

Appendix B - Update in respect of Social Work Recruitment

Social work has for a number of years experienced an issue with recruitment. This is a national issue and one that is particularly difficult when seeking to recruit experienced staff. This is caused by a number of factors:-

Market forces - there are a number of Local Authorities on Government intervention plans and as a result experienced Social Workers are able to earn significant amounts of money as agency workers.

Negative media reporting - this has the effect of making social work an unattractive career option for young people to consider.

University fees - there has been a change to the bursaries being given to students, historically social work studies were given a full bursary and fees were covered, this changed last year and a number of Universities have oversubscribed places on the course. For example: Lincoln secured 34 bursaries and has 84 students on the social work course. This means the bursary is given in the second year in a competitive basis. This has seemed to have had the effect of making social work less attractive to mature students who historically were present in greater numbers on social work training courses.

In response to this recruitment and retention difficulty, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) has introduced a number of measures to secure good quality staff:-

Career fairs

LCC staff have attended and continue to attend a number of university career fairs promoting the benefits of working for Children's Services. This has included attending the networking meeting at Bishop Grosseteste University in Lincoln where students have been recruited into our locality teams and for sessional work with the Children's Homes and Contact Service.

Regional Universities

Relationships have now been established with a wide range of regional universities to enable LCC to offer a wider range and more diversity in terms of practice placements. The aspiration in this approach is that we can work with high performing universities in the region who have a strong research background, and voice in the profession; this would attract the best calibre workers. Relationships have been established with: Hull, Nottingham, Nottingham Trent, Sheffield Hallam, and Leicester. The established relationship with Lincoln continues.

Step Up programme

Historically LCC sponsored employees to attain a part time social work degree from Lincoln University. This programme is in its final two years and as discussed recruiting newly qualified social workers is no longer a prevailing problem. The Step Up programme is a scheme sponsored by central government as part of its attempt to improve the quality of social worker practitioners. Applicants have to

evidence work experience in the sector and already completed a degree to 2:1 standard.

LCC has this year increased its offer of eight placements for the 14 months of the Step Up programme and the response has been excellent. By August 2015 LCC will know if they have successfully filled the eight places available.

Rolling Recruitment

The rolling recruitment commenced in January 2015. This comprises of a specific social work job page on the LCC website and three job applications that remain open on a rolling basis. As a result of this approach, by May we have been successful in appointing to a number of vacancies - six practice supervisors through five internal promotions and one external candidate; one advanced practitioner who has decided to work for us permanently and cease being an agency worker; ten level 1 social work posts have been offered and a further recruitment date is set for the end of May. These posts are based across all locations in the County. This approach has been successful in the recruitment of newly qualified staff who are relocating to Lincolnshire. This has been supported by using online advertising methods, the most successful being Community Care online.

Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)

LCC has introduced a mandatory ASYE scheme for all newly qualified workers. This has enabled the ongoing learning required in the first year after qualifying to be built upon and also given the time for knowledge, skills and critical reflection, to enable workers to develop in their practice. This includes regular professional supervision and mentoring by more experienced member of the team. At the end of this programme the workers have to evidence their competence by the completion of an assessed portfolio of work and the completion of a post qualifying module provide by Nottingham Trent university. This has given an academic rigour to the ASYE programme and leads the workers into the progression pathway.

Career progression

LCC has introduced a career progression panel for social workers to make progress from being a level 1 to a level 2 social worker two years after they qualify. What this has meant is that workers do not have to apply for level 2 jobs but have to provide evidence of competence to a panel independent of their team. This approach has been developed to offer a clear career progression route for staff that is open and transparent.

Post Qualifying pathway/CPD

LCC has introduced a post qualifying pathway for staff to enable them to be successful in promotion to the next level posts. This includes the commissioning of specific post qualifying training courses and the availability of coaching and mentoring. These courses have included a specific post qualifying unit for the Child Protection Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers (commencing in July 2015), PAMS (parenting assessment manual) training, Public Law Outline training, Signs of Safety training and practice leader sessions, Supervision training, annual professional judgement conference and many more learning opportunities. Many of

these courses have been mandatory to ensure that all staff have the same baseline of knowledge to apply in their area of work.

Regional work

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) group has a workforce development group and LCC is working with this group to devise a Memorandum of Co-operation. This will focus on how the Local Authorities in the East Midlands region can work more closely together on matters of workforce development, and manage agency staff usage and costs. This in turns links to LCC engagement in the national work of the Local Government Association (LGA) focusing on the recruitment and retention of social workers.

Future work for next 12 months

There are a number of areas that will be developed over the next 12 months:-

- Continued attendance at regional university career fairs and other promotional events.
- The ASYE programme will continue to be reviewed and updated to respond to the changing demands of social work and address any emerging themes in practice.
- To bring diversity to the workforce LCC will be continuing the development of its relationships with the University further and will be keen to see how the placement options within LCC can be widened. This will include a 12 month drive to secure more practice educators within the organisation across a range of teams.
- Work with HR will commence to plan two schemes internally to bridge the gap in terms of staffing. These will focus on equipping level 2 social workers with the knowledge and skills to progress to advanced practitioner level and alongside this a career progression criteria and panel will be established. A second piece of work will focus on the gap between advanced practitioner and practice supervisor.

