

Review of Social Work and Occupational Managerial Roles in Adults Services

Report of the Head of Service for Adult Care Operations & Health

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation: that the Cabinet be asked to agree funding for new Advanced Practitioner roles in Adult Social Care to support statutory work, reduce pressure at a time of increased demand and complexity and provide a career pathway for Social Workers and Occupational Therapists in Devon (Option 3 as outlined in section 4 and 6 of the Report).

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### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Both Social Work and Occupational Therapy have capability frameworks that describe the knowledge, skills and abilities expected at different points in the career pathway. Devon has not fully implemented either pathway at this point.
- 1.2 The career pathways provide a mechanism for Social Workers and Occupational Therapists to develop their practice to be able to deal with increasing levels of complexity in their work. For example, a Newly Qualified Social Worker may undertake safeguarding work but may require a level of supervision and support to do so. The more experienced the worker, the higher the level of accountability and responsibility in dealing with more multifaceted areas of practice.
- 1.3 The context of this is our statutory duty to protect Adults at risk in Devon, cope with rising demand and level of complexity of social care work outlined in section 2 of this paper.
- 1.4 To ensure an appropriate skill mix, Adult Social Care have identified the need for skilled Advanced Practitioners. This currently missing role will provide a vital level of practice expertise, leadership, and capacity to support with safeguarding and other statutory work that will give the best outcomes to people at risk in Devon.

1.5 The purpose of this paper is to:

- 1) Update on the work around the career pathway for Qualified Registered Social Workers and Qualified Registered Occupational Therapists in Devon
- 2) To provide evidence of changes to demand, capacity, and nature of the work in Adult Social Care.
- 3) Outline the options explored and consider the recommended approach relating to the introduction of new Social Work and Occupational Therapy Advanced Practitioner Roles in Adults Services.
- 4) Request funding to implement the recommended approach, which is outlined in more detail in section 3 of this report.

