

## Case study

### Reference number

## Subject details (fields in red to be completed by DfE staff)

<b>Teaching Partnership name</b>	Kent, Medway and the South East Social Work Teaching Partnership
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	Medway Council
<b>Sector</b>	Social Work
<b>Subject</b>	Workforce and Labour Market Planning
<b>Potential related work area</b>	Progression

## Case study details

### Main title

Recruitment and Retention.

### Subtitle

Planning for a strong and stable workforce.

### Introduction (max 100 words)

Detailed analysis of the current workforce and labour market trends allows the Kent and Medway and South East Social Work Teaching Partnership Local Authorities to better predict future student intake, final placement numbers and LA recruitment requirements. This will in turn inform the creation of career pathways and progression opportunities, which effectively engages and develops our workforce.

It is our aim to use this analysis to inform a labour market strategy that meets the individual business needs of the two Local Authorities, promotes retention of the Social Work workforce and further embeds the culture of “grow our own.”

## Body of case study text

### Background

The Kent, Medway South East Teaching Partnership (KMTP) is comprised of two local authorities, Kent County (KCC) and Medway Council (MC) and two HEIs, University of Kent (UOK) and Canterbury Christchurch University (CCCU) based in the South East of England. We are committed to achieving the objectives it has been commissioned to deliver within the Implementation Plan. These objectives have been translated into a vision and ethos in relation to attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing the brightest and best social workers in the country.

It aims to do this by:

1. Undertaking research into the current labour market pressures,
2. Designing a comprehensive CPD framework for both LAs to enable social workers to develop career pathways,
3. Ensuring CPD plans are informed by employer demand and that practitioners are supported to access CPD opportunities and
4. Attracting more students into social work training and posts and retain higher numbers of practitioners with the partnership Local Authorities.

### Workforce and Labour Market Planning

#### 1. The Current Workforce

The two Local Authorities cover geographical areas of significantly different sizes, however, share common complexities and workforce mobility between the two authorities is not uncommon. As such the KMTP in conjunction with Medway’s Social Care Academy and the

Kent Social Care Academy provides opportunity to take a collective approach and share resourcing where it can be beneficial in recruiting and developing the workforce.

*Kent and Medway Social Work Workforce November 2018*

Data Group	KCC	Medway	National
Size of Adult's Workforce (SWs) FTE	400	50	17000
Size of Children's Workforce (SWs) FTE	702	130	29 470

The KCC and MC's Social Work workforce makes up 2.75% of the National workforce and covering 3% of the geographical area. KCC is the 10<sup>th</sup> geographically largest county in England and has the 6<sup>th</sup> largest population. Medway whilst geographically smaller, has a higher level of population density. Both experience similar social issues and complexities.

In 2019, KCC and MC recruited 102 and 18 NQSWs respectively into their ASYE programmes. Further work needs to be undertaken to explore the retention and progression of the ASYE cohorts. The KMTP is undertaking a piece of research, which will inform decision making and planning around the ASYE programmes and Practice Educator CPD, which is outlined later in this case study.

The demographics of the workforce does not deviate significantly from the national picture, with the exception of BAME social workers. The number of BAME in Medway is 9% higher than the national average and 12% higher than in KCC.

*Adult social workers 2018*

Demographics	KCC	Medway	National
Aged over 55	22%	22%	22%
Female	87%	77%	81%
BAME	17%	26%	24%

*Children and family's social workers 2018*

Demographics	KCC	Medway	National
Aged over 50	30.9%	23.7%	29.2%
Female	85.1%	91.2%	85.6%
BAME	14%	26.5%	17.4%

Factors which influence recruitment, retention and professional development are being considered within the research being conducted by the TP and will inform the labour market strategy and planning.

## 2. Labour Market Influences

### 2.1 Population and Market trends

There is a projected population increase across Kent and Medway of 19% by 2037 (from 2016). This will increase by 34.5% in the population of those aged over 50, however, only 12% increase in the 0-18% population. Within the under 18's age range there are other factors which includes a transient population. The number of children in the care of other local authorities who are placed within KCC and Medway has had an impact on resources along with children coming through as Refugee/Asylum Seeking children.

There were 1.8 million requests for adult social care support from 1.3 million new clients, for which an outcome was determined in the year, were received by local authorities in 2017-18. This was an increase of 1.6% since 2016-17. This is equivalent to more than 5,000 requests for support received per day by local authorities.<sup>1</sup>

The number of social workers within Adult Services employed by local authorities in England increased by 4.7% from 16,200 to 17,000 between 2017 and 2018. However, the total number of jobs in adult social services departments has decreased by 30% since 2011 (despite a 3% increase in 2018).

