

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES & TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 7
10 NOVEMBER 2014	Public Report

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services

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RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Scrutiny Committee of the current position of the recruitment and retention of staff in Children's Social Care.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the sustained improvement in Social Care and the developments to recruit and retain Social Care staff.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy identifies "Improving Health" and "Supporting Vulnerable People" as priorities. Improvement in Children's Social Care is key to the delivery of these priorities.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Following an Ofsted Inspection in August 2011, the Council has engaged in a programme to secure rapid improvement. This improvement is driven by three key elements:

- Our Self Assessment document (for use with OfSTED)
- The Children's Services Single Delivery Plan
- The Ofsted Action Plan which focuses effort on what we must prioritise
- The leadership of Members and officers in delivering the required changes

- 4.2 The Council's progress is closely monitored by this Committee and the Achieving Outstanding Board.

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 As of 14th October, the current vacancy gap is 24 FTE against an establishment of 83. This figure includes pipeline leavers and pipeline starters. Presently there are 22 locum social workers who are covering vacancies and a peripatetic locum social work team consisting of 7 social workers who are covering 2 vacancies and the cover of Maternity Leave for permanent staff.

The new Permanent Team Manager for Leaving Care started in post on 3rd October. Further to this, a Permanent Team Manager has been appointed to First Response. Safer Recruitment checks are being undertaken with a proposed start date in December 2014.

A further Team Manager applicant has been invited for interview for a permanent role in First Response and an interview has been organised for a Team Manager for Conference and Review.

Adverts have been placed in The Guardian Newspaper and Guardian Online for both Head of Service and Team Managers.

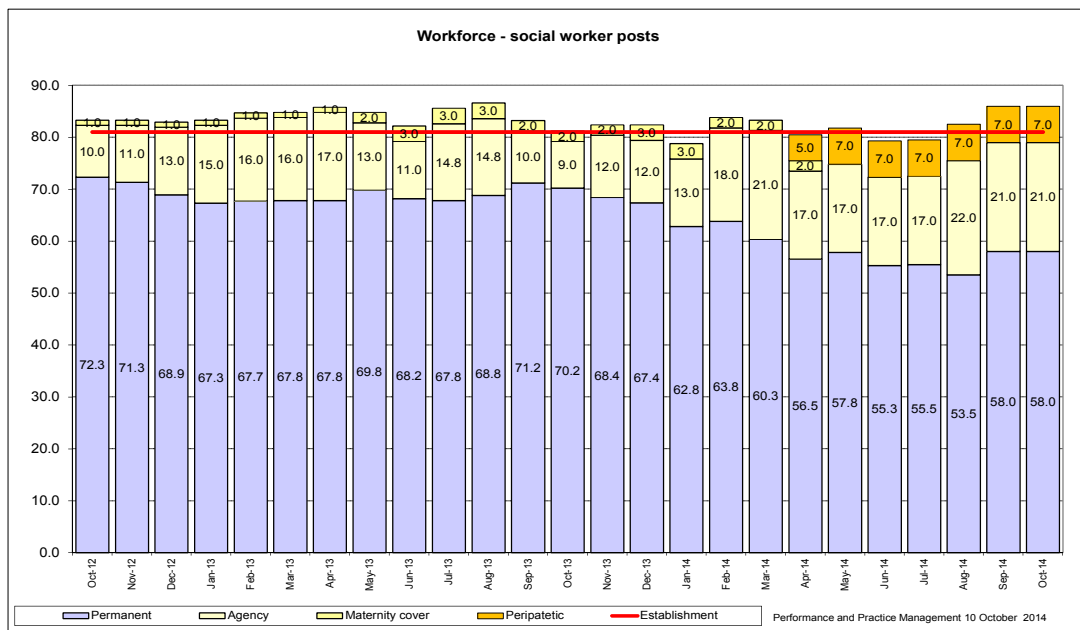
Further adverts have been placed in September in Community Care Online for Social Workers and Team Managers.

The new cohort of NQSWs has been recruited and they will begin in their posts once their HCPC registrations are confirmed, along with the necessary HR checks. When they take up their posts it will enable us to release agency staff and, as a result, reduce our costs.

We are exploring with the Department for Education the option of a bursary funded scheme.

Developments:

- A Working Group has been formed to review and discuss the potential for Peterborough to develop and manage our own supply of agency staff. It's clear that savings can be made by not having the additional costs that we are currently being charged by agency providers. However, work needs to be completed in regard to how this can be achieved and implemented successfully. Every agency worker costs our council almost double that of a permanent worker.
- A proposal has also been put together to develop our own Social Worker Academy for Newly Qualified Social Workers. The longer term benefits of this will mean that we will have an establishment full of permanent Social Workers. This will also mean that for a sustained period of time, the NQSW establishment will increase on the current level of 15%. We need to ensure the appropriate level of NQSWs and experienced staff to undertake Child Protection visiting and the more complex work.
- How we recruit and retain our Team Managers has been reviewed this year. It was decided that a Market Rate Supplement will be added to the salaries of our permanent Team Managers and vacant posts. This is crucial for the retention of our Team Managers as well as an added attraction and incentive for any new applicants for vacant posts we currently have.
- For the last quarter, exit interviews have taken place for both permanent staff and agency staff that have left. The information received from these interviews is of enormous benefit, as it tells the department how the member of staff and other staff are feeling at work. We have had 12 social workers leave the department over the last year to become agency staff. Some staff have left because of personal reasons. None have left dissatisfied with the support or supervision offered.
- The Social Work Careers website has been refreshed completely from the original Head and Heart Website. Included in this is a new strapline which is 'Make the difference – Give back the dream'.
- The refreshed branding and new strapline has been incorporated into all of the external advertising for Heads of Service, Team Managers and Social Work staff.



6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 All local authorities are struggling to recruit permanent staff. We are looking at ways, outlined above, to attract good quality staff, whilst reducing our spend on agency staff.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 This Committee will continue to receive a regular update on progress.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 9.1 None.

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 None.

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