

Proposal

Proposal title: Residences Support Service – Proposal for Change

Date: 30th October 2009

Introduction

The Wardenal Service (now called the Residences Support Service) moved into the Student Services department in January 2009 to join other student-facing teams fulfilling a pastoral function. The Residences Support Service was managed as 3 distinct operations over 3 Hall sites with different employment arrangements and different practices in relation to residence support and services to students which was not well documented. The Service interacted with other support services to varying degrees. There was little consistent service to students nor a consistent 'deal' for the Team. Student Services undertook a review of the Service which began in February 2009. This paper describes the output from the Review Group and includes proposals to streamline service delivery, harmonise working practices and modernise the employment arrangements.

The proposals are for debate and further consideration based on comments and counter-proposals received from the staff affected and their representatives.

Background

Most wardens have not received wages but free accommodation and other benefits – in return for undertaking a rota of pastoral, out of hours duties. Some members of the Wardenal Service have concerns about their remuneration package and their absence of inclusion in a formal annual pay review as enjoyed by other University employees. Any revised conditions for Wardenal workers will clearly have a financial implication for the University in continuing to provide the same or similar model of Wardenal Service moving forward.

The Wardenal Service has been a critical part of support for the student experience particularly of our most vulnerable students – first year undergraduates, international students, students with disabilities or in crisis. It provides a safe, study conducive environment and maintains discipline in Halls. On some sites a formalised pastoral function is undertaken although it is not always clear to what extent this occurs. The Service's contribution helps the University sell the accommodation offer to students and their parents. It is a key partner in supporting students in their transition to living in an HE environment, picking up issues and signposting students to other services in the University or in the wider Community. Without this service, other support services could be overwhelmed and/or early intervention in student crises would be lost.

Principles

The Review Group worked on the following principles in formulating options and recommendations.

- The provision of a residence support service is a selling point to prospective students and their families which aids recruitment and increases University income in Schools and the Halls
- A residence support service maintains a safe, study conducive environment maintaining discipline and health and safety as outlined in the Hall Regulations which forms part of the residents' contract
- The service adds value to the student experience by providing an out of hours service and signposting vulnerable students to other services
- The service to all student residents should be consistent as part of their residential contract
- The majority of costs should be seen to benefit the student experience directly
- The residences support team should be paid as employees of the University with access to similar

benefits as other employees

- There should be consistent terms and conditions for the residence support service team
- As a result of the review fixed term contracts, turnover and redeployment across the 3 sites will be used to facilitate any change and it is intended that there will be no compulsory redundancies
- There is no intention for terms and conditions to be retrospective which could result in an obligation on individuals (repayment for benefits) or to the university (repayment of services) already received and make the service unsustainable

These principles are set in a context of:

- continued reduction in HE funding and the need to ensure best value for money
- increased residential fees and the need to clarify the offer to residents paying them as part of a legal contract
- integration with Student Services practices
- the need for a review of terms and conditions based on time since last review and concerns raised by members of the former Wardenal Service

All of which make the current position untenable moving forward.

Options

Based on a benchmarking and research exercise, management information on wardenal activity, feedback from students, information on structure and financial information, 10 options were considered. [Please note when referring to reduced hours, this is based on an assumption of service from 6pm-8am weekdays and all day weekends (weekend on call provision equates to 1 sub warden by day and 2 overnight).]

Option	Rota Model	Safe student envirt.	Consistent student support	Adequate leave & absence cover on all sites	Paid employee status for all wardens	Accom Offset	Catering	Unilink	Other	Estimated Increase (+) or Decrease (-) In cost from current service (Option 1)
1	As is	√	X	X	X	√	√	√	√	=
2	1 in 5 Reduced hours	√	√	X	√	√	X	X	X	-
3	1 in 5 Reduced hours	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	-
4	1 in 5	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	X	-
5	1 in 7 Reduced hours	√	√	√	√	√	X	X	X	-
6	1 in 7 Reduced hours	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	+
7	1 in 7	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	+
8	As is	√	X	X	√	√	√	√	√	+
9	1 in 10	√	√+	√	√	√	√	√	√	+
10	No Service	X	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	-

Proposal

The Review Group recommend a change to the model of provision and the employment status of wardens as outlined in Option 5 to take effect from September 2010 following a formal consultation period with all relevant stakeholders including Academic Schools, students, staff and their union representatives (Appendix 5).

