



16 June 2014

Agenda Item: 4

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
SOCIAL WORK HEALTH CHECK ACTION PLAN 2014**

Purpose of the Report

1. This report outlines the progress which has been made in carrying out the objectives of the Children's Social Work Health Check Action Plan 2014.

Information and Advice

2. The Children's Social Work Health Check report and Action Plan were considered by the Children and Young People's Committee on 13 January 2014.
3. The Action Plan has eight objectives and 32 recommended actions. Of the recommended actions, 20 have now been completed, there has been progress made on 10 and only 2 are still to be started. Further details are also provided in **Appendix 1**.

Objective One

Implementation of a strategy to support long term workforce stability, including the retention of experienced staff, reducing the use of agency staff and the recruitment of new members of the workforce.

4. Veronica Thompson, HR Team Manager, is currently working with the Children's Social Care Transformation Team to develop a workforce strategy which includes the recruitment and retention of social workers and first line managers.
5. In order to promote the department and encourage people to make applications to work in Nottinghamshire, attempts have been made to increase the public profile of Nottinghamshire County Council, Children's Social Care. This has included improving the dedicated [recruitment website](#) to include profiles of staff and information about their experiences of working for the department, as well as information about the region and the Council.
6. Efforts have also been made to raise the profile with local universities, including attending job fairs and providing members of staff as expert lecturers

on social work courses. Nottinghamshire County Council Children's Social Care has also been represented at three national job fairs and facilitated its own recruitment events, where members of staff have been available to see prospective applicants and provide them with further information about working in Nottinghamshire.

7. A rolling programme for recruitment is in place, with all current vacancies being advertised centrally. Following the recruitment campaign in January 2014, nine new members of staff were appointed to the department. In March 2014, 29 new members of staff were appointed to the department and for the campaign carried out in April 2014, 88 people have submitted applications.
8. To ensure that there is consistency within the recruitment process, a group of managers has been identified to create a pool to run selection panels. These managers have received training regarding the recruitment process, including the use of competency based interview questions and the development of appropriate tests for Social Workers, Practice Consultants and Team Manager posts.
9. Although there are still social work posts which do not have permanent members of staff, the numbers of these posts is reducing and as a consequence the number of agency and interim social workers is starting to decrease. The current workforce and recruitment strategy is starting to show some positive impact and will continue to run for the remainder of 2014. It is anticipated that a retention strategy will be presented to both Children and Young People's Committee and Policy Committee in the summer 2014, with a plan to implement in the autumn.

Objective Two

Promoting effective communication between senior management and practitioners

10. A Social Care Practice Forum has been developed to promote a clear line of communication between front line workers and senior management. Each team or service area has been asked to nominate a representative to attend the group which consists of 25 front line practitioners. Diana Bentley, the designated Principal Child and Family Social Worker, and Steve Edwards, Service Director, arrange, attend and chair these meetings on a quarterly basis. There have now been three meetings of the Forum with further dates agreed for the rest of 2014. These meetings have proved to be a valuable experience for those attending and have provided a real opportunity for information sharing from the practitioner's perspective and also from a management perspective.
11. The Children's Social Care Practice Forum has now agreed a leaflet and poster for staff and managers which outlines Children's Social Care practice standards, professional expectations and corporate commitments which will be printed and distributed to all workers and offices. The group has provided input into the current transformation programme review of support services

and given best practice examples of how to monitor and promote the safety of staff which will be incorporated into future guidance for managers. The Children's Social Care Practice Forum has welcomed visits from Councillor Peck, Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee, Councillor Foale, Lead Member for Children's Social Care, and Anthony May, Corporate Director Children, Families and Cultural Services.

12. Now that this Forum has been successfully established, it is hoped that the role of the group can be expanded and that additional meetings can be arranged to enable front line practitioners to actively participate in the planning and design of future service delivery arrangements.
13. The Social Work Practice Support Service is now producing a monthly newsletter for all staff which provides information regarding the latest policy development / updates, practice guidance and project work which is being undertaken.

Objective Three

Ensure that there is consistent practice within service areas regarding arrangements for Time off in Lieu (TOIL) and flexible working arrangements

14. In November 2013 Gill Elder, Group Manager HR Operations, produced a notice to remind managers of key points for managing TOIL. This document has now been distributed to all managers and is available for everyone to access on the Children's Social Care Practice Support Service intranet site.
15. This document gives advice and guidance to managers and staff regarding the use of TOIL arrangements and how this can be constantly managed across the service.

Objective Four

Compliance with the completion of workload management scores which are used as a tool to monitor work allocation, and are collated on a quarterly basis by the social work practice support service to chart departmental case loads and case flow.

