

THE LONDON PLEDGE

The London Pledge is a pan-London commitment by Children's Services system leaders to work cooperatively and transparently to manage the agency supply chain, improve the quality of agency staff and regulate pay rates within Children's Social Work.



1. Introduction

This London Pledge is designed to address challenges related to the workforce of Children's Social Work Professionals with focus on the supply and quality of agency workers through evidenced protocols, adopted by other regions over many years, and a commitment to transparent and co-operative working. This agreement replaces the Memorandum of Cooperation.

2. Objectives of The London Pledge

The London Pledge recognises the need to respond to agency challenges collectively and in cooperation, providing clear protocols and mechanism of control, whilst also ensuring that each Local Authority can respond to their own needs in times of significant pressure.

3. Scope

This London Pledge covers the CSW Professional Workforce for agency staff, including Children's Social Workers, Senior Social Workers, Assistant Team Managers and Team Manager roles (or equivalent).

4. Effective Date

The effective date of the London Pledge is 1st June 2022.

5. Governance & Resources

The London Pledge is overseen by Directors of Children's Services who are responsible and accountable for ensuring that their service managers, HR, Managed Service Providers and agency suppliers implement the London Pledge in a timely manner within each of their boroughs.

Directors of Children's Services will be supported by Assistant Directors of Children's Services, Principal Social Workers, Workforce Leads and Senior HR representatives from across the region, alongside LIIA and London Councils.

Progress updates will be shared with ALDCS on a quarterly basis and discussed sub-regionally (according to ICS footprint) (Appendix 1)

Resources to support communication and consistent messaging across the key stakeholder groups, the supply chain and candidates will be made available in a

central repository.

6. Adoption of The London Pledge

Every borough will include the London Pledge in the terms of contracts and other documents to support the delivery of its objectives, working with third party providers to fully represent its terms throughout the supply chain.

The Directors of Children's Services commit to implementing the London Pledge in their own service holding one another to account.

The Local Authority signatories ("the Boroughs") of The London Pledge agree to adopt the protocols for agency CSW recruitment and hold one another accountable through agreed processes of control and transparency.

7. Commitment to The London Pledge

The Directors of Children's Services commit to The London Pledge for a 2-year period, until 31st May 2024.

8. Management of agency staffing

8.1. Rates of pay for agency workers (Schedule 1):

The Boroughs agree that they will:

- a. Pay agency social worker staff at rates no greater than those set out in Schedule 1 of The London Pledge, instructing their Managed Service Providers and any agencies who supply each Borough of the rates. The rates set out should not be supplemented with any additional allowances (such as travel or accommodation).
- b. Work in collaboration with Managed Service Providers to ensure that the assigned role title and capped pay rate for agency staff appropriately reflects the experience of each worker, aligned to the rates outlined in The London Pledge.

8.2. Referencing quality and supply chain engagement

The Boroughs agree that they will:

- a. Adopt a common referencing standard (Schedule 2).
- b. Complete the reference template (Schedule 2) as part of the end of an assignment process for agency workers, supported by the Managed Service Providers.

- c. Complete the reference template (Schedule 2) in a timely manner providing detailed feedback on the capabilities and performance of workers alongside confirmation of dates, and not defer to the representing agency to provide a date reference.
- d. Ensure that the Managed Service Providers embed the template for use in the agency supply chain and ensure its use as part of their typical pre-employment compliance process.
- e. Work with Managed Service Providers to host conference calls with the CSW agency supply chain wherever possible to ensure needs and expectations for roles placed are fully understood. Agencies will be expected to retain and re-train this information with their staff to ensure learnings are captured and utilised in future recruitment activities.
- f. Work with the Managed Service Providers to ensure that any persistently non-compliant agencies are removed, suspended or demoted from the agency supply chain.
- g. Not employ Social Workers who have recently completed their ASYE to join the workforce as agency workers. Candidates must demonstrate a minimum of 2 years' experience in the permanent workforce for ASYE to qualify for appointments as agency workers.
- h. Not employ case working 'project' or 'parachute' CSW candidates. The boroughs will not use these descriptions or other similar terms to create any case working Social Worker roles that are deemed to fall outside the terms of the London Pledge.

8.3. 6 Month 'Cool-off' period for transfer of permanent to agency worker:

The Boroughs agree to:

- a. Not employ candidates leaving a permanent contract in London to take up a contract role with another authority in London for a minimum of 6 months after leaving their permanent post. This does not apply to permanent staff moving to permanent roles in other authorities within the region. Social workers who are made redundant from a permanent post will be exempt from this requirement.

8.4. Exception process for essential breaches:

The Boroughs agree that they will:

- a. Proactively request in writing an exception to authorise any breach of The

London Pledge rates or other protocols only in exceptional circumstances. Exceptions can be requested on a time limited basis when operational challenges deem them necessary. Any request must outline the reasons for the requested breach using the exception request template (Schedule 3) and be presented to all boroughs within the sub-region (including DCS and named delegate(s)) for approval. Unanimous agreement from the signatory sub-regional boroughs must be achieved.

- b. Ensure that Directors of Children's Services (and named delegated(s) within Children's Services) respond to exception requests within 48 hours of receipt.
- c. Review over cap placements after 6 months, with the aim to bring the respective candidate(s) in line with the London Pledge rates or move to a permanent appointment relevant to their experience and role.

8.5. Notice Period

The Boroughs have the right to:

- a. Institute a 3-week notice period for agency CSW candidates, committing to adopting a reciprocal arrangement between agency workers and LAs to minimise immediate or quick departures and the associated impact on children and the permanent workforce.

