
The Avenues Trust

Quality of Work

Issue to be Addressed

The Avenues Trust needed to carry out a review of its reward and grading structure, in order to ensure that the structures delivered the organisational strategy and that pay was fair and competitive. In order to achieve this, it also wanted to benchmark current reward practice with social care organisations and the wider market. There was a perception that it was timely to perhaps seek new ways of rewarding staff, consider the overall development of its workforce, plan for succession across the organisation and improve staff retention. Staff within the trust had also been required to undertake a rapid professionalisation programme, but the organisation had not been funded for this.

Root Cause of the Issue

The Avenues Trust is a publicly funded not-for-profit organisation operating under tight financial restrictions. While it has charitable status, it receives its funds solely through local authorities, and provides services on behalf of the public sector. There was a perception that staff were underpaid, and there was a need to determine whether this was, in fact, the case. The organisation needed to clarify the level of pay and the other benefits offered to employees, and put a value to some of the reward package that had not previously been quantifiable.

Their approach

The Avenues Trust worked with Hay Group, initially to evaluate the jobs within the organisation, and then to explore a number of issues that arose as a result of these evaluations. The process determined the size of the jobs within the Trust, and benchmarked the remuneration packages on offer with those available throughout the social care sector and in other sectors.

On the back of the evaluation process, the organisation was also able to determine the differences in job sizes between particular roles and their line managers.

Outcome

The evaluation and benchmarking process confirmed that staff within the organisation were significantly underpaid compared to similar sized jobs both within the social care sector and across other sectors. This was particularly true for frontline delivery staff. Central services staff salaries were much closer to or competitive with the market rate.

The findings of the evaluation and benchmarking process enabled the organisation to consider where it could afford to invest in support worker pay and develop a strategy for doing so. Discussions regarding the findings were held with the Management Board, and the quantified evidence allowed the problem to be clearly communicated, discussed and resolved. The decision was taken to address the discrepancies in support worker pay over a four year period.

It was also established that the gap, in terms of job size, between senior support workers and line managers was too large. This meant that the line managers spent a bigger proportion of their time dealing with operational rather than managerial issues, and the structure offered little promotion potential for the senior support workers, or possibility to recruit to these line manager roles from within the organisation. The organisation was aware that the gap was significant, but the analysis carried out illustrated that it was even more of an issue than was anticipated. This demonstrated that a new intermediate tier of management was required in order to address the succession issue and assist the organisation to operate more effectively.

The findings also led to the introduction of a training programme to develop leadership and management competencies. More opportunities for horizontal development were also introduced, although these opportunities have proved less popular with staff, most of whom prefer to specialize in their current lines of work.

Overall, the project has helped improve employee commitment and engagement, and employee retention.