

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 SEPTEMBER 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

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.

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 the following 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 front line services continues to challenge many local authorities and is well documented. The situation will vary for each local authority from time to time and will even vary across different service areas within one authority.

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, e.g. Continuing Professional Education and Learning Framework for Social Workers and the National Career Pathway for Social Workers reports. However, it is recognised that there are a wide range of factors contributing to issues affecting recruitment and retention and there is no one solution.

3.3 This report sets out some of the key activities undertaken in Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) since the previous report presented to this Committee in October 2014, and responds to the issues which have been raised in relation to;

- Local Authority pay scales;
- Provision of practice placements;
- Support given to newly qualified social workers;
- Staff engagement, including exit interviews and consultation;
- Agency workers.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 Employees were consulted on proposals to make changes to the former Safeguarding and Family Support structure in November and December 2014. During the period of consultation, extensive feedback was received from individual employees and teams.
- 4.2 This coincided with changes to the Corporate Management Structure which resulted in the realignment of the management of the service to the Corporate Director of Social Services and Wellbeing, with effect from 1 January 2015.
- 4.3 Consideration of the feedback from the consultation exercise consequently resulted in revisions being made to the proposed structure which was subject to a further consultation exercise in February and March 2015.
- 4.4 These changes included a commitment to maintain the Assessment Team whilst proposals were developed and agreed for the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); and the establishment of three Safeguarding Locality Hubs. Whilst other proposals were also considered, a decision was made not to progress these at that time.
- 4.5 The new structure, which was implemented in April 2015 and completed in July 2015, included establishing the role of a deputy team manager, thereby increasing the management capacity in the hubs to ensure a more robust support and supervision structure.
- 4.6 Following the realignment of the management of the service, the priorities for the working group on recruitment and retention were refocussed to concentrate on:
 - Implementing the new staff structure;
 - Improving the learning and development arrangements;
 - Developing more attractive recruitment materials;
 - Marketing and promoting BCBC as an employer of choice;
 - Creating capacity by developing a flexible bank of qualified, experienced social workers who would be able to support the service if and when required.

These priorities will be influenced by any ongoing recruitment and retention issues, and will also be informed by the outcome of exit interviews and findings from the staff survey undertaken between July and August 2015.

4.7 Staffing Issues

- 4.7.1 Whilst the new staffing structure has been implemented and the team manager and new deputy team manager positions have been filled, 2 vacancies remain at Senior Practitioner level. These positions have proved difficult to fill, with little or no external interest and limited eligible internal applicants. An advert is currently in the national press in addition to our standard recruitment methods. Should there be no response to the current

advert, consideration will be given to redeploying the allocated budget to support teams differently.

- 4.7.2 A high number of newly qualified social workers have been recruited which means that the overall number of social workers with less than two years' experience presents a real challenge for the service. It also places a pressure on managerial capacity to provide adequate support, which is essential to enable newly qualified social workers to become experienced and confident practitioners, who will want to continue to work in BCBC.
- 4.7.3 At the time of drafting this report there are six agency social workers that have been covering unfilled positions and providing capacity in areas where there is a lack of experience.
- 4.7.4 A further two agency workers have been agreed to cover two vacancies in the East Hub to offer additional support in hubs whilst we await confirmation and securing of start dates for the recently permanently recruited social workers as they are all newly qualified. It is not unusual for Local Authorities across England and Wales to use agency workers to augment existing workforce capacity, although consideration will always be given to the additional costs associated with engaging agency social workers once the permanent workers are secured and working in the teams.
- 4.7.5 Additional measures have been put in place to support the newly qualified social workers so that they are better equipped to undertake the role and feel more confident and resilient. These include:
 - The First Year in Practice programme has been updated and is being implemented on a mandatory basis;
 - Consultant Social Workers based in the hubs will be providing direct support to staff through case mentoring, direct observation of practice and reflection and peer supervision.

