

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**Report for Health & Care Scrutiny Committee
11th April 2024**

REPORT AUTHOR: Dr Holly Gordon, Senior Manager Safeguarding & QA

REPORT TITLE: Responding to our Recruitment and Retention Challenge in Social Care

Introduction:

This report provides an overview of recruitment and retention activities in Powys Children's Services (CS) and joint activities with Adult Services (AS) specifically focusing on social work recruitment. It covers activities undertaken in 2023 and planned activities during 2024 including the grow our own social work project and developments from the health and care academy.

Recruitment:

Powys social services have updated the way in which job vacancies are advertised. This includes a more detailed summary for each vacancy such as the tasks and roles the applicant will be undertaking, skills and values the candidate must possess as well as including the new ways of working statement. We have utilised the new corporate branding and have developed information packs for social work and residential job roles. All our vacancies are advertised on the PCC job site, social media platforms and the We Care Wales web site. In 2023 a successful bid to Social Care Wales was submitted which led to the employment of a full time Project Officer over a three month period to organise and hold social work recruitment events and to develop recruitment brochures. Social Services were able to secure venues within the allocated funding budget and held 4 recruitment events in 2023.

During March 2023, Powys Social Services held four Social Work recruitment events across the county, the events were purposely scheduled to target people on their way home from work and venues chosen for their location to major road networks within the county and just over the border. These events produced limited success in the way of applications, but they have supported an increased awareness of the benefits of working for Powys Social Services.

91 CS staff responded to 2023's recruitment and retention survey. The respondents relayed that the biggest attractions to work in the department was the location, job role and having supportive colleagues/managers. Staff felt that the key selling points for prospective employees were flexible working, career development and training opportunities. Staff also relayed that workloads were the least liked element of their employment. The survey highlighted that the key reasons why staff stayed within the department were friendly staff and making a difference. The majority of staff stated that they always feel supported by their

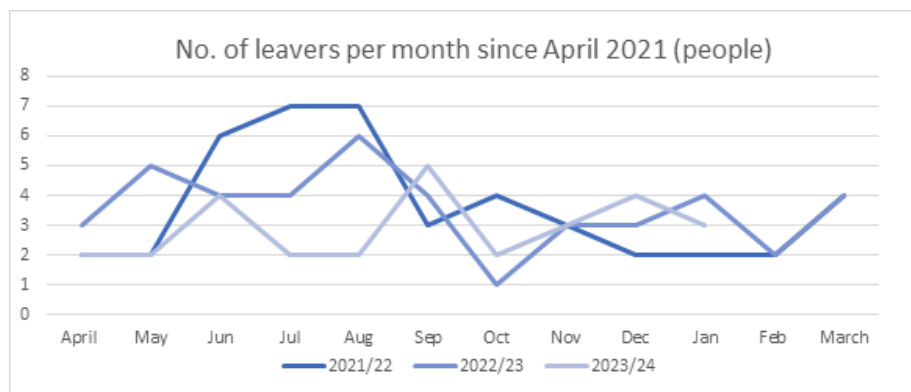
manager. The results of the recruitment and retention survey support recruitment campaigns and provide useful insights into staff satisfaction levels.

