

Children's Services Recruitment and Retention Spotlight Review: Progress report on recommendations

Report of the Director of People & Culture & Director of Children & Young People's Service

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

That the Children's Scrutiny Committee note the progress made on the recommendations contained within the Children's Services Recruitment and Retention Spotlight Review report (November 2023).

2) Children's Services Recruitment & Retention Spotlight Review - Background / Introduction

In November 2023, the Children's Scrutiny Committee published a report subsequently approved by Cabinet, which included a number of recommendations. These are set out in the table below.

	Recommendations
1	As part of the recruitment theme of the People First Strategy, the Council should work more closely with schools and education providers to promote careers in Children's Services and the Council as a place to work.
2	The recruitment process needs to ensure that potential staff are clear about the roles and responsibilities of jobs they apply for.
3	The formal induction programme needs to be embedded across the service and staff must have the time built into their working day when they join to complete the programme.
4	The Cabinet Member to review the Memorandum of Cooperation for social worker agency rates in the Southwest with other Local Authorities so that it is effective and fit for purpose.
5	In the review of pay and allowances which has already begun, Members ask that reference is made to competitiveness with the NHS Agenda for Change, Professional Registration Fees, and travel expenses.
6	Caseloads for each staff across the service should be no higher than the national averages or the recommended number for each service.
7	Protected caseloads for newly qualified staff are maintained.
8	Staff should consistently have access to both case management/practice supervision and wellbeing/personal supervision.

9	The Council needs to ensure managers have an appropriate number of direct reports. 10
10	Through the Voice theme of the People First Strategy to celebrate staff and their achievements more, the Council should consider celebration events, appreciative enquiries, or serious success reviews.
11	Scrutiny Members will ensure they visit staff in their workplace and seek their feedback on an annual basis and report this back to the Children’s Scrutiny Committee.
12	In the review of pathways, the Council should ensure that pathways for staff progression are clear, including annual appraisals, additional qualifications, and leadership/manager training, where appropriate.

3) Update on Recommendations

This report provides an update on the recommendations within the spotlight review.

3.1. As part of the recruitment theme of the People First Strategy, the council should work more closely with schools and education providers to promote careers in Children’s Services and the council as a place to work.

Collaboration with Exeter University

Work is underway to scope how the Civic Agreement in place with Exeter University can benefit Childrens Services; options explored to date include the provision of accredited Leadership and Management qualifications to support the development of a strong talent pipeline for managerial posts, and the potential for the University to offer a Social Work Degree Apprenticeship.

Scoping is underway to co-write the Practice Educator (PE) Award and the assessment framework with Plymouth University

Work is in progress to develop and co-write a suite of training to train Practice Educators in-house for our students, ASYEs and other learners – which will create a wider resource than just within the Social Work Academy to develop training and workforce development. Launch planned from June 2025, aligned to timeframe for PDAs to complete fellowship.

For Children in Care and Young Care Experienced Leavers

To continue our commitment to Children in Care and Care Leavers, in promoting high aspirations for education, training and employment we are talking with our young people and capturing their aspirations. Through collaboration by the Virtual School, FE/HE, and other training providers, we are planning to explore opportunities for employment within Devon County Council and with other employers. The virtual school are working with local colleges to set up aspiration taster days with the Devon participation team in attendance. We have been developing flexible options for career pathways for young, experienced care leavers into employment with DCC.

Partnerships with Schools and Colleges

Through collaboration with local schools and colleges we have established meaningful partnerships to offer joint initiatives such as careers fairs offering an opportunity to students to discuss the industry, organisation culture and career opportunities. Some examples, we attended the Exeter College Apprenticeship Expo during National Apprenticeship Week (February) where we promoted apprenticeships/careers across DCC, including a lot of interest in Social Worker apprenticeships. Additionally, the apprenticeship team attended the Employability Week at Clyst Vale Community College in January where they spoke to students about careers at DCC.

Career Events

We returned to the Devon County Show this year to raise awareness of careers in health and social care with a focussed creative activity planned for children.

We attended the Southwest Regional Armed Forces Careers event in March 2024 which was an opportunity to showcase DCC careers to veteran leavers as well as veterans considering their future career planning who will be leaving the military. Spouses, partners, and family members were also in attendance.

3.2. The recruitment process needs to ensure that potential staff are clear about the roles and responsibilities of jobs they apply for.

As part of the award of Devon County Council's advertising contract, we have stipulated the need to review and develop both a corporate and a Social Care specific Employee Value Proposition (EVP) to support the attraction of potential candidates to DCC. Creative concepts have been designed following engagement with internal focus groups consisting of new starters, apprentices, EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) representatives and senior leaders as well as an external survey, social listening, and competitor review with a view to launching later in Summer 2024.

Review of the narrative used within job adverts has been completed and updated to refresh the look and feel. This is work in progress and as part of the launch of the Employer Value Proposition the DCC careers platform alongside all other DCC digital platforms will be updated to ensure consistency.

As an Authority, we will be moving towards greater agility and flexibility, for example using more generic job descriptions. This is a step away from prescriptive job descriptions but is a more modern and flexible way of working.

