

# LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

## Meeting of the General Purposes Committee

Wednesday 1 June 2005

### Report from Director of Social Services

For action

Wards affected:  
All

#### **Report Title: Recruitment of hard to recruit Team Managers in Children's Services.**

Forward Plan ref:

#### **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 The recruitment of permanent Team Managers to front line teams in Children's Services is essential to ensure high quality and safe services for children in need of protection and children who are looked after by the Local Authority. A number of improvements have been made to the terms and conditions of Team Managers and more recently there has been a professional advertising campaign. Despite this eight out of eleven key posts remain vacant and are currently filled by agency team managers.

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That members agree to a payment of £2000 gross as a "golden hello" to attract new recruits to eleven hard to recruit to team manager posts in Children's Services.
- 2.2 That members agree to replace the existing retention payment of £1200 per annum with a market supplement of £3200 per annum in order to retain current permanent team managers and attract new recruits in the hard to recruit to team manager posts.

- 2.3 That members delegate to the Director of Social Services and from 4 July 2005 the Director of Children and Families the authority to determine the conditions and circumstances under which the “golden hello” and market supplement will be varied or terminated.

### **3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 Brent Children’s Services have struggled for several years to recruit and retain Team Managers in Referral and Assessment and Children in Need teams. These posts account for eleven out of a total of 19 Team Managers posts in the service. The teams have a direct interface with the public and are responsible for assessing the needs of vulnerable children including those with disabilities, child protection, accommodating children, taking court proceedings and ensuring that statutory responsibilities are fulfilled for Looked After Children.
- 3.2 The Team Managers responsible for the Referral and Assessment and Children in Need teams carry a great deal of responsibility and the decisions they make on a daily basis have a direct and lasting impact on the lives of the children and families who come to the attention of Children’s Services.
- 3.3 These posts are the most important in children’s services and require experienced and skilled managers. At the same time they are the least popular because they are perceived to be potentially high risk and to be lacking in job satisfaction when compared to more specialist roles such as Team Managers in the Placement Service. This is the case in all Social Services department in the current climate, but is a more acute problem in Brent because of our history.
- 3.4 The reality in Brent is that our services are much improved, but it continues to be the case that team managers in the front line teams will be faced with a higher workload and more complex problems than their colleagues in neighbouring boroughs such as Harrow, Westminster, Camden and Kensington and Chelsea. Our salaries terms and conditions in comparison to these competitor boroughs are not competitive enough to make Brent more attractive when all factors are taken into consideration by potential applicants (see appendix 1).
- 3.5 The competitive market for qualified social workers has resulted in our relying increasingly on relatively inexperienced social workers, many of whom have qualified overseas. Although committed and enthusiastic, this workforce makes huge demands on the skills of team managers who must offer regular coaching and intensive support to ensure that critical decisions are implemented and statutory processes are properly understood and complied with.

- 3.6 The recruitment and retention of permanent team managers is essential if we are to retain and develop our social work workforce. There is evidence from social work staff that their relationship with their team manager is the most important factor when deciding to change from agency to permanent social work status or to leave Brent.
- 3.7 In recognition of all the above a number of actions have already been taken to improve pay and conditions. These include:
- Increasing salaries by extending the Team Manager grade from PO4 to a linked PO4 -5 grade.
  - Increasing the number of Referral and Assessment Team Manager posts from 2-4 and the number of Children in Need posts from 4 -6 in order to reduce the span of responsibility of individual team managers.
  - Introduction of a retention allowance of £1200 per annum.
  - Offering management development opportunities to team managers.
  - Increasing the number of senior social work posts to attract skilled and experienced social workers.
  - Increased training and the introduction of professional mentoring for social workers, so that less “coaching” is required of team managers.
  - Creation of an additional principle officer post to increase the support available to team managers from senior managers.
  - A professional recruitment campaign, to increase the number of permanent qualified social workers.
  - Improved systems and management information and increased support from systems and support staff.
- 3.8 Some of these actions have had an impact in that a number of agency team managers have chosen to stay with Brent for some time. However, the pay differential between agency and permanent team managers is such that we cannot persuade agency team managers to become permanent and we have only recruited two permanent team managers in the past two years.
- 3.10 The impact on the salaries budgets of this situation is severe. The maximum cost of a permanent team manager is currently £49400, including on costs, London Weighting and the retention payment of £1,200 per annum. The current cost of agency team managers from our preferred supplier is between £60,500 and £71,500 per annum.

