

**Cabinet  
Tuesday, 17 October 2023**

**ADDENDA**

**19. For information only: Cabinet Responses to Scrutiny Papers  
(Pages 1 - 8)**

Children and Adults Workforce Retention and Key Worker Housing

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## Annex - Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

*Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested<sup>1</sup> and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.*

*This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.*

### **Issue: Children and Adult's Social Care Workforce**

**Lead Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care; Cllr John Howson, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services**

**Date response requested:<sup>2</sup> 18 April 2023**

#### **Response to report**

1. This report provides information on progress against recommendations made following the "Children and Adults' Social Care Workforce" item at People Overview Committee on 10 November 2022.
2. It is submitted to Cabinet for information as Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

#### **Executive Summary**

3. Significant work is taking place to address workforce issues for internal and external staff. This activity addresses retention attraction, recruitment, training and wellbeing initiatives, aligning to other applicable Council strategies ensuring a co-ordinated approach.

<sup>1</sup> Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

<sup>2</sup> Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received<sup>9</sup>

## Annex - Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

4. Discussion with the District and City Councils, as planning authorities, continues. The role of the Council is limited to consultation on key worker housing priority and allocation within Local Plans and the sharing of ideas.

*Recommendation 1 – It is recommended to continue with the inclusion of staff retention within the Oxfordshire County Council Workforce Strategy; not to develop as a standalone strategy.*

*Recommendation 2 – It is recommended to continue partnership working with District & City Councils to influence where practicable, development of key worker housing and use of S106 monies.*

### Background

5. On the 10 November 2022 the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee (POSC) received a briefing providing an overview of the children and adults social care workforce (both internal and external), recruitment and retention challenges and opportunities.
6. Following this meeting POSC submitted two recommendations to Cabinet on 18 April 2023. The recommendations are:
  - To develop and introduce a Council wide staff retention strategy.
  - To have a partnership approach to key worker housing with the District Councils, including exploring the potential for Section 106 funding.
7. This report is the response to the above mentioned recommendations and provides an update on progress made in relation to the recommendations, following approval this paper will subsequently be presented at Cabinet and POSC.

### Key Issues

**Recommendation 1: To develop and introduce a Council wide staff retention strategy**

## Annex - Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

8. The Council does not have a council wide retention strategy; however, a draft corporate workforce strategy that is holistic and incorporates retention alongside recruitment and development of the workforce, has been developed and due for approval by the new HR Director once they join the Council in September 2023.
9. The strategy has been developed building on the principles of the council's values and behaviours and alignment with the Delivering the Future Together (DTFT) programme and action plan.
10. It is felt that considering the distinct, but connected, issues of staff recruitment, retention, and development together rather than separately, is the best method for delivering joined up approaches across the council.
11. There is, however, a wide range of ongoing recruitment and retention activity being carried out jointly across Children's and Adults services.

### Return to Social Work Scheme

12. This scheme encourages ex-social workers and occupational therapists to restore their qualifications and re-join children's or adults services.

### Social Care Academy

13. The Social Care Academy provides support and practice development to newly qualified staff. Activity is taking place to improve and develop the Social Care Academy to provide a consistent and improved approach to newly qualified social workers and occupational therapists, and to support their further development with the aim of improving staff retention.

### Review of Agency Staff

14. There is an ongoing review of the use of agency staff across all services. This focuses both on the reduction in the use of agency workers and recruitment activity to appoint existing agency workers to the permanent workforce. Highlights include
  - Reduction of use of agency staff in our Family Safeguarding Plus service from 67% to 23% between June 2022 and June 2023.
  - Conversion of 8 social workers from agency employment to OCC contracts.

## Annex - Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

### Improved online recruitment sites

15. Improvements have been made to the [recruitment site](#)<sup>3</sup> for children's and adults services and a targeted recruitment and marketing campaign for vacancies in new children's homes has been initiated. The campaign and recruitment site will be further developed to promote hard to fill roles across CEF and Adults over the course of 2023-24.

### Response to the Staff Engagement Survey

16. Clear actions from the recent staff engagement survey have been developed and incorporated into the People's Plan and Wellbeing Action Plan. These actions focus on career progression pathways, apprenticeship routes, succession planning, 'Grow Your Own' initiatives as well as focused actions on staff wellbeing.

### Benchmarking with other LAs

17. We have instigated a benchmarking exercise with 19 Local Authorities across the South East to look at jobs in Education departments that are particularly difficult in terms of recruitment and retention, roles such as Educational Psychologists and SEN Officers.

### Welcome and Loyalty Payments

18. The previous Golden Hello payments for Children's social workers have been reviewed and are now called 'Welcome and Loyalty' payments with the lumpsum amount of £3500 paid to new social workers joining OCC over a period of 2.5 years.

### Partnering to support the retention of external workforce

19. Working with partners across the county the Council have in place a broad programme of activity to support the recruitment and retention of staff across our external workforce (registered care providers, personal assistants, volunteers etc).

