

Report No.  
DCYP11112

## London Borough of Bromley

### PART 1 - PUBLIC

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Decision Maker: **Executive**

Date: **19 October 2011**

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

**TITLE: RELEASE OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING TO SUPPORT IMPROVEMENTS IN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SOCIAL WORK**

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Chief Officer: Gillian Pearson, Director of Children and Young People Services

Ward: Boroughwide

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#### 1. Reason for report

- 1.1 The Department for Education (DfE) announced in 2010 the creation of a Social Work Improvement Fund (SWIF) to assist employers to build capacity for reform and improvement in social work with children and families.
  - 1.2 In addition in September 2011 the Local Authority was informed of the Government's intention to distribute further funding to support the implementation of the recommendations of the Munro Review of child protection.
  - 1.3 Bromley Council's allocation of funding is £168,713 from SWIF and £50,000 from the Munro funding.
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#### 2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 **That the Council's Executive agrees the release of the Social Work Improvement Fund and Munro funding to support the improvement in front line child protection practice as outlined in this report.**

## Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing policy: Recruitment and Retention Strategy
  2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People
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## Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated cost £190,000
  2. Ongoing costs: N/A
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Safeguarding and Quality Assurance
  4. Total current budget for this head: £4.8m
  5. Source of funding: In year Government grant funding from Social Work Improvement Fund (SWIF) and Munro initiative grant funding
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## Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional) – All social work staff within Children's Social Care and Safeguarding.
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours – N/A
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## Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-statutory - Government guidance:
  2. Call in: Call-in is applicable
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## Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected) - 2,600 children are provided with a social work service per year.
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## Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? N/A
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

### 3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 Over the past 2 years there has been recognition by Government that the quality of front line social work practice in child protection needs reforming. This has led to the Government recognising and accepting the work of the Social Work Reform Board and commissioning Professor Eileen Munro to undertake a comprehensive review of child protection social work. In line with the recommendations of the Social Work Task Force, the precursor of the Social Work Reform Board, the Department for Education (DfE) announced in 2010 the creation of a Social Work Improvement Fund (SWIF) to assist employers to build capacity for reform and improvement in social work with children and families.
- 3.2 The SWIF allocation for Bromley for 2011/ 12 is £168,731. Allocations to individual authorities have been determined by the Department for Education according to the Relative Needs Formula which is used when allocating other funding to local authorities. The Children's Workforce Development Council has been tasked with distributing these funds and supporting employers to look at ways of improving front line practice and developing the core skills of child protection social workers.
- 3.3 The final report of the Munro review of child protection, building on the work of the Social Work Reform Board, outlines the need to improve the skills of front line children and family social work capabilities. It highlights the need for social workers to be trained in practice methods based on sound research that improve outcomes for children. This includes the need for social workers to be trained in effective analytical skills to assess family functioning and theoretical frameworks to assist in the provision of therapeutic help for children.
- 3.4 It is recognised in the report that social work training is not providing the skills in social workers that Local Authorities as employers need. It also emphasises the need for employers to form closer relationships with higher education institutions that provide social work training so that the training programmes can be developed in partnership. Bromley, along with LB Bexley and LB Lewisham, have already entered a partnership arrangement with Goldsmiths' College, London University to provide more focused training of children and families social work students.
- 3.5 On 9 September 2011 the Children's Workforce Development Council informed Directors of Children's Services that the Government had earmarked a further £8.5 million for Local Authorities to help deliver the redesign of children's social work as determined within the Munro Review report and recommendations. The allocation for Bromley is £50,000, half of which is for the Local Safeguarding Children Board to strengthen their role in terms of coordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of this local arrangements and to support the role they play in relation to learning and training.
- 3.6 The London Borough of Bromley Social Work Recruitment and Retention Strategy approved by the Council's Executive in February 2010 identified the need to develop high quality training for experienced practitioners as a retention tool. The proposed training will meet this objective.
- 3.7 It is proposed that the 2011/12 SWIF allocation for Bromley and the Munro Review funding is focused on improving the skills of front line child protection social workers in the following ways:
- (i) £50,000 on the introduction of the 'Disorganized Attachment model' for assessing child maltreatment and neglect.
  - (ii) £30,000 on the introduction of the 'Parent Assessment Manual Software' (PAMS) for the assessment of neglectful parenting where parents have learning disabilities.

- (iii) £60,000 on the Graduate certificate in Systemic Practice for all front line staff.
- (iv) £50,000 on the introduction of a training package to support staff and foster carers with the assessment and management of older children with behavioral difficulties.

### ***Disorganised Attachment***

- 3.8 The disorganised attachment model assesses parenting through observation with less reliance on interviewing, in addition to the use of standardised questionnaires that more readily identify when parents are giving inconsistent responses. It provides social workers with skills for assessment work with children at different stages of development. In samples of maltreated children, around 80-90% are found to have disorganised attachments to their abuser and this model has proved an effective tool for identifying those children most at risk of harm and concentrating expensive resources on the right cases.

### ***Parental Assessment Manual Software (PAMS)***

- 3.9 The PAMS framework is a system of assessments tools which have been developed by psychologists to assist in the assessment of parenting by those parents with learning disability. It requires the completion of a range of exercises which can then be translated into a report which is accepted within the court arena. Currently limited usage of this within Bromley has seen a reduction in the use of expensive specialist assessments being commissioned by the court.

### ***Graduate Certificate in Systemic Practice***

- 3.10 A weakness of social work practice is the failure of social workers to holistically assess the functioning of a family and the role of specific children, especially those subject to abuse, play within the family. Training in systemic family therapy provides a framework for social workers to work with changing family systems to protect children and develops skills and strategies in managing family sessions and improving family functioning. The plan is for all front line staff to participate in a course of systemic practice leading to a certificate. More experienced staff and those with particular ability would be supported to take the study of family therapy to Masters level. The systemic practice model sits alongside the use of the disorganised attachment assessment model as the treatment stage of work with abusive families.

### ***Working with Adolescents***

- 3.11 It is intended to introduce a programme of training (as yet not identified) to enhance the skills of those working with challenging adolescents. This will be of particular value in the Teenage and Adolescent Parenting Service, Looked After and Leaving Care Teams and Youth Offending Team. It will also be extended to in-house foster carers to improve the stability of in-house placements for challenging young people as part of the Children's Social Care Strategy to reduce dependency on independent fostering placements and increase less expensive in-house foster placements.
- 3.12 The Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Team has reduced its dependency on social work locums from 43% to 10% and is working towards a target of 5%. This has allowed for teams to stabilise and more effective case management. Investment in training aimed at developing intervention skills is timely for Bromley and complements the Munro Review recommendations. It should greatly enhance our ability to retain staff, improve our service to children, families and the courts, and reduce placement costs in the medium term.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Social Work Improvement Fund grant is not a specific grant. There are no specific requirements for its use other than an indication that it should be used to support local change in social work. This funding could be used to offset some current expenditure which would in turn offset the current cost pressures in social care.
- 4.2 The Munroe funding is specific and cannot be used to offset current funding arrangements. It is intended that this grant is used to provide additional activities. Therefore this could not be offset against current expenditure.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Policy, Legal and Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	