Benefits

This option maintains a support offer to students in Halls; ensures a consistent model across all sites (1-7 rota model); provides paid employee status, includes an accommodation allowance and removes all other benefits whilst ensuring cover arrangements for annual leave or sickness cover on each site. Based on paying at least National Minimum Wage this proposal does not require additional financial resource.

Impact**The Residence Support Service**

- all Residence Support Service staff will be treated as University employees and access similar pay, conditions and entitlements as such
- a consistent accommodation benefits package will be offered to each member of the team according to their roles and responsibilities and set out in their job description and contract
- changes to rota patterns to working one week and one weekend in seven (e.g. currently variable rotas depending on site)
- reduction in other benefits which may make the offer less attractive (e.g. removal of Unilink pass, catering package, free parking etc)

The University of Southampton

- maintains a supported halls of residence supported environment in a context of reduced income
- secures the accommodation offer as a selling point for prospective students and their parents to protect recruitment to Schools and Halls
- ensures employees are treated equitably within the University framework
- reduces likelihood of need to expand other support services particularly in the out of hours provision

Preliminary Timescales

Janice Rippon, Director, Student Services, presented the outline proposal to former Wardenal Service on 22nd September 2009 for information and discussion. This was followed by the summary proposal being circulated in advance of the formal consultation by Alison Beard, Head of Support Services. Simon Higman, Registrar and Chief Operating Officer, presented the outline proposal to UEG on 29th September 2009. He agreed that Option 5 should form the basis of this consultation proposal.

- Formal Consultation starts with staff and trade unions on 30 October 2009
- Briefing to all staff and TUs – 2 November 2009
- Meeting with TU – 5 November 2009/12 November 2009
- Individual meetings with staff (as requested by individuals) – during November 2009
- Consultation closes – 4 December 2009
- Comments considered on proposals – during December 2009
- Proposal updated and re-circulated (2nd consultation) – 4 January 2010
- Briefing to all staff and TUs – 12 January 2010
- Raise at JNC for info – 13 January 2010
- Meeting with TU – 15 January 2010/18 January 2010
- Individual meetings with staff (as requested by individuals) – during January 2010
- Further meeting with TU (if required) – 10 February 2010/12 February 2010
- 2nd consultation closes – 28 February 2010
- Further comments considered on proposals – during March 2010
- Decision made by Director of Student Services and ratified by RCOO – by 1 April 2010
- Decision communicated to staff and TU – mid-April 2010
- Briefing to all staff and TUs – late-April 2010
- Raise at JNC for info – 18 May 2010
- Further briefings and individual meetings as required – during May 2010
- Send letters confirming new arrangements – 1 June 2010
- University, Department, Team and individual briefings – during Summer 2010
- New arrangements commence – 1 September 2010
- University, Department, Team and individual briefings continue – during autumn 2010

Next Steps

The formal consultation will commence on **30th October 2009**. Comments, questions and feedback should be made by **4th December 2009** to the Director, Student Services either by attending scheduled meetings or directly by email to j.rippon@soton.ac.uk. These responses will be collated with a view to redrafting the proposal taking the responses into consideration for first phase consultation (see above). A summary report of the consultation will be distributed to all staff and trade unions. This process will be repeated for the second phase of the consultation, at which stage an Equality Impact Assessment will be prepared, which ends on **28th February 2010**.

Appendices

- 1 Current structure
2. Current Costs
3. Benchmarking and feedback
4. Impact Assessment
5. Options
6. Recommendation
7. Wardenal Service Job Descriptions
8. Proposed Residence Support Job Descriptions

[Dr Janice Rippon](#)

Direct tel: +44 (0)23 8059 3062