

Report No.

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: EXECUTIVE

Date: Tuesday 20th June 2017

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: RELEASE OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR THE STEP UP TO SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME

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

Ward: All

1. Reason for report

1.1 On 3 October 2016, the Department for Education wrote to all Directors of Children's Services to notify them that cohort 5 of the Step Up to Social Work Programme had been agreed and invited consortiums of Local Authorities to bid to participate in the programme.

1.2 The Council has taken part in cohort 2, 3 and 4 of the Department for Education's Step Up to Social Work Programme and have signed up to take part in cohort 5.

1.3 This report is seeking approval for the release of the 'ring-fenced' funding for cohort 5. The funding is released in instalments over two financial years: 2017/18 and 2018/19.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Executive is asked to:

i. Consider the content of the report

ii. Approve the release of the ring-fenced funding for 2017/18 and 2018/19 for cohort 5 of the Step Up to Social Work Programme

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The Council being involved and leading in this initiative will support the Children's Social Care recruitment and retention strategy and create the opportunity for the Council to support high calibre trainees in qualifying as social workers who will eventually be recruited into children social care teams.
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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: £915,000
 2. Ongoing costs: Non-Recurring Cost:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Safeguarding and Social Care
 4. Total current budget for this head: N/A – ring-fenced grant
 5. Source of funding: Department for Education – Step Up to Social Work Programme Grant
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 1 FTE
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: 1 FTE
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-Statutory - Government Guidance:
 2. Call-in: Applicable:
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
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Customer Impact

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

Background

- 3.1 Step Up to Social Work ('Step Up') is a Department for Education (DfE) funded initiative that started initially as a pilot in 2010 as a new accelerated work based entry route into children's social work. The programme was developed in response to recognised recruitment issues, plus concerns that qualifying programmes were not consistently preparing graduates for the realities of practice upon qualification, particularly in front line child care services. The Council previously ran a similar 'Grow Your Own Social Worker' programme at high salary and training costs to the Council. Step Up is designed to attract high calibre, professionals into children's social work and enables employers to work closely with their chosen higher education provider to ensure that the programme produces skilled, confident and capable social workers for front line child care teams. Due to the programme being a resounding success the DfE agreed to fund further cohorts of the programme and it now has national coverage. The programme is intended to be a cost neutral initiative funded wholly by the DfE.
- 3.2 The programme is only accessible to Local Authorities who come together to form a Regional Partnership (RP). Within the RP, there must be one authority who takes the lead. The lead Authority's primary role is to receive the entire grant funding for the programme on behalf of all the Authorities in the partnership. It is also the lead authority's responsibility to manage the project and contract with the higher education institute.
- 3.3 The Council first took part in the Step Up programme at cohort 2 (2011). LB Bromley took the lead Authority role in a partnership of three local authorities known as the South East London RP. Cohort 3 of the Step Up programme began in 2013 and the Council once again took the lead in an expanded partnership of six local authorities (the Surrey and South East London RP). The council took the lead in cohort 4 in a further expanded partnership of seven local authorities (the Surrey & South East London RP). LB Bromley has successfully recruited 3 of the 4 trainees supported by the Council upon completion of cohort 4 into frontline children social care teams. Table 1 below sets out the breakdown of supported and recruited trainees over the course of cohort 2, 3 and 4. For clarification LB Bromley and the South East London/Surrey and South East London RPs were not part of national cohort 1.

Table 1 – Breakdown of supported and recruited trainees over previous cohorts

Cohort	Number of trainees supported on the Step Up to Social Work Programme across the regional partnership	Number of trainees recruited after completion of the Step Up to Social Work Programme across the regional partnership	Number of trainees supported on the Step Up to Social Work Programme by LB Bromley	Number of trainees recruited after completion of the Step Up to Social Work Programme by LB Bromley
Cohort 2	13	12	6	6
Cohort 3	31	28	4	3
Cohort 4	29	27	4	3
Total	73	67	14	12

- 3.4 Due to the continuing success of the Step Up To Social Work Programme, the DfE gained ministerial support in order to fund a fifth national cohort. An announcement was made by the DfE of its intentions to support a fifth cohort on 3 October 2016. Any partnerships that were interested in participating had to respond by 16 December 2016.
- 3.5 The Council has agreed to participate in cohort 5, taking the lead authority role once again. The partnership is known as the Surrey and South London RP and now includes the London Boroughs of Bromley, Bexley, Croydon, Merton, Wandsworth and Surrey County Council. LB Croydon, Merton and Wandsworth are all new partners for cohort 5. The partnership is looking to recruit 26 trainees across the six Authorities. LB Bromley is looking to take on 4 students; LB Bexley – 4; LB Croydon – 3; LB Merton – 4; LB Wandsworth – 3; Surrey CC – 8.
- 3.6 The timetable for initiating cohort 5 has been set by the DfE in order that trainees can commence studies in January 2018 (see Table 3)

