

24 January 2022**Agenda Item: 8****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, INTEGRATED STRATEGIC
COMMISSIONING AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT****ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERSONAL ASSISTANT SUPPORT SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To outline the rationale for the development of a Personal Assistant Support Service.
2. To seek approval to establish the following additional temporary posts (12-month contract until 31st March 2023) required to manage this provision:
 - 1 FTE Direct Payments Commissioning Support Officer - Employment Support (Grade 4) (Recruitment focused)
 - 2 FTE Direct Payments Commissioning Support Officers (Grade 4) (Mosaic and Data Input Team process focused)
 - 1 FTE Direct Payments Team Leader (Hay Band B) to oversee the operational running of the team and line management responsibilities.

Information

3. The successful development of the Personal Assistant (PA) care market is a key strategic aim of the department as people tell us that this is how they want to receive support. In addition, it is a key component of the delivery of the Care Act 2014. Enabling suitable vulnerable adults to use a Direct Payment to employ a Personal Assistant to support them offers unique benefits to individuals receiving support, compared to support delivered by a care agency worker. Personal Assistant packages are more person-centred as they deliver support tailored to the individual's needs. They also offer more choice and control to the Direct Payment recipient which is a key element of personalisation and delivering strengths-based support.
4. Local research has indicated that where people use a Direct Payment to employ a Personal Assistant the care arrangements are more stable and last longer than Direct Payments used to employ an agency to deliver care. Having a small, stable team of support around a person builds mutual trust and respect and leads to improved quality care delivery and satisfaction levels.

5. Nottinghamshire, along with the rest of the country, is currently experiencing shortages across the care workforce. The department has in place plans to build capacity to support people and Personal Assistant support is a key part of that. Currently there is a gap between requests for support from a Personal Assistant and the number of Personal Assistants available, the department is therefore keen to accelerate work to build Personal Assistant capacity.
6. Home Care is usually delivered via a homecare agency, but approximately 917 people receive their homecare from a Personal Assistant (correct December 2021). Personal Assistants are employed directly by the person needing the care. This has several advantages:
 - it gives the person employing the Personal Assistant more choice as to the nature of support that they want
 - it utilises individuals who may not usually be part of the homecare workforce - in 50% of cases, the Personal Assistant is already known to the person employing them and not otherwise working in the care sector
 - the Personal Assistant typically receives a higher rate of pay than most homecare workers employed by an agency
 - the person, or if they have insufficient funds, the Council, typically pays less per hour than for normal homecare as there are no agency fees.

The benefits of having a Personal Assistant are further illustrated in the two brief case studies below:

Case Study 1

A employs 2 Personal Assistants as this gives him more choice and control than an agency package would. A is a young man with a physical disability and requires support with personal care and accessing the community. A says "life is a billion percent richer for having a Direct Payment, better than the conveyor belt of changing agency staff." A feels his staff are the best employees in Newark and they enable him to be independent and are a benefit to both his physical and mental health.

Case Study 2

M is an older adult who has Parkinson's disease and Dementia. M does not want to go into a residential home. Care agencies were tried 4 times per day, however this failed. M now receives a Direct Payment that is used to employ Personal Assistants. M's mental and physical health have improved. This has enabled M to remain in his own home in keeping with his wishes. Using Direct Payments and M employing a Personal Assistant has provided the Council with a saving £267.20 per week.

7. Given the mutual benefits of this approach, the department is currently working to increase the number of people supported by a Personal Assistant to 15 per month. This should also produce an annual saving of £275,900 (£657,000 full-year effect) as per the agreed business case.
8. Frontline workers are positive about the benefits of Personal Assistants but setting up a Personal Assistant package takes time and expertise. Feedback received from frontline

workers has focused on the challenges they experience when undertaking the process, with staff reporting that the process is time consuming and cumbersome. They struggle with the requirement for detailed knowledge of employment law and the time required to source a Personal Assistant. Staff reported that they would be better able to promote the use of Personal Assistants if they could hand over most of this responsibility to the Direct Payments Team.

9. To help increase the use of Personal Assistants the department has a target for the operational teams to support 15 more people each month with a Personal Assistant. Performance in this area has been impacted by the priority given to the pandemic response. The current average monthly figure is 12 new Personal Assistant packages per month (average January to July 2021); this is an average of 24% of all new Direct Payment packages set up per month.
10. A key aspect of making the use of Personal Assistants work is through building up a database of Personal Assistants who can be quickly deployed. This requires dedicated time both in attracting new Personal Assistants, supporting their training and encouraging them to remain in the sector while Direct Payment recipients are matched to them.
11. It is therefore proposed that additional posts are developed within the Direct Payments Team within Integrated Strategic Commissioning. Their role will be to centralise the process and to support frontline workers to increase the number of Personal Assistants employed to deliver personal care packages.
12. Whilst social work staff will still be responsible for undertaking the Care and Support Assessment and related financial assessments, the Direct Payments Team will be responsible for:
 - supporting the Direct Payment recipient to become an employer
 - sourcing and recruitment of the Personal Assistants
 - the referrals for a Disclosure & Barring Service check and Right to Work check
 - establishing the financial contract with the Direct Payment Support Service
 - completing the Direct Payment calculator for Personal Assistants which accurately calculates the total cost of the package
 - submitting the Direct Payment calculator to the Data Input Team to enable the commissioning of the package
13. By introducing this additional support for frontline staff, it is anticipated that the existing target of 15 packages per month can be consistently met (and potentially exceeded) and, in addition, the department can achieve a further 10 Personal Assistants per month. This could deliver additional in-year savings of £158,782 (£350,381 full year effect) which would be used to pay for these extra posts.
14. Approval from the Committee is requested for the establishment of the additional temporary posts detailed below:
 - 1 FTE Direct Payments Commissioning Support Officer - Employment Support (Grade 4) (Recruitment focused) (£32,051)
 - 2 FTE Direct Payments Commissioning Support Officers (Grade 4) (Mosaic and Data Input Team process focused) (£64,102)

