



# Cross-Regional Pledge: London Region

The Cross-Regional Pledge confirms how the 'Child and family social workers: agency rules statutory guidance', will be applied by Local Authorities on the use of agency child and family social workers and confirms the relationship between regions who commit to working collaboratively for the benefit of the workforce and the children and families they serve.

## **Introduction**

This pledge confirms how Local Authorities will implement [the DfE's 'Child and family social workers: agency rules statutory guidance'](#) published in September 2024.

This pledge provides clarity for Local Authorities, Managed Service Providers (MSPs), recruitment agencies and social workers on the shared commitments to the agency rules for the region and expectations of application.

The pledge forms part of a wider regional strategic workforce programme that seeks to improve the sufficiency, stability, supply and disproportionality of social work professionals and the wider children's workforce through collaboration and innovation. All Local Authorities, at all levels, directly shape and contribute to initiatives.

The pledge builds on wider collaborative work undertaken between the regions to better accelerate progress and achieve a positive impact for the workforce and the children and families they serve. This agreement substantiates the commitment of all named regions to continue to work collaboratively over the next 2 years, wherever meaningful and beneficial to shared ambitions.

This agreement replaces previous regional agreements.

*The list of Local Authorities in participating regions can be found in Schedule 3.*

## **Terms**

The scope of the pledge aligns with that of the 'Child and family social workers: agency rules statutory guidance' and is therefore for all agency child and family social workers, and child and family social workers looking to move from local authority employment into agency roles across five categories including Children's Social Workers, Senior Social Workers, Assistant Team Managers, Team Manager and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)/ Child Protection (CP) Chair roles (or equivalent).

This 'Child and family social workers: agency rules statutory guidance' is effective from 31st October 2024.

As confirmed in the statutory guidance this agreement will be kept under review and updated versions will be published if necessary to reflect regional and/or national amendments.

## **The 7 Rules**

This agreement outlines the 7 rules that Local Authorities, providers and social workers must comply with to work within the region. Each is detailed below with clarifications to support effective local application of the rules.

### **1. Price Caps**

- a. Agency social worker staff will be paid at the rates no greater than the price caps set out in Schedule 1 of this agreement. All Local Authorities will instruct their Managed Service Providers (MSPs) and any their recruitment agency supply chain to ensure clarity of expectations. Financial or non-financial bonuses that take the worker over the price cap are not to be offered.
- b. The price caps in Schedule 1 are based on Umbrella/Limited Company hourly pay rates, which are inclusive of employers' national insurance contributions and holiday pay. This should be converted for the PAYE equivalent candidates.
- c. All Local Authorities are to work in collaboration with Managed Service Providers (MSPs) to ensure that all social worker qualified roles in scope of the agreement are mapped to one of the five categories and price caps as outlined in Schedule 1.

### **2. Post Qualified Experience**

- a. Local authorities will not engage agency child and family social workers with less than three years post-qualifying experience (PQE) in direct employment of an English local authority practising in a child and family context while registered as a social worker with a UK regulator.
- b. Three years post-qualifying experience can be obtained from a single period of employment with one employer or can be gained over several periods of employment with different employers. It need not be achieved within a specific three-year period but should total three years to be sufficient.
- c. Local authorities will apply the post-qualifying experience minimum to all agency child and family social workers irrespective of their pathway to the profession.
- d. Agencies will ensure that the agency child and family social workers that they represent for assignments comply with the post qualified experience rule and have the experience that Local Authorities consider necessary for the role.

### 3. Project Teams

- a. Local Authorities will not employ case working 'project' or 'parachute' social workers.
- b. This refers to all contracts that supply agency child and family social workers to a local authority via a 'project' team or other packaged model. This will include all packaged models or equivalents, including those described as project or managed service teams, irrespective of the precise structure, name, or definition of the model in question.

### 4. References

- a. Local Authorities will adopt a common referencing standard using the template provided in Schedule 2. The reference template is based on the social work professional standards in England and contains two sections. Local authorities are expected to complete both sections of the reference template for each agency child and family social worker.
- b. Local Authorities will complete the reference template (Schedule 2) within 2 weeks as part of the end of assignment process for agency workers, providing a detailed practice-based reference for all agency child and family social workers on assignment, irrespective of length of assignment.
- c. Local Authorities will ensure that their respective Managed Service Providers (MSPs) have embedded the template for use by the recruitment agency supply chain and ensure its use as part of their typical pre-employment compliance processes.

**Link to download the [National Standard Reference Template](#). Also linked in Schedule 2.**

**Link to explore the [DfE resources to help manage the agency workforce](#).**

### 5. Notice Periods

- a. Local Authorities should ensure all agency assignments are provided with a four-week notice period or align the length of assignment notice periods with that of the local authority's contractual notice period for substantive staff in the same or an equivalent job role at the same point in tenure if less than four weeks. For the avoidance of doubt, for example, if the notice period of a substantive staff member in the same or equivalent job role is less than four weeks during their probationary period, then this is the comparative notice period that would apply to an agency worker. It is not expected that notice periods be increased to more than 4 weeks if the contractual notice period for substantive staff is more.
- b. The agreed notice period is reciprocal between agency child and family social workers, agencies, and the Local Authority. Local Authorities will therefore inform their Managed Services Providers (MSPs) or Joint Venture providers and recruitment agencies throughout the supply chain to ensure clarity with all parties from the outset.

