

**Decision Maker:** Executive

**Date:** For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 29 October 2013

**Decision Type:** Non Urgent Executive Key

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

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**Chief Officer:** Executive Director of Education, Care & Health Services

**Ward:** (All Wards);

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1. Reason for report

On 3 February 2010 the Executive agreed a package of measures to support better recruitment and retention of children's social workers. The main aims of the recruitment and retention strategy are to:

- Increase the recruitment of qualified Social Workers
- Decrease the number of qualified Social Worker leaving the Council and
- Reduce the dependency and costs incurred through engaging expensive Agency Workers

An initial review of the strategy was carried out after two years of operation and the findings presented to the Executive Working Party for Children's Social Care. The strategy is entering its final year of operation in April 2013.

It is clear, from the comparative salaries data that Bromley needs to have an enhanced employment package to retain its profile in the job market for qualified social workers. The current package of measures was successful in increasing the appointment of new staff in the first two years of operation and the number of leavers had started to reduce. However in 2012/13 this progress has slowed and there is a risk that the Council could see a return to vacancy levels of 2010. If the package was removed Bromley salaries would not be competitive in relation to neighbouring London Boroughs and Local Authorities. Without the current enhanced package Bromley recruitment and retention will fall below unacceptable levels with disproportionate impact on the quality of frontline services. Therefore, the retention package needs to remain in place for the foreseeable future.

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## **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- Recommend the current scheme is extended for the 2014/15 financial year by utilising the residual funding from the agreed recruitment and retention package for 2010-2014.
- Consider the future funding of enhanced social worker salaries going forward.
- That the current scheme is extended to include the Children with Disabilities Service. Extending the package is expected to cost an additional £7,374 per annum.

## Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
  2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People
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## Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost £817,200 Recruitment and Retention budget over the four year period 2010/11 to 2013/14
  2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost estimated annual cost of scheme continuing in 2013/14 £213,133.
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Referral and Assessment and Safeguarding and Care Planning
  4. Total current budget for this head: £
  5. Source of funding: Mainstream
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## Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 27 FTE in Referral and Assessment and 42.8 FTE in Safeguarding and Care Planning. These figures relate to qualified staff only.
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: n/a
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## Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement The Children Act 1989 as amended
  2. Call-in: Applicable:
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## Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected):
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## Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

### **3. COMMENTARY**

#### **3.1 Background**

The recruitment and retention strategy for children's social care is designed to build and maintain an appropriately skilled professional workforce primarily within two key front line teams – Referral & Assessment Team (RAT) and Safeguarding & Care Planning Team (SGCP).

This report focuses on the key strands of the strategy and what impact they have had, since April 2010, on staffing levels within the two front line teams; issues that the strategy has given rise to across the whole of the children's social work service and how well the remuneration package we offer now compares to those of neighbouring local authorities.

The report also updates Members on the national context for the social work profession generally and in particular children's social work.

#### **3.2 National Context**

Since the report of the Social Work Task Force in December 2009 considerable progress has been made in addressing issues highlighted. A key achievement is the establishment of an agreed recognised Professional Capabilities Framework spanning entry to the profession to advanced social work; establishing standards for employers in supporting and supervising social work professionals and strengthening the requirements for social work education. All newly qualified social workers are now expected to undertake an 'assessed year in employment' ensuring that they are 'fit to practice'. Bromley has lead and established a programme to manage this process by collaborating with Bexley and Lewisham to develop and implement a systematic support programme for newly qualified staff. The third programme is due to commence in October 2013. Considerable work has been done in Universities to increase the quality of students. This has produced a steady flow of good newly qualified social workers coming into the job market from which Bromley has benefited.

The availability of experienced highly skilled social workers remains a problem. Initially, the economic downturn did increase the availability of such people in the employment market as locum social workers became concerned about their long term employment prospects. Due to this the Council was able to secure the permanent services of a number of locums; however this trend has not continued.

