

Outstanding Questions and Answers from 10th June 2015 Committee Meeting

Questions from Cllr Yip on the Children's Social Care and Safeguarding and Education – May 2015 report:

Q1. In relation to 1.6 on the document “we intend to increase our workforce and decrease reliance on agency workers, so that the level of agency worker use is at no more than 15% overall..” Can I enquire what the rate of agency use was a year ago, at May 2015, and where it appears on the RAG rating system.

Answer: In the first instance, the number of agency workers across all levels (Social Worker, SSW/SP and Team Manager) was increased with a view to ensuring maximum coverage of vacancies. This was with a view to making the service safe, increasing available capacity and supporting manageable caseloads for permanent staff. As a result of this the overall level of agency use has been actively increased to approximately 30% of the workforce as compared to approximately 20% last year (when comparing the end of the quarter to March 2015 – 29.8%, and March 2014 – 21.9%).

The target for reducing reliance on agency workers by achieving an overall level of 15% by March 2017 is to be achieved via:

- Increased controls in the pay rates to, and use of, agency workers to cap and reduce the differential between that received by agency workers as compared to the permanent workforce.
- An increase in rates of retention following such initiatives as the implementation of the career progression mechanism, enhanced learning and development offer and improved managerial support
- An increase in the net gain of qualified staff to the workforce (attracting more joiners than people who leave the organisation). The overall turnover of permanent qualified social work staff has reduced from 29.7% at the end of the quarter to March 2014, to 14.5% in March 2015. Continued monitoring of joiners to Birmingham indicates that there is a reasonable likelihood that there will be sufficient numbers attracted to match the average number of vacancies for SW and TM roles.

A recruitment and media plan has been developed for the coming year; the end to end processes associated with candidate experience, the use of social media and enabling proactive engagement are being reviewed to support an increase in capacity. This coupled with the recent refresh in branding and the continued collation of intelligence will support the refinement of the recruitment strategy.

With respect to a RAG rating the position report rated this RED. We can confirm that remains the position subject to monitoring of progress over coming months.

Q2. When will the next report using this RAG rating scheme be compiled and submitted and will we have assurances that it will follow the same RAG rating assessment criteria and heading to facilitate comparison.

For future reports there will be RAGs based on each service manager's rounded appraisal of progress vs risk. We can expect more rounded assessments for both education and social care. December

may be a good point at which to bring a summary report on overall progress (this has been pencilled into the Committee's work programme for the 9th December 2015).

Q3. In relation to 5.10 "this theme has not arrived at any milestones.." while I noted Colin's honest comment about the RAG green rating what are the specific 'milestones' that the comment refers to in this key section and it's assessment individually per milestone to account for the overall 'Green'. Will this comparison be carried forward into the next report?

Answer: Please see comments above.

Q4. The "final 6. Recommendation" to the committee was surprisingly short. I was curious as to the 'specific improvement topics' that the report is asking us to consider and again if this will be carried forward to the next report.

Answer: The recommendation was deliberately non-specific so as not to limit the committee's thinking. But the "specific topics" are the main themes of the respective improvement plans, some of which the committee may want to explore in more depth.

Question from Cllr Bowles: How many statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) had been converted and how many new Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans were in place?

Answer: As of 16th June 2015, 361 EHC plans are in place including 229 statements of SEN converted (transferred) to an EHC plan and 132 new EHC Plans finalised since the 1st September 2014.