

Wiltshire Council

Children's Services Select Committee 23 September 2010

Summary Report on Allocation and Vacancies in Children and Families Social Care

(The contents of this report were presented to the Local Safeguarding Children Board in July 2010, therefore data is correct as at the end of June 2010)

Purpose of the report

1. To update the Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB) on case allocations and workforce vacancies within Children's Service in line with the Laming Report Recommendation.

Background

2. The Laming Report into the circumstances surrounding the death of Victoria Climbié in the London Borough of Hackney made recommendations into strengthening and improving reporting arrangements within local authorities in respect of staff recruitment and workload management. This report provides the LSCB with information in respect of previous and current case allocation and vacancies within the social care teams.

Summary of locality child care teams

3. During 2009/10 Social Care provided services to children, young people and families through seven Locality Teams located across Wiltshire as follows:

North Wiltshire	Chippenham/Corsham (based at Chippenham), Wootton Bassett/Malmesbury/Calne (based at Wootton Bassett)
East Wiltshire	Kennet (based at Devizes)
West Wiltshire	Trowbridge/Bradford on Avon/Melksham (based at Trowbridge), Westbury/Warminster (based at Trowbridge)
South Wiltshire	Amesbury (based at Amesbury) Salisbury (based at Salisbury)

4. The Locality Teams dealt with the whole range of services, including delivering frontline referral and assessment functions, working with children in need, children and young people subject to Child Protection Plans, Care Proceedings, working with Children Looked After, including through to adoption.
5. In addition, supporting the Locality Teams are two Family Support Teams one team based in Chippenham, covering the North and East of the county and a South and West Team based in Trowbridge and Salisbury. These teams undertake work commissioned by locality teams, including parenting assessments, court ordered assessments, supervision of contact and prevention of accommodation. Family support managers also manage the Crisis Intervention Service (CIS), who work between 2pm -10pm and over weekends to prevent family breakdown and reduce the need for accommodation.
6. There are three Children with Disabilities Teams (CDT's) providing services to disabled children and young people in Wiltshire. The teams are based in Chippenham, Melksham and Salisbury.
7. The social work establishment of the Locality Child care Teams in 09/10 equates to 66 full time equivalent Social Workers, 12.5 Assistant Team Managers and 7 Team Managers.

Team	Team Manager	Assistant Manager	Qualified Social Worker
Chippenham/Corsham	1	1.5	8.4
Wootton Bassett/ Malmesbury/Calne	1	2	9.5
Kennet	1	2	10.7
Trowbridge/Bradford Avon	1	3	12.8
Westbury/Warminster	1	1	5
Amesbury	1	1	6.2
Salisbury	1	2	12.89
Total	7	12.5	65.49

Main consideration

8. During the period June 2009 – June 2010 the vacancy rates across the whole County have been generally low. The only exception to this has been

the team based in Trowbridge where, out of 20 Qualified Social Worker posts, 3.2 full time equivalent Social Work posts have been vacant.

9. Across the whole County vacancy rate was on average 3%. This is low compared to other authorities, some of whom have reported 20% vacancy levels.
10. An area of recruitment presenting some challenge has been in respect of Assistant Team Managers in two particular teams. In the Trowbridge/Bradford on Avon/Meksham Team the third Assistant Team Manager post was never filled and in Wootton Bassett there were Assistant Team Manager vacancies since early February 2010. The inability to recruit to these posts presented challenges for the Team Managers concerned.
11. The use of agency Social Workers in Wiltshire has been low. The Trowbridge/Bradford on Avon/Meksham Team have employed 2.4 full time equivalents and the Wootton Bassett Team has employed 2 full time equivalents. This has ensured allocation of casework and maintained the flow of work through from referral and assessment possesses.
12. There are currently 5 Qualified Social Workers and 1 Assistant Team Manager on maternity leave.
13. There has been some long term staff sickness across teams. At the most challenging point mid-year, there were 3.8 staff on long term sick leave. This is a variable factor and very closely monitored by Team Managers with HR support. Managers are encouraged to vigorously apply the sickness absence policy with active support for Head of Service.
14. The front line child care locality teams have been restructured from the seven generic teams to function specific teams. The restructure involved considerable consultation with all staff and managers were actively involved in shaping and deciding the new structure.
15. On 21 June 2010, the dedicated specialist teams went live with the following replacing the former locality child care teams:

Team	Team Manager	Assistant Manager	Qualified Social Worker	Base
Referral and Assessment North and East	1	2	9.7	Devizes
Referral and Assessment South and West	1	2	10.4	Trowbridge
Community Safeguarding North	1	1	8.84	Chippenham
Community Safeguarding South	1	1	9	Salisbury
Community Safeguarding				