16. All managers within Children's Social Care are aware of the revised workload management tool. Feedback has been given regarding the tool and a final revision will be completed ready for reporting in quarter one of 2014/15.
17. Following a concerted effort of Team Managers, Service Managers and the Social Work Practice Support Service, there is now full compliance with the reporting of workload management scores.

Objective Five

Consistent use of the EPDR (annual appraisal) process to monitor performance and promote development in accordance with NCC competency framework and social work professional capabilities framework

18. An EPDR process which incorporates the Social Work Professional Capability Framework has been developed by the Social Work Practice Consultants Team.
19. Due to ongoing work to formalise links between the EPDR process and the departmental training plan, this has not yet been implemented.

Objective Six

Social Workers should feel safe whilst undertaking their duties with appropriate risk assessments completed and control measures put in place.

20. This is the objective of the action plan which has required the most work.
21. In November 2013, Diana Bentley, designated Principal Child and Family Social Worker, produced a pocket guide for all Children's Social Care staff giving advice and guidance regarding personal health and safety. This pocket guide has been widely distributed and is now available for all members of staff to access on the Social Work Practice Support Intranet site.
22. Diana has also been collaborating with Mike Bland, Health and Safety Advisor, to create a suite of documents designed to support all teams to develop and consistently record their agreed system for monitoring the safety of lone workers. This was disseminated in May 2014, with the Social Work Practice Consultants visiting teams and assisting them to understand and implement safer practice.
23. The Social Work Practice Support Service has now re-engaged with the Lone Working Technological Solutions Project with a view to Children's Social Care supplying lone workers with electronic safety devices.
24. The Social Work Practice Consultant Team is currently facilitating induction workshops for all new starters to the department. One of the core elements of this induction workshop is a session raising awareness of safety planning for social care staff who are lone workers, or working in potentially risky environments. Between October 2013 and April 2014, ten induction workshops have been facilitated and 38 newly appointed workers attended these sessions. The evaluation of these events showed that all new starters found these sessions to be informative, and some workers felt that they had learnt new techniques and information about how to safeguard their own health and welfare whilst at work.

25. Diana Bentley has also been collaborating with Mike Bland to develop a workshop for practitioners and a workshop for managers, which will increase awareness of risk assessment for staff.
26. Practitioners were asked at a Forum meeting whether they had noticed any changes to the way their health and safety whilst at work was being monitored and managed. They confirmed that the action which has been taken has increased awareness of risk of actual or potential aggression, and that greater emphasis was now being placed on monitoring the whereabouts of staff.
27. Workers however identified that, although this was definitely a positive development, they now feel that more support is required to safeguard the emotional health and welfare of staff.

Objective Seven

Social workers will have the technology they require to do their job, including access to appropriate office space, touchdown facilities, home working and mobile technology.

28. There has been a pilot project within children's social care to look at how mobile devices can be used by practitioners to improve productivity by providing mobile access to electronic recording and communication.
29. The initial pilot was successful and the mobilisation project has now progressed to a second phase which is looking at how the use of innovative mobile technology (including the use of the Framework-i electronic case recording system) can be rolled out to practitioners who work away from an office base.
30. There are currently some Social Workers in the Assessment and Permanence Teams who have been provided with iPads. Colleagues working in the Contact Service also have access to mobile technology, and further work is ongoing to develop a business case for workers and teams in Children's Social Care where mobile technology will be of most benefit to staff and be cost effective to the department.

Objective Eight

All teams will have effective Team Meetings

31. This objective of the Health Check Action Plan is being progressed by members of the Children's Social Care Practice Forum, who have been asked to liaise with their teams and service areas and provide information about how team meetings should be facilitated.

32. Diana Bentley will then translate this information into a single protocol of expectation for the facilitation of Team meetings.

Other Options Considered

33. The report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

34. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

35. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) That the Committee notes the progress which has been made in carrying out the objectives of the Children's Social Work Health Check Action Plan 2014.

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Constitutional Comments

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

Financial Comments (KLA 28/05/14)

37. 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.

Children's Social Work Health Check – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 13 January 2014

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0436

Appendix 1 - CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE – SOCIAL WORK 'HEALTH CHECK' – ACTION PLAN 2014 (Updated March 2014)

