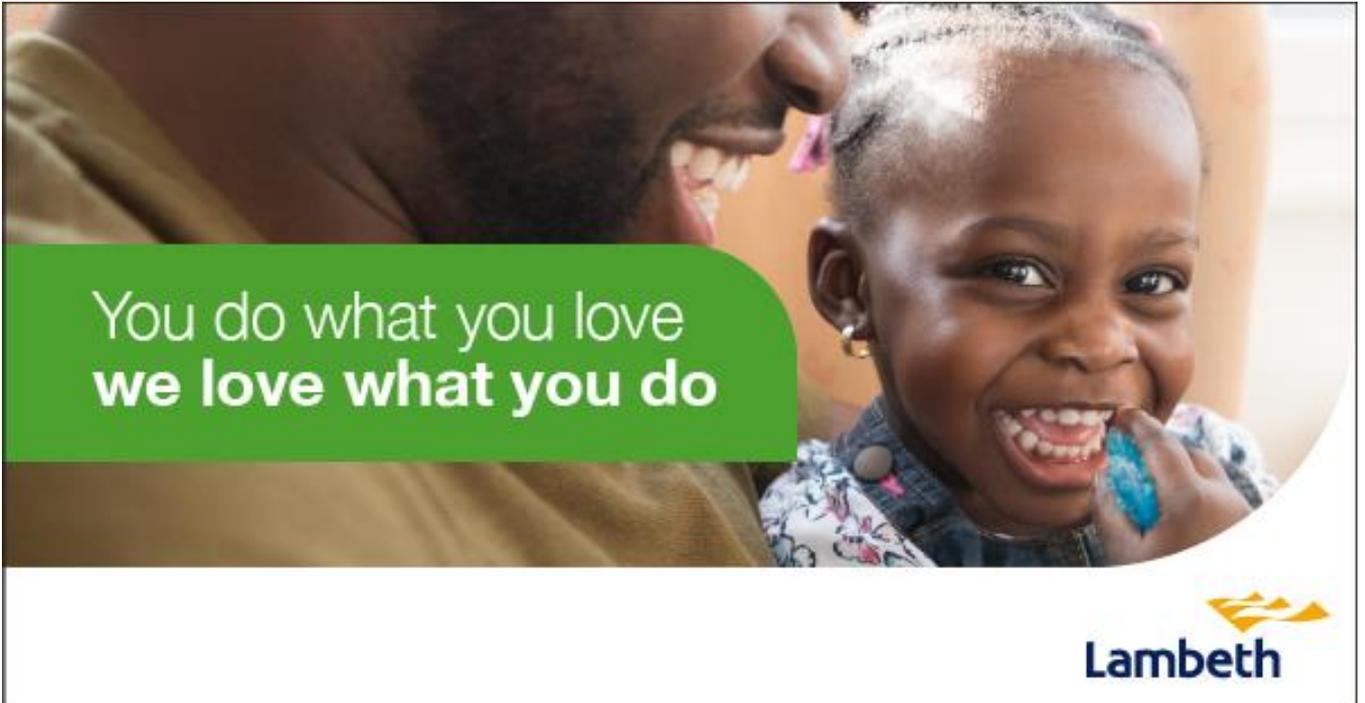


# Children's Services Workforce Development Strategy 2020-2023



**Children's Services Workforce Development Strategy**

**March 2021**



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## About this document

<b>Title</b>	<b>Lambeth Children’s Services Workforce Development Strategy 2020 - 2023</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>To set out the strategy of Lambeth Borough Council in relation to the Children’s workforce</b>
<b>Updated by</b>	<b>Stuart Barratt</b>
<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Children’s Services Workforce Development Board</b>
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This document is only valid on the day it is printed

Date Issued:	Version	Summary of Changes	Created by
March 2021	1	Final version	S Barratt

## Intended Audience

This document has been issued to the following people for Review (R) Information (I) and Review and Sign off (S). The Workforce Development Strategy is mandatory and must be shared with all managers, and staff across Children's Services.

