

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

3 July 2018

Subject: Families & Children's Services Social Work Capacity

Cabinet Member: Cllr Laura Mayes - Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary

The current and future demand in children's services is evident both nationally and locally. We have improved services within Wiltshire for vulnerable children and families and we now need to prepare ourselves going forward. One key issue we need to address is the social work capacity within Families and Children's Services via new investment.

Proposal

That Cabinet approve an additional £1.2m investment to increase the social work capacity with Families and Children's Services.

Reason for Proposal

We need ensure sustainable, future proof and secure service across Families and Children's Services. This will only be achieved by increasing the number of social workers and associated posts to ensure we can manage the current predicted increase in service demand and offer both achievable, and where required, protected levels of caseloads. The proposals will also ensure we have sufficient managerial oversight in this important and high-risk area of the council's delivery. This proposal essentially ensures the Local Authority have the requisite capacity within core work groups to deliver on these principles.

**Terence Herbert
Corporate Director**

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

3 July 2018

Subject: Families & Children's Services Social Work Capacity

Cabinet Member: Cllr Laura Mayes - Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills

Key Decision: Yes

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the proposal to ensure a sustainable, future proof and secure service across Families and Children's Services. This will be achieved by increasing the number of social workers and associated posts to ensure we can manage the current predicted increase in service demand and offer both achievable, and where required, protected levels of caseloads. The proposals will also ensure we have sufficient managerial oversight in this important and high-risk area of the council's delivery.
2. The outcome sought is an additional £1.2m annual investment in Families and Children's Services.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

3. One of the council's five priorities in the Business Plan 2017- 2027 is to protect the most vulnerable in Wiltshire's communities. Social workers and social work managers have a key role in delivering that priority which means being able to recruit and retain the right number of high calibre staff in these roles is critical to delivering the principles and actions that will ensure that we meet this priority.

Background

4. The background is that the establishment levels within this service have remained the same since 2015 when social work capacity was last increased, this alongside the market supplement introduced 2015 had a positive impact but are no longer sufficient going forward.

Social Work – Building a sustainable model

5. There are many elements that influence and support the quality of social work delivery; high quality university education, good induction, robust, reflective and supportive supervision and management oversight, effective procedures and systems and manageable caseloads.

6. We have been developing a robust practice framework (CARE) – a coherent approach that structures how we work with families; our staff feedback is that this is assisting them in their assessment and interventions.
7. The Council has invested in a new Case Management System (CMS) run by Liquid Logic. The system is scheduled to go live in November 2018 and will bring together the Council's work across Early Help, Children's Social Care and Support and Education support. It will allow us, through the use of Portals and Liquid Logic's Singleview module, to work even more closely with partners who will be enabled to use the system to understand a family's journey, contribute directly to assessments and more effectively share information.
8. We deliver a training offer that staff support and we operate as a learning organisation ensuring reviews and audits along with family feedback inform the learning and development programme for staff and partners.
9. Our staff are committed to Wiltshire and to the families they work with. They tell us and the evidence supports their view that with manageable caseloads they can more effectively work with families and experience an improved sense of wellbeing for themselves.

Main Considerations for the Council

10. There is much to celebrate in Wiltshire with supporting and improving life chances for children and young people at the heart of the Council's agenda. Ensuring that our children and young people are safe and healthy, and that families have access to services that meet their individual needs at an early stage, is crucial in making sure every child and young person has the best possible start in life and grow up to be purposeful and functioning adults and potential parents.
11. Wiltshire is a relatively healthy and affluent County and outcomes for most children and young people are generally good compared to outcomes across England. However too many of our children who live with increased or multiple vulnerabilities (for example Special Educational Needs [SEN], young carers, care leavers, young people with mental health difficulties) are not doing as well in life as we, or their families would wish.
12. 12% of our children live in low income families. The issues faced by these children combine to impact upon their development and education, limiting their future employment prospects, and reducing their opportunities to succeed throughout their lives and increasing the likelihood of their reliance on 'high end services'.
13. The Families and Children's Transformation (FACT) Programme has been designed to take a whole-system approach with partners, staff, children, young people and their families to both streamline and improve the way we

work whilst promoting multi-agency integration and enabling us to be more efficient in the delivery of our services and more effective at helping families and children achieve positive outcomes at the earliest point.