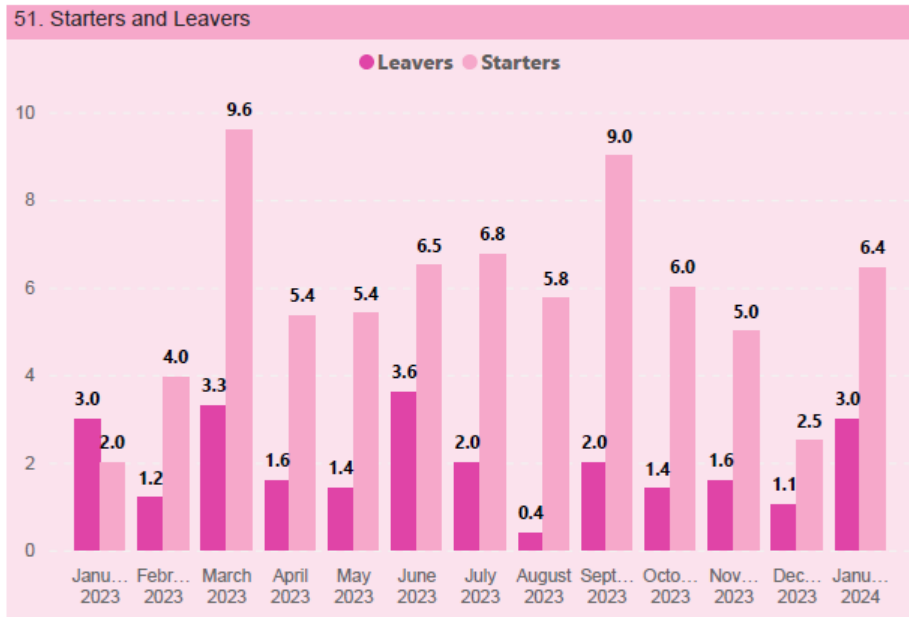
There will be an enhanced recruitment drive focusing on social work vacancies in May 2024. The Practice Development Team continue to attend national social work recruitment fayres such as Compass and Social Work today which includes presenting a seminar on social work practice in Wales.

Employment information:

The data available illustrates that workforce trends are starting to change, and the workforce is stabilising to some extent. Data available on the leaver rate across the financial years highlight that the rate of employees leaving CS has reduced significantly in the 2023/24 financial year. Within the previous 12 months, monthly figures also show that the starter rate is now significantly surpassing the leaver rate on a month-by-month basis.

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Financial year | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 |
| No. leavers (people) | 44 | 43 | 29 |



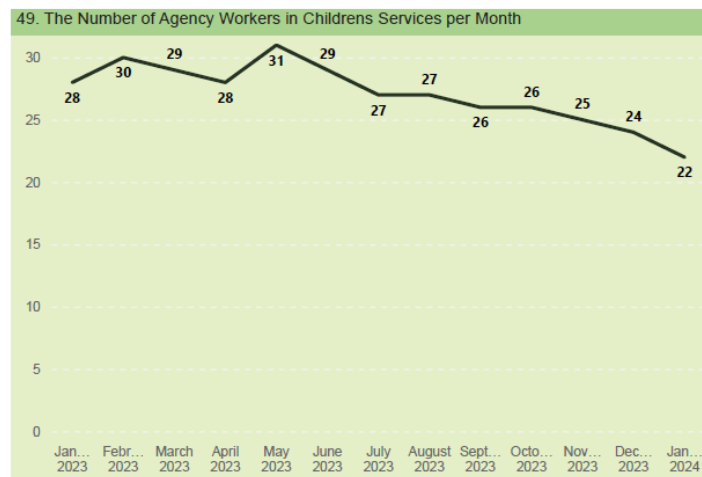


Despite recruitment campaigns and retention payments for specific teams, children’s services have required significant investment in agency social work expenditure which reflects a national picture. However, it is important to note that the numbers of agency workers are reducing primarily due to the success of the grow our own project. At the time of writing children’s services currently have 21 agency social workers within teams.

| Date | Agency Social workers in place |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| 5 March 2021 | 33 |
| 4 March 2022 | 49 |
| 3 March 2023 | 30 |
| 1 March 2024 | 21 |

It is also of note that within the previous 12 months, a total of six agency workers holding a variety of social work posts, have become permanent employees.

The 2023 figures are presented below:



Grow Your Own Social Worker Project:

The high rates of experienced social workers who are leaving the profession (Hall, 2023), combined with the difficulties in recruiting social workers to vacant positions, have meant that 'Grow your own' social worker schemes have become increasingly important for Local Authorities to ensure that they have sufficiently qualified staff in the workforce.

The Grow Your Own social work project has been in scale up in Powys since 2020. The project aims to promote professional growth and development from employees of Powys Local Authority by financially supporting staff to undertake a social work qualification. The rationale for the project has been recognition of the lack of qualified social workers employed by Powys and challenges relating to recruitment in key social work teams. The grow our own social work project is overseen by the Practice Development Team which supports both Children's and Adult social services staff with their professional development. The Open University sponsorship route has been shown to be the most cost-effective option for sponsoring a social work qualification. In Children's Services, this has been supplemented by funding a small number of Master's opportunities.

The table below illustrates the number of social services staff who have taken up Year 1 modules (K102 and KZW113) of the social work degree with the Open University. In 2023 the offer was extended from social services staff to all PCC departments:

K102

| K102 Financial Year | Number from Adult Services | Number from Childrens Services | Number from Wider Council Service |
|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2015 – 2016 | 4 | 0 | N/A |
| 2017 – 2018 | 5 | 3 | N/A |
| 2019 - 2020 | 5 | 10 | N/A |
| 2020 - 2021 | 3 | 20 | N/A |
| 2021 – 2022 | 13 | 16 | N/A |
| 2022 – 2023 | 1 | 8 | N/A |
| 2023-2024 | 5 | 10 | 3 |

KZW113

| KZW113 Financial Year | Number from Adult Services | Number from Childrens Services | Number from Wider Council Service |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2017 – 2018 | 1 | 3 | N/A |
| 2018 – 2019 | 2 | 1 | N/A |
| 2019 - 2020 | 3 | 7 | N/A |
| 2020 - 2021 | 2 | 16 | N/A |
| 2021 – 2022 | 13 | 17 | N/A |
| 2022 – 2023 | 2 | 5 | N/A |
| 2023-2024 | 8 | 11 | 3 |

After completion of Year 1, staff can apply for Year 2 and Year 3 modules. This is a competitive process with applicants needing to be successful at interview. The course costs for the degree sponsorship are met by the SCWWDP budget which is administered by Social Care Wales. Those completing social work degrees through the OU are required to remain in Powys in a social work position for two years post qualifying. The retention rates of social workers from the grow our own cohort is considerably lengthy than the stipulated minimum period.

| OU Degree Sponsorships | Number from AS | Number form CS | Total |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------|
| 2017-2018 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| 2018-2019 | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| 2019-2020 | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| 2020-2021 | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| 2021-2022 | 3 | 9 | 12 |
| 2022-2023 | 5 | 7 | 12 |
| 2023-2024 | 5 | 6 | 11 |

Masters in social work sponsorship:

In 2021, Children's Services advertised two sponsorships for the Master's in social work commencing in 2021 to all employees in PCC. The successful applicants had their course fees fully funded and were paid a Grade 7 (£27,803- £29,777) for the duration of the course. The applicants are now qualified social workers working within frontline Children's Services teams. Two further applicants were offered this opportunity in 2023 and are continuing to

study. These employees will be required to remain within the service area for a 3-year period after qualifying. The costs of this initiative have been met by children’s services.

Practice Learning Opportunities:

It is vital that social services provide high quality, well supported practice learning opportunities (PLO’s) for all social work students on placement. This is a compulsory part of any social work qualification where students can develop their skills, knowledge and values in direct practice under supervision. Students are required to successfully complete a placement in Year 2 and Year 3. The placements for Year 2 and Year 3 occur at the same time, which has led to a significant increase in student placements.

In 2021, a total of 15 PLO’s were offered which increased to 22 PLO’s in 2022. In 2023 this increased again to 29 student placements. The 2024 student cohort are currently undertaking their PLO’s. There are a total of 30 students accessing placements across Powys currently. This figure includes 25 grow our own internal employees as well as students from Glyndwr, Cardiff and Swansea University.

Each student must be allocated a Practice Educator to support the learner. The role of the Practice Educator involves observation, teaching, supervision, and assessment. All Practice Educators must have the appropriate qualification or must be undertaking the qualification. Any Practice Educator completing the qualification must be allocated a Practice Supervisor to oversee their practice. Currently in Powys there are a total of 44 practice educators, 6 of which are currently studying for the qualification.

Projections: Qualifying social workers, OU sponsorship / MA sponsorship

| Area | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | Total |
|----------|----------------|------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------|
| CS | 1 | 5 | 1 (2020) 4 (2021) 2 MA (2021) | 3 (2021) 5(2022) | 3 (2022) 3 (2023) 2 MA (2023) | 3 (2023) 6 (2024) | |
| CS Total | 1 (went to AS) | 5 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 38 |
| AS | 2 | 3 | 2 (2020) 3 (2021) | 2 (2021) 3 (2022) | 2 (2022) 3(2023) | 3 (2023) 5 (2024) | |
| AS Total | 2 | 3 | 5 (1 went to CS) | 5 | 5 | 7 | 27 |
| total | 3 | 8 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 16 | 65 |

The figures for 2021-2023 are actual figures of qualifying staff. The figures for 2024-2026 are projections. Figures based on 12 sponsored OU degree’s (7/5 estimated divide between CS and AS). There are difficulties in predicting whether the qualified social workers will be employed by CS or AS. Students being sponsored by the OU route do not need to decide which service area to work for prior to qualifying. Students are not able to undertake both

placements within either children's or adult's services. There is no guarantee that students selected from one service area will seek to continue in that service area upon qualifying.

Staff retention / wellbeing initiatives:

The results from a staff wellbeing survey in 2022 showed that staff were requesting additional support when exposed to distressing and traumatic events which has supported and shaped initiatives led by the in-house psychologist in Children's Services. This feedback has directly shaped new initiatives to support staff wellbeing. This includes piloting one to one decompression sessions to support newly qualified social workers with the emotional demands of their new role, providing individual and group debriefing sessions for staff and carers who have been affected by traumatic events/distressing material in work, and we have held our first staff wellbeing event (13th October 2023) to promote and support workforce wellbeing. In addition, Schwartz rounds are about to commence. These will enable staff to participate in a supported facilitated group space, where on a monthly basis, they can share and reflect upon the emotionally challenging aspects of practice. Additionally, there is practice guidance in place to support newly qualified social workers in their first three years of practice. This guidance supports managers and social workers by ensuring that inductions are of a good standard, mentors are in place and caseloads are closely monitored.

Health and Care Academy:

Powys Health and Care Academy has built on the School's Initiative pilot that was run in the 2022/23 academic year and worked with education settings to develop a programme to provide young people with exposure to the opportunities in health and social care in Powys through the new Academy Careers Education and Enterprise Scheme (ACEES). Working closely with Powys County Council and Powys Teaching Health Board colleagues, the Academy has developed a programme of engagement with 10 of the 13 secondary schools and two further education colleges across Powys. This programme comprises of sessions delivered to Powys' young people aged 11-18 and aims to motivate them to consider a career in health and social care. The offer includes clinical and professional skills sessions, volunteer opportunities, information on flexible routes to health and social care careers, along with recruitment advice and top tips, with the aim of maximising the number of young people across Powys gaining employment in health and social care.

A full evaluation is being undertaken and will reported to the Workforce Futures Programme Board, co-Chaired by the Director of Social Services. To date, the Academy Careers Education Enterprise Scheme has reached 3,707 learners through the whole school approach and two Careers festivals for those studying health and social care in Y12 and Y13. An adapted version of the scheme is being offered in three Additional Learning Needs settings in Powys in March/April 2024 (reaching around 110 learners), and the offer is available to the Pupil Referral Unit on request, should a suitable group of learners be identified in that setting.

Childcare Workforce

To address some of the current workforce challenges across the childcare sector and to support the Flying Start Expansion the Childcare and Play team within Children's Services has developed a Childcare Apprentice scheme. The Flying Start Apprentice Scheme was developed as a pilot in an attempt to make a positive impact on the recruitment of a qualified childcare workforce. The scheme, which is fully funded by Welsh Government Flying Start grant currently funds nine childcare, play, learning and development apprentices in nine Flying Start childcare settings across the County. All apprentices interact positively with the advisory team and attend training when appropriate to support their professional development. The majority of the apprentices will qualify prior to the Summer term 2024. It is anticipated that this will be a rolling programme and further apprenticeship opportunities will be advertised over the next few months.

Dr Holly Gordon
Senior Manager, Safeguarding and QA