



Derby City Council

**CORPORATE PARENTING SUB BOARD**  
**14 April 2015**

# ITEM 10

Report of the Strategic Director of Children and Young People

## Monitoring Safeguarding Practice

### SUMMARY

- 1.1 Delivering good quality social work practice and driving forward improvements is dependent upon having a stable, competent and experienced work force.
- 1.2 There is a national shortage of qualified children's social workers and Derby is affected by the national picture.
- 1.3 There is a recently developed workforce strategy in place with the aim of making Derby a more attractive place to work for social workers and reducing reliance on agency social workers.

### RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the content of the report and presentation is noted and that the range of management actions in place to bring stability to the work force is recognised and endorsed e.g. increase in posts, work force strategy, support for NQSWs etc.

### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 This report presents a summary position of key safeguarding issues across CYP.

### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 This report is about the health of social work practice in the Integrated Safeguarding division in Derby. Keeping children safe is dependent upon having a stable, competent and experienced work force.

- 4.2 **Budget**

The current budget for social workers and team managers is just over £8.5 million. Although this may seem a very significant amount of money, the amount that the authority spends on children's social care is not high compared to comparator authorities, as the table below demonstrates.

#### 4.3 Comparator Data

Planned Spend on Children's Family Support, Safeguarding and Young People aged 0-19 years

Authority	Planned Spend per Young Person	Position
Walsall	387	1 <sup>st</sup> Top spender
Telford & Wrekin	377	2nd
Leeds	356	3rd
Coventry	310	4th
Portsmouth	276	5th
<b>Derby</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>6th</b>
Dudley	248	7th
Peterborough	246	8th
Bolton	246	8th
Sheffield	247	10th
Tameside	181	11 <sup>th</sup> Lowest Spender

#### 4.4 The Workforce

The number of members of staff in Derby undertaking social work with children and young people is 106 social workers, 29 unqualified social workers and 22 Team Managers.

Recently, agreement has been given to create 7 new social work posts and money for half of these posts is being put into next year's budget subject to Cabinet approval. This is to reduce social work case loads and reduce reliance on Agency Social Workers.

#### 4.5 ASYEs

There are 25 Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Social Workers, formally known as Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) in the workforce.

The government expects Local Authorities to give social workers in their first year in employment a significant amount of academic input. This is provided by the Work Force Learning section but Team Managers are also expected to give additional input in terms of supervision and opportunities for shadowing more experienced social workers. Due to the amount of training and other developmental opportunities for NQSWs, they are only actually in work on average four days a week. Therefore, their caseloads should be similarly reduced. Ideally, the Council would like to have fewer ASYE social workers and more experienced staff and this is a common issue for many authorities in particular city areas.

#### 4.6 **Vacancies**

The vacancy rate is 15% and the long term sickness absence rate 6%. This compares with a national vacancy rate of 6.5%. The national shortage disproportionately affects the south east of the country and cities through the rest of the country. Recruitment of social workers in Derby has improved over the last few years but almost without exception, the only people applying to work in Derby are newly qualified. Some staff have been lost to agencies, others have retired, others have been promoted and others have moved into other areas of social work such as fostering, adoption and post adoption support. The loss of the Senior Practitioner role as a result of Job Evaluation will act as a disincentive for experienced staff to stay and it is hoped that this will be rectified in the latest review by Hay. The social work workforce is largely a young female one and consequently maternity leave is a significant issue.

CYP DMT has recently agreed a Workforce Strategy for CYP and work is underway on taking a more strategic and assertive approach to the recruitment and retention of social workers and first line team managers. Further details about the workforce strategy will be presented to the corporate parenting board.

Generally, morale is good across the service but feeling 'overloaded' with cases and constantly working long hours has caused morale to dip in certain parts of the service from time to time.

The team manager cohort has experienced a lot of recent changes. There are a number of newly appointed TMs in acting up into roles and this has had a marked impact on the vacancy rate. Any instability in the service needs to be very carefully managed in order to ensure this does not impact on children's outcomes and the quality of practice.

