



## **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 24 January 2023**

<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2022-2025: PROGRESS REPORT</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

The report presents the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an update on the Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy 2022-2025.

The Strategy sets out the Council's strategy and plans for developing and supporting the social care workforce over the next three years. It outlines five priorities to attract, retain and support the development of a stable, talented, and committed workforce which has the skills, knowledge and motivation to improve children's lives. These priorities are:

- Priority 1: 'Growing our own' through recruitment and development;
- Priority 2: Support Continuous Professional Development to deliver a motivated and skilled workforce, with an emphasis on supporting staff retention;
- Priority 3: Develop high performing social work managers that support a performance management framework that reflects 'high support high challenge';
- Priority 4: Develop new and revised ways of working building on existing strengths to support children, young people and their families; and
- Priority 5: Communication and change management

Underpinning these priorities is a commitment to developing a healthy working environment that supports a positive emotional health and wellbeing amongst our workforce and enables Wirral Council to be an employer of choice in children's social care services.

The Strategy will be implemented in conjunction with a range of other key workforce strategies and is aligned to the priority and vision of the Wirral Plan. The success in building a strong and stable workforce will secure "brighter futures" for Wirral children and young people – one of the main priorities outlined in the Wirral Plan.

This is not a Key Decision. This report affects all Wards.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to endorse the progress made to date on implementing Social Care Workforce Strategy 2022-2025.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 To ensure that elected members are briefed and have oversight on the progress towards implementation of the Social Care Workforce Strategy. A commitment was made in January for members to continue to monitor the progress and activity undertaken in this area as it is a key risk area for the council.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 Do nothing: It is important that there is appropriate and effective monitoring of strategies and plans to provide assurance that progress is being made.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Social Care Workforce Strategy 2022 – 2025 was approved by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in January 2022. Following approval of the Strategy, a robust governance framework was put in place. This involved the establishment of a Social Care Workforce Strategy Board, chaired by the Assistant Director for Children and Families and consisting of key representatives from the Practice and Performance Improvement Teams, Human Resources and Social Care. Several sub-groups were also established to lead on the specific priorities within the Strategy.

### **3.3 Priority 1: 'Growing our own' through recruitment and development:**

- 3.5 The following key achievements have been made to date:

- A calendar of recruitment events has been outlined to promote Wirral as a great place to work. Colleagues from the Council attended a recruitment fair at Anfield, Liverpool in August 2022.
- A contract was put in place with three recruitment agencies to assist with identifying suitable candidates for hard to fill posts. To date, the agencies have supported with recruitment of 7 social workers.
- A 'package on a page' has been developed to outline all of the benefits of working in Wirral including, training and development, employee benefits and other enticing opportunities.
- A new exit interview process has been launched to understand the reasons why people are leaving and to provide an opportunity to put mitigating actions in place or address concerns.
- Three social workers have successfully completed year one of their Social Work Degree Apprenticeship. A second cohort will launch in January 2023 and 4 suitable candidates have been successful in joining the programme.
- All of the students who have been part of the Step Up to Social Work Programme as part of cohort 7 were successful in application to become Newly Qualified Social Workers in Wirral. A bid to the Department for Education for cohort 8 has been successful, with Wirral continuing to be the host organisation on behalf of nine other authorities.
- The Department for Education has agreed to provide £250,000 to fund an innovation programme, led by Capacity Community Interest Company, which will, if it proceeds, see the development of a non-for-profit recruitment agency. So far,

as part of the programme, a feasibility study has been undertaken and engagement has taken place with Councils across the North west. Agreement on the final proposed model is expected early 2023.

**3.6 Priority 2: Support Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to deliver a motivated and skilled workforce, with an emphasis on supporting staff retention:**

3.7 The sub-group that has been set up to deal with this priority has met on a regular basis and below summarises the progress made to date:

- A coaching and mentoring programme has been developed and will be launched in January 2023. There is already a corporate database of coaches who can be accessed by all employees. A bespoke Children's Services database is being established;
- Regular bi-monthly audits are in place to identify good quality practice and areas for improvement. A new Learning and Celebration event was held in November 2022 as an opportunity to share and celebrate the excellent work of social workers.
- Shadowing opportunities have been advertised and a shadowing pilot will commence in 2023 with 5 hosts and 5 staff shadowing. Work to support the development of the Social Work Academy has taken place, including the writing of materials in relation to Continuing Professional Development ("CPD"), progression and wellbeing and engagement. Filming of several social work colleagues has been undertaken.

**3.8 Priority 3: Develop high performing social work managers that support a performance management framework that reflects 'high support high challenge':**

3.9 The work under this priority sits with the CPD Subgroup which meets on a regular basis. Below summarises the progress made to date:

- A senior manager audit has been undertaken using 360-degree feedback tool to identify strengths and areas for development amongst senior managers.
- All Heads of Service in Children's Services have been enrolled on a Leadership Programme which explores positive leadership techniques and teamwork.
- A new Social Work Leadership Pathways Programme has been made available to all Team Managers. The Pathways programme is managed/offered by Frontline (a charity who support the development of excellent social work practice and leadership) on behalf of DfE.
- Regular Team Manager forums empower managers to understand their role and responsibilities in relation to improving practice.

