

Delegated Officer Report

Decision Maker:	Gerard Jones, Managing Director Children and Young People
Date of Decision:	25 May 2021
Subject:	Recruitment of Early Help family workers to backfill apprenticeships and maternity leave
Report Author:	Bruce Penhale, Assistant Director Early Help
Ward (s):	N/A

Reason for the decision:

The report seeks approval to appoint additional Senior Family Workers (G6) and Family Workers (G5) in the Family Connect service on fixed term contracts to provide cover for staff who are away from the service undertaking social work apprenticeships (3 FTE – 2 FTE to April 2023 and 1 FTE to April 2022) or on maternity leave (1.5 FTE for 12 months). These posts comprise more than 10% of the family workers in the service.

The need to backfill for these posts results from the current levels of demand within the service, which are impacting upon the quality of support provided to children and families. The high caseloads in district targeted early help teams (up to 30 children per FTE) means that staff cannot provide the necessary intensity of intervention to meet families' needs and reduce the likelihood of problems escalating or recurring. It is also impacting upon staff wellbeing.

Staffing levels without providing these backfill arrangements are also unsustainable in the Family Centres, impacting the ability to deliver court mandated family contact for children, and to deliver work on parenting which will help enable children to return to their families. Lack of capacity in these centres also creates additional pressures on social work teams.

Early Help teams have recently moved to a new district operating model which will support development of a multi-agency early help offer, which will improve delivery of earliest possible help to children and families. Over time, this new model is planned to reduce the numbers whose needs

escalate to require support from children’s social care or targeted early help. However, the new model will not be successful unless teams have the capacity at this early stage to deliver sufficient intensity of targeted early help support to families, and to develop the district partnership offer.

Summary:

The report seeks approval to appoint additional Senior Family Workers (G6) and Family Workers (G5) in the Family Connect service on fixed term contracts to provide cover for staff who are away from the service undertaking social work apprenticeships or on maternity leave as follows:

Backfill for staff on social work apprenticeships

- 1 FTE Senior Family Worker (G6) to April 2023;
- 1 FTE Family Worker (G5) to April 2023;
- 1 FTE Family Worker (G5) to April 2022.

Backfill for maternity leave

- 0.5 FTE Senior Family Worker (G6) for 12 months from July 2021;
- 1 FTE Family Worker (G5) for 12 months from August 2021

Because these costs relate to development of the Early Help offer, they can be funded through the Reform Investment Fund. This is Supporting Families (formerly known as Troubled Families) funding from government, which is held in a ring-fenced reserve for supporting this area of activity.

What are the alternative option(s) to be considered? Please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s):

Option A Do not create this additional temporary capacity

Option B create the additional temporary capacity by backfilling these posts

Option B is recommended. Without backfilling for workers who are absent from the service, the impact on caseloads in teams will prevent children and families receiving the necessary quality of support and impact staff wellbeing. It would also pose a risk to the aim of the district operating model for early help to reduce the numbers of children and families whose needs escalate to a point that they require a referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.

Consultation: including any conflict of interest declared by relevant Cabinet Member consulted.

There has been consultation with managers within Early Help and Children’s Social Care

Recommendation(s):

Option B Create the additional capacity

Implications:

What are the **financial** implications?

This report is seeking to put in place temporary appointments by way of fixed term contracts to backfill for staff on social work apprenticeships and maternity leave.

It is anticipated that the social work apprenticeships backfill appointments will be made on approval of this report (estimated 01 June 2021). Suitable candidates have already been identified.

The overall financial implications associated with preferred Option **B** to create additional temporary capacity within the Service are summarised per the table below:

Description	Grade	FTE	21/22 £	22/23 £	Total £
Snr Family Worker	GRD 6	1.00	32,950	40,730	73,680
Family Worker	GRD 5	1.00	29,425	36,040	65,465
Family Worker	GRD 5	1.00	29,425	-	29,425
Snr Family Worker	GRD 6	0.50	14,370	4,790	19,160
Family Worker	GRD 5	1.00	23,540	11,770	35,310
Total			129,710	93,330	223,040

The total across both financial years including on costs is **£223,040**.

The posts within this report are included within the recent establishment report in children's social care.

This proposal can be wholly funded through the Reform Investment Fund.

This is Supporting Families (formerly known as Troubled Families) funding from government, which is held in an earmarked reserve for supporting this area of activity.

Sufficient balances are available to fund this request and will not result in any additional revenue costs for the council.

Vicki Hayes/Sadrul Alam

What are the **legal** implications?

n/a

What are the **procurement** implications?

n/a

What are the **Human Resources** implications?

The strategic aim of this is to create a comprehensive succession plan to enable Oldham to 'grow their own' via the Apprenticeship route and to also support a

'great place to work' culture and to mitigate people leaving the organisation for promotion opportunities elsewhere.

It is important that there is some backfill capacity to ensure service continuity and to allow people to put themselves forward for the opportunities outlined in this paper. This would have to be on a rolling permanent basis to allow the free flow of succession through the system.

In the last couple of weeks the service have completed external recruitment for vacant posts of Senior Family Workers and Family Workers in the service. We had a very good response, and have more appointable candidate than roles. Subject to approval of this report and associated Rec 1 this will be the first part of the actions to fill the roles by using this cohort of people.

Claire Ingle 20/5/21

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment attached or not required because (please give reason)

The proposals will not have an adverse impact on any section of the population, and will help achieve positive outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

What are the **property** implications

n/a

Risks:

There are no corporate level risks associated with this post.

Co-operative agenda

Early help services provide support to families which builds their capacity to be in control of their own lives.

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? n/a

Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? Yes

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? No



Reason(s) for exemption from publication:

List of Background Papers under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

There are no background papers to this report

Report Author Sign-off:	
Bruce Penhale, Assistant Director Early Help	

Date:	

In consultation with Managing Director of Children & Young People			
Signed		Date:	25 May 2021
In consultation with the Director of Human Resources, (or representative)			
Signed		Date:	1 June 2021