



CABINET – 26TH JANUARY 2022

**SUBJECT: APPROVED MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS (AMHP)
RECRUITMENT IN THE SOUTH EAST WALES EMERGENCY
DUTY TEAM (SEWEDT)**

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the recruitment and retention challenges pertaining to the number of Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) employed by the South East Wales Emergency Duty Team (SEWEDT) and the direct correlation with salaries and the impact on service sustainability out-of-hours.
- 1.2 To seek Cabinet approval to apply a market supplement for Approved Mental Health Professionals who undertake duties within the service to ensure that the legal, statutory duties of the service is suitably met. This additional market supplement would ensure parity with the daytime Mental Health Teams in Caerphilly and across the Partner Authorities.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 SEWEDT provides an emergency social work service for the five counties of Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Newport and Monmouthshire during the hours when mainstream services are closed, thus discharging statutory social care responsibilities for 75% of the social services operational period. Caerphilly County Borough Council acts as the co-ordinator and the contracting agent on behalf of the Partner Authorities.
- 2.2 Social Workers are required to qualify as an Approved Mental Health Professionals in order to undertake formal Mental Health Act Assessments, which could lead to individuals being compulsorily admitted to hospital.
- 2.3 To qualify as an AMHP, a Social Worker must have relevant experience and attend a six-month university course supplemented by support from the Authority in terms of providing a mentor/assessor and a placement.
- 2.4 Under the Mental Health Act (1983, amended 2007), the Authority and its Partner Authorities are expected to provide sufficient resources to ensure that assessments under the Act are undertaken within a reasonable timescale to meet citizens' needs across 365 days of the year.

- 2.5 Following a long-standing recruitment issue, Caerphilly County Borough introduced their market supplement for daytime AMHPs in 2014-2015. This was not applied to AMHPs working in SEWEDT at the time
- 2.6 The service has experienced a very poor response to advertising vacancies for AMHPs over the last 18 months and has been unsuccessful in appointing people to the core team on a permanent basis where an AMHP is essential. The capacity of the service to undertake their statutory duty is therefore strained, which has an impact on the future ability of the team to effectively respond in a timely manner. This will also be compounded by the likely retirement of two permanent and experienced AMHPs in the next six months. There are also three vacant part-time AMHP posts currently unfilled which further impacts on the service.
- 2.7 Discussions with AMHPs who currently work in both the daytime and SEWEDT casual team have confirmed that the lack of an AMHP market supplement is a critical factor acting as a barrier to potential applications.
- 2.8 There is an additional risk to recruitment and future retention that current SEWEDT AMHPs could potentially consider moving to another Local Authority Emergency Duty Team where the AMHP market supplement is received. Comparatively, five of the Local Authorities based across the South Wales region or that border Gwent all receive an AMHP market supplement for covering a duty rota out-of-hours.
- 2.9 A business case was submitted to the SEWEDT Board of Directors in October 2021 outlining these issues with the recommendation that the Board approve a market supplement for SEWEDT AMHPs, and approval was given.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the recommendation that a market supplement be applied to SEWEDT AMHPs employed to undertake the function of an Approved Mental Health Professional as outlined in 8.2 and as supported by the SEWEDT Board of Directors. This is for the hours when the mainstream daytime services are closed, from 5pm to 8.30am Monday – Thursday, then 4.30pm on Fridays, for 24 hours during weekends and bank holidays, for which the 20% enhancement would continue to apply. The impact of this will be monitored and evaluated after a period of twelve months to determine the effect upon recruitment and retention of SEWEDT Approved Mental Health Professionals.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 SEWEDT experiences significant difficulty in recruiting AMHPs.
- 4.2 There are continuing risks to the service in light of the ongoing poor response to advertised vacancies resulting in permanent positions unfilled, as well as the corresponding risk to retention given that the Authority provides the AMHP market supplement to daytime Mental Health Teams and that other Local Authorities provide the AMHP market supplement out-of-hours for EDTs.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 Recruitment and Retention of AMHPs