Name	Position	S/R/I
Merlin Joseph	Strategic Director of Children's Services (Workforce Development Board)	S
Dean Shoesmith	Director of Human Resources (Workforce Development Board)	S
Alex Kubeyije	Director of Children's Services	
	Assistant Directors Children's Social Care	I
	Service Managers	I
	All social care staff	I

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## 1. Introduction

The Our Children, Our Future plan, sets out how we want to provide outstanding services for the 67,900 children who call Lambeth their home. The plan sets out, how we intend to bring together all our energy, enthusiasm, and resource across the public sector to deliver this ambition.

Our vision is to recruit a permanent highly skilled workforce, to work with our children, young people, and their families. We want to create an enabling environment, where our workforce is supported to develop their skills and capabilities. We want excellent practice to flourish, so that good quality outcomes are secured for all children and families. This means creating an environment where social workers feel valued and supported to make a difference. We will also ensure we provide high quality supervision and opportunities for staff development and career progression.

This Workforce Strategy sets out the activities, which will establish the conditions for social workers in Lambeth to feel supported, celebrated and invested in. We want to enable our practitioners to make positive decisions for our children. We want to support them, to work towards achieving positive outcomes for our children and families.

## 2. Key Objectives for Workforce Development in Lambeth

We have developed four key objectives in our Workforce Development Strategy. These will for the focus of our activity for the next three years. These are based on the current workforce demands and issues across Children's Social Care These will be tracked through our improvement programme and our Workforce Steering Group.

We have started our journey to recruit to our new operating structure. We are increasing the number of permanent staff we employ and reducing the numbers of agency social workers across our services.

There are clear benefits to having a largely permanent workforce, who are paid in line with our neighbours and other London councils. We will continue to monitor the pay amongst our neighbours, to ensure we are viewed as an attractive destination of employment.

We have made substantial inroads, to make sure our caseloads are manageable for our practitioners. We will continue to review our caseloads, so that they allow our social workers to prioritise quality social work with our children and their families.

At the heart of the strategy, is a commitment to ensuring equality and diversity are promoted, particularly within senior management positions. Across Children's Social Care, we have worked hard to ensure that Lambeth's workforce reflects the diverse populations living and working in the Borough. We will continue to make sure that our workforce is reflective of our communities, in both our approach and our understanding of our families.

**Objective 1 - To recruit a permanent workforce who have the qualifications and experience to support our children fulfill their potential.**

We want to recruit a permanent workforce, to provide stability for our children, young people, and families. We want our young people to keep their social worker where at all possible, to give them consistency on their journey through social care.

By strengthening teams with permanent staff at all levels, we can connect effectively, to a network of supporting practitioners. These are part of our wider team, to support our children's needs across social care and health.

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By taking this approach, we can reduce our use of agency social workers and reinvest monies into our front-line services. These savings will allow us to make further investments in our new improved Fostering service and training offer. The cost of agency staff currently, is approximately 30% more than a permanent social worker. Over the last 5 years, we have seen agency social work expenditure rise by approximately 35%. This figure is continuing to rise, and therefore the recruitment of colleagues to permanent contracts is a main priority.

**Objective 2 - To retain our Social Work Staff through appropriate employment packages and rates of pay in line with our neighbours.**

We know that our social care staff, deliver some of the most challenging and rewarding work that any Local Authority employee can do. We want to make sure that our Social Work staff, are paid appropriately in line with their inner London peers and other London local authorities.

We will continue to benchmark the rates of pay across key roles, to make sure that we retain our top talent. We want to ensure that our staff get paid fairly in line with our neighbours in London. We will also focus on what makes us attractive as an employer and let existing and new colleagues know about our staff benefits in Lambeth.

