

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

12 September 2018

Developing a Sustainable Workforce

Report by Executive Director Children, Adults, Families, Health & Education

Summary

At a previous meeting of the Committee, concerns had been raised over the recruitment and retention of particular occupations in West Sussex. The Committee asked for a report detailing how West Sussex County Council managed this.

There continues to be problems with recruitment into the social care and education profession in West Sussex. However, this reflects a national shortage of supply of teachers, social workers and educational psychologists.

The key to improving pupil outcomes is to have well qualified and high quality teachers and school leaders. The key to improving child welfare and accurately diagnosed educational needs is to also have sufficient and high quality educational psychologists and child social workers.

As a consequence of the high cost of living in much of West Sussex, recruiting tends to be from those already residing or having studied in the area. Many teachers do not remain teaching all their professional lives.

Considerable effort is needed to recruit high quality professionals. The Educational Psychology service has had a successful four year strategy that has resulted in full recruitment for September 2018 against a national trend.

Recruitment fairs appear to be well attended and worthwhile to promote West Sussex Education as a good place to work, but it is too early to track whether they have improved recruitment in the county.

There are several schools across the county who have individual strategies to attract people into education professions. Also, the apprenticeship levy is underused by schools to develop professional skills and attract new people to education jobs.

The focus for scrutiny

The Committee is asked to consider to what extent are all agencies maximising the opportunities to attract, recruit, retain and develop professionals into social care and education careers.

Recommendations

- (1) That the Committee takes note of the nationally demanding environment within which West Sussex schools and the County Council recruits to education and social care careers.
- (2) The Committee is asked to consider how further West Sussex could be

- promoted as a good place to work in education and social care.
- (3) The Committee is asked to consider how to maximise the opportunity the apprenticeship levy funding provides to develop professional skills, build capacity and secure workforce sustainability into schools and education roles in the local authority.

Proposal

1. Background and Context

Education

- 1.1. "Training a sufficient number of new teachers of the right quality is key to the success of all the money spent on England's schools. The Department, however, has missed its recruitment targets for the last four years and there are signs that teacher shortages are growing. Until the Department meets its targets and can show how its approach is improving trainee recruitment, quality and retention, we cannot conclude that the arrangements for training new teachers are value for money."

Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, 10 February 2016

- 1.2. Currently, the demand for Education Psychologists is significantly in excess of the supply available.
- 1.3. The difficulties in recruitment in West Sussex reflect this national picture and there is therefore a high level of competition with regional and immediate neighbours for high quality staff for schools and into those services provided by the local authority. The relative high cost of living, especially from the housing market, means that the pool to recruit from has a tendency to be those people already living in the area.
- 1.4. The key to improving the quality of pupil outcomes in West Sussex is to improve the quality of teaching and school leadership. School leaders need to recruit from strong fields of applicants.

Teaching

- 1.5. For teaching posts, it is not the role of local authorities to undertake the recruitment, but individual school governing bodies or trusts. The Local Authority can only play a role in promoting the county and opportunities offered by our schools.
- 1.6. The National Audit Office report found that 53% of the 44,900 (full time equivalent) teachers entering the profession in 2014 were newly-qualified, with the remainder either returning to teaching after a break or moving into the state-funded sector from elsewhere. Teachers leaving state-funded schools significantly influences the number of new teachers required. Between 2011 and 2014 the number of teachers leaving the

profession increased by 11%, and the proportion of those who chose to leave the profession ahead of retirement increased from 64% to 75%.

- 1.7. In a survey undertaken by ASCL in January 2016, most secondary schools struggled to recruit to mathematics, English and science posts. This means that a number of subjects are taught by non-specialist teachers, for instance nationally the proportion of physics classes being taught by a teacher without such a post A level science qualification rose from 21% to 28% between 2010 and 2014.
- 1.8. There are a range of different routes for teachers to be trained either University led or through school centred initial teacher training (SCITT). In 2018, nationally 53% of entrants to the teaching profession came through the SCITT route. In West Sussex there are three local University led teacher training routes and one West Sussex based SCITT, South Downs. However, there are also several participating West Sussex schools in the University led programmes and who act as training centres within this SCITT.
- 1.9. West Sussex County Council acts as an appropriate body running the Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) accreditation and support programme. 355 NQTs were registered with West Sussex in 2017/18. There is also Pound Hill Infant teaching school who also act as an appropriate body for a few NQTs.
- 1.10. A survey of NQTs commencing employment with West Sussex in September 2016 & September 2017 indicated 80% & 82% had trained in local universities and 69% & 70% were West Sussex based prior to their training. 68% of Primary NQTs in 2016 who followed an undergraduate training route did so after attending a West Sussex secondary school.

