

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
12 OCTOBER 2022
7.30 - 8.29 PM**



Present:

Councillors Leake (Chair), Allen (Vice-Chair) and Mrs L Gibson

Present Virtually:

Councillors Angell, Bhandari, Dudley and Porter

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Neil and Wade

Non-Voting Co-optee Present Virtually:

Councillors Heydon

11. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

12. Minutes from previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 12 July 2022 were approved as a correct record.

13. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

14. Update from the Chairman of the Local Joint Committee

The Chairman update the Committee that Local Joint Committee had been held earlier in the afternoon and had covered the items that were on the Employment Committee agenda. There were no particular issues raised.

15. Minutes of Sub Groups

The minutes of the Local Joint Committee held on the 12 July 2022 were noted.

16. Social Worker Pay/Retention & Recruitment People

The Committee received a report which sought approval for revised pay arrangements across social care to address the significant recruitment and retention challenges, support a more stabilised workforce and to reduce the agency spend.

The Committee were joined by Paul Young, Assistant Director: HR & OD and Grainne Siggins, Executive Director: People to present the report.

The work had been ongoing, with a report being presented to CMT in February 2022 outlining the extent of temporary/agency worker use and the issues this presents for service delivery and continuity particularly in social care. As a result, a project team

was established to explore the current market factors and comparative salaries, both locally and regionally, for social care for both adults and children.

There were three main reasons to why a Project Team had been formed:

- 1 To reduce reliance on agency workers and spend.
- 2 To stabilise the social care workforce by recruiting qualified workers to vacant permanent roles.
- 3 To retain existing social care workforce by providing better career opportunities, training and development.

Within the supporting documentation, the work of the Project Team had been detailed. Much of this work had been challenging, with issues around gathering information from other Local Authorities as factor.

Learning and development opportunities also needed to be a factor, following the Ofsted review, it was reported that the learning and development offering in Bracknell Forest was strong, but there was not the capacity for social workers to access it as they were too busy with their day job. This was something that this work wished to address in order to support staff.

The current pay arrangements differed between workers in children's social care and across adults because market premia payments and staff retention payments had been implemented for around 10 years. Due to these pay differentials the recommendations proposed in this report are likely to impact more positively in adult social care rather than all areas of the children's workforce. This had caused some issues within the review as it had been the desire to level up the salaries, however this hadn't been possible through this review as shown by the pay arrangements detailed within the report.

The proposals for the adult workforce would place social workers and occupational therapists at the top of the pay arrangements, in comparison neighbouring authorities. Given the forthcoming challenges in this area and the need for greater numbers of qualified staff there was every expectation that other local authorities would also be reviewing their own pay arrangements.

The proposed pay and grading scheme was based around three career pathways, which were detailed within the report, and allowed aligned training and career development including apprenticeships to each role within the pathways. Apprenticeship roles was something that was really important for Bracknell, with a "grow your own" approach being looked at. It was hoped that there would shortly be an apprenticeship program with a Southern University, which was a positive development.

Arising from the Committees comments and questions, the following points were made:

- In terms of the supervision newly qualified social workers required, simpler work, smaller caseloads and high-level supervision.
- Some roles required additional levels of qualification.
- The grades were supported in a way to manage the complexity levels of the work.
- The Assistant Team Management role would have the management oversight of cases, make key decisions and audits.
- There was no management at service level, that had previously been removed from the structure.

- The Council would always look to reduce layers and increase bands of control.
- Both Occupation Therapists and Social Workers were required to register with their relevant professional bodies in order to practice which was supported by the Council.
- The proposal had significant financial implications and there was a report going to the Executive to ensure the finances were in place, should the Committee agree the recommendations.
- MP meant market premium and RP meant retention payment.
- A retention payment had been given to all employees in 2021/22.
- It was raised that on Bracknell Forests website there was a vacancy showing for a Social Worker within the MASH team which was advertising up to £43k which didn't equate to the local pay comparison.
- 5.8 detailed the current salary at £43k.
- The comparable for children didn't look bad, but it did for adults and was less favourable. The increase for a children's social worker was £800.
- The recommendation was for all social workers for children and adults.
- Agency activities and costs detailed within the report were correct.
- There was an increase in agency costs due to the increasing vacancies.
- A number of agency staff would always be required to a degree, but the proposals would hopefully reduce that to a minimum.
- Suggested reduction in agency numbers had been detailed at 5.27.
- The number of agency staff were detailed within the report.
- The number of agency staff depended on the able to recruit to post and permeant positions and how quickly this could be done.
- There was a whole range of reasons to why permanent staff were preferred.
- It was hard to predict the number of agency staff due to turn over.
- These roles were roles that the LA had to have in place as a statutory duty which is why they had to be replaced by agency staff.
- Some Members raised concerns that the numbers felt like a jump in the dark and were not convinced by the proposals.
- The report detailed the countrywide challenges within social care and recruitment.
- The council was in a competitive market locally.
- Still with these proposals staff could earn more as an agency worker.
- Good quality staff making good quality decisions were needed to support and be committed to the council.
- AMHPS vacancies was due to an increase in numbers and an on-call arrangement in place.
- The EIA would be published in the next two weeks.
- The details surrounding the Climate Change implications would be responded to separately.
- Concerns were raised that there was not enough evidence.
- It was raised that there were more vacancies and agency jobs in the report then on the website.
- It was hoped that the council would be in a more favourable position for filling vacancies if the recommendation were approved.
- The posts in the report were regularly advertised and closed.
- A breakdown could be provided of the posts advertised and how many people had applied. It was commented by Members that this should have been included within the report.

RESOLVED that the Employment Committee consider the report and approves the following recommendations:

- i. A revised pay and grading scheme for social care.
- ii. The payment of 4 per cent retention payment for children's social workers.
- iii. Extension of the market premium payments to the Heads of Service roles in Adult Social Care

17. **2022 Pay Award**

Paul Young, Assistant Director: HR & OD provided a verbal update on the 2022 Pay Award.

The current position was that this was the pay award due for April 2022, but was looking like it could be confirmed earlier than previous years.

The request from Trade Unions had been an increase of £2000 on each spinal column point along with a number of other claims, such a recognition payment for work during the pandemic, national agreement on family leave and pay and home working policies, increase in millage rates, updates to contracts on term only arrangements and an additional day annual leave.

The National Employers responded to the Unions claim back in July, with an increase on spinal column points of £1925 and an increase of 4.04% on all allowances, that would be backdated from April 2022, and from April 2023 an additional day of annual leave would be added to the annual leave entitlement.

The Trade Unions had received the National Employers offer and they have gone back to their membership to consult and determine whether the offer would be accepted. UNISON had confirmed that the offer had been accepted from their members, the ballot for GMB was still open and would close on the 21 October.

It was hoped that the Council would be in a position to grant the April 2022 pay award in the November 2022 pay.

CHAIRMAN