**Objective 3- To build the right conditions for high quality social work through manageable caseloads and effective supervision.**

We will focus on ensuring that caseloads remain in line with professional recommendations for high quality social work. We want to make sure that our social workers in the FSCP and CAT teams only work with 15 young people at any one time.

We will do this, so social workers can complete their visits and plans within statutory timeframes consistently. More importantly, we want to give social workers the time to understand the needs of our children. This will allow them to develop high quality plans, activities, and interventions where they are needed.

**Objective 4- To recognise, reward and invest in the workforce through a career development programme that supports progression opportunities for our social work staff.**

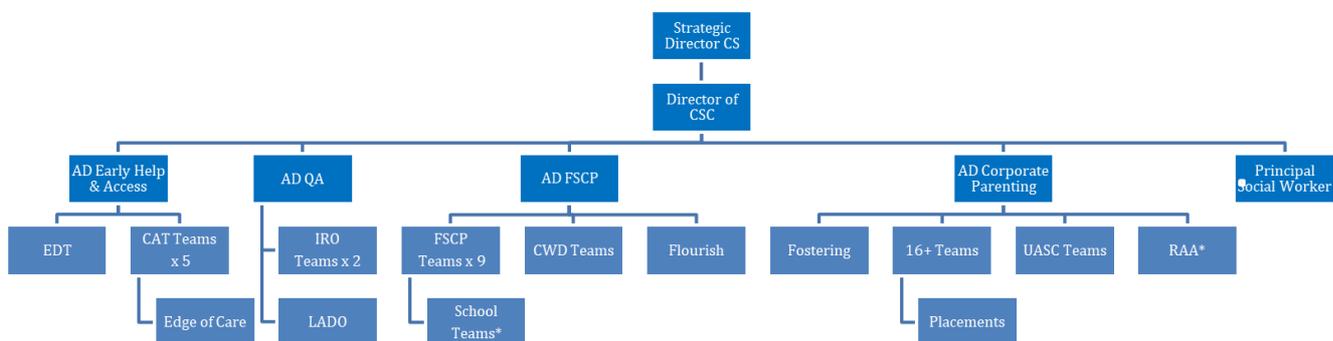
We are committed to developing the careers of our social care staff, through learning and development opportunities. We have developed our practice model, the Heart of Practice to provide a structure of practice and interventions that supports children and their families.

We have developed a revised social work career pathway, enabling progression from ASYE to management roles. In line with our commitment to our colleagues, we will provide individual training plans for all staff alongside access to an annual appraisal and regular reflective supervision in line with our new policy which has been drafted in the autumn of 2020.

### **3. Objective 1 – Recruiting a permanent workforce**

Lambeth has developed a new structure for social care in 2019/2020. This has helped us to create the roles required, to help provide stability across our social care work force. We have created new teams relating to contextual safeguarding and edge of care services. These have helped to fill gaps that existed in the previous structure. Moving forward, our new structure help us to provide a balanced social work structure, delivering the breadth of services needed for our children and young people.

We employ 308 staff to provide a variety of services from early help and support, through to specialist teams to support children with additional needs. Our services are structured into 4 sections as shown in the diagram below.



We are committed to equality and diversity and are aiming to ensure that our workforce accurately represents the community it serves. We actively promote on merit and we are putting in place plans to ensuring we attract candidates who reflect our communities.

We know that managing our vacancies is the key to delivering good services for children and families. We have recruited over 60 roles to our new structure since the spring of 2020. This is the start of two waves of recruitment planned in late 2020 and early 2021. By the end of spring in 2021, we intend to have recruited to 50 new roles in our new operating model.

We have standardised the structure of the majority of our social work teams. This will help us to ensure that we have the right management spans of controls in place. This will also support our new supervision policy that will go live by the end of 2020.

## Social Work Team Structure

The majority of our social work teams operate with the below structure with a Team Manager leading six practitioners including an Advanced Practitioner who holds a smaller, complex workload and a Newly Qualified Social Worker undertaking the ASYE programme.



