

16 November 2015

Agenda Item: 10

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

SOCIAL WORK 'HEALTH CHECK' ACTION PLAN 2015 – PROGRESS REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The Children's Social Care 'Health Check' was previously considered by the Children and Young People's Committee on 20 April 2015. This report outlines the progress which has been made in carrying out the objectives of the action plan.

Information and Advice

2. The Children's Social Care Social Work 'Health Check' Action Plan 2015 had seven objectives and 20 recommended actions. Of the recommended actions 15 have now been achieved and there has been progress made on five.

Objective One

Continuing a targeted and specific plan to recruit permanent social workers.

3. Since the 'Health Check' action plan 2015 was completed local authorities (both locally and nationally) have continued to experience difficulties retaining a high quality permanent social work workforce in front line child protection services.
4. To help tackle this difficulty the new Quality and Improvement Workforce Development Manager, who came into post in spring 2015, has been working with senior managers in Children's Social Care to develop a sustainable recruitment strategy. In September 2015 a national advertising campaign launched the new rolling advertisement and recruitment process.

Objective Two

Development of a model which will enable and encourage social workers to remain working in fieldwork roles.

5. Many local authorities (including neighbouring authorities to Nottinghamshire) have started to offer financial incentives and benefits to child care social workers and team managers. There has been consideration given to how Nottinghamshire County Council can compete with other employers to recruit and retain social workers in key roles with retention bonuses or market supplements to existing salaries.

6. There is continuing work being undertaken with Nottinghamshire's Human Resources service to agree how market supplements for hard to recruit social work and team manager posts can be achieved.

Objective Three

Work Load Management returns reflect the complexity of work balanced with the workers level of skill and experience

7. A new and simplified workload management tool has been developed and tested across children's social care. The new tool is to become operational from November 2015 and should enable social workers and managers to have open discussions regarding the level of a social worker's caseload according to the complexity of the work and the range of skills and experience the social worker has to undertake the work. The new work load management system should enable this information to be easily recorded in supervision and reported.

Objective Four

The professional knowledge and skills of social workers will be most effectively and efficiently used in all parts of the department.

8. Since the 'Health Check' Action Plan 2015 was completed there has been a full roll out of mobile working devices (Lenovo ThinkPads) to social workers. Despite some issues regarding the connectivity and consistent reliability of the devices, social workers and team managers have welcomed this development. There has been positive feedback that this advancement with technology now enables social workers to be more flexible in their work.
9. The social work practice pilot has been running since March 2015; initially this was a six month project which was extended for an additional three months and is now due to be evaluated in December 2015. Social workers and team managers in teams who have had social work support officers working in their team report that this additional resource has been extremely useful. The full analysis of this project will be completed by the Transformation Project.

Objective Five

Social Workers have access to current research and legislative and procedural updates

10. Following the completion of the 2015 'Health Check', the Principal Child and Family Social Worker and members of the Social Work Practice Support Service have ensured that managers and social workers working in the department are aware of how to access the department's online policies and procedures. To complement awareness raising within teams, a detailed information leaflet has been produced with hyperlinks to policies, procedures and statutory guidance. This leaflet has been widely circulated to all staff and managers.

11. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker and Practice Consultants Team have delivered over 30 practice workshops for social workers and managers across the County to raise awareness and help develop consistent practice with developing and reviewing child in need plans, writing evidence for court cases, domestic abuse and child sexual abuse.

Objective Six

Consistent approach to Team Meetings to be agreed and adopted in the department

12. A guide to consistent approaches to team meetings and team development has been developed with members of the children's social care forum.
13. Following consultation with group managers, children's service managers and team members, a new programme for team development and training will be launched in the financial year 2016/17.

Objective Seven

Ongoing monitoring of personal safety and continuing development of resources and advice to ensure the physical and emotional wellbeing of staff

14. Despite some initial scepticism and anxiety amongst some social work teams, social workers have all started to use the Outlook calendar to record their diary and are no longer using the separate 'whereabouts' system. The IT training department provided staff briefings in all offices to raise awareness and increase skills and confidence in using the Outlook calendar. It is vital for the ongoing monitoring of staff whereabouts and safety that this is consistently used by all staff.
15. Social workers who are lone workers have been issued with a 'Reliance' lone worker device.
16. Information is regularly circulated to social workers and managers to remind them of the need to effectively manage and monitor their personal safety as lone workers. The policy and procedure is currently being updated again and will be re-launched in November 2015.

Other Options Considered

17. This report provides an update on the progress of the 2015 'health check' action plan and no other options are available for consideration.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

18. This report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

19. 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

services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, 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 progress made in carrying out the objectives of the Children's Social Care 'Health Check' action plan be noted.

Steve Edwards
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Constitutional Comments

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

Financial Comments (SS 02/11/15)

21. 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.

Social Work Health Check 2014 - report to Children and Young People's Committee on 20 April 2015 (previously published)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0715