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Impact Assessment



Assessment of: A culture for change in children's social care - recruitment and retention of social workers and front-line managers.

Service: Children's Social Care

Head of Service: Vivien Lines

Version / date of sign off by Head of Service: September 2021

Assessment carried out by (job title): Vivien Lines, Interim HoS Children's Social Care and Jacky Wilson, Head of HR

1. Description of project / service / activity / policy under review

Devon County Council holds a number of statutory responsibilities and functions aiming to support and protect families and children and young people in Devon, especially children and young people who are vulnerable and/ or disadvantaged locally. These responsibilities and duties are summarised within a number of pieces of statutory legislation and guidance, examples include:- *Children Act (1989, 2004); Children & Families Act (2014); The Care Act (2000); Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018); Chronically Sick & Disabled Person's Act (1970); Special Educational Needs & Disability Code of Practice:-0-25 years (2014).*

As a Local Authority we also have high ambitions to achieve the best possible outcomes for children in Devon, especially those in the most challenged circumstances. We know that the best way of getting change for children and young people is through relationships with them and their families and we are investing in restorative ways of working to achieve this, but this cannot be achieved without a stable and high performing children's social care workforce. Social Workers are one of the many key professionals within Devon County Council Children's Services who are working with families and children and young people to support needs, and to promote safety and welfare within Devon.

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Social Workers support a range of children and young people including children who are in the care of the Local Authority; Care Leavers; Disabled children and young people and/ or children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); children and young people in need and/ or where there is a risk to their safety or welfare.

Nationally and locally recruiting and retaining Social Workers has been challenging. A series of recommendations are being made to Cabinet on 8th September 2021 to support with this in turn supporting Devon County Council to continue to support children, young people and families to achieve the best possible outcomes and to access the right support at the right time.

2. Reason for change / review

Historically we have had challenges in both recruiting and retaining experienced Social Workers and are currently operating with a high number of vacancies at the front line of children's social care. This has been exacerbated by the pandemic as applications from permanent staff and the supply of agency staff have dwindled, together with increased local competition for staff, and we are no longer able to cover all of our vacancies with agency staff. Our most recent Ofsted focused visit quoted our own assessment, that our high vacancy rates and use of agency workers, and staff turnover, is affecting our ability to develop meaningful and sustained relationships with families (May 2021).

Actions have been taken following decisions of Cabinet in December, but further investment is needed to create terms and conditions that enable us to compete regionally and nationally for staff and to make Devon a place where staff come to and stay to develop their careers as practitioners and managers.

A business case has been put forward with recommendations being proposed to [Devon County Council Cabinet for consideration](#). Proposals include increasing the salaries for Social Workers by way of a salary supplement and to introduce a retention payment for specified roles in targeted teams, an approach to support career and professional development alongside developing resilience within the workforce in time supporting system and quality improvement.

This assessment considers the impact of the changes proposed in within the business case.

3. Aims / objectives, limitations and options going forwards (summary)

There is a need to recruit 100 permanent social worker and 8 permanent Team Managers in our frontline teams in Children's Social Care to move away from a position where approximately 50% of this workforce is agency and 30 Social Worker posts are unfilled due to the difficulties

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recruiting agency staff. To do this we need to take a comprehensive approach to whole workforce development and to recruitment and retention including measures targeted at specific groups of the workforce who are currently extremely hard to recruit to. This purpose of the proposals is to:

- Reduce reliance on agency staff who are expensive, and their temporary nature impacts on our ability to deliver relationship-based practice.
- Attract qualified social workers into the workforce in Devon by making Devon competitive with other Local Authorities nationally and regionally, including by recruiting from overseas.
- Increase the number of permanent staff and managers in our frontline Child Protection teams to be able to invest in a stable and high performing workforce and relationship driven restorative approaches with families.
- Support social workers to maximise the time they spend with families.
- Make Devon a place where people have access to high quality continuing professional development and where they want to stay and are supported to progress their careers as both practitioners and managers.
- Increase Social Worker qualifying pathways available in Devon, by supporting student placements and social workers to join us and complete their Assessed and supported first year in employment.
- Increase access to bursaries and apprenticeships and partnering with Frontline, a national Masters' level qualification programme.
- Invest in specific parts of the workforce to support improved outcomes, for example in our care leavers workforce.

