



General Purposes Committee
22 November 2011

**Report from the Director of
Adult Social Services**

**Market Factor Supplement Payment –
Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHPs)**

1.0 Summary

1.1 The Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHPs) had until October received an annual allowance of £1542 (the difference between Inner and Outer London Weighting) in recognition of the additional training and levels of responsibility they undertake in pursuance of the Council's statutory obligations under the Mental Health Act. The Market Factor Supplement is therefore not a new payment but requested in order to re-instate this allowance which was withdrawn as part of the current pay harmonisation. The AMHP role involves working in highly volatile situations with high levels of client-risk and extended/unsocial working hours. The allowance is to retain the nationally-scarce AMHP role within Brent in order to meet Brent's statutory responsibilities and to attract new staff to Brent to meet the increase in statutory work. The allowance had also been considered a due recognition of their commitment to maintaining a service to high standards and of their loyalty to Brent. Other local boroughs pay more and Brent needs to be competitive in order to retain its current AMHP workforce and be able to recruit new staff in order to maintain the service.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to highlight the importance of reinstating the allowance as a Market Factor Supplement Payment as set out in the attached business case (Appendix 1)

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the annual allowance of £1542 be reinstated to the Council's AMHPs as a Market Factor Supplement Payment in recognition of the issues summarised below.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The loss of the current allowance would have a negative impact on the recruitment and retention of AMHPs. It is likely that a number of the existing staff would either take early retirement, since many staff are close to retirement, or move to other neighbouring boroughs where the pay for AMHPs is higher, e.g. Westminster, Camden, Kensington and Chelsea. As such Brent would incur additional costs in recruiting replacement staff, who for the most part would be inexperienced and newly-qualified, leaving a much less experienced, skilled and legally knowledgeable workforce, which may also be more susceptible to legal challenges arising from their practice.
- 3.2 There is a national shortage of AMHPs due to being a more highly-qualified role requiring considerable experience as a social worker before training as an AMHP. The London Council Survey shows that AMHPs are in the extreme difficulty category for both recruitment and retention. Nationally, the majority of AMHPs are above 45 years and tend to remain in posts and therefore less available in the job market.
- 3.3 Since July 2007 Brent has lost 13 permanent AMHPs and has only been able to recruit two permanent staff, having to use 9 locum staff. This has been extremely costly to the Council with agency rates often 1.5 times the normal salary. Furthermore locums tend to move on rapidly to more lucrative opportunities with other boroughs and are also time-consuming to induct.
- 3.4 There has been an increase in AMHP assessments of 30% nationally since the implementation of the new Mental Health Act (MHA) 4 years ago. Brent has seen a significant increase in MHA assessments and AMHP work, particularly through increased use of Community Treatment Orders, Guardianship and revisions to the Code of Practice, which has led to an increase in Section 2. The loss of existing Brent AMHPs would put at risk the Council's ability to meet its statutory obligations under the MHA.
- 3.5 It is therefore cost effective for Brent to pay the Market Factor Supplement to ensure that the existing experienced AMHP workforce is retained and future recruitment to vacant posts is not jeopardised.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The full year cost of the £1542 Supplement for each of the existing 24 AMHPs is £37,008. However there is no net increase for 2011/12 as this has been accommodated within the 2011/12 operational budget.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The loss of the existing Allowance and failure to replace with the Market Supplement could lead to the loss of a number of the existing workforce and would potentially impact on the Council's ability to meet its statutory responsibilities under the Mental Health Act.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 There are no diversity implications.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

7.1 These are contained in the body of the report.

Background Papers

Market Factor Supplement Business Case - Appendix 1 attached.

Contact Officers

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