AGENDA FOR CHANGE:
GUIDANCE FOR SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPISTS AND SLT ASSISTANTS ON THE JOB EVALUATION PROFILES

In December 2003 a ‘family’ of profiles were agreed for Speech and Language Therapy. These are published on www.doh.gov.uk.

Now is an appropriate time to determine where we are in the Agenda for Change (AfC) process, how we got there and the next steps to ensure the best possible outcome for colleagues working in Speech and Language Therapy.

November 2002 was an important time in the Agenda for Change Job Evaluation process. It was at this stage that Amicus received the first batch of draft profiles for the professions that we represented including Speech and Language Therapy. To say that we were ‘underwhelmed’ by their contents was an under-statement. Indeed we were incandescent because they greatly undervalued our members contribution to providing health and social care. This could have a major effect on recruitment and retention of key skilled staff.

Our task was to ‘verify’ the contents of the profiles and then identify any gaps. We undertook this work with the Speech and Language Therapy Occupational Advisory Committee (OAC) and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT). This work included a bi-lateral meeting with the Department of Health (DOH), two working sessions with the RCSLT and one additional evaluation session, once again with the RCSLT. There was then a meeting with Sue Hastings, DOH independent advisor, at RCSLT where individual therapists presented job analysis questionnaires and were interviewed to provide evidence for principal and consultant profiles.

The interview process was successful in that it increased the range of profiles produced and enhanced Amicus’s understanding of the level of practice of those Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) who were evaluated.

On assessing the outcome of AfC we issue a Health Warning. The language used in the titles of the profiles is not how it is commonly understood in the profession. We will explain the difference and how it impacts on pay in our commentary that follows. Also we have utilised the professional expertise of the RCSLT and the labour relations expertise of Amicus to issue clear guidelines on the suitability for application of each profile to postholders. We recognise that the assignment to and within the current Whitley Bands varies across the country so we will seek to define our recommendations in professional terms rather than pay terms.

Some colleagues have been placed on parts of the current Whitley Bands partly for reasons other than skill levels. This reflects recruitment and retention factors. The Agenda for Change job evaluation scheme does not measure this factor and there is a separate part of the agreement to cover this. We hope therefore that as a result of our recommendations, colleagues at the same level of practice will receive the same pay, regardless of where they work. When making a comparison between your current pay and that proposed under AfC, colleagues in London need to realise that additional investment has gone into London Weighting and the provisions of Cost of Living Supplements which can be extended to Speech and Language Therapy in the South East.

The other issue to be aware of is that the last regarding exercise resulted in posts across the country being variously graded, when reading this guidance, notice should be taken of post descriptors more than grades- this is inserted in order to help ‘read across’ to the new post titles and bands.

Outcomes

Profiles have been agreed at the following levels:
Clinical Support Worker Speech and Language Therapy
Band 2 £11,148 - £13,832

Clinical Support Worker Speech and Language Therapy Higher
Band 3 £12,852 - £15,381

These profiles produce salary advance for Speech and Language Therapy Assistants. Colleagues who are on or who are applying for movement onto the Professions Allied to Medicine Technical Instructor Scales may like to consider application of the Higher level profile. However, this may not be applied exclusively to these colleagues. It all depends on whether the profile matches or not (See matching process below). Colleagues who have successfully applied for Grade II or Grade I Technical Instructor Grade may like to consider making the case that neither profile matches your job and instead seeking to go for local evaluation (See matching process below). A colleague is currently completing a Job Analysis Questionnaire (JAQ) as part of the job evaluation procedure with a view to creating a profile at Band 4.

Speech and Language Therapist
Band 5 £17,548-£22,710

This profile applies to newly and more recently qualified Speech and Language Therapists (SLT).

You may also like to make reference to Page 35 of the Job Evaluation Handbook (First Edition) on the Development of Professional Roles. This provides for an re-assessment of colleagues who “move quickly to operate in roles that demand a level of autonomous decision making in the overall delivery of care that exceeds that normally associated with jobs allocated to Band 5”.

A technical note has been produced on how a practitioner moves from level 5 in the Knowledge factor to level 6. This is key to moving from Pay Band 5 to Band 6. This note is available from Colin.Adkins@amicustheunion.org.

Specialist Speech and Language Therapist
Band 6 £20,955 - £28,387

The title of this profile understandably is the origin of much of the concern regarding the possible pay outcome of AfC. The title of specialist in this profile is not how it is understood and applied to roles in the profession. A leading member of the profiling group (a sub-committee of the Job Evaluation Working Party) described this profile as “applying to postholders one stage above the one for Speech and Language Therapist” i.e. the Band 5 profile.

Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist
Band 7 £25,290 - £33,342

This profile is applicable to Specialist roles as they are understood in the profession. Job titles normally associated with such levels of practice are likely to include ‘specialist speech and language therapist’. May have clinical supervisory/mentoring responsibility for more junior staff. Will have evidence of attendance on Specialist short courses and advanced training up to Masters level equivalent in particular clinical specialist areas.

