

Report to	GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE
Date of meeting	23rd November 2022
Lead Member / Officer	Cyng/Cllr Gill German / Cyng/Cllr Elen Heaton / Nicola Stubbins
Report author	Nicola Stubbins, Corporate Director
Title	Information Report – Recruitment and Retention Issues in Social Services

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. Recruitment and retention challenges in Children's and Adult Social Services
- 1.2. Impact of recruit and retention challenges in Children's and Adult Social Services
- 1.3. Actions being taken to mitigate these challenges

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. At the last meeting of the Governance & Audit Committee, Members requested an information report outlining actions being taken to mitigate the challenges of recruitment and retention in both Children's and Adult Social Care.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That the Committee notes the report and considers whether any further scrutiny is required

4. Report details

- 4.1 Local Authority Children's and Adult Social Services deliver a wide and complex range of statutory services, many of which require specialist and professionally qualified staff. They also deliver a range of prevention and early intervention services, often considered non-statutory as they tend to be grant funded, however the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act 2014 now requires LA's to provide

these. In addition to this, the Local Authority commissions a wide range of social care services which it remains statutorily responsible for.

4.2. Due to the nature of Social Services and Social Care Services, this sector is heavily regulated.

4.3. It is recognised that there is a National, UK-wide, recruitment and retention crisis in Social Care, across most if not all roles. This crisis is mirrored in Health Services too. Social care services play a crucial role in health care pathways – keeping people well for longer outside of hospital and enabling faster, safer discharges home. Therefore, the sector plays a critical part in protecting NHS capacity and its ability to deliver high-quality, safe care. The impact of these challenges means people are missing out on vital care and support, leaving them less independent, more vulnerable and more likely to rely on healthcare services. However, this is not a one-way relationship – the lack of capacity in primary and community care is also an important factor, which is leading to more pressure in social care services.

4.4. For many years DCC's social services workforce has remained fairly stable despite nationally the social care sector experiencing major challenges related to the recruitment and retention of staff. However, in the wake of events such as COVID-19 and Brexit, DCC vacancy rates have now risen sharply. These challenges put pressures on the whole sector, its workers, and users, with Local Authorities and care providers increasingly having to rely on expensive agency staff.

4.5. DCC Social Services frequently lose staff due to the enhanced pay and conditions offered by neighbouring Local Authorities and the Local Health Board, often for similar but less demanding roles. More recently, and in part as a result of more flexible working arrangements, Recruitment Agencies have significantly increased / improved their pay and terms and conditions.

4.6. When we do recruit we are often only able to replace experienced staff with newly qualified or inexperienced workers who are unable to undertake more complex work and are prohibited in legislation from undertaking specific tasks. Many new

starters are younger, newly qualified staff, and rates of maternity leave have recently increased.

4.7. Recruitment and retention challenges experienced by DCC Children's and Adults Social Services are impacting its ability to deliver our statutory responsibilities. Despite staff working relentlessly over the last two years, levels of unmet, under-met or wrongly met needs are increasing, and the situation is getting worse. The growing numbers of people needing care and the increasing complexity of their needs are far outstripping our capacity to meet them.

4.8. Failure of DCC to deliver its statutory responsibilities could result in:

- Death, injury or neglect to a child or adult with care and support needs
- Legal challenge
- Reputational damage
- Sanction by Regulatory Body

The impact of recruitment and retention within CS has been noted by CIW in its inspection of child protection services. In the findings letter following this inspection CIW noted '*The recruitment and retention of social care staff is a national area of concern. It is a particular area of concern within intake and intervention teams in children's services in Denbighshire local authority. The current situation places significant pressure on staff who we found to be dedicated, aiming to ensure the best outcomes for children and their families. Staff are working incredibly hard to try to meet demand, and are often working long hours. The local authority must ensure a sufficient and suitably qualified workforce.*'

4.9. Recruitment and retention challenges are placing increased pressure on remaining staff in all teams, negatively impacting their well-being and increasing levels of unplanned absence. The use of agency staff also has a negative impact on the morale of permanent staff who are paid significantly less than their agency counterparts. Where is the motivation to remain and not move to an agency? There is a risk within the current workforce that issues of performance and capability are not being robustly challenged as Managers are reluctant to risk staff leaving or going off on sickness absence.

4.10. Some neighbouring Local Authorities have taken a decision to pay a market supplement. Adopting a Market Supplement approach can mitigate the Equal Pay Risk by evidencing market forces. However, the risk of a Market Supplement is that it will fuel the ongoing bidding war between regional employers, and may impact on other roles within those service areas, i.e. Senior Practitioners, Deputy Team Managers and Occupational Therapists.

4.11. General trends re difficulty in filling posts / staff leaving:

- Higher salary scales offered by neighbouring authorities / health board / recruitment agencies exacerbated by the cost of living crisis
- Increased complexity / risk of work
- Difficulty in finding / commissioning appropriate care and support including residential and domiciliary care
- Temporary funded posts / uncertainty around continued funding of posts
- Higher salary in other roles perceived as having less responsibility / pressure
- Pressure of work due to increased caseloads
- Negative publicity – ‘blame’ culture
- the pandemic creating a sense of “burn-out” and reducing potential candidates’ willingness to move into the sector
- within the residential and domiciliary care sector some staff do not want, or feel unable, to work more hours because it could impact other benefits

5.0 Current Vacancies in Children's Services – Including Early Intervention & Prevention or Childcare

Role	No. of Vacant Posts	
Social Worker	12	Advertised multiple times inc. on new Pay Scale
Senior Practitioner	1	Advertised multiple times
Senior Family Support Worker	1	Application just closed, 5 applications
Childcare: Welsh Essential Room Leader	7	Also require: Rolling Supply Childcare Assistant as currently only have 1 supply member if staff.

