

Thursday, 2 March 2022

Workforce

Purpose of report:

For the CFLL Committee to receive update on the implementation of the approved strategy and the Recruitment, Retention and Culture programme in order to provide reassurance to the Board members and to seek feedback and support upon the current strategies and approach to stabilise the social care workforce within our statutory social work teams.

Introduction:

In March 2022, a children's social care RRC programme had been in place for over a year but had not demonstrated sufficient impact. A renewed focus and change in approach was needed. In March 2022, a refreshed RRC programme plan was developed with 5 workstreams ('Explore' / 'Attract' / 'Engage & Retain' / 'Develop' / 'Succeed'). To deliver the plan, operational services, HR and other colleagues were brought together into a focussed working group for each workstream.

A complete overview of the programme plan is shown on the latest one-page 'Activity & Impact' plan which is attached to this report (see: Appendix 1).

The programme has delivered many tangible improvements over the last 6 months, and these are summarised below, along with a summary of our plans for early 2023.

The work being undertaken in this area is critical to the ongoing improvements within our children social care delivery. Stability in the workforce is a critical element in achieving successful outcomes for CYP and their families in Surrey. We know that changes in social worker is disruptive for children and causes delays in the timeliness in interventions we provide to families. Equally our work on Phase 2 of implementing Family Safeguarding is critical to our practice improvements and ambitions and therefore workforce stability and a improved percentage of permanent workers is critical to our success.

The ongoing challenges in recruitment and retention both nationally and locally in Surrey presents a risk to the quality of delivery in services. In Surrey we have strong

and clear ambition for continuous improvement and intrinsic to the success of this is workforce stability.

Whilst this report and the work of the RRC programme has focused specifically upon our social work workforce it is important to recognise and acknowledge these challenges exist across other parts of the CFLL directorate, most notably within our SEND interventions (including our improvements related to EHCP timeliness and quality) and within our residential estate where we face challenges to recruit and retain suitable qualified staff.

Explore workstream

1. Explore workstream – recent activity:

- A round of CFLL Staff Exit Interviews were conducted to better understand the reasons staff leave and identify actions to address them. The most identified reason for leaving is ‘career development’ and ‘financial package’. We are using the exit interview information to drive the work around retention. A process was put in place to support staff from the Directorate and HR to conduct exit interviews. The new approach to exit interviews was presented via a management webinar attended by approximately by 70 employees.
- In June 2022, the People and Change directorate set up a corporate Exit Survey for people leaving the organisation to complete. Survey data for staff exiting CFLL staff suggests there were a range of reasons for leaving CFLL, including: work life balance, lack of progression opportunities, child dependents, better reward package elsewhere and incompatible working relationships.

2. Upcoming activity for the Explore workstream:

- HR colleagues have been developing a weekly leavers report so that they can proactively contact leavers to increase exit survey completion rates. Once Unit 4 (the replacement system for SAP) is rolled out this process will be automated to further increase completion rates.
- A more detailed analysis of the CFLL Staff Exit interviews and stay interviews will be shared across the CFLL Directorate in March 2023.
- The updated exit survey findings will be communicated to CFLL employees alongside proposals to address the most common issues identified.

Attract workstream

1. Recent activity:

- Two sessions have been held with our locum workforce to communicate the benefits of joining Surrey permanently. From these sessions, we have been able to 'convert' four locum workers to permanent staff. We are developing a narrative with these workers talking about why they have decided to become permanent SCC employees and we will be able to share this with other agency workers.
- We had a presence at Community Care Live in October 2022 to promote Surrey as an employer of choice and to speak to potential recruits. 62 'leads' were generated as a result. We have seen a small number of these leads converted into applications. Therefore further discussions with Adult services will take place prior to attending this forum again as it had not necessarily proved to be a strong route to recruitment.
- Following a concerted focus on improving communication between Connect2Surrey and operational managers looking at processes and streamlining these and increasing our online activity has led to the submission rate of candidate CVs approximately doubled.

2. Upcoming activity:

- A social media framework has been created to target advertising at relevant professional networks. This work is due to go live from February 2023.
- The recruitment team are working with operational teams to gather content that can be used to further promote our services externally.
- A CFLL Social Worker hiring day will take place in Spring 2023.
- New interview question templates will be developed for all social worker roles, and applied to ensure consistency of practice when selecting staff. The interview questions and cases studies will be finalised by March 2023.
- A new recruitment page (showing current internal vacancies) will be added to the CFLL SharePoint Hub by March 2023, to promote internal opportunities for existing staff.

