

SUBJECT: Delivering Excellence in Children's Services - Workforce

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 6th December 2017

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- To provide Cabinet with a summary of the workforce proposals for the next phase of the 'Delivering Excellence in Children's Services' Programme.
- To present the evidence base and business cases to support the proposals.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet Members are requested to consider the key recommendations in this report as follows:

2.1 Early Help Duty and Assessment Team

2.1.1 To convert one Social Worker post into a Senior Practitioner post.

2.1.2 To make the temporary Support Worker post into a permanent role within the team.

2.1.3 To convert one temporary agency worker assignment into a permanent Social Work post (or 60 hours of Support Worker hours).

2.2 Family Support and Protection Team

2.2.1 To convert three temporary agency worker assignments into three permanent Social Worker posts.

2.2.2 To convert of one temporary agency worker assignment into one permanent Senior Practitioner post.

2.3 Placement and Support / Contact Team

2.3.1 To increase the contact team by one Contact Support Worker on a six month temporary contract. The purpose of this is to reduce the current costs of spot-purchasing contact worker sessions from independent providers (whilst the second phase of family support review work is undertaken).

2.3.2 To implement the full recommendations contained within the review of the Placement and Support Team including i) the formal consultation regarding the deletion of 1 assessing social worker post from the establishment within the Placement & Support Team and ii)

to transfer the resource released from this post into the creation of a Social Worker post within the Family Support & Protection Team iii) to create a flexible budget around 1 social post.

2.4 Business Support.

2.4.1 To amalgamate unutilised Business Support hours within the establishment into a permanent business support post.

2.4.2 To review and revise the Business Support Manager job description, to provide a key role of supporting the Children's Services with all aspects of workforce planning including staff recruitment and retention.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Background

3.1 In January 2016 Council approved a reconfiguration in the way in which we deliver services within Children's Services. As outlined in previous reports these changes were part of the overarching transformation programme 'Delivering Excellence in Children's Services' designed to deliver the cultural and practice changes necessary to address problems within the service and realise the benefits enshrined within the legislative framework of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014).

3.2 This plan sets out the next phase of the transformation programme from an overarching workforce perspective and consolidates the workforce elements of four teams:-

- Early Help, Duty & Assessment Team
- Family Support & Protection Team
- Placement & Support Team
- Business Support Team.

3.3 There are no proposed changes within the proposals to the Long Term Support Team or the Children with Disability Team.

Service Demands

3.4 There continues to be an upward trend in the numbers of Looked After Children and Young People and children on the Child Protection Register (figure 1). The last year has seen a particularly significant increase in numbers (figure 2).

