

Decision Maker: Children and Young People Portfolio Holder

Date: For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Children and Young People PDS Committee on 21 February 2012

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: **REVIEW OF THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORK STAFF**

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

Ward: Boroughwide

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 On 3 February 2010 the Council's Executive agreed a package of measures to improve the recruitment and retention of qualified Social Workers within Children and Young People Department's Children's Social Care Services. It was agreed that the impact of the strategy should be reviewed after two years of operation.
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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 **The Children and Young People Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:**
- **consider the success of the strategy in addressing the recruitment difficulties within the Referral and Assessment and Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams;**
 - **comment on the challenges still facing the Council in retaining staff in the front line teams.**
- 2.2 **The Children and Young People Portfolio Holder is asked to:**
- **endorse the continued use of the strategy for 2012/13 and 2013/14.**

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable:
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People:
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost: £125,000 a year
 2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Safeguarding and Social Care
 4. Total current budget for this head: £8.918m All staff Referral and Assessment and Safeguarding Teams
 5. Source of funding: £4.173m
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 99.5 All staff Referral and Assessment and Safeguarding Teams
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement:
 2. Call-in: Applicable:
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected):
-

Ward Councillor Views

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

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The recruitment and retention strategy and funding arrangement, agreed by the Council's Executive on 3 February 2010, consisted of a number of elements the most important of which was an enhanced remuneration package; a 'grow our own' social worker scheme and the use of overseas recruitment.

The strategy was designed to stabilise the staffing within two front line teams of the Children and Young People Department's Children's Social Care Services – Referral & Assessment and Safeguarding & Care Planning. In 2009/10 the vacancy rates in Bromley of qualified Children's Social Workers and Deputy Group Managers (Practice Supervisors) fluctuated between 36 – 40% as the Council was experiencing difficulty in filling posts. In addition, the Council was incurring significant costs as a consequence of excessive dependency on expensive Locum Social Workers.

This review assesses the impact of the strategy up to 31 December 2011. The review is based on employee data and feedback gathered through discussion with existing employees and exit interviews for those who have left in the period under review.

3.2 National Context

The national shortage of qualified social workers employed in statutory children's social work referred to in the report to the Executive on 3 February 2010, has improved. Currently there are more newly qualified social workers entering the job market encouraged by various Government initiatives and the expansion of post graduate places. The economic downturn has also had an impact as some social workers in the locum market are now looking for greater job security through permanent appointments. Despite this, it remains difficult at a national and local level to recruit experienced qualified social workers and children's social work continues to be recognised as a key shortage recruitment area within local Government.

During the period leading up to the London Borough of Bromley's recruitment and retention strategy proposals and subsequent to their agreement by Executive, a number of key developments have taken place at a national level:

- The Social Care Reform Board is leading on the implementation of 15 recommendations made by the Social Work Task Force in December 2009. It is establishing an agreed recognised professional capabilities framework spanning entry to the profession to advanced social work; developing standards for employers in supporting and supervising social work professionals and strengthening the requirements for social work education. This work is ongoing and includes the introduction of an "Assessed and Supported Year in Employment" for newly qualified social workers commencing September 2012.
- The "Munro Review of Child Protection – Final Report – A Child Centred System" was published in early 2011. The focus of this report is on working practices, professional standards, workloads and minimising/simplifying systems which have the potential to reduce the bureaucratic burden facing children's social workers. Thereby, allowing social workers to focus their time on the child and family.
- The National Joint Council for Local Government Services, also in response to a request from the Social Work Task Force, set up a Working Party to examine Recruitment, Retention and Career Progression of Social Workers. A final report was issued in December 2011. The report makes recommendations regarding pay and grading structures, and career progression covering unqualified posts through to management. The report provides benchmark job profiles and moderated job

evaluation scores. This is a very extensive review and HR is currently working on an exercise to compare benchmark job profiles to Council social work jobs. As yet it is not possible to assess the potential impact on our grading structure and retention strategy. The report acknowledges that authorities will need to retain the flexibility to use local recruitment and retention payments to respond to changes in the employment market. The report includes a desktop review of the recruitment issues facing local government but it does not provide any new insights into the issues other than confirming the importance of training, good supervision, and manageable caseloads.

