

Report to:	RESILIENT COMMUNITIES AND CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager.
Date of Meeting:	7 February 2019

SUPPORTING THE WORKFORCE

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To report back to the Committee on the piece of work undertaken looking at the support provided to the Children's Services' workforce.

2.0 Recommendations:

- 2.1 To consider any issues that might need to be progressed and use the information as an additional evidence source when considering reporting from Children's Services.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

- 3.1 To conclude the piece of work undertaken on Supporting the Workforce and use the findings to influence future scrutiny work.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? N/A

- 3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None.

4.0 Council Priority:

- 4.1 The relevant Council Priority is:

- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

5.0 Background Information

- 5.1 At its meeting on 13 September 2018, the Resilient Communities and Children's Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a piece of work on Supporting the Workforce of Children's Services in order to qualify the information provided by the Director of Children's Services and Principal Social Worker in relation to changes in culture within Children's Services.
- 5.2 The piece of work was undertaken in two parts. The first, a presentation from Linda Dutton, Head of Human Resources and Tony Morrissey, Interim Head of Safeguarding highlighting the support on offer to staff, and the second, a meeting with the Shadow Improvement Board to speak to frontline staff in order to gather their opinions.
- 5.3 The presentation was attended by Councillors O'Hara, Mitchell, Mrs Scott, Scott and Stansfield and Councillors O'Hara, Mrs Scott and Scott attended the meeting of the Shadow Improvement Board.

5.4 Supporting the Workforce Presentation

- 5.4.1 The support provided by Human Resources was outlined and Members noted the Health and Wellbeing offer comprising of the in-house occupational health service, Employee Assistance Programme, Managing Work Related Pressure and Coping with Pressure training and the Supervision system.
- 5.4.2 A large amount of information was also presented on recruitment and retention and the work ongoing to ensure that turnover of staff was reduced. It was noted that an action plan was in place and was monitored regularly including consideration of monthly data regarding vacancies and agency usage. There was a dedicated advertising portal, the iRecruit applicant tracking system and the Step Up to Social Work programme.
- 5.4.3 Learning and Development requirements and opportunities were identified through Individual Performance Appraisals (IPAs) and a Teaching Partnership had been funded by the Department for Education following a successful funding bid from partners. The Partnership would support student placements in the Council and aimed to improve the quality of the students qualifying as social workers.
- 5.4.4 Members were also informed of the Leadership Charter and the outcomes of the Leadership Survey for 2018. The survey was one way in which staff could submit views anonymously regarding the support received from their line manager. Responses from each of the 49 questions demonstrated that 43 returned a higher agreement score when compared with last year's results from the Children's Services directorate.

5.4.5 A new induction process was being introduced and would comprise of aide memoirs, an induction checklist, practice standards and shadowing opportunities. In addition, the level of ‘supervision’ had increased and it was now undertaken monthly and included qualitative questions.

5.5 Meeting with Shadow Improvement Board

5.5.1 The Shadow Improvement Board comprises of frontline staff and managers and provides opportunities for engagement and feedback, a steer on training needs and a link to the Improvement Board. Representatives of the Resilient Communities and Children’s Scrutiny Committee met with the Shadow Improvement Board during the course of their ordinary meeting held on 27 November 2018.

5.5.2 The meeting of the Shadow Improvement Board was well attended and there was a good level of contribution from across the Board to questions posed by the Committee Members.

5.5.3 Councillor Mrs Scott introduced the Scrutiny Committee representatives to the Board and set out the reasons for attendance at the meeting.

5.5.4 The findings of the meeting were as follows:

- That IPAs were carried out and included a plan for learning and development. There were also more direct ways of requesting training and feeding in views regarding development required either cross-team or individually.
- Managers were supportive in finding time for the workforce to attend training events once they had been deemed appropriate.
- Supervision might vary across teams, however, it was always undertaken and reflected needs at the time. It had generally developed to include more reflection. Outside of formal supervision there is regular interaction to allow cases and concerns to be discussed.
- Workload is more achievable than previously, although there were peaks and troughs. The reduction of cases coming in through the front door had been reflected in individual workloads. It was therefore considered that gatekeeping was working.
- There had been a change in culture, there was enthusiasm demonstrated for the ‘forward thinking’ approach undertaken by the Service and having the confidence to change.
- With regards to partners, the concerns previously raised to the Committee by the Director of Children’s Services were echoed, however, improvement was reported in respect of partners understanding more about their role and taking responsibility where appropriate.
- There was a good knowledge of Occupational Health and the Employee

Assistance Programme and what both services could offer to staff.

- It was felt that there had been a reduction in those off sick, however, also considered that the recording of sick leave and returns to work had improved. If a member of staff was off long term then work would be divided and shared causing an increase in workload.
- The Shadow Improvement Board felt that teams were very supportive of each other, and, despite differences in personality and therefore management style, managers were generally supportive to staff and had created a supportive culture.
- Examples were given of circumstances outside of normal working hours where managers had offered immediate support when dealing with complex and distressing cases.
- In an ideal world, a few additional social worker posts would be created to allow staff to produce higher quality work. Additional professional and clinical supervision regarding dealing with deaths would also be useful for many staff.
- All staff were being supported well in relation to the Ofsted Inspection being carried out of the Service at the time of the meeting.

- 5.5.5 Members considered that the meeting with the Shadow Improvement Board had been very positive and invaluable to getting to know more about the Service and the support on offer to the workforce. The representatives at the meeting were enthusiastic, committed and passionate and spoke about doing their best with limited resources, being at the beginning of a process of transition and the desire to get started.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices:

None.

6.0 Legal considerations:

- 6.1 None.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

- 7.1 Contained within the report.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

- 8.1 None.

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 Any additional workforce would need to be budgeted for.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 None.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.