

	<p><b>ACTION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BY OFFICER</b> <b>28<sup>th</sup> October 2015</b></p>
<p><b>Title</b></p>	<p><b>Recruitment of Children’s Social Work Practitioners</b></p>
<p><b>Report of</b></p>	<p>Nicola Francis, Family Services Director</p>
<p><b>Wards</b></p>	<p>All</p>
<p><b>Status</b></p>	<p>Public</p>
<p><b>Enclosures</b></p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>Officer Contact Details</b></p>	<p>Chris Collier, Resourcing Manager CSG HR, 020 8359 7127</p>

### Summary

This report seeks authorisation to commence a procurement tender exercise in order to partner with a specialist social work recruitment agency, to recruit permanent, qualified, Children’s Social Work practitioners.

The reason this approach is being taken is due to the Council being unable to directly recruit sufficient numbers of high quality and experienced practitioners.

Following a thorough procurement process, the selected party will be contracted to supply up to an initial 15 permanent workers. The Council will continue to recruit directly, in parallel with the agency recruitment campaign.

### Decisions

- 1. Permission to tender for a recruitment partner to supply 15 permanent social work practitioners with a contract value of £159,000.**

## **1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 This report enables authorisation of a procurement tender exercise, in order to select a specialist social work recruitment agency to recruit children's social work practitioners.
- 1.2 The Council is experiencing difficulties in recruiting social work practitioners within Children's Social Care. Since September 2015 the Council has been operating an ongoing recruitment campaign for suitably qualified social work candidates but has not received sufficient suitable applications.

## **2. REASONS FOR DECISIONS**

- 2.1 Recruiting experienced social workers is extremely challenging across the Country and more so within London. The Council's approach to this challenge has been to launch a social work specific recruitment website titled "More to Believe In", in order to attract experienced social workers. This campaign has been running since September 2015 and has included advertising across a number of recruitment media sources, including job boards, social media and radio. This campaign hasn't had the requisite results in terms of social workers being appointed and whilst this campaign will continue, it is considered that in the short-term a parallel recruitment process by an agency be run.
- 2.2 The proposed approach is to partner with a specialist social work recruitment agency in order to attract permanent workers into the service. The recruitment agency would take the approach of directly sourcing candidates for the Council, who would then be assessed and vetted in accordance with the recruitment and selection procedure in Barnet's constitution. The agency would work on a "no placement no fee" basis.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

- 3.1 Another approach would be to consider recruiting agency temporary social workers in order to fill the gaps within the service, whilst the permanent recruitment campaign is active in the background.
- 3.2 It is felt that this approach would not only increase agency spend across the service, but also push the resource mix of social workers to be weighted in favour of those on agency contracts. A key area of any OFSTED inspection is the resource mix for those social workers responsible for vulnerable groups. Whilst it is recognised that agency workers may be required to cover certain roles and provide a degree of flexibility to the service, the Council can't have long-term reliance on agency social workers.

- 3.3 Other London Boroughs have worked with specialist social work recruitment agencies to source permanent workers, with a good degree of success. It is felt that this approach alongside continued use of the “More to Believe In” brand and website will increase the number of experienced social workers being recruited.

#### **4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 Once a decision has been reached, a procurement process will be undertaken in conjunction with the CSG Procurement team, in order to source and select an appropriate specialist recruitment agency.

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

##### **5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 5.1.1 The Council’s Corporate Plan 2015-20 sets out its vision for delivering its objectives and there are three areas particularly related to Family Services’ delivery.

- I. The Council will continue to ensure a great start in life for every child and that young people are well prepared for adulthood.
- II. Safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable young people will continue to be effective and robust, with greater interface between statutory services, for example Social Care and Youth Offending teams working together to identify and support young people who might be at risk.
- III. There will be a range of services to identify and address, at an early stage, any issues that may impede a successful childhood, provided through a well-trained high quality workforce.

- 5.1.2 To deliver the Corporate Plan requirements for Family Services, it is essential that the Council employs sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced social workers who are able to make appropriate decisions in the best interests of those children and young people for whom the Council is responsible.

##### **5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

- 5.2.1 This proposal would enable the Council to enter a procurement exercise, and ultimately partner with a suitable recruitment agency. The procurement exercise will be run in conjunction with the CSG Procurement Team and in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules in the Council’s constitution.

- 5.2.2 The tender responses will be assessed against Barnet’s principle of 50% quality and 50% price.

5.2.3 A requirement of the project is that the selected supplier puts forward qualified staff looking for a long-term career within the Council, thereby providing stability to the service in terms of staffing, and reducing reliance on costly agency staff. With this in mind, the tender specification will propose the below payment method for the selected supplier:

Based on the appointed candidates' annual salary:

- 10% on start date with the Council
- 5% after 6 months service in post
- 10% after 12 months service in post

Based on the highest available salary for a Social Worker, £42,455 per annum, this would equate to £159,206 for 15 appointed candidates, based on them completing a full 12 months service.

5.2.4 The cost of this recruitment campaign will be borne through existing Family Services budgets.

5.2.5 An essential element of this campaign is that not only are good quality and highly experienced social workers appointed, but those individuals need to commit to Barnet for a good period of time. Recruitment agencies can often place good candidates into Local Authorities, but these individuals don't stay for any length of time. Therefore a key element of assessing any tender responses will be to understand the organisations track record of appointing social workers into other Local Authorities.

### 5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

5.3.1 Appendix 1 – Table A of the Contract Procedure Rules sets out authorisation and acceptance thresholds and provides that Directors/Assistant Directors can authorise a procurement exercise with estimated values up to £172,514, via a Full Officer DPR. Acceptance will be completed by a Council Officer as designated by the approved Scheme of Delegation and via Summary DPR.

### 5.4 Risk Management

5.4.1 Ensuring the Council has a high quality and experienced children's social care workforce is imperative to managing the risks to children, young people and families in the Borough. Experienced social workers are more able to deliver effective interventions and take appropriate action to protect vulnerable young people.

5.4.2 Any inspection of the Council, most notably OFSTED, may raise concerns if it has not considered how it recruits and retains a skilled workforce that is able to work with young and vulnerable people. It is likely the Council will have an ongoing need for agency social workers to ensure adequate staffing levels and flexibility. However, the Council wants to work towards increasing the proportion of permanent social workers, as oppose to agency workers, this will

increase stability in the service and client groups alike.

5.4.3 Ensuring there is continuity of social work support for children and young people is important to securing good outcomes. A reliance on agency staffing can disrupt case planning and can increase the cost of service delivery.

## 5.5 Equalities and Diversity

5.5.1 Candidates put forward through this campaign will be assessed and appointed in-line with existing recruitment and compliance policy. This includes the collection of equality and diversity information through the recruitment process.

## 5.6 Consultation and Engagement

5.6.1 Discussions have taken place within the delivery unit.

## 6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 None.

## 7. DECISION TAKER'S STATEMENT

7.1 *I have the required powers to make the decision documented in this report. I am responsible for the report's content and am satisfied that all relevant advice has been sought in the preparation of this report and that it is compliant with the decision making framework of the organisation which includes Constitution, Scheme of Delegation, Budget and Policy Framework and Legal issues including Equalities obligations.*

## 8. OFFICER'S DECISION

### I authorise the following action

8.1 Permission to tender for a recruitment partner to supply 15 permanent social work practitioners with an initial contract value of £159,000.

**Signed**            Nicola Francis, Family Services Director

**Date**              28 October 2015

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