3.3 Recruitment:

From 1 April 2010 to 31 December 2011 the Council has made significant headway in attracting and recruiting permanent qualified children's social work staff (see **Appendix 1**). Overall 36 qualified staff have been recruited with a further 6 appointments in the pipeline awaiting confirmation of a start date, subject to satisfactory CRB checks and references. In addition six members of staff qualified in 2011 through the Social Work trainee scheme, five of which started positions in the Referral & Assessment and Safeguarding & Care Planning teams and one was appointed to the Youth Offending Team. In total 41 qualified staff have been appointed in the period (not including YOT) with a further 6 in the pipeline, an average of 24 per annum. This compares to 16 qualified appointments during 2009/10.

The ability to attract and appoint qualified staff has helped to reduce the number of locum social workers working in children's social care from 34 on 1 April 2010 to 10 on 31 December 2011.

The successes in recruitment have been achieved in spite of losing a key component of the strategy – the ability to recruit overseas. During the course of 2010 an immigration cap was introduced leading to the cancellation of a planned recruitment campaign in America and Canada. Having lost this source of candidates, a review was undertaken to consider the possibility of recruiting from EU countries. However, none of the options was sufficiently attractive to justify the costs involved. Up until this point in time the appointment of newly qualified social workers to children's services had been avoided due to the demanding nature of the work. However, in view of the shortages faced, the Assistant Director took the decision to open up recruitment to this group, putting in place special measures to support and mentor newly qualified staff. This change to the recruitment strategy has proved most effective.

The changes to the remuneration package agreed as part of the strategy are important in putting the Council on a level with those packages offered by neighbouring boroughs (see **Appendix 2**). There is currently no evidence to suggest that other London Borough's or Local Authorities are reducing the financial elements of their remuneration packages. Other elements of our approach to recruitment have been strengthened to underpin the remuneration package:

- A Children's Social Care One Bromley "micro site" was developed and implemented in December 2010. It is linked to advertising via Google and a large number of visits are made to the site.
- Rolling three weekly Recruitment Panels and 48 hour shortlisting.
- A prioritisation of factors known to assist with retention: good professional supervision, manageable case loads and professional development opportunities.

By early 2011 our recruitment and retention package was attracting a steadier flow of good applicants. The selection processes were reviewed and made more rigorous to ensure that we only recruit good quality candidates.

3.4 'Grow our Own' Scheme

Following competitive interviews six staff were sponsored to undertake a social work qualification; 2 staff are taking a BA in Social Work which is a three year programme; 4 staff are taking a Masters in Social Work which is a two year programme. The sponsored staff were all working in support roles within social care prior to joining the scheme. They are making good progress and should join the children's social care workforce as qualified social workers in 2012 and 2013. The 'grow our own' scheme agreed by the Executive also included provision for a Masters programme to support the development of senior practitioners. This element of the strategy has not yet been implemented as it has not been possible to identify a programme that meets our needs. This element of the strategy will need to be reviewed in light of the national capability framework before any decisions are made.

The sponsorship scheme in use is based on previous practice in the Council. Whilst this scheme has been successful in developing existing staff to take up professional roles, the costs are no longer sustainable in the current economic climate. Alternative options have been explored, including bursaries and Open University. In 2010 the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) developed the Step Up To Social Work programme (see **Appendix 3**). The programme is a national initiative designed to attract high calibre professionals into children's social work. The programme offers candidates an 18 month bursary leading to an MA in social work. It is a condensed, work based entry route to social work and enables the employers to work closely with the higher education provider to ensure that the programme reflects the world of work at no cost to the employer.

The CWDC set out specific criteria requiring local authorities to form regional partnerships with a designated lead authority to make a successful Step Up application. In August 2011 Bromley, in collaboration with the London Boroughs of Bexley and Lewisham, formed the South East London Regional Partnership. It was agreed that Bromley would take on the Lead Authority role. After a rigorous selection process 14 candidates were chosen by the three partners to join the scheme. These candidates are due to gain qualified status in September 2013, with 5 candidates due to start with Bromley, 6 with Lewisham and 3 with Bexley.

3.5 Retention

For the period 1 April 2010 to 31 December 2011, 28 qualified staff have left the Council from the Referral & Assessment and Safeguarding & Care Planning teams. There were 17 leavers during 01/04/2010-31/03/2011 and 11 leavers during the 9 month period 01/04/2011-31/12/2011.

In year one a structural reorganisation contributed to the overall leaver rate. There are also other factors that should be taken into account when considering retention rates. Within this period, as the workforce stabilised, it was possible to apply more rigorous performance management. This also impacted on the leaver figures.

