

Meeting: Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board

Date: 04/05/2021

Wards Affected: All

Report Title: Effectiveness of the Council's approach to workforce development for Children's Services

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1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report has been prepared to provide members of the Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Board with an update on the effectiveness of the Council's approach to workforce development for Children's Services.

In summary;

1.2 Since the Learning Academy Launched in September 2020 our vacancy rate has reduced by 10%, turnover rate has reduced by 11% and our (use of) agency staff rate by 23%.

1.3 We have recruited 16 Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) on to our Assisted and Supported Year ((ASYE) in employment tailored programme. We have appointed 14 to join our cohort in Sept 2021 and a further 3 for January 2022 with interviews on going during the next few months.

1.4 We have established clear career pathways including the development of the Advanced Social Worker role, and structured development opportunities for first line managers. We are also introducing succession planning as part of our determination to develop our own workforce and equip them with the necessary skills for career progression.

2. Reason for strategy and its benefits

2.1 We want Torbay to be a place where we have turned the tide on poverty and tackled inequalities; where our children and older people will have high aspirations. Our intended outcome from the workforce development strategy is that Torbay Children's Services will have permanent, fully resourced, qualified and highly skilled employees

who will invest in achieving the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families in Torbay.

2.2 The strategy outlined in this report help us to deliver this ambition by creating a Council fit for the future that will:

- be our vehicle for investing in and developing newly qualified social workers so at the completion of their programme they can confidently take their place among the wider workforce
- ensure quality of practice by using learning from practice evaluation to support professional and service development
- create a culture of innovation by drawing upon and translating research and experience into practice change of the highest standard
- enable practice excellence in collaboration with universities
- put relationships at the heart of our practice with children and their families and ensure a relentless focus of our support for our workforce at all levels.

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

1.1 Torbay Children's Services launched the Learning Academy in September 2020 as part of its recruitment and retention strategy with an attractive offer that will reach out and engage potential candidates and a Continued Professional Development (CPD) offer that will invest in all staff, support retention and drive service improvement. Our intended outcome from the strategy as a whole is that Torbay will have permanent, fully resourced, qualified and highly skilled employees who will invest in achieving the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families in Torbay.

1.2 'Assessed and supported year in employment' social workers (ASYE's) are a key element of the strategy, and trained and developed well they will become a significant part of our workforce. In the medium term they will reduce our reliance upon agency social workers which will in turn help in reducing costs. The Learning Academy launch focussed on the recruitment of newly qualified social workers (NQSW's) onto our new ASYE programme. Our offer which includes competitive salary, protected workload allocations and high quality training attracted 16 NQSW's in Sept 2020 for Year 1 and already for Year 2 Sept 2021 we have appointed 14 high quality candidates with another 3 to join the cohort in January 2022.

1.3 In order to support the protected allocations of our NQSW's we are currently employing 1 experienced agency social worker per 2 NQSW's to absorb the more complex work. In the future we foresee skilled and experienced social work teams will be able to absorb a NQSW.

1.4 As part of the offer the service created the Advanced Social Worker (ASW) role. Not only does this provide a highly skilled, knowledgeable and experienced Social Worker who will manage complex work and support and develop less experienced colleagues it also creates a sustainable career pathway within a smaller unitary authority. We created a bespoke ASW development programme to further support and enhance the role.

1.5 For the success of our recruitment and retention strategy it is essential we increase our numbers of permanent experienced social workers to further reduce our reliance

on agency staff and ensure quality and consistency of service for children, young people and their families. A survey by DfE in 2020 found 83% of local authorities are struggling to recruit experienced Social Workers. To support Torbay's recruitment of experienced social workers a specialist marketing company (TMP) was procured to develop and boost our recruitment campaign nationally support by our competitive relocation offer.

- 1.6 In order to sustain retention and reduce our turnover rate the Learning Academy needs to consider how to promote 'Pull Factors' (factors that encourage workers to stay in Torbay) which include:
- the ability to make a difference
 - high quality supervision (management oversight and opportunities for development)
 - peer support
 - opportunities for career progression
 - organizational support for emotional wellbeing
 - feeling valued
- 1.7 The Learning Academy has supported the development of defined career pathways through its 'grow your own' strategy including creating opportunities for apprenticeships, step up to social work, placements, and Advanced Social Workers and leadership roles. We have strengthened links between quality assurance and learning to drive service improvement and progress on the service's Ofsted journey. A strong investment has also been made in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) which enables staff to make a difference through high quality social work while being valued as a colleague. The service is actively improving the quality and accessibility of supervision and management oversight and this will continue as we strive for robust and consistent supervision practice.
- 1.8 The Head of the Learning Academy is working with corporate HR to develop Torbay Councils workforce strategy and undertaking joint procurement of leadership and management training. This ensures that Children's Services is aligned to One Torbay and promotes cross pollination of learning across the services.
- 1.9 Means to actively track cost savings emanating from the recruitment and retention initiatives on a monthly basis are in advanced development. The details will be distributed to support leaders in monitoring the effectiveness of the strategies.

2. Options under consideration

2.1 N/A

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

3.1 Means to actively track cost savings emanating from the recruitment and retention initiatives on a monthly basis are in advanced development. The details will be distributed to support leaders in monitoring the effectiveness of the strategies

4. Legal Implications

4.1 N/A

5. Engagement and Consultation

5.1 N/A

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

6.1 N/A

7. Tackling Climate Change

7.1 N/A

8. Equality Impacts

8.1 Not applicable as this report has been prepared to provide an update on existing services.

Appendix 1

Workforce Data