Welsh Essential Childcare Assistants Childcare Assistant		All of these posts have been out as part of a bigger recruitment campaign since July. We've had to extend 3 times.
Families First / Flying Start: TAF Admin post (MAT cover) advertised 4 times (no interest). Just had closing date on 5th time and have 5 apps to shortlist Families First Referral and Systems Officer - advertised 3 times no applicants at all Flying Start Portage/Early Language Development Team leader Flying Start Childcare Team Leader	4	Advertised multiple times
LIFT Occupational Therapist	1	Advertised multiple times
Total	26	Plus 4 on Maternity Leave

(As at 31/10/22)

5.1 Current Vacancies in Adult Social Services

Role	No. of Vacant Posts	
Social Worker	6	Advertised multiple times inc. on new Pay Scale
Occupational Therapist	1	Advertised multiple times inc.on new Pay Scale
Deputy Team Manager	1	Advertised multiple times
Community Resource Team Co-Ordinator	1	Advertised multiple times
Independence at Home Support Workers	4	advertised 20 times and have reviewed the number of vacancies and the hours on offer but still unfilled

Care Assistant Llys Awelon	1	advertised 8 times since Oct 21
Health & Social Care Workers North & South DCC	3	advertised 8 times since Oct 20
Accommodation Support Worker	1	advertised 8 times since Oct 20
Reablement Support Worker	1	advertised 8 times since Oct 20
Day Care Assistant Cysgod Y Gaer	1	advertised 5 times since Aug 21
Night Care Assistant Cysgod Y Gaer	1	advertised 5 times since Aug 21
Supply Care Staff - various roles	5	rolling advert but response quite poor, many staff on relief pool as second jobs
Total	26	Plus 7 on Maternity Leave (with a further 2 in Dec)

(Vacancies as at 31/10/22)

5.2 Managing Planned Leave and Maternity Leave

In addition to the current vacancies as outlined in the table above, both Children's and Adult Social Care also have to juggle the annual leave entitlement of staff and also staff on Maternity Leave. In the past these temporary 'shortages' have been subsumed and covered by the teams, however, given the level of vacancies and unfilled posts, this is increasingly problematic and is creating even more challenges in terms of workload and morale of staff. Additionally, when staff return from Maternity Leave they often do so on reduced hours as they have to take annual leave within a defined period of time. Currently Children's Social Care have 4 members of staff on maternity leave and Adult Social Care have 7 members of staff on maternity leave.

6.0 Actions taken to mitigate the recruitment and retention crisis

6.1 A Corporate Social Care Recruitment & Retention Board has been established chaired by the Corporate Director, supported by Human Resources, Communications, and Working Denbighshire. An action plan has been developed and most actions implemented including:

- Appointment of a dedicated HR Recruitment Specialist for Social Care

- Extended advertisement for social care vacancies
- Improved recruitment packs
- Detailed analysis of joiners and leavers data
- Liaising with Working Denbighshire to capture / follow up unsuccessful candidates
- Dedicated Job Fairs and DCC attendance at various community events with a focus on social care recruitment
- Specific advertising and social media campaign focussing on social care recruitment inc. livery vehicles and DCC branding
- Removal of Grade 7 for New Social Workers and Occupational Therapists
- Grade 8 to Grade 9 Progression for Social Workers and Occupational Therapists
- Re-Introduction of Practice Teacher Payments
- Review of Adult Mental Health Social Workers
- Claiming of Registration Fees – process reviewed and simplified
- Human Resources have conducted a comprehensive comparison of pay and conditions across the 6 North Wales Local Authorities and BCUHB

6.2 Given that the recruitment and retention crisis is a national issue it is understood that there is a limit to the number of actions that DCC can take on its own to address this challenge and therefore Lead Members and Senior Officers have also been instrumental in raising this issue at a regional and national level through the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru.

6.3 The Chief Executive Team (CET) has regular oversight and monitoring of the situation and Social Care Recruitment & Retention is a standing item with dedicated monthly meetings.

6.4 The Corporate Risk Register has also been reviewed with the result being that “The risk of a serious safeguarding or practice error, where the council has responsibility, resulting in serious harm or death” description and controls have been updated. The inherent score has increased to reflect the pressures the council is facing and the impacts of changes in the external environment (these are set out in the description). The inherent score has increased from B2 – Critical Risk: Likely / High Impact to A1 – Critical Risk Almost certain / Very high impact. The residual score has increased from D2 – Major Risk: Unlikely / High Impact to A1 – Critical Risk Almost certain / Very high impact. The risk score has been increased on the basis of our assessment that the chance of this occurring is currently higher than it was previously. Although we do not regard the likelihood as “almost certain to occur in most circumstances” (which is the definition of Risk Likelihood A in our risk methodology), the risk has certainly increased. It therefore feels appropriate to increase the Risk Likelihood score, and that means increasing it from B to A. Increasing the risk score enables the risk to be further prioritised and escalated, which feels appropriate and necessary at this time. The impact has been increased because we know the risk is higher in terms of likelihood and despite our controls, we are at the limits of what can be done to reduce the likelihood of the risk. The risk is beyond our appetite.