

# **Social Work Task Force**

## **Organisations and workloads – a ‘health check’**

***Annex A of *Building a safe, confident future:****

***The final report of the Social Work Task Force***

The Social Work Task Force is an expert group, jointly appointed by the Secretaries of State for Health, and Children, Schools and Families, to advise the Government on social work reform

# Organisations and workloads – a ‘health check’

The Social Work Task Force believed that the people who organise, deliver and receive services are ultimately best placed to understand how local services should work. However, when seeking to make improvement, it can be difficult to find the best starting points for analysis and then action.

The Task Force presented an initial framework for helping employers and practitioners to take action now in assessing the “health” of their organisation on the range of issues affecting workload. This framework should be developed further in due course in support of the proposed standard for employers.

The framework looks at 5 key areas which we know all make a significant contribution to the development and delivery of excellent services.

The framework is to support organizations to undertake a self assessment against the 5 areas, identify current strengths and plan to tackle areas for improvement.

The framework is not designed to act as a check list, but as a mechanism to promote debate at all levels of the service.

It can be used at team, service and organisation level. It should be the basis for discussion at each of these levels, with a requirement in place that staff have been involved in the response at each level and a mechanism for recording areas of disagreement. Where this is identified, a mechanism for reviewing the assessment, usually by a manager of another team or at a higher level, should be included.

Each organisation should also clarify how frequently they will undertake a “health check” and what the process for audit and reporting should be, including at least an annual report to lead member for both adult and children’s services.

The framework is not designed to be prescriptive and can be adapted to meet the needs of each organisation. However, the following prompts may be of use in promoting analysis and debate:

## Effective workload management

Vacancy rates – including:

- current unfilled posts
- posts covered by agency/temporary staff

- posts which are filled but where staff are absent (e.g. long term sick, maternity leave)
- turnover rates

#### Workload – including

- numbers of cases held by each full time equivalent
- average hours worked by staff on a weekly basis
- current levels of TOIL and leave to be taken by team members
- number of supervision sessions which have taken place – is this in line with organisational policy?
- staff attendance at CPD opportunities as planned in performance appraisal – how often is training cancelled/re-arranged?
- additional responsibilities e.g. student on placement, acting as mentor to other team member, undertaking action research

### Pro active workflow management

- Number of unallocated cases
- Re-referral rates
- Changes in workflow over time (peaks and troughs)
- How unallocated cases are risk assessed
- The escalation process for unallocated cases and alerts to senior managers
- How many cases are allocated to the team/manager/duty
- Delays in transfer of cases between teams
- How often workers are required to cancel meetings with people who use services/other professionals in an average week due to re-prioritisation of work
- Specific blocks to work flow which need to be considered e.g. efficiency of commissioned services, relationships with other agencies, transfer between teams/services
- Is the most efficient use of skills being made within the team and wider service? Are social workers undertaking tasks for which their skills are primarily required or could they be done more effectively by someone with different skills e.g. an administrator, para professional or other professional group either within the service or via a commissioned arrangement?

### Having the right tools to do the job

- Access to equipment – mobile working, IT access including to the internet
- Access to professional services to support case work– translators, legal advice etc
- Access to resources e.g. research, library facilities

- Appropriate office space e.g. desk, office chair, access to quiet space.

## A healthy work place

- Is there a system in place to monitor frequency of supervision and quality of it in order to ensure effective practice is supported?
- Is 360 appraisal in place?
- Is there an employee welfare system in place and are staff aware of how they access it?
- How often do team meetings take place?
- Are staff able to contribute to the agenda?
- Are senior managers accessible/visible in the service?
- How are stress levels monitored on an individual and service basis?
- Is there a whistle blowing process and are staff aware of what this is?
- Are there processes in place to ensure staff welfare e.g. risk assessments of roles/activities, call back/monitoring processes to ensure safety whilst working away from the office base including out of hours?
- What are the sickness levels in the team/service and what is the pattern over time?

## Effective Service Delivery

- Findings from compliments, comments and complaints
- Feedback from service users
- Feedback from stakeholders/other professionals
- Staff survey results
- Exit interview analysis

