



Coventry City Council

## Briefing note

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**To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**

**10<sup>th</sup> December 2015**

**Subject: Children's Services Spend and Use of Agency Staff**

### **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To inform the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) of the spend and use of agency staff in Children's Services.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Scrutiny Board 2:

- 1) Note progress on reducing spend and use of agency staff

### **3 Information/Background**

- 3.1 The Council is required through the Master Vendor contract, Pertemps to supply all suitable agency workers on behalf of the Council. The information supplied by the Master Vendor on the agency spends give detailed information on agency usage and spends.
- 3.2 The Ofsted Inspection of Coventry's Children's Services and the review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), published in March 2014, judged services and the LSCB to be inadequate. The Ofsted report identified a number of priority actions and areas for improvement. As a result an additional £5.6 million for 2014/15 was allocated to Children's Services to improve, recruit and retain an effective workforce.
- 3.3 Following the appointment of the Director of Children's Services the Children's Workforce Strategy will be revised. The strategy is specific to Coventry and seeks to fulfil the requirements of the Improvement Plan "To recruit and retain an effective workforce". The strategy will include the use of agency and a model for the future. The revised strategy will be completed in December 2015 and will be presented to the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) at the meeting on 25 February 2016.
- 3.4 Work is continuing regionally between 14 local authorities in the West Midlands to cap the agency worker hourly rates for Children's Social Workers (this varies depending on the level appointed to). The Chief Executives and Director of Children's Services have raised concerns in the region about escalating hourly rates for Children's Social Workers. A meeting was held in 2014 to agree on capped rates for several levels of social works an agreed protocol was signed by all 14 contributing local authorities. The capped rates were introduced at the beginning of January 2015. Social workers engaged with the authority before this date remains on the agreed rates until such time as they move authorities and then the new rates apply.

- 3.5 Work is also in progress to create a centralised bank of references held on behalf of participating authorities. This will enable more effective monitoring of agency workers between Authorities. This should result in hourly rates for agency social workers remaining static and ultimately reducing. Managers are required, as is our Master Vendor Pertemps, to ensure that no hourly rate is awarded above the agreed capped rate and exceptions will be reported to the Director. This will continue to be monitored by the Resources Directorate.
- 3.6 This report provides an update on the current position relating to spend and the use of agency staff in Children's Services.

#### 4 Current position (Agency Staffing)

- 4.1 There are currently **220.7** permanently employed social workers in funded posts across Children's Services made up as follows:
- 10 Service Managers
  - 34 Team Managers
  - 28 Senior Practitioners
  - 65.9 Social workers
  - 65.6 Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) and Early Professional Development(/EPD Programme)
  - 17.2 Independent Review Officer/Local Authority Designated Officer/Quality Assurance Manager

There are 70 Agency staff covering vacancies for the above posts. The table below highlights by service area the establishment funded posts, actual posts filled and vacancies and agency levels for each area as at 16 November 2015.

Service	Establishment Funded posts	Actual Filled Posts	Vacancies	Agency staff employed
Referral and Assessment Service	56.6	40	16.6	7
Neighbourhoods	104.4	74.4	30	48
Fostering and Adoption	48.9	39.4	9.5	6
MASH/CSE	15.4	13.4	2	2
CDT	15.6	15.6	0	2
LAC/Route 21	25.3	21.7	3.6	1
Children's Safeguarding	20.2	16.2	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>286.4</b>	<b>220.7</b>	<b>65.7</b>	<b>70</b>

- 4.2 Agency staff currently represents 25% of the workforce, permanently employed experienced social workers and senior practitioners represent 33% and Newlyqualified Social Workers(NQSWs) and Early Professional Development (EPD)staff represent 23%.With Managers and IRO's accounting for the remaining 19%.The Neighbourhoods Teams represent the highest level of the total agency staff with 68%. .3 In October 2014, Children's Services employed 84 agency staff compared with 70 in November 2015.
- 4.3 Further work to understand why staff stay and leave social worker posts and the impact of agency staff in the future is being undertaken. The revised workforce strategy will include a revised offer for retention and alternative methods for recruiting social workers in the future, training and development and clear career pathways for staff.

## 5 Agency Spend

- 5.1 Agency spend to date is £3.8 million. The forecast for 2015/16 on agency staff is £5.8 million. The table below provides a comparison with 2014/15 and highlights that agency spend is reducing, however 2014-15 includes a £2M one off spend on Skylakes.

Children Services Agency Spend in	2014/15	2015/16 to date
Forecast	-	£5.8 m
Actual	£8.3 m	£3.8 m
Average monthly costs	£0.69 m	£0.48 m

## 6 Key Areas of Progress to date:

- 6.1 **Social Worker Recruitment Campaign** - The 'Do it for Daniel' recruitment campaign has now closed. The campaign generated a huge amount of interest for a range of vacant roles and the national profile of the campaign generated significant interest at job fairs both in Birmingham and Manchester.
- 6.2 The campaign resulted in a total of 47 appointments being made for a range of roles including experienced social workers, IRO's, team managers, senior practitioners and newly qualified social workers. However from those 47 appointments there were 13 candidates who withdrew after accepting the roles.
- 6.3 Work is now underway on a new recruitment campaign and this will be informed by the lessons learnt from the first campaign, targeted recruitment activity, utilising social media and ensuring higher ranking on search engines such as Google. This campaign will have a new narrative informed by the overall vision and direction of travel as set out by the new Director of Children's Services.
- 6.4 **Social Worker Retention** - The Council currently have a scheme in place to pay newly Recruited experienced social workers £2,000 and then further retention payment of £1,000 per year for every year they stay with us (to be reviewed at the two year point) and a payment to existing experienced social workers of £1,000 per annum. As part of our new campaign we will have to review our overall rewards package and ensure it is fit for purpose and competitive within the region.

## 7 Next Steps

- 7.1 Children's Services will establish a stable workforce, invest in social workers development and reduce reliance on agency workers by delivering on the following:
- Launch of new recruitment campaign ( Director's Priority)
  - Refresh and review the workforce strategy
  - Workforce Development board to be jointly chaired by the Assistant Director of Human Resources and Workforce Services and Director of Children's Services
  - Evaluate training activity
  - Set the targets for reducing agency social work

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