

Supplemental Items for Executive

Thursday, 24th July, 2014 at 5.00 pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

Part I

Page No.

8. **Children's Services Recruitment and Retention Proposal (EX2876)** 1 - 28
(CSP:1,5 and 8)
Purpose: To advise Members of the extent and impact of the recruitment and retention problems faced by Children's Services and to set out a costed strategy to address them.

Andy Day
Head of Strategic Support

For further information about this/these item(s), or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Stephen Chard / Linda Pye on (01635) 519462 / 519052

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Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk

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Agenda Item 8.

Title of Report:	Children's Services Recruitment and Retention Strategy
Report to be considered by:	Executive
Date of Meeting:	24 July 2014
Forward Plan Ref:	EX2876

Purpose of Report: To advise Executive the extent and an impact of the recruitment and retention problems faced by Children's Services and to set out a costed strategy to address them.

Recommended Action: Executive are requested to endorse the drafted strategy attached to this report and agree to the one off use of general fund reserves of £311k in the current financial year along with the increasing ongoing investment required from 2015/16 to implement it.

Reason for decision to be taken: This issue is already impacting on our ability to provide a safe and effective child protection service. If action is not taken this position will weaken still further. In addition to this our current position could contribute significantly to a poor outcome to an Ofsted Inspection (which is due imminently) which would result in significantly higher costs and reputational damage to the council.

Other options considered: A wide range of other options have been explored in previous reports. This report sets out the best option in terms of the likely effectiveness balanced against affordability and value for money.

Key background documentation:

- Reforming Social Working – Improving Social Worker recruitment, training and retention, The Policy Exchange (2013)
<http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/reforming%20social%20work.pdf>
- All Party Parliamentary Enquiry into the State of Social Work (2013)
- http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_90352-5.pdf

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

CSP1 – Caring for and protecting the vulnerable

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Strategy principles:

CSP5 - Putting people first

CSP8 - Doing what's important well

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Strategy priorities and principles by:
Seeking to address the recruitment and retention issues being experienced in recruiting children's social workers.

Portfolio Member Details	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Irene Neill
E-mail Address:	Irene.Neill@westberks.gov.uk
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	17 July 2014

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Name:	Mark Evans
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Implications

Policy:	Revised West Berkshire Children's Social Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2014 - 2017 being proposed.
Financial:	The proposals contained in this paper will require a one off contribution from General Reserves of £311k in the current financial year. The significant ongoing funding requirements estimated to total £992k by 2017/18 will be funded by the Communities Directorate finding alternative savings and/or additional revenue streams to help mitigate these additional costs. A further £210k from General Reserves has been earmarked for 2015/16 to assist the Directorate in delivering the funding requirements over the medium term.
Personnel:	The development of a distinct T&C offer for a discrete category of staff in response to market conditions and risks disaffecting members of staff outside this group. Some aspects of these proposals may be regarded as setting a precedent which other members of staff will seek to follow. It will be necessary to be very clear and open about the boundaries, requirements and expectations associated with these proposals.
Legal/Procurement:	N/a
Property:	Proposals to acknowledge the requirements around confidentiality, quiet space and space for shared team reflection in the light of this challenging work may require adaptations to the buildings where these staff are primarily located.
Risk Management:	Failure to address this issue would significantly elevate two key risks faced by the council. The first relates to the significantly increased potential for the avoidable death or serious injury of a child. The second is the impact on an Ofsted inspection and the potential for an inadequate judgement.

Is this item relevant to equality?	Please tick relevant boxes	Yes	No
Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community and:			
• Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	
• Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	
• Will the policy have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	
• Does the policy relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	
• Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	
Outcome (Where one or more 'Yes' boxes are ticked, the item is relevant to equality)			
Relevant to equality - Complete an EIA available at www.westberks.gov.uk/eia	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Not relevant to equality	X		

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Report is to note only	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Children's Services is facing an acute staffing crisis which is impacting on our ability to provide a safe and reliable child protection service. The problem is part of a wider national issue, but it is imperative we address it in the local context to ensure that we are able to effectively help, support and protect vulnerable children.
- 1.2 This paper is set out in two parts; the first outlines the recruitment and retention challenges and their impact, the second details our strategy designed to deal with this issue and includes detailed costing for the proposals.
- 1.3 Extensive discussion and consideration of this issue has already taken place including two previous reports to management board and detailed discussions with the Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Children's Services. The strategy and investment required to support it is set out in this report represents the outcome of this work. The strategy has been carefully considered and the current iteration represents the options that are most likely to be successful whilst representing best possible value for money. Consequently it needs to be considered as a whole, as the impact would be reduced significantly if elements are removed or reduced.

2. Part 1 – The Recruitment and Retention Challenges

- 2.1 Children's Services are dependent upon good quality staff to deliver a safe and effective child protection service. Nationally there is a serious recruitment crisis, that is most acute in the South East. Locally we have been unable to fill 29% of frontline child protection posts despite a range of innovations designed to address this problem. Difficulties have arisen over the last three years with the gradual loss of staff, combined by an inability to recruit suitable replacements. This situation was manageable until recently when the agency/locum market also started to become increasingly volatile. The problem impacts very significantly on both the quality and cost of the service (agency workers cost 58% more than WBC staff).

3. Part 2 - The Recruitment and Retention Strategy

- 3.1 The second part of the report sets out our strategy to address this problem. The strategy itself is included in a separate document (Appendix A), whilst the costings and financial implications are included in the body of the report (Tables 4 & 6).
- 3.2 **Equalities Impact Assessment Outcomes** - No equalities issues have currently been identified in relation to these proposals, but before implementation, this dimension will be considered further.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 West Berkshire Council needs to act quickly and decisively to address this issue. Failure to do so will expose vulnerable children to unacceptable risks. It will also lead to significant additional costs. Other neighbouring local authorities have already implemented policies designed to attract and retain good children's social work staff. We are competing for staff in a challenging market. The strategy proposed is designed to represent the best possible balance between being both effective and represent good value for money.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Executive are requested to endorse the attached draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy.
- 5.2 Executive are requested to agree the investment required to finance the strategy as outlined in Tables 4 & 6.
- 5.3 Executive agree that the strategy will be reviewed annually with a report outlining the impact and any proposed changes. There will also be a quarterly report to Corporate Board which will be escalated if it is deemed necessary. We also anticipate the impact of the strategy will be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny.

