

TITLE	Recruitment and Retention of Social Worker staff
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Children's Services 12 th September 2017
WARD	None Specific
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR	Judith Ramsden, Strategic Director of Children's Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Children's Services and Wokingham Borough Council are required to provide regular oversight and action to improve and maintain staff recruitment and retention. There is also a need to ensure robust workforce development and succession planning.

Achieving a permanent and stable children's social care workforce is important for delivering improved and good quality services to children and their families.

Wokingham Children's services, in common with all other Local Authorities relies upon a limited amount of interim and agency staff to provide flexibility and maintain service coverage. The senior Leadership team continues to actively manage the degree of interim staff, using their skills where necessary and appropriate whilst at the same time pursuing and promoting a more widespread workforce stability.

The recent Joint Targeted Area Inspection of Services in May 2017 outlined that from an Ofsted perspective; Wokingham Children's Services were ambitious and focussed upon recruitment retention and support of staff with positive emerging results.

RECOMMENDATION

For overview and scrutiny to note the report and the action taken by children's social care and HR to manage the workforce and recruit staff permanently.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report is a regular submission to overview and scrutiny on the stability of the workforce. The report outlines a snap shot of the data regarding staff turnover and the management of the workforce.

It outlines the actions taken by senior leaders to improve the recruitment and retention of staff against a challenging national climate of a shortage of qualified social workers and managers, increasing risk and responsibility placed upon these professionals and a national picture of salary and benefits lagging behind other professions.

It is highly important to note that despite challenges in the recruitment and retention that a good level of quality services continues to be delivered to children and their families in Wokingham.

Background

Wokingham is one of the smallest unitary authorities in England. The Children's Social Care department provide an annual return to the Department for Education, which is calculated and returned in the late Autumn of 2017. An update to Overview and Scrutiny was provided in January 2017, which reflected the figures of the annual return. This update has been requested prior to the finalisation of figures in the annual return and therefore the figures provided reflect Quarter 4 of 2016/17 (January to March 2017) and the current position (August 2017).

As of Quarter 4:

As a measure of stability, we have looked at the numbers of staff in post for 18 months or more across all social work managers and those in Early Help: **78%** have been in Wokingham for 18 months or more.

25 managers are in post across social work and early help, 89% are permanently employed. There is one ATM vacancy, which is in the process of being recruited to.

In terms of social work stability, 88% of social workers are permanently employed.

Current Position:

In August 2017, the figures remain broadly the same, though there is one ATM vacancy, which is in the process of being recruited to.

The breakdown of permanent staff, and permanent staff with a tenure in Wokingham of longer than 18 months across managers, social workers and all social work and Early Help staff is as follows:

	% Permanent	% Permanent Staff with tenure > 18 months
Social Work & Early Help Managers	81.4%	81.8%
Social Workers	83.7%	83.3%
All Social Work & Early Help Staff	87.5%	82.4%

The turnover of staff has stabilised in the many areas of the workforce including children looked after teams which has seen significant improvement with all social work staff and personal advisors now being filled by permanent employees.

The small numbers in the workforce will cause percentage calculations to swing in a way that is not useful in understanding the challenges of workforce development. In reality as of August 2017, there are approximately 8 vacancies across the Children's Social Care and Early Help department.

The Authority finds itself in a challenging situation for social work recruitment, set against a continued national shortage of qualified social work staff and as such, the recruitment, retention and workforce stability is positive against this context.

Recruitment and Retention: Methods and Approaches

Social Work Campaigns

Wokingham Children's Services undertook a recruitment campaign in conjunction with Jobs Go Public in January 2017. This resulted in a number of key team manager and social work posts being permanently appointed to. A conscious approach of succession planning and a project to 'grow our own' managers resulted in the promotion of three members of staff to key roles.

A further recruitment campaign in June 2017 has resulted in the successful appointment of a Service Manager and a final successful appointment of the last team manager post. From November 2017, this will mean that the entire Children's Social Care and Early Help workforce from Director and Senior management level to frontline management level will be permanent members of staff.

The approach of succession planning continues such as;

- use of the 'Step Up' programme in partnership with Winchester University,
- a strong ASYE programme following recruitment of newly qualified social workers
- Sponsorship of existing unqualified staff through the social work degree in exchange for a commitment to post qualification employment.

From the Autumn 2017, Wokingham will be supporting up to social work students at various level of qualification/ study and we are hopeful that the positive offer that is provided by Wokingham can attract a number of students into permanent employment upon qualification.

The purpose of succession planning and career pathways is a necessary method of developing our workforce into the next generation of managers. It promotes stability and assists with developing a culture within the department of staff trained in the vision and goals of the organisation.

Wokingham Children's Services have also been successful in the bid to the DFE Innovation Programme to continue signs of safety implementation, which formally begins in September 2017.

Conclusion

Recruitment and retention to achieve workforce stability remains a constant challenge but one which is largely positively managed by the senior leadership team and a view confirmed by the regulator in the JTAI of May 2017.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years because 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)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Not applicable		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Not applicable		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Not applicable		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

Cross-Council Implications

n/a

List of Background Papers

None

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Version No. 1

Date 24th August 2017