Educational Psychologists

- 1.11. Nationally there are a very high number of Educational Psychologists (EP) job vacancies across England. Some LAs have put into place 'golden hello' payments, retention payments and relocation monies in order to successfully recruit EPs.
- 1.12. There are 160 training places for EPs available from September 2018 in England per year. There were 1105 applications made for these in 2017/18. A career in educational psychology remains a popular choice for psychology graduates. There is no alternative training route in England to become an EP.

2. West Sussex's response

- 2.1. In 2016, Headteachers' Executive Groups requested that the local authority support school recruitment through advertising to promote teaching in West Sussex and in facilitating other local initiatives to attract locally trained/current residents.

- 2.2. Recruitment fairs, to attract professionals into West Sussex education posts, have been organised for the past two years. In 2018, the two fairs at Fontwell Park and Ifield Community College had 33 stands at each of the events, representing secondary schools, academies, SCITTs, Multi Academy Trusts, universities, colleges and allied organisations. Total attendance at the two fairs was approximately 600 people.
- 2.3. The attendance and feedback at the recruitment events indicated that they were successful. Feedback indicated motivation for attendance as follows: The majority of visitors were interested in teacher training and support roles in schools but many went away with additional information, advice and guidance from other groups present. Whilst it will be difficult to follow individuals through to whether they
- 2.4. As part of a sequence of Department for Education events to share effective recruitment and retention practice, Durrington High School hosted a well-attended meeting on the 10 July 2018.
- 2.5. A significant investment was made by West Sussex County Council in the Educational Psychology Service from 2014 to prioritise and focus upon recruitment activity. Recruitment activity between 2014 and 2018 has resulted in the appointment of 18 Education Psychologists (EPs) which reflects the level of commitment made by the service in order to recruit EPs. From September 2018 the EP service will be fully staffed.

3. The Apprenticeship Levy

- 3.1. The Apprenticeship Levy is a UK business levy which is used to fund apprenticeship training. It is charged at 0.5% of a businesses pay bill. This applies to schools and the local authority.
- 3.2. The schools target is to have 230 apprenticeships in place by April 2019. At the moment there are 24 for 2017/18.
- 3.3. The apprenticeship model provides a range of training available for new and existing staff at a variety of levels and is therefore a strong opportunity to engage the workforce in funded professional development.

4 Social Care

The National Picture – How do you become a Children’s Social Worker (CSW)?

- 4.1 The key requirement for becoming a social worker is to obtain a degree in social work approved by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Social Work programs prepare students for entry-level, professional, generalist social work practice and for graduate social work education.

- 4.2 As part of the degree, students are required to undertake a work based placement. West Sussex County Council offers placements for students studying for their degree to provide them with an insight into social work in practice and in order to begin to form a connection with students to enhance future employment potential.
- 4.3 Once a social worker obtains their degree they then have to register with HCPC and complete an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).
- 4.4 Since 2015 the FTE of Children's Social Workers nationally has seen a small increase from 26,500 to 28,500 (30,670 headcount). Nearly a third of the workforce are aged 30 to 39 and 85% are female. 56% of them have spent less than five years in post and 33% of CSWs leave their employer within the first two years of employment. These figures indicate that experienced social workers will be significantly more difficult to find and indicate the importance of the first few years of employment in the employment decisions of children's social workers.
- 4.5 In 2017 the national vacancy rate was 17% with 68.7% of vacancies being covered by agency staff. The Local Government Association (LGA) reported that some 5,000 qualified social workers have left the profession. The average working life for a social worker is under eight years which, for example, compares to 25 years for a doctor. The LGA has introduced a pilot programme aimed at encouraging and supporting social workers to return to employment and West Sussex has been actively involved in this.
- 4.6 The Government has also recently focussed on boosting the quality of social work graduates through the creation of the ASYE programme and also recently through programmes such as 'Step Up To Social Work', which seeks to encourage people into the profession. WSCC has developed and implemented a social worker Academy that provides a strong framework of support for trainees, newly qualified social workers and staff returning to practice.
- 4.7 In January 2016, West Sussex County Council Children's Social Care had an Ofsted rating of Requires Improvement and had identified workforce challenges including staff turnover, agency reliance and vacancy gap as areas needing to improve. The national shortage of children's social workers alongside fierce local competition for experienced social workers means that while WSCC has typically been successful in recruiting newly qualified social workers, recruiting experienced social workers can be more difficult.
- 4.8 Key data regarding the children's social worker workforce at WSCC in December 2016, is summarised in the following table:

