

**Our Ref: BP 2525/04**

**22 September 2004**

**Director of Social Services  
Director of Human Resources  
In each HSS Trust**

**cc SS Pay Reference Group  
Director of Human  
Resources in each Board**

Dear Director

**AGENDA FOR CHANGE:  
SOCIAL SERVICES INFORMATION GATHERING EXERCISE FOR  
UNQUALIFIED RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE SOCIAL WORKERS  
AND SOCIAL WORK ASSISTANTS**

As you know the Department established a Social Services Pay Reference Group to explore and resolve issues that arise as a result of the Social Services Agenda for Change Job Evaluation exercise. The Group is comprised of representatives from DHSSPS, HPSS Employers and Staff Side.

The group has been meeting for approximately 12 months and progressed a number of issues. In addition the group has developed an agreed understandings paper, which identifies issues arising for a variety of reasons eg differences in how “commonly-titled” groups of staff are being employed within the HPSS (copy enclosed for ease of reference).

A sub group with representatives from the DHSSPS, HPSS Employers and Staff side was recently formed with the specific aim of examining the understandings paper and taking forward two main areas identified in the paper:

- Unqualified Residential Child Care Social Worker
- Social Work Assistants.

## **Unqualified Residential Child Care Social Worker**

Whilst it is acknowledged that 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 policy of the Department in its commitment to have a fully qualified workforce within Child Care, or the aspirations of HPSS Employers or Trade Unions. Therefore the sub group has been asked to produce an accurate base line of information in relation to unqualified residential Child Care social workers. The information will assist in identifying the number of staff in this category, identify those who may wish to progress to qualified social worker status and inform any decision surrounding the most appropriate method of professional training based on existing qualifications and experience.

## **Social Work Assistants**

Although this is a commonly titled grade, the range of job titles and indeed roles due to the widely differing service delivery models has meant that to date it has not been possible to come up with a single Agenda for Change job evaluation/profile solution that could maintain the integrity of this grade title. 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 Understanding Paper, provides detail surrounding the issues identified for this group of staff and once again a detailed analysis of the workforce is required. This information will be used to identify the number of staff in this area of work, assess training needs and help in the development of a generic Band 5 “assessing worker” job profile within 2 years of Agenda for Change as outlined in the Understandings Paper.

## **Questionnaire**

In order to assist with the information gathering process the sub group have developed in partnership a questionnaire for each staff group and would appreciate your co-operation in completion of this exercise. Copies of the questionnaire are enclosed and additional copies can be obtained from Extranet and the Departments website <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk>

The information will be used to advance the work of the Social Services Pay Reference Group in preparing Social Services staff for Agenda for Change.

You will note that the job holder signature is required on each completed questionnaire therefore completed questionnaires must be returned on or before **19 October 2004** to.

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Yours sincerely

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