



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
13 NOVEMBER 2017**

**CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION
STRATEGY**

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the development of a Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Children's Social Care. The Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The actions which are currently being considered within the development of the Children's Social Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy can all be implemented within current Council policy.
3. It is possible that further recommendations to implement one off payments such as recruitment or retention payments could be proposed. The Council Pay Policy does not currently have provision for one-off payments and therefore the policy would need to be amended to enable this.

Background

4. A BBC News item from April 2016 (see Background Papers below) highlighted a range of national issues within children's social worker recruitment and retention. The report detailed that almost 20% of all children's social worker jobs were vacant across England. Key points within the report were that almost as many individuals starting in social work posts were leaving social work and that more than a quarter of social workers had less than 2 years' experience.
5. The Children's Social Work Recruitment and Retention Strategy is being developed to respond to an increase in spend on agency workers, challenges in directly recruiting staff and to support the Children and Families Department in adequately resourcing services to meet OFSTED requirements.
6. In developing the Children's Social Work Recruitment and Retention Strategy, the following data has been analysed:
 - HR and payroll data
 - Salary data from other councils
 - 2017 staff survey results
 - Starter and leaver information

- Agency usage and costing data

and these findings related to the recruitment and retention of Children's Social Care staff in the last 12 months Have been addressed in the Strategy.

7. The following strengths have been highlighted:

- At service level there have not been any significant increases in turnover;
- The percentage headcount of experience(level 3) Social Workers has increased;
- The level of turnover of Team Managers and Independent Reviewing Officers has been low.

8. Within the Strategy, areas of concern that have been identified for the Children's Social Care recruitment and retention position over the last 12 months are summarised as:

- an increasing number of Senior Practitioners choosing to leave the Council;
- a high level of turnover of experienced (level 3) Social Workers, and Senior Practitioners;
- the salary for level 3 Social Workers, Senior Practitioners, Independent Review Officers and Team Managers is currently behind the market median;
- a high number of Team Manager vacancies and poor interest in current advertised posts;
- having to regularly re-advertise posts due to poor response;
- regularly losing candidates at later stages of selection due to pay or being offered financial incentives to stay with their current employer;
- absence of regularly collected and monitored leaver data;
- current high usage of agency staff in First Response, Strengthening Families and Child Protection teams;
- other Local Authorities offering more attractive professional development support;
- the role and status of Independent Review Officers requiring review against statutory guidance and other Local Authority models;
- 2017 staff survey results indicating that job satisfaction and work/life balance are of significant importance for individuals working in Children's Social Care. However, responses to questions in these areas were less positive than the Children and Families Departmental average.

Recommendations under consideration

9. In taking into account the findings above, the following recommendations are being considered:

- Review of grading or market premium for specific posts where appropriate;
- Improvements in recruitment marketing resources and approach;
- Improvements in the collection and review of recruitment and retention data;
- Alternatives to agency Social Worker usage;
- Allocated time for professional development;
- Targeted actions to address issues raised in the 2017 staff survey;
- Review of the Assessed and Support Year in Employment (ASYE) development programme (for newly qualified Social Workers in their first year

of employment), the core children's social care development programme and children's social career progression model;

- Utilisation of the apprenticeship levy to appoint Social Work apprentices.

Next steps

10. A draft of the Children's Social Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy will be completed and agreed by the Children and Family Departmental Management Team by December 2017. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be updated on the progress of this strategy during updates on the Ofsted Continuous Improvement Action Plan.

Background Papers

BBC news article 'England children's social worker post almost 20% vacant' 20/04/2016
www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-36026098

Officer to Contact

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Equality and Human Rights Implications

An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment will be completed for the draft Children's Social Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy before completion in December 2017.

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