

EMPLOYMENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

1 APRIL 2010

REVISION TO CAREER FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Report from: Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services

Author: Helen Gulvin, Assistant Director, Children's Care

Summary

On 13 October 2009, the Employment Matters Committee agreed a number of recommendations regarding a career framework and a revision to incentives for children's social workers and managers as proposed by the then Interim Assistant Director, Children's Care. This report is specifically addressing the career framework and recommends a revision to this framework. At the time of the decision in October 2009, the Employment Matters Committee asked officers to alert them to any difficulties in implementing the scheme as there were some concerns about the ability to release staff on the required training in view of service delivery requirements.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 The Council has an agreed policy and procedure for managing the re-grading of posts and progressions through pay bands. This proposal acknowledges the need to recognise different levels of experience, skills and training required during progression through the grade and rewards more highly qualified, experienced and skilled staff accordingly.

2. Background

2.1 In 2006 the Joint Area Review judged the Council's safeguarding arrangements to be adequate. In 2008 OfSTED judged Staying Safe in Children's Services to be adequate. Improvements have been made as indicated in the unannounced inspection of Referral and Assessment Services in February 2010, which acknowledged progress achieved. Further inspection will be in the form of tri-annual inspections of safeguarding and Looked After Children services.

2.2 In March 2009, the Laming Report on progress with regards child protection made a number of recommendations, five of which were specific to children's social workers to ensure effective safeguarding (Appendix A).

- 2.3 The Directorate has responsibility for delivering services to vulnerable children and young people to fulfil its statutory duties and the priorities of Medway's Children and Young People's Plan. In order to deliver a safe and reliable service, and meet future public and political challenges, it is important that Medway identifies and retains experienced and capable practitioners.
- 2.4 The previous report presented in October 2009 addressed issues that enabled the payment of additional allowances to team managers and senior practitioners in the Duty and Assessment Teams in recognition of the high risk cases referred to and managed in those teams. The Employment Matters Committee also agreed to a revised pay framework to enable Medway to recruit and retain a children's social work staff establishment to work to keeping children in Medway safe.
- 2.5 The decision was taken to address the considerable challenges that Medway has faced regarding the recruitment and retention of qualified social workers since 1998. This situation is in the context of a national shortage of social workers. Therefore, local authorities have competed to attract social workers with regards pay and reward schemes.
- 2.6 The solutions agreed in October 2009 were aimed at providing a sustainable package to address recruitment issues with appropriate financial reward alongside the development of clear progression routes, skills and competencies.
- 2.7 The changes aimed to develop a workforce and reward programme that addressed:-
- an approach that would work in the market for social workers;
 - retain the most competent staff;
 - establish a career grade that rewarded practitioners for professional expertise;
 - provided a training and development programme for staff that ensured a skilled, informed and competent workforce, in line with Laming recommendations.

3. Previously agreed pay arrangements for social work staff

- 3.1 A three-tier framework was agreed on 13 October 2009 for social workers to enable staff to progress through pay scales as they demonstrated competencies and effectiveness. The framework was progression by yearly increment with an opportunity for acceleration based on qualifications gained through the established post. The details agreed are as follows:

Competency Band	Spinal Column Point	Salary
Level 3 Social Worker	43	36313
	42	35430
	41	34549
Level 2 Social Worker	40	33661
	39	32800
	38	31754
	37	30851
	36	30011
Level 1 Social Worker	35	29236
	34	28636
	33	27849

4. Concerns about the current scheme

- 4.1 It was not foreseen that there would be any restriction on staff who wish to undertake these post-qualification awards. However, this has not proved to be the case. The full impact of the new re-grading arrangements have not had time to impact on the vacancy rate which stands at 16%. In addition, this framework, linked to financial reward, has encouraged social workers to apply to attend Post Qualification programmes to a level that is unmanageable in terms of business provision. Employment Matters Committee on 13 October 2009 asked officers to alert them to any difficulties in implementing the scheme as there were some concerns about the ability to release staff on the required training in view of service delivery requirements.
- 4.2 In reviewing the staff who have applied for places on PQ courses, it has been found:-
- That staff are applying whose experience and performance suggests that they should have progressed to a higher grade;
 - That managers are uncomfortable about rationing training to service needs due to financial incentives for staff.
 - That the majority are appropriate applications.
- 4.3 The conclusion that has been reached is that, whilst qualifications and appropriate training are essential, a blanket approach tied to qualifications can be counter productive and does not meet individual or service needs.