Measure	WSCC	National Average
Social Worker Turnover	20.9%	16%
Agency Staffing	20.1% (82FTE)	16.0%
Vacancy Gap	18.09%	17.0%

4.9 A plan was developed to reduce reliance on agency staff Since December 2016, with a more proactive and multifaceted approach to recruitment being undertaken supported by a financial investment, and governance via the Children’s Quality and Development Board, to support the project.

4.10 In 2017, WSCC invested in a strategy that aimed to position WSCC more competitively in the market, increase social worker career progression, and implement a project to recruit a large number of experienced social workers into the County Council. The objective was to stabilise staff turnover and significantly reduce the number of agency social workers noting that an agency social worker costs WSCC significantly more than employed staff.

4.11 The strategy aimed to achieve the following:

- a) Increase rate of recruitment of experienced social workers
- b) Reduce the need to rely on more expensive, and less reliable agency staff
- c) Reduce staff turnover to increase the stability of the workforce

5 Improving the offer

5.1 A benchmarking and review exercise was carried out to compare WSCC pay with pay in the South East region. The review indicated that WSCC is below local competitors and therefore plans were developed to more closely align WSCC pay rates to comparable authorities in the local area. A pay increase for social workers was implemented on a phased basis over a 2 year period with increases being applied in 4 equal instalments.

5.2 In addition it was identified from research and exit data, that one of the reasons why experienced social workers leave is that there was little opportunity to develop their careers and be recognised for achieving levels of competence beyond becoming an effective social worker. Experienced Social Workers felt they had to leave the authority in order to progress beyond the Grade 10 level. As a result a career progression scheme was

implemented to enable progression, subject to specific criteria, for the most talented and capable Practice Managers and Social Workers.

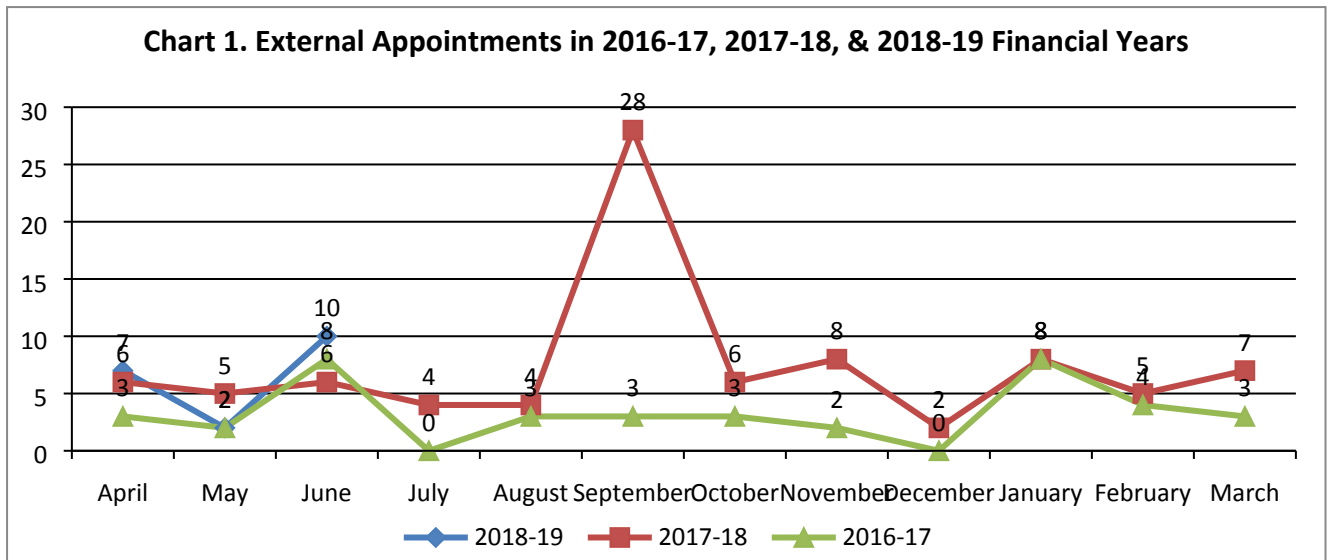
- 5.3 Social Worker pay will continue to be a challenge due to the competitive nature of social worker recruitment activity in the region. Other authorities in the region are taking steps to become more attractive to social workers, for example, by offering financial incentives upon appointment and retention payments. Social Worker pay is monitored regularly to inform further action that WSCC may need to consider in the future.

