

Item No.	Classification	Date: 30 September 2021	Meeting: Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission
Report title:	Impact of BrExit on workforce – social care		
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1.0. Purpose

- 1.1 To explain the impact of BrExit on the workforce in social care; and the actions taken by officers to recruit, train and retain the workforce.

2.0 BrExit

- 2.1 The United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union (EU) in 2016 and officially left the trading bloc on 31 January 2020. In addition to trade and legislation, the departure meant that the government could develop and apply rules about the employment of foreign nationals.

- 2.2 In preparing for BrExit, the council maintained a BrExit Risk Register. The social care workforce was not identified as a risk. Nonetheless, in the lead up to BrExit in 2018 and 2019, the Children’s and Adults’ Services department required providers to consider the risks related to BrExit and ensure that they had a business continuity plan that included a response to identified risks related to BrExit. Providers did not identify workforce as a risk and instead focused on the supply and cost of goods and equipment.

- 2.3 In addition, a cross-council group of officers promoted to the public, the council’s workforce and care providers the opportunity to apply to the EU settlement scheme before 30 June 2021. Prior to the pandemic, support was available to make the on-line application.

- 2.4 During 2021, a points-based system was introduced for foreign citizens (except Irish nationals) wanting to move to the UK. People wanting to move to the UK to work, live or study have to apply and pay for a visa. Applying for a visa as a skilled worker costs between £600 and £1,500 per person - unless an individual has skills the country is short of. Social Care is deemed to not have a shortage of skills and therefore is not subject to the visa scheme.

3.0 Southwark Skills Strategy

- 3.1 The Southwark Skills Strategy sets a vision to deliver a high quality, local skills offer that is accessible and responsive to learner and employer needs by 2022. The Skills Strategy delivery plan was agreed by the Southwark Skills Partnership in 2018 and has been reviewed and updated annually.

- 3.2 The Skills Partnership met in May 2021 to review delivery plan priorities in the context of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as Brexit. The pandemic has had a profound impact on the local, regional and national economy, affecting certain sectors particularly negatively and creating new growth in others. At the same time, it is considered likely that a potential reduction in EU citizens working in the UK will have an adverse impact on existing skills shortages particularly in key local sectors such as construction, hospitality and health & social care.
- 3.3 Health and social care remains a priority sector in the delivery plan with the development of the Southwark Health Skills Centre, a collaboration between Guys and St Thomas' and London South Bank University providing training and integrated pathways into health care jobs. Work is also underway to develop a life sciences innovation district, SC1, around Guys and St Thomas' and Kings College Hospital. The Skills Partnership will work to ensure that routes into new employment opportunities created here are well developed and accessible to Southwark residents.
- 3.4 Southwark Works continues to support residents into jobs in the health and social care sectors and develop partnership with local employers looking to recruit. Southwark Works will continue to promote their services to care home providers and develop further links to the Proud to Care network to ensure local residents are able to secure vacancies in the sector.

4.0 The Workforce

- 4.1 The adult social care workforce is monitored by Skills for Care and for children's social care it is the Department of Education.
- 4.2 Appendix 1 shows the headline information from Skills for Care about the workforce in London. In Southwark, like the rest of the London region, the adult social care workforce is predominantly British nationals. 77% of the workforce is British with 17% non-EU foreign nationals and 6% of EU (non-British) nationals. Therefore, the impact of BrExit was minimal on the workforce as evidenced by lower than regional average vacancy and turnover rates at 8% vs 9.5% and 26.4% vs 29% respectively.
- 4.3 The Department of Education does not appear to report on the nationality of the workforce but it does report on ethnicity. Ethnicity is not an indication of nationality and therefore there is no available regional information.
- 4.4 In terms of the local authority's data, the council reports its equalities, diversity and inclusion data on an annual basis through the Annual Workforce Report the report presented at the February 2021 Overview and Scrutiny Committee did not include the nationality of staff.

5.0 Impact of BrExit of the workforce

- 5.1 Due to the number of EU (non-British) nationals and the steps taken to ensure that the workforce could apply for settled status there has been no material impact on the social care workforce in relation to BrExit.

Appendix 1 – Infographic of the adult social care workforce in London

