

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

7 October 2014

Subject: Actions to recruit and retain social workers

**Cabinet member: Councillor Stuart Wheeler
Support Services (HR, Legal, ICT, Business Services)**

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on all of the actions being taken and planned to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers across the council following the agreement of CLT on 23 June to pay market supplements to specific social worker roles.

Proposal

That cabinet note and support the actions being taken and planned to recruit and retain social workers in operational children's services and adult social care.

Reason for Proposal

To improve the recruitment and retention of experienced social workers and social work managers.

Corporate Directors: Dr Carlton Brand, Carolyn Godfrey and Maggie Rae

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Purpose of Report

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Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. One of the council's three priorities in the Business Plan 2013 – 2017 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 high calibre staff in these roles is critical to delivering the principles and actions that will ensure that we meet this priority.

Background

3. As outlined in the report to cabinet titled "Payment of Market Supplements to Social Workers and Social Work Managers" dated 22 July 2014, there are currently recruitment difficulties nationally in respect of social workers, particularly in respect of experienced practitioners. A report published by the Policy Exchange in June 2013, Reforming Social Work, surmised that the supply of social workers will not equal demand until 2022 due to a discrepancy between the supply of newly qualified social workers (NQSW), where the statistics show that many are unable to secure employment, and the limited availability of experienced practitioners.
4. There have been difficulties in recruiting experienced social workers and social work managers across both adults and children's services within the council, and as outlined previously the most significant difficulties are currently within operational children's services, and there is also evidence of current recruitment difficulties in team leader and some experienced social worker roles in adult care operations.

5. Strategies to recruit social workers and social work managers have been in place since December 2012 with HR working closely with operational managers within children's services and adult care operations to try and improve the situation. As well as on-going recruitment advertising on the council's careers website throughout the period, and attendance at careers fairs, a joint targeted advertising campaign for social work recruitment with children's services and adult care operations ran from November 2013 to April 2014 with some success. However despite this campaign, and the on-going advertising of vacancies, there are still a high number of agency workers in senior practitioner and manager roles in operational children's services, and a number of team leader and level 3 social worker roles remain vacant in adult care operations.
6. As a result of this CLT agreed proposals to pay market supplements to specific social worker roles in the safeguarding and MASH teams in children's services and provided the option for these supplements to be extended to other social work roles in other areas of children's services and within adult care operations where there is evidence of significant difficulties in recruiting. Cabinet were asked to note this decision at their meeting on 22 July 2014.
7. In the report to cabinet in July it was acknowledged that whilst the payment of market supplements was agreed on the basis that pay may be a clear driver in attracting candidates to apply for posts, research says that other factors have a bigger impact on whether a candidate accepts a job offer and whether they stay with an organisation. Other factors include development opportunities, career progression, workload, work life balance and access to flexible working. It was concluded that this approach will only work if the other factors affecting retention are managed effectively.
8. As a result an action from the meeting on 22 July 2014 was to provide cabinet with a report outlining the other actions taking place and planned to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers across the council.

Main considerations

Recruitment – action taken and in place

9. As outlined already strategies to recruit social workers and social work managers have been in place since December 2012 with HR working closely with operational managers within children's services and adult care operations to try and improve the situation.
10. Both adult care operations and children's social care attended two community care live events in 2013 and 2014, with significant support from HR. These events were an opportunity for the council to profile itself and to signpost prospective candidates to the vacancies available. Attendance at these events highlighted that the council's profile within the social work community is not high. The location of the county was unclear, as was the lifestyle on offer. A careers stand enabled face to face discussions with a wide range of social workers about the council, its location and the working environment on offer. It was the feedback from the event attended in 2013 that led to the development of a targeted advertising campaign

that launched in November 2013, which focused on the lifestyle on offer in Wiltshire.

