

### Grow Our Own Scheme 3 – HR Comments

The first cohort of this scheme are nearing completion of their degree, and all individuals are on-track to qualify as social workers within the timescales planned at the outset of the scheme. Employees from this first cohort have been mapped against level 1 social work vacancies within social work teams; a significant number have already commenced as Family Support Workers within these teams in readiness for their anticipated qualification and registration as social workers. It is expected that the entire cohort will be practising social workers with NCC by September 2019, providing a substantial additional resource and alleviating some current challenges around capacity. Following on from the success of the first scheme, the second cohort commenced the degree course in January 2019 and are expected to be newly qualified social workers, ready to take up level 1 positions and commence ASYE, by September 2020; at the same time, the first cohort will be finalising their ASYE and being considered for progression to level 2. External recruitment to level 2 / 3 positions continues to be a significant challenge – the progression of our Grow Our Own social workers to these more senior roles is a key component of workforce plans and strategy to build stability and quality. This proposed third cohort will enable us to continue developing new social workers, who will take up level 1 / ASYE positions as the previous cohort progress to level 2, investing in our workforce, and building capacity, stability and resilience in our social work teams.

Cohort 3 offers up to 19 places for NCC employees: 15 in Childrens Social Work Teams and 4 in Adults. Risk to NCC resulting from initial outlay of course fees is limited by the scheme pay-back clauses and remains supported by appropriate legal documentation which will be signed by each programme participant prior to commencement. The cost to the employee and the repayment plan remains consistent with the previous 2 schemes. Candidates will be subject to an assessment process before being offered permanent employment as a Newly Qualified Social Worker and expected to undertake the 12 month ASYE programme.

The principles of the Scheme have been reviewed, and some updates have been made in-light of lessons learnt from previous schemes. In particular, the scheme now stipulates a requirement for part-time employees to undertake placements on a full-time basis without additional hours or pay.

The Scheme continues to outline examples of changes in circumstances including long-term sickness, short-term sickness, long-term ill health, maternity/adoption, performance and capability, as well as redundancy/restructuring. Should any of these exceptional circumstances occur that may jeopardise an employee's ability to complete the course, NCC will work with the Provider in the interests of the employee to determine an appropriate response. NCC will be the lead in such processes and the employee will have parallel responsibilities to comply with all policies and procedures set out in both the NCC People Management Handbook and the Provider's Student Handbook.

Management will need to consider the impact of workload during an employee's placement periods, on that employee and on other members of the employee's team, as it is not intended that backfill arrangements will be approved during this time.

It is also noted that during the period of the two year programme and including time spend on placements, employees will remain in their substantive roles unless a permanent change in their contract takes place for other reasons. Management should be mindful that any management-led proposal to alter an employee's substantive contract is likely to require formal consultation with the employee.

Furthermore, whilst there is a management expectation that those employees who are successful in attaining their qualification and registering with the HCPC will apply for and be assessed against Level 1 Social Work posts, management should note that whilst this

expectation has been clearly set out and communicated, there is no formal obligation or contractual requirement for employees to apply for such posts, and therefore management would not be in a position to enforce this. It is also noted that if successful in securing a Level 1 Social Worker post the colleague will be enrolled onto the ASYE programme and will be employed on the terms and conditions relevant to this post. Any formal agreements related to the Loan Agreement or Learning Agreement are a separate matter.

As stated, in the course of the two year programme, there are many variables that may affect employees circumstances, both personally and from an NCC employment perspective and management are advised to take HR and/or Legal advice on individual employment circumstances, on a case by case basis.

Again, management will need to manage the variety of changes to personal circumstances carefully and with advice from HR on a case by case basis, to ensure fairness and transparency of treatment.

There will be an appropriate and relevant application process for a place on the Scheme and this will be reflective of the Children & Adults Equality Action Plan.

Jo Zylinski  
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