



REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 8 MAY 2019

SUBJECT: WORKLOAD PRESSURES FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE STAFF RESPONDING TO COMMUNICATIONS AND COMPLAINTS

BY: ACTING CORPORATE DIRECTOR (EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Council of the pressures affecting Education and Social Care staff in relation to the responding to communications and complaints, and to consider and approve an increase in budget.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Council in terms of Section II (25) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the approval of all revenue expenditure.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Council notes the content and recommendations of the report and approves an increase in the Business Support Unit budget of up to £43,000 per year to enable recruitment of a Business Support Officer (Communications & Complaints).**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 There are a number of serious workload pressures within Education and Social Care at present. Investigating formal complaints and responding to Subject Access Requests present a significant challenge due to lack of dedicated staff resource, resulting in pressure on senior officers to respond within legislative timescales.
- 3.2 A Business Support Officer would support Education and Social Care staff dealing with complaint investigations and communications with the public, including:-
 - Investigate formal complaints, preparing evidence and statements, and drafting complaint responses
 - Co-ordinate all documentation relating to Subject Access Request enquiries, redacting information in compliance with Data Protection and General Data Protection Regulation principles, providing a comprehensive response

- 3.3 Education and Social Care staff at various senior officer levels are currently responding to formal complaints. These members of staff are working at and beyond capacity, which has an impact on staff workload and morale. Failing to recognise this and address it adequately through resources and support may exacerbate the situation.
- 3.4 In 2018/19 the Schools & Curriculum Development service received 32 formal complaints and Integrated Children's Services received 41 formal complaints, all of which resulted in investigation. It is difficult to quantify on-going informal complaints where customers are unhappy with the service provision and where investigation and interventions are required to minimise the possibility of these issues reaching formal complaint stage.
- 3.5 The Quality Improvement Officers (QIO) spend approximately 20% of their working time responding to formal and informal complaints. This equates to 35 hours per week (calculated as 20% of 5 FTE) at a cost of £75,905 (calculated from QIO grade 3). It is anticipated that the Business Support Officer post would reduce the QIO workload burden by undertaking initial investigations; researching and preparing evidence; preparing witness statements; and drafting complaint responses. The time released would reduce time off in lieu accumulation and allow the QIOs to focus on their core workload to support and challenge schools to secure improvement and attainment.
- 3.6 There has been a significant increase in the number of MP and MSP enquiries allocated to QIOs for a response. There were a total of 14 in 2013/14, 14 in 2014/15, 18 in 2015/16, 17 in 2016/17 and 28 in 2017/18. In the first 3 quarters of 2018/19 there were a total of 25 enquiries.
- 3.7 Additionally, social work managers and team managers spend approximately 20% of their working time responding to formal and informal complaints. This equates to 43.5 hours per week (calculated as 20% of 6 FTE) at an approximate cost of £88,579 (calculated as 20% of 3 FTE at SJC grade 11 and 3 FTE at SJC grade 13). It is anticipated that the Business Support Officer post would also reduce the workload burden for social work staff. The time released would reduce flexi accumulation and allow the social work staff to focus on their core workload.
- 3.8 A job description has been drafted and forwarded to Human Resources in order to determine the appropriate grading of the post. The costings around this proposal are based on a grade 8 salary (currently £42,870 per annum, including on-costs). The indications are that this would be appropriate for the duties and responsibilities of the post.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

This report relates to the following within the Corporate Plan 2018-2023:

- Where life is better for everyone.
- Provide a sustainable education service aiming for excellence.

- The vision being that our children have better educational and social outcomes and so are better prepared for life.
- Improved outcomes for those most in need of support.
- Our most vulnerable young people and families are safe and nurtured.
- Public and staff have confidence in all services we provide for children and young people.

The related strategies: -

Moray Children's Services Plan

(b) Policy and Legal

This report outlines the pressures facing the service and proposals to ensure we can continue to meet the requirements of national policy and legislation.

(c) Financial implications

In order to expand the service as described it would require additional budget of approximately £43,000 per year. This report therefore contains the additional expenditure warning, as it would entail additional call on Council reserves beyond those budgeted for. The Corporate Management Team has considered the report and recommends additional funding and the increase in establishment.

There are no costs in providing a workspace, furniture and equipment for an additional member of staff as this can be managed within existing resources and accommodation.

(d) Risk Implications

If the creation of a Business Support Officer post is not approved, there is a risk to our existing staffing in terms of staff workload and morale.

(e) Staffing Implications

It is vital for the service moving forward that an appropriately graded resource is recruited to support complaints.

(f) Property

There will be a review of existing staff accommodation provision to facilitate incorporating this new post.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no equalities issues arising directly from this report.

(h) Consultations

The Corporate Management Team; Education and Social Care Senior Management Team; Human Resources Manager; Head of Financial Services; Head of Legal and Democratic Services; Resilience & Asset Management Officer; Equal Opportunities Officer and the Democratic Services Manager have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with the content relating to their areas of responsibility.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Council is invited to approve the additional funding and increase in establishment and approve immediate advert for the post required.

Author of Report: **Fiona Michie, Business Support Administration Manager**
Background Papers:
Ref: