

**Report for:** Staffing & Remuneration Committee, 17 December 2018

**Title:** Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers within Children's Services

**Report authorised by:** Ann Graham – Director of Children's Services

**Lead Officer:** Brenda McMahon – HR Business Partner Children's Service

**Ward(s) affected:** None

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** Non Key

**1. Describe the issue under consideration**

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to review the current recruitment and retention strategies for qualified Social Workers within Children's Services. This report was requested by the Chair of Staffing & Remuneration Committee.

**2. Cabinet Member Introduction**

2.1 Not applicable.

**3. Recommendations**

3.1 That the committee noted the contents of this report.

**4. Reason for Decision**

4.1 Not applicable.

**5. Alternative options considered**

5.1 Not applicable.

**6. Background information**

**6.1 National Challenges:**

6.1.1 According to the most recent Department for Education Social Work statistics in England, there are currently 398,430 Children In Need (CIN) with an estimated 670,000 children living in 'high risk' situations.<sup>i</sup> Official statistics illustrate that, between 2010 and 2016, the rate of all CIN per 100,000 decreased by 1%, moreover the rate of children issued with Child Protection Plans increased by 24% and the rate of looked after children increased by 9%.<sup>ii</sup> Worryingly, it is estimated by 2020, there may be an estimated 5 million children living in poverty in England.<sup>iii</sup>

6.1.2 From a national context with regards to the overall Qualified Social Worker workforce data issued in February 2018, the number of Children and Family Social Workers as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 was 30,670. The national average turnover rate for Social Workers stood at 15% and 4,000 (FTE) of the 5,340 (FTE) agency workers working as children and family social workers were covering vacancies – this equates to 75% (FTE) of all agency workers covering vacancies.<sup>iv</sup>

6.1.3 As well as increased demands on services, there have also been budgetary pressures. Since 2010, there has been a fall in local spending power with cuts of early support services and budget reserves being utilised to bridge the gap.<sup>v</sup> In 2015/2016, there was an estimated overspend of £605 million on Local Authorities Children’s Services budgets.<sup>vi</sup> By 2025, it is estimated that Local Authorities are facing a £3 billion funding gap for Children’s Services with a further drop in the Early Intervention Grant by £183 million.<sup>vii</sup>

6.1.4 Where the Social Work workforce is concerned, the profession is showing signs of strain. Some of the strains associated with the Social Worker profession include stress related burnout with 63 percent of leavers in 2017 having worked less than five years.<sup>viii</sup> There is also a national shortage of experienced social workers, although in 2017 the number of newly qualified social workers increased in contrast to previous years.<sup>ix</sup>

6.1.5 Across England, Local Authorities have responded differently to these signs of strain. In London, caseloads on average are lower with a high dependency on agency workers. In the North and parts of the Midlands, caseloads tend to be higher with a lower dependency on agency workers.

6.1.6 When undertaking their inspections Ofsted are interested in a number of aspects including core aspects of the stability of the workforce, social worker development opportunities, supervision practices, caseloads levels and leadership support. Two recent examples of Ofsted Inspections for Brighton and Hove Council and Tameside Council clearly demonstrate the value which Ofsted place on the stability of the workforce. Brighton and Hove Council has been praised by Ofsted for its strategy in ending the use of agency social workers.<sup>x</sup> In contrast, Tameside Council has been rated as inadequate due to a number of reasons including a 41% social worker agency dependant workforce.<sup>xi</sup>

## 6.2 Local Challenges

6.2.1 As well as responding to National challenges, Haringey Council’s Children’s Services department also have local challenges to respond to. The London Borough of Haringey is an exceptionally diverse and fast-changing borough with a population of 258,912.<sup>xii</sup> The London Borough of Haringey is one of the most diverse boroughs in London with 80.6% of children in schools describing themselves as non-White British compared with London and England (65% and 23% respectively). One in five of the population is aged between 0-19 years and it has the 8th highest child poverty rate in London and the 11th in England.<sup>xiii</sup>

6.2.2 The current qualified Social Worker workforce within Haringey Council’s Children’s Services stands at 207 out of a total departmental workforce of 695. As of October 2018, the qualified social worker profile broken down by role was:

Role Title	Number of Roles
Social Worker	127
CPA/IROs	7
Senior Practitioner	28
Team Manager	27

<b>Service Manager</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Head of Service</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Assistant Directors</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Director of Children Services</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>

As of October 2018, the turnover rate of permanent Social Worker roles stood at 10.62% with London Boroughs' average being 17% (DfE). The turnover target rate for Children's Services in Haringey Council is 8%. It should be noted that the reason as to why the Children's Services turnover is under the London Boroughs' average is that agency turnover is not monitored within Haringey Council. The current qualified agency social worker profile within Children's Service is 33.33%. The average London Boroughs' agency social worker profile is currently 24%. As of October 2018, the agency social worker profile breakdown was 42 frontline agency social workers and 22 agency qualified social workers at Senior Practitioner, IRO/CPA, Team Manager and Service Manager level.