Engage and retain workstream

1. Recent activity:

- Developed alongside our staff 'Returning to the office principles' and these have been developed to promote the benefits of meeting and working with colleagues in person.
- It is currently too early to formally assess the impact of these principles. It is important for our social work staff to have the opportunity to learn and reflect alongside each other and we need to balance this with the benefits of working more flexibly. Whilst we do not feel issuing a directive about office attendance is necessary it is an area we intend to closely monitor and ensure the right balance is achieved for our social work teams.
- Our ambition is to create a supportive environment in the office for workers that need/want to use it while not unnecessarily pressurising staff and negatively affecting their wellbeing and happiness. A question on this subject will be included in the next round of 'Stay Interviews' in February 2023.

2. Upcoming activity:

- Stay interview data will be collated from February 2023 onwards and used alongside the feedback from Exit Interviews carried out in the Explore workstream. This feedback will feed into our work of the RRC Board.
- Within the Southwest quadrant there has been a forum for staff to come together and discuss issues that are working well, doing ok or areas needing improvement. This is led by a peer using the principles of motivational interviewing. It is a solution-based forum where staff are encouraged to speak openly to develop ideas and solutions and rate issues using a Traffic Light system. The approach also helps to identify areas of work which are positive which can therefore be amplified. A key part of the forum is for this to be led by practitioners with relevant managers to be invited into the end of the session to hear the feedback in a anonymous way in order for managers to learn from their staff and to take forward areas of work, Following work within the RRC group it was agreed to review this forum and implement across all areas of the children social care teams from April 2023. We will revisit this after 6 months to gain feedback and assess the impact.

Develop workstream

1. Recent activity:

- A Surrey Children's Services Internal (Staff) Transfer Policy has been developed to provide the clarity and transparency to practitioners and managers about transferring staff between teams as a development

and retention opportunity in Surrey. This followed feedback that transfers had not previously been consistently managed across teams.

- Preparations are underway to separate the existing mentoring scheme into two separate schemes – one for mentoring and one for coaching as these are two distinct offers. Training is being developed for participants in both schemes and they will be linked to Surrey's recruitment offer.
- We are partnering with Kingston University to train the 'Step-up to Social Work' students. There are 8 step-up students in Surrey, who will be supported to join our ASYE (newly qualified) scheme once they have graduated in May 2023.
- We have launched a social work post graduate scheme and Surrey County Council has committed to sponsoring 10 students.
- A Career Progression scheme has been launched and the first progression panel took place in December 2022. The new approach reflects the feedback received from our workforce and therefore we anticipate this will have a positive impact upon retention. This alongside other changes that we have implemented will be monitored and reviewed to ensure this is having the impact we desire.

2. Upcoming activity:

- A recruitment campaign is planned, to attract an additional 8 social workers to join the 'Step-up to Social Work' cohort starting May 2023.
- In March 2024, as agreed with Kingston University, 20 Step-Up (to social work) students will start at Surrey CC.
- The Social Work Progression pathway will be reviewed, to separate out the roles of Team Manager and Advanced Social Worker as these are distinct roles and both hold equal value. The Targeted Youth Support exemption will also be resolved. This is scheduled to happen by April 2023.
- A service-specific induction template and new onboarding materials will be developed and rolled out in January 2023 as part of onboarding work to improve these processes.
- Social Work Degree Apprenticeship vacancies were advertised internally during January 2023, with information sessions offered to prospective candidates and interviews planned for late March 2023. Apprenticeships will start by the end of August 2023.
- The above-mentioned mentoring and coaching schemes will launch in April 2023.

Succeed workstream

1. Recent activity:

- A new project has been initiated to pilot a new approach to succession planning with some teams.
- Pending feedback from this pilot, the plan is to rollout the new approach across the service by Q3/Q4.
- A new data reporting tool has been developed to provide further insight and 'deep dives' into monthly and quarterly data on staff recruitment and retention levels across the CFLL social worker workforce. Reports generated by the tool will be utilised at RRC Board meetings to inform programme monitoring and decision making from January 2023.

