



Proposed Recruitment & Retention Payment for Social Workers in the Together for Families Service

For decision For discussion For information

SUMMARY

Proposal for Recruitment and Retention Payment to SWs in Children's Social Care Together for Families Service

OWNER

HR Task Group

- Kit Lam, EDFR
- Maria Young, Director of CSC
- Shella Smith, Head of HR

VERSION

1.0

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1. Executive Summary

The recruitment of qualified social workers (QSWs) in local children’s services remains a national issue and for many directors of children’s services, it is the biggest barrier to improvement. As record numbers of social workers continue to leave the profession, the high level of reliance on agency social workers within a very small regional and national pool has become the norm. This places significant pressure on children’s services generally and within the Together for Families (TfF) service at BfFC particularly in terms of:

- a) budget pressure given the high cost of agency staff compared to permanent staff with a differential of c£30k per worker per annum
- b) service pressure as it continues to be a significant barrier to stabilising the service and impacts on our ability to achieve the necessary service improvements that is sustainable

It is also recognised that the level of resilience and expertise for QSWs in the TfF service is higher than other service areas. This is mainly due to the risk levels of children open to this service that necessitates QSWs navigating between child protection and court work. Regrettably, there are fewer QSWs with the necessary skills, experience and resilience who are attracted to the role under the current pay offer.

In July 2022, a HR Taskforce group consisting of the Director of Children’s Social Care (DCSC), Head of HR and Executive Director of Finance and Resources (EDFR) was formed to focus on recruitment, retention, and conversion of agency workers to permanent hires. The priorities of the HR Taskforce and BfFC senior leaders remain to:

- reduce agency spend on QSWs by stabilising the TfF workforce
- improve the recruitment of QSWs through ‘growing our own’ programmes
- improve the retention of SWs through targeted support, bespoke training and addressing caseload and other concerns which impacts recruitment and retention
- convert the high number of agency staff to permanent recruits through our ambition to be an ‘employer of choice’

As part of the HR Taskforce’s work, it was identified that it is particularly difficult to recruit and retain permanent QSWs in the TfF service. This is evidenced by the higher turnover rates and the higher ratio of temporary to permanent current staffing levels in the TfF service compared to the other teams with QSW, as illustrated below:

Social Worker Turnover	Temp	Perm	Total Turnover
Children Looked After + Leaving Care Team	100%	30%	36%
CSPOA	50%		20%
CYPD Service	33%		11%
Fostering Team	100% ¹	13%	22%
Together for Families	100%	33%	64%

¹ Temp turnover of 100% is 1 person



Social Worker Current Staffing	Perm	Temp	Total	% Temp	% Perm
Children Looked After + Leaving Care Team	10	1	11	9%	91%
CSPOA	3	2	5	40%	60%
CYPD Service	6	3	9	33%	67%
Fostering Team	8	1	9	11%	89%
Together for Families	27	25	53	47%	53%

The QSW role within the Tff service has been assessed as insufficiently differentiated to pursue job evaluation that would push the grading to a higher pay band. The recommendation from the HR Taskforce is therefore to implement a recruitment and retention (R&R) payment for QSWs working within the Tff service to create a stable team of permanent hires, by recognising the market pressures that prevents the team from being able to recruit and retain staff in sufficient numbers at the normal graded salary for the role. It will not apply to newly qualified social workers undertaking their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYEs) until they have successfully completed the programme.

The scheme will need approval from:

- BFFCs Finance Committee and Board (approved on 24 Nov 2022)
- the Council’s Policy Committee

In addition, we will consult and communicate with trade unions and colleagues and employees in the children’s social care team.

An Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix A) has been completed which considers the people management impact on services within BFFC and RBC. This highlighted no significant risks.

The recruitment and retention payment would go live subject to approvals and funding being in place (likely Feb/Mar 2023) and would apply to all qualifying employees in the Tff service. The scheme would be reviewed in 12 months’ time to determine whether the recruitment and retention payment for new entrants is still needed going-forward.

2. Recruitment and Retention Payment

The rationale for this proposal has been developed by the HR Taskforce which includes the Head of HR. The group is assured that the rationale to support the recruitment and retention payment would not create any employment implications in terms of equal and fair pay claims from the wider teams. The scheme would be reviewed in 12 months’ time to determine whether the recruitment and retention payment for new entrants is still needed going-forward, i.e., if the Tff service is stabilised there would not be the need to continue with the scheme for new entrants.

