



## **UNISON response to Adults Consultation**

UNISON notes the proposed restructure is not about saving money on staff costs but about “cost recycling”. In getting the balance right between “front line” staff and non “front line” staff it should be remembered staff delivering the service are the people making sure services happen, not staff overseeing processes for delivering the service. Sufficient resources for overseeing the work are necessary insofar as they make the “front” end work possible and efficient.

UNISON has already recommended an extended consultation period as the risks associated with getting the structure wrong are high and have direct implications for the quality of care provided to Adults needing support from Social Services. **The lack of support within the staff group for this proposal means we continue to make that recommendation.**

**Having had extensive discussions with members at well attended meetings we have established the following:**

- 1) There is support and interest in setting up geographical multi-disciplinary teams.
- 2) There is strong opposition to the reduction in the numbers of people with supervisory responsibility – in particular the deletion of the senior practitioner role, not least because this is a role which aids career development.
- 3) UNISON is challenging the grades proposed on new roles.
- 4) There is support for keeping a cross borough review team.
- 5) An on- site permanent supervisory presence in the hospital teams is essential.
- 6) Retain a cross borough Sensory Impairment team along the lines outlined by the Sensory Impairment workers.
- 7) A lack of clarity about where Right to Control sits in the structure and concerns about the additional supervisory responsibility this gives the team leader

- 8) Lack of cover arrangements in the management team for sickness and annual leave.

**The risks of going ahead with the proposals as they currently stand:**

- 1) Sustaining the demoralisation of staff group leading to poor performance and poor retention of staff.
- 2) Resulting from (1), reputational damage to the service and loss of confidence by staff group and residents of Barnet.
- 3) Deterioration in standards resulting in poor safeguarding as a result of significant withdrawal of support for the practitioners.
- 4) Poor decision making by staff unable to gain suitable advice in a timely manner, resulting in poor outcomes for service users.
- 5) Delays in hospital discharges and care packages to service users as colleagues are unable to access sound advice in a timely manner.
- 6) Failure to discharge Local Authority responsibilities to carry out Best Interest Assessments and DOLS assessments
- 7) Risk of failure amongst registered professionals to maintain standards necessary for their continued registration.
- 8) Risk of failure to meet targets for reviews and failure to gather information/ data useful in the planning of future services.
- 9) Risk of failure to provide an equitable service across the Borough to those with a Sensory Impairment.

**We propose the following principles for a basis for continuing the consultation and negotiation:**

- 1) Retain the current posts of team managers and senior/ principal practitioners.
- 2) Retain the Sensory Impairment team as a cross borough team.
- 3) Retain the Review team as a cross borough team.
- 4) Retain hospital teams with the presence of on-site managerial expertise.
- 5) Move other staff into Geographical multi-disciplinary teams.
- 6) For the work envisaged in Quality in Care Homes to be the remit of the Review team looking at the resources of the Review team.

- 7) The Head of Care Quality will have the key responsibilities of the Service Manager of the Practice Governance and Assurance Team and the duties of that team will be spread amongst the whole staff group. E.g. File auditing and checking for standards will fall in the scope of Team Managers.

**The advantages with this:**

- 1) Staff morale will improve.
- 2) A clear career path will be retained through the professions.
- 3) Multi-disciplinary working will be enabled. The current role profiles for senior practitioners and Team managers already have in them an expectation of “Lead on cross cutting project and development work” and so these groups can lead on developing the new teams and new work in the Review team.
- 4) Support Planning and Hospital discharges will take place in a timely and safe manner.
- 5) There will be no grading issues (as a result of this restructure).
- 6) Robust supervision and quality of casework management.
- 7) Ability to maintain and possibly improve on standards for delivering a cross Borough Sensory Impairment service.
- 8) Ability to maintain and possibly improve on achieving timely reviews with data and information to inform future service delivery.
- 9) No increase in bureaucratic measures to address care quality but meaningful front line measures to deliver this.
- 10) Ability to provide BIA- DOLS assessments.
- 11) Ability to maintain standards around safeguarding for service users and in so doing ensure the support of the professional integrity for staff.



## **UNISON RESPONSE TO ADULTS SERVICES CONSULTATION**

### **RESPONSE TO ADDITIONAL MATERIAL RECEIVED SINCE OUR SUBMISSION 24<sup>TH</sup> January**

Social Services is moving into unprecedented times as the numbers of people requiring assistance becomes greater, with more complex needs. Decreasing personal resources means we can anticipate more people looking for assistance from Social Services. Diminishing resources to offer service users puts more pressure on staff to deliver what they can, as safely as they can. With this in mind:

- 1) UNISON welcomes the proposal to add a senior practitioner-type role back into the structure as this goes some way to mitigate the risks mentioned in our first submission document.
- 2) UNISON welcomes that the information we had requested at the start of the consultation, namely the numbers of posts in the current and proposed structure, has been given in a format which answers the question raised. This now means we can **begin** a meaningful discussion about people and posts. We note there is an offer to meet with the Assistant Director to discuss this further and this meeting will be sought.

#### **OUTSTANDING CONCERNS**

- 1) We do not believe a generic role profile is adequate, but more importantly we would want to see a structure and grading to that structure which reflects more closely the direction of travel outlined by the College of Social Work. Otherwise the membership of the Local Authority to this body and a rejection of a model promoted by it and many other Local Authorities would seem to be at odds.
- 2) The gap in spinal column points between the top of the Team Leader and the bottom of the Service Manager (7) is far too great and it is still the case no one is happy about these roles. There is a risk of upheaval to the service as

people use the first year of the restructure simply to move on and so put business continuity at risk.

- 3) The more resources shrink the more important it is that staff members understand the role they are playing and know the resources (in a very global sense) available to them. This is not the case with an unstable workforce.
- 4) The Direct Payments Manager post seems to be deleted and there are concerns about where this work and expertise will go.
- 5) The table of staff numbers, whilst helpful, raises some fundamental questions which have not been considered so far in the consultation. There are potential implications for the postholders of many colleagues in the current structure.
- 6) The issue around the ringfencing with respect to the Service Manager role has, so far, not resulted in a reasonable way forward. UNISON is concerned that if the path outlined at a recent JNCC 29<sup>th</sup> January of going out to external advert does not lie in the spirit of the legislation around meaningful consultation:

“The consultation shall include consultation about ways of—  
(a) avoiding the dismissals,  
(b) reducing the numbers of employees to be dismissed, and  
(c) mitigating the consequences of the dismissals,  
and shall be undertaken by the employer with a view to reaching agreement with the appropriate representatives.]”

UNISON has emphasised the need to be consistent across the Council and pointed to the way this issue has been dealt with in the Children’s Service as a way forward. If this way is not adopted then once again there is inconsistency between the way Adults and Children’s Services are respectively applying the Council’s policy.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend the extension of the consultation period to enable meaningful discussions around this restructure to take place.

UNISON notes and reiterates there has been no tangible reason put forward as to why the consultation for this restructure has to finish 1<sup>st</sup> February 2013.

A similar restructure took place 2009 and took much longer and managed to take place with the goodwill and cooperation of the entire workforce. The spirit of this proposed structure – a move to multi-disciplinary teams based in geographical groups has been accepted as a positive move by UNISON as expressed through a number of union meetings. We believe, therefore, there is a potential for a positive resolution if the will to engage with the workforce is utilised.

UNISON’s concerns relate to the risks not only to our members but to service users and we are very conscious if this structure is not right then the consequences can be catastrophic.