4.8 Exit Interviews

- 4.8.1 Exit interviews have been a priority with a HR Officer undertaking a face to face interview with the leaver, prior to the end of employment. This allows a full discussion to capture the main reason for leaving, other contributing factors as well as information about the employment experience.
- 4.8.2 Since August 2014, 13 face to face exit interviews have been held. Of the 25 leavers during this period, 12 were not available to participate in an exit interview. A summary of the exit interview responses is set out in Appendix 1, which shows the main reasons provided by leavers (in the majority of interviews more than one category was identified).
- 4.8.3 Of the total reasons provided, Job Dissatisfaction, Dissatisfaction with the Working Environment and Problems with Managers were the highest with 54% of the responses including these. Job Dissatisfaction and Dissatisfaction with Working Environment are attributed to high caseloads, work demands and the impact this has on work/life balance. Problems with Manager related to the

lack of stability at both manager and senior practitioner level caused by high level of turnover.

- 4.8.4 In response to these findings, the introduction of Deputy Team Managers has enabled a better level of supervision and oversight. Whilst current caseloads are not consistent across the service, there has been some reduction, particularly in relation to Child In Need cases being closed by the hub teams and stepped down to the early intervention project. At present, Social Workers in the Safeguarding Teams hold an average of 18 cases.
- 4.8.5 The destination of these leavers varies with four moving to neighbouring authorities, three to an agency and others leaving social work and moving to the independent sector.
- 4.8.6 Notwithstanding the above, the majority of leavers reported that they had a positive experience whilst working in BCBC, acknowledging that many of the issues they identified were systemic of the social work as a profession. Learning and development provision and flexitime were regarded as positives.

4.9 Staff Survey

- 4.9.1 Investigating why people leave and obtaining accurate information can be difficult. Therefore, in order to focus on the retention of the current workforce, a staff survey has been undertaken, the outcomes of which will be considered in addition to the routine exit interviews.
- 4.9.2 Issued specifically to qualified social workers, senior practitioners, deputy team managers and team managers in the front line Safeguarding teams, the survey was undertaken over a four week period to gain a better understanding of employees' views. The response rate was 69%, with 45 responses from a potential of 65.
- 4.9.3 The survey, developed and analysed by the Consultation and Engagement Officer, focussed on what attracted employees to work in BCBC, job satisfaction, rewards and challenges of the role and factors affecting future employment. A copy of the survey questions is set out in Appendix 2. The responses have been analysed and a report setting out recommendations and an action plan will be reported into the Performance Management group in September.
- 4.9.4 The main messages coming from the survey showed that the most important factors in attracting employees to work in BCBC were 'Permanent employment opportunities' and 'Opportunities for continuing education and professional development'. The well-established arrangements for continuing educational and professional development in BCBC will be promoted as part of the work being undertaken to improve recruitment materials and market BCBC as an employer of choice.
- 4.9.5 The survey explored overall levels of job satisfaction as well as satisfaction levels against specific areas of the role. Overall, 57.8 per cent of those who

responded to the survey are either Very or Fairly Satisfied with their current job. ‘Working within your team’, ‘Job Security’ and ‘Opportunities for professional development’ recorded the highest satisfaction ratings of the specific criteria identified. The link between satisfaction levels around Opportunities for Professional Development and the fact that this is one of the main factors attracting employees to work for BCBC may suggest that expectations are being met in this area once the employee joins the authority

- 4.9.6 13% of respondents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their current job, whilst 27% are not satisfied and 2% are very dissatisfied. ‘Work Demands’ had the lowest satisfaction rating across all job types, which also mirrors comments made in relation to work demands when exploring ‘job dissatisfaction’ and ‘dissatisfaction with the work environment’ responses during Exit Interview discussions.
- 4.9.7 In relation to factors affecting future employment, all respondents indicated that ‘A good work-life balance’ was important, with 84% suggesting that this factor was ‘Very Important’ to employment over the next 2 years. The survey also asked respondents to indicate whether they were likely to leave BCBC within set timescales. The majority of respondents were unsure on their future, but encouragingly, more considered themselves unlikely to leave than likely. 5 applicants considered themselves very likely to leave the Authority within 12 months. Although the survey is anonymous, further analysis has been requested of these 5 responses in particular to identify whether there are any common areas of dissatisfaction. It is also unclear whether any of these 5 responses originated from the 4 Social Workers who left the service during the survey period.