5 Options

- 5.1 It is acknowledged that training and personal development is an essential factor in developing expertise and skills.
- 5.2 However, qualifications alone do not prove competency and effectiveness in achieving outcomes for children.
- 5.3 To ensure that staff demonstrate:
- appropriate personal development and learning;

- competency and effectiveness

A Competency Framework document has been developed (Appendix B) which demands proof of competency supported by evidence of personal development and learning.

- 5.4 The Competency Framework remains based on three levels for progression. Opportunities for acceleration are based on the acknowledgement of skills and competency, through evidence provided which demonstrates these attributes. The existing pay bands would continue.
- 5.5 This framework would, therefore, give the facility for recognising and rewarding outstanding performance. For example a social worker on Level 2 at scale point 37 who can give evidence of competency at Level 3 could progress to Level 3 and move to scale point 41
- 5.6 This process would replace the agreed framework and the long-term benefit to the service will be to increase experienced and effective children's social workers working at Level 3.

	Option	Risks	Benefit
1.	Maintain the current pay progression framework.	1. Creates ill will if staff cannot access training due to service needs. 2. Encourages staff to take up unnecessary training. 3. Discourages staff from taking up appropriate training. 4. Staff progress on qualification not on demonstrable competency in role. 5. Does not ensure managers monitor performance on competency and inform staff re issues early.	
2.	Adopt the competency based framework.		1. Staff can progress on competency. 2. Appropriate use of training. 3. Ensures Managers manage performance and work with staff to address issues.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 A full consultation has been undertaken with staff and trade unions. The new framework has been welcomed as addressing concerns with regards access to training and an evidence based progression framework and suggestions have been incorporated into this scheme.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 Whilst it is anticipated that the proposed changes to the children's social work career framework will mean that social workers would be able to pass the competency threshold without the need for a formal qualification, it is estimated that the impact in the short term would be negligible and absorbed within the existing budget.
- 7.2 Over the medium term, the implications would need to be addressed through the medium term financial planning process.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The contracts of employment for the relevant staff will require variation to reflect the new competency framework. Consultation has been carried out with the affected staff and their consent to the variation prior to implementation of the proposed changes will be sought. It is anticipated that most staff will agree to the proposed changes.

9. Risk Management

- 9.1 The table in 5.6 lays out the risks of not implementing this framework.

10. Diversity Impact Assessment

- 10.1 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been undertaken on the previous proposal, which found it was not necessary to carry out a full impact assessment.

11. Recommendations

- 11.1 The Employment Matters Committee is asked to agree to the implementation of the revised Competency Framework (as attached at Appendix B) for main grade social workers with effect from 1 April 2010.
- 11.2 The Employment Matters Committee is asked to agree that a review of the revised Competency Framework be brought back to Committee in twelve months' time.

Lead Officer Contact

Helen Gulvin, Assistant Director, Children's Care

Tel: 01634 331215

Email: helen.gulvin@medway.gov.uk

Background Papers

Laming recommendations; Medway's Children and Young People's Plan

APPENDIX A LAMING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORK

Recommendation 11

DCSF should revise Working Together to Safeguard Children to set out clear expectations at all points where concerns about a child's safety are received, ensuring intake/duty teams have sufficient training and expertise to take referrals and that staff have immediate, on site support available from an experienced social worker. Local Authorities should take appropriate action to implement these changes.

Recommendation 15

The Social Work Task Force should establish guidelines on guaranteed supervision time for social workers that may vary depending on experience.

Recommendation 16

DCSF should revise Working Together to Safeguard Children to set out the elements of high quality supervision focused on case planning, constructive challenge and professional development.