Figure 1

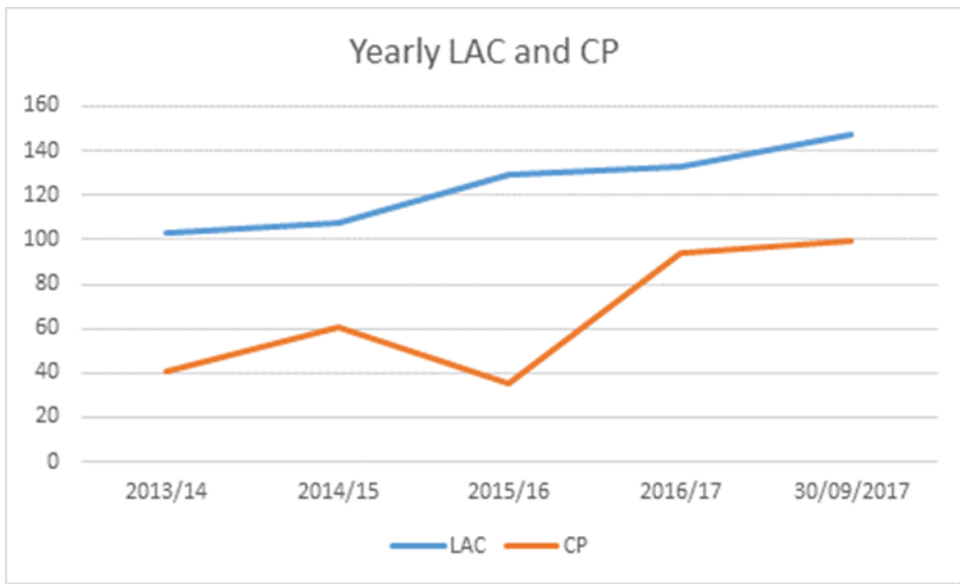
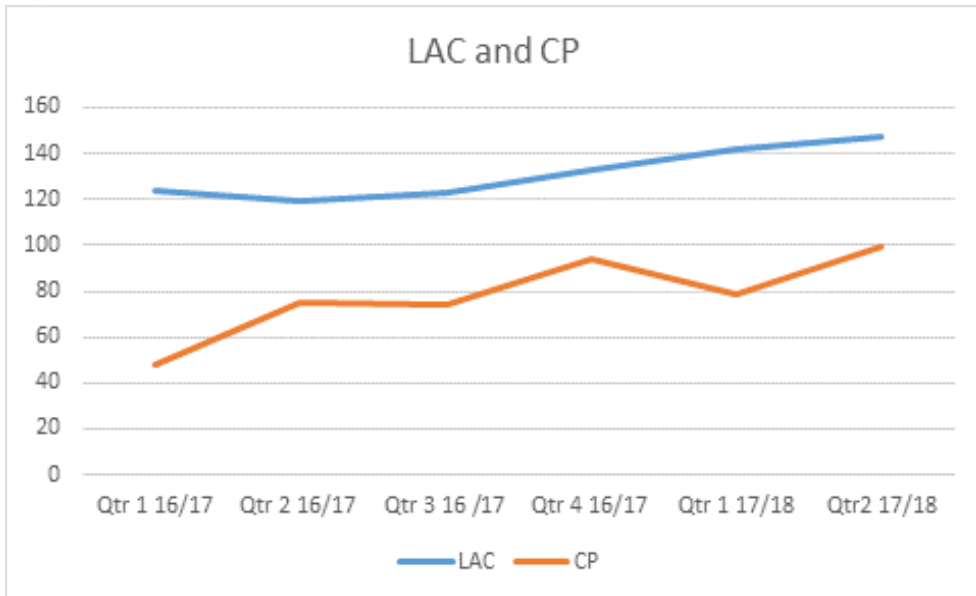
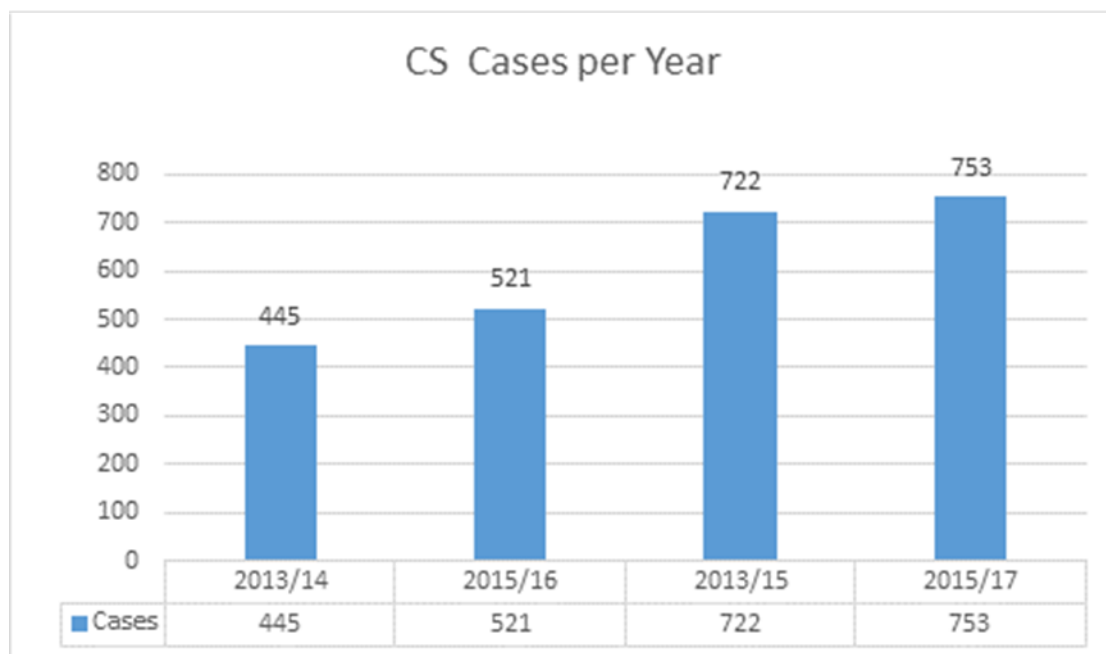


