

CABINET- 25 APRIL 2023**CABINET RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE**

Item under consideration: CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE

Recommendations:

The Select Committee welcomes the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning directorate's aim of having 85 per cent permanent social workers. To reach this position, the Committee proposes the following:

1. The Committee fully supports the proposal of a market rate supplement of £5,000 per annum for all social workers in Family Safeguarding teams and Independent Reviewing Officer roles. It recommends that the Council matches the salary package for children's social workers offered by neighbouring local authorities, and undertakes annual salary benchmarking to ensure this package, both monetary and non-monetary, remains competitive (Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Children and Families);
2. An action plan with SMART criteria to achieve the aforementioned 85 per cent is developed and shared with the Committee, including a timeline and target date by which to achieve this goal (Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Children and Families);
3. Key worker housing is included as a deliverable in the Cabinet report *A Housing, Accommodation and Homes Strategy for Surrey*, for decision in March 2023 (Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Children and Families);
4. The Cabinet Member(s) and Directorate Leadership make immediate efforts to investigate the scope of issues of discrimination and bullying in Children's Services reported in exit interviews and to the Select Committee, and take action to address these issues;
5. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and the CFL Assurance and Performance Board give consideration to the following initiatives, outwith the 2023/24 budget envelope where necessary, to help recruit and retain social work staff:
 - (a) Ensure a face-to-face exit interview is offered to every single leaver. These could be with a colleague of the leaver's choice;
 - (b) Look at ways to make Connect2Surrey more efficient and communicate with managers more swiftly;
 - (c) Provide administrative support to social workers;
 - (d) Create a clear route for family support workers and administrators to step up to social work, with training suggested at their annual performance review;

- (e) The Committee supports the plan to reinstate the annual car user lump sum for upkeep of cars assigned to business use, and recommends also investing in more pool cars for visits to families out of county, exploring the use of electric vehicles to reduce the Council's carbon footprint;
- (f) On taking control of on street parking enforcement in April 2023, provide front line and peripatetic social workers with parking permits for use on Council business;
- (g) Take action to ease parking constraints experienced by social workers at Surrey County Council offices;
- (h) Assign sufficient desk space to social workers in Surrey County Council offices;
- (i) Create an assistant team manager role to help supervise extended teams;
- (j) Offer support to international employees to help adjust to cultural differences;
- (k) Encourage local universities to make a statutory service placement a mandatory part of the social work degree;
- (l) Review if it would be beneficial to ASYEs to bring back the former practice of rotating them between teams for a variety of experiences before they choose where to settle;
- (m) Work with East Surrey College to give placements to their Level 3 course in Access to Social Work students.

6. The Committee continues to engage with the Recruitment, Retention and Culture Board.

Liz Bowes, Chairman - Children, Families, Lifelong Learning Select Committee

Cabinet Response:

Achieving a permanent social worker workforce of 85% will be challenging and will take time but this is an important target for the Children, Families & Lifelong Learning (CFLL) directorate and the wider Council in order to improve services and outcomes for the children and families we support. As such, the recommendations from the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture Select Committee in March 2023 are welcome.

For some of the recommendations, work is already underway either within the Recruitment, Retention & Culture (RRC) programme or through other activity across the CFLL Directorate. For others, additional activity will need to take place over the coming months in order to progress them. Further information is provided below in response to the recommendations from the Select Committee.

It is important to note that the directorate has an agreed budget envelope and that cost pressures, such as the ones identified in these recommendations, must be matched either by budget efficiencies or additional investment.

For clarity, the response is set out to address each recommendation separately.

Recommendation 1:

Following the initial discussion at the Children Services Assurance and Performance Board a detailed business case is being completed which will be presented back to this Board on 11th May. Within this Business case there will be the rationale and the cost analysis of having 'market supplements' for hard to recruit roles within the statutory social work service. We have liaised with other local authorities who have put in place such schemes to understand the impact and any challenges in doing so. It needs to be acknowledged this would not be for all social workers in all roles and therefore can create 'division' within the service, however we have a need to ensure we can fulfil our statutory duties and therefore ensuring we have sufficient and experienced workers in our family safeguarding teams is a priority at the current time and there is evidence from other local authorities to suggest offering a market supplement will help support the stability of these teams and service areas.

Recommendation 2:

We are plotting the known factors for our future recruitment of both permanent social workers and through our 'grow our own' initiatives. This will enable us to forecast our social worker workforce position over the next few years based on recently introduced initiatives to improve recruitment of newly qualified social workers and the routes into social work for existing 'non-qualified' staff.

