

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

**To:** Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee – 6 September 2016

**Subject:** **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKERS**

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Previous Pathway of Paper:** None

**Future Pathway of Paper:** None

**Electoral Divisions:** All

**Summary:** This paper provides an update to the Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee on recruitment and retention of children's social workers.

**Recommendation:** The Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT ON** the activity in relation to recruitment and retention of children's social workers, as outlined in this paper.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This paper provides an update on the recruitment and retention activity since the report presented in January 2016. At the Cabinet Committee meeting in January 2016 members requested further detailed information about the reasons for leaving and how this informs the retention strategy.

## 2. Context

2.1 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 experienced children's social workers continues to impact on recruitment and has meant that the target of 85% of posts filled by permanent staff has not yet been achieved. In case-holding teams at the end of June 2016, 75.5% of posts were filled by permanent employees (compared to 73.7% in June 2015) with a further 18.3% being filled by agency staff (compared to 22.7% in June 2015).

2.2 Turnover stands at 15.5% in case-holding social work roles and whilst this is below the KCC average this has a significant impact on recruitment of suitable staff for these hard-to-fill roles.

The recruitment activity that has taken place between June 2015 and May 2016 is summarised in the table below:

<b>Social Workers</b>	<b>Senior Practitioners</b>	<b>Team Managers</b>
114 applications received	66 applications received	52 applications received
35 interviewed	47 interviewed	27 interviewed
26 offered *	23 offered **	16 offered **

\* not including Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW)

\*\* note that a majority of interviews and offers would have been internal.

2.3 The key elements of the recruitment and retention activity can be summarised as:

a) Targeted advertising for experienced social workers, senior practitioners and team managers has been agreed and planned up to the end of September 2016. This includes targeted on-line advertising, social media, and maximisation of the google search facility to drive potential applicants to our website.

b) Additional retention/market premium payments targeted at staff reaching significant length of service landmarks were implemented from January 2015 and the second tranche of these payments was made to eligible social workers in January 2016.

c) The new car market premium was implemented in January 2015.

d) Connect 2 Staff from within Commercial Services has recently been commissioned to recruit experienced social workers and team managers to permanent positions within Specialist Children's Services.

e) Following the successful recruitment of 46 Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) to commence in September 2016, a further campaign is underway to recruit additional NQSWs.

