



FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	February 2020
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Service Area	Children's Services
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	26 th February 2020

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

Peripatetic Social Workers - Children's Services

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report summarises the Business Case that led to Corporate Management Team supporting the proposal that the Council recruit 2 full time peripatetic social workers to children's services. As the proposal involves a change of structure, Council support of the proposal is required.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that

2.1 The contents of the report be noted.

2.2 The proposal that Children's Services recruit 2 full time peripatetic social workers be supported.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

3.1 Children's Services employs qualified social workers to discharge the Council's duties to safeguard children, provide care and support to children and their families and statutory services to looked after young people and care leavers.

3.2 During 2019-20, a service re-configuration has been implemented to develop and improve the Council's services to vulnerable children. Despite this, there continues to be high demand for statutory children's services and there are examples of staff working excessive hours, and reliance on agency staff to meet demand during vacancy due to recruitment, or parent leave.

- 3.3 The Council has a duty to comply with the Social Care Wales Code of Practice for Social Care Employers that is issued under Section 112 of the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. The Code of Practice includes at 2.7 the following requirement:

Have policies and systems in place for workers to raise concerns about any matter which might have a negative effect on the delivery of safe and dignified care and support and take adequate action to respond to concern.

- 3.4 There are examples of staff informing the service that there are times when they feel overwhelmed due to caseload size. A range of support has been provided to staff in response to this. The support includes this proposal.
- 3.5 It is proposed that the service employ 2 full time peripatetic social workers to address demand and avoid reliance on agency staff.

4.0 BUSINESS CASE

4.1 We plan to improve our services

The service has detailed improvement plans, which are reported to Scrutiny Committee. The delivery of those plans will improve outcomes for children and young people and develop sustainable services at a lower cost in the long term. Certain areas of progress are at risk of decline due to capacity, for example, focused work aimed at reuniting families and reducing the number of looked after young people.

4.2 Capacity to deliver change

Caseload size has improved but there continues to be a number of examples of caseloads that are higher than they should be for the effective delivery of our work.

4.3 Evidence of demand in excess of capacity

In line with the Council's Flexible Working Policy, the Council's recording process called HR21 evidences the following accumulated 'lost hours' in children's services (hours worked in excess of the 25 hour carry over per flexi period).

- 24.04.18 - 01.03.19 1937:41 lost hours
- 29.03.19 - 13.09.19 1293:55 lost hours

- 4.4 There are a number of reasons for these hours being accrued but, for the main part, it is:
- time spent discharging the Council's duties to children who are looked after and supporting young people in crisis or ;
 - discharging the Council's safeguarding duty and work by staff involved in delivering work for Court deadlines.
- 4.5 Analysis shows that the bulk of these hours are in the team that does the Court work, with some examples in the Children Looked After Team. There are real pressures in the system.

- 4.6 There is a strong correlation between manageable caseloads and better outcomes for families and improved staff recruitment and retention.
- 4.7 Capacity in structure
Capacity in service structure is sufficient for predictable demand, dropping below that at times of absence due to annual leave, and particularly vacancy due to recruitment, parent leave and sickness. A workforce strategy is in place to counteract recruitment challenges.
- 4.8 There is currently a bulge in numbers of looked after children that is creating additional demand. Work is required to support young people and families in reducing risks that will either help families to sustain changes to make it possible for children to return home safely or support good permanence planning for those young people allowing them to settle into stable new homes. For some of those cases, the Authority will be able to apply to Court to discharge the Care Order.
- 4.9 There has been reliance on agency staff and as at Month 7, the value of agency costs in Children's Services was £123,567.
- 4.10 The service proposes to recruit 2 full time social workers on fixed term contracts for 24 months to work as peripatetic social workers between the 2 teams where we have peak demand. This will support us in reducing caseload sizes, excessive staff hours and will facilitate our improvement work. The costs are below and are effective in terms of re-balancing our agency spend.
- Year 1 £93,740
Year 2 £98,480
- 4.11 If the Council supports the proposal, the staff, once employed will be directed to the work that can most benefit from time limited intense intervention in the service area with greatest demand, at the agreement of the Children's Services Management Team. The proposed structure and reporting requirement is included at Appendix 1.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 These are new costs to the service as outlined above, however the cost is lower than the impact.