Other key Recruitment & Retention related developments

The Children's Social Care Recruitment & Retention team transferred to the People & Culture directorate in October 2023, followed by the Social Work Academy Team. Since then, a Recruitment & Retention Strategy for the Children & Young People's Futures (CYPF) directorate has been designed and agreed with the service in January 2024 to provide a framework to address to challenges currently being experienced. The strategy is

currently being implemented and provides the detail of the action plan supporting it. The strategy can be referenced in this pack.

A new Recruitment & Retention Manager has been permanently appointed, Sarah Collard-Baker, to focus on addressing these issues within Children's Services. She joined us from Somerset County Council, with a wealth of experience in relation to providing Children's Social Care workforce solutions and replaces a consultant who had previously been providing the support.

Recruitment of Social Workers from Overseas

A new cohort of seven Social Workers joined DCC in January 2024 from South Africa and work is currently underway to plan a further cohort to join in October 2024.

Recruitment of Assessed & Supported Year in Employment (AYSE) Social Workers

We recruited 3 new ASYEs (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) from the last round of recruitment in January 2024. Following this, we have reviewed the approach and consequently launched a new campaign on 22 April to run for 4 weeks, which has a far more structured approach including a media plan, boosted posts, many more touch points with candidates.

3.3. The formal induction programme needs to be embedded across the service and staff must have built into their working day when they join to complete the programme.

Practice Educator Support for Students, Overseas Social Workers, Return to Social Work practitioners and Apprentice Students

There are currently 14 Overseas Social Workers, 17 Student Social Workers, 10 Apprentices, 5 Step-Up Students and 8 Frontline Students. Totalling 54 student placements (this total fluctuates year on year). Support includes being the Practice Educator, Delivering Induction programmes, completing initial meetings and reviews as well as portfolio reviews and final report writing. Delivering CPD (Continuing Professional Development) specifically for Students, monthly supervision, peer reflection group sessions and ad hoc support.

In addition, the Learning and Development Team have delivered online sessions to provide support for wellbeing and resilience, with over 200 staff attending.

During May 2024, for Learning at Work week, we delivered events to provide Wellbeing at Work sessions for managers to provide more understanding of wellbeing at work and guidance to support mental health. This included delivering a focus on West Country savings and loans to help inform what a credit union is, along with a session on the new employee assistance programme offer and what benefits are available to employees.

The Principal Social Worker has reviewed the induction process with new staff receiving a programme of bespoke and mandatory training plus essential information sharing. This includes linking in with the council's virtual manager's programme.

3.4. The Cabinet Member to review the Memorandum of Cooperation for social worker agency rates in the Southwest with other Local Authorities so that it is effective and fit for purpose.

The table below outlines the summary of agency workforce data, but fuller data is included in Appendix 1 about agency and workforce data.

Staff group	Current %age of agency (31 March 2024)	Previous %age (July 2023)	%age change
Management and leadership roles within Assessment, Childrens and Families, Corporate Parenting and Disabled Children's Services (Total Budgeted - 50 FTE)	33% (16.5 FTE)	44% (21.5FTE)	11% reduction (5 FTE)
Social Worker roles within Assessment, Childrens and Families, Corporate Parenting and Disabled Children's Services (Total Budgeted – 225 FTE) *National benchmark 17.8% (2023)	45% overall** (101 FTE) **Variations at team level from 69% (Assessment) to 24% (Disabled Children's)	52% (113.6 FTE)	7.2% reduction (12.6 FTE)
Interims/ Consultants in CYPF	11 (9 in Social Care)	28 (February 2023)	60.7% reduction (17 headcount)

We are actively supporting Children's Services to improve recruitment and retention with a focus on reducing agency reliance. We are currently working through a targeted and focussed 'temp – perm conversion project' where agency workers are being met with individually to discuss the benefits of converting from agency placements to permanent roles.

This targeted project began in early February, and we are making some substantial progress having now agreed with three agency Team Managers and one Referral co-ordinator within MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) to transfer onto permanent contracts with many more conversations taking place and scheduled for the coming weeks. To date we have held 21 meetings with potential workers which has resulted in two confirmed conversions with a further six colleagues requesting an additional meeting to further discuss the opportunities. We have a further 28 agency workers that have been identified as potential candidates to convert, and calls are scheduled in over the next four weeks to speak with these colleagues.

In total over the last 3 months, we have been successful in agreeing terms with 9 agency colleagues who have or are imminently joining the service on a permanent contract. The breakdown of job titles is as follows:

- Head of Service – 1 (Corporate Parenting)
- Service Managers – 2 (Children & Families North/ Mid & East)
- Team Managers – 5 (MASH, C&F Mid & East, P&T Exeter)

- Referral co-ordinator 1 (MASH)

This project has now become scheduled as part of the team's 'business as usual' and will also expand to include early conversations with agency joiners, so that we can track their journey with us and have dialogue with them around permanent opportunities within Devon's Childrens Services.

Feedback from the majority of those agency staff who do not currently wish to convert, highlights that their main reason is that they are awaiting the outcome of discussions in relation to a Memorandum of Understanding to be agreed across the Southwest region that will cap the rate of agency workers' pay. The current rate of pay for a permanent social worker is between c£22 and £24 per hour, when in comparison as an agency worker they can earn up to £44 per hour. A regional cap would reduce this pay differential. These discussions are being progressed both through regional DCS meetings and regional HR meetings.