Funding for cohort 5

- 3.7 As the lead authority, the Council is responsible for accessing and administering the funding on behalf of the partnership to deliver cohort 5 of Step Up. The Council will receive total funding of £915,000 over a period of two financial years: 2017/18 and 2018/19 (based on taking 26 trainees onto the programme).
- 3.8 As with cohort 2, 3 and 4, funding is released in stages as certain milestones are met. Table 2 below sets out the timescales for the release of funding. The partnership continues to operate under a Memorandum of Understanding which states that all decisions regarding the detailed use of the funding to meet the objectives must be agreed by all partner Authorities. The project is managed by a Steering Board who oversee and monitor the operational implementation and actively participates in the strategic development of the project to make sure that it is delivered to the highest standards and to timescales. A new Steering Board involving all cohort 5 partners has been established which is chaired by a LB Bromley representative. They will ensure that financial monitoring and procurement follow Bromley's procedures and regulations.
- 3.9 The DfE grant funding sits within the ECHS department budget.
- 3.10 The Executive are therefore asked to agree the release of this funding for financial years 2017/18 and 2018/19 to be used for the delivery of the Step Up programme cohort 5.

Table 2 – Breakdown of cohort 5 funding timetable

Objective	Funding for cohort 5	Total funding for the Surrey and South London Regional Partnership (based on 26 students)
Administration and Management of the Programme	£48,000	£48,000
Bursary	£19,833 per student	£515,658
Training Costs (University Fees)	£11,667 per student	£303,342
Placement Supervision	£1,750 per student	£45,500
Additional one off funding for a partnership supporting between 26-35 trainees	£2,500	£2,500
Total		£915,000

Table 3 – Timetable for the delivery of cohort 5

Deadline for regional partnerships (RPs) to apply to DfE	16 December 2016
DfE notify RPs of outcome of bids	27 January 2017
<i>Step Up to Social Work</i> candidate application form goes live	28 March 2017
Application window closes	05 May 2017
Contractor sifts application forms	30 March – 19 May 2017
Successful applications to be forwarded to RPs for pre-assessment centre stage (electronic/ paper format)	3 April –22 May 2017
RPs to undertake paper sift of applicants	3 April – 7 June 2017
Assessment centres	22June – 21July 2017
Successful applicants invited to confirm place on course	Early-mid August 2017
RPs perform necessary checks/references on successful applicants	August 2017
Local management of reserves within and between regional partnerships	August – September 2017
Contractor manages the reserve pool of candidates to fill as many places as possible	October – November 2017
Partnerships confirm HCPC approval for programme	By November 2017 latest
<i>Step Up to Social Work</i> programme starts	January 2018

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

The Council being involved and leading in this initiative will support the Children's Social Care recruitment and retention strategy and create the opportunity for the Council to support high calibre trainees in qualifying as social workers who will eventually be recruited into children social care teams.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Step Up to Social Work Programme will assist the Council in delivering its commitment to prioritise the safeguarding and protection of our most vulnerable children and young people, as stated in Building a Better Bromley. The scheme also forms a key part of our recruitment strategy.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Confirmation of the level of funding has been received by the DfE, and will be £915,000 spread over two financial years (2017/18 and 2018/19). Funding is broken down in Table 2 and assumes that 26 students will be recruited and take part in the programme.

Expenditure will take place over two financial years covering the course and its evaluation. All costs associated with this programme will be picked up through the grant and there will not be a call on core funding to run the programme. Should the level of applicants reduce then funding per trainee will be affected accordingly. Any funding that has not been used by the end of each of the two financial years to support the programme must be returned to DfE under the terms of the grant.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 It is important that we take advantage of any opportunities to increase the supply of high calibre social workers available to work within Bromley. The Step Up to Social Work programme has become a useful part of the Council's recruitment and retention strategy. It complements rather than supplant the wider recruitment and retention initiative being implemented to create a 'Dream Organisation' and promote Bromley Council as a place to work and earn recognition and reward for hard work and exceptional performance. In addition to the Step Up to Social Work Programme, the Council also targets newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) for recruitment. An open recruitment evening for NQSWs is being hosted by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Education, Care and Health Services on 25th May 2017. The Step Up to Social Work trainees and NQSWs will receive comprehensive in-house and on the job external training to ensure 'fitness for purpose' in order to maximise the return on investment (ROI). The Council's recruitment and retention initiatives are outlined in Appendix 1.
- 7.2 The DfE provides RPs with funding to manage the project and they expect RPs to use this funding to employ a Step Up To Social Work Co-ordinator. The partnership established this post in 2011 on a full-time fixed term basis. The post sits within the HR division in the Workforce Development team at Bromley. The post is managed by Bromley's Head of Workforce Development. The Surrey and South London partnership has agreed to extend the term of the current Step Up Co-ordinator post to continue to provide support for cohort 5. The Step Up Co-ordinator will continue to have day to day management of the project and management of the contract with the HEI, with overall responsibility held by the Head of Workforce Development.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Council policy and EU regulations on a fair and transparent procurement procedure will be followed as will adherence to Council Financial Regulations. Although there is a Partnership

between other Councils who will be involved and contribute to the decision making of the procurement exercise, Bromley is taking the lead role and the procurement will be subject to Bromley Financial Regulations.

9. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

As Bromley is taking the lead role, any procurement will be subject to Bromley Financial Regulations.

Non-Applicable Sections:	N/A
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	CEO1627 – Children’s Social Care Recruitment and Retention Update