

MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION

2018 – 2019

THE YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF AGENCY SOCIAL WORKERS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES



1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 The recruitment and retention of experienced social workers can be a challenge at both national and regional level, which means that the regional Local Authorities are often in competition with each other to attract quality agency social workers at a reasonable cost. There is no current standardised rate or quality standards linked to a shared Job Profile for agency social workers, which means that there is variation in relation to both cost and quality across the Region. This can be a particular challenge for Children's Services who are subject to improvement requirements as a result of the Ofsted Inspection regime.
- 1.2 The costs associated with the use of the agency workforce can be significant, both financially and in terms of the stability of the wider workforce. This has the potential to impact on the quality of the services provided to children, young people and their families. Whilst the use of temporary agency staff is widely accepted as a necessary means to meet short and medium term capacity issues which arise from improvement requirements, re-structuring, vacancies, sickness and maternity absence, the commitment to a strong, stable and permanent workforce is accepted at a regional level.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 It is proposed that all upper tier South Yorkshire and Humber Local Authorities formally commit to work together collaboratively to effectively manage the use of social worker agency staff including through:-
- 2.2 Agreement and implementation of standardised pay rates, with an hourly rate up to £30 (thirty pounds), for deployments of social work agency staff excluding Social Worker Managers. This will be effective from 1 April 2018 and reviewed on an annual basis.
- 2.3 Agreement of common Job Profiles for social work agency staff;

- 2.4 Agreement to prohibit movement of agency Social Workers between participating LAs, for a period of six months; where said worker leaves within the duration of an assignment; (this will be managed as part of the recruitment and selection process);
- 2.5 Agreement to share information regarding any practice concerns;
- 2.6 To work towards the full implementation of the terms of this Memorandum of Cooperation via all their suppliers, i.e. the main contractors and any second tier suppliers;
- 2.7 To consider, where possible, a Regional Framework of primary and secondary suppliers for qualified social workers, which will facilitate the standardisation of the quality of supply, improve compliance issues, standardise the quality of supply and manage the demand more effectively.
- 2.8 To adopt a common standardised Reference Template to reduce the risk of the recruitment of poor quality agency staff, ensuring that suppliers provide references from the last employer as the main referee. Agency supplier will be treated as the employer;
- 2.9 To ensure that all suppliers and agency social workers are clear from the outset of the Memorandum of Cooperation and how it is being adopted by all signatory Local Authorities and their agency suppliers. There will be standardised documentation on the Memorandum provided by Local Authorities and suppliers during recruitment.
- 2.10 Local Authorities and their suppliers to refrain from active headhunting Children's Social Workers from within the Local Authorities that have adopted the Memorandum of Cooperation. The rules of engagement will be developed in discussion between Local Authorities for this purpose;

- 2.11 Agree limiting agency social worker(s) length of assignment to ensure that expectations are managed, for a maximum 12 week period initially; Renewals will be agreed (locally) subject to exigencies of service/ LA.
- 2.12 Adopt a standard staff evaluation template for completion at the end of each assignment which will drive up quality, enhance shared intelligence in relation to performance and promote a culture of learning across the agency workforce;
- 2.13 To agree that there will be exceptions based on local conditions, specialist requirements and business priorities. If an LA has a business requirement to opt out of the agreement for a defined period, the rationale should be presented to the regional ADCS group for consideration and resolution, prior to any opt out.
- 2.14 A Social Worker notice period for leaving a Local Authority will be proportionate to the outstanding work to be completed in the post that they are leaving. This should ensure that the needs of children remain paramount.

3. ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

It is anticipated that the benefits will be:-

- 3.1 The consistent application of a standardised approach to the development and management of the agency workforce to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families;
- 3.2 The management of the migration of agency social worker staff which will reduce instability, improve quality and standardise payment;
- 3.3 Facilitate the agency social workers to be a robust resource to support the development and stabilisation of the permanent workforce;

- 3.4 To utilise standardised pay rates and Job Profiles to support consistent standards of practice, this excludes travel costs
- 3.5 To reduce unnecessary competition which can destabilise the wider agency workforce.

4 THE SCOPE

- 4.1 The scope covers Children's Social Worker roles for agency supply.

5 EFFECTIVE DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 The effective date for the agreement to the Memorandum of Cooperation is 1st April 2018.
- 5.2 The effective date for the practical implementation of the underpinning protocol, allowing for 90 days notice to agency providers, will be phased linked to a co-ordinated Implementation and Delivery Plan with the agreement fully in place and operational by the 1st July 2018.

6 GOVERNANCE

- 6.1 The South Yorkshire and Humber Directors of Childrens Services will be accountable for ensuring that their respective Assistant Directors of HR and Procurement with agency suppliers adopt the protocol based on the agreed timelines in the associated Implementation and Delivery Plan. There will be standard updates presented to the Regional DCS Group and virtual reports presented by exception based on a local issue, which would benefit from a collective solution-focused strategy.

7 MEASURING SUCCESS

- 7.1 The key measures of success which will include financial savings, improved stability leading to improved outcomes for children. Key performance measures will be agreed as part

of the Implementation and Delivery Plan, to include (from 2017/2018 baseline):

- Agency unit cost reduction
- Improved retention rates
- Reduced % agency SW staff
- Reduced vacancy rates
- Healthy turnover (5 – 10%)
- Evidence of improved practice quality

We the undersigned endorse and agree to uphold the protocols outlined in the Memorandum of Cooperation dated the.....

Signed.....

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Signed.....

Hull City Council

Signed.....

North East Lincolnshire Council

Signed.....

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Signed.....

North Lincolnshire Council

Signed.....

Sheffield City Council

Signed.....

Kirklees Council

Signed.....

Doncaster Children’s Services Trust

Signed.....

North Yorkshire County Council

Signed.....

Calderdale Council

Signed.....

City of Bradford MDC

Signed.....

Leeds City Council

Signed.....

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Signed.....

City of York Council

Signed.....

Wakefield Council