6 Recruitment

- 6.1 The WSCC approach to job adverts was reviewed and a more proactive approach to engaging with candidates was introduced including responding more quickly to applications. Recognising that only a small proportion (estimated at 15%) of Social Workers might be actively looking for a new role, a more creative, proactive approach to advertising was introduced focused around building awareness and reputation of WSCC Children's Social Care recognising that over the long term, this would increase the likelihood of social workers choosing WSCC, when they decided to seek a change of employer. The approach included the following:

- Bringing our web site in-house to enable us to update content on a regular and ongoing basis
- Involving our own workforce in developing website content including producing online articles promoting West Sussex social work activity and producing videos of Social Workers describing their work
- Developing advertising imagery based around WSCC employees reflecting the "with you, with the child, every step of the way" strapline.
- Trialling a range of different advertising media, jobs boards, and websites
- Developing a social media presence (e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook)
- Staging and hosting our own recruitment events in local areas with our own staff involved and presenting
- Attending national recruitment and continuing professional development events and hosting CPD and discussion sessions (e.g. Community Care Live, Compass)
- Hosting our own CPD events supported by external speakers on subjects of importance to social workers. These events (for example a Social Worker Conference on World Social Work Day) were aimed at engaging with our existing staff as well as enabling a significant number of external social work professionals to attend.
- Developing a "Refer A Friend" scheme
- Contacting ex-employees to promote the improved WSCC offer and inviting them to consider returning to WSCC

