

**June 2021**

# **MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION**

## **The South West Regional Partnership for the Management of Children's Social Workers**

**Between:**

Bath and North East Somerset Council  
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council  
Bristol City Council  
Cornwall Council  
Devon County Council  
Dorset County Council  
Gloucestershire County Council  
North Somerset Council  
Plymouth City Council  
Somerset County Council  
South Gloucestershire Council  
Swindon Borough Council  
Torbay Council  
Wiltshire Council

**Author:** Alice Hale, Swindon Borough Council

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021

## **Review Period**

This is an updated version of the original MoC document that was first created and approved in July 2016.

The document and its terms will be reviewed every 12 months with a view to ensure the rates are reflective of the current position across Children's Social Work teams.

A copy of the terms of reference has been appended to this document – see appendix 1.

## **Context**

There is a known national shortage of experienced Children's Social Workers, meaning that local authorities increasingly source agency workers to perform these roles. Increased cost of Agency Children's Social Workers and the disparity between the cost of engaging an agency worker compared to employing a Social Worker directly has been an area of focus on a national scale for a number of years.

To manage agency and permanent worker supply and demand and the costs associated with this, there is a need for a collaborative and strategic approach. The Directors of Children's Services for the 14 Local Authorities in the South West came together to develop and agree a set of terms and protocols through a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in 2016 to ensure:

- The hourly pay for social work staff within Children's Services is capped, to prevent spiralling costs and growing competition between South West Local Authorities, and to mitigate the increasing discrepancy between an agency social worker's level of skill and experience and the rates of pay they have been able to demand
- Agencies providing social work staff within Children's Services comply with agreed standards and protocols, to ensure a stable and high quality workforce is maintained

This updated MoC is being signed in 2021 to reflect the South West's ongoing commitment to working collaboratively.

## **Scope**

This MoC applies to Agency Children's Social Worker roles of: Experienced and Specialist (Advanced/Practitioner) Social Workers, Assistant Team Managers, Team Managers and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) roles. Full definitions of these roles have been agreed by all South West Councils and are in conjunction with the PCF Framework.

This MoC does not apply to Agency Adult Social Worker roles.

## **Legal status of the MoC**

This MoC is not a legally binding agreement, but a "statement of intent" by the collaborating South West Local Authorities, with the aim to address key workforce issues affecting Children's Social Workers. The Memorandum does not take away local decision-making.

The notes from each meeting, along with any circulated documents or data captures are not intended for wider publication and are for the sight of the attendees and their nominated Senior Management only.

## **Governance**

The Regional Directors of Children's Services for each Local Authority 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 discussed at the Regional ADCS Group meetings at agreed intervals (usually no less than once per annum)

## **Pay caps**

All Local Authorities in the South West agree to manage Agency Children’s Social Worker pay within the following hourly pay caps:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Ltd / PAYE</b>	<b>Pay cap</b>
<b>Experienced/Specialist Social Worker</b>	PAYE Agency	£35
	Ltd Company	
<b>Assistant Team Manager</b>	PAYE Agency	£38
	Ltd Company	
<b>Team Manager &amp; IROs</b>	PAYE Agency	£41
	Ltd Company	

If a Social Worker is engaged on a PAYE contract basis, the rate applicable will likely be considerably less than if engaged on a Limited Company contractor basis.

## **Additional Expenses**

The above pay cap rates are exclusive of the additional expenses paid to the agency worker therefore all Local Authorities will need to submit any additional expenses, such as and not limited to; accommodation allowance, relocation costs, mileage. These expenses will be accounted for as additional pay on top of the workers’ pay rate.

## **Exemptions**

The South West Local Authorities recognise that sometimes there are exceptional circumstances that require a Local Authority to pay outside of the agreed caps. When this happens, the representative from that Local Authority should complete an Exemption form and have this agreed by the DCS group, then send the approved form to the MoC Project Officer for circulation. A record of all exemptions will be kept by the MoC Project Officer and routinely discussed at the regional workforce meeting. Exemption details and numbers across the South West will be included in regular performance monitoring reports to the regional ADCS group.

A copy of the exemption form template has been appended to this document – see appendix 2.

## **Standard reference template**

To ensure that objective, complete and accurate feedback is provided by South West Local Authorities at the end of engagement with agency staff, South West Local Authorities agree to the use of a standard referencing template to be completed at the end of an assignment.

This minimum standard will then be available for any Authority looking to engage with an agency worker before a new assignment begins. These checks are in addition to standard checks that must be undertaken on all agency workers to establish their right to work in the UK and their medical fitness to undertake the work assignment. Further guidance on pre-employment standards is available.

A copy of the agency worker reference template has been appended to this document – see appendix 3.

## **Headhunting**

South West Authorities have committed to not to proactively or aggressively headhunt staff, either agency or permanent, directly from other participating South West Authorities. This includes knowingly offering or promoting a role if the individual is already working on behalf of another authority in the South West. This excludes standard recruitment campaigns and promotions.

### **Measuring success**

Annual data captures are undertaken where all South West Local Authorities are asked to contribute. The data captures shows supply, spend and use across the region and the results are collated to monitor and review the regional position and the associated pay caps.