We also have comprehensive action plans for each of the 5 workstreams within the RRC programme that can be shared with the Committee.

However, it is important to note that these initiatives on their own are unlikely to achieve an 85% social worker workforce in the near future. It is for this reason that proposals (and in some cases detailed business cases) are being developed to further improve the offer to social workers at Surrey County Council (SCC), particularly in the hard-to-recruit roles. It is important to note that some proposals are not currently able to proceed, in part due to the ongoing Surrey Pay Review and the challenges to changing terms & conditions for some of our social work roles. We are working with colleagues from HR to ensure these proposals can progress as soon as possible.

The national as well as local issues with recruiting social workers also presents significant challenges to achieving an 85% permanent social worker workforce. For this reason, we are also exploring alternative staffing models which link to the recommendations within the Care Review and the current national consultation process related to workforce changes within Children Services. This includes greater use of non-qualified (or alternatively qualified) practitioners as well as greater administrative capacity to support social care practice.

Recommendation 3:

The Cabinet report 'A Housing Accommodation and Homes Strategy for Surrey' (March 2023) referenced the housing challenges for key workers within the 'Call to Action'. It was noted that the Members also sitting on the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee would raise this issue.

More support for children's social work staff with housing would be welcomed by the CFLL directorate. This is outside of the remit of the Recruitment, Retention & Culture programme and children's social care services, and would require a wider Council approach.

Recommendation 4:

The CFLL Leadership Team have undertaken the following actions to investigate the scope of issues of discrimination and bullying in Children's Services reported in exit interviews:

1. Renewed focus on culture change, awareness raising and encouraging staff to take tangible action where possible:
 - Through CFLL Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Staff webinars which have achieved attendance rates of approximately 450 staff members:
 - March 2022 webinar focused on transgender discrimination.
 - July 2022 webinar focused on tackling racial inequality and uplifting voices (webinar developed in response to exit interview feedback).
 - February 2023 webinar focused on intersectionality (webinar developed in response to exit interview feedback).
 - Upcoming webinar in July 2023 will be focused on cultural change, the CFLL Leadership Team will have a core role in supporting the webinar and actively encouraging staff to attend.
 - The Executive Director for CFLL supported MEGA for Black History Month events in October 2022.
 - The Executive Director for CFLL produces weekly news bulletins and included in this is an EDI segment that covers a wide range of topics and areas including discrimination, cultural dates and upcoming events. This has proved helpful to keep CFLL staff updated, informed and aware.
2. The Guidance for staff experiencing discrimination document was developed in collaboration with Adult Social Care in response to the issues of discrimination and bullying. This guide was endorsed and signed off by the CFLL Leadership Team after being supported and adopted by the Trade Unions and SCC Health and Strategy Team.
 - CFLL aim to produce posters concerning the discrimination guidance for staff who are less active online. Additionally, a PowerPoint presentation pack to be used during team sessions will be sent to Managers to increase awareness.
3. The Director for Education & Lifelong Learning (and Chair of the Directorate Equality Group) has held EDI drop-in sessions with the Resources Chief of Staff for staff affected by the racist attack outside Ashford School.
 - Additional drop-in sessions took place on 16th February and 16th March 2023.

- Another meeting is being organised for April 2023, and there are plans for the Director for Education & Lifelong Learning and another Leadership Team member to run a general drop-in session for CFLL staff in June.
4. At a CFLL Leadership Team meeting, data concerning our colleagues with disabilities was reviewed. Following this discussion, further conversations were held with the DENIS Network and the Directorate Equality Group. The Director for Education & Lifelong Learning has been in contact with the SCC Land and Property team, and through conversations about the accessibility of our buildings, the Accessibility Forum was created to ensure better management and accessibility of SCC buildings.
 5. The CFLL Staff Onboarding & Induction App features an EDI landing page written and approved by the Leadership Team to 'set the tone' for new starters. There are links on the onboarding platform to the CFLL EDI Hub and to the discrimination guide. The line manager induction guidance highlights Autism Awareness e-learning, Introduction to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Surrey (e-learning) and an Unconscious Bias classroom course – all to be completed within 3 weeks of starting (for the e-learning), and by the end of probation for the classroom course. As of March 2023, 246 new starters have registered on the onboarding platform.
 6. Three of our CFLL leaders (Executive Director for CFLL, Director for Education & Lifelong Learning and the CFLL Chief of Staff) are on the Reverse Mentoring Program; this is designed to better help our leaders to foster cultural change.
 7. The North East quadrant children's social care services have developed a discussion forum that we would like to adopt across the rest of our services. To strengthen staff confidence, the North East management team have been holding regular meetings and open discussions with staff focused on discrimination and racism and the most effective ways of responding to it. The opportunity to hold these open conversations in a safe space has resulted in increasing participation from employees, often leading to 30-40 colleagues attending the discussions. These are being held monthly, with stories being shared and lessons being learnt about the way we recruit, and the support offered to staff.
 - As a result, staff have become increasingly confident in sharing their issues and there is an identified need for greater use of the reporting methods already in place for staff members who experience discrimination. This approach will be piloted in another quadrant shortly and if successful, rolled out across the rest of children's social care services.
 8. Tea Breaks are a Race Equality Matters initiative that, similarly, focus on providing an open and safe space for staff to have honest conversations about racial inclusion and race inequality. Planning is underway to roll-out Tea Break spaces across the council.

