer to the point of delivery and overall that the clinical and administrative functions more closely integrated. It is anticipated that the creation for high quality, suitably qualified nurse advisors will improve the overall quality of service provided and management and outcomes for staff and managers.
12. The post holder will also lead on supporting the employee wellbeing strategy, overseeing clinical governance arrangements and play a lead role in seeking national accreditation of the national SEQOHS (Safe, Effective, Quality, Occupational Health Service) standard.

Other Options Considered

13. The proposed option is containable within existing budget. The maintenance of the status quo in the face of market shortages and increased demand could result in head teachers and managers being unable to adequately meet statutory requirements such as those under the Equality Act and impact on their ability to effectively manage staff absence.

14. The service review findings and operational experience has identified that the costs of buying in Occupational Health Nurse Advisor capacity, if the Council is unable to recruit and retain appropriate staff, would incur considerable additional cost to the authority.

Reasons for Recommendations

15. The recommendation will strengthen the clinical governance arrangements of the Occupational Health Unit; ensure that clinical decisions regarding the planning and deployment of resources are taken closer to the point of delivery; minimise the additional expenditure incurred by the use of agency nurses and ensure that the capacity to support the implementation of the action plan to deliver the Employee Health and Well-being Strategy is built into the current service model.

Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, 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.

Financial Implications

17. The post has been evaluated at Band C. This equates to an additional staffing cost of £1,152 per annum, including on costs, and can be contained within the current overall Occupational Health Unit budget.

Equalities Implications

18. The restructuring of the service will be carried out in accordance with the County Council's employment and equality policies.

Human Resources Implications

These are set out within the body of the report. The recognised trades unions and affected staff have been consulted on the recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Elected Members approve the changes to the Occupational Health staffing structure effective 1 September 2015 as set out in this report.

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Constitutional Comments (KK 09/06/15)

1. The proposal in this report is within the remit of Personnel Committee.

Financial Comments (SES 09/06/15)

2. The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Trades union side comments.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All