Executive Report

6. Introduction

- 6.1 Children's Services is facing an acute staffing crisis which is impacting on our ability to provide a safe and reliable child protection service. The problem is part of a wider national issue, but it is imperative we address it in the local context to ensure that we are able to effectively help, support and protect vulnerable children.
- 6.2 This paper is set out in two parts; the first outlines the recruitment and retention challenges and their impact, the second details our strategy designed to deal with this issue and also includes detailed costing for the proposals.
- 6.3 Extensive discussion and consideration of this issue has already taken place including two previous reports to management board and detailed discussions with the Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Children's Services. The strategy and investment required to support it is set out in this report represents the outcome of this work. The strategy has been carefully considered and the current iteration represents the options that are most likely to be successful whilst representing best possible value for money. Consequently it needs to be considered as a whole, as the impact would be reduced significantly if elements are removed or reduced.

7. Background

- 7.1 West Berkshire's Children's Services has for several years had a problem with recruitment and retention of permanent social workers. This reflects a recognised problem in the wider market which is turbulent and subject to a tendency to high turnover and over-dependence on agency staff. In this challenging workforce context, the service has also been implementing the recommendations from the Munro Review of Child Protection in England and the recommendations made by Ofsted during its last inspection of the service in July 2012, which found the service to be "adequate" for safeguarding and "good" for looked after children.
- 7.2 In response to this situation, the service – in collaboration with HR colleagues – developed and implemented a career progression framework with the aim that this would attract and retain strong child & family social workers in the West Berkshire workforce. At the time of implementation of these proposals our internal evaluation of our own service was that it was safe, and any vulnerability was around a lack of pace in implementation of the Munro reforms and Ofsted recommendations. Although the career progression framework has been implemented and has led to the successful establishment of a number of senior practitioner posts, this change has not been quick or comprehensive enough to offset the accelerated turbulence in the market. Our turnover of social workers and managers has not reduced and our reliance on expensive (and sometimes poor quality) agency staff has increased. As of May 2014 we are concerned that these issues mean that not only is the service less effective than it should be, but also that we can no longer guarantee to keep the service safe.
- 7.3 Over recent months there has been a significant change in our ability to recruit and retain staff. Prior to this we were maintaining a relatively stable position with the service being supported by a small group of known and trusted locum staff. More recently our dependence upon agency staff and their contribution to the service has become much more problematic and is now judged to be impacting on our ability to deliver safe service. The problem is not unique to West Berkshire; similar difficulties

are being experienced by other nearby authorities. We cannot be definitive about the reasons, but suspect the recent second inadequate Ofsted judgement in Slough, alongside other local authorities improving their terms and conditions for social workers, is having a very significant impact on an already competitive recruitment market.

- 7.4 Over recent years, reliance on agency staffing has been gradually increasing. Last month 29% of qualified staff in our frontline Child Protection teams were temporary agency workers, costing on average 58% more than an employed social worker at the same level. This is both detrimental to the quality of service delivered and extremely costly for the council. The seriousness of the situation has been exacerbated over recent months by real difficulties in recruiting good quality locums and by significant vacancy levels in some of our “frontline” teams. As a consequence of this, we have also identified some concerns with the quality of practice in some key areas (most notably our Referral and Assessment Team). Failure to address this problem will result in us being unable to deliver a safe child protection service, to the detriment of the most vulnerable children and young people of West Berkshire. Such weaknesses, if not promptly and adequately addressed could also contribute to a poor Ofsted inspection, which would result in significant additional costs and the potential for severe reputational damage for the council. More recently, councils found inadequate for the children’s services functions have been stripped of the right to operate them (although the costs and the accountability continue to fall to the council in question).
- 7.5 Considerable work has already been done including re-designing our children’s social work career structure. From April 2014 we implemented a new approach that is designed to offer social workers improved opportunities to progress. The new structure is based on a sector best practice example that has been developed by the College of Social Work. This has had some positive impact. Seven Senior Social Workers have been appointed to date. One has been an external agency to permanent appointment, one has moved from one of our easier-to-recruit-to teams to one of our most challenging teams and the other five have been internal appointments. This is encouraging, but is not enough progress and it will not resolve the situation quickly enough to make the service securely adequate for children, young people and families and certainly prevents the service from being good. Significantly, more action is now required to address the issue. Part of the new work will include increased promotion of the new career structure within a suite of measures to recruit new permanent staff to West Berkshire and to keep them in the service for longer.

8. Scale of the Problem

- 8.1 We employ qualified Social Work staff in eight teams, Table 1 sets out the level of vacancies and agency staffing at present. The table shows that several teams have high proportions of vacant posts covered by agency staff, of which the Referral & Assessment Team, the two Locality Teams and the Disabled Children’s Team are the most vulnerable.

