

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 19 November 2015
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People and Economy
PORTFOLIO: Health and Wellbeing
SUBJECT: Formation of a Merseyside Regional Sensory Service
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To outline proposals for a collaborative procurement process to establish a regional sensory service, this will include delivery of statutory assessment of need. The report also sets out Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) implications and seeks Executive Board approval to transfer four Council employees to this service.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) Executive Board note the report and;
- 2) In accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) Regulations 2006 Executive Board approve the transfer of two full time Vision Rehabilitation Officer Posts and two part time Support Worker Posts to the proposed Merseyside Regional Sensory Service.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 At its 20th November 2014 meeting Executive Board agreed (Minute 90) to recommend to Council, budget savings for 2015/16 which included £50,000 from the restructure of vision rehabilitation services both in-house and within the voluntary sector

3.2 Rather than looking at vision rehabilitation in isolation a more pragmatic approach is to consider all provision to meet the needs of those with sensory impairment. Sensory services are provided across all age groups though highest and growing demand arises from the needs of the ageing population. Dual sensory loss, that is both visual and hearing impairment, is now widespread amongst older people and the impact can severely restrict a person's daily living.

- 3.3 Statutory assessments of need relating to sensory loss and prevention and early intervention support are offered by the Council through in-house services and contracts held with voluntary sector providers.
- 3.4 Commissioners across Merseyside are proposing to establish a regional sensory service for both statutory and non-statutory services. Combining resources across the region will achieve efficiencies by maximising capacity to meet increasing demand for statutory assessments of need and maintain a focus on preventative support whilst maintaining service quality.
- 3.5 Halton is participating in this regional procurement process and engagement with providers, service users and other stakeholders is underway. It is also proposed to externalise the in-house vision rehabilitation service through a transfer to the regional service.
- 3.6 Currently two full time vision rehabilitation officers are employed by the Council. In addition one officer is supported by two 18.5 hours per week, support worker posts under access to work. Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) regulations apply to all four posts.
- 3.7 The transfer will be managed as part of the procurement process and relevant employment information including current terms and conditions will be shared with bidders. Bidders must sign a declaration that they are satisfied that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 apply to the contract for the regional service.
- 3.8 Executive Board are asked to approve the transfer of the two vision rehabilitation officer posts and the two associated access to work support posts to the proposed Merseyside Regional Sensory Service.
- 3.9 Work is underway to identify needs for those living with sensory loss and services will be co-designed through service user/provider engagement at both regional and local level. Rehabilitation will remain a focal point of the service with innovative solutions including use of assistive technology and digital inclusion to support daily living being championed.
- 3.10 One service provider will be contracted to lead the regional service and will collaborate with other agencies to ensure comprehensive support for sight and hearing loss is available. A core specification will be established to ensure compliance with legal duties. Each Authority will determine its financial contribution to this and the additional services required to meet local priorities.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 As part of the UK Vision Strategy a number of priorities have been set for England and include:

'Habilitation and rehabilitation available on a free and timely basis for as long as needed to learn or relearn key life skills including mobility'

This priority will continue to be met through vision rehabilitation services within the proposed Merseyside Regional Sensory Service.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The redesign of sensory services, transfer of posts to a regional service and the setting of a financial envelope for the procurement of future services will achieve the required savings identified by Council.

5.2 The Council's HR section will work with the service to ensure compliance with all prevailing employment legislation relating to the TUPE transfer outlined. This will include informing and consulting with staff in scope of the transfer and providing the required Employment Liability Information to a new provider, as the new employer. Section 8.0 of the Council's Staffing Protocol will apply; this assures that staff terms and conditions are protected upon transfer in their current job role to a new employer.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

Sensory service provision is across all ages and the needs of children, young people and their families will be considered in developing the regional service.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None identified

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None identified

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Demand for statutory assessments relating to sensory impairment is increasing and this will be managed as a priority within the redesigned regional service.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Equality and Diversity issues will be considered within the service specification for the regional service.

12.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.