9. Management of permanent staffing

The Boroughs agree that they will:

- a. Refrain from proactive headhunting of staff from signatory boroughs committed to the London Pledge directly or through third parties, unless for a promotional role.

9.1 Data sharing to improve future CSW workforce development

The Boroughs agree that they will:

- a. Participate in surveys and data gathering by providing a timely, accurate and comprehensive response to requests so that accurate and reliable information is available to all signatories.
- b. Provide accurate and complete data to the London Council's HR Metrics Service on a quarterly basis (in collaboration with MSPs where applicable).

10. Transition to The London Pledge

The Boroughs agree that they will:

- a. Commit to working within the pay rates and protocols of the London Pledge from 1st June 2022.
- b. Bring any existing agency workers who exceed the new London Pledge rates in line with the new capped (or if necessary, maximum) pay rates at the earliest possible opportunity from go-live on 1st June 2022.
- c. End the assignments of agency workers that continue to sit outside of the new London Pledge. Timeframes to be formalised by sub-regional governance groups.

11. Continuous Development of The London Pledge

- b. The performance of the London Pledge will be reviewed by the sub-regional governance groups with support from London Councils and LIIA on a quarterly basis.
- c. The rates outlined in Schedule 1 will be reviewed annually in consultation with other regions nationally.
- d. The protocols outlined in the London Pledge will be reviewed annually to identify opportunities for reciprocity with other RIIA in order to strengthen the London Pledge.
- e. The London Pledge forms part of a wider strategic programme to respond to CSW recruitment and retention challenges, of which the sub-regional governance groups will be represented.
- f. The boroughs will collaborate with other regions to strengthen the London Pledge and develop shared objectives where appropriate.

We, the undersigned, support and commit to the terms of The London Pledge.

Director of Children's Services

Schedule 1

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

The rates set out below are hourly rates (umbrella/Ltd company rates). These are rates inclusive of Employers' NI and holiday pay ie. equivalent to Ltd Co/Umbrella rates. The rates exclude agency mark ups, which are unchanged.

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 new **capped pay rates** have been applied based on London data.

| Job Categories | CAPPED RATES Agency Worker Pay Rates | MAXIMUM RATES Agency Worker Pay Rates |
|---|---|---|
| Social Worker | Up to £35.00 | £38.00 |
| Senior Social Worker/Specialist Social Worker | Up to £37.00 | £40.00 |
| Assistant Team Manager/Practice Manager | Up to £40.00 | £43.00 |
| Team Manager | Up to £43.00 | £45.00 |

A maximum pay rate has been introduced for exceptional circumstances.

The rates set out should not be supplemented with any additional allowances (such as travel or accommodation).

Schedule 2

London Agency Children's Social Worker Reference Template

This reference template is to be completed for the relevant agency worker to assess their competency in relation to their role, to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children, young or vulnerable people. To comply with the Safeguarding Guidance, you must ensure the reference is accurate and does not contain any misstatement or omission.

Section 1 - Worker Details

| | | | |
|--|--|--------------------|--|
| Worker's Name: | | | |
| Worker's Job title and summary of key duties and responsibilities: | | | |
| Contract start date: | | Contract end date: | |

Section 2 – Competency & Performance

Mark the relevant box:

| | Excellent | Good | Competent | *Requires development | Unproven |
|---|---|------|-----------|-----------------------|----------|
| Oral communication | | | | | |
| Written communication including report writing | | | | | |
| Court work (if applicable) | | | | | |
| Quality of work | | | | | |
| IT skills and data entry reporting | | | | | |
| Able to distinguish between confidentiality and disclosure | | | | | |
| Able to set and maintain appropriate professional boundaries | | | | | |
| Colleague interaction and team-work | | | | | |
| Client interaction | | | | | |
| Knowledge of legislation | | | | | |
| Able to adhere to professional codes of conduct/practice | | | | | |
| Able to engage constructively with the supervision process | | | | | |
| Attendance record | | | | | |
| Have you, or your colleagues, ever had cause for concern about the worker's conduct or performance related to the safety and welfare of children, young or vulnerable people or have they ever been subject to disciplinary or capability procedures whilst in your employment. | Yes No If Yes, please provide details (and any attachments) | | | | |
| Would you re-employ this worker in the same or any other role within your organisation? | Yes No | | | | |

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | If No, please provide reasons: |
| Any additional comments? | |

Section 3 – Referee Details

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Referee Name: | |
| Referee Job Title: | |
| Organisation: | |
| Contact information: (Email) | |
| Relationship with the worker: | |

Declaration (Please tick to confirm)

I confirm that I am authorised to give the reference details outlined on this form.

☐

I understand information disclosed in this document can be shared with the worker and potential employers.

☐

Signature:

Date:

Schedule 3

Request Form for Exceptions to The London Pledge

Exception requests must be submitted proactively (ie. before any hiring decisions are made) to the sub-regional DCS (or named delegate) for approval. Only unanimous approval will enable the hire of any candidate outside of the terms of The London Pledge. Retrospective requests will not be accepted, and the candidate's contract must either come in line with the protocols of The London Pledge or be terminated with immediate effect.

| | |
|---|--|
| Borough | |
| Post to be filled | |
| Proposed Pay Rate London Pledge Rate | |
| Length of Contract | |
| Name of agency representing the candidate (if known) (and if via the Managed Service Provider) | <i>Please name the agency directly representing the candidate</i> |
| Rationale for exception | <i>Please describe the exceptional circumstances that require appointment of a candidate on a rate higher than those set out within the London Pledge.</i> |
| Authorisation by Borough submitting the request | Director of Children's Services (or named delegate) Date: |
| Decision of DCS (or named delegate) | Approved / Not Approved Date of Decision: |