

Area of service being improved: Recruitment, Retention and Use of Agency Staff

RBA Implementation Update number 3: Evaluation (March 2015)

1. This is why the improvement initiative was started (The story)

During the period leading up to December 2014, the rate of social worker and social work manager turnover in Cardiff Children's Services was too high.

High numbers of vacancies together with long recruitment periods had led to the use of agency staff to fill gaps. The cost of paying agency workers was far too expensive. Some managers earned excessive sums.

Leadership and managerial instability had impacted negatively on Cardiff's reputation.

An insufficiently robust approach had been taken in relation to poor performance and this was linked to underutilising PPDR processes.

It was believed that the recruitment process was bureaucratic, but there were indicators that the development of DigiGov would go some way to resolving those difficulties.

2. These are the people who were involved in making improvements (Participants):

- Children's Services Management Team. • The Communication Team.
- Children's Services Training Team. • HR People Services Team.

3. This is the timeline and the emerging context:

The Recruitment and Retention initiative started in early December 2013, and was implemented during 2014. Formal evaluation started during March 2015 and the initial findings are presented in the following sections of this report.

Significant events during the time of implementation were:

- By June 2014 Children's Services had implemented a realigned model of case work. This separated teams of social workers who work with 'children in need' (not looked after) from those who work with 'looked after' children. This was a long anticipated development. Finalising it had a significant impact on staff confidence in the Children's Services Management Team, and consequently on morale.
- Starting at the end of July 2014, an external social work agency was commissioned to provide a team to case manage up to 250 cases for a time limited period. This remedial action was intended to rapidly reduce the social worker case-loads and intended to create long term reductions by increasing the rate of case closure. The agency team included qualified social workers, family support workers and managers. The team is due to depart during April 2015.

4. These are the key things (from the action plan) that we did to improve the situation:

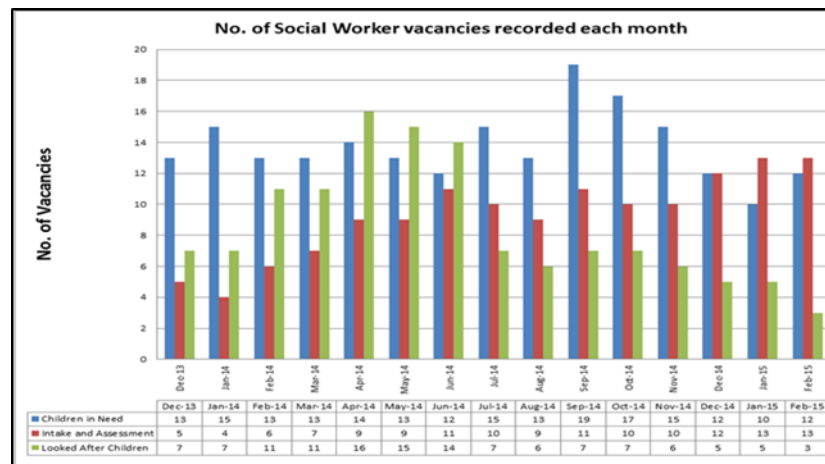
- A process was established to recruit to every post that was filled by an agency worker.
- A brand was created and promotional material placed in 6 publications of the Big Issue, 2 Primary Times, the Student Pocket Guide, Guardian website (100,021 views), Recruit3 and WCVA websites, Capital Times (to over 145,000 households), Facebook (5,628 clicks, 1,528,579 views), Spotify (400 spots), on Billboards, Buses, and were played on the radio (across 200 spots) and shown in cinemas (1,628 showings to 132,769 people in 38 cinemas). The campaign video received in excess of 650 views on YouTube, and 28,000 tweets targeted social work graduates, social care lecturers, social work publications, community care websites, social work action network, UCLan school of social work and safeguarding children contacts on Twitter. Campaign posters were mailed to Hubs, leisure centres, libraries, community and youth centres, schools, doctors surgeries, play centres and sixth form students. There was a centre pull out in the June edition of Capital Time, with an additional editorial feature in the September issue reminding people about the vacancies.
- OMs improved direct engagement with frontline staff and with potential social work applicants.
- Links with universities were strengthened. Hosted students were encouraged to apply for permanent positions post qualification.
- The secondment to social work courses strategy was reviewed.
- Recruitment events were held during Social Care Week.
- Managers monitored staff satisfaction during supervision sessions. OMs led by example and had direct conversations with staff to build long term confidence.
- The February 2014 directorate newsletter reinforced attendance and wellbeing messages.
- Use of the Attendance and Wellbeing Policy became an agenda item in Supervision between Operational Managers and Team Managers.
- Training Officers conducted exit interviews.
- Workforce intelligence was improved.

