

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 22 February 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Healthy Living and Social Care
Report Title:	Supporting the Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Social Workers in Children and Young People Services
Purpose of Report:	To set out to Cabinet the challenges in the Council meeting its statutory responsibilities to recruit and retain sufficient Qualified Social Workers (QSWs) in Children and Young People Services, and to seek support to enhance the salaries of posts in those teams that are hardest to recruit to.
Report Owner:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
Responsible Officer:	Director of Social Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Cabinet Member, Senior Leadership Team and relevant officers in Human Resources and Finance
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to recruit and retain sufficient QSWs is central to the operation of an effective Social Services Directorate. Workforce stability improves the quality of our service to those we support and our ability to achieve positive outcomes. • Recruitment and retention into Children and Young People Services is not without issue. There is a recognised and longstanding challenge nationally in recruiting and retaining QSWs into teams where Intake and Court work are the thrust of their business. • Local Authorities that have agreed an enhancement to the salaries of QSWs in these teams in recognition of these challenges are able to demonstrate increased success in recruiting and retaining staff. This creates consequences for the Vale of Glamorgan and the Council is not able to compete in terms of their salary offer, but whose reliance on agency staff is increasingly exponentially. • It is proposed to enhance the salaries of QSWs in these teams to improve workforce stability, enable the Local Authority to meet its statutory responsibilities and to support the delivery of a robust service to children and families in the Vale of Glamorgan. 	

- It is recognised that in making this payment to QSWs in those teams, the enhancement should be paid also to Practitioner and Team Managers to retain a differential.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet agree to pay an enhanced salary by way of an annual allowance of £5000 to QSWs employed and recruited to the Intake and Family Support and the Care Planning and Proceedings Teams.
2. In making this payment to QSWs in those teams, the enhancement should be paid also to Practitioner and Team Managers.
3. To delegate authority to the Director of Social Services in consultation with the Head of Human Resources, Head of Finance and the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health to review and amend the annual allowance should this be required.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure that the Vale of Glamorgan is able to attract and retain QSWs in these teams.
2. To ensure a differential between the salaries of QSWs and their line managers in these teams is maintained.
3. To ensure that the allowance remains at an appropriate level to attract and retain QSWs in the Intake and Family Support and the Care Planning and Proceedings Teams.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Local Authority has a legal responsibility to ensure there are sufficient QSWs in Children and Young People Services (CYPS) to meet local demand and that QSW caseloads are in keeping with the provision of effective and timely care and support to children and families.
- 1.2 In September 2018, following the completion of a service review, CYPS implemented a revised structure that created a Children Looked After Team, a dedicated 'Court' Team (Care Planning and Proceedings) and broadened the remit and resources of the Intake and Family Support Team.
- 1.3 These steps have positively impacted on the experience of children looked after and those before the Court by reducing transfer points and enabling teams to focus on the planning and delivery of care and support in these areas of work. These actions have not however addressed the recruitment and retention issues in the Care Planning and Proceedings Team, which have remained problematic and are now critical.
- 1.4 Demand into the Intake and Family Support Team has increased considerably over the course of the last ten months, identifying the need for greater capacity.
- 1.5 Teams that fulfil Intake and Court roles are recognised as being the most challenging areas to recruit and retain to. This reflects the work undertaken; type, pace and complexity, and the associated long working hours and challenges in achieving a work life balance. Those taking up such roles often limit the time

they remain there, moving to roles in other teams where the work is considered more manageable or offering greater satisfaction, in the absence of an incentive to stay.

- 1.6** Recruitment and retention in such teams are longstanding issues across Wales. A step change in our approach is needed if we are to successfully address these issues and achieve permanently recruited to and stable teams.
- 1.7** CYPS have sought to promote the ability of the Division to recruit QSWs. In partnership with Human Resources and the Communications Team, CYPS developed a bespoke recruitment campaign and microsite that launched in October 2017 and was intended to appeal to a local and national audience and increase QSW applications. Whilst the campaign was far reaching, the number of appointments were very small.
- 1.8** This was followed by further advertising in the usual way and then the development of an open advert that went live in October 2019, linked to a microsite and intended to increase applications by removing barriers that can exist when candidates aren't able to apply because there is no advert and they go elsewhere. Whilst this has attracted interest, this has predominately been from individuals with an interest in social work rather than QSWs. Over the last 14 months the open advert has achieved only 23 applications resulting in only 4 appointments and only 1 into the Intake and Family Support Team and none into the Care Planning and Proceedings Team, in both teams where significant vacancies remain.
- 1.9** In consideration of the need to explain the remit of the Care Planning and Proceedings Team, its support structure and team arrangements, a bespoke advert was developed and issued in November 2020, but with no qualified applications received.
- 1.10** Currently within the Intake and Family Support Team, 67% of QSWs (8 of 12) are agency workers, an increase from 33% in 2019 (4 of 12), and a further QSW has just handed in her notice. An additional four QSW posts have been agreed to add necessary capacity to the Intake and Family Support Team and for speed these are being sought through agency links. In the Care Planning and Proceedings Team, none of the 6 QSW posts are permanently recruited to and only 50% of the posts are filled at all at the current time.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** In the absence of sufficient permanent QSWs in these teams, there is an increasing reliance on agency staff, which only partly and temporarily addresses the issue.
- 2.2** In both teams there are challenges in securing experienced agency QSWs linked to availability and the payment of higher rates in some local authorities, in response to recruitment and retention challenges across Wales. The costs of employing agency QSWs are significant and rising as can be seen in the table below.

