

	General Purposes Committee 27 July 2026
	Report from the Corporate Director, Service Reform & Strategy
	Lead Member – Leader of Council & Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care (Councillor Muhammed Butt)
Recruitment and Retention Payments for Adult Social Care Social Workers, Occupational Therapists and Visual Impairment Rehabilitation Officers	
Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	One Appendix 1: Eligible posts for recruitment and retention payments
Background Papers:	None.
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The local authority has a legal duty to assess residents' care and support needs and the local and national picture indicates there is high demand and strong competition for qualified, regulated staff to discharge this statutory responsibility. This has resulted in recruitment and retention challenges and a reliance on agency staff. A lack of permanent qualified staff in these posts risks poorer quality services and poses a risk to financial stability due to the escalating costs associated with agency staff.
- 1.2 The General Purposes Committee previously approved the payment of recruitment and retention payments in November 2023. This report seeks approval to continue with the recruitment and retention payments for social workers, occupational therapists and visual impairment rehabilitation officers in

Adult Social Care (ASC), to improve the recruitment and retention of permanent staff. This approach complements a suite of strategies being employed and is forming the building blocks of an overarching workforce strategy within the refreshed ASC transformation programme. The proposals are closely aligned to the Children's social care approach to ensure that parity and fairness across the social care workforce is maintained.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Committee agree to the continuation of the use of recruitment and retention initiatives, as follows:
- 2.2 To make a one-off payment of £5,000 to newly recruited permanent qualified social workers, occupational therapists and visual impairment rehabilitation officers on grades PO2 – PO7, on satisfactory completion of their probationary period and repayable where an employee leaves the council within 12 months of receiving the payment.
- 2.3 To make annual retention payments of £3,000 to all qualified social workers, occupational therapists and visual impairment rehabilitation officers on grades PO2 to PO7 to be paid annually after completion of a full year's service.
- 2.4 To make retention payments for Best Interest Assessors of £2,000 a year for being on the rota to carry out statutory duties commensurate with the role.
- 2.5 To make retention payments of £1,000 a year for qualified Practice Educators to take two students a year.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 Implementation of these activities will enable the service to contribute to the borough's priorities 'Thriving Communities-Every opportunity to succeed' and *'Local people in the borough to gain jobs via our apprenticeship'*.
- 3.1.2 We have a diverse workforce; however 21.7% are currently agency workers. The proposal in this paper aims to retain good performing agency workers which include staff who live within Brent and recruit a permanent workforce that is representative of the borough at all levels.
- 3.1.3 We are currently hosting 4 local apprentices and the aim is to retain them or convert them to ASYE once the registration is completed.

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 The Adult Social Care workforce is of central importance in delivering an excellent service to adults requiring care and support and the Director of Adult Social Care is held accountable for professional leadership including internal and external workforce planning. This proposal relates to those who are direct employees of Brent Council as opposed to a commissioned or provider service.

- 3.2.2 Recruitment challenges are not unique to Brent; the employment market for social workers, occupational therapists and visual impairment rehabilitation officers is extremely competitive both nationally and locally.
- 3.2.3 The continuation of the proposed scheme is set out in Appendix 1 and is reflective of the scheme applied in the Children's Young People & Community Development Directorate.
- 3.2.4 Adult Social Care continue to take a wide range of actions to address recruitment challenges focusing on:
- Workforce recruitment, retention, and stability
 - Workforce development
 - Leadership and management
 - Our work culture
- 3.2.5 The proposed continuation of recruitment and retention payments will support us to increase the number of permanent staff into adult social care, reducing reliance on agency staff and associated cost pressures.

3.3. Impact

- 3.3.1 There is a national issue in the adult social care workforce, with more staff irrespective of the employer looking to retire, change careers or move to agency work. Staff have left permanent posts with the Council to take up employment either as an agency worker or permanent roles with other London local authorities where there is a more competitive remuneration and reward structure. To attract talented, permanent workers, manageable caseloads and opportunities to develop are essential components of the employment offer. In the last two years we were able to convert 32 agency staff to permanent with the recruitment and retention payments providing an incentive to do so.

3.3.2 Salary Bench Marking

Social worker salaries and additional payments data provided by London Councils (as at April 2025) and gathered from recruitment websites is set out in the table below. The data is for neighbouring London Boroughs where this is available.

This data highlights that Brent pays significantly below some of our neighbouring Boroughs and demonstrates the need for additional payments to remain competitive in a very tight market.

Council	Maximum Salary	Additional payments
Social Worker		
Brent	46512	Golden Hello £5K; R&R £3K
Ealing	46512	
Hillingdon	46968	
Hounslow	49056	Market supplement - not defined
Hammersmith	49638	
Harrow	50691	Up to £6K
Camden	52329	£4K - £2K at end of Years 3 and 4
Kensington	53319	£2.5K - Child protection roles
Westminster	57495	£1K or £2K for project work
Senior Social Worker		
Brent	49551	Golden Hello £5K; R&R £3K
Ealing	49551	
Hillingdon	52194	
Harrow	54843	Up to £6K
Hammersmith	55710	£1500
Hillingdon	57402	
Camden	57583	£4K - £2K at end of Years 3 and 4
Kensington	60003	£2.5K - Child protection roles
Hounslow	61653	Market supplement - not defined
Westminster	76872	£1K or £2K for project work
Approved Mental Health Professional		
Ealing	46512	
Camden	52329	£4K - £2K at end of Years 3 and 4
Kensington	53319	
Brent	53607	Grade uplift applied
Harrow	54843	Up to £6K
Hammersmith	55710	£1500
Assistant Team Manager		
Brent	56646	Golden Hello £5K; R&R £3K
Hounslow	57402	Market supplement - not defined
Kensington	60003	
Team Manager		
Harrow	62349	Up to £6K
Hillingdon	62766	
Hammersmith	62922	£1500
Brent	63159	Golden Hello £5K; R&R £3K
Ealing	63159	
Camden	63438	£4K - £2K at end of Years 3 and 4
Hounslow	66378	Market supplement - not defined
Kensington	66693	
Westminster	76872	£1K or £2K for project work