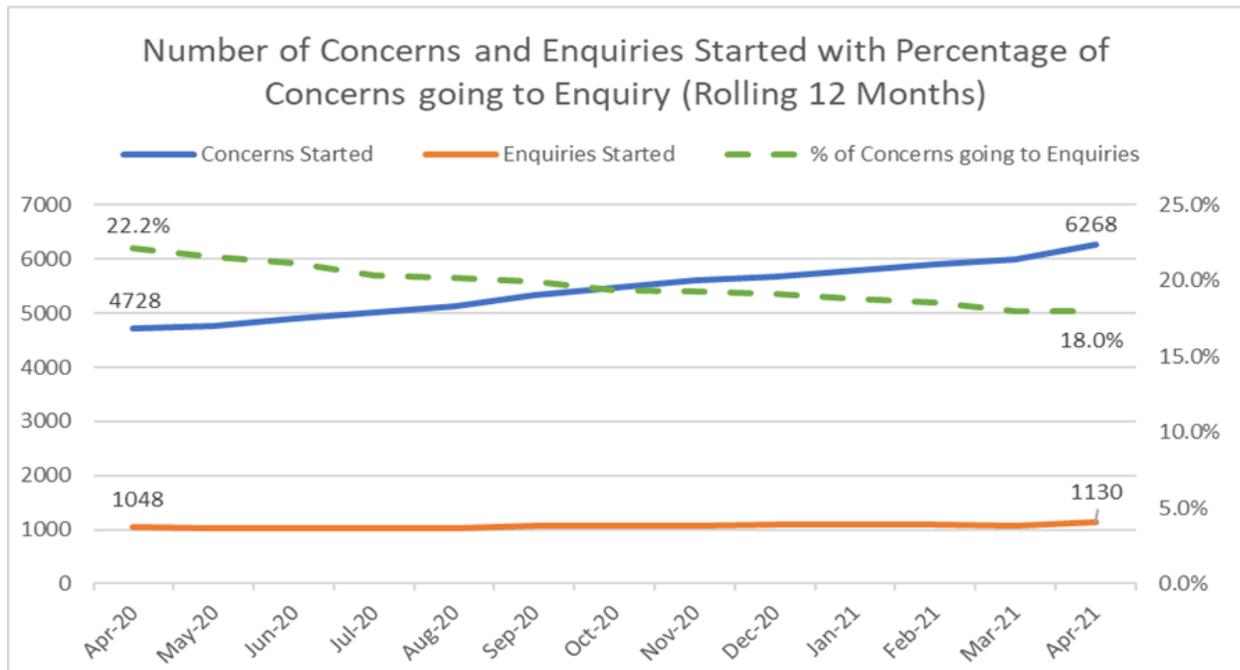
## **2. INTRODUCTION**

### **The importance of a Career Pathway**

- 2.1 Devon aspires to be an excellent authority, where staff are well trained, well supported and deliver a competent and confident service to their citizens. Having a permanent and stable workforce is key to achieving this and aligning our roles to a clear nationally recognised career structure is an important steppingstone to achieving this.
- 2.2 Implementation of professionally recognised career pathways will be a significant factor in enabling us to compete on a level playing field with neighbouring and other authorities but more than this, as a real selling point for Devon in terms of valuing our staff and gaining wider benefits around recruitment and retention.
- 2.3 Like other authorities, Devon County Council has seen a rapid decline in the number of qualified Social Workers and Occupational Therapists applying for permanent posts. We need to invest in our Social Worker and Occupational Therapist workforce to reduce this.
- 2.4 Adults and Children's services have worked together to develop a career pathway for Social Workers which is aligned between both services and to the national career pathway. A first Phase of this has now been successfully implemented up to, and including, Experienced Social Workers. However, the second Phase, which includes Advanced Practitioner and Team Manager roles is not yet implemented. This is a crucial aspect to ensure an embedding of the full pathway.
- 2.5 The Occupational Therapy Pathway is stand alone for Adult Services and needs to be aligned to the Social Worker Advanced Practitioner and Team Manager levels in Phase 2.

## Changes in demand and nature of work.

2.6 Graph 1 shows that Safeguarding concerns that have been started by Adult Social Care teams have increased by 33% in a year (1540 more concerns raised than previous year).



2.7 Pressure on our Adult Social Care teams have been increasing over the years.

i. Graph 2: shows the increase in cases on the waiting lists since April 2020.

On 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020 there were 1465 cases on the waiting list, this reduced to its lowest point in April 2020 during the Covid-19 response (808 cases) and in since then (in approx. 18 months) it has risen to 2124 cases (August 2021).



- ii. Recent government funding changes has meant that hospital discharge reviews now need to be completed within a 4-week period instead of 6-week period. The number of people supported at any one time is consistently at the 350 mark, putting real pressure on the system.
- iii. Feedback from staff relating to the change in nature of the work becoming more complex and increasing demand including Court of Protection work.

### **Future complex demand**

- iv. Between August 2021 and July 2022, a total of 157 preparing for adulthood cases are likely to be referred into Adults teams for a complex assessment when they turn 18.
- 2.8 In addition to the pressures outlined above, Team Managers in Adult Social Care currently manage between 3 to 16 FTE. To reduce risks to service delivery and to support managers with their workloads, the spans of control should be in the region of 8-9 FTE per team manager. An additional 11FTE would be required across Devon to ensure each manager had 8.5FTE each.