The most significant reason for leaving the Council in this period is relocation which the Council has very little influence over. The second biggest factor is to join another local authority/career advancement. The use of exit interviews has provided a useful 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 three key elements of our recruitment strategy – remuneration, management supervision and support and personal/career development.

Management supervision and support is important to all leavers. Most would have liked more time with their manager but recognised that this would have been difficult to achieve given the workload and time constraints that managers and staff face. Whilst this is an issue that needs to be addressed the manner in which the feedback was given was not negative, nor was the quality of supervision called into question. This highlights a shared understanding of the work pressures facing the service between managers and their staff. Only one officer identified the job as 'too stressful'.

Personal development is viewed by leavers from two very different angles – those leavers who took a proactive approach to seeking development welcomed the opportunities given to them by the Council; in sharp contrast there were those who had a somewhat passive approach to development and expected the Council to manage the process for them and felt that they had been overlooked when opportunities arose.

Career development is an issue for some leavers – those joining other authorities had moved to experience new areas of work or to achieve promotion. Requests to move between teams to gain more experience are dealt with in a supportive manner but the ability to meet such requests are balanced against two factors – there needs to be a vacancy available in the area in which the social worker wishes to work and the stability of the Referral and Assessment and Safeguarding and Care Planning teams needs to be protected.

In September 2011 focus groups were held with Social Workers and Senior Practitioners from the Referral & Assessment and Safeguarding and Care Planning teams. Overall there was general agreement that the recruitment and retention package has had a positive effect on attracting and retaining staff in the Division. A considerable range of views on other issues were expressed which made it difficult to identify any single action or actions that would lead to improved retention. This work is still ongoing and the management team are considering the broad range of issues raised.

3.6 Conclusion

The recruitment and retention strategy has made a significant difference to our ability to recruit qualified staff. By 1 April 2010, the underlying vacancy rate for the front line teams (excluding the use of locum staff) was 40%, by 31 December 2011 the vacancy rate stood at 8%. However, taking into account the appointments in the pipeline and no additional resignations this should reduce further to around 4%.

Whilst this is pleasing it should not be viewed with complacency as the Council still faces challenges in retaining staff. In view of this it is essential the Council maintains its competitive employment package achieved through the recruitment and retention strategy.

Looking forward over the next two years the Council's Recruitment & Retention Strategy will need to be reviewed and updated to take account of the work that has been done on a national grading and career structure, the introduction of a probationary year for newly qualified staff and the application of the national capability framework. This may require re-prioritising elements of the strategy within the current funding available.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 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

- 5.1 The estimated costs of the recruitment and retention strategy for year 2010/11 were reported as £309,400. The tables, table 1 and 2, below sets out the actual spend during 1 April 2010 – 31 December 2011:

Table 1

Retention Element	01/04/10-31/03/11 (12 months)	01/04/11-31/12/11* (9 months)
Golden hellos NB all newly appointed qualified staff in the division are eligible for a golden hello	£29,000	£15,000
Annual retention supplement	£73,000	£55,086
Finders fee	£0	£0
Market premium - extended salary scales	£44,500	£26,631
	£146,500	£96,717
Total	£243,217	

Table 2

'Grow Our Own Scheme'	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
BA 3 year programme x 2 students	← £51,342 →		
MSc 2 year programme x 4 students	← £128,764 →		
Total spend over 3 year period	£180,106		
<i>Costs include courses fees, backfill and miscellaneous costs connected with the course but not salaries.</i>			

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 spend will increase on this element of the strategy as we retain the new staff appointed from April 2010 onwards.

The market premium extended the salary range and therefore only those staff already on the maximum of their grade received an increase. Again this spend 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.

Part of the costs of the recruitment and retention strategy are off-set by the reduction in spending on agency locums in the Referral & Assessment and Safeguarding & Care Planning Teams. It was calculated (in the Executive Report on 3 February 2010) that the Council needed to reduce the use of agency locums by 12 to 'break even'. As previously stated there were 34 qualified social work agency locums on 1 April 2010 reducing to 10 on 31 December 2011. The overspend on the staffing budget in these teams was £374,000 in 2009/10, £274,000 in 31 March 2010/11, and is forecast at £50,000 for 2011/12.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 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

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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.

