

	<b>General Purposes Committee</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> July 2020
	<b>Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People</b>
<b>Recruitment and Retention Payments for Children and Young People's Social Workers</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b> (only applicable for Cabinet, Cabinet Sub Committee and officer decisions)	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
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## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update the Committee of the impact of the decision in October 2018, to introduce recruitment and retention initiatives to key social work roles within the Children and Young People's (CYP) department.
- 1.2 To provide information about the overall approach to social work staff retention at all levels within the department.
- 1.3 To provide updated benchmarking information regarding specific hard to recruit social work roles.

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee approves the continuation of recruitment and retention initiatives within CYP (including market supplements to all social workers) until the end of the 2020/21 financial year. The current initiatives are:

- To provide a one-off, £5,000 payment to newly recruited permanent social work managers, social work practice consultants and senior social workers in hard to recruit to teams within the Localities and LAC and Permanency Services, on satisfactory completion of a probationary period.
- To provide a retention payment of £3600 to the social work managers and social work practice consultant posts, payable after 36 months in role and on a recurring 36 month cycle, subject to annual review of market conditions.
- To allow the department the discretion to provide relocation package support to key posts, up to a maximum of £5,000 in individual cases.
- Continuation of the existing market supplement of £1200 per annum to all social workers (PO1-PO3).

2.2 That authority is delegated to the Strategic Director, CYP, in consultation and regular review with the Director of Legal, HR, Audit and Investigations, to determine how recruitment and retention payments are offered across the department, with a continued focus on hard to recruit to posts.

### 3.0 **Detail**

3.1 GP Committee agreed in October 2018 that CYP could introduce recruitment and retention payments in hard to recruit to posts as outlined in paragraph 2.1 above. This was in response to significant structural difficulties in recruiting and retaining more experienced social workers and first line social work management staff. A realignment of CYP social work activity took place in January 2018 and, whilst there were a number of benefits to frontline practitioners, recognised in the May 2018 Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services, it had not resulted in an increase in the number of experienced social workers and social work management roles being taken up by permanent staff. As at September 2018 only 44% of experienced social workers and front line management posts (PO3, PO5 and PO7), were filled by permanent staff.

3.2 The issue of sufficiency of suitably qualified children's social work staff is recognised as a national issue that the DfE is seeking to address through new routes into social work and better development pathways for future managers. The profession is noted as an occupation that appears on the list of skills shortages to enable overseas recruitment to fill key vacancies.

3.3 The 2018 report to the General Purposes Committee set out what other London boroughs had introduced as incentives to recruit key social work staff. A recent benchmarking exercise (March 2020) was undertaken to consider current initiatives across London for the social worker grade (Brent equivalent of SO2 - PO3) due to difficulties in recruiting permanently to the senior social work grade (PO3).

Local Authority	Ofsted Rating	Salary Range	Other Incentives
Brent	Good	£31,458 - £41,706	Annual £1200 retention payment £5k golden hello
Hillingdon	Good	£33,948 to £42,684	Annual £4k retention payment in frontline teams Annual £1.8k payment for practice educators
Harrow	Good	£33,618 - £41,292	Annual £1500 market supplement Retention payment - £3,000 (payable after 3 years)
Barnet	Good	£39,040 - £51,065	No other incentives
Greenwich	Good	£33948 - £45585	Rota days equating to an additional 10 days off per year Travel costs reimbursement worth £1k+, or essential car user car parking Royal Greenwich Keyworker housing
Bexley	Outstanding	£32,517 - £41,934	flexible benefits payment - £2,370 pa
Barking and Dagenham	Requires Improvement	£32430-£42,681	£5k golden hello payment £15k retention payment after 3 years 2-month paid sabbatical after 4 years Keyworker housing

- 3.4 It is important that Brent remains competitive in the market place for good quality staff. The upcoming offer of key-worker housing as part of a recruitment package will considerably strengthen the position in relation to neighbouring boroughs and it is anticipated this may counterbalance the higher rewards and benefits packages on offer for senior social workers in some other outer London authorities.
- 3.5 The current departmental workforce strategy was refreshed in November 2019 and focuses on the following issues:
- Identifying and promoting the behaviours and practices that support strong teams so that managers are clear about what is expected of them and what support is available, in line with the Brent CYP Practice Framework.
  - Re-aligning the balance of experienced and new staff so that there is better throughput of work and managers can be freed up to focus on developing themselves and their teams.

- Identifying those teams which are particularly at risk from turnover and creating individualised support plans for those teams.

#### 4.0 Update

4.1 Since the implementation of the new initiatives, three recruitment rounds took place at the beginning and in the middle of 2019 and the beginning of 2020. The campaigns have been to recruit social workers at all levels (grades SO2 – PO7). The next recruitment round will start in May 2020, focusing primarily on social workers at all levels due to success in recruiting to management posts.

