



## **Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN)**

### **Social Work Department – Allied Health**

### **The Children's Hospital at Westmead (CHW)**

## **Consultation Document**

*6 July 2021*

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## **Introduction**

The Department of Social Work (hereafter referred as the department) at the Children's Hospital at Westmead is concerned with the emotional, psycho-therapeutic and psycho-educational needs and wellbeing of the children and families who attend or are out patients of The Children's Hospital at Westmead.

The department offers a wide range of services within the hospital and community.

The primary objective of the department is to provide a child focussed family centred service that aims to minimise the impact of the illness and hospitalisation on the child and family, promote health outcomes and link children and families with appropriate support services in their community.

Social Workers work within clinical teams to provide a range of services to children, parents and families, through:

- assessments for support
- counselling and therapy
- education and support groups
- information and assistance in accessing services
- coordinate information and support groups and maintain links with community organisations

With a new leadership structure recently being recruited to and embedded, with conjunction of a review of the department and service needs, a number of proposed changes are being considered.

Of note, the Health Service Union (HSU) has corresponded with the Sydney Children's Hospital Network (SCHN) in relation to specific matters within the social work department.

This consultation document provides further detail as part of the consultation on those matters.

## **Role of Allied Health Assistant**

It had been raised that the current incumbent of the role had been working additional hours in a consistent manner. As such a review of the available information was undertaken. It was evident from this that on average the incumbent had worked up to an additional 16 hours per week for a period in excess of 52 weeks. The additional hours were to support the increase in volume of work within the department.

With consideration of the review and available information, the incumbent has been appointed in a full time permanent position.

## **Additional Hours**

As part of this review, taking into consideration numerous factors including service needs, staff that are working additional hours to their contracted arrangement are being reviewed. When this review is complete, recruitment measures will be commenced to reflect the establishment or in the alternative, incumbents will not be working any additional hours.

SCHN expects that this review will be completed no later than 30 August 2021.

## Weekend on call

Due to the nature of the work and increase in trauma related responses required from the department occurring out of hours, a review has been on-going pertaining to service delivery and clinical allocations with a focus on:

- improving psycho-social responsiveness to patient/family needs
- providing a timely on-site response i.e. improved trauma responses
- ensuring staff wellbeing by reducing the on-call and call backs.

### COVID19 period

An opportunity arose in September 2020 where resources became available through COVID 19 contingencies. An urgent response was required and resulted in an on-site temporary arrangement leading to rostered level three and four social worker during the day on Saturday and Sunday. Given that access to COVID 19 funds were time limited and in consultation with staff, a volunteer weekend service model was temporarily created.

### Next steps and request for feedback

This temporary arrangement has proven to be very successful with positive feedback from clinicians and staff as well as patients and their families. CHW is now looking at an implementation phase, and is seeking your input as we consult further on providing an on-site weekend service on a volunteer only basis, weekend roster. Our current thinking at this stage is that if there were no volunteers or employees available for the weekend roster, the department would default back to the current on call arrangements.

## Out of hours on-call roster

The current arrangement is that the weekend service provision is for an on-site social worker between 09:30 and 18:00. These hours overlap with the day on call shift with exception of 1 hour in the morning (08:30 to 09:30) and two in the evening (18:00 to 20:00). The current weekend on-call pattern covers a 12 hour rotation of 20:00 to 08:00 then 08:00 to 20:00 between Friday night and Monday mornings.

CHW is proposing that weekend on-call shifts start at 18:00 and finish the next morning at 08:30am. This is to align with the volunteer weekend service outlined above.

Although there will be a one hour gap between the end of the on-call shift and the start time of the weekend on-site social worker, this is within current service provision key performance indicators for responding to call backs.

Any shortfalls in clinical coverage during this one hour period will be addressed by the head or deputy head of department. This is consistent with day to day management of competing priorities such as when a designated social worker is managing a complex situation and is unable to immediately respond to another call.

Please table 1 for timetable.

**Table 1 - Timetable for implementation of changes to on-call roster**

<b>STAGE</b>	<b>TIMESCALE</b>
Consultations with staff - <i>inclusive and transparent consultation will take place utilising various means</i>	7 July 2021
Notification to unions	7 July 2021
Working with affected staff to determine support required	7 July – ongoing
Consultation with staff and unions close	20 July 2021
Assessment of staff and union comments	20 July 2021 – 24 July 2021
Proposed implementation of changes	3 August 2021
Continue to work with staff affected by changes	Ongoing

These dates are only approximate and may be amended as necessary.

### **Meal breaks**

With consideration of the long hours that may be required by staff, CHW can confirm that no staff are required to work additional hours. Any work that is required to be undertaken in addition to the rostered working hours needs to be discussed and approved prior by the Head of Department. This will then be paid in accordance with the [AWARD] namely pursuant to clause 8 overtime and clause 10 Meals.

### **Nine day fortnight working pattern**

In response to questions from staff concerning the administration of the nine day fortnight, it has become apparent that a review is needed in order to update practices and procedures and bring them into line with current policy and flexible working practices. These arrangements have not been reviewed since they became operational in 2016.

CHW will ensure as part of the review, individual staff flexible working arrangements are maintained where practicable through the flexible working practice processes and reviewed in accordance with established policy and procedure.

### **Employee Assistance Program**

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free strictly confidential and professional counselling service provided by the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network to all staff. Staff can access the program via the following contact details:

- AccessEAP (1800 818 728)

- Converge International Free call 1800 337 068

## **Feedback and Contact Details**

Enquiries and feedback regarding the proposed structure should be addressed to:

Paul Bains

Head of Social Work Department – Children’s Hospital Westmead

Email - [paul.bains@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:paul.bains@health.nsw.gov.au)

Phone: 9845 2624

In person by appointment

Children’s Hospital Westmead

Level 1

Social Work Department