

Personnel Committee – 5 December 2022

Soulbury Pay Scale for Educational Psychologists

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To gain Personnel Committee approval to adopt all spinal column points within the Soulbury Pay Scale for Educational Psychologists, endorsed by Corporate Management Team (CMT) at its meeting of 17 November 2022.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the change of spinal column points (SCP) within Soulbury Pay Scales for Educational Psychologists.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 The Soulbury Agreement allows Local Authorities to choose a scale of 6 continuous points (+3 SPAs) on which to pay main-grade Educational Psychologists (EP).
- 3.2 There is a shortage of EPs locally and nationally and competition to recruit is high.
- 3.3 There are currently 6.31 known vacancies from December 2022.
- 3.4 Recruitment activity is a priority for Children's Services as the EP service will be unable to function unless pending recruitment campaigns are successful. This high vacancy rate means the council is reliant on expensive locum cover to meet statutory obligations in relation to EHCP assessments.
- 3.5 Walsall Council have previously approved the use of scales 2–10 (and currently use these) of the national Soulbury pay scales. However, the national scales span from 1-11 and neighbouring authorities have advertised/are advertising on the scale 3-11 often with point 5 as a minimum start point. Please see appendix 1 for comparison data provided by Children's Services.

Aim

- 3.6 To remain competitive and attract applicants Walsall Council need to at least match remuneration offered by other West Midlands LAs. There is strong demand from schools to purchase EP time through our trading model. If we are unable to meet this, they will resort to private arrangements and the LA/EP service will lose an important funding stream further exacerbating recruitment, statutory functions and overall viability.
- 3.7 This report seeks to increase the pay scale range used by Walsall Council so that the maximum SCP of 11 on the national Soulbury scales can be used.

3.8 Currently Walsall Council's 6 continuous points are paid at Soulbury EP Scale A, points 2-7 (+3 SPA points equating to a maximum point 10). The proposal is to change this to Soulbury EP Scale A, points 3-8 (+3 SPA points) therefore using the maximum point 11 of the national scales and changing Walsall Council scales from 2-10 to 3-11.

Know

3.9 The proposed change will support recruitment activity and therefore reduce dependence on locums leading to a cost saving in the longer term.

Our Council Plan priorities

3.10 The policy is directly aligned to the council's strategic priority of internal focus ensuring all council services are customer focused, effective, efficient and equitable and helps support the delivery of our Employee Satisfaction Proud promise.

Response

3.11 Subject to approval, HR will amend the Walsall Council Soulbury payscales so they mirror the National Soulbury scales of SCP 3-11 for EP's (this will have no immediate effect/impact as no one is currently receiving SCP 2 so will not affect any individuals it will simply open up the head room for future progression).

Review

3.12 The Soulbury Pay Scales are reviewed annually in line with the national pay award and are formally published as part of the Pay Policy Statement reviewed each year.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 The 2022/23 staffing budget for Educational Psychology (EP) team is £775k. This is based on the following structure:

Post Title	No FTE	Budget £
Principal EP Manager	1.00	82,512
Senior EP Manager	2.20	175,389
EPs	7.31	472,167
Trainee EP	1.00	44,834
Total	11.51	774,902

4.2 Of the 7.31 EP posts, 6.31 will be vacant by December 2022. Within the budget above, all vacant posts are budgeted for at the lowest scale point (currently PA2) which equates to £53,944 per FTE.

4.3 Following the proposal to regrade the posts to PA3-8, the budget for vacant posts would need to be increased to £56,614, an increase of £2,670 per post. Investment of £16,848 would be required to permanently regrade these posts. Potential funding options are being explored including use of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

- 4.4 Agency staff are currently in place of permanent staff to cover the Council's statutory duty linked to the completion Educational Psychology assessments. The demand for these assessments varies month on month.
- 4.5 Based on an EP solely completing EP assessments, a full time worker could complete up to 120 assessments per year at a cost of £56,614 based PA3. In comparison, the current costs for agency to complete an EP assessment is £1,205 per assessment. Therefore 120 assessments would cost £144,600 per year, £87,986 more than a permanent member of staff.
- 4.7 As at October 2022, there is a forecast agency spend within EPs of £858k offset by (£519k) underspend on vacant posts. Therefore there is a current forecast overspend of £339k included in the forecasted financial position. The aim of this proposal is to support recruitment and retention and reduce overall dependency on agency going forward.

5. Legal Considerations

- 5.1 There are no anticipated legal issues arising from this report.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Not applicable

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