4.2 The outcome of the campaigns is detailed in the table below:

Job type	Applications Received / Number Interviewed	Offers	Offers fulfilled	Number to receive R&R payment based on new arrangement (denotes hard-to-fill team)
Team Manager (PO7)				
2018/19	22 / 12	9	6	6
June 2019	14 / 4	3	3	2
December 2019	17 / 8	3	3	3
SWPC (PO5)				
2018/19	17 / 12	6	4	2
June 2019	11 / 4	3	3	1
December 2019	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Social Worker (SO2-PO3)				
2018/19	39 / 17	13	12	1
June 2019	41 / 13	11	6	1
December 2019	17 / 6	3	2	1

4.3 For the LAC and Permanency service at management level (PO5 and PO7) the position in terms of permanent staffing as at May 2020 has significantly improved. In May 2018 33% of social work management roles at PO5 and PO7 were vacant and filled by agency staff. The current vacancy rate is 7% (1 vacancy).

4.4 For the Localities service at management level the position in terms of permanent staffing as at May 2020 has also significantly improved. In December 2018 55% of social work management posts were vacant and filled by agency staff. The current position has improved so that currently 18% of posts are either filled by agency staff or are vacant (5 vacancies).

4.5 The permanent management appointments brought in staff from other local authorities as well as converting existing agency staff managers to permanent contracts. All commented that the recruitment initiatives played a significant part in their decision to choose Brent or to convert to a permanent arrangement.

- 4.6 Separate to the recruitment programme has been the launch, in January 2019, of the social work career progression framework within the department. This built upon the existing programme that supports newly qualified social workers with the intention of 'growing our own' staff – particularly in supporting them to achieve Senior Social Worker status as current recruitment has failed to make progress to increase numbers in this role. The career development framework also enables talented staff to move through the promotion system at a faster pace.
- 4.7 The first panel was held in May 2019. There were 12 submissions from staff with 10 being successful. Of the successful applications 6 staff progressed to Senior Social Worker and this provides the most likely strategy to increase numbers of staff within these positions. The progression framework will act as a retention tool with at least one member of staff having commented that they were considering leaving Brent before it was put in place.
- 4.8 A second panel was held in November 2019. There were 9 submissions from staff with 7 being successful. Of the successful applicants 3 staff progressed to the Senior Social Worker. The most recent panel was held in May 2020 where 6 applicants progressed to a more senior level within the department.
- 4.9 To reduce the uncertainty for agency workers during the pandemic whilst at the same time build resilience for children's services both now and in the future, agency workers covering permanent positions were invited to move on to a permanent contract, facilitated by a fast track process. This has generated interest from six agency workers at experienced, senior social worker and management roles, all of which are in the hard-to-recruit teams.
- 4.10 International recruitment of 13 qualified social workers from Southern Africa (5) and India (8) has taken place to augment domestic arrangements. These staff commenced in Brent between July and October 2019 and have settled in well. Consideration will be given to a further international recruitment round in 2021.
- 4.11 Brent is signed up to the LGA's Return to Social Work programme, offering free training to 200 former social workers so they can restart their careers in local government. This has not yet resulted in any social work appointments.
- 4.12 The overall position of permanent social work qualified staff across the department as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 was 78%, an increase from 75% 12 months ago. The key challenge is in recruiting experienced social workers (PO3 level) as there are many opportunities in the agency market and recent recruitment rounds have not seen any significant rise in successful applications. It is anticipated that the overall permanency rate will increase during 2020 as retention rates rise, agency workers move on to permanent contracts and the impact of the next recruitment round in May/June 2020 is seen. To ensure progress is maintained it is proposed that the short-term measures to further increase the number of permanent staff in key social work roles remain in place. Funding for this will continue to be met from within the CYP department, leading to a reduction in cost pressures and creating positive impact.

- 4.13 Other factors that have contributed to recruiting and retaining staff are the positive Ofsted inspection outcome, stability at senior management levels and continuing monitoring of manageable caseloads for staff.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 General Fund budgets for social worker staffing have been based on the average cost of permanent staff being employed. The cost to the council of engaging agency staff in these roles is greater than the cost of permanent staff. Consequently, the recruitment of permanent staff prevents additional costs being incurred by the council.
- 5.2 The additional cost of agency staff in social work positions contributed to the overall overspend by the CYP department in 2018/19 and in 2019/20. The cost of the recruitment and retention initiatives are additional costs to the council, however, the initiatives can result in reducing budget pressures related to higher cost implications of agency staff.
- 5.3 The recruitment payment of £5,000 adds to the initial cost in year 1 and based on the allocations made to date in the last two financial years, the cost incurred is £85,000. Over the next two financial years there will need to be monies set aside to fund retention payments to date of £61,200 between 2021/22 and 2022/23. However, this is then recouped as the need to pay the additional agency costs are avoided.