Figure 2



3.5 This has equated to a 69% increase in the number of cases held within the service since 2013/14 (figure 3).

Figure 3



- 3.6 Overall child care cases within the service have increased in terms of complexity with more children requiring to be Looked After, or who are subject to court interventions or formal child protection processes. This inevitably requires a more intensive resource response to both ensure the child's safety and well-being and to meet our statutory requirements.
- 3.7 These increases within Monmouthshire are in line with regional and national trends as illustrated through the Cafcass figures at section 11.
- 3.8 The reasons behind the increasing demands for Children Services are complex and include:
- Impact of generational abuse and neglect
 - Current social and economic environment – correlation between poverty and vulnerability
 - Historic low service provision for MCC including early help and prevention services.
 - Impact of judiciary
 - Increased awareness and knowledge of child protection issues within professional and public
 - Increased expectations of state intervention in the welfare of children.
- 3.9 These demand pressures have resulted in the need to recruit agency social workers to help meet our statutory requirements and to reduce and manage the risk of harm experienced by vulnerable children and young people. This reliance on agency workers creates additional budgetary pressure and does not accord with our stated intention to achieve a stable and permanent workforce.

Evidence Base and Case Load Data

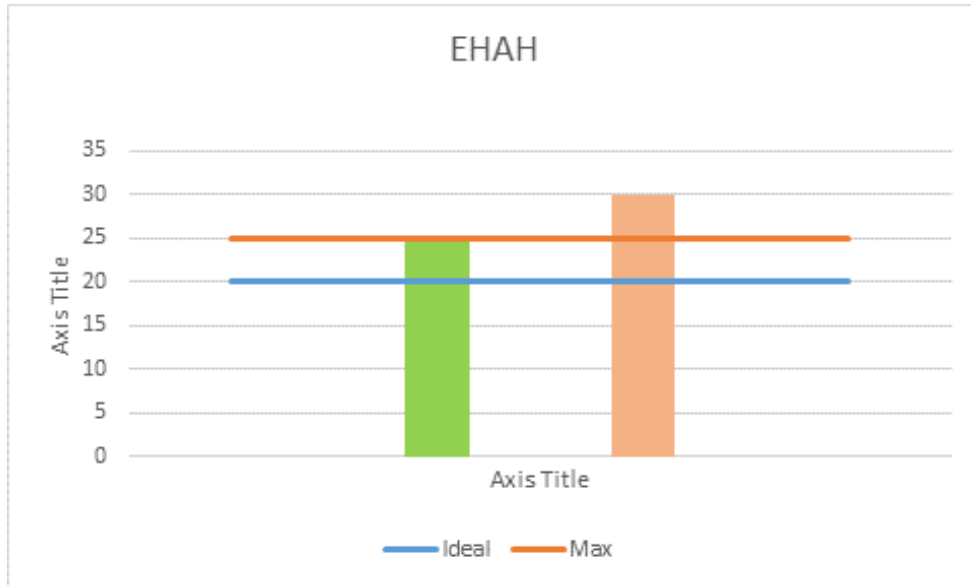
- 3.10 Over the last six months the service has implemented an evidence based approach to tracking case load activity and complexity within the service via live dashboards. This provides an overview of the pressures and capacity across the whole service and has helped us to better understand the demand versus resource equation. Together with a range of service delivery changes and practice improvements the development of team dashboards is helping us to ensure that the allocation of workforce resources is optimised and that our work with each family is monitored, reviewed and remains outcome focused.
- 3.11 Our current analysis of service demand versus resources has highlighted that two teams are under particular pressure (the Early Help, Duty & Assessment and the Family Support & Protection Team); one team has some potential to release resource to address (Placement & Support Team), and 3 teams are resourced correctly including Business Support.
- 3.12 We have begun to use this information to inform our understanding of 'safe' case load standards.
- 3.13 There is certainly no magic number for a 'safe' caseload; numbers can only ever offer a starting point within the context of individual professional development coupled with a strong culture of positive (evidence based) performance management. However, from work undertaken by the Munro review of child protection; 'A Child Centred System' (crown copyright 2011), the concept of a manageable workload for Social Workers is proposed. This major report outlines how '.....high caseloads were a significant problem... and the time available for a case has a major impact on how well the work can be done'. In relation to what she describes as 'the main obstacles to good practice' (heavy caseloads and lack of supervision), Munro states that '.....the interplay between workers and the work environment is the most productive was of improving standards and reducing errors.'
- 3.14 Manageable caseloads are essential to achieving a more stable workforce and also ensure that children receive the best intervention where and when it is needed. The recommendations in this report are based on advocating average caseloads which reflect our understanding of what is right for Monmouthshire Children's Services in respect of 'good' practice and correspondingly supports a stable, skilled and confident workforce.
- 3.15 There is clear evidence nationally that the overwhelming reason why Social Workers leave employment strongly correlates to unmanageable workloads, lack of developmental opportunities and lack of management support. The converse is equally true; where social workers have reasonable caseloads and access to high quality, regular supervision, not only do they stay with the organisation, but the work they carry out is of higher quality.
- 3.16 Based on current analysis, in the Early Help, Duty and Assessment team the average caseload required to ensure safe practice would be between twenty and twenty five cases per worker.