4.10 Pay and Conditions

- 4.10.1 Although there has been no explicit indication from the exit interview data that employees are leaving due to pay, we are aware that some are taking up similar roles in neighbouring local authorities where the pay is greater than in BCBC. Previous analysis has shown that salaries for the social work job family are comparable to other local authorities in Wales. Recent research has focussed on neighbouring authorities and Appendix 3 summarises this position.
- 4.10.2 BCBC, like most other Local Authorities, has 2 social worker grades in line with the National Career Pathway for Social Workers guidance. Progression between the two grades is dependent upon 2 years post qualifying service and competency assessment. This means that a newly qualified social worker will commence at Spinal Column Point (SCP) 32, progress to SCP 33 by the end of their first year then, subject to assessment, progress to Social Worker 2 - SCP 36 at the second anniversary of appointment.
- 4.10.3 The starting point for both Social Worker 1 and Social Worker 2 posts in BCBC compares favourably with neighbouring Authorities. In practice this means that social workers starting as either Social Worker 1 or Social Worker 2

should commence employment in BCBC on at least the same point, if not a higher point, than those offered at neighbouring Authorities.

4.10.4 Agency Social Workers continue to earn a considerably higher salary through the agency contract than those directly employed by the Authority. Recruitment agencies are particularly interested in experienced practitioners and since April 2014, 6 experienced practitioners have left Safeguarding and Assessment to take up agency contracts elsewhere.

4.11 Workforce Development

4.11.1 Learning and development activities play a key part in the ongoing professional development of a social worker. The Social Care Workforce Development Programme (SCWDP) offers a range of continuing professional development opportunities for this group of staff. This includes bespoke training including induction, a specific programme for newly qualified workers, a consolidation programme for those entering their second year in practice and mentoring support for managerial positions.

4.11.2 In addition to supporting the qualified social work workforce, the SCWDP team also contributes to the provision of new social workers through the co-ordination and support of practice placements for social work students and the employment of a Social Work Trainee.

4.11.3 During the last academic year (September 2014 – June 2015), a total of 36 student placements were facilitated by the Authority. Ten of these were within child related services, and of this number, four were in Safeguarding teams. Seven of the 10 placements facilitated in child related services were final year placements and three of these students have secured permanent employment within the Safeguarding service.

Practice Learning Opportunities are very much dependent on the availability of qualified and experienced Practice Assessors within teams, and on the capacity of the teams to accommodate a student social worker.

4.11.4 The existing Social Work Trainee is due to qualify in 2017 and whilst traineeships are a good means of ‘growing your own’, it is also very costly as the traineeship comprises of both salary and university costs. The long term funding for the SCWDP is uncertain so future investment in traineeships is unlikely.

4.12 Conclusion

4.12.1 There has clearly been good progress in terms of the most recent recruitment activity in as much as all social work vacancies have been filled. However, there is a continuing trend with regards to newly qualified social workers, in the main, being the only applicants. This causes significant challenges within teams given the vastly inexperienced workforce and the demands and complexity of the workload. In addition, there is a requirement via guidance from the Care Council for Wales in terms of the protection of caseloads for

newly qualified workers. Whilst some additional measures have been put in place to support teams, this still remains a significant challenge in terms of the allocation of cases, managing performance and service delivery.

- 4.12.2 Having made 19 appointments and recruited to all vacancies (excluding two senior practitioner vacancies), Social Worker 1s now account for 81% of the qualified social workers in our three Safeguarding Hubs. The service will need to focus on the retention of staff to both stabilise the workforce and ensure that a position is reached within the next two years where the inexperience/experience balance within the service changes.
- 4.12.3 As part of the efforts to improve retention, the induction process has been reviewed and amended. Whilst the overall process will be developed further as set out in 4.6, elements of the reviewed induction process are already being used to support new starters.
- 4.12.4 The First Year in Practice programme offered to newly qualified social workers has been reviewed and all elements have been made mandatory for any new starter.
- 4.12.5 As set out in 4.7.4, it has been agreed that Consultant Social Workers will offer additional support to our Safeguarding Hubs through case mentoring, direct observation of practice and reflection and peer supervision.
- 4.12.6 In response to trends identified in Exit Interviews, the Supervision Policy has been relaunched and is due to be implemented across all Safeguarding Social Work teams. Going forward, compliance with the Supervision Policy will be monitored through local performance data.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules.