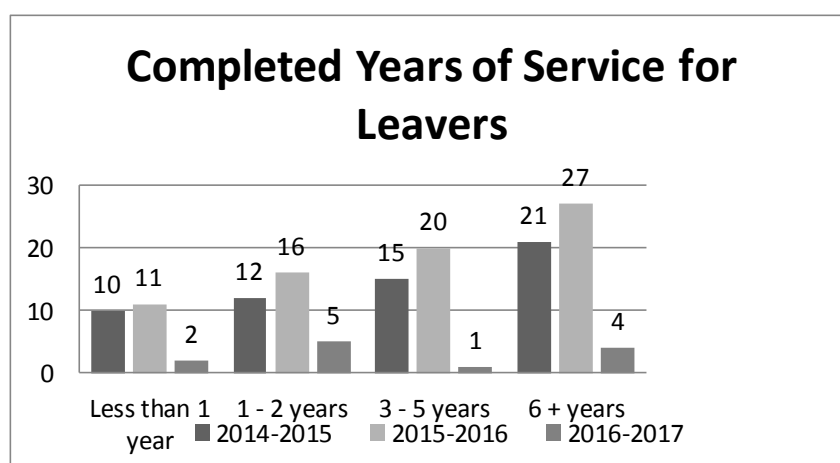
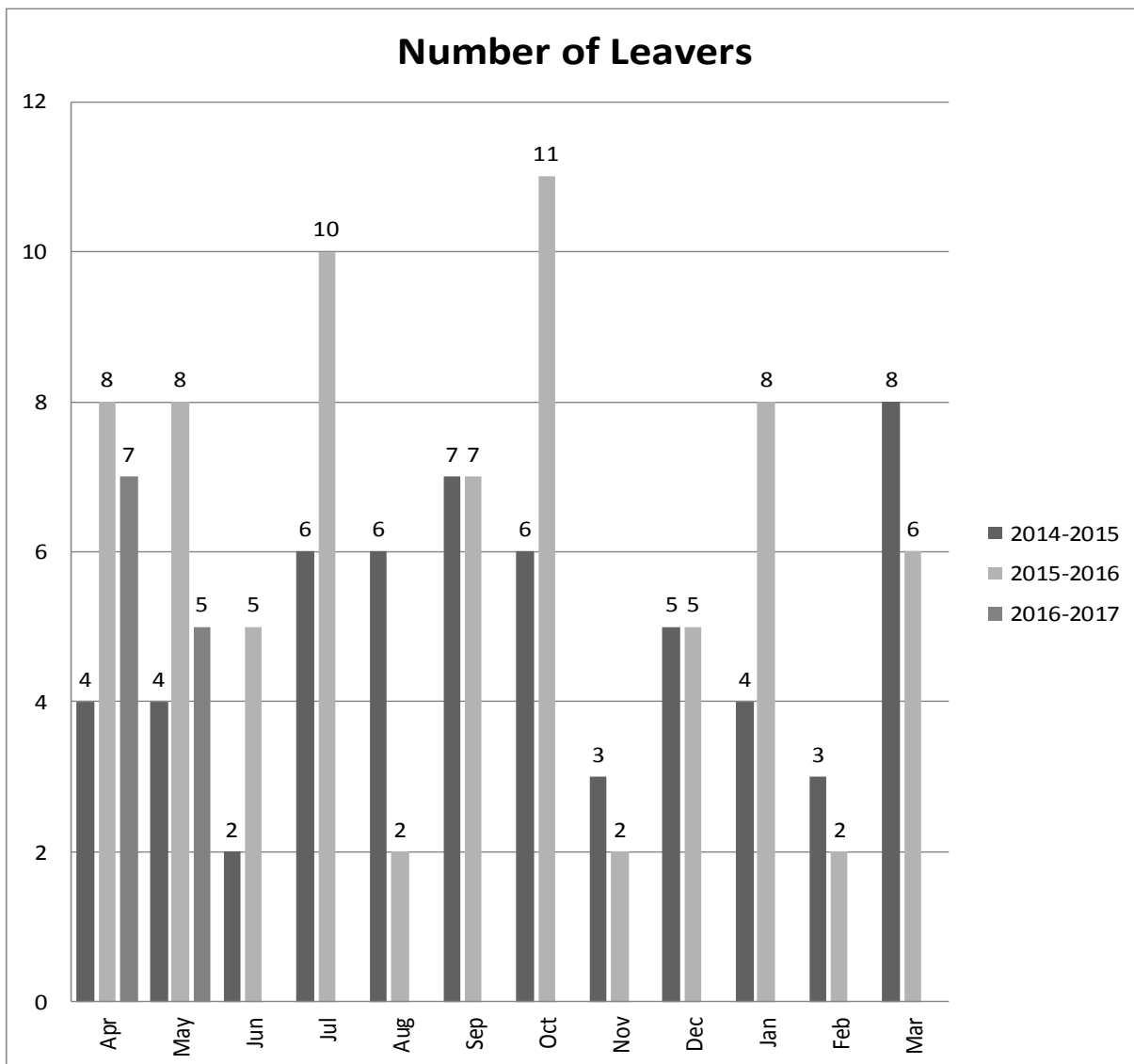
### 3. Analysis of leavers

3.1 The graphs below show the numbers of qualified case-holding social workers leaving KCC between April 2014 and May 2016.

