

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 15 December 2014

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WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Councillor Pavitar Kaur Mann, Commissioner for Education & Children

PART I **NON-KEY DECISION**

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE STRATEGY

1 **Purpose of Report**

To set out the Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy which aims to establish Slough Borough Council as an employer of choice, with a stable, competent workforce with high ambition for Slough children, who will deliver good quality services and achieve improved outcomes for local children.

2 **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Cabinet is requested to resolved that the Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy be endorsed as part of the Children's Social Care Improvement Programme.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Corporate Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Priorities:

- Health
- Economy and Skills
- Regeneration and Environment
- Housing
- Safer Communities

As part of the Children's Social Care Improvement Programme, improving the quality of social work practice within Slough Borough Council's Children's Social Care Service cuts across all the Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities in relation to those most vulnerable children and young people within the borough.

4 **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

Staffing: Investment and Expenditure Projections 2014/15

The table below shows the substantial investment in staffing for 2014-15 and confirms that a total of £3.3m has been added to the budget during the year. This is to enable full

funding for 91 front line staff and first line managers (including administrative staff) to be filled by either permanent or agency staff so that the service can achieve its objective of reducing caseloads and improving practice and performance. This growth is sourced by permanent funds of £0.9m including funding for future 'proofing' and £2.4m which is one off funding to 'bridge' the extra cost of agency staff whilst progress is made in permanent recruitment.

	£'000	£'000
Current Budget		2,841
Increased Establishment	701	
Agency Cover	2,403	
Future planning	142	
Sub Total		3,246
Total*		6,087

* Of the £6.087m; £2.4m is one off and £4.6m is recurrent of which £842k is new.

Recruitment of Permanent Staff – Oct Outturn

As at Oct 14, of the 91 funded posts, there were 45 (45 in Sept) permanent posts at a cost £2,070k, 2 vacant posts (1 Sept), and 44 (45 in Sept) agency staff at a cost of £3,771k, a total of £5,841k, and would represent a current projected underspend of about £246k (£201k in Sept), an increased underspend of £45k from last month. This represents a current ratio of 49%:51% (49%:51% in Sept), between permanent and agency staff, across the service including front line management positions.

Workforce Projections – revised following October outturn

Latest projections have been amended to assume that by the end of the current financial year there will be 6 additional permanent posts, resulting in a ratio of 51 permanent staff, 0 vacant posts and 40 Agency i.e. 56%:44%. The goal is to achieve an 80:20 split within 3 financial years. Current performance continues to show an overachievement of 8 permanent staff, at this point in time against the target of 37.

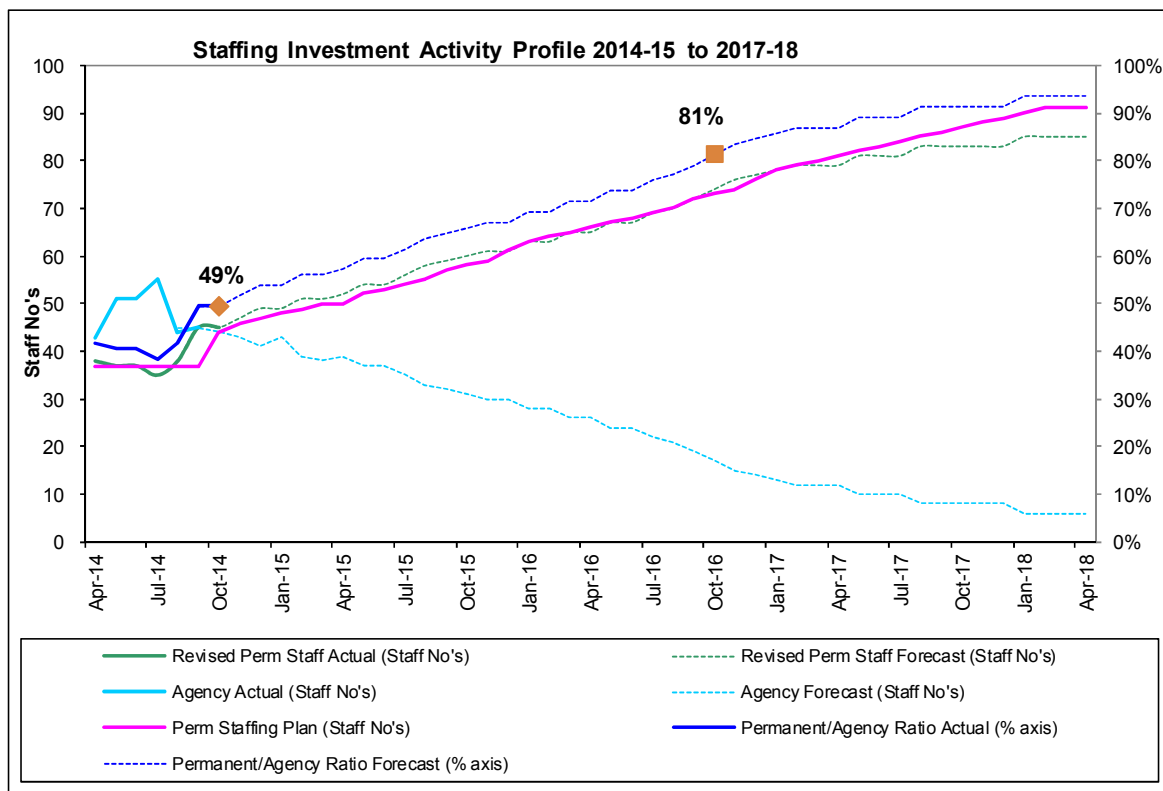
The graph below shows the staffing profile of permanent to agency staff over the next 3 years. The cross-over point where permanent staff starts to exceed agency staff is now expected to be around October 2014 (Oct 14 in Sep). The goal of achieving the ratio of 80% permanent staff was projected to be reached in February 2017, but the successful campaign would mean that the goal would be achieved earlier, providing that recruitment is completed, by October 16, based on 15 QSW's being employed in each of the years for 2015 16 and 2016 17.