In figure 4, the green bar demonstrates the current average case load per worker in the including the additional (agency) worker.

The pink bar is the average case load per worker if resourced by the establishment only without the additional (agency) worker.

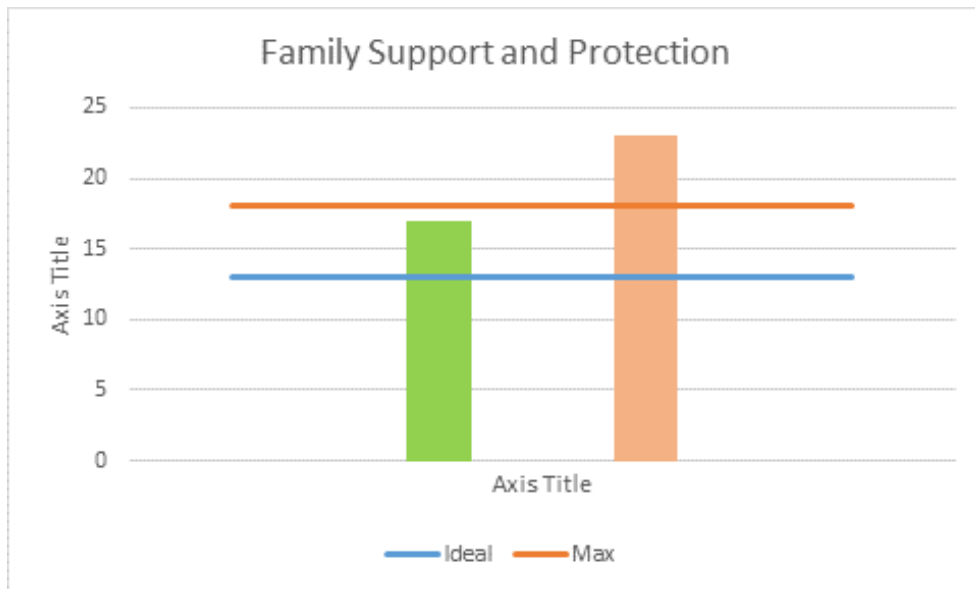
In summary the diagram below for Early Help, Duty and Assessment highlights each worker would have to be allocated an additional 5 cases (minimum) which would be deemed unsafe and unmanageable, particularly where these are newly qualified.

Figure 4



3.17 In the Family Support & Protection team Figure 5 describes the average case load numbers with and without the recommended additional posts within the establishment. As this team works with more complex cases (particularly those within court proceedings) workers require lower caseload parameters.