11. This joint advertising campaign for social work recruitment ran from November 2013 to April 2014 with some significant success, particularly in relation to the recruitment of NQSW's, with 20 job offers being made in children's services. The success of the advertising campaign in respect of NQSW's will now enable the development of effective succession plans and build future capacity in the service. Both services now have a number of NQSW's, each requiring significant supervision and support, but as a result of the success in recruiting NQSW's in 2014 a more structured approach to the recruitment of NQSW's is planned for 2015, with a focussed campaign to recruit in March and September 2015.
12. Despite this campaign, and the continued advertising of vacancies on the council's careers website since April, there are still currently a high number of agency workers in social work and social work manager roles across children's and adult services. This continued reliance on agency staff this needs to be considered alongside an increase in the establishment within operational children's services, and a period of sustained performance management activity within the service which saw a number of experienced social workers leave. The aim has been to recruit and retain only the quality candidates and staff, but this means high volume recruitment into these roles is more challenging.
13. The council is aware that a majority of local authorities are having difficulty in recruiting experienced social workers and this is supported by a range of research about the recruitment and retention issues associated with social work. We are aware that neighbouring authorities are running rolling recruitment campaigns, and this has led to strong competition for resources available for both permanent and temporary roles in a shrinking pool, with hourly rates being the key driver in being able to recruit temporary staff.
14. As outlined already social worker vacancies have continued to be advertised on the council's careers website, and the social care recruitment microsite has remained live since the targeted campaign ended in April 2014. This has generated a steady flow of applications and therefore recruitment interviews and appointments, where suitable candidates have been found. Since April 2014 there has been 210 applications received, from which there have been 25 job offers and 23 hires.
15. Continued pressure on the services, specifically in the safeguarding and assessment and MASH teams within operational children's services, and the continued reliance on temporary agency staff, has led to a further advertising campaign to recruit to specific posts in children's services. This campaign has been live since the end of August 2014. This has included an update of the social work recruitment microsite to feature vacancies in operational children's services only, as well as an update of information about the teams within the service, the benefits of working at the council and new staff profiles from social workers within the service. Adverts are in the Guardian and Community Care (on line), as well as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. There has also been some investment in optimising the search engines to ensure social worker vacancies appear at the top of any job search results.

16. As well as the steps taken to recruit permanent social work staff in both children's and adult services the reliance on agency workers has continued. However these staff are in short supply due to the competition locally for these resources. HR are working closely with Comensura to source the best candidates, and this has included increasing the hourly rate for roles in safeguarding and MASH in children's services aligned with the market supplements now being paid to permanent staff in these areas. No recruitment agencies have been approached outside the Comensura framework, as all reputable agencies that are able to supply social workers are now on the framework. It is anticipated that this is likely to continue but the reliance should reduce over the next 6 – 12 months as a more targeted recruitment campaign takes hold.

Recruitment – future plans

17. Work to develop a bigger and more targeted campaign for both operational children's services and adult social care operations is also underway. This campaign will run into 2015 and will include alternative ways of advertising social worker vacancies. This campaign is being developed with Penna, the council's recruitment advertising agency, and will include a significant financial investment. The campaign will launch in October 2014.

18. The campaign being developed includes a number of approaches, some based on traditional recruitment advertising and others are new approaches not used by the council before. The approaches include:

- Networking on social media. This will include discussions on professional networks and in social work forums (including Community Care, The Guardian and British Association of Social Work). Social workers, managers, the L&D leads and members of the council's recruitment team have been trained to use social media. These staff will be interacting with social workers and social care professionals via professional networks and discussion forums, as well as contributing to a Wiltshire Council careers blog to raise the profile of the council, and to bring the working environment and culture to life as well as the opportunities available. The aim is to signpost potential candidates to a new recruitment microsite, and this will start prior to the launch of the campaign in October 2014.
- The social work recruitment microsite used in the last campaign will be redesigned to include elements of the council's new employer brand (which focuses on the new ways of working and what the council has to offer in terms of flexibility, benefits and culture), video profiles of a range of council staff, including the associate directors and some social workers and managers, photographic or video profiles of service users outlining their experience of the services and a virtual tour of a hub to demonstrate the facilities and working environment on offer. In addition council initiatives including ASPIRE will be included to showcase our services.
- A sponsored themed week in The Guardian across the Social Care Network (online). This will include three editorial pieces about the council and a

question and answer editorial and this will launch the campaign. There will also be live follow up question and answer session on the social care network at a later date during the campaign.

- Enhanced job listings and job matching for social care roles in The Guardian (online) for six months (this includes up to four roles per month).
 - 600k banner impressions across the Social Care Network in The Guardian to help with signposting and directing social workers to the social work recruitment microsite. (This will run for six months, with 100k of banner impressions per month)
 - A double page spread advertorial in Community Care's 2014 Careers Guide, which is an investment over 12 months as this digital publication remains available on jobsite and editorial site, giving year-long exposure to an audience of over 300,000 active and passive jobseekers. This will be a content heavy advert that will appear as editorial content to engage the reader.
 - A sponsored feature in Community Care is planned for January 2015, depending on the success of the initial three months of the campaign. This feature will be live for 2 weeks and will include an editorial about the council.
 - Job listings on Community Care following the sponsored feature, these listings will run for 3 months from January 2015, and will continue if vacancies remain.
 - Targeted banner advertising on the Community Care editorial site. These will run for 3 months from January 2015 and will continue if vacancies remain.
 - Careers pages will be developed on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter for launch in January 2015 alongside the launch of the council's new employer brand, (which will be used for more general recruitment as well as to support this campaign).
 - Job specific adverts will appear on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter
 - Pay per click adverts across a range of relevant blogs (those read and visited by experienced social workers locally and nationally) and ensures job vacancies are promoted to non-active job seekers.
 - On-going optimisation of on-line sites, this will ensure potential job seekers are driven to the councils social work recruitment microsite and job vacancies by using keywords and recruitment marketing in job search engines, and will ensure Wiltshire vacancies are listed first in search results. This includes Indeed Jobs, Google Advertising and the use of Ad pepper (a digital marketing service).
19. As outlined already in paragraph 11 there are also plans for a more structured and focused campaign to recruit NQSW's in 2015. The success in operational children's, services, as a result of the recruitment campaign earlier this year, has

highlighted opportunities to build future capacity across both children's and adults services to support effective succession planning. Two intakes are planned in March and September 2015 with the aim of recruiting the most talented from this pool of candidates. The council already has robust processes in place to support these staff and further investment in a Wiltshire social work "academy", due to launch in September 2015, will also support this activity.

20. Alongside all current and planned recruitment activities all vacancies will continue to be advertised and promoted internally with the aim of recruiting permanently some of the high performing current agency staff. In addition agencies who supply experienced social workers via the Comensura framework are being asked to supply CV's of experienced social workers looking for permanent employment. This was an action that took place during the last campaign with no success, but agencies are being informed of the market supplements and further attempts are now being made to recruit via these agencies.
21. Consideration is also being given to the use of a virtual team of social workers via an organisation called Skylakes. This organisation is a delivery arm of Sanctuary, an agency used via the Comensura framework for the supply of temporary social workers. Skylakes are preparing a proposal to provide the safeguarding & assessments teams within operational children's services with an externally managed team of social workers to support the teams in progressing cases to create capacity whilst the recruitment campaign takes hold. This service has been in place recently in Buckinghamshire, Norfolk, Coventry and Hillingdon to clear a backlog of cases in those councils.

Retention

22. Despite the current difficulties in recruiting social workers recent data show that the council is able to retain staff in these roles, with the average length of service of directly employed social workers in children's operational services and adult social care being 7 years and 6 years respectively. The data also shows that the average length of service of directly employed social workers who have left the council is 8 years and 9 years respectively (based on leavers since January 2013). This data suggests that where we are able to recruit staff in social worker roles they stay. However the issue is the inability to attract candidates to apply for permanent roles, and this means the retention of our permanent staff is now more critical than ever.
23. A report in 2013 by Mary Baginsky (Senior Research Fellow at King's College London) titled Retaining Experienced Social Workers in Children's services: The Challenge Facing Local Authorities in England identified the factors most closely associated with retaining experienced social workers. As well as workload, pay and working conditions these include a positive workplace culture, supervision that addresses both organisational and professional requirements and opportunities for professional and career development.

