

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKLOAD REPORT

Additional Information – Appendix 5

Workforce / Workload Issues

By the 30th June 2016, the total number of directly employed Social Workers in post had reduced from 195 to 176 full time equivalent posts. A proportion of these posts became vacant due to a number of reasons, for example: promotional opportunities, increased social work input into the Child Sexual Exploitation Hub, introduction of the Principal Social Worker and the Missing Coordinator post. A number of Social Workers have taken posts in CAF/CASS, Adult Services and some to neighbouring authorities and agency providers. There has also been an unavoidable delay in recruiting to social work vacancies. All staff leaving the authority are offered an exit interview.

The service is currently undertaking work on recruitment and retention of Social Workers with both Human Resources and Workforce Development.

The appointment of the Principal Social Worker is instrumental in the recruitment and retention agenda. The Principal Social Worker has developed a Health Check Survey which will be undertaken later in the year and will involve all Social Workers employed by Bradford. This will give Social Workers the opportunity to give feedback and guide the Local Authority in tackling the issues at the front line of services and give a snap shot of how things are for Social Workers regarding, workload, support and learning and development.

A comprehensive induction package and 'buddying' support arrangement is being established.

Child Protection

The overall trend in the number of children who are subject to Child Protection Plans has been gradually rising over the last year. This could be for a number of reasons such as local issues which can create surges in child protection numbers, for example a sudden increase in Eastern European Families particularly Slovakian Roma Communities. This can and has lead to an increase in the numbers of children made subject to Child Protection Plans. With the changes in the Communities that we serve, we are often not able to respond quickly enough to this change and provide support to those Communities who have little knowledge or understanding of Children's Services. The decision to de-plan cases is made in Multi Agency Child Protection reviews and it is determined by the willingness of agencies to manage risk outside of child protection system. Responses to this varies and can often be linked to a belief that a step-down plan will not give adequate support to a child who has been at risk of significant harm.

Relatively, there are still fewer children subject to a Child Protection Plan in Bradford than nationally. Bradford has always had a lower ratio per 10,000 than either regional or national partners.

Looked After Children

The number of Looked After Children has seen a sharp rise in the last 6 months. This is slightly higher than the national average rate of 60 per 10,000 but is still below the latest known rate for combined statistical neighbours averages. The number of Looked after Children has been increasing since February 2016. This is due to an increase in the number of children becoming Looked After, together with a decrease in the number of children ceasing to become Looked After .There were twelve additional children becoming Looked After Children between February to June 2016 compared to the same period the previous year. There were twenty seven fewer children ceasing to be Looked After Children between February to June 2016 compared to the same period the previous year. Legal services are experiencing difficulties due to capacity and increase in demand, this is impacting in getting discharge of care orders into court.. Strategies for dealing with this are being considered. Despite the data regards Nationality not being completed for all Looked After Children admissions there has been an increase in the number of admissions from Slovakian nationality (from two in February to June 2015 to 13 thirteen for February to June 2016).

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