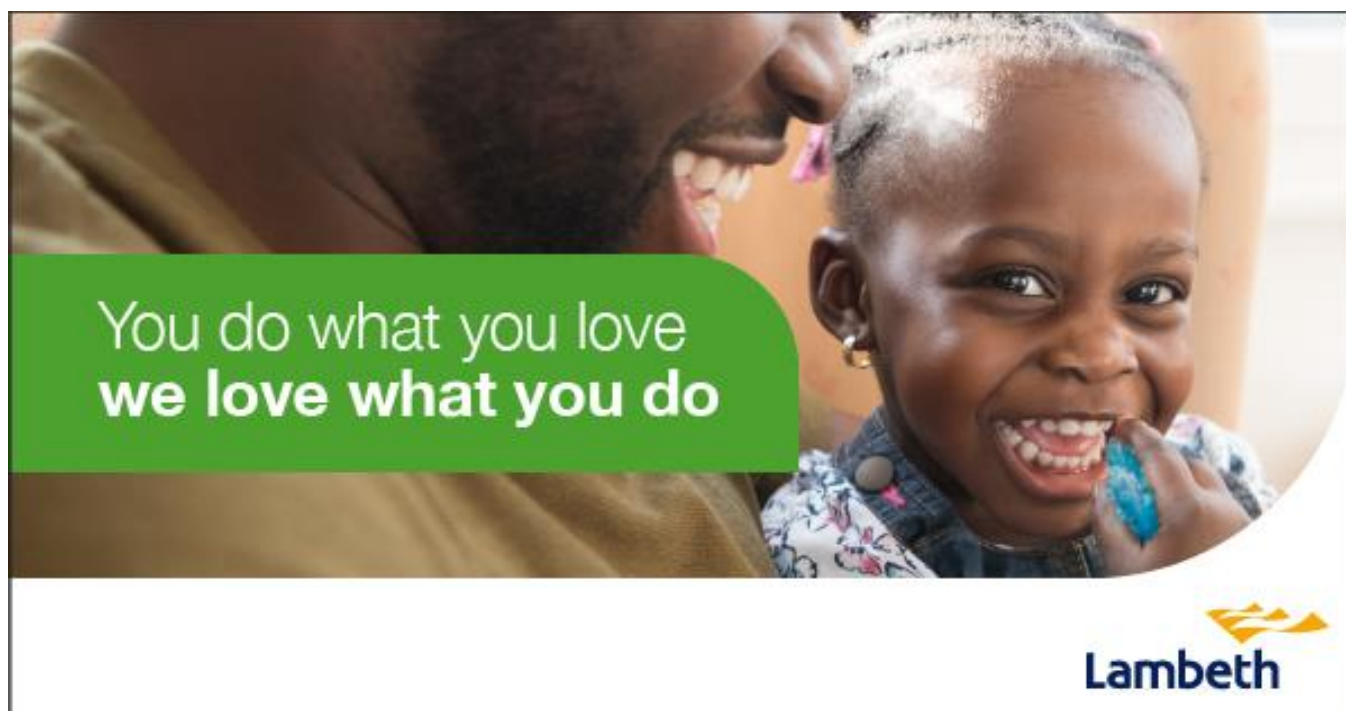


# Children's Services Workforce Development Strategy 2020-2023



## Children's Services Workforce Development Strategy

July 2022



<b>Strategy Approved By:</b>	Children's Workforce Development Board
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## About this document

<b>Title</b>	Lambeth Children's Services Workforce Development Strategy 2020-23
<b>Purpose</b>	To set out the strategy of the London Borough of Lambeth in relation to Children's Services workforce development
<b>Updated by</b>	Nick Le Friec
<b>Approved by</b>	Children's Services Workforce Development Board
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## Version Control

Date issued	Version	Summary of changes	Created by
March 2021	1.0	Final version	S Barratt
July 2022	1.1	Update to Strategy objectives in line with work completed and emerging themes.  No changes to baselined KPIs.	N Le Friec

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## 1.Introduction

The Lambeth Children and Young People's Plan 2018-22, sets out how we want to provide outstanding services for every child who calls 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 be the focus of our activity for the next three years. They are based on the current workforce demands and issues across Children's Social Care and will be tracked through our improvement programme and our Workforce Steering Group.

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

There are clear benefits to having a largely permanent workforce and we have started our journey to recruit to our new operating structure. We aim to continue to increase the number of permanent staff we employ and reduce the number of agency social workers across our services.

Through successful permanent recruitment, we can reduce our use of agency social workers and reinvest savings into our front-line services. 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 permanent recruitment is a main priority.

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 foster an open, transparent and inclusive recruitment policy and process to support this objective.

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

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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.

The introduction of the London Pledge in June 2022 will support Lambeth in more effective management of the agency market. A renewed effort to promote agency absorption will be launched in July 2022 in light of these changes.