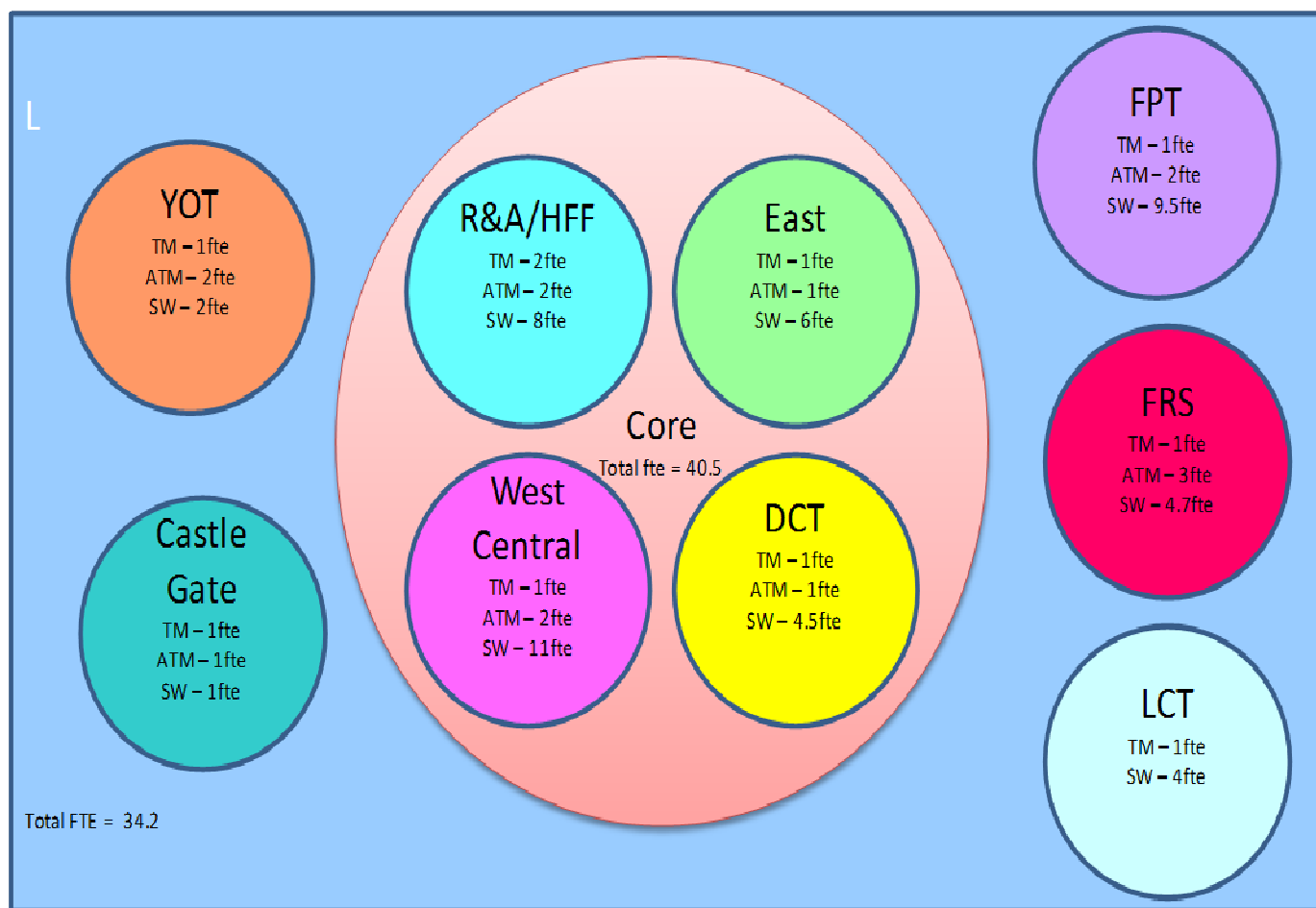
Table 1

Team	Social Workers			Assistant Team Managers			Team Managers		
	FTE	Vacant FTE	Agency FTE	FTE	Vacant FTE	Agency FTE	FTE	Vacant FTE	Agency FTE
Referral and Assessment	8	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	0
West Locality	10	6	6	2	2	2	1	0	0
East Locality	6	2	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
Leaving Care	4	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Family Placement	9.5	0	1	2	1	1	1	0	0
Family Resource Service	4.7	0	0	3	1	1	1	0	0
Castlegate	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Youth Offending Team	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
Disabled Children's Team	4.5	2	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
Total	49.7	13	11	14	4	4	9	1	1

9. Analysis of the Problem

- 9.1 The difficulties experienced by the service are cumulative and attritional in nature, meaning that as the same underlying problem persists over an extended period.
- 9.2 Over recent years we have lost permanent social work staff and struggled to replace them with permanent replacements. For a while we were able to recruit high quality, long-term locums. This increased our costs, but enabled us to provide relative stability in the teams and for the children and families those staff worked with. More recently this has no longer been possible; agency staff tend to stay with us for shorter periods, the quality of staff provided through agencies is more variable and in some cases we have been unable to fill a vacancy using agency staff because none were available.
- 9.3 The problem is most acute in our four frontline teams. Diagram 1 below illustrates the numbers of staff in the core hardest to recruit to teams and our other services.

Diagram 1



9.4 There is clear evidence from our use of agency staff that the problem is impacting differentially across teams. The West Central Team has had the highest use of agency staff for a significant period. This is linked to instability in the management of that team. Until recently the team manager and both assistant team managers were locums. We have made some progress by recruiting a permanent team manager and one of the two assistant team managers. We are confident this will help to improve the situation in the team. Unfortunately we now have instability developing in two other teams (R&A and East Locality) following important changes in the management of both those teams. Our East Team Manager has resigned and both teams are losing one of their two assistant team managers. Experience shows us that if we don't do anything to address this promptly we are likely to lose more frontline staff following the departure of key managers.

9.5 We carried out a review of agency spend with detailed analysis of the two cost centres in Children's Services where the cost of agency staff most exceeded the notional cost of the establishment posts they replaced. A couple of key pieces of information exposed as part of this work are that on 31/3/14 the vacancy level for Children's Social Workers stood at 29% and the average cost of an agency worker was 58% above the cost for an employee. This includes all on costs such as pension contributions etc. It is the difference in those costs that accounts for the disparity

between vacancy “savings” and agency costs. There are no supernumerary workers in those teams.

9.6 The difficulties of recruitment and retention impact on all Child and Family Social Worker posts, but are particularly acute in four of our teams that manage our child protection, court and looked after children work. In total we employ 74.7 FTE social work posts, 40.5 of these in the hardest-to-recruit-to teams. Diagram 1 (on the previous page) illustrates the distribution of workers between the core four hardest to recruit to teams and our other five teams. The proposal at this stage is to limit the most costly recruitment/retention measures to this core group of 40.5 staff, whilst continuing to monitor the situation for the other 34.2 staff. Workforce intelligence suggests that many neighbouring authorities are already experiencing problems recruiting to these teams and taking steps to address similar issues with revised terms and conditions of employment. As a result this decision will need to be kept under constant review, depending on changing market conditions.

10. Additional Workforce Intelligence

10.1 To date our succession planning work for our management vacancies has been unable to identify internal candidates with the skills and experience required to take on these roles and our market intelligence suggests they will be difficult to recruit to externally. Experience also suggests that the loss of an established team manager often leads to a rapid de-stabilisation of teams and increased reliance on agency staffing. Social workers find it easy to follow a respected manager to a new organisation in this unstable market. Table 2 shows the increasing volatility of the workforce in our four hardest-to-recruit-to teams over the past three years. The recent resignations are in addition to these losses.