3.2 Of the total number of leavers (144), the highest proportion of leavers was recorded in the following categories:

- Resignation to new employment = 60 people (42%)
- Resignation – other = 32 (21%)
- Resignation – personal/domestic reasons = 14 (10%)
- Normal retirement = 14 (10%)

3.3 Further analysis shows that 56 (39%) had less than 3 years' service and, of these, 23 (16%) had less than 1 year's service



- 3.4 The Council took the decision to stop using exit surveys in 2013/14; however since April 2015 Specialist Children's Services have captured additional information on individual leaving reasons, from managers who have conversations with leavers regarding their future career plans. It should be noted that there are some gaps in the information provided by managers.
- 3.5 There were a total of 86 leavers in the 14 month period April 2015 to May 2016 and the reasons captured by managers can be summarised as follows:

- 10 people left substantive roles to take up agency roles in Medway or London
- 4 people left substantive roles and took up new posts in other local authorities
- 5 people left to work in the private or voluntary sector
- 11 people cited the need to earn more money to fund lifestyle changes
- 3 people cited the level of workload and impact on their work-life balance
- 7 people cited frustration with the changed working practices
- 4 people cited the desire to experience other organisations
- 3 people cited personal issues around caring responsibilities and family commitments

3.6 There are a number of examples given by staff, to their managers, including:

*“..left as she wanted a new opportunity ...went to work for an independent fostering agency”*

*“... had caring responsibilities and could not manage full time employment alongside care of 4 children”*

*“..wanted some time out of frontline work given the increasing pressures and demands...she would have liked working for Kent but there were no positions available that would give a better work-life balance”*

*“...left to work as agency worker...did not wish to complete the portfolio for progression to KR10”*

*“...had a 2 hour journey each way from home by train and decided to work closer to home”*

*“...left to move to another authority ...wanted experiences out of KCC”*  
*“...left on good terms ...chose to “go locum” to save up to go travelling”*

*“...left to care for her elderly parents in law who lived abroad”*

*“...move to a private fostering agency...found the additional hours had too much of an impact on family commitments”*

*“...found the transition to CIC difficult and did not want to manage care proceedings ...moved to another authority”*

#### **4. Retention initiatives**

4.1 The Memorandum of Co-operation, which has been in place since April 2016, should address the issue of social workers leaving the Council to become locums in Medway and other south east authorities but this will need to be monitored.

4.2 It is recognised through national research that the ability to work flexibly is an attractive aspect of the employment offer and can also help with retention of staff. Specialist Children’s Services intend to offer more opportunities for flexible working where possible.

4.3 The recent Social Worker Health Check highlighted a number of areas of good practice including supervision which has good quality reflection and challenge. Training and development was highly rated particularly the roll out of the signs of safety model and good opportunities for progression. Staff also valued the support and encouragement from their colleagues and a sense of job satisfaction. However, workload and work-life balance were concerns for staff and clearly impact on

retention. An action plan to address staff concerns is being developed by Specialist Children's Services.

4.4 It is important that the other aspects of the recruitment and retention plan are maintained, particularly in relation to supportive, strong supervision, and the continued use of the capability framework which links to professional development. Recent changes to the capability framework have been introduced to simplify the requirements and enable progression decisions to be made locally.

4.5 The Teaching Partnership bid developed in partnership with Medway Council and the University of Kent and Medway and Christchurch University has a focus on professional development at all levels and also proposes a greater influence on the students entering the Social Work degree programmes, thereby improving the quality of students and ensuring greater understanding of the expectations of social workers for the future. It is essential that more robust links are made with the academic bodies to provide a more defined framework of continuous professional development for social work staff.

## 5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implication associated with this report.

## 6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

## 7. Equality Implications

7.1 There are no equality implications associated with this report.

## 8. Conclusions

8.1 The attraction of additional high quality staff continues to be challenging and has barely kept pace with the number of leavers, however, further measures are now in place aiming to increase numbers of both experienced and newly qualified staff.

8.2 Further initiatives are being introduced, or planned, to address areas of concern for staff and strengthen the areas of good practice which should help to retain more of our current high calibre staff.

## 9. Recommendation(s)

**9.1 Recommendation:** The Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT ON** the activity in relation to recruitment and retention of children's social workers, as outlined in this paper.

## 10. Background Documents

None

## 11. Contact details

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