- 1 FTE Direct Payments Team Leader (Hay Band B) to oversee the operational running of the team and line management responsibilities (£52,073).
15. The posts are specialist roles that offer a varied and challenging workload, and it is anticipated that there will be a good level of interest in them. To increase the likelihood of successful appointments, the posts will be advertised internally and externally. We are confident that we will be able to successfully recruit to these posts.
 16. Even with the proposed additional staffing, this could create a net saving to the Council of £10,555 in-year savings (full-year effect £210,349). This is as well as increasing the capacity of the front-line workers, who would otherwise be trying to commission the Personal Assistant packages and help to source suitable Personal Assistants.
 17. The primary risk to this proposal successfully delivering additional home care capacity, alongside savings to the Council, is the recruitment of sufficient Personal Assistants. Currently, the level of available Personal Assistants is in line with demand. It is therefore proposed that this risk is mitigated by:
 - putting these posts in place for a trial period of 12 months to establish the impact. A minimum of 12 months is required to support effective recruitment and for the new structure to have full impact
 - generating a further promotional drive with front line staff and the wider public to raise awareness of the benefit of using Direct Payments to employ Personal Assistants rather than commissioning a managed service
 - exploring the option of a Personal Assistant 'bank' provision to act as a floating team to cover emergency cover, sickness and potentially annual leave, as this is a common barrier to longer term package sustainability.

Other Options Considered

18. To continue to promote and support Personal Assistants and to use the current staffing within the Direct Payments Team to support frontline staff - this approach has already been tried, and whilst numbers of Personal Assistants have slowly increased it has levelled off and it has not been possible to consistently achieve the required targets.
19. To embed workers within the district teams to undertake this work directly - by centralising the provision within the Direct Payments Team, the Council can spread the benefits across all the district teams and provide economies of scale. Many of the processes and Personal Assistant recruitment activities are specialist in nature and it would be difficult to retain oversight if these were fragmented across several different teams.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

20. A centralised team will ensure more consistent and robust support for all frontline staff in the promotion and use of Personal Assistants and a faster response to this work.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human

rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment 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

22. The cost of the posts requested is expected to be £148,227 for 12 months. It is proposed that this will be funded from the savings projected from having more Personal Assistant packages leaving a projected in-year saving of £10,555 (£210,349 full-year effect) to the Council. However, it is to be noted that this proposal is not primarily focused on generating departmental savings it is about increasing the capacity of the market while also fulfilling strategy priorities to build on what works and to provide what people are asking for.
23. There is a risk that the additional Personal Assistants will not successfully be recruited, and this would result in a greater departmental cost pressure made up of the extra staffing costs for the additional workers. So the project will be actively monitored to ensure the staffing costs are covered. In mitigation, over 50% of Personal Assistants are already known to the person they support. Therefore, having a single team of staff applying a consistent and enthusiastic approach to promoting Personal Assistants to people needing care is highly likely to generate more Personal Assistants. In addition, we have a rising trend of people being supported by Personal Assistants. This is without promotional activity which has reduced in the last 18 months due to Covid related work reprioritisation. Once expanded staff capacity enables promotional activity to be prioritised again, this will also improve awareness of the benefits of having a Personal Assistant and becoming a Personal Assistant, as well as the number of people supported by a Personal Assistant.

Human Resources Implications

24. The proposal detailed within the body of this report requires the fixed term employment of 4 FTE positions, comprising 3 at Grade 4 and 1 at Hay Band B.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Committee:

- 1) approves the proposal to centralise within the Direct Payments Team the commissioning of Direct Payments to employ Personal Assistants.
- 2) approve the temporary establishment of four temporary posts to sit within the Direct Payments Team to undertake the additional business activity for a period of 12 months until 31st March 2023 as follows:
 - 1 FTE Direct Payments Commissioning Support Officer - Employment Support (Grade 4) (Recruitment focused)
 - 2 FTE Direct Payments Commissioning Support Officers (Grade 4) (Mosaic and Data Input Team process focused)
 - 1 FTE Direct Payments Team Leader (Hay Band B) to oversee the operational running of the team and line management responsibilities.

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Constitutional Comments (LPW 10/01/22)

25. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee. If Committee resolves that further actions are required, it must ensure that such actions are within its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (KAS 13/01/22)

26. The cost of the posts requested is expected to be £148,227 for 12 months. It is proposed that this will be funded by recruiting a further 10 new Personal Assistants per month. However, the original saving referred to in **paragraph 7** is currently not being achieved as the saving per hour has reduced from £5 to £4 and the number of new Personal Assistants to date is an average of 12 as referenced in **paragraph 9**. To meet the savings in the original target, the number of Personal Assistants per month would need to increase by 3.5 to 18.5 plus a further 10 for the additional saving in this paper.
27. The project will need to be regularly monitored to ensure the costs of these additional staff are being covered by the additional savings from the increased Personal Assistant packages.

HR Comments (SJJ 15/12/21)

28. All posts will be advertised in line with the Council's recruitment policy. The temporary posts will be appointed to on fixed term contracts. The proposals have also been shared with the relevant recognised Trade Unions for information.

Background Papers and Published Documents

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.

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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