

16th September 2019**Agenda Item: 13**

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES

CHILDREN'S SERVICES WORKFORCE HEALTH CHECK 2019

Purpose of the Report

1. To present the key findings and recommendations arising from the 2019 Children's Services Workforce Health Check.

Information

2. Social Work Health Checks have been conducted on an annual basis and since 2015 they have encompassed the wider children's workforce to ensure that there is a comprehensive understanding of employees' experiences of working for the Department, both to inform current and future workforce planning and support.
3. The 2019 Health Check survey was completed by 287 staff from a frontline workforce of approximately 1,070. With the survey aimed primarily at staff who worked directly with children and families, this still represented 27% of the target workforce (a 5% increase on last year's participation).
4. The survey data was combined with Human Resources data, and other workforce data held within the Department, to provide an overview of the current workforce.
5. Practitioners operating at the frontline, engaging directly with children, young people, and families face a number of challenges and pressures within the course of their daily work, and there is a need to ensure that, as a Department and as an employer, there is an accurate understanding of how it feels to be involved in such work, and how the Department can offer the most appropriate support to the workforce to enable them to deliver quality and consistent services to communities in Nottinghamshire.
6. The survey covered a number of key areas that are intrinsic to a health check of the workforce, and included:
 - i) workforce demographics and stability
 - ii) having the right tools to do the job
 - iii) having a healthy workplace
 - iv) workforce development
 - v) effective service delivery.

Key Findings from the 2019 Health Check

7. The responses to this year's Health Check survey were the most positive that have been received in recent years, with some significant improvements in staff feedback most notably around the provision of appropriate technology to do the job, and the support offered to social workers from Social Work Support Officers (SWSOs) and newly introduced Social Work Assistants (SWAs). There was an overarching view that staff morale was high and that their experience of working within the Department was positive. Whilst it must be acknowledged that the survey cohort only represented around a quarter of staff, it is nonetheless a reassuring snap-shot of the wider workforce given that most staff who participate in a survey are invested in "having their say".

What's Working Well for the Department's Frontline Staff:

8. The survey showed the following:
- 65% of the workforce has been with the Department for over five years, and 81% have been with it for over two years
 - 80% of staff stated that they envisaged remaining within the Department in 12 months' time, with 59% intending to be in the same job role, and 10% hoping to have moved into more senior roles within the Department
 - 98% of staff stated that they received regular supervision and 81% rated the quality of their supervision between 6 & 10, with 66% rating it between 8 & 10 (where 10 was excellent and 1 was poor)
 - 89% of staff stated that they had opportunities for reflective supervision
 - 98% of staff felt that their manager was accessible when they needed them
 - 93% of staff felt listened to and supported by their managers
 - 79% of staff felt that there were adequate processes in place to monitor their safety
 - 90% of staff said that they were able to access the ICT network whenever they needed to
 - 80% of staff stated that the introduction of Smarter Working and more flexible working arrangements had been beneficial to their work:life balance and their wellbeing
 - 83% of staff felt that SWSOs and SWAs had contributed to more effective working
 - 80% of staff rated their job roles as rewarding
 - The top four positive aspects of their working experience were:
 - having supporting colleagues
 - having supportive managers
 - having appropriate technology to do the job
 - a good work:life balance
 - 78% of staff who had experienced change stated that they had felt supported through the change process

- 88% of eligible staff had received an Employee Performance and Development Review (EPDR) within the last 12 months
- 94% of staff who had identified training needs during their EPDR had managed to take actions to address their training needs.

What Issues Do We Need to Focus On:

9. Whilst 13% of the survey respondents came from Black and Ethnic Minority (BEM) communities, only 4% of the manager-respondees were from these communities.
10. 21% of staff felt that there were not adequate processes in place to monitor their safety, with some inconsistencies in the approach to staff safety across certain teams.
11. 22% of all reported sickness absence is related to stress which, whilst an improvement on the 26% reported in 2018, still carries underlying figures for fieldwork social work teams of 37%. Taking into account the levels of stress-related absence, the uptake of support that is made available corporately is still low.

What Actions Will We Take:

12. As regards the issues highlighted around the representation of BEM communities within the Department's management structure, the Department will:
 - i) conduct a review of recent recruitment activity to Team Manager positions, to identify the ethnic make-up of candidates and the outcomes of each recruitment process
 - ii) request a refreshed set of HR data on the composition of the current workforce so that the percentages that are representative of Black and Ethnic Minority communities can be reviewed
 - iii) explore opportunities to introduce a bespoke management development programme for aspirant managers from the BEM workforce.
13. Staff safety continues to be a priority, and the Council is already investing in the provision of Smart Phones for the frontline workforce which will have a personal safety App installed on them for staff to use. The Department will also ensure that there is more consistency in approaches to staff safety across frontline teams so that staff feel safe and confident.
14. In relation to the levels of stress-related sickness absence, the Department will ensure that:
 - i) communications around the existing support infrastructure are improved both for staff and for managers
 - ii) it continues involvement with the Schwartz Rounds pilot and considers this as a potential long-term part of the support infrastructure
 - iii) it continues to monitor the percentage of sickness absence that is related to stress/depression.

Other Options Considered

15. Whilst the Department would have wished for a larger survey cohort, it still achieved an increase on last year's participation and would rather staff took part freely than make the Health Check a mandatory task.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

16. The recommendations below have been agreed by senior management within the Department, and the actions coming from these recommendations will help to address issues that require more focus over the coming 12 months.

Statutory and Policy Implications

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

18. There are no financial implications arising from the report

Implications for Service Users

19. The maintenance and improvement of the existing infrastructure for staff support and development will enable the workforce to deliver a quality and consistent service to Nottinghamshire communities.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Committee:

- 1) considers whether there are any actions it requires in relation to the issues contained in this report
- 2) considers how it wishes to monitor the actions/issues contained within this report
- 3) agrees to receive an update report in the next six months and that this be included in the work programme.

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Constitutional Comments (EP 23/08/19)

22. The Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report. If Committee resolves that any actions are required, it must be satisfied that such actions are within the Committee's terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 29/08/19)

23. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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