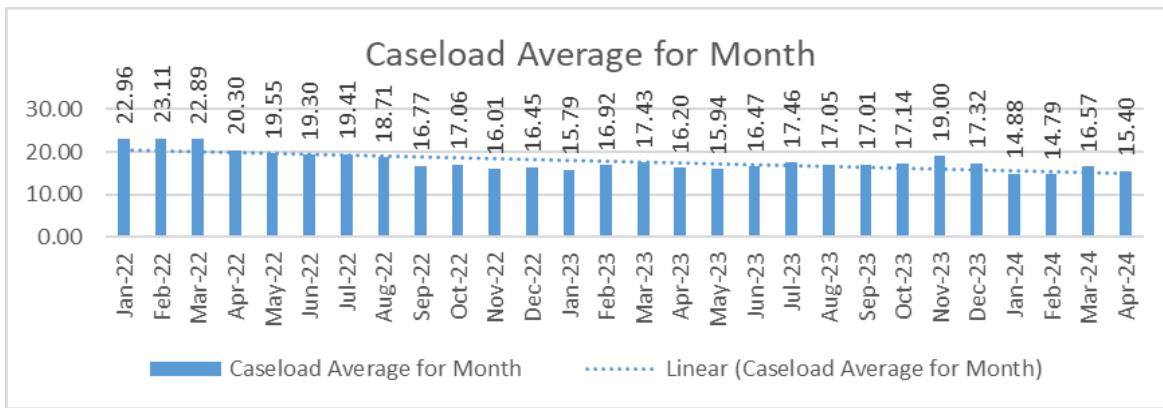
3.5. In the review of pay and allowances which has already begun, Members ask that reference is made to competitiveness with the NHS Agenda for Change, Professional Registration Fees, and travel expenses.

To help with recruitment and retention, a proposal has been agreed by SLT (Strategic Leadership Team) to recognise the continuous service and reckonable service for all new staff on Agenda for Change contracts for the calculation of certain terms and conditions. It is proposed that **all staff** joining DCC from the NHS can maintain their continuous service for calculation of DCC sick pay entitlement and DCC Maternity/Adoption and paternity pay entitlement. This would not be extended to redundancy or the 2-year statutory employment rights that are contained in legislation.

3.6. Caseloads for each staff across the service should be no higher than the national averages or the recommended number for each service.

Since January 2022 analysis for caseloads has improved with a single effective method of calculation across all teams and services, including robust procedures to record staffing levels, FTE (full time equivalents), Employment/Role types and starting and leaving dates. Resource requirements were built based on Social Worker's having no more than a maximum of 18 (25 in Assessment). We now are confident that levels of staff following the reshape in 2023 accurately reflect the volume demands in caseloads in front door statutory services.

Caseload averages have fallen from an all-time high of 23.11 in February 2022 to 15.40 in April 2024, giving an average this current year to date of 16.44.



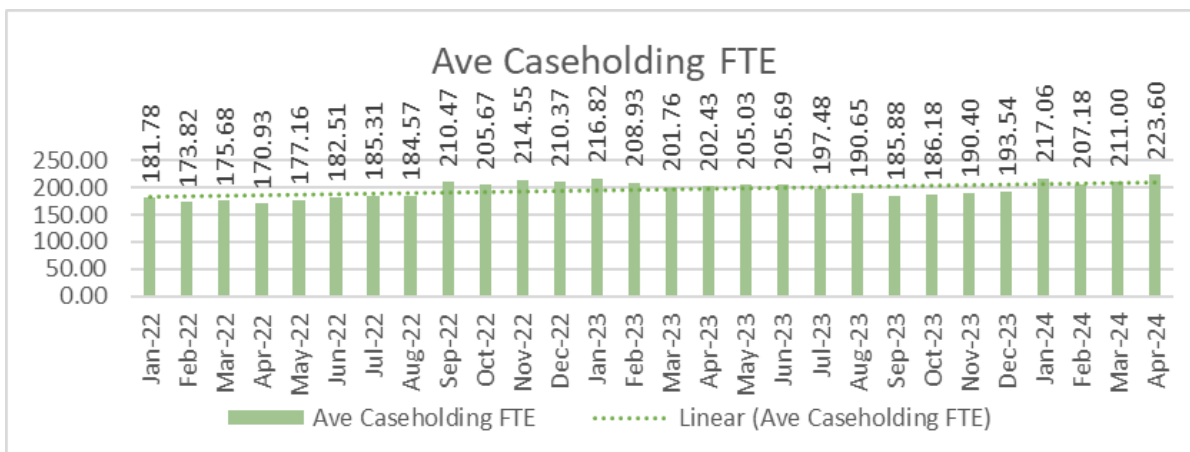
Equally for the Assessment Service caseload averages have fallen from an all-time high of 31.83 in 2022 to below the target set of 25 with an average this year to date of 19.19.

All other front door Services have remained at an average of below 18 since September 2022, with a current average this year to date of 15.69.

3.7. Protected caseloads for newly qualified staff are maintained.

Our current data is accurate to within 0.05 of a caseload to the Governments 2023 statistics which ensures we are now accurately recording and analysing the data. Comparing DCC data to national statistics for England we can also ascertain that our average caseload is now largely in line at around 16.

