



## Children's Services Social Worker Position Statement – December 2017

The Children's Workforce Development strategy 2017-20 highlights the aims and objectives and the future approach to developing a talented and skilled workforce which delivers on our aspirations for enabling children and their families to be safe, healthy and have access to good quality education so they go on to have happy and fulfilling lives. The **aims** of our corporate plan are that people in Dorset are:

- Safe
- Healthy
- Independent
- Prosperous

These aims underpin the focus of all our work with children, young people and families and are core to the development of the workforce. The **objectives** of the workforce development strategy are to:

- Ensure there is a sufficient, confident and stable workforce with the appropriate skills and competency to deliver good outcomes for children, young people and families
- Develop a strategic approach to workforce planning, learning development and recruitment in Children's Services
- Ensure that professional work effectively in partnership with children, young people and families and across the wider workforce
- Offer appropriate qualification, training and progression routes for the workforce
- Ensure that the workforce has the skills, knowledge and confidence to work with the most vulnerable children, young people and families
- Ensure the workforce has the skills, knowledge and confidence to work effectively with children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Alongside many local authorities both across the South West and nationally, we have struggled to recruit to social worker vacancies, particularly those who are highly experienced and knowledgeable, with the ability to undertake complex casework. As at December 2017, we are carrying a total of **46 full time equivalent** posts as vacancies. These vacancies are across all areas of Children's social work, but prevalent across the area teams where we are experiencing acute skills shortages. We have a total of **33 full time social worker posts** vacant across the service.

We currently spend around £1.1 m on agency staff covering vacancies, long term sickness absence and maternity leave and we need to reduce this. To address this issue we have:



- A dedicated social work microsite
- An advertising campaign to attract social workers to Dorset
- A programme of developing social workers and 'Grow our Own' career pathways
- An ongoing participation in the DfE 'Step Up to Social Work' programme

In addition, we are developing and implementing:

- Sector specific job descriptions and person specifications
- Improved career progression and a fast track programme for career development
- Ensuring that there are reasonable caseloads

We are proud to be a partner with the DfE in developing and launching our 'Reinvigorating Social Work' (RSW) programme. RSW an evaluated training and action learning programme that develops direct work skills around appreciative enquiry and evidence informed practice. It includes ways of establishing and maintaining effective relationships with children, families and partners to improve assessment, planning, doing and reviewing skills. At its heart, RSW is a relentless focus on outcome focused practice and being able to identify what 'good' outcomes look like for individual children and answer how we will know we have made a difference. We have a plan for all our social workers and managers to participate in the RSW programme by Summer 2019 and this forms part of our unique offer to new recruits into the service.

We fully recognised that we need to do more to attract and retain experienced social workers. We have been successful in recruiting ASYE Level 1 social workers who get first class support during their first year with us, giving them a great start to their future career with Dorset Children's Services. We now need to focus our efforts in not only targeting talented and experienced people, but also increasing our baseline numbers. To this end, Members agreed an additional **£1m** into frontline social worker services, creating an **additional 20 social worker posts**. These extra posts will:

- Reduce caseloads to a manageable number of no more than 1:15
- This will enable social workers to do the quality work with families and children
- In turn, this will enable us to manage risk, safely leading to fewer children on CP plans and to fewer children being taken into care and families able to stay together safely
- Manageable caseloads make social workers feel safe. This makes councils an attractive employer of choice and vice versa
- We know from experience that this approach works



Children's Services

Social Worker Recruitment and Retention Plan 2017-18

Activity	Activity is designed to close this gap	Description	Possible interventions	Next Steps	Responsible	Timeline
Ensure 'Our Offer' supports our aim to be an employer of choice	Need to improve our employment offer to ensure it is competitive.	Review our employment offer so that we can attract and retain high calibre candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the relocation package</li> <li>Introduce a key skills retention bonus for L2/3 vacancies</li> <li>Map out career progression routes and criteria</li> </ul>	Recommendations to committee Full costing based on current vacancy levels and sign off Promote career pathways	HRBP HRBP CS Leaders CS L&D team and Comms	31.01.2018 31.12.2017 31.01.2018
	Need to ensure we create an environment where social workers feel safe and supported	Ensure a consistent approach to high quality supervision and management throughout all teams  Career progression routes are clearly defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managers and leaders provide high quality reflective supervision</li> <li>Managers and leaders provide support for resources, performance management, wellbeing</li> <li>Managers and leaders support CPD in ensuring staff are developing their skills, knowledge and experience</li> <li>RSW programme is accessible</li> </ul>	Directors and AD identify areas where additional support is needed Draw up a development plan to support managers Link into RSW programme for all staff	CS L&D team with CS Leaders CS Leaders RSW Project Lead	28.02.2018 31.03.2018 31.03.2018



