

# Joint Negotiating Committee (Employers')



## SOCIAL WORKER REGISTRATION FEE AND 'GOLDEN HELLO' PAYMENT REVIEW

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### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) on the implementation of the reimbursement of the Social Worker Registration Fee and the impact of the Golden Hello payment.

### 2. Social Worker Registration Fee Reimbursement

- 2.1 At the meeting of the JNC held on 8 July 2019, the following was agreed in respects to Social Worker Registration Fees:
  - (a) reimburse all qualified Social Workers or post holders required to pay for HCPC Social Worker registration up to Team Manager or equivalent grade, with effect from 1 August 2019;
  - (b) this is non-contractual and does not form part of employees Terms and Conditions of employment;
  - (c) in line with the regulatory transfer from the HCPC to Social Work England, the Council will continue to monitor and review any possible changes to either the registration process or the registration fee that may impact on this proposal;
  - (d) a review will be undertaken in July 2020 to measure the impact of this proposal on the recruitment and retention of staff.
- 2.2 In accordance with the above and the qualifying criteria, social worker registration reimbursement was implemented and has been claimed by practitioners across Adults and Children's services.
- 2.3 The regulatory transfer from HCPC to Social Worker England was implemented on 2 December 2019. The Council has continued to review the registration process and fee, but as of September 2020 there have been no changes.

- 2.4 A review of the reimbursement of fees has been conducted throughout 2019/20 since its introduction. At its launch, the announcement was well received. It was noted at the time, from Children's Services that the proposal was seen as a positive response to specific requests for the reimbursement in the Children's Service Social Worker Health Check 2018/19.
- 2.5 A new starter survey was conducted in 2019 within Adult Services, which identified that the reimbursement of fees whilst not a key motivator in applying at Milton Keynes Council, played its part in the overall benefits package being offered to applicants.
- 2.6 From feedback obtained as part of Adult Services 2019/20 Social Worker Health Check, the reimbursement of fees was well received.

### 3. **Review of the 'Golden Hello' Payment**

- 3.1 Last year, Adult Services introduced a 'Golden Hello' market supplement payment to experienced external social workers. The payment was part of a series of approaches taken as part of a recruitment drive with the objective of removing the services over dependency on agency workers and to improve the quality of appointments being made.
- 3.2 The payment was to be made to qualifying Social Workers at G and H grades. A figure of £5,000 was identified to set a clear competitive differentiation with local authority market supplements.
- 3.3 Since the golden hello's introduction, the service has recruited 31 external permanent social workers, and has made 21 golden hello payments.
- 3.4 The service has also continued to recruit F Grade Social Workers and support their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Programme (ASYE). In addition, 2019 also provided the opportunity to utilise the new social worker apprentice courses available via the apprenticeship levy. The service last year inducted two new apprentices with a regular annual intake now underway.
- 3.5 Due to the success of the recruitment campaign there have been significant reductions in agency usage. Not only did the service achieve the unprecedented feat of 100% occupancy at the later stages of last year, this now typically operates around 95% and has created a stable and improved working environment for the services team and has made significant savings in agency spend. These savings have more than offset the initial investment in the golden hello payments.
- 3.6 The service has been mindful of monitoring the impact of the payment to existing staff and have monitored and supported staff closely with this. Initial anecdotal feedback was expectedly mixed with colleagues understanding the need for the payment, but not feeling any financial benefit for themselves.

The reimbursement of registration fees was seen as a very positive step to demonstrate the Council's intention to show financial support where possible to existing social workers.

- 3.7 The Social Worker Health Check survey later formally captured these sentiments, but there was a clear understanding and appreciation of the benefits the payment brought by removing agency workers, bringing more balance and stability to each respective social worker team and the positive impact this had on caseloads.
- 3.8 The Health Check assisted in identifying the most important aspects of focus for retaining and supporting existing social workers. Resoundingly the feedback identified career development, training opportunities and improved quality in management communication as more significant than financial benefits.
- 3.9 Adults Services introduced and continues to implement mechanisms and initiatives of support to existing social workers. These have included:
  - (a) a restructure of the entire Adult Services to create an Assessment Service (social work) led by a Group Head, to bring social work teams together, creating closer and improved ways of working and a new structure and pathway for career progression;
  - (b) for the first time the service created and recruited to the role of Principal Social Worker, whose role is solely focused on the professional development of the service's social workers;
  - (c) revised supervision format and 1:1 support; and
  - (d) a new social worker career progression framework is the final stage of development. This will outline a far more fluid approach to career development than the current process. Based on the Professional Capability Framework (PCF) and Knowledge Skills Statement (KSS) the new framework removes the unnecessarily restrictive progress that is currently in place. This will allow the service to assess and allow social worker to progress through the grades F-H in a more timely manner, basing assessments on demonstrable skills and knowledge, than additional formal qualifications that the current framework dictates. This will also assist in improved options when it comes to offering salaries to external candidates.

#### 4. **Proposed Revisions to the Golden Hello Payment**

- 4.1 A pay review was conducted in July 2020 to evaluate the golden hello payment and the Councils' salary offering compared to neighbouring authorities. The review identified that the Council is competitive with its basic salary offering

and that the level and type of market supplement being offered varies significantly. Some authorities have removed market supplements all together whilst others have notably increased their supplement offering in line with Milton Keynes Council.

- 4.2 After conducting the review it was determined by the Adult Services Leadership Team (ALT) that in line with the much improved occupancy rate, and recognising the current climate and the new financial pressure placed on the service and the organisation, it would be prudent to revise the level of golden hello payment made. Consideration was given to removing the payment in its entirety but having reviewed the pay packages offered by our neighbouring authorities it was decided that this would make our own offer significantly less competitive.
- 4.3 It is proposed that the golden hello payment is now paid at a lower rate and that it differentiates between grades G and H. The original intention of the payment was to target a more experienced level of social worker; therefore, the following changes have been proposed:

Grade / Basic Salary	Level of Golden Hello Payment
H - £34,788 - £38,813	£3,000
G - £29,636 - £33,799	£2,000

## 5. Recommendations

- 5.1 The following recommendations have been made:
- (a) the Council continues to reimburse social workers for their professional fees, and that process for registration and potential changes to the fees is closely monitored;
  - (b) the 'Golden Hello' payment continues, but at the recommended levels proposed in Section 4.3. The impact of this change on the number and quality of candidates will be monitored; and
  - (c) Adult Services continues to develop and enhance its retention initiatives for existing social workers.

## 6. Implications

- 6.1 There are no wider implications identified than mentioned in the paper.

6.2 Resources and Risk

X	Capital	X	Revenue	X	Accommodation
X	IT	X	Medium Term Plan	X	Asset Management

6.3 Legal

This does not form part of employee Terms and Conditions of employment.

6.4 Other Implications

Y	Equalities / Diversity	X	Sustainability	X	Human Rights
X	E-Government	X	Stakeholders	X	Crime and Disorder

Background Papers:

- JNC05: Social Worker (Hcpc) Registration Fee - Reimbursement (July 2019)
- JNC06: Adult Social Worker 'Golden Hello' Payment (July 2019)