

GM Pledge**Frequently asked Questions**

Topic	Question	Response
General information about the pledge	What is being proposed?	The introduction of a GM Pledge which will set out a series of commitments in the way we collectively support and manage our social care workforce with the aim of driving stability in relation to the use of agency social workers across GM.
	Why are we doing this?	To provide better care and support to our vulnerable children and families, reduce the over reliance on agency staff and manage costs
	What are the commitments in the Pledge?	<p>The commitments set out in the Pledge mean that each local authority will agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hold one another to account and provide mutual support and assistance to other GM LAs e.g., short term provision of staff or leadership advice and support in specific areas • Not to pay any agency social work staff above the agreed rates of pay • To introduce a standard reference template for all candidates that relates to standard of practice for any agency worker • Not to engage candidates leaving a permanent contract in GM to take up an agency role in GM for a minimum of 6 months • To refrain from headhunting staff from GM boroughs, unless for a promotional role • To work closely with the agency supply chain to better enable their support of permanent recruitment activities across GM • To provide accurate and complete data to the GMCA’s HR metrics service on a quarterly basis.
	What will this mean for individual LAs?	<p>By signing up to the Pledge individual LAs are agreeing to adhere to the commitments in the Pledge. This will mean that any new agency contracts will need to be compliant with the Pledge from November 2023.</p> <p>It is recognised that each LA will have a different level of reliance on agency staff reflective of their own circumstances. A timeline in relation to areas such as cessation of any project teams and existing workers paid above the capped rates will be agreed individually with DCSs with a view that all Local Authorities will be compliant in 6 months.</p>

	What does it mean for existing staff?	<p>The aim is that this will create a more stable workforce overall. There will be very little impact for existing permanent staff. However, it is worth noting that the pledge commits each borough to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not to engage candidates leaving a permanent contract in GM to take up an agency role in GM for a minimum of 6 months; and • To refrain from headhunting staff from GM boroughs, unless for a promotional role
	What will it mean for agency staff?	<p>From November 2023 new agency staff will be paid in accordance with the rates of pay set out in the Pledge document. The pledge also introduces a standard reference template for all candidates that relates to standard of practice for any agency worker and allows boroughs to instate a 3-week notice period for agency CSW candidates both in terms of an individual providing notice and employers giving notice to workers.</p>
	Which staff does it cover?	<p>The Pledge covers the children’s social work professional workforce for agency staff including but not limited to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s social workers • Senior social workers • Advanced practitioners • Independent reviewing officers • Assistant team managers • Team manager roles. <p>This includes project teams and specialist roles.</p>
Timeline	When will the pledge be introduced?	<p>There is a collective ambition from Chief Executive’s, Directors of Children’s Services and HR Directors to implement the Pledge from November 23.</p>
Sign up	Which GM Boroughs have signed up to the Pledge?	<p>All 10 GM Boroughs have signed up to the GM Pledge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolton • Bury

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manchester • Oldham • Rochdale • Salford • Stockport • Tameside • Trafford • Wigan
	How long is each LA signing up for?	A minimum of 12 months. Annual reviews will be conducted to support iterations and improvements.
Rates of pay	What are the rates of pay?	<p>The new pay rates are outlined within schedule 1 of the GM Pledge. Reed as the GM as the contracted agency provider have been requested to agree the implementation of pay rates for new SW engagements with each of the GM boroughs and adjust systems and processes to accommodate the new capped rates. The rates set out should not be supplemented with any additional allowances (such as travel, accommodation or additional hours being processed via the timesheet)).</p> <p>Where workers are engaged 'off contract' DCSs will be accountable for ensuring pay remains within the agreed Pledge levels.</p>
	Who will the rates of pay apply to?	The rates of pay will apply to new engagements active from November 23. Each DCS will agree a timeline for the transition of existing workers within 6 months which reflects local circumstances.
	What if the pay rate is higher than we would typically like to pay for an agency worker? Should we match these rates?	No. the pay rates is defined as 'up to x' and there is no expectation that incumbents are upwardly brought in line with revised pay rates.

