

TITLE	Update on delivering Effective Safeguarding Services for Children
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee –on 13 January 2015
WARD	None Specific
DIRECTOR	Judith Ramsden, Director Children's Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The update on delivering effective safeguarding services focuses on the effectiveness of the recruitment and retention strategy. Improvements made to this strategy will improve our service and lead to increased staff retention, which will lead to better outcomes for children across the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

The attached progress report in recruitment and retention to be noted.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

At the last Overview and Scrutiny meeting it was agreed a progress report on recruitment and retention in Children's Social Care should be submitted at the next meeting. This report puts the progress to date into the wider context and describes our pilot project.

Background

Analysis of Issues

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save) £k	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	(4k)	Yes – within existing budget	R
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	(25k)	Yes – within existing budget	R
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	(163k)	Yes – within existing budget	R

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

None

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers

Workforce Strategy, Recruitment & Retention Strategy

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Date : 5 January 2015	Version No.

Wokingham Borough Councils Children's Social Care are committed to recruiting, developing and retaining professionally qualified, highly skilled, motivated, diverse, stable and integrated workforce directly employed as far as possible, in order to provide high quality and consistent service to children and families.

Our strategy is based on feedback from young people and families with whom we work, feedback from staff, comparisons with competitors in the market, the need to be distinctive and innovative and use best practice. The aim of the strategy is to generate an innovative offer to stimulate interest from Social Workers and retain those working directly for Wokingham Borough Council, ensuring we retain their vital skills and experience.

The children's social care recruitment and retention pilot sits alongside the children's social care training strategy and the two are part of the overarching children's services workforce strategy.

This is a challenging time for developing our children's services workforce with external national scrutiny on safeguarding services and increased demand for services for children.

National Challenge:

The national challenge for recruiting and retaining children's services workforce are well documented. Loughborough University Centre for Child and Family Research have highlighted the challenges and pressures faced by local authorities due the increasingly complex and demanding nature of child protection work in time of austerity, finance and budget reductions and the professions public image portrayal by the media. The Institute of Public Policy Research, in their research briefing for the government identifies rising demand, high vacancy rates and reliance on agency staff and low status of the profession as key challenges.

There is a broad consensus within the national and international literature about what makes for effective recruitment and retention practices in social care. These combine a mixture of personal and organisational factors. Personal factors typically include professional commitment to children and families, previous work experience, education, job satisfaction, efficacy, and emotional exhaustion or work overload. Organisational factors routinely involve better salary, supervisory support, reasonable workloads, co-worker and opportunities including professional development.

Recent research by TMP Worldwide for Community Care in 2014 indicated that local authorities need to develop more flexible pay and reward packages for social workers in order to compete for staff in the current job market.

The Local Challenge:

The national challenge is felt keenly at a local level despite a relatively attractive starting salary for newly qualified and main grade staff. Local factors effecting recruitment and retention include high house prices, change in demands on the work place in greater choice and flexibility in working arrangements, an over-supply of newly qualified Social Workers combined with a national reduction in experienced qualified Social Workers, a highly competitive regional labour market and the impact of London salary on London our recruitment.

Wokingham Borough Council Pilot

This pilot was agreed by Corporate Leadership Team on 22nd July 2014.

- a) The pilot programme has improved pay rates for Social Workers, Assistant Team Managers and Team Managers with competence thresholds for progression within Social Worker levels. This is linked to a panel assessment against the national professional capabilities framework.
- b) A pilot bonus scheme depending on length of service to increase retention of skilled staff.
- c) Pilot scheme to replace flexi time with additional leave to more straight forwardly compensate for the vital flexibility to work longer hours to meet service needs, thereby improving life work balance.

- d) Pilot employee referral scheme to increase the number of quality external applicants by encouraging staff to refer people to apply to work for us.
- e) Improve recruitment marketing, new job descriptions, improved website and microsite.
- f) Growing our own Social Workers more effectively and maximise the use of student practice placements
- g) Enhance staff development opportunities including management and leadership development mentoring and coaching.
- h) Increased time spent with clients by introducing business support capacity to free up social work time.
- i) The profile of Wokingham Borough Council has been raised on the national scene due to our successful innovations project with Professor Eileen Munroe, Andrew Turnell and Terry Murphy. This project is a superb opportunity for Social Workers personal and professional development.
- j) We have an excellent Training and Development plan.
- k) All our Social Workers have a reasonable case load and access to good quality supervision, coaching and action learning.

We are beginning to see the impact.

Turnover:

	Turnover Rate: 2013/14	Turnover Rate: 2014/15
Q1	27%	33.6%
Q2	24%	17.9%
Q3	27%	18.97%
Q4	30%	

Actual new recruitment of Social Workers and Social Work Managers July – Dec 2014:

Job Title:	Number Recruited:
Service Manager	2
Assistant Team Manager	1
Senior Social Worker	0
Social Worker	3
Practice Consultant	1
Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)	1
Local Authority Designated Offices (LADO)	1
TOTAL	9

Impending New Recruits Jan – Mar 2015:

Job Title:	Number
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	Recruited:
Service Manager	1
Assistant Team Manager	1
Senior Social Worker	0
Social Worker	8
Practice Consultant	1
Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)	0
Local Authority Designated Offices (LADO)	0
TOTAL	11

Social Work Vacancies:

Department:	Number of Vacancies:
Team Manager	2
Disabled Children's Team	1
Brambles Neighbourhood Team	2
Duty Referral & Assessment Team	2
Here4U (Children in Care Team)	2
TOTAL	9

Conclusion:

Clearly our strategy is beginning to work. It is early days but we are optimistic that our combined package enhances personal and organisation benefits and will succeed. In January/February 2015 we are working with Hayes Recruitment Agency to recruit up to 6 experienced Social Workers from Australia. We are confident that this will bring extra capacity by April/May 2015. We are also expanding our newly qualified Social Worker numbers to ensure that we are able to grow our own for the future. Whilst they will not be able to work alone on complex cases, with the support of our Principle Social Worker and Practice Consultant we are confident we will grow these through to experienced, skilled Social Workers for Wokingham Borough Council.

We will undertake an executive search for the two team manager posts.