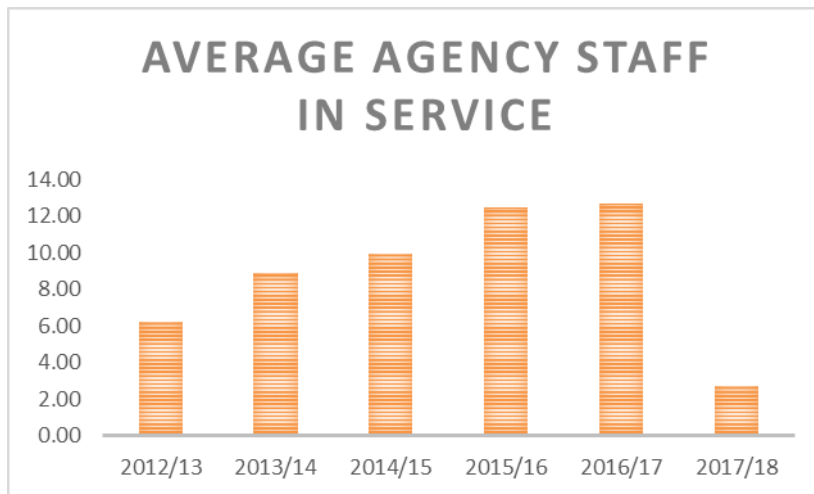
Figure 5



Case for establishment of permanent posts

- 3.18 As set out in previous reports a critical element of the improvement programme for Children’s Services has been the focus on recruiting permanent workers coupled with a strengthened practice management structure. Workforce stability and effective leadership at a practice level provides the foundations to building strong and sustainable services. A stable and consistent workforce allows for continuity of service to families, shared service knowledge and history, and ultimately better outcomes for children.
- 3.19 Over the last 18 months the service has delivered against this objective through external recruitments and through attracting agency workers to move onto the council’s ‘terms and conditions’. At the start of 16/17 there were 18 agency workers across Children’s Services. Currently there are 7, which demonstrates 38.3% reduction. Figure 6 demonstrates the average number of agency social workers working within the service (calculated on average yearly basis).

Figure 6



3.20 The current agency workers assignments within the service are:

- One covering a Social Worker post (to back-filling a temporary secondment into a Senior Practitioner role)
- One covering an establishment vacancy (currently being advertised)
- Five workers in non-establishment assignments (the subject of the current recommendations in this report).

3.21 Agency exit plans for these five non-establishment posts cannot be safely achieved within the current establishment because of service demands.

3.22 The cost differential between employing an agency social worker and a permanent worker on Monmouthshire Terms & Conditions is approximately £13,000 per annum, which over over five posts equates to £65,000.

3.23 There will be further challenge to reduce the reliance on agency staff if the recommendations in this report are agreed (as per option 2). Given, our recent track record in successfully attracting workers into Monmouthshire Children's Services we are confident that this is achievable.

Business Case for the recruitment of additional contact workers

3.24 There has been a sustained increase in the numbers of children looked after by the Local authority and currently the numbers stand at over 147. The staffing establishment for the contact team was based on the LAC population as of 2014 which was 103 children, a rise of over 40%. Consequently this rise in numbers, together with increased demand from courts, has resulted in the contact team being unable to keep meeting the increasing demand and consequently we have relied on the use of Independent providers.

- 3.25 This has resulted in an increasing number of contacts being commissioned from independent providers and currently the main independent provider is commissioned to cover contacts for 14 families, on behalf of the authority. The cost of commissioning these external providers for contact services has risen from £4,300 per month approximately during 2016-2017, to £7,100 per month for current year.
- 3.26 Whilst previously, we have tried to limit the use of independent providers to cover weekend contacts only, this is no longer the case and approximately 80% of contacts, now covered by the independent sector are inside normal working hours, which could be covered by Terms & Conditions for our in-house service, if we were sufficiently staffed.
- 3.27 By providing an additional full time support worker to the contact team on a temporary basis for 6 months, not only will we be able to cover staff sick leave more efficiently but also achieve a cost avoidance to the local authority by avoiding the additional costs of using independent providers.

