

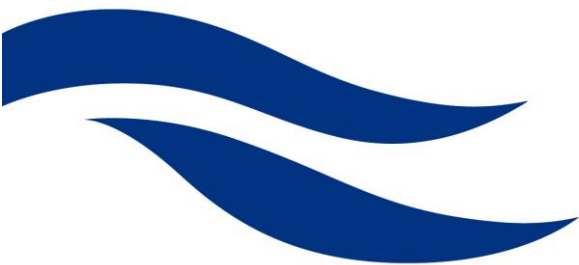
Better Childhood in Hartlepool:

Recruitment and Retention



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Recruitment and Retention

Our Framework for children and family social work sets out very clearly our commitment to delivering the best possible support to our children, young people and families.

We have high expectations for the quality of work we undertake with our children, young people and families and we know that we must invest in our workforce to ensure that we recruit and retain the best social workers.

Social work is a demanding yet rewarding job and it is important that we support our workforce to reflect, learn and flourish. This strategy sets out our approach to recruitment and retention.

Context

Our most recent recruitment activity shows that the recruitment of newly qualified social workers has been relatively easy; social workers are keen to work in Hartlepool and recruitment rounds yield many applicants for the available posts. However the recruitment of experienced social workers is proving significantly more challenging.

Over the last few years we have struggled to recruit experienced staff. The most recent adverts for social workers have only resulted in the recruitment of newly qualified social workers. This is placing significant pressure on the teams. A review of this has resulted in us reviewing the progression for our social workers to ensure that we can retain our experienced workers. We have also reviewed our offer to ensure that we are publicising what we offer when recruiting. Hartlepool has an excellent offer for workers and it is important that prospective workers are aware of what they can expect if they work for Hartlepool.

Supporting Student Social Workers

We believe that it is important to support the development of student social workers and we do this through a number of different pathways:

- Frontline programme where students are based full time within the authority with a Consultant Social Worker overseeing their work;
- Local University student placements – we have an excellent relationship with Teesside University and support the course with members of the management team attending sessions as appropriate as well as providing statutory social work placements;

- Open University student placements.

Recruitment

The North East has a history of good working relationships between the local authorities and Hartlepool is part of regional work to raise the profile of the region. Members of the management team have attended job fairs to highlight the work in the region and Hartlepool.

A film has been produced by our social workers to explain the offer available for social workers working for Hartlepool. This is available on our council website and on the Jobs NorthEast website.

We have developed our Hartlepool framework for children and family social work which makes it clear to prospective social workers what our values are and what we offer.

Induction

There is a corporate induction programme that social workers are required to attend. Induction for social workers is led by the team managers and workers spend time with other teams across the authority and shadow more experienced workers. An induction process is currently being developed to formalise across all teams' which includes our practice manual, framework for children and family social work and the workforce development plan.

Workforce Development and Progression

ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) is a 12 month programme for assessing newly qualified social workers (NQSWs). It supports the NQSW during their first year in employment, helping them to develop their skills, knowledge and professional confidence. This includes all ASYEs having a mentor to support them in addition to their manager. We are committed to protecting caseloads for our ASYEs.

Progression for social workers – There are progression opportunities for social workers from ASYE through to Band 12 (experienced social workers). In addition we have recently introduced the development role of Assistant Team Manager to ensure that there is progression from experienced social workers to team manager. In addition we have introduced a consultant social work role to support Frontline to offer another progression opportunity for aspiring team managers.

We believe that the development of our workforce is of paramount importance. We want to ensure that our workforce is equipped to work with our families to support an improvement in children's outcomes. We feel it is important to support our workers on

their own learning journey. Managers discuss development needs in supervision and this is also discussed in appraisal.

There is a comprehensive workforce programme in place that consists of:

- Training sessions delivered by external specialists focused on priorities;
- Training sessions delivered by internal staff;
- Staff briefings;
- Team sessions to look at areas of development – to ensure that action learning is taking place;
- Task and finish groups to look at specific areas of interest such as planning which has been identified as an area of improvement through audits.

In addition there is an HSCB (Hartlepool Safeguarding Children's Board) training programme focussing on the boards priorities which is open to all social workers and family workers.

The priority for the next few years is the implementation of Signs of Safety. A significant investment has been made to train all senior managers, team managers and social workers over the last year. All social workers are being supported to undertake 5 days intensive week long training in SoS approaches. In order to support implementation, we also commission a SoS consultant to work with us on embedding the approach in casework with children and families.

Hartlepool Borough Council participates in Firstline management development and has team managers are currently on the Firstline scheme to develop their skills and ensure they feel equipped to support their teams.

As stated on our values we firmly believe that children and families should have consistency of worker and in order to achieve this aim we feel it is vital that we reward are permanent members of staff for their loyalty. We have therefore fully supported the regional agency worker framework which sets regional rates for agency social workers. We have also committed to recruiting a number of social workers over establishment to ensure that we do not need to rely on agency workers and there is sufficient capacity within the organisation to manage the presenting level of demand for support and services.

Furthermore in recognition of the challenging practice that social workers undertake and the inducement opportunities offered elsewhere to seek to recruit experienced staff, we are using the single status pay agreement to make sure that workers are rewarded financially for their loyalty to their role and Hartlepool as appropriate.

Staff Support and Wellbeing

We feel that staff support is critical to the wellbeing and performance of our workforce and take this very seriously. Our Hartlepool Framework has been developed which sets out how we support our workforce which includes:

- How social workers are supported to work within our framework;
- How have we structured our service;
- Career development.

We believe that supervision is critical in ensuring that workers are supported, have an appropriate level of management oversight of their practice, have the opportunity to reflect on their practice and building their own resilience. We promote reflective supervision to ensure that workers also have the opportunity to discuss their own personal wellbeing. We have also recently started to introduce group supervision through Signs of Safety which we will continue to develop.

We feel that it is important that senior managers are visible and the Director, Assistant Directors and Heads of Service are fully involved with staff briefings, training and all operate an open door policy.

We recognise that children's social work can be very rewarding however we know that it can be demanding and challenging and we feel it is important to focus on our staff emotional wellbeing.

We have recently introduced a pilot to focus on workers wellbeing through:

- Offering flexible working to support Home Life Balance;
- Away days focusing on mental health awareness; sleep, relaxation and mindfulness – identifying causes of sleep deprivation and offering solutions to assist restful sleep and recharging of the body and brain; nutrition with a focus on eating/hydrating to fuel the body and brain. Identification of food groups which are slow release energy foods to improve alertness and to prevent fatigue;
- Questionnaire completed which also identified key areas to focus on during the working day i.e. all staff stated that between 2pm – 5pm their energy levels dropped significantly which affected concentration and productivity;
- Realistic and achievable activities and exercise – Sports and Recreation team are tailoring activities to individual teams and the wider service. Programme's to be developed early December;
- Inspirational talk focusing on the importance of supporting each other, team resilience and identifying stressful situations earlier and dealing with them before it escalates;
- A room has been remodelled to allow for time out at breakfast/lunch/breaks which ensures that workers can get a break from their desks. Meetings do not take place over the lunch period unless an emergency.

This pilot has been incredibly well received by workers and this will be rolled out across all teams from January 2018.

We issued this document in January 2018. We will check the information is up to date in January 2021.

