

The future of the Occupational Health Provision in Lewisham

1. Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to consider the future of the occupational health service and to promote a discussion amongst members of the type of service they would like to see.

2. Background

2.1 The Occupational Health Service provides medical advice to managers across the Council and to schools to support the process of absence management. The service also provides a range of occupational health orientated services and specific guidance to HR, managers and school leaders regarding current and potential staff.

2.2 These services include

- pre employment health assessments
- responding to medical referrals
- health surveillance for specific groups of staff
- co-ordination of specialist advice on specific issues

2.3 The current contract was let to OH Works Ltd in November 2010 for a 3 year period with an option to extend for a further 2 years to 31st October 2015. The contract is now due for renewal from 1st November 2013 with the option of extending the existing contract or retendering and awarding a new contract from this date.

2.4 It should be noted that the OH budget has been subject to significant budget savings requirements over the last 3 years and further budget reductions are anticipated in 2014/15.

3. Current Proposals

3.1 It is intended to extend the current contract until November 2014 whilst options are explored including a shared OH Service with other interested Local Authorities, Business will continue as usual until 31st March 2014. However, from 1st April 2014, due to further budget reduction requirements some impact may be felt in the form of longer waiting times for appointments as OH staff time will have to be reduced.

- 3.2 It will be essential therefore to ensure that staff are aware of the importance of keeping their appointments so that slots are not wasted. (Data on the level of school staff DNA is available).
- 3.3 Shared services with other Local Authorities may provide economies of scale but it is likely that this option could include telephone consultations and an off site doctor (at London bridge) for the more complex cases only.
- 3.4 This would be a huge cultural shift for Lewisham having always had on site OH specialists and it may be one that schools would not want to consider. However, OH services are particularly expensive and careful consideration will need to be given to the options available.
- 3.5 It should also be noted that the schools' workforce currently makes up approximately 57% of the Council as a whole.
- 3.6 Schools will be further consulted in the coming months as to the options available to them.

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