

Report of the Director of Children and Families

Report to Executive Board

Date: 19th September 2018

Subject: Children and Families Services Workforce: progress and next steps



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. The purpose of this report is to review the progress made in Leeds in developing the Children and Families Services workforce and to seek the Board's support for the next steps in the ongoing strategy for improvement.
2. Workforce issues are an increasing national priority due to recognition that failures to recruit, retain and develop staff is closely linked to service and inspection failure and that stability in the workforce is important at building effective relationships with children and families. Leeds leads the way in bucking these worrying national trends due to the impact of the city's comprehensive workforce strategy. The strategy has been developed in partnership with staff, unions and partners and has included work on career structures, training, and progression.
3. Continued investment in staff and the strategy in Leeds has meant that the city leads the sector in key measures national workforce performance, and has provided the stability and capacity for better work with children and families through learning and practice improvement. Investment has not just improved outcomes and quality but also helped drive reduced costs – for example improved recruitment and retention has radically reduced agency costs, avoiding close to £17 m in agency costs since 2011/12.
4. Whilst there has been great progress in recent years the service aims to continue to innovate and improve. The main areas of work for the next stage of our strategy

include Early Help and residential workforce development; attracting a workforce that better reflects local children and families in terms of gender and ethnicity; regional workforce planning; and assessing the potential for a more developed traded workforce development offer across the sector.

Recommendations

5. Executive Board is recommended to:

Endorse the proposed next steps for continuing to develop the Children and Families workforce.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to review the progress made in Leeds in developing the Children and Families Services workforce and to seek the Board's support for the next steps in the ongoing strategy for improvement.

2 Background information

- 2.1 There is an increased national focus on the Children and Families services workforce as research and inspections continue to highlight the importance of the recruitment, retention and development of front line staff. There is a recurring pattern in 'failing' inspections of high caseloads, high staff turnover and high use of agency staff limiting the effectiveness of work with children and families. Recent research, such as the Children's Commissioners' 'Stability Index' (<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/stability-index-2018/>) has demonstrated the value of stable and consistent relationships between workers, children and families, and how many children continue to suffer the consequences of multiple changes of worker.
- 2.2 This was certainly the case a decade ago when Leeds was performing poorly in Children and Families Services. Inspectors criticised 'unacceptably high' caseloads, 'insufficient' management capacity and newly qualified staff struggling with large and complex caseloads.
- 2.3 Workforce reform and development has been the cornerstone of improving outcomes and services in Leeds. There has been a comprehensive strategy for recruiting, retaining and developing staff at all levels of Children and Families Services, based on four principles:
- Child centred and child friendly
 - Restorative and relational
 - Research informed
 - Outcome focussed
- 2.4 The main parts of this strategy include:
- a) *Improved partnership working*: improving workforce development has been supported at every stage by much improved joint working with staff, Unions and Universities. This has made sure that progress has been swifter, more secure and better tailored to the needs of staff.
 - b) *Social work career structure*: agreeing and implementing a single structure for all social work roles with a clear progression pathway from social worker to senior social worker to Advanced Practitioner or Team Manager.
 - c) *A comprehensive workforce development offer throughout the directorate*: a comprehensive curriculum of learning and development for all members of children's services staff

- d) *Training pathway*: a clear training programme tailored to each job role and career progression
- e) *Improved progression*: changed career progression to be more focused on practice rather than paperwork
- f) *Management development*: including an 'Aspiring Managers and Aspiring Service Managers' programmes to prepare staff for management. 70% of course attendees progress to management roles within 12 months.
- g) *Academic Masterclasses*: an annual programme of the latest research and thought leadership in the sector, aligned to the priorities of the service. Over 1,200 staff attend in each year and feedback is very positive, particularly for more experienced staff.
- h) *Teaching Partnership*: Leeds Children and Families Services is the lead partner of the Leeds and Wakefield Teaching Partnership made up of Leeds and Wakefield councils and local universities. The aim of the partnership is improve student recruitment and retention and to ensure social work training is better tailored to the needs of employers. This has been supported by winning nearly £1 m of government funding, which has been used to fund better support for students; social work practitioners teaching in the HEIs and enhanced work placements for students; and readiness to practice and employment support.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Nationally there are significant workforce problems across the sector, with very high rates of agency staffing, vacancies, and turnover. In Leeds the hard, shared work of staff, unions, educators and local managers, and the investment in staff and the workforce strategy has made a big difference.