- 5.1.1 Recruitment and retention for frontline Emergency Duty Teams can generally be challenging given the unsociable nature of the hours of work, limited access to resources, scale of coverage of the service, the need for autonomous decision-making and skilled interventions at crisis points for citizens. In terms of the recruitment and retention of AMHPs, there is a struggling picture reflected across the UK. For SEWEDT, this has now been exacerbated by the impact of the AMHP market supplement that is not paid to SEWEDT qualified AMHPs but is paid to the daytime Mental Health Teams' qualified AMHPs as well as other EDTs to qualified AMHPs in the South Wales region.
- 5.1.2 The specialist role of the AMHP in SEWEDT is one of the most important given the high demand within the service for Mental Health Act Assessments. Furthermore, their responsibility to organise and undertake an assessment under the MHA 1983 (amended 2007) and, where legal definitions are met, authorise detentions under the Act. AMHPs have specific responsibilities to uphold the human rights of people being assessed under the Act, consider the social perspective and follow the guiding principles of the MHA, which includes applying the least restrictive principle. The AMHP is also responsible for organising the complex inter-agency arrangements required to undertake the assessment and communicating with everyone involved, including the person's Nearest Relative.
- 5.1.3 Since December 2020, to meet the needs of the service, there has been a number of attempts to appoint three part-time permanent roles (AMHP essential) without success. The posts have been advertised on four separate occasions.
- 5.1.4 Feedback from colleagues in other Local Authorities and from the AMHPs in the SEWEDT casual team confirms that the lack of interest is directly linked to the salary plus the fact that no AMHP allowance is offered. The 20% temporary disturbance paid for working out-of-hours is no longer considered an incentive because they would be receiving a lower rate of pay than they are currently receiving in their daytime roles. Caerphilly is currently on the lowest Pay Scale for Senior Practitioners compared to daytime workers across the other four Partner Local Authorities. Therefore, at this time the posts are being covered by the casual pool and one temporary fixed term contract, but this is not a sustainable model. The situation is further compounded by the fact that two of the current full-time, permanent, and experienced AMHPs are planning to retire within the next six months, therefore impacting on the capacity of the service to fully fulfil its statutory duties.

5.2 Mental Health Act Assessments

- 5.2.1 The tables below evidence exactly how much mental health work is completed by the SEWEDT out-of-hours service. Contacts, where discussions with the AMHP took place, and Mental Health Act Assessments were completed on behalf of the Partner Authorities from 2017 to 2021:

All Mental Health Contacts

	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Section 136	615	671	629	458
MHA Assessments	541	506	527	501
Totals	1156	1177	1156	959

Mental Health Contacts Progressed to Referral

	17/18		18/19		19/20		20/21	
	Total	SW Out	Total	SW out	Total	SW Out	Total	SW Out
Section 136	199	181	237	215	222	201	190	160
MHA Assessments	178	133	150	118	168	141	177	139
Totals	377	314	387	333	390	342	367	299

5.2.2 In summary, the data indicates that a significant proportion of the out-of-hours workload is in response to Mental Health Act Assessments and this trend has been consistent over time. Therefore, the level of demand across the Partner Authorities remains consistently high for Mental Health Act Assessments; there has been an increase in the number of mental health contacts that have progressed to referral. This is reflective of the demographic need and context of the population.

5.2.3 As a consequence, there is an impact on the SEWEDT service and its capacity to fulfil the duties and undertake the Mental Health Act Assessments within a timely way. This is more challenging given the context of the service: covering five Partner Authorities out-of-hours when resources are more limited, and work is unplanned - instead it is responsive to the emerging needs of the immediate crisis.

5.3 The Gwent Context

5.3.1 Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport, Monmouthshire, and Torfaen daytime Mental Health Teams all pay a supplement to their qualified Approved Mental Health Professionals. Based on investigation, the amount of this allowance varies across the five partner Local Authorities. Please refer to the table below:

Local Authority	Allowance Amount for AMHP
Blaenau Gwent	£840 pa
Caerphilly	£2814pa
Newport	£1200pa
Monmouthshire	£1200pa
Torfaen	£2500pa

5.3.2 The allowance is paid to each AMHP for undertaking the role of duty AMHP in the daytime by being on the rota. This ensures that each Local Authority is meeting its statutory duty set out in the Mental Health Act 1983 (amended 2007) by ensuring that it has sufficient resources to respond to Mental Health Act Assessment requests. This statutory duty also applies to any Mental Health Act Assessment request that takes place out of hours but in terms of the out-of-hours service the difference is that the AMHP has no choice to opt out of being on the rota (5pm-8.30am Mon-Thurs; after 4.30pm on a Friday until 8.30am on a Monday, and bank holidays). However, this market supplement allowance has not been applied to the SEWEDT AMHPs, who have not received a payment but provide the same level of cover and have to ensure that there is an AMHP on every shift to meet its statutory obligation. This is because there was no identified recruitment issue previously.

5.3.3 Following a long-standing recruitment issue, Caerphilly introduced their market supplements for AMHPs in 2014-2015. However, this has not been applied to AMHPs working in SEWEDT as a recruitment issue had not previously been identified. Notably, evidence now clearly indicates that this is a significant barrier to SEWEDT's recruitment issues, creating a real impact on the capacity of the service, particularly when compared to other EDTs that are offering a supplement in line with daytime teams. There is an additional risk that where other teams offer the AMHP allowance, qualified SEWEDT AMHPs may decide to move which would impact on future retention levels even more so. This is compounded by the likelihood of the retirement of two permanent, experienced AMHPs in the next six months and currently three vacant part-time AMHP posts.

