

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**REPORT TO CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE****13 OCTOBER 2014****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR CHILDREN****RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS****1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide Committee with information in relation to the recruitment and retention of Social Workers and the actions undertaken and planned to address these issues

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 Having a qualified, stable and appropriately experienced workforce in place will contribute directly to two Corporate Improvement Priorities:

- Working with children and families to tackle problems early
- Working together to make the best use of our resources

3. Background

- 3.1 Recruitment and retention of Social Workers in Children's Services continues to challenge many local authorities in Wales. While this is not a new issue, the situation will vary for each local authority over time and will even vary across different areas within the service.
- 3.2 There have been a range of national reports on this matter and recommendations have been taken forward at a local and national level. However, it is recognised that there is no one solution and there are a wide range of factors contributing to the situation at any one time.
- 3.3 Of concern at present is the significant number of newly qualified Social Workers employed in this Authority who are in their first or second year of practice. Managers are required to protect newly qualified social workers workload and time during their first year in practice and as a result are challenged in their ability to allocate the high number of child protection and looked after children cases currently faced.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 A recruitment and retention project has been established to develop strategies to tackle this agenda. The project board, comprising managers from the Safeguarding and Family Support service, Social Care Workforce and Development team and corporate functions such as Human Resources and Communications and Marketing, has been established. Sponsored by the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support, the project reports to the Children's Strategic Improvement Board,

chaired by the Corporate Director Wellbeing (in her capacity as Director of Social Services).

- 4.2 The aim of the project is to establish a stable, confident and competent social work workforce with an appropriate mix of skills and experience which is able to meet statutory responsibilities and achieve positive outcomes for children and young people.
- 4.3 The focus of this work has been on the front line safeguarding social work teams; however it is acknowledged that the work of the project will be of benefit to other social workers in Safeguarding and Family Support and in some cases Adult Social Care.
- 4.4 The project brief at Appendix 1 sets out the project objectives and the project board, chaired by the Head of Safeguarding and Family Support. This board monitors the progress made against the objectives and reviews the overall staffing situation to make key decisions about the deployment of staff.
- 4.5 The main features of the work undertaken through the project workstreams and progress made is set out below:

4.5.1 **Vacancy Rates**

An immediate priority was to address the vacancy position to ensure arrangements were in place, through appointments, secondments and agency workers, to cover all permanent positions. Additionally, meetings were arranged with hosted students who were in their final year of training and were seeking employment. At the time of writing this report there were 5 permanent vacancies (3 Social Workers, 1 Senior Practitioner and 1 Team Manager) of which, 3 have been recruited to.

4.5.2 **Recruitment**

Recruitment practices have been improved which promote working in Bridgend as a Social Worker, for example the professional development opportunities available. Recruitment timescales are now more responsive to service needs. A rolling advertising campaign has been implemented. This has included targeted recruitment for social workers with more than 2 years post qualifying service. This is proving successful in attracting applicants, with 3 experienced social workers recently shortlisted for interview.

4.5.3 **Agency Workers**

There are improved monitoring arrangements for the engagement of Agency workers. At the time of writing this report there were 6 agency social workers engaged in the Social Work teams. While exit plans are in place for these, their departure will depend on the success of recruiting experienced social worker staff.

4.5.4 **Exit Interviews**

Exit interviews can provide direct indications as to how to improve staff retention, through questions relating to reasons for leaving, comments about BCBC as an employer and any additional information to improve retention.

Since October 2013, 20 exit questionnaires have been issued to Social Workers who have left employment since April 2013. 7 questionnaires have been returned and 3 exit interviews have been undertaken. Based on these 10 responses and interviews the following themes emerged:-

- 'To work in another service area' and 'Job Dissatisfaction' are the most common reasons for leaving identified.
- Other reasons for leaving included 'Dissatisfaction with the work environment', 'Health' and 'Need for a change'.
- Some staff referred to caseloads being too high, resulting in unrealistic expectations being placed upon them. Some staff felt that they required additional supervision and support, while others cited the need for better communication between management and practitioners.
- Notwithstanding the above, many staff reported that they had had a positive experience whilst working in Bridgend acknowledging that many of the issues they identified were systemic of Social Work as a profession.

4.5.5 Pay and Conditions

The Authority has implemented the All Wales Career Pathway Structure and this is reflected in the Council's Pay and Grading structure. The current salaries for the Social Work job family are comparable to other Local Authorities in Wales. There is no indication from the exit interview data that employees are leaving employment solely for higher salaries.

