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To all Members of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)

22nd March, 2018
Our ref: C/MR

Dear Member,

Supplementary Agenda – Meeting of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) - Thursday, 29th March, 2018

The papers for the above meeting were circulated on 21st March, 2018. The appendices documents are attached to this letter. Please include them with your papers for the meeting.

- **Agenda Item 5.** **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS**
  (Pages 3 - 16)

  Report of the Task and Finish Group

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Rose
Governance Services Officer

Membership:	Councillors S Bains, D Kershaw, J Lepoidevin, A Lucas, P Male, C Miks, K Mulhall, M Mutton (Chair) and P Seaman
By invitation:	Councillors J Clifford, S Hanson, K Jones, B Kaur, K Maton, R Potter and E Ruane

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Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
Date: 29th March 2018

Subject: Amendments to the report - Recommendations from Task and Finish on Retention of Social Workers

1   Purpose of the Note

1.1   To inform the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board of minor amendments to the recommendations from the task and finish group on Retention of Social Workers report

2   Information/Background

2.1   The report that has been published was published without the appendices. The following information amends the references to the appendices.

2.2   Amendment 1

2.3   Paragraph 7.17 should read:

"The Senior Leadership Team provided a response to some of the emerging themes from the task and finish group. These can be found in section 7."

2.4   Amendment 2

2.5   Paragraph 8.1 should read:

"Members were provided with financial information on the current funded posts within Children's Services Social care, implemented as part of the workforce redesign. (Appendix 3)"

2.6   Amendment 3

2.7   Paragraph 8.6 should read:

"Members also considered information gathered from exit interview of staff who had left the organisation (Appendix 4)."

2.8   Amendment 4

2.9   The list of appendices should read:

Appendix 1: Scoping Document
Appendix 2: Social Work Research by the Teaching Partnership at Birmingham University
Appendix 3: Financial information
Appendix 4: Workforce Strategy and exit interview information

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Scrutiny Scoping Document

Title of Review	
Retention of Social Workers	
Objectives	
What does the Board/Task and Finish Group hope to achieve by considering the topic?	Identify recommendations for the Cabinet Member to improve the retention of Social Workers
What will be the indicators of success?	In the long term an improvement in the retention of social workers.
When will the review be evaluated?	12 months from the agreement of the recommendations, however recruitment and retention rates are currently monitored as part of the Children's Improvement Board
Scope	
What will be included in the scope of the review?	The recruitment and retention of Social Workers in their jobs
What will be excluded from the scope?	Specific details of social worker qualification Use of agency staff
Does the review link with any existing strategies or policies? Is this currently being reviewed/refreshed?	• Children's Service Workforce Strategy action plan. • Progression Scheme (April 2018) • Workforce Board
Methodology	
How will the review be carried out? e.g. surveys, site visits, select committees etc.	• Meetings with senior managers • Focus group with existing social workers o NQSW o Established SW o Team managers • Review of other local authorities policies/strategies • Review of exit interviews • Meeting with support services such as HR, Finance, Workforce development etc.
Barriers and Risks	
What are the barriers and risks to the review?	• Time and capacity of officers for the T&F group • Potential financial implications of any incentive schemes considered
How can these be managed/ overcome?	• Realistic expectation on affordability – robust financial assessment of any proposals • Support provided by Scrutiny Team
Equality and Diversity	
Does the review have any potential implications for Equality and Diversity? (race, gender (including transgender), disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, poverty, looked after children)	Equality and Diversity issues should be considered as part of this review, ensuring that no groups of employees experience discrimination and that this is not a factor in the non-retention of social workers.
Timescales and reporting procedure	
List any key dates/events which might impact on the timescales of the review	Recommendations to be considered by the Board March 1st 2018, Cabinet Member 16th April 2018
Anticipated number of meetings	4, plus focus groups
Scrutiny Board portfolio	SB2
Cabinet Member portfolio	Children and Young People
Anticipated reporting date to Scrutiny Board	1st March 2018
Anticipated reporting route – Cabinet Member/Cabinet	Cabinet Member – 16th April 2018
Report of…….	Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board
Comms involvement	Dependant on recommendations identified

