



membership resources

State of the Market Survey 2008

Report

Local Authority Social Care Services



Briefing 08/73
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The state of the market survey was conducted by Rob Bailey, APSE Principal Advisor for Social Care

For any enquires in relation to the survey, Rob may be contacted on:

Tel: 0161 772 1810

Email: rbailey@apse.org.uk

**LOCAL SERVICES
LOCAL SOLUTIONS**



Association for Public Service Excellence
2nd floor Washbrook House
Lancastrian Office Centre
Talbot Road, Old Trafford
Manchester M32 0FP
telephone: 0161 772 1810
fax: 0161 772 1811
email: enquiries@apse.org.uk
web: www.apse.org.uk

Local Authority Care Services

State of the Market 2008

APSE conducted an on-line survey during November 2008, sent out to over 500 local authority contacts in social care across the UK.

A series of questions were asked covering attitudes to the issues currently facing social care services and the shape and challenges for future service provision.

Social care managers are facing substantial change as personal budgets and commissioning replace the current service packages. Anticipated changes include:

- Further significant declines in the number of local authority day centres and residential care homes;
- Increasing specialisation by the local authority into niche service areas including re-enablement and mental health care provision;
- Increases in available budgets although eligibility criteria are anticipated to increase, disenfranchising many service users.

Officers are however generally supportive (60%) of the changes although there is uncertainty as to how service standards can be maintained as the services 'fragment'.

Results

Care homes and day centres

In total respondent authorities were responsible for a total of 204 local authority run care homes and 198 adult day centres. Numbers of centres differed widely with some authorities having no remaining centres. Of those that retained in-house provision, the average number of care homes was 9.2 (median 5.5) and day centres 7.1 (median also 5.5)

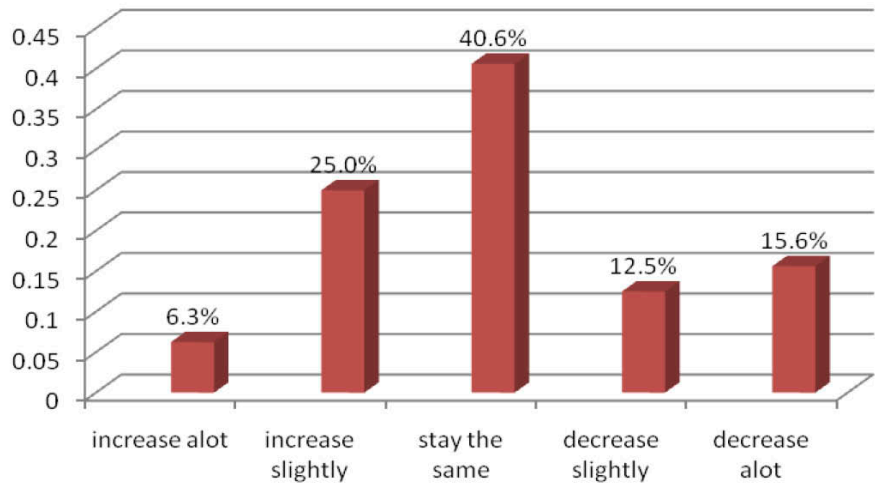
Asked how the number of facilities would change over the next 12 months and 35.5% saw a decrease in residential homes and 33.3% a reduction in day centres. A small number 6.5% saw an increase in homes and 15.2% an increase in day centres. A third of authorities are therefore seeking to decrease direct council provision in the short term.

Direct employment

In total the respondent councils employed 4375 staff in care homes, 3361 in day centres and 7813 in domiciliary care. Average number per authority in care homes was 198.9

(median 160), day centres 124.5 (median 75) and domiciliary care workers 269.4 (median 150).