There have, however, been indications from staff that they are leaving to take advantage of different flexible working arrangements in other Local Authorities, such as working condensed hours, more part time opportunities and or increased flexible working. The Council is currently updating its Flexible Working policy and part time opportunities will be advertised in order to respond to these issues.

4.5.6 Marketing

As part of the recruitment and retention board marketing and communications issues have been considered. A microsite is being developed to promote Social Work vacancies and increase the profile of Bridgend as an employer. The microsite will include testimonials of social workers and managers, detailing the positives of working as a social worker in Bridgend. The site will also promote other benefits to prospective social workers such as; training and development opportunities, career progression opportunities, mentoring and other support arrangements. The microsite will go live in the autumn

4.5.7 Workforce Development

Learning and development activities play a key part in developing a Social Worker's performance and the contribution that they make to the organisation. The Social Care Workforce Development Programme offers a range of continuing professional development opportunities for Social Workers and Social Work Team Managers. Specific examples include:

- An induction programme for newly appointed Social Workers and Social Work Managers.
- Newly qualified social workers entering their first year of in practice are supported through a model which is line with the Care Council for Wales and Welsh Government guidance (2008). 10 social workers who qualified in 2014 will be accessing the programme.
- During 2014/15 17 social workers entering their second year of practice will be supported to access the Consolidation Programme which is part of the Care Council for Wales Continuing Professional Education & Learning Framework for Social Workers.
- A programme of mentoring support for Social Work Team Managers and Senior Practitioners.

A qualification and skills audit is to be undertaken which will support the realignment of the Safeguarding Teams, with the aim of ensuring that when allocating social workers to teams there is an appropriate mix of knowledge, skills, experience and professional autonomy.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules.

5.1 None

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 This report is for information purposes only and does not therefore need an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report as the costs associated with the activities outlined will be contained within existing resources.

8. Recommendation

8.1 It is recommended that Committee note the content of this report.

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Background documents:

None



Bridgend County Borough Council

Recruitment and Retention Project

Project Brief

Version: 1.0

Date: 16 June 2014

Status: Final

Author: Project Manager

Project Roles:

Senior Responsible Officer	Head of Safeguarding and Family Support
Project Manager	HR Officer

Document Control

Version Control

Version	Status	Date	Author	Amendment Details
0.1	Draft	12.02.2014	Project Manager	Initial Draft
0.2	Draft	31.03.2014	Project Manager	Amendments - CT
0.3	Draft	07.04.2014	Project Manager	Additions – Project Board
1.0	Final	16.06.2014	Project Manager	Additions – Project workstreams

Strategic Context

1. The Safeguarding and Family Support Service is currently facing challenges in relation to the recruitment and retention of qualified and experienced social workers. It is acknowledged that this is a national problem, with all authorities facing particular issues in this area.
2. Having a qualified, stable and appropriately experienced workforce in place will contribute to the quality of services provided and the achievement of the below Improvement Priorities identified in the Corporate Plan 2013-2017;
 - Working together to make the best use of our resources
 - Working with Children and Families to tackle problems early.

Aim of the project

3. The aim of the project is to establish a stable, confident and competent workforce with an appropriate mix of skills and experience within the Safeguarding and Family Support service which is able to meet statutory responsibilities and achieve positive outcomes for children and young people.

Project Objectives

4. The objective of the project is to develop strategies to tackle issues affecting the recruitment of social workers in Children's Social Services, as well as improving our ability to retain those social workers already working for the Authority.

In achieving this, the Project will:

- Identify the key factors that are contributing to the current issues experienced in recruiting and retaining Children's Social Services Social Workers e.g. Candidate attraction, turnover levels, absence levels.

- Increase Bridgend County Borough Council's presence within the labour market, promoting BCBC as an employer of choice.
- Develop a range of targeted recruitment campaigns aimed at ensuring that applicants have the correct skills and experience levels to meet service requirements.
- Gain a clear understanding of BCBC's pay position in relation to other Welsh Local Authorities.
- Take appropriate actions to fill vacancies through deployment of workforce and a range of temporary solutions, including internal and external secondment opportunities.
- Review working arrangements with Agency providers to ensure that the Safeguarding and Family Support service requirements are met.
- Identify best practice strategies employed across sector to assist with both the recruitment and retention of staff.
- Improve the provision of workforce information (and comparative data) to ensure that accurate, meaningful information is available to assist with developing teams.
- Ensure that Recruitment and Selection policies and procedures reflect the specific requirements of the service.
- Establish effective internal communication arrangements to ensure that staff are informed and engaged.
- Establish arrangements to support and develop less experienced and knowledgeable social workers.
- Review existing management practices and procedures, including Induction, Supervision and Appraisal arrangements.
- Ensure that Managers are suitably equipped to manage the sickness absence process.
- Ensure that the skills mix in each Team is balanced and caseload levels are manageable.