2. Upcoming activity:

- Developing an accessible succession planning toolkit for use across CFLL and there will be a pilot of succession planning within targeted Social Care roles. The Succession Planning Taskforce will be convening from January 2023 onwards, the pilot will be launched by April/May 2023 aiming for succession planning to be embedded in operational services and performance conversations by the end of the year.
- To review how we can further support leadership development (by June 2023).
- To agree on the links between career progression and succession planning as part of the work outlined above – certainly by the conclusion of the pilot in early-Summer 2023.
- To meet with the Directorate Equality Group (DEG) by March 2023 to discuss Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) elements of succession planning and leadership development support.

Impact of the RRC programme

1. While we have been able to recruit to vacancies this year, there remain challenges in retention. The last reported 12 months have shown a 7% increase in voluntary turnover for the Social Worker (SW) Workforce (i.e. Advanced SW, Senior SW and SW).
2. The turnover rate for our Senior Social Workers and Advanced Social Workers has reduced marginally, but this has been outweighed by the increase in turnover for Social Worker roles (which represent a far larger part of the social work workforce).

- Overall, our retention of social work staff has deteriorated over the last 12 months.

Figure 1: social work turnover between November 2021 and October 2022

	NOVEMBER 2021	APRIL 2022	OCTOBER 2022
TURNOVER ALL SOCIAL WORKER ROLES	21.94%	27.04%	27.84%
Social Worker Turnover	17.66%	26.27%	27.79%
Senior Social Worker Turnover	26.80%	26.23%	26.67%
Advanced Social Worker Turnover	36.00%	34.48%	32.00%
ALL SOCIAL WORKER ROLES – VOLUNTARY LEAVERS		73	
ALL SOCIAL WORKER ROLES - STARTERS		72	

- Positively, there has been a noticeable reduction of leavers with 4+ years tenure (from 45.35% reported at 31 March 2022 to 37.66% at 31 October 2022). Retaining our most experienced social workers is an important required outcome for the RRC work.
- There has however been an increase of leavers in the 1-2 years tenure category, rising from 19.77% to 25.97% in the same reporting periods. Our ‘Exit Interviews’ and ‘Stay Interviews’ will help us to further understand the reasons for social workers to stay/leave.
- The recruitment of skilled and experienced social workers is a national issue that is being reflected in our staffing for children’s services in Surrey. **This data highlights the scale of the challenge, the need to do things differently to attract and retain staff, and the importance of our continued investment of time and resources in this area.**

Current Children’s Social Care Workforce Position

Establishment and Vacancies

- As of 31 October 2022, there were 142.08 FTE vacancies in the Social Worker, Advanced Social Worker and Senior Social Worker roles (a small reduction from the 149.22 FTE vacancies at 30 June 2022).

<p>Figure 2: social work vacancies as of 31 October 2022 (excludes 19 double occupancy roles covered by agency)</p>

Social Worker Role	Establishment (FTE)	Permanent (FTE)	Agency (FTE)	Vacancies (FTE)
Advanced Social Worker	47.89	22.39	14	11.50
Senior Social Worker	132.73	83.43	26	23.30
Social Worker	248.56	181.28	42.30	24.98
Total (FTE)	429.18	287.10	82.30	59.78

8. Based on average cost of these roles this is the total current establishment:

Figure 3: social work establishment as of 31 October 2022 (excludes 19 double occupancy roles covered by agency, unfunded posts as well as international social worker and ASYE cover)				
	67% Permanent Social Worker Staff	19% Agency Social Worker Staff	14% Vacant Social Worker Staff	Total
Number of Roles	287.10	82.3	59.78	429.18
Annual Cost	£15,174,673	£6,144,847	£3,247,925	£18,071,596

Connect 2 Surrey – Agency Recruitment

9. Surrey County Council changed the provider for agency staff from Adecco to Connect 2 Surrey (C2S) in February 2022.

10. There were some initial challenges with the changeover, and it was hoped that once these were addressed the change would be positive for Children’s Services and recruitment of agency staff.