14. As part of our shared vision we will empower professionals to maximise the time spent with families, providing early support to prevent escalation and ensuring that our children thrive in their families and communities.
15. So, in brief, good quality services delivered by well supported and trained people who have the necessary time and expertise to empower and support the people of Wiltshire is critical to delivering improved outcomes. A core and fundamental element of this workforce is our Social Work and Support staff.

Workforce

16. In order to deliver on our ambition to ensure families access services at the right time and effectively work with them to improve their outcomes and de-escalate risk, we need to ensure we have sufficient staff in place to do this.
17. We know that nationally Local Authorities have an average of 17% of social worker posts currently unfilled (the range for this can be from 3- 50%). The shortage of qualified social workers has also increased the use of agency staffing (costing upwards of an estimated £150m nationally). This is adding yet further costs to a system that is already having to find substantial efficiencies.

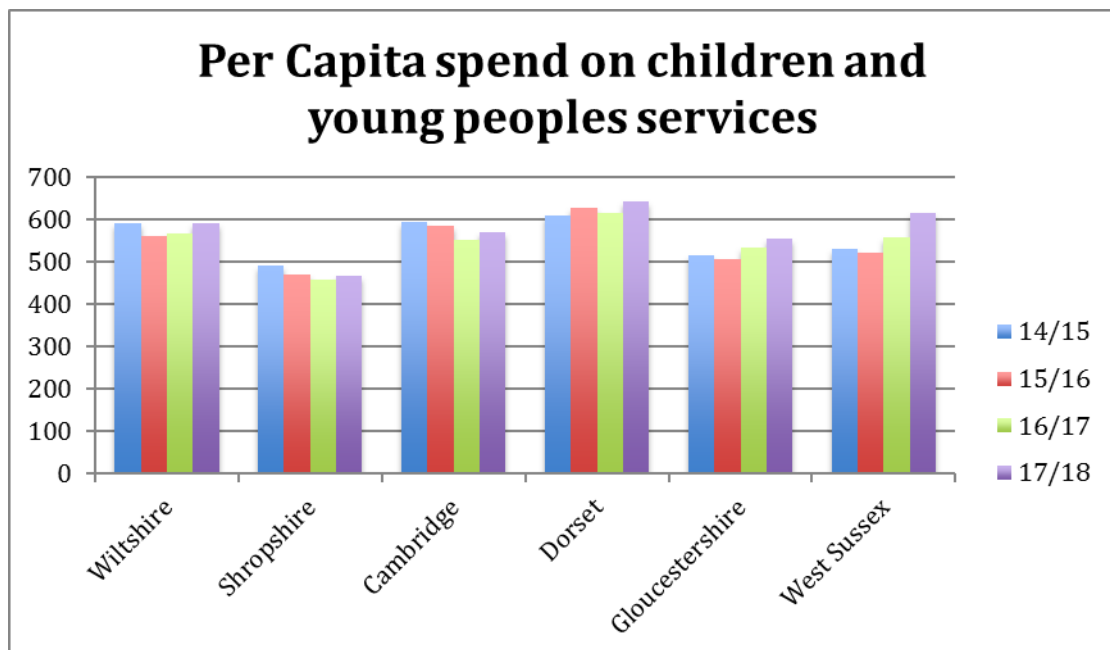
Position at 30 Sept 17	National	Regional	Wiltshire
Vacancies	17%	15.8%	10.8%
Turnover rate	13.6%	14.5%	10.7%
Agency worker rate	15.8%	13.3%	4.7%
Absence	3.1%	4.0%	4.7%

18. Wiltshire's position is more favourable than either the regional or national picture but we know that with no slack in the system any social work vacancy presently puts substantial pressure on delivering services to vulnerable children and thus we need to ensure we remain in this position by looking ahead to the future.
19. We also know that families frequently report that it is staff from a range of professional backgrounds that can best support them in times of crisis and there is good evidence to encourage a clearer definition of the work we see as the social work task and how a more flexible workforce can be deployed to support this.
20. We have seen the benefits of the previously agreed market supplements and an improved recruitment strategy but know from our staff feedback that workload remains critical and is the primary factor that is impacting upon our retention. There has been no increase in social work establishment in

Wiltshire since 2015, over the last 3 years we have seen demand on our services increase.

