

Report to: Governance Committee

Date of meeting: 23 January 2024

By: Chief Operating Officer

Title: Employee referral scheme

Purpose: To recommend the expansion of the current ASCH support worker referral scheme to roles across the Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Governance Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Agree that the existing refer a friend scheme for support workers in Adult Social Care and Health is made permanent; and**
 - 2) expand the scheme to other roles across the Council as set out in this report.**
-

1 Background

- 1.1 A 'refer a friend' scheme is currently being operated for Support Worker roles in Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) Directly Provided Services on a pilot basis. Under the scheme, employees who refer a friend to apply to a Support Worker vacancy receive a payment of £250 if that friend is successfully appointed. The new employee also receives £250 after completing their first year in post. For reference, a copy of the scheme policy document is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The scheme was approved in late 2021 and launched in April 2022. It was agreed that it would be reviewed after 12 months, before considering whether to continue it on an ongoing basis, and whether the same approach could be applied to other hard-to-fill roles across the Council.
- 1.3 Since the scheme was launched, 11 Support Workers have been appointed following a referral. Although the overall number of vacancies in the service has increased, the service considers the pilot scheme to be a success overall. Candidates have indicated that they would not have applied without a referral, and so the scheme has helped mitigate some of the wider recruitment challenges facing the service and the Council as a whole. On that basis, subject to agreement from the Governance Committee, the existing scheme would be made permanent and expanded to other roles at ESCC.
- 1.4 In considering expanding the scheme, whilst it is not possible to determine precisely how much impact the pilot referral scheme had in encouraging candidates to apply, it is reasonable to assume that at least some vacancies that might otherwise have gone unfilled were filled as a direct result of a referral. Given the ongoing challenges facing recruiting managers, expanding the referral scheme may provide another tool that the organisation can use to help attract applicants. Benchmarking with other local authorities has shown that both Surrey and West Sussex County Councils currently operate a scheme.
- 1.5 The following roles have initially been identified as being in scope for the expanded referral scheme:
 - Adult Social Care and Health – all front-line roles
 - Business Services - all Procurement roles on Single Status grades, Principal Auditor, Audit Manager, qualified Estates and Buildings Surveyors and property energy efficiency roles.
 - Children's Services - Assessment and Planning Officers (Education), Social Workers, Residential Support Workers & Business Administrators (Early Help and Social Care)

- There are no particular Communities, Economy and Transport or Governance Services roles considered to be in scope at present.

- 1.6 Subject to approval to expand the scheme, it is proposed that Assistant Directors will have authority to decide whether it applies to each given vacancy from the list above, it would not automatically be applied by default.
- 1.7 Assistant Directors would also have authority to expand the list of roles above to include other hard-to-fill roles if necessary. Only Single Status roles would be included in the scheme. Guidance would be provided to help define what qualifies as a hard-to-fill role and to ensure other options had been explored, for example:
- The vacancy has been advertised multiple times or for an extended period without being filled.
 - Alternatives such as secondments, job redesign, regrading, targeted advertising and alternative selection methods have been explored.
 - The role requires particular skills, specialisms or qualifications that are not widely available in the candidate pool.
 - There is significant competition for suitable candidates, for example from a neighbouring authority, another large employer or sector.
 - There are no immediate and specific equality impacts – as below a general equality impact assessment has been carried out.
- 1.8 The Council has in place a variety of approaches and policies in place to support successful recruitment in a challenging environment. The proposed referral scheme is an additional resource to supplement those already in place.
- 1.9 An equality impact assessment (EIA) has been carried out for the pilot scheme, based on the information available, there does not appear to be a strong relationship between the protected characteristics of referees and appointees. Any equality impact is therefore likely to be limited and mitigated by the Council's wider work to attract and retain a more diverse workforce. Subject to approval to continue and expand the scheme however, a new EIA will be carried out each year to monitor any impacts and consider any mitigations that might be necessary.

2 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 2.1 The Governance Committee is recommended to:
- 1) agree that the existing refer a friend scheme for support workers in Adult Social Care and Health is made permanent; and
 - 2) expand the scheme to other roles across the Council as set out in this report.

Ros Parker
Chief Operating Officer

Contact Officers:
 Sarah Mainwaring
 Assistant Director, HR&OD
 Tel. No: 01273 482060
Sarah.mainwaring@eastsussex.gov.uk

Nicholas Earley
Lead HR Consultant, Policy
Tel No:01273 335061
Nicholas.earley@eastsussex.gov.uk