11. However, there have continued to be significant issues with Connect 2 Surrey delivering enough agency staff to meet demand. Due to these challenges for the period 13/06/2022 to 01/09/2022, a change of process was introduced whereby Service Managers were able to contact agencies directly. This change in process resulted in improved relationships between the service managers and agencies with Service Managers being able to directly advise the agencies of the needs of their service which helped with submission of CVs. Following work completed between the service and C2S the decision was made to cease this from 05/09/2022 and return to all CVs coming through C2S. More recent data indicates improvements in the flow of CV’s and the conversion of these into employment. We continue to monitor this closely via regular performance information and meetings as this remains a key part of our recruitment strategy whilst we work towards achieving a stronger percentage of permanent workforce and decrease our reliance upon the agency workforce.

Target Children’s Social Care Workforce Position

12. As referenced above, we currently have 67% permanent social workers, 19% agency and 14% vacant. Our aim is to reach a position of 85% permanent social workers, 10% agency, and acknowledging that we will realistically always have up to 5% of positions vacant at any given time.

13. A more modest target of 80% permanent social workers, 15% agency and 5% vacant is also costed below. Note: Costs can go up and down depending on the month.

Figure 4: upper target for the social care workforce				
	85% Permanent Social Worker Staff	10% Agency Social Worker Staff	5% Vacant Social Worker Roles	Total
Number of Roles	364.8	42.9	21.5	429.2
Annual Cost	£19,281,666	£3,204,430	£1,165,895	£21,320,200

Figure 5: modest target for the social care workforce				
	80% Permanent Social Worker Staff	15% Agency Social Worker Staff	5% Vacant Social Worker Roles	Total
Number of Roles	343.34	64.4	21.5	429.2
Annual Cost	£18,147,451	£4,806,644	£1,165,895	£21,788,200

Existing recruitment initiatives in place

Newly Qualified Social Worker Recruitment

14. In terms of our newly qualified social workers (NQSW) below is a breakdown of numbers for 22/23 and 23/24 – this also details the additional costs associated with recruiting a large cohort of NQSWs:

- We are aiming to recruit approximately 40 NQSWs, starting their ASYE in September, year-on-year, from now on.
- Additional agency cover is required from September 2023 – December 2023 for the new cohort of NQSWs starting their employment with SCC – a cost of £695,400 this year.
- (The expectation is that we will – over time – require fewer staff to provide cover as our retention of skilled and experienced social workers improves.)
- NQSWs are (usually) initially employed as Family Support Workers (FSWs) in August in order to secure their employment before the ASYE starts. This has a cost of £118,379 this year.

Figure 6: newly qualified social worker costs					
Estimated ASYE support cost	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27
Number of ASYEs	38	40	40	40	40

Oct - Dec Agency cover	£695,400	£768,600	£783,240	£797,880	£812,520
Aug expected FSW pay	£118,379	£130,840	£133,332	£135,824	£138,317
Sep expected ASYE pay	£130,526	£144,265	£147,013	£149,761	£152,509
	£944,305	£1,043,705	£1,063,580	£1,083,466	£1,103,346

*Salary costs increase year-on-year based on predicted salary increases at SCC.

15. NQSWs will hold a limited caseload while on their ASYE and will usually hold a full caseload 12 months later (i.e. by the following September).

Step up to Social Work

16. There are 8 'Step-up' students who will complete their course in March 2023. The course runs for 18 months. The next course will start in January 2024 and will finish in May 2025 (subject to DfE confirming they are running another cohort).

17. We are planning to have a larger cohort of 20 students going forward. There is no cost to us – other than providing practice educators which we do for all students. As they are students, we don't need back fill – they are additional capacity within the service.

Frontline Students

18. We are currently working with the organisation 'Frontline' which offers a two year intensive paid training for MSc in Advanced Relationship Based social work practice. Following the programme the cohort then entering into our ASYE year following completion of their Frontline training. Workers are based within Surrey children services and are supported in small 'pod' type teams working alongside an experienced Consultant Social Worker.

19. Our aim is to agree 16 Frontline students for 23/24. The Frontline Programme comes at no cost to SCC, the Consultant Social Worker posts which oversee the students is funded via the Frontline Programme. This cohort will be qualified social workers by September 2025.

Student Placements

20. We offer student placements via local universities and have developed particularly good relationships with Kingston University and the Royal Holloway University.