Recommendation 24

The Social Work Task Force should:

- i. develop the basis for a national children's social worker supply strategy that will address recruitment and retention difficulties, to be implemented by DCSF. This should have a particular emphasis on child protection social workers¹;
- ii. work with the Children's Workforce Development Council and other partners to implement, on a national basis, clear progression routes for children's social workers;
- iii. develop national guidelines setting out maximum case-loads of children in need and child protection cases, supported by a weighting mechanism to reflect the complexity of cases, that will help plan the workloads of children's social workers; and
- iv. develop a strategy for remodelling children's social work which delivers shared ownership of cases, administrative support and multi-disciplinary support to be delivered nationally.

Recommendation 29

Children's Trusts should ensure that all staff who work with children receive initial training and continuing professional development which enables them to understand normal child development and recognise potential signs of abuse or neglect.

**Social Worker – Children and Families
Skills and Competency Framework**

Skills and Competency framework for Social Workers

Principles

Social workers are expected to use supervision to reflect on their work and to be informed/agree on priorities with their manager using the attached skill and competency framework.

It is expected that all social workers will take responsibility for their own development in liaison with their manager, will be willing to undertake training considered relevant or essential by the department (including post qualification training) and show application of training in practice situations.

The department recognises that it has a responsibility to facilitate training and to support social workers so that they can develop and plans are formulated with each social worker under the Performance Development Framework.

The framework comprises of 3 levels. To be able to progress from level 1 to level 2 and level 2 to level 3, you must be able to demonstrate experience of all skills and competency criteria and a commitment to self development through training commensurate to your level and grade as agreed with your manager eg PQ training

Level 1

At this level you are expected to have some knowledge and experience in most level 2 skills and competencies. It is expected that you will work towards level 2 competencies using the competency table in supervision, seeking guidance appropriately. Newly qualified social workers will be required to undertake a full induction.

Level 2

Progression to level 2 is dependent on evidence of satisfactorily performing all level 2 competencies and skills. Social workers should be able to deal with most aspects of their work, guidance only being required on more difficult tasks. Completion of the Consolidation Award or equivalent is desirable.

Level 3

To progress to level 3 you must demonstrate broad experience across the full range of the job together with consistently good performance at all level 2 and 3 competencies. You are expected to perform successfully and effectively at a higher level and undertake specialist and more complex tasks as required. Completion of Post Qualification Training is desirable as is a Practice Teaching Qualification and that you should have overseen at least one student placement.

The Team Manager must provide evidence to show that the worker has either met or not met the criteria. If the worker does not meet the criteria agreed actions be recorded.

Promotion of diversity and equality

To be considered for progression, at all levels, you must be able to demonstrate an awareness of equality and diversity issues, promoting these in your practice.

Core Skills Level 2	Core Skills Level 3
<p align="center">Recording</p> <p>Appropriately uses RAISE /ICS or other designated IT systems Recording is brief, relevant, unambiguous and timely Distinguishes between fact and professional opinion</p>	<p>Demonstrates excellent analytical skills Able to introduce new staff to our recording system prior to them accessing training</p>
<p align="center">Assessments</p> <p>Are completed within timescales Identify needs, risks and parenting capacity Are not just a description of circumstances Contain analysis of information gathered State the views of the child/service user and their desired outcomes Show involvement of other professionals Have been shared with service users</p>	<p>Completes assessments with minimal managerial input Takes on cases irrespective of complexity and risk Takes and manages cases when the Council's reputation is vulnerable Informally provides advice and support to colleagues in this area</p>
<p>Care Plans/Planning</p> <p>Are assessment based - taking into account user need and choice Have been regularly reviewed in order to achieve outcomes Demonstrate an understanding of available resources</p>	<p>Evidence of creativity in Care & Pathway Planning Able to devise plans independently and with minimum management input Able to plan and organise activities, information groups etc.</p>
<p align="center">Legislation - departmental policy & procedures</p> <p>Legislation and procedures are understood and applied to practice Shows an awareness of local authorities duties and responsibilities Recognises the importance of working to departmental policy and procedures Evidence of keeping up to date with changes in legislation</p>	<p>Will provide frontline view on guidance and procedures that are being developed Ability to contribute effectively to/has taken part in a departmental working party or other forums. Confident and competent at giving evidence in court and presenting to formal groups e.g. Panels.</p>
<p>Child Protection</p> <p>CP assessments are informed by sound knowledge of risk indicators Cases have been taken to conference/ appropriate referrals made to C&F teams and contributions made to conferences CP issues are incorporated in carers' assessments Conference reports are concise and produced to timescales CP Plans are followed through CP Home Visits are undertaken within timescales and recorded appropriately</p>	<p>Shares knowledge and practice in the area with colleagues Accesses a range of skills and methods (counselling, solution focussed etc) to engage the service user</p>
<p>Report Writing</p> <p>Is proficient at writing reports for meetings particularly Network Meetings & Case Conferences With assistance from manager is becoming proficient at writing reports for Court and the Fostering and Adoption Panel</p>	<p>Reports are clear, well structured, well argued, grammatically correct and correctly spelt i.e. they require the minimum of input from the Team Manager</p>
<p>Looked after children (LAC)</p> <p>Understands the importance of engaging young people – demonstrated in practice Places the welfare and needs of the child at the centre of planning LAC/Pathway Planning materials are used competently and compliantly All LAC of school age have up to date Personal Education Plan</p>	
<p>Workload Management</p> <p>Is able to prioritise workload effectively within a changing environment Seeks appropriate advice when necessary. Works towards closing cases</p>	<p>Is beginning to take an overview of the work being undertaken by the team Able to juggle own workload in order to take on additional priority tasks when required</p>

