

Report for: Staffing & Remuneration Committee, 3 March 2020

Item number:

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

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

Lead Officer: Brenda McMahon - HR Business Partner for 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 provide an update on 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

Not applicable.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That the committee note the contents of this report.

4. Reason for Decision

Not applicable.

5. Alternative options considered

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.¹ 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%.ⁱⁱ Worryingly, it is estimated by 2020, there may be an estimated 5 million children living in poverty in England.ⁱⁱⁱ

- 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 30th 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.^{iv}
- 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.^v In 2015/2016, there was an estimated overspend of £605 million on Local Authorities Children’s Services budgets.^{vi} 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.^{vii}
- 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% of leavers in 2018 having worked less than five years.^{viii} There is also a national shortage of experienced social workers, although in 2018 the number of newly qualified social workers increased in contrast to previous years.^{ix}
- 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.^x In contrast, Tameside Council has been rated as inadequate due to a number of reasons including a 41% social worker agency dependant workforce.^{xi}

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.^{xii} 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.^{xiii}

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 January 2020, the qualified social worker profile broken down by role was:

Role Title	Number of Roles
Social Worker	127
Child Protection Advisor /Independent Reviewing Officers	7
Senior Practitioner	28
Team Manager	29
Service Manager	8
Head of Service	4
Principal Social Worker	1
Assistant Directors	2
Director of Children Services	1
Total	207

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

- a. Above national average agency social worker fill rate. As of December 2019, the agency fill rate stood at 34%.
- b. High agency spend rate - The current average monthly spend on agency workers for Children's Services over the period June 2019 to December 2019, is £450k.
- c. Turnover rate of permanent social worker - As of December 2019, the permanent social worker turnover rate was 10.5%. The permanent social worker turnover target is 8%.
- d. Above Council average sickness rate - For December 2019, the average sickness days in Haringey Council was 9 days with Children's Services being at 11 days. According to the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) website Haringey Council's Children's Services absence rate was 2.3% for 2018 which is below the Council's neighbouring boroughs 2.62% and below England's average 3.2%.
- e. 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 and to support relationships with children, young people and families so that they do not have many changes of social workers.

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 Medium Term Financial Strategy (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 Children's Services.

6.3.2 The key objectives which underpin the initiatives and strategies are:

- a. Recruiting a sufficient and skilled workforce
- b. Ensuring our offer is comparable with other Local Authorities
- c. Retention

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

- a. Meeting monthly with Haringey Council's resourcing partner HAYS and going through the monthly Recruitment management information.
- b. Following up with any actions plan once this management information has been analysed.
- c. Developing a recruitment attraction strategy for permanent Social Workers, agreement on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Service Level Agreements (SLAs).
- d. Implementation of a digital recruitment strategy and a review of all Recruitment processes.
- e. Implementation of a 'gifted worker' strategy
- f. To develop our recruitment pipeline by recruiting newly qualified social workers and providing them with effective support.
- g. To further develop our recruitment pipeline with increased numbers of apprentices, step up students and student placement students.
- h. To convert skilled agency workers to permanent social workers
- i. To recruit experienced workers through our own local networks and through international recruitment.
- j. HAYS, the Council's resourcing partner were tasked with a number of actions including to successfully recruit an agreed number of qualified social worker roles within a specific timeframe with the aim of the qualified social worker target being reduced to 20%
- k. In February 2020, there were 7 external qualified social workers who accepted job offers.
- l. To create a standard Recruitment management information dashboard. This has been implemented.
- m. To review the operation of Tier 2 suppliers. The service meets with the Tier 2 suppliers once a quarter at a suppliers meeting.
- n. Continuing to ensure that there is greater onsite support from HAYS.
- o. Supporting with the recruitment with the Invest to Save Projects for Children's Services.

6.3.4 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

Retention Payment Schedule	
Target Area	T1 (Assessment and Safeguarding)
Amount	Trigger
£1,500	Every 6 months. First payment for those appointed on or after 1 st 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 st 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 st January 2019 will be immediately after the end of the first 18 months.

6.3.5 Within the Retention objective, these actions centre on:

- a. Maintaining appropriate caseloads and a safe and supportive environment for social workers to practice in.
- b. Delivering on the training and leadership training opportunities as part of the Children's Services Training Academy. The Training Academy focuses on three key areas; providing training opportunities for qualified and unqualified roles, leadership development and supporting the grow our own strategy. This Academy was implemented as of the 4th November 2019.
- c. Introduction of 'Celebrating Success' employee awards specifically for Children's Services. This is scheduled to be launched in March 2020.
- d. Continue to improve completion rates for My Conversation.
- e. The utilisation of appreciation pin boards where positive feedback can be displayed.
- f. Delivering a series of Training workshops for all Children's Services Managers.
- g. Continue to develop clear career pathways and embedding a culture of learning and knowledge sharing.

- h. To embed the Children's Services Workforce Health and Wellbeing strategy which aligns to the Haringey Council's Workforce Health and Wellbeing strategy.
- i. Ensuring our recruitment and retention offer is competitive in comparison to our Local Authority counterparts. Recent benchmarking analysis carried out advised that Haringey Council were over ranked number 5 with regards to competitiveness. This was out of 10 London Local Authorities.

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 The Children's Services Workforce Plan 2020 – 2023 is currently being worked on.

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. This remains the same as detailed in this paper. The previous scheme pre January 2016 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 total Children's staffing budget is £29.4m, of which £14.8m (50%), 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 staffing overspends.

As at November 2019 the total Qualified establishment is 201 with 132 permanent staff, 69 agency and 4 vacancies (excludes Heads of Service, Assistant Director and Director Roles). The agency rate is 34% and above the London Borough's agency average of 24%. The closer to 0% agency the more likely to spend within budget.

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

ⁱ 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>

ⁱⁱ 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

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/five-million-british-children-sentenced-to-poverty-by-2020-40013>

^{iv} https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/681546/SFR09-2018_Main_Text.pdf

^v 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

^{vi} <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/bright-futures/bright-futures-childrens-services/childrens-services-funding-facts>

^{vii} <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/bright-futures/bright-futures-childrens-services/childrens-services-funding-facts>

^{viii} 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

^{ix} 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

^x <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/2005681/council-gets-good-ofsted-rating-after-ending-agency-worker-use>

^{xi} <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2018/09/18/inadequate-service-struggling-41-agency-social-workers-practitioners-leave-management-changes/>

^{xii}

https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/130625_final_child_poverty_strategy_2013-15_2.pdf

^{xiii}

https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/130625_final_child_poverty_strategy_2013-15_2.pdf