Service initiatives and actions

24. Within social care professional supervision is a vital part of support and has elements of coaching within it, especially within reflective supervision. As outlined

in the Baginsky report good professional supervision and support is a key factor in retaining staff. It provides a safety net, the opportunity to explore and check out practice in difficult cases as well as providing management oversight.

25. All staff in both children's and adult services receive regular supervision in line with the council's policy and professional best practice. There has been recent emphasis on reflective supervision for all staff and managers are currently undergoing a series of mandatory, commissioned training days in providing and recording reflective supervision. Reflective supervision has been highlighted as a best practice approach in recent Ofsted inspections at other local authorities.
26. A principal social worker (PSW) has recently been appointed in both children's and adult services. The role of the PSW's is to promote and develop standards in social work and social care, including support and development for the workforce with a focus on succession planning. The PSW's will work very closely with learning and development, sharing the aims and responsibilities in retaining and developing staff. A close alliance between the PSW's and the learning & development team will help to construct appropriate, relevant, targeted training that will support staff in being skilled, knowledgeable and confident at work. Recent Ofsted inspections at other local authorities have highlighted the importance of the role of principal social worker in improving practice and increasing the stability of the workforce.
27. Workloads are closely monitored across both services. Caseload management using the "Mable" system and capacity planning takes place within adult care operations to ensure the team establishments are correct. In children's operational services the on-going difficulties in the recruitment of experienced social workers means that there is pressure on workloads in the safeguarding teams in particular. As a result additional family support workers have been recruited via Comensura to provide social workers with additional support.
28. Social workers across both services have laptops, which enables them to work in any hub as well as remotely, and piloting of the ability to record on tablets and upload to central systems, including carefirst, is taking place. To aid efficiency carefirst has been made far more stable and better performing through enhancements to underlying platform and investment in support team training and skills. In addition there is now an enterprise licence in place which allows unlimited use of carefirst and caremobile, with facilities to improve working with partners through use of an interface. Caremobile for use on tablets is currently being tested and plans for suitable touchscreen devices to run this on are being progressed.
29. Homeworking is available to all staff, and a wider range of working patterns has been approved in adult social care and within the MASH team in children's services. Elements of social work roles can be worked very flexibly, for example recording can be done at any hour because of flexible working and access to technology. However flexible and remote working needs to be balanced with the needs of the business and the duty of care to staff in relation in lone working.
30. Structures in operational children's services have been reviewed and changed to deliver improvements in service delivery, but also to ensure that there is good

visible leadership in place as well as effective peer support. In addition there has been a range of practice improvements, including single assessment, risk tools to assist social workers, significant multi-agency working, with the “team around the child” initiative and the development of an improved early help service in partnership with social workers in the service. In addition the service has introduced practice standards so that social workers have access to clear guidance.

31. The systems thinking team is currently undertaking a review of the traditional model of social work delivery as practised in within operational children’s services with a view to advise on the introduction of the Hackney/Cambridgeshire model which aims to reduce bureaucracy, increase the amount of time social workers spend directly working with families and importantly using a combination of professionals to work as a team. This model has less reliance on professionally qualified social workers and promotes multi-disciplinary working.
32. Within adult social care the services are structured to enable variety. Social workers have the ability to work within teams that provide support to older people, people with a disability, including learning disabilities, as well as in the areas of safeguarding, mental health and hospital social work. Initiatives within the service also add to this variety, including the “Help to Live at Home” initiative which means social workers can work closely with providers with the aim of delivering better outcomes for customers. This is recognised as an innovative approach to support adults and Wiltshire is a leading authority on this. In addition Wiltshire is a beacon council for the Better Care Plan, working with health to integrate services. This initiative will give social workers the opportunity to provide support locally working with GP’s.

Learning & development initiatives and actions

33. Opportunities to learn and development are a key factor in retaining staff. The council has in place a wide range of quality training and development opportunities for all staff, including access to support for professional qualifications and the continuous professional development (CPD) required for all professionally qualified staff. Guidance for constructing a CPD portfolio is now available on The Wire. In addition there are robust induction programmes in place in both children’s and adults services supported by the corporate induction support available from the core learning & development service.
34. To support CPD and career progression there are structured but differing arrangements in place for social workers in children’s and adult’s services, namely
 - a. In children’s services there are formal arrangements to support progression from level 2 to level 3 and 4 and this includes completion of post graduate course including the General Certificate in Professional Practice (GCPP) and the Graduate Diploma in Childcare run at Bournemouth University. The service supports approximately 15 staff a year to complete the certificate programme, and this arrangement has been in place since January 2012.