Job type	Number to receive R&R payment	£5k Recruitment & Retention Payments	£3.6k Retention Payment after 36 mths in Role
		£	£
Team Manager (PO7)			
2018/19	6	30,000	21,600
Jun-19	2	10,000	7,200
Dec-19	3	15,000	10,800
SW Practice Consultant (PO5)			
2018/19	2	10,000	7,200
Jun-19	1	5,000	3,600
Dec-19	N/A		
Social Worker (SO2-PO3)			
2018/19	1	5,000	3,600
Jun-19	1	5,000	3,600
Dec-19	1	5,000	3,600
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>85,000</b>	<b>61,200</b>

For the group of staff recruited to date, the table below models the potential costs avoided over 4 years with the assumption that all receive the recruitment payment in year 0 and the retention payment of £3,600 will be received in year 3.

Additional Cost / (avoided cost) £k					
	Num.	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Team Managers (PO7)	11	8.2	(46.8)	(46.8)	(7.2)
Social Work Practice Consultants (PO5)	3	0	(14.5)	(14.5)	(3.7)
Experienced social workers (PO3)	3	(11.5)	(26.5)	(26.5)	(15.7)
In year cost avoided	17	(2.8)	(87.8)	(87.8)	(26.6)
<b>Estimated cumulative cost avoided</b>		<b>(2.8)</b>	<b>(90.7)</b>	<b>(178.5)</b>	<b>(205.1)</b>

- 5.4 The model above which assumes 2019-20 staffing cost levels shows that cumulative costs over a number of years amounting to £0.2m may potentially be avoided. It should also be noted that based on the timing of the recruitment drives total retention payments of £54,000 will need to be funded over the financial years 2021/22 (£29,000) and 2022/23 (£25,200). The cost of the initial recruitment and retention payments were funded from CYP reserves. To ensure that funding is available for the retention payments, a reserve will need to be built up to fund these costs. This confirms a successful recruitment strategy to date which avoids additional agency costs and reduces overspend related to agency staff.
- 5.5 The option to continue this incentive scheme in 2020/21 will incur one off costs in year at £5,000 per successful recruitment and a reserve will need to be built up for the future retention payments at £3,600 after 36 months. The model

shown above should be reviewed again at the end of the financial year to aid any decision around whether to continue with and how to fund the incentives for recruitment and retention.

## **6.0 Legal Implications**

- 6.1 Where a supplement is paid on top of the evaluated grade of a post the potential for equal pay equality of terms claims arises. The council will need to demonstrate that there is a “material factor” which is neither directly nor indirectly sex discriminatory to avoid or defend any such claims. The situation highlighted in this report concerning the difficulties which have been experienced in recruiting and retaining suitable staff to these roles, for the reasons stated, could amount to a relevant “material factor” which the council could rely on in respect of justification for the need to offer additional financial incentive, in circumstances where this might result in a pay disparity. The need to continue to make recruitment and / or retention payments must, however, be kept under regular review, with reference to current evidence to ensure that the practice only continues for as long as it is justified by material market factors.

## **7.0 Equality Implications**

- 7.1 The public sector equality duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 7.2 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 7.3 An Equality Impact Assessment was completed, in respect of the proposals considered, in the previous report to the GP Committee with the analysis being based on the characteristics of ethnicity and gender as these were the two most significant types affected by the proposed changes. To ensure the analysis was sufficiently broad it also included staff undertaking similar tasks from the Community Wellbeing department. The overall analysis was that the risks that the criteria for applying the proposed payments disadvantage persons with a protected characteristics were low based on ethnicity and medium based on gender. It was considered that the market evidence, establishing that there was a material factor (namely market conditions for recruitment to the affected posts) justified the pay disparity.



## **8.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

Not Applicable (N/A)

## **9.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)**

The Human Resources implications have been contained within the main body of the report above.

## **10.0 Next Steps**

- 10.1 Monthly progress meetings to consider the impact of the recruitment and retention initiatives continue to take place. It is intended that GP committee are asked to continue to approve these arrangements to the end of the 2020/21 financial year with another review taking place in early 2021/22.
- 10.2 Human Resources will continue to consider any demand pressures within other departments of the Council and the corporate implications where there are similar skills shortages in hard to recruit to posts.

### **Report sign off:**

**Gail Tolley**

Strategic Director of Children and Young People