

## **EMPLOYMENT MATTERS COMMITTEE**

**29 JUNE 2011**

### **REVIEW OF THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKERS**

Report from: Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services

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

#### **Summary**

On 1 April 2010, the Employment Matters Committee agreed to the implementation of the revised Competency Framework for Social Workers. This report outlines the findings of the review of the Competency Framework for Social Workers 12 months later.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

1.1 This issue lies within the Council's policy and budget framework and the Committee's terms of reference. Therefore, this is a matter for the Employment Matters Committee.

#### **2. Background**

2.1 The Employment Matters Committee agreed the revised Competency Framework for Social Workers in April 2010, at which point Members asked for a review in a 12 months' time on the impact of the implementation.

2.2 The previous review of the Career Framework for Social Workers concluded that, whilst qualifications and training are essential, a blanket approach tied to qualifications could be counter productive and meet neither individual or service needs and that qualification alone did not prove competency and effectiveness. On this basis the Competency Framework for Social Workers was approved with the envisaged benefit to the service of increased experienced and effective children's social workers working at level 3.

#### **3. Findings of the Review**

3.1 Members requested that as part of the review the impact of introducing the Competency Framework for Social workers on recruitment and retention should be included.

3.2 Appendix A details the number of new starters and leavers to Social worker posts in Children's Care over the period April 2008 to March 2011. It is

difficult to identify the impact that the Career Framework and Competency Framework for Social Workers have had based on this data alone.

- 3.3 The number of social workers in children's care at the end of May 2011 is 5.6% higher than at the same time last year. However, as 6 new social work posts were created through a reorganisation of the service, this increase cannot easily be seen when comparing vacancy levels. Social worker vacancies in children's care at the end of May 2011 are 17.2% against 17.3% one year ago.
- 3.4 There are 52 Qualified Social Workers in Children's Care as of 31 March 2011. Of these, 11 have progressed through the pay scales under the Career Framework for Social Workers and 5 through the revised Competency Framework for Social Workers. Of these 5 Social Workers 1 demonstrated outstanding competency and progressed from level 1 straight to level 3.
- 3.5 Appendix B details a comparison of competency Levels of social workers as of 31 March 2010 and as of 31 March 2011. This data better demonstrates an improvement in the level of competency of social workers since the introduction of the Competency Framework for Social Workers. As of 31 March 2010 62% of Social workers were at level 1 competency but as of 31 March 2011 this figure has reduced to 37%.

#### **4. Advice and analysis**

- 4.1 Qualitative feedback from Social Workers to date is that this is a fair, transparent and robust system for measuring and demonstrating their competency in the role and provides clear targets and expectations of performance.
- 4.2 Feedback from managers with regards the framework has been that it provides a clear basis of evaluation of skills and thereby enhances managing performance of every standard.
- 4.3 The framework provides clarity with regards training and development needs for individuals and also for those in the same competency band and further analysis with targeted training to common issues is planned.
- 4.4 The Competency Framework for Social Workers very much reflects the recommendations from The Munro Review of Child Protection, namely developing social work expertise. Progression through The Competency Framework for Social Workers requires social workers to demonstrate and evidence their skills and knowledge rather than focusing on whether they have complied with prescription and have kept extensive records. As social workers progress through the Framework their level of expertise will be greatly increased which should in turn significantly improve outcomes for children.
- 4.5 The Competency Framework for Social Workers has raised the expertise level of social workers at Medway Council in its first year, particularly at level 2.

4.6 Following the first year of the use of this framework we are confident that the framework has offered the correct tool to enable the management of staff performance which meets the needs of individual staff and service delivery.

## **5. Risk management**

5.1 The adoption of the revised Competency Framework has led to an improvement in the level of competency of Social Workers which is to the benefit of the Local Authority of increased experienced and effective children's Social Workers.

## **6. Financial and legal implications**

6.1 The establishment of the Competency Framework for Children's Social Workers has been met from within existing budgets.

6.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## **7. Recommendation**

7.1 That the report be noted.

### **Lead officer contact**

Helen Gulvin, Assistant Director, Children's Care

Tel: 01634 331215

Email: [Helen.Gulvin@medway.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.Gulvin@medway.gov.uk)

### **Background papers**

Report to Employment Matters Committee – 1 April 2010:

<http://democracy.medway.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=181&Ver=4>

Report to Employment Matters Committee – 13 October 2009

<http://democracy.medway.gov.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?CommitteeId=135&MeetingId=909&DF=13%2f10%2f2009&Ver=2>



## Appendix A

### Starter and leaver statistics for the period April 2008 to March 2011

Year	No. New Starters	No. Leavers	Reason for Leaving		
			Resignation	Career Break	Casual Employee
Apr 2010 – Mar 2011	9	6	5	1	0
Apr 2009 – Mar 2010	13	3	2	1	0
Apr 2008 – Mar 2009	13	7	5	0	2

## Appendix B

### Comparison of Competency Levels 31 March 2010 with 31 March 2011

Year	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
31 March 2010	32	14	6
31 March 2011	19	25	8