

16<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Agenda Item: 15

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL  
WORK****PRINCIPAL CHILD AND FAMILY SOCIAL WORKER ANNUAL REPORT****Purpose of the Report**

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

**Information**

2. The summary below outlines the key priorities for 2018/19 for Nottinghamshire County Council's Principal Child and Family Social Worker (PC&FSW), the actions which have been taken to meet these objectives and goals for future work.
3. The Munro Review of Child Protection (2011) recommended that each local authority designate a PC&FSW to lead on developing professional practice and standards to ensure good outcomes for children and young people at an organisation and at a national level.
4. In 2018 the Department for Education in Working Together<sup>1</sup> determined that the PC&FSWs have a key role in developing the practice and the practice methodology that underpins direct work with children and families and should support social workers, the local authority and partners to develop their assessment practice and decision making skills, and the practice methodology that underpins this.
5. The PC&FSW is managed within the Service Improvement (Youth, Families and Social Work) Service, is a member of the Youth, Families and Social Work Divisional Leadership Team and has line management responsibility for the county wide social work practice consultant team.

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<sup>1</sup> Working Together to Safeguard Children A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (July 2018)  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/779401/Working\\_Together\\_to\\_Safeguard-Children.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf)

## Recruitment and retention

6. Child and family social work is challenged by high turnover and vacancy rates and a heavy reliance on agency staff and demand for permanent, experienced workers significantly outstrips supply (with children's social work now on the national occupational shortage list)<sup>2</sup>.
7. Since January 2017 the PC&FSW has been working with colleagues to look at how things can be done differently with supporting social workers in training, newly recruited graduate social workers and social workers who are working for the department with a view to improving the working environment and experience for staff and promoting recruitment and retention of social workers.
8. It is hoped that by increasing the number of good quality social work student placements newly qualified social workers can be encouraged to work for the authority.
9. In the academic year 2018/19 Nottinghamshire Children Services offered 61 placements for students from Nottingham Trent University, The University of Nottingham, University of Derby, University of Lincoln, Sheffield Hallam University, Manchester Metropolitan University (step-up and GOO) and Liverpool Hope University. In the academic year 2019/20 to date 33 student placements have been confirmed who will start in September and October 2019 with a further cohort to be confirmed for spring 2020.
10. Early indicators suggest that promoting student placements does lead to the recruitment of social workers. In 2018/19, 25 graduate social workers were recruited by the Council's Children's Services. The recruitment of graduate social workers in 2019/20 is looking extremely positive; 44 new recruits have accepted positions with the Council (38 of whom had been student social workers with the authority) and will all commence their employment before the end of September 2019.
11. The PC&FSW is the lead officer with oversight of the department's engagement with other programmes to enable people to gain their social work qualification and practice as registered social workers.
12. In October 2018 7 existing employees were able to start the Grow Our Own (GOO) fast track undergraduate training programme. The members of staff completing the programme are continuing to work in their substantive posts whilst also completing their study. Nottinghamshire County Council has paid £3,000 of the course fees with the students self-funding the rest by accessing a £10,000 Career Development Loan from the Council. The first cohort of GOO students are doing very well and are all on track to complete their training in May 2020, graduating in July 2020 and then transferring into social work positions.
13. The PC&FSW is currently overseeing the selection process for a second cohort of up to 10 GOO students who are due to commence their training programme in October 2019.
14. The PC&FSW is the lead officer with oversight of the Council's engagement with the Step-up to Social Work programme<sup>3</sup>. This Department for Education sponsored 14 month, national fast track training programme is designed for people with previous education and

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<sup>2</sup> RiP - Social work recruitment and retention

<sup>3</sup> Gov.UK – Step up to social work <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/step-up-to-social-work-information-for-applicants>

experience of working with children and families. Candidates are based within a local authority whilst completing their study for a post graduate diploma in social work.