Attend* Campus Recruiting and Career Fairs	Need to improve overall applicant pool	Both qualified and part qualified students can be effectively recruited and introduced to DCC employment offer. Raises the profile of the authority and flags the opportunities available to graduates, post graduates and undergraduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Send team of HR and experienced/frontline social workers to fairs</li> <li>Use RSW pop-up banners (comms have these)</li> <li>Provides an opportunity for job seekers to ask both job specific and hiring process/benefit questions</li> </ul>	CS Recruitment lead and HR to organise	HRBP	31.12.2017
Develop Provider Partnerships	Need to improve overall applicant pool	Develop a variety of recruitment strategies with area universities, colleges and schools to encourage students to understand and pursue careers in social work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with local training providers to generate interest in social work in general and DCC in particular</li> <li>Promote DCC career pathways offering and showcase varied learning routes</li> </ul>	CS Lead to approach local providers	CS Recruitment Lead	31.12.2017
Targeted Recruitment	Improve diversity in social worker employee profile	Consider whether specialisms are required and/or a more diverse workforce recruited from different ethnicities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target career fairs to increase diversity amongst new recruits</li> <li>Promote specialist areas in our recruitment campaigns and showcase what we are doing in these areas to make the employment offer attractive</li> </ul>	Comms to help provide materials	Comms with HR	31.01.2018



Placements	Need to improve overall applicant pool	Target social work returners through offering a paid placement pending full registration. Although officer time is required in supervising and training, the potential payoff is having a known applicant who is familiar with the role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from LGA initiative to promote returners to Social Work</li> <li>• Offer flexible working options to make the employment offer attractive</li> <li>• Recruitment banner to promote returners to social work</li> </ul>	Comms to help promote this  Use CommCare features to promote returners in line with LGA January 2018 campaign	Comms with HR	30.01.2018
Word of Mouth	Need to improve overall applicant pool	If current employees are happy in their jobs, they become one of the best sources of recruitment. We need to understand what makes DCC social care directorates a great place to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve casework ratio</li> <li>• Increase no. of posts</li> <li>• Use snap surveys to get employee feedback following specific interventions</li> <li>• Improve and put in place consistent level of supervision and management</li> <li>• Make sure the full employment offer is understood</li> <li>• Use the staff survey insights to understand where we can improve</li> <li>• Encourage staff to promote DCC as a great place to work</li> <li>• Proactively manage and support sickness absence</li> </ul>	Comms and HR to work on internal messages to staff via email, mosaic, animations, newsletters, etc.  Internal comms campaign for DCC social workers – including about Reinvigorating Social Work  DCS to secure funding for additional posts	Comms and HR  DCS	31.03.2018  Start Dec 2017



Employees as Recruiters	Need to improve overall applicant pool	The next step beyond word of mouth recruiting is encouraging and incentivising employees to recruit others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the Friends and Family referral scheme on Sharepoint and at team meetings</li> <li>Issue periodic reminders to staff of the current vacancies and their referrals are appreciated</li> </ul>	Comms and HR to work on internal comms messages to staff	Comms and HR	31.03.2018
Develop a Talent Pipeline	Too many unfilled vacancies and potential future vacancies	We need to ensure that we can not only manage our current vacancy rate, but also anticipate future vacancies through natural attrition. It is critically important to keep positions filled. Vacant positions increase the workload of all employees and add to the stress of already stressful jobs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social Work BA (Hons) OU 3 year degree course</li> <li>OU – PG Dip in Social Work – 18 month post grad diploma for candidates with min 2:1 degree</li> <li>No relevant or degree – 3 yrs p/t study to achieve Social Worker degree</li> <li>Introduction to Health &amp; Social Care (K101), no entry qualifications required</li> <li>Step up to Social Work – national 14 month programme for candidates with min 2:1 degree in a relevant subject. DfE funded</li> <li>Social Work apprenticeship possibly due out next year</li> </ul>	<p>CS L&amp;D team to survey staff with relevant entry qualifications</p> <p>CS L&amp;D team to identify potential costs</p> <p>CS L&amp;D team to identify potential candidates based on current qualification base</p>	CS L&D team and HR	31.03.2018
Use our Insights to our best advantage	Too many applicants refusing interviews, job	We have the ability to collect information from our staff to help us to improve the working environment and the role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that RTW interviews are always completed and that we use the information collected</li> </ul>	CS Line Managers supported by CSLT to ensure this is done	CS Line Managers with HR	31.12.2017



	offers and employees resigning from the role	Often this information isn't collected and if it is, we do not analyse it or use it in an insightful way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that exit interviews are always offered, where appropriate and that we feed relevant information through to inform future developments</li></ul>			
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\*List of area educational institutions offering Social Worker qualifications:

- Bournemouth University – Social Work BA (Hons)
- University of Gloucestershire – Social Work BSc (Hons)
- Plymouth University – Social Work BA (Hons)
- University of the West of England – Social Work BSc (Hons)
- University of Bath – Social Work and Applied Social Studies BSc (Hons)
- Southampton Solent University – Social Work BA (Hons)
- University of Winchester – Social Work BSc (Hons)
- University of Portsmouth – Social Work BSc (Hons)