

**Decision Maker:** CARE SERVICES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date:** Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016

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

**Title:** CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE - RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION UPDATE

**Contact Officer:** Mathew Brooks – HR Strategy Officer  
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**Chief Officer:** Charles Obazuaye – Director Human Resources

**Ward:** Borough-wide

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1. Reason for report

- 1.1 To update the Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on the current staffing position of qualified Children's Social Workers in the Children's Social Care Division.
  - 1.2 To provide information on the recruitment and retention initiatives taking place and planned with a view to having a permanent and stable workforce in this area.
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2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **The Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the report.**

### 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: n/a
  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): 194.45 qualified CSC Social Care staff
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
- 

### Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement The Children Act 1989 as amended
  2. Call-in: Not Applicable – No Executive Decision
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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. Bromley like most London Boroughs and Local Authorities struggle to recruit experienced Social Workers with one year or more post qualifying experience. Furthermore, the buoyant locum market for qualified Social Workers has caused competition between neighbouring London Boroughs and Local Authorities which has prompted a number of Councils to review and update their remuneration packages. The Council has had issues recruiting experienced qualified Social Workers for a number of years as evidenced by the overseas recruitment trips to Atlanta in 2009 and subsequent recruitment campaign in Spain.
- 3.2 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. In February 2015 Executive agreed a further two year extension as well as enhancements to the existing R&R strategy. The enhanced R&R package was widely publicised across the Children's Social Care division which included a dedicated news leaflet from the Leader's desk.

- 3.3 The current R&R Strategy (**see Appendix A - Recruitment & Retention package chart 2015-17**) consists of a number of key enhancements to Social Worker's salaries and benefits. These include 'Golden Hello' payments between £1000-£2000 for qualified staff who take up a new position with Bromley. Annual retention supplements between £1500-£2000 per year are paid to staff on the anniversary for each full year completed in post. Market supplement increments which extend the salary scales of certain posts to remain competitive with other London Boroughs and Local Authorities. Other initiatives include the lease car scheme being offered to all Social Workers, additional annual leave allowances, paying a 'finder's fee' for staff who introduce a Social Worker to the Council. The Council also offers relocation packages to attract Social Workers to move to the area.
- 3.4 Whilst the R&R Strategy covers all qualified Social Worker posts it focuses predominately on enhancements to qualified Social Worker's in the 'frontline' teams (Safeguarding & Care Planning & Referral & Assessment) which have historically been the teams which Bromley has found it most difficult to recruit to.

### 4. CURRENT STAFFING POSITION – QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS

- 4.1 The Council currently has a high level of Locum Social Workers working within most teams in the division. Since the Ofsted report in July 2016 the Council has focused on ensuring that most posts are filled which has meant recruiting experienced qualified staff via agencies on a short term basis in order to bring stability to the teams as well as increasing capacity to lower caseloads. In response to the Ofsted inspection the Council has also increased the number of established posts within the division.

## 4.2 New establishment posts

4.2.1 At the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016 the Executive agreed that Council be recommended to approve funding for the posts included in Phase One and Phase Two which have already been committed totalling £949k in 2016/17 with a full year effect of £1,471k as set out at paragraph 6.3 of Report CS17036; and that Council agree to release up to a further £141k in 2016/17 and a further £795k in a full year for Phase Three, with any utilisation of the monies being subject to approval by the Executive following an appropriate level of scrutiny. The new posts and associated costs are detailed in **Appendix B 'Expenditure as a result of Ofsted'**.

## 4.3 Vacancy rates and Locum staff usage

4.3.1 The table below shows the current staffing position within Children's Social Care with permanent and agency staff.

### Qualified Establishment as at 24.11.2016

Section	Total Post FTE	Qualified SW Headcount	Qualified SW FTE	Agency FTE	Total FTE	Qualified Vacancies
Care & Resources	66.15	50.00	47.39	15.88	63.27	2.88
Early Intervention & Family Support	3.00	3.00	3.00	0.00	3.00	0.00
Referral & Disabilities Service	50.08	32.00	30.48	16.00	46.48	3.60
Safeguarding & Care Planning	59.80	30.00	30.00	29.00	59.00	0.80
The Quality Improvement Service	15.42	11.00	9.33	5.80	15.13	0.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>194.45</b>	<b>126.00</b>	<b>120.20</b>	<b>66.68</b>	<b>186.88</b>	<b>7.57</b>

4.3.2 From the information above it is clear that the ratio of locum staff to permanent staff is too high and needs to be addressed if the Council is going to realise its ambition to have a stable, permanent workforce in Children's Social Care.