DCC recruitment and retention to SW roles has improved particularly after the reshape and Social Workers FTE holding cases has risen to an all-time high of 223.6 in April 2023 compared to an all-time low of 170.93 in April 2022, contributing significantly to the lower caseload averages we are now seeing.



Caseload data is now readily available through the staff structures and Power BI dashboards, ensuring that Team Managers, Service Managers and Leadership always have clear easily obtainable data, and so enabling protected caseloads for Newly Qualified and Overseas Workers to be maintained and managed. The table below shows national benchmarking data relating to Caseloads.

Source of Data	Jan 22 to Sept 22	Year to Sept 23	Year to Date
DCC recording for the Whole of the Front Door	20.33	16.65	16.44
education-statistics.service.gov.uk for England	16.6	16.	n/a
education-statistics.service.gov.uk for Devon	18.3	16.7	n/a
DCC Data split			
DCC recording for Assessment Only	26.45	22.34	19.19
DCC recording for all other front door Services	18.24	15.24	15.69

3.8. Staff should consistently have access to both case management/practice supervision and wellbeing/personal supervision.

Training has been delivered by People & Culture to the Leadership and Management levels within Social Care around good practice in relation to supervision in Autumn 2023. A Service Manager has been identified to lead on this going forward including monitoring completion levels and quality of practice. Reporting is now shared monthly with Children’s Leadership Team to focus on improvement, however, there is still a high number of staff where supervision is not being recorded using the iTrent system.

Other key progress in relation to work delivered by the Social Work Academy

Aligning the Academy Training Offer with the 7 Pillars of Practice

We launched a new Academy Website earlier in 2024, providing a single point of access for training, resources, and tools to support practice. Launch events for the 7 pillars training took place on the 12th and 15th February 2024 and reached over 100 practitioners in these events. The feedback was incredibly positive with comments received below:

- *“This is such a valuable resource! Fabulous to have it so easily accessible! Well done all!”*
- *“This is all very exciting, and I can’t wait to navigate my way around it”*

All Practice Development Advisors (PDAs) in the Academy trained in Restorative Practice

All PDAs have been trained as “Restorative PDAs” since April 2024, to ensure that all PDAs are practicing restoratively, and a consistent restorative approach is taken to the supervision of learners and within training that is delivered via the Academy. 2-day training for PDAs was undertaken in March 2024 for train the trainers as well as the full 5-day training sessions.

Delivery of Pillar 7 (Management Oversight) and more in-depth, day long training for each of the Pillars of Practice building on the ‘Lunch and Learn’ Session approach are currently being developed.

Supervision Lunch and Learn Workshops – A series of ‘Lunch and Learn’ sessions for **all practitioners** covering each of the 7 Pillars of Practice that have been taking place since August 2023 and were completed in February 2024.

Writing and Delivery of the 7 Pillars of Practice Day Training

All pillars are scheduled to have been delivered by the end of August 2024. Day training launched for Pillar 1 (Purposeful Visits) in February 2024 with all future dates now available for practitioners to book a place.

S7 and S37 Training

This package of training has been written by the Service Manager for the Academy drawing on their CAFCASS experience in Private Law. These bitesize training packages are available on the Academy website and were shared with the whole service for training as part of Practice Week in April 2024.

Research In Practice Training for Management Oversight and Supervision

Research in Practice delivered a 2-day Supervisor Development Programme to Service Managers (Feb 24). The 5-day training session for Advanced Social Workers and Team Managers took place in April.

To support this, Research in Practice host an extensive repository of supervision and leadership tools used within this course, which is freely accessible within DCC.

From May 24, the Academy and Principal Social Worker (PSW) have been meeting with attendees to gather feedback and explore personal impact on practice. To support this training, DCC have also provided Restorative Supervision learning sessions and updated the supervision template which has encouraged the use of reflection and analysis rather than it being description and task focused.

Newly Designed Service Development Meetings (SDM)

Since February 2024 the Principal Social Worker, Academy Service Manager and Quality Assurance Team Manager will be following a newly designed agenda for SDM meetings. SDM takes place once a month and from March will be in-person.

All managers from Team Manager upwards attend SDM; each month there will be an activity that focusses on one of the Pillars of Practice from a management perspective including a presentation about audit findings, sharing of good practice examples, a tabletop exercise and a whole group exercise where the group collectively agree and commit to implementing good practice in each respective service in respect of each Pillar of Practice.

In February, the first newly designed SDM took place with a focus on Pillar 7 – Management Oversight and Supervision.

Upcoming projects (pending approval/scoping)

Bitesize briefings

To cover:

- chronologies
- what an audit looks like
- how to speak to an OFSTED inspector
- case studies

- short video clips to increase consistency in diagnostic work

Developing Communities of Practice around key topics

Each PDA (Practice Development Adviser) to be assigned with an area to lead on

To write and deliver Care Planning and Permanence Planning Training

Care Planning training to be developed for delivery from February 2024. Suzanne Lyus, Intermediary Worker to deliver Permanence Planning Training from March 2024 – the package has been finalised and Suzanne is working with the operational services to ensure dates are offered that are accessible to all and that some events are also offered on a face-to-face basis.