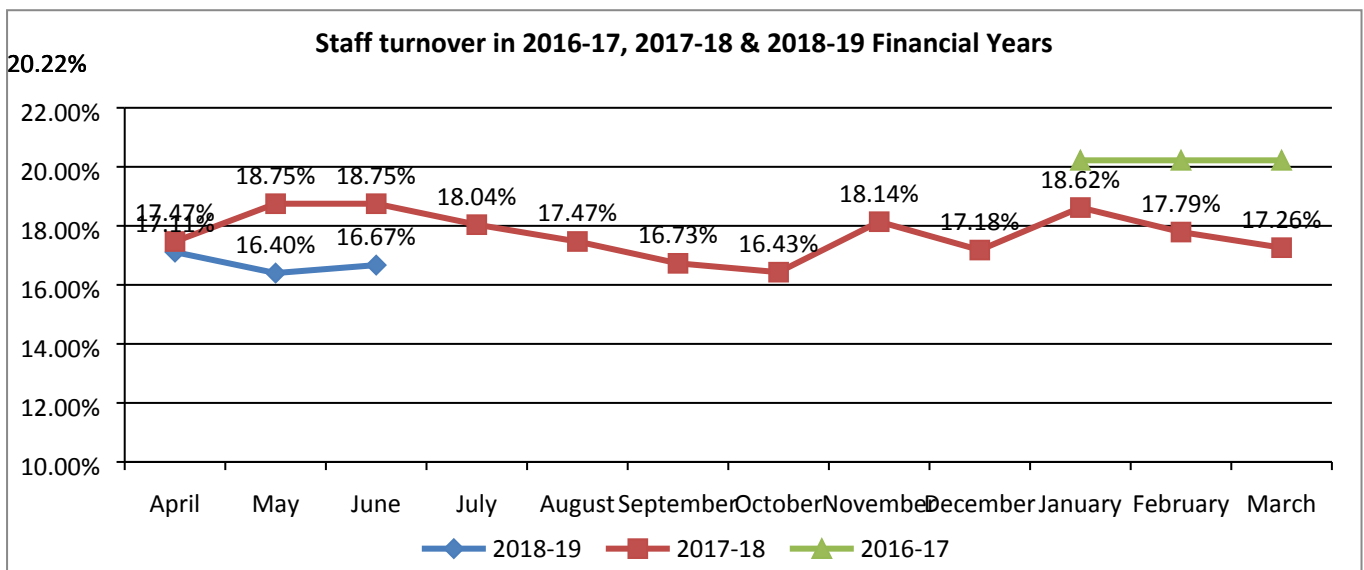
- Expanding the Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) Academy
 - Developing a Return To Social Work offering
- 6.2 In addition to this a range of other initiatives have been undertaken to directly increase the number of experienced social workers recruited including converting agency staff to permanent employment and recruiting experienced social workers from overseas.
- 6.3 In relation to converting agency staff to permanent employment, in order to make the most of the improved offer, and noting the IR35 regulation changes, group discussions and individual one to one meetings have been held with all agency social workers in order to convince as many to convert to permanent WSCC contracts as possible. To date 18 agency social workers have either converted to a permanent contract or are in the process of doing so, and a further 2 have expressed a strong interest in doing so.
- 6.4 A project is in progress to work in partnership with a specialist agency to recruit a number of experienced social workers from overseas. Since the project commenced in December 2017, 12 overseas social workers have commenced employment and a further 5 social workers are due to commence employment with WSCC in September 2018.
- 6.5 WSCC has recently also launched a Casual Bank Scheme for social worker staff via promotion at the Social Work Conference and publicised via an email from Community Care to c59k subscribers as well as more general advertisements and articles in One Voice encouraging internal staff to apply and join the scheme.
- 6.6 As a result of this approach, the rate of external recruitment has increased significantly compared to before the launch of the recruitment strategy. The recruitment rate is higher since January 2017 (double the amount of appointments were made in the first quarter of 2018-19 compared to the same quarter in 2016-17). Since January 2017, on average 5.58fte appointments per month have been made (excluding September 2017 due to the NQSW recruitment), compared to 2.6 per month in the 9 months prior to commencing implementation of the recruitment strategy. The average number of appointments continues to show a trend towards an increase. This performance is summarised in the graph below.



7 Retention

7.1 Alongside the recruitment activity, a series of initiatives aimed at increasing retention are being implemented. HR and the Head of CSC speak directly with all potential leavers and this has proven to be effective in reducing numbers. The WSCC staff turnover rate has reduced since the strategy was implemented, but the number of leavers remains a challenge.

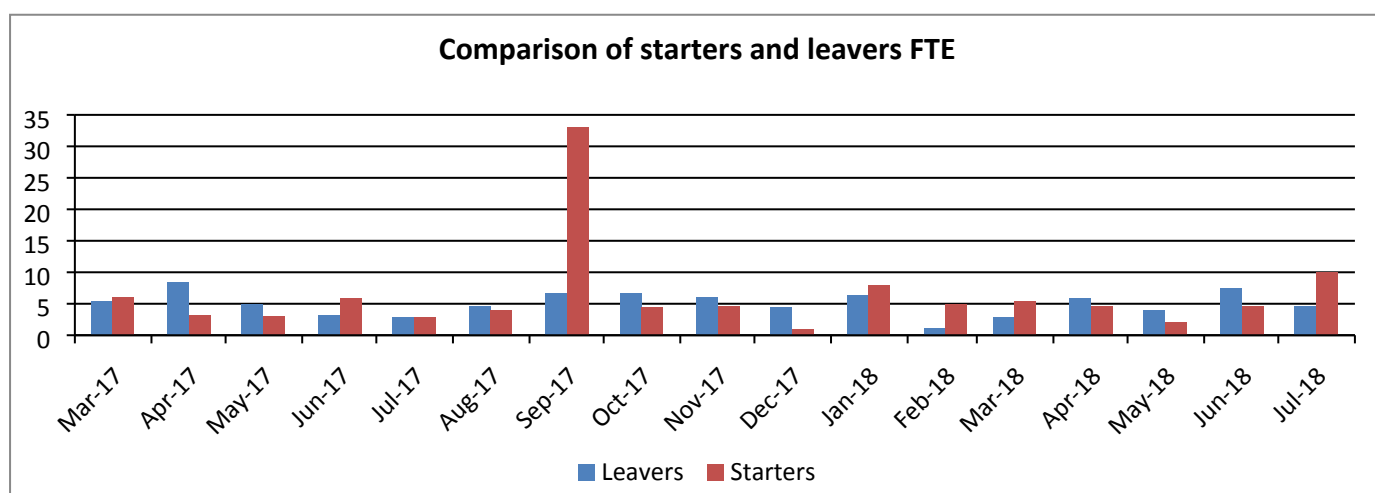
7.2 The graph below summarises staff turnover since the implementation of the strategy. The graph indicates that turnover rate has decreased since the Workforce Strategy implementation commenced. The rate of turnover is typically around 17-18% and the reasons and actions being taken are described later in this section.