#### 4.7 **Agency Social Workers**

The number of agency social workers in the city has recently increased to 20.

The percentage of agency social workers in Derby is 19%. The national average is 19.3%. This is obviously far higher than is desirable but unfortunately necessary in order to avoid large social work case loads, low morale and high turnover rates of permanent staff. An agency social worker costs the authority significantly more than an employed social worker. There is one agency manager engaged in the city at the present time. Again, the cost to the authority is significantly greater than an employed manager. In order to reduce reliance upon agency workers, the social work establishment was increased by six in the last year. Recently, as part of the new work force strategy, it was decided that Agency managers are only going to be engaged when there are no suitable internal candidates to take up the posts for example to cover sickness or maternity leave. An open advert for social workers is about to be put on the website, highlighting the benefits of working for Derby in order to try to reduce vacancies and attract more experienced staff. This will include short minuetts where social workers will talk about why Derby is a good place to work.

Details regarding the costs of employing agency staff in children's social care will be presented to the corporate parenting board.

#### 4.8 Open Cases

The number of open children's cases on 28.2.15 was 1,732. This equates to a slowly increasing number in all categories and is in line with what is happening on a national level.

#### 4.9 Average Social Worker Case Loads

The current averages vary in different parts of the service. Some are higher than would be desired but are not significantly out of line with the national picture.

Caseloads range from 17 children per worker in Children in Care Teams; 20-22 in locality social work teams and 28 in reception. Measures to reduce caseloads in reception are in place and numbers will start to reduce.

#### 4.9 Cases Allocated to Managers

When there is insufficient social worker capacity, cases are allocated temporarily to Team Managers who service them through the duty social worker system. A lot of these are expected babies awaiting parental assessments; all child protection and looked after children cases are allocated to qualified social workers. There is a protocol outlining how unallocated work is managed. Since the numbers of unallocated cases changes on a weekly basis, an updated picture will be presented at the corporate parenting board.

### OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 There are no other options for consideration.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

<b>Legal officer</b> <b>Financial officer</b> <b>Human Resources officer</b> <b>Estates/Property officer</b> <b>Service Director(s)</b>  <b>Other(s)</b>	Andy Smith - Service Director – Early Intervention and Integrated Safeguarding Andrew Bunyan - Strategic Director – Children and Young People Councillor Fareed Hussain – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
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**Background papers:**  
**List of appendices:**

None  
Appendix 1 – Implications

## IMPLICATIONS

### Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The cost of employing children's social workers and front line managers is significant (over £8.5 million) but Derby is not a high spender compared to comparator authorities.
- 1.2 It clearly is not good value either financially or from a quality perspective to employ agency social workers and efforts should continue to try to reduce the numbers.
- 1.3 Increased funding to reduce social worker caseloads will be added to the budget next year.

### Legal

- 2.1 Local Authorities have a legal responsibility to provide sufficient social workers to act as key workers to children in care, children subject to child protection plans and to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect and to assess children in need.

### Personnel

- 3.1 The Council needs to take all reasonable steps to make Derby an attractive place to work for social workers in order to improve recruitment and retention of staff and reduce reliance on agency staff.

### IT

- 4.1 Social Workers are currently using an inefficient and cumbersome casework management system but this is due to be replaced in April, 2015 which will hopefully bring about significant improvements.

### Equalities Impact

- 5.1 Social Workers provide services to the most vulnerable children in the city and endeavour to improve their life chances in terms of educational attainment, health and safety.

### Health and Safety

- 6.1 See above.

### Environmental Sustainability

7.1 None.

## **Property and Asset Management**

8.1 None.

## **Risk Management**

9.1 There is a significant risk to the Council of not being able to maintain a sufficient number of qualified and experienced social workers to meet the demands in the city. This is through children suffering unnecessarily and reputational damage from a poor inspection outcome.

## **Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

10.1 Giving citizens an inspiring start in life.

10.2 Better outcomes for our communities. The health, safety and well-being of the people of Derby are key priority outcomes for us as a Council.