15. In 2018/19 5 Step-up students joined the Local Authority, successfully completed their training and are now employed as social workers by the department.
16. Nottinghamshire County Council has agreed to host up to 8 Step-up to social work students in the next cohort who are due to commence their training in January 2020.
17. The PC&FSW is currently exploring whether it would be feasible to also host students from the Frontline<sup>4</sup>, a Department for Education funded training programme, in 2020.
18. Additionally the PC&FSW is working with colleagues in Adult Social Care to see if there are any further opportunities for supporting staff to become qualified social workers via a Social Work Apprenticeship.

### **National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS)**

19. The Department for Education has an ambition that experienced child care social workers and managers will be able to demonstrate their proficiency by sitting a national accreditation assessment which is benchmarked against post qualifying standards for child and family practitioners and practice supervisors<sup>5</sup>.
20. The Department for Education promotes NAAS as a vehicle for improving the quality of practice and the outcomes for vulnerable children.
21. In the Ofsted Framework, evaluation criteria and inspector guidance for the inspection of local authority children's service<sup>6</sup> it is noted that the social care workforce should be sufficient, suitably qualified and accredited to deliver high-quality services to children and their families.
22. In March 2019 Nottinghamshire's Children's Social Work service joined the national phase 2b rollout of the NAAS which is an opportunity for the organisation to internally embed the post qualify standards and for our social workers and managers to volunteer to do the accreditation assessment.
23. The PC&FSW is the NAAS lead for Nottinghamshire and is co-ordinating the embedding of the post qualifying standards and preparing staff to undertake the assessment.
24. The PC&FSW was the Council's first practitioner to successfully complete the accreditation, and there are 10 further workers lined up to complete in late summer.

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<sup>4</sup> Frontline <https://thefrontline.org.uk/>

<sup>5</sup> Social work post-qualifying standards: knowledge and skills statements <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knowledge-and-skills-statements-for-child-and-family-social-work>

<sup>6</sup> Framework, evaluation criteria and inspector guidance for the inspection of local authority children's services [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/824184/ILACS\\_Framework\\_evaluation\\_and\\_inspector\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/824184/ILACS_Framework_evaluation_and_inspector_guidance.pdf)

25. There is an ambition that approximately 100 members of staff will have completed the voluntary accreditation assessment by April 2020.

### **Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE)**

26. The PC&FSW is the designated ASYE co-ordinator and in this role has oversight of the ASYE programme.
27. The ASYE is a DfE sponsored, one year employer led induction programme which develops the skills, knowledge and confidence of newly qualified social workers (NQSW). It is expected that all NQSWs entering the Nottinghamshire children's workforce will complete the ASYE programme.
28. The 2018/19 cohort of NQSWs who have been on the 2018/19 ASYE programme have recently completed a survey which clearly shows that the training, supervision and support they receive is excellent.
29. In response to feedback from NQSWs that after their first year of employment there was little structured support, the PC&FSW has developed a formal package of training and support for social workers in their second year of practice. The aim is that this will provide professional support to staff which will enable them to continue with their professional development and learning and to continue to practice as social workers in field work teams and thereafter feel able to do the NAAS accreditation assessment.

### **Social Work Career Progression**

30. The PC&FSW oversees the children's social work career progression process, which is aligned to the national professional capabilities framework (PCF) for social workers.
31. With the support of their managers social workers who are able to demonstrate that they are working at the level of an 'experienced social worker' can attend a career progression panel and apply for progression to salary scale Band B.
32. In the year 2018/19 21 social workers attended the career progression panel and were able to successfully demonstrate that they were working at the level of an experienced social worker. This favourably compares to the 17 social workers who progressed in the previous 12 months.
33. In the autumn of 2019 the PC&FSW will be aligning the Nottinghamshire social work career progression to the national post qualifying standard.