- c. For the avoidance of doubt, it is considered that if an agency candidate is offered a 6-month assignment with an agreed end date that is represented in a contract and/or MSP or payrolling system at the outset of the contract, then this will be deemed as the Local Authority complying with the notice period rule. It is only if the role is ended earlier than the original end date that notice should be offered in line with the agreed period. This will be reciprocated by agency workers and their representing agency with support from Managed Service Providers (MSPs) or Joint Venture (JV) providers as needed.
- d. There may also be circumstances where the entire notice period is not appropriate, including;
  - i. An individual is dismissed due to gross misconduct following a fair and reasonable investigation.
  - ii. An individual asks to leave before their notice period on compassionate grounds and this is agreed with the Local Authority.
  - iii. It is agreed by both parties that exceptional circumstances justify termination of the assignment with a reduced notice period.
- e. Where an agency child and family social worker has left without working the agreed notice and where the above circumstances do not apply, Local Authorities may wish to reflect this in the reference they provide.
- f. Local authorities should wherever possible and reasonable decline to accept an agency child and family social worker who has, without agreement, failed to complete their notice period at their previous Local Authority assignment.

## **6. Cool-off Periods**

- a. Local authorities should not engage agency child and family social workers for a period of six months after they have left a substantive role in their children's services department or that of a local authority within the same region.
- b. The cool-off period will not be applicable where a social worker:
  - i. is moving to another permanent role within the same or other region
  - ii. has been made redundant from a permanent or fixed term contract role
  - iii. is seeking an agency assignment in a different region from their most recent employment
  - iv. Local authorities may also consider exceptional circumstances on compassionate grounds on a case-by-case basis.

## **7. Data Collection and Mapping**

- a. Local authorities will provide the Department for Education with quarterly data on the use and pay to agency child and family social workers (including where supplied via a project team or other packaged model).
  
- b. Local Authorities will mapping all child and family social workers roles to one of the five categories outlined in Schedule 1.

**Link to [DfE data and price caps operational guidance.](#)**

**Link to [summary of DfE data and price caps operational guidance.](#)**

## **Supply Chain Engagement and Expectations**

- a. Local Authorities are encouraged to utilise their Managed Service Providers (MSPs) or agency supply chain partner, to host conference calls and enable other engagement mechanisms with the child and family social worker agency supply chain wherever possible to ensure needs and expectations for requirements are fully understood and represented to candidates. Agencies will be expected to preserve and continuously train this information with their staff to ensure learnings are captured and utilised in all future recruitment.
  
- b. Agencies are not to advertise a role above the price caps outlined in Schedule 1, whether externally or via unsolicited emails to candidates working within a Local Authority. Any non-compliant adverts will be reported and removed via regional governance structures and Managed Service Providers (MSPs) or agency supply chain partner will deploy the appropriate sanction outlined within contacts by agreement with the relevant Local Authority.
  
- c. Local Authorities will work with Managed Service Providers (MSPs) or agency supply chain partner to ensure that any persistently non-compliant agencies are removed, suspended or demoted from the agency supply chain.

## **Appendices**

Schedule 1 – Price Caps

Schedule 2 – National Standard Reference Template

Schedule 3 - List of Local Authorities in Participating Regions

## Schedule 1 – Price Caps

### Schedule 1

#### **Pay rates for new agency staff (inclusive of on costs, exclusive of agency mark- up)**

As referenced in item 1 b) of the agreement, the price caps set out below are hourly rates based on Umbrella/Limited company rates, which are inclusive of employers' national insurance contributions and holiday pay. This should be converted for the PAYE equivalent candidates.

The rates exclude agency mark ups, which are set out in existing provider contracts.

These rates have been arrived at by analysis of data collected from London Authorities' outlining the most common pay rates, as well as in collaboration with neighbouring regions to ensure that they are representative of market rates.

The **price caps** have been applied based on London data.

| <b>Job Categories</b>   | <b>Agency Worker Pay Rates</b> |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>Social Worker</b>  | <b>Up to £37.52</b>            |
| <b>Senior Social Worker/Specialist Social Worker</b>                                | <b>Up to £39.04</b>            |
| <b>Assistant Team Manager/Practice Manager</b>                                      | <b>Up to £41.10</b>            |
| <b>Team Manager</b>   | <b>Up to £45.20</b>            |
| <b>Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) / Child Protection Conference Chair (CP)</b> | <b>Up to £45.20</b>            |

As set out in item 1 a) of the agreement, the rates set out should not be supplemented with any additional allowances (such as travel or accommodation). Financial or non-financial bonuses that take the worker over the price cap are therefore not to be offered.

## **Schedule 2 – Reference Template**

### **Schedule 2**

Link to download the [National Standard Reference Template here](#)



## **Schedule 3 – List of Local Authorities in Participating Regions**

### **East of England Region:**

Bedford Borough, Cambridgeshire, Central Bedfordshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Luton, Norfolk, Peterborough, Southend-on-Sea, Suffolk, Thurrock.

### **East Midlands Region:**

Derby, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Leicester, Leicestershire, North, Northamptonshire, Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire, Rutland, West Northamptonshire

### **South East Region:**

Brighton and Hove, Bracknell Forest, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Medway, Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire, Portsmouth, Reading, Slough, Southampton, Surrey, West Berkshire, West Sussex, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham.

### **London Region:**

Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Camden, City of London, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Harrow, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Kingston upon Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Newham, Redbridge, Richmond upon Thames, Southwark, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth and Westminster