

SUPPORTING SOCIAL CARE WORKERS

APRIL 2003

BEACON COUNCIL SCHEME – ROUND 5

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**Melanie Newman
Social Care Modernisation
Department of Health
Wellington House
133 – 155 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8UG**

**Tel: 0207 972 3793
Mobile: 07867 538 408**

SECTION I - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The social care workforce comprises over 1 million people working in various care settings including people's homes. Two thirds work for some 25,000 employers in the independent sector. The remaining one third work in the statutory sector for 150 local councils with personal social services responsibilities

Social workers

1. Of the 1 million workforce, about 80,000 are qualified social workers, the majority of whom work in the statutory sector. About half are in front-line service delivery and half in management, training and policy roles. Qualified social workers undertake assessments of service user needs and are therefore an important part of the workforce controlling resource use. Initiatives are in hand to:

- improve the expertise of social workers by introduction of a new degree level qualification and review of post qualifying training requirements,
- increase the numbers applying for and completing professional training,
- encourage workforce re-engineering so that the most qualified staff are only used where they need to be,
- encourage best HR practice, including retention of existing staff and return of those who have left the workforce,
- recruit from abroad (local initiatives in some councils).

Social care workers

2. Professional Social Workers constitute only about 40,000 of the front line staff in social care. In this document they are distinguished from Social Care Workers, who may be experienced and have NVQ level qualifications but are not professionally qualified (to CQSW, DipSW or degree level). The majority work in the independent sector. The main levers affecting this element of the workforce are:

- central government decisions about the overall funding settlement for local government (indirectly affecting pay and conditions),
- local council commissioning of service provision from the independent sector,
- the spread of best HR practice by the Social Care Institute for Excellence and others,

- the work of the Topss England in training and workforce planning across the independent and statutory sectors,
- the roles of the General Social Care Council (GSCC) in registering the workforce based on codes of practice and qualifications, and the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) in regulating care providers.

SECTION II - POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Service requirements

1. Government policy, set out in the *Modernising Social Services White Paper* (Cm 4269) is to:
 - Promote and enhance people's independence
 - Provide services that meet each individual's needs
 - Provide services in a fair, open and consistent way in every part of the country
 - Ensure children looked after by local authorities are given best life chances
 - Ensure there are safeguards against abuse, neglect or poor treatment
 - Put in place clearer standards and better training arrangements for social care staff so that people using services have confidence that the staff they deal with are safe, skilled and competent
 - Ensure services are reviewed through the Best Value regime
2. Delivery Plans developed by the Department of Health have targets with expectations about additional staff to meet service development needs. These are expressed in different ways, and there is a wide range of options for staffing particular services. Overall we estimate an additional 20,000 WTE staff are needed to meet service development needs
3. Taken together with the need to tackle high vacancy rates we estimate an additional 50,000 WTE staff are needed to enter the workforce. This assumes we would not reduce the vacancy rate in the short term to lower than 5% (currently about 10%). In general, turnover is higher among care workers than social workers, in the independent sector than in local councils and among part-time rather than full-time staff.
4. The HR strategy aims, within broad parameters of the numbers and types of staff needed, to meet the PSA targets by increasing numbers entering the workforce, encouraging changes in the way existing staff are used to achieve productivity gains, and ensuring training is available to underpin a flexible workforce.

Aims and planning assumptions

The Department's social care workforce strategy has the following aims and planning assumptions:

- ✓ To reduce vacancy rates and encourage new entrants into the workforce through:
 - a DH managed national recruitment and retention campaign in support of employers
 - a new Human Resources Development Specific Grant to develop HR management and best practice and facilitate re-engineering of job roles