Meeting planner (dates to be agreed according to availability)

Meeting	Subject	Officers
1	Introduction, agreement of scope, background and context to the issue. Information required: • Draft scope (GH) • Current recruitment and retention data (LP-M) • Evidence available on what works (LP-M) • Children's Workforce Strategy • Progression Scheme	JG, LP-M, GH
2	Planning for focus groups and identification of questions – which include pastoral care for social workers and financial incentives Information required: • Exit interview information (JG/LP-M) • Information from other local authorities	JG/LP-M GH
3	Focus groups with different groups of Social Workers	GH
4	Support services – HR, Workforce Development, Finance. To cover financial incentives as well as other potential incentives.	Reps from depts. JG/LP-M GH
5	Final meeting to identify recommendations. Information required: • Summary of key pints discussed and any areas for recommendations identified (GH)	Children's Services Leadership Team GH

Retaining Social Workers – Messages from Research

In order for high quality services to be provided to children and their families, there is a need for a workforce that is well-trained, motivated and supported. However, there is evidence in the UK of a shortage of experienced child and family social workers (Research in Practice, 2015). Social workers on average remain in the profession for less than eight years (Curtis, et al. 2010).

When experienced social workers leave, there is an impact on the quality of the service that can be provided. Baginsky (2013) explored what is meant by the term 'experienced' social worker. 'Experienced' does not just refer to the number of years that a social worker has spent in practice, but also the depth and breadth of their experience. Experienced social workers should have an excellent understanding of social work theory and its application, and a knowledge of social work research.

Newly qualified social workers learn through peer support and interaction with more experienced workers, and a shortage of experienced social workers reduces the 'community of practice' for those beginning their careers. When there is a lack of skilled workers, confidence in the profession is reduced from both service users and other agencies (Buckley, 2008).

High staff turn-over leads to added pressure on those who remain, and a lack of continuity for children and families. Social work by its very nature relies upon relationships between the social worker and the children and families that they work with (Research in Practice, 2015).

Why do Social Workers Leave?

There are several reasons identified in research for social workers leaving their current role, Local Authority, or indeed the profession as a whole. These are known as 'push factors' (Research in Practice, 2015).

Culture of Blame

Children and families social work continues to receive negative media representation which increases anxiety among social workers who are dealing with complexity and risk. If social workers fear being blamed within their Local Authorities then they feel vulnerable and will lack trust in their managers (Healy et al, 2009; Baginsky, 2013).

In order to counteract this, organisation need to support 'collective accountability', with a shared commitment to supervision and continued learning and development (Research in Practice, 2015).

Lack of clarity about roles

Risk-adverse culture within social care often results in decision making being done by management, rather than the social worker. This can lead to social workers feeling disempowered and unable to use their own professional judgement. When social workers are micro-managed in this way it can lead to low job satisfaction (Searle and Patent, 2013), which then can increase the likelihood of social workers leaving.

In order for social workers to make decisions, and for managers to have the confidence that they can do this, they need to be provided with continued professional development in order to improve their knowledge, confidence and skills (Ward, 2014).

High levels of stress and burnout

Higher levels of stress tend to be reported within social work than in other professions (Collins, 2008). When there is high staff turnover and vacancies within a team or organisation, the remaining social workers caseloads increase, and newly qualified social workers can be expected to take on too much responsibility from an early stage in their career. If this continues, over time the risk of emotional burnout increases (Gibbs, 2009). Stress can impact on social workers judgements and their ability to perform tasks (Baginsky, 2013).

Organisations need to be proactive and not reactive in promoting the well-being of their social workers (Research in Practice, 2015).

Overly bureaucratic systems

Research suggests that the core reason that social workers enter the profession is to complete direct work with children and families, and when social workers are able to do this their job satisfaction increases (Stalker et al., 2007). Overly bureaucratic systems (such as awkward electronic recording systems), reduce the amount of time that social workers can spend with children and their families. There is also a lack of administrative support across social care, and this leads to social workers having to do more administration tasks. Gibson (2016) found that when social work focusses on administrative tasks, the social workers 'capacity for empathy for the parents' is reduced.

