

**Decision Maker:** Executive

**Date:** For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 21 January 2015

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Executive Key

**Title:** **CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE RECRUITMENT & 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 (R&R) strategy are to:

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

On 20 November 2013 Executive agreed a one year extension to the current Recruitment and Retention strategy for the 2014/15 financial year. Due to the current employment market for children's social workers it is essential that consideration is given to the continuing appropriateness and effectiveness of the strategy going forward.

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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**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 2015/16 and 2016/17 financial years by utilising the residual funding from the LAA reward grant from the agreed recruitment and retention package for 2010-2014.**
- **Comment on the proposed enhancements to current package as set out in Appendix B.**

### Corporate Policy

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

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost Recruitment and Retention budget LAA grant- £817,200 over the four year period 2010/11 to 2013/14. Circa £596,000 remaining.
  2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Children's Social Care Division
  4. Total current budget for this head: £
  5. Source of funding:
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### Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 156
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
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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): Not Applicable
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### Ward Councillor Views

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

### 3. COMMENTARY

3.1 On a national level 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, competition between neighbouring London Boroughs and Local Authorities has prompted a number of Councils to review and update their remuneration packages.

#### Salary benchmarking

3.2 The main focus of the recruitment and retention strategy for children’s’ social care is designed to build and maintain an appropriately skilled professional workforce within two key front line teams – Referral & Assessment Team (RAT) and Safeguarding & Care Planning Team (SGCP). Other elements of the R&R strategy seek to ensure that Bromley remains competitive in the market place as well as being seen as an attractive employer to join.

3.3 The most recent benchmarking data the Council has undertaken focused on the frontline teams (Appendix A). The data shows that whilst Bromley salaries remain competitive it would fall far behind its neighbouring Councils if the R&R package was removed.

3.4 In November 2014 the Council participated in a London wide salary survey for Children’s Social Care led by the London Borough of Haringey on behalf of London Councils. The results of this extensive survey are expected to be circulated in January 2014 and will give the greatest indication yet of how competitive Bromley’s salary package is compared with other London Boroughs.

#### Vacancy Rates

3.5 The table below shows the vacancy rates for qualified Social Care staff across the Division:

Section	Team	2013/2014				2014/2015	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
		Apr-Jun 30.06.2013	Jul-Sep 30.09.2013	Oct-Dec 31.12.2013	Jan-Mar 31.03.2014	Apr-Jun 30.06.2014	Jul-Sep 30.09.2014
Care & Resources	16+, Leaving Care & USAC Service	12.71%	4.24%	4.24%	4.24%	4.24%	12.71%
	Family Placements	3.71%	7.42%	22.61%	16.43%	19.78%	23.15%
	Looked After Children Service	13.87%	13.87%	13.87%	21.17%	21.17%	13.87%
Quality Assurance & Child Protection	Quality Assurance Service	0.00%	0.00%	35.06%	18.12%	8.73%	32.10%
Referral & Assessment	Common Assessment Framework	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	Emergency Duty Team	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	Referral & Assessment Team	24.00%	19.96%	3.99%	11.98%	11.81%	15.74%
	Teenage & Parent Support Service	14.51%	14.51%	25.35%	25.35%	25.35%	20.22%

Safeguarding & Care Planning	Safeguarding/Care Planning (East)	29.63%	19.23%	16.00%	28.00%	33.33%	12.00%
	Safeguarding/Care Planning (West)	27.27%	22.73%	26.09%	21.74%	20.83%	28.57%
	Children's Disability / Social Work & Short Breaks Team	17.27%	17.27%	17.27%	31.80%	23.85%	31.80%
Youth Support Services	Youth Offending Service	5.62%	5.96%	11.92%	23.84%	25.35%	32.72%

The majority of non frontline teams have been stable and have had no significant difficulties recruiting to most posts. However, isolated recruitment difficulties do exist, there has been significant difficulty recruiting to Deputy Manager posts in Fostering and Adoption and the Children's Disability & Short Breaks team over the past 18 months despite efforts to recruit both externally and internally and through the use of Employment Agencies.

### Youth Offending Service

- 3.6** During the past twelve months there have been significant difficulties recruiting to Senior YOT Officer positions and YOT Operations Managers. As indicated in the table shown in 3.4 the vacancy rate currently stands at 33%. Benchmarking is currently being undertaken on YOT salaries.
- 3.7** Other Local Authorities have adopted the Bromley model of recruiting qualified YOT Officers into posts previously held by unqualified staff in a bid to raise standards. This is impacting on the pool of available qualified YOT staff the Council can recruit to as Social Work qualified Youth Offending Officers are currently at a premium across London.