These are the things that were tried but proved challenging:

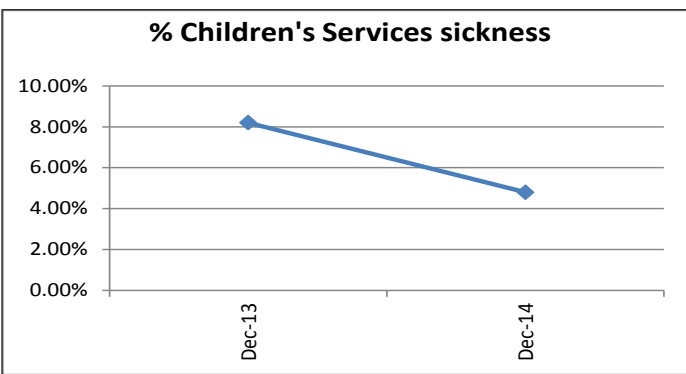
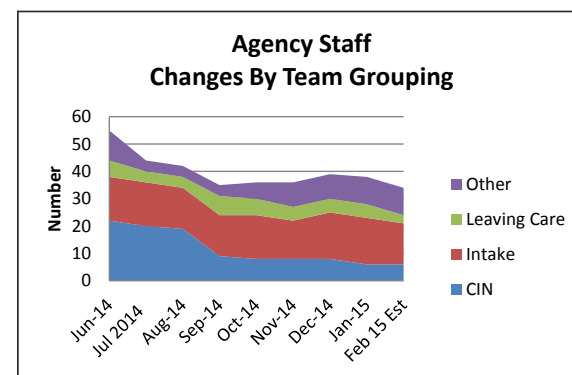
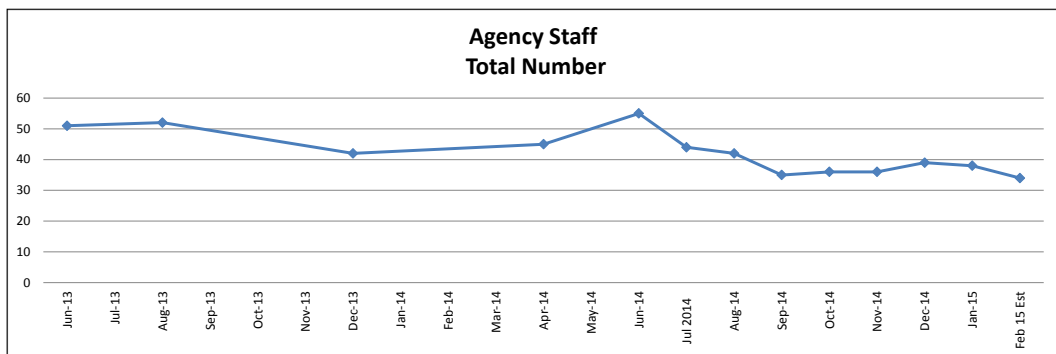
- Progress was slow in being able to create a 'Care Ambassador scheme'. The scheme was intended to be rolled out to events, job fairs, Job Centre Plus, Careers Wales, university open days and 14-19 pathway links with schools.
- Insufficient numbers of Principal Social workers limited the numbers of Mentors available, so Children's Services paid for external mentors to support newly qualified social workers.
- It was difficult to track if all managers had completed the Attendance and Wellbeing training provided by an external training organisation.
- A proposal for a remuneration package which was to include incentives broader than salary was not progressed.

5. This is what the numbers show us about the effect of what we have been doing (Quantitative Performance):

Please note: Service realignment occurred by June 2014. The direct impact of this was to create additional social worker posts which added to the overall vacancy numbers in the short term.



