

2014

MEMORANDUM OF CO-OPERATION The East of England Regional Partnership for Managing the Demand and Supply of Children's Social Workers

Between:

Bedford Borough Council
Cambridgeshire County Council
Central Bedfordshire Council
Essex County Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Luton Borough Council
Peterborough City Council
Norfolk County Council
Southend Council
Suffolk County Council
Thurrock Council

Date: 30 September 2014 (FINAL)

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Context:

Nationally and regionally, each council is focused on attraction, recruitment and retention to fill social worker vacancies and leadership roles. Success is mixed and much depends on factors like pay and the employment package, as well as reputation, development opportunities, case loads, quality of support and supervision, together with leadership. A few LAs are experiencing severe service quality issues and their increased recruitment and agency supply activities are affecting the whole supply pipeline. The mis-match in requirements, i.e. over-demand and under-supply, is affecting all local authorities.

To manage agency and permanent worker supply and demand, and the costs associated with this, there is a need for more collaborative and strategic approach. Just managing the agency supply will not resolve the bigger challenge of securing a more stable permanent workforce to deliver good quality local services for vulnerable children. Equally, each LA is trying to address its own local challenges with limited success.

This Memorandum of Co-operation (MoC) is an attempt to work more collaboratively across the East of England initially, and then with bordering councils, in order to manage the demand and supply of children's social workers.

Scope:

The scope covers children's social worker roles for both permanent and agency supply.

Extension of the scope of the MoC to adult's social worker roles for both permanent and agency supply will be subject to agreement by Directors of Adult Services across the East of England Region.

Effective Date of Implementation:

The effective date for the initial protocols (1-7) will be **1 August 2014**, although some of these will need phasing-in via a co-ordinated delivery plan.

The effective dates for the remaining protocols (8-16) will be determined in discussion with the Regional DCS Group and will form an ongoing programme of activity supported by a transparent and co-ordinated delivery plan.

Governance:

At Phase 1, the Regional Directors of Children's Services (DCS) Group will be accountable for ensuring that their Service Managers and Directors/Heads of HR and agency suppliers adopt the protocols. Progress updates and, where necessary, decisions will be presented to the Regional DCS Group at agreed intervals. Initially this is expected to be quarterly.

At Phase 2 the Regional ADASS Group will be accountable for adopting and implementing the MoC for adults' social worker roles.

The Regional Chief Executive's Group will also receive progress updates on request.

The Eastern Region's Children's Improvement Board will also receive progress updates on request.

Measuring Success:

Key measures of success, including financial savings, will be agreed with the Regional DCS Group.

All Local Authority signatories to the Memorandum of Co-Operation (MoC) agree to adopt the following protocols as agreed in principle by the Regional DCS Group on 6th June 2014 and as amended following discussion and feedback:

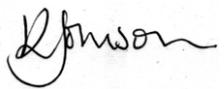
1. Adopt a common minimum standard for referencing to help prevent 'recycling' of poor quality permanent and agency workers.
2. Use end of placement reviews with adequate information passed back to the agency workers and the agency supplier to determine any development requirements or to cease placing the worker to help to address quality issues.
3. To work towards fully implementing the terms of this MoC via all their suppliers, i.e. main contractor and any 2nd tier suppliers.
4. Proactively use their agency supply chain as a pipeline for the supply of permanent workers, in addition to direct recruitment. All LAs acknowledge that working as an interim helps to build experience and enhances productivity.
5. Where possible, to consider transition to a 'direct' supply model for qualified social workers (i.e. employed by the main supplier rather than 2nd tier agencies/sub-contractors) with a single or a few key suppliers. This will assist with reducing / maintaining agency pay rates and margins to help address the quality and quantity of workers in the supply chain, and to improve compliance issues, e.g. professional registration, right to work, DBS and other checks. Those LAs that choose not to move to a direct supply model or whose current agency contracts prevent this, are NOT precluded from participating in the MoC and will be actively encouraged to remain part of this collaborative approach.
6. Ensure that permanent and agency workers are clear from the outset of the MoC and how it is being adopted by all signatory LAs and their agency suppliers. LAs and suppliers will provide standardised information on the MoC during recruitment and at induction.
7. LAs and all their suppliers (whether providing permanent or temporary supply of workers) to refrain from aggressive 'headhunting' from within those LAs that have adopted the MoC, unless for a promotional role. Some rules of engagement will be developed in discussion with LAs for this purpose.

