

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: CYP Scrutiny

DATE: 22 September 2022

SUBJECT: Social Care Recruitment

REPORT FROM: Adam Peluch

CONTACT OFFICER: Jeanette Richards, Executive Director, Children's Services

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report provides a summary overview of recruitment activity in relation to Children & Young People Social Care
- 1.2 At a national, regional and local level, there are acknowledged and long-standing challenges for employers in securing sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and experienced qualified social workers to undertake a range of roles withing Childrens Social Care.
- 1.3 Recruitment and retention difficulties are particularly pronounced in respect of frontline Social Workers (Level 2 and Level 3), but also to some degree amount other roles such as Team Managers and Independent Reviewing Officers. Recruitment and retention challenges are particularly pronounced in the frontline child protection functions of Safeguarding and Initial Response.
- 1.4 As a result, the service remains dependent of the use of specialist Project Teams and expensive agency workers to provide sufficient capacity to deliver essential statutory services.
- 1.4 Following the ILACS inspection, sufficiency and stability of the social care workforce has been highlighted as an area requiring intervention to ensure consistent and high-quality services can be provided to children and their families.

2.0 Recruitment – Actions to Date

- 2.1 Since the inspection, a number of steps have been taken by the Directorate to support recruitment and retention activity. There are summarised below:
- 2.2 Development and deployment of an improved recruitment campaign, including:

- specific promotional pages on the Greater. Jobs recruitment website supported with video messages and through social media channels
- a rolling recruitment programme for Social Workers, ensuring an advert is always live
- Monthly “drop in” recruitment sessions for prospective social workers to attend and find out more about working for Bury.
- Increasing service visibility at recruitment events / fairs.
- promotion of the broader bury offer and the benefits of working for the Council.

2.3 Introduction of targeted market interventions to ensure our employment offer is attractive and competitive, including:

- Recruitment and retention payments for targeted roles within the workforce
- Payment of professional Social Work England fees for post requiring registration as a condition of employment.
- Provision of free car parking to Social Workers who are based in town centre locations
- Increase in the rates payable to social workers becoming Practice Educators and supervising student social workers
- Completion of a salary benchmarking exercise to ensure remuneration levels are competitive with our peers.
- Promotion of the agile working offer
- Maintenance of market supplement payments where there a demonstrable need to ensure alignment with the external market.

Market interventions remain under continuous review to ensure they are effective and will be amended to account for changes in market condition and organisational requirements.

2.4 Improving the conditions for social work by:

- Establishment of, and appointment to, a new role of Principal Social Worker to lead on the development of social work.
- Establishing a programme of engagement events, such as the “Voice of the Workforce” group.
- Development of a new organisational structure (currently in consultation) designed to facilitate the reduction of caseloads held by workers to an average of 15 and provide improved levels of support and supervision. This includes the establishment of a significant number of additional posts in the structure.
- Introduction of the role of Advanced Practitioner across all service areas to manage complex casework and support the development of other social workers.
- Establishing a strong and stable senior leadership team.
- Developing a Social Work Academy to bring together the Social Work Career Pathway and workforce offers.
- Strengthening and developing the overall learning and development offer.

2.5 Growing our own social workers through:

- Developing the Social Worker Apprentice programme, with an aspiration to increase numbers from 3 to 9 places on the programme.
- Developing the pool of Practice Educators to enable the Directorate to host more students
- Strengthening our involvement in the Step up to Social Work programme.

2.6 Strengthened capacity and processes regarding recruitment through:

- Investment in additional dedicated HR capacity to support recruitment activity.
- Developed protocols on conversion of agency staff to substantive employees to encourage transfer.
- Regular reporting of recruitment and onboarding activity to Improvement Board, and ongoing work to minimise the time between interview and new employees commencing in role.

2.7 Further work on supporting recruitment activity is in progress, with an emphasis on a number of innovative approaches:

- Undertaking initial work on introducing international recruitment, with the support of a specialist external partner. This is anticipated to include significant target recruitment within particular countries, with a prospect of appointing up to 20 qualified and experienced social workers into hard to fill roles over the medium term.
- Improving the “candidate experience”, with improved communications and onboarding processes.
- Detailed consideration of the introduction of further highly targeted interventions to specific workforce sectors that continue to present particular recruitment and retention challenges, which the Directorate will engage with trade unions and the workforce over in the coming weeks.
- Piloting of an enhanced business support offer to social workers, with a view to allowing social workers to focus on core responsibilities and potentially hold higher caseloads safely.
- Exploring further opportunities to strengthen and expand routes into social work with Bury, including opportunities for employees from other parts of the business to retrain and transition into the sector in a supported manner.

3.0 Recruitment Activity

3.1 Targeted recruitment activity has been planned and delivered since the first quarter of 2022. A programme of rolling adverts for Social Workers has been implemented, with associated media and marketing, along with timetabled selection activity to ensure candidates are assessed and on-boarded at pace.

The first advert of the rolling process went live on 27th April 2022 and remaining adverts are scheduled until 4th January 2023. Shortlisting and interviews take place on a weekly basis.