6.2.3 The specific challenges which the Social Worker workforce face in Haringey Council include:

- Above national average agency social worker fill rate. As of October 2018, the agency fill rate stood at 33.33%.
- High agency spend rate - The current average monthly spend on agency workers for Children's Services over the period April 2018 to October 2018, is £440k.
- Turnover rate of permanent social worker - As of October 2018, the permanent social worker turnover rate is 10.82%. The permanent social worker turnover target is 8%.
- Above Council average sickness rate - For September 2018, the average sickness days in Haringey Council was 9 days with Children's Services being at 11 days.
- The difference of salary costs inclusive of on costs between qualified frontline social workers and agency social workers is low at £6k. Therefore, there are not significant cost savings to be made by converting agency social workers to permanent social workers. The focus is on having a permanent social worker establishment for practice improvement.

6.2.4 In addressing these challenges, there are a number of workforce specific initiatives and strategies which are being undertaken. These workforce initiatives and strategies involve a wide range of stakeholders and are interlinked to other strategies such as the MTFs and the Children's Services Improvement Programme.

### **6.3 Recruitment and Retention Strategies**

6.3.1 The purpose of these workforce initiatives and strategies is to increase levels of employee engagement and mobility, increase workforce related cost-efficiencies and ultimately futureproof the Children's Services department.

6.3.2 The key objectives which underpin the initiatives and strategies are

- Recruitment
- Financial
- Retention
- Develop a “Grow Our Own Strategy”

6.3.3 Within the Recruitment objective, there are a number of actions being undertaken. These include

- meeting monthly with Haringey Council’s resourcing partner HAYS and going through the monthly Recruitment management information,
- following up with any actions plan once this management information has been analysed,
- developing a recruitment attraction strategy for permanent Social Workers, agreement on KPIs and SLAs,
- creating a digital recruitment strategy and a review of all Recruitment processes. HAYS, the Council’s resourcing partner have also been tasked with a number of actions including
- to successfully recruit an agreed number of qualified social worker roles within a specific timeframe,
- to create a standard Recruitment management information dashboard,
- to review their operation of Tier 2 suppliers and
- to ensure that there is greater onsite support.

6.3.4 Within the financial objective, the focus has been on

- the agreement of financial objectives for Budget Holders,
- SAP objectives for Children’s Services Managers,
- all managers receiving finance training,
- an analysis of cost of Absenteeism to the Children Services department,
- a reviewed process for the signing off of new vacancies and
- clear objectives in place for establishment cleansing and
- a costing exercise of how much savings are potentially had by converting all agency workers to permanent employees.

The Recruitment and Retention offer which has been in place since January 2016 and noted that it had reduced agency spending from £4.63m in 2014/15 to £4.54m in 2017/2018.

The Recruitment and Retention payments for qualified social workers are:

**Table 1 – Recruitment – Current Payment Schedule**

Recruitment Payment Schedule	
Target Area	T1 (Assessment and Safeguarding)
Amount	Trigger
£1,000	On appointment
£1,000	Immediately after the satisfactory completion of probation and the review against the capability framework at 6 months.
£1,000	Immediately after the satisfactory completion of the programme of work at the end of the first 12 months.

**Table 2 – Retention – Current Payment Schedule**

<b>Retention Payment Schedule</b>	
Target Area	T1 (Assessment and Safeguarding)
Amount	Trigger
£1,500	Every 6 months. First payment for those appointed on or after 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2018 will be immediately after the end of the first 18 months.
Target Area	T2 (Children in Care and Placements)
Amount	Trigger
£1,000	Every 6 months. First payment for those appointed on or after 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2018 will be immediately after the end of the first 18 months.
Target Area	T3 (All other social workers, senior practitioners, team managers, IROs and CPAs)
Amount	Trigger
£750	Every 6 months. First payment for those appointed on or after 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2018 will be immediately after the end of the first 18 months.

6.3.5 Within the Retention objective, these actions centre on

- improving completion rates for My Conversation and implementing a new 1-2-1/My Conversation form across Children’s Services,
- delivering a series of Training workshops for all Children’s Services Managers,
- developing clear career pathways and embedding a culture of learning and knowledge sharing,
- reviewing the Children’s Services Induction,
- developing a “Grow Our Own Strategy” for Children’s Services,
- developing a Children’s Services Workforce Strategy,
- a review of the Children’s Services Learning and Development offering, and
- a review of sickness and exit interview processes.