### Starters and Leavers Frontline Teams

- 3.8** 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 before and after it was introduced in 2010.

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>	24	16	+8
<b>2014/15 to 31/10/14</b>	18	11	+7

↑  
Post  
introduction  
of the R&R  
strategy  
↓

- 3.9** Whilst in broad terms more staff are being recruited into posts than are leaving there are still significant vacancies in these two teams. There has also been a significant increase in the number of newly qualified Social Workers recruited through both the Step Up to Social

programme in 2013 and through a direct recruitment campaign in 2014. Whilst it is positive for Bromley to employ newly qualified Social Workers with a view to retaining them as they become more experienced it is remaining problematic recruiting sufficient numbers of more experienced Senior Practitioners.

**3.10** 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
↑ 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>	7	3	+4
	<b>2014/15</b>	0	7	-7

### Retention / Exit Data

**3.11** Exit interviews are carried out with all qualified staff leaving both the front line teams and all teams in the division. 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.

**3.12** 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.

**3.13** From the information collected on leaver's destinations, the significant and most commonly recurring destinations stated are relocation, joining a London Borough or Local Authority and joining an Employment Agency to work as a Locum.

### Agency Spend

**3.14** One of the main aims of the introduction of the recruitment & retention strategy was to reduce the dependency and costs incurred through engaging Locum/Agency staff. The chart below shows the spend on qualified Locum/Agency staff before and during the introduction of the R&R Strategy.

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
<b>All Teams</b>	1,784,747.29	1,890,909.93	1,087,718.40	1,067,307.86	1,329,110.00
<b>Front Line Teams</b>	1,284,633.99	1,401,462.21	765,209.75	713,740.51	837,870.00

**3.15** Overall the spend on Locum/Agency staff has decreased since 2010/11. The figure did rise in 2013/14 on the previous year but it is important to note that the Children's Disability Service joined the Children's Social Care Division from the Education Division during this year. It is also important to note that the number of qualified establishment posts has risen from 109 posts as at 31 March 2010 to 130 as at 30 November 2014.

#### **4. Officer Steering Group Recommendations**

**4.1** In response to the continuing recruitment and retention difficulties facing different teams within the Children's Social Care division an officer steering group was set up in August 2014 consisting of Heads of Service, managers and staff from the division as well as colleagues from Human Resources and Finance.

**4.2** The steering group was tasked to review the current package identifying any areas which were hindering the ability to recruit and retain staff across the division and formulate a new look 'fit for purpose' package. (See Appendix B for a full summary of recommendations, elements that have changed or are new are highlighted in yellow). The key recommendations by the steering group are listed below.

##### **4.2.1 Annual Retention Supplement**

It is recommended that all current and newly recruited Social Workers should continue to receive the £1,500 annual retention supplement with the exception of newly recruited Social Workers in the Fostering and Adoption teams. These two teams have remained stable and it is viewed that there are no difficulties in recruiting to these roles. Staff already working in these teams who receive this payment will continue to do so. Due to the difficulties recruiting Deputy Managers into Fostering and Adoption and to the Senior Practitioner post based in Housing it is recommended that these posts should now be eligible to receive the £1,500 annual retention supplement.

As highlighted in 3.4 the high vacancy levels amongst Senior YOT Officers and the YOT Operational Managers it is recommended that the annual retention supplement should also be applied to these posts.

To encourage promotion and career opportunities for Social Workers in the non front-line teams it was recommended that the retention supplement should not cease when someone is promoted to a Senior Practitioner or Deputy Manager role.

##### **4.2.2 Market Supplement Increments**

The steering group agreed that due to the continuing recruitment difficulties and the demands of the work carried out by the two front line teams that Social Workers, Senior Practitioners and Deputy Managers should continue to receive the additional market supplement increments so that the differential with other teams remains.

### **4.2.3 Golden Hello and Finder's Fee**

The steering group recommended that new employees joining the Council from outside the organisation should continue to receive the £1,000 Golden Hello with the exception of newly qualified Social Workers.

Due to the difficulty in recruiting experienced Senior Practitioners and Deputy Managers to the front line teams from outside the Council it is recommended that the Golden Hello payment is increased to £2,000. To encourage existing staff to move into a frontline post within the Council from a non-front line team it is recommended that a £1,000 Golden Hello payment is made.

As take up of the Finder's Fee has been extremely low since the introduction of the R&R Strategy it is recommended to increase the amount to £500. The group felt it was important to further publicise the Finder's Fee scheme to all staff across the Council.