Impact of Children and Families Workforce Strategy

- 3.2 The government provide annual data on key measures of social work staffing. The latest national data (from late 2017) clearly demonstrate the impact of our strategy:

	Leeds	Statistical Neighbours	National Average	Leeds National Ranking
% of social work vacancies	0	11.7	17	1st
% rate of SW turnover	8.4	15.9	13.6	18th
% of agency social workers	1.4	11.7	15.8	4th

- 3.3 As an illustration of the challenges for the sector can be seen in other areas' figures. For example there are a number of authorities with over 40% of permanent social work posts vacant; some with a turnover rate of over 30% and others with agency use of well over 30%. Indicative of its wider troubles,

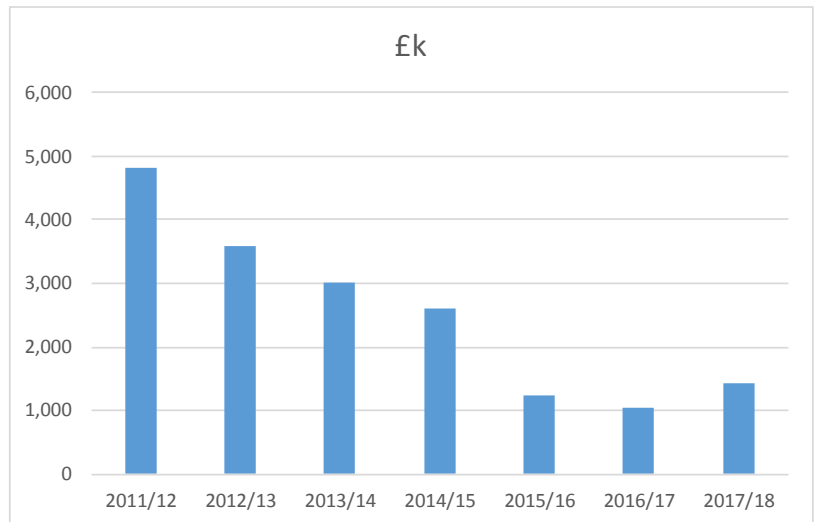
Northamptonshire is the lowest rated Council for both vacancies and agency staff – over half of permanent posts are unfilled, and over 40% of staff are agency.

Investing to Save

- 3.4 Investing in the Children and Families workforce has not just improved outcomes and practice but helped reduce costs to the Council’s budget.
- 3.5 As noted above, Leeds has bucked the national trend and sharply reduced the use of agency staffing due to better recruitment and retention of permanent staff. This has led to significant savings in spending on agency staff, as the table and graph below show.

CSWS Agency Spend

Year	£k
2011/12	4,830
2012/13	3,602
2013/14	3,016
2014/15	2,606
2015/16	1,235
2016/17	1,031
2017/18	1,423
Change 11/12 to 17/18	-3,407
% Change 11/12 to 17/18	-71%



- 3.6 If agency spend had remained at the levels seen in 2011/12, then the total cost over the past seven years would have been £35.9 m. Thanks to investing in permanent, high quality local staff the cost over seven years has instead been less than half that figure - £17.7 million.

