

Report of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Young People)
Recruitment, Retention and Workload of Children's Social Workers

Proposed Action Plan

Recommendation	Action taken/proposed	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>Recommendation 1. That the Chief Social Services Officer considers adopting similar practices to those introduced by the Youth Service to carry out induction programmes whilst awaiting CRB clearance.</p>	<p>It is considered that this practice could not be applied for the benefit of Children's Social Worker recruitment for several reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applicants are drawn from a wide geographical area. 2. The service is provided during normal office hours and applicants are usually in employment and therefore would not be able to attend sessions during coinciding periods. 3. Applicants are usually subject to giving notice following receipt of a formal offer of employment. <p>However the department feels that the recent practices that have already been put in place to keep applicants interested and engaged in the recruitment process should be further developed.</p>	<p>Peter Varley – Senior Human Resources Manager</p>	

	<p>Further developments have been introduced into the recruitment process and updated as follows:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved communication between HR/Service Area Managers and recommended candidates on the progress of the various parts of the vetting process. <p>Additional regular telephone and e-mail contacts are now taking place between HR and Recruitment Service, Candidates and the Key Recruiter and Service Delivery Manager to whom the allocated recommended candidate has been assigned to update them on the progress of pre-employment checks to maintain a dialogue between all parties involved.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. HR to assess starting salaries in parallel to the other stages in the recruitment process to minimise potential disputes with recommended candidates following them receiving the formal offer of employment letter which is the final part in the process. This assessment will incorporate the already introduced increased flexibility around consideration of a candidate's experience, roles and salary with other organisations. <p>As soon as details of a recommended candidate are received by HR (and prior to commencement of pre-employment checks), HR officers make an initial assessment of the proposed salary, taking into consideration relevant factors such as post-qualification experience/training and scope/salary of previous posts held.</p>		
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	<p>3. Within 5 working days of receipt of recommended candidates, HR should send each candidate a training pack highlighting the training and development programme for the first year.</p> <p>Subject to the completion of pre-employment checks, HR send out (within 5 working days), with the offer of employment, a letter on behalf of the Employee Development Section which gives information on a range of post-employment learning activities/courses which are accessible through the supervision and appraisal process. This is in accordance with the requirements of an accredited Investor in People organisation and includes the mandatory Social Worker induction programme designed in conjunction with the Children’s Workforce Development Council Standards.</p> <p>4. HR to prepare offer of employment letters in advance. This will ensure that on the day of completion of all vetting processes and other checks it will be available for despatch on the same day.</p> <p>Once a proposed salary level is made and pre-employment checks are put into progress, draft appointment letters are prepared ready to be printed off once confirmation is received that all pre-employment checks have been satisfactorily completed.</p> <p>5. Upon receipt of acceptance of post and confirmation of start date, send Training and Development information letter explaining training dates and programmes.</p>		
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	<p>When the signed employee acceptance form is returned to HR with a proposed employment commencement date, the new employees' details are sent to the Employee Development Unit who then make contact with the new employee and arrange Induction Training.</p> <p><u>Update on Average Time Taken to Appoint to SW Posts</u></p> <p>In the original report, an average appointment time of 13 weeks was given from the date an advert appeared until the letter of appointment was sent out.</p> <p>The average appointment time has been calculated for the latest period April to September 2006, and gives a result of 6.5 weeks. It should be noted that during this period no formal external advertisements were placed as recently qualified Bursary and Seconded DIPSWA training employees were being allocated to vacant SW posts. The 4 Social Workers externally recruited during this period were via the open Social Worker advertisement on the LCC website, and, consequently, the 6.5 week figure would not include the 2 week advertising period.</p> <p>This still gives an average appointment time of 8.5 weeks per preferred candidate.</p> <p>PV 04/12/2006</p>		
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<p>Recommendation 2. That the Chief Social Services Officer considers the potential for developing job rotation and secondment opportunities.</p>	<p>The work on the structure and nature of social work teams is continuing as part of the department's Transformation Programme. In particular we are researching the levels of need across the city in order to determine what the correct distribution of resources should be. This is difficult work that needs to be carried out carefully if we are to deal equitably with the demand from families in need. This is likely to take several more months to complete. The implementation of the outcome will provide the major opportunity for staff distribution.</p> <p>However, at each stage of change, we are looking at the prospects for staff rotation and there have recently been – or are about to be – changes in a number of teams where such opportunities are being considered and, if appropriate, will be offered. These include Pathway Planning, the Asylum Team, child Protection and Disabled Children's Teams. Meanwhile, requests by individuals are also carefully considered and will be supported if they aid the retention and development of staff members.</p>	<p>Tony Griffin – Head of Children's Service Transformation</p>	
<p>Recommendation 3. That the Director of Children's Services, in conjunction with the Director of Legal Services, considers how to appropriately challenge the unnecessary prolonging of care orders.</p>	<p>How to appropriately challenge the unnecessary prolongation of Care Orders.</p> <p>The need to restrict both the making of care orders and their unnecessary prolongation has remained high on our agenda when meeting with CAFCASS and the Legal Section.</p> <p>We have fixed the date – within six months – and the agenda for three joint multi-agency seminars which will</p>	<p>Tony Griffin – Head of Children's Service Transformation</p> <p>John Colman – Head of Service Delivery</p>	

	<p>cover issues of best practice in care proceedings. These will provide a further opportunity to examine thresholds for both the making and discharging of orders. Current evidence suggests that the number of Care Orders both requested and made is down compared with last year. The number of Suspension Orders has remained constant. In addition, we have been successful in obtaining ten Special Guardianship Orders on children who would otherwise remain in care as long term foster children.</p>		
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