

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 15 March 2022
Report of: Corporate Director of Children's Services

Report Title

Update on Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers

Summary

This report provides an update and assurance on the recruitment and retention activity of social workers as part of our 'Investing in Our People Plan'.

The report details the current position in terms of workforce profile, stability and progress made.

Workforce stability remains a priority for the service and it continues to be routed through Ambition 3 of the improvement plan under the action; 'Creating the Conditions for Practice to Flourish'.

Recommendation(s)

- To note the contents of this report and the work that has been progressed to date.
- To agree to receive further updates
- To offer scrutiny and challenge to the service.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Jill McGregor
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Background Papers:

Investing in Our People Plan

Please specify whether the content of the report relates to any of the following areas. If the report does not relate to an area just put N/A.

Corporate Priorities	
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	
Finance	
Legal	
Equality/Diversity	
Sustainability	
Carbon Reduction	
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management	
Risk Management	
Health and Safety	

Workforce Stability (Retention)

Workforce stability has continued to remain a significant priority for the service and is routed through Ambition 3 of the Children’s Social Care Ambitions plan 9 the formal Improvement Plan) under the action; ‘Creating the Conditions for Practice to Flourish’.

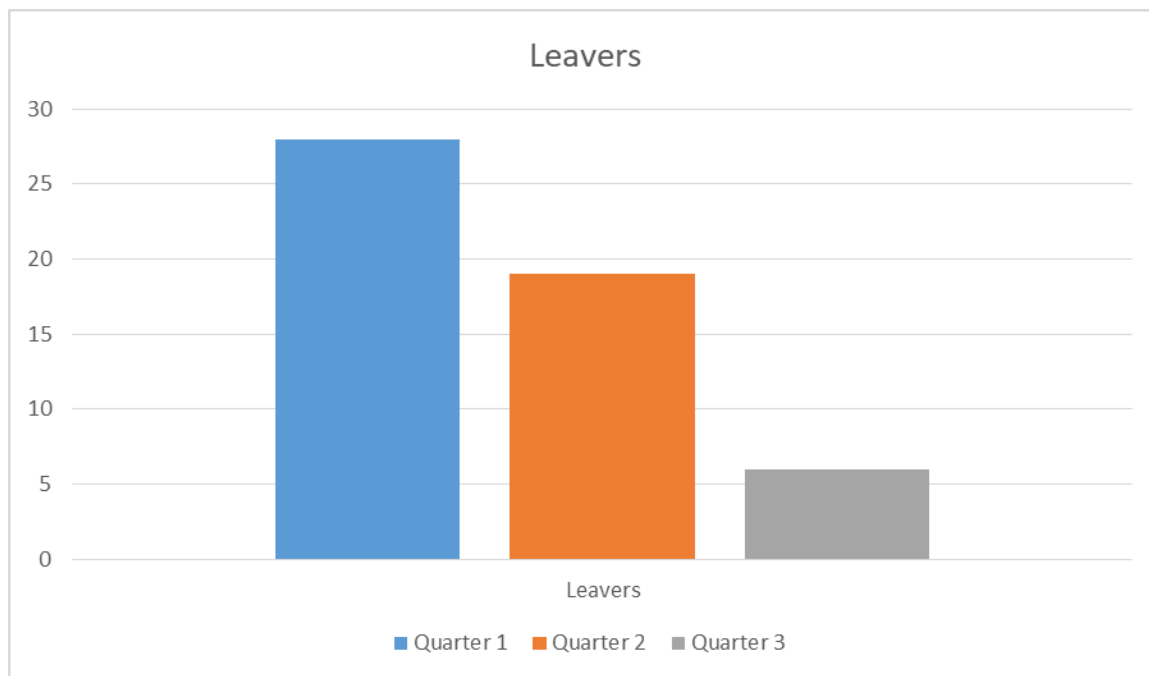
The impact of workforce instability has been highlighted during the Monitoring Visits, but it was also recognised that were factors that had contributed to this including the service redesign and continuing to work through the pandemic.