6.3.6 These actions are aligned to the changing needs of the Children’s Services department. It should be noted that some of these actions have been completed and others continue to be worked on.

6.3.7 One of the key strategies which is being utilised in addressing the Recruitment and Retention challenges within Children’s Services is the development of a “Grow Our Own Strategy”. This is already underway with the release of 10 agency Social Workers with the appointment of 10 ASYE students between October 2018 to January 2019. There is also a focus on scoping out what frameworks would need to be in place to upscale the intake of ASYE students and student placements. Furthermore, the Learning and Organisational Development lead for Children’s Services and the HR Business Partner for Children’s Services are working together on developing career pathway frameworks for all qualified social worker roles. This will then give clearer opportunities for succession planning with Children’s Services.

## 7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1 The Recruitment and Retention strategies are key elements in ensuring that the Council has a sufficient, stable and appropriately qualified workforce to deliver on its commitment to enable every child and young person to enjoy the best start in life.

## 8 Statutory Officers' comments

### 8.1 Chief Finance Officer

The current recruitment and retention monetary reward scheme was approved by the Staffing and Remuneration Committee in 2015, and was implemented in January 2016 following revision of a previously agreed scheme. The previous scheme limited recruitment and retention payments to £1.5k per year, and £2k per year respectively for social workers, senior practitioners and team managers.

Spending on social workers is a significant part of the costs of Children's Services. The staffing budget is £22.6m, of which £12.1m (54%), is within the Safeguarding and Social Care service. In general, agency staff cost more than equivalent permanent employees, so the high level of social workers is a major contributor to the staffing overspend (£1.1m at quarter 2).

The service is currently incurring £330k - £340k (2018/19) for this scheme, with an estimated full year cost of £414k if all positions were occupied by permanent staff qualifying under the scheme.

Although there was reduction in agency spend within Safeguarding and Social Care budget (£3.5m spend in 2016/17), spend has remained in the region of £4m over the period 2014/15 to 2017/18 (note table below), with a similar figure projected for 2018/19 (at quarter 2).

2017/18 (Spend)	2016/17 (Spend)	2015/16 (Spend)	2014/15 (Spend)
£4.5m	£3.5m	£4.4m	4.6m

### 8.2 Assistant Director of Corporate Governance

There are no legal implications arising from the report.

## 9 Use of Appendices

Not applicable.

## 10 Local government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Not applicable.



## **Bibliography**

---

- <sup>i</sup> Children’s Commissioner, 2017, ‘On measuring the number of vulnerable children in England’, <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CCO-On-vulnerability-Overveiw.pdf>
- <sup>ii</sup> Department for Education, 2017, ‘Characteristics of Children in Need: 2016-2017 England’, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/656395/SFR61-2017\\_Main\\_text.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/656395/SFR61-2017_Main_text.pdf)
- <sup>iii</sup> <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/five-million-british-children-sentenced-to-poverty-by-2020-40013>
- <sup>iv</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/681546/SFR09-2018\\_Main\\_Text.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/681546/SFR09-2018_Main_Text.pdf)
- <sup>v</sup> Department for Education, 2017, ‘Characteristics of Children in Need: 2016-2017 England’, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/656395/SFR61-2017\\_Main\\_text.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/656395/SFR61-2017_Main_text.pdf)
- <sup>vi</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/bright-futures/bright-futures-childrens-services/childrens-services-funding-facts>
- <sup>vii</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/bright-futures/bright-futures-childrens-services/childrens-services-funding-facts>
- <sup>viii</sup> Department for Education, 2017, ‘Characteristics of Children in Need: 2016-2017 England’, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/656395/SFR61-2017\\_Main\\_text.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/656395/SFR61-2017_Main_text.pdf)
- <sup>ix</sup> Department for Education, 2017, ‘Characteristics of Children in Need: 2016-2017 England’, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/656395/SFR61-2017\\_Main\\_text.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/656395/SFR61-2017_Main_text.pdf)
- <sup>x</sup> <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/2005681/council-gets-good-ofsted-rating-after-ending-agency-worker-use>
- <sup>xi</sup> <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2018/09/18/inadequate-service-struggling-41-agency-social-workers-practitioners-leave-management-changes/>
- <sup>xii</sup> [https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/130625\\_final\\_child\\_poverty\\_strategy\\_2013-15\\_2.pdf](https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/130625_final_child_poverty_strategy_2013-15_2.pdf)
- <sup>xiii</sup> [https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/130625\\_final\\_child\\_poverty\\_strategy\\_2013-15\\_2.pdf](https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/130625_final_child_poverty_strategy_2013-15_2.pdf)