4.3.3 Across London agency locums levels are high with several London Boroughs having a higher ratio of locum to permanent staff than Bromley. A protocol between 29 of the 32 London Borough's known as the Memorandum of Cooperation exists to cap maximum pay levels for Locum Social Work staff ensuring that the already inflated pay rates do not rise any further. Bromley is part of the Memorandum of Cooperation and has capped its pay rates in line with the agreed rates, however the rates are still approximately 35% higher than the equivalent permanent salary which is why the issues needs to be addressed urgently.

4.3.4 The proposed changes to the IR35 regulations due to take effect from 1 April 2017 could impact on the number of Locum Social Workers who wish to continue working through an agency. It is hoped that the changes will positively impact on the number of locum staff converting to a permanent contract.

#### 4.4 Starters, leavers and pipeline-appointment information

4.4.1 The below table shows the number of qualified starters, leavers and pipeline appointments during the period 1 June – 30 November 2016.

	Leavers	Starters	Pipeline
Care & Resources	4	3	4
The Quality Improvement Service	3	0	1
Safeguarding & Care Planning	8	5	1
Referral & Assessment Team	8	1	2
Early Interventions & Family Support	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>

4.4.2 The pipeline appointments are new recruits who have not started in post but are due to start imminently subject to the individual's notice period and satisfactory pre-employment checks. These checks are being prioritised and in some cases recruits are also able to start pending the pre-employment checks following an appropriate risk assessment.

### 5. RECRUITMENT & RETENTION INITIATIVES

5.1 In response to the high number of vacant posts being covered by locums working within Children's Social Care at present a number of initiatives are taking place with more planned, with the aim to encourage new staff to join the Council, retain the staff currently working for Bromley as well as convert the Locum staff to become permanent employees.

#### 5.2 Recruitment initiatives

##### 5.2.1 'Always On Recruitment' Rolling Advert

On the jobs pages of the Bromley website there is an 'always on' rolling advert for front line Social Workers and Senior Practitioners. This ensures that any potential candidates visiting the website can apply for a role. Similarly on the Bromley CSC recruitment microsite there are contact details and an email address to send CVs to, this ensures candidate's details can be captured whether there is a specific role available for them to apply to or not.

##### 5.2.2 Locum recruitment

HR recruited to a new temporary post in July 2016 to take over the management of recruiting Locum staff. This postholder ensures there is a fast turnaround of CVs and arranging interviews in a competitive market. This has proved to be an effective way of filling vacant posts and reducing the administrative pressures on the service managers thereby increasing capacity within the service.

##### 5.2.3 Recruitment event for current Locum staff

Due to the high number of locum staff in the Division there is a strong focus for the Council to convert them into permanent Bromley employees wherever possible. A *Career Opportunities Event for Locum Staff* took place on 16 November 2016 which 25 Locum staff attended. The Chief Executive, Leader, HR Director and Head of Workforce Development were in attendance to promote to the locum staff the benefits of working for Bromley on a permanent basis. As the staff are known to LBB the aim is to make the

recruitment process as efficient as possible. the locum event was viewed very positively by all stakeholders and in particular the agency staff. Consequently since the event 12 agency staff have arranged a 1-1 meeting with the Director of HR to discuss the possibility of becoming permanent staff and four have already converted.

#### **5.2.4 Exploring options for affordable Housing for Social Workers**

There are a variety of options being considered to make housing available and affordable for qualified Social Workers. Options for both renting and buying within and outside of Bromley are being considered. This could give Bromley a distinct unique selling point in attracting staff to work for LBB.

#### **5.2.5 Updated Bromley Recruitment Microsite / Recruitment Advertising**

Work has already been done to improve the current Children's Social Care recruitment microsite and further work will be carried out to highlight the changes made within Children's Social Care, its commitment to improvement, and the appointment of a new Director etc. New and innovative ways to target and recruit experienced Social Workers are being researched with a multi-platform campaign planned for December 2016 and January 2017.