Social worker jobs within Adult Services have generally been retained by local authorities during a period where many other jobs have been outsourced to the independent sector. Nationally, it is likely that the decreasing turnover rate has contributed to the decrease in the vacancy rate with fewer jobs becoming vacant due to people leaving their jobs<sup>2</sup>.

Since 2012, there has been a 12.5% increase in referrals to Children's Services nationally, which is on average a rate of 477.4 per 10,000 children aged under 18 years. Within Kent and Medway, in the year March 2017/18 referrals were received at a rate of 576.4 and 408.5 per 10,000 children aged under 18 years respectively<sup>3</sup>.

Nationally the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) children and family social workers at 30 September 2018 was 29,470, an increase of over 3% from the same point in 2017<sup>4</sup>. The number of agency workers in post and vacancy rate has remained stable in this period.

### 2.2 Geographical area

Many students live, learn and work within the geographical boundary of the KMTP. Preliminary data has shown that, the majority of UOK and CCCU Social Work BA and MA students live within the Kent and Medway area.

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<sup>1</sup> Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Report, England - 2017-18: [Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Report, England - 2017-18 pdf](#)

<sup>2</sup> Headline Social Worker Statistics: [Headline Social Worker Statistics pdf](#)

<sup>3</sup> Characteristics of children in need: 2017 to 2018 (England): [Characteristics of children in need: 2017 to 2018 \(England\) pdf](#)

<sup>4</sup> Children's Social Work Workforce 2017-2018: [Children's Social Work Workforce 2017-2018 pdf](#)

*CCCU Students by Geographical area (2017-2019)*

Programme	KMTP area	SE England	Other
BA	84%	15.5%	0%
MA	86%	11%	0.78%

These students then go on to make up 66% of those recruited into the KCC and Medway ASYE programmes. Both KCC and MC have a strong culture of “grow your own”. In some areas this is driven by necessity, with significant time and investment having been made in the development of practitioners, who then often progress to become the next generation of line managers. This is at times in a context of reduced staffing numbers and a high demand on services. The work currently being developed within KMTP will lead to opportunities for practitioners and managers to develop their career along a professional pathway further reinforcing the culture of learning and “grow your own.”

### 3. Workforce Retention

The key findings from the initial literature review on retention are that social work has a reputation as being a stressful job, and burnout is a topic that has been researched. Key findings were that burnout levels were higher for children’s social workers than adult social workers, and work experience was significant in reducing likelihood of burnout. Inexperienced workers in child protection often felt unsupported within their services which contributed to burnout. Heavy workloads are frequently reported as an issue for social workers with the number of cases being the main issue. Social workers valued good management support, good supervision, post qualifying training, a supportive team and flexible working; these factors could help retain staff. Social workers stay in the job because they want to make a difference.

#### *Adult social workers 2018*

Data Group	KCC	Medway	National
Turnover rate	20%	26%	13.8%
Vacancy Rate	0%	17%	8.3%

In KCC Adult Social Care the turnover rate was 20% at September 2018 and the vacancy rate was reported as zero by Skills for Care (2018). The use of agency staff is also very low at only 3% in June 2019. KCC do not monitor internal promotions for staff, so it is unclear how many staff left and how many were promoted.

The career structure in KCC Adult Social Care is the Newly Qualified Social Work level, the Social Work level, workers can progress to the Experienced Social Worker level when a portfolio of work has been completed. In Mental Health the Experienced Social Worker level is offered to workers with an Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) qualification, and ‘Golden Hello’ and retention payments are offered at this level. According to the KCC website (2019) in certain areas such as Gravesham, Experienced Social Workers in Mental Health are offered ‘Golden Hello’ and retention payments. Kent Adult Social Care recruitment and

retention are a strength, which could be due to the career structure, geographical area and payment incentives.

In Medway Adult Social Care from 2017-2018 the turnover rate was 27% and the rate of progression was 9%; the high turnover rate and rate of progression was due to an internal restructure that took place that year, with many posts being deleted and many being created. The vacancy rate reported by Skills for Care at September 2018 was 17%. The number of Newly Qualified Social Workers that left in that year was 12%, the number of Social Workers that left was 76% and number of Managers or Senior Social Workers that left was 12%. In Medway Adult Social Care from 2018-2019 the turnover rate was 16% and rate of progression 3%. The percentage of Social Workers that left was 56%, the number of Managers or Senior Social Workers who left was 33% and the number of NQSW who left was 11%. In the year that followed the restructure the turnover rate and rate of progression reduced.

