

## Social Care and Health Overview Scrutiny Committee

### Adult Social Care – Corporate Risk Register - Item 11

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr D. Coughlan

#### 1. Executive Summary:

- 1.1 This report sets out the progress made within the Directorate over recent months in relation to corporate risk register item 11: ***Significant vacancies have a negative impact on practice, capacity, and ability to deliver priorities, including safeguarding and operational development.***

#### 2. Reason for scrutiny:

- 2.1 The Committee asked for a report on the directorate's actions to address the risks relating to significant staffing vacancies.
- 2.2 It is expected, that Scrutiny Committee members will gain assurance that the senior leadership team are addressing the recruitment and retention issues and affecting positive change within the workforce.

#### 3. Recommendations:

- 3.1 That the Committee note progress in relation to positive change within the Adult Social Care workforce.

#### 4. Background:

- 4.1 Staff recruitment and retention has been a long standing issue within Adult Social Care for a number of years. With many organisations including Walsall Council, struggling to recruit qualified Social Workers and Occupational Therapists to permanent vacancies, and/or to retain staff. The retention issue is particularly relevant for staff members that have gone on to complete a post qualifying award in a specialist area of practice (for example; Approved Mental Health Practice, Practice Educator and Best Interest Assessors).
- 4.2 There have been a number of approaches to resolving this issue across neighbouring authorities; some have involved increasing rates of pay, others relate to creating posts to promote staff. The impact of these issues is difficult to quantify. .

- 4.3 The Adult Social Care senior leadership team has built upon the work already completed within the directorate which reframed the job descriptions and specifications for our Advanced Practitioners and Team Managers. These roles are now clearly focussed on staff development, practice improvement and financial /performance management.
- 4.4 The new Advanced Practitioner post provided a management career progression pathway within the directorate, which enables staff with an appropriate qualification, to take their first step into wider workforce development and leadership roles, such as staff supervision, workload allocation and deputising for the Team Manager etc.
- 4.5 This next step has set out the directorate's ambition for the wider professional workforce, which is aimed at improving front line Social Worker, and Occupational Therapist recruitment and retention. This is also about maximising professional autonomy, accountability and motivation to undertake post qualifying training specifically in relation to the Approved Mental Health Practitioner and Best Interest Assessor roles. The model establishes a professional practice career progression pathway that now sits alongside the management career progression pathway.

## **5. Changes to SW and OT Job Descriptions and creation of Senior Practitioner role:**

- 5.1 The recent changes to the locality model for Adult Social Care have shaped clearer lines of responsibility which in turn re-establish professional autonomy and accountability that is more aligned to the British Association for Social Workers (BASW) professional competency framework and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) codes of practice for Social Workers and Occupational Therapists. As such, the directorate has revised the job description and person specifications for all of our staff in qualified Social Worker and Occupational Therapist posts. The revisions have seen a change in grade from its current level of G8 to G9. The revised Job Description is fully aligned and incorporated into the "Adult Social Care Roles and Responsibilities" framework which is due for launch in early October 2017. Furthermore, the revised job description emphasises professional autonomy which will benefit the directorate as we move toward fuller integration with partners and ensure a strong Adult Social Care ethic underpinned by core Social Work values, within future working arrangements.
- 5.2 In addition to the change in Job Description and grade for Social Workers and Occupational therapists, the directorate has also introduced a new grade of Senior Practitioner (SP) for staff that hold a post qualifying (PQ) award as either an Approved Mental Health Practitioner or Best Interest Assessor; where the individual applies to progress and commits to practice in accordance with that award and agrees to take on the mentoring role for trainee BIA's and/or AMHPs. Unlike the existing Advanced Practitioner role, this role will focus on practice delivery and PQ mentorship specifically in relation to the BIA and AMHP task and not management functions. SPs will have full caseloads which will be adjusted to reflect the mentoring role, the BIA or AMHP function when needed. The SP post has been established at the G10 grade.

- 5.3 The directorate leadership team, believe these changes will not only encourage practitioners to undertake post qualifying training (supported/funded by the directorate where appropriate) but will encourage those in possession of a relevant post qualifying award to remain with Walsall Adult Social Care. The new pay grading structure has meant that Walsall Adult Social Care is now highly competitive within the Midlands job market. Furthermore, the changes have completed the career progression pathway for our professionally qualified workforce.

