

23 May 2016**Agenda Item: 5****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE****PRINCIPAL CHILD AND FAMILY SOCIAL WORKER ANNUAL REPORT
2015/16****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report summarises the work completed by the Principal Child and Family Social Worker (PC&FSW).

Information and Advice

2. The summary below outlines the key priorities for 2015/16 for Nottinghamshire County Council's Principal Child and Family Social Worker, Diana Bentley, and the actions which have been taken to meet these objectives.

Maintain and develop a clear line of communication between frontline staff and senior management, championing best practice and encouraging a 'reflective approach' to social workChildren's Social Care Practice Forum

3. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker is responsible for facilitating the Children's Social Care Practice Forum which enables staff to communicate directly with the service director and to participate in service development. The forum is now well established, has terms of reference and meets on a quarterly basis. All forum meetings are attended by Steve Edwards, Service Director, Diana Bentley and representatives from all Children, Families and Cultural Services (CFCS) service areas. Issues which have been discussed at the Children's Social Care Practice Forum have included: the development of a new assessment model; Practice Education; office environments; and the training and developmental needs of staff.
4. Members of the Children's Social Care Practice Forum feel that they have been listened to, that their views are valued and that they are able to bring issues from their team and service area to the attention of the Service Director and PC&FSW.

Social Work Practice Consultant Team

5. Diana Bentley is the Manager for the Social Work Practice Consultant Team (17.5 posts). In September 2015 Diana Bentley did a detailed review of the roles and responsibilities of the practice consultants which drew on the feedback from the Ofsted inspection in July 2015, information provided by Newly Qualified Social Workers, Social Workers and

Managers in fieldwork teams (Survey monkey) and Practice Consultants. This resulted in some adjustments being made to the operating model to meet the needs of the service.

6. During 2015/16 the Social Work Practice Consultant Team has continued to co-work, mentor and provide supplementary reflective case supervision with social workers and to develop best practice guidance and workshops for staff which have included completing child and family assessments, writing reports for court (s.7, s.37 and Care Proceedings), direct work with children and working with children and families where there is sexual abuse.
7. For the first time in 2015/16 the Social Work Practice Consultant Team became fully staffed, this now provides an excellent opportunity for increasing the presence of Practice Consultants in field work teams and developing lead roles.

Report the views and experiences of the front line to all levels of management including the Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services and Elected Members

Scrutiny of Safeguarding Meetings

8. Diana Bentley represents CSC social work staff at three monthly Scrutiny of Safeguarding Meetings which are chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by the Elected Member with the lead responsibility for Children's Social Care and the Chair of Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board (NSCB). These meetings are arranged to inform the Chief Executive of children's social work services in Nottinghamshire from a practice perspective.

Work directly with children, young people and their families in a consultation and research role and articulate these experiences across the organisation as part of an evidence base

Service User feedback

9. Diana Bentley and the Social Work Practice Consultant Team work alongside the Quality Improvement Team to ensure that feedback is received directly from children and young people about the service they have received. This included 1:1 meetings with children and young people and also the development of innovative child participation group sessions. The valuable feedback given by the children and young people helps to inform the future development of tools and working practices for social workers to use.
10. When giving feedback, children and young people are invited to also write a letter ("message in a bottle") to Steve Edwards, Service Director. Steve Edwards responds in person with a letter to all children and young people who choose to send a message in a bottle. This process enables the Service Director to maintain a direct channel of communication with children and young people.

Academic research projects

11. In 2014 Diana Bentley provided The Centre for Child and Family Research, Loughborough University, with support in gathering evidence for their Department for Education (DfE) funded research: Children who return home from care: improving

practice. This research has recently been published by the DfE and the research team will be coming to the local authority to present their findings.

12. A member of staff at Sheffield Hallam University has recently completed a Doctoral thesis examining the impact of fatal child abuse upon social work practitioners; Diana is working with Sheffield Hallam University to arrange a session where this learning can be disseminated to managers within Nottinghamshire County Council Children's Social Care.

Act as a 'critical friend' providing quality assurance on social work practice

NSCB Audit

13. Diana Bentley is Children's Social Care's lead representative on the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) Multi-agency audit sub-group. Diana was the lead auditor for the multi-agency audit of Initial Child Protection Conferences in October 2015 and a Multi-agency audit of Child Sexual Abuse referrals in February 2016. These audits have provided a valuable learning opportunity for colleagues within the department and also partner agencies.

Adoption panel

14. Diana Bentley is a member of the newly formed dual fostering and adoption panel. This is a monthly commitment which enables Diana to remain involved in direct practice and decision making whilst also providing a new and challenging experience.

Career Progression

15. Diana Bentley has developed a revised social worker career progression process, which is aligned to the national professional capabilities framework for social workers and clearly outlines how and when social workers can apply for progression. Diana is a member of the career progression panels which are going to meet on a bi-monthly basis, making this more accessible and more equitable to all staff.

Assessment and Accreditation of child care social workers

16. In 2015 Nottinghamshire County Council was invited to participate in the DfE trial of the new assessment and accreditation test for social workers. Diana Bentley worked with the DfE to ensure that social workers in Nottinghamshire were able to participate in the trial and has represented the department, attended consultation events with the DfE and ensured that staff in Nottinghamshire remain informed.

