

Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 25 January 2016

Report of: Nigel Moorhouse, Director of Children's Social Care

Subject/Title: Children's Social Care Recruitment and Retention

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Rachel Bailey, Children and Families Portfolio Holder

1. Report Summary

1.1 The recruitment and retention of social workers and practice managers is a critical element of our Ofsted improvement plan, and extensive efforts are being made to increase stability in the children's social work teams. Consequently there has been a significant improvement in the recruitment of permanent staff and an associated reduction in the use of agency workers. The current Recruitment & Retention Strategy for 2015-17 has four priorities:

- to recruit sufficient permanent high quality staff with suitable qualifications and experience
- to retain existing employees by ensuring they have the right skills, equipment and support to carry out their roles effectively
- achieve manageable social worker caseloads
- increase engagement and communication with social work staff

1.2 Recruitment and retention activity is planned and monitored by the Recruitment & Retention Task Group under the leadership of the Children and Families Social Care senior management team. Membership of the group includes senior managers from across the service, representatives from Workforce Development, HR and the Communications Team.

2. Recommendation

Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

2.1 Note the contents of this report and the workforce data in **Appendix 1**

2.2 Endorse the Recruitment & Retention activity that has already taken place to improve stability in the workforce.

2.3 Propose any additional recruitment and retention activity.

3 Background

3.1 The recruitment and retention of high quality social workers and managers, particularly for front-line posts in Child Protection Teams is a challenge for all local authorities. However, the significant efforts that have been made to address these issues in Cheshire East are bearing fruit and were recognised by the Ofsted Inspection Team in the summer; their report states:

The local authority has introduced an ambitious and thoughtful range of recruitment and retention initiatives. Elected members are fully supporting this approach and sustainability is secured through increased funding for the children's social care workforce, such as the provision of supernumerary social workers to minimise the impact of less experienced staff. The involvement of senior managers, including the Director of Children's Services (DCS), in shortlisting and interviewing social workers and managers at all levels demonstrates the strong commitment of leaders to ensuring the right staff are in place. As a result of these efforts agency appointments are declining and permanent appointments are steadily rising. In the 15 months preceding this inspection there were 59 new permanent appointments in children's social care as opposed to just eight in the preceding two years. In 2013–14, 49 agency staff were appointed. This reduced to 39 in 2014–15, and just three agency staff have been appointed so far in 2015–16, demonstrating improving stability.

3.2 Following the inspection, recruitment activity continued throughout the latter months of 2015 and therefore the position at the start of our new social work recruitment campaign for this year is more encouraging:

- In CHECS there is one agency social worker covering maternity leave
- The CiN/CP Team in Macclesfield has 5.5 agency workers, two of whom are covering maternity leave, two sick leave ; there are no agency managers
- In the Permanence and Throughcare Team at Cledford House, there are three social worker vacancies, one of which is currently filled by an agency worker; by the end of January, there will only be one remaining agency Practice Manager and this post has recently been advertised
- In the Crewe CiN/CP Team, five social worker vacancies are currently being covered by agency staff and two agency Practice Managers remain.
- We retain some agency social workers to reflect the high number of newly qualified social workers

3.3 Activity to recruit to these vacancies includes:

- A new social media campaign to support refreshed social worker advertisements on the website; interviews are scheduled to take place in February
- An updated Jobs Microsite including a 'Working in Crewe' video has been produced with social workers and managers appearing in.
- Additional payments for experienced social workers and managers who join the authority under the Recruitment & Retention Market Supplements Policy 2015-17.