- b. In adult social care mental health social workers have to become approved mental health practitioners (AMHPs) to progress. The service supports the training of a group of social workers each year to become AMHP's. This structured development is planned by the mental health team and emergency duty team managers. There is a statutory duty to provide sufficient AMHP's and investment in this structured support as well as the provision of development updates and other continuous professional development opportunities ensures this statutory duty is met and that staff are provided with the professional support needed to progress.
35. Career progression in both services is dependent on the opportunities available, so the learning and development focus is in ensuring the staff are in the best position when vacancies arise.
36. In addition to the training and development already outlined training is also available through Wiltshire Pathways which includes a majority of the safeguarding training.
37. In addition to the formal training provided coaching is also available for social workers. Coaching qualifications are available and all staff can access these. In addition external coaching and mentoring is also provided where required. In children's operational services and adults social care operations there are a number of qualified coaches and staff receiving coaching.
38. For newly qualified social workers (NQSWS) there has been stronger focus on the assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) over recent years, and in January 2014 an ASYE co-ordinator was appointed to support the NQSWS in both children's and adult services in their ASYE. The coordinator has developed a handbook, set up learning agreements, run support groups and is working with managers to ensure the NQSWS receive the additional support that the scheme is designed to provide. The first NQSWS to come through the scheme have just successfully completed their ASYE.

Future plans

39. As this report outlines there is already a wide range of learning and development available as well as structured supervision at a service level to support both personal and professional development of social workers. In addition the council has invested in improving the working environment for all staff with access to new technology and flexible working opportunities, and in a report to cabinet in July a decision to pay market supplements to social worker posts in response to the ongoing difficulties in recruiting and retaining experienced social workers was outlined.
40. Despite of the steps taken, and initiatives already in place and planned it is acknowledged that steps are needed to improve things further by developing clearer career and development pathways to further support staff retention. As a result there are now clear plans in place to develop a social work "academy" within Wiltshire, and the project to develop this is currently being scoped by the programme office. It is envisaged that the academy will be launched in

September 2015, however many of the key features of the academy will be in place much earlier than that.

41. The academy will aim to attract, recruit, develop and retain social workers and meet the standards for employers of social workers in England, which includes a requirement for CPD. The academy will provide an organised programme of learning via learning and development pathways. These pathways will guide new staff and managers through an organised programme of learning and development, from induction to CPD, in order to equip staff with the skills, knowledge and understanding to do their job as efficiently, effectively and confidently as possible. The content of these pathways will be dictated by national standards, local knowledge and practitioner experience.
42. Other steps planned include further development of the ASYE programme to ensure this training is linked to the academy aims, with the provision of further support and guidance for NQSW's.
43. Stronger links with local higher education providers will be developed. The existing links with Bath, UWE (Bristol), Wiltshire College and Bournemouth will continue, with some exciting initiatives possible including opportunities for prospective students to do short placements and/or shadowing of operational social work staff so they can get a better understanding of the role, opportunities for more flexible arrangement and access to course, pre-social work courses (E.g. foundation degree in social work), joint training/lecturing, an organised system for placements and operational social work staff lecturing on programmes.
44. There will also be stronger emphasis on continuous professional development (CPD). All registered professionals need to undertake this, and once a member of staff is competent within their role opportunities to further enhance their knowledge and skills along a clear continuing pathway will be key to effective succession planning. Plans include increased opportunities to access research and a series of learning activities to give experienced staff additional knowledge and skills that will enable them to step up to management and more senior roles.
45. Further steps to support effective succession planning include:
 - a. More targeted promotion of the generic courses available in the corporate management matters portfolio enriched with reflective sessions that link to the social care arena.
 - b. Providing support to existing staff who are keen to train as social workers. This support will be offered through a social work degree to a small number of staff in both children's and adults services.
 - c. Development of a "return to social work" course to attract qualified staff who have not worked as a social worker for a while, and who may need an update before re-applying to re-join the profession.