	Can we pay candidates under the capped pay rates?	Yes the pay rates are defined as 'up to' and LAs can pay under the pay rate as appropriate in line with staffing structures
	What do I do if my incumbent agency staff fall outside of the pay rates?	Bring them in line with the GM pledge rates within 6 months of the Pledge being launched.
	What if my incumbent agency staff fall under the capped pay rate?	You do not need to upwardly bring candidate pay rates in line with capped pay rates unless this is aligned with your borough's objectives. The pay rates state 'up to' to ensure flexibility of application
	What if an agency in the supply chain is repeatedly presenting candidates over the GM Pledge?	This should be raised with your HR Business Partner/HR Director.
	How often will the pay rates be reviewed?	The rates will be formally reviewed annually but will be collated and reported on quarterly and revised if necessary.
Breaches/Exceptions	What should I do if I need to go outside of the pledge rates?	Speak to your manager in the first instance. Ultimately any actions outside of the pledge will need to be agreed by DCSs.
	What would be considered worthy of an exception request?	This is for the DCS group to decide, taking shared accountability for decisions. However, the pledge will be most effective if a high bar is set for any exceptions to be approved that limits any higher rate to truly exceptional circumstances.
	What should I do if an agency retrospectively demands a candidate pay rate post offer, over the capped rates?	Maintain the offer that the proposed capped rate. Report the agency to your HR Business Partner/HR Director to take action with the agency to understand the circumstances and feedback.
	What happens if an LA breaches the GM pledge rates without seeking agreement to an exception?	The DCS/HRD groups will need to decide and discuss what actions should be taken in these circumstances. This might include agreeing a period of time to move to an appropriate rate or that the engagement should be ended immediately.

	Could we request an exception to employ a permanent worker through an agency if personal circumstances dictated it?	If the borough is unable to directly employ the candidate on a short term (or longer contract should an instance arise), it would be advisable to consult with the DCS in the first instance for review
	What if you have a concern about the conduct of an agency?	A collaborative contract is in place across GM with Reed for the provision of agency staff. The vast majority of SW's are sourced by this contract any concerns should be raised with your HR Business Partner/HR Director.
Project Teams	How are project teams managed under the Pledge?	Project teams should not be used to enable case working CSW roles. All candidates should be paid under the GM Pledge capped rates (inside of IR35) and employed via an agency to ensure compliance and quality standards are met. It is recognised that there a number of project teams currently in place and DCSs will agree a phased plan to end these teams reflective of local circumstances.
References/reference template	How will the reference template be implemented?	It will be included as part of the compliance process for agencies supplying. Boroughs will need to ensure arrangements are put in place to for the template to be completed before an agency staff member leaves so that future requests can be responded to in the correct format without delay.
3 week notice period	Can we just provide dates confirmations in references and/or defer to the agency?	No. All references must be completed in full. We have a professional responsibility to complete qualitative referencing in line with safeguarding guidance to ensure the highest quality of service for our children and young people and prevent the circulation of poor candidates.
Resource	Will all LAs commit to providing resource internally for the pledge to be upheld effectively?	Every DCS will need to agree appropriate arrangements in their borough and provide a named delegate to lead implementation.
	Is the GM Pledge just about saving money?	No, it is about stabilising the support to our vulnerable children and families. It is part of a wider workforce strategy to re-balance the workforce with more permanent staff and to improve retention. Spending excessively on agency staff limits our ability to best use resources to benefit the children and the families we work with

Performance monitoring	How often will data be collected and circulated to oversee the performance of the Pledge?	Quarterly via the DCS and HR Directors Groups who will be responsible for reviewing and communicating any action points.
	How will we know if it's working?	<p>This will be managed through Data solution/performance reporting – A GM version of the data solution in operation for the London Pledge has been developed and agreed.</p> <p>It provides practical and clear reporting on the proportion (%) of agency assignments in line with/outside the bounds of agreed caps and offers individual localities the option to see their own patterns and trends (including for specific job roles/types) as well as the higher level GM aggregated view.</p> <p>The performance of the Pledge will be reviewed by the GM DCS and HR Directors groups with support from GMCA on a quarterly basis from November 2023.</p>
	What if it doesn't work?	Ultimately the success of the Pledge will depend on the commitment of DCSs and their staff to abide by its terms. We believe that the reporting and monitoring of performance data will make a marked difference to the effectiveness of the GM Pledge.
	How will any employment of ASYE under 2 years post experience as agency staff be monitored?	Via the quarterly monitoring report which will be considered at quarterly DCS/HRD meetings.
National reforms	What is the relationship between the GM Pledge and the national reforms advocated through the Children's Social Care Review on the use of regulation and agency social workers?	The introduction of the GM Pledge will help meet the potential new national rules on the use of agency staff recommended as part of the independent review of children's social care. We will work alongside the DfE to ensure we meet new regulations once these are confirmed.
Alignment with other regions	How does the GM Pledge align with other regions?	The North West Association of Directors of Childrens Services are sighted on the proposals and are keen to explore how the model could operate on a wider geographical footprint.

Resources /key contacts	Where are all the resources and key contacts for the GM Pledge?	On the GMCA website from 1 November 2023
	Who are the key governance contacts within each borough for the GM Pledge?	The 10 Directors of Children's Services and HR Directors are the key governance contacts.