Figure 7

Contact Hours	Annual Costs for External Spot purchase contract	In house Provision Cost	Diff/potential saving	Rational
37hrs temporary contract	£86,400 /2 = £43,200	£33,000/2=£16,500	£26,700.00	To directly reduce current use of external provider – cost saving

4 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

OPTIONS	BENEFITS	DIS-BENEFITS	RECOMMENDED	COST
1. No increase to the workforce establishment	Agency staff can be quickly released from	The continued use of agency resource	No	£60,000 pressure as agency

and remain with the current structure	posts should demand decrease	<p>Inability to withdraw from the agency market</p> <p>Instability in the workforce undermines service and practice improvement, and fails to promote consistency and good practice</p> <p>Instability in the workforce leads to a poorer experience for the child and family with the risks associated with 'starting again' with a vulnerable family – local knowledge of families is not retained within the service</p> <p>Instability within the workforce increases the pressure for seniors and team managers in particular having to manage a transient workforce</p>		staff would have to be retained to meet current demand
2. Increase compliment in line with demand but do not move post.	Teams would remain stable without the need for consultation regarding changes to individual posts.	<p>This will result in a disproportionate alinement of the workforce according to current pressures and demands.</p> <p>This would adversely affect the ability of Children's Services to meet the targets within the medium term financial plan.</p>	No	£244,653
3. Move post within the service in line with demand,	This will eliminate the risk to the Authority of having to use agency workers and allow for a	Within this option it has to be recognised that required savings will not be achieved within the initial stages of	YES	£196,705

<p>increase staffing compliment through permanent recruitments to assist with budget management</p>	<p>structured programme of withdrawal from the agency market.</p> <p>It will support the service to meet current demands and pressures.</p> <p>Improvements in service data can identify if additional capacity is no longer required.</p> <p>Staff turnover rates within Children's Services indicates that should the workforce need to be downsized in the future, this will be achievable through natural movement of staff.</p>	<p>the MTFP as savings will be used to fund the additional staff compliment required.</p> <p>This option reduces resource within the Placement & Support Team whilst requiring this service area to progress with its targets through the Fostering Project and Medium Term Financial Plan. This has been mitigated against within the risk assessment.</p>		
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5 EVALUATION CRITERIA

Early Help Duty & Assessment

5.1 The conversion of one Social Worker post into a Senior Practitioner post will enable the social workers to receive quality support, supervision and decision making by a Senior Practitioner. It will ensure adequate cover of the duty rota to ensure that targets regarding timescales on decision-making for multi-agency referrals and assessments, both critical to ensure safe and effective practice. It also ensures that cover can be maintained during periods of absence (annual leave, sickness, etc). Both Senior Practitioners will have the capacity to quality assure practice as well as coach, train and develop the team to raise standards and ensure consistency within decision making and thresholds and the provision of Information, Advice and Assistance. The conversion of one agency assignment to a

permanent Social Work post will allow for safe case load management and support the team's capacity to meet current service demand at the 'front-door'.

Performance Data:

- Case loads
- Number of decisions made on contacts within 24 hours
- Numbers of assessments completed within statutory time-scales
- Numbers of families achieving desired outcomes
- Staff turnover

Family Support & Protection

- 5.2 The conversion of three temporary agency worker assignments into three permanent Social Worker posts will ensure safe case load levels in accordance with the complexity of case work. The conversion of one temporary agency worker assignment into one permanent Senior Practitioner post will enable the social workers to receive quality support, supervision and decision making by a Senior Practitioner. This is particularly important given the current pressures within the judiciary where the Social Workers benefit from experienced Senior Practitioners and Team Manager.

Performance Data:

- Number of cases progressing through court within statutory timescales
- Numbers of statutory child protection visits and core groups held within timescale
- Case loads
- Staff turnover

Placement & Support Team

- 5.3 By employing an additional contact worker this should reduce the numbers of spot purchased contact worker sessions from independent providers. The Placement and Support Team will be required to continue to meet service demands and work to the target set out with the fostering project and the medium term financial plan.

Performance data:

- Numbers and costs of spot-purchased supervised contact sessions
- Number of fostering and kinship carer assessments completed to timescale
- Net number of Monmouthshire foster carers recruited and numbers of children placed
- Case loads
- Staff turnover

Business Support Team

- 5.4 The amalgamation of unutilised Business Support hours within the establishment into a permanent business support post will ensure full utilisation of the budget and will ensure the teams receive quality Business Support.

