

Briefing Note

Title: Update on Principal Social Workers Report

Date: 17 September 2019

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Job Title: Principal Social Worker

Intended Audience:

Internal

Partner organisation

Public

Confidential

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Adult's and Safer City Scrutiny Panel on the additional information about the impact of the work undertaken by the Principal Social worker that was shared with Cabinet on 5 June 2019. The report will also outline changes that will be made to future reports following feedback from members.
- 1.2 A copy of the report presented to Cabinet is attached for information.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Principal Social Worker report was presented to Cabinet on 5th June 2019. Prior to attendance, the Principal Social Worker was asked to consider the impact of the work outlined within the report and to expand further on the equalities section of the report. The additional information outlined below was shared with Cabinet members.

3.0 Discussion

- 3.1 To support workforce stability the Council has ensured that newly qualified social workers were properly supported. All were given protected time to take part in an Assessed Year in Practice programme that delivers practical training once a month for 12 months. In Children's Services newly qualified social workers have an allocated Advanced Practitioner to offer support with new and complex work. Both the Adult and Children's Senior Management teams have increased their visibility at social work briefings and provided more opportunities for social worker to share their experiences and raise concerns.
- 3.2 This has resulted in a significant reduction in turnover in Children's Social Care which has halved in the period November 2018 to March 2019 when compared with June 2018 to October 2018. The workforce within Adult Social Care is stable and consistently has low turnover rates compared with national averages. This in turn

had seen a reduction in the need for agency staff which in turn has also had a positive impact on the relevant budgets. A more stable workforce also results in greater consistency for the people supported by Adult and Children's Social Care and therefore better outcomes.

- 3.3 A range of work undertaken in Children's Services including embedding Restorative Practice and a focused workforce development offer has resulted in the number of children receiving formal support decreasing across all areas of Children's Social Care.
- 3.4 The number of children in care in Wolverhampton has been considerably higher than comparator authorities, over the last ten years. The rate increased annually from 2009 until 2014, reaching 807 at its peak. The number as at the end of March 2019 was 624.
- 3.5 The Principal Social Worker outlined the actual reduction in agency spend. In 2018/19 agency spend in Children's Services reduced by £136,746 from previous year.
- 3.6 The Principal Social worker drew cabinets attention to paragraph 3.26 and 3.27 of the report in which the impact of the Three Conversations approach is discussed. In adult's services the implementation of the Three Conversations initiative had seen a reduction in waiting lists to zero in participating sites. No person requiring support had waited more than three weeks for contact and the average waiting time for an initial conversation was two days. The workforce had reported that they felt happier and more fulfilled working under the new initiative and the feedback gained from people who had used services during the innovation phases was also positive.
- 3.7 The Principal Social Worker highlighted paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10 of the report. This section discussed the national shortage of social workers and outlined how the City of Wolverhampton Council would be training 36 new social workers in 2020. This would be more than the number required in Wolverhampton and would therefore help to assist with the need for qualified social workers regionally.

4.0 Changes that will be made to the report 2019/20

- 4.1 The Principal Social Workers will be laid out differently and more succinctly outline the impact of work undertaken on the end user using graphs to compare progress with previous years.
- 4.2 The report will evaluate equalities information in more detail. It will seek to discuss how diverse groups who are accessing services reflect proportionally or not the demographic of the City. It will also incorporate information about the diversity of the workforce in order to analyse whether the workforce is adequately diverse to meet the needs of the population within the City.

4.3 The report will provide information where this is available on how people with protected characteristics have contributed to consultations and the development of services.

4.4 The report will outline any specific work that is undertaken in relation to enabling social workers to work effectively with people who have protected characteristics.

5.0 Questions for Scrutiny to consider

5.1 The priorities for 2019/20 have been set to enable continuous improvement in practice across both Adult's and Children's Social Care. The Principal Social Worker contributes to this by ensuring services are sufficiently staffed and the workforce is appropriately skilled and knowledgeable. Does Scrutiny feel that the priorities set reflect this outcome?