We will advertise for social workers on a rolling basis, to help ensure we have a pipeline of potential new social workers. Outside of this arrangement, we will place a job to advert on a permanent basis within 20 working days of the role becoming available. We will also utilise several social media platforms, to help reach out to the widest pool of candidates across London and the surrounding counties.

As of September 2020, we have over 120 agency staff across children’s social care in Lambeth. Moving forward, we want to lower the overall numbers of agency staff to below 25% of our total

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workforce in the first instance. By 2022, we wish to have lowered this even further to 15% of our workforce.

Through a pan-London memorandum of understanding, we are seeking to limit the pay per hour being sought by agencies to reduce artificial pay inflation. We do understand however the challenges of the social work market. As such, there still may be a need for an agency requirement in hard to reach roles in the CAT and FSCP social work teams.

We also wish to ensure, that all roles are funded through agreed budgets. Our ambition by the end of 2021, is that we have no unfunded supernumerary posts within our structure.

We will seek to minimise the new hiring of agency staff. We will create a new business case template, to approve hiring agency social workers by exception, where other routes cannot be found. To support this objective, we will be establishing new approaches for supporting cover for maternity and long-term sickness.

Our Senior Leadership Team, as part of a managed programme, will be engaging agency staff as part of a campaign of “agency to permanent” events. We want to engage our agency colleagues productively to demonstrate the benefits of joining Lambeth’s teams on a permanent basis.

We are also exploring an overseas recruitment programme, for Social Workers to help fill Social Work roles within our new operating structure. We hope to have this in place, with the first cohort of overseas workers joining Lambeth in the Autumn of 2022.

We are reviewing how we can grow our own talent, by providing a new pathway into social work. We are joining the Step up to Social Work Programme in 2021. We will be supporting a south London programme, with new social work trainees joining the Programme in 2021.

We know that we need to support new colleagues who are joining us at the start of their social care career. In Lambeth, we support the use of the Frontline Programme alongside other routes into social work. We will continue to support new social workers and are offering support to 15-20 ASYE’s per year.

## **4. Objective 2 - Retaining a stable Social Work qualified workforce**

Lambeth is a great place, to work, live and visit. Our Borough has seen substantial amounts of investment into our communities. Our staff benefit from the overall retail and leisure offer in our district. Lambeth has become in recent years, a vibrant place for residents and businesses.

We want to retain our social care workforce and provide the supporting environment for all our staff. We will continue to make sure that we pay our staff appropriately. We are committed to review our pay grades in line with surrounding local authorities to review where pay discrepancies may occur. A benchmarking exercise has been undertaken and the recommendations of this will be reviewed. In the spring of 2021, we will feedback if there is a further need to make any changes to pay and conditions.

We have developed an Annual Health Check tool to gauge the views of our social workers and practitioners. We will use the learning from this tool, to reflect on areas of improvement through engagement with our social workers in a calendared programme of engagement with social care staff.

From our last health check in 2019, we know that we need to work with colleagues at all levels to help develop their own learning and development pathway. We want to do this so that we help

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our colleagues reach their career ambitions in Social Work. To help bridge that gap, we have created a new Advanced Practitioner role to help social workers bridge the gap between social work and team manager roles.

We have also reviewed our career progression opportunities. A new career progression pathway has been developed working with partners. Newly qualified social workers are offered a permanent position if they pass their training year. We have also redefined our progression panels and we will be holding quarterly progression interviews for social workers and business support officers to take the next steps in their career.

We want to make sure that we create the right working balance for our staff. We will continue to incorporate support for staff to ensure that they have the right work / life balance to support our colleagues. A working group is currently exploring with staff how we can provide practical steps and improvements in this area. A report will be presented back to the Workforce Steering Group in Early 2021 with key recommendations.

Lambeth Council has a range of employee benefits that all Social Work staff can access including our employee assistance programme, a staff discounts and benefits scheme and an excellent pension. We will ensure that staff are aware of all the corporate benefits we offer them as part of their induction.