4. People affected, diversity profile and analysis of needs

People affected by the recommendations being proposed would include professionals and practitioners working across targeted services Devon County Council Children's Services- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Initial Response Teams, Children and Families Teams, Permanency and Transition Teams and Disabled Children's Service. The availability and stability of the Children's Social Care workforce will also impact children and young people aged 0-18 years living in Devon and families of children and young people living in Devon. Providers of services being commissioned externally, and professionals delivering services in-house by Devon County Council directly would also be affected.

Reach:- At September 2021, there are 51% permanent social workers staff (100), and whilst there are fewer agency staff at 30% (58), 19% of vacancies are not filled (37) including cover for maternity, sickness, secondments, and permanent vacancies. The completion rate for sensitive data fields in self-completed workforce reporting is low however workforce data available highlights the following trends:-

- ❖ **Sexuality:-** Workforce information available indicates that there is no significant difference in the profile of targeted workers in targeted teams compared to workers in non-targeted teams in relation to sexuality.
- ❖ **Disability:-** Workforce information available indicates that there is no significant difference in the profile of targeted workers in targeted teams compared to workers in non-targeted teams in relation to disability.
- ❖ **Ethnicity:-**Data available indicates no significant difference in the ethnicity composition of targeted teams compared to non-targeted teams.
- ❖ **Religion:-** Of those who have disclosed a religion, there is no significant difference between targeted teams and non-targeted teams.

- ❖ **Gender:-** There is a very high proportion of women in the children's social care workforce overall (82%). There is a slight increase in the proportion of men in non-targeted teams. In targeted teams 83% are women and in the non-targeted teams 77% are women.
- ❖ **Age:-**The workforce data demonstrates that there is a slightly higher proportion of younger workers in the targeted teams compared to the non-targeted teams.

The Devon Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) 2021 indicates an overall population of 802,375 of which 21% (165,178) are children and young people aged between 0-19 years. The JSNA indicates health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in Devon are mixed. The proportion of Devon's children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is continuing to grow. At October 2020, 20,794 children and young people had an identified special educational need in Devon. 7,478 children and young people in Devon have an Education, Health and Care plan. The top categories of need in Devon are social, emotional and mental health difficulties; autistic spectrum disorder; and speech language and communication needs. At January 2021, approximately 1,800 disabled children and young people were being supported by DCC Disabled Children's Service. At September 2021 there are higher numbers of children in care (now 806) and children subject to child protection plans (now 590) requiring support, assessment and intervention from the Local Authority.

Experience:- Devon County Council are committed to hearing the voice of our families and children and young people. Practitioners across Children's Services are in regular contact with children in care and care leavers. Views can be shared through resources such as the MOMO app and also through annual participation events like Bright Spots Survey. Findings from the 2021 Bright Spots survey reiterate how important being able to contact social workers is and knowing who this key professional in their lives. Care leavers have highlighted through the 'Building Back Better' event in 2020 the importance of key and consistent relationships. Feedback from these channels is influencing recommendations within the business case to ensure Social Workers can be as available and visible to children, young people and families as possible.

Dependence:- There is high dependency on the services and support provided for our children in care, disabled children, care leavers, children in need and families living in Devon. Intervention supports children, young people and families to meet milestones, make opportunities accessible whilst allowing them to achieve the best possible outcomes to ensure they are happy, healthy, safe and children and young people are prepared for adulthood and independence.

5. Stakeholders, their interest and potential impacts

- Children and young people in Devon. The proposals are designed to benefit children and young people across Devon by creating a more stable and skilled workforce that can work in restorative and relationship ways to help them bring about changes in their lives and keep children safe.
- Families in Devon:- Ultimately the proposals are designed to enable more families to receive help and support without needing statutory social care processes.
- NHS Devon Clinical Commissioning Group;
- Public Health;
- Children and Families Health Devon delivering community, health and wellbeing services in Devon;
- Devon and Cornwall Police;
- Devon Children and Families Partnership;
- Providers of services on behalf of Devon County Council for example Independent Fostering Agencies supporting foster care and Residential Children's Homes Providers, all supporting placements for children in care.
- Devon County Council Elected Members. Overall decision-making lies with this group. Elected Members will be making decisions that represent and respond to the needs and interests of Devon communities based on the information and evidence provided to them by Officers. Elected Members also need to be assured in their decision making that Devon County Council are meeting their legal responsibilities and making the best use of public funds.