Demand in Children's Services

21. The Local Government Association has revealed that nationally 66,410 children were put on child protection plans in 2017, a rate of more than 180 a day. The figure is almost double the 33,300 put on such plans a decade ago, while children's services face a £2bn funding gap by 2020.
22. One in every five children in England is referred to children's services before the age of five.
23. The LGA analysis also highlighted the particular shortfall facing early intervention work as a result of a £500m cut in government funding since 2013, with further projected cuts of £183m by 2020, which will represent a 40% overall reduction.



24. The above shows that half of our statistical neighbours are spending more than they were in 2014/15, it is important to note that two of these are bordering authorities. Where spend is on staffing, the largest resource delivering direct to families and children, this will have an impact on Wiltshire in terms of workforce recruitment/competition.
25. The National Children's Bureau "Off the Radar Report" highlights the evidence that the number of children with additional needs is growing. A Survey poll of 101 Local Authority Lead Members for children, conducted for NCB, found that 87% said demand for children's services had increased in the last two years. (Oct 2017). Furthermore recent research by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (July 2017) suggests that in England half a million children are so vulnerable that they require help from the state. This reports highlights the

challenges in accurately identifying the number of vulnerable children and states “The figures that we do know about are shocking enough – more than half a million children so vulnerable that the state has to step in; 700,000 in ‘high risk’ family situations such as living with drug or alcohol addicted parents or in temporary accommodation; at least 800,000 with mental health disorders”.

26. The NCB highlights that these challenges are likely to increase over the coming years and there is a clear link with austerity and rising child poverty. Recent research has shown that children in low income households have worse cognitive, social and health outcomes as a result of growing up poor. (2017) ‘Does Money Affect Children’s Outcomes? An update’.
27. The NCB believes the Government should urgently take specific actions to improve children’s outcomes – such as increasing funding for children’s social care so that local authorities can meet their statutory duties and maintain services focused on early intervention.
28. We know children in care are less likely to achieve good qualifications; (only 13% achieve five or more GCSE’s) compared with over half of their peers.(Department for Education (2017) ‘Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March 2016’).
29. Recent research suggests over 70% of children in care experienced at least one change in their placement, school or main social worker over a twelve month period. As such, the quality of support and of relationships children and young people in care receive varies considerably.(NCB (2016) ‘From care to Independence. Consequently, young people leaving care often struggle to cope with independent living meaning they are more likely to experience homelessness, unemployment and involvement in crime. Again the NCB suggests the Government should prioritise improving outcomes for care leavers, by addressing gaps in resource.

Demand in Wiltshire

30. Since 2014 we have seen a decline in the number of Early Help Assessments completed by partners from 1768 (2013/2014) to 939 in 2017/2018. In response to this we have improved the Council’s Early Help offer in the creation of the support and safeguarding service and the introduction of family key workers to work with families who are below the statutory child in need process. In time this will lead to a reduction in the number of statutory cases however this will take some time and better identification of need is going to maintain demand for social care services.
31. During this same timeframe we have seen improvement in service provision although our child in need figures are similar to the level in 2013/14, the number of single assessments completed has increased by about 60%. We have also seen an increase in the number of child protection investigations started.

32. Our looked after population has risen from 397 (March 2014) to 450 (22nd June 2018).
33. On the 1st April 2018 the duties for Care leavers increased following changes to the Children and Social Work Act 2017; so Local Authorities are now required to offer personal adviser support to all care leavers up to age 25, irrespective of whether they are engaged in education or training. This includes care leavers who return to the local authority at any point after the age of 21 up to age 25 and request PA support.
34. Furthermore the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers we are supporting has increased in the last 3 years and we are now supporting 51; this will rise further.

Request/Proposal

35. In order to maintain performance with increasing demand we need to increase our establishment, recruitment will take at least 3 months and thus we need to act quickly in order to be prepared and ready for increasing demand.
36. The increase in capacity need to be across both the support and safeguarding service and the Child in Care Service. This is in order to manage the increase in demand in child in need, child protection, looked after children and care leavers. Paragraph 45 (Financial Implications) outlines the financial modelling of the 2 options, one being sole social work capacity and the other with some personal adviser capacity also.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

37. The Corporate Director has consulted with the Chair of Children's Select Committee regarding these proposals.

Safeguarding Implications

38. The safeguarding implications are directly related to the ability of the council to recruit and retain sufficiently experienced social workers and managers to undertake the statutory safeguarding responsibilities of the council and to ensure these staff and managers have sufficient time and capacity to safely and effectively assess and intervene with families requiring help.