5.4 Comparison to Other South Wales Emergency Duty Teams

5.4.1 Comparatively, five of the Local Authorities based across the South Wales region or border Gwent, provide an AMHP market supplement to all their EDT AMHPs for covering the duty rota out-of-hours. As in Gwent, the amount of the payment varies; please refer to the table below for details:

Local Authority	Allowance Amount for AMHP
Cardiff	£2800 pa
Swansea	Business case has been submitted for daytime AMHPs and EDT; this has been agreed but awaiting confirmation of the amount
RCT	Allowance paid – but amount not confirmed
Neath and Port Talbot	£792pa
Powys	£1500pa

5.4.2 The recruitment of qualified AMHPs across South Wales is highly competitive and the position of SEWEDT in the market is not strong enough to attract applications given that the AMHP market supplement paid for other local Emergency Duty Teams is comparatively more appealing. Therefore, the option not to pay a market supplement to qualified AMHPs within SEWEDT can no longer be supported.

5.5 Conclusion

The report recommends that the AMHP market supplement for SEWEDT qualified AMHPs is fully implemented and attracts the 20% enhancement as all SEWEDT Mental Health Assessments take place out-of-hours as fully supported by the SEWEDT Board of Directors.

To ensure that the SEWEDT service is effective in undertaking its Mental Health Act duty whilst meeting the needs of its citizens, there is a clear rationale for the implementation of the AMHP market supplement for qualified AMHPs working out-of-hours in SEWEDT for the reasons outlined, namely recruitment and retention, in line with daytime Mental Health Teams and other Local Authority Emergency Duty Teams in South Wales.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The assumption has been made that the service demand, particularly for Mental Health Act assessment requests, will at least remain at the same rate and that population numbers will at least remain stable, although there is the potential for service demand to increase given the impact of the pandemic on citizens' mental health and wellbeing and the risk of the impact of possible further variants.
- 6.2 The financial implications section shows the AMHP market supplement without a 20% enhancement for working out-of-hours and with the 20% enhancement. It also includes the assumption of a 2% uplift pending confirmation of the pay award that is currently being negotiated

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An integrated impact assessment has not been conducted on this proposal as it relates to recruitment and retention of necessary emergency duty staffing.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 SEWEDT currently employs eight core Social Workers consisting of four full time and 4 part-time workers, all of whom are AMHPs, and they cover a four weekly rota pattern. Two Deputy Team Managers and the current Team Manager are also qualified AMHPs and support the AMHP rota when required. Further to this, the team has a pool of casual AMHPs who provide cover for annual leave, training, and sickness for the core team. The recommendation is that the casual AMHPs would also receive a proportionate percentage of the AMHP market supplement which is included in the financial proposal below.
- 8.2 Based on the current market supplement paid to Caerphilly AMHPs, the cost to the SEWEDT payroll would be as follows:

Partner Contributions	Approved Budget for 2021/22	Requirement with Market Supplement	Requirement with Enhanced Market Supplement
12.31% Blaenau Gwent	£120,627	£126,493	£127,873
29.95% Caerphilly	£293,482	£307,756	£311,113
13.01% Monmouth	£127,486	133,686	£135,144
26.79% Newport	£262,518	£275,285	£278,288
17.94% Torfaen	£175,796	£184,345	£186,356
100% Total	£970,909	£1,027,565	£1,038,774

Additional cost of market supplement if treated as an isolated flat rate payment	£47,656	or £3,971 per month
Additional cost of market supplement as an uplift in the basic hourly rate attracting 20% bonus etc	£58,865	Or £4,905

The above table shows the AMHP market supplement without a 20% enhancement for working out-of-hours (column 3) and with the 20% enhancement (column 4). It also includes the assumption of a 2% uplift pending confirmation of the pay award that is currently being negotiated.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are Human Resources implications related to the implementation of these proposals and HR have been fully involved in the process.
- 9.2 The intent of this recommendation is designed to have a positive impact on personnel levels to ensure that long-standing unfilled permanent vacancies for AMHPs in the SEWEDT are filled and retention is sustained of current AMHPs.
- 9.3 Payment of the proposed market supplement to SEWEDT AMHPs is specifically linked to the service delivery of the AMHP rota by suitably qualified and experienced AMHPs and is not transferable to another post.
- 9.4 HR would also ensure that any proposed payments will not subject the Authority and its Partner Authorities to any Equal Pay Risks.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report reflects the views of the consultees.
- 10.2 Team meetings within SEWEDT have taken place.
- 10.3 The SEWEDT Board of Directors is fully supportive of the recommendations.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Mental Health Act (1983, amended 2007)
- 11.2 Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

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