None

6. Equality Impact Assessment

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 agree to note the content of this report.

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10 Background documents

None

Appendix 1

Exit Interview Feedback

Summary of main reasons for leaving.

	No. of times chosen	Percentage of Respondents choosing reason ¹
Job		
Temporary contract/lack of job security	2	15%
job dissatisfaction	7	54%
Workplace		
Dissatisfaction with working environment	7	54%
Problems with work colleagues	1	8%
Problems with managers	7	54%
Discrimination	0	0%
Harrassment and/or bullying	1	8%
Career		
Promotion/higher paid job	1	8%
To work in a different service area		0%
Lack of training/career development opps	0	0%
Taking up full/part time education/study	1	8%
Personal		
Health	2	15%
Relocation/Location	1	8%
Caring Responsibilities	1	8%
Not returning from Maternity	0	0%
Need for a change	4	31%
Travel problems/work closer to home	5	38%
Retirement	0	0%
Other personal reasons	1	8%

¹ Percentage = Number of respondents who have chosen the reason divided by the number of respondents

Safeguarding Retention Survey

Introduction.

This survey has been designed specifically for Social Workers, Senior Practitioners, Deputy Team Managers and Team Managers in front line child care teams as part of the work being undertaken to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers.

The results gathered will be used to assess where we are currently and assist managers and the Recruitment and Retention Working Group to identify areas requiring attention. The information you provide will be used to better understand the issues affecting qualified social work practitioners in their roles and make recommendations for improvement.

You do not have to share your name unless you wish to do so, however, your contribution to the survey will enable a better understanding of your views. Please note the information will be kept confidential and only aggregated results will be published.

The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete

About you

Q1 Please select your role:

- Social Worker
- Senior Practitioner
- Team Manager / Dept. Team Manager

Q2 How many years have you been qualified?

- Newly qualified social worker (NQSW).....
- 1 - 2 years.....
- 3 - 5 years.....
- Over 5 years

Q3 How many years have you been working in your current position?

- Less than 12 months.....
- 1 - 2 years.....
- 3 - 5 years.....
- Over 5 years

Before your current position.

Q4 How important were each of the following in attracting you to work in BCBC?

	Not important at all	Of little importance	Fairly important	Very important
Flexibility of working arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for career development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for continuing educational and professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Permanent employment opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working in a specific service area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Location	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reputation of the Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of alternative employment opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q5 What was the main thing that attracted you to working in BCBC?

Your current position.

Q6 How satisfied are you with...

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither nor unsatisfied	Fairly unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
Flexibility of working arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your working environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities to gain additional qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supervision arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working in your current team	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your job security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work demands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support from line manager	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication within team/service area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q7 What do you find the most rewarding aspect of your job?

Q8 What do you find the most challenging aspect of your job?

Q9 Overall, how satisfied are you with your current job?

Very satisfied

Fairly satisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Fairly dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

Your future.

Q10 How likely are you to leave BCBC in the...

	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Unsure	Likely	Very likely
next 12 months?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
next 1 to 2 years?	<input type="checkbox"/>				
next 3 to 5 years?	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Q11 How important do you believe the following factors will be to you in the next two years?

	Very important	Fairly important	Neither important nor unimportant	Fairly unimportant	Not important at all	Not applicable to me
Promotional opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flexible working arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A good work-life balance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Career development opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational and professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enjoying the challenge of work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q12 If you have any additional comments in relation to issues affecting the recruitment and retention of social workers in Bridgend County Borough Council, please use the space provided below.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey

Please click the tick button below to submit.

Pay Scale Comparison – M4 Corridor

