

20 April 2015**Agenda Item: 06****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - SOCIAL
WORK PRACTICE PILOT****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report informs the Committee of the progress of the social work practice pilot in Children's Social Care. The report also seeks approval to establish two new fixed-term Senior Social Work Support Officer scale 5 posts from the Children's Social Care budget.

Information and Advice**Social Work Practice Pilot**

2. In a Committee report to Children & Young People's Committee on 8 December 2014, the Committee was informed of the plan to run a six-month pilot in Children's Social Care (CSC). The pilot seeks to prove the concept of a new model of social work practice which will integrate social workers and support workers effectively and measurably, based on need within localities, and thereby reducing the number of agency social work posts required. The report also sought approval in principle to fund the pilot from the Strategic Development Fund in the event that it does not curb costs as anticipated.
3. Approval was obtained for 19 Social Work Support Officer (SWSO) posts to populate the pilot. To date, 11 FTE posts have been recruited to, and interviews will take place to fill the remaining 8 FTE posts by the end of March 2015.
4. The majority of posts have been filled by secondment from Business Support Teams.
5. At the inception of the pilot there was some discussion as to where the 19 posts would report. Initial suggestions proposed that the relevant CSC Team Managers or Service Managers would manage the SWSOs assigned to their teams.
6. However, subsequent discussions with colleagues from Cambridgeshire who have adopted this model of social work practice have recommended that the management of these posts is kept separate from the pilot teams to which they are aligned. This is to ensure a consistency of approach across all pilot teams by:
 - ensuring that changes to the job description are managed across all teams, and that substantial changes are not made to the daily tasks carried out by SWSOs which are dependent on the team to which they are aligned. Whilst it may be appropriate to

amend the job description throughout the pilot to include team-specific tasks, this should be evaluated and agreed by the project steering group and not at a local level

- ensuring that SWSOs are not asked to carry out tasks which are inappropriate and which could contravene safeguarding procedures
 - ensuring that SWSOs are consistently managed and supported across all the pilot teams
 - providing balanced and impartial evaluation of the effectiveness of the SWSO role, in concert with the project team.
7. It is proposed that a new role is created – Senior Social Work Support Officer. A job description has been written and has been submitted for evaluation. The job description, which is available as a background paper, is based on a similar role – Senior MASH Officer - which has been evaluated at a grade 5.
 8. If approved, two Senior SWSOs would be appointed for a fixed-term of seven months to cover the staggered start and end times of the pilots. One Senior SWSO would manage the Bassetlaw District Child Protection Team (DCPT) and Looked After Children (LAC) team SWSOs, and one would manage the Rushcliffe & Broxtowe DCPT and Children’s Disability Service (CDS) Fieldwork team SWSOs.
 9. For the duration of the pilot these two roles would be managed by a CSC Service Manager.
 10. The Senior SWSO roles would also be evaluated during the pilot. If the pilot is successful and is rolled out across the social work estate, learning from the pilot would be incorporated into the future management arrangements for the SWSOs.

Financial Rationale

11. A post at grade 5, including on-costs, is £30,794. A fixed-term contract of seven months would therefore cost £17,963. Two posts would cost £35,926.
12. It is proposed that this cost (£35,926) be contained within the Children’s Social Care budget by utilising existing underspend from vacancy level turnover on social work vacancies.
13. The outcome of the pilot will be brought back to Committee in six months with recommendations for a permanent model.

Risks

14. There is a risk that without close supervision the SWSO role could be used to perform inappropriate tasks within the social work teams, including business support tasks and social work tasks. It is important to ensure that the role of the social work support officer is not compromised or diluted, and that all of their resource directly contributes to increasing social worker capacity. This risk is increased if there is not separate, independent line management of the SWSO role.

Other Options Considered

15. Several other options for the management of the SWSOs have been considered:
- that the SWSOs report in to a Business Support Officer
 - that the SWSOs report in to a CSC Service Manager
 - that the SWSOs report in to the Team Manager of the team to which they are aligned.
16. It is felt that none of the other options would provide the necessary combination of full-time and impartial line management for the SWSOs for the evaluation of the pilots. It is important that the SWSO role will provide the required consistency for the duration of the pilots.
17. The pilots will evaluate the potential longer term management arrangements, if the pilot is successful and considered for wider roll out.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

18. In order that the development of social work practice can be accomplished which will potentially reduce the department overspend on agency social workers and could go on to contribute to departmental savings budgets. Having Senior Social Work Support Officers overseeing the SWSOs will provide management consistency and support the consistent evaluation of the pilots.

Statutory and Policy Implications

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

20. It is proposed that this cost (£35,926) be contained within the Children's Social Care budget by utilising existing underspend from vacancy level turnover on social work vacancies.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That:

- 1) the progress of the social work practice pilot be noted.
- 2) the creation of two new fixed-term Senior Social Work Support Officer posts be approved.
- 3) the two fixed-term Senior Social Work Support Officers are recruited against existing underspend from vacancy level turnover on social work vacancies.

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 25/03/15)

21. Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report. In accordance with the Council's Employment Procedure Rules all proposed changes to staffing structures require HR advice and consultation with the recognised trade unions.

Financial Comments (LCJ 25/03/15)

22. The financial implications of this report are set out in paragraph 20 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Children's Social Care Transformation Programme – Social Work Practice Pilot – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 8 December 2014

Senior Social Work Support Assistant Job Description & Person Specification

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0610