Dear Hayley and Mark

I am writing in response to your email regarding the issues raised in the Disability News about the work commissioned by the Council for Capita to undertake outstanding reviews of clients receiving adult social care support. I am also aware that following the meeting on Monday 6th February 2017, the issues you raised about professional registration fees is being looked into and Suki and team will respond in due course.

In response to the main points you raise, we have collated the information and the facts are as follows:

1. The situation in May 2016: there was a long standing issue about the Council having over 2,000 outstanding reviews for its clients and many of these had not been reviewed following the changes in the Care Act which came into force in April 2014. This issue had been raised in public forums by clients and carers and the Council’s Transformation and Improvement Board agreed that additional capacity needed to be brought in to complete these reviews. Asking existing staff to complete the backlog of reviews would have impeded on their substantive work and was not considered to be sustainable taking into account the number of reviews needed to be undertaken.

2. Completing outstanding reviews and assessments: The Council commissioned Capita in May 2016 to undertake the project to clear a backlog of overdue social care reviews and assessments, which would enable the Council to meet its legal obligations under the Care Act 2014 (which came into effect on 1 April 2015). The details of the work are as follows:

3. The contract with Capita: It was specifically agreed that the Council would not enter into a gain share or similar such agreement with Capita (i.e. the amount Capita gets paid does not depend on the reduction in care packages). This was to ensure the work was not linked to incentivising any savings or cost reductions in any way. There was no need to procure this separately as this was within the existing agreement with Capita as our strategic partner. A copy of the contract cannot be shared due to commercial confidentiality.

4. The pilot phase: A pilot phase of one month was agreed to review 220 cases and this was completed for a fixed sum and the full project is based on cost plus 12% (the terms of the Capita Southampton Ltd. joint venture). During the pilot phase, the size of the Capita team was smaller than was needed, so Capita offered a bonus to members of its team to complete additional reviews over weekends in order to complete the required number of reviews in the time available. This was at no additional cost to the Council, as the pilot was for a fixed cost.

5. Monitoring: The work was monitored on a weekly basis by the Director of Adult Services and then the Acting Service Director and the Transformation Director. The plan is for all of the outstanding reviews to be completed and for the Council’s own team to take over future reviews from September 2017 at the latest. As at 30 January 2017, 976 cases have been closed (reviews completed and written up).

6. The project and ensuring sustainability for ongoing reviews: The Capita team have been co-located with Council staff within the Adult Social Care office space to enable joint working and knowledge transfer. Going forward, the plan is to increase the number of Council staff in the team and reduce the number of Capita staff in the team over time, leaving the Council with a team that can keep on top of the reviews going forward (a sustainable review model). As part of this transition, the Capita team of 12 decreased to 9 in January 2017, replaced by 3 members of staff from the Council. Further staff from the Council will be moved into the team with a corresponding decrease in the number of Capita staff over the next few months. The timetable for this is scheduled to be considered at TIB on 28th February 2017.

7. Ensuring compliance when undertaking reviews: All reviews have been completed in accordance with the Care Act 2014 and associated regulations – including application of the national Care Act eligibility criteria. Some of the reviews were care packages set up under the previous eligibility framework, Fair Access to Care Services (FACS). The Capita team has used the Council’s Care and Support Planning Policy, approved by Cabinet in September 2016, to inform decisions about how eligible care needs should be met on a case by case basis.

8. Results from the reviews undertaken to date: 79% of cases reviewed so far have resulted in no change to the care package, 1% have increased and 20% have decreased or have been provided in a different way (0.4% have transferred to enhanced telecare) (as at 30 January 2017). Some changes in care packages were expected as they had not been reviewed following the changes introduced as a result of the Care Act 2014. Overall, there has been a 5.8% reduction in the cost of care packages (as at 30 January 2017).

9. Payments for the work: Neither the Council nor Capita have incentivised social workers to reduce the size of care packages following a review. Capita pays its social workers at market rates for locum staff. The rates are consistent with the proposed ADASS regional rate caps (social worker with 2 years’ experience up to £32 per hour). Capita paid corporate rates up to an agreed limited for social workers who were working away from home to stay locally. This was typically for 3 nights a week, with the remainder of the time writing up and finalising reviews and assessments at home. The hotels used are those with which Capita have arrangements for discounted rates so that costs are kept to a minimum.

10.Capita’s position: Tracy Lewis, Operations Director, Capita Southampton Ltd. has confirmed the following:

•We pay market rate to our Social Workers and this is in line with the ADASS proposed MOU.

•We engage Social Workers with extensive national experience and therefore they may not be local to Southampton. We minimise overnight stays by planning the client visits across 3 days, which minimises overnight expense. Our Social workers stay in standard 3 star hotels booked via our Travel Provider to secure best rates.

•The incentive was a one off exercise to boost case closure numbers as we were down on Social Worker numbers, i.e. productivity not savings.

•This project was introduced to clear a backlog of cases to enable the Council to develop a sustainable model of practice, e.g. not putting additional pressure on the existing Social Work team. The transition has commenced with 3 members of staff transferring over to the Review team in January 2017.

•The review team have conducted reviews in line with the Care Act and delivered savings (as a result of the client needs changing or alternative interventions being available) which results in the individuals having the care and support needed to meet their eligible social care needs and enables the Council to reinvest into clients that require support. There have also been cases where clients’ needs have changed and packages have been increased as a result (1%).

•The delivery is subject to weekly performance monitoring.

•Our Social Workers are targeted with 5 cases per week and have weekly performance reviews on delivery and reasons for deviation. Setting performance targets is standard business practice to drive good outcomes.

I hope the above helps to explain the situation and trust that you will come back to me should you require any further information on it.

Best wishes

Richard Crouch

Chief Operations Officer (Customer Experience)

Southampton City Council