

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN

SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE UPDATE

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To receive a position update on the mechanisms put in place to secure the stability of the TfC social care workforce against the context of continued regional and national recruitment pressures.

2. Background Information

- 2.1 The TfC Social Work workforce was increased in 2015 at the recommendation of Ofsted who identified that higher than average caseloads had resulted in in unsafe practice. In response to this issue, there was an agreement to expand the number of social worker positions within TfC and re-invest in the wider workforce.
- 2.2 TfC's ability to fill the increased numbers of posts needed was impacted on by continued issues in the recruitment of post qualified social workers. This resulted in an increase use of agency workers. By the end of 2016, 37.7% of the social care workforce were agency workers (the national average was 16% at the time).
- 2.3 TfC produced a Social Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy in 2017 identifying a number of mechanisms to reduce reliance on agency social work staff; this included improving our recruitment processes, marketing TfC as a new and innovative organisation and helping our employees to feel valued by positively changing workplace culture and investing in our workforce.
- 2.4 Targets for Social Work appointments were identified by the TfC Improvement Board with progress reported into the Council at quarterly intervals. The target for TFC in the period 2019/20 is to reduce agency usage to 14% of the social work workforce.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 Since the publication of the TfC Social Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy in 2017 considerable work has been undertaken to meet the identified targets and achieve greater stabilisation across the Social Care Workforce.

3.2 As a result of this work, TfC is now exceeding national targets across all areas; the most notable area of improvement is the percentage agency worker rate which has decreased from 37.7% to 13.50% as at the end December 2018. This means that the Operational Commissioning Group (OCG) target of 14% for 19/20 has now been met and exceeded.

3.3 The work undertaken as part of the Strategy has included:

- Improvements to the TfC Social Work offer (extending to application of a 2% recruitment and retention allowance for all Social Work qualified positions, a Golden Hello payment of £1000 and a relocation scheme for new Social Workers joining TfC).
- More manageable caseloads for experienced Social Workers and protected caseloads for ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) Social Workers, which has created a supported and “safe” working environment for Social Work professionals.
- A renewed focus on flexible working for Social Work staff in recognition that our workforce is young and predominantly female.
- Greater investment in training and development provision for Social Workers with a clear career pathway now in place from student placement (TfC continues to partner regionally with local HEI providers and participates in Step Up and Frontline national campaigns), to completion of the ASYE year right up to Team Management level with investment in the First Line Management and Leadership programme.
- External engagement through the ADASS/ADCS North East Workforce Development Group secured a regional cap on daily rates for any newly engaged agency social workers. This was introduced on a phased basis from September 2017 and was fully implemented to all agency workers from July 2018 to provide a regional benchmark around the payments of agency workers. Through this group there was also a regional approach to the promotion of the North East at national social work recruitment events;
- Increased numbers of ASYE's recruited in 18/19 by 50% which has created a potential influx of a further 21 Social Workers into the TfC workforce on 1 September 2019;
- Roll-out of a targeted digital recruitment campaign which made the Social Care ‘Work for Us’ pages on the TfC website the highest visited pages in the period and also a Recruitment Open day held on 27 September 2018;

- Investment in 'Grow Our Own' strategies with sponsorship of 3 existing TfC staff on the Postgraduate Social Work degree programme and 3 further places on the recently published Degree Apprenticeship programme. This will create a further 6 Social Workers who will progress automatically through the ASYE career pathway at TfC through Frontline and Step Up programmes;

3.4 The above offer is shaped through improved staff engagement including an annual Staff Survey, wholesale TfC Staff Briefings with Directorate and Board members, an annual Training Needs Analysis and regular HR, Training and Staff Wellbeing updates.

3.5 **Table 1** below shows the impact of the above interventions on the stability of the TfC social care workforce in the current period:

Table 1: National and local children's social worker workforce statistics

| | England | TfC Sept 16 | TfC present |
|------------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| Agency worker rate (%) | 16.1 | 37.7 | 13.50 |
| Turnover Rate (%) | 15 | 19.2 | 12.29 |
| Vacancy rate (%) | 17 | 25.6 | 9.2 |

Statistics based on FTEs. National/regional statistics taken from DfE Children's social work workforce 2017 - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/681546/SFR09-2018_Main_Text.pdf

3.6 The TfC Social Care workforce continues to be scrutinised as part of routine workforce planning activity. This informs future recruitment needs and ensures that the right skill mix and expertise is secured across all frontline teams. We know from this that TfC needs to continue its rolling recruitment programme specifically targeting post-qualified workers who will counteract the influx of newly qualified social workers coming through.

3.7 TfC estimate that if turnover rates remain at the forecasted level for 19/20 that recruitment of 1.9FTE additional Social Workers per month, alongside the conversion of 21FTE ASYE's would secure 100% permanence by the end of this period.

4. Recommendations

4.1 The Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider the progress made and comment on the report.