## **3. PROPOSAL**

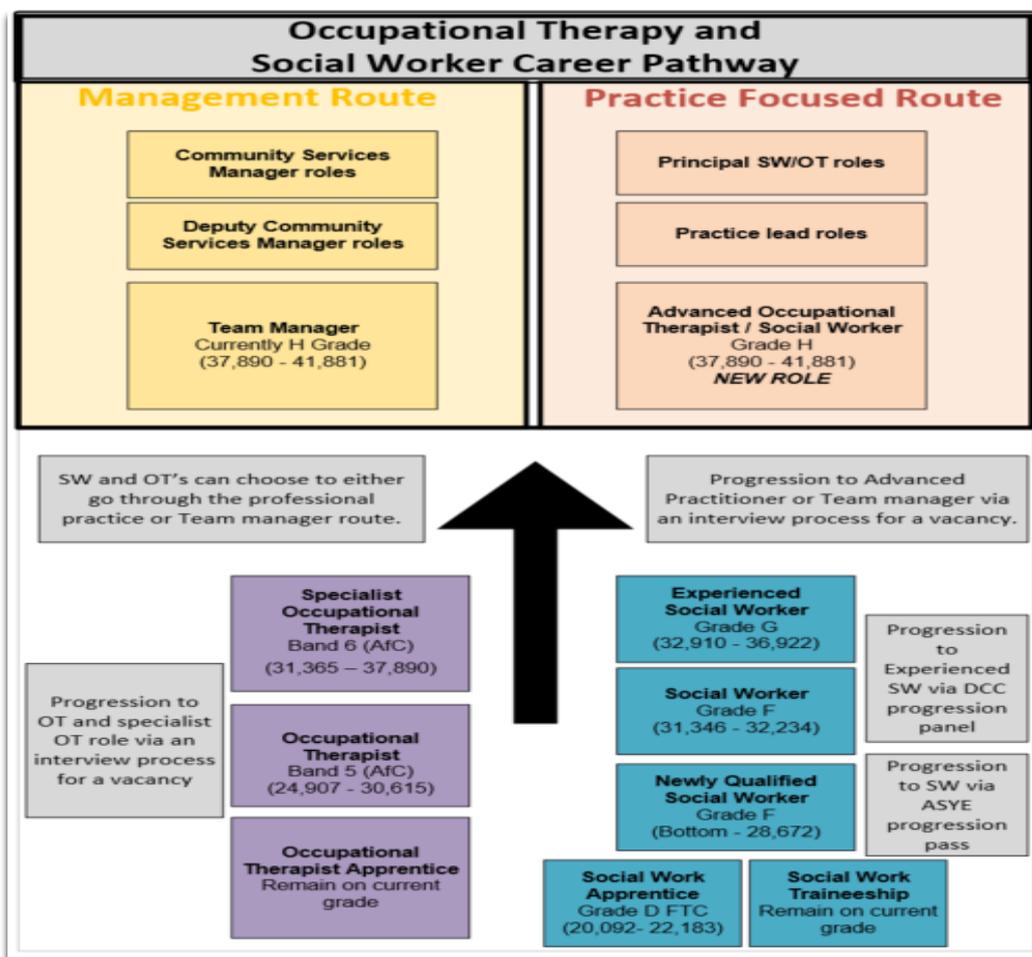
- 3.1 The proposal is to test the introduction of new Advanced Practitioner roles in teams across Devon to ensure a high-quality professional response to demand within the Adult Social Care workforce.
- 3.2 A series of options have been considered and are outlined in section 4 of this report, the recommended approach is option 3.
- 3.3 These new roles will enable professional supervision and development of skills, as well as offer support to team managers with the quality of the work in the team by increasing capacity and reducing pressures in workflow. This in turn will have a benefit to the people of Devon in relation to better practice that focusses on improving strengths-based approaches that focus on their safety and wellbeing.
- 3.4 Impact of the new roles on Adult Social Care Teams:

This proposal will:

- ensure increased capacity for staff supervision
- increase in staff knowledge, skills, and confidence
- case advice and guidance
- support with report writing for court work
- taking on safeguarding enquiry lead roles
- better support for our staff which in turn leads to better outcomes for the people we work with
- people are safer, receiving more personalised care and support
- better application of a strength-based approach
- Team Manager will be released to complete management tasks and service development.