6.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1

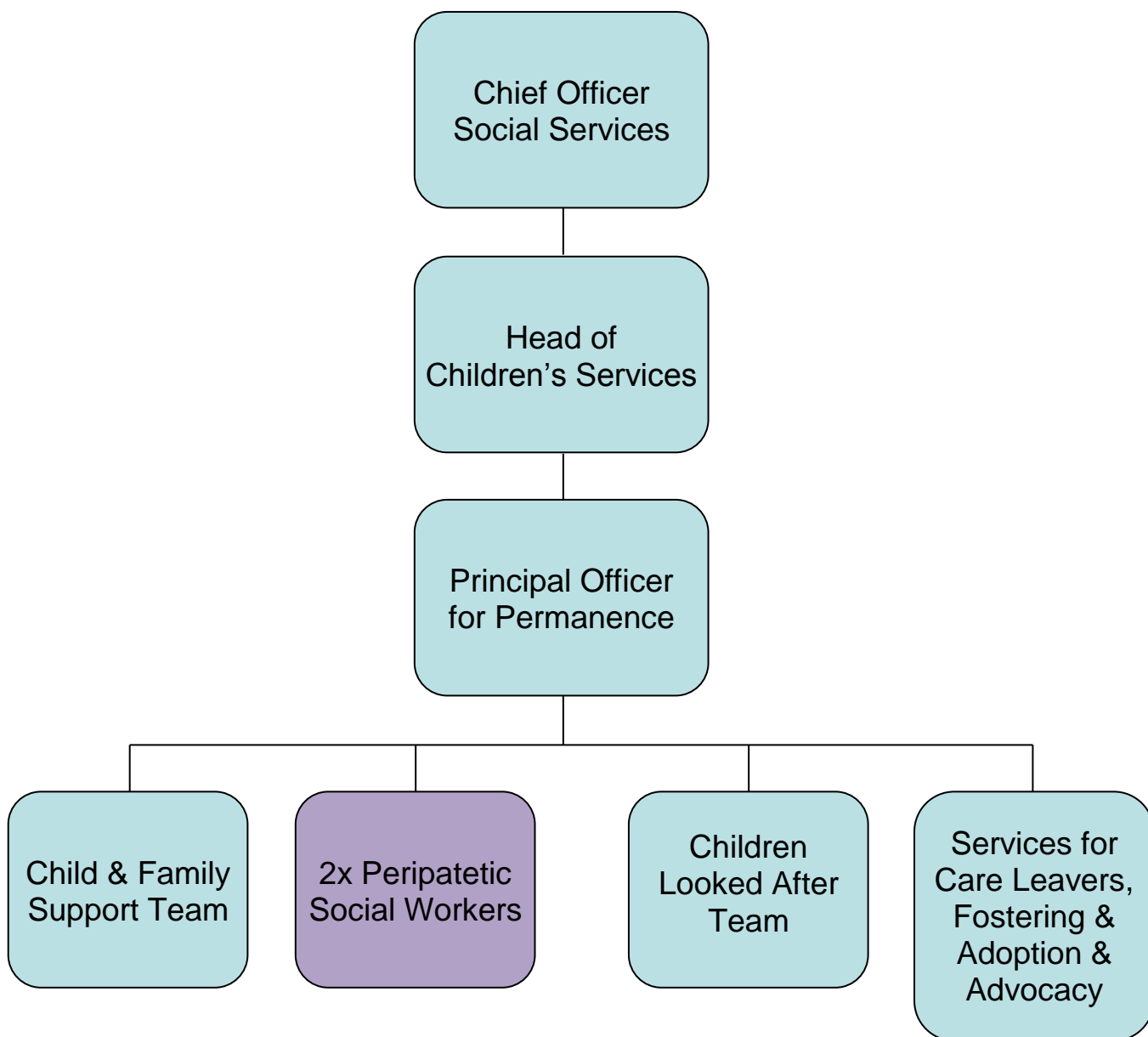
	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Not Applicable
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	3 of 4	0 of 4	1 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	5 of 5	0 of 5	0 of 5
3. Protected Characteristics <i>(including Welsh Language)</i>	10 of 10	0 of 10	0 of 10
4. Biodiversity	0 of 1	0 of 1	1 of 1
<p><u>Summary:</u></p> <p>The main positive impacts are the development and improvement of services for children and young people.</p> <p>No negative impacts have been identified.</p>			

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COUNCILLOR CHRIS DAVIES
CABINET MEMBER FOR
SOCIAL SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.



Current

Proposed