- At the peak of the recruitment drive OMs were interviewing 9 applicants per week.

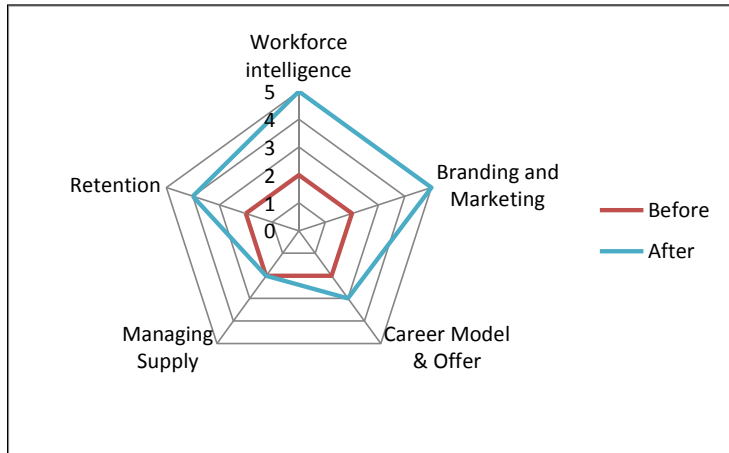


- Campaign information on the Council webpage received 1,170 views.
- There was a disproportionately high number of agency managers across the service prior to the initiative. The current position is that of the 17 Team Managers in Case Management Services, 16 are now permanent and 1 is in the process of being appointed as permanent.
- Expenditure on agency staff improved during the year, due to a significant reduction in the number of agency social workers employed within the CIN Team, although this was slightly offset by the number of agency staff in Intake and Assessment.
- The cost of the external managed social work service in 2014/15 was £850,000. The cost was partially offset by a contribution from corporate contingency (£600,000), which effectively covers the initial six month cost of the nine month contract.

6. These are the opinions we have collected (Qualitative Performance / Intelligence)

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1= (negative) really badly / failing / no difference at all, 5= (positive) really well / complete success / significant difference) Operational Managers rated their perceptions of progress as follows:

This is **“how well” we did the things we decided to do (Putting our strategy into practice):**



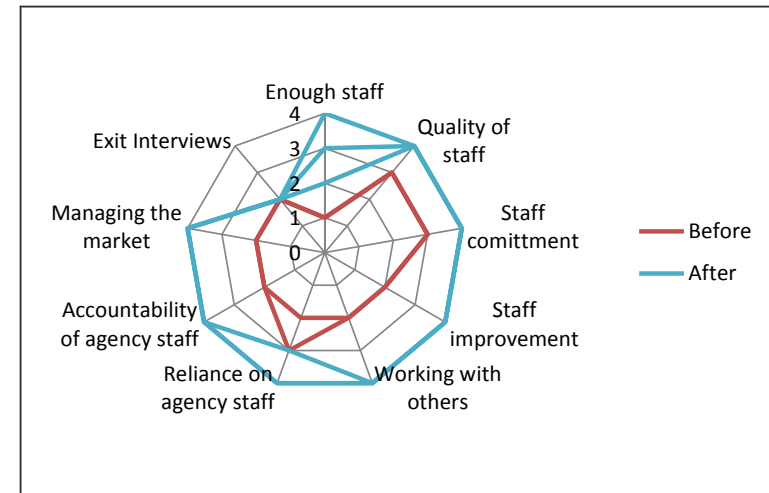
Comments:

- Some of the improvement made to the career offer was achieved through management action and realignment of the service.
- Strengthening links between the Training Section and Case Management managers would help manage supply.