Public Health Implications

39. With increased professional capacity we will be able to provide more support which will have a positive impact on the health of families and children as well as positively impacting on the children as they move into adulthood.

Procurement Implications

40. There no procurement implications. Additional staff will be recruited via normal HR processes. If agency staff are sought, we will identify them via the Matrix neutral vendor framework.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

41. Vulnerable Families and Children face inequalities in society, additional resource to work with these families will improve their life chances and reduce inequalities.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

42. There are no environmental and climate change considerations as a result of the agreed proposals.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

43. There is a risk to vulnerable children and adults if social workers and their managers do not have the requisite time to spend with families ensuring robust and effective assessments and interventions. The council will be assisted in recruitment and retention of experienced social workers and managers if caseloads are considered manageable. This risk means that vulnerable adults and children may suffer harm if steps are not taken to improve the council's ability to recruit.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

44. The risk associated with this action is the impact on Council budgets/spend, good financial management will be required.

Financial Implications

45. The additional budget that would be required to meet the cost of an additional 16 Social Worker's and 8 Assistant Team Managers in children's services (safeguarding) would be approx. £1.2m in a full year.
46. Costing to increase Families and Children's Workforce.

2018/19 Costing

Model 1

	FTE	Cost per FTE	TOTAL COST
L3 Social Worker	16.00	45,923	734,775
Assistant Team Managers	8.00	56,951	455,604
	24.00		1,190,379
Less 5% Vacancy Factor			-59,519
Travel @ £2625k per Ops worker			42,000
			1,172,860

Model 2

	FTE	Cost per FTE	TOTAL COST
Aspiring Manager	2.00	45,974	91,948
L3 Social Worker	4.00	41,965	167,861
Personal Advisers	2.00	35,442	70,885
	8.00		330,694
L3 Social Worker + 10% MP	10.00	45,923	459,235
Assistant Team Manager + 15% MP	6.00	56,951	341,703
Aspiring Manager + 15%	1.00		52,639
MASH 1 SW - L level 3 + 10% MP	1.00	45,923	45,923
	18.00		899,500
Less 5% Vacancy Factor			-61,510
Travel @ £2625k per Ops worker			42,000
	26.00		1,210,684

47. It would be usual for additional expenditure proposals to be considered alongside other requests during the annual budget process. However, given the potential adverse impact of delaying consideration until later in the year it is recognised this initiative needs to be acted upon now.
48. The nature of the request is for a recurring commitment on the Council's budget. As such a permanent financing solution should ideally be identified. Members will recall that the outturn results reported to the June

meeting of the Cabinet identified additional income from business rates under the Business Rates Retention Scheme. This is a recurring revenue stream and therefore it is proposed that this is utilised in support of the recruitment of additional social workers in the Children and Families workforce.

Legal Implications

49. There are no direct legal implications within this proposal. Any recruitment should follow our recruitment policies.
50. If this is not progressed there is a risk that the Council will not be able to meet its statutory obligations to safeguard children.
51. The level of increase in care proceedings should be monitored particularly in the early stages to ensure that there are sufficient legal support resources to meet any increase in demand.

Options Considered

52. Several other strategies are being developed to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers and managers. We have also looked at increasing the level and diversity of our workforce to support families across a broader range of professionals. However, the demand data suggests that without an increase in social work capacity we will not be able to manage future demand which will impact negatively on service provision and outcomes for families and children in Wiltshire.

Conclusions

49. The Families and Children's Transformation (FACT) programme is driven by five core principles for families and children;
 - **Help when you need it**
 - **We are Better Together**
 - **More time to be with Families**
 - **Resilient communities**
 - **Equity of Opportunity**

This proposal essentially ensures the Local Authority have the requisite capacity within core work groups to deliver on these principles.

Lucy Townsend (Director - Family and Children's Services)

Report Author: Lucy Townsend, Director - Family and Children's Services,
lucy.townsend@wiltshire.gov.uk,

Date of report: 25th June 2018