

PUBLIC

MINUTES of a meeting of the **APPOINTMENTS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE COMMITTEE** held on 10 March 2021

PRESENT

Councillor B Lewis (in the Chair)

Councillors R Ashton, K Buttery, A Foster, T Kemp, S Marshall-Clarke, P Smith and M Wall

Officers in attendance – E Alexander, H Barrington, P Buckley, E Crapper, R Edinboro, J Parfremment, J Skila and L Wild

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1/21 **MINUTES RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

2/21 **APPLICATION FOR THE PAYMENT OF A MARKET SUPPLEMENT TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS** In 2018 the Council agreed a 'growth bid' which enabled children's services to increase the number of social workers in frontline children's teams. The aim of this was to strengthen our ability to achieve best outcomes for children by introducing a new structure for social work teams and reduced caseloads for staff. Subsequently in July 2019, to support with recruitment and retention, a market supplement was agreed for frontline child protection social workers.

Since the implementation of the growth bid and the introduction of the market supplement, the number of established social workers in post had increased and the vacancy rate had reduced from 27% in October 2019 to 17% (45 FTE) in October 2020. As a result of the progress made over the last 12 months the reliance on agency social workers had also reduced from 62 in October 2019 to 34 in October 2020. Whilst there was an ongoing commitment to recruitment, which was demonstrated in the reduced number of vacancies, specific decisions to maintain good quality agency workers had been taken. This enabled the council to support the inexperienced levels of social workers joining us during this period of accelerated growth, with most new social workers being newly qualified and unable to cope with the complexity of the work.

In addition to the market supplement, to support with recruitment and retention, Derbyshire had continued to offer several various routes into social work:

- Frontline (partnership arrangement with Government commissioned organisation);
- Grow Your Own (a route for existing staff to become social workers delivered in partnership with Nottingham City Council and Manchester Metropolitan University);
- Step up to Social Work (Government Scheme, which was a full-time study programme, existing staff can be supported by providing extended unpaid leave to train to become a social worker, scheme was also open to external applicants);
- Return to Social Work Practice (National initiative to encourage professionals to return to practice);
- Social Work Apprenticeships

Whilst the introduction of the market supplement in 2019 and other recruitment and retention strategies had effectively started to reduce the number of vacancies and strengthen Derbyshire's position in the region, there remained a risk that should salaries fall behind neighbouring authorities, individuals who had been supported to train would leave to work outside of Derbyshire County Council.

Section 8 of the Application for the Payment of a Market Supplement proposed to continue the current Market Supplement to Children's Services Child Protection Social Workers at the following rates:

- Grade 9 - £4,000pa
- Grade 10 - £3,000pa
- Grade 11 – £2,000pa
- To pay Grade 12 Practice Supervisors a minimum of point 29 (£37,344) of the Grade 12 (points 28 – 31 pay scale) in order to ensure that all Practice Supervisors were paid more than a Grade 11 Social Worker.

If approved, the proposals would be actioned with effect from 1 July 2021 for a period of two years, with a further review of market conditions taking place towards the end of the two-year period.

Further details of the recruitment and retention rates across localities and the pay rates across the region were contained in the market supplement application attached at appendix 1 to the report. An Equality Impact Assessment attached at appendix 2 to the report, had been undertaken to determine the impact of the market supplement payment to child protection social workers on employees within the nine protected groups, identified under the Equality Act.

As we now had a significantly reduced reliance on agency workers, it was proposed that the market supplement was funded by continuing to reduce the reliance on agency workers and using the natural vacancy rate created by leavers and new starters. With over 260 staff the turnover rate was expected to consistently exceed the 7% required to fund the establishment with market supplement applied. The downward trajectory of agency workers must be maintained and reduced to 0 as the vacancy rate also reduced for the budget target to be reached. If the staffing level as at 31st October 2020 were to be maintained the locality social work budget would be projected to overspend by just under £1m over 12months, the cause of which could be directly attributed to the cost of agency staff in 2020-21 (projected annual spend on agency social workers based on October 2020 numbers would be £2,290,000)

Whilst the vacancy rate remained higher than 7% there was opportunity for a small number of agency social workers to support new starters and inexperienced staff. This would need to be carefully monitored and tracked with a monthly report demonstrating the following in relation to the target.

- the number of established social workers in post
- the vacancy rate to date
- agency social workers in post
- budget projection.

RESOLVED that the committee approve the payment of market supplement for a period of two years.