4.0 Other Approaches to Recruitment and Retention

4.1 Other approaches to recruiting and retaining staff have included reviewing the benefits to working in Brent, ensuring that our offer is competitive and effectively marketed to encourage high quality practitioners to apply and stay in Brent. Over recent years, ASC leads have taken a wide range of actions to address these challenges. These actions have included:

- Offering the opportunity to rent key worker housing which has led to practitioners becoming permanent and remaining in their roles.
- Introducing internal apprenticeships for Occupational Therapists (Ots) and Social Workers (SWs) and launching Brent's first Community Social Work Apprenticeship Programme which offers local residents an opportunity to gain a degree whilst learning and earning a London Living Wage salary.
- Introduction of the Adult Social Care Training Academy ensuring all social care staff have access to training that will enhance their skills, knowledge, and confidence. Course completion of 77 attendees from July 2025 - March 2026. E-Learning attendance from July 2025 involving 55 attendees.
- Fast-tracking of active agency staff to convert to a permanent contract with 32 conversions.
- Rolling recruitment adverts and social media advertising.
- Regular supervision supported by a standardised documentation and a tracker.
- We have used creative strategies to advertise and recruit local people who want to work in their local community.
- Working with North West London Social Care Academy on ways to engage with different groups in our communities, including previously marginalised groups who may not have been in work as part of a pipeline into Social Care.
- Recruiting based on values and behaviours, like kindness, compassion and reliability, life experiences and a willingness to learn.
- Communicating clearly with applicants about progress on their application, to help build positive relationships and keep them onboard for the recruitment process. Share information and timeframes early on to ensure eager applicants can start as soon as possible.

Other measures which have been developed include;

- The launch of a linked grade Job Description from PO2 – PO4, career progression framework, enabling staff to move through the promotion system for PO2 – PO7 grades. This will be supported by linked grade job descriptions to facilitate progression.
- Rotations for OTs across health and social care.
- For non-regulated staff the developing care workforce pathway will reflect the skills, behaviours and expertise needed to deliver excellent social care and set clear expectations about what high-quality care looks. In time, it will become a recognised benchmark for all non-regulated in adult social care roles.

4.2 Whilst these and other measures will continue to contribute to the recruitment and retention of permanent staff, the proposal for recruitment and retention

incentives as outlined in this report are required to maintain and boost the number of permanent staff in regulated roles across the department.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 There are regular recruitment campaigns and these payments will be incorporated into the materials. Monthly progress meetings to consider the impact of these initiatives have been set up and the overall effectiveness of the proposed changes will be reviewed every two years.

6.0 Financial Considerations

- 6.1 The cost of recruitment and retention payments based on current staff numbers and expected new recruitment is c.£500,000 per annum, excluding employer costs and will be funded from within ASC budgets.

7.0 Legal Considerations

- 7.1 Where a supplement is paid on top of the evaluated grade of a post the potential for equal pay claims arises. The council will need to demonstrate that there is a genuine “material factor” which is neither directly nor indirectly discriminatory based on sex to avoid or defend such claims. The position of the employment market, which may lead an employer to increase the pay of a particular job to attract candidates, may constitute an objectively justified economic ground for a pay disparity. Where payments to an employee are on-going the payment must be kept under regular review to ensure that it only continues for as long as it is justified by material market factors.

8.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 This proposal seeks to continue recruitment and retention payments for all social workers, occupational therapist and visual impairment rehabilitation officers which ensures fairness across these roles. There are no obvious equality issues with this proposal. Additionally, it is considered that the market

evidence, establishing that there was a material factor (namely market conditions for recruitment to the affected posts) justifies any pay disparity.

- 8.4 The make-up of the Adult Social Care workforce (specifically the posts which are qualified social workers) overall is predominantly female and from a multi-ethnic background. The characteristics of ethnicity and gender are specified as these were the two most significant types affected by the proposed changes.
- 8.5 The current demographic of Brent's Adult Social Care workforce reflects the diversity of the borough and indicates equality and fairness, through the lens of diversity, in the current recruitment and retention approach. Additionally, the programme for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic managers demonstrates the focus on supporting the workforce's diverse talent.
- 8.6 There are no obvious, substantial equality implications within these proposals particularly as the approach seeks to ensure Brent continues to deliver a quality service to adults with care needs. However, for staff, it is important to ensure that recruitment and retention payments are awarded in a fair and equitable manner.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 9.1 N/A.

10.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

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

1.0 Communication Considerations

- 11.1 The continued payment of Recruitment and Retention payments will be communicated across the Directorate through email distribution lists, newsletters, team meetings and staff quarterlies. Communication will be well constructed, and the design principles of the scheme will avoid equal pay claims by staff who are not included in this scheme such as non-regulated staff. Externally the payments will need to be highlighted in any recruitment campaigns and in job adverts.

Report sign off:

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