

**From:** Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services  
Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

**To:** Children's and Young People's Cabinet Committee – 16 May 2023

**Subject:** Frontline Partner Authority and Early Adopter bid for Early Careers Framework

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** None

**Future Pathway of report:** N/A

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:** This report outlines 2 funded projects being undertaken by Integrated Children's Services (ICS).

**Recommendations:**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and the future implications of these pilots.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Frontline is the biggest social work recruitment programme in the country funded by the Department for Education (DfE). It is a national programme with centralised recruitment attracting a high number of applicants from Kent residents. Frontline approached KCC to participate in the programme which would allow a possible route for Kent participants to be placed in their home county.
- 1.2 The programme is anticipated to bring a diverse range of people into the social work profession and offer a further route into social work at KCC where the timeline is streamlined to create Social Workers within one year. This programme is expected to complement other successful programmes run by KCC such as Step Up and the Social Work Degree Apprenticeship. A recent national recruitment campaign by Frontline resulted in over 120 applications from Kent residents.
- 1.3 The DfE is responsible for paying a bursary to the participants of £18-20,000 and funding the full 1-year degree training programme via the University of Lancaster, as well as a grant to KCC of £4,500 per participant. In return, KCC is expected to fund a Consultant Social Worker to support up to 4/5 participants during this initial year and the grant income can be used towards this cost. In the second year of the programme the participants are then expected to join KCC as newly qualified social workers and participate in Kent's well-established "Assessed and Supported Year in Employment" (ASYE) programme.

1.4 The council has the opportunity to support up to 10 participants split into two units from September 2023, in two of our hardest to recruit areas, Sevenoaks North and Thanet. The financial commitment required of KCC is anticipated to be the cost of two Children Social Work posts, less the grant income of £45,000. An estimated cost to KCC of approximately £75,000-£150,000.

#### 1.5 **Early Adopter bid**

The Department for Education has recently requested expressions of interests from Local Authorities to support in the development of a structured early career offer of support to social workers beyond the one-year ASYE programme. An initial bid by KCC was made to be part of this programme in respect to two Kent initiatives: the Early Years programme and The Social Care Capability Framework. If KCC were successful, the research phase is anticipated to start in June and funding will be provided to support engagement in this process.

### **2. Financial Implications**

2.1 *Frontline* - The revenue cost of the programme to KCC is approximately £75,000 over one year for the support of up to 10 trainee social workers. This is a substantially lower cost route than the social work degree apprenticeship route where KCC are required to fund the salary costs of trainees for three years whilst completing their degree (with a total cost of c£900,000). The cost of this programme is expected to be managed within the Social Work budget.

2.2 The successful recruitment and retention of the trainees is a further opportunity to reduce our dependency on agency staff which are approximately 50% more expensive than permanent staff.

2.3 *Early Adopters Bid* - The DFE will initially provide £50,000 to support each Local Authority to engage in the research activity. This will require the involvement of a range of staff across both Children Social Work and Human Resources including Principal Social Worker, Practice Development, Workforce Development and Learning & Development. Further funding is anticipated for subsequent phases of the project.

### **3. Legal implications**

3.1 *Frontline* - A Collaboration Agreement was provided which is currently with Legal Services for review.

3.2 *Early Adopters* - A grant funding agreement will be provided if successful

### **4. Equalities implications**

4.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is being completed for both projects.

### **5. Risk and Other Factors**

5.1 *Frontline* - Participants apply direct to Frontline so would not form part of the usual routes to recruit social workers eg. social work degree graduates or social work degree apprentices. Frontline agreed KCC may influence some aspects of

the recruitment process but will not be directly involved. The Consultant Social Worker roles are internal secondments and they will be allocated the families held by the students, up to 50 families maximum. Therefore, there will not be a need to backfill the roles.

- 5.2 *Early Adopters* - To comply with the funding regulations, ICS will need to engage in the research activity so this will require resource capacity from existing members of CYPE and HR/OD. It will eventually require a pilot group of staff to test new systems or attend training, feedback to the research team and produce monitoring reports.

## **6. Governance**

- 6.1 *Frontline* - KCC enters a partnership arrangement with Frontline with roles and responsibilities set out. KCC is responsible for the participants joining our ASYE programme and becoming NQSWs in year 2.
- 6.2 *Early Adopters* - The DfE will provide a contract for Early Adopters setting out the expectations. A report will be brought back to Committee to provide an update on the outcome of the projects.

## **7. Alternatives considered**

- 7.1 *Frontline* - If the Authority does not participate the trainees will still be recruited by Frontline but will be placed in other local authorities. Whilst we will continue to offer the social work degree apprenticeship opportunity, currently this programme is only offered every 3 years due to the significant cost.
- 7.2 *Early Adopters* – If we decide not to take part, other LAs will get the opportunity to shape a national programme and we will need to wait until it is developed and rolled out in 2026.

## **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1 *Frontline* – This is a national programme with proven results in both completion and retention rates. It offers another route into social work at KCC and is a potential solution to plugging the gaps in 2 hard to recruit areas. The 10 participants will automatically join us as ASYEs in year 2. The inward investment from DfE is significant and compares favourably to that of other entry routes. The participants are local residents meaning we are supporting the local economy and helping to improve local opportunities within KCC.
- 8.2 *Early Adopters* – This gives KCC the opportunity to lead from the front and shape a national programme. We will get the opportunity to experience innovative new ideas and give our social workers access to the finest development opportunities and learning from other local authorities. Eventually, if the programme is successful, KCC may qualify for funding from the DfE to fund a programme to be rolled out across KCC similar to the funding received for the ASYE programme.

## **9. Recommendations**

**Recommendations:**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and the future implications of these pilots.

**10. Background Documents**

None

**11. Contact details**

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