- Planning assumption: an additional 50,000 WTE staff by 2005/06
- ✓ To increase numbers applying for, entering and completing professional social work training by:
 - Encouraging applications through the national recruitment campaign
 - Extending student financial support
 - Planning assumptions:
 - 5,000 additional applicants to courses by 2005/06;
 - Financial support available to all students who need it by 2003/04
- ✓ To improve the quality of social work training so that students complete training ready to practice by:
 - Introducing a new degree level qualification
 - Increasing the quantity, quality and diversity of practice learning
 - Planning assumptions:
 - Degree introduced from 2003;
 - Practice learning provision sufficient for all students to complete 200 days during their programme.
- ✓ To increase numbers with relevant qualifications in the social care workforce by.
 - Employer sign up to increased training (through the Topss England National Training Strategy, regulation by the NCSC, and workforce registration by the GSCC).
 - Training support funding, including
 - the Training Support Programme Specific Grant
 - National Training Strategy Implementation Fund (Topss England)
 - a new National Training Strategy Specific Grant.
 - Planning assumptions:
 - An additional 300,000 people with NVQ level 2 or higher by 2005/06
- ✓ To develop opportunities for continuous professional development (CPD) and post qualification training by.
 - Funding through the Training Support Programme and the new Specific Grants for training and HR Development
 - Fundamental review of the PQ framework by the GSCC
 - Planning assumptions:
 - 7000 Child Care PQ Awards by 2006

SECTION III – KEY CONTRIBUTORY ORGANISATIONS

The following organisations all impact on the social care workforce and support the development of policy and local initiatives to improve service delivery whether directly or indirectly.

1. National Training Strategy and workforce planning:

a) **Topss England** (previously the National Training Organisation for social care) brings together employers, trainers, staff and service users into a national and regional structure coterminous with regional Government Offices. It is currently seeking Sector Skills Council status. It has a wide role, in forming and disseminating workforce policy, disbursing training funding, and encouraging good HR practice, in particular through its Regional Committee infrastructure.

b) As service policies develop and organisational structures change, there is a need for a more flexible social care workforce. Training provision needs to ensure generic skills are available, enabling flexibility in the workforce, as well as opportunities for career progression into specialisation where needed. Topss has published, endorsed by the Department of Health and DfES, the National Training Strategy for England. It is also responsible for the national occupational standards which inform NVQ training and the new social worker degree qualification. The standards reflect employers' specification of requirements. Topss England has also undertaken work on matching competencies to job roles to help employers develop a better understanding of how qualifications are relevant to the kind of workforce they require.

c) Topss England is also developing a management development strategy within the National Training Strategy. It is funding through a DH grant training for the NVQ4 Registered Managers award. The Department also funds a Top Managers Development Programme of £500K pa and front line management development. Topss England is currently drawing together all the existing initiatives, identifying gaps and implementing projects to increase the capacity of managers at all levels throughout social care.

2. Regulation of the workforce:

a) **The General Social Care Council (GSCC)**, was established by DH in 2001 as an executive NDPB under the Care Standards Act 2000 and has a statutory remit to promote high standards of conduct and practice among social care workers. The GSCC will:

- Register social care workers. The first part of the register, for professionally qualified social workers, will be open in 2003. Conditions for registration will be linked to adherence to published Codes of Practice, qualifications and evidence of good character.
- Regulate and support social work education and training.

- publish Codes of Practice for social care workers and employers (published on 23 September 2002).

3. Regulation of service providers:

a) The National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) was established under the Care Standards Act 2000 as a non-departmental public body. It regulates providers of social care services and private healthcare. The Commission's aim is to drive up the quality of services and improve the level of protection for vulnerable people. It carries out regular inspections of services against national minimum standards (NMS) set by the Secretary of State and has strong powers of enforcement to ensure that services meet the required standards. The standards include expectations about the quantity and quality of the staff employed. The targets to be met vary between different forms of provision but very broadly anticipate that half of the workforce will have a relevant qualification to NVQ2 level or higher by 2005.

b) New legislation is expected to be introduced early in 2003 which will bring together the NCSC with the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) to become the **Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)**. This new body will:

- carry out local inspections of all social care organisations – public, private, and voluntary – against national standards and publish reports.
- register services that meet national minimum standards.
- carry out inspections of statutory social service provision.
- publish an annual report to Parliament on national progress on social care and an analysis of where resources have been spent.
- validate all published performance assessment statistics on social care.
- publish the star ratings for social services authorities.

4. Analysis and embedding of best HR practice:

a) The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) was established in October 2001 to promote best practice in social care services. The Institute identifies research knowledge and evaluations of best practice, abstracts the key messages and disseminates them to the field. Its current work programme includes action to embed best HR practice across the whole social care sector.