3.2 In respect of Social Workers, the rolling programme has produced:

Advert Live	Advert Closed	Candidates Applied	Candidates Shortlisted	Interviews	Offers Made	Offers Accepted
27/04/22	13/05/22	3	3	20/05/22	3	2
13/05/22	06/06/22	1	1	10/06/22	1	0
07/06/22	17/06/22	2	2	24/06/22	0	N/A
17/06/22	01/07/22	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
01/07/22	15/07/22	1	1	29/07/2022 > rescheduled to 04/08/2022 > rescheduled to 18/08/2022	1	1
21/07/22	27/07/22	1	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
28/07/22	03/08/22	3	2	12/08/22	0	N/A
04/08/22	10/08/22	2	1	19/08/22	1	1
11/08/22	17/08/22	1	1	26/08/2022 > rescheduled to	0	N/A

				02/09/2022		
18/08/22	24/08/22	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
25/08/22	31/08/22	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
01/09/22	07/09/22	2	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

3.3 From a broader perspective, and encompassing recruitment activity across the full range of Children's Social Care posts, employees have been engaged as detailed below:

Starters	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Total
Advanced Practitioner	0	0	0	1	0	1
Child & Family Worker	1	0	0	0	2	3
Early Help Practitioner	0	0	0	1	1	2
Principal Social Worker	0	0	0	0	1	1
Standby Advanced Practitioner	0	0	0	2	0	2
Team Manager	1	1	0	0	2	4
Total	2	1	0	4	6	13

3.4 The following table summarises the range of adverts that have been posted, the response rates and numbers of applicants appointed:

Role	Advert Live	Advert Closed	Candidates Applied	Candidates Shortlisted	Interviews	Offers Made	Offers Accepted
Experienced Social Worker (MASH)	20/04/22	02/05/22	6	5	30/06/22 & 01/07/22	1	1
Children's Rights Projects Worker	20/04/22	20/05/22	3	2	15/06/22	1	1
Children's Services Team Manager	20/05/22	07/06/22	4	2	17/06/22	2	2
Family Support Worker	25/05/22	08/06/22	7	6	23/06/22	3	2
Advanced Practitioner	25/05/22	08/06/22	1	1	24/06/22	0	N/A
Family Support Worker – Fixed Term	25/05/22	08/06/22	5	5	23/06/22	1	0
Principal Social Worker	25/05/22	08/06/22	7	2	06/07/2022 due to candidates being on holiday	1	1
Child & Family Worker	08/06/22	22/06/22	11	4	26/07/22	3	3
Children's Improvement Manager	20/06/22	03/07/22	7	2	27/07/22	1	1
Head of Service (IRT)	25/06/22	08/07/22	1	1	26/07/22 &	1	1

					17/08/22		
Advanced Practitioner (Practice Improvement)	06/07/22	20/07/22	2	2	18/08/22	2	2
EDT Advanced Practitioner	19/07/22	02/08/22	1	1	09/08/22	1	1
Head of Service (CASS & Leaving Care)	20/08/22	07/09/22	2	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Head of Service (Safeguarding)	20/08/22	07/09/22	4	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Advanced Practitioner	20/08/22	07/09/22	4	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Adoption Social Worker (Temporary)	23/08/22	06/09/22	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Adoption Social Worker (Permanent)	23/08/22	06/09/22	1	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

3.5 In respect of promotional events

The Greater Manchester Social Work Academy held a social work careers event on 17th June 2022 to allow students to meet different employers virtually, along with workshops on how to complete application forms and prepare for interviews. Linda Evans, Interim Director of Social Care Practice, presented to the students talking about why they should come to work for Bury once they are qualified.

A regular twilight recruitment event has been developed to encourage the current social care workforce to actively support and engage with attracting talent. These twilight sessions will take place on the second Tuesday of each month and will be reviewed periodically to determine the effectiveness.

The first twilight recruitment event occurred on 12th July 2022, where one person attended and three people registered their interest in the event.

The second twilight recruitment event occurred on 9th August 2022. Six people attended this session; those in attendance were individuals who were aspiring to be Social Workers.

A third twilight event is scheduled for week commencing 12th September.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 The Directorate has made significant progress in strengthening the employment offer to potential candidates considering joining the Directorate and has developed an improved approach to attracting and retaining employees.

4.2 The broader market for social work qualified professionals remains challenging, and the strengthened offer has not yet yielded significant tangible benefits in terms of decreased reliance on agency workers and project teams.

- 4.3 Full implementation of the proposed new structure, delivering reduced caseloads, opportunities for Advanced Practitioners and smaller supervision groups, is anticipated to further improve the attractiveness of the Bury employment offer and should support recruitment efforts going forwards.
- 4.4 A full review of market interventions is required to ensure they are aligned to market conditions and supportive of delivery of service priorities.
- 5.5 Further development in respect of international recruitment and the strengthening of programmes to develop our own Social Workers are anticipated to significantly contribute towards successful population of vacancies over the medium term.

List of Background Papers:-

Contact Details:-

[Report Author]

Executive Director sign off Date: _____

JET Meeting Date: _____