Organisations need to simplify and integrate their procedures where this is possible, or provide administrative support in order to give social workers more time to use their expertise with children and their families (Research in Practice, 2015).

Negative Ofsted judgement

Staff turnover can increase following a negative Ofsted judgement, as well as interim appointments in management and leadership roles, increasing the instability within an

organisation (Research in Practice, 2015). A poor Ofsted judgement creates anxiety staff, and can also lead to an increase in their workload, due to staff turnover and attempts to improve services (Kelly, 2005).

Organisations need to acknowledge and challenge where practice has not been adequate, but also need to recognise that staff may feel 'over-criticised' and want to leave, at the time when the organisation needs them most (Research in Practice, 2015).

Why do Social Workers Stay?

There are numerous reasons identified in research as to why social workers stay in their current team, organisation or the profession as a whole. These are known as 'pull factors' (Research in Practice, 2015).

Making a difference

The majority of social workers are very committed to the work that they do. A motivation for social workers is making a difference in the lives of the children and their families with whom they work (Stalker et al., 2007).

Organisations which allow a maximum time to be spent with children and their families, have higher levels of job satisfaction, are more desirable places for social workers to work (Research in Practice, 2015).

Good quality supervision, support and the opportunity for development

If social workers feel supported by their supervisor, and their peers, social workers are more likely to want to remain in this organisation. Where there is good quality supervision and continued professional development is valued, this helps reduce the stress and pressure of social work. The sense of belonging to a team and having support from colleagues increases the well-being of social workers (Research in Practice, 2015).

Opportunities for career progression

Recognising experienced social workers and having pathways for career progression are effective ways of retaining experienced social workers (Burns, 2010). Progression pathways should include, but not be exclusively management positions, with case-holding senior and advanced practitioner roles, and practice educator posts also being recognised (Research in Practice, 2015).

3

Organisational support for emotional well-being

There are numerous methods for social workers to develop a greater resilience and manage the emotional stresses of their work (i.e. Mindfulness). Organisations as a whole should commit to supporting practitioners well-being, rather than placing the responsibility on the individual (Russ et al, 2009).

Feeling valued

Feeling valued is regularly cited as a reason why social workers stay. Pay is one aspect of valuing staff, but more often referenced is the way that social workers are treated and spoken to by management and the organisation (Research in Practice, 2015).

Good quality management

Social workers are more likely to stay within their team or organisation if they have a good quality manager. A confident team manager is able to protect their team, even within the context of a highly stressed Local Authority, whereas an inexperienced manager can contribute to the stress that the social workers are experiencing (Baginsky, 2013).

What works in Social Work Retention?

Retaining experienced social workers is a challenge across children and families social work, and particularly in child protection teams. In order to retain experienced social workers there needs to be greater stability in organisations and higher levels of job satisfaction. This in turn will lead to more positive outcomes for children and families. Baginsky (2013) found that the factors that are most closely associated with retaining experienced social workers are:

- Workloads, remuneration and working conditions
- Positive workplace cultures
- Supervision that addresses both organisational and professional requirements
- Opportunities for professional and career development

Hannah Bedford Learning Research Associate, Coventry City Council and West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership

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AWorkforce Overview Note (including Market Supplement)

Childrens Services Restructure Overview

The table below shows the current funded posts within Children's Services Social care, implemented as part of the workforce redesign.