**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.**

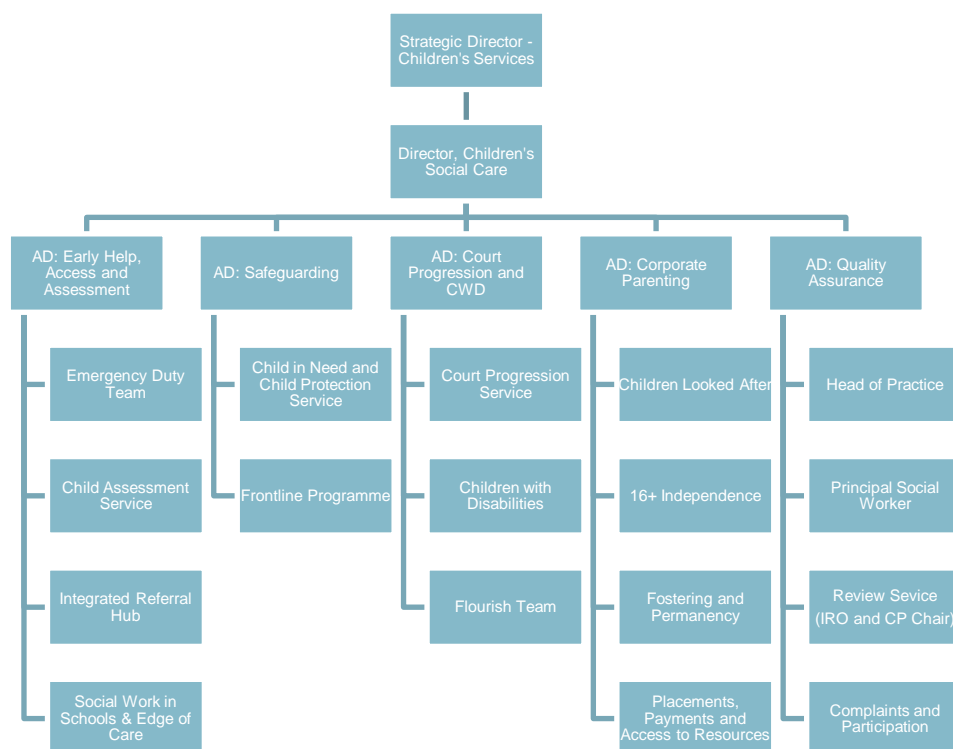
We are committed to developing the careers of our social care staff, through learning and development opportunities. We have developed and refreshed our practice model, Children at the Heart of Practice to provide a structure of practice and interventions that supports children and their families.

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 launched a new structure for Children's Social Care in 2019/2020. This has helped us to create the roles required, to help provide stability across our social care work force, delivering the breadth of services needed for our children and young people. Further redesign work was undertaken in 2022 including the creation of a new Court Progression service and a dedicated service for Placements and Payments.

We employ approximately 480 staff (including agency workers) across the directorate 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 as follows:



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 including redacted shortlisting and diverse interview panels.

We know that managing our vacancies is the key to delivering good services for children and families. In 2020, after the launch of the new structure, we interviewed over 370 candidates for our vacancies including many permanent staff for progression opportunities. In the first two years of the strategy we have recruited over 140 new permanent staff in Children's Social Care. 95 of these staff were social work qualified.

We will advertise for social workers on a rolling basis, to help ensure we have a pipeline of potential new social workers. 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 July 2022, we have over 170 agency staff across children's social care in Lambeth. Moving forward, our ambition is to lower the overall numbers of agency staff to below 20% of our total workforce, bringing this in to line with the inner London average.

Through the London Pledge, 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 particular need for agency requirement in hard-to-fill roles in the CAT and FSCP social work teams.

Our Senior Leadership Team, as part of a managed campaign, 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 will consider new approaches to recruiting permanent social work staff including overseas recruitment, extending our ASYE programme, a welcome payment incentive and undertaking digital advertisement campaigns.

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We are reviewing how we can grow our own talent, by providing a new pathway into social work. We are joining Step up to Social Work 2021, 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 annually recruit a cohort of 15-20 ASYEs.

## **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 local area. 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. In April 2022, we introduced a market supplement (all SW roles) and retention allowance (CAT/FSCP only) for PO1, PO2 and PO3 Social Workers in recognition of the increasingly competitive social work market and retention pressures.

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.

Insights from the Health Check has highlighted 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 our colleagues reach their career ambitions in Social Work. To help bridge that gap, we have Advanced Practitioner roles to offer social workers a practice-based progression pathway.

We have also reviewed our career progression opportunities introducing a new career progression pathway for career-grades social work roles. We hold quarterly progression application windows for social workers to take the next steps in their career. Newly qualified social workers are offered a permanent position if they pass their training year.

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.