Despite this a number of actions have progressed to improve the stability of the workforce these include:

- Implementation of the revised service structure and a detailed programme of change management to support “go live” with the new arrangements became operational on 4th October 2021
- Continued roll out of Care and Confidence modules to support the workforce through this change
- Established a systematic programme of recruitment campaigns and engaging an external recruitment company to enhance the approach
- Continuing to work with interim staff who are in a position to consider permanent employment with Trafford.
- Strengthened the induction programme ensuring that managers and practitioners are welcomed and supported in new roles and responsibilities.
- In April 2021, introduced a Market Factor Supplement for Grade 8 Social Workers and Grade 9 Advanced Practitioners in order to support retention and recruitment of experienced staff.

There continues to be a higher proportion of agency staff to permanent staff within the service, however the high number of permanent staff exiting the service staff that was experienced in Quarter 2, has slowed and we have experienced a stabilisation of this in Quarter 3.

The below graph shows the number of leavers across the 3 quarters;



There are different categories of reasons that our staff are telling us why they are making the decision to leave.

The highest number leavers not unsurprisingly are due to resignation. There are a small number of people who have left due to retirement.

We have reported in the last two updates that the reasons people tell us they leave has been consistently;

1. Work culture
2. Workload
3. Hours of working, working relationships & personal

However in the most recent report from exit interviews is showing us that the top 3 reasons people leave are;

1. Personal Reasons/Choices
2. Work Culture
3. Workload

46% of leavers share that they move on to other public sector/local authorities with 24% stating that they move to agency work. Almost 10% shared that they were leaving and reviewing and re - evaluating whether they wanted to continue in the profession. This is not just a Trafford issue as regionally and nationally this appears to be some of the impact of Covid.

73% shared that they had regular 1:1's with their managers and there was an equal high proportion of staff reporting that they felt that they felt supported, their

contributions were recognised and that they had the right development/training opportunities.

Induction and appraisals feedback was not as positive with a high proportion of leavers saying that they did not have access to good induction or annual appraisals. A higher number of leavers reported that they did not feel that they had received coaching and mentoring to help them develop.

It is important to note that those members of staff leaving, began their roles prior to the refresh and implementation of the dedicated Childrens Induction Programme. There is now an agreed approach of checking in with any new starters within a month of them starting to ask how they have experienced their induction and to pick up any gaps. This will be a Head of Service responsibility to ensure that the line of sight to practice is maintained but the Practice Improvement and Learning Service will provide a role is overseeing and supporting this.

It is really pleasing to note that our recent social work health check report highlighted the strong evidence of the following views from of our social workers in terms of what influences them to stay;

'My organisation promotes a working environment that upholds ethical practice and quality standards'

'I have felt positive and able to cope with work most of the time'

'I feel safe in my role and the work I am expected to do'

'My organisation has ensured all staff are appropriately protected from the risk of infection by the virus and taken account of different individual risks of infection on grounds of (e.g.) age, ethnicity, prior health conditions, caring for others etc quality standards'

The Care and Confidence programme (part of our three year Strengthening Practice programme) has continued to be offered to all practitioners and managers. This work began in the context of the COVID pandemic, a restructure and continuing work on the Improvement Plan in order to focus on the wellbeing and care of staff as the redesign was implemented and in the context of continuing to provide services in an unprecedented time. This programme began on the 7th September 2021. The learning objectives of the programme are;

- Participants will be able to articulate their purpose and align it with the organisational purpose
- Participants will be able to articulate what type of support they require to do their work and how best the organisation can provide it
- Participants will be able to explore their own skill base of resilience and emotional intelligence and plan ways to improve and maintain it.
- Participants will be able to link all their activities to the impact on the child and family and plan ways to get the best out of their working days.
- Participants will be able to link restorative practice and other strength-based practice processes to their tasks and develop a relational approach to their interventions with children, young people and their families.

The Care and Confidence programme was delivered in 6 x two-hour sessions online through a Virtual Learning environment that allowed practitioners to access resources before and after sessions. This part of the programme has allowed the practitioners and the teaching staff to begin to form relationships with each other. It has also allowed the practitioners to focus on themselves and their own wellbeing.

The feedback from Strengthening Practice has been that there is a really strong value base that the practitioners demonstrated consistently through the first half of the programme. The critical element is to transfer this passion for doing the right thing at the right time for the right children into day-to-day actions that make demonstrable difference. The feedback loop between the Strengthening Practice leads, the Practice Improvement and Learning Service and the collaboration group will be crucial for the next part of the programme.