To write and deliver PREVENT training with community safety team colleagues

Currently being coordinated by the Service Manager for the Academy who is the PREVENT lead for Children's Services. One-off training event delivered during Practice Week April 2024 with follow up sessions TBC.

To write and deliver the Domestic Abuse (DA) Pathway and training

The DA Pathway has been co-written by the Principal Social Worker and the Service Manager for the Academy using resources and literature from CAFCASS and other Local Authorities. The document has been agreed with Heads of Service and was launched during Practice Week in April 2024.

To write and deliver 'Life Story Work' training

This action is for the Academy to work with Adopt Southwest to develop a training package that the Academy can then deliver to the workforce. Aim is to roll out from Summer 2024.

To write an 'Analysis Toolkit' for Managers

This is being written for Team Managers (TMs) to identify strengths and areas of improvement for practitioners that then directs TMs to resources and tools that can be used with practitioners to develop their practice within supervision and management oversight to compliment the full day Pillar 7 (Management Oversight and Supervision) training being delivered in August 2024.

Ongoing 'Business as Usual'

Practice Educator Programme Support and Delivery

There are currently 15 practitioners training to be Practice Educators within the organisation. They all require check-ins, observations of practice, portfolio reviewing and final report writing/assessment.

Delivery of Current Academy Training including Neglect, Court Skills, Working with Fathers, Mind of My Own (MOMO)

Court Skills Training 4 days every year, MOMO Training 2 days every year, Neglect Training 2 days every year and Working with Fathers 4 days every year. This brings with it a potential opportunity to sell the Neglect Training learning package and gain income for the Academy

which is being explored by the Service Manager and PDA responsible for development of the package – this is currently on hold due to Academy capacity.

Writing and Delivering Continuous Professional Development Sessions

These sessions take place once a month and calendar invites are sent to all practitioners.

Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) Programme involvement, training, forums for providers and forums for workforce

There is one DDP trained PDA in the Academy. They work with families one day a week, facilitates practitioner forums and engages in learning and supervision linked to their DDP accreditation. There are plans to increase their work to support practitioners and provide a forum for private providers linked to our proposal to expand our Homes for Children.

Other future considerations for the Academy

Sector Led Improvement Partnership

A bid has been submitted to the DfE's Resource Allocation Board (RAB) for funding to enable the Authority in receiving workforce development support from Hammersmith and Fulham Borough council, it is envisaged that this peer review will ensure that the Academy is best placed to support the improvement journey within CYPF.

Delivery of AIMS Assessment Training

Consideration to be given to paying for Train the Trainer course for PDA in the Academy once we are at full PDA capacity. This can then be offered "in-house" to permanent practitioners across the service.

Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) Training

Consideration to be given to providing this training to experienced and permanent practitioners. This has not been offered to practitioners for a considerable time and given practitioner turnover, there are few who remain that have been trained in Achieving Best Evidence. Before pursuing this, a survey of practitioners who have been trained elsewhere will need to be undertaken to ensure that this is a need for the workforce.

Sexual Abuse Training

The team is working with the Child Sexual Abuse Centre to deliver training to our Assessment and Intervention Teams. It is hoped that a PDA from the Academy will attend this training to aid understanding of its delivery and the resources used which can then allow the training to be replicated.

Development of Peer Experts

The development of a group of practitioners with a specialist interest in specific topics such as working with trans children and young people, honour-based violence, female genital mutilation, and sexual abuse (but not limited to these topics).

Development of Restorative Practice Champions

As we move into 2024/25 it is proposed that our Restorative Coaches work with our Social Work Academy to deliver Restorative Practice Training to our Advanced Social Workers so

that they can become “Restorative Champions”. This will involve taking the lead on disseminating information about Restorative Practice, leading, and coordinating restorative and reflective activities within their teams and attending Restorative Practice ongoing CPD sessions. All of this is with the aim to ensure that our Restorative Practice Model permeates through every team and service within Children’s Services.

3.9. The council needs to ensure managers have an appropriate number of direct reports.

Following the 2023 reshape in Social Care, we are confident that there is sufficient management capacity to ensure that spans of control are effective and efficient. We introduced an additional 11 Team Manager posts and 40 Advanced Social Worker posts (for line management of Family Practitioners and Personal Advisors) to address inequitable spans of control and bring average direct reports down to an average of 6/7 per TM / ASW.

3.10. Through the voice theme of the People First Strategy to celebrate staff and their achievements more, the Council should consider celebration events, appreciative enquiries, or serious success reviews.

Over the last 12 months, the Chief Executive and the Directors have held both face to face and online staff engagement sessions with Over 600 staff joined the recent staff briefing session in March 2024 with our Chief Executive, Donna Manson, and Maria Chakraborty, Director of People and Culture. The sessions covered the launch of the Council’s Change and Improvement Programme and an update on our People First Strategy actions delivered and priorities for the year ahead. The sessions were an opportunity to celebrate achievements.

As part of the People Strategy, Organisational Development have drafted a proposal to create a corporate wide approach to recognition. As part of this we are intending to launch an annual celebration event in September to celebrate achievements, qualifications, and apprenticeships along with long service and acts of kindness. We are looking to recognise those with long service of which there are 101 across the service that would be included for their 25+ years' service.