## **6. Career Progression:**

- 6.1 The changes to the Social Worker and Occupational Therapist roles, has created a further career progression pathway for the professionally qualified workforce. This compliments the management career progression pathway which now enables suitably qualified Social Workers and Occupational Therapists to apply for Advanced Practitioner Posts, which in turn enables workers to develop their line management skills whilst focussing on the development of the wider adult social care workforce prior to applying for Team Manager roles. The introduction of the new Senior Practitioner grade has created an alternative career progression pathway that focuses on individual professional practice development and the mentorship functions specifically for BIA's and AMHPs. As such, there are now two career progression routes available to professionally qualified staff within the directorate.

## **7. Investment in the workforce:**

- 7.1 These changes have seen significant investment into the professional Social Work and Occupational Therapy workforce.
- 7.2 Social Workers and Occupational Therapists that do not hold a BIA or AMHP post qualifying award moved on to the revised Job Description and the new pay grade from 1st October 2017. Furthermore, they can apply to undertake relevant post qualifying training; funded by the directorate where the worker has shown an aptitude for the task through the normal post qualifying training selection process. Significant additional investment has been made available to ensure adequate resourcing of training programmes for the workforce.
- 7.3 All existing professionally qualified staff in possession of a relevant post qualifying award which enables them to practice as either a BIA and/or AMHP, who commit to use the post qualifying award to fulfil the function (i.e. commit to continue to practice as an AMHP, BIA), and who commit to take on the mentorship role for trainee AMHPs and/or BIAs, can now apply to progress to the Senior Practitioner role on the G10 scale).

## **8. Service Impact:**

- 8.1 The time taken to work through the model, agree Job Descriptions, run through the evaluation and grading process and the HR, and staff engagement process has been significant. This has impacted on the directorates staffing numbers. For example, prior to implementation of the new staffing model and pay grades etc. we

had seen a number of staff leave to work within neighbouring authorities, and given the previous staffing model; particularly in terms of pay and career progression, we had been unable to present a competitive deal for appropriately qualified staff across the Midlands area. As such, we held a significant number of vacant posts. Additionally, the investment of funding from central government in terms of the £2bn national IBCF funding, enabled us to expand our staffing levels by a further 11 posts. However, given the recruitment difficulties, this meant the directorate was then carrying some 34 vacant posts within the SW OT workforce against an establishment of 106. As such, almost one third of our professional posts were unfilled. This lack of capacity has led to significant difficulties both in terms of normal business delivery, but also in terms of our ability to provide directed focus on proactive assertive reviewing of cases. Our locality Social Work teams have had to prioritise new business coming in, adult safeguarding and reviewing care for crisis cases. As such, the staff group have been unable to schedule the full range of reviewing activity required to drive through sufficient change.

## **9. Current position:**

- 9.1 The directorate has recently gone out to advert to recruit to all vacant posts, and is currently working through the selection process. An advert was run across the midlands, the national press and utilising social media. The directorate ran an informal drop in session for prospective candidates to come along and meet Adult Social Care. This combination of exercises proved highly beneficial; as we have recently received 78 applications for the 34 available roles. This sits against a backdrop where in the past we often failed to attract any interest in vacancies for Social Workers.
- 9.2 The new Senior Practitioner grade/role, has enabled us to be competitive within the market for staff that hold the additional AMHP and BIA qualification, which should ensure the directorate is in a strong position to fulfil our statutory mental health act and mental capacity act functions going forward.

## **10. Sustaining the model:**

- 10.1 The combination of improved pay, career development opportunities and career progression opportunities should ensure Walsall is seen as an attractive employer within the Social Care market across the Midlands. Furthermore, the refocus on staff development from our newly appointed Advanced Practitioners and Team Managers should help Walsall Adult Social Care to become the employer of choice.
- 10.2 Once the capacity issues have been addressed through this recruitment exercise, the directorate will be in a far better position to make further inroads toward delivering against the saving targets, whilst at the same time, ensuring the strongest, best model of social care delivery is embedded within the workforce. Over time, we should begin to see better outcomes for service users as their cases are more proactively managed.

10.3 In addition to the changes outlined above, the directorate has invested an additional £120,000 over the course of the next three years to fund post qualifying training in respect of AMHP, BIA, Practice Educators and specialist Adult Safeguarding training. This investment should enable us to develop the workforce and encourage staff retention, whilst ensuring the service is able to respond to the statutory demands of the future and ensure best practice development.

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