The work of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) was published in December 2011. The report addressed recruitment, retention and career progression of Social Workers. The NJC produced a series of generic social work job profiles and an associated pay and grading model. A comparison of the NJC pay and grading model to the Council's pay and grading structure is given at Appendix A. The comparison exercise did not identify any particular issues for the Council to address. The report did touch on the key recruitment challenges facing local authorities but did not provide any new insights into how to resolve the situation. The NJC report included issues relating to career progression emphasising the need to build career pathways into staffing structures as well providing appropriate development opportunities.

Overall, children's social work continues to be recognised as a key shortage recruitment area within local government and competition to attract the best of a scarce resource remains high. Furthermore, the recent round of Ofsted inspections has prompted a number of authorities to review and update their remuneration packages.

### 3.3 Recruitment & Retention

The recruitment and retention strategy for children’s social care is based on offering a ‘total package’ made up of a competitive salary and financial incentives; manageable caseloads, good supervision and training opportunities. See Appendix B, Chart A for full details of the ‘total package’. At the time of establishing the remuneration package, it was recognised that Bromley needed to strike a balance between offering a competitive remuneration package without fuelling an escalation in the remuneration packages offered by neighbouring authorities. Chart B of Appendix B highlights the salaries paid and market increments.

### 3.4 Recruitment

The majority of the elements in the recruitment and retention strategy were directed at staff in both the RAT and SGCP team, which had the highest vacancy rates and use of agency workers. In order to fully appreciate the seriousness of the recruitment and retention issues facing the two front line teams the following vacancy data excludes the use of agency workers. The vacancy rates were at their worse in the first two quarters of 2010 before the strategy began to take effect. The vacancy rates in the RAT stood at 50% (15.39 fte) and 35% (14.39 fte) in SGCP team. The vacancies rates fell to their lowest on 1 April 2012 when they stood at 13% (3.6 fte) in RAT and 9% (4.3 fte) in the SGCP team. However this trend has not been sustained and as at 31 March 2013 the vacancy rate for RAT stood at 32% (8.6fte) and for SGCP stood at 24.9% (11.3fte).

### 3.5 Starters and Leavers

The chart given below shows the impact of the recruitment and retention strategy on the number of starters and leavers in the RAT and SGCP teams.

Financial Year	Total Starters	Total Leavers	Net Effect
<b>2009/10</b>	17	18	-1
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<b>2010/11</b>	22	17	+5
<b>2011/12</b>	20	11	+9
<b>2012/13</b>	11	17	-6
<b>2013/14</b> *1 April to 31 August 2013	9	4	+5

↑  
 Post  
 introduction  
 of the R&R  
 strategy  
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In 2009/10 the Council was not able to recruit enough new starters to keep pace with the number of leavers. During the first two full years of implementation of the recruitment and retention strategy this trend reversed as the number of starters significantly increased above the number of leavers. However the success in the recruitment rates experienced between 2010/12 declined in 2012/13.

Action is being taken to raise the profile of Bromley jobs in the employment market. There have been some positive signs in the first five months of the 2013/14 financial year as the number of starters has increased. It also should be noted that we are anticipating the appointments of several newly qualified Social Workers from our Grow our Own and Bursary schemes later this year. See paragraph 2.8 for more details.

### 3.6 Retention

Retention remains a problem, Appendix C provides information on the length of service of leavers in the front line teams. In such a competitive and volatile job market it is considered that retention of new recruits for three years plus is a reasonable return on the time and effort invested in the recruitment and induction process. The average length of service for leavers during April 2010 to April 2013 is lower than would be expected, particularly in regard to senior practitioners.

The chart given below shows the numbers of Senior Practitioner starters and leavers in the RAT and SGCP teams before and during the implementation of the recruitment and retention strategy.