6. Additional research used to inform this assessment

- [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Devon Overview \(2018\).](#)

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7. Description of consultation process and outcomes

Consultation has taken place locally with staff and trade unions.

8. Equality analysis

Characteristics	Potential or actual issues for this group. [Please refer to the Diversity Guide and See RED]	How will the project / service / policy / activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminate or reduce the potential for direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or disadvantage, where necessary. • advance equality (meet needs / ensure access, encourage participation, make adjustments for disabled people, ‘close gaps’). • foster good relations between groups (tackled prejudice and promoted understanding), if relevant? <p>In what way do you consider any negative consequences to be reasonable and proportionate in order to achieve a legitimate aim? <u>Are you complying with the DCC Equality Policy?</u></p>
Age	Social Workers in Devon range in age from early 20’s - 60’s, however the workforce in the targeted teams is typically younger, in the first five years of their social work career post qualifying.	<p>Elements of the recommendations will benefit all staff working in Children’s Services regardless of age. The salary supplement and retention payment are available for all qualified workers if they currently work in one of the specified teams regardless of age. The targeted measures are seeking to attract and retain experienced social workers and will benefit all staff in these roles regardless of age. Social Work training can be undertaken at any age and many will qualify after many years in unqualified roles. Increasing the SW salary range will benefit older workers as they progress their careers, currently these workers often leave Devon to secure higher salaries elsewhere to remain in practice.</p> <p>Workers in non-frontline teams are typically older as workers have been qualified longer and made a decision to move into other teams to remain in practice. These teams will not benefit from the targeted proposals however the measures proposed are considered reasonable and proportionate as the workforce in non- frontline teams is stable and not difficult to recruit to and given the extreme difficulties recruiting to frontline teams and the impact of vacancies in frontline teams on other parts of the service.</p>
Disability (incl. sensory,	NA	All staff across the service will benefit from some measures. The salary

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mobility, mental health, learning disability, neurodiversity, long term ill health) and carers of disabled people		supplement and retention payment are available for all qualified workers if they currently work in one of the specified teams.
Culture and ethnicity: nationality/national origin, ethnic origin/race, skin colour, religion and belief		One of the recommendations for Cabinet is for further overseas recruitment campaigns to take place. This will increase the ethnic diversity of the social worker workforce. This could have the potential for a positive impact in extending our reach, understanding and offer to children and young people from minority ethnic and cultural groups. A further recommendation is for the Council to pay the right to remain fees for the existing cohort of overseas Social Workers and any subsequent overseas recruits. This is a recommendation designed to support the retention of these workers.
Sex, gender and gender identity (including men, women, non-binary and transgender people), and pregnancy and maternity (including women’s right to breastfeed)	82% of CSC workforce are women. 83% in targeted teams and 77% in non-targeted teams.	The wider set of proposals in the Cabinet report will benefit all workers equally regardless of sex/gender/gender identity. The salary supplement and retention payment are available for all qualified workers if they currently work in one of the specified teams. If Social Workers don’t currently work in one of the teams it would be possible for them to move to a qualified worker role in one of these specified teams. The social work workforce varies in

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		<p>composition across the targeted roles, and teams.</p> <p>The supplement and retention payment is paid based on the role and not the employee – if a Social Worker moved to a team which doesn’t attract the supplement or retention payment they would cease to be eligible to receive it. The proposals are designed to create a more permanently employed workforce enabling women to have access to maternity rights.</p>

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<p>Other relevant socio-economic factors such as family size/single people/lone parents, income/deprivation, housing, education and skills, literacy, sub-cultures, ‘digital exclusion’, access to transport options, rural/urban</p>	<p>Children and young people feeling they are unable to get hold of their Social Worker and/ or have experienced a number of changes in Social Worker since being in the care of the Local Authority.</p>	<p>The recommendations proposed in the business have the potential to have a positive impact on this issue identified by children and young people. Recruiting more Social Workers who are able to focus on direct delivery to children and young people could positively lower caseloads and ensure more Social Worker time is targeted to building relationships with children and young people and also in being accessible to children and young people. This could in turn positively impact children and young people in feeling they are important, valued and have a trusted adult who understands them and is able to support them. This will benefit self-esteem of children in young people, confident that voice is being heard and also support children and young people to achieve the best possible outcomes socially, emotionally, physically and academically through support and relationships with key professionals developing, being as responsive and timely as possible.</p>

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9. Human rights considerations:

There is a concern that by including a salary supplement approach, the proposals move outside of the Council's established job evaluation process and advantage part of the workforce. This is argued to be reasonable and proportionate given the high proportion of agency and vacant role and high staff turnover in these teams potentially impacting on the Council's ability to support Devon families effectively and keep vulnerable children safe.