East	1	1	8.84	Devizes
Community Safeguarding West	1	1	12.46	Trowbridge
Children in Care and Through Care North and East	1	1.5	8.5	Chippenham
Children in Care and Through Care South and West	1	1	9.5	Salisbury

16. To support the move to dedicated teams an additional 15 Qualified Social Work posts have been approved.
17. The recruitment of Social Workers has been ongoing since February 2010. The "Hidden Gem" campaign attracted significant interest and it has been possible to recruit into these posts. The large majority of applicants are Newly Qualified Social Workers which will present some operational challenges, in particular, for the Community Safeguarding Teams in West and East, who each have five Newly Qualified Social Workers joining teams.
18. Team Managers are organising local induction programmes for their Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW), along with the Corporate Induction and a specifically created Children and Families Induction led by Head of Service to orientate Social Workers to work in Wiltshire. All NQSW's will be supported on the newly qualified training programme and will have dedicated time to follow this through with external mentoring and team 'buddy' coaching.
19. Managers posts were filled, with the exception of Community Safeguarding South.
20. There are currently as of 28 June 2010, 9.17 Social Work vacancies across the county. These can be broken down by teams as follows:

Team	Vacancy – Qualified Social Workers
Community Safeguarding South	2
Community Safeguarding West	2.46
Children in Care South & West	1.4
Children in Care North & East	0.2
Referral & Assessment North & East	0.6

Referral & Assessment South & West	2.51
Total	9.17

21. A further advert for Social Worker posts will be advertised online in the week commencing 8th July 2010 and over the summer period with an extended closing date.
22. Permission has been given by the Service Director for agency Social Workers to remain until the end of August 2010. The need for their continued presence in teams will be reviewed at this point.
23. A recent advert was placed for Assistant Team Managers. There were four vacancies across the county as follows, two full time equivalents in Community Safeguarding West and North, 0.5 full time equivalents in Children in Care North and East and Community Safeguarding South respectively. There is an Assistant Team Manager on maternity leave in Community Safeguarding West. Following interviews all Assistant Team Managers posts were recruited to with the exception of Community Safeguarding South.

Workload Activity

24. Workload activity is captured on a monthly and cumulative basis. Throughout 09/10 this performance activity has been scrutinised by the Senior Management Teams with action plans as required to support KPIs.
25. The numbers of initial contact referrals, Initial Assessments, Core Assessments and Section 47s within the newly established Referral and Assessment teams has been a specific focus. Early comparisons with the first two months show a reduction in Initial Contacts across the County however this activity will be carefully monitored to identify any trends and to ensure equitable alignment of social worker resources across the teams.
26. There are currently, as of May 2010, 160 children subject of child protection plans and 363 children in care. The number of children in care continues to slowly increase. As a per 1000 population these figures are in line with statistical neighbours.
27. Throughout 09/10 all referrals moving to initial assessment were allocated to a named qualified social worker. All Child Protection and Looked After Children were allocated to a qualified social worker.
28. All managers routinely monitor Social Workers case loads through an established workload management tool. There is a recommended workload for newly qualified Social Workers and Level 4 workers. This allows weighting for complexity. The restructure is aiming for statutory caseloads of around 15 Children and Young people. Caseloads will be carefully monitored to ensure appropriate alignment of Social workers across teams.

Retention of Social Workers

29. The Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) scheme has been in place in Wiltshire since 2008 and all newly qualified Social Workers are expected to participate in this scheme. All NQSW have a restricted caseload in order to gain optimum benefit from the scheme.
30. Newly appointed newly qualified Social Workers will be registered for the next course in September 2010.
31. Wiltshire has also signed up for the Early Professional Development (EPD) programme. Managers will be trained shortly to deliver this programme and all NSQWs once they've completed their first year of practice will move into this programme.
32. The EPB programme links seamlessly into the post Qualifying Award formally known as PQ1 and also links in with an established carer progression process for Social Workers.
33. These first two years of practice for Social Workers are important and Wiltshire's commitment to these programmes, supported by the Council for workforce development CWDC, will strengthen the Social Work workforce.

Environmental Impact

34. None.

Equalities Impact

35. The establishment of a skilled, experienced workforce "mirroring" the diverse population we serve will ensure that all communities get a good quality service

Risk Assessment

36. The highest risk is the inability to recruit sufficient front line, appropriately qualified workers. This has been mitigated to date by a successful recruitment campaign.

Financial Implications

37. If the recruitment campaign falters then additional costs will be incurred due to the use of agency staff. Agency staff have been used sparingly to cover the gaps.

Legal Implications

38. None.

Conclusion

39. There has been a significant amount of activity involving the workforce in the design, delivery and implementation of the new structure. During this

period effective and safe services have been maintained. The net gain of 15 additional social work posts will enable further improvements to be made in case management, planning and review. To enable the workforce across the specific teams to deliver high quality services a training and development plan will be delivered.

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Unpublished documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

None.