

**CHILDREN, SCHOOLS and FAMILIES VACANCIES**

*Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families*

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**1. Purpose of the report**

To respond to a request to provide information on vacancies in CSF and to enable the Select Committee to consider areas for possible scrutiny.

**2. Summary**

The report separates the data and commentary on non-teaching vacancies from those on teaching vacancies. Particular attention is given to the professions in which vacancies are a national as well as a local difficulty. An outline of activities to tackle the most difficult recruitment areas is given.

**3. Conclusion**

It is suggested that this report and the comments of members be passed to the Resources, Property, Partnership and Consultation Select Committee which is considering recruitment and retention across the whole of the County Council.

## 1. NON-TEACHING VACANCIES

The position as at 28 September 2001 is:

<b>Occupational Groups</b>	<b>Establishment</b>	<b>Current Vacancies</b>	<b>Vacancies as a Percentage of Establishment</b>
Administrative & Secretarial ( Local Service & Operations)	358.88	42.98	11%
Senior Managers – M5+	59.75	5.19	8%
Social Workers – East	73.5	16.43	22.35%
- North	60.97	4.61	7.56%
- South	52.16	10	19.17%
- West	54.35	12.30	22.63%
Operations – Family Placement Social Workers	120.71	11.64	9.64%
- Residential Workers	237.14	38.24	16.12%
Other Quadrant Professional Staff:			
- Educational Psychology	45.2	5	11%
- Education Welfare	33.6	1.09	3.24%
- Community Teams	20	4	20%
- Professional Assistants	37.5	1.81	4.82%
- OT's	6.07	1.04	15.52%
- Family Support Centres	96.37	7.26	7.53%
- Youth Team	77.5	4.04	5.21%
- Pupil Services	43.21	3.52	8.14%
Educational Advisers	51.10	7	13%
Youth Offending	41.45	1	2%
Youth Service	96.49	5.24	5%
Finance	81.02	6.8	8%
Management Information	40.30	6	14.88%
Human Resources	58.44	5.20	8%

The shortage of social work staff reflects the national picture. The survey of all local authorities published by the Association of Directors of Social Services on 21 September indicates an average vacancy rate for children's social workers of 16% with an average for London borough of almost 20%.

The pattern in Hertfordshire has been one of a continually rising trend of vacancies from 9% in June 2000 to 18% in March 2001. The peak vacancy rate of 23% at the start of August has now fallen to just below 18%.

## **1.2 Action to cover vacancies**

Where possible vacancies are covered by agency staff, use of professional assistants to cover work and ensure maximum use of qualified social work skills, re-allocation of duties, the postponement of non-urgent work and by an increased workload for staff.

The impact of the level of vacancies is assessed within each budget in the Children, Schools and Families service. The potential underspends that arise from vacancies are considered against the additional costs that are incurred in employing agency staff or deploying consultants to ensure the work programme continues to be delivered. In addition, the need to accelerate our recruitment processes generates additional costs. These issues will be reflected in the budget monitor reports.

## **1.3 Impact on services**

After taking into account temporary cover arrangements, the impact on services is as follows:

### **LOCAL SERVICES DIVISION**

#### **Social Work in the Quadrants**

- All referrals to quadrants are initially assessed to ensure that risks to children re evaluated and managed.
- All referrals requiring child protection investigation are immediately allocated.
- Other referrals may, after initial assessment, need to wait longer than we would wish for full assessment and provision of service.
- In the long-term teams, casework is confined largely to children on the Child Protection Register, Looked After Children and those children who have recently been removed from the Register.
- Preventative work to prevent family breakdown or support children in need is undertaken only in exceptional cases.

#### **Educational Psychologists**

- All entitlement visits to schools are provided.
- Project work in schools and multi-professional preventative work is limited.

#### **Occupational Therapists**

- Families with Children with Disabilities are waiting longer than we would wish for assessments, equipment and adaptations to their homes.

### **OPERATIONS DIVISION**

- Family placement teams are prioritising their work, leading to delays in approvals and placements for non-urgent cases.

- Locum workers are used, where necessary, to chair Child Protection conferences and undertaken management reviews. There is some loss of consistency and reduction in the support to quadrant staff on professional development and practice issues.
- Safe occupancy levels are maintained in residential children's homes. Where occupancy levels need to be reduced because temporary cover cannot be provided, additional placements (note additional cost) are purchased from the independent sector.
- Development work in the Division has slowed down.

### **PLANNING DIVISION**

- The use of external consultants and the additional commitment of staff has ensured that significant deadlines are met.
- There is some slippage on timescales mainly in relation to internal processes.

### **RESOURCES DIVISION**

- Work has been re-distributed to ensure that critical work is delivered.
- Development work in the area of management information has slowed in order to cover the routine preparations of national data returns.

### **SCHOOL STANDARDS & CURRICULUM DIVISION**

- Vacancies in some subject specialisms means that schools sometimes find it difficult to secure appropriate advice and support.
- The scope and breadth of the professional development programme for school staff are somewhat reduced.

### **DEVELOPMENT DIVISION**

- Recruitment difficulties in the Development Division have led to a re-distribution of work and some slippage in anticipated timescales.
- Staff shortages in other divisions has had a significant impact on this division's ability to involve fully an appropriate range of other staff in projects which underpin the future development of Children Schools and Families.
- Shortage of Community Childcare Officers means that problems are being experienced in meeting the targets for expansion agreed in the Early Years Development and Childcare Plan.

## **1.4 Action to recruit**

Regular advertising campaigns which were a feature of the formal Social Services department have continued in CSF. The most recent has been a two-week campaign during September in Community Care, the Guardian and the Times Educational Supplement. The campaign has not advertised specific posts, but has sought to attract a range of professions to work in CSF. 50 definite applicants (some applying for more than one job) have been received, split as follows:

4	Social work team managers
20	Social workers
10	Residential social workers
13	Education welfare officers
15	Non-specific

In addition:

- qualified staff who have left Hertfordshire in the last 12 months are currently being contacted to foster interest in working for the new service;
- a fast-track interview process has been established with a panel which meets each Tuesday to ensure that applicants have a decision within 5 working days;
- Manpower has established secondary contracts with specialist social work agencies and has a system of daily contacts with its partners to recruit temporary staff;
- all student social workers on placement with Hertfordshire are routinely contacted about career opportunities (with a 78% success rate);
- recruitment of administrative staff and residential social workers has been promoted through local press advertising and, for administrative staff, backed up by leaflet drops in housing estates close to the quadrant bases;
- a recruitment open evening at Porters Wood in St. Albans, again backed up by a local leaflet campaign, attracted 76 people on 24 September;
- a team of 3 managers will spend 5 days in South Africa in October interviewing social workers who plan to come to the UK;
- discussions with Manpower and other agencies are at an early stage in exploring a possible long-term relationship to recruit qualified staff from overseas.

## **2. Teacher Vacancies**

2.1.1 The survey of schools in September 2001, with a response rate of 78%, shows the following results:

<b>SECTOR</b>	<b>TEACHER ESTABLISHMENT</b>	<b>TEACHER VACANCIES</b>	<b>VACANCIES AS A % OF ESTABLISHMENT</b>
<b>Primary &amp; Nursery</b>	3,961.5	92	2.32%
<b>Secondary</b>	4,472.5	102	2.28%
<b>Special</b>	366.6	15	4.09%
<b>TOTAL</b>	8,800.6	209	2.37%

2.1.2 By geographical quadrant, vacancies are distributed as follows:

<b>SECTOR</b>	<b>NORTH</b>	<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>WEST</b>
<b>Primary &amp; Nursery</b>	14	25	35	18
<b>Secondary</b>	24	31	22	25
<b>Special</b>	4	1	6	4

2.1.3 Of the 557 schools which were surveyed, 313 reported no vacancies at the start of the school year.

## **2.2 Action to cover vacancies**

Of the 557 schools, 313 have reported no vacancies at the start of the current term.

Vacancies are covered by the use of supply teachers (either from the school's own pool or from agencies), additional temporary hours for part-time staff or by a reduction in the management duties of senior staff, including headteachers.

## **2.3 Impact on services**

The level of teacher vacancies in our schools is a concern. Clearly the most extreme impact of this is short-time education; there has been only one incidence of this over the last twelve months but headteachers and governor reports indicate that some schools remain close to this action.

There has been some incidence of school inspections where teacher shortages have had an impact on outcomes. The longer term impact on standards is a matter of concern; there is already evidence of a shortfall against EDP performance targets, to some extent attributable to teacher shortages.

There is evidence of teacher shortages being managed through school leaders providing more teaching themselves; whilst helpful in the short term, this is clearly a concern in terms of the broader objectives of raising standards. The efforts of CSF are focused on improving the situation for schools both in the short, medium and longer term.

## **2.4 Actions to improve recruitment**

2.4.1 The Teacher Recruitment and Retention team has three foci for its work:

- a) recruiting new teachers to Hertfordshire;
- b) attracting potential returners for permanent, temporary or supply positions;
- c) promoting teaching as a career to graduates and others who already live or work in Hertfordshire.

2.4.2 Continuing work during 2001-02 schools year to support recruitment activities comprises:

- a recruitment telephone helpline;
- a programme of town centre recruitment events;
- marketing Hertfordshire schools and authority at recruitment fairs in universities and colleges;
- a video conferencing link with an Australian agency.

2.4.3 Specific activities during the year are:

- a returners' conference in September
- a returners' course which includes a 2 week school placement in the Autumn term;
- a returners' club to maintain contact with interested teachers;
- a programme of surgeries for returners and new graduates;
- the production of a recruitment video;
- a teaching taster course in November;
- a conference and modular training programme under the Graduate and Registered Teacher Programme;
- updating workshops for teacher returners;
- one week school placements for 2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduates.

### **3. SUMMARY**

3.1 As a result of vacancies, the CSF service is certainly hard-pressed, but staff not only are responding extremely well to ensure that a good service continues but also are keen to develop the full potential of CSF.

3.2 The greatest emphasis has been on ensuring that risk is properly assessed and managed. By ensuring that statutory obligations are met and a secure service base is built, staff have had to reduce time spent on achieving the significant gains which CSF can deliver.

**MTC**  
**4/10/01**