The current profile of the Social Workers across the service is:

Number	FTE	
Number of ASYE's	17 FTE	This is decrease of 5 since the last report which is in line with the number of those practitioners who have successfully completed their ASYE year. There are 2 more ASYE's due to join us following recruitment activity but they are awaiting their SWE registration. Our approach to recruiting ASYE's is a key strategy in our Investing in our people plan. Our numbers of ASYE's in previous cohorts were; 12 ASYE's in 20/21, 9 ASYE's in 19/20 and 10 in 18/19.
Number of permanent Social Workers (not including the ASYE's)	33.2 FTE	This is a reduction on the previous reported figure of 37.8 FTE. Number of exits remain lower than previous quarters. Some of this decrease can be attributed to the time between the time a practitioner leaves and the time it takes for someone to commence their role with us. This is often due to the statutory checks, specifically references, being delayed. Experienced practitioners also have notice periods to serve also, that adds delay.
Number of Agency Social Workers	41.6 FTE	This is a slight increase in the previously reported figure of 38.6 FTE. However, some of this increase is due to using agency staff over the establishment in some parts of service where it has been agreed that we need to manage the demand or cover maternity/secondments. There are 5 agency SW's that are over our establishment for these reasons.

The 12-month turnover figure at the end of Quarter 3 (2021/22) was 16.6%. At its highest in the quarter it was 17.67% and this was expected due to the number of resignations received in Quarter 2 as previously reported.

We have started to see a decrease in the number of resignations from permanent staff, which is positive. Where we are seeing some turnover is within our agency staffing particularly in our Families First part of the service. We now have 4 permanent Practice Managers in post and it is hoped that this will bring some stability.

Other permanent recruitment activity is detailed later in this report.

Whilst our agency rate is still much higher than we want, and there is undoubtedly some turnover as described, there are a number of agency members of staff who have been with the service for longer periods of time and therefore agency staff doesn't automatically mean instability.

As a result of our targeted recruitment activity (detailed below) we do expect to see our agency rates reduce. We accept that there will always be the need for the use of the interim market but clearly at a much lower rate than we are currently at.

We have reviewed with colleagues in HR around what an offer could look like for agency staff. An offer to agency staff cannot be at the detriment to permanent staff so we have explored what this could look like without compromising our position.

It is difficult to offer any additional benefits to agency staff without then giving them employment rights and clearly this is a compromise for permanent staff.

This is not just a Trafford issue and the NWADCS group have agreed to progress an exploration into a different approach to this which will include a not for profit agency resourcing framework for the North West.

There are some helpful points with the national review of CSC from Josh McAllister which includes having a cap on agency rates and having a basic requirement for agency staff that prevents ASYE's going straight to agency work. In Trafford we do not engage any ASYE on an agency contract as this is in contradiction to our principles of supporting ASYE's.

Recruitment Activity

There has been a continued approach of having a rolling advert for social workers through the greater jobs platform.

We have now extended the rolling advert to include Advanced Practitioners.

The below table is a breakdown across the social care teams of vacancies, agency cover and then the actual vacancies / gaps:

Team	Vacancies against the establishment	Agency Cover	Actual Vacancies / Gaps
EH & FRT	1 x Head of Service 1.5 x Advanced Practitioner 1 x FTE SW	1 x Head of Service 2 x Advanced Practitioners 3 x SW	0 gaps – over establishment due to managing sickness and staffing gaps for other reasons and also impact of Covid and using monies from the contain funds
Families First			
Central	1 x Advanced Practitioner 3 x SW	3 x SW	1 x Advanced Practitioner
North	1 x Advanced Practitioner 4 x SW	1 x Advanced Practitioner 4 x SW	0
South	1 x Advanced Practitioner 4 x SW	1 x Advanced Practitioner 3 x SW	1 x SW
West	1 x Advanced Practitioner 4 x SW	4 x SW	1 x Advanced Practitioner
Support and Protect			
Central	1 x Advanced Practitioner	1 x Advanced Practitioner 2 x SW covering secondments	0
North	1 x Practice Manager 1 x Advanced Practitioner 2 x SW	1 x Practice Manager 1 x Advanced Practitioner 3 x SW (1 covering for a secondment)	0
South	1 x Practice Manager 5 x SW	1 x Practice Manager 3 x SW	2 SW
West	1 x Advanced Practitioner 3 x SW	1 x Advanced Practitioner 4 x SW (1 covering for secondment)	0
Cared for Children/Care Experienced	1 x Head of Service	1 x Head of Service (recently recruited to this post on a permanent basis – start date awaited)	0
Team A	2 x SW	1 x SW	1 SW
Team B	1 X Advanced Practitioner 1 x SW	1 x Practice Manager (covering maternity leave) 1 x SW	1 SW
Team C	3 x SW	0	3 SW
Provider Services			