In June 2019 the vacancies that were being filled by agency workers were Approved Mental Health Social Workers, Social Workers, with a small number at Practice Manager and Senior Social Worker level. Recruitment to NQSW roles is not an issue with a high number of applicants to posts this year. All Practice Manager roles and the majority of Senior Social Worker roles are filled by permanent staff. Medway are offering training for Approved Mental Health Practitioners, and once the training is completed Social Workers are paid at the Senior Social Worker level. The number of agency staff employed in June 2019 was 32%. Most of the agency staff had been at Medway for a year or less, and a small amount had been there for two or three years.

Medway is close to London geographically, so workers can work in outer London or in neighbouring Kent which may explain the high number of agency staff.

Adult Social Care have put in place a strategy to recruit AMHPs, a suggestion would be for the service to consider retention and 'Golden Hello' payments to improve recruitment and retention of experienced Social Workers.

### *Children and family social workers 2018*

Data Group	KCC	Medway	National
Turnover rate	12%	19%	16.2%
Vacancy Rate	11%	33%	16.5%

In KCC Children's Services the turnover rate reported at September 2018 was 12% which is slightly less than what was reported nationally by the Department for Education (2019) which was 16%. This could be due to the geographical area as in parts of West Kent it is very difficult to work in any other local authority due to location. West Kent is similar to Cornwall geographically and the turnover rates are also low, they were reported as 10.8% by the Department for Education (2019). The data held about KCC from September 2018 for Children's Services showed that they had 11.4% agency workers and the vacancy rate was 11%. The vacancy rate was less than the national level which the Department for Education (2019) reported as 16% in September 2018. The amount of agency staff used is also lower than the national level which the Department for Education (2019) reported as 15%.

The career structure for KCC Children's Services: Newly Qualified Social Worker, Social Worker, Experienced Social Worker, Senior Social Worker, and Team Manager. Social workers can complete a

portfolio to progress from a Social Worker to Experienced Social Worker level. Kent County Council are also offering retention payments of £3,000 per year for many Social Work roles; payments are offered to Newly Qualified Social Workers after they have been in post for 12 months. Kent Children's Service have a 'Good' Ofsted rating Ofsted (2017), which may well help retention.

For Medway Children's Services for 2017 to 2018 the turnover rate was 22%, and rate of promotion was 6.4%. The number of Newly Qualified Social workers reported as leaving was 10%, 50% were Social Workers and 40% were in Manager or Senior Social Worker roles. For Medway Children's Services for 2018-2019 the turnover rate was 19% and the rate of progression was 17%. The percentage of Senior Social Workers or Managers leaving was 39% and the percentage of Social Workers leaving was 61%. The turnover rates are also comparable to boroughs that are nearer to London such as Bexley which the Department for Education (2019) reported as 22.7% and Barking and Dagenham which was reported as 18.5%.

The number of agency staff in June 2019 was around 28%, which is higher than the national level in England which was 15% at September 2018. The number of agency staff is lower than what was reported by the Department for Education (2019) in 2018 for Medway which was 38%. In June 2019 the majority of agency workers were in Social Work posts with some in Management posts spread across Quality Assurance and Safeguarding, Referral and Assessment and Area Teams. Most of the agency staff had been at Medway for a year or less and a small amount had been there for two or three years.

The study being undertaken by KMTP is seeking to explore the reasons that social workers remain employed within two local authorities in the South East of England. The exploration includes identifying existing social workers reasons for staying and their experiences from Newly Qualified Social Worker to a more established social worker. The study seeks to identify barriers and enablers to social worker development, progression and retention through a mixed method, instrumental case study. The Local Authorities within the partnership will be able to plan for changes in the workforce based on research and the data used by the HEIs to further inform student intake.

#### **4. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

The Partnership has been successful in developing a Career Progression pathway and Core Development programme, across both Children's and Adults Directorates within KCC and MC. We worked to identify partnership-wide training needs as part of enhanced career pathways. This work is also informed by the literature review undertaken by the two researchers employed by KMTP and work undertaken in partnership with both HR partners and Social Care Academies within the partner Local Authorities.

#### *Literature Review*

A literature search of several databases was carried out to discover the main factors influencing the retention of the workforce. Areas of focus included; CPD, Leadership, Agency workers, personnel engagement and the enablers and barriers to retention. Both qualitative and quantitative literature was considered as was grey literature.

Influencing factors are complex not least as a result of the changing registration bodies, and austerity measures.

The importance of the availability of emotional support from leaders and colleagues as this was a strong recurring theme across the body of literature and was sometimes accompanied by the ability for an organisation to nurture rather than chastise. This support ultimately protecting practitioners from 'burn out'.