SECTION IV – DH INITIATIVES TO INFORM FUTURE DIRECTION

1. The Department has introduced a number of initiatives aimed at raising the profile of social care, increasing training at appropriate levels (NVQ as well as degree level and specialist training), encouraging best HR practice and improving commissioning by councils from the independent sector.

Raising the profile

2. Research commissioned by DH from COI Communications in 2000 found 4 main reasons contributing to problems in recruitment and retention in the social care sector:

- the **poor image** of the work: the general public has very little knowledge about what social workers do. What knowledge exists is based heavily on negative media coverage and tends to be very unfavourable. There is more knowledge of what social care workers do but a perception that the work is a vocation and not a career.
- **low pay and** competition for unskilled staff in service industries,
- **poor Human Resources management.** The research showed the importance of good HR policies - training, supervision, flexible working etc - in retaining staff
- **Poor career development** and job prospects.

3. In addition to this evidence, data show that applications to social worker training courses fell by nearly 60% from 1995 to 2001, resulting in the ratio of applications to course places available dropping to less than 2:1.

4. Based on this evidence the Department launched the first ever national recruitment and retention campaign for social care in October 2001. The campaign comprises national advertising, leaflets, posters, local and national PR activity, a helpline, and a website. The materials produced are available to local employers to support their own recruitment and retention efforts. The Campaign was funded initially for £1.5m. Its aims are to:

- Raise the number of people applying for social worker training by 5000 by 2004.
- Inform the public about what social workers and social care workers do.
- Make existing social workers and social care workers realise that their work is valued.

5. To date there have been 4 bursts of advertising and PR activity which have generated over 40,000 calls to the Helpline and hits on the web site. Provisional data suggests that the campaign is having an impact alongside other measures to improve recruitment. Applications for social work courses have risen for the first time in seven years, by 8.3% on the numbers for 2001. The campaign will continue for at least the next 3 years. Increasing the number of social work course applications will remain a key aim but the campaign strategy is being reviewed currently to undertake more work on

recruitment of social care workers to enable more re-engineering of the workforce and reduction of vacancy rates so that service demand can be met.

National Training Strategy funding

5. Although there have been Care NVQs around for several years these have not been undertaken by many staff and there is a poorly developed framework for NVQs to be undertaken in most employment situations. Of the 1 million people in the social care workforce only some 20% have relevant qualifications. The Department has specified National Minimum Standards inspected by the National Care Standards Commission aimed at increasing NVQ training to improve the quality of service provision. The Learning Disability White Paper *Valuing People* also includes a requirement for both care staff and managers to obtain specific qualifications by 2005. To meet these minimum standards – that around 50% of social care staff should have a relevant qualification at NVQ2 or higher - approximately 300,000 staff will need to have achieved qualification by 2005 in addition to those already qualified.

6. Topss England have developed the National Training Strategy (2000) (NTS), which aims to raise levels of qualification across the workforce over a 5 year period. To support the implementation of the Training Strategy, the Department of Health set up an implementation fund of £2 million for 2001/02 rising to £15m for 2002/03 and continuing until 2005/6. The fund is being administered by Topss England through their Regional Training Committees (RTCs). It is available to all staff within social care regardless of whether they work in the statutory or independent sectors and is obtained through bids made by employers to the RTCs. The allocation of funds is linked to the production of workforce development plans, and employers are asked to provide matched funding for each allocation from the fund. RTCs are expected to find additional funding by matching any amounts that they get from the NTS Implementation Fund. This funding will come from employers themselves, the Learning Skills Councils, the European Social Fund and other sources.

7. In 2001/02 the funds were used for training staff in the new Induction Standards. For 2002/03, the money is being used to support:

- 6,000 staff to undertake Induction Training.
- 9,000 Registered Managers of Adult Care Homes to undertake the new NVQ Level 4 Registered Managers award (required for the National Minimum Standards of Care Homes).
- 8,000 line managers to become Assessors for NVQs Awards.
- 1,500 line managers to become Verifiers for NVQ awards.
- 2,000 staff to become Mentors.

The grant conditions for 2003/04 are being considered now.

