**Proposal to increase vision rehabilitation capacity at Sensory Needs Service**

Independent research by the Office for Public Management (OPM) and based on a case study of services provided by Sight for Surrey has shown that the financial benefits of good vision rehabilitation services significantly outweigh the actual costs of delivering this service. In the case study site, over £3.4 million of health and social care costs were avoided, reduced or deferred annually based on a service which cost an estimated £900,000 a year to deliver. (Please see attached report **Economic value of rehabilitation** for full details.)

The Rehabilitation Workers’ Professional Network (RWPN) is the UK professional body for vision rehabilitation workers. They believe there should be 1 FTE Vision Rehabilitation Worker to every 117,000 of the local authority population to enable visually impaired people’s rehabilitation needs to be met. This figure has been calculated from RNIB’s sight loss data tool, research carried out by the Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU) University of York (2014) and OPM (2017). The RNIB estimate that between 2015 and 2020 the number of people who are blind or partially sighted in England has increased by 12 per cent, and by 2025, the number will have increased by 27 per cent. (Please see the attached paper **Vision Rehabilitation Workforce Planning**

for full details.)

For the Bradford and District local authority with a population of over 530,000 this would equate to approximately 4.5 FTE vision rehabilitation officers. We currently employ 2.8 FTE.

Given the economic value of vision rehabilitation, the Sensory Needs Service therefore proposes increasing our rehabilitation capacity by creating and recruiting to the following two posts. We envisage the apprenticeship being an opportunity for a Bradford resident. Please note that Vision Rehabilitation Officers are trained to work with people who are deafblind as well as visually impaired.

**Apprentice Rehabilitation Worker (full time) – temporary 2 year contract.**

**Cost:**

Salary plus on costs for two years = £63,300

Foundation Degree Rehabilitation Work course fees at Birmingham City University of £6,000 per year (£12,000 in total) covered by Apprenticeship Levy = no extra cost for Adult Services

Accommodation, travel and subsistence costs for attendance at 14 group learning and assessment weeks at Birmingham City University = £6,600

**Total = £69,900**

**Rehabilitation Officer (full time)**

**Cost:**

Salary at SCP27 (as mid-point of salary scale SCP23 -30) and on costs = £40,200 per annum

**Total = £40,200 per annum**

Although the apprenticeship is a temporary contract, we would intend to recruit to a permanent Vision Rehabilitation Officer post on successful completion of the apprenticeship.

Both of these posts would help with succession planning as by the time of completion of the apprenticeship in 2023, our current Vision Rehabilitation Officers will be aged 51, 59 and 61.

If we were successful with this proposal, we would further propose to convert one of the Rehabilitation Officer posts into a senior/lead officer post to enable progression. It is to be noted that progression opportunities for vision rehabilitation workers is notoriously poor, with many leaving the field in order to pursue a senior or management position in other areas. Two of our current Rehabilitation Officers have undertaken the BSc (Hons) top up degree in Rehabilitation Work, which was created by Birmingham City University to offer progression and quality in supervisory roles.