The pink line on the graph reflects the permanent staffing plan as per the growth bid; this had assumed that currently we would have 37 planned permanent posts (actual 45), 50 posts by Mar15, 65 by Mar 16 and 80 by Mar 17 to achieve the 80% required. The revised permanent staff line (green line) is based on where we are, the recruitment plans and where we expect to be. This shows the positive impact of the recent recruitment campaign.

The second table below shows a profile permanent staff plan as per the growth bid, and the revised plan based on Oct14 actual and future plans for 2 years to achieve 81%

permanent staff by October 16. The current ratio is 49% for all staff. This shows that 6 permanent staff will be employed by the end of 2014 15, 14 in 2015 16 and 14 in 2016 17.

The graph is however skewed when all SW staff are considered together, so a further analysis over the 2 service head teams is required, made up of the Children In Need (CIN) and Protection & Care Team (P&CT) / Looked After and Care Leavers Teams (LA&CL) combined, to show where pinch points exist. The detail by team has therefore been set out under the sub heading "analysis of agency cover by type"



All Teams	Actual	Planned		
	Oct-14	Mar-15	Mar-16	Mar-17
Budgeted FTE	91	91	91	91
Perm staffing Plan	37	50	65	80
Revised Perm Staff	45	51	65	79
Variation	8	1	0	-1
Ratio (Perm/Agency)	49%	56%	71%	87%

(b) Risk Management (

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal	The strategy will achieve a stable, experienced social workers are one of the essential conditions for success for a children's social care organisation	
Property	None	
Human Rights	None	
Health and Safety	None	

Employment Issues	The strategy is to support an improved ratio of permanent employees	More stable workforce
Equalities Issues	None	
Community Support	None	
Communications	None	
Community Safety	None	
Financial	Additional budget was made available from April 2014.	
Timetable for delivery	The strategy is work in progress	
Project Capacity	In place	
Other	None	

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act or Legal implications

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for an Equalities Impact Assessment

(e) Workforce

The Strategy is designed to reduce the reliance on agency staff and secure a more stable and permanent workforce.

5 Supporting Information

5.1 In its inspection in December 2013, Ofsted made some specific observations regarding the Council's social worker workforce:

'Slough has been unable to recruit enough qualified and suitably experienced permanent social workers. There is an over-reliance on temporary staff, with many examples of their poorly completed work....Nearly all social workers have excessively high caseloads....Too many changes of social worker.....The current organisation and physical location of social work teams do not support effective team workInsufficient privacy to discuss children's cases.

5.2 Ofsted's immediate and priority actions to be completed were to:

- Develop and put into operation a comprehensive workforce strategy to attract and keep high quality, experienced permanent staff to Slough.
- Ensure Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQS) have a protected caseload and the necessary support to provide a rich learning environment, such as an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme.
- Ensure social workers are able to have confidential discussions with their managers and other members of their teams.

5.3 The Strategy sets out the Council's plans to address the issues raised by Ofsted, along with timescales and targets for doing so, along with actions and progress already made over the past year.

- 5.4 The desired outcomes from the implementation of this Strategy are:
1. A sufficient and stable workforce of appropriate skill and competency to ensure caseload levels are within agreed margins and levels that promote good practice, including sufficient time for workers to spend with children and young people.
 2. A range of effective marketing, recruitment and retention strategies that increase the number good quality staff who apply and are appointed with the commitment to deliver our vision.
 3. A 'grow your own' organisation that encourages and supports pre and post qualifying learning and protected personal development and support.
 4. A child-first culture supported by a range of frameworks, pathways, techniques and behaviours.
 5. An organisation that supports social workers to spend more time with children and families, through the development of embedded business processes that effectively support the service to deliver good outcomes for children.
 6. Quality social work practice, which captures the views and feedback of children and families, and of staff, and uses this information to inform continuous improvement, and is supported by effective learning and development, supervision and management.
 7. A 'children's services friendly' work environment which enables us to achieve our objectives; which promotes good engagement with children, young people and families; promotes team identity, and provides sufficient confidential space for good quality work.
- 5.5 The Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy Programme Board was established to develop a workforce strategy and oversee the implementation of the actions required to achieve our desired outcomes.
- 5.6 The appendix to the Strategy sets out in detail the progress made over the last year, highlights of which include:
- Using additional investment to:
 - build the permanent staff capacity and future-proofing Slough Borough Council's competitiveness in the market;
 - introduce additional social work teams which has seen falling caseload numbers; and
 - enable the recruitment of high quality agency social workers as we work to recruit quality permanent staff.
 - Development of a co-ordinated recruitment campaign based on improving Slough's market competitiveness, improved recruitment webpages for Children's Social Care vacancies, and smarter recruitment processes e.g. speeded up short-listing, appointing, and e-DBS processes.
 - Strengthening our social work career progression through a Professional Capability Framework.
 - Expanding our casework audit programme to evaluate the quality of social work practice across all teams.
 - Redesign of the Ground Floor East office space at St Martin's Place to ensure it is fit for purpose of social work.

6 **Comments of Other Committees**

The Corporate Management Team reviewed and endorsed the Strategy in October 2014.

7 **Conclusion**

The Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy aims to set out the desired objectives the Council has for its children's social care workforce and asks for the Cabinet's endorsement of the approach.

8 **Appendices Attached**

A - Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy 2014-2017

9 **Background Papers**

1 - Slough Borough Council: Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and Care Leavers (Ofsted, 19 November – 11 December 2013)