- The successful trial of a 'Register Interest' button on the website which means that any candidate who makes an enquiry is called for an informal discussion within 24 hours by a Group Manager
- Renewed engagement with the Universities of Keele, Staffordshire and Manchester Metropolitan by senior managers and Workforce Development so that Cheshire East is automatically considered to be an 'employer of choice' for people within travelling distance of Crewe
- Young People's Panels for all social worker and practice manager roles to reinforce the authority's commitment to young people and their involvement in key decisions to prospective employees
- A comprehensive newly qualified social worker programme

4 Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

4.1 It remains the case that it is more difficult to recruit to vacancies in the Crewe Team; we believe that this is largely for geographic reasons which makes the targeting of the larger centres of population in North Staffordshire all the more essential.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 The Council has statutory obligations in relation to the provision of children social work services and it is therefore imperative that we are able to recruit and retain high quality social workers and managers.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 There are always significant costs associated with high turnover of staff in terms of recruitment, induction and training. There are also direct consequences for the quality of practice and in turn, the outcomes for children and families who are in need. Therefore our reduced dependence on agency staffing is to be welcomed in both financial and qualitative terms. It is also to be hoped that a new agreement between Local Authorities across the North-West to limit rates of pay for agency social workers and managers will assist in controlling costs, and reduce the attractiveness of this as a potential career path to existing employees.

7 Equality Implications

7.1 The recruitment and retention strategy will ensure that the Council continues to improve outcomes for its most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and their families.

8 Rural Community Implications

8.1 There are none identified at this stage

9 Human Resources Implications

9.1 The recruitment and retention of high quality social workers and managers will continue to be a challenge for the local authority and will require the support from HR colleagues to deliver the strategy in relation to this.

10 Public Health Implications

10.1 The strategy will support positive public health outcomes.

11 Risk Management

11.1 The recruitment of high quality social workers and managers is a business-critical objective and should remain on the corporate risk register for the time being. However, the Council is in a considerably better position than even a short time ago and there is every reason to be optimistic that progress will continue. We know that many practitioners are reluctant to move into Councils rated inadequate for safeguarding. Therefore now that Ofsted have recognised our significant improvement in safeguarding and our good adoption service, this will only serve to make Cheshire East an increasingly attractive proposition for new and experienced social work staff.

Contact Information

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Appendix 1: Workforce Profile

Post Qualifying Experience

		April 14	April 15	June 15	CIN/CP June 15	Sept 15	Dec 15	Optimum Profile
Grade 8	Newly qualified, less than 1 years' experience, completing ASYE.	17%	18% (22)	18%(21)	31%(18.8)	16%(19.5)	13%(16.5)	10%
Grade 8	More than 1 years' experience completed ASYE.		11% (13)	14%(17)	14%(8.5)	18%(21)	20%(25)	
Grade 9 & 10	Grade 9 – have 2 years or more experience Grade 10 – have Specialist Awards	58%	52% (62)	49%(60)	27%(16.2)	50%(60)	52%(64)	85%
Agency staff	All agency staff have 2 years or more experience.	25%	18% (22)	18%(22)	28%(16.5)	16%(19.5)	14%(17.5)	5%

Staff Turnover

4 permanent members of staff have left the authority this quarter (from 1st October 2015 to 31st December 2015), 3 were Social Workers. In this quarter there have been 5 permanent new starters including 4 Social Workers and 1 Personal Advisor. We have been trying to recruit permanent Social Workers and Practice Managers and 2 new Practice Managers are due to start in January along with 3 new Social

Workers. All Practice Managers posts which are not held by permanent staff are filled by experienced agency staff who are committed to seeing through improvement in Cheshire East.

Duration with Cheshire East	Less than 1 year	Between 1 and 2 years	Between 2 and 5 years	Between 5 and 10 years	Over 10 years
% staff	19%	19%	18%	13%	31%

Time in Current Role	Less than 1 year	Between 1 and 2 years	Between 2 and 5 years	Between 5 and 10 years	Over 10 years
% staff	30%	23%	25%	14%	9%

Average Caseloads of Staff

Team	Average Caseload
CIN/CP Team - Crewe	23
CIN/CP Team – Macclesfield	20
Adoption	16
Permanence & Throughcare	17
Children and Families Support Team	18
Fostering	22