Table 2

Team	2011/12			2012/13			2013/14		
	Leavers	Starters	Net	Leavers	Starters	Net	Leavers	Starters	Net
R&A	1	2	+1	0	0	0	3	2	-1
W&C	2	0	-2	3	0	-3	5	3	-2
East	3	0	-3	0	0	0	2	1	-1
DCT	0	1	+1	1	0	-1	2	1	-1
Total	6	3	-3	4	0	-4	12	7	-5

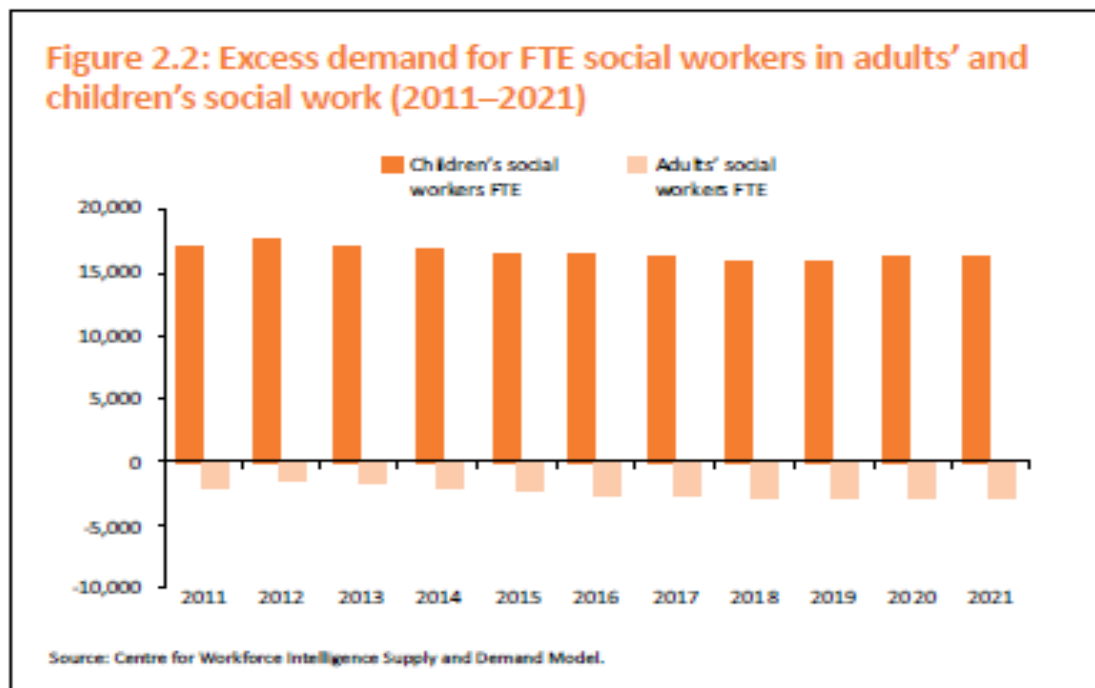
10.2 Leavers’ records from the last 12 months show the following outflow of staff from key teams:

30/05/14 – SW R&A
 28/02/14 – SW West Central
 14/02/14 - SW East
 08/02/14 – SW West Central
 06/12/13 – ATM West Central
 27/11/13 – SW R&A
 04/10/13 – SW West Central
 31/07/13 – ATM West Central
 01/05/13 – SW East

11. Nationally and Regionally

- 11.1 This issue is not just a problem at local level. Table 3 below illustrates the extent of the recruitment challenge nationally. It also shows clearly that the situation is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future for as long as there is such a shortage of child and family social workers available from which to recruit. One of the reasons for the shortage of child and family social workers is the very short “life” these workers have in the profession – on average seven years. This is attributed to the very challenging nature of the work, taking place in an increasingly risk averse and punitive environment and with poor organisational understanding of the conditions in which good social work thrives, thus leading to early burnout among social workers in the highest risk teams.

Table 3



- 11.2 A recent benchmarking survey across the South East in September 2013 identified Children's Social Work vacancy rates across the region as ranging from 5-38%. At this time West Berkshire had a rate of 19.8% (Bracknell Forest 5%, Reading 11.5%, Slough 32.6%, Windsor and Maidenhead 25.6%, Wokingham 38%, Hampshire 14.5%, Oxfordshire 13.7%, SE average 15.2% and England 13.6%). Local experience and discussions with other local leaders indicate that there has been a rapid increase in vacancy rates over the intervening eight months, which is consistent with West Berkshire's own increase in agency workers to 29%.

12. Impact of Vacancies & Agency Staffing

- 12.1 High vacancy levels and reliance upon agency staffing impact in three key areas, they are:
- **Quality and Safety of Service** – Frequent changes of staff impede our ability to deliver a high quality service. Effective child protection is built on good relationships with families, and staff who are familiar with local working practices. High turnover fractures these important relationships and makes the workforce less effective as

new starters have to learn and re-learn local systems. High turnover also results in extensive management time and resources being devoted to recruitment and induction at the expense of other important activities. Child protection requires stable, supportive teams who are able to work closely together in a trusting environment to deal with the challenging emotional content of the work. This has been identified in research as a crucial component in safe, effective practice.

- **Risk** – Child Protection work is fraught with risks. The service works with some of the most vulnerable children in our community. If the service fails the consequences can be catastrophic for individual children and their families. There are also potentially very serious reputational risks for the council in terms of both the potential for a child death or an “inadequate” judgement in an Ofsted inspection. Councils who experience these high profile and tragic events often then experience a vicious circle in which recruitment difficulties become even more acute and significant investment to restore adequate services is needed. Locally, Slough is known to have invested in excess of £2million following their “inadequate” Ofsted inspection outcome, and this was not sufficient to stabilise the situation, which has led to a further “inadequate” judgement. Slough Borough Council now faces the prospect of having Children’s Services being removed from their control, whilst having to resource it at level that will be determined by others and whilst still being held accountable for the outcomes of the services provided. In another local example, Oxfordshire recently spent £8million in one year addressing Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) concerns. Coventry Council are investing in excess of £6million following a recent Ofsted inadequate judgment.
- **Cost** – Agency Social Workers and managers are expensive. The average cost of an agency children's social worker is currently £67,488 per annum whereas the average cost of an employed children's social worker is £42,560. In 2013/14 Children’s Services spent over £1 million on agency staff. Current projections indicate this is likely to rise significantly in the financial year 2014/15 because of the increasing instability of our teams. Despite the rise in cost, the number of social workers deployed will not increase.
- **Increase in Demand for Service** – The main focus of this report is on the staffing challenges facing Children’s Services, it is important that these are seen in the context of the demand pressures experienced over the last three year period. Locally and nationally there has been a significant increase in the workload of Children’s Services driven by changes in demography, increased expectations in relation to the quality of services, responses to specific issues (e.g. Child Sexual Exploitation) and a series of high profile child death tragedies. In the local context this has led to a significant increase in workload. Between 2011/12 to 2013/14 the number of children looked after has increased by 22% (125 to 161) and children subject to a child protection plan rose by 48% (78 to 116).

