

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Reference Number:

4669

Author:

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Department:

People

Contact:

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Subject:

Funding for Market Supplements in Children's Integrated Services

Total Value:

£702,000 (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

To approve the re-allocation of money to staffing budgets to fund market supplements for a period of 2-years to address acute recruitment and retention challenges across some statutory services in Children's Integrated Services.

Reasons for the Decision(s)

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There is a national and regional shortage of Children's Social Workers (CSW) and this is further evidenced by the council's inability to attract suitable applicants for experienced social workers in the recruitment market and experienced agency workers. Numbers of uncovered vacancies and turnover of experienced social workers among the permanent staffing compliment are high, and a significant amount of management resource is required to support continuous efforts to recruit due to the retention challenges. Attracting experienced social workers is a significant challenge and coupled with a workforce that is constantly being headhunted for other opportunities, agency conversions and lifestyle choices, we are seeing high levels of turnover in our statutory case-holding social work teams. Not being able to replace the experienced workforce is proving significantly difficult in delivering these statutory services.

In contrast, our entry-level pipeline and routes into social work are proving popular and we are bringing in entry-level talent with Newly Qualified Social Workers. This new workforce will take time to nurture and grow as part of their development into experienced social workers, and the council is exploring the use of apprenticeships into social work and working with schools, colleges and universities (including the international workforce)to attract future talent into the profession, given the national shortages.

The decision requests the Portfolio Holder to consider the allocation of resources as per finance comments to address the acute recruitment & retention challenges being experienced in certain services in the Children's division in the hope that it will further stabilise resources and minimise the risk to statutory service delivery. The proposal is to introduce market supplements for welcome and retention purposes. Delivering Child Protection and Children in need services is a significant priority for the council and the re-allocation of this funding will ensure that we will be able to perform our statutory functions as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The council consistently has children, young people and families to support as part of our children's statutory service provision. Stabilising our workforce is important to provide our children, young people and families the stability they need to life happy and fulfilled lives, and providing a demand-managed service forms part of our responsibilities as a Unitary Local Authority and as part of the Children's Act. The re-allocation of this funding will support the development of two-year market supplements in some teams within Children's Integrated Services, and the model of market supplements has been taken from practice with other local authority organisations who also find themselves in the same situation in the retaining and recruitment of an experienced social work workforce.

The funding in both years will be met from one-off underspends across the Children's service.

Briefing notes documents:

Final CLT Recruitment and Retention Issues - Update - 1.7.22.docx

Other Options Considered: Officers considered three further options as part of this work: 1 - offer reduced market supplements (either welcome or retention payments). While more affordable, this option is not recommended as this would only address the recruitment challenges OR retention challenges and therefore only addressing part of the problem in recruitment & retention. It would also not provide us with market competitiveness across the tough social worker market to attract new talent. 2 - offer an inflated market supplement. This option is not recommended on the grounds of cost. Whilst it would address the recruitment & retention issues and provide us with a stronger place in the market with our competitors it would be the most expensive way to deliver the change. 3 - do nothing. While the most affordable option, this would not resolve the challenges with recruitment & retention, it would not provide Nottingham with any leverage in the competitive market place to recruit & retain social workers, therefore this option is also not recommended on the grounds of no action not being the appropriate solution.

Background Papers: None

Published Works: None

Affected Wards: Citywide

Colleague / Councillor Interests: None

Consultations:
Date: 21/06/2022
Unions: Unison, GMB, Unite
Market Supplement business case has been sent to Trade Unions and further data was requested. An extraordinary Collective Consultation meeting convened to discuss market supplement, unions have provided views and further requests have been made. Management will respond as part of the market supplement consultation process that is ongoing.

Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.

Crime and Disorder Implications: None

Equality: CIS Pay Review EIA FINAL - Updated 1.7.2022.docx

Relates to staffing: Yes

Decision Type: Portfolio Holder

Subject to Call In:

Yes

Call In Expiry date:

13/07/2022

Advice Sought:

Legal, Finance, Human Resources, Equality and Diversity

Legal Advice:

Offering a benefit (retention and recruitment supplements) for one set of roles could create discrimination risk. As I understand it, an Equality Impact Assessment will be completed to ensure that any proposal to offer recruitment and retention supplements is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim (i.e. justified). This is a defence to any indirect discrimination claims. The supplements should be kept under review to monitor if they are effective. If they are, and individuals remain, there will come a point in time when they are no longer needed/can be justified and at that point they should be removed. If they are not effective, then they should be removed and other mechanisms introduced. Any supplement should be offered subject to signing a clearly worded agreement that deals with repayment if the individual leaves within a certain period. This is to ensure compliance with Ss 13 - 14 of the Employment Rights Act 1996.

Simon Lambert (Employment Solicitor) 15.06.22 Advice provided by Simon Lambert (Interim Employment Lawyer) on 16/06/2022.

Finance Advice:

The decision seeks approval to address the acute Social Worker retention and recruitment challenges in Childrens Services through the introduction of Market Supplements.

The cost of £0.702m over the next two years will be met from the service through one off funding solutions including utilisation of earmarked provisions and holding non-essential spend as detailed in the business case to CLT 17th May 2022.

Advice provided by Christine Green (Strategic Finance Business Partner) on 31/05/2022.

HR Advice:

This decision requests funding from budgets within Children's Integrated Services to be made available for a recruitment and retention initiative in the form of a market supplements in direct response to the acute recruitment & retention challenges in some parts of the service.

. HR advises that the market supplement is the appropriate route through the council's pay policy. An evidence-based business case should be developed outlining the rationale in more detail and Trade Unions should be consulted through the agreed process, as well as workforce consultation and engagement. It should be made clear to unions and colleagues that these market supplement payments are non-contractual and subject to review after a defined period (ending 31/3/2024 in this case).

. The affected in-scope parts of the service are; Fieldwork Teams; MASH/Duty (frontdoor), Emergency Duty Team and Fostering. These payments are also role specific to the aforementioned teams and include the following: Service Managers, Team Managers, Senior Practitioners, Advanced Practitioners and Level 3 Social Workers, as the service do not have recruitment & retention challenges at Level 1 or Level 2 Social Workers. Some Social Worker teams in children's are not in scope.

. An Equality Impact Assessment should be undertaken as part of the market supplement process to outline the equality impacts of the proposal, as there are teams that are proposed to receive the market supplement and other teams that are not in-scope based on evidence. The Equality Impact Assessment as with the Market Supplement business case should provide key data to include recruitment, attrition and key workforce profile data and used in consultation with trade unions and the workforce.

. A clear mechanism for reporting and monitoring the impact of the proposed market supplement needs to be outlined. This will need to be done through tracking recruitment and retention activity within the in-scope teams but also any attrition in the out of scope teams.

Advice provided by Aadil Bhatti (HR Consultant) on 14/06/2022.

Equality and Diversity Advice:

For those who may adversely be impacted from this proposal mitigations have been identified. The author also notes that the teams that are not going to benefit from the market supplement are either already being paid at the same contractual level as the teams benefiting from this proposal. I am happy to sign off. Advice provided by Rosey Donovan (Equality and Employability Consultant) on 20/06/2022.

Signatures

Cheryl Barnard (Portfolio Holder- Children, Young People, Schools)
SIGNED and Dated: 06/07/2022
Catherine Underwood (Corporate Director for People)
SIGNED and Dated: 06/07/2022