

# MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION

2021 – 2022

## The Yorkshire and Humber Regional Partnership For the Management of the Demand and Supply of Agency Social Workers Children and Young People's Services



## **1. Context**

1.1 The recruitment and retention of experienced social workers can be a challenge at both national and regional level, which means that the regional Local Authorities are often in competition with each other to attract quality agency social workers at a reasonable cost. There is no current standardised rate or quality standards linked to a shared Job Profile for agency social workers, which means that there is variation in relation to both cost and quality across the Region. This is a challenge for all LAs but can be a particular challenge for Children's Services who are subject to improvement requirements as a result of the Ofsted Inspection regime.

1.2 The costs associated with the use of the agency workforce can be significant, both financially and in terms of the stability of the wider workforce. This has the potential to impact on the quality of the services provided to children, young people and their families. Whilst the use of temporary agency staff is widely accepted as a necessary means to meet short- and medium-term capacity issues which arise from improvement requirements, re-structuring, vacancies, sickness and maternity absence, our regional aspirations are for a strong, stable and permanent workforce and we will work pro-actively towards this.

## **2. Proposal**

It is proposed that all upper tier Yorkshire and Humber Local Authorities formally commit to work together collaboratively to effectively manage the use of social worker agency staff including through: -

2.1 Agreement and implementation of standardised pay ranges relative to experience and level of social worker:

- £32-£35 for case holding social workers

- £37-£40 for Advanced Practitioners/Team Leaders

N.B: Medium term strategy is to reduce hourly rates to match equivalent salaried social worker rate

2.2 Agreement to share information regarding any practice concerns.

2.3 Agreement to work towards the full implementation of the terms of this Memorandum of Cooperation via all their suppliers, i.e. the main contractors and any second tier suppliers;

2.4 To ensure that all suppliers and agency social workers are clear from the outset of the Memorandum of Cooperation and how it is being adopted by all signatory Local Authorities and their agency suppliers.

2.5 Local Authorities and their suppliers to refrain from active headhunting Children's Social Workers from within the Local Authorities that have adopted the Memorandum of Cooperation.

2.6 To agree that there will be exceptions based on local conditions, specialist requirements and business priorities. If an LA has a business requirement to vary its compliance with elements of the agreement (e.g. pay rates) for a defined period, this

would include the use of Project Teams, then it should first be approved by the DCSs and there should then be:

- an approach to the AD Safeguarding group with details of the need and the variations it intends to make. The AD Safeguarding group would consider whether there might be regional support to meet need. If this is not possible, then the variation will be applied

### **3. Anticipated Benefits**

It is anticipated that the benefits will be: -

3.1 The consistent application of a standardised approach to the development and management of the agency workforce to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families;

3.2 The management of the migration of agency social worker staff which will reduce instability, improve quality and standardise payment.

3.3 Facilitate the agency social workers to be a robust resource to support the development and stabilisation of the permanent workforce;

3.4 To utilise standardised pay rates to support consistent standards of practice, this excludes travel costs

3.5 To reduce unnecessary competition which can destabilise the wider agency workforce.

### **4 The Scope**

4.1 The scope covers Children's Social Worker roles and Project Teams for agency supply.

### **5 Effective Date of Implementation**

5.1 The effective date for the agreement to the Memorandum of Cooperation is 1st January 2022 with a six month transition period for those Local Authorities currently standing outside of this agreement.

### **6 Governance and Accountability**

6.1 The Yorkshire and Humber Directors of Children's Services will be accountable for ensuring that their respective Assistant Directors of Safeguarding and HR and Procurement with agency suppliers adopt the protocol based on the agreed timelines

6.2. The AD Safeguarding Group will have regional responsibility for monitoring the use of the MOC and ensuring that underpinning documentation is in place. The application of pay rates and any variations within the MOC will be reviewed quarterly, with a report to AD Safeguarding and then to DCSs with AD commentary. The MOC will be formally reviewed on an annual basis, with a report then being made to the regional ADCS group with any recommendations for changes. If more frequent update are required then recommendations will be made to the ADCS with a view to address issues that arise which would benefit from more immediate attention.

### **7 Measuring Success**

7.1 The key measures of success which will include financial savings, improved stability leading to improved outcomes for children.

- Agency unit cost reduction
- Improved retention rates
  - Reduced % agency SW staff
- Reduced vacancy rates
- Healthy turnover (5 – 10%)
- Evidence of improved practice quality

We the undersigned endorse and agree to uphold the protocols outlined in the Memorandum of Cooperation dated the..... .December 2021

Signed.....

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Signed.....

Hull City Council

Signed.....

North East Lincolnshire Council

Signed.....

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Signed.....

North Lincolnshire Council

Signed.....

Sheffield City Council

Signed.....

Kirklees Council

Signed.....

Doncaster Children's Services Trust

Signed.....

North Yorkshire County Council

Signed.....

Calderdale Council

Signed.....

City of Bradford MDC

Signed.....

Leeds City Council

Signed.....

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Signed.....

City of York Council

Signed.....

Wakefield Council





