

## **Right People, Right Skills, Right Time**

### ***Our Framework for Retention and Recruitment 2022/2025***

This strategic approach underpins each of the overarching aims of the 'Our Ambition for Our People' framework and has been developed to support the recruitment of roles in Hereford's Children and Young people Services and the retention of staff through a culture of learning and support.

Emerging from the vision, values and strategic themes set out, we aim to provide challenging, stimulating and rewarding work, using and developing the right skills to achieve our objectives and work towards aspirations.

All staff recruitment activity is an important opportunity to promote Children's Services, its image, values and to be seen as an organisation people want to work for, where their contribution is valued. Importantly, we want that experience to be a positive one.

Where it is appropriate to do so we will work across Herefordshire Council on recruitment initiatives that benefit us all. We will also work collaboratively across the West Midlands Region on areas of common challenge.

We recognise and acknowledge that our staff are our most important asset and their commitment, motivation and enthusiasm is key to achieving our strategic aims and improvement in service delivery. We aspire to making working for us the same life-changing experience for staff, as that aspiration we have for our children, young people and their families.

We will:

- Embrace talent and have a clear offer of development and career progression that will support staff motivation, recruitment and retention
- align skills, expertise, and capacity to focus on key service deliverables
- develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours of our workforce to achieve sustainable improvements in service performance and therefore staff morale and satisfaction
- secure continuity of service to reduce the number of changes to staff that work with children, young people and their families
- address occupational skill shortages and critical hard to fill roles

**The aims of the Retention and Recruitment framework are therefore:**

- to ensure that all staff recruitment activity supports our continuous improvement, service plans and service user needs
- to attract high quality staff to Herefordshire's Children's Services
- to be an employer of choice so that staff want to stay with us; this means having an employment offer that promotes emotional engagement with us
- to have an outstanding Social Care Academy that shares and promotes best practice and new ways of working across Social Care
- to offer excellent learning and development opportunities to all of our staff in the directorate

## **About our strategic framework**

It sets out the priorities for recruitment and retention of staff and provides an overarching framework for how these priorities will be met over the next three years. We want to have a stable and skilled workforce that:

- is emotionally engaged with us; they are clear about what we are here to deliver, what we need to improve and are committed to the part they play
- shares common goals and values
- undertake their roles to a high standard
- is valued and respected by our residents, our partners, service users and each other
- can work together to deliver high quality services based on common work practices and agreed protocols
- can collaborate with colleagues in the wider system putting the needs of our children and young people at the heart of what they do
- achieves great outcomes for the children, young people and families that we work with

## **Staff Retention**

Permanent, committed staff members enable effective team working; team colleagues recognise and build on each other's strengths and together they enhance service delivery. Constant changes are unsettling for teams and service users and can create inconsistency of work. Whilst time spent on a thorough worker induction impacts on a manager's time, that investment is essential to preventing some of the inconsistencies of practice.

Retaining our good quality, experienced staff is therefore a key objective in our strategy. This means listening to and engaging with staff directly, learning from the social work health check and the staff survey. Through our staff forums and other channels we will work together to raise issues and identify solutions that will benefit staff, the service and ultimately our services users and partners.

Offering incentives and opportunities to progress is an important part of our employment offer. Secondments and projects will provide opportunities for you to attain skills and experiences in different areas and will also support the movement of resources to where they are most needed.

## **Recognising Contribution**

We will also focus on how we provide non-financial recognition for the work of all our staff, and celebrate the individual contribution made by staff across Children's Services.

Our intention is to submit the winners to the relevant national awards including The National Children and Young People Awards and Social Worker of the Year Awards, the aim being to promote excellent practice in Herefordshire to the rest of the country and for our staff to get further recognition.

### **So, to be the best we can be:**

we will help you to fulfil every aspect of your role as defined in your Career Family  
we will map our career pathways and make it clear how you can progress whether that be expanding your role or progressing vertically through the organisation  
we will adopt a blended approach to learning and development to suit all learning styles  
your managers will coach you to help you to realise your potential

### **Nurturing talent and succession planning:**

- We will complete an annual skills audit covering all staff for their current role and for
- what other knowledge and experiences you bring to Children's Services and the greater council, this will help us identify learning needs and aspirational talent
- Our desire is to home grow our future managers and leaders by facilitating opportunities to develop necessary skills in a controlled way through training, projects, and delegation.
- We will have a transparent talent management and succession planning process that is fair and equitable to all staff
- Where appropriate, and it can be supported by the business, we will use our apprenticeship levy to develop our talent

### **And**

- All staff who are leaving us will be offered an exit interview with a colleague of their choosing so that we can understand why.
- We will also have a process called 'Stay' that enables staff who are thinking of leaving to have a confidential conversation with the Principal Social Worker or HR Business Partner in the hope that we can find a solution that will support them to stay with us
- As part of our approach to retention we will have an internal transfer protocol for staff who wish to transfer to other teams / localities but remain within our Children's Services. Our aim is to expand this further to include access to secondment opportunities and acting up arrangements.
- Themes from these interviews will be regularly reported to the leadership team so that the intelligence can be used to inform our actions and continually improve our recruitment and retention offer.