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<sup>3</sup> <https://jobs.oxfordshire.gov.uk/adult-social-care>

## Annex - Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

20. A refreshed strategy and delivery plan is currently out for consultation and due to be finalised by the end of 2023. The delivery plan will incorporate a mix of new and existing interventions, such as:
- Proud to Care Recruitment Portal – A dedicated recruitment portal for Oxfordshire which provides focused recruitment support with a dedicated job broker to drive up numbers of local applicants and quality of candidate match
  - Crisis Grants administered by Care Workers' Charity – Grants in the region of £500 can be provided to help with cost-of-living pressures that have put care workers into financial hardship
  - Workforce Development Fund – This fund provides leadership training for career development
  - [Values-based Approaches](#)<sup>4</sup> – Training and a webinar series to promote value-based recruitment and management practices which is shown to increase staff retention rates
21. The draft strategy and delivery plan consultation is hosted on 'Let's Talk' Oxfordshire and engagement has been positive so far, supported by targeted e-comms.
22. A care provider Workforce Round Table also took place on the 15 September to consult directly on the proposals. This is the latest in a well-established series of conversations which enable providers and other key partners to come together to provide feedback on current activities in the workforce programme and stimulate open dialogue on new initiatives, including those focused on staff retention.

### The Oxfordshire Way & Delivering the Future Together

23. All activities are aligned to the Oxfordshire Way strategic approach, ensuring we have a highly skilled and valued work force that supports people to make their own decisions about their care options, supporting people to live well and independently closer to home.
24. The internal workforce strategies are aligned to the 'Delivering the Future Together: Our Values' strategy which recognises the role of our workforce in enhancing the lives of people living in Oxfordshire and the commitment to putting our people first to become an employer of choice.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/news-and-events/blogs/what-is-values-based-recruitment>

## Annex - Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

### Recommendation 2: To have a partnership approach to key worker housing with the District Councils, including exploring the potential for Section 106

25. As a two-tier local authority, the County does not have responsibility for housing. Housing provision falls to the District and City Councils as the relevant planning authorities
26. We continue to engage with our District and City Council partners to understand and influence their approaches to the delivery of Key Worker Housing across the County. Partners include Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council's
27. Specific information on Key Worker Housing can be found on the Council's website, via the [Finding a Home in Oxfordshire<sup>5</sup>](#) guide, produced in partnership with the afore mentioned Council's. Currently Key Worker housing can be accessed through a number of social housing landlords although the majority currently prioritise NHS roles.
28. The Finding a Home in Oxfordshire guide also provides information on the Age UK Oxfordshire's Homeshare service which matches older people who are looking for help or companionship at home, with another person who can lend a hand, and needs affordable accommodation.
29. Currently South Oxfordshire DC and the Vale of The White Horse DC do not have a formal policy on key worker housing although intentions are signalled in their Housing Delivery Strategy.
30. Cherwell District Council provides for permanent key worker roles within Oxfordshire to be placed within Band 2 on their housing register to secure social housing (significant priority). Cherwell District Council also has a bond scheme to help assist key workers into private rented accommodation.
31. The City Council does not offer housing specifically for key workers, signposting to social landlords such as A2Dominion
32. Engagement with the District and City Councils is primarily undertaken through Andrew Chequers, Deputy Director of Housing and Social Care Commissioning, as principal lead.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/adult-social-and-health-care/FindAHomeInOxfordshire.pdf>



## Annex - Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

- 33. There is recognition that a joined-up approach, tailored to local need, is required. We are engaged in ongoing discussions with our partners to understand the current approach and predicted need, to identify and maximise opportunities.
- 34. The dialogue explores opportunities for consultation to inform Local Plan development and Affordable Housing Allocations together with the sharing of ideas, recognising that District and City Councils are the relevant planning authority responsible for housing.
- 35. Officers are working closely together across Adults, Housing and Commissioning to align efforts and proactively share learning about initiatives from elsewhere in the country including, for example, the Mayor for London's Key Worker strategy.
- 36. Future engagement plans include attendance at relevant events including networking forums and webinars where appropriate
- 37. All activities described above are managed in-line with existing service budgets. No exceptions are anticipated for reporting purposes.

Report by Karen Fuller, Interim Corporate Director of Adults and Housing; Anne Coyle, Interim Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer Rose Rolle-Rowan, Lead Commissioner Strategy and Innovation, 07554 103354

**Response to recommendations:**

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
To develop and introduce a Council wide staff retention strategy.	Partially accepted	It is recommended to continue with the inclusion of staff retention within the Oxfordshire County Council Workforce Strategy; not to develop as a standalone strategy.

## Annex - Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

To have a partnership approach to key worker housing with the District Councils, including exploring the potential for Section 106 funding.	Accepted	It is recommended to continue partnership working with District & City Councils to influence development of key worker housing and use of S106 monies
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