#### **5.2.6 Corporate and CSC recruitment videos**

Two recruitment videos have been commissioned with filming taking place in November and December 2016. The first video will show a virtual tour of the Council whilst promoting the benefits of working at Bromley, it will highlight the working culture, and other key selling points such as staff benefits, and the great geographical location of Bromley given its proximity to both the city and the Countryside etc. A second video focussing specifically on Children's Social Care is also taking place with the new Director/Deputy Chief Executive at the fore discussing their vision for the Division going forward.

#### **5.2.7 Target Recent Leavers**

This initiative targets Staff who have left in the past 3 years advertising all vacancies to them and highlighting the changes made/future direction of the service whilst promoting all the benefits of re-joining the Borough including – Golden Hellos, Retention Payments, Market Supplement Increments, Training/Career Development, improved IT, and flexible working etc.

#### **5.2.8 Step Up to Social Work**

This is a national employer led initiative giving high achieving non-social work graduates the chance to retrain to be social workers by obtaining a Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work. LB Bromley has been part of the programme for the past 3 cohorts (2,3,4) as the lead authority in the Surrey & South East London Regional Partnership (Surrey, Bromley, Bexley, Lewisham, Lambeth, Southwark and Greenwich). This has led to 9 new SWs joining LBB during the past 2 ½ years with a further 4 due to graduate and join LBB in March 2017.

### **5.3 Retention Initiatives**

**5.3.1 No Quit Policy & Exit Interview** – all qualified Children's Social Care staff are offered a 'No Quit' interview with the Director of HR in order to see whether anything can be done to persuade them to stay. CSC Managers are aware of the policy and are encouraged to have these discussions as well with staff before they formally resign and/or notify HR as early as possible. Exit Interviews are offered to all staff to find out the leaver's reasons and their experience of working for the Council. This intelligence helps to identify any trends and possible solutions.

### **5.3.2 Senior Practitioner Progression Pathway**

This initiative is aimed at existing Social Workers working for LBB. In order to help address the difficulties in recruiting Senior Practitioners in frontline teams, the pathway was launched in September 2015 as a route for staff to obtain the capabilities to develop into Senior Practitioners. Three Social Workers embarked on the pathway to obtain a Graduate Diploma in Children and Families studied at Royal Holloway University of London and moved into Senior Practitioner roles in Sept 2016. On the back of this a wider 'Bromley Children's Services Social Care Academy' is being developed with a view to enhancing the knowledge and skills of staff, and where possible linked to formal qualifications.

### **5.3.3 Recruitment & Retention Strategy Consultation Meetings**

In addition to the above initiatives a series of 6 meetings are taking place during October & December 2016 with staff at all levels across the CSC division to review the current Recruitment & Retention package. As well as pay the meetings are looking at the working environment and working culture to determine if there are any improvements that can be made to ensure that Bromley is a desirable place to work for current and future employees.

5.3.4 The meetings focus on various areas including; pay & benefits, mobile working/IT, the working environment, management style & management support, caseloads and training & development with the aim of capturing staff opinions and ideas about what can be improved. A full review and costed proposal of suggested improvements to the R&R Strategy will be taken to Members for consultation. From the early meetings progress has already been made in terms of improving the working environment and work is under way to look at improving mobile and flexible working for Social Workers.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

6.1 The Council alongside other London Borough's is experiencing difficulty in recruiting and retaining experienced qualified social workers. There is a defined national shortage and Bromley already undertakes a number of initiatives to ensure it remains competitive and an employer of choice in an increasingly competitive marketplace. A review of the current Recruitment and retention Package is underway and it is hoped that this will assist.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 The Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the report.

## **8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 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.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Members have already agreed a £949k financial package of support to recruit additional children's Social care Staff. A fully costed proposal relating to a revised Recruitment and Retention package will be presented to members for consideration shortly.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 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.

## 11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 As set out in this report.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Not applicable.
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Appendix A – R&R Package Chart 2015-17 Appendix B – Expenditure as a result of Ofsted