

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Employment & Appeals Committee

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PART 1 **FOR INFORMATION**

Recruitment in Children Services Update and Step up to Social Work Programme

1 Purpose of Report

This report has been produced for Members following a request to update the committee on recruitment and retention issues that were detailed to this Committee in April this year. Further it gives information that committee members requested regarding how the Step up to Social Work Programme is working in SBC.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Employment & Appeals Committee to note the contents of the report.

3 Supporting Information

Members will be aware that the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers highlighted that there was a need for priority and immediate action to 'develop and put into operation a comprehensive workforce strategy to attract and keep high quality, experienced permanent staff in Slough.

At a meeting of this Committee in April the action plan arising from the above was described. Below is a progress report on what has been done and the impact of this work.

What have we done?

- Undertaken a regional benchmarking exercise and developed and agreed proposals for recruitment and retention incentives for social workers and managers in front line social work teams
- Re-designed recruitment and promotional materials (using our staff to promote working in social work in Slough) and undertaken a national recruitment campaign. 14 candidates have been offered and accepted posts.

Practice Managers	4
Consultant Practitioner	1
Experienced Social Worker	3
Newly Qualified Social Worker	6

- Put in place a comprehensive 12 month programme of support (including 'restricted' case loads) and development for newly qualified social workers. Our current cohort of 5 will complete this programme in February 2015. Our second cohort of newly qualified social workers (7) have been recruited and started with us at the beginning of September. They will undertake the 12 month programme, with an overlap with the first cohort. The second cohort undertook a month's induction programme prior to starting work in their new teams. The purpose of this was to familiarise the newly qualified social workers with Slough children and families services and to undertake some basic training to prepare them for the transition.
- Re-designed (with the support of colleagues in Facilities Management) the working environment of our social work teams, so that teams now have their own bank of desks and managers are able to sit along side their team with a business support officer to each team. Created some break out areas on the floor where confidential discussions are able to take place.
- Children, Young People and Family Services now have a stable senior management team covering the Early Help and Social Care services. In December we had one permanent Head of Service in post, we now have all 5 posts covered by permanent appointment or other long term arrangements.

What is the impact?

- We are predicting to reach our target of 80:20 permanent to agency social work staff by October 2016, ahead of the February 2017 target.
- 8 of the 11 front line social work teams should have permanent first line managers in post before December. This is an essential pre-condition to stability, attracting more permanent social workers and continuing to improve the quality of social work
- Morale is good and permanent staff feel valued.
- Our 2 cohorts of newly qualified social workers are being well supported whilst they learn to be 'good' social workers. By September 2015, assuming all remain working with us, we will have 'grown' 12 permanent social workers who are working towards becoming experienced practitioners

It is abundantly clear that there is no one 'quick fix solution' to the recruitment and retention problems in Slough. A concerted effort on a number of fronts is believed to be our best chance to bring about a gradual but steady shift away from an over reliance on agency staff and begin to attract and employ social work practitioners of the right calibre. This will cost the authority less money and bring stability and consistency for children.

Step up to Social Work Programme

The Step Up to Social Work Initiative is a government incentive to encourage graduates from other professionals to come into Social Work on a fast track programme.

The programme has a robust and rigorous recruitment process and there is an expectation that the students from this selection process will be of high quality. Their experiences on placement are designed to equip them with a sound foundation to start work as a newly qualified social worker on the Assessed Year in Practise Scheme. The idea behind this is that Slough will 'grow their own' social work staff within the programme which is being

rolled out to help with the recruitment difficulties into social work of the 'right kind of people, with the right kind of skills.'

Currently Slough has two students on placement through this programme. The students have now completed their first year and have started their second placement. This will run until March 2015 when, hopefully they will pass, and make appropriate applications to Slough for paid permanent employment.

The Step Up scheme will also be running in 2015, consideration is being given to increasing the number of students through this programme.