<p align="center">Multidisciplinary working and relationships</p> <p>Is able to work cooperatively to build and maintain partnerships b Is able to understand the interrelationship between the individual and their social environment, intervening accordingly.</p>	<p>Competently chairs small meetings e.g. core groups Able to assert departmental view regardless of setting e.g. CPPG & Court Can attend Court / Panels without managerial support if required</p>
<p align="center">Confidentiality</p> <p>Understands and demonstrates when it is and is not appropriate to share information according to departmental guidelines and legal principles.</p>	
<p align="center">Technology</p> <p>Uses Technology effectively and appropriately</p>	<p>Uses Technology proficiently – provides advice and support to others in this area</p>
<p align="center">Core Competencies Level 2</p>	<p align="center">Core Competencies Level 3</p>
<p align="center">Accountability</p> <p>Accepts responsibility for own decisions Case management is effective, being proactive and anticipating problems Knows when to appropriately seek management input Uses supervision and appraisal effectively</p>	<p>Plans ahead by consistently anticipating concerns and problems</p>
<p align="center">Conscientiousness</p> <p>Shows care in completing work Demonstrates attention to detail Reliably delivers work of a high quality and standard</p>	<p>Shows concern not only about own work but also about that of the team Reliably delivers work of a high quality and standard</p>
<p align="center">Adaptability and optimism</p> <p>Works effectively with changing priorities and situations Willing to take on new ideas – able to think and work in a positive and creative way to support service users and others</p>	<p>Adapts style as required dependent on setting Is able to take a planned, systematic and calm approach to dealing with difficult/unplanned situations</p>
<p align="center">Professional integrity</p> <p>Completes tasks as agreed Is able to work to outcomes they do not necessarily agree with Represents the role and service in a professional manner at all times</p>	<p>Able to deputise for Senior Practitioner Has represented the local authority appropriately in a variety of settings</p>
<p align="center">Communication</p> <p>Communicates in a way that is engaging and clear, actively listening and checking for understanding Is sensitive to the communication needs of others</p>	<p>Able to communicate to a diverse audience at all levels using a range of approaches Is able to deal with hostile service users</p>
<p align="center">Empathy</p> <p>Can recognise and understand unspoken or partly expressed thoughts, feelings and concerns of others. Appreciates the meaning of what is said. Respects and relates to people of diverse backgrounds</p>	<p>Consistently advocates on behalf of clients Is perceptive and intuitive to those with specific needs.</p>
<p align="center">Managing Stress/Conflict</p> <p>Can function effectively under pressure Can ask for appropriate support Able to manage conflict and work towards de-escalation tensions</p>	<p>Identifies and manages conflict - able to diffuse conflict Promotes an inclusive and supportive culture</p>
<p align="center">Leadership & developing others</p> <p>Develops others within local networks Encourages others to take further training Coaches and mentors less experienced members of staff Encourage behaviour that supports the corporate vision</p>	<p>Can articulate a set of goals and develop in people the will to meet these Provides practical support and guidance to colleagues Uses training experiences, particularly practice teaching, to develop others Able to contribute to or deliver training or run groups</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Influence and impact</p> <p>Supports the team especially during challenging times Fosters team motivation</p>	<p>Can build a consensus around a plan using logical, detailed technical arguments Can anticipate how different people will respond and adapt approach accordingly Develops and share expertise in particular areas of work. Takes a positive and proactive lead on making improvements through change</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Diversity and Equality</p> <p>Applies the legal and regulatory framework on equality in practice Knows and can explain how institutional discrimination works Challenge practices that do not promote equality and diversity</p>	<p>Identify ways that service strategies can deliver more equitable services for all users Model ways of working to promote equality and diversity within teams and partnerships.</p>

