

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY TASK & FINISH GROUP:
RECRUITMENT & RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS**

WEDNESDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Green (Chair), Councillors; Keens, Rivers, Rowlands and J. Taylor.

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS: Councillors: N. Ayub and Hussain

SUPPORT OFFICERS / ADVISORS:

- Angela Claridge – Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer
- Lee-Anne Farach – Service Director, Specialist Family Support
- Matt Hussey – Democracy and Scrutiny Officer – LBC
- Farah Ismail – Senior Consultation Officer
- Michelle Gwyther– Interim Programme Manager, LEX Team
- Sally Rowe – Director of People

PUBLIC/ INTEREST GROUPS REPRESENTATIVES:

None this time

		ACTION
6.	APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE (REF: 1)	
	Resolved: An apology for absence from the meeting was received on behalf of Councillor Franks.	
7.	MINUTES (REF: 2.1)	
	Resolved: That subject to the deletion of the first four bullet points at paragraph 3 and of any reference to ‘service users’ the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 th August 2016 be taken as read, approved as a correct records and signed by the Chair.	

8.	RECRUITMENT & RETENTION ACTIVITY UNDERTAKEN BY THE PEOPLE DIRECTOR (REF: 6)	
	<p>Michelle Gwyther, Interim Programme Manager, LEX Team submitted a report that updated the Task and Finish Group on what was the current focus for the People Directorate in terms of the recruitment and retention of staff. The report outlined detailed activity of what had already been undertaken and was scheduled to be undertaken to address the known issues. She added that the report also included findings on locum surveys undertaken by the Council and Guidant and some activities underway to address the outcomes.</p> <p>Members were informed that the Local Authority did not have an issue in recruiting Newly Qualified Social Worker to work in either adults or children's social care. However, social care services could not be staffed solely by Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) as their caseloads needed to be protected in their first year of employment, and guidance requires them to hold significantly smaller caseloads and not hold complex cases initially. A balance of experienced and less experienced staff across both social care services was required to appropriately manage risks to both staff and service users.</p> <p>She went on to advise that current statistics had been collected separately for Children and Adults Social Care which would be shared with the task and finish group in due course, however, as of the 30th July 2016, the percentage of agency qualified social work staff, managers and occupational therapy staff was 34.4% in children's social care and 50% in adults social care.</p> <p>As part of the Locum survey, respondents were asked their reason for being a locum, what they felt were the disadvantages of being a locum and what could persuade them to accept a permanent role. These included:</p> <p>Reasons for being a locum – frequent responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More money; Financial • Independent and choice; Freedom of work placements to work where you want to work and move between jobs • Broaden my experience in various local authorities; Variety • Changes after more than 10 / 12 / 20 years in long term employment <p>Individual responses to reasons for being a locum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overworked as an employee and expected to do more and more • Didn't want to commit to a permanent role • Because Local Authorities prefer to employ people with a year to three years' experience, leaving people like me, who had just qualified out in the cold. • More efficient in getting a job (permanent recruitment takes months) • Focus on practice and doing the job, rather than the politics of the organisation. 	

	<p>Disadvantages of being a locum – all of the below were frequent responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No holiday pay; No paid leave • No sickness pay • No pension • Unpredictability; There is no stability, job security or employment rights • Being away from home; Travelling • Don't get same training opportunities that permanent staff get • 1 week notice period • Getting to know a new staff group and managers; Not feeling a 'belonging' to the team; Not fitting in and have to leave • Weekly salary <p>Permanent Staff were also surveyed by the Council in early 2016 to ascertain their views of working for the Council. 55 individuals responded, 41 from adult's social care and 17 from children's social care which was a relatively low response.</p> <p>Lee-Anne Farach, Service Director, Specialist Family Support commented that staff left the authority to become locums for financial reasons which the Council could not match. Another benefit of becoming a locum was flexible working hours.</p> <p>Sally Rowe, Director of People commented that the council needed to recognise that both Children and Adult social care were in crisis and better market supplements needed to be offered. She added that the rules surrounding job evaluation were too strict and inflexible and needed to be relaxed. She went on to say that the market supplement for Adults was far less than that for Children Social Care which was wrong. Another issue was the retention of front line managers. She concluded that the majority of staff that became locums was the ability to break their contract and move from authority to authority.</p> <p>Resolved: That the current issues in recruiting qualified social work staff and occupational therapists across children's and adults social, as well as the specific recruitment and retention activity undertaken and planned be noted.</p>	
9.	SOCIAL WORKERS & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS REASONS FOR LEAVING & EXIT INTERVIEWS (REF: 7)	
	<p>Angela Claridge, Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer reported on the reasons for leaving provided by Social Workers and Occupational Therapists and the outcome of the exit interview process in the last twelve months.</p> <p>Members were informed that Employees were encouraged to complete the exit interview form with their manager before they left the authority. They also had the alternative of having an exit interview with an HR Advisor or to complete the form independently and email it to HR Services. However, an exit interview</p>	