Sector Leadership

- 3.7 As set out in the paper of July 2018, Leeds is playing an important role in working with central government, promoting reform and improvement across children and families services nationally. This role has been rewarded with additional government funding and is helping local managers develop their roles and careers.
- 3.8 In light of the national interest Leeds has been working with partner Councils on workforce issues. This has included training events at the Leeds Relational Practice Centre and more intensive support with councils that are facing the biggest challenges. The impact of this can be seen in our Improvement Partnership with Kirklees, which has adopted the same strategy used in Leeds. The recent monitoring report from OfSTED noted the impact of improvements in the workforce, for example in this quote: ‘Increasing permanence of frontline staff is improving continuity of case ownership, and social workers with whom inspectors

spoke articulate well the needs of the children and families, and the direct work being undertaken with them to meet their needs.'

Next steps

3.9

As this report makes clear, the city has achieved a great deal over recent years in improving the support for the front line staff who do the most challenging, vital work with children and families. However, there is still more to do. The main areas for the next stage of our strategy are set out below:

- a) *Leeds Academic Health Partnership*: We will continue to develop the work around the LAHP to ensure that where appropriate the learning offering the city across the health and care sector (LCC, NHS, Third Sector etc) is coordinated and in some instances delivered jointly. This will ensure that there is consistency of care and support to the citizens of Leeds.
- b) *Early Help Workforce Development*: the Social Work profession has been the primary beneficiary of our workforce strategy to date, but now there is a pressing need to adapt our approach to include early help practitioners. As is seen nationally there is a need to raise standards; deepen and develop practice and develop a more consistent approach to career progression and training. The service will use part of the city's Troubled Families funding to underpin this work, using it to offer the national Early Help Qualification Framework to local staff, develop a 'Motivational Interviewing' training programme and a range of other work. Early work in this area has been well received by staff and our approach is attracting interest from other Councils.
- c) *Residential Workforce Development*: as part of a wider programme of work to improve standards and outcomes in residential homes, there is intensive work underway to improve professional development for this staff group. The plan is to develop a citywide programme supplemented by a targeted training offer that is tailored to the staff and young people in each home.
- d) *Representative Workforce*: as part of a workforce planning review earlier this year it was identified that there is some work to do to make the children and families workforce more representative of the local population of children and families. This is important as the city becomes more diverse, particularly for work with children where the child population has a far higher, and growing, proportion of children from Black and Minority Ethnic families and from families whose first language is not English. In addition, as is seen nationally, men are under-represented in the Children and Families workforce, despite the need to improve work with young men and fathers.
- e) *Regional workforce planning*: Leeds will be working with all the West Yorkshire councils to undertake shared workforce planning in recognition of the shared labour market and shared challenges in recruiting and retaining staff.

- f) *Teaching Partnership*: the next stage of the partnership is to secure longer term sustainability for when government funding ends next year, and to continue to strengthen social work practitioner roles in developing and delivering social work training in Universities.
- g) *Sector led improvement*: existing sector led working has shown a significant level of interest in learning from our work in Leeds, from Early Help training to Leeds Relational Practice Centre events to partnership and intervention support. As central government funding for these activities is only guaranteed until 2020, the service will now undertake an assessment of the feasibility of developing a traded training offer, providing support across the region and the wider sector.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Staff, unions and partner agencies have been extensively involved in the development and implementation of Leeds Children and Families Services workforce strategy. This will continue to be the case throughout the next stages of our work.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 Ensuring that the Leeds workforce better reflects the children and families that it serves is a priority for the next stage of our strategy. As is noted above, there will be work at a city, Teaching Partnership and regional level to support this important work.

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 This report is closely aligned to the aims and plans of the Council, supporting the Child Friendly Leeds priority as well as wider aims on employment and equalities.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 There are no direct financial implications for this report. However, as noted above, investment in staffing has avoided over £17 m of agency costs over the past seven years.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 No specific legal or information issues.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 No specific risk issues.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The benefits of valuing, investing and supporting front line staff is clear, and has played an important part in improving outcomes, practice and quality in children

and families services in recent years. In addition these improvements can be achieved whilst controlling costs, as can be seen by the large savings in agency staffing over recent years. The strategy is now expanding and adapting to wider staff groups, and to provide support across the sector.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Executive Board is recommended to:
- 6.2 Endorse the proposed next steps for continuing to develop the children and families workforce.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.