

25th April 2022

Agenda Item: 4

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL WORK

ESTABLISHMENT OF ADDITIONAL POSTS WITHIN THE LOOKED AFTER AND LEAVING CARE SERVICE

Purpose of the Report

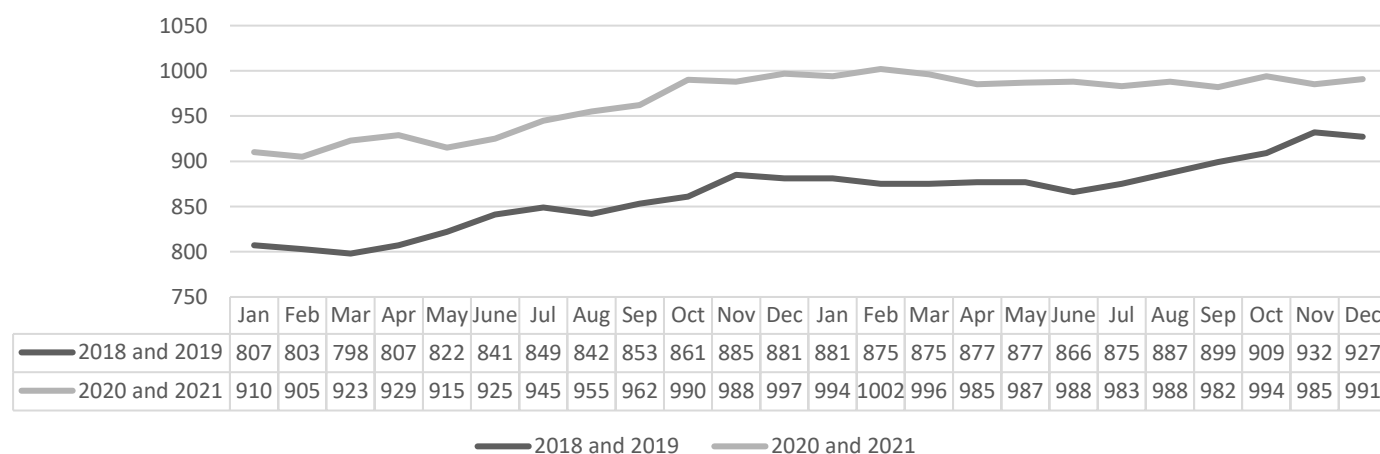
1. The report seeks approval to establish 2 FTE Social Work Support Officer (Grade 4) posts totalling £62,934 per annum within the Looked After Service, and 2 FTE Personal Advisor (Grade 5) posts, effective from the date of the Committee meeting.

Information

Looked After and Leaving Care Services

2. The Looked After Service is responsible for providing dedicated social work assessment, planning and support for children who are looked after by the Local Authority, and who become care leavers upon transitioning into adulthood. The last three years have seen a steady increase in the numbers of young people coming into care, from 807 in January 2018 to 991 in December 2021:

Volume of looked after children - Jan 2018 to Dec 2021



3. An experienced Social Worker in the Looked After Service is expected to support 18-20 children, although this number will be lower if the Social Worker is supporting children who are placed out of area or where there are young people with significant levels of risk due to missing episodes or risk of child criminal exploitation. The current social work establishment increased in April 2021 by 4 FTE posts to 32.3 FTE to manage the increase in the number of children who are looked after.
4. Currently there are 5 FTE Social Work Support Officers in the Looked After Service. Social Work Support Officers support Social Workers by undertaking tasks that do not need to be undertaken by a qualified Social Worker. Committee agreed in 2018 that the ratio should be 1 FTE Social Work Support Officer to 4 FTE Social Workers. The current ratio is 1 Social Work Support Officer to 6.46 Social Workers, which exceeds the agreed ratio. By establishing an additional 2 FTE Social Work Support Officers, this would bring the ratio to a manageable level of 1 FTE Social Work Support Officer to 4.6 FTE Social Workers.
5. Since September 2020, the Social Work teams have been completing three Personal Education Plan meetings for each looked after child per year in order to improve the opportunities for children and link them with appropriate training and educational opportunities from an early age. Prior to this one meeting per year was held. This has increased the workload of the Social Work Support Officers as they are responsible for arranging the meetings and uploading the paperwork following the meetings.
6. The continuing increase in looked after children in Nottinghamshire has impacted on the resources required for Leaving Care. The Service has attempted to provide early allocation and meaningful input from Leaving Care Personal Advisors prior to looked after children reaching their 17½ birthday as recommended by Ofsted. This is getting more challenging due to the demand for the service. The Council's re-modelling of the provision of services for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) to make full use of Home Office Grant funding has redirected some pressures on Leaving Care and allowed for an increase in capacity of almost 3 Personal Advisor caseloads within the generic Leaving Care Service without any additional budget pressures. However, this increase in capacity is still not fully meeting the provision required for the number of young people entitled to services under the guidance of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. The provision of a further 2 FTE Personal Advisors within the Leaving Care Service will enable continuation and development of earlier Personal Advisor allocation and build capacity for the projected growth of the care leaver population within Nottinghamshire.

Other Options Considered

7. The alternative option is no change; however, this would mean that the Social Workers will have less time to spend with children as they will have less support to complete the administration tasks as part of their work with children. If there were no change to the Leaving Care Personal Advisor capacity then allocation of leaving care provision is likely to be just prior to a young person's 18th birthday, as well as presenting a need to increase case load allocations across the team, impacting on the quality of provision and service to our young people.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

8. The establishment of an additional 2 FTE Social Work Support Officer posts will create the specialist administration support needed due to the increase in the number of children in care, the number of extra Social Work posts within the team and the increase in the number of Personal Education Plan meetings. The establishment of an additional 2 FTE Personal Advisor posts will enable Leaving Care to continue to meet the needs of the growing number of young people identified as care leavers, whilst maintaining and developing Nottinghamshire's service and offer to Care Leavers.

Statutory and Policy Implications

9. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment 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

10. The cost of 2 FTE Social Work Support Officer (Grade 4) posts is £62,934 per annum and 2 FTE Personal Advisor (Grade 5) posts is £73,098 per annum. This cost of the posts can be contained within the 2022/23 Youth Families and Social Work staffing budget of £25.7m.

Human Resources Implications

11. Recruitment will occur in line with the Council's agreed procedures.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That Committee approves the establishment of 2 FTE Social Work Support Officer (Grade 4) posts within the Looked After Service and 2 FTE Personal Advisor (Grade 5) posts within the Leaving Care Service effective from the date of the Committee meeting.

Steve Edwards
Service Director, Youth, Families and Social Work

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Sophie Eadsforth
Group Manager, Looked After Children, Leaving Care, Children with Disabilities & Fostering Services
T: 0115 804 1211
E: sophie.eadsforth@nottscc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (LW 24/03/22)

12. Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

Financial Comments (LCD 24/03/22)

13. The cost of 2 FTE Social Work Support Officer (Grade 4) posts is £62,934 per annum and 2 FTE Personal Advisor (Grade 5) posts is £73,098 per annum. This cost of the posts can be contained within the 2022/23 Youth Families and Social Work staffing budget of £25.7m.

HR Comments (BC 23/03/22)

14. The staffing implications are contained within the body of the report. New posts will be recruited to in line with the vacancy control and recruitment procedures.

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.

[Supporting Improvements in Children's Social Care – report to Children & Young People's Committee June 2018](#)

[Changes to the staffing establishment in Children's Social Care – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 22nd February 2021](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C1557