	<p>was not mandatory, and employees were not pushed to do so. She added that whether an exit interview took place or not, the manager was still required to establish a reason for leaving when discussing leaving arrangements so that a reason for leaving code could be entered on the leavers form.</p> <p>Councillor J. Taylor raised concern that exiting staff were not encouraged to undertake an exit interview. Councillor Keens added that exit interviews were compulsory in the Civil Service.</p> <p>Angela Claridge, Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer replied that many staff if leaving on bad terms did not want an exit interview as they might require a reference in the future.</p> <p>The Chair commented that if members of staff were leaving the authority due to a bad relationship with their manager, then it would be inappropriate for them to conduct the interview. She added that many staff might not be aware that HR could also hold an exit interview if required.</p> <p>Resolved: That the collection and utilisation of data from the social care workforce who choose to leave the council to inform retention measures be improved by the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Putting a process in place in the social care divisions in the People Department to increase the number of exit interview forms that are completed and sent to HR Services for recording and analysis. ii) Monitoring the data bi-annually to identify trends and report to the People Corporate Director. iii) In the medium term to develop an independent on-line, paperless process to increase efficiency and quality of data. iv) Analyse in more depth the reasons why a number of Childrens' Social Workers left within the first two years of service. 	
8.	CONSULTATION (REF: 7)	
	<p>Farah Ismail, Senior Consultation Officer tabled the proposed questions for the Recruitment & Retention of Social Workers questionnaire.</p> <p>The Chair informed Members that she had met with the Senior Consultation Officer and the Democratic Services Officer prior to the meeting to discuss what type of questions should be included. It was felt that any questionnaire should delve deeper than the previous Guidant questionnaire.</p> <p>The Senior Consultation Officer added the group had pulled together 'killer'</p>	

questions' that were no too wordy, with 'open box' questions for more in depth responses as it was agreed that a measure of satisfaction was required. She also suggested that a contrast with other comparative Authorities regarding salaries should be made. She went on to say that due to confidentiality, the survey would be conducted online using a programme called SNAP as Members would want an open and honest response from staff.

Members felt that the proposed questions were too negative and that it should also contain more positive questions.

The Director of People commented that any questions around pay could give the impression that the end result could be a pay rise. She added that the biggest issue was losing staff to Agencies. She went on to say that survey contained 'dangerous questions' and that question's around case load should be included. She concluded that the survey should be aimed at what the Council and staff could influence and afford.

Councillor N. Ayub commented that overall the survey should be open to more probing questions and what the key motivations for staff wanting to stay.

Councillor Rowland suggested that a question such as 'would you encourage a friend to join Luton Council' should be included.

Councillor Hussain commented that the survey conducted by Guidant had a better response from staff in Adult social Care. He added that support from Managers was key to retaining staff, and referred to an employee with no managerial support and a high case load. He went on to say that although controversial; parking was an issue as Social Workers needed to pop in an out of the office at short notice.

The Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer commented that the audience for the survey should be permanent members of staff and agency staff. She added that people were initially attracted to the profession by the variety of work undertaken. She went on to say that nationally more people were leaving the profession than joining.

Councillor N. Ayub commented that the profession was extremely stressful due to the type and high volume of case load, and that many staff could not switch off. This would ultimately have an effect on their health with stress being a major reason for staff absences. She suggested that a more holistic approach should be made with wrap around services offered to staff.

The Director of People replied that certain professions, staffs are assessed every three months and counselling is offered if required. She added that stress was an inherent part of the job, with staff developing their own coping mechanisms. She went on to say that any services offered to staff would have cost implications.

Councillor Keens raised concern that counselling and therapy were not being offered to staff and that it should be compulsory.

	<p>Councillor Hussain suggested that Occupational Health should be included in the survey.</p> <p>Members raised concern at the level of sickness within Children and Adult Social Care, and Occupational Health due to stress and suggested that a report be submitted to the next meeting.</p> <p>The Chair concluded that more stay/leave boxes would be added to the survey and that an Email forwarded by the Task & Finish Group explaining what Members were trying to achieve would be included in the survey. She added that staff would be given a minimum of four weeks to respond.</p> <p>Resolved: (i) That the Report (Ref: 8) be noted.</p> <p>(ii) That the Senior Consultation Officer submit a further draft Consultation Survey to the next meeting.</p> <p>(iii) That the Service Director, HR and Monitoring Officer submit a report in regards to Sickness Levels with Children and Adult Social Care and Occupational Health to the next meeting.</p>	
	(NOTE: The meeting ended at 7.50pm)	