### **A Flexible Workforce**

It is important that we develop a rounded and flexible workforce to help us to continue from Requires Improvement to Good. The development of career families will enable staff to understand what their options are whether they are looking to expand their knowledge and skills sideways or upwards.

Being part of a flexible workforce that can work across the variety of roles may be appealing to some current and potential new social workers who like the security and sense of belonging when working for one local authority but enjoy the challenge of working in different environments without having to leave. This flexibility will enable us to fill vacant posts quickly with a worker who is familiar with the organisation, skilled, and committed to our strategic vision.

As part of our sufficiency planning and workforce modelling we will also consider whether there are any tasks currently undertaken by social workers that could be undertaken by alternatively qualified and other experienced staff. This will enable those within social care to take on tasks that will widen their experience whilst also enabling qualified social workers to undertake more specific tasks that specifically require a social worker. This could then lessen our reliance on agency social workers.

We will apply the same methodology to all parts of the directorate so that we have decision making at the right level, tasks undertaken within the right roles leading to job satisfaction.

We have a rich tapestry of professionally qualified staff and those with a wealth of experience in our directorate so we should maximise the benefits of this for you, our staff, and for those children and families we work with.

The ability for Children's Services staff to move between teams and directorates and widen the roles of unqualified staff will have significant benefits in terms of the knowledge and experience of staff. In addition, this approach can help to retain employees who have returned after a period of absence (such as maternity leave) who no longer want to remain in their previous role but would like to remain working for us. We have developed a Transfer Protocol help staff move roles without having to go through a full recruitment exercise when we already know they are suitable, this will help us to prevent losing them to another organisation.

As part of our review of benefits we will be exploring the possibility of different work patterns in teams (where this is appropriate and will meet the needs of children and their families). This could allow for more flexible working that might be attractive to staff if it helps them with their personal responsibilities. This would need to be thoroughly investigated and involve staff and unions.

Our Flexible Futures initiatives will support flexible working along with creating comfortable agile office environments. We have a number of sites across the county where you can book to work from reducing unnecessary travel and access our networks and systems as if you were in the main office. This is an ongoing programme of work that is designed to create great working environments with allocated spaces for team meetings and meeting up with other colleagues.

The council has a number of work locations in the county which aim to meet the needs of the services and our employees whilst being cost and energy effective. There are central office locations in Hereford, along with a network of Multi-Agency-Offices (MAOs). These MAOs provide work space in different parts of the county that mean staff can reduce the need to come into Hereford or can be used between visits.

With your manager you can create your own Hybrid working arrangements that help your work life balance and help you address the needs of your service.

## **Staff Engagement**

Communication with staff at all levels is key to ensuring our plans meet the needs of our staff and can be developed in accordance with their feedback. We will continue to enhance virtual and direct communication channels through a variety of channels, so staff and managers understand what support and opportunities are available and ensure these are consistent across the county. We will set up a 'workforce matters' page on our SharePoint site so that all staff can have access to this framework, supporting materials and information.

We encourage all staff to get involved with projects and other individual and service developmental opportunities through the staff forums that we have.

The Principal Social Worker will publish the Social Work Health check annually and, through the Social Care Academy, plans will be developed to address any outstanding issues. We will also encourage staff to complete the employee survey run by the council as this will be another way of understanding how you, our staff, are feeling.

For a fuller description, please refer to this document:

An Approach to Workforce Development – Our Ambitions for our People 2022/25

## **Recruitment and selection**

We will be clear that we are part of Herefordshire Council and A place to thrive - the Spirit of Herefordshire is our overarching brand.

We do however need to be instantly recognisable by our 'directorate identity' by visually reminding staff why they chose to work within the Children's Services system. We also want to be recognised as one of the best Children's Services in the West Midlands Region by delivering great outcomes and being a great employer. We want our staff and prospective staff to feel valued and supported to deliver their roles to a high standard giving the children and young people we work with the best possible lives. The overarching Ambitions for People paper and supporting plans will give more detail about how we will do this.

