

9d. CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Peer Review

As part of our Children's Safeguarding Improvement Programme, we invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a Peer Review of our children's safeguarding services to provide us with a 'critical friend' assessment of our Improvement Journey so far and highlight where further work is needed. The eight strong Peer Review Team started on the 5th October and were with us all week reviewing a number of children's journeys and analysing data and documentation prior to their visit. Whilst onsite they undertook visits, interviews and focus groups with staff from across the partnership as well as reviewing social care records. The team presented its findings to senior officers from all key agencies on 9th October and will be producing a formal letter during November.

Overall the team were impressed with the hard work and dedication from all partners to work together and improve services for children and young people in Buckinghamshire. However, whilst they identified a number of strengths and improvements we have made since the Ofsted inspection, as we expected, they also identified a number of areas for further improvement. We will be using this feedback as an opportunity to take stock of where we are now and where we need to get to, and in doing so recognise that our ambitions will take us longer than anticipated. We continue to be dedicated and committed to drive these improvements forward as quickly and efficiently as possible to ensure better outcomes for the children of Buckinghamshire – which is of paramount importance to us all.

All partners agreed that we need to work together to review and refresh the Improvement Plan to ensure that everyone is aware of the priorities and what we need to achieve by when, including taking forward some of the 'quick wins' identified by the Peer Review Team. A multi-agency planning workshop on 21st October helped take this work forward. The final letter and refreshed Improvement Plan will be circulated in November.

Courageous Conversations

Following the Courageous Conversations staff event that took place in March, a refresh day was held on the 20th October. The session was attended by 13 staff members from across the business unit. They were honest about their reflections on how the service is developing, challenged aspects of the improvement plan and made suggestions on how we continue to move forward. Staff feedback is an essential part of our change programme; we will build in more staff feedback forums and opportunities to engage with senior managers to ensure this continues to be influential.

Recruitment and Retention

We continue to have a focus on recruitment and retention which is a critical element of our improvement journey; our permanently appointed Senior Management continue in post and are committed to improving recruitment and retention.

A national shortage of social workers presents challenges for the service. In order to raise our profile in this tough market we are aiming to launch a new careers site and social media campaign at the end of the year. There will also be representation from the Resourcing Team and the Business Unit at the Community Care Live and The Compass recruitment fairs in London in November. The Resourcing team are also launching a new agency portal to speed up the submission of agency CVs, reduce

duplication and enable automated reporting. In addition, the team are focusing on building stronger relationships with Recruitment Agencies to make sure the Council gets the best talent available. In order to grow our own talent and reduce our reliance on agency workers, One Council Board is reviewing a proposition for a Newly Qualified Social Worker Programme.

On-going work continues to improve inductions for newly appointed members of staff with the aim to improve the new starter experience which will contribute to improved retention levels. We continue to scrutinise exit interviews to learn lessons from our leavers.

Work on growing our own Social Workers continues through supported routes to completing a social work degree, masters or postgraduate diploma. There are currently 10 undertaking a social work degree due to complete in September 2016/17. A further 6 have been identified to start postgraduate diploma/masters in January 2016. The effort to reduce our agency spend is continuing with the agency bill having reduced to 25% in September.

The key metrics for monitoring social worker recruitment in the critical area of Children's Social Care are given below. Please note that the time to offer for temporary and permanent recruitment has reduced quarter on quarter and now meets target. This has been achieved by working hard on the process and ensuring that duplication and turnaround times for CVs are addressed. The permanent time to start date (vs offer) will always be harder to reduce as many candidates have 3 months' notice, which equates to at least 90 days.

Key metrics for September data against benchmarks are as follows:

Metric	Sept Data	Target
% of qualified social workers on an agency contract (includes all agency workers including those covering absence, maternity etc)	25%	20%
Actual Agency Spend	£459k	£600k
Sickness Rate for qualified social workers (average days lost in a reporting year per fte)	6.76 days	12 days
Number of qualified agency social workers covering permanent posts in Children's Services	57	27
Metric	Q2 Data	Target
Average time to fill permanent qualified social worker post (approval/ rolling CV receipt to offer)	17 days	43 days
Average time to fill permanent qualified social worker post (approval/ rolling CV receipt to start date)	66 days	75 days
Average time to hire qualified SW agency workers (date booking requested to start date)	14 days	14 days
Permanent Retention / Turnover Rate	17.3%	15%

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