The proposed recruitment and retention payments are:

TfF service QSWs	Golden Hello	R&R (12 month) payment	R&R (24 month) payment
QSW – existing	-	£3k	£3k
QSW – new recruits	£5k	£3k	£3k
QSW - existing agency converting to perm	£5k	£3k	£3k
QSW - new agency converting to perm	£5k	£3k	£3k
QSW – internal transfer to the TfF service	-	£3k	£3k

Conditions:

- Golden Hello payment is subject to all new entrants (including former agency workers) meeting the person specification criteria, passing the required pre-employment checks, signing a BFfC permanent contract of employment and successfully passing the 6-month probation period
- R&R payments after 12 months and 24 months are paid subject to satisfactory performance. R&R will not be made to those who are subject to formal capability or disciplinary procedures
- Golden Hello and R&R payments are non-pensionable

It is critical that the recruitment and selection process for experienced QSWs is robust and supported by a clear understanding of the conditions associated with any payments. The TfF service, HR and Finance Teams will need to work closely to ensure the payments are only made to those eligible and meeting the given criteria with clear reporting in place to BFfCs Executive Directors Meeting (EDM).

In addition, agency hires converting to permanent employees and new recruits to the service will be placed within the existing pay scale, dependent on career stage experience.

3. Financial Impact of Proposal

The proposal is only applicable to QSWs within the TfF service. There are four teams each comprising 12 QSWs (total of 48). Estimated costs based on September establishment:

TfFT QSWs	Golden Hello	R&R (12 month) payment	R&R (24 month) payment
YEAR	Immediate	2022/23	2023/24
QSW – existing	-	21 * £3k = £63k	21 * £3k = £63k
QSW – new recruits	-	3 * £3k = £9k	3 * £3k = £9k
QSW - existing agency	24 * £5k = £120k	24 * £3k = £72k	24 * £3k = £72k
TOTAL (MAX. COST)	£120k	£144k	£144k

This does not consider the costs savings associated with non-direct costs such as the recruitment process, recruitment advertising etc.

BFFC are engaged with RBC to explore funding of this proposal through either a one-off increase in contract sum (growth bid) or through Delivery/Transformation Funding. Given that the cost of agency is currently generating an overspend position on the 2021/22 budget of c£500k, this proposal is intended to minimise and mitigate the ongoing unbudgeted overspend within the CSC pay budget going-forward.

4. Consultation and Communication

Meetings will need to take place with key stakeholders to gather feedback and comments on the scheme. The scheme will potentially result in overlaps with the pay rate of senior team members; however, these can be objectively justified as a result of the significant recruitment and retention challenges relating to the appointment of permanent QSWs in the Tff service. Furthermore, the scheme will be reviewed after 12 months and will be discontinued if the Tff service is stabilised with more permanent QSWs in post.

Current pay rates:

Newly Qualified Social Worker (post ASYE)
RGSW5 – SCP 26 – 28
£30,984 - £32,798
Market Supplement: £8,000
Total £38,984 - £40,798 (RGSW5)

Experienced Qualified Social Worker
RGSW6 – SCP 28 – 33
£32,798 - £37,568
Market Supplement: £8,000
Total £40,798 - £45,568 (RGSW6)

Consultant Practitioner
RGSW7 – SCP 33 – 39
£37,568 - £43,570
Market Supplement: £6,000
Total £43,568 - £49,570

Assistant Team Manager
RGSW8 – SCP 39 – 42
£43,570 - £46,662
Market Supplement: £6,000
Total £49,570 - £52,662

Team Manager
RGSW9 – SCP 43 – 48
£47,665 - £53,287
Market Supplement: £6,700
Total £54,365 - £59,987

It is not proposed that any adjustment is made outside of QSW scheme as presented.



5. Recommendations

BFFC Board approval was given on 24 November 2022. Policy Committee is asked to consider and approve the proposed Recruitment and Retention proposal.

It is also proposed that if approved, the scheme would be implemented for a 12-month period subject to a review thereafter to:

- determine the impact of the scheme on recruitment and retention
- assess whether the scheme needs to continue for a further 12-month period depending on the level of 'need' to attract new entrants into the team
- consider any negative impact that may arise such as disenchantment from existing permanent staff and negative reactions from neighbouring LAs

Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment

Provide basic details

BfFC Proposed Recruitment and Retention Payment for Social Workers in the Together for Families (TfF) Service

Directorate: Resources

Service: HR and Organisational Development

Name and job title of person doing the assessment

Name: Shella Smith

Job Title: Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development, RBC and Head of HR for BfFC

