

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

SUNDERLAND SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN – PROGRESS UPDATE

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide a report on the progress being made on the Safeguarding Children Learning and Improvement Plan.
- 1.2 In response to a request from the Committee to provide an update on recruitment and retention issues relating to the service.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Learning and Improvement Plan was developed by the Children's Services Improvement Board in response to the areas of improvement highlighted by the Ofsted Inspection Report.
- 2.2 The Learning and Improvement Plan has been developed around 7 key priorities for improvement:-
 - Recruiting, retaining and developing a skilled and confident social care workforce
 - Providing coherent and coordinated early help services to children and their families
 - Improving the quality and timeliness of assessment and care planning
 - Ensuring high quality support and services for looked after children and effective permanency planning
 - Putting the voice of the child at the centre of social care practice
 - Supporting young people leaving care to have a positive and successful transition to adulthood and independence
 - Embedding strong quality assurance and governance mechanisms to drive continual improvement of service
- 2.3 The Children's Services Improvement Board monitors the Improvement Plan on a monthly basis. Members of this Committee also receive the agenda for the Sunderland Safeguarding Board.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 Alex Hopkins (Director of Children's Services) will provide a verbal update at the meeting on the progress being made on the priorities set out in the Improvement Plan and issues relating to the formation of Together for Children.

- 3.2 An update has also been included on recruitment and retention issues relating to the service. These are set below.

Workforce profile

- 3.3 Weekly monitoring and analysis is undertaken of the workforce profile in children's social care. This information is shown in the below table (Table 1) is accurate as of September 2016 and is based on the proposed children's services establishment for children's social care.

Permanent employees

- 3.4 There are 235 permanent posts in the proposed structure for children's social care in the following teams Management, Integrated Contact and Assessment, Child Protection and Looked After Care. Currently there are 156 permanent employees employed within these teams.

Agency Workers

- 3.5 Agency workers are being used to provide stability and additional resource in bringing caseloads down in locality safeguarding teams and to provide cover for vacant posts and absence. The Council works with De Poel as the contracted provider for agency personnel.
- 3.6 There are currently 114 agency workers engaged in various social care roles. Of this figure, 98 are engaged through the Council's De Poel contract and 16 are engaged outside of the Council's contractual arrangements for agency workers. Occasionally, it has been necessary to use alternative recruitment agencies to identify suitable candidates for the roles requiring to be filled urgently. This is currently being worked through to identify why roles have not been able to be filled through the existing arrangements.
- 3.7 De Poel have provided some detailed figures on turnover rates amongst agency workers engaged in roles in Children's Social Care, as follows:-

January 2016 – March 2016

Already in post	Starters	Leavers	Net Total
70	34	13	91

April 2016 – June 2016

Already in post	Starters	Leavers	Net Total
91	41	35	97

July 2016 – September 2016

Already in post	Starters	Leavers	Net Total
97	21	17	101

Vacancy Rates

- 3.8 There are currently 83 vacant positions, based on the proposed children's services structure for children's social care teams. A further 9 posts have been successfully recruited to during July and August (see Table 2), bringing this total down to 74 vacant positions.

Table 1

Team	Proposed Permanent Establishment	Additional Temporary Establishment to be filled with agency staff	Current number of permanent FTEs	Current agency FTEs
Management	8	2	6	8
Integrated Contact and Referral	11	1	10	4
Assessment teams	36	31	5	30
Coalfields 1 & 2	16	10	6	14
North 1 & 2	16	9	7	8
South & East 1 & 2	16	4	12	7

Team	Proposed Permanent Establishment	Additional Temporary Establishment to be filled with agency staff	Current number of permanent FTEs	Current agency FTEs
Washington 1 & 2	19	7	12	11
West 1, 2 & 3	24	13	11	18
Permanence/Looked After Team	18	N/a	21	6
Leaving Care	25	1	24	0
Fostering	17.5	2.5	15	3
Adoption	12.5	1.5	11	1
Out of Hours	4	1	3	2
Children with Disabilities	12	N/a	13	2
Total	235	83	156	114

Recruitment and Retention

- 3.9 Recruiting and selecting the right people is fundamental to children's services' improvement journey; however this does remain a challenging area in terms of recruitment and retention.