#### 4. **Financial Implications**

- 4.1 To replace the existing retention payment of £1,200 pa by a market supplement of £3,200 pa would cost £2,000 per post. Two of the current team leaders are Brent employees so the cost in a full year would be £4,000.
- 4.2 The table shows the impact of this proposal if it resulted in the recruitment of 1, 2 and 9 additional Brent employed team managers. The amounts shown include all the costs of employing officers and Outer London pay weighting. 2005/06 salary levels have been used. It assumes that one recruitment campaign costs £8,000 but that there would be savings from larger scale recruitment and the officers would stay for 3 years.

Item	One new team leader appointed at the top of PO5 £	One new team leader appointed at the top of PO5 and one at the bottom of PO4 £	Nine new team leaders appointed at mid-point of PO4/5 £
Average cost of agency team leader	66,000	132,000	594,000
Cost of Brent employed staff (with existing retention of £1,200 pa)	52,294	99,236	446,562
Saving	-13,706	-32,764	-147,438
Cost of higher retention payment and Golden Hello, assuming that the officer stays 3 years.	2,667	5,333	24,000
Saving after implementation of increased retention payment and Golden Hello	-11,039	-27,431	-123,438
Recruitment costs (with cheaper large scale recruitment) assuming a 3 year stay	2,667	4,000	13,333
Net saving	-8,373	-23,431	-110,105

- 4.3 If it is possible to replace any agency staff team leaders by offering a higher retention bonus and introducing a recruitment bonus it will save money, even allowing for typical recruitment costs and assuming that staff stay three years. Any additional costs will be contained within existing Children's Services Salaries budgets.

## **5. *Legal implications***

- 5.1 Pay differentials between a man and a woman carrying out similar work or work of equal value or work which has been assessed as having the same grade under the Council's job evaluation scheme are open to challenge under the Equal Pay Act. These proposals create pay differentials between Team Managers' posts in Children's Services. However differentials which are due to a material factor which is not gender-based are lawful under the Act and the problems in recruitment and retention referred to in this report seem to be such a material factor. In order to avoid successful future challenges to the differentials under the Act the continued payment of the "golden hello" and market supplement will need to be kept under review in the light of future labour market conditions.
- 5.2 The market supplement should be paid on the basis that the Council has the contractual right to keep this payment under review in the light of labour market conditions and to end or vary it in its discretion in the light of the review.
- 5.3 If it is intended to provide that the "golden hello" will be repayable should the Team Manager leave the Council before completion of a minimum period of service, then the length of the period should be no longer than is reasonably required to protect the Council's interest in maintaining a stable and trained workforce of permanent Team Managers. Otherwise the repayment provision could be found by a court to be void as in restraint of trade.

## **6. *Diversity Implications***

- 6.1 The recruitment of a permanent and skilled group of team managers will improve the quality of assessment and ensure that services are appropriate to individual need.

Recruitment will follow Council procedures and posts will be advertised in "Brent Matters", neighbouring boroughs and the professional press. Social Services has a good record of employing team managers who reflect the diversity of the community we serve.

## **7. *Human Resources Implications***

Any situation where staff are able to make a direct comparison between their role and others of equal value which attract higher levels of pay, places the Council at risk of challenge under the Equal Pay Act. Therefore it is important that payments made to staff to reflect difficulties in recruitment are kept under constant review to ensure their continued justification. Such payments should have a limited lifespan e.g. 1 or at most 2 years at which point they should cease unless the case for continuation of the payments be made.

## **8. Staffing implications**

- 8.1 This proposal applies to 11 of the Team Manager posts in Children's Services that have been difficult to recruit to over 3-4 years. It does not apply to the 8 team manager posts in the Placements, Leaving Care, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and the Family Support team.

### **Background Papers**

None

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