### **Implement the Remodelling Practice Programme**

34. The PC&FSW and the team of practice consultants are leading on the design, implementation and embedding strengths based practice within teams.
35. Nottinghamshire County Council was successful in a national bid to trial the use of Schwartz Rounds<sup>7</sup> in a children's social care context. Schwartz Rounds are designed to provide a

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<sup>7</sup> Point of case Foundation <https://www.pointofcarefoundation.org.uk/our-work/schwartz-rounds/>

structured forum where all staff in all roles, come together regularly to discuss the emotional and social aspects of working in children's social care.

36. The PC&FSW and four practice consultants have received training to facilitate the rounds and are now engaged in a formally evaluated trial for the What Works Network<sup>8</sup>. Early indications from staff suggest that workers attending are finding the rounds beneficial. The trial period will continue until December 2019; if this is positive the PC&FSW and practice consultants will continue to facilitate Schwartz rounds for all staff.
37. The PC&FSW and practice consultants are visiting all teams to introduce the principles of strengths based practice. To complement this the PC&FSW is developing a full training and development programme for social care staff to ensure that the theories and principles of strengths based practice are understood and embedded into practice. This is a long term project and will continue to form a significant part of the PC&FSW and practice consultants' workload.
38. The PC&FSW and a lead practice consultant have developed, trialled and evaluated a process for Group Reflective Supervision, the aim of which is to support social care staff to share learning and understanding, and to promote the progression of work. The programme for Group Reflective Supervision is due to be rolled out across all field work social work teams, residential care and family service teams from September 2019.
39. The PC&FSW and practice consultants continue to facilitate multi-agency problem solving meetings (MAPS) which support groups of professionals to work together and creatively identify different ways of working with a child or family.

### **National Principal Social Work Network**

40. The PC&FSW attends and participates in the quarterly national child and family principal social work network. These meetings are hosted 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.
41. The Chief Social Worker for England, and representatives from the Department for Education, attend the meetings and share information regarding national social work reform and agendas for improvement.

### **Regional Principal Social Work Network**

42. The PC&FSW is the chair of the regional principal social work network. Meetings are held every three months and provide an invaluable opportunity for peers from across the region to share examples of good practice and innovation.
43. In May 2019 the regional principal social work network hosted a successful regional practice development day which was attended by nationally recognised researchers in social work practice. The network will facilitate another development day in 2020 on a theme which has relevance across the East Midlands.

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<sup>8</sup> What Works Network <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-works-network>

## **Adult and Child Care Principal Social Worker joint working**

44. The PC&FSW and the Adult Care PSW have begun to work together on a number of pieces of projects and have an ambition to strengthen this relationship and promote positive social work practice in Nottinghamshire.
45. The PC&FSW and the Adult Care PSW are hoping that in the next 12 months they can work together on aspects of workforce development and learning and development, the annual social work health check, recognising and celebrating success and professional achievement and hosting a joint festival of practice.

## **Other Options Considered**

46. No other options have been considered.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

47. The report provides an opportunity for the Committee to consider any further actions arising from the information contained within the report.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

48. 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**

49. The costs of all the initiatives are met from a combination of grant funding (DfE, What Works Network and Step-up to Social Work training), the existing budget held by the PC&FSW and the existing budget held by the Learning & Organisational Development, Workforce Planning & Development Team.
50. The Grow Our Own social workers scheme incurs no additional cost to the Council; the cost is met from a combination of placement funding from the university and the existing budget held by the PC&FSW.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That Committee considers whether there are any further actions it requires in relation to the information contained in the report.

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**Constitutional Comments (EP 23/08/19)**

51. 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 03/09/19)**

52. The costs of all the initiatives are met from a combination of grant funding from the (DfE £0.271m, What Works Network and Step-up to Social Work training), the existing budget held by the PC&FSW, £0.996m, and the existing budget held by the Corporate Learning & Organisational Development, Workforce Planning & Development Team.
53. The cost of the Grow Our Own social workers scheme is met from a combination of placement funding from the university and the Service Improvement budget which is £0.217m.

**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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