

SELECT COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT – JUNE 2018

Issue: Educational Psychology Service Performance

The improvements in performance in submitting Appendix D Psychological Assessments have been maintained. It is pleasing to report that as at 1st June 2018, 94% of reports requested since 12th January had been submitted within the six week, statutory limit. The six week Appendix D assessment contributes to the statutory 20 week assessment timeline for Education, Health and Care Plans and the rate for completing these assessments will be a focus for the SEND Ofsted inspection.

The following proposal is aimed at increasing capacity in a cost effective manner, without some of the ongoing costs incurred when using agencies.

Current Position

The service is currently understaffed due to maternity and sick leave, and there is also too much dependency on high cost locum support.

There is a need to stabilise the team so that there is sufficient on-going capacity to meet demand and also work within identified budgets.

There is ongoing pressure on the service owing to the number of requests for Education, Health and Care Plans. An average of 25 requests for Education, Health and Care Plans were made each month from September to December 2017, currently there is an average of 62 requests per month.

Proposed Model Moving Forward

To help meet this demand, the service has been supported through the use of locums. The Associate Model set out within this paper proposes an alternative to the ongoing use of locums as this is creating an unsustainable pressure on the budget.

It is proposed that the Education Psychology Service moves towards the use of 'Associate Education Psychologists' instead of locum Education Psychologists. The model works by developing and maintaining a bank of appropriately qualified Education Psychologists. In this way, there is not an ongoing financial commitment to sustain permanent staff or fund high cost locums. The model draws from a bank of Associates as and when to meet demand.

All Associates would be pre-checked (Health Care Professional Council, Disclosure Barring Service, General Data Protection Regulation) and would sign an agreement in relation to the work to be offered to them.

The Education Psychology Service within the Associate Model would be used to support statutory work related to Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments, and they would not be part of the permanent staffing establishment.

There are no foreseen, associated costs beyond payment for each piece of work completed.

The Model is attractive to staff as it gives associates more flexibility than locum employment.

It should be noted that in addition, there will be further attempts to recruit to the substantive posts in the service structure and associates will only be used when the Education Psychology Service employed by the council are unable to meet the statutory deadlines because the demand is high.

The interim Senior Education Psychologist is developing the Associate Model to begin in September 2018 and a number of Education Psychologists have expressed an interest in working in this way.

Experience from other local authorities suggests that other Education Psychologists may consider this way of working once it is in place.

In the long term, the plan would be to rely on associates only at times of particularly high demand. However, in the short term, until sufficient capacity is recruited to substantive posts, it is likely there will be similar amount of associate time used to that of locums, although with the 15% savings.

Steve Laycock

Locum Principal Educational Psychologist

08 June 2018