Job Description	Grade	Responsive services	Area Team	LAC Team	TroughCare	Fostering	Placements	Total FTE
Service Manager	SM2	1.0	4.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	**9.0**
Team Manager	9	5.0	16.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	1.0	**32.0**
Senior Practitioner	8	5.0	17.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	0.0	**32.0**
Children & Family Social Worker	7	14.0	106.0	19.0	13.0	20.0	1.0	**173.0**
Newly Qualified Social Worker	6	0.0	16.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	0.0	**26.0**
Children & Family Worker	5	5.0	16.0	3.0	0.0	4.0	0.0	**28.0**
Personal Advisor	5	0	0.0	0	11	0.0	0	**11.0**
Other posts	Various	7	3	5.6	0	1	4	**20.6**

There are a number of assumptions underpinning the staffing model including

Caseloads: built in at 14 per social worker for Looked after children and child protection, and 20 per social worker for children in need, and 25 per personal advisor for former relevant children (leaving care) In addition to this, reductions to caseload have been made for certain posts (e.g. Senior Practitioners, newly qualified social workers NQSW)

Advanced Social Worker Posts (grade 8): the structure includes resource to convert 50 FTE grade 7 Social Worker posts into Grade 8 Advanced social worker posts.

Current Position

There are currently 45 agency workers covering vacancies, and we continue to look to reduce this number through recruitment and retention.

In addition there are currently 45 NQSW's, which is higher than the original workforce model.

There are currently 48.2 full time equivalent social workers receiving the market supplement. Replacing this with 50 FTE Grade 8 Advanced Social Worker posts in the new structure is cost neutral.

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Children's Social Care Plan for the Retention of Staff

Aim
The plan to improve the recruitment and retention of Social Workers across the Children's Service has been in place for a number of years and takes many forms. This programme will ensure that we have well-trained, a supported and motivated workforce, who feel valued and remain with Coventry City Council.

Our Role
- Organisational Development Team play a crucial role in the retention of Social Workers across the Childrens Service and to ensure their experience here is improved.
- The Children's Workforce Development Adviser supports Childrens Services with the Social Work Experience Programme, by visiting the teams in the Hubs, inducting new Social Workers and carrying out exit interviews.
- The common themes are shared with the Workforce Development Board on a monthly basis.
- Organisational Development also provide a comprehensive Learning and Development portfolio to ensure employees can access high quality courses to improve their skills and knowledge to help support the children, young people and families in our City.

Outcomes
- The Social Work Experience Programme commenced in January 2016 with the Induction of the Strategic Leads – The Children's Workforce Development Adviser now inducts all newly appointed experienced Social Workers across the Service
- Exit Interviews – all Social Workers are interviewed to feedback about their experiences of working for Children's Services (e.g. what worked well, or what improvements we need to consider within the Service)
- Signs of Safety Framework – is the frame work that is currently being embedded across the Service to support Practitioners in their work. 463 employees have been trained along with 62 Practice Leads and 60 Partner services across the City
- A comprehensive Learning and Development Portfolio has been designed for the Service since 2015. Courses are mapped to the Knowledge and Skills Standards, Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF), Workforce Development Strategy, Appraisals and the Improvement Plan

Exit interviews- Key themes
Reasons for Leaving:
- Improved work/life balance
- Better Flexibility
- Closer to home
- Improved progression

Social Worker Feedback
- ASYE Programme is attractive with protected caseload and support
- Great support from my Service Manager and Team Manager and from Social Workers in my team
- Induction was very informative
- There are lots of opportunities here in Coventry

- My Manager encourages feedback and suggestions
- Colleagues listened and supported me
- Excellent supervision – generally high quality
- Time management is important with level of cases
- Work/life balance is promoted, not always able to practice this
- Lower caseloads for Social Workers required
- Clearer progression pathway needed and expectations shared
- Academic progression would be welcomed
- Following the re-design, workers need reassurance, to feel valued
- Internal communication should be clearer
- Acknowledge good practice more

Statistics
From October 2016:
- 34 Social Work Leavers
- 18 Exit Interviews
- 53% interviewed
- 100% of leavers notified to OD are offered an interview

Process
- Manager completes leaver form
- Report sent to Organisational Development weekly
- Leaver invited for an interview at their convenience in their place of work
- Structured template covering; recruitment, induction, the Coventry experience, role, challenges and improvements, development, leadership and management, support, suggestions, future
- Engagement after leaving from John Gregg; thank you and conversation if they would like to return