

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION
CABINET BOARD**

3rd November 2016

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES
- A. JARRETT**

MATTER FOR MONITORING

**WORKFORCE PROFILE –
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES**

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1. **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the Workforce profile in relation to Children and Young People Services.

2. **Executive Summary**

There are currently no concerns regarding the Workforce profile of Children and Young People Services and the improvements that have been made over the last few years continue to be maintained. The number of vacancies is low, the use of agency workers is also low and managed appropriately and turnover and sickness absence are at acceptable levels. There is stability amongst the management team and people issues are being dealt with promptly and appropriately.

3. **Background**

Data regarding workforce has been reported on a regular basis since the Serious Concerns Protocol was invoked in November 2012, in order to monitor progress against the Workforce element of the Improvement Plan for Children and Young People Services. The Protocol was lifted at the beginning of 2015 and the monitoring of workforce data has continued to ensure that the improvements that have been achieved in this area are maintained. This report provides an update of the current position.

4. **Report**

4.1 Establishment Control/Recruitment

All vacancies continue to be tracked and reported to the Senior Management Team on a fortnightly basis. The Service is only advertising for one Fostering social worker and one peripatetic social worker at the moment. All adverts are placed via the HR Officer who works closely with the Senior Accountant to ensure that budgets are adhered to.

All appointments are jointly signed off or overseen by the HR Officer and the Recruitment team to ensure that safer recruitment practices are also adhered to.

The average number of net vacancies in 2016 so far is 2.75 FTE (0 at its lowest and 6 at its highest), compared to 7.6 FTE in 2015. In 2015, 28 employees joined the Service from external organisations and so far in 2016, 13 have joined the Service. Recruitment has therefore slowed down, resulting in longer periods of stability for teams.

4.2 Recruitment of Social Workers

The Service has continued to recruit experienced Social Workers for its permanent positions. However this year three newly qualified Social Workers have also been recruited to temporary posts to aid succession planning. Out of the three, two were previous students in the Service, which is a good indicator that NPT is now an employer of choice – people want to work for us. This is further supported by the fact that two employees who have left the Service in previous years have come back this year and one recent leaver has applied for one of our currently advertised posts.

4.3 Recruitment of Other Positions

The Service has easily filled unqualified positions, using prior consideration or other internal applicants. One Young Person's Advisor and one Family Worker have been recruited this way. There are currently no management vacancies that the Service is actively recruiting for. In terms of past management vacancies, these have mostly been filled by internal recruits, through promotions. This has been important in helping to retain an ever more experienced workforce.

Earlier this year the market pay supplement for Principal Officers was extended until November 2020. This payment was agreed by the Head of Human Resources following clear evidence from the Head of Service, that the basic rate of pay was significantly less than the relevant market rate for a similar post and also that there were recruitment and/or retention problems. Although two Principal Officers left last year the senior management team has since been stable which has no doubt benefitted the Service.

4.4 Use of Agency Workers

Agency workers are only being used when absolutely necessary, following receipt of a business case from the team manager. At its height the Service was using over 40 agency workers. There are currently 3 in the Service covering maternity leave and vacancies, two of these are in the Conference and Review Service. This team currently has 2 employees on maternity leave with 2 due to go on maternity leave, plus two vacancies. Offers have been made to fill the vacancies and new starters are due to start in November.

The number of agency workers is likely to drop to 2 at the end of October as one agency worker has accepted a permanent post in the Llangatwg Team. Another recent agency worker is coming back to us as a permanent Independent Reviewing Officer in November. The fact that agency workers are still applying and accepting jobs with the Service continues to be encouraging. They would rather work for NPT than accept contracts elsewhere. According to the Care Council, as at 1 June 2016, 191 of registered social workers were employed in social care by an agency, so agency workers are still being used extensively in both Children's and Adults Services across Wales.

4.5 Progression/Succession Planning

Every 6 months Social Workers who are currently grade 8 and have 2 years' experience are given the opportunity of progressing to grade 9. In October three employees have progressed. The number of grade 8 Social Workers is currently only 13 (as at 6th October 2016), out of a total of 81. The workforce therefore continues to get more and more experienced.

Internal employees continue to be promoted to higher positions within Children's Services, thus helping retention and motivation. This year 13

employees have been promoted to positions such as Team Manager, Deputy Team Manager and Consultant Social Worker.

Employees also continue to be supported to attend the Team Management Development Programme and other development programmes as appropriate.

4.6 Leavers

The number of leavers so far this year is 17 (with two months to go). This compares to 21 overall in 2015, 20 in 2014, 14 in 2013 and 23 in 2012. Turnover therefore appears to be slightly lower this year than in the last 2 years. Three of the leavers transferred to Adults Services and so remained with the Authority.

Exit interviews continue to be conducted with all leavers, unless the circumstances deem it inappropriate. Reasons for leaving include Career related (6) with social workers moving to higher paid or alternative jobs in CAFCASS, the NHS, Barnardo's, an agency and Bridgend Council. Three of these had been unsuccessful in internal interview processes but obviously wanted roles with more responsibility and found them elsewhere. There were a number of unavoidable leavers – four retired, as well as employees who left whilst being managed (mostly informally) for capability reasons – 5.