21. In the current academic year 22/23 we are offering 16 year 1 placements and 22 final year placements.
22. We have reviewed the pathway from final year placement to job offer at SCC and have simplified this to maximise the conversion rate from final year student to permanent member of SCC and a move onto our ASYE pathway.
23. **NOTE:** For the 'Step-up', 'Frontline' and 'Student Placements' initiatives set out above, once those cohorts of practitioners are qualified as social workers, they will move into our ASYE pathway. These will therefore form part of the 40 NQSWs we intend to recruit to in future years (not in addition to the 40 NQSWs). The benefit of having these routes into our ASYE intake, rather than simply securing all 40 NQSWs from open recruitment is that we will increase the proportion of the intake that we know and that has an existing commitment to Surrey.
24. At the current time our recruitment approach is focused upon how we attract and retain newly qualified social workers (NQSW). We know that we currently have a good offer for our NQSW via our Assisted and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE) and recent changes to this programme have been undertaken as a result of listening to existing cohorts and incorporating their feedback into the changes that we have made.
25. Whilst we have reviewed and refreshed our online marketing and presence, there remains a challenge to attract experienced social workers into Surrey, both in terms of agency and importantly, permanent staffing.
26. A number of factors appear to be impacting the recruitment of experienced social work practitioners:
- National sufficiency of qualified staff.
 - Surrey's size and the impact this has upon social worker driving times and costs related to personal vehicles.
 - Cost of living in Surrey, property costs.etc.
 - Historical view of Surrey's 'inadequate' journey with Ofsted and how we ensure we change the narrative around this.
27. We currently have several routes to bring newly qualified workers into Surrey and these are outlined below, some of which come at no cost to SCC while some require additional funding if we were to continue them, most notably the apprentice offer which targets not only recruitment but also retention.

28. The risks associated with this strategy are:

- Level of skill and knowledge within the service given high numbers of relatively in-experienced social workers.
- This places direct pressure upon our team manager group who are responsible for the care planning that sits within their teams and the development of their social workers.
- Developing the workforce through this approach is a longer-term strategy and will not resolve the financial challenges related to high numbers of agency which we currently have.

29. Whilst this approach should remain a clear focus within the CFLL Directorate it is important to recognise the risks associated in terms of being able to manage the complexity of child protection work with a relatively inexperienced workforce and the impact this has upon our ability to reduce the current overspend related to our agency staff.

30. This approach alone has restrictions and the RRC Board - via its workstreams - have engaged with and listened to the voice of our workforce and we have a number of areas to take forward and explore in which retention and recruitment could be improved.

32. We have already acted upon and made changes to several areas highlighted by our staff, and these have been received positively and are highlighted in this report.

33. As described above the work of the RRC programme has focused upon listening to our workforce and hearing their feedback and ideas related to both recruitment and retention.

34. The RRC programme has also undertaken research into other local authorities to understand good practice related to recruitment and retention and we are using national research to inform our thinking and approaches.

35. There has been significant activity over the last year which has focused upon improving systems and processes for recruitment and internal movement for our existing staff. We have used the feedback from our workforce to inform this activity.

Future Recruitment and Retention Planning.

Apprentice Social Workers Scheme for SCC Employees

36. This is an important scheme, both for retaining experienced staff, increasing our social worker headcount (and reducing our vacancies), and increasing the proportion of permanent social workers.

37. The scheme has now been formally launched (November 2022) with the first cohort of 4 apprentice social workers beginning the course in September 2023. 4 new starters would begin each year (therefore with 8 on the course by year 2, 12 on the course by year 3 and by year 4 when 4 more apprentices start the course, the first 4 would have finished). The course lasts 3 years so apprentices would begin their ASYE at the start of year 4.

38. An assessment of costs is included below for increasing the size of the Apprenticeship Scheme.

Figure 7: projected costs of increased apprenticeship scheme				
	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Total Cost of Scheme – (4 apprentices joining each year)	£105,309	£287,156	£467,749	£541,201
Total Cost of Scheme – (8 apprentices joining each year)	£210,618	£554,241	£884,780	£1,030,924
Total Cost of Scheme – (16 apprentices joining each year)	£421,236	£1,088,41	£1,718,843	£2,010,371

Extending the Post-Graduate Course at Kingston University

39. By developing a relationship with Kingston University, we have entered into a partnership to provide post graduate social work training for existing employees.

