

Beacon Council Scheme Round Five

Supporting Social Care Workers Theme

Evidence on Current Practice, Best Practice and User Satisfaction

Background

This paper presents key findings on current practice, best practice and user satisfaction in the selected theme. This information has been taken from the Round Five theme reports completed by the central government policy leads in each theme in late Spring 2003. The full theme reports can be found at: www.local.odpm.gov.uk/research/beacon/beacon.htm

The user satisfaction data and analysis was completed by MORI in August 2003 and the full report on all themes is available at www.local.odpm.gov.uk/research/beacon5.pdf

The evidence base on theme research and user satisfaction is designed to assist the Independent Advisory Panel in creating the selection criteria for the scheme. It is also designed to assist local authorities in applying for the scheme and in improving services generally. The research evidence base on the Beacon Council Scheme is crucial in identifying current and best practice in service provision whilst taking into account the satisfaction of those that receive the services. This evidence base also enables local authorities to identify areas for improvement as well as potential areas for innovation in attempting to achieve continuous improvement in service provision.

The research evidence base can also demonstrate whether the scheme is achieving its long-term objective of improving services. Warwick University Business School has commenced work on a three to five year ODPM / IDEa funded project entitled *An Impact Evaluation of the Beacon Council Scheme* and this will yield further evidence shortly and greatly contribute to the future evidence base on service improvement.

Section A – Indications of Excellent Practice in Supporting Social Care Workers

- 1 Key links with workforce issues in health (and other sectors such as education, housing, youth justice, Early years, Connexions etc) are made by:
 - Developing NVQ training jointly with health partners based on national occupational standards developed by Topss England.
 - Developing new types of care worker, for example mental health support workers, those working in rehabilitation of older people and child and family support services. The GSCC, Topss and others are being asked to review how training can be developed to ensure generic skills are available in the workforce, with specialisation where needed.
 - Recruitment of Occupational Therapists where there are high vacancy rates in both health and social care settings.

- Regional workforce planning through collaborations between Topss England Regional Committees, NHS Workforce Development Confederations and Learning and Skills Councils.

Pay & Conditions

2. Negotiation of pay and conditions is not a function of central government. Central government levers on pay and conditions are through:

- recognition of pay pressures in Spending Review Personal Social Services resource settlements
- encouragement of best workforce planning and HR management practice
- encouragement of good procurement practice by councils of independent provider services

Key Planning Assumptions

3. The DH planning assumption of 50,000 new WTE staff would resource service developments and reduce the overall vacancy rate by half to 5%. The remaining vacancy rate needs to be managed by re-engineering the workforce to gain productivity improvements and managing vacancy levels using a agency staff where necessary.

4. To raise the qualification level of the workforce to 50% (with NVQ2 or better) will require an estimated additional 300,000 qualifications. More applications for social worker training are needed (5,000 by 2005/06) and more specialist training in child care (7,000 by 2006).

5. There is a range of different things to look for which could be indicators of best practice. Broadly, they come within these areas:

- **development of a flexible workforce through:**
 - generic training based on national occupational standards,
 - specialised training as part of a career pathway,
 - re-engineering of the workforce by employers facilitated by the Department's HR development strategy,
 - employers effectively addressing pay and conditions through the Local Government Pay Commission and through effective commissioning
 - Topss's work on training and workforce planning
 - the work of the GSCC and NCSC in registration of the workforce, development of social worker and post-qualifying training and inspection of care providers
- **successful implementation of HR management improvements to:**
 - clarify the advantages of work in the social care sector
 - improve support for front-line staff facilitated by the national recruitment and retention campaign in support of local employers, the Department's HR development strategy and investment in the National Training Strategy

- develop the leadership qualities and technical capacity of managers at all levels in all sectors
- **ensuring funding levels for training are sufficient**
- from central government
- from employers through their commitment to the Topss National Training Strategy
- through the NCSC monitoring of national minimum standards

Training initiatives

6. Training initiatives designed to improve the level of competence of the workforce include:

- Reform of the social worker qualification to become degree level
- Encouragement of Continuous Professional Development through registration by the GSCC
- Funding support by the Department of Health for training by local councils and the independent sector (the Training Support Programme and new National Training Strategy Specific Grant)

Social Work Qualification Reform

7. The new degree course requirements specify that students must spend a minimum of 200 days in practice settings. A radical review of how practice learning is undertaken and financed will report in January 2003, and a Practice Learning Taskforce has begun work to improve the quality, quantity and diversity of practice learning.

