

## International Recruitment of Social Workers

Date: 10 November 2022

Report of: Head of Human Resources

Report to: Deputy Director of Social Care and Social Work

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### Brief summary

There is a national shortage of social workers, and Adult Social Care currently has vacancies for up to 30 experienced social workers. These need to be urgently filled, with social care and the wider Health and Care system continuing to face significant challenges around hospital discharge, increased demand for services and the ongoing pressures linked to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nationally, between 16-18% of Social Workers are recruited from overseas. This is, however, the first time that the council has entered this market, as a direct consequence of shortages within the domestic UK workforce.

This report seeks permission for Adults and Health to spend up to £235,200 to recruit 15 experienced overseas social workers, with a view to them being in post by April 2023.

£67,200K of this will be paid directly to Sanctuary Personnel Limited ('Sanctuary'), who will provide the necessary expertise to manage all elements of the recruitment process. Sanctuary are approved providers on the Crown Commercial Services procurement framework that addresses NHS and public sector need to increase international recruitment to fill existing vacancies

Further to this, £168K will be spent by the council on sponsorship fees and pastoral support. Pastoral support includes payment for visas, flights, and initial accommodation costs, and also includes critical support to help new recruits and their families to settle in quickly, which in turn aids long term retention.

### Recommendations

The Deputy Director of Social Work and Social Care Services is recommended to:-

- a) Approve the expenditure of up to £235,200 to support recruitment of 15 experienced social workers from overseas.
- b) Approve the direct award of contract to Sanctuary Personnel Limited under Lot 1c of the CCS RM6162 'International Healthcare Professionals Recruitment and Associated Services'

Framework for £67,200k commencing on 17 November 2022 and ending on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 (with provision to extend for a further six months).

## What is this report about?

- 1 This report seeks approval to recruit 15 experienced social workers from overseas by April 2023, using the expertise and services of an external agency, Sanctuary Personnel Limited, to manage the process.
- 2 The Leeds Health and Care system is facing significant challenges with supporting the timely discharge of people out of hospital, increased demand for services and the ongoing pressures linked to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3 Short term arrangements have recently been secured that will add capacity across our social care workforce to:
  - (i) undertake 100 assessments to clear the backlog of referrals to the Hospital Social work teams
  - (ii) support our hospital social work teams for up to 6 months
  - (iii) provide a bed brokerage services so people can leave hospital in a timely way and have their long-term needs assessed out of hospital and/or discharged from hospital into a care home.
- 4 The extra support to hospital social work teams and the bed brokerage service will run for up to 6 months, and it is imperative that we have more permanent experience social work capacity in place when this ends in April 2023.
- 5 The end-to-end process for recruiting overseas social workers will take up to 22 weeks to complete, hence the need for urgent action and the approach to make a direct award to Sanctuary Personnel. The recruits would be brought in through two cohorts (8+7 people)
- 6 Sanctuary Personnel are approved providers on the Crown Commercial Services framework for NHS and Public Sector organisations. Their services are covered by [Lot 1c under agreement RM6162](#)
- 7 Leeds City Council has worked closely with partners at Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust, who have extensive international recruitment experience and knowledge of the international recruitment provider market.
- 8 The overseas recruits would be sourced from South Africa, Zimbabwe and the Caribbean. Social work practice in these countries is a close match to the UK and these countries are well represented on the Social Work England register. Car drivers will not need to revisit a driving test in the UK and can drive from day one. Sanctuary Personnel have experience of working in these countries and collaborate with training providers in the host countries to prepare people for UK practice.
- 9 As part of their paid service, Sanctuary Personnel would provide:
  - Candidate attraction, marketing, and recruitment campaign
  - A comprehensive compliance, vetting and screening process

- Interview organisation and candidate preparation
- Post interview processing through to successful recruitment
- Coordination of relocation and pastoral support
- Management information and progress reports

10 Sanctuary Personnel's fee is 15% of the first year renumeration cost for each recruit, which equates for £67,200 in total for 15 recruits, based on the rate card costs quoted by Crown Commercial Services.

11 Leeds City Council would also spend an additional £168K to support all 15 recruits as follows

- Sponsorship Fee for 3 Years - £3K per person
- Application Fee - £199 per person
- Relocation allowance - £8K per person

12 The relocation allowance would be managed by Sanctuary Personnel on the council's behalf, and would cover the following provision

- Compliance support, and VISA application support, checking and processing payments.
- Support to bring family members to the UK, for up to 3 months after the Worker lands.
- Free E-learning modules for all recruits and tailored Social Work training from qualified social workers with management experience/Practice educators.
- Help arranging and paying for flights and transfers.
- Help to find and secure properties. Payment of deposit and 1<sup>st</sup> Months' rent (minimum)
- Managing the relocation allowance and ordering items for the home.
- Utilities support and advice.
- Assistance opening bank accounts and obtaining an NI Number.
- Arranging Sim card.
- Helping to find Schools, GP's, and places of worship.
- Full info packs and welcome gifts.
- Introduction to an online community of International Social Workers, and WhatsApp groups
- Free subscription to the "my social work news" magazine.