The Social Care team held a Service wide conference on 13 November 2023 at Westpoint called the ‘Children’s Social Care and Early Help Annual Conference’, which included celebrating the successes over the past year. The Director of Children & Young People’s Futures also holds a monthly all staff Team’s briefing session, which the includes the opportunity for all employees to raise questions in advance, in addition to praising teams and share good practice.

As part of the events provided in May for Learning at Work Week the Learning and Development Team delivered sessions on communicating and engaging focusing on improving skills so you can communicate and engage more effectively.

3.11. Scrutiny Members will ensure they visit staff in their workplace and seek their feedback on an annual basis and report this back to the Children’s Scrutiny Committee.

At the time of this report coming to the Committee for consideration (June 2024), the Committee would be in the middle of its annual round of visits to frontline staff across the County. The visits for 2024 included the Front Door, Assessment Teams, and Public Health Nursing Teams.

A further report on the visits and their findings is expected at the Children’s Scrutiny Committee meeting in September 2024.

3.12. In the review of pathways, the Council should ensure that pathways for staff progression are clear, including annual appraisals, additional qualifications, and leadership/manager training, where appropriate.

Recruitment of Assessed & Supported Year in Employment (AYSE) Social Workers

As mentioned previously, we have recently recruited 3 new ASYEs (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) from the last round of recruitment in January 2024. However, we had hoped for a greater response and so we have reviewed the approach and consequently launched a new campaign from 22 April to run for 4 weeks, which has a far more structured approach including a media plan, boosted posts, many more touch points with candidates.

Launch 2-year ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) support programme to align with neighbouring Local Authorities

A proposal has been developed in alignment with the Workforce Recruitment and Retention Plan, to extend the ASYE supported year to a 2-year programme, with the intention of making the Devon offer more attractive in terms of retaining our NQSWs (Newly Qualified Social Worker) and moving them into Social Worker roles.

It is anticipated that once at full complement, the Academy will be sufficiently resourced to provide this programme. Accompanying this proposal is a plan to re-introduce the Social Worker title back into Children’s Services with a clear plan of career progression within our social work workforce. To progress through each stage post qualification there is greater scrutiny on a practitioner’s ability to advance to the next grade, but additionally a greater learning offer for those within the organisation who wish to continue to grow and develop professionally.

Please refer to the update in section 3.8 for all other activities in progress.

Furthermore, it is proposed to reintroduce a lower graded Social Worker role into the care progression framework. This will allow staff to progress from the ASYE programme into a F grade Social Worker role, rather than having to be appointed directly to a grade G Experienced Social Worker role. This will allow staff greater flexibility to pace their progression in their Social Worker career with cases allocated to better reflect experience, skills, knowledge, and levels of practice.

Other workforce metrics

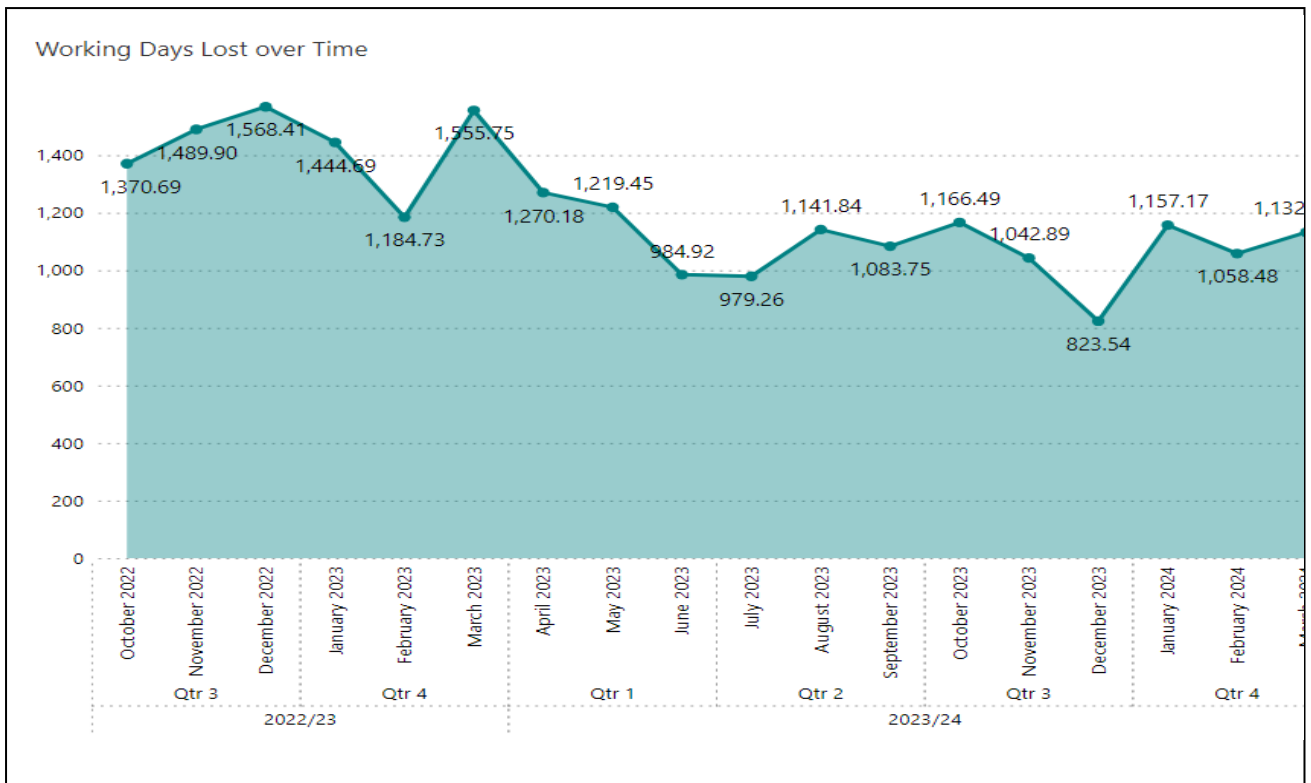
The culture within an organisation can have a substantial impact on the retention of the workforce. Organisation Culture is challenging to measure, however 'organisation climate' is a term often used to provide metrics that can point to some key indicators. There are several workforce metrics that can help to indicate the current organisation climate, such as sickness absence rates, numbers of operational HR casework including for grievances, disciplinaries and whistleblowing. Although this is not directly outlined in the recommendations, it can help to show a reflection of the current workforce.