Another recurring factor throughout the literature was that 'making a difference to the lives of service users' was significant to social workers, for NQSW's the focus was around putting social work values into practice. Supervision could be used to help social workers identify this in their case work.

It appears that a clear definition of leadership and a decision as to whether this is shared or hierarchical may benefit retention figures.

In addition, a clear career progression pathway benefits retention. A route that does not necessarily involve management roles will aid the retention of staff who want to maintain service user contact.

### *Kent County Council*

The preliminary work that KMPT completed in this area was used to inform the development of a CPD offer within KCC. This in conjunction with additional external grant funding provided to KCC formed the basis of their CPD offer to Children's Services. The work for Adult's CPD has remained in place utilizing the existing funding in KCC's training budget. The involvement of the KMTP in developing a CPD offer has been limited, with the exception of providing support in the form of financial backing for a series of conferences provided to Social Work practitioners/student across the partnership, which is led by the KCC Workforce Development team.

The work in developing the CPD and career progression offer in KCC within the past 6 months has been led by internal Learning and Development and the Strategic Board of the new Kent Social Care Academy. The academy itself was designed and implemented by a project lead paid for by the KMTP. The implementation of the Kent Social Care Academy will ensure the sustainability of the work in developing and implanting CPD programmes for Social Workers and in supporting student placements and progression within Kent Adult and Children's Services.

### *Medway Council*

#### *Core Development Programme*

Medway aims to enable career-long learning and empower social workers to work confidently and effectively with the children, adults and families they support. The KMTP has supported Medway by developing a Practice Framework that identifies the core CPD programme that will enable social workers working in Child and Family and Adult Services to develop their knowledge and skills to drive practice improvement to deliver the best possible outcomes for people who use social work services.

The primary purpose for developing this CPD programme was to develop a career pathway for social work practitioners working in Child and Family Services and Adult Service in MC and KCC, however it was accepted by Strategic Leaders in Medway only. The programme will enable practitioners to develop the necessary knowledge and skills that support excellent social work practice and develops a workforce with the right skills and knowledge with greater job satisfaction and higher levels of retention.



The programme learning outcomes are informed by the Professional Capability Framework for Social Work at the Social Worker level, Experienced Social Worker and Advanced Social Worker levels and the Chief Social Workers' Knowledge and Skills Statements for Social Work in Child and Family and Adult Social Work. The content of the programme has been created in consultation with Senior Leaders and staff within the Adults and Children's Directorate. Of note, the programme for Children's was informed by the requirements of the Improvement Plan created for Children's Services following the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection in August 2019. The programme itself is modular based and will be delivered in bite sized sessions of up to 2 hours that incorporate a taught element and a reflective session to embed theory into practice. When funding ends for the KMTP in March 2020, the responsibility for the programme will remain with the Learning and Development team and sit within the Children's CPD faculty of the Medway Social Care Academy.

### *Leadership and Management Programmes*

The KMTP have designed a Leadership and Management programme for Social Work practitioners within Children's and Adults, which has been adopted by Medway. The primary purpose for developing this CPD programme was to develop a Leadership and Management career pathway for social work practitioners working in Child and family Services and Adult Services in MC that is aligned with the PCF and Employer Standards. The programme will enable them to develop the necessary knowledge and skills that support excellent social work practice management and develops a management workforce with the right skills and knowledge with greater job satisfaction and higher levels of retention.

This programme is comprised of a mixed method approach to learning. There are 3 modules which, have a half day taught element, online content and a portfolio of evidence and learning. The programme provides an opportunity for continuous learning by providing programme at 3 different levels—Aspiring, Operational and Strategic management.

This programme forms the basis of the Leadership and Management career progression pathway. Separate guidance has been drafted in partnership with the HR team in Medway so that practitioners are clear about the requirements in accessing the training. In addition to this training all social work staff can apply to the Leadership and Management apprenticeship schemes.

Additional funding has been awarded to the KMPT for Leadership and Management and a "one off" training programme has been developed with this funding. This programme utilises coaching to support senior managers to identify key areas for development within their service and to effectively create those changes. This programme whilst offered to both KCC and MC, was taken up by Medway Council for their managers in both Children and Adults services. The programme has an element of train the trainer training, so will be sustainable within MC for the future.