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 2021/22 there were **67** leavers



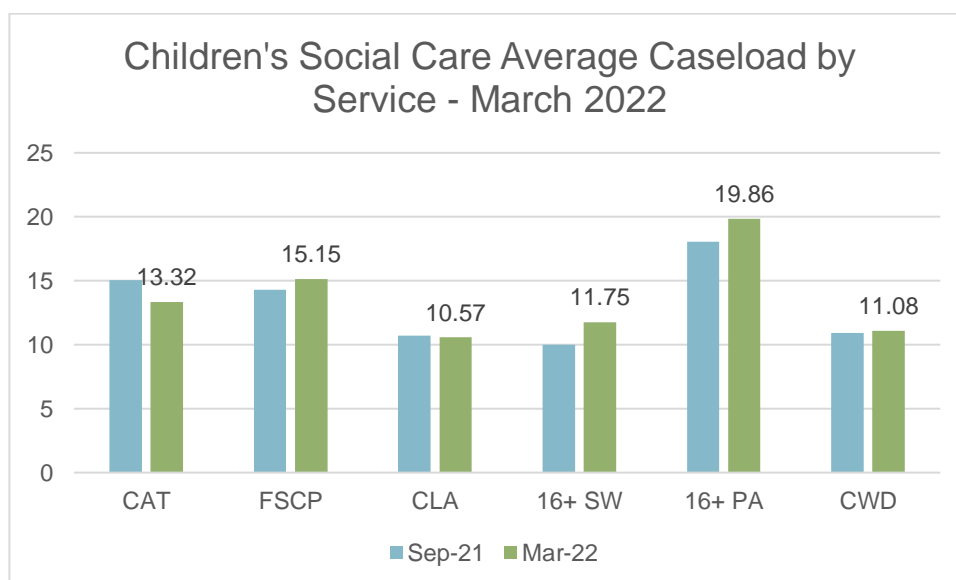
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within Children's Social Care which reflects an approximate 22% turnover rate. As a learning organisation, we are reviewing our leavers' information to help ensure that we address areas of ongoing development. The Principal Social Worker published a report in 2021 highlighting turnover drivers which included: discontent with work culture, workload pressures and unsatisfactory conditions for practice. These challenges are being addressed through the Workforce Development Sub-Group.

## 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 Long-Term Teams. 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 service. 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.

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. This was refreshed through consultation in 2022 and remains our approach.



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A key element of Children at the Heart of Practice is 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 Supervision policy which sets out the frequency and approach we are taking to providing structured support to our colleagues

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

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.

We launched a new Learning and Development Strategy in 2022 informed by a learning needs analysis undertaken in November 2021. The Strategy will be delivered in partnership with the Lambeth Safeguarding Children Partnership, University of

Greenwich and our Partners in Practice, Islington Council. The strategy outlines the training offer from ASYE up to senior management level and aligns with SWE Professional Standards with a focus on six core themes: induction; mandatory training; core fundamentals; service specific; CPD; and leadership and management.

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.

A clear progression pathway for career-graded Social Worker roles is in place, offering clear and agile routes to more senior roles. Career progression is promoted by many roles being first advertised internally before being opened to external candidates, in 2021 a third of all candidates interviewed were internal.

## 7. Governance

A Children's Social Care Workforce steering group has been established, to oversee the deliverables contained within this Strategy. This group is chaired by the Strategic Director for Children's Services.

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

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working groups for each of our objectives, to provide the day-to day-activities to deliver on the ambitions put forward in this strategy.



## 8. Summary

We are committed to grow a permanent workforce which is retained through 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 fulfil 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 recruit a highly skilled, stable permanent workforce and for excellent practice to flourish

#### Programme Goals

*What our programme seeks to achieve*

Recruit a permanent workforce

Retain a stable Social Work qualified workforce

#### Initiatives

*What workstreams we will implement to achieve outcomes*

Attract new staff to apply to Lambeth

Robust assessment and selection

Recruit a workforce that is reflective of the community - at every level

Embed and promote progression pathways

Establish a competitive offer

Ensure the right level of support is in place

#### Key activities

*How will we deliver our outcomes*

Launch external recruitment campaign

Widen and enhance newly qualified social worker recruitment (ASYE, Frontline, students)

Review assessment and selection processes

Fill vacancies created by restructure, including AP roles

Embed the Social Worker Progression Pathway

Benchmark roles and establish a business case for enhancements

Promote opportunities to work on specialist teams or projects

Review business support model

#### Performance Indicators

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

Operate at a maximum 20% agency rate

Interview success rate does not deviate +/- 15% on previous years

Attract a minimum of 35 social work starters per year

Workforce protected characteristics reflect local community

Maintain a turnover rate below 15%

A maximum of 25 social work leavers per year

Lambeth is above the median financial offer amongst statistical neighbours

Improvement in Health Check indicators around support factors

# Our Logic Model

Our vision is to recruit a highly skilled, stable permanent workforce and for excellent practice to 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