Recruitment & Assessment	1 x Practice Manager 3.6 x SW	1 x Practice Manager 3.6 x SW	0
Connected Carers & SGO	1 x Practice Manager 1 x SW	1 x Practice Manager 1 x SW	0
Supervising SW	1 Advanced Practitioner 2 x SW's	1 x Advanced Practitioner 2 x SW	0
Children with Additional Needs	1 x DSCO 1 x Practice Manager 4 x SW	A project team approach has been used in this part of the service: 1 Project Manager 1 FTE Advanced Practitioner 4 x SW's	1 x DSCO
Vulnerable Adolescents	1 x Head of Service 1 x Practice Manager	1 x Head of Service 1 x Practice Manager (start date March 2022)	0
Totals	4 x Heads of Service 6 x Practice Managers 9.5 x Advanced Practitioners 44.6 FTE Social Workers	3 x Heads of Service 7 x Practice Managers (1 covering maternity) 9 x Advanced Practitioners 41.6 FTE SW (including secondment cover and over establishment agreements)	1 x HoS/DSCO 2 x AP 8 x SW

Since the last update in February we have recruited 3 more permanent social workers who have now commenced their employment. 2 are ASYE's and 1 is an experienced worker who has relocated to the Northwest and made contact with Trafford before making an application. The proactivity of having the conversation resulted in an application and a successful appointment. There are a further 7 applications that have been shortlisted this week with 3 interviews being offered.

In addition to the greater jobs platform there is the recruitment campaign that we are being supported by Tripod as our external recruitment partners.

We have progressed the development of the microsite and this is now live. The site includes video testimonials from practitioners and managers about what it is like to work in Trafford and lots of information about our story.

Tripod are supporting us in the recruitment of the Social work and Advanced practitioner roles. Webinars are scheduled for 16 March 2022 as part of the next round of recruitment that had a closing date of 7 March 2022. There are 3 applications from Social Workers and these will all be progressed to interview.

We have successfully recruited 2 Advanced Practitioner's from the first campaign with Tripod and start dates awaited pending references and checks being received.

As a combined impact of the greater jobs advert and Tripod, we have 6 permanent social workers to interview within the next 2 weeks and 1 more Advanced Practitioner.

In terms of management/leadership posts, since the last update in February we have recruited to 2 more Heads of Service posts on permanent basis. These posts are the Head of Service for Cared for Children/Care Experienced and the Head of Service for Vulnerable Adolescents. The latter is really positive as this has been out for advert on 3 occasions. The appointed candidate has a strong background in this area of work and this is a really good appointment. Start dates are awaited but this is anticipated to be July 2022 for both appointments. There are interim arrangements already in place.

The gaps in terms of permanent recruitment for Practice Managers is;

- 2 posts within Support and Protect
- 2 posts in the Fostering Teams
- 1 post within the Complex Safeguarding
- 1 post in Children with Additional Needs

There are interim arrangements in place for all of these posts.

2 applications have been received for the support and protect roles and interviews will take place on 17 March 2022. Adverts will be live at the end of this week (11 March 2022) for the other roles.

Conclusion

Investing in Our People remains a priority for the service and will continue to be progressed through the strategic action plan.

There has been a significant decrease in the number of leavers and this has been sustained in the early part of quarter 4.

Recruitment activity has been undertaken in a targeted way focussing on management posts first, with good outcomes. Now we can focus on Advanced Practitioners and Social Workers.

There are early successes from the Tripod approach with 2 Advanced Practitioners being appointed.

There are minimal actual gaps in staffing as the use of agency staffing has continued which has maintained manageable workloads for our practitioners.

Next Steps

1. Continued with the targeted recruitment of Social Workers and Advanced Practitioners through greater jobs and Tripod
2. Recruit to all remaining manager posts
3. Continue to deliver on the actions of the Investing in Our People Plan
4. Continue to monitor the impact of the Investing in Our People Plan through the steering group chaired by the Director for Early Help and Childrens Social Care