13. Part 2 - Strategy to Address the Recruitment and Retention Crisis

13.1 To address this problem it is vital that West Berkshire Council acts quickly and decisively. Failure to do so will incur additional costs and risks. Other neighbouring local authorities have already implemented policies designed to attract and retain good children's social work staff. We are competing for staff in a challenging market.

- 13.2 Action to improve the situation will require additional investment above the current CEL for the Communities Directorate in order to create the right range of incentives to attract and retain good quality social workers. Withdrawing and recycling funding from elsewhere in the service reduces the amount of early intervention and prevention work that we are able to carry out and in turn leads to increased pressure in these high risk teams which further impacts on our ability to retain staff.
- 13.3 The child protection social worker labour market is complex. There is extensive research that demonstrates workers are not simply motivated by direct financial incentives. The most successful local authorities combine competitive pay with a supportive workplace and appropriate working environment. (These too have financial implications). Consequently resolving this issue will require a multi-faceted approach designed to make West Berkshire an employer of choice. We will need a bold approach that differentiates us clearly from other local authorities and their offer.
- 13.4 In response to this we have developed and costed a draft recruitment and retention package that is included with this report in Appendix A.
- 13.5 The proposed costings for the package set out in Appendix A are set in the tables below. The retention elements have been calculated on the basis of a 60% take up of the planned retention benefits. To qualify for these benefits staff would need to remain in the service for three years. Retrospectively modelling the impact of this identifies 11 (27%) staff who would have qualified. There is a financial risk that a greater number may qualify which would increase the total cost of the package. This is an unlikely scenario, but the additional cost would be offset by a very stable workforce with minimal use of agency staffing.

14. Financial Information

- 14.1 The tables set out the information as described below:

14.2 Table 4 – Funding requirements for financial years 14/15 to 17/18

Table 4: Funding Requirements for Financial Years 14-15 through to 17-18								
The table below shows the annual investment required into Children's Services to fund the programme.								
It is anticipated that financial year 14-15 the initial investment will be funded via reserves.								
The entire cost requirement of the programme will be funded through the CELs/SELs.								
			Additional FTE	FY 14-15	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	Total Annual Funding Requirement 17-18 onwards
Retention Bonus & Leave	Retention Bonus	Initial investment in 15-16, rollover in base in subsequent financial years. Additional investment required in 17-18	0	0	0	0	360,000	360,000
	Retention Leave	Agency requirement to cover leave period, 14-15 increased agency budget sufficient. Financial year 16-17 onwards supernumerary posts to cover leave.	3	0	0	134,407	3,494	137,901
Recruitment Specialist	Recruitment Specialist	Initial investment into base budget in 14-15, 15-16 additional full year effect of post less 14-15 initial investment. 16-17 onwards growth only.	1	28,000	21,248	1,280	1,314	51,842
Social Worker Academy	Social Worker Academy	50% investment in 14-15, balance of £258K in 15-16. 15-16 base budget rolled forward no further additional investment.	0	73,603	103,717	0	0	177,320
Employing four additional Family Support Workers	New Assistant Social Worker Posts (Para Professionals)*4	Initial investment into base budget in 14-15, 15-16 additional full year effect of post less 14-15 initial investment. 16-17 onwards	4	67,130	50,942	3,070	3,148	124,290
Promoting Relocation Allowances	Relocation Package	Initial investment in 14-15 budget, funding rolled over as part of base budget in subsequent years.	0	40,000	0	-16,000	0	24,000
Use of Car for Work	Travel Options Package (formally Re-open of lease car scheme).	14-15 initial investment for new employees (12), seven month (1.9.14 appointment dates), 15-16 full year effect and budget rolled over into 16-17 onwards. Existing staff (4), full year effect factored into 14-15 and budget rolled over into subsequent years.	0	19,704	6,000	0	0	25,704
Effectively Marketing our Offer	Advertising, Campaign & Media	Initial investment made in 14-15 and rolled over as base in subsequent financial years.	0	52,000	-2,000	-15,000	0	35,000
Additional Support Posts	Resilience Post	Initial investment into base budget in 14-15, 15-16 additional full year effect of post less 14-15 initial investment. 16-17 onwards growth only.	1	28,000	21,248	1,280	1,314	51,842
Additional Recruitment Incentive	Recruit a Friend Scheme	Initial investment in 14-15 budget, 15-16 includes increase to base as 14-15 investment not the full year effect. 16-17 onwards budget rolled over in base, assume no increase or decrease required.	0	2,500	1,250	0	0	3,750
Total Funding Requirement Financial Years 14-15 to 17-18				310,937	202,405	109,038	369,269	991,649