	<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Total Starters</b>	<b>Total Leavers</b>	<b>Net Effect</b>
	<b>2009/10</b>	3	7	-4
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↑ Post Introduction of the R&R Strategy ↓	<b>2010/11</b>	12	3	+9
	<b>2011/12</b>	7	7	0
	<b>2012/13</b>	3	10	-7
	<b>2013/14</b> * 1 April – 31 August 2013	5	2	+3

During the 2012/13 financial year there was a significant rise in the number of Senior Practitioners leaving the Council. This was coupled with a downturn in the ability to attract significant numbers of new recruits from outside the Council into Senior Practitioner vacancies.

### 3.7 Leaver Reasons and Destinations

Exit interviews are carried out with all qualified staff leaving the front line teams. These provide an insight into how people feel about the working environment. The issues that leavers wish to discuss with HR are personally driven; however, care is taken to touch on the key elements of our recruitment strategy; remuneration, management & supervision and support, and personal/career development.

In the vast majority of cases there is not a single reason why social workers leave the Council. It is usually an amalgamation of reasons which make it difficult to identify a single overriding reason or trend that the Council can address, thereby reducing the number of leavers with ease.

The key findings from the exit interviews carried out in 2012/13:

- The majority of leavers said that the salary and benefits package has been regarded as satisfactory and not cited a main reason for leaving.
- There has been some positive feedback on the retention package with the vast majority saying it is appreciated. Several leavers commented that without the additional retention supplement they may have left sooner.
- There is a general perception that most neighbouring boroughs pay higher than Bromley.

- Several leavers have raised concerns about the quality and access to supervision they receive from their managers and have cited this as part of their reason for leaving.
- There are differing perspectives on career development at Bromley.
- Some Social Workers have stated they are unclear on the key differences between their role and the role of the Senior Practitioner and what is needed to become a Senior Practitioner.
- Some Leavers commented that there are lots of career prospects and they have been actively encouraged to apply for promotion.
- Some leavers stated that the reason for leaving is for a promotion at another London Borough or Local Authority.
- Training was universally recognised as being of a high quality with particular praise for induction and the choice of courses available.
- Caseloads are viewed by the majority as manageable but several have commented that they do not spend as long as they would like on each case.

From the information collected on leaver's destinations, the significant and most commonly recurring destinations stated are relocation and joining a London Borough or Local Authority. Other significant destinations are retirement, joining an Employment Agency and joining the private sector.

### **3.8 'Grown our own' schemes**

Through the 'Grow our own' strategy 6 staff were sponsored to undertake professional qualifications to become social workers (2 staff taking a BA in Social Work which is a three year programme; 4 staff taking a Masters in Social Work which is a two year programme). This programme has been most successful; the four staff that qualified in 2012 have taken up professional roles and are now in their 'first year of assessed employment'. The two Master's students have completed their course and are due to take up professional roles in September 2013.

While the above scheme has been very successful, the costs involved are not sustainable in the long term. Alternative options were under consideration when it became possible for the Council to take advantage of a fully funded national initiative (Step Up to Social Work programme) designed to encourage and support people who wished to make a career change into children's social work. In August 2011 Bromley, in collaboration with the London Boroughs of Bexley and Lewisham, formed the South East London Regional Partnership in order to participate in and receive funding for the bursary programme leading to a Masters in Social Work. The Council currently has 5 candidates on the programme that subject to successful completion of the qualification will join the workforce in November 2013. Central government announced funding for another cohort on a slightly different basis leading to a Diploma in Social Work. Bromley is leading on the programme with six other London Boroughs and Local Authorities which should produce another 5 Newly Qualified Social Workers joining the Borough in 2015. In addition, Bromley's leadership and successful management of the scheme has the added advantage of promoting Bromley and enhancing its reputation as an employer of choice. More detailed information about the Step Up to Social Work programme is given in Appendix D.

### **3.9 Salary Comparison Neighbouring Authorities**

The information in Appendix E compares the salary ranges and additional payments for Social Worker, Senior Practitioner and Deputy Manager salaries in Bromley with neighbouring Councils. This information was supplied voluntarily by the neighbouring Councils and is correct as at 1 January 2013. The information is complex due to the variety of different add-ons and supplements paid to the basic salary by each Council. Appendix E

shows that like Bromley several other Councils employ the use of additional payments to attract and retain Social Workers.