Interestingly a slight majority forecast that the number of domiciliary workers would increase over the forthcoming year (see below)

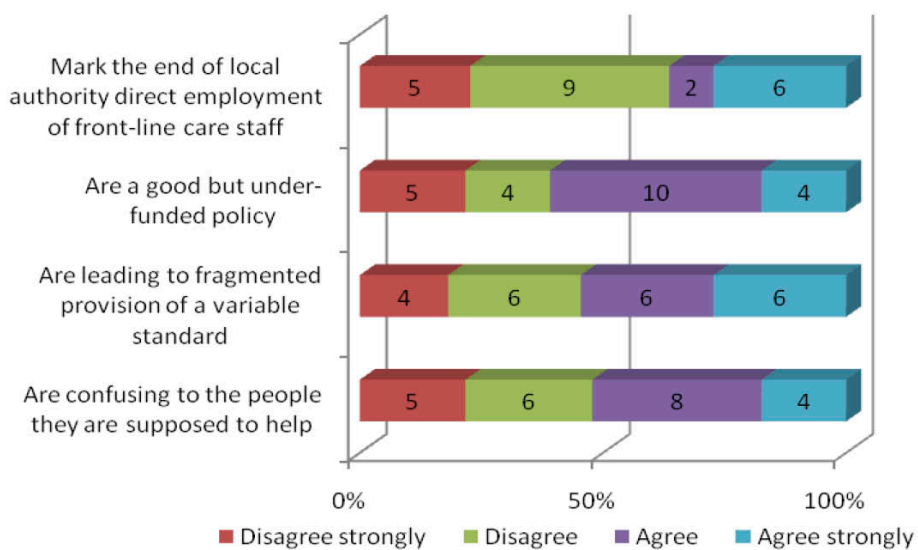


Eligibility

Eligibility criteria are frequently used as a method for restricting the numbers that qualify for free or subsidised care. Unsurprisingly 42% of respondents thought that eligibility criteria would be increased (either slightly or a lot) whilst only 7.7% forecast a slight decrease.

Personal budgets

Personal budgets are rapidly gaining in importance as those receiving care take responsibility for organising their own requirements.



Several questions were asked to test officer views of personal budgets. The responses, which cover the whole country, did not foresee front-line care moving entirely out of local authority direct employment (63% disagreed or disagreed strongly). A clear majority (60%) supported the policy although underfunding remained an issue.

The possibility of fragmentation of provision and variable standards split opinion with just over half thinking that the service would be degraded. Similarly numbers thought that personalised budgets were confusing to the person receiving care.

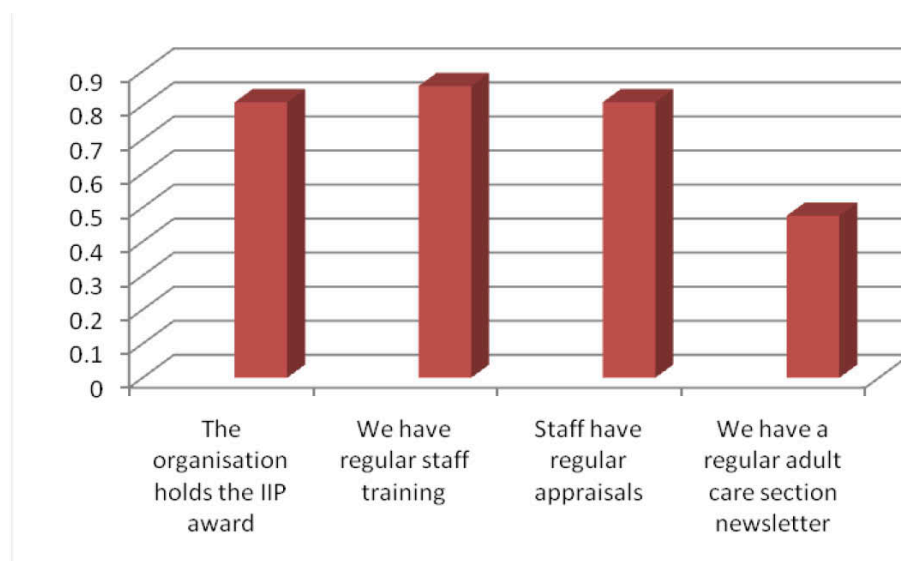
Adult Care budgets

Whilst underfunding was flagged up in earlier questions, many predicted that the budget under their control would increase (40%). Around 20% forecast a decrease and 36% thought it would stay the same.

