

THE STAFF CONSULTATION PROCESS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPOSED DELETION OF ALL POSTS IN HOMECARE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF POSTS IN A NEW REABLEMENT SERVICE.

On 20 December 2011 the Director of Adults Culture and Community Services (as was) wrote to all staff stating that due to the significant savings that had to be made, proposals were going to Cabinet on 21 December 2011 regarding a number of options to reorganise services, including options to close or cease a range of services.

On 21 December 2011 Cabinet gave the approval to commence formal consultation with stakeholder groups.

This paper focuses on the process that was applied in connection with the staff consultation process for the deletion of all posts based in the Homecare Service and the establishment of a new Reablement Service.

These proposals were consulted upon in 2 phases

The first phase covered the proposal to delete the posts based in the internal Homecare Service.

First Phase - Closure of internal Homecare

In essence the impact for staff would be that this proposal would result in all posts in Homecare being deleted and staff being made redundant unless they requested voluntary redundancy or alternative employment was found for them within the Council.

Staff were alerted at this stage that proposals were being drawn up for a new Reablement Service and that once the detailed proposals were worked up we would look to ring fence the new posts to Homecare staff.

The formal staff consultation process on this phase commenced on 31 January 2011 and was due to last until 30 April 2011 however this was extended until May 2011 in order to allow sufficient time for full responses to be received.

Several briefing sessions were held with Homecare staff. UNISON trade union representative also was present at these sessions.

At the sessions various issues were raised regarding ways in which staff could contribute to the consultation process about the proposals to close the internal Homecare service as well as the timetable and process that would be applied if it was agreed that the internal Homecare service would close. The majority of the issues that were raised by staff focussed on matters to do with the value of the service to service users and the implications if the service closed. Staff also raised questions about the timetable and likelihood of deployment and/or redundancy if approval was given. Council procedures regarding reorganisations were fully explained.

Staff were handed a leaflet at each of the first briefings. This leaflet confirmed the ways in which staff could contribute to the consultation process with contact details for trade union representatives and managers and the dates of Formal Trade Union Consultation meetings so that they could feed into these via their trade union representatives. It also set out ways in which staff could make enquiries about voluntary redundancy and redeployment as well as ways staff could access support that had been put in place for staff at them at this difficult time.

In addition to the above 6 Formal Consultation meetings were held between Senior Managers of the Department and Trade Union Representatives on 25 January 2011, 17 February 2011, 15 March 2011, 6 April 2011, 7 April 2011 and 26 May 2011.

The formal Trade Union Response to various proposals, including the one to close the internal Homecare Service, was submitted on 6 May 2011 and is attached.

Throughout the process the main focus for staff and trade union was the nature of the impact of the business changes on the various user groups.

Neither staff, nor trade union representatives, raised any issues to do with the characteristics of the workforce that is affected by these potential closures.

Following on from this many staff in Homecare did decide to request voluntary redundancy and these requests have been approved.

Second Phase - Creation of the New Reablement Service

Due to the nature of the new service, which have been fully set out in the service proposals, the most significant change for staff working in the new Reablement service would be that we would require fewer (i.e. 30 Reablement workers instead of 63 existing Homecarers) and the operation of the new Reablement Service would rely on staff working to new contracts with new working patterns that would enable a service to be provided 7 days a week and at times outside the requirements for current Homecare staff. The new working patterns would be significantly different to those operated by current Homecare staff.

The detail of the proposals for the staff structure and the new shift patterns and working arrangements required for the Reablement Service were issued to Homecare staff and their trade union representatives on 1 August 2011 and formal consultation ended on 31 August 2011.

Homecare staff were invited to attend one of 5 briefing sessions that were set up in order to go through the detail of the proposals for the new service and new working patterns with them as well as remind them of ways in which they could contribute to the consultation process direct or via their trade union representatives.

The Trade Union response was received on 30 August 2011 and it contained a significant number of points which contributed positively to the process. These points were taken on board and responded to and are attached as Appendix.....

For the reasons outlined above it will be important that staff do understand the new working shift patterns so that they can make informed choices as to whether they are in a position to apply for the new roles. It will also be important that the Council is able to make evidence based decisions as to which of the 63 staff to appoint to the 30 roles based on justifiable job requirements. It is for this reason that that it will be necessary to assess applicants ability to read and understand Reablement Plans based on short relevant and proportionate written tests. We will continue to liaise with Trade Union representative on this aspect of the process to assist with effective change management even though the formal consultation has ended.

We have done our best to work with staff during the course of the consultation to enable them to contribute to the consultation process, to come to terms with the impact of the proposals on them and to identify ways in which we can mitigate against compulsory redundancy by helping staff make informed choices as to whether they were in a position and able to apply and be considered for the new roles working in Reablement on new and different working patterns or whether they wanted to opt for voluntary redundancy.

This approach has resulted in very many Homecare staff electing to take voluntary redundancy which has greatly reduced the impact on staff.

We have also emphasised the benefits to staff of the 'supporting changes' package that has been put in place in terms of dealing with change and other forms of staff support.