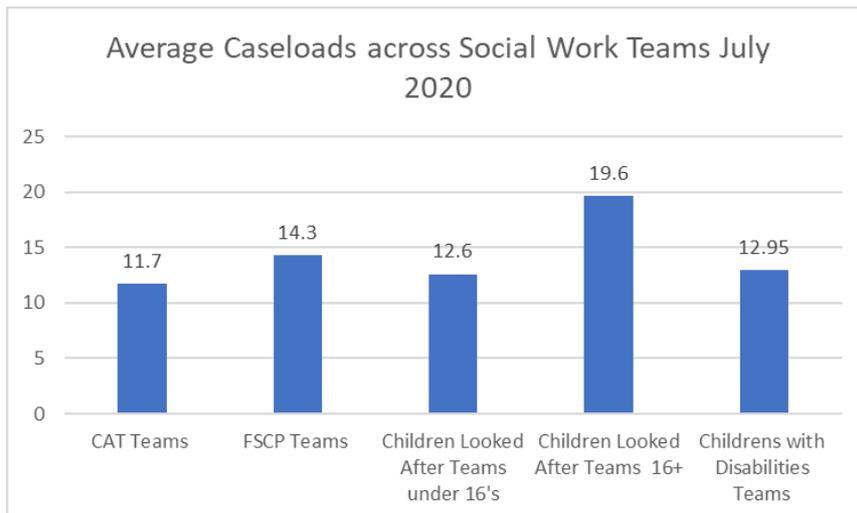
We will be actively reviewing our metrics to review the overall management of our structure to allow us to monitor the numbers of starters and leavers across children's social care. We have developed a new performance framework to help us support the ongoing review of our service, so that we can plan appropriately for changes in our workforce.

We are committed to improving our learning through conducting an exit interview for all permanent members of staff within Children's Social Care. In 2019- 2020 there were **30** leavers within children's social care which accounts for about 10% of our workforce. As a learning organisation, we are reviewing our leavers' information to help ensure that we address areas of ongoing development and to ensure we are supporting our social work staff, if there are trends showing areas of improvement we will need to consider.

## **5. Objective 3 – Building the right conditions for high quality social work practice**

Ensuring that Social Workers have manageable caseloads, is a key priority for our Directorate. By keeping the same social worker in a young person's care journey, we can develop relationships with children, families, and their carers providing stability for our young people.

In 2019, the average caseload for a social worker according to the Department for Education was 16.9 cases per social worker. In Lambeth, we are aiming for our social workers to work with a maximum of 15 young people, in the CAT Long-Term Teams at any one time. We will continue to monitor the numbers of caseloads, to ensure that, social workers can have the required time to undertake visits and develop high quality plans.



We will ensure that all our children are managed in the appropriate part of the social work ladder. Where it is appropriate, we will step children's cases down in line with appropriate policies and social work frameworks. Where there is a risk to children, we will escalate and ensure that appropriate proceedings and actions are taken in a timely manner.

Reducing turnover of our colleagues will help to ensure that continuity and capacity is maintained to acceptable levels. This will help to keep caseloads stable and improve the experience of the young person and their family with us.

## 6. Objective 4 – Recognise, reward and invest in our workforce

We are developing an overarching training offer to meet the needs of our social care staff. In 2016 we launched our practice framework: 'Children at the Heart of Practice' (Heart of Practice), with the purpose of setting out the values and methodologies that encompass our social work offer to Lambeth's children and families. Heart of Practice remains our approach and we are committed to the continuing professional development of staff working in Children's Services in line with our practice model.

Our learning and development offer is closely linked to our approach with a bespoke introductory, single module and accredited training opportunities exploring the values and methodologies of the approach available to practitioners.



We are focused on practice that builds relationships and provides support for families. Our commitment to relationship-based social work extends to how we work with partners and providers, where we build effective professional working relationships that enable families to change and thrive.