Recommendation 5:

Many of the initiatives listed within recommendation 5 are being progressed through various channels and predominantly through the work of the Recruitment, Retention & Culture (RRC) programme. Progress so far, and plans are outlined below. Where further action is needed, the recommendations will be

reviewed at the CFLL Leadership Team, Children's Social Care (CSC) Transformation & Assurance Board and the RRC Board.

Recommendation 5a:

The exit interview process for social care employees was launched in June 2022. In light of the analysis undertaken and the feedback we have received we are making some improvements to it including arranging the exit interviews for leavers. A communication to all staff will be sent in April 2023. We will ensure that the same process is shown on Our Surrey.

When an employee resigns, their manager will still meet with them at that time to understand the reasons behind their resignation and the CFL Workforce Team will still send the employee the exit survey link asking them to complete the questionnaire before their last day of employment.

In addition to this, from now on, the CFL Workforce Team will also send the leaver an exit interview invitation offering them the opportunity to meet with a colleague, work peer (same job role), a member of the People and Change team, or any colleague of their choice.

Recommendation 5b:

After several changes to the arrangements made since the Connect2Surrey contract started last year to improve communication and the ways-of-working, we are continuing to hold fortnightly meetings with Connect2Surrey, attended by our CFLL Workforce Lead and one of the operational ADs (representing all of our operational services across children's social care). Activity from Connect2Surrey (including CVs supplied, interviews, appointments, onboarding) is regularly reviewed and specific actions agreed to help fill our vacant positions.

A fortnightly drop-in session has also been setup, led by Connect2Surrey, for our Service Managers to attend.

Following some recent analysis, it is reassuring that we have had more new starters through the Connect2Surrey contract than we achieved through the previous supplier in their last year. However there remains a challenge regarding the number of CV's being received and the conversion of these to employment. Through our work with Connect2Surrey we understand these is not just a 'Surrey' challenge, there is a shortage of experienced qualified social workers nationally and locally both in terms of agency and permanent recruitment.

Recommendation 5c:

Improving administrative support for social workers is an important priority for the service and is supported by feedback we hear from staff.

Our aim is to embed administrative staff directly within the frontline teams. Initially, we will develop this for the Family Safeguarding service as it is a key part of how the Family Safeguarding Model can function effectively, we have worked closely with colleagues from the National Strengthening Families Team

(Hertfordshire) who are supporting us to implement this in a consistent and effective way.

Consideration is being given to then embedding administrative staff within all teams across children's social care services.

We are keen to learn from others and as mentioned have met with colleagues from Hertfordshire CC to understand more about how they provide administrative support/staff within their services; Hertfordshire CC already have a well-established Family Safeguarding Model and we are currently receiving support to help us fully embed this in Surrey.

Recommendation 5d:

Developing further routes into social work and communicating them clearly to our workforce is an important part of the work of the RRC programme and our overall approach to 'growing our own' social care workforce.

The Surrey Children's Academy has collated all routes into social work onto a single [SharePoint page](#) that has recently been shared with staff. This includes both funded and self-funded options for staff with varying levels of qualifications already held. Some of the options outlined here include:

- [Social Work Degree Apprenticeship](#): Developed last year as an output from the RRC programme with the first cohort of apprentices interviewed in early-2023 and beginning their apprenticeship in September.
- [Step Up To Social Work](#): Ideal for existing non-qualified practitioners (such as Family Support Workers), this is a 14-month funded qualification with the applications for the next cohort closing this month (April 2023).
- Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work: Also developed through the RRC programme, 10 places are being funded to undertake this at Kingston University (further places can be self-funded) with the next cohort starting in September.

