

AGENDA FOR CHANGE FOR SOCIAL SERVICE STAFF WITHIN THE HPSS

This document is constituted as a working document between the DHSS&PS, HPSS Employers and the Social Services Trade Unions, NIPSA and UNISON. This document seeks to deal with specific issues that are arising as a result of the Social Services Agenda for Change Job Evaluation exercise. The document provides a basis in which progress can be made in resolving the issues identified to date.

Background

The Agenda For Change Testing exercise has seen approximately 20 regional profiles developed that cover the vast majority of Social Services staff. There are some exceptional profiles that have not yet been developed, however they are being addressed as part of the local job evaluation programme, which will be commenced shortly within the wider HPSS family.

Those profiles that have been developed have in general produced potentially positive results for the jobholders. However there are a number of issues that are affecting certain positions within the existing Social Services organisational structure.

Issues

The issues arising are not as a result of the Agenda for Change profile development exercise per se, but exist for a variety of reasons:

- There are very specific differences in how "commonly-titled" groups of staff are being employed within the various employing organisations. As such the job evaluation process for such jobs could produce differing pay band outcomes. This implies that when it comes to matching these staff groupings the results could split a currently homogeneous NJC grade between two Agenda for Change pay bands, which may be to the detriment of some and benefit of others. All parties to this document recognise the difficulties this poses and are committed to producing a rationalised service delivery framework which produce fewer service based inequalities
- The Agenda for Change Job Evaluation Scheme was not constructed in a way that took as comprehensive account of the range of social service jobs as it has done for the comparable health jobs. As a result the construction of the pay bands focused on Whitley "clusters" and disregarded the NJC pay scales producing boundaries between bands that are not in kilter with the existing NJC pay scales in certain key areas.

The training framework envisaged for Agenda for Change sees NVQ (III) as being appropriate for care assistant/ nursing auxiliary type jobs, which suggests that there are large scale training issues for the HPSS. This impacts more particularly on NJC jobs such as DCW (II), SWAs and residential workers; whose roles in Job Evaluation terms vis-à-vis the knowledge, skills and experience factors seem out of balance with the level of responsibility associated with their posts.

The opportunity for these specific groups of staff to be engaged in post NVQ (III) training has not been as actively promoted within all of the HPSS Employers as it potentially could have been. Appropriate post NVQ (III) training would reduce the potential for jobs to be evaluated as being on the cusp of pay band 4 & 5 when the outline of the duties and actual responsibilities would suggest pay band 5 as being a better fit.

Additionally workforce pressures have necessitated the need for unqualified staff to be used alongside qualified staff in the delivery of service in certain areas. This does not meet the policies of the Department, or the aspirations of HPSS Employers or Trade Unions.

All parties to this document recognise the need to have an appropriately trained workforce across the HPSS and are committed to a framework for all staff groups capable of supporting the KSF. In particular an appropriate post NVQ (III) training framework will be developed as a matter of urgency. This framework will be capable of underpinning the knowledge and skills needed to discharge the duties in the above groups.

Social Services frontline management structures are likely in AfC terms to have considerable overlap between practice grades and management grades, which may produce friction within the Employee setup. However such overlap is consistent with what has occurred within the national AfC framework.

Additionally within the HPSS some Social Service frontline manager positions have moved on to Trust Senior Manager contracts, while some remain on NJC contracts. There is a very clear need for consistent outcomes regardless of whether jobs are defined as senior manager, trust or, NJC. This will assist with dealing with the issues in this grouping.

The following details the Social Service staff groups for whom draft profiles have been created together with a shared understanding of issues associated with each profiles.

Staffing Groups Residential

The Agenda for Change draft profiles cover all the main practice grades in residential work. Further consideration is being given to what management/head of home profiles will be produced. Both of the band five profiles in this section raise post NVQ (III) training issues which will be brought forward

Residential Carer (Band 3)

This profile is likely to cover grades such as care assistants and other support grades in caring roles across a range of residential settings such as Elderly Persons Home (EPH) or Elderly Mentally Infirm (EMI) Units and community Learning Disability Units.

