

## **CABINET – 12 OCTOBER 2017**

Written response to Public Question 2:

**Questioner:** Sami Benferi

**Asked of:** Councillor Christine Robson, Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People & Schools

**Question:** The Revenue and Capital Revenue Monitoring Report for Quarter 1 highlights that £0.56 million of the overspend in children's services has been caused by the costs associated with agency staff. When will the time come that we have a children's services team which is fully staffed with permanent employees so as to ensure that we can reduce these sizeable costs and instead invest in the vulnerable young people who need the most support?

**Response:** Due to the nature of the service and market factors relating to social work in London there will always be a turnover of staff that requires a level of agency staff to maintain safe levels of service. In addition, agency staff will be required to cover maternity leave and long term sickness particularly for case holding social work posts. Every effort is being made to reduce the levels of agency staff where possible including recruitment of social workers from overseas and the permanent recruitment of social workers who complete the front-line and step-up programmes. The staffing costs at Q1 had already improved by £30k due to a combination of these actions. We will continue these strategies to mitigate the costs further, to improve retention and improve stability so that children and families can enjoy a more consistent service. These strategies were commended in the recent Ofsted report published in March 2017.