Evidence of competencies

(To be completed by the social worker seeking progression)

In order for you to be considered for progression you should have worked with your line manager to ensure you meet all competencies for the appropriate level.

Before requesting progression, please give evidence of meeting the competencies in the table below. Evidence should be in the form of examples of your practice and not detail theoretical knowledge or awareness of the competency and should be supported where possible by a portfolio of evidence. Applicants are required to identify approximately 3 examples for each competency.

Recording
Assessments
Care plans
Legislation – departmental policies and procedures
Child Protection
Report writing
Looked after children
Workload Management

Multidisciplinary working and relationships

Confidentiality

Technology

Accountability

Conscientiousness

Adaptability and optimism

Professional integrity

Communication

Empathy

Managing stress and conflict

Leadership
Influence and impact (for level 3)

Manager Authorisation for Accelerated Social Worker Salary Progression

(To be completed by the authorising manager)

Progression of staff should be based on the progression criteria for their job. When the progression assessment is completed the evidence form should be attached to this progression document and sent with Payform PAY002 to Payroll Services, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent, ME4 4TR;

Name	ERN:
Job Title	Post Number:
Progression from spinal point:	
to spinalpoint:	
Effective from:	

Date of Progression Assessment:

I recommend that the above named employee is **progressed/NOT progressed** (delete as appropriate).

They have **met/not met** (delete as appropriate) all the competencies appropriate and **have/have not** (delete as appropriate) been able to demonstrate good attendance, punctuality and promotion of diversity and equality issues.

*Please give **full reasons** below if recommendation is not to progress*

Line Manager _____ Date _____

Authorised* _____

- Progressions can be authorised by Service Managers and above only.

The Procedure

These arrangements provide for a structured assessment of a Social Worker's contributions alongside but not replacing existing arrangements for annual salary progression within the margins of the social work pay grade.

The local assessment process will form part of the Council's overarching performance management process and performance and development review scheme.

The assessment will be an objective one based on written evidence provided. The assessment will be measured against a number of competencies.

Newly qualified social workers will be expected to have completed the Council's induction programme before applying to progress to level 2. It is expected that most newly qualified social workers will have completed at least one year's service with the Council before applying for progression via the competency route.

If approved the award will be backdated to the day the application was signed by the line manager. If not endorsed the applicant will receive a full written statement as to why progression is not agreed setting out the details and what is required in order to achieve progression.

Review

Should the social worker wish to challenge the assessment they have the right to a review. This right should be exercised in writing to the Assistant Director, Children's Care within 10 working days of being notified of the outcome of the formal assessment, outlining the reasons for requesting a review.

A review hearing will be held at which the manager responsible for the assessment will be asked to explain their decision with reference to any documentation or other evidence. The social worker making the appeal will be asked to state their reasons for the review and why they should be allowed to progress with reference to any documentation or other evidence and they will have the right to be represented.

The decision will be given in writing within 10 working days of receiving the appeal and will set out the reasons for the decision in full including what the social worker needs to do to progress.

The decision of the Assistant Director, Children's Services will be final.