Our Staff currently receive, a 3-day introductory training course for our Heart of Practice course, that we also extend to our agency staff. This helps us to inform our staff on our practice model and its

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approach and application in Lambeth. We have also developed a 12-day Heart of Practice course which we are extending to some social work staff throughout 2021.

In addition to the training in the social work methods, we provide a management training and mentoring programme. We are looking to put in place a management and supervision course to support managers with the skills to help them grow as leaders.

We are developing a culture of continuous improvement, through high quality reflective supervision, group supervision and a comprehensive programme of auditing which includes consultation with children and their families. This is tied to our new Supervision policy which sets out the frequency and approach we are taking to providing structured support to our colleagues.

Moving forward we will making sure that we consistently deliver against the principles contained in our development offer and ensure that all staff at all levels have the opportunity to have their own developmental plan alongside their annual appraisals.

## 7. Governance

A Children's Social Care Workforce steering group has been established, to oversee the deliverables contained within this Strategy. This group is being chaired by the Strategic Director of Children's Services. The steering group will provide the governance to oversee this strategy, with updates being provided to the Child at the Heart of Practice Board, which is chaired by the Chief Executive.

The recruitment and retention of social workers is an essential part of the Council's business and a key challenge to maintaining a balanced budget. At an operational level, we will be developing working groups for each of our objectives, to provide the day-to day-activities to deliver on the ambitions put forward in this strategy.



The Workforce Development Strategy sits within into our Magnificent Seven Improvement Plan. This outlines the improvements we need, as part of a wider improvement programme to get our services from 'requires improvement' to 'good'.

We have developed a timeline and plan to track our journey to provide the services outlined in this Strategy. This will be reviewed by Senior Leaders, Elected Members and the Lambeth Together Partnership to review its progress.

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## 8. Summary

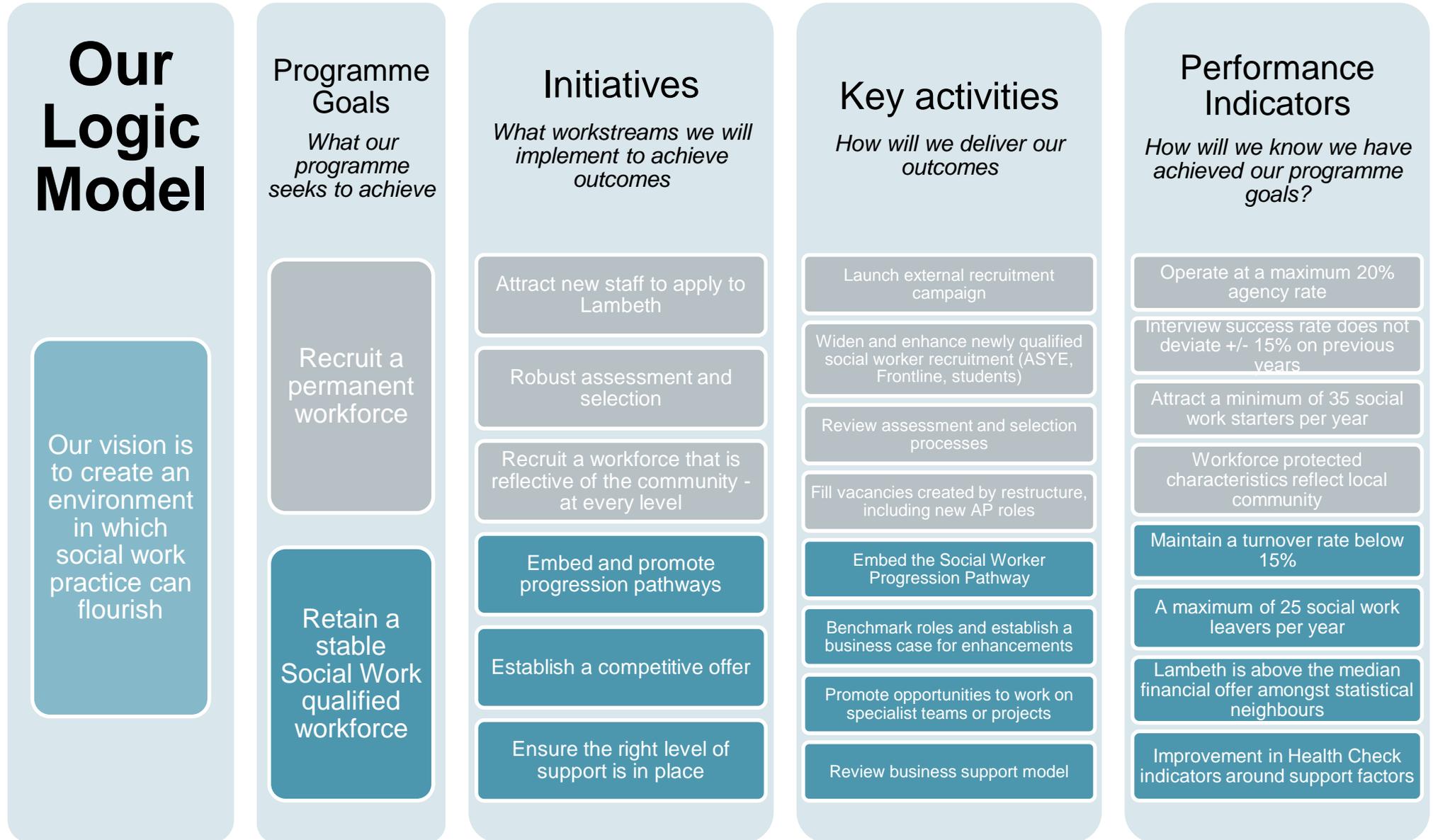
We are committed to grow a permanent workforce which is reflected by appropriate rates of pay and manageable caseloads. We will support our social work staff through our innovation teams to deliver the required activities covering the areas of ambition contained in this strategy