### **"Customer" experience**

We will treat candidate in an equal way recognising their knowledge, experience and skills, with the aim to enable them to show us their abilities in an open and transparent process that has no bias. This means using simplified systems and applying consistently high standards throughout the whole process. Our managers will be trained to apply all parts of the recruitment process consistently and fairly to ensure the right person for the role each time. We will feedback to unsuccessful candidates in a truthful and useful way to enable the candidate to learn from the experience. More detail regarding our ambitions in relation to Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion can be found in our Ambition for People document that can be found here

We will have an effective approach to on boarding of staff from candidate stage through to being on payroll and beyond. Managers will be responsible for making and maintaining contact from offer of interview through to interview, offer and starting. After that they will, with their team, ensure that their new colleague has the best possible local induction and has the support they need to integrate into the team and be comfortable in their new role.

### **Effectiveness and efficiency**

For large population roles we will have a countywide approach to recruitment and selection where it is appropriate. Advertorials will be placed in relevant publications and online to attract potential

candidates to Herefordshire Council and its Children's Services and point them in the direction of our microsite. We will maximize our use of digital advertising including developing Social Media channels, and using our database of email contacts. Internally we will ensure that our staff are aware of all permanent vacancies and have equal access to them through an open process.

For Social Work and Early Help where we have multiple vacancies, our recruitment activity will be planned and managed centrally to maximise the effect of streamlined procedures. Team Managers will be on a rota for shortlisting and interviewing and receive full training on the interview process from start to finish including safer recruitment practice, induction and on boarding.

For one off recruitment activity we will follow the normal recruitment process and provide advice and support to managers as they need it. The same offer of training is available to all managers.

We recognise the significant time managers invest in recruitment activities. We will have centralised approach to recruitment ensuring that the process is swift for applicants and supports vacant positions to be filled with good quality candidates as quickly as possible:

- User friendly application processes that allow CVs to be uploaded supported by a
- personal statement and the completion relevant declarations.
- Review of the end to end process, can it be simpler?
- Weekly review and shortlisting of all applications will enable us to engage with candidates early and offering interviews. Aim is to interview within 5 working days of shortlisting. For campaigns shortlisting and interview dates will be set up in advance and appear in the advert. However if a good candidate applies early why not see them before closing date if we have a number of vacancies!
- Tracking all roles in the establishment, including agency, so we know centrally where the vacant positions are; this will be done by managers weekly with the support of the central team
- Where appropriate, we will have job specific adverts in Community Care on a rolling basis
- Recruitment on a county wide campaign basis for large population roles with several vacancies
- Using targeted recruitment approaches for key roles, for instance reaching out to partners to second people with specific skills needed for a short period of time.
- Rewards for the "refer a friend" scheme

Until we have increased our permanent staffing numbers social work posts will be advertised using a campaign approach where more than one vacancy of a similar nature exists, potential applicants will still have the chance to indicate what type of team they would prefer to work in. Providing options will be an extra incentive for social workers and managers with a particular interest in working with a specific client group, for example, Children with Disabilities, or Looked after Children. By visiting our jobs microsite they will know exactly what job roles (not numbers) are available at each level in each type of team.

The microsite will be home to all of our vacancies across all parts of our directorate, it will be our 'shop window' for the roles we have and news we have to share. We will also identify the best ways of advertising all of our roles whether internally only, in a professional publication or locally.

We will have a small team in Children's Services to co-ordinate recruitment and be the conduit into the Hoople Recruitment Team. This provides some much needed capacity to support the recruitment processes of permanent staff, including use of young people's panels, and implementing the knowledge and skills statements into the social work interview processes. They will also centralise the recruitment of agency staff, working with Hoople / Matrix to ensure the quality and best use of agency staff through frontline manager assessments.

As part of the role profiles in our career families (see Our Ambition for Our People framework), there will be a clearly articulated recruitment process for each type of role to ensure that there is a thorough and objective process that is equitable to all candidates whether external or internal.

### **Our Employment Offer**

The whole council is behind the Children and Young People's directorate and will continually look for ways to support us

The council offer their staff a number of employee benefits including:

- Competitive salary
- Market Forces Supplement on specific roles
- Local Government Pension Scheme contributions of up to 17.5% of gross salary
- Car parking pass
- Generous holiday entitlement
- Social Work England registration fee
- The Orchard employee benefits including discounts on essentials, nice to haves and luxuries
- Investment in your professional and personal development
- Family friendly policies including a hybrid / flexible working approach
- A generous relocation package commensurate with the role
- Access to an Employee Assistance Programme, occupational health, counselling and physiotherapy services
- Death in service benefits, helping support your loved ones after you've gone

As part of our planning we will review our features and benefits on an annual basis to ensure they are still right for us.

The Herefordshire Social Work Academy is an additional offer to Children's Social Workers staff that provides excellent development opportunities against distinct career pathways.

For our Education and Skills workforce and Business Support we want to ensure that you have the best possible learning opportunities that will help you do your jobs to a high standard and support career progression and job satisfaction

In addition, investment in new IT systems and support to develop existing recording and reporting systems have provided much needed support to Children's Social Care. Availability of social work resources and access to core tools, must also be prioritised. The leadership team will continue to work with its corporate colleagues to ensure that these issues are recognised and supported.