14.3 Table 6 – Detailed breakdown of costs and assumptions

Table below documents the total annual cost of the							
Activity	Assumptions	Additional FTE to agreed current establishment	FY 14-15	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	
Retention Bonus and Sabbaticals	Retention Bonus	Retention bonus - one off £15k payment post 3 years of service from start of programme.					
		Assume 14-15 is first year of contract for all staff (40), handcuff payment payable in financial year 17-18. Calculations based on the assumption that even with proposal, employee churn will exist. Staff levels anticipated to fulfil the three years and require bonus is 60% (24 employees)					
		EXISTING 28 EMPLOYEES.		0	0	252,000	
		12 NEW EMPLOYEES - entry into scheme on date of commencement of employment. Assume vacancies recruited 14-15.		0	0	108,000	
	Retention Leave	Leave is paid, therefore financial requirement is agency budget to cover permanent staff on leave. Agency staff using 13-14 average cost is £67k per worker pa. £125k budget for agency built into 14-15 budget.					
		EXISTING 28 EMPLOYEES: Assume that 60% of existing staff will remain in post and therefore eligible for leave (17), staggered over 3 years, i.e. 6 per year from 15-16. One employee on leave at any one point, cover required 1fte agency worker full year.	0	67,000	67,000	67,000	
		NEW 12 EMPLOYEES, assume all recruited in 14-15. 60% anticipated to stay for 3 years (7), all leave due 17-18. Assume 2 fte agency to cover leave staggered throughout the year.	0	0	0	134,000	
		Less existing agency budget (14-15 figure £125k) plus savings from supernumerary posts employed 16-17 onwards (3 posts, 1.0Fte).	0	-67,000	-67,000	-201,000	
		Supernumerary Posts (*3 at SCP 40 Mid J), appointed 15-16 (full year). Purposes is to replace the need for agency staff covering staff on retention leave and dependency on agency staff.	3	0	134,407	137,901	
Employment of a Recruitment & Retention Specialist	Recruitment Specialist	1.0fte post at K grade mid point SCP 44, growth in costs per annum assumed as 2.6% (in line with MTFs). FY 14-15 7/12s, assumes appointment at 1.9.14.	1	28,000	49,248	50,528	51,842
Social Worker Academy	Social Worker Academy	Costing per Academy paper. Assume full year effect from 15-16 onwards. 14-15 50% as recruitment will be late in year.		129,000	258,000	258,000	258,000
		Reduction in programme costs through rebadging an existing graduate post and two existing newly qualified posts into programme.		-55,397	-80,680	-80,680	-80,680
Employing four additional Family Support Workers	New Assistant Social Worker Posts (Para Professionals)*4	4 1.0fte additional posts, grade F/G, mid point SCP 26, annual growth 2.6%, average increment £700 pa, top of pay scale will be reached post FY17-18. Assume a 14-15 start date 1.9.14, all 4 posts recruited to in 14-15.	4	67,130	118,072	121,142	124,290
Promoting Relocation Allowances	Relocation Package	£8k maximum offer per individual, anticipated 5 appointments in a full year. Assume all appointed in 14-15. Requirement reducing in subsequent (16-17 onwards) years to 3 appointments.	0	40,000	40,000	24,000	24,000

Use of Car for Work	Travel Options Package (formally Re-open of lease car scheme).	Package offered consists of: Essential user status £1.2k average cost per employee pa, 0% interest free loan (applicable to essential users), cost to Council is cost of borrowing to supply 0% loan to employee. .					
		Current 12 Vacancies: 100% essential user status plus 0% loan.					
		LEASE CARS - option removed	0	0	0	0	0
		ESSENTIAL USER STATUS, average cost pa £1.2k, assume full year effect 15-16 onwards, pro-rata to 1.9.14 start date 14-15.	0	8,400	14,400	14,400	14,400
		EXISTING STAFF not receiving either essential user status or a lease car: (28 employed staff, based on ResourceLink approx 80% receive either a lease car or have essential user status), using 8 as base, 100% essential user status plus car loan:					
		LEASE CAR option removed	0	0	0	0	0
		ESSENTIAL USER STATUS, full year effect (assume backdated to 1.4.14)	0	9,600	9,600	9,600	9,600
	**0% Interest Free Loan (12 new employees & 4 existing staff assumed will become essential users). Cost to Council is annual cost of borrowing (average borrowing 0.71% in 13-14), £15K loan essential car status only.	0	1,704	1,704	1,704	1,704	
Effectively Marketing our Offer	Advertising	Advertising budget assumed as an annual requirement. £2k pledge development funding incorporated in 14-15 only.	0	17,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
	Campaign	Funding an annual requirement, with spend anticipated to reduce by £5k 16-17 onwards.	0	15,000	15,000	10,000	10,000
	Media	Funding an annual requirement, with spend anticipated to reduce by 50% in 16-17 onwards.	0	20,000	20,000	10,000	10,000
Additional Support Posts	Resilience Post	Assume K grade post at mid point SCP 44, 2.6% annual growth applied. Assume full year effect from 15-16. 14-15 start date 1.9.14 applied.	1	28,000	49,248	50,528	51,842
Additional Recruitment Incentive	Recruit a Friend Scheme	£1k finders fee paid to employee once friend commences employment, success of scheme to be reviewed in the mid term. Currently approx 12 vacancies, assume on average 3 new appointments from scheme per annum for a fully year. Assume for 14-15 as three months into the financial year, 2 appointees. Assume one off fee more enticing than continuing payments.	0	2,500	3,750	3,750	3,750
		Annual Costs:	9	310,937	513,342	622,380	991,649

14.4 The proposals detailed in the tables above will require a one off contribution from General Reserves of £311k in the current financial year. The significant ongoing funding requirements estimated to total £992k by 2017/18 will be funded by the Communities Directorate finding alternative savings and/or additional revenue streams to help mitigate these additional costs. A further £210k from General Reserves has been earmarked for 2015/16 to assist the Directorate in delivering the funding requirements over the medium term.

15. Conclusion

15.1 West Berkshire Council needs to act quickly and decisively to address this issue. Failure to do so will expose vulnerable children to unacceptable risks. It will also lead to significant additional costs. Other neighbouring local authorities have already implemented policies designed to attract and retain good children's social work staff. We are competing for staff in a challenging market. The strategy proposed is designed to represent the best possible balance between being both effective and represent good value for money.

16. Recommendations

- 16.1 Executive are requested to endorse the attached Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy.
- 16.2 Executive are requested to agree the investment required to finance the strategy as outlined in tables 4 and 6.
- 16.3 Executive agree to that the strategy will be reviewed annually with a report outlining the impact and any proposed changes. There will also be a quarterly report to Corporate Board which will be escalated if it is deemed necessary. We also anticipate the impact of the strategy will be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny.

Appendices

Appendix A - West Berkshire Children's Social Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: N/a

Officers Consulted: Extensive discussion has taken place with Children's Social Care Staff and the Communities Directorate Leadership Team, Corporate Board

Trade Union: Initial discussions have taken place with the relevant trade unions.

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West Berkshire Children’s Social Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2014 - 2017

**'Nobody does this job for the money, but a competitive salary/package
would help recruitment and retention'**

Views of a group of West Berkshire Social Workers 12th June 2014

1. Introduction

The recruitment and retention of children's social workers is one of the most challenging issues facing councils nationally. The problem has been enduring, going back over fifteen years and projected to be a very serious issue for at least a further seven (Reforming Social Work 2013¹). To address this it is essential that West Berkshire has an effective strategy that both helps us to retain our existing staff and also to recruit new staff. This strategy sets out how we will achieve this.