On 6th June 2014, the Regional DCS Group also agreed to consider the following protocols and these were endorsed subject to clarity on these being aspirational on 5th September 2014:

8. Over time, agree to apply the Protocols to all social worker roles in Children's and Adult's Services, and other roles as identified.
9. Work towards more broadly comparable pay rates across the region for permanent and agency social workers (this may mean that a few LAs will pay more depending on geography, but most are already paying 'market' supplements to a similar overall level). Some of the savings from reducing temp spend and converting market pay to base pay could support increased pay rates to aid recruitment and retention.
10. Work towards greater consistency of employment packages as far as possible across the LAs to reduce competition.
11. Work towards limiting agency worker tenure at the outset of each placement so that expectations are managed, e.g. 12 weeks maximum. This will discourage workers from leaving the security of permanent roles or to convert to a permanent worker, but does require a strategy in each council to ensure that vacant roles are filled as quickly as possible. There is recognition that it will take time to implement this fully so it is therefore proposed to monitor the average length of tenure to assess impact and inform future strategy.
12. Consider and draft a 'no recruitment' or placement policy for temporary workers who have joined agencies from the LAs who have adopted the Code, e.g. for 6 or 12 months from date of leaving. This could be included in employment contracts to try to restrict workers from joining other LAs (i.e. those who are signatories to the MoC) within this time frame unless for a promotional role. This would be difficult to enforce but is used in other sectors. Some LAs have already adopted this approach with their agency staffing provider.
13. LAs and suppliers to work towards ceasing to contract with individuals who are 'self-employed' and to reduce over reliance on these workers. A strategy of only accessing work if they are an employee or an agency worker on the agreed rates will assist with this.
14. Work with suppliers and LAs to develop a single pool of job ready, highly skilled agency workers that could offer good quality support and resource for failing services. A 'Development' Academy approach could assist with this for use by all agency suppliers and also help support those workers into permanent roles.

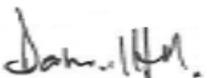
15. Develop a joint approach to working only with identified universities and colleges to offer high quality training and qualifications for social workers, and use the combined economies of scale from the LAs to help drive cost, quality and outcomes. The numbers of places should be informed by strategic workforce planning.
16. Develop a regional approach to workforce planning for social workers to forecast and then help to plan to meet future demand.

We, the undersigned, endorse and agree to uphold the Protocols outlined in this Memorandum of Co-Operation dated 11th September 2014:

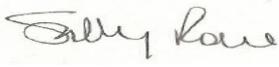
Signed: 	Signed: 
Name: Kevin Crompton	Name: Karen Johnson
Director of Children's Services	Head of HR
Bedford Borough Council	Bedford Borough Council

Signed: 	Signed: 
Name: Adrian Loades	Name: Christine Reed
Director of Children's Services	Director of HR - LGSS
Cambridgeshire County Council	Cambridgeshire County Council

Signed: 	Signed: 
Name: Edwina Grant	Name: Catherine Jones
Director of Children's Services	Head of HR Policy and Development
Central Bedfordshire Council	Central Bedfordshire Council

Signed: 	Signed: 
Name: Dave Hill	Name: Bob Whiting
Director of Children's Services	Head of HR (Adult & Family Operations)
Essex County Council	Essex County Council

Signed: 	Signed: 
Name: Jenny Coles	Name: Louise Tibbert
Director of Children's Services	Assistant Director HR & OD
Hertfordshire County Council	Hertfordshire County Council

Signed: 	Signed: 
Name: Sally Rowe	Name: Angela Claridge
Director of Children's Services	Head of HR and Monitoring Officer
Luton Borough Council	Luton Borough Council

Signed: 	Signed: 
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Director of Children's Services	Acting Head of HR
Peterborough City Council	Peterborough City Council

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Director of Children's Services	Acting Head of HR
Norfolk County Council	Norfolk County Council

Signed: 	Signed: 
Name: Simon Leftley	Name: Joanna Ruffle
Director of Children's Services	Head of HR
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

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Director of Children's Services	Head of Strategic HR
Suffolk County Council	Suffolk County Council

Signed: 	Signed: 
Name: Carmel Littleton	Name: Jackie Hinchliffe
Director of Children's Services	Head of HR
Thurrock District Council	Thurrock District Council