7.3 The graph below compares the number of the starters and leavers in FTE and indicates that leavers exceeded the number of starters in 7 of the

past 12 months. However, the total number of new starters over the 12 month period exceeds the number of leavers, even if NQSWs are discounted.

- 7.4 The impact of the volume of leavers over time will reduce further as a result of the intake of Newly Qualified Social Workers in September and the recruitment of social workers from overseas. It is, however, important to note that the case holding capacity of NQSWs and overseas Social Workers is initially substantially less than experienced social workers. The data therefore indicates that challenges are still being experienced in the number of leavers and a number of actions taken to address this are described below.



- 7.5 Through undertaking focus groups (HR engaging directly with social workers in an informal setting) and a review of exit data, it was identified that there were a small number of key issues that were factors in staff turnover including workload, quality and consistency of line management and supervision, and flexible working.

- 7.6 **Workloads** – the issue of workload is a complex one, which will be influenced by both the stability of the workforce, the resilience of staff to manage complex and challenging workloads, the number of vacancies, and the actual capacity of the service compared to demands. An analysis of capacity within the service has recently been undertaken. The analysis compared WSCC resources and caseload, with other authorities. The output indicates that WSCC has lower capacity, and higher caseload, than some other comparable authorities. Work is therefore being undertaken to addressing this challenge as a priority for the service.

- 7.7 As part of a response to this, and in acknowledgement of the difficulties in recruiting experienced social workers, a pilot of a 'blended team' model has been undertaken in order to help to inform the development of options for managing capacity. The blended team approach has involved recruiting additional Co-ordinating and support roles, alongside additional Child and Family Workers. The aim was to enable qualified social workers to spend more of their time on the activity that must be undertaken by social workers, with non-statutory, support, and administrative work being undertaken by staff with the appropriate level of skill.

- 7.8 In July, a review of the impact of Blended Teams was undertaken and this indicated that Social Workers estimated that around 20-25% of their working day was being freed up as a result of the increase in support. Social Workers also reported feeling less pressure as they felt more able to go home at the end of the day without worrying about outstanding work. Feedback indicated that cases are being closed quicker and social workers have been able to concentrate on direct work rather than administration.
- 7.9 The impact of recruiting Co-ordinators and Children & Family Workers is therefore a key part of the plan for addressing capacity challenges and staff turnover within the service and therefore work is currently underway to increase build blended teams in more areas within the service.
- 7.10 **Flexible working** - flexible working is highly valued by social workers where it is operating effectively and this is therefore a key factor in supporting staff to maintain resilience. Feedback was received from some staff that there was inconsistent access to flexible working across the service. Actions were therefore taken to promote proactively the opportunities for flexible working across the service and to promote flexible working practices as part of our recruitment campaign activity. HR and the Head of Children's Social Care have jointly communicated to all social workers that they may apply for 9 day fortnights, compressed hours, increase flexible working arrangements, and career breaks. All staff have been invited to contact HR or the Head of CSC directly if they wish to raise any concerns with how flexible working is being considered by their line manager. This had the effect of a number of staff putting forward, and having approved, requests for flexible working arrangements.
- 7.11 Improving support provided by managers** - Exit data and focus groups indicate that in a few instances insufficient support from line managers has contributed to staff leaving. In order to address this, a management development intervention has been developed by the HR Team in partnership with the Children's Social Care Leadership Team.
- 7.12 Two priorities were identified in particular. The first priority is on implementing a high quality, consistent supervision model which nurtures and develops social workers. The second priority is around creating a safe environment where people are able to challenge poor practice in order to enable improvement.
- 7.13 A Practice Manager Development Programme was launched in June 2018 with around 90% attendance at half day workshops. The programme will take place over a number of months and will focus on developing skills and behaviours in 3 key areas; resilience, team effectiveness, and self as manager. Modules are organised to occur at 6-8 week intervals focussed around 3 hour workshops. This management and leadership focus will be supplemented by sessions on Management Oversight, Management of

Risk, Quality Assurance, and Performance Management. The next modules are planned for delivery in September 2018.