Non-Applicable Sections:	N/A
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	

Employee Data

Starters 1 April 2010 – 31 December 2011 (21 months)

Post Title	# Starters	Pipeline
Group Manager	0	0
Deputy Manager	3	0
SW Senior Practitioner	15	3
Social Worker	18	3
Consultant Practitioner	0	0
TOTAL	36	6

Leavers 1 April 2010 – 31 December 2011 (21 months)

Leavers by Job Title	# Leavers
Group Manager	1
Deputy Manager	2
Consultant Practitioner	1
Senior Practitioner	7
Social Worker	17
TOTAL	28

Starter Source Data 1 April 2010 – 31 December 2011 (21 months)

Recruitment Source	# Starters
New Starter from Employment Agency	21
New Starter from Full Time Education	2
New Starter from Local Authority	4
New Starter from London Borough	3
New Starter from Private Sector	2
New Starter Unemployed	4
TOTAL	36

Reasons for leaving (21 months)

Reason for leaving	# Leavers
To join agency	1
Retirement	1
Relocation due to family reasons	9
Career move to another sector/area of social care	2
Join another local authority	6
Declined to give information	5
Resignation/Performance management	3
Appointment not taken up	1
TOTAL	28

Salary Comparison and Employee Data (mid year 2011)

(i) Salary comparison with neighbouring London boroughs and Kent County Council

Newly Qualified Social Worker – minimum salary lowest-highest			
Borough	Min	Max	Any additional money that is included in the salary?
Bexley (NQSW without experience)	£27,691	£29,244	14% market premium and benefits package worth £2,163
Kent	£28,422	£37,724	£2,000 welcome package
Bromley without R&R package	£29,601	£31,761	none
Southwark	£29,571	£38,733	none
Bexley (NQSW with experience)	£30,088	£32,924	14% market premium and benefits package worth £2,163
Croydon	£30,310	£33,510	none
Bromley with R&R package	£32,101	£34,261	£1,000 golden hello and £1,500 annual retention supplement
Greenwich	£32,670	£43,567	10% of salary as golden hello, 10% of salary as annual retention supplement
Lewisham	£33,306	£35,055	none

Newly Qualified Social Worker – maximum salary lowest-highest			
Borough	Min	Max	Any additional money that is included in the salary?
Bexley (NQSW without experience)	£27,691	£29,244	14% market premium and benefits package worth £2,163
Bromley without R&R package	£29,601	£31,761	none
Bexley (NQSW with experience)	£30,088	£32,924	14% market premium and benefits package worth £2,163
Croydon	£30,310	£33,510	none
Bromley with R&R package	£32,101	£34,261	£1,000 golden hello and £1,500 annual retention supplement
Lewisham	£33,306	£35,055	none
Kent	£28,422	£37,724	£2,000 welcome package
Southwark	£29,571	£38,733	none
Greenwich	£32,670	£43,567	10% of salary as golden hello, 10% of salary as annual retention supplement

Social Worker – minimum salary lowest-highest			
Borough	Min	Max	Any additional money that is included in the salary?
Kent	£28,422	£37,724	£2,000 welcome package
Southwark	£29,571	£38,733	none
Bromley without R&R package	£29,601	£33,510	none
Croydon	£30,310	£33,510	none
Bromley with R&R package	£32,101	£37,918	£1,000 golden hello and £1,500 annual retention supplement and two additional increments
Greenwich	£32,670	£43,567	10% of salary as golden hello, 10% of salary as annual retention supplement
Bexley	£32,924	£37,243	14% market premium and benefits package worth £2,163
Lewisham	£33,306	£35,055	none

Social Worker – maximum salary lowest-highest			
Borough	Min	Max	Any additional money that is included in the salary?
Bromley without R&R package	£29,601	£33,510	none
Croydon	£30,310	£33,510	none
Lewisham	£33,306	£35,055	none
Bexley	£32,924	£37,243	14% market premium and benefits package worth £2,163
Kent	£28,422	£37,724	£2,000 welcome package
Bromley with R&R package	£32,101	£37,918	£1,000 golden hello and £1,500 annual retention supplement and two additional increments
Southwark	£29,571	£38,733	none
Greenwich	£32,670	£43,567	10% of salary as golden hello, 10% of salary as annual retention supplement

