



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
REVIEW BOARD
8 April 2019**

ITEM 5

Report sponsor: Andy Smith, Strategic Director
People

Report author: Suanne Lim, Service Director
Children's Integrated Services

Monitoring Safeguarding Practice

Purpose

- 1.1 Having a stable and competent workforce is a pre-requisite for safeguarding children and young people and driving forward improvements. Derby remains Ofsted rated as 'Good' for its services and support to children and young people, and this report provides an update on recent workforce developments and safeguarding pressures.
- 1.2 The main safeguarding pressure continues to be the significant increase in demand for services across all areas and in particular for children in need of help and protection, which mirrors the national picture. The actions taken to recruit and retain our social work staff are critical to mitigating the additional pressures that this brings.
- 1.3 On the 4 March 2019, a joint targeted multi-agency inspection of Derby commenced. The inspection will assess arrangements for tackling '*child sexual abuse in the family environment*'. There will also be a review of 'front door' arrangements to make sure children and young people are appropriately safeguarded when risks are identified. This is a statutory inspection of partner agencies across the city that is involved in protecting our children and young people. The inspection will conclude on 22 March 2019.

Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note the actions being taken to make improvements and challenge progress.
- 2.2 To provide initial findings of Joint Targeted Agency Inspection (JTAI)

Reason(s)

- 3.1 To provide the Board with an overview of the effectiveness of safeguarding practice in the city.

Supporting information

- 4.1 Derby City Council has statutory duties to safeguard, protect and support vulnerable children and young people. In March 2017, our services for ‘children in need of help and protection, looked after children and care leavers’ were judged to be ‘good’ by Ofsted for overall effectiveness.
- 4.2 Since the March 2017 Ofsted inspection quarterly Quality Assurance audits and visits have been undertaken, both single agency and multi-agency. This has included a ‘mock’ Inspection in March 2018 to test our safeguarding thresholds and processes which have been positive in outcome.
- 4.3 Derby like all Councils experiences difficulty in recruiting experienced social workers and this has been a focused area of work for Children services. The consequence of this is that if there are insufficient experienced social workers to complete statutory work agency staff have to be employed to fill this gap and ensure that children are safeguarded from harm.
- 4.4 During 2017 to 2018 there has been a very significant increase in demand across all of children’s social care and early help services in Derby. Most notably a 12% rise for children requiring protection from harm and a 13% rise in children becoming children in care and needing to be looked after by the Council. This means that our social workers and Team Managers have responsibility for a greater number of children.
- 4.5 **Social Worker establishment, vacancies and agency social workers (excluding fostering and adoption)**

Established SW posts	No of Vacant SW posts	No of Agency SWs in post
122	February 2019 = 15 (September 2018 – 11.5)	February 2019 = 19 February 2018 = 22 (September 2018 = 20)
122	15	19

- 4.6 Of the established 122 social worker posts directly supporting children, 30 social workers are in their first year of practice after qualifying as a social worker, they are called ASYE - Assessed and Supported Year in Employment. As newly qualified social workers they have a reduced caseload and receive additional training and support from the ASYE programme delivered by the workforce and development team. This is important as they 'learn on the job' and are supported in this very demanding area of work.

This explains why the table above shows 15 social work vacancies but 19 agency workers. Additional agency capacity is needed to compensate for the 30 ASYE social workers with reduced caseloads along with essential cover for maternity leave and long term sickness absence.

As corporate parent to children in care and at their request there are no agency social workers in the Children In Care team and there are no agency managers.

4.7 **Cost of Agency Social Work**

The average weekly costs of a Derby City Council social worker is circa £1000 including on costs.

The average weekly costs of an agency social worker is circa £1,300, this is a weekly difference of £300.

For 19 agency social workers this is a weekly difference of £5,700.

For 19 agency social workers this is an annual additional cost of £296k.

Since September 2018 there has been a reduction of a further 1 agency social workers, this is an annual saving of £16.8k.

It is also relevant to note that it is increasingly difficult to recruit the quality of experienced agency social workers that the service requires which does place additional pressure on the service.

4.8 **Recruitment of Social Workers**

A working group was established in September 2017 chaired by the Service Director to focus on making Derby a more attractive place for social workers to choose to work. Actions include:

- Open recruitment advert-bi monthly interviewing, HR checks on the day
- Mortgage Subsidy Scheme- interest free loan
- Good and regular liaison with local Universities, placements for students our future prospective social workers
- Meetings with agency social workers to promote the 'Derby offer', four have converted to permanent staff
- Grow Your Own scheme starts January 2019 for five staff
- Return to Social Work scheme being explored
- As a result of job evaluation social workers receive very favourable salaries compared to other Council areas in the East Midlands.
- Ofsted 'Good' Judgement is attractive to social workers

4.9 **Retention of Social Workers**

There is a good retention record of social workers and staff are loyal to Derby. An example of this relates to ASYE. An ASYE programme has been offered since 2012 and 115 social workers have joined the Council this way. Of the 115, 87 remain working for Derby and some have now moved into management posts. National and our own local research tells us that to retain staff we need to offer the following:

- Good quality supervision and a supportive environment
- Pay and Reward
- Opportunities for progression and development
- Manageable caseloads
- Flexible working patterns

The above points are part of the established offer to our staff apart from social workers currently having higher caseloads than is ideal, which is linked to the demand in the system. This does place significant pressure on social workers and managers which is subject to constant review and scrutiny to consider what support maybe required. This has included additional business administration support and social work and team manager posts. Direct support is also provided through supervision for social workers and the networks established in all localities for peer to peer support.

There is a framework and culture of talking to and listening to staff with regular meetings with our experienced staff in particular. Additionally two staff conferences have been held this year for all staff to improve opportunities for a direct link between the frontline and senior managers which have had very positive outcomes.

4.10 A summary of outcomes of the Joint Targeted Agency Inspection will be provided at the Board.

Public/stakeholder engagement

5.1 There is an ongoing programme of engagement with social work staff and managers to ensure a direct line of sight and communication between senior managers and the front line.

Other options

6.1 There is openness to exploring all options to improve safeguarding practice.

Financial and value for money issues

7.1 For 2017/18 the agency social worker expenditure was £1,970,375
The agency social worker expenditure to date to February 2019 is £1,404,559.

Legal implications

8.1 Local Authorities have a legal responsibility to provide sufficient social workers to act as key workers to children in care, children subject to child protection plans and to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect and to assess children in need.

Other significant implications

9.1 None identified.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Olu Idowu HOS Legal Services	
Finance	Alison Parkin HOS Finance	
Service Director(s)	Suanne Lim, Service Director Children's Integrated Services	
Report sponsor	Andy Smith Strategic Director of People	
Other(s)	Judith Russ HOS Children's Safeguarding	