

PROPOSAL TO IMPROVE THE RECRUITMENT & RETENTION OF QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS (UNDERTAKING CHILD PROTECTION WORK) IN CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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1. Purpose of the report

This report seeks the approval of the Cabinet for a series of measures intended to improve the recruitment and retention of Social Work Staff in the Children Schools and Families Service.

2. Summary

CSF is currently experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining sufficient Qualified Social Workers. The recent Social Services Inspectorate Report identified recruitment and retention issues as one of the main reasons for the inconsistencies in the quality of our Child Protection Services.

Currently CSF have 83 vacancies for Qualified Social Workers, experienced in Child Protection across the Quadrants. Our current vacancy rate is 33% and average turnover rates are 17%.

The reasons why Social Workers leave can be summarised as - better career progression opportunities and financial rewards elsewhere, excessive workload and poor work-life balance.

Social Workers are concerned about the level of support and access to Team Managers. In the normal course of events, Team Managers do not hold any cases, however, given our vacancies, they are having to cover casework, and attend court-hearings, which means they are far less available to support staff.

It is proposed to address these recruitment and retention issues by three related strategies:

- ◆ Salary increases - Add competitive market supplements to defined roles
- ◆ Extending career progression opportunities by investing more in our existing staff to improve retention

- ◆ Workforce re-modelling to get the right balance between qualified, unqualified and Administrative staff for particular tasks in assessment and casework management

The cost of the proposals require a growth in the revenue budget of £1.1m for 2004/05, increasing to £1.75m in 2007/08. The proposals are intended by 1 April 2005, to reduce the current vacancies from 83 to 15, reduce turnover from 17% to 10%, reduce unallocated cases to less than 1% and increase the number of staff in Social Work Career Pathway training from 10 to 70.

3. Conclusions

CSF needs to take action to improve the recruitment and retention of Social Work Staff.

The market supplements will help retain our existing Qualified Social Workers, whilst additional funding will increase progression opportunities for all Social Workers in CSF.

Implementing new processes and administrative support will improve the quality of service and allow more time for front-line workers to undertake direct casework with children and families.

The above initiatives, combined with our short-term recruitment campaigns will give Children, Schools and Families the resources to reduce the level of unallocated Child Protection Cases and spread the existing workload, relieving the pressure points in both referral and assessment and long-term casework in the Quadrants.

1. Background

- 1.1 CSF is struggling to attract and retain sufficient qualified Social Workers to sustain and deliver a safe service to some children within Hertfordshire.
- 1.2 The Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) recommended in its Annual Review of Performance (September 2003) that recruitment and retention should be identified as a priority area for improvement.
- 1.3 Subsequently, in the SSI Inspection of Child Protection Services (December 2003) one of the summary findings identified that the quality and effectiveness of service had been adversely affected by the volatility of the workforce, particularly high levels of staff turnover and difficulties in recruiting and retaining experienced professionally qualified Social Workers.
- 1.4 The SSI recognised the impressive efforts that were being made to address workforce issues, however the level of vacancies in Social Work Teams continued to be a significant challenge.
- 1.5 These vacancies are causing capacity issues in the allocation of Child Protection cases and have contributed to the lack of consistency in the quality of casework practice.

1.6 This report proposes a number of initiatives to address these recruitment and retention issues.

2. Current Position

2.1 Over the past 12 months, 40 Qualified Social Workers have resigned from Social Work posts within the Quadrants, CSF has an establishment of 211 Qualified Social Workers across the Quadrants; currently there are 128 in post, leaving 83 vacancies. Of the 83 vacancies, 18 are currently covered by agency staff.

2.2 These levels of vacancies necessitated an overseas recruitment campaign. We have recently recruited, subject to references, 21 Australian Social Workers and it is planned that they will join HCC on a phased basis over the summer months.

