



CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 February 2024

SECOND DESPATCH

Please find enclosed the following items:

Item 1 The Children's Workforce - Witness Evidence

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Child and Family Social Work workforce (CFSW)

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Laura Eden-Director of Safeguarding

Deborah Idris- Assistant Director Safeguarding and Quality Assurance &
Interim Director, Safeguarding

Our CSC SW workforce

- Suitable qualified practitioners, *registered* and *regulated* by SW England
- SW qualification is a JD requirement, to carry out *statutory* safeguarding *duties* on behalf of the LA.
- Workforce requires qualified practitioners and managers to *supervise* and oversee *key decisions* e.g. case allocation, prioritisation, care planning, statutory decision making e.g. *agency decision maker* for adoption, permanency and fostering.
- Islington employ 250 Child and Family Social Workers
- *Outstanding* Ofsted

Recruitment / retention

Children Services Research Omnibus found:

- No local authority felt confident that they will be able to recruit enough permanent CFSWs to meet their needs in the next 12 months.
- **Recruitment and retention is the top priority** for service delivery for most LAs
- **Recruitment and retention of CFSWs is the main risk** to service delivery for most LAs
- **Experienced** CFSWs are the hardest to recruit / retain, followed by team leaders, senior managers.
- Newly qualified CFSW are easier to recruit, but it is getting harder.

National context – headline facts and figures

2.7%

reduction in CSC posts
since 2021.

21%

increase in CSC vacancies

13%

increase in agency worker

9%

increase in CSC leaving LAs

16.6

average case load (increase
from previous year)

3.5%

Sickness absence rate
(increase)

Islington context – headline facts and figures

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1.8%

reduction in CSC posts
since 2022

10.5%

increase in CSC vacancies from
2022 to 2023

2.4%

increase in agency worker

3.7%

increase in CFSWs leaving LAs
compared to 2022

11

average case load (decrease
from previous 2022)

1.8%

Sickness absence rate
(decrease from 2022)

Workforce Initiatives: LIAA

(Islington PSWS is a member of Steering Group)

- LIAA Workforce Steering Group, [Annual Plan](#)
 - London Pledge (MoU) re agency recruitment)
 - Leadership in Colour
 - Big Listen Report
 - Social Work Permanent Recruitment Framework (FLiP)
 - London Social Work for Children (LSWC) microsite for recruitment
 - LSWC Regional Data Dashboard to be launched to support recruitment campaigns
 - LIAA Big Listen Report about agency and permanent workforce
 - SEND workforce
 - Residential workforce

Islington workforce initiatives

- *Benefits and allowances* for hard to recruit social work jobs (e.g. retention bonus, travel card, additional qualifications benefit)
- Regrettably, *key worker housing* will no longer be offered which was a significant attraction for our newly qualified workforce
- Actively recruiting newly qualified social workers through *Islington SW Academy* and offering a highly regarded ASYE qualification.
- Develop local talent pipeline through:
 - *Social Work Apprenticeship Degree* in partnership with Kingston University
 - *Frontline Programme*, in partnership with University of Lancaster
 - Lead authority of *North Central London Step Up to Social Work Partnership* in partnership with Middlesex University
 - *Studentships* from Middlesex University, Goldsmith's University and Northwest London University, Manchester University

Islington workforce initiatives

- Develop local talent pipeline of through (continue):
 - Training social workers as Practice Educators and Assessors for students and ASYE
 - Partner of North London Social Work Teaching Partnership
 - Grant funding to increase the number of apprenticeships

Well regarded and mature *Motivational Social Work Practice Model*

Managers development through *Frontline Pathways Programme* for first line, middle, and senior managers.

Social Work Academy talent pipeline

Role	Number
NQSWs undertaking ASYE	15
NQSW Academy intake (April)	TBC
Students (100 days)	10
Students starting March (70 days)	6
Step Up to Social Work students	8
Social Workers on apprenticeship degree	6
Frontline unit to begin April 24	4
Practice educators undertaking training	5
Practice educators undertaking training (Autumn)	6

Highlights

- Recruiting experienced social workers is a national issue
- Islington is in a better position compared to national and regional authorities.

Page 10 We meet our needs through several workforce initiatives, but it is becoming harder to recruit and retain experience talent.

- Cost of living and expensive housing significantly impacts on the profession
- Competition for experienced staff will continue to increase.
- Agency pay caps may curb the outflow of social workers from LAs but it won't stop them leaving the profession, and may further reduce supply