Training Support Programme

8. General support to social care training has been provided since 1988 through a ring fenced specific grant, paid to local councils through the training Support Programme (TSP). The objective of the funding is to increase the proportion of staff who have appropriate qualifications at vocational, qualifying and post-qualifying levels. Although paid by DH to local councils for training social services staff within the council, it is also expected that the funding is used to support training within voluntary and independent organisations that contract with councils to provide statutory services. Not all councils use their grant to support training in the independent sector. It is estimated that 13% of the grant was spent on independent sector staff in 2001, despite those sectors now comprising two thirds of the workforce.

9. For 2002/03 £57.5 million is available in the TSP. The Grant is only 70% funded, and local councils have to find 30% from within their own resources. The main, generic fund covers all client group services. The PQ Child Care Award is a post qualifying award for specialist training in work with children and families, and the Student Support sub-programme provides funding for local councils to support staff who are working towards social worker qualification.

HR Development

10. Many employers report difficulties in recruiting and retaining social workers and social care workers. The most recent Employer's Organisation Survey reports that about half of local councils have difficulties recruiting social workers, and 40% occupational therapists. Vacancies are particularly high in child care teams, in some cases up to 50%. Around 30% of councils report problems recruiting to residential and home care posts.

11. From 2003/4, the Department is establishing a new Specific Grant to local councils for HR development (£9.5 million in 2003/04 rising to £23.9m in 2004/5 and £62.8m in 2005/06). The grant conditions are currently under development and will include pilot studies of new flexible working patterns to meet developing service needs. The grant will support social care employers in developing the social care workforce so that:

- the effectiveness of human resources management can be raised and problems of recruitment and retention of staff can be tackled.
- reforms in service provision can be delivered by development of new types of worker. This will need to be underpinned by role redesign so that there is much greater stratification of the workforce with the most highly trained deployed only where their skills are most needed and support is provided by other types of worker with appropriate skills.

12. The objective is to halve the vacancy rate in 3 years from the current 10% level. This will build on work undertaken by others including:

- the report *People Need People* published by the Joint Review Team of the Audit Commission and SSI on the management of HR in council

social services in 2000, identifying a link between good service outcomes and good HR management practice

- *Care to Stay* published by the Employers Organisation with the Local Government National Training Organisation in 2001 highlighting examples of good HR practice
- the report and action plan published in 2001 of the National Task Force on Violence Against Social Care Staff which recommended targets to reduce the incidence of violence and abuse against workers in all sectors
- guidance on HR Best Practice in social care published in 2002 by the Association of Directors of Social Services
- work by the Social Care Institute for Excellence to identify and embed best HR practice
- work by Topss England to establish the number of qualified social workers who are not currently working in social care and could be encouraged to return.

SECTION V – OBSTACLES TO EXCELLENT PRACTICE

1. The latest DH staffing return shows that, as at 30 September 2001 there were a total of 283,500 people working for council social services in England. Of these, 125,500 (44%) were working full-time and 158,000 (56%) were working part-time. This gives a total WTE staffing complement of 211,300. Proportionately there was a higher concentration of employees among the older age groups. Staff turnover has seen an increase, rising from 11.1% in 2000 to a rate of 12.4% in 2002.

2. There is a growing proportion of long term agency employees covering field social work posts. The estimated number of long-term agency workers in council social services includes around 1,420 WTE social workers equating to about 4% of the directly practising workforce. The cost of long term agency employees to Councils during April to September 2001 was an estimated £74 million.

Workforce strategy

3. Taking account of these future requirements, the workforce strategy for the social care sector reflects:

- Current blockages in the ability to deliver quality services arising from:
 - High vacancy and turnover rates across the sector
 - A reduced ratio of applications to places for training to become a qualified social worker and increasing drop-out rates during training
 - Poor preparedness for practice on completing professional training
 - A low level of training in the wider social care workforce (at NVQ levels)
 - Policy developments for the various service user groups (children, older people, mental health, and people with disabilities) requiring

increased numbers of staff and different types of worker, some with generic skills and some more specialised.

4. Outcomes anticipated from the strategy and indications of excellent practice should demonstrate:

- A reduction in vacancy and turnover rates so that service users receive better quality and more consistent care
- More social workers qualified and able to practice competently, and able to undertake more specialised training
- Raised general standards in social care through a better qualified workforce (NVQs)
- Development of a care workforce with generic skills and new emerging specialisations where needed

5. The Pay Commission aims to provide some measure of fairness and consistency in deciding pay and grading across all local government employees. Social services pay is included in the consultation and negotiation arrangements. Social workers' earnings have fallen behind those of other groups, including teachers, nurses, and police officers. Latest available figures show that average gross weekly earnings for social workers are £427; below the averages for nurses, police officers and teachers and below the average for all employees at £444. A 'typical' newly-qualified social worker in England and Wales would expect to start on just under £17,000.

6. Some councils are offering to pay 'market supplements' (typically around £2,000). For most social workers, it is possible to progress to around £23,000. In an increasing number of councils the maximum salary has been boosted above the levels recommended by the national 'defined grading scheme' for the profession in order to retain experienced staff. With extra experience and additional responsibilities, a 'senior practitioner' can earn up to £26,000.

Commissioning

7. Local councils' purchasing of care services has created new, developing markets in which the relationship between commissioning practice and its impact on the workforce is emerging. The independent sector's response to managing cost pressures has generally been to keep wages low and to limit training to the statutory minimum. This response contributes to recruitment and retention problems experienced in the private and voluntary sectors, especially in the fields of residential and home care.

8. The Department has reviewed the commissioning of long-term care through the work of the Strategic Commissioning Group, chaired by Ministers, working with the Local Government Association, the Association of Directors

of Social Services, and independent sector providers to identify improvements to commissioning practices. The work has been undertaken alongside a wider review by ODPM of strategic procurement. The Department published in 2001 an agreement between the statutory and independent social care, health care and housing sectors – *Building Capacity and Partnership in Care*. The agreement covers guidance on good commissioning, strategic planning, building capacity, reducing instability, and joint working.

9. Work has also recently started through the Choice Protects review on commissioning of services for children looked after by local authorities, building on the foundations laid by the Quality Protects initiative across all children's social services. Commissioning in children's services is much less well-developed than in adult services, primarily because the volumes are much lower and the focus has therefore been on constructing packages for individual children. The work of the review so far has concentrated on identifying barriers to effective commissioning and work is now being taken forward on solutions, including skills development, information analysis, and developing partnerships with providers.

10. The Department is currently considering a similar approach to the Strategic Commissioning Group. Any policy statements about relationships with providers would include reference to considering workforce development issues. Work is also being taken forward through the work to develop a Children's National Service Framework and to develop Children's Trusts on multi-agency commissioning for health and social care.

11. Currently DH collates the only routine annual information that is available on the local council's workforce and this has major gaps. Some HR data is collected as part of the Social Services Inspectorate Performance Assessment Framework activity. Otherwise, DH and other policy stakeholders rely on ad hoc reports and surveys, such as the annual survey published by the Audit Commission, Income Data Services (a recent report commissioned by Unison), and other studies funded by DH that include work undertaken by the King's College Research Unit, DH Statistics Division, and COI Communications.

12. There is work in progress to strengthen the information base required for local, regional and national workforce planning:

- A Social Care HR Information Project being developed with Topss England that will pull together national comparative data which can be used to identify trends and patterns.
- Topss England are working with employers locally to improve information gathering systems and identify data requirements.
- In the future, through the regulatory work of the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) and the General Social Care Council (GSCC), we should be able to build up a clear picture of the whole social care sector and measure HR practice against the National Minimum Standards.

13. This is a very large workforce: 4% of the active national workforce and rising. It has not been a focus of central government policy until very recently. It has very high vacancy rates and a very low qualification level at 20% of the workforce. There is evidence of high rates of violence and abuse of workers and high levels of stress.

14. Though overall there is a need for significant improvement in levels of training and in HR management, there are examples of employers who have achieved turnaround in relatively short timescales (3 years) in vacancy rates. There are also indications from the Department's recruitment campaign of increased interest in social care as a career.

15. There are some factors which may present a risk to implementing excellent practice:

- competition for social care and social workers in the same recruitment pool as other public sector growth areas
- competition in the social care sector with other low pay but less stressful jobs, particularly the retail sector in some areas
- dependence on external agencies for delivery of the overall strategy aims, including Topss England currently bidding with the Department's support to become a Sector Skills Council. Restructuring may destabilise its workforce development infrastructure.

SECTION VI – INDICATIONS OF EXCELLENT PRACTICE

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
- Implementation by employers of the Topss England National Training Strategy
- 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.