The review and revision of the Business Support Manager job description, identifying a key role of supporting the service with all aspects of staff recruitment including; attraction, advertising, safe recruitment, selection and workforce planning activities within children's services workforce will support the overall workforce plan and will assist the management team in delivering the workforce plan in the most productive manner and will ensure long term sustainability.

Performance Data:

- Numbers of staff recruited

6 REASONS:

- Ensure service demands are consistently met and that children are not exposed to further risk or harm.
- Reduce risk to the authority from external regulators, judicial review and human rights applications.
- Reinforce good practice and sustain positive progress within the service.
- Reduce the reliance on the use of agency staff and thereby further reduce costs.
- Assist with the retention of permanent staff, senior practitioners and team managers.
- Ensure there is a stable and consistent Social Work team to support children, young people and families.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 The cost of the five additional over-establishment posts is £244,653.
- 7.2 If recommendation 2.3.2 is accepted this will represent savings of £47,948 (deletion of 1 social work post from Placement and Support Team).
- 7.3 Children's Services set out in the medium term financial plan a range of saving proposals for the first year (2018-19) including i) one child returning to an 'in-county' placement from a residential provision representing savings of £148,012, ii) the transfer of 5 independent fostering placements to Monmouthshire carers representing savings of £103,205 and iii) recuperation of £106,000 saving from Continuing Care funding.
- 7.4 It was recognised within the authority's medium term financial plan that these savings would be set against the costs of the proposals and that consequently, Children's Services would not start to contribute to overall savings until year 2021/22 at the earliest.

- 7.5 Cabinet members will be aware of the deteriorating position regarding the projected overspend within Children's Services at Month 7. The pressures are directly correlated to the increased Looked After Child population particularly because of our reliance on independent / private providers of residential, fostering and support living placements. There are active work streams in place, aligned to our medium term financial planning targets, to support budget recovery. Never-the-less this will undoubtedly result in some set-back in Children's Services ability to contribute to the overall savings required by the Authority.
- 7.6 The cost of a temporary contact support worker is met via the savings on spot-purchased sessions as at Figure 7.
- 7.7 The additional cost of converting one Social Work post to a Senior Practitioner is approximately £5,000 and will be met through the reduced regional costs of the Intensive Family Support Service.

8 RISK ASSESSMENT:

Risk	Uncontrolled Risk	Control	Controlled Risk
Inability to recruitment Social Workers with the relevant skills knowledge & experience to the vacant new establishment posts	High	Plan and carry out a targeted marketing campaign in a timely manner	Medium
Increase labour turnover of Social Workers if caseloads are too high.	High	Option 3 if adopted and agreed by cabinet will mitigate this and will result in stable workforce with reasonable and manageable caseloads	Low
Increase absence levels if caseloads are too high.	High	Option 3 if adopted and agreed by cabinet will mitigate this and will result in stable workforce with reasonable and manageable caseloads	Low

Reputational damage and inability to attract applicants longer term from the external market if caseloads are too high	High	Option 3 if adopted and agreed by cabinet will mitigate this and will result in stable workforce with reasonable and manageable caseloads	Low
High caseloads could result in poor outcomes & decision making for children and young people	High	Option 3 if adopted and agreed by cabinet will mitigate this and will result in stable workforce with reasonable and manageable caseloads	Medium

8.1 The risk to the service of redundancy is low because of the overall expansion of the service to meet demands. In the event that the service is unable to fund redundancy costs we will look to call on the corporate reserve fund.

9 WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

9.1 The new service delivery model has been developed to impact positively on all children any young people and the families the service work with. This will be regularly updated and reviewed as the model is implemented. The proposals in this report looks to align people's skills and competencies to increase organisational efficiency and effectiveness in line with the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act.

10 CONSULTEES:

The service has consulted the workforce on these proposals and will continue to listen, consider and reflect the views of the workforce during the implementation phase. Consultation feedback and responses are collated at Annexe 1

- Children's Services Management Group
- Directorate Management Group
- Senior Leadership Team
- Children's Services
- Unions: Unison & GMB

- CYP Select
- CYP Management Team

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS:



Notes of Case
Applications p...

CAFCASS figures

12 AUTHOR: Jane Rodgers

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