

Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting	9 th December 2021
Report Subject	Social Services Workforce
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer (Social Services)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nationally we are operating in the context of considerable and sustained pressures that threaten Local Authorities' ability to fully meet statutory responsibilities and regulatory requirements. The challenges include:

- Increasing demand and complexity of demand
- Insufficient supply of qualified and experienced social workers and Occupational Therapists
- Shortage of direct care workforce, particularly domiciliary care staff, across local authority and independent sector providers
- Limited applications from suitable foster carers aligned to the age and need profile of our looked after children
- Severely restricted supply of reliable, suitable and affordable agency social workers

Many local authorities are working on a range of short, medium, and long term measures attuned to their particular circumstances. This report identifies the specific risks we are managing locally, and the range of actions we are taking to proactively respond to protracted recruitment and retention challenges across the social care sector. However, resolving the pressures across the social care system will take investment and necessitate a range of actions at a national, regional and local level. This includes a call for a standardised national pay scale for social workers and the harmonisation of pay rates for health and social care workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To acknowledge the current staffing crisis in the social care workforce and the impact this is having on the Council's ability to consistently deliver a safe and effective service.
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2	To support the action being taken in response to this crisis to ensure sufficient capacity and resilience to effectively support vulnerable adults and children.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	WORKFORCE PRESSURES
1.01	<p>Nationally, there are employment and vacancy pressures across key sectors of the economy. The Health and Social Care pressures are pressing and require urgent action. Demand for services is higher than pre-Covid levels and coincide with a reduced workforce capacity. Regional partners are taking all the actions within their scope and power to alleviate the pressures on the service. Despite all that is being done locally, and in the region, health and social care services are in a serious and deteriorating position which could take us into winter crisis. Our drive to keep services functioning and able to meet demand are being led professionally in the regional Recovery Co-ordination Group. The need for direct assistance with capacity and resources has been escalated to Welsh Government given the emergency we are facing in maintaining services and the risk of service failure this winter.</p>
1.02	<p>Flintshire has responded proactively to recruitment and retention challenges with a range of measures. Specifically, over the last 12 months we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sponsored officers to commence studies to become social workers • sponsored 4 OT places on the Open University (OU) course • targeted newly qualified employees and developed a 3 year programme to enable them to develop to level 3 social workers • recruited additional children services assistants and developed routes for them to qualify as social workers • expanded our pool of Senior Practitioners to build management support for new staff and enhance retention opportunities for experienced workers • develop a 'values' based approach to recruiting front line care workers with robust induction and development support • worked with the independent sector to support the development of approaches to recruit and retain care workers • worked with Health to seek to align and develop complimentary recruitment initiatives and minimise competing for the same cohort of staff • worked with local university and colleges to promote social care as a career of choice and to attract new workers • launched the Maethu Cymru/Foster Wales brand supported by national TV and media campaigns to attract new foster carers. • promoted and worked with social care Wales to launch the WeCare Wales recruitment campaign • developed a number of well-being programmes to support the existing workforce to stay well

1.03	<p>However, even with these strategies we have been unable to ensure workforce sufficiency leading to pressures across the social care system. More recently we have social workers moving to other employers via agency work, and to other local authorities offering higher salaries. Unfortunately, even with a rolling programme of adverts, we have been unable to recruit experienced social workers, OT's or a sufficient number of additional direct care workers.</p>
1.04	<p>The workforce challenges are leading to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • waiting lists including access to early help, social work and OT support • Senior Practitioners in some Teams are having to hold cases, particularly for complex cases • where vacancies or sickness arise, there is no capacity in the system to redistribute cases and they are having to be managed by staff on the daily Duty system. This results in reactive case work until the case can be allocated • Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW), Children Services Assistants/ Personal Advisors (CSA/PA) and Community Care Officers (CCO) are holding or supporting complex cases, necessitating additional management oversight and support • pressures in sourcing domiciliary care for people, resulting in a wait for care packages at home • pressures in sourcing registered placements for teenagers leading to the short term use of provision operating outside of regulation • people waiting for homecare packages in residential care homes in step down placements. • pressure of sourcing care home placements in county for nursing and complex dementia care • reduced service provision meeting critical needs only
1.05	<p>In response we are making decisive and responsive service adjustments that are interim to ensure that limited resources are deployed proportionately across cases depending on need as demand and risk shifts. This approach reduces risk when compared to an attempt to maintain all levels of service with the same approach i.e. with the risk that services are less targeted and more thinly deployed across the board.</p>
1.06	<p>Whilst it is acknowledged that this approach falls short of our desired good practice models, and in some cases will perhaps only represent minimum acceptable practice and support, our core principle is that any approach will continue to prioritise and maintain safeguarding responsibilities across all services.</p>
1.07	<p>Workforce Project Board A Task and Finish Project Board has been established chaired by the chief social serves and head of HR to maximise the effectiveness of recruitment to all roles within in social services. The meeting currently meets fortnightly and takes forward the following specific actions.</p>