2.3 Details of where those vacancies are, are shown in the table below

	Long-Term Care				Referral & Assessment				Disability			
	Est	In Post	Agy	Vac	Est.	In Post	Agy	Vac	Est.	In Post	Agy	Vac
EAST	32	19	4	9	28	12	1	15	5	5	1	-1
SOUTH	25	17	0	8	18	11	1	6	5	3	1	1
NORTH	27	21	0	6	19	11	0	8	5	2	0	3
WEST	25	14	5	6	17	10	3	4	5	3	2	0
	109	71	9	29	82	44	5	33	20	13	4	3

2.4 The current vacancy rate across the Quadrants is 33% of establishment. The average turnover vacancy rate is 17%.

2.5 Qualified Social Workers who have resigned have been interviewed by CSF's Human Resources Unit, to understand their reasons for leaving. These reasons can be summarised as excessive workload, perceived lack of management support, poor work-life balance, better promotion opportunities and financial rewards elsewhere.

2.6 The SSI recognised that there is a national problem in recruiting and retaining Qualified Social Workers and that Hertfordshire's proximity to London exacerbates this difficulty.

2.7 The recent Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters' and CSF's 'Growth & Change Programme', recognise the need to implement long-term measures regarding workforce reform to eliminate the current reliance on reactive solutions to the shortage in qualified staff. The Department for Education and Skills will be considering strategies for improving the skills and effectiveness of the children's workforce and making working with children a more attractive career option. A common core of training, flexible routes into social work, including work based training routes, is being considered.

2.8 CSF has already established pilot projects for workforce re-modelling, by examining the most cost-effective ways of delivering services and achieving the

correct balance between qualified, unqualified and administrative staff for particular tasks. The workforce re-modelling will enhance the ability of frontline staff to safely manage more Child Protection cases and will address one of the main reasons why they leave; i.e. workload pressures and work-life balance, by having more effective support in place. It will also improve the consistency and quality of our casework management.

- 2.9 The longer-term actions regarding manpower planning, workforce re-modelling, succession planning, career paths, graduate and management development are currently being incorporated into CSF's Recruitment and Retention Strategy.
- 2.10 Social Workers are concerned about the level of support and access to Team Managers.
- 2.11 In the normal course of events, Team Managers do not hold any cases and their main function is to supervise, support and coach their staff and closely monitor the progress of casework.
- 2.12 However, given our vacancies, Team Managers are having to cover casework, and attend court-hearings, which means they are far less available to support staff. This is a concern, particularly in relation to new, inexperienced or overseas staff who require considerable levels of supervision.
- 2.13 If the numbers of Social Workers is increased through Recruitment and Retention, the Team Managers will be released to concentrate on their main tasks of supervision and monitoring.
- 2.14 The current grading of Social Workers within CSF is: -
- | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|---------|------|---------|
| H7 Pre-qualification Level | Salary Min. | £19,185 | Max. | £21,282 |
| H8 Social Workers | Salary Min. | £21,282 | Max. | £23,358 |
| H9 Social Workers | Salary Min. | £24,726 | Max. | £26,640 |
| M1 Senior Practitioners | Salary Min. | £27,420 | Max. | £30,594 |
- 2.15 Progression through levels H8 to H9 is based on experience and competencies, and usually takes approximately 12/18 months. Progression to Senior Practitioner is more difficult, owing to the limited number of posts available and causes career progression problems. Investing more in our existing staff by creating greater opportunities for progression will improve the retention of experienced staff.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 The action to be taken needs to address the main reasons why Social Workers leave.
These are:-

- ◆ Financial rewards elsewhere
- ◆ Career Progression opportunities
- ◆ Excessive workload
- ◆ Poor work-life balance

3.2 The specific proposals to address these recruitment and retention issues are related to three main areas:-

- ◆ Salaries - Add competitive market supplements for defined roles. The payments will be contingent on satisfactory performance and continuing service
- ◆ Career Progression Opportunities - Extend the number of Senior Practitioner posts available which are linked to length of service, competencies and on-going performance. Increase the number of opportunities for staff to be able to study to become a professionally qualified under our, Social Work Career Pathways Scheme.
- ◆ Workforce Remodelling - Implementing new processes for casework with enhanced administrative support, thus releasing Social Workers to work directly with children and families and to carry out those functions which only a Qualified Social Worker can perform.