40. For the cohort 23/24 we have identified funding for 10 people to apply for this opportunity. We have negotiated a financial package with the university of £8,000 per person and the course duration is 18 months.

41. The ongoing wage costs for applicants to attend the course will be held by the individual teams and whilst this creates some short-term challenges, SCC benefits from providing both placements within the service for the students and helping to retain existing staff through a supported offer of further professional development.

42. This opportunity has been received very well by our staff.

43. We would need to identify funding for future years to continue to offer this scheme which would cost up to £100,000 per cohort of 10 places.

Funding for Recruitment & Retention Initiatives / Campaigns

44. At the current time we have no identified budget to support recruitment / retention campaigns such as ongoing partnership with Community Care, advertising, open days to promote SCC to outside applicants and service / team budgets for retention activities such as learning events and team building opportunities.

45. At the current time any such activity as described above is limited and when we do undertake any the budget to do so comes out of our staffing establishment budget lines.

Petrol Allowance / Car Allowance for Permanent Staff

46. A joint statement from SCC and the Unions was issued in January 2023 setting out the offer for a lump sum payment for all SCC employees that use a vehicle within their role. While this doesn't provide any additional incentive specifically for social worker staff (above that of all other SCC staff), it is still a welcome area of support for our staff that travel a significant number of business miles each year.

47. Further investigation may be needed regarding financial support for transport costs for social work staff.

Paid Sabbaticals for Permanent Staff

48. We have now had confirmation that paid sabbaticals will not be considered as an SCC-wide policy for staff. Further investigation is needed across children's social care to firstly understand the need for such an offer, the impact it may have on recruitment & retention and the cost of introducing a policy that enables paid sabbaticals.

49. Initial feedback collated through the RRC programme suggests this would be an effective offer both to retain existing experienced staff and to attract new staff or convert locums to permanent employment. Burnout is a recognised issue in child and family social work and sabbatical arrangements have been implemented successfully elsewhere. While the implementation of sabbatical arrangements might not be deemed worthwhile in the Council as a whole, for these roles the impact could be significant and a positive reason for deviation from the standard Council offer.

9-Day Fortnight (72 hours in 9 days) and Compressed Hours (4-day Weeks)

50. Following work at the RRC Board a proposal was put to our operational Assistant Directors that in order to encourage retention, attraction and flexibility that Social Workers be given the opportunity to work either a 9-day fortnight (72 hours in 9 days) or compressed hours (36 hours in 4 days), with management agreement. The hope is that this will contribute to flexible working and a better work-life balance.

Wellbeing Support for Social Work and Residential Staff

51. The nature of the work that staff in children's services undertake means they can be exposed to trauma which can impact upon their own resilience and well being.

52. We know that staff can be at a high risk of developing burnout and experiencing chronic stress; both of these can have a considerable impact on a person's physical and mental health and will increase the risk of staff absence and people leaving the social work profession (or leaving their role within Surrey CC).

53. The Surrey Children's Services Academy have recently been exploring additional wellbeing support for our social work and residential staff, tailored to the profession and the challenges they face, and following conversations with HR colleagues, have identified some options for support using specialist providers. These options could include the following (or a mix of):

- a. Psycho-educational workshop on vicarious trauma to large mixed group of staff.
- b. Reflective Practice to be offered to teams of social workers.
- c. Training for Practice Leads in Reflective Practice. Those Leads to then deliver Reflective Practice to their staff on a regular basis.
- d. Supervision for those Practice Leads.
- e. New social work students to be given a basic awareness of vicarious trauma and self-care at induction.
- f. Individual brief psychological support, an assessment of current needs and the pathway to longer support or mental health services if required.
- g. Access to a wide range of live workshops.

54. These options will need to be costed and assessed to understand what would work best for our workforce and what would be the most cost-effective.

Hard to Recruit Market Supplement Scheme

55. Many local authorities offer schemes such as 'market supplements' for hard to recruit areas within their children's services. Typically, but not exclusively this

tends to be in the front-line child protection teams or other areas which have become “hard to recruit to” such as the Independent Reviewing Service.

