

Report to:**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE****Relevant Officers:**

Linda Dutton, Head of Human Resource and Organisational
Workforce Development

Kara Haskayne, Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker

Date of Meeting:

10 September 2020

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE – RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**1.0 Purpose of the report:**

1.1 To provide an update of Children's Social Care Improvement in relation to the recruitment and retention of Children's Social Care employees.

2.0 Recommendations:

- 2.1
- To note the contents of the report.
 - To continue to meet statutory monitoring, challenge and support obligations.
 - To identify any further information and actions required.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

3.1 For Members of the Scrutiny Committee to be fully informed about the recruitment and retention of employees across Children's Social Care and support effective monitoring and scrutiny in 2020/2021.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council?

No

3.2.1 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget?

The recruitment and retention approach supports the medium term financial plan.

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

No other alternatives are appropriate

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is:

- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

5.0 **Background Information**

5.1 **Children Social Care Recruitment and Retention Update Report (August 2020)**

5.2 Children's Social Care and Human Resource (HR) and Organisational Workforce Development (OWD) Service have been working together to increase workforce recruitment and retention. This focus is to ensure sufficient workforce capacity and experience to improve the quality of service, to safeguard children and prevent children having the need to be brought into our care.

5.3 **Recruitment activity and outcomes**

5.4 There were **15** permanent qualified vacancies at the end of July 2020, which have been actively sought to recruit to:

- 1 Head of Service
- 1 Service Manager
- 4 Team Managers
- 1 Deputy Team Manager (Families Together Service)
- 1 Practice Development Manager
- 1 Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) Learning Co-ordinator
- 6 Social Workers

5.5 It is pleasing to report that since then two senior leadership roles within the Strengthening and Supporting Families Service (SSF) have been appointed to and their start dates have been expedited to ensure they commence in post during August 2020. The Head of Service is an experienced Head of Service from a North West Local Authority deemed as 'good'. The Service Manager has previous Service Manager experience and has been a Child Protection Chair in Blackpool for the last year, has played an active role in the operational implementation of Blackpool Families Rock across social care and the partnership and has a good insight into the service improvement areas he will be responsible for leading. There has also been further recruitment to one of the Team Manager posts and three of the six social work vacancies.

5.6 A very proactive **Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) recruitment campaign** (newly qualified social workers) continues. To date 28 ASYEs have been recruited, all of which are due to have commenced in role by September/October 2020. The latter start dates are due to some social work students not having been able to complete their placements within other Local Authorities, due to the Covid-19 lockdown and their exam boards therefore being rearranged.

We have had feedback from successful applicants that they have heard about the strong ASYE programme that Blackpool offers, that they share the values and principles of Blackpool Families Rock and want to work in this way with families. If the forecasted cohort of 32 ASYEs by September is met, this would equate to 17.9% of Blackpool's Children's Social Care workforce, therefore the targeted ASYE recruitment campaign continues.

5.7 There are currently three employees on the **Apprenticeship Programme**. Due to the impact of Covid-19 on the local Higher Education Institutes, the 2020-2021 cohort apprentice interviews have been rearranged until Autumn 2020 in preparation for a January 2021 commencement. With regard to the **Step Up Students**, it is currently cohort six of the programme and Blackpool has participated in four cycles of this

initiative, offering three placements in preparation for the cohort commencing in 2021. Blackpool continues to work collaboratively with Blackburn, Lancashire County Council, Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN).