Employment

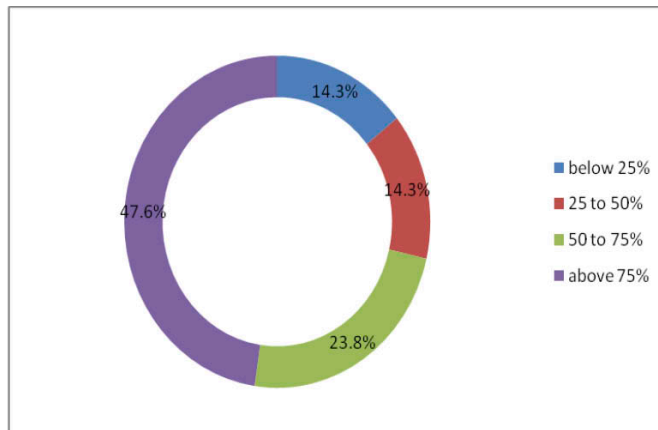
76% of organisations had completed job evaluation where it applied and of those 53% had seen an increase in wage costs as a result. 41.1% had seen no change and a smaller number claimed a decrease. The average hourly rate for domiciliary care workers stands at £7.24 per hour although the median was £7.00 and wages ranged £6.30 and £8.41. Data for other services including education catering and building cleaning suggests that although authorities have completed the technical aspects of job evaluation they have yet to implement the results which could mean further significant wage rises in the next 12 months above any national wage settlement.

Absence was thought to be slightly above average by the majority (52.4%) of respondents and a further 14.3% saw it as being too high leaving around a third thinking it average or below. Typical national rates of sickness (including long term sickness) are 5% in direct services, equating to around 12 /13 days per year.



Across the board organisations are proactive in encouraging the development of their staff. Over 80% hold IIP, have regular staff training and staff appraisals. Approximately 50% have regular staff newsletters.

Day centre transport



Local authorities continue to provide the majority of day centre transport with 47.6% of respondents estimating that over 75% is provided in-house. This compares to 29% who think in-house transport accounts for less than half of journeys.

The future and the wider role

Commissioning is set to become the main delivery mechanism within social care with a majority of respondents already moving towards this model. 36% expect to become a commissioner of services whilst a similar number expect their role to remain as a present.

Officers were generally positive about the opportunities for their service although this requires significant change in many cases. The service is predicted to become increasingly specialist in nature, with re-enablement teams and specialised teams for mental health home care services and for those with behavioural problems. Overwhelmingly, there is a desire that standards of care are maintained so whoever provides the end service does so in an effective and cost efficient manner – the role of the commissioner. It is worth noting how blurred the line has now become between health and adult social care and this has implications for whom ultimately provides the funding.

Traditional day care services are generally accepted to be in long term decline and will reduce further. Local authority care and nursing homes are similarly declining with those left specialising in providing the more involved care services such as dementia. Traditional domiciliary care by the local authority is predicted to decline substantially (to be replaced by direct payments to other providers) although evidence for this is currently mixed and dependent on the location within the UK.

APSE

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email: enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national advisory groups include:-

- Efficiencies, procurement and service transformation
- Building cleaning
- Citizen engagement
- Local authority, police and fire authority partnerships
- Community safety and security
- Housing management, construction and building maintenance
- Parks, horticultural and ground maintenance
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Social care
- Leisure management and community venues
- Vehicle maintenance and transport operations
- Waste management, refuse collection and street cleansing
- Workforce strategy and employee relations