56. Within SCC our Family Safeguarding teams support children via a Child in Need (CiN) or a Child Protection Plan (CPP); they also undertake all our pre-court work within the Public Law Outline framework (PLO) and subsequently all applications for Care Orders in the Family Court. The Independent Reviewing Service, particularly in relation to Child Protection Chairs, has a key part to play in responding to families’ needs through oversight of the right level of intervention with timely Plans that reflect the progress made to address concerns.

57. Whilst all areas of our practice hold equal value and importance it is a fair analysis that working in these teams brings additional demands and holds the highest levels of risk and challenge. As the philosophy and approach, we wish to promote is supporting children to remain with their families, this work requires high levels of skill, analysis and holding of risk. It is also the area of social work practice which brings the highest levels of scrutiny and oversight both internally and externally.

58. At the current time we are experiencing significant recruitment challenges for our Family Safeguarding (FST) teams and our Independent Reviewing (IR) Service. To try and address this we are seeking to introduce a market supplement for Social Worker, Senior Social Worker, and Advanced Social Worker roles in the FST teams and the Independent Reviewing Officer role.

59. This is due to:

- a. Substantial difficulty recruiting to social worker and senior social worker posts in the past and very little response to targeted recruitment activity for the IR Service.
- b. Whilst our basic pay appears comparative and in line with our neighbouring authorities from recent research undertaken it is apparent that many authorities total package is at a higher and more competitive than Surrey’s current offer. For example, West Sussex and Kent County Council total package is approximately £5,000 per year per worker higher than our current offer, with some of their package including market supplements for hard to recruit roles.
- c. The national shortage of children’s social workers and the knowledge that we have a significant problem recruiting and retaining social workers.
- d. The need to support our practice model of Family Safeguarding which requires manageable numbers of children allocated, and experienced practitioners to manage risk to ensure we intervene at the lowest level for the family.

60. We are proposing: To introduce a supplement of £5,000 pro rata, per annum for Social Workers in FST teams and Independent Reviewing Officer roles. With National Insurance and pension contributions, this would cost Surrey £6,493 per annum per worker. An example of current costs for a senior social worker on middle grade costs SCC £54,000 per year. In comparison an agency social worker costs SCC approximately £80,000 per year. Therefore, even with introducing a market supplement we would see a significant cost reduction between permanent and agency workers.

61. The introduction of the Market Supplement-based on 123.21 eligible FTE Social Worker posts would require an estimated full year additional budget of approximately £800,000.

62. To introduce the supplement for 30 FTE Independent Reviewing Officer posts will require an estimated full year additional budget of approximately £195,000.

Conclusion:

63. The RRC programme will continue to work on solutions with little or no cost to CFLL and SCC. However, without any additional investment, the challenges we are experiencing in improving staff retention and recruitment may continue for some time. Faster progress may be made through investment in some or all the proposals outlined in this report, by placing more emphasis on retention and aligning with strategies that have worked in other authorities (for example in relation to the market forces payment for hard-to-recruit areas).

64. The Committee is asked to reflect on the work achieved thus far by the Recruitment and Retention programme and its workstreams and the future recruitment and retention approaches presented and indicate their support for this approach or suggestions of future work that can be undertaken.

Next steps:

Following presentation at the CLL Assurance and Performance Board (25.01.23) where our recruitment and retention initiatives were discussed and given approval to, we are in the process of developing a business case which will outline proposals to stabilise our social care workforce and create the environment required to deliver the interventions and services required for CYP and their families in Surrey.

Within this business case there will be benchmarking information with other local authorities related to how Surrey compares in terms of current vacancy levels and

levels of agency cover. We will also compare the success of similar initiatives in other local authorities.

The business case is being developed alongside corporate colleagues from HR and Finance to ensure that there is a clear analysis upon any financial implications and if investment is necessary how we will demonstrate the impact this will have upon reducing the reliance upon agency staff (and therefore reducing costs) and considering the long term benefits from a HR perspective of any additional retention strategies being considered.

The CFLL Assurance and Performance board will then consider next steps for taking these initiatives forward.

Identify future actions and dates.

Report contact

Matt Ansell, Director – Family Resilience and Safeguarding, Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and service of the person able to respond to detailed enquiries

Contact details

Matt.Ansell@surreycc.gov.uk

Sources/background papers



RRC Jan
Summary.pptx

This page is intentionally left blank