

COMMITTEE: SEN Joint-Committee

DATE: 14th March 2014

REPORT TITLE: SEN Provision Unit Report

ACTION: Consider the report

BACKGROUND: The work of the SEN Joint-Committee's Provision Unit during Autumn Term 2013, and Spring Term 2014 is described

Report of the SEN Provision Unit

2013 Christmas Term

1.0 Administering Assessment and Review Processes

Two clerical assistants have been appointed until the end of March 2015 bringing the administrative team back up to its full capacity and reducing the substantial workload that has been shouldered by the long-term administrators. We thank the administrators for their hard work during a challenging period for the service.

All the statutory assessments completed during the autumn term have been completed within the deadlines where there were no exceptions.

A substantial number of annual reviews were received this year during December and January. The service has performed commendably to process them timely to set budgets for devolved schools.

Regional developments of streamlining business plans are linked to our records system; Capita ONE continues. Adopting the proposed changes will ensure substantial time savings for the clerical assistants.

A plan of a new administrative service has been presented to the Client Officers. This is done in order to address the need for the re-structuring of the Administrative establishment for 2015-16 to reflect changes to the operational requirements of the Provision Unit. The principle was approved in November.

The acting Administrative Senior Officer will be leaving his secondment and will return to his previous post on 18th March. There are arrangements in place to fill the post until the end of March 2015 when the Senior Administrative Officer's secondment terminates.

2.0 Specialist Teachers Service

At the beginning of term, discussions were ongoing to consider employing new teachers. It seemed that all the children's needs could not be met given the size of the current team, and in addition, several of our teachers are now approaching retirement age.

It was decided to place advertisements for three posts, a full-time post in language and communication, and autism, where the greatest increase in cases has occurred, and two 0.6 posts, one in the visual field, and the other in the hearing field.

Historically, we have been unable to employ qualified teachers who are also fluent in Welsh, and have employed trainee teachers and made arrangements for them to attend courses whilst working for us.

It was therefore decided to advertise for qualified teachers, but also added that we would consider applications from experienced teachers who wished to receive training.

Initially, the new posts were for a period of two years only, as there was uncertainty about the future situation. Consequently, there was the possibility that secondments for these posts could be considered.

3.0 Educational Psychology Service

During this term, we continued with a substantially lower number of psychologists in our team. This was due to two being on maternity leave, and two part-time psychologists had left the service. We could provide a service for every school, but each one received considerably fewer visits than usual.

As a consequence, three assistant psychologists were employed to assist to fill the gap. None of them could be released from their post until Christmas, but the other two gave much assistance, who were able to assist with several tasks and who have started work looking at the difference in the provision on the Isle of Anglesey and Gwynedd for children with language and communication difficulties.

One of our psychologists has held a course for students at the university on language and communication difficulties and how this affects behaviour.

Another has presented a course to a school on engagement, namely a child's difficulties to establish good a relationship with his parents.

The Educational Psychology Service as from September

Assistant Psychologists

You will be aware that three assistant psychologists are currently employed by the service.

This is possible due to 1.4 shortage of psychologists. Here are the salary figures, but of course, employment costs are slightly higher.

educational psychologist salary scale	average	salary 1.4 educational psychologist
£34 273 - £47 778	£41 151	£57 611
Assistant psychologist scale	first year	Salary of 3 assistant psychologists
£27 067 – £30 377	£27 067	£81 201

Therefore, this year, we are using an additional £23 590 to the usual funding for the psychological service. The three employee's agreements terminate in the summer.

These arrangements have been made due to failure to recruit new psychologists to the service.

Working as an assistant psychologist is a step in the process of training as an educational psychologist.

We therefore wish to support them in their efforts to obtain further training, with the aim of considering employing them after qualifying.

Professional Training Courses

As you will recall from the previous meeting, the only training course in Wales, held at Cardiff University, was unavailable. It is now available, after several services and authorities, including the Joint-Committee, contacted their elected members, in Cardiff and Westminster. We thank our chairman, Mr Gwilym O Jones, for his willingness to assist with this.

This enables the assistant psychologists to apply to follow the course from September.

They have also applied to attend courses in England, as well as the only course held in Scotland this year, at Dundee University.

Request to the Joint-Committee to Consider Promoting Training of Psychologists

We are submitting a request to the Joint-Committee to consider the scheme outlined here, that would provide support for the assistant psychologists to attend a professional training course, and enable us to provide an appropriate educational psychology service for our schools in the future.

We have been authorized to advertise two trainee psychologists' posts, to commence in September 2014, after the three assistant psychologist posts have terminated.

The successful candidates will attend a course, held either in Cardiff, for three years, or in Scotland, for two years, and will then work for the Joint-Committee 0.8 full-time.

This the cost per annum of employing a trainee psychologist, as regards salary and fees.

The Joint-Committee would have to pay salary and fees in Scotland, for the two years duration of the course.

The fees are paid in Wales, but students have to pay a 'supplementary' fee as the funding allocated by the Government to the university is not wholly adequate. This would be met by the Joint-Committee, and would also supplement the bursary students receive, to bring it up to the level of a trainee psychologist's salary.

Scotland

Trainee psychologist's salary scale	first year	University of Dundee fee	Cost for the first year
£22 019 - £30 075	£22 019	£9 500	£31 519
	Second year	University of Dundee fee	Cost for the second year
	£23 631	£9 500	£33 131

Cardiff

Salary scale of trainee psychologist £22 019 - £30 075	'Supplementary' fees	Cardiff university bursary	Cost to the Joint-Committee
First Year £22 019	£4 000	£12 800	£13 219
Second Year £23 631	£2 000	£12 800	£12 831
Third Year £25 241	£2 000	£12 800	£14 441

The following costs would be met by the Joint-Committee.

1. Two psychologists going to Scotland
 - £63 038 the first year
 - £66 262 the second year
2. Two psychologists going to Cardiff
 - £26 438 the first year
 - £25 662 the second year
 - £28 882 the third year
3. One going to Scotland and the other to Cardiff
 - £44 738 the first year
 - £45 962 the second year
 - £14 441 the third year

Most of the above is lower than the funding that would otherwise be allocated to employ a full 1.4 psychologist, and the others are not much higher.

A clause will be included in their agreements to ensure that they will pay the money back, should they, for some reason, not continue to work for the Joint-Committee in the future.

The Other Assistant Psychologist

You will have noticed that we propose that the Joint-Committee gives consideration to supporting only two trainee psychologists on a course, and then employ them as 0.8 full-time psychologists. This is due to lack of funding to employ more than that, a total of 1.6 full-time psychologist.

Perhaps the other psychologist would have obtained a place on a course in England, (where it would be impractical to consider supporting them on the course) or in Cardiff, and could leave our employment and attend that course, receiving the usual bursary.

Or, it would be possible to employ her for another year as an assistant psychologist, for her to make another application for a training course in a year's time.

Gareth Payne
Chief Acting Educational Psychologist