**Diagram 1:** Outlines the recommended career progression pathway for Social Worker and Occupational Therapists.

**DIAGRAM 1: CAREER PROGRESSION PATHWAY**



- 3.5 This proposal enables practitioners to advance their career either through the practice focused route and/or through the management route.
- 3.6 The new Advanced Practitioners will be responsible for providing supervision to newly qualified and other staff as well as holding a small caseload of complex cases.
- 3.7 Adults Services request funding to test this recommended pathway in teams across Devon as follows:
  - i. Recruit to 3 Social Worker Advanced Practitioner posts, 1 in each of the three teams identified as having high volumes of demand – Exeter, Holsworthy and Newton Abbot.
  - ii. Recruit to 1 Occupational Therapist Advanced Practitioner role to cover the Eastern locality.

- iii. The proposal is for all posts to be permanent and advertised externally to reduce the risk of not being able to recruit to the posts.
- 3.8 Subject to the funding being available, this is proposed to commence in January 2022.
- 3.9 Quarterly review points will be put in place throughout the year to understand what impact the new posts will have on the team's performance, quality, and practice.
- 3.10 Measures of success will be reviewed regularly throughout the implementation. These will include: Number of assessments and reviews completed, quality of assessments and reviews, waiting list numbers, staff feedback re: professional support, feedback from service users and carers.
- 3.11 This test of change will inform the future direction of the career pathway work. It is Adult Social Care's intention to fully implement the Advanced Practitioner pathway to the wider service, in line with National frameworks and Children's services.

#### **4. OPTIONS/ALTERNATIVES**

4.1 The following options have been considered in full:

##### **Option 1: Do nothing**

###### *Positives*

- This is the least costly option

###### *Negatives*

If we do nothing, we will continue to experience difficulties with our current pathway as follows:

- There is evidence of increasing pressure for statutory work for Adult Social Care with incremental increases in waiting list numbers, safeguarding concerns and workloads.
- Without the Advanced Practitioner role, the Team manager deals with all practice, service delivery and staff matters whilst managing more than should be expected numbers of FTE.
- Not aligned to national frameworks
- Recruitment and retention issues.
- Need to consider SW across Children's and adults services
- Lack of career pathway and progression routes
- Flat structure that does not drive good practice.
- Cannot address the Post Qualifying Standards for Social Work Supervisors which need to be implemented

**Option 2:** To increase our team manager capacity to enable a more sustainable span of control in teams without an Advanced Practitioner role.

### *Positives*

- Increased capacity in the service
- Spans of control are reduced
- Quality is improved, although with less of a focus on professional supervision.

### *Negatives*

- This option will not fully address some of the practice issues in Adult Services as the additional resource will be more focused on management of the service.
- It will continue to limit options for those wishing to follow a Practice rather than Management Career Pathway
- Investment of **£154,567 in 21/22 and ongoing investment of £618,266 from 2022/3** is required to implement this option in full.

**Option 3:** Introduce 3 Advanced Practitioner Social Worker roles (into 3 teams) and 1 Advanced Practitioner Occupational Therapy role (covering the Eastern system).

To plan a test of change to understand what impact these roles could have on the Adult Social Care pathway by increasing professional supervision and support for team managers and team members with the quality of the work in the team.

### *Positives*

- Increased capacity to enable professional supervision for all staff
- Spans of control are reduced
- Quality is improved

### *Negatives*

- An investment of **£56,206 in 21/22 and ongoing investment of £224,824 from 2022/3** is required to implement this option in full.

## **5. CONSULTATIONS/REPRESENTATIONS**

5.1 The following staff feedback has been received through various consultations including the recent LGA health check survey and practice model consultations.

- Team managers are under a lot of pressure and often focus on the management of the service and less on professional practice.
- work is required to enhance continuous professional development
- further support for supervision and tools for practice
- there is limited capacity to enable regular professional supervision for Social Workers and Occupational Therapists.
- improved professional judgement, creativity and autonomous decision making
- improvements to using a strength-based approach during and post pandemic
- there is good collaborative working across disciplines
- staff feel confident about the advice and information that they can give
- demand on services is high, this means that Social Workers and Occupational Therapists often don't have enough time to reflect on their practice.
- We have workers with good skills, including knowledge, empathy, emotional intelligence, reflective practice.

- There are clear pathways for support and a focus on helping the person to remain as independent as possible.