### *Research Events*

The KMTP will be facilitating three research events by March 2020. Our aim is that these events will constitute 'research dissemination', where practitioners identify findings from new research that they can use in practice, either directly, or in terms of informing their work. The first event is scheduled to take place in January 2020, entitled, "The Politics of Risk in Child Protection" with Dr Jo Warner. The second event will cross both Adults and Children's Directorates, exploring research, policy and practice of Transitional Safeguarding. The third event will take

place in March 2020, with Prof. Alisoun Milne (UOK) delivering a seminar about her research and knowledge about dementia. Practitioners and students from within the Partnership are encouraged to attend.

## **5. Workforce and Labour Market Plan**

The plan will focus on 3 key areas; student intake and placements, social work recruitment and Continued Professional Development/developing career pathways.

### ***5.1 Student intake and Placements***

At present, we take approximately 100 final placement students each year across both authorities, with KCC providing around 75 and Medway 30.

Both Local Authorities, also offer placements to Step-Up Students, 6 in MC and 14 in KCC, in addition this year will see the beginning of the SW Apprentice programme, and MC have recruited 6 and KCC have recruited 25.

The data provided by the KMPT in relation to the student to NQSW conversion will inform the number of student placements required by the Local Authorities. Of note in Medway, within the Student Faculty there has been a change in how students are selected, which includes more oversight from senior management in this process. There is a strong grow your own culture in both Local Authorities who when taking students, do so with the view that these students will be the next cohort of NQSW.

The responsibility for student selection for placements going forward will sit within the Student faculties of the Kent and Medway Social Care Academies. The number will be based on NQSW vacancies levels, with the aim that each Local Authority would then go on to recruit at least 80% of these students, taking into account external interest for NQSW roles and other external factors.

### ***5.2 Social Work Recruitment***

We have utilized the recruitment figures, turnover and rates of progression to make recruitment projections based on business need. Both Local Authorities have developed an understanding of local trends and patterns of workforce progression from student intake to advanced social workers to progress towards the development of a recruitment strategy. Each have plans to over recruit NQSWs with the view that the career progression scheme will enable a positive turnover of staff through progression/promotion. This will also reduce the need to rely on agency staff in the more experienced roles and promote staff retention.

The NQSW recruitment takes place around March/April (see Progression Case Study) with Medway adding a further recruitment cycle for opportunity to recruit the MSC students who complete their studies later in the year.

### ***5.3 Career Progression Scheme Medway***

A new career progression scheme has been developed by the KMTP and adopted in Medway for Children's Services and how this can be developed further within Adults is being explored. There are a number of different roles within Children's Services, covering a total of 5 grades with 3 routes for career progression; Direct Practice, Practice Education and Leadership and Management. The Career Progression Scheme enables social workers to progress from social

worker through to senior practitioner upon producing evidence of sufficient skills, knowledge and experience.

The scheme has 3 levels of practice. A social worker will be working at one of these levels and will need to meet and evidence the expected capabilities and standards relating to this level.

- Social Worker
- Experienced Social Worker
- Senior Practitioner (subject to a vacancy being available)

Progression to the role of Senior Practitioner will be by assessment and subject to a post being available.

- There will be a maximum of 15 Senior Practitioner roles available across Safeguarding (1 per team)
- There will be a maximum of 9 Senior Practitioner roles available across First Response (2 per team in Assessment and 1 in MASH)

The social worker must be able to evidence the levels as set out in the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). In providing the evidence the social worker needs to be mindful of the level of capability that they are working at as defined in the PCF and how they have embedded the Knowledge and Skills Statement (KSS) for child and family practitioners.

The PCF is the overarching framework of capability for social work and the KSS sets out what a social worker should know and be able to do in child and family social work practice. Together, the PCF and the KSS provide the foundation for social work practice in England at qualifying and post qualifying levels.

Social Workers will be supported to progress in their career within a Direct Practice route, enabling them to remain in practice building on and using their expertise in direct practice with children, young people and their families. Having demonstrated and evidenced their progression to an experienced practitioner level they have the opportunity to pursue a 'specialist' route. This could be either Practice Education, Fostering, Adoption, QA or a Leadership and Management route.

The expectations and standards set within the career progression scheme have been incorporated into the Job Descriptions/Person Specifications for future recruitment.

With a range of CPD pathways the aim is to better meet our business need through targeted succession planning to have "the right staff, with the right skills, in the right jobs, at the right time."

An evaluation of the impact of the progression scheme will be undertaken to measure its impact on recruitment and retention in the longer term.

## **6. Sustainability**

Medway has a longstanding established Social Care Academy and during the life of the KMTP, KCC has been supported to develop their own virtual academy. Many aspects of the Partnerships work will be picked up and carried on within the work of the Social Care Academies, including CPD and career progression, with the support of the HR and Learning and Development partners who sit within these facilities alongside strategic management.