Residential Carer Higher Level /Team leader (Band 5)

This profile is based in large part around the existing senior care assistant / shift coordinator role in EPHs. NJC based community units with residential workers will match either to this profile or to the unqualified residential social worker profile depending on the service structure in their locality.

Unqualified residential social workers (Child Care)

This staff grouping has access to a current maximum salary of £23,359. Under Agenda for Change, the profile for this job is falling into Band 5, which has a maximum basic salary of £22,700. While any shortfall is likely to be made up by basic pay supplements for out of hours work and potential overtime, this group of staff is unqualified. This is not consistent with the Department's policy on Hughes VI, and the commitment to a fully qualified workforce within Child Care.

This commitment was recently reaffirmed by the Department (as part of the Children Matter Task Force work) and HPSS Employers must work towards this objective without exception. That does however mean that the future of the current unqualified workforce will need to be considered carefully.

A particular Agenda for Change anomaly will exist in any employing authority where it becomes clear that facilities or Trusts are fully discharging their statutory residential functions with a workforce that does not routinely have qualified workers on shift because a large majority of the workforce are unqualified.

A detailed analysis of this staff group is required, with determination of the numbers both wanting to and deemed capable of applying directly for professional training. A strategy would be developed to support staff not yet able to access professional level training immediately by facilitating their access to appropriate development opportunities. Those not willing to, or deemed unsuitable to undertake such a training programme could be relocated to other duties within the Social Services sector with appropriate pay protection. The details of this protection would be the subject of agreement with the Trade Unions.

Social Work Assistants

The majority of staff paid on this NJC scale, work within the Elderly Care Programme. Presently they have access to a maximum NJC salary of £19,185. However although this is a commonly titled grade, they have a range of job titles and indeed roles due to the widely differing service delivery models for elder services in use in the community trusts. This has meant that to date it has not been possible to come up with a single AfC job evaluation / profile solution that could maintain the integrity of this grade title.

The current Agenda for Change outcome has created three potential job profiles that fall over two pay bands, 4 & 5. The Band 4 maximum would only allow a maximum salary of £18,064, while the Band 5 would allow up to £22,700.

The diversity of structures and working practices across the HPSS makes this staff grouping potentially the most difficult to address appropriately under Agenda for Change. The 3 job profiles are:

Band 4 - Domiciliary Care Organiser - essentially a home help services manager - allocating hours etc. This job has at best a limited social care dimension and all parties see this role becoming subsumed into a more generic management type grade as the job's evolution is towards an exclusively management/administrative Job.

Band 4 - Home care assessing Job. This is a critical job profile, which would progress to a Band 5 job if staff undertook the additional responsibilities that would be associated with training to an appropriate post NVQ (III) level in social care assessment. The assumption of these responsibilities could precede the participation in the formal training if the service pattern in specific Trusts reflects this need. Work on providing this framework needs to be completed urgently to allow a workable solution to be found for staff in this group.

Band 5 - Home Care Organiser staff and client, currently those Social Work Assistant's undertaking both an assessing and home help management role. This enables them to score across a wider range of job evaluation factors. All parties acknowledge that this current dual role may not best fit the direction of service development models. However changes to the tasks undertaken by this group of workers that might affect current AfC outcomes must be avoided.

It is critical that a detailed analysis is undertaken of staffing within this area. The DHSS&PS can negotiate with HSS Boards to commission appropriate post NVQ (III) training targeted particularly at this group of staff, and training resources would need to be prioritised to ensure this could be realised throughout HPSS. This could be supported by the Department including a Priority for Action objective to seek appropriate post NVQ (III) training for this workforce.

The group of staff involved in assessing care needs have however the potential to assume a greater role within the Social Services organisational make up. With advancement to appropriate post NVQ (III) training, the staff could assume some duties that are currently being undertaken by qualified staff outside the elderly

programme of care. Such a step could be developed into part of a solution to the issues of workforce shortage in Field social work, where qualified staff may not need to be doing certain tasks e.g. contact/transport etc.