Sickness

Teams within the People & Culture directorate have been working with managers to support a focus in this area with a view to supporting staff to feel well, managing absence in a robust and timely way, and reducing reliance on agency workers and additional pressure on the remaining workforce. This has included:

- Providing training sessions to managers through team meetings about how to record absence on our Human Resource Management System (iTrent) so that our reporting is accurate, and it can enable clear oversight and management of absence.
- Monthly reports on long term sickness cases are sent to Heads of Service to highlight areas for concern.
- HR Operational support to ensure that employees are supported appropriately to return to work or are exited the organisation.
- Heightened emphasis at senior leadership level.

Sickness levels have slowly reduced over the last 18 months. Within Social Care the number of working days lost due to sickness has reduced from 5522 days lost in 2022/23 to 5151 days lost in 2023/24. This is a reduction of 6.7%. The number of occasions of sickness has reduced from 657 in 2022/23 to 550 in 2023/24. This is a 16.3% reduction. In May and June 2023 there were 22 employees in Social Care and Health and Wellbeing that were on long term sick (over 28 days). This has reduced to 13 at the end of March 2024. 31.6% of sickness is short term (less than 8 days), 5.94% is medium term (8 days to 27 days) and 62.44% is long term (more than 28 days). National benchmarking suggests the average sickness rate for local Government workers in 2022 is 3.6%. The Childrens and Young People Futures Directorate has a current sickness rate of 4.01% or on average 9.02 days per person. The breakdown of working days lost per month for the whole of Children's & Young People Futures Directorate is found below.



HR Casework

The HR casework levels have shown a significant improvement. Currently, there is one disciplinary case, no grievances, and one whistleblowing case. This positive trend contrasts with the situation in September 2023, when there were four disciplinary cases, seven grievances, and three whistleblowing cases under investigation. This reduction in caseloads reflects effective management and resolution of HR-related issues.

Month/ Type of case	Disciplinarys	Grievances	Whistleblowing
March 2023	4 (0 new)	4 (1 new)	5
April 2023	4 (0 new)	3 (1 new)	4
May 2023	5 (2 new)	3 (1 new)	2
June 2023	5 (0 new)	2 (0 new)	3
July 2023	3 (0 new)	2 (1 new)	3
August 2023	2 (0 new)	4 (3 new)	3
September 2023	4 (2 new)	7 (4 new)	3
October 2023	4 (0 new)	7 (0 new)	3
November 2023	4 (1 new)	6 (0 new)	2
December 2023	1 (0 new)	2 (1 new)	2
January 2024	1 (0 new)	2 (0 new)	2
February 2024	2 (1 new)	0	1

March 2024	1 (1 new)	0	1
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4) Options / Alternatives

This is an information paper updating Children’s Scrutiny Committee on progress against the Children’s Services Recruitment & Retention Spotlight Review recommendations, and therefore has no specific options/alternatives that are not already covered by or subsumed within the detailed policies or actions referred to therein.

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

No consultations have been required for this update report

6) Strategic Plan

This report responds directly to the recommendations made by the Children’s Scrutiny Committee Spotlight Review in November 2023.

These align with the vision and the following priorities in the Council’s Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 - <https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan>

- Be ambitious for children and young people
- Support sustainable economic recovery
- Tackle poverty and inequality (address poverty, health, and other inequalities)
- Improve health and wellbeing, including any public health impacts
- Help communities be safe, connected, and resilient

7) Financial Considerations

This report has no specific financial implications that are not already covered by or subsumed within the detailed policies or actions referred to therein.

8) Legal Considerations

This is an information paper updating Children’s Scrutiny Committee on progress against the Children’s Services Recruitment & Retention Spotlight Review recommendations, and therefore has no specific legal considerations that are not already covered by or subsumed within the detailed policies or actions referred to therein.

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

No environmental considerations have been identified in relation to this update on the Committee's recommendations.

10) Equality Considerations

The aim of the Recruitment and Retention Spotlight review recommendations and the overarching People First Strategy is to have an inclusive culture that celebrates diversity, where everyone can feel safe, well, and able to be themselves. To grow and retain a workforce that feels it belongs and is supported to thrive.