7.14 **Health Check and Feedback** - A health check survey was recently carried out and findings are currently being analysed. When compared to 2017, there are a number of areas where responses have improved in 2018. In particular:

- The number of staff that spend at least 6 hours doing routine admin tasks decreased by 12%
- There was a 10% increase in those who reported receiving emotional support in supervision
- There was a 9% increase in staff agreeing that their employer values and respects the work that social workers do
- There was a 13% increase in satisfaction with flexible working opportunities
- There was a 6% increase in feelings of enthusiasm about the job

7.15 Work is ongoing to analyse the results and develop an action plan in partnership with staff. However, the findings indicate that the service has increased its ability to use social workers effectively and is enabling social workers to do more direct work with children and families, which is likely to reflect to some extent the impact of the Blended Team approach.

7.16 Feedback also indicates that improvements to flexible working has increased satisfaction for social workers and is enabling staff to achieve a better work life balance. Management development is clearly helping to improve the culture as social workers feel more valued and respected. However, moving forward supervision time and quality must continue to improve and appraisals need to become more routinely part of developing practice and link with the supervision framework.

8 Summary of Impact - May 2018

8.1 The table below summarises some of impact that has been experienced as a result of the recruitment and retention strategy. It is clear that agency reliance has decreased and the vacancy gap has also decreased. Staff turnover has decreased since December 2016 but the number of leavers, as described above, remains a challenge for the service.

Measure	WSSC Dec 2016	WSSC May 2018	National Average
Social Worker turnover	20.9%	17.79%	16%
Agency Staffing	20.1% (82FTE)	13.13% (58FTE)	16.0%
Vacancy Gap	18.09%	16.78%	17.0%

4. Proposal

- 4.1. To seek to recruit even more from the local population through as wide a range of routes as is possible. This will include training routes.
- 4.2. The two recruitment fairs continue and are aimed at promoting West Sussex as a good place to work. They focus on professionals starting or returning to work in education. They continue to be both extensively publicised locally and regionally.
- 4.3. The local authority more actively seeks to influence leaders of school, trusts and teaching schools to generate even more activity that promotes West Sussex as a good place to work in education.
- 4.4. The apprenticeship levy is used more widely and effectively to recruit prospective teachers and care workers. It also is used to develop professional skills in those presently employed in schools and the local authority to higher levels of qualification.

5. Resources

- 5.1. To continue to fund the recruitment fairs.
- 5.2. To continue to support roles that develop partnership working with teaching schools so that teachers remain and further develop in West Sussex.
- 5.3. To continue to support the approach the Education Psychology service takes to recruitment as an ongoing drive to gain and retain the best quality staff.

Factors taken into account

6. Issues for consideration by the Select Committee

- 6.1. To what extent can West Sussex further attract high quality existing and newly qualified professionals into all roles within education and social care to improve outcomes for children?
- 6.2. How can the apprenticeship levy be used to more effectively in the West Sussex Education sector to recruit and retain staff?

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Not applicable for this report.

8. Risk Management Implications

- 8.1. If we do not continue to develop strategies for recruitment and sustainability of the education workforce, standards of pupil outcomes and care may well be not as high as the council expect.

9. Other Options Considered

- 9.1. Recruitment and retention of education staff will involve a continuous and increasingly active process from all partners, including the county council. The approach above is the essential minimum required.
- 9.2. The present national recruitment environment will require greater activity from all parties, sometimes for the same level of recruitment. Active closer working would support this. The emphasis on partnership working is essential.

10. Equality Duty

- 10.1. Equality of opportunity must be an important factor to recruit from the widest possible group: that are resident; in higher education; or from outside the county, with the skills and quality West Sussex education needs.
- 10.2. Recruitment requires equality to be considered.

11. Social Value

- 11.1. n/a

12. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 12.1. None

13. Human Rights Implications

- 13.1. None

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