Other considerations

46. Despite all of the actions being taken and planned it is unlikely that the council will reach a situation where there is a full complement of permanently employed social workers and managers in the short term. As a result HR have been working

closely with Comensura and neighbouring councils to develop a regional forum to improve the quantity and quality of applications through Comensura. This is likely to develop in to a more general recruitment and retention forum, and may involve the development of a south west regional CPD conference.

47. In addition steps have been taken to manage the escalating levels of pay for experienced social workers recruited via agencies. This is a factor that is affecting the ability of all councils to recruit permanent staff so a cap on the hourly rate has been agreed in the region and internal monitoring is taking place to ensure the council complies with this wherever possible. However the recent decision to pay market supplements to social work roles in operational children's services teams (safeguarding & MASH) has resulted in an increase in the hourly rate for agency staff assigned to these teams.
48. The long term aim is to focus recruitment activities on NQSW's so both children's and adult's services will need to have more effective succession planning to enable this and to build the future capacity needed to resolve the on-gong recruitment difficulties. Plans for 2015 include two campaigns to recruit NQSW's in March and September, as these are optimum times for those nearing completion of their qualifications and starting to look for jobs and for those who leave job seeking until after the summer break. Experience from the last campaign demonstrated that the council needs to put itself in a position to recruit the highest calibre of NQSW, and a more focused campaign would support this. The recruitment campaign launching in October 2014 will start to highlight the council's plans to recruit NQSW's next year.

Safeguarding Implications

49. The safeguarding implications are directly related to the ability of the council to recruit and sufficiently experienced social workers and managers to undertake the statutory safeguarding responsibilities of the council.

Public Health Implications

50. A failure to recruit sufficient social workers poses risks to the health and wellbeing of the population and especially the vulnerable.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

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

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

52. There are no equalities implications as a result of the agreed proposals.

Risk Assessment

53. There is a risk to vulnerable children and adults as a result of the difficulties the council is experiencing in recruiting experienced social workers and social work

managers. 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 and related work is not taken

54. The risk is that we will not have sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified and experienced social workers which could mean that vulnerable children and adults may suffer harm.

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

55. There are no risks associated with the actions taking place or planned. The significant risks are associated with the council taking no action to recruit and retain social workers.

Financial Implications

56. In addition to the financial implications outlined in the Cabinet report dated 22 July 2014 and titled "Payment of Market Supplements to Social Worker And Social Work Managers" a budget of £200k has been set aside to pay for recruitment advertising and other recruitment marketing over the next 6 – 12 months, including the recruitment campaign planned for launch in October 2014 outlined in paragraphs 17 & 18.
57. The activities planned will be closely monitored throughout the recruitment campaign that launches in October 2014, and any recruitment initiatives not delivering the required results will be stopped to avoid any unnecessary expense.
58. This expenditure has to be offset against the council's current expenditure on agency social workers as the aim of the recruitment campaign is to reduce the number of agency workers employed and therefore reduce this expenditure.

Legal Implications

59. There are no legal risks associated with the actions being taken or planned other than those outlined in the Cabinet report dated 22 July 2014 and titled "Payment of Market Supplements to Social Workers and Social Work Managers".

Conclusions

60. A wide range of actions have taken place or are currently in process to support the recruitment and retention of social workers, and a number on actions and initiatives are also planned. The actions already in place have delivered some success and it is important that the services invest enough time in maintaining the momentum created from advertising campaigns to prevent skills and experience gaps in the social work workforce in the future.
61. It is accepted that the council will not be in a position of having a fully employed social work workforce in the short term but steps are being taken to build capacity for the future with a longer term aim of having recruitment activities focused on

newly qualified social workers. This long term aim needs focused action now. Work to develop effective succession plans across both operational children's services and adult care operations will be done as part of the development of the social work "academy" and it be important that the services use these plans to ensure the retention of high performing social workers, and ensure these staff have access to the development needed to support effective succession.

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Background Papers

None