This is **“how well” we achieved the outputs we decided we needed (Performance against self-imposed standards):**

Our standards

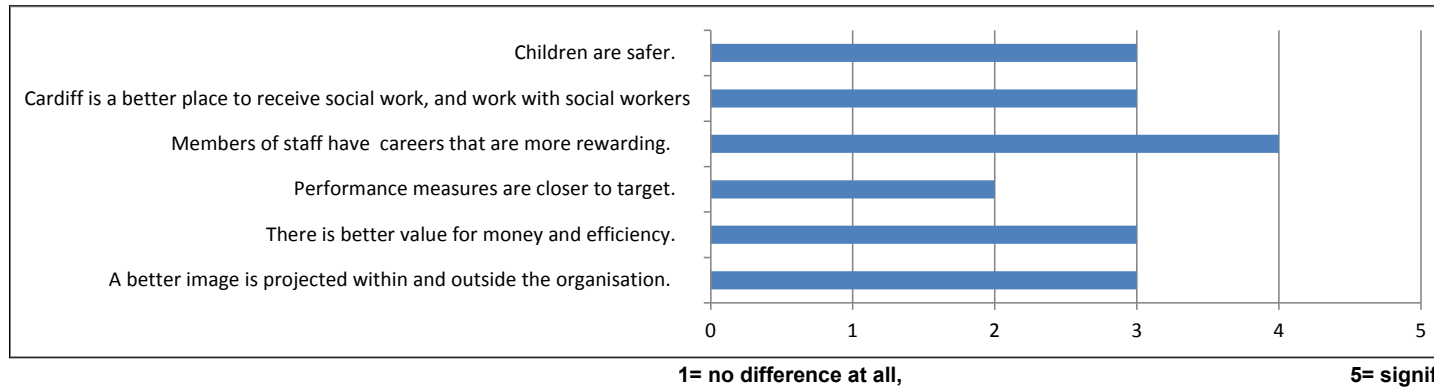
- There are enough staff to do the job.
- Vacant posts are filled promptly.
- Members of staff are competent, professional, demonstrate process compliance, and provide good quality services.
- Good members of staff are committed to staying for a long time, and have opportunities to progress their careers.
- Poor members of staff improve.
- Members of staff work well with each other and with others.
- Reliance on agency staff is reduced to an absolute minimum.
- Agency staff share the same degree of accountability as permanent staff.
- Agency markets are effectively managed by the commissioner.
- Exit interviews are held in a timely fashion and the organisation learns from the aggregated intelligence.



Comments:

- Continued progress in engaging partner agencies will further ease staffing pressures.
- Reduction in the use of agency staff has increased opportunities for progression within the directorate.
- Some agency staff are covering vacancies created by staff promotions.
- Realignment of the service into specialisms offers potentially more rewarding careers.
- Some agency staff from the Managed Team have applied for and obtained permanent positions with Cardiff.
- Managers are now more discerning in their choice of agency staff.
- Agency prices were increasing. This has now stabilised.
- The quality of the information from exit interviews can be further improved.

This is the “difference made” by the Recruitment and Retention initiative:



Comments:

- *Progress in the right direction. There are greater numbers of permanent and qualified staff.*
- *Teams are now specialised for Looked After and Children in Need. Consistency in practice has improved.*
- *Numbers of agency staff have been reduced.*

9. This is the intelligence we have about the future trend (the curve):

- The rate of short term sickness has improved and is no longer considered to be significantly related to dissatisfaction among the workforce. 😊
- There have been improvements in the rates of long term sickness. 😊 Previously we thought that wouldn't change.
- Maternity leave is high and is still not likely to change, as the workforce is predominantly female. 😊
- Measures to improve morale are thought to be working. 😊
- The new consistency resulting from having a permanently appointed Director and no agency / consultant managers in case management teams is thought to be having a stabilising effect. 😊

10. This is our conclusion about the effectiveness of the Recruitment and Retention initiative:

- The marketing campaign was extremely successful in promoting the work of social workers in the City of Cardiff to the interested public. However it has been difficult to obtain evidence showing a direct link between calls generated by the campaign and appointments made.
- Direct work by Operational Managers on improving culture and their drive to interview large numbers of candidates to replace agency staff with permanent appointments is thought to have had made the most significant contribution on the improvement made.

12. Next steps:

- A business case for a social worker trainee scheme.
- Case Management Operational Managers (OMs) could be rolled out as ambassadors at events, in a campaign to recruit 2015 social work graduates.
- OMs to review contents of recruitment packs.
- A lean review of the corporate recruitment process is recommended.
- Roll out work arising from the Social Worker Skill Audit.