

35 Children's Social Worker Recruitment & Retention Update

Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

6th September 2023

Wokingham Children's Services Social Work Workforce



85.4 FTE budgeted qualified social work staff in CS (Team Manager and below)

8 Teams

- Referral & Assessment; MASH; 3 x Long Term Teams; Here4U; Placements; Children with Disabilities

25% of FTE filled by agency workers (end of June 2023)

- Range over the last 12 months of 22%-30%
- Trend: agency % is levelling out at around 24-25%

50% of workers with Wokingham over 2 years

29% of workers with Wokingham under 12 months



Agency Rate: How Wokingham Compares

Children's Social Work Workforce Return
1st Oct 12 – 30 Sep 22 (published Feb '23)

	% Agency
Slough	38.5
Windsor & Maidenhead	36.1
West Berks	33.0
Reading	27.8
Wokingham	24.2
Bracknell Forest	17.5
South East	17.9
National	17.6



The Importance of Stability



A Stable and Effective Social Work Workforce:

- Is good for children and young people:
 - workers know children well and develop trusted long-term relationships with them and their families
- Builds knowledge, expertise and improves practice quality
- Develops an excellent knowledge of the local area and the particular challenges children face
- Allows Leadership and Management to focus on achieving practice excellence
- Promotes team bonding and co-support



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Local Strategic Approach to Recruitment & Retention, Successes, Challenges, Opportunities

• Successes

- Employment of dedicated Social Work Recruitment & Retention Specialist
- Growing our own: Newly qualified Social Worker (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) Programme
- Focus on creating a nurturing and supportive environment for Social Workers
- Recruitment of Practice Assistants
- Comprehensive training offer
- Clear progression route and process
- Agency % has decreased
- Conversion from agency to permanent employment
- Manageable caseloads

• Challenges

- National shortage of qualified, experienced Social Workers (permanent and agency)
- Salary and benefits inflation in response to the shortage
- Sickness



Meet our Team Members

- **Rachel Bedford**, Principal Social Worker
- **Jo Salmon**, Practice Consultant
- **Charlene Edwards**, Social Worker (former ASYE)
- 40 • **Imogen Wilson**, Social Worker (former ASYE)



Strategic Proposals – Department for Education



Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy and Consultation

Children's Social Care Reform 2023

February 2023

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DfE Consultation on Implementation Strategy for Children's Social Care Reform: Stable Homes, Built on Love (February 2023) Includes the following proposals:

- Introduction of Family Help, a single service removing the distinction between “targeted early help” and “Child in Need”.
- Family Support Workers in Early Help to be given caseholding responsibilities as Family Help Workers in the new service.
- Early Career Framework (ECF) to replace ASYE programme for newly qualified Social Workers providing 2 years of consistent high quality post-qualification support.

Test and Learn phase by pathfinders anticipated findings 2025

- Reduce the cost and overreliance on agency social workers through introduction of national rules on their recruitment, and capping of the amount Local Authorities are permitted to pay for an agency worker.
- post-qualified experience needed for an agency assignment
- Introducing rules around references, notice periods, and movement between agency and substantive roles

Anticipated implementation Spring 2024



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Next Steps

- Consider what the DFE proposals mean for Wokingham and opportunities
- Continue to focus on quality of recruitment, onboarding and retention activity.