Senior Practitioner - minimum salary lowest-highest			
Borough	Min	Max	Any additional money that is included in the salary?
Bexley	£33,015	£38,460	14% market premium and benefits package worth £2,163
Bromley without R&R package	£33,510	£36,306	none
Croydon	£34,542	£38,961	none
Southwark	£36,096	£42,258	none
Bromley with R&R package	£36,510	£42,789	£1,000 golden hello and £2,000 annual retention supplement and four additional increments
Lewisham	£36,960	£38,733	none
Kent	£37,725	£45,357	£2,000 welcome package
Greenwich	£41,450	£43,567	10% of salary as golden hello, 10% of salary as annual retention supplement

Senior Practitioner - maximum salary lowest-highest			
Borough	Min	Max	Any additional money that is included in the salary?
Bromley without R&R package	£33,510	£36,306	none
Bexley	£33,015	£38,460	14% market premium and benefits package worth £2,163
Lewisham	£36,960	£38,733	none
Croydon	£34,542	£38,961	none
Southwark	£36,096	£42,258	none
Bromley with R&R package	£36,510	£42,789	£1,000 golden hello and £2,000 annual retention supplement and four additional increments
Greenwich	£41,450	£43,567	10% of salary as golden hello, 10% of salary as annual retention supplement
Kent	£37,725	£45,357	£2,000 welcome package

Consultant Practitioner			
Borough	Min	Max	Any additional money that is included in the salary?
Bromley without R&R package	£36,306	£38,961	none
Bromley with R&R package	£39,306	£41,961	£1,000 golden hello and £2,000 annual retention supplement
Croydon	£39,789	£41,610	none
Bexley			Do not have this role
Southwark			
Greenwich			
Lewisham			
Kent			

Deputy Manager/Assistant Team Manager/Team Leader/Practice Manager - minimum salary lowest-highest			
Borough	Min	Max	Any additional money that is included in the salary?
Bexley	£34,650	£40,383	benefits package worth £2,163
Southwark	£36,096	£42,258	none
Bromley without R&R package	£36,306	£38,961	none
Greenwich	£38,961	£41,610	none
Bromley with R&R package	£39,306	£45,498	£1,000 golden hello and £2,000 annual retention supplement and four additional increments
Croydon	£39,789	£41,610	none
Kent	£41,113	£48,152	
Lewisham			Do not have this role

Deputy Manager/Assistant Team Manager/Team Leader/Practice Manager - minimum salary lowest-highest			
Borough	Min	Max	Any additional money that is included in the salary?
Bromley without R&R package	£36,306	£38,961	none
Bexley	£34,650	£40,383	benefits package worth £2,163
Greenwich	£38,961	£41,610	none
Croydon	£39,789	£41,610	none
Southwark	£36,096	£42,258	none
Bromley with R&R package	£39,306	£45,498	£1,000 golden hello and £2,000 annual retention supplement and four additional increments
Kent	£41,113	£48,152	
Lewisham			Do not have this role

Step Up To Social Work Scheme

In 2010, the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) developed a new programme, Step Up To Social Work. The programme is a national initiative and offers an alternative route into social work. Due to the programme being a resounding success, in May 2011 the CWDC announced that they would be funding a second cohort of candidates through the programme.

The programme is only open to Authorities who come together to form a Regional Partnership. The London Boroughs of Bexley, Bromley and Lewisham have come together to form the South East London Regional Partnership.

The programme is designed to attract high calibre professionals into children's social work. To apply, candidates had to demonstrate that they had achieved a 2:1 or above in their bachelors degree of any discipline (aside from social work), a grade C or above in English and Maths at GCSE level, and had experience with children and young people.

The programme offers candidates an 18 month bursary leading to an MA in social work. It is a condensed, work based entry route with the key benefit that partnership are able to work with the higher education provider to create a "bespoke" Masters programme that better reflects the world of work within the partner organisations. The programme must of course meet the General Social Care Council (GSCC) requirements and the National Occupational Standards.

The London Boroughs of Bexley, Bromley and Lewisham went out to tender and successfully commissioned Goldsmiths as our partner higher education institute. All four organisations form part of the South East London Partnership and will come together to design and deliver the Masters course.

The partnership received 211 applications in the summer. Through short-listing and candidates deciding to withdraw from the process we are left with 48 to put through the assessment centre.

The partnership were initially looking for 12 candidates, however, due to the high standards displayed by many of the candidates, both Lewisham and Bromley took the decision to take on an additional candidates, taking the cohort up to 14.

The Masters course will officially commence on 13 February 2012.