- 5.8 The Council's Relocation Policy has been reviewed to ensure that it maximises candidate attraction. To do this Blackpool has reviewed and reduced the eligibility criteria and has offered financial support for commuting miles over a specified number of daily miles as opposed to mandating that a successful candidate would have to relocate.
- 5.9 To ensure the service has sufficient resource to meet demand, the Council continues to use **agency qualified social worker cover** when required during the recruitment process. At the end of July 2020 there were 27 agency workers in place and eight workers from Innovate, equating to an agency rate of 20 per cent. An Innovate Team has been kept on until the Autumn, to support children exiting from our care and achieving permanence.
- 5.10 Blackpool continues to undertake **targeted recruitment campaigns** for qualified social workers at all levels, to stabilise the workforce and ensure caseload levels are maintained/reduced. 252 (150 External/102 Internal) posts have been filled since 1 Jan 2019, of which 140 (89 External/51 Internal) are Social Work England (SWE) qualified. Average caseloads at March 2019 were 24 and as a result at the end of July 2020 this had reduced to 21.
- 5.11 **Creative and innovative marketing activity** has been undertaken in partnership with our Marketing Team, to support candidate attraction from the wider Regional and National social care workforce. For example recent Community Care articles and 'vimeos' (online videos) about our Families Together Service (edge of care support and family together meetings) and how Blackpool has co-produced and are implementing Blackpool Families Rock principles across Children's Social Care and the partnership. Values based recruitment is also being introduced in line with Blackpool Families Rock co-produced principles.
<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2020/07/20/working-families-building-strengths/>
<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2020/03/11/strengthening-families-core/>
- 5.12 **Retention Activity**
A **survey of new starters** in Children's Services has been undertaken to assess the impact of the promised Workforce Commitment to their actual lived experience and help identify any issues which may impact upon retention. The survey has been sent to new starters with more than three months' service and less than 12 months' service, the results of which are currently being analysed and provided to the Principal Social Worker.

Additional corporate initiatives to support recruitment and retention of social workers who have significant experience and for team management positions have been considered. A proposal based upon evidence of recruitment statistics to date has recently been provided to the Corporate Leadership Team and an attractive 'Golden Hello' offer has been approved for H3 and H4 roles of £1000 after six months and another after 12 months.
- 5.13 Taking the learning from the **AYSE Support Programme** offer, the Principal Social Worker, in conjunction with the HR and OWD Service, has developed a Practice Development Service. Including additional staffing capacity, the four permanent, two 18-month temporary and Senior Practice Development Leaders will work with the Principal Social

Worker and proactively support recruitment and retention activity, including addressing absence and performance issues.

Another function of the service is to develop an **Academy approach** to delivering a **Workforce Development Strategy**, supporting **Continual Professional Development** (CPD) postgraduate and ASYE opportunity, to retain current experienced staff and support future successions and leadership sufficiency planning. This will also provide an attractive offer to experienced external potential applicants, regionally and nationally.

- 5.14 The Principal Social Worker and OWD Service continue to engage in the **Greater Lancashire Teaching Partnership** programme, which helps to provide students as a recruitment source and develops Blackpool's Practice Educators. The Council has actively engaged in the UCLAN Practice Educator virtual offer during Covid-19, and has wrapped support around this via the Practice Development Service, to increase the number of **Practice Educators** across the service. This offers both a professional and personal development opportunity to staff who are best placed to undertake role modelling, mentoring, coaching and buddying to other members of the workforce and students in terms of practice improvement.

This professional development, alongside the **H2 panel**, led by the Principal Social Worker, will support staff evidencing good practice progressing into H3 senior social worker roles in a planned way, in line with succession planning and future leadership sufficiency. Increased Practice Educator capacity will also increase future student placement capacity and subsequently recruitment of high quality ASYEs.

- 5.15 As of the end of July 2020 there had been 26 **leavers from social work qualified posts** over the past 12 months, 14 of which were at H1 level (ASYE). The picture is improving and the more that employee feedback from exit interviews, existing employees and new starters is addressed, it is anticipated this will further improve.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

List of Appendices:

None.

6.0 Legal Considerations:

Blackpool Council takes a transparent and legal recruitment and retention approach.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

All activity is undertaken in accordance with Council policies and procedures and Employment Legislation.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

Blackpool Council's recruitment and retention approach aims to take into the characteristics of the public served in Blackpool. In this Covid-19 period, the Council is responsive to the needs of employees in the context of managing day-to-day life commitments and work life.

9.0 Financial considerations:

Recruitment and retention is at the heart of the Council's medium term financial planning. The Council's workforce is its most valuable resource and without skill and experience there is a risk that inappropriate, costly decisions are made.

10. Risk management considerations:

Covid-19 risk assessments are in place to support the Council's approach and have not prevented it from delivering on its approach. The Council has made best use of virtual recruitment and support measures.

11. Ethical considerations:

Blackpool Council's recruitment and retention planning has a significant focus on social work values and the expectation of adoption of the 'Blackpool families rock approach'.

12. Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

The Council regularly communicates with its workforce to determine 'what works' and address challenges and opportunities.

13. Background papers:

None.