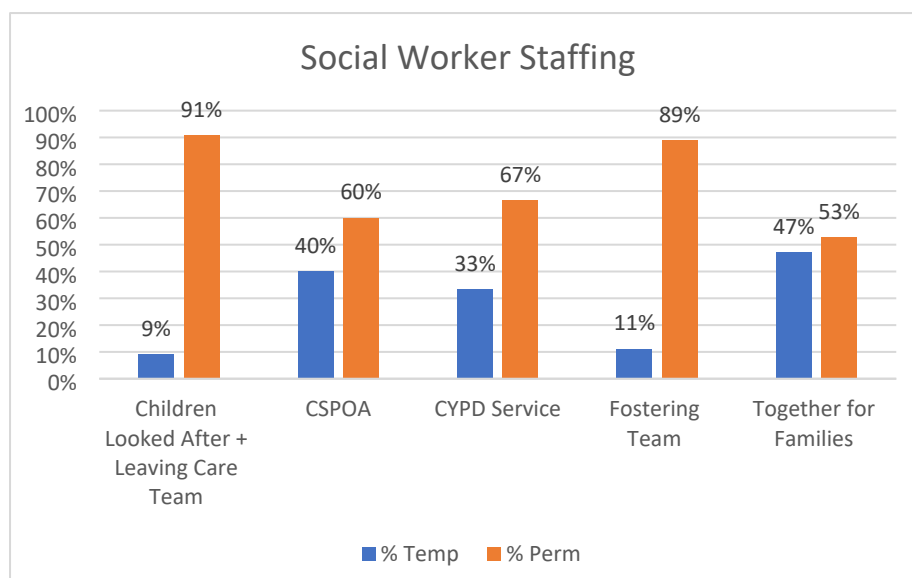
Date of assessment: 13 December 2022

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?

The recruitment and retention of qualified social workers (QSWs) in children's services remains a national issue. As record numbers of social workers continue to leave the profession, the high level of reliance on agency social workers within a very small regional and national pool has become the norm. This places significant pressure on children's services generally and particularly within the Together for Families (TfF) service at BfFC. It is recognised that the level of resilience and expertise for QSWs in the TfF service is higher than other service areas. This is mainly due to the risk levels of children open to this service that necessitates QSWs navigating between child protection and court work. Regrettably, there are fewer QSWs with the necessary skills, experience and resilience who are attracted to the role under the current pay offer.

The data clearly highlights that it is particularly difficult to recruit and retain permanent QSWs in the TfF service. This is evidenced by the higher turnover rates and the higher ratio of temporary to permanent current staffing levels in the TfF service compared to the other teams with QSW, as illustrated below:



Turnover	Temp	Perm	Total Turnover
Children Looked After + Leaving Care Team	100%	30%	36%
CSPOA	50%		20%
CYPD Service	33%		11%
Fostering Team	100%	13%	22%
Together for Families	100%	33%	64%

The target set for the proportion of QSWs (FTE) who are permanent is 85%. We currently have only 53% of posts permanently filled within the Tff service.

The proposed change is to introduce a recruitment and retention payment for all permanent QSWs employed within the Tff service at BfFC, where there is significant and unmanageable levels of turnover as outlined in the report. This is being taken as one of several steps to mitigate against the historic recruitment and retention challenges and is supported by a range of additional measures to help recruit and retain permanent staff.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

New and existing QSWs in the Tff service, including current agency workers who are appointed to a permanent, qualifying position.

What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?

We are hoping to see:

1. A marked improvement in the number of applicants who apply for and remain in permanent QSW positions in the Tff service, thus increasing the proportion of permanent QSWs to meet our target of 85% permanency.
2. A reduction in QSW agency numbers and spend.
3. Improved retention rates for QSWs to reduce the risk of service disruption to children, families and young people.

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

Existing permanent QSWs have expressed concerns that agency workers are paid more than them for the same type of work. This has resulted in some choosing to leave permanent employment to receive increased financial benefits.

Some agency workers have expressed a desire to move to permanent roles but have voiced concerns around pay. They would welcome the option to move into permanent roles if the pay gap was reduced.

The company senior leadership team – have been consulted on the proposals and provided with opportunities to comment on the scheme before referring to company Board Members.

Company Board Members – who have overall responsibility for approval of any scheme before referral to Reading Borough Council. They have raised concerns with regards to the vacancy levels and requested options to improve recruitment and retention of QSWs

Reading Borough Council – to ensure there are no adverse effects that could occur due to the introduction of this scheme and to assess the implications against the Council's workforce.

Assess whether an EqlA is Relevant

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.)