1.08	<p>Commissioned care costs – Regional Approach</p> <p>Actions have been identified to respond to escalating risk of Providers exiting the market as increases in the cost of living and insurance impact on business viability. This includes a letter sent to WG from the Chief Executives of the organisations represented at the RCG, asking for support to implement a long term sustainable fee model for commissioned care.</p>
1.09	<p>Streamlining of HR processes</p> <p>Actions have been developed to streamline HR processes to make our recruitment processes more efficient and responsive, where deliverable within our current IT systems. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A fast track approval process for front line Social Services vacancies - Developing a reduced application form – giving due regard to safe recruitment principles and legislation within RISCA (Registration and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act - Review of existing processes to identify opportunities for efficiencies
1.10	<p>Marketing of Job Opportunities</p> <p>Actions centre on innovative advertising and marketing approaches to attract a good quality workforce. To do this we are building on the Values Based Recruitment initiative and maximising the positive reputation of working for Flintshire County Council. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refreshed advertising and social media campaigns, including training for HR staff on using social media effectively. - New advertising templates - Advertising on Care@Flintshire - website - Showcase direct care roles at job fayre / community events including the planning a social care job fayre in February 2022 - Engagement with Job Centre, Careers Wales and DWP to ensure the promotion of social care opportunities - Promotional video work – some already prepared with WeCare Wales. - Social Services open days / leaflet drops
1.11	<p>Attracting people to work in social care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with Coleg Cambria to promote social care and attract new entrants - Developing placements for newly qualified staff and those seeking sponsorship - Working with Communities for Work to explore where we can offer incentives to care workers - Developing an options appraisal for Social Care Workforce Academy
1.12	<p>Retention of Workforce</p> <p>There is a need to consider how we might support the current workforce to continue with the resilience and hard work shown to date and retain them in the sector in the long term. Ideas being explored include:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluate proposal for rotation of SW and OT staff in areas vulnerable to burnout and fatigue - Develop a local sector awards ceremony for direct care staff - Explore positive approaches to encourage and reward high workplace attendance
1.13	<p>Market Supplement for level 3 childcare social workers</p> <p>One of the immediate actions we have had to take is to instigate the authority's Additional Payments Policy. This is in response to a pressing need to ensure sufficient experienced level 3 qualified childcare social workers following repeated, unsuccessful recruitment campaigns. The Policy has enable a temporary 12 month market supplement to bring the salary for level 3 experienced and qualified childcare social workers to become comparable with posts outside of the Council.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The implementation of the market supplement as a short term, temporary arrangement of 12 months duration in November 2021 is £183k. Given the budgetary pressure already in place for Children's Services this will be a Corporate financial pressure to be met from corporate un-earmarked reserves.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	A comprehensive risk register has been developed and is attached as Appendix 1.
3.02	<p>The monitoring and review of a full project risk register is being undertaken by a specific task & Finish Group. Risks are categorised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational: the Council's inability to fulfil its statutory and essential social care functions. • Financial: the pressure created by the escalating cost of agency staff and our inability to retain the workforce • Legislative: delays in the management of court proceedings and safeguarding. • Operational: the Market Supplement is time limited with no long tem solution • Other operational risks are detailed in the Project Risk Register

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	None

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 Workforce Risk Register

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Craig Macleod Telephone: 01352 701313 E-mail: craig.macleod@flintshire.gov.uk
7.02	Contact Officer: Susie Lunt Telephone: 01352 701407 E-mail: susie.lunt@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	None