The following tables give further details about the proposals:

3.3 Salaries

The proposed market supplements are as follows:-

Qualified Social Workers	Outcome								
◆ Market-Force Supplement of £2,000 for each Qualified Social Worker with (less than 4 years service) in Social workers Teams in Quadrants, involved in Child Protection Work , currently this is 95 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE).	These payments will reduce the gap between HCC and our neighbouring counties, and make our pay levels more competitive, compared with London Boroughs.								
◆ Market-Force Supplement of £3,000 for each Qualified Social Worker with (more than 4 years service) in Social Work Teams in Quadrants, involved in Child Protection Work, currently 33 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE).	Position now: <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">London Boroughs</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£30,239 (Average)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>HCC H9 Max.</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£26,640</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Difference</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£ 3,599</td> </tr> </table>	London Boroughs	£30,239 (Average)	HCC H9 Max.	£26,640	Difference	£ 3,599		
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◆ These payments will be paid in two instalments, with clawback clauses, to reduce the risk of payments being made and then Qualified Social Workers leaving. They will also be subject to satisfactory performance.	After Supplements added: <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">London Borough</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£30,239 (Average)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>HCC H9 Max</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£26,640</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Plus £3k Supplement</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£29,640</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Difference</td> <td style="text-align: right;">£ 599</td> </tr> </table>	London Borough	£30,239 (Average)	HCC H9 Max	£26,640	Plus £3k Supplement	£29,640	Difference	£ 599
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ These payments will be payable annually for at least the next 3 years and will be reviewed annually. 	<p>This will help with recruitment of new staff and by having proposed phased payments this will help retain existing staff.</p> <p>Target is to recruit 86 Qualified Social Workers and reduce the vacancies to 7% of establishment by 1 April 2005 (i.e. 15 vacancies)</p>
Team Managers	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Market-Force Supplement of £2,000 for Quadrant Team Managers and Principal Officers involved in Child Protection work. 	Retention of Qualified Team Managers, ensuring that sufficient differential exists between Team Managers and experienced Qualified Social Workers.

3.4 Career Progression Opportunities

The following career progression opportunities will enable CSF to retain and develop more Qualified Social Workers and allow progression to senior level for those who can demonstrate the necessary competencies.

Senior Practitioner Posts	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The introduction of a Competency based Scheme, maintained to a nationally recognised standard, to all our Qualified Social Workers across CSF who have 4 or more years service, so that they can progress to a Senior Practitioner role, once they can demonstrate the necessary competencies. ◆ Senior Practitioners in the Quadrant based teams, involved in Child Protection cases qualify for the £3,000 market related supplements ◆ This scheme will be available across the whole of CSF and not just limited to Social Work posts in the Quadrants. 	This will encourage experienced Social Workers to stay who otherwise may feel that they have reached a ceiling under the current CSF Structure, due to the limited funding available for Senior Practitioner posts.
Social Work Career Pathways	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ In order to increase the number of Qualified Social Workers available to CSF, more investment is required to support professional development of existing unqualified staff. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Extra investment is required to fund more students on the full Social Work degree courses at the University of Hertfordshire (UH). ◆ In addition a research project with UH is currently developing a qualification for Professional Assistants to enable them to take on duties currently assigned to Social Workers. It will be modular based, and would lead to a qualification equivalent to Year 1 of the full Social Worker Degree. Students may then be able to transfer to the Degree Programme. 	<p>This is a longer-term solution as it is a 3-year course. It is planned for 30 students per year to start the course for the next 4 years.</p> <p>This will enable us to develop the very competent unqualified Professional Assistants and those from non-traditional routes (e.g. local workforce, adult learners) to become Qualified Social Workers. This is a medium-term initiative and will start producing results after 12/18 months. It is planned that 30 students would attend the course starting September 2004.</p>
<p>Continuous Professional Development</p>	<p>Outcome</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ CSF is committed to developing its staff. All social care staff attend courses on policies, procedures and practices within CSF. This is further supported in their teams by the line manager who offers regular supervision and co-ordinates the induction of the worker into their team. ◆ The member of staff and manager work together to identify the learning needs and assess the competence and practice of the worker to undertake the responsibilities of the job. A performance management plan is agreed and reviewed twice annually. ◆ As a result of the Social Service Inspectorate, the recently formed Performance Action Team have identified some priority actions:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Review and revise policy and guidance regarding supervision and ensure this is integrated into the County Council Performance Management & Development Framework 	<p>A more confident and competent workforce whose learning needs can be met through, shadowing, co-working, attending specific training days, group supervision, coaching and mentoring. In addition, Social Workers will be encouraged to undertake post-qualifying training, within a national framework that will recognise and validate their competence to practice as Social Workers.</p> <p>This will enable staff to progress and develop their career with HCC in a more structured way and feel less likely to want to move and seek opportunities with other authorities.</p> <p>This will help improve the consistency and quality of assessments and casework management.</p> <p>Agreed supervision policy which Managers will be expected to carry out effectively.</p> <p>This will provide more support and training, which will aid retention.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Produce samples of good supervision practice with guidance notes and roll this out via Quadrant Seminars and individual coaching and mentoring ◆ An analysis will be completed on the strengths and weaknesses of Managers. Individual Learning and Development Plans will be drawn up as part of the Performance Management and Development Framework ◆ A Learning and Development Strategy for all staff is being developed. The strategy will address the particular learning and development needs of Managers ◆ The evaluation of all cases on the Child Protection Register has included a section about what support or training staff will need to ensure best practice ◆ All staff are receiving further training and coaching of the Core Assessment Framework, and other related subjects on a monthly basis. 	<p>Managers performance will be enhanced as development areas are improved.</p>
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3.5 Workforce Remodelling