Any Social Work staff that may go onto be recruited and developed for Devon County Council would be expected to support the vision, values and principles of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (1990) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) describes a number of articles detailing the rights of all children and young people age 18 and under. This includes: - non-discrimination; best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; health and health services; standards of living; right to education; freedom of expression and thought. In addition, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) describes a further series of articles clarifying the rights of all individuals with a disability including children and young people. This includes:- respect for each person's dignity and personhood; disabled people being full and equal members of communities/ society; equal life chances; education; equal rights to family life whereby disabled children should never be forced to live away from parents and families unless this is the best thing for them; health without discrimination; independence; standard of living; right to enjoy culture; recreation, leisure and sport in an equal basis to people who are non-disabled.

10. Supporting independence, wellbeing and resilience. Give consideration to the groups listed above and how they may have different needs:

In what way can you support and create opportunities for people and communities (of place and interest) to be independent, empowered and resourceful?

[Insert text here]

In what way can you help people to be safe, protected from harm, and with good health and wellbeing?

[Insert text here]

In what way can you help people to be connected, and involved in community activities?

[Insert text here]

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11. Environmental analysis

An impact assessment should give due regard to the following activities in order to ensure we meet a range of environmental legal duties. The policy or practice does not require the identification of environmental impacts using this Impact Assessment process because it is subject to (please mark X in the relevant box below and proceed to the 4c, otherwise complete the environmental analysis table):

Devon County Council's Environmental Review Process	
Planning Permission	
Environmental Impact Assessment	
Strategic Environmental Assessment	

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	Describe any actual or potential negative consequences. (Consider how to mitigate against these).	Describe any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes. (Consider how to improve as far as possible).
Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost:	None	None
Conserve and enhance wildlife:	None	None
Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's landscape:	None	None
Conserve and enhance Devon's cultural and historic heritage:	None	None
Minimise greenhouse gas emissions:		Devon County Council maintain flexible working polices and keep these under review for all staff members. This includes the flexibility to use technology and to also work from home as well as the office. Flexible working arrangements will be available to any Social Workers who are recruited should recommendations be supported by Devon County Council. Use of technology and flexible working should support with reducing the need to travel and for frequency of some face-to-face meetings thus reducing carbon emissions that would be expelled during travel periods.
Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise):	None	None

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Contribute to reducing water consumption:	None	None
Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level):	None	None
Other (please state below):		

12. Economic analysis

	Describe any actual or potential negative consequences. (Consider how to mitigate against these).	Describe any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes. (Consider how to improve as far as possible).
Impact on knowledge and skills:	The proposals include investment in social work qualification pathways, continuing professional development and career progression opportunities which will improve knowledge and skills across the whole social work workforce.	
Impact on employment levels:	The proposal create the opportunity for more Devon residents to qualify as social workers and for improved permanent recruitment to the social work workforce reducing vacancy rates and the proportion of posts that are filled by agency staff.	
Impact on local business:		

13. Describe and linkages or conflicts between social, environmental and economic impacts (Combined Impacts):

None

14. How will the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area be improved through what is being proposed? And how, in conducting the process of procurement, might that improvement be secured?

The proposals have the potential to improve opportunities within the social work workforce and improve the contribution of the workforce to the economy in Devon by improving the stability of the workforce locally and employing more social work staff who live and work in Devon.

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15. How will impacts and actions be monitored?

We will continue to engage with the workforce and consult with them about the impact of proposed measures. We will continue to monitor our recruitment and retention activity closely and how this impact on the profile of the workforce overall, particularly the proportion of posts that are recruited to permanently and overall workforce turnover. We will continue to monitor the quality of social work practice and its impact on outcomes for priority groups of children and young people across Devon.