11) Risk Management Considerations

No risks have been identified in the provision of this update report on the Children's Services Recruitment and Retention Spotlight Review.

12) Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

This report is submitted in response to a request from the Children's Scrutiny Committee for an update.

Name

Maria Chakraborty, Director of People & Culture
Stuart Collins, Director of Children and Young People's Futures

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, Workforce & Digital Transformation
Councillor Andrew Saywell

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

The Children's Services Recruitment & Retention Spotlight Review Report is published on the council's website at [Issue - items at meetings - Children's Services Recruitment and Retention Spotlight Review - Democracy in Devon](#)

Date November 2023

The Children & Young People's Futures Service Recruitment & Retention Strategy & Action Plan included with this report.

Contact for enquiries:

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Appendix One - Workforce Data

The table below contains a breakdown of the permanent workforce for the **whole Childrens and Young People Futures Directorate**.

	Social Care	Health & Wellbeing	Education	SEND	Public Health Nursing
Headcount	545	455	281	165	227
FTE	507	405	224	142.5	179
Male/Female	106/439	85/371	47/234	30/135	4/223
Average length of service	7 years, 0 months	8 years, 11 months	11 years, 5 months	5 years 11 months	9 years, 2 months
Average age of workforce	43.9	44.8	49.8	44.1	45.1

The table below provides a breakdown of permanent and agency workers in the **management and leadership** roles within Assessment, Childrens and Families, Corporate Parenting and Disabled Children’s Services on 31 March 2024.

	Budgeted FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	Unfilled Vacancies
		ALL	Agency	Agency Rate %	Perm	Perm Rate %	
ALL Team Managers, Service Managers & HoS Worker Totals	50	44.0	16.5	33%	27.5	55%	6.00
Assessment	12	10.0	5.5	46%	4.5	38%	2.00
Children & Families	25	23.0	7.0	28%	16.0	64%	2.00
Corporate Parenting	7	5.0	4.0	57%	1.0	14%	2.00
Disabled Children's Service	6	6.0	0	0%	6.0	100%	

There has been a 11% (5.0fte) reduction in **all agency workers within these roles since July 23** (see below). The national benchmark figure for Social Workers was 17.8% in 2023, and across all agency workers in the Assessment, Childrens and Families, Corporate Parenting and Disabled Children’s Services, we are currently at 33%, having reduced from 44% in July last year.

Month/Year	Budgeted FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	Unfilled Vacancies
		ALL	Agency	Agency Rate %	Perm	Perm Rate %	
Jul 23	49	43.0	21.5	44%	21.5	44%	6.00
Aug 23	49	43.0	20.5	42%	22.5	46%	6.00
Sep 23	49	41.0	19.5	40%	21.5	44%	8.00
Oct 23	49	39.0	17.5	36%	21.5	44%	10.00
Nov 23	49	43.0	19.5	40%	23.5	48%	6.00
Dec 23	49	43.0	19.5	40%	23.5	48%	6.00
Jan 24*	50	41.0	18.5	37%	22.5	45%	9.00
Feb 24*	50	42.0	19.5	39%	22.5	45%	8.00
Mar 24*	50	44.0	16.5	33%	27.5	55%	6.00

* Showing temporary increase in Budget Est in Corp Parenting 1 x TM in January 2024

The table below provides a **breakdown of permanent and agency workers in Social Worker roles** within Assessment, Childrens and Families, Corporate Parenting and Disabled Children's Services on 31 March 2024.

	Budgeted FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	Unfilled Vacancies
		ALL	Agency	Agency Rate %	Perm	Perm Rate %	
ALL Social Worker Totals Only	225	196.6	101.0	45%	95.6	42%	28.36
Assessment	44	39.0	27.0	69%	12.0	31%	5.01
Children & Families	121	100.6	53.8	53%	46.8	47%	20.38
Corporate Parenting	37	38.5	15.8	41%	22.7	59%	-1.53
Disabled Children's Service	23	18.5	4.4	24%	14.1	76%	4.50

There has been a **7% (12.6fte) reduction in all agency workers** within these roles since July 23 (see below).

Month/Year	Budgeted FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE	Unfilled Vacancies
		ALL	Agency	Agency Rate %	Perm	Perm Rate %	
Jul 23	218	209.8	113.6	52%	96.2	44%	8.21
Aug 23	218	198.8	102.6	47%	96.2	44%	19.21
Sep 23	218	197.6	101.0	46%	96.6	44%	20.36
Oct 23	218	195.6	97.0	45%	98.6	45%	22.37
Nov 23	218	196.4	95.8	44%	100.6	46%	21.57
Dec 23	218	194.4	94.0	43%	100.4	46%	23.56
Jan 24*	225	203.0	99.6	44%	103.4	46%	21.96
Feb 24*	225	199.4	102.8	46%	96.6	43%	25.56
Mar 24*	225	196.6	101.0	45%	95.6	42%	28.36

* Showing temporary increase in Budget Est in Corp Parenting 1 x TM and 7 x SW, all approved in January 2024

The number of **Interim and Consultants** has been reduced by 60.7% from 28 in February 2023 to 11 currently within the whole of CYPF with 9 in Children's Social Care.