Our data confirms that some Team Managers currently have up to 16 FTE.

## 6. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 This section explores the numbers of FTE required across Adult services based on the 3 options described above.

**Table 1** below outlines the estimated cost(s) of the options explored and the proposal outlined in section 3 above (see option 3 in the table).

All figures have been ratified by Finance.

| <b>Scenario</b>                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Current costs</b><br>(64.8 Team managers) | <b>Additional Costs 21/22-3 months Jan- March</b> | <b>FYE Additional costs 2022/23</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Option 1:</b> Do nothing                                                                                                                                                                   | £3,605,467                                   |                                                   |                                     |
| <b>Option 2:</b> To increase our team manager capacity to enable a more sustainable span of control in teams without an Advanced Practitioner role.                                           | £3,605,467                                   | <b>£154,567</b>                                   | <b>£618,266</b>                     |
| <b>Option 3:</b><br>Introduce 3 FTE Advanced Practitioner Social Worker roles into 3 teams and 1 FTE Advanced Practitioner role covering the Eastern system H grade posts. (4 Posts in Total) | £3,605,467                                   | <b>£56,206</b>                                    | <b>£224,824</b>                     |

## **7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

7.1 There are no specific legal considerations.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS (INCLUDING CLIMATE CHANGE)**

8.1 There are no specific environmental impact considerations.

## **9. EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS**

The following equality considerations have been considered as part of this proposal:

9.1 The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate against job applicants because of a protected characteristic

We will make it clear in the advertisement that an applicant will not be excluded on the grounds of sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race, marital status, disability, age, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

We will take care not to apply criteria and conditions to job requirements and the recruitment process that may result in unjustifiable indirect discrimination against job applicants.

9.2 There is a duty to make reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process in relation to job applicants with a disability

We will seek advice from DCC HR Direct and ensure reasonable adjustment are put in place for job applicants with a disability

9.3 As part of the implementation of this proposal, a fair and equal recruitment process will take place, with full consideration to all protected characteristics and issues of equality across the workforce.

A clearly communicated vision for the introduction of the Advanced Practitioner roles and what it will mean for Adults Services and for Social Worker and Occupational Therapists looking to progress in their careers

An open and transparent recruitment process

## **10. RISK MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

10.1 This proposal has been assessed and all necessary safeguards or action have been taken/included to safeguard the Council's position.

10.2 Where risks have been identified such as the potential de-stabilisation of the Adult Social Care workforce if the vision for this proposal isn't articulated clearly and the recruitment process isn't handled sensitively, the implications of that have been considered in preparing this report.

10.3 The Adult Social Care risk registers have been updated as appropriate.

## 11. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT

11.1 There are no implications of the proposals on public health (services)

## 12. SUMMARY

12.1 In conclusion, the proposal is to adopt option 3 as outlined in section 4 and 6 of this report. The introduction of the Advanced Practitioner role into Adult Social Care will:

- provide professional leadership and supervision/appraisal of staff, working in partnership with the manager, staff, and others, contributing to an effective and efficient service
- support the Team Manager on day-to-day operational issues
- provide a lead professional role in the team, supporting the development of good evidenced based practice
- enable co-working on complex cases with less experienced workers to ensure quality and consistency and to develop professional practice.

Outcomes include:

- a more responsive, timely, person centred service for people who need care and support in Devon.
- reduced risks relating to staff retention and recruitment
- a stronger focus on quality.
- support staff in meeting their statutory obligations and in compliance of policy.

12.2 An investment of **£56,206 in 21/22 and ongoing investment of £224,824 from 2022/3** is required to enable the implementation of the Advanced Practitioner role to the career pathway in Adult Social Care. These Social Worker and Occupational Therapy roles are vital to provide additional capacity to support team managers and teams, undertake important and statutory supervision, and ensure effective complex and high-risk case management in Devon.

Keri Storey  
Head of Service for Adult Care Operations & Health

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Adult Care & Health: Councillor James McInnes

Chief Officer for Adult Care & Health: Jennie Stephens