Induction briefings

17. Diana and the Practice Consultant Team facilitate induction briefings every two weeks for new starters to the department. The purpose of these briefings is to offer a consistent oversight of the structure of the department, role and responsibilities of different teams and services. The contents of the induction workshop are reviewed and updated to ensure that they remain relevant.

Lead the piloting and implementation of new ways of working for the Social Work Team across Children's Social Care

Ofsted inspection 2015

18. The Ofsted inspection of Nottinghamshire County Council services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, 11 May 2015 – 4 June 2015 recognised that Diana Bentley and the Social Work Practice Consultants working within teams has improved consistency of practice and has had a positive impact on improving morale and social work practice in front line teams.

Child and Family Assessment

19. In accordance with Working Together 2015 (Statutory Guidance) Children's Social Care implemented the new Child and Family Assessment (Single Assessment) on 29th February 2016. Prior to the implementation of this assessment model Diana Bentley worked closely with colleagues from the Family Service and the Framework Development team to develop a consistent assessment model and toolkit to be used by both service areas.
20. Diana Bentley and the Social Work Practice Consultant Team provided an opportunity for all staff to attend an information sharing workshop prior to the implementation (29 workshops).
21. The implementation of the Child and Family Assessment as a new model of working has been efficient, with social workers and managers mostly feeling that they were provided with the information and guidance they needed.
22. Diana Bentley is going to continue to work with a working group of managers and the assessment delivery team to ensure that there continues to be communication and problem solving so that there is consistency of practice.

Child and Parenting Assessment

23. It was identified that there were inconsistencies in the quality and format of reports and statements written by social workers for court proceedings. In October 2015 Diana and solicitors from the Safeguarding and Social Care, Legal Services, designed a template for completing Child and Parenting Assessments for court and also wrote detailed guidance for social workers writing reports and statement for care proceedings. Diana arranged workshops for social workers and managers in all teams, so that this could be constantly adopted into practice.

Children's Services Workforce Development Commissioning Forum

24. Diana Bentley is the Children's Social Care representative on the Children's Services Workforce Development Commissioning Forum. Diana has communicated with staff and managers at all levels to identify priorities for future learning and development and worked closely with the Learning & Organisational Development Team to ensure that a range of training and continuing professional development opportunities are available.

Champion professional social work practice and development both within the organisation and at a regional and national level

National Principal Social Work Network

25. Diana Bentley attends and participates in the quarterly National Child and Family Principal Social Work network meetings. These meetings are hosted by Daisy Bogg Consultancy on behalf of the DfE and are attended by principal social workers from England. The meetings offer learning and developmental opportunities, an opportunity for information transfer and networking with peers in other local authorities and also for Isabelle Trowler, the Chief Social Worker for England, to communicate with practitioners. Attendance at these meetings has provided useful information and has enabled Nottinghamshire County Council to participate in the debate regarding:
- Development and progress made by other local authorities
 - Ofsted inspection
 - Education of social workers
 - National agenda for the reform of social work.

Regional Principal Social Work Network

26. Diana Bentley attends and participates in the Regional Child and Family Principal Social Work network meetings. These are normally held every two or three months and are hosted by Diana Bentley on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council. This group is regularly attended by representatives from Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire.

Universities

27. Diana Bentley and the Social Work Practice Consultant Team have collaborated with the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University to provide practitioners to do teaching sessions with students and assessments of students.
28. Diana Bentley will continue to liaise with local universities to provide expert input into undergraduate and post graduate training courses and participate in research projects.

Strategic oversight of Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE)

29. In 2015 it became a requirement of the DfE that the principal social worker or senior manager had strategic oversight of the Assessed and Supported Year of Employment scheme for newly qualified social workers.
30. In this role Diana Bentley has been liaising with the Business Partner within Learning & Organisational Development who leads the ASYE programme to ensure that the programme is compliant with the requirements of the DfE and Skills for Care by meeting the learning objective of the DfE knowledge and skills for child and family social workers.

Provide professional individual and group supervision to social workers to improve practice

Multi-agency Problem Solving Meetings (MAPS)

31. In October 2014 Diana Bentley and the Social Work Practice Consultant Team started to offer teams of professionals working with a children and families the opportunity to have facilitated reflective case discussions using a circle of adults methodology.
32. MAPS meetings are designed to allow a group of professionals who feel that despite their best efforts the plan for the child/ family is not progressing and the case is “stuck” an opportunity to think in a creative way and consider different and new ideas.
33. The Ofsted inspection 2015 identified the positive impact the development of the social work practice consultant role has had on multi-agency problem solving meetings (reflective sessions) for challenging cases or cases that social workers regard as ‘stuck’.
34. The team has been asked to present this innovative way of working to social work events in Birmingham and Manchester.

Nottinghamshire County Council Coaching Network

35. Diana Bentley successfully completed the ILM Level 5 certificate in coaching and mentoring and has become a member of the Nottinghamshire County Council coaching network.

Other Options Considered

36. The report is for noting only

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

37. The report is for noting only

Statutory and Policy Implications

38. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Committee notes the progress which has been made by the Principal Child and Family Social Worker.

Steve Edwards
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For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments

39. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (SS 05/05/16)

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

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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