Benefits/dis-benefits

5. The benefits of the project will be:

- Reduced turnover and vacancy rates
- Improved retention rates
- Balanced skills and experience mix
- Improved position in the labour market and public profile.

- Improved staff morale within Teams and Services

Constraints/Assumptions/Dependencies

6. This project may be constrained by;
- Certain market forces which are beyond the control of this project
 - The Council's pay and grading structure defines the salaries for all levels of the Social Worker job family
 - Capacity to meet project requirements within the defined timescales
 - The need for additional resource investment to meet project objectives.

Project Governance

7. The Recruitment and Retention project will report to the Director of Social Services in her capacity as Chair of the Strategic Improvement Board – Children's (SIB).
8. It is proposed that there should be a Project Board comprising:
- Safeguarding and Family Support Group Managers
 - HR Officer
 - HR Business Partner
 - SCWDP Manager
 - Communication and Marketing Officer
 - Business Support Officer

Other Officers can be co-opted on to this board as required.

9. The following work streams have been created to progress the Project Products identified (see attached);
- Human Resources – HR Officer/Workforce Development Manager
 - Workforce Development – Social Care Workforce Development Manager
 - Service Development – Group Manager – Assessment and Case Management/Disability Transition and Case Management
 - Marketing – Marketing Officer

Project Portfolio

10. The following products are required and the product owners are shown below as being the officers who will take responsibility for the product, drawing others in as required.

Product Name	Product Owner (s)	Stage
Develop arrangements to ensure exit information is gathered and analysed	HR Workstream	IP
Engage with staff teams to identify areas of concern and good practice and develop	Service Development Workstream	S

mechanisms for engaging consistently.		
Review internal communication arrangements to ensure smooth flow of information throughout the Service.	Service Development Workstream	S
Review current Team structures and assess skills mix in relation to current caseload levels.	Service Development Workstream	IP
Research current best practice in relation to recruitment of Social Workers, both in Local Government and cross-sector.	HR Workstream	IP
Develop specific website resources to promote S&FS service to prospective applicants, including exploring the use of modern technology to support recruitment.	Marketing Workstream	IP
Undertake a benchmarking exercise on social work pay and conditions	HR Workstream	IP
Consider options available for encouraging current workforce to remain in employment with BCBC, including options for promoting continuing professional development.	Workforce Development Workstream	IP
Offer secondment opportunities, both internally to suitably qualified Social Workers in ASC and externally with partner organisations, in order to allow staff development opportunities in the short term.	HR Workstream	IP
Liaise with Team Managers to understand current Agency staffing levels.	HR Workstream	C
Meet with Agency provider to ensure service provided meets requirement and agree set of service and operating standards.	HR Workstream	IP
Ensure that staffing structures on HR Trent system match operational structures and budget arrangements to ensure that accurate management information is available at all times to assist with Project actions/recommendations	HR Workstream	C
Obtain information about workforce composition in other LA's.	HR Workstream	S
Review existing Recruitment and Selection Policy and associated procedures to ensure that they meet service and safeguarding requirements.	HR/Service Development Workstream	IP
Train Recruiting Managers to ensure that they are fully conversant with Recruitment and Selection practices and operate within these.	HR Workstream	S
Train Team Managers and Senior Practitioners to ensure that they are able to manage sickness absence process.	HR Workstream	S
Identify actions needed to ensure that management practices are being fully utilised: Induction; Probation; Supervision and	Service Development/HR Workstream	IP

Appraisal		
For Stage, enter OA for options appraisal (aka feasibility), S for start-up, IP for in progress, and C for Complete		

Key Milestones

Key Milestone	Estimated Date
Established Project Board	February 2014
Agree Terms of Reference and Project Brief	March 2014
Agree Work Streams; including membership and scope	May 2014
Project Board to receive highlight report from Resources Work Stream on progress against Products	July 2014
Project Board to receive highlight report from Service Development Work Stream on progress against Products	August 2014
'Go live' for S&FS recruitment web pages	September 2014
Workforce Update Report to Service Improvement Board	Quarterly

Funding

11. Staffing costs need to be monitored to ensure that they remain within budget.
12. Any costs over and above the established budget will need to be identified and appropriate actions taken or issues escalated.
13. Specific actions/recommendations which require additional resources will be costed and funding options will be explored