We have set stretching targets to reduce the number of agency staff in our directorate substantially. We are committed to providing services to support children in borough through our own dedicated services, and to provide placements that encourage our children to thrive.

We are committed to being a diverse workforce that is reflective of the communities we are proud to work with. We value our staff and are developing high quality tools, training and practices to encourage social work practice to thrive.

We know that our staff are our greatest asset. Throughout the course of implementing this Strategy we will seek to make the balance shifts we want to see in growing our own staff, managing appropriate caseloads and investing in our people to fulfill their potential to improve the quality of services for children and families.

## 9. Workforce Strategy Benefits and Measurements



# Our Logic Model

Our vision is to create an environment in which social work practice can flourish

## Programme Goals

*What our programme seeks to achieve*

Build the right conditions for high quality social work practice

Recognise, reward and invest in the workforce

## Initiatives

*What workstreams we will implement to achieve outcomes*

High quality, reflective supervision

Manageable caseloads

Valuing staff and treating them with respect

Relevant training at every level

Investment in career progression and development

Staff reward and recognition

## Activities

*How will we deliver our outcomes*

Expand the use of group supervision

Tracking CSC Workforce profile to address areas of underrepresentation

Monitor caseloads and complexity of work

Maintain open communication channels, celebrate successes

Expand engagement with Children at the Heart of Practice training

Career-graded progression pathway for PO1-3 social workers embedded

Improve uptake of annual appraisals

Expand the use of exit interviews

## Performance Indicators

*How will we know we have achieved our programme goals?*

Increase in the number of documented practice compliments

Overall improvement in positive response rate in CSC Health Check

Average caseload of 15 for social workers in long term teams

Case management, professional supervision and group supervision targets met

80% of staff engage in a minimum of 10 days training

70% undertake Children at the Heart of Practice training

15% increase in number of staff with completed appraisal

Minimum of 30% of roles filled by internal progression