Advertisements

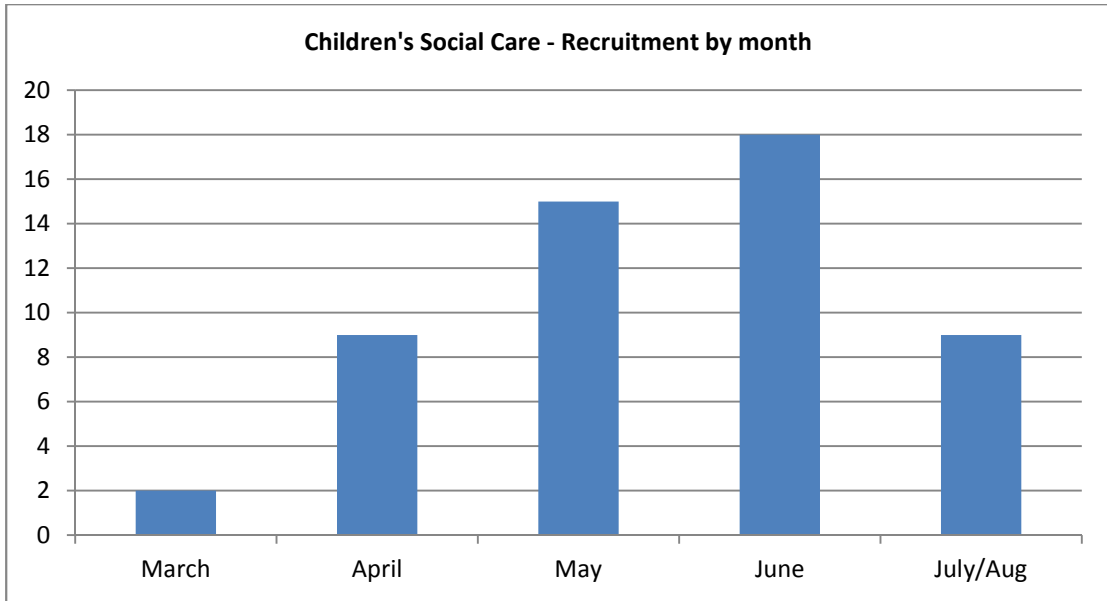
- 3.10 The Council continues to have a rolling job advertisement with North East Jobs for Team Manager and Social Worker positions, which have been identified as difficult to recruit to positions. The advertisement has been reviewed in August to ensure it is clear and indicates the necessary requirements and qualifications needed for the posts. Children's services have also agreed to place an advertisement with Google.
- 3.11 Applications from the rolling job advertisement are reviewed on a fortnightly basis so that applications are progressed promptly and forwarded to managers for short-listing.
- 3.12 Forthcoming adverts are to be placed in The Guardian and North East Jobs for the Director positions in the Together for Children board. It is also planned to re-advertise the post of Director of Early Help with interviews scheduled to be held in November 2016.

Recruitment Targets

- 3.13 The Council has recruitment targets for recruiting permanent employees into children’s social care. Meeting this target is crucial to future organisational performance and reducing the current expenditure on agency workers.
- 3.14 In the context of recruiting social care employees in the region, demand for recruiting to these positions is high with other neighbouring local authorities also recruiting for the same positions. In terms of achieving recruitment targets going forward consideration needs to be given to the employment offer from in attracting potential applicants as well as innovative recruitment practices.
- 3.15 The below table and graph summarises the current recruitment activity into key positions within the children’s social care structure since the last Improvement Board meeting in July. Despite recruitment activity being slower as was anticipated during July and August 9 positions has been successfully recruited into during this period.

Table 2

Position	Proposed Permanent Establishment	Additional Temporary Establishment to be filled with agency staff	Current number of permanent FTEs	Current agency FTEs	Staff appointed but not yet in post	Number of staff still required
Team Manager	24.5	11.5	13	15	1	10.5
Advanced Practitioner	22.5	13.5	9	2	3	10.5
Social Workers	135	62	73	74	4	58
Social Work Assistants	24	6	18	5	1	5
Total	206	93	113	96	9	84



Microsite

3.16 The microsite was successfully launched on Monday 4 July 2016 and can be accessed internally via the Hub and externally on the Council's web site and jobs pages. Since its launch the Council's advertising agency, TMP, has been monitoring the site and provided the following statistics:

- 281 visits (198 from referring web sites, 70 from directly typing the web address into a browser and 13 via Google)
- Visiting 4.3 pages per visit
- Spending an average of 1 minute and 48 seconds on the site

Of the individual pages, the page views on the microsite have been as follows:

Page Title	Page Views
Apply	69
Children's Company	41
Learning & Development	94
Model of Working	80
Roles	72
Structure	102
The Teams	114
Why Sunderland?	56

Specifically, in relation to the job roles currently being advertised, the below table shows the views for each position:

Job title	Views	Clicks on how to apply
Team Manager	312	58
Social Worker	44	7
Senior Social Worker	27	4

3.17 In developing the microsite site further important work is taking place with the communications team in order to attract more potential applicants to apply for roles. Specifically the following development work is being current undertaken:

- To identify a number of social care employees to describe a day in the life of working as a Social Worker or Team Manager in children’s social care, to provide those potential applicants with an insight into what it’s like working in Sunderland.
- For potential applicants viewing the web site to be asked to subscribe to the site.

Retention

3.18 In order to meet the challenges of retention the following need to be considered:

- Induction – develop a robust induction package for new starters; to hold focus groups with new appointees and obtain feedback on their induction experience
- Explaining employee benefits
- Become an ‘employer of choice’ in a very competitive market
- Manage employee turnover – analyse exit interview feedback
- Offer training and development opportunities
- Provide a career progression pathway to all employees
- Foster a positive culture of support through supervision and performance management feedback
- People management training for all line managers
- Flexible working arrangements to help employees achieve a better work life balance, and boost commitment and loyalty
- Communicate and engage with employees; and
- Workplace health and well-being promotion.

Innovative Marketing

- 3.19 An innovative piece of marketing work is being commissioned to publicise Together for Children and what it means for the employer brand and employee experience.
- 3.20 Progress is being made on all the action points identified throughout this report. Further changes are being proposed to key processes which it is believed will increase the achievement of recruitment and retention targets.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 The report will provide members with an overview of the progress being made in implementing the Safeguarding Children Learning and Improvement Plan, human resources issues facing the service and issues relating to the formation of the new Children's Trust.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the progress being made.

6. Glossary

None

7 Background Papers

Safeguarding Children Learning and Improvement Plan