Local councils will be held more firmly to account to ensure they contribute to practice learning through the Social Services Inspectorate's Performance Assessment Framework.

Continuous Professional Development

8. Beyond the generic basic social worker qualification, there have been developing opportunities for post qualification training and continuous professional development (CPD). The Training Support Programme (below) has a sub-programme that supports employers in enabling their staff to take specialist Post Qualifying courses, mostly for child care and the mental health Approved Social Worker training.

9. The GSCC has begun a fundamental review of the PQ framework, and there is new funding for CPD development in the new Human Resources Development Strategy Specific Grant.

Section B - User Satisfaction in Supporting Social Care Workers

There appears to be no national quantitative data outlining the general public's understanding of the difficult but important role of social care workers. What little research there is in this area focuses on the role of social *workers*.

However, there have been a number of publications looking at the vacancy rates within social care services, and surveys recording the views of social carers.

A 'Social Services Recruitment and Retention Survey' in 2000 looked at social care staffing levels in independent residential and nursing homes.

Regional variations in recruitment and retention – independent sector residential and nursing homes (England, April 2000)

Base: 212 independent sector residential and nursing homes.

	Manager/ supervisor	Care Staff
	%	%
Vacancy rate (%)		
London	4.9	15
South East/East	3.5	11
Midlands/South West	5	4.8
North	4.9	8.9
England	5.2	9.3
Turnover rate (%)		
London	10	22.9
South East/East	10.8	23.8
Midlands/South West	10.5	15.6
North	24.6	25.9
England	13.1	21.8

Source: Social Services Recruitment & Retention Survey, Social & Health Care Workforce Group (2000).

A previous literature search entitled "Desk Research on recruitment and Retention in Social Care and Social Work" published by the Department of Health is also a good source of data.

The key findings from the 874 care staff (home care, residential care and day care workers) in UNISON's postal survey of a sample of 4,500 of its members in December 1999 sheds light on the perceived difficulties social care workers are facing in their work.

Key Findings among care workers.

Q Compared with this time last year, would you say that....

	All care staff (874) %	Home Care Workers (408) %	Residential Care Assistants (299) %	Day Care Workers (167) %	All staff in survey (4,505) %
<i>Base:</i>					
.. in your working area or department the workload and pressure has:					
Increased	73	64	80	81	73
Remained same	19	24	16	14	22
Decreased	3	6	1	1	2
.. in your working area or department stress levels have:					
Increased	75	68	81	79	71
Remained same	16	18	14	15	21
Decreased	1	*	1	1	1
.. in your working area or department morale has:					
Increased	3	3	3	3	5
Remained same	33	35	33	30	34
Decreased	63	61	64	67	60
.. in your working area or department service users' expectations have					
Increased	54	49	58	60	54
Remained same	29	27	31	31	30
Decreased	4	6	3	1	2
In the last 12 months have you considered leaving your current job?					
Yes, seriously	31	28	33	33	32
Yes, but not seriously	34	32	36	36	34
No	35	40	30	30	33

Source: Unison Members in Local Government Survey (1999).¹

A survey conducted on behalf of Joseph Rowntree Foundation and quoted in the hitherto referred desk research for the DOH looks at domiciliary care workers' views of key aspects about their job. Results are shown in the table below:

¹ Quoted in "Desk Research on Recruitment and Retention in Social Care and Social Work" by Christine Eborall & Kay Garmeson for the Department of Health (August 2001).

Domiciliary Care Workers' assessment of key aspects of their jobs

Base: All domiciliary care workers (182)

	Excellent or good	Adequate	Poor or unaccept- -able	No response
Users' appreciation of the work	80	15	3	2
The amount of training received	58	32	8	2
Physical working conditions	55	36	3	5
Recognition from employer for good work	50	26	20	3
Degree of supervision	43	32	13	11
Rate of pay	35	40	24	1

Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.²

Suggested further reading:

'*Employers Skill Survey: Case Study - Health and Social Care*' (2000), produced by the then Department for Education and Employment (currently the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions). This report is based on qualitative research which examines the relationship between service delivery strategies, and the deployment of skills, recruitment problems and skill gaps within health and (elderly) social care.

Ronan Smyth

Local and Regional Government Research Unit (ODPM)

January 2004

² Quoted in "Desk Research on Recruitment and Retention in Social Care and Social Work" by Christine Eborall & Kay Garmeson for the Department of Health (August 2001).