### **What impact will this proposal have?**

13 This work will have a considerable positive impact of system flow and the delays caused by awaiting allocation of a social worker and the time it takes to source a residential or nursing home bed either on a temporary or permanent basis. This is a time-critical piece of work as pressure is growing in the hospital as Covid and flu rates are expected to increase.

14 It will fill 15 of the current 30 vacancies that the council has for experienced social workers and help us to further strengthen our social worker diversity profile and representation.

### **How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?**

- Health and Wellbeing       Inclusive Growth       Zero Carbon

15 This proposal particularly supports outcome three of the Health and Well-being Strategy that states, "people's quality of life will be improved by access to quality services" and the priority to deliver "the best care, in the right place, at the right time". It is one of the 12 big ideas of the Inclusive growth strategy to be the Best City for Health and Well-being. Social care staff contribute to being a zero-carbon city by working in a hybrid way thereby reducing their carbon footprint.

## **What consultation and engagement has taken place?**

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?       Yes       No

- 16 The Adults and Health Directorate Leadership Team have been fully involved in the development of these proposals.
- 17 Leeds City Resourcing Group members have provided input and advice to support this work, especially via Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust and their established international recruitment experience.
- 18 Leeds City Council's corporate HR team has been fully involved, and has confirmed that the existing Reed Agency Contract cannot provide the service on offer from Sanctuary Personnel, nor provide the required numbers of social workers within the necessary timescales through its existing domestic UK pool.
- 19 The Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships was briefed on 10/11/22.

## **What are the resource implications?**

- 20 This report seeks permission to spend up to £235,200 from Adults and Health budgets, broken down as follows:

• Fees direct to Sanctuary Personnel	£67,200
• Sponsorship, visa, and relocation support costs	£168,000
Total	<b>£235,200</b>

- 21 A rebate system applies in the case that a recruit leaves within the first 10 months of employment. This would range from 20% to 85% of the introduction fee, depending on at what stage the person left. The provider states it has a 99% retention rate for social workers in this period.

- 22 On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022, a government announcement stated that DHSC will invest £15m to help boost international recruitment of care workers. It remains unclear if any of this funding will be available for social worker recruitment. It looks unlikely, but we will keep this under review.

## **What are the key risks and how are they being managed?**

- 23 The system is already under severe pressure, and it is imperative that flow out of the hospital improves. Whilst short term arrangements have been put in place for the next 6 months, the social worker vacancies need to be filled on a permanent basis.
- 24 A 99% retention rate (in first 10 months) of social workers in similar Sanctuary Personnel projects is reassuring.
- 25 Pastoral and relocation support is critical to helping people to settle in, and aids long term retention.

26 The capacity of the existing social work teams to support a high number of new starters from overseas is a potential challenge, hence why the proposal is to split the intake into two cohorts.

27 The ability of new recruits to quickly adjust to UK social work life and practice is key to success, hence the careful consideration that has been made to source from countries with a close UK match.

### **What are the legal implications?**

28 This is a Significant Operational Decision, and is not subject to call-in.

29 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information under the Access to Information Rules.

30 The reasons for urgency are set out in the report, hence the intention to conduct a direct award. It takes 22 weeks to complete recruitment, and we need social workers in place by April 2023.

31 The use of the Crown Commercial Services procurement framework offers a compliant route to the market for international recruitment.

### **Options, timescales and measuring success**

#### **What other options were considered?**

32 The other option for this work is to continue to try to fill all roles through domestic UK recruitment to make permanent appointments, but we would struggle to recruit as there is a national shortage of social workers.

33 We will continue to explore all other alternative routes to bring in and secure the best social work talent for Leeds – by working with local and national universities, through targeted promotions and campaigns, offering competitive and attractive packages, and through grow our own programmes.

#### **How will success be measured?**

33 Success will be measured by

- 15 overseas social workers in place by April 2023
- 100% retention rate
- Quality of social workers – match to our Leeds values and practice
- Speed and effectiveness of induction – getting up to speed fast and safely
- Creating necessary capacity to support hospital social work teams
- No break between short term 6 month arrangements and arrival of overseas recruits

#### **What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?**

34 The intention is to make a direct award as soon as practicably possible. It will take in the region of 22 weeks to complete the end-to-end recruitment, and the desire is to have as many of the 15 social workers in post by April 2023. The Deputy Director for Social Work and Social Care Services had lead responsibility for implementation, with practical implementation capacity coming from the Adults and Health Organisation Development team.

### **Appendices**

- Equality Impact Assessment.

### **Background papers**

- None.