### **4.2.4 Additional Annual Leave**

It was acknowledged by the group that staff in the two front line teams regularly work additional hours and struggle to find the time to take the time off that is owed to them as time in lieu. The steering group recommended to reward staff in these teams an additional three days annual leave. It was felt that when planned far enough in advance it is easier to plan additional annual leave rather than taking time off in lieu at short notice.

### **4.2.5 Continuous professional development / career pathway**

As a way of strengthening the retention of key members of staff and identifying talent within the division the Workforce Development team in consultation with the steering group have devised two new programmes for staff:

Senior Practitioner Progression Pathway (S3P) The S3P is a programme designed with the aim to develop Social Workers with the capabilities and competence to progress to Senior Practitioner level, participants are required to hold a minimum of 18 months post qualification experience. The scheme will identify and progress experienced talented staff at a faster rate, this structured programme should positively impact on the likelihood of retaining this key group of staff. The programme will consist of a mixture of academic and on the job activities. Once successfully completed, participants will be eligible to move into a Senior Practitioner post.

Continuous Professional Development Plan. This is a structured plan of training courses for qualified staff as well as on the job activities directly linked to the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). In order to ensure our social work staff are exposed to the relevant development opportunities required to successfully function at each PCF level. In addition, there is also a Continuous Professional Development Plan for non-qualified social work support staff.

These two new programmes will serve as a viable means of ensuring that financial incentives are not the only solutions being proposed to solve the recruitment and retention challenges facing the Children's Social Care Division.

### **4.2.6 Management Support/Supervision and Staff Reward**

It was agreed to continue to look at ways to strengthen the best practice processes which already exist within the division by ensuring that staff have regular supervision, appraisals, are well inducted and that caseload levels continue to be monitored. It was agreed that a

recent pilot should be extended to ensure that staff have regular access in communicating with the Assistant Director and Heads of Service to raise any issues they have and make recommendations for service improvements.

The group felt that there is also scope to improve celebrating the success of staff across the division.

#### **4.2.7 Recruitment process**

One of the issues identified by the group was the time it takes for a potential applicant to apply for a post and be offered an interview, due to the highly competitive job market for qualified Social Workers it was agreed that a faster more streamlined process was needed for applicants to apply and be offered an interview. As a direct result of the steering group a new improved application process has been put in place for both direct and agency applicants with a commitment from managers to provide same day feedback and/or interview offers to candidates.

### **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1** It is clear, from the salary benchmarking (Appendix A) that Bromley needs to have an enhanced employment package to retain its profile in the job market for qualified social workers. If the package was removed Bromley salaries would not be competitive in relation to neighbouring London Boroughs and Local Authorities.

### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1** 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 2015/16 and 2016/17 financial years by utilising the residual funding LAA reward grant from the agreed recruitment and retention package for 2010-2014.
  - Comment on the proposed enhancements to the current package as set out in Appendix B.

### **7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1** 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.

### **8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1** The costs of the recruitment and retention strategy was calculated over a four year period from 2010 – 2014, the total net cost was £817,200 funded from the LAA reward grant. 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 during 1 April 2010 – 31 March 2014.

Retention Element	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Golden Hellos	£28,000	£18,795	£20,048	£23,750
Annual retention supplement	£73,042.33	£104,842.00	£126,367.00	£109,036.56
Finder's fee	£0	£0	£0	£625
Market premium - extended salary scales	£44,526.50	£56,130.00	£31,654.00	£47,061.73
Annual Total	£145,568.83	£179,767.00	£178,069.00	£180,473.29
<b>Total spend</b>	<b>£683,878.12</b>			

### Additional Costs

- 8.2** By enhancing the Recruitment and Retention package with the recommendations set out under section 4.1 of this report the additional anticipated annual costs are between £35,000 - £45,000 per annum. It is not possible to give an exact figure as the amount will be dependent of the number of staff recruited and retained across the division over the next two and a half years.
- 8.3** From the original budget of £817,200 there is £597k remaining. Some elements of the recruitment and retention package were paid from underspends within the Division since 2011/12. Therefore there is budget available to fund the package during the current financial year as well as the 2015/16 and 2016/17 financial years.
- 8.4** **Once the funding available has been exhausted the recruitment and retention package will need to be reconsidered. For this to continue beyond 2016/17, funding will have to be found from within existing resources or growth agreed.**

## 9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** 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.

## 10 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** 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.
- 10.2** 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.
- 10.3** 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.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	[List non-applicable sections here]
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	[Title of document and date]