- 2.3** The costs for the current year only represent the costs to end January and don't factor in the rising number of agency appointments required in the absence of permanent QSWs in the Care Planning and Proceedings Team or the additional QSWs being sought for the Intake and Family Support Team.

Period / Team	2018/19 £	2019/20 £	2020/21 (to end Jan 2021) £
Intake and Family Support	123,617	213,366	260,430
Care Planning and Proceedings	99,622	169,768	205,027
TOTAL	223,239	383,134	465,457

- 2.4** In response to evolving concerns relating to demand, CYPS finalised a comprehensive demand review in December 2020 that has identified significant increases in the number and complexity of issues being referred to and managed by the service since March 2020. These increases reflect the impact of the pandemic and are considered to be increases that will endure.
- 2.5** The review has identified the need for four additional QSWs and a fourth Practitioner Manager in the Intake and Family Support Team if we are to achieve sufficient capacity to respond to this demand aligned to manageable caseloads. This has been fed into the Council's cost pressure process, but with an associated recognition that the need is 'now', with agreement to recruit to these posts on an interim basis via agency staff. Efforts are underway to achieve this.
- 2.6** Whilst the gaps in capacity remain, the Divisional Management Team has been meeting regularly to identify how the wider teams can support tasks in the Intake and Family Support and Care Planning and Proceeding Teams by transferring cases or tasks from those teams and/or retaining work that would otherwise transfer. This impacts capacity in those assisting teams and the delivery of services to children and families and is not a sustainable solution.
- 2.7** Additionally, and in recognition of the urgency, additional capacity has been identified on a temporary basis from the wider Directorate by releasing independent chair capacity from the Resource Management and Safeguarding Division to undertake social work tasks.
- 2.8** In partnership with Human Resources, CYPS have undertaken a benchmarking exercise with other local authorities to understand the 'offer' that other organisations have made to attract and retain their QSWs in order to be able to operate a safe and effective service for service users and staff.
- 2.9** Current salary scales and the detail of any enhancements paid by local authorities who have responded are included below. Although Caerphilly aren't

one of the local authorities to respond, we know from their advertising they introduced an enhancement in August 2018 for QSWs in their frontline teams, set at that time at a level of £3,227 per annum.

Local Authority	QSW pay scales	Enhancement paid
Vale of Glamorgan	SCP 26-35	None
Bridgend	SCP 26-32	None currently although considering as a priority
Cardiff	SCP 25-34	£5000 annual supplement paid to QSWs and managers in child protection and Court teams
RCT	SCP 32	All Social Workers are paid on a fixed scale plus £2000 supplement for all CYPS teams and an additional £2000 for 'frontline intensive teams'
Neath Port Talbot	SCP 26-35	None
Blaenau Gwent	SCP 30-34	None

2.10 Although it is recognised that there is some variation in the responses, significantly those local authorities in our neighbouring and regional area are either paying an enhancement; Cardiff and RCT are and Bridgend are considering it. We have seen QSWs in our Intake and Family Support Team already make choices to leave for higher paid posts in RCT and since Cardiff introduced their enhancement, to Cardiff as the more local option.

2.11 Positively, where local authorities have made the decision to introduce an enhancement, they are able to demonstrate the impact on both numbers of applications and appointments.

- 2.12** CYPs are requesting agreement is given urgently to enable us to both retain existing QSWs and to advertise for current vacancies in the Intake and Family Support and Care Planning and Proceeding Teams with this allowance included in the advert to give the best opportunity to attract and retain QSWs in these teams, and prior to other local authorities further reviewing their offers.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The proposal seeks to achieve a long term sustainable solution to the recruitment and retention of QSWs in teams where recruitment and retention are recognised issues.
- 3.2** Paying an enhancement in specific teams alongside the positive reputation the Vale of Glamorgan has for staff support and high practice standards reflecting integration and partnership working, the involvement of service users and effective collaboration, has real potential to prevent QSWs leaving for what they view as a better offer elsewhere and to attract staff to work for this Local Authority.
- 3.3** Workforce stability significantly enhances staff morale, the quality of our service delivery and the experience of those we support, all of which are Divisional priorities.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** In order to ensure we are competitive and attractive the proposed enhancement is £5,000 per annum. On an establishment of 21 relevant posts in the Intake and Family Support Team (including the 4 additional QSWs and 1 additional PM agreed) and 8 in the Care Planning and Proceedings Team, this equates to £145,000 per annum. When compared to the costs for agency staff included above, this is a considerable saving, alongside the advantages associated with a permanent and stable workforce and greater consistency for children and families.
- 4.2** A cost pressure relating to 2021/22 onwards for these issues including the proposed pay enhancement and additional staff are included in a report elsewhere on this Cabinet agenda. It is anticipated that the costs relating to these issues can be funded through an increase in the base budget and in the short term through accessing Local Authority Covid Hardship Grant where appropriate and Social Services reserves.

Employment

- 4.3** It is recognised that in making this payment to QSWs in the teams proposed, the enhancement should be paid also to Practitioner and Team Managers to retain a differential.
- 4.4** Any QSW already employed in Social Services in the Vale of Glamorgan can apply to work in either of these teams where recruitment and retention is a recognised issue, and in that context the application of an enhancement is equitable.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.5** The report seeks to outline the escalating risks in Children and Young People Services to the ongoing provision of sufficient Qualified Social Workers (QSWs) in the Intake and Family Support and Care Planning and Proceedings Teams to fulfil the Vale of Glamorgan Council's statutory duty in relation to the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, and to support the Council in fulfilling its duties

5. Background Papers

None.