BFFC's main business is to provide excellent services to children, young people and families. The core area of work is related to the delivery of services via key frontline workers which is wholly but not exclusively delivered by QSWs. As such, low levels of permanent QSWs can result in a fragile workforce if we have to rely on the use of agency workers to deliver these critical services. Agency workers are not employees; therefore, they are able to leave the company at very short notice leaving little to no time to seek alternative arrangements to maintain continuity to our children. This can result in unallocated caseloads posing a risk to the children, young people and families if there is no QSW allocated to a case and must be avoided. In addition, children have sadly become accustomed to the allocation of different QSWs which is both unsettling and prevents them from having continuity of service during what is already a difficult time in their lives.

The most recent gender pay gap analysis confirms that the majority (86%) of BFFCs workforce is female which is a typical finding when compared to similar providers in the social care field. In terms of comparator groups in BFFC, since most of our workforce is within the social care field, we do not have any comparator groups in relation to gender that would be disadvantaged by the introduction of this scheme and it is therefore likely to be advantageous to female workers.

There is historical evidence of recruitment and retention difficulties for QSWs, particularly in the Tff service. Experience and local data strongly suggest that demand for QSWs remain high, with additional challenges in the areas of Children's QSWs. As a result, many similar service providers have implemented separate schemes designed to attract and retain QSWs to ensure continuity of service to prevent high caseloads which can lead to overload. This is an area where QSW will make decisions whether to take up employment if caseloads are too high which can place them at



professional risk if they are unable to manage the number of cases in terms of volume and complexity. This is a differentiating factor from Adult QSWs.

The scheme will potentially result in overlaps with the pay rate of senior team members; however these can be objectively justified as a result of the significant recruitment and retention challenges relating to the appointment of permanent QSWs in the Tff service. Furthermore, the scheme will be reviewed after 12 months and will be discontinued if the Tff service is stabilised with more permanent QSWs.

The Council employees QSWs within Adult Services. However, the level of permanency is much higher, with less agency workers covering established QSW posts than in BffC. Of the permanent QSWs in Adults, the majority are women. This means that there is unlikely to be a risk of a successful equal pay claim from a Council QSW, using a BffC QSW in receipt of a recruitment and retention payment as a comparator, as they are also predominantly women.

There is no evidence to suggest that race or age in relation to QSWs in BffC or the Council would give rise to discrimination should the proposal be agreed. There is no correlation between age or race of employees and receipt of the proposed recruitment and retention.

Beyond the gender, race and age analysis, it is very difficult to do a meaningful analysis on disability, sexuality, and religious belief as disclosure rates for these protected characteristics are low for both Council and BffC employees and therefore the data is less reliable. As such, it is not possible to confirm whether there is potential discrimination within these groups, but we have no reason to believe this would be the case.

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, and feedback.

No

If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:

Neither the Council or BffC has evidence that the proposed recruitment and retention payment for QSWs would create discrimination for staff on the grounds of gender. The proposal does create opportunities for a cohort of staff (the eligible group) however the proposal is objectively justified by the business needs of the Company.

Signed (completing officer)	Shella Smith	Date	13 December 2022
Signed (Lead Officers)	Shella Smith		
Date	13 December 2022		



Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- **Consultation**
- **Collection and Assessment of Data**
- **Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive**

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups, but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

Example: A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel.

Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable.

This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.



Consultation

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts. If you haven't already completed a Consultation form do it now. The checklist helps you make sure you follow good consultation practice.

[My Home > Info Pods > Community Involvement Pod - Inside Reading Borough Council](#)

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
BfFC Service Managers and staff	Face to face meetings or via Teams	February 2023
Agency social workers currently employed by BfFC	Face to face meetings or via Teams	February 2023
Trade unions	Face to face meetings or via Teams	February 2023

Collect and Assess your Data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

Describe how this proposal could impact on Racial groups

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability

Is there a negative impact? Only 2.8% of the current workforce of BfC identify as disabled so it is not possible to draw any significant conclusions with such limited data, but it is not considered highly unlikely that there will be a negative impact.

Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)

Is there a negative impact? A high proportion of the current workforce of BfC have chosen not to disclose their sexual orientation so it is not possible to draw any significant conclusions with such limited data, but it is considered highly unlikely that there will be a negative impact

Describe how this proposal could impact on Age

Is there a negative impact? No

Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief?

Is there a negative impact? A high proportion of the current workforce of BfC have chosen not to disclose their religion belief so it is not possible to draw any significant conclusions with such limited data, but it is considered highly unlikely that there will be a negative impact

Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you **MUST** assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

Tick which applies (Please delete relevant ticks)

2. Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason

You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.

N/A

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

As part of ongoing governance arrangements, including reporting to EDM

Signed (completing officer) Shella Smith Date 13 December 2022

Signed (Lead Officers) Shella Smith

Date 13 December 2022