Principal SLT
Band 8a-b £32,258-£38,709/£37,574-£46,451

We believe that this is would be a profile for a Highly Specialist SLT. Job titles normally associated with such levels of practice include Senior Specialist, Highly specialist. These therapists would have highly developed clinical skills and have undertaken significant postgraduate training in the specialist area and be involved in policy development for that clinical area. Will be leading clinician for the speciality within a trust and undertake advisory work within the speciality on a locality/trust wide basis.
Consultant SLT
Band 8a-8c £32,258-£38,709/£37,574-£46,451/£45,213-£55,742

For band 8a/b see principal descriptors above. At 8c Job titles normally associated with such levels of practice include Consultant, Senior Specialist, Highly Specialist. They would have very highly developed clinical skills recognised within their region. They will offer unidisciplinary/multi-disciplinary training at regional and sometimes national level. Should be involved in research at speciality level and provide advisory expertise at regional/national level. Advises on/implements new services within the speciality area, may lead on strategic and or business planning within the speciality area. Likely to be published and provide high level training, often on under-graduate and post-graduate training courses. Therapists are not required to have a PhD to access the consultant status. This job profile should not be confused with the regionally developed ‘Consultant AHP’ grading descriptions.

Professional Manager (Clinical, Technical or Social Service)
Band 8a £32,258 - £38,709
Band 8b/8c £37,574 - £46,451/£45,213 - £55,742
Band 8d £54,193 - £67,096

Band 8a posts would cover SLT’s with posts such as team leader or co-ordinator of an aspect of the service e.g. team leader for special schools. The individual will be involved in strategic and policy development for that aspect of the service, be involved in recruitment, supervision and monitoring of waiting lists, service provision etc.

Band 8b posts would cover SLT’s with posts such as Head of learning disabilities, head of paediatrics etc where there is a more senior manager in place within Speech and Language Therapy

Band 8c posts would cover the above posts where there is not a more senior SLT manager or in large/complex services. Would also cover Heads of Speech and Language Therapy services within an organisation.

Band 8d posts would cover Head of SLT services with wide ranging responsibility e.g. across a number of organisations/wide range of service provision or with additional senior management responsibility within an organisation.

Implementation and Assimilation

Key to determining a better outcome for Speech and Language Therapists and Assistants is the matching process and the possible need for local evaluations where a postholder’s role does not match a national profile. Matching guidance has been produced by Amicus.

Each trust will establish a matching panel that will match postholders against nationally agreed profiles. They will do this on an informed basis by using Job Descriptions. So immediate Task One (is for postholders going through this process to update their Job Descriptions to ensure that they reflect the role they are currently required to undertake rather than the role they were first employed to do. Many of you have already undertaken this work as part of the re-grading process. It may be helpful to consider the language of AFC in revising job descriptions.

Next the matching panel will take informed advice from the manager of the section of work being matched and a relevant staff side representative. So immediate Task Two is for the Staff Side representative to seek to meet the manager to determine whether there is a consensus on the correct application of profiles for postholders prior to meeting the matching panel.

The matching panel will determine one of two courses of action. Firstly, whether a match can be made with a nationally agreed profile and the nature of this match. There is an appeal to a second matching panel if you are unhappy with their decision. Secondly, in the absence of a match that the postholder should be referred for a local evaluation. Post matching representatives should also ensure that organisations do not try to ‘re-design’ jobs downwards and create Band mix because of cost factors. We have been informed at Secretary of State level that all trusts will receive sufficient funds to fully implement AfC.
Remember; if the profile does not fit you do not have to wear it. Go for local evaluation. However, you will have to provide evidence to prove that the profile does not fit and not that you disagree with the factor level outcomes.

The local evaluation process is exactly the same, including the materials used, as the national process. The Department of Health has produced draft guidance for colleagues in the position of completing a Job Analysis Questionnaire as part of a local evaluation process. This will soon be available.

This is where the proposed system is fairer and more transparent. Under Whitley, Trusts optimised the grades to meet the salary budget. Whilst often we have proved the unfairness of these abuses of the Clinical Grading criteria Trusts retain power to act as final arbiters of our claims and deny our members fair pay.

Under the Agenda for Change we can mount an evidence based challenge to the Band allocated for a post and ultimately have an independent assessment of the post via the Job Evaluation scheme.

More excitingly using the Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) we can start defining the competencies required for higher levels of practice and giving members the means to reach these via CPD. Amicus and the RCSLT will work together to fulfil the potential of the KSF for colleagues working in Speech and Language Therapy. RCSLT has already ensured that linkages are made between the RCSLT competency project and the KSF.

This guidance will have to be developed as we have monitored the outcome of the matching process in the early implementor sites. Our advice and guidance will be supplemented by additional training of SLT Reps. We are now entering a very challenging period of the Agenda for Change process. Your activity and support over the proceeding months has been key to obtaining better outcomes on many profiles. Your continued activity and support will produce further advances and help clarify how much the vast majority of those working in Speech and Language Therapy will be paid ahead of our second ballot on Agenda for Change in 2004. Keep up all your good work.