The information in Appendix F shows the relative position of the Council's remuneration package compared to neighbouring London Boroughs and Local Authorities, across key jobs. The information is shown broken down by both the standard salaries paid and the enhanced salaries with additional and supplementary payments. The maximum enhanced salaries indicated in Appendix F include market supplement increments where these are paid and any annual retention supplement paid. They do not include Golden Hello payments as these are a one off payment to new starters only. They do not include the lease car payment other than where it is offered as a cash option. It should be noted that the duties for job titles used for comparison purposes will vary slightly depending on the service structure of the different Local Authorities. This difference is most marked for the role of Deputy Manager and therefore direct comparisons should be treated with caution.

Looking at the salaries including enhancements, Bromley's minimum total package appears to be broadly competitive. The maximum total package offered to Senior Practitioners is also competitive. However, Social Worker and Deputy Manager salaries in Bromley are significantly behind our neighbours. This may be impacting on the calibre and experience of the candidates we can attract and the decisions that staff are making to leave.

### **3.10 Children's Social Care Division**

Whilst the main focus of the recruitment and retention strategy is directed to the two front line teams it does contain provisions to encourage stability in the other services:– Leaving Care, Adoption, Fostering, Looked After Children, the Common Assessment Framework Team, Emergency Duty Team and the Teenage and Parent Support Services.

There has been staff turnover within the above named teams during the operation of the recruitment and retention strategy. However, the levels are not considered significant compared to the two front line teams. It is considered that extending some elements (see Appendix B Chart B) of the recruitment and retention strategy has encouraged stability within these teams. The front line teams have accounted for 75% of new starters in the Division and 67% of the leavers.

The introduction of the strategy coincided with the transfer of a group of social workers out of the division into the Education Division. Whilst it made operational sense to move the SEN & Disability Service, it impacted adversely on the staff in relation to the recruitment and retention strategy. There is evidence of vacancy levels running at around 26% within the team and it is considered appropriate now that the application of the strategy at the same level as it applies to the other non frontline teams listed above would help alleviate these problems. Extending the package is expected to cost an additional £7,374 per annum.

### 3.11 Conclusion

It is clear, from the comparative salaries data that Bromley needs to have an enhanced employment package to retain its profile in the job market for qualified social workers. The current package of measures was successful in increasing the appointment of new staff in the first two years of operation and the number of leavers had started to reduce. However in 2012/13 this progress has slowed and there is a risk that the Council could see a return to vacancy levels of 2010. If the package was removed Bromley salaries would not be competitive in relation to neighbouring London Boroughs and Local Authorities. Therefore, the retention package needs to remain in place for the foreseeable future.

As part of a planned restructuring of the Specialist Support and Disability Service, the Disabled Children's Social Work and Short Break Team are due to join the Children's Social Care Division. As a result of this Social Workers in this team should now receive the annual retention payment.

A single pay spine should be introduced incorporating both the Social Worker and Senior Practitioner roles. This should be underpinned by a set of clear competencies that will enable Social Workers to progress up to the level expected to carry out the more complex work that is currently undertaken at Senior Practitioner level. A clear and transparent career pathway should encourage greater retention rates amongst Social Workers/Senior Practitioners in the frontline teams.

Work has begun on offering a greatly improved range of professional and technical training and development opportunities for current Senior Practitioners to further their skills, knowledge and experience. As well as having an impact on retention levels this should also ensure there is a sufficiently trained and experienced pool of staff ready to make the next step in their careers to apply for Deputy Manager positions as they arise.

### 3.12 Recommendations

Based on the above information the **Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee** is asked to consider and comment on the report and to make recommendations on the following:

Recommend the current scheme is extended for the 2014/15 financial year by utilising the residual funding from the agreed recruitment and retention package for 2010-2014.

