

MEMORANDUM OF CO-OPERATION BETWEEN LONDON BOROUGHs

**Working together to improve the workforce of
Children's Social Work Professionals**

1. Introduction

For many years London boroughs have faced challenges related to the workforce of Children's Social Work Professionals. In particular, recruitment and retention of social workers has resulted in competitive behaviours between boroughs that have increased costs without addressing the key underlying issues by delivering an improved supply of skilled and experienced permanent staff. This approach has led to a plethora of incentives and payments to attract staff and a tendency to increase pay to maintain a competitive position with competing authorities.

Shortages in suitable staff have led to dependence on expensive agency staff with consequential impact on budgets and the quality of the workforce.

The requirement for permanent staff to achieve improvements in service delivery to our most vulnerable residents, particularly in the event of adverse outcomes to regulatory inspections, exacerbates the position.

London boroughs have recognised that a more collaborative and forward-thinking approach is required to address the issue inherent in the workforce, combining both short-term actions with a commitment to a more strategic approach.

This Memorandum of Co-operation is intended to provide a framework for collaboration between boroughs to address the key issues. The signatories to this Memorandum have committed to work with other boroughs in accordance with the terms set out.

2. Scope

This Memorandum covers the Children's Social Work Professional Workforce for both permanent and temporary/agency staff.

3. Effective Date

The effective date of this Memorandum is 1st April 2015.

Where particular provisions of the Memorandum require further development or phasing, the Programme Team will determine an appropriate timescale and implementation plan, in consultation with signatories.

4. Governance

The Programme Team (comprising a Chief Executive, a Director of Children's Services and Heads of HR) will develop an implementation programme, timetable and monitoring framework to give effect to the terms of this Memorandum.

Directors of Children's Services in each borough will be responsible and accountable for ensuring that their service managers, HR and other support services and agency suppliers implement in a timely manner the terms of the Memorandum and their respective elements of the implementation plan.

The Chief Executives' London Committee will oversee and monitor the Memorandum and receive regular updates from the Programme Team. The Chief Executives' London Committee will nominate a sponsor to champion and support the Programme.

5. Memorandum of Co-operation

The parties (“the Boroughs”) to this Memorandum agree that they will abide by the terms and spirit of this Memorandum in relation to the Children’s Social Work Professional Workforce for both permanent and temporary/agency staff. They will include reference to this Memorandum and its terms in recruitment material, contracts and other documents and as far as is possible require third party providers to comply with its terms.

The Boroughs agree that they will promote the Memorandum with partner agencies, providers and neighbouring authorities who are not signatories.

6. Management of Agency staffing

The Boroughs agree that they will:

- 6.1. Work collaboratively and with agency suppliers to develop mechanisms to ensure that rates and charges for supplying agency staff appropriately reflect the skills and experience of workers and the remuneration of permanent staff;
- 6.2. Work collaboratively and with agency suppliers to establish appropriate procurement frameworks and contractual arrangements that deliver a sustainable balance between the interests of boroughs and agencies;
- 6.3. Ensure that agencies providing staff are required to comply with an agreed standard for the completion of pre-employment checks and referencing of workers;
- 6.4. Ensure that references provided for agency staff are objective, complete and accurate and provide all the information set out on the template agreed by the Boroughs to ensure that workers of low quality or in need of development are identified;
- 6.5. Ensure that agencies receive appropriate and complete feedback about the capabilities and performance of workers during and at the end of placements so that agencies can provide any development required or cease or suspend placing the worker as appropriate;
- 6.6. Include appropriate provisions in future contracts to allow the appropriate sharing with other boroughs of information about rates and charge;
- 6.7. Develop a policy between the Boroughs to refrain from retaining as agency workers staff who are leaving permanent employment with the Boroughs for a designated period ;
- 6.8. Investigate options for establishing a bank of suitably skilled and experienced social work professionals employed directly by the Boroughs;
- 6.9. Ensure that all agencies and agency workers are made aware of the Memorandum of Co-operation and that the preferred option for boroughs is to employ permanent staff.

7. Management of permanent staffing

The Boroughs agree that they will:

- 7.1. Work in co-operation to avoid competitive increases in pay and benefits that create an inflationary pressure by developing broadly comparable pay rates across the region for permanent staff to minimise the impact of pay as an incentive to move between boroughs whilst recognising the importance of local factors;
- 7.2. Participate in surveys and data gathering by providing a timely, accurate and comprehensive response to requests so that accurate and reliable information is available as to the workforce in London and as the basis for pay decisions;
- 7.3. Refrain from proactive headhunting of staff (whether temporary or permanent) directly or through third parties from other boroughs who are party to this Memorandum;
- 7.4. Ensure that agencies providing permanent staff are required to comply with an agreed standard for the completion of pre-employment checks and referencing of workers;
- 7.5. Ensure that references provided for permanent staff are objective, complete and accurate and provide all the information set out on the agreed template to ensure that workers of poor quality or in need of development are identified;
- 7.6. Work together to promote positive images of children's social work and to promote careers in social care through press, social and other media and advertising.

8. Improving the supply of high quality permanent staff

The Boroughs agree that they will:

- 8.1. Commit to take a minimum % each year of their children's social work professional workforce as newly qualified social workers in their Assessed and Supported Year of Employment or as trainees on other schemes (e.g. Frontline) in order to ensure that all boroughs contribute to the future pipeline of qualified staff;
- 8.2. Contribute to the development of a London-wide trainee rate for NQSW's undertaking ASYE to encourage and facilitate more staff being offered positions;
- 8.3. Contribute to the development of sub-regional and London-wide approaches to supporting ASYE and other professional development to ensure consistent pathways and share costs;
- 8.4. Participate in surveys and data gathering by providing a timely, accurate and comprehensive response to requests so that accurate and reliable information is available as to turnover and reasons for turnover in the workforce in London to assist the Boroughs to improve their retention of staff;
- 8.5. Contribute to the development of sub-regional and London-wide approaches to supporting staff under the Employers Standard including participating in audits of practice, sharing good practice and resources.

9. Review and extension of this Memorandum

The effectiveness of this Memorandum will be reviewed every 12 months and a report made to CELC. That Review will include consideration of whether adoption of the Memorandum should be recommended to Directors of Adult Social Services.

We, the undersigned, support and commit to the terms of this Memorandum of Co-operation dated 1st April 2015

Signed:
Name:
Director of Children's Services
Borough:

Signed:
Name:
Chief Executive
Borough:

Signed:
Name:
Head of HR
Borough: