

**BRIEFING NOTE FOR: Director Helen Blackman**  
**Head of Service Clive Chambers**  
**Service Manager Kay Sutt**

**DATE: 28<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

**TITLE: Regrade for the post of CRSCW from E to F grade**

**1. SUMMARY**

For the last several years Childrens Residential Social Care Workers who are no longer receiving protected allowances have been awarded a 10% market supplement. As Service Manager I have to apply for this each year. Every year we are successful at gaining this supplement as there is recognition and acknowledgment by Nottingham City Council that in terms of pay this post is not receiving the market rate that it should, which is equivalent to an F grade post.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> June I submitted to the job evaluation team an updated JEQ and job description to be re-evaluated due to the role of the CRSCW becoming more complex overall in the last several years together with additional tasks and responsibilities. Added to this, Ofsted expectations and demands having increased significantly.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> July I received notification from the job evaluation team that the post had been evaluated at an F grade and to get these established on Oracle I will need to complete some forms and return to the job evaluation team with a DDM and that they will then make the necessary changes on Oracle.

**2. BACKGROUND**

Recruitment data for the Children's Residential Service dates back to the launch of the Engage Portal (October 2016). Between October 2016 and February 2018, 7 Children's Residential Social Care Workers recruitment adverts were run for a total of 19 vacancies. An additional advert was run to recruit 10 casual workers. This number of recruitment processes was required as it was not possible to fill all of the vacancies.

The challenge in recruiting Residential Care Workers is a long-standing issue nationally. It is reflected in the findings of the Department for Education report "Training and developing staff in children's homes research report, January 2015". This found:

- The main challenge with recruitment appeared to be attracting and selecting the right people for the job. Much of the problem was attributed to competition with other similarly low paid, entry-level work, requiring no previous qualifications. The alternatives at this level were likely to be substantially easier and more conducive to juggling work and family commitments. Equally, the combination of the specialist and demanding nature of the work and the low entry point made it difficult to attract people with adequate experience, skills and insight.
- Despite the perceived low status of work in children's residential care, managers were looking for staff with particular attributes, skills and experience, which they felt, were key to being a good residential care worker. These included: their ability to care; a commitment and passion for the job: their emotional maturity, intelligence and resilience and core knowledge and practice skills that are required for working with young people in residential care.
- Few staff started work in the sector with relevant qualifications. This often made the recruitment process quite protracted, as managers had to assess an applicant's suitability

for a job according to whether they had transferable skills and appropriate attributes to do the work.

### Operating context

The children and young people living in children's homes are amongst the most vulnerable and traumatised in society. Many have special educational needs or disabilities, including social, educational and mental health difficulties and many are victims of abuse or neglect. It is therefore vital that we continue to do everything possible to provide a positive experience of being looked after, helping them to overcome their previous experiences, and enabling them to achieve their potential.

It continues to be of the **upmost importance** that we retain a highly skilled, stable, experienced and suitably qualified work force within our Childrens Residential Homes including Short Breaks Service providing continuity and consistency of care for children and young people who are unable to live with their birth families.

Locally the focus has been on our Residential provision due to the consequence of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA). IICSA brings significant potential reputational risk for the local authority, which provides a further imperative for robustly addressing any recruitment challenges and retaining our highly trained and skilled work force. In December 2019, the Nottingham Evening post ran an article about the Ofsted inspection results of both private and local authority homes regionally, citing that some homes across the region were still receiving judgements of Inadequate and Requiring Improvement. All of our children's homes are currently judged to be Good or Outstanding. This is due to Nottingham City having and retaining a highly skilled, knowledgeable, well trained/qualified and experienced workforce who place Citizens at the heart of everything they do.

Ofsted themselves have stated that this is an excellent achievement for a local authority and we have gained much respect and confidence from our local Ofsted Regional Managers. They have advised other local authorities across the country to make contact with us so that we can share good practice as well as demonstrate how well our small group home model works. As a result of this, a number of these local authorities have adopted this model and now run their own small group homes model.

During the Covid 19 pandemic we have been approached by yet another local authority, Warwickshire County Council, who are also looking to adopt our Residential Model and are requesting support from our service on how they go about this. We have also been approached by private providers too who wish to emulate the model we have at Nottingham City Council.

Our Residential staff have remained passionate and committed during the pandemic, risking their own health and wellbeing to care compassionately and outstandingly for the children and young people who live in our homes and for the children and families who access our short breaks service.

### Current Recruitment Picture:

Working in the industry, we are aware that both private providers and local authorities are finding difficulties in recruiting to residential care posts. This is highly likely to be due to the nature and intensity of the work with highly vulnerable children and the requirement to work unsociable hours. At an Ofsted conference in June of last year, Regional Ofsted Managers spoke of the challenges across the country in recruiting and retaining Residential Workers due to low pay and working in a highly stressful and complex environment.

Between March 2018 to present there have been 19 separate recruitment processes relating to 30.5 posts. Five posts are currently vacant and are in the process of being recruited to. We have had to advertise for many of these posts more than once as we have not been able to recruit sufficient suitable candidates to fill the vacancies. These posts were all advertised with the 10%

market supplement as described above.

We have completed exit interviews for those leaving the Residential Service and the reasons for colleagues leaving are for a number of factors including gaining Family Support Worker roles at a higher grade (F grade), moving on to complete social work qualifications, not being able to manage the pressures of the role in terms of caring for complex and challenging young people, finding alternative roles paid at the same grade but not including shift work, unsociable hours and sleep-ins.

A number of our Residential Social Care workers have stated that they will leave our service if they do not continue to receive the grade and pay that our neighbouring local authorities are paying their Children's Residential Social Care Workers. We know that our neighbouring local authorities will be keen to recruit experienced staff. There is a significant risk we will lose some of our most highly valued and skilled workers who have always been proud to work for Nottingham City Council and continue to be ambitious and drive performance to ever-higher levels.

### Pay comparators

The hourly rate for the grade E without the market supplement is currently £11.19 (Level 1) when staff progress to level 2 this increases to £11.88. The cost of employing agency staff is dependent on a range of factors such as when the shift is worked. The average cost would be circa £15.48 per hour. This is particularly important because Registered Children's Residential Homes are highly regulated and inspected at least annually and sometimes six monthly dependant on inspection results. A key issue considered in the inspection regime is the proportion of permanent staff on shift at any one time. Homes cannot operate with more than 50% agency staff in line with Ofsted Standards and Regulations. Some of our homes are operated by no more than two or three individuals, so are particularly vulnerable to this risk.

Other local authorities such as **Nottingham County** and **Derby City** pay their Residential Social Care Workers at higher rates. This is a maximum of **£28,785 per annum (£14.96 per hour)** for Derby city and **£26,317 per annum (£13.67 per hour)** for County, plus sleep-ins and allowances. The County are currently looking at further increasing pay for their Residential Social Care Workers. The Service Manager recently attended a regional meeting and **Derbyshire County Council** stated that they pay their Children's Residential workers the same as newly qualified Social Workers, **£26,890 per annum (£13.97 per hour)**, and shift allowances. Comparable roles at private providers of residential care are also higher in many places. Higher Hopes and Compass Children's Homes pay starting salaries of £24k and £23k respectively compared to NCC starting salary of £21,589 at Grade E.

Even some of our country's popular supermarkets such as Aldi and Sainsbury's pay their Shop Assistants up to £9.20 per hour outside of London, which is very close to the hourly rate for Residential Social Care workers. This is despite the fact that our Residential Workers are working within a highly complex service with some of the most damaged, challenging and high-risk children and young people within our city.

### Proposal

The proposal is that all of our Residential Social Care Workers are moved from the E grade onto the F Grade. It is suggested that this should be seriously considered as an alternative to the market supplement as the preferred option, as this means that our workforce do not have to worry and be anxious each year as to whether they will face a significant reduction in pay. If this proposal were not supported, we would advocate that the current market supplement be maintained. A comparison of the financial implications of the two proposals is set out in the Financial Advice that is provided at the end of this form.

Although there is a financial implication in agreeing to place workers on the F grade, it would be offset by the additional costs that would be associated with the necessity of using agency staff or paying staff overtime, which would potentially be significantly more costly. Agency staff also impact

on the continuity of care for some very troubled young people, hence the focus on this in the Ofsted Inspection regime.

If the decision was not to continue with the 10% market supplement or move to the proposed F grade, we run a high risk of losing workers to neighbouring local authorities, other roles or less demanding jobs for similar pay. Given the issues set out above in relation to recruitment we will have to rely more on agency workers and paying overtime which could result in even higher costs as well as more importantly a decline in the standard of care given which in turn will impact our Ofsted results as well as reputational damage to the council.

This would be absolutely devastating for our Children’s Residential Service and Short Breaks Service and will undermine all the hard work which has gone into building a high quality service which provides such Good and Outstanding care to the most vulnerable and traumatised children and young people in our city.

### **3.Financial Implications**

There are 89.94 FTE Children Residential Social Worker in the budget within the residential children’s teams. This financial year the 10% market supplement is included in the budget which is a total of £275,655. This assumes a 2% pay rise in 20/21 which as yet hasn’t been agreed.

The total budget in the residential units is £5,118,724 and Business as Usual (BAU) FOT at Pd3 is £5,216,123. The overspend is due to Staffing, of which there is a shortfall in budget of £97,399. This excludes additional costs of £457,939 for COVID-19. This additional COVID-19 cost includes additional staffing, loss of income and additional running costs.

Grade	FTE	BASIC PAY	NI	PENSION	APP'SHIP LEVY	VACANCY SAVING	TOTAL PAY
Grade E1/E2	89.94	£2,092,637	£170,855	£374,588	£10,516	-£53,246	2,595,350
Market Supplement 10%		209,264	28,907	37,484	0	0	275,655
Total							2,871,005
Grade F1	89.94	£2,320,238	£202,282	£415,349	£11,613	-£58,782	2,890,700
Increase							19,695

If the children’s department was to regrade the Children Residential Social Worker posts to F grade this financial year (20/21), the difference between the costs of the 10% market supplement which as said is already in the budget and the F1 grade would be £19,695. This includes the on costs as well as apprentice levy and vacancy savings. This also assumes that each worker would be on F1 and that the following year the increase in F2 would be funded corporately in line with the usual pay model process.

In addition to this there will also be an increase to the overtime and allowances costs £4,819 based on overtime and allowances claims based from 2019/20. The last two years have been consistent in terms of allowances and overtime. Overtime and allowance are in part to use to cover shifts when staff are off on sick. In 2019/20 there were approximately £100k spent on sickness.

Payment Type	Budget	18/19	19/20	20/21 10% Market Supplement	20/21 Grade E	Variance
Allowances/Overtime	£306,147	£710,270	£676,091	£775,003	£779,823	£4,819

Therefore the total additional cost to the service would be £24,514. The budget for the increase hasn’t been identified.

Consideration should be given to the risks associated with this report and its impact to the

organisations financial position. These include:

- Currently, there is no budget to fund the costs existing overspend of £97,399 identified in the report, plus the above £25,514. The service must be able to identify how this will be funded.
- If funding is not identified from the department or C& A directorate, the service must seek the appropriate approval to spend in accordance with the organisations financial regulations and internal governance procedures.
- Work is ongoing to develop mitigation plans to address the significant 2020/21 forecasted budget gap. The approval process for 2020/21 is currently in progress and not yet confirmed.

The children's residential homes need to maintain a level of staffing to comply with Ofsted Standards and Regulations and cannot have any more than 50/50 agency/staff ratio within the homes at any given time.

Staff turnover of Children Residential Social Workers is 33.91% since March 2018. With 30.5 FTE leaving out of a total Children Residential Social workers of 89.94 FTE.

Should there be a national pay rise in April of 2020, Nottingham City Councils Children's Residential Social Care Workers would still be paid at a lower rate than neighbouring local authorities as their workers would receive the same national pay rise.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

It is vital that we retain our well trained and highly skilled workforce as well as attract the right people to apply for any future vacancies within the service. Recently, despite over 20 candidates applying for posts we only interviewed a small number due to the quality of the applications as well as lack of any kind of experience of working with children and young people.

The Childrens Residential Care Workers Post has not been re-evaluated for the past several years and as said within this report the breadth of the role has extended and become more complex and onerous as well as Ofsted's Standards and expectations ever increasing.

The submission of the JEQ did result in a recognition that the post is re-graded to an F grade post, for which I received news of only yesterday, 27<sup>th</sup> July.

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