Our first priority in the strategy is to stem the loss of good quality staff from West Berkshire through effective retention. Our next priority is to become much more competitive in the children’s social work recruitment market.

2. Our Vision

¹ Reforming Social Work, Policy Exchange 2013
<http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/reforming%20social%20work.pdf>

Our vision is that West Berkshire should become an employer of choice for skilled and experienced children's social workers. This will enable us to have enough high quality staff to meet the needs of our community. This will be achieved by developing a reciprocal commitment from and to staff who work in this incredibly challenging area. This will include sustainable approaches which combine 'growing our own staff' with attracting the best that are available in the open market. Protecting the vulnerable is at the heart of the council's vision and we recognise this group of staff are critical to our success in achieving this aspiration.

3. Where are we now?

Over the last three years we have seen a gradual loss of permanent staff that has contributed to us becoming heavily reliant upon agency staffing in our frontline teams. At the time of writing, almost a third of our frontline staff are temporary agency workers. This is both detrimental to the quality of service provided and costly. Child Protection work requires consistency, commitment and a stable workforce. Constant changes of staff are profoundly unhelpful in work that is dependent upon the quality of relationships between workers and children and their families. Agency workers are expensive (58% above the cost of an employee) and excessive turnover wastes extensive time and effort (repeated recruitment, induction, training etc). Over each of the last three years we experienced a net loss of staff (11/12 - 3, 12/13 - 4 & 13/14 - 6), we have also seen a considerable rise in turnover during the same period.

The problem has worsened despite considerable activity to address the issue, this has included:

- ❖ Implementation of a social worker career progression based on The College of Social Work Best Practice Model
- ❖ Re-grading Assistant and Team Manager roles
- ❖ Cut a management post to invest in two additional front line social worker posts
- ❖ Constant social worker rolling recruitment campaign
- ❖ Small 'grow our own' social worker scheme (two places annually)
- ❖ Developed a pan-Berkshire agreement to manage local agency staffing market
- ❖ Held staff focus groups to explore retention issues
- ❖ Held staff conference themed around retention

Research indicates that the difficulties recruiting children's social workers will continue to be very difficult for at the least the next seven years (Reforming Social Work 2013²). We are also aware that neighbouring authorities are preparing improved recruitment and retention packages for this group of staff.

During this three year period we have also seen a significant increase in the workload of our child protection staff. The number of children subject to child protection plans, looked after and care proceedings have all increased by 15-20%. Over this period we have only created two new social work posts (funded through deletion of a non social work post). Due to the recruitment challenges faced, the teams have not experienced the intended benefit of these posts. Consequently individual social workers case loads are higher than ideal.

If we do not take action we project that the gradual attrition of staff that has taken place over the last three years will accelerate and it is already presenting serious risks to the safety of the service and the finances of the council.

4. Where do we need to get to?

It is important that we stabilise children's social care and increase our ability to be competitive in a very challenging recruitment market. Our aspiration over the next three years is to ensure 95% or more of our staff are directly employed WBC staff, to reduce turnover to healthy levels (less than 10%) and to have a competent and capable children's social care workforce.

Our strategy to achieve this focuses on two key strands:

- ❖ Building on our strengths to become the employer of choice for children's social care in the Thames Valley area.
- ❖ Training and developing our own staff to ensure long term sustainability

5. How will we achieve this?

² Reforming Social Work, Policy Exchange 2013

<http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/reforming%20social%20work.pdf>

To become an employer of choice for this group of staff will require a significant improvement on what we offer today. Our staff tell us that they like working in West Berkshire because of the strong commitment to protecting vulnerable children, the open and honest style of leadership and management and because it is a great place to live and work.

We will build on these strengths in this strategy. We have identified a strong potential to promote the unique qualities of West Berkshire in our recruitment message. West Berkshire has many strengths that if clearly communicated will become a powerful recruitment and retention message. As a small authority, staff have ready access to senior management, members and a strong connection to the core values of the council.

The strategy is based around three key elements:

- ❖ Attracting, developing and retaining the best staff
- ❖ Ensuring our terms and conditions are competitive
- ❖ Effectively marketing our offer (both internally and externally)

5.1 Attracting, developing and retaining the best staff

Working in child protection is a tough and gruelling profession, research indicates that the average career span of a children's social worker is seven years (Reforming Social Work 2013³). Key to this short duration is burn out, working day in day out with children experiencing distress and trauma takes a toll on individuals and many decide that they are unable to do it longer term opting for other less challenging roles. Some staff choose agency work as it offers financial independence and the ability to take regular career breaks.

5.1.1 Supervision, Support and Leadership

Social Workers consistently report locally and nationally that good quality support and professional supervision is one of the most important factors in their employment. Nationally this is highlighted

³ Reforming Social Work, Policy Exchange 2013

<http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/reforming%20social%20work.pdf>

in both Reforming Social Work 2013⁴ and the 2013 All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Work⁵, locally our own staff identified it as a pivotal factor in the career decisions in both focus groups (Spring 2014) and our staff conference (June 2014). Staff are very positive about the supervision provided, but indicated the addition of high quality external clinical supervision would be greatly valued. Consequently we will be investing in the provision of additional external clinical supervision.

5.1.2 Retention Bonus and Retention Leave

Central to our strategy is a package of benefits designed to attract staff who want to commit to one employer to enable them to provide the consistent presence children need. Staff working in the most challenging teams will be provided with a three year retention bonus and up to three months paid retention leave at the end of three years continuous service (eight weeks additional leave with up to four weeks banked annual leave). This will be costly, but still far better value than employing an increasing number of agency staff who cost 58% more than our directly employed staff. Retention bonuses have been successful in a number of other local authorities (Westminster, Bexley, Bromley, Kent and many others). Windsor and Maidenhead experienced a major loss of staff when they removed their retention bonus arrangements in 2013. Both Reading and Wokingham Councils currently pay market supplements to staff engaged in child protection work.

The retention leave element of the strategy was identified by our own staff, firstly in focus groups held in Spring 2013 and then reiterated at our Child Protection Social Work Conference held in June 2014. The retention leave will be a powerful tool in retaining staff to both West Berkshire and the profession. It will give workers a period to recover from the intense pressure of child protection and return energised and refreshed. This is an essential point of difference to our strategy which will act as a powerful inducement to both retain and recruit staff.