This will enable Administrative Staff to add more value to their current roles and improve the effectiveness of frontline workers.

Re-aligning Resources in Casework Management	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ In re-modelling the workforce, the allocations of resources between Qualified, Unqualified and Administrative Staff has been reviewed. Additional Administrative Staff within the Quadrants could release Qualified Social Care Staff from performing routine administrative duties, in order to safely increase their caseloads. 	<p>The current analysis suggests that potential benefits can be gained, but the pilot period will be extended for a further 6 months until September 2004, to enable more full analysis of the costs and benefits that are available.</p> <p>As this is a significant change, it is important to test the pilot further to ensure that the outcomes have not been effected by any seasonal variation or other factors.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ This scheme is currently being piloted and tested in the North Quadrant. ◆ The financial implications include the estimated cost of implementing this pilot scheme in all Quadrants. 	<p>The intended benefit will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Allocation of more cases ◆ Social Workers carrying greater caseloads without risk to case management
<p>Enhancing Administrative Support</p>	<p>Outcome</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ In order to increase the quality of the Administrative Support, a clear administrative structure with clear accountability for specialist staff with a competency based progression career scheme, is required. ◆ A detailed scheme has been devised and needs to be fully implemented across the Quadrant. ◆ Additional funding is required to implement the scheme. 	<p>By having more effective Administrative Support, it will help support Social Workers with casework management and release them to spend more time supporting their clients, rather than doing inappropriate administrative tasks.</p>
<p>Worklife Balance</p>	<p>Outcome</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Another opportunity to help parents manage their work-life balance exists around Child-Care provision. ◆ Costings and the wider implications of tax, provision and eligibility for this benefit needs to be further researched. ◆ This will be included in our Early Years Strategy. Additional funding will be required and a future report will follow. 	<p>Effective Child-care provision will help with increasing the number of Qualified Social Workers who can return to work and help others to manage their parental responsibilities more effectively, allowing recruitment and retention.</p>

3.6 Professional Assistants

<p>Professional Assistants</p>	<p>Outcome</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Although these positions are not hard to fill, the Professional Assistants have been essential to maintaining a safe service. Their efforts need to be recognised. 	<p>Recognition of the support of the unqualified staff within the quadrants who have been central to providing and maintaining the service due to the shortage of Qualified Social Workers. This will ensure that the Professional</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ It is proposed that a £500 Honorarium for all Professional Assistants, subject to satisfactory performance and completion of 1 years service. ◆ This is a one-off payment. 	<p>Assistants' efforts have been valued and will support their retention in Service.</p>
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4. Financial Implications