Working with colleagues in Human Resources, we will continually look at our employment offer and reward package with a view to optimising our offer to you and staff joining us.

### **Positive Campaigns**

Our staff are our greatest asset and undertake vital work to protect vulnerable children and young people in our communities. However, there is a risk that high profile incidents at a number of local authorities including our own, and overall vilification of the profession in the media can act as a disincentive to enter or remain in social care.

To counteract this, we will explore ways in which we can send out positive messages about the work undertaken by our social work and social care staff.

We will maximise the use of digital technology for example we could have a dedicated “Twitterthon” and we will continue to build on Social Media platforms. Our Service Directors, Principal Social Worker and other key post holders will develop their digital skills and maximise their use of twitter. A proactive approach to press releases will also support our aims.

We will develop a recruitment microsite and have a relevant strategic resourcing partnership; these will be key platforms in getting out our messages and letting our staff have a voice. The microsite will be regularly updated to keep it fresh with short films of staff telling the world why they live and work here.

We will also work with schools to raise awareness of opportunities to be seconded to the Education and Skills part of our services. Thinking longer term about our future workforce we aim to develop structured processes to engage with students at appropriate times to discuss their career aspirations.

### **Community Care Strategic Partnership**

We will have a 12 month strategic partnership approach that will offer us access to a national wide pool of potential applicants and enable us to have articles about our improvements published with the help of editorial specialist who can maximise the impact of what we have to say. Unlimited advertisements for all roles across social care will help us keep our name in the forefront of people’s minds. We will have a detailed plan that will be supported by a small team of people to ensure we use all elements of the contract to best effect and in a timely way

### **We will plan for the future by**

- continually reviewing the roles we have and how we arrange and deliver our services; we need to make sure we have the **right people in the right roles at the right time** doing the things that deliver excellent services.
- having Career Families that clearly articulate all the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for each role in our organisation; this helps you to fully understand your role now, but enables you to think about your future aspirations and what you need to learn or develop to achieve them
- understanding future skills shortage areas and planning in advance to address them through creative recruitment campaigns, apprenticeships and traineeships
- using data about our children and families to plan service needs and assist with workforce planning
- understanding our age profile and plan recruitment and development in advance

### **How will we know that we’ve been successful?**

When we achieve our goal, we will have a consistent permanent social care workforce who have the right skills and knowledge to deliver excellent service to children and families. Use of agency staff will reduce and staffing costs will be within budget. The overall outcome will contribute to the successful delivery of our improvement plans to move us through to good.

To ensure that the proposals within this strategy are bringing about the necessary improvements in our

ability to recruit and retain a permanent workforce we will ensure that there is regular monitoring of the indicators that will be agreed as part of the Improvement plan. These will include:

- increased number of appropriate applications received internally and externally
- number of people interviewed will increase
- offers will be made to those individuals who meet the standards we are looking for in a timely way and those offers will be accepted
- number and type of new permanent starters into our services will increase
- number of posts “uncovered” or covered by agency staff will be minimal and for a short or pre planned duration
- reduced levels of turnover
- improved staff engagement scores through staff surveys
- reduced caseloads and improved performance as we fill our established posts and retain our staff
- reduced agency spend

### **Delivering the strategy**

We are committed to delivering all aspects of this framework over the next three years, we want to work at pace but we must get things right and embed them.

We will engage with colleagues across the council who can provide the expertise to help us achieve our ambitions.

We will have an annual ‘Strategy into Action’ plan that supports delivery of this and other people related frameworks, this will be monitored as part of the regular performance monitoring of our services to ensure we maintain pace and can measure the benefits.

We are all part of the solution and all have a part to play in delivering this strategy from being a welcoming and supportive colleague through to a compassionate and inspirational leader.

### **What will, success look like for us?**

- Career families for you that are clear about knowledge, skills and accountabilities and career pathways are mapped out
- A learning offer is clear and supports **necessary and developmental learning at all levels and the progression through career pathways**
- An employment offer that is competitive with features that are unique to us
- An engaged and skilled permanent workforce that is motivated to deliver excellent services to help children and young people.
- Have an excellent on boarding process and induction that will help our new staff feel emotionally engaged with us and settle into working on Herefordshire’s Children and Young People Services to

become a valued part of our team.

- We will have a reputation for being a great employer amongst the professional who work with children and young people
- By providing regular reports regarding recruitment activity and sickness and turnover the Directorate Leadership Team, will understand where their priorities are and also be able to overlay these with other performance data to help them understand the performance of the directorate

**This means that .....**

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... and we will have built a cohesive service made up of a range of professionals and experienced staff who have a common goal of making sure that the children and young people in our county have the best possible start in life.

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