Within this context the DHSS&PS is prepared to take the necessary steps to develop, with HPSS Employers, a generic Band 5 “assessing worker” job profile within 2 years.

There is a recognition that many of the staff who perform the domiciliary care organiser i.e. Supervisor of home helps have been reorganised into these posts through the decisions of their employers and there needs to be some clear mechanisms for staff in these posts to avail of any newly created “assessing worker” role at Band 5 level that will be developed. The means to give effect to this would be the subject of agreement between the Department, the Employers and the Trade Unions.

Social Worker Grades

A number of profiles have been developed to cover the existing Social Worker structure. The profiles are generic to all programmes of care.

New Entrant Social Worker (Band 5)

Profile created on the assumptions underpinning the proposed supported practice year associated with the new Social Work Degree. This group will progress on a basis similar to the proposed Agenda for Change Midwifery Model. They will enter the pay system at Band 5, with the potential for accelerated progression to Band 6. There are some unresolved issues which are currently being considered by the Social Services Profile Group:

- What happens to newly qualified social workers in the interim, if they are very rapidly given full caseloads and employers are not in a position to offer them the support envisaged?
- What are the Band 5 entry level pay points and transition arrangements for progression to Band 6?

Social Worker Profile (Band 6)

This is the profile which covers the existing basic grade practitioner, and as such it is intended that all social workers would match to this profile on assimilation to Agenda for Change.

Residential Social Worker Qualified (Band 6)

This profile should match all social work qualified residential social workers in the service.

Specialist Social Worker (Band 7)

This profile was based on a selection of existing senior practitioner jobs. The specialist social worker is expected to offer a range of practical advice and support to social workers re practice issues.

Social Work Section Manager (Band 7)

This profile covers the existing Senior Social Worker job. Issues of accountability and supervisory responsibilities exist between this profile and the specialist social worker profile. In principle all parties are agreed that caseload allocation and responsibility lies with the section manager while more specialist advice and guidance on professional issues may be more applicable to the role of a specialist social worker.

Day Care

The profiles developed in this programme of care cover the existing jobs for Care Assistants, Care Support Workers, Day Care Worker Levels 1 & 2, Senior Day Care Worker, and both Centre Managers and Deputy Centre Managers. While questionnaires were gathered to reflect the existing structures, it was clear following analysis and profile development that at most there will be only four initial profiles.

Day Centre Carer (Band 3)

This will cover Care Assistant, Support Worker and Day Care Worker Level 1 grades. Given the outcomes in this area it is likely that generic job descriptions to facilitate movement between the existing grades will be developed.

Day Centre Carer Higher Level (Band 5)

This singular profiles will subsume the existing Day Care Worker Level 2 and Senior Day Care Worker jobs. Both jobs clearly scored within the band, predicated on the assumption that Day Care Worker Level 2's undertake substantive review and assessment work.

Day Centre Manager Small-Medium/ Medium-Large (bands 6-7)

These profiles are still under development. There are currently ten management grades covering both Centre and Deputy Centre Managers. Grading is based on the size of centre the staff are managing. It is hoped that there will be only 2 Agenda for Change profiles to cover these groups of staff, and that as a consequence a uniform regional approach to day centre management will emerge.

Social Work Locality / Service Manager (Band 8a)

This profile will cover the majority of the existing Assistant Principal Social Workers and Principal Social Workers. There are issues around this profile, in that it suggests which would subsume two closely aligned existing grades into the same Agenda for Change pay band. An agreed workforce reform initiative to more clearly define the roles of this profile will be needed. There may be issues for a small number of staff at either end of this spectrum in matching terms primarily due to service delivery issues.

Programme Manager / Assistant Director (Band 8b)

This profile is likely to be the main profile for a single professional head, in charge of a programme of care, such as family and childcare or learning disability, within a Trust.