

From: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Service
Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

To: Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee
23 September 2014

Subject: **Recruitment and Retention of Children's Social Workers**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This paper provides an update to Children's Social Care Cabinet Committee on recent Member and Officer discussions on enhancements to the remuneration package for key staff in Specialist Children's Services.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse the proposed improvements to the recruitment and retention strategy for Children's Social Workers as outlined in this paper.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Gary Cooke, Cabinet Member for Corporate & Democratic Services, which includes responsibility for Human Resources, and Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services have met with officers from both SCS and HR to explore ways to improve levels of recruitment and retention of key post holders in Specialist Children's Services.
- 1.2 Following discussion at the last Cabinet Committee in July, further discussions have taken place and a number of options have been explored. As a result, a range of proposals are now recommended.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The current level of spend on agency workers in Specialist Children's Services is high, resulting in a significant pressure on Divisional staffing costs of around £3.5m. There is therefore an imperative to reduce this spend both in this financial year and over the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 2.2 The proposals recommended will cost in the region of £1.15m, but it is clear that without this investment, the capacity to reduce the number agency staff will be severely limited.
- 2.3 It is important to note that the need to have fewer agency staff and therefore a more stable workforce, especially at team manager level, is also crucially relevant in terms of a "good" Ofsted inspection.

3. Context

- 3.1 A detailed and comprehensive recruitment and retention plan is in place and is regularly reviewed by the Specialist Children's Services Resourcing Group. Progress against this plan has been good, but the national shortage of children's social workers has meant that the target of 85% of posts filled by permanent staff has not been achieved. In case-holding teams at the end of July, 69.6% of posts were filled by permanent employees with a further 20.6% being filled by agency staff. Further details of the distribution of current vacancies are shown at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 KCC's remuneration package is regularly reviewed against that of other Authorities and is competitive. The latest comparator details are shown at Appendix 2. A summary of existing market premiums is shown at Appendix 3.
- 3.3 The proposals outlined below concentrate on the areas where it is felt specific improvements could and should be made. These have been based on factual evidence of vacancy rates, staff demographics, comparators and feedback from staff on reasons for leaving. It is therefore felt that taking these actions will result in an improvement in recruitment and retention rates, although these may not become apparent immediately.
- 3.4 It is important that the other aspects of the recruitment and retention plan are maintained, particularly in relation to supportive, strong supervision, and the introduction of the professional capability framework which links to professional development, both of which are known to be valued by staff.
- 3.5 The ability to attract high quality Newly Qualified Social Workers has continued this year and is fundamental to the underlying importance of planning for the longer term by growing our own supply of social workers.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 It is recommended that in addition to the ongoing activity to recruit and retain social work staff, action should be focused on the following:
- Targeted advertising for experienced social workers. Senior practitioners and team managers.
 - Equalisation of market premium payments for Senior Practitioners and Social Workers.
 - Additional retention/market premium payments targeted at staff reaching significant length of service landmarks
 - Car allowances

5. Recommendation(s)

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6. Background Documents

Appendix 1: Vacancy rates

Appendix 2: Salary comparisons

Appendix 3: Existing KCC Market Premiums

7. Contact details

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