Recommendation 5e and 5f:

Reinstating the annual car user lump sum, providing more pool cars for frontline workers, and providing parking permits across the county would be welcomed by social work staff. We aim to work with wider Council departments to explore how any such retention schemes could be developed within SCC. Children's services will take this forward into the recently formed council-wide 'Workforce Performance Board'.

Recommendation 5g:

With our South East quadrant staff moving from Consort House to Woodhatch Place, there will now be parking available for those staff. In the South West and North East quadrants, there are dedicated car parks for the children's services staff and no known issues with parking. For the North West quadrant staff there have historically been challenges with parking in Woking. There are 54 parking spaces specifically set aside for social care duty workers and blue badge holders and a further 134 spaces that can be used by any staff. There is also free parking

available nearby (within 10 minutes walk) and parking on roads in the area is available for free from 11:30am onwards.

Recommendation 5h:

Two of our quadrants (South West and North East) are based in dedicated offices entirely for the use of the children's social care services based there. Our South East and North West quadrants are based at Woodhatch Place and Quadrant Court respectively, with our countywide services including the C-SPA, Fostering, CWD etc based between these two buildings. For all teams and services, there is ring-fenced desk space specifically set aside for those staff. In addition, since the removal of social distancing guidelines resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is significant amount of available desk space to use within those buildings should it be needed. There are times when additional desk space is needed when all staff from a particular service are in the office on the same day however the flexible working arrangements across many of SCC's buildings enable staff to use extra space when needed.

Recommendation 5i:

The concern regarding there being no Assistant Team Manager roles within the children's services structure was recently raised at the RRC Board meeting where clarification was shared with some Members in attendance. Whilst we no longer have a position titled 'Assistant Team Manager' (ATM) within our children's services structure (since the 2018-2019 restructure), the role (i.e. at that grade and with those responsibilities) is still in place. During the 2018-2019 restructure, the ATM roles became Team Manager roles, the Team Manager roles became Service Manager roles and the Head of Service/Service Manager roles became Assistant Director roles.

Recommendation 5j:

Over the past five months colleagues from HR have held three meetings with groups of international social workers (ISWs). The workers have taken the opportunity to explain what is good and what could be improved about working for SCC and adjusting to living in the UK. Two of their main concerns relate to housing and support with the costs of running a car. HR are exploring what additional support can be offered. A further meeting will be held with them shortly to update them on our progress. The service is planning to run a staff survey focused on the culture within children's service and what staff would like to change. The ISW's will be included in this survey.

The Children's Services Academy runs an induction programme for ISWs over 4 days covering key topics including: social work and the law / home visits / assessments / safeguarding / working with children in care and targeted youth support. In addition, extra support is now provided to managers supporting ISWs and there is further information available on the [New and Developing Social Workers SharePoint site](#).

Recommendation 5k:

All universities would want statutory placements and try to source these wherever possible for their students, often focusing on final placements to better prepare students before joining the qualified social worker workforce. Universities recognise the importance of these statutory placements but are restricted to what Local Authorities can offer, and we in-turn are reliant on the availability of social work teams and Practice Educators to support and assess students. Usually, workforce stability also impacts on Local Authorities' ability to accept social work students. At SCC, we try to recruit newly qualified social workers for their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) with at least one statutory placement, however, this is not always possible.

Recommendation 5l:

An initial review regarding ASYE placements and potentially rotating between different services can be undertaken by the Academy through discussions with children's social care leadership and management. We must consider the potential impact on the work that could be allocated to ASYE workers and ensure there isn't a negative effect on the consistency of services for the children and families we support. A key message from our children and young people has always been about the importance of having a consistent social worker so any planning related to rotating ASYE's needs to consider the impact this would have upon the child / young person relationship with their social worker.

Recommendation 5m:

We haven't been approached by East Surrey College for placements in the past however the Children's Services Academy is happy to consider their requests and will approach social work teams to place their students wherever there is available capacity to do so. We have recently held discussions with East Surrey College and will continue this dialogue.

Recommendation 6:

The Recruitment, Retention & Culture Board welcomes the continued engagement of the Select Committee Members. Three of the Members are currently invited to the monthly Board meetings.

Sinead Mooney
Cabinet Member for Children and Families
25 April 2023

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