Consider the future funding of enhanced social worker salaries going forward.

That the current scheme is extended to include the Children with Disabilities Service. Extending the package is expected to cost an additional £7,374 per annum.

## 4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Authority is responsible for providing a statutory social work service to vulnerable children and to safeguard them from harm. This is delivered within a performance framework subject to external inspection. One such inspection identified the positive impact of the Council's recruitment and retention strategy.

## 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The estimated costs of the recruitment and retention strategy was calculated over a four year period from 2010 – 2014. The estimated total net cost was £817,200. This was based on a total cost of £1,202,000 less the savings based on the average difference in the costs of employing permanent staff compared with agency locums.

The table given below sets out the actual spend with oncosts during 1 April 2010 – 31 March 2013.

Retention Element	01/04/10-31/03/11	01/04/11-31/03/12	01/04/12 – 31/03/13
<b>Golden hellos</b>  NB all newly appointed qualified staff in the division are eligible for a golden hello	£35,084	£18,795	£20,048
<b>Annual retention supplement</b>	£91,497	£104,842	£126,367
<b>Finder's fee</b>	£0	£0	£0
<b>Market premium – extended salary scales</b>	£55,792	£56,130	£29,421
<b>Total annual costs</b>	£ 182,373	£ 179,767	£ 175,836
<b>Total</b>	<b>£537,976</b>		

The estimated costs were based on recruiting experienced Social Workers and Senior Practitioners who could command the higher ends of the salary scales available as well as the additional market supplements and attracting overseas candidates. Having had to change the approach to recruitment mentioned in paragraph 3.1, a significant number of new starters are being appointed in the lower and middle quartiles of the salary scales.

The estimated costs set out in the recruitment and retention strategy reflect full year costs. The above figures reflect the pattern of spend throughout the year. The retention supplement is paid on the anniversary of completing a year's service. Therefore, the expenditure for this element of the strategy will increase as we retain new staff year on year.

The market premium extended the salary range and therefore only those staff already on the maximum of their grade received an increase. Again this expenditure will increase as existing staff move into the additional increments, but will be balanced out by the loss of more experienced staff leaving the organisation.

The payment of golden hellos is based on the sum being recoverable if the new entrant does not continue in employment within the first six months of service.

As at 1 April 2013 from the original budget of £817,200 there was £596,611.32 remaining as some elements of the recruitment and retention package were paid from under spends from other budgets within the Division. The projected spend of the scheme for 2013/14 is £213,133 and extending the scheme to 2014/15 is projected to cost £216,437. This means that there is budget available to fully fund the package for an additional year in 2014/15.

## 6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The duty to safeguard and protect children and the legal procedures and orders available to ensure protection are contained in the Children Act 1989 as amended.

## 7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

It is essential to establishing a stable workforce in the front line teams that the Council is able to offer a competitive employment package. Considerable headway has been made in recruitment and this is now beginning to be reflected in retention rates. However the employment market for experienced qualified children's social workers remains volatile.

Whilst the focus of this report is on how the recruitment and retention strategy had impacted on the two front line teams, there are other issues arising from its implementation. These relate to the impact on those who do not receive the benefits of the strategy and their concerns as to how their services are valued; there are also concerns about how the difference in salary levels between practitioners and deputy/group managers has been eroded by the payment of market premium and the retention supplement. Finally, social workers based in other service areas within the department are concerned that they do not have access to the benefits of the strategy.

Going forward it will be important to ensure that the strategy stays in step with any developments that are made as a result of the national work on the career and grading structure of the social care profession.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	[List non-applicable sections here]
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Appendix A – NJC Review of Grading Structure for social work Appendix B chart A – Recruitment & Retention Package Chart Appendix B chart B – CSC Salary Comparison Ranges post single status Appendix C – Leavers & Starters Destination Data Appendix D – Step Up Programme Appendix E – Salary Comparison Neighbouring Boroughs Appendix F – Salary Comparison Neighbouring Boroughs