In order to introduce these initiatives, the budget will need to increase on an ongoing basis:-

SALARIES	CURRENT ESTABLISHMENT	FULL ESTABLISHMENT
Market Supplement for Qualified Social Workers Based on: 95 WTE x £2,000 + £529 on costs £240,255 33 WTE x £3,000 + £794 on costs £125,202	£365,457	£619,635 Based on: 155 WTE x £2,000 + £529 on costs £391,995 60 WTE x £3,000 + £794 on costs £227,640
Team Manager and Principal Officers (in Child Protection) Adjustments Based on 35 Managers and 8 Principal Officers x £2,000 + £529 on costs	£108,747	£108,747 At full establishment
TOTAL	£474,204	£728,382
CAREER PROGRESSION	CURRENT ESTABLISHMENT	FULL ESTABLISHMENT
Increase in Senior Practitioner Posts Based on 33 WTE receiving upgrade from H9 - M1 £3,404, including on costs	£ 112,332	£204,240 Based on 60 WTE receiving upgrade from H9 - M1
Social Career Pathways Based on: 55 days replacement cost @ £100 per 30 Students at college studying the full degree £168,000 4 modules at £9,000, per module for 30 students studying foundation course £36,000	£ 204,000	£333,000 Costs increase as more groups start. Costs increase to maximum in 2007/8
TOTAL	£316,332	£537,240

WORKFORCE RE-MODELLING	CURRENT ESTABLISHMENT	FULL ESTABLISHMENT
Re-aligning Resources in Casework Management Based on an additional 4.5, H3 posts x 4 Quadrants (Assumed introduced by October 2004) Full year cost £305,582.	£ 152,791	£ 305,582
Enhancing Administrative Support Based on and additional 4.5, H3 posts x 4 Quadrants (assumed introduced October 2004) Full year cost £305,582	£ 99,242	£ 144,186 To include other divisions on completion of Growth and Change Review
TOTAL	£ 250,033	£449,768
PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANTS	CURRENT ESTABLISHMENT	FULL ESTABLISHMENT
Professional Assistants Based on: 79 WTE x £500	£ 39,000	One-Off Payment
GRAND TOTAL	£1,082,069	£1,715,390

The additional funding required for 2004/05 would be £1.1m, as most of the actions need to be implemented immediately.

These costs would increase as CSF moves to a full establishment. Forecasts are:

2005/06 £1.50m
2006/07 £1.65m
2007/08 £1.72m

5. Comparability

The above proposals have been reviewed and agreed with Adult Care Services, who have been very supportive. They are considering the implications of introducing the competency-based scheme for Senior Practitioner.

This would require a change in the current role of the Senior Practitioner in ACS. If Qualified Social Worker with more than 4 years service moved from H9 to M1, the cost implications for ACS would be £204,000.

6. Staff Consultation

UNISON has been consulted on the CSF proposal.

7. **Targets**

If the above expenditure is approved it is forecast that the following targets will be achieved:-

	Current April 2004	Target April 2005
Reduction in Qualified Social Worker vacancies In Quadrants	83	15 (i.e. 7% of establishment)
Reduced Turnover Rate	17%	10%
Unallocated Child Protection cases	5%	Less than 1%
Staff on Social Work Career Pathways	10	70

8. **Conclusion**

CSF needs to take action to reduce the number of Qualified Social Workers leaving Child Protection positions.

The market supplements will help retain our existing Qualified Social Workers, whilst additional funding will increase progression opportunities for all Social Workers in CSF.

Implementing new processes and administrative support will improve the quality of service and allow more time for front-line workers to be working with families.

These initiatives will reduce turnover. Combined with our short-term recruitment campaign with Manpower and our overseas recruitment campaign, this will give us the resources to take unallocated cases to an acceptable level and spread the existing workload, relieving the pressure points across the Quadrants.

9. **Background Papers**

The Social Service Inspectorate (SSI) Annual Review of Performance (September 2003)

The SSI Inspection of Child Protection Services (December 2003)