Report author: Nyoka Fothergill

Tel:07891278038

Report: Managing social work/occupational therapy workforce

Date: 27 April 2022

Report of: Deputy Director – Social Work and Social Care Services

Report to: Director of Adults and Health

Will the decision be open for call in? ☒Yes ☐No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? ☐Yes ☒No

What is this report about?
Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

This report is to update on the current position following approval of the Executive Board report which was approved in December 2021 to support Adult Social Care (ASC) service transformation in the following areas:

1. The proposal to invest £660,253 to deliver a pilot that uses Occupational Therapy and additional Social Work staff at "the front door" to maximise capacity to meet growing demand for information and advice and demand for a social care assessment of needs, embedding an "independence first" approach.
2. The proposal to invest £646,323 to deliver a pilot of a new Community Reviewing Team that includes Occupational Therapy and Social Work staff to enhance the capacity of the current Adult Reviewing Team to deliver an increased reviewing schedule. Note that this investment is anticipated to deliver £3.3m from 2022 – 2025.
3. In addition to the above this report sets out an additional request for the continuation of funding for the peripatetic social work team, established in 2021 in response to significant increase in demand resulting from the pandemic (for a further six months) when the funding ends at the end of April 2022. This will provide vital support in assisting to reduce the accumulated back logs which remain high due to service demand and staffing capacity issues within the staff teams.
4. These proposals support our council strategic focus to provide needs-led, asset-based approaches based on early intervention and prevention, supporting the people and places most in need.

Recommendations

The Director of Adults and Health is recommended to -

1. Approve the expansion of the current staffing structures to support the transformation as set out in the Executive Board report, which would support an increase in staffing numbers for both Social Work and Occupational Therapy roles. In addition to this, note the need to ensure the management structures are appropriate in line with this proposal, so the proposal will also include an expansion of the team manager numbers.

2. Approve the variation to the contract (attached) to enable the continued funding of the Peri Team. The current funding ends on 29/04/22 and is not recurrent. This report is seeking ongoing funding for a further six months. The funding source for this to be from slippage on staffing budget caused by recruitment delays to the expansion of staffing structures outlined above.

Given the amounts involved in the recommendations, the first decision is a Key Decision and subject to call in. However, the second decision falls within the definition of a Significant Operational Decision and is not subject to call-in.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

1. The overall picture in Leeds is reflective of the national landscape following the impact of Covid on adult social care services.

2. Leeds has the second lowest numbers of social workers per 100,000 in comparison to other core cities, and 4th lowest when compared to CIPFA and regional authorities. This data does not account for the proportion of the Leeds social work numbers that are wellbeing workers (un-registered social workers), which when considered would put Leeds further below the average. The service currently has a 70:30 split of social workers and wellbeing workers.

3. The position for the OT service is also very similar to the above in terms of demand so their current staffing structures will also need to be expanded to support with the SW/OT skill mix required to deliver the transformation outlined in the Executive Board report. There are only 26wte registered Occupational Therapists and 15 Occupational Therapy Assistants working in the community teams, which is a very small resource for the current demand.

4. It is important to highlight that the budget action plans associated to the transformation proposals are at risk of not being delivered if the staffing capacity of the SW/OTservice areas are unable to expand or retain current staff numbers.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted?   ☐Yes   ☒No

1   This proposal will enable the adult social care service to reset service provision post Covid and support delivery of the associated budget action plans.

2   It will also support with the capacity and demand of the neighbourhood teams who are currently experiencing significant demand, due to the back logs that have accrued due to the staffing capacity issues experienced by all the teams.

3   The additional funding will enable the service to expand the skill mix of the current workforce; as well as enabling them to release staff to focus on the transformation activity that is required to achieve the proposed savings as set out in the executive report.

4   There will be an increase in reviewing activity that is focused on enablement to ensure that home care provision and high-cost placements are cost effective in meeting needs. In addition to this there will be a focus on maximising independence, which gives people the option to remain living in communities where this is appropriate to meet their desired outcomes.

5   Due to the high vacancy levels, it is important to note the current demand on the area teams workloads and the impact this is having on the health and wellbeing of staff. The proposed expansion of additional staff will assist with these pressures. It will all ensure that team sizes are manageable so managers can adequately support the growth in team sizes.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

1. Consultation on this proposal has been made with Trade Union and HR and finance colleagues, also with the service managers who will be required to deliver the transformational activity.

What are the resource implications?

1. The exact staffing numbers are not yet confirmed so the report is seeking a decision that is flexible and enables this resource modelling to be undertaken alongside HR and finance colleagues so the post ID's can be created as posts are recruited to.

2. The value of the investment approved at Exec Board for the two transformation projects is £1,306,576 (£660,253 and £646,323 respectively) so the expansion would be within this previously approved funding amount. Continuation of the Peri Team for a further 6 months is £319,042.

What are the legal implications?

1. This is a key decision report as its over 500k, therefore subject to call in.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

1. The key risk is the non-delivery of the budget action plans, coupled with the cost implications of using agency staff to deliver the transformational activity, if the required posts can not be recruited to via a local authority contract.
2. Every effort is being made to ensure the LA contract is the first option for backfilling vacancies where possible.
3. There is a national recruitment/retention issue impacting on the social care workforce. Further discussions are being held at a regional level to address the issues aligned to the differential use of agency rates between local authorities.
4. The further funding of the Peri team will ensure the back logs are more manageable and the time to respond to referrals is managed in a more timely way.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

☒Inclusive Growth   ☒Health and Wellbeing   ☐Climate Emergency

- Supporting the city's economic recovery from COVID-19 and building longer-term economic resilience
- Ensuring support for the health and social care sector to respond to and recover from COVID-19
- Supporting self-care, with more people managing their own health conditions in the community
- Working as a system to ensure people get the right care, from the right people in the right place
- Strengthening digital and data 'Smart City' infrastructure and increasing digital inclusion

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

In terms of staff retention, various options and actions have already been put in place to try and alleviate the staffing pressures. These options include:

- Offering permanent posts to staff that are currently on temporary contracts because they are backfilling for existing social workers who have been seconded to other posts on fixed term contracts.
- The CCG have also funded some agency social work posts to meet with the demand in the hospital setting. There has been some slippage in the fund which has enabled these resources to be secured until August 2023.
- Although the service runs a rolling recruitment process for social workers, following the last recruitment in March the service was unable to fill all the vacant posts which is resulting in a reliance on agency staff to fill these gaps.
- The service also provides agency cover for maternity leave so options are also being considered to keep these posts on when the maternity period is complete as this will be another opportunity to expand the staffing numbers and support with the transformation activities. Where possible the aim will be to offer people, LA contracts as opposed to the use of agency staff.
- Further options are being explored to support Senior Social Workers (SSW) going through progression to be automatically upgraded without waiting for SSW vacancies to become available. This will improve retention through recognition of social worker's progression and career development and prevent them leaving to seek promotion opportunities elsewhere.
- Further options being explored to offer Social Work apprentices permanent positions once qualified. We currently have around 3 places every two years. 3 SW apprentices are due to qualify in July 2023.

b) How will success be measured?

The delivery of the budget action plans will be monitored by the service Budget Review Group and the oversight and monitoring of the transformational activity will be monitored by the promoting Independence Steering Group.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

The service is currently undertaking a rolling recruitment process, and this will enable vacancies to be filled more regularly as well as providing capacity for staff to be released to undertake the transformational activity.

Appendices

Variation to Contract – for the extension of the Peri Team (attached).

Equality Assessment.

Background papers

None.