**3.10 Priority 4: Develop new and revised ways of working building on existing strengths to support children, young people and their families:**

3.11 This priority has focussed on two major change programmes:

- system-wide family approach; and
- systemic practice

3.12 **System-wide family approach:** A new locality approach to working has been designed and a first phase implemented in social care services on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022. The locality model has been informed through engagement sessions with practitioners and managers. The approach is being regularly reviewed by operational leads, heads of service and the Assistant Director for Children and Families.

3.13 **Systemic Practice:** The Wirral safeguarding Children Partnership has introduced systemic practice as the next iteration of the Supporting Families Enhancing Futures (SFEF) model for working with children, young people and families.

3.14 A multi-agency steering group has been established to oversee and direct development and implementation of the model and 4-day training sessions for professionals has been developed and delivery began in October 2022 and sessions were available through to the end of 2022. Feedback about the training has been very positive. The model will be officially launched early in 2023.

3.15 **Priority 5: Communication and change management:**

3.16 In order to address this priority, teams have been taking steps to improve the way in which they communicate, and progress includes:

- A communications survey and policy has been developed.
- A change management approach, including a step-by-step change management delivery plan, has been adopted for the implementation of our Wirral System-Wide Family approach. This change management approach will be utilised for any future strategic change within children's services;
- Completion of the 2022 Social Work Organisational Resilience Diagnostic (SWORD) survey has taken place and the findings have been analysed so that clear themes could be addressed.

3.17 **Underpinning theme: Wellbeing**

3.18 Progress made so far on this theme includes:

- A wellbeing calendar has been launched which includes wellbeing activities and thematic days for staff to be involved in activities. These activities have been a mix of virtual and in-person events and sessions and have included offering social workers free hot drinks at Liberty Bell, charity cake sales and gardening competitions;
- A #Bethedifference revive has taken place with changes made to the annual Be the difference awards so that nominations capture good practice and recognition around different award categories. This received 71 responses across the directorate which was the highest ever received.

3.21 **Sector Challenges**

3.22 Despite the positive work which has taken place to deliver the Strategy, increasing the number of permanent social workers in Wirral remains a challenge and, like many other authorities, there is an increasing number of vacancies. The data overview at appendix A of this report provides an overview of the number of social workers who have started at Wirral compared with the number of leavers as well as the number of agency workers in post.

## **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 A focus of the strategy will be on securing permanent employees into vacant posts to reduce the reliance on agency workers. In this regard, the importance of the strategy implementation is significant in supporting the local authority to achieve a balanced budget. Any investment, therefore, should be considered in the context of any potential deliverable savings.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The Council has a legal duty to safeguard the welfare of children and young people in Wirral. The Council service is highly regulated and performs several statutory functions. It is obliged to meet statutory timescales and risks intervention and scrutiny from Ofsted (regulator) and the Department for Education if these are not met. The development of a stable, skilled and supported workforce is fundamental to the ability of the Council to adhere to its legal obligations.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

6.1 The key teams which will have responsibility for implementation of the Strategy include:

- Children's Performance and Improvement Team;
- Social Care Practice Improvement Team;
- Human Resources; and
- Organisational Development

6.2 In addition, colleagues from across the Council and Children's Services may also be called upon to assist with specific projects or initiatives. This could include support from Legal Services, Information Technology and Finance providing advice and guidance and assisting in the effective implementation of planned approaches and initiatives.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 The previous strategy was not providing direction to inform planning and activity. Initiatives were reactionary and ad hoc, resulting in duplication and little impact. It is important that the Council provides clear strategic direction for the prioritisation of resource and activity. The implementation of the strategy will lead to the development of a planned, meaningful and achievable programme of activity that can be monitored, reviewed and assessed to understand its impact and effectiveness.

7.2 The workforce challenges outlined are not unique to Wirral. Councils across the country struggle to recruit and retain social work professionals. Whilst this strategy seeks to address the pertinent local issues, the national challenges associated with market shortages may continue to be apparent for its duration.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 There is a commitment as part of the ongoing delivery of the Strategy to engage and consult with different stakeholders on new proposals and initiatives connected with

each theme. This includes frontline professionals, senior managers and other departments.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is attached here.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no significant environment and climate change implications arising from the report. The strategy articulates plans to develop a robust hybrid model of working which will continue to support reductions in Carbon dioxide emissions.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The strategy outlines a strategic approach to 'growing our own' as being a fundamental concept to drive planning moving forward. Initiatives outlined include working with local schools and universities to encourage young adults from Wirral to consider a career in social work. These training and development opportunities can translate into rewarding career opportunities, thus creating new employment for residents on Wirral.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A - Overview of social care workforce data

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

National Review of Social Care  
Social Care Workforce Strategy 2019-2021  
SWORD survey 2021  
SWORD survey 2022

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with paragraph A of its Terms of Reference: exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council.

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Children, Young People and Education Committee</b>	<b>January 2022</b>