With the workforce becoming ever more experienced the Service may well encounter more turnover for career related reasons, although it will continue to offer development and promotion opportunities where possible to try to mitigate this. The Service has introduced full appraisals this year which should also aid retention by focusing on individuals' personal and development needs.

It is worth noting that issues to do with work/life balance or stress are not generally being mentioned by leavers. During exit interviews they have been very positive about the Service and would all but one recommend the Authority as an employer.

4.7 Induction/Probation/Supervision

All managers conduct individual inductions, probationary reviews and supervision sessions with their team members. Six monthly corporate

induction days are also held to enhance inductions in teams. The HR Officer spends 2 hours with new recruits to go over HR policies and procedures in between the six monthly corporate inductions. New recruits also attend appropriate training as part of their induction. As mentioned above comprehensive appraisals are currently being rolled out.

4.8 Disciplinary/Grievance Issues

The amount of disciplinary and grievance issues in the Service remains acceptable. There have only been 2 disciplinary investigations this year so far, resulting in one Written Warning for Misconduct. There are two current grievances (no previous grievances), one being dealt with at the informal stage and one at the formal stage 1. There is also one ongoing Employment Tribunal relating to historical issues.

4.9 Maximising Attendance at Work

Over the past three years sickness absence has been closely monitored and proactive support put in place to support managers and staff in maximising attendance across the service.

During the period of 1st January 2016 to 31st August 2016, Short Term absences accounted for **760.5** calendar days during the period compared to **1259.5** days lost in 2015, showing a large decline in short term absence days lost over the year. Long term absences accounted for **1535** Calendar days during the period.

The number of days lost across the service is attributed to only **34%** of the workforce. Therefore **66%** of staff took no sickness absences during the period of January to August 2016.

There were **6** individuals who were absent on three or more occasions during the year (**6.9%** of the overall staff that have been off sick). Calendar days lost for these individuals accounts for **213** days for the service. Of the 6 individuals, work related stress was listed as the cause for absence of only one employee which is linked to an ongoing, historic grievance.

During the period there were **20** instances of sickness absences of 28+ calendar days which compared to **10, 14** and **35** instances for the same

period in 2015, 2014 and 2013 respectively resulting in an average of **19.75** instances across the last 4 reports since 2013.

The most prevalent reasons for employees experiencing a sickness absence during the period were: Personal Related Stress (**20%**), Work Related Stress (**15%**), Bereavement (**15%**), Fractures (**15%**) and Ligament Injury/Surgery (**10%**).

Work related stress has increased from **1%** in 2015 to **15%** in 2016. This figure relates to 3 members of staff being absent due to internal HR procedures raised (e.g. disciplinary and grievances).

This compares to

- 2015 absences were: Abdominal/stomach related (**24%**); Cold (**10%**) and Headache (**8%**). Work related Stress accounted for only **1%** of incidents of absences.
- 2014 absences were: Abdominal/stomach related (**23%**); Other Reasons (**12%**) and Flu (**10%**). Stress related absences accounted for **5%** of incidents of absences.
- 2013 absences were: attributed to: Stomach related (**17%**); Stress related (**16%**) and Cold related (**10%**).

Maximising attendance and managing absences continues to be a priority. Actions in place to ensure staff welfare and absences are managed includes:

1. Weekly reporting of long term absences and case management activities to Children Services Management Group.
2. Fortnightly reporting of long term absences and case management activities to SSHH Senior Management Team.
3. Use of Phased Return to Work following long term absences
4. Early intervention of Stress related issues (Work or Home Related Stress)
5. Centrally directed issuing of cautions by HR (email to managers for staff who hit 3 or more absences in a 12 month period or when patterns emerge).
6. HR directed Stage One Maximising attendance meetings with staff who hit 3 absences or more or Long Term absences.

4.10 HR Support

Two HR Officers continue to support the Service on-site in Neath Civic Centre. There are currently no plans to change this. A co-ordinated and pro-active approach to managing HR issues continues to benefit the Service.

5. **Conclusion**

The downward trend of vacancies and use of agency workers has continued in 2016. Teams are stable which can only have a positive impact on service provision. Lower case-loads, high morale and fewer changes of social worker will undoubtedly have improved outcomes for children.

The management team continues to be proactive in dealing with issues at the lowest levels and together with high levels of communication this has resulted in a positive culture of openness and continuous improvement.

An ever more experienced workforce brings its own challenges as well as benefits but a conscious effort to promote internally and provide development opportunities has been beneficial in this respect.

Work will continue over the next year to maintain these favourable conditions as well as further reduce turnover and sickness absence.

6. **Financial Impact**

Not applicable.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

Not applicable.

8. **Workforce Impacts**

Not applicable.

9. **Legal Impacts**

Not applicable.

10. **Risk Management**

Not applicable.

11. **Consultation**

Not applicable.

12. **Recommendation**

Not applicable.

13. **Reason for Proposed Decision**

Not applicable.

14. **Implementation of Decision**

Not applicable.

15. **Appendices**

Graph – Net Vacancies and Agency Workers June 2013 to October 2016

16. **List of Background Papers**

None.

17. **Officer Contact**

Andrew Jarrett, Head of Children and Young People Services