



*“Focussing on the child- not forgetting you”*

## **Children’s Social Care Progression Pathway – Social Workers**

### **1. Aims and Objectives**

- 1.1 Bromley’s aim is to manage it’s talent so that people are nurtured to reach their full potential and that individuals grow into promotional jobs. We want colleagues to be ambitious for better outcomes for children and young people and to know that if they work hard and produce quality work they will be able to move up through the organisation. The suite of non-managerial specialist jobs (e.g. Advanced Level Senior Practitioners, IROs), allows an alternative career path to the normal management one for social workers, and a different route to leadership roles.
- 1.2 The progression pathway is an integral part of the Council’s Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Children’s social workers and various initiatives to recruit, manage and retain quality staff including the ‘No Quit Policy’ for example.
- 1.3 This pathway defines a progression route and guides employees as to what level of competence is required to progress through each level.
- 1.4 Nothing in this pathway detracts from a manager’s discretion to recognise talent and progress individuals outside of the timescales defined where this is supported by evidence of appropriate competency. For example, this may be triggered as part of the ‘No Quit’ conversation to ensure the Council retains exceptional talents/performers.

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### **2. Social Work Career Pathways**

2.1 The Social Work Progression Pathway will be as follows:



2.2 Progression between the levels is characterised by development of people’s ability to manage complexity, risk, ambiguity and increasingly autonomous decision making across a range of situations.

2.3 Progression criteria are specifically detailed in Appendix A and comprise a combination of functional activities, specific evidence and in the majority of instances a separate panel interview. Progression is also supported by a range of Training and Academic Modules some of which are mandatory.



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- 2.4 All applications to progress will be made directly by the Social Worker to the Progression Interview Panel.
- 2.5 Vacancies for Group Manager and Head of Service Posts will also be externally advertised.

### **3. Progression Interview Panel**

- 3.1 In addition to meeting the evidence requirements the decision on whether a person progresses to the next grade will be taken by a Progression Panel.
- 3.2 The arrangements for this panel are as follows:

The Panel consists of:

- Assistant Director, who Chairs the Panel.
  - The Principal Social Worker (or in his/her absence Director of Children’s Social Care).
  - Service Manager from a different team.
- 3.3 Decision making will be by collective consensus but if necessary by a simple majority.
- 3.4 The Panel will:
- Convene twice a year (September and March).
  - Determine its own way of operating, such as whether any particular round will involve face-to-face interviews, discussions by phone or email, or a combination.

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- 3.5 Once all of the applications have been received, the Panel may wish to assign each member a share of the applications to review. Each panel member can then present each application during the panel meeting.
- 3.6 The Panel will ordinarily reach a view by reviewing the papers but may choose to interview candidates. Situations where this might be done include, but are not limited to:
- Where the criteria for progression requires it.
  - Where the decision whether someone should progress is marginal and where dialogue may assist.
  - Where the social worker has requested to be interviewed.
- 3.7 Once a decision has been reached the Panel will complete a Progression Panel Decision Form to record the decision-making outcomes and to evidence progression for successful candidates to HR and Payroll.
- 3.8 Progression will be subject to a post being available at the appropriate level. Where a post is not available immediately successful applicants for progression will be notified as soon as a post does become available.

### **4. Implications for social workers working toward a gateway to progression**

- 4.1 As with all continuing professional development, the primary responsibility for developing the skills, knowledge and experiences to be able to demonstrate readiness for progression sits with the social worker.
- 4.2 Social workers at BR11 grade are expected to be looking toward building the experiences necessary to meet the requirements for progression.

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- 4.3 Readiness will not be arrived at overnight, and social workers should make use of supervision, appraisal, and their personal development plans to be working toward progression.
- 4.4 Social Workers are expected to be able to identify and articulate how their work meets the requirements for progression. It is for them to present the evidence of this.

### **5. Implications for managers of social workers working toward a gateway to progression**

- 5.1 Team Managers are expected to support social workers on their journey toward increasing competence. This will include:
- Ensuring supervision takes place and is recorded, appraisals are done, and personal development plans are drawn up, and that these each are congruent with the journey toward increasing competence and to the requirements of the next gateway to progression.
  - The social worker is given sufficient opportunity to do work which develops the required competencies and behaviours, and that this builds at a suitable pace.
- 5.2 The Service Manager is responsible for overall development and progression of staff in the service area. The Service Manager will survey and monitor personal development plans and appraisals of all Social Workers ensuring training, support and guidance is readily available and social workers are displaying appropriate competencies at key stages to work through the career path.
- 5.3 It is recognised that each individual has different development routes, timescales and ambition and that extraneous circumstances may delay progression in some cases. Service Managers will be expected to track progress and discuss with individuals where there are delays. This should be open dialogue to consider career choices, development opportunities etc. Creative solutions should be considered; sometimes a sideways step can unlock potential and allow people to flourish.
- 5.4 Where an individual is unsuccessful in their application to progress the service manager should constructively feedback to the individual the reasons why and work with them to maximise their strength’s and

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identify any opportunities for addressing shortfalls arising from their application. For example, a three way structured conversation between the employee, the manager and the Head of Workforce can be arranged to discuss how best to support the employee.

- 5.5 If there are performance concerns these should be dealt with promptly through the proper procedures with an aim to improve performance and create capability.

### **6. Monitoring and Review**

- 6.1 The Director of Human Resources will monitor the implementation of this Pathway to ensure that it continues to meet business needs, and does not impact adversely and unlawfully on any part of the Council’s workforce. The Pathway will also be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains appropriate and reflects up to date statutory guidance.