

HOME SUPPORT STAFF - RECRUITMENT AND WORKFORCE ISSUES

Report By: Head of Social Care (Adults)

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To inform the Committee of workforce issues relating to home support staff.

Background

2. A progress report on the implementation of the Best Value Review of Home Support was presented to this Committee on 24th November 2003. It was reported that the improvement plan included a change of purpose for in-house home care to reablement. The service would be called STARRS (Short term assessment reablement and review service), with transfer of long term maintenance home support to the independent sector.
3. The report highlighted that the pilot of STARRS had been restricted due to difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff in the independent sector. This meant that older people who had completed their reablement programme, and whose care needs could now be met by long-term maintenance arrangements, were not able to transfer to a care agency in a timely manner. In turn, STARRS could not take on new applicants for reablement programmes.

In-house Home Care Workforce Issues

4. The profile of the in house service workforce shows that the majority of staff (70.5%) are aged over 40 years of age. There are no corresponding statistics for the independent sector at present, but equally no indication that the profile would be significantly different.

Age profile of In House Home Care Workforce:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
20 – 29 years	6.5%
30 – 39 years	23%
40 – 49 years	28%
50 – 59 years	36%
60 years+	6.5%

5. The profile of the workforce also shows that 98% of home care assistants are female. The recorded ethnicity of the employees are 95% white British or Irish. (The remaining 5% data was withheld by the employee)

Recruitment

6. One of the difficulties in home support staff recruitment in the past has been the profile and perception of care roles as a “job” rather than a valued career. The directorate will be represented at the Hereford Jobs Fair on 30th/31st January 2004, where the profile of home support as a career will be raised.
7. The Best Value Review improvement plan indicated a reduction of numbers of staff for the reshaped reablement service. A decision was made in May 2003, that active recruitment would cease for the In-house Care Service, in recognition that only a small percentage of current staff would be retained to provide the STARRS Service. This approach also meant that competition between the in-house service and the independent sector in recruiting from the same pool of potential employees would be reduced.
8. The main reasons given by the newly formed independent sector “Home Care Forum” for recruitment difficulties include:
 - The sector’s inability to pay much above the minimum wage.
 - Unsociable hours including evenings and weekends, as many carers prefer to work during school hours only.
 - Poor response from advertising specifically in rural areas.
 - Time taken to complete Criminal Records Bureau checks.
 - Training requirements prior to commencement of carer employment i.e. induction, moving & handling etc, carers unwillingness to complete NVQ level 2 qualifications:
 - Lack of a positive career path.
 - The current spot purchasing arrangements with the Council mean agencies are unable to plan recruitment to meet need for care as it arises.

Retention

9. The “Exit Interview System”, has gathered information about why employees leave the service. The key reasons for people leaving the in house service are as follows – (in order of volume)
 - To work for an independent Care Agency
 - To work in different field of work – no pattern
 - To take up another post within Social Services
 - Moved out of area
 - Unable to find affordable child care

Improvement plan:

10. As part of the Home Care Best Value Review, the changing shape of the Service will support closer working relationships with the Independent Sector. Work is taking place in the directorate to plan with the private, independent and voluntary sector for integrated training programmes for care staff across all sectors. Training grant monies have been allocated with the specific instruction that some must be spent in the private, independent and voluntary sector.
11. The switch to volume contracting of services will enable agencies to develop their business to support an equitable Service county-wide. It should also have an impact on the ability of agencies to develop career pathways to encourage potential employees into the service.
12. The Training and Development team is also working closely with Home Support managers to plan for the future, and there are a number of challenges to overcome in order to maintain a qualified and competent workforce. One of the challenges is around the dispersed nature of the service – the service is widespread, and access to training materials and opportunities needs to be facilitated in a planned way. This also raises the question of computer literacy as a training need.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the recruitment and workforce issues in relation to home support be noted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None