Existing staff already in post at the start date of the scheme will have an additional entitlement - at managers' discretion - to 'draw down' the sabbatical early, subject to the conditions that their total working time (i.e. not including sick leave or maternity leave) for West Berks council exceeds three years at the time the sabbatical is taken and that they give not less than eight week's notice.

⁴ Reforming Social Work, Policy Exchange 2013

<http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/reforming%20social%20work.pdf>

⁵ All Party Parliamentary Group Report on Social Work 2013 http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_90352-5.pdf

If two or more existing staff members seek to draw down this entitlement at the same time, managers will have discretion to stagger the leave on a presumption that the member of staff with the longest service gets to go first.

Existing staff members who choose to draw down the entitlement early will be required to pay back the cost of the leave if they subsequently leave the service before the end of the three year scheme. (Thus people who took the leave early in 2015/16 would have to work 2.5 further years before they could leave us without payback but those who didn't take it until early 2017 would have given us nearly the full three additional years anyway).

This will provide existing staff with long service an opportunity to have the break they need, but would still make it more likely that we achieve the full retention benefit of the retention leave offer for those staff. It will also enable us to flex the timing of the retention leave to meet the needs of the service.

5.1.3 Employment of a Children's Social Care Recruitment and Retention Specialist

This will be a critical role that will drive much of the work outlined in this strategy. The role will require expertise in both social work and recruitment processes. The role will include:

- ❖ Leading the implementation and regular reviewing of this strategy
- ❖ Co-ordinating all retention work (regular focus groups, exit interviews, tracking leavers destinations etc).
- ❖ Head hunting new staff
- ❖ Implementing an agency to permanent programme
- ❖ Expediting the recruitment process at every stage
- ❖ Managing all agency recruitment (and relationships with agencies)
- ❖ Developing relationships with universities to recruit newly qualified SWs

The success of the post will be easily measured with an initial focus on reducing the loss of permanent staff quickly and moving to an increase in the permanently employed West Berkshire staff. The scope of the role will include all 74 of the qualified social work posts working with children.

This is a tried and tested concept, it builds on work that was originally pioneered in the education sector when facing an acute recruitment crisis for teachers. Most larger authorities have this type of dedicated role already and Reading have developed something similar which has helped them to reduce their reliance on agency staffing (currently in the region of 10%).

5.1.4 Social Work Academy

The route to a sustainable position is to recruit and develop our own staff. Whilst the market for experienced staff is fierce we can recruit bright and capable, but inexperienced staff. At present workloads are so heavy that our teams have very little capacity to take on staff who are not able to do more complex work. To address this we will develop a unit with six newly qualified staff who will be supported over a two year period to develop the levels of skill and competence required. The unit will recruit high quality graduates with a connection to the local area (as this is one of the strongest factors in retention). This is a tried and tested approach. In one example (Sunderland City Council⁶) the introduction of an academy helped reduce reliance on agency staff from 33% in 2010 to 2% in 2014.

5.1.5 Employing Four Additional Family Support Workers

This measure supports the strategy's aspirations in two ways. Firstly it helps to reduce the workload of social workers enabling them to focus their time more effectively on working directly with children and families. Family Support workers can manage time consuming tasks on behalf of the allocated social worker, for example the organisation of contact, transportation of children, implementing elements of child protection plans. This strategy has been used very effectively in education where classroom assistants take on many tasks to free up teachers to teach.

We will also recruit Family Support Workers with the potential to go on to train to be Social Workers. Working as a Family Support Worker is the ideal foundation experience for becoming a child protection social worker and experience gained in this role will accelerate progress when they complete their social worker training. Consequently the additional Family Support Workers will help to create a pipeline of good quality local candidates for our social work academy.

⁶ <http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=11641&p=0>

5.1.6 Promoting Relocation Allowances

We will be promoting our existing relocation package (which is potentially available to all WBC employees) in future advertising and consequently anticipate a significant increase in demand as we seek to attract good quality staff from further afield.

5.2 Ensuring our terms and conditions are competitive

5.2.1 Good Team Working Environment

Child Protection can be a frightening and dangerous role. Social Workers face threats and intimidation on a regular basis. Consequently it is essential staff return to safe and secure team environments where they can discuss complex case issues and debrief with colleagues following home visits. This is also particularly important to newly qualified staff learning their profession, but is often also essential for more experienced staff. Flexible working does not assist in this process as it erodes the team identity and makes it more difficult to find where their team colleagues will be on any given day.

The recent (2013) All Party Parliamentary Group Report on Social Work⁷ identified the damaging effect of hot desking and makes a recommendation to end the practice for social work staff. This is also an increasing body of academic research supporting this view (Re-imagining SW).

Consequently we will move away from hot desking arrangements for frontline workers over the next year.

5.2.2 Use of Cars for Work

Social Workers need their cars to work with children and young people. Research by leading Social Work academic Harry Ferguson (2012⁸) identifies cars as essential working tools for social workers. Many of the most difficult and challenging conversations with children and young people

⁷ All Party Parliamentary Group Report on Social Work 2013 http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_90352-5.pdf

⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/oct/23/social-workers-car-place-of-sanctuary>

are held in social workers cars. The importance of the car is also recognised by the 2013 All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Work⁹ who include a recommendation that local authorities support social workers to have access to cars for their work.

In recognition of this we will provide a range of measures to support social workers to have access to appropriate vehicles. This will include interest free loans and essential car user status for all frontline social workers. Social workers will also be provided with appropriate parking spaces.

5.3 Effectively marketing our offer (internally and externally)

We are confident that we have the potential to be an employer of choice based on our existing strengths and the measures set out in this strategy. However these benefits will only be realised if they are effectively marketed both internally and externally. As part of this process we will develop a pledge/contract for existing staff setting out what they can expect from us as an employer, and what we expect from them in return. Kent¹⁰ have used this approach very successfully in their recruitment and retention of social workers.

The investment in this area will be to promote West Berkshire as a great place to be a social worker using various channels (social media, trade press etc).

6. How we will Measure Success

We will devise a recruitment and retention score card including detailed information including quantitative measures (vacancy rates, turnover, agency staffing etc) alongside qualitative information (outcome of exit interviews, staff surveys etc). This will be reported on a six monthly basis to management board.

⁹ All Party Parliamentary Group Report on Social Work 2013 http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_90352-5.pdf

¹⁰ http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/11359/social-work-contract.pdf

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