Key	Objective met Objective has been completed within agreed time scale	Objective will be met Work is still ongoing – objective will be completed by agreed time scale	Not yet achieved Work is still ongoing
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Objective One	Success Measure	Actions	Responsible Person / Resources	Progress
Implementation of a strategy to support long term workforce stability, including the retention of experienced staff, reducing the use of agency staff and the recruitment of new members of the workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Check 2014 identifies that there has been a reduced reliance on agency (interim) social workers • Higher levels of stability within teams • Recruitment of new and experienced social workers • Fewer people resigning from their posts 	Implementation of a sustainable centralised recruitment strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisements • Competency based interview questions / assessment centre 	Transformation Team initiating the strategy with SWPSS taking this over March 2014 - This work is continuing to be co-ordinated by the Transformation Team	Objective met A rolling programme of recruitment events has been set up. Recruitment programmes took place in December, January and March 2014. Further programmes are scheduled for Mar-April and June-Sept 2014.
		Evaluation of event being attended to increasing profile of NCC Children's Social Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job and recruitment fairs • Links with local universities • Use of media 	Transformation Team initiating the strategy with SWPSS taking this over March 2014 - This work is continuing to be co-ordinated by the Transformation Team	Objective met The rolling programme of recruitment events has incorporated attending: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compass job fair • Targeted event at University • Job centre Plus • Nottingham Post Job Fair

		Analysis of incentives which could be used to encouraged experienced social workers to remain in field work positions, such as market supplements, “golden hello”, and performance related pay.	Transformation Team	Objective will be met Analysis is being completed and recommendations being considered
		The consistent use of Social Work Practice Consultants to support and mentor NQSWs	Diana Bentley, Team Manager - Social Work Practice Support Service	Objective met All Social Work Practice Consultants are having placement agreement meeting where their role to support and mentor Newly Qualified Social Workers is agreed.

Objective Two	Success Measure	Actions	Responsible Person /	Time Scale
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			Resources	
Promoting effective communication between senior management and practitioners.	Social Workers (including managers) will feel engaged in discussions and decision making.	All service areas to have representatives on the Children's Social Care Practice Forum • Meetings for 2014 to be agreed and disseminated	Diana Bentley Team Manager - Social Work Practice Support Service	Objective met Initial meeting took place on 24/10/13, further meetings arranged for 15/01/14, 29/04/14, 22/07/14 and 15/10/14
		Children's Social Care Practice Forum to be used as a forum for consultation regarding important issues affecting the workforce	Diana Bentley Team Manager - Social Work Practice Support Service	Objective met As above
		Dates for Team Manager Strategy days for 2014 to be agreed and disseminated in advance	Children's Social Care Service Director	Objective met
		Terms of reference for Team Manager strategy days to be agreed including when and how agenda for meetings will be distributed	Children's Social Care Service Director	Objective met
		Regular Newsletters to be distributed • Service Director • Social work Practice Support Service • Framework	As stated in action	Objective met As above

Objective Three	Success Measure	Actions	Responsible Person / Resources	Time Scale
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Ensure that there is consistent practice within service areas regarding arrangements for TOIL and flexible working arrangements	A shared understanding within service areas about the arrangements for TOIL.	Managers Information and Guidance document regarding working patterns / time off provisions disseminated to all managers	Children's Social Care Service Director	Objective met on 29 November 2013 Document was circulated to all managers and is now stored on CSC internet site
	Social Workers experience a consistent approach to TOIL within service area.			
	Clarity about the application of flexible working arrangements			
	Health Check 2014 will show that there is more consistency across the division regarding the accruing and taking of TOIL			

Objective Four	Success Measure	Actions	Responsible Person / Resources	Time Scale
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<p>Compliance with the completion of workload management scores, which are used as a tool to monitor work allocation and are collated on a quarterly basis by the social work practice support service to chart departmental case loads and case flow.</p>	<p>Supervision file audits will show that all fieldwork social workers will have a workload management score completed each month.</p>	<p>Workload management scores must be completed monthly and negotiated and agreed during supervision.</p>	<p>All Team Managers</p>	<p>Objective met Compliance Q3 100%</p>
	<p>Full compliance with sending quarterly returns to the social work practice support service</p>	<p>Managers to give feedback regarding the workload management tool which was revised in October 2013. Final tool to be circulated and published on the intranet</p>	<p>All Team Managers and Diana Bentley</p>	<p>Objective will be met Feedback has been received from managers. Revised guidance will be circulated and placed on intranet for use Q1 (April 2014)</p>
	<p>When health check 2014 is completed social workers will confirm that workload management scores are being completed</p>	<p>Managers who do not complete the workload management quarterly return to be contacted and reminded.</p>	<p>Social Work Practice Support Service</p>	<p>Objective met Social Work Practice Support officers have contacted individual managers</p>
		<p>Children's Service Managers will ensure that they review the workload management scores for their teams and add comments about the actions they are taking to ensure equitable case loads.</p>	<p>Children's Service Managers</p>	<p>Objective met Compliance Q3 100%</p>

Objective Five	Success Measure	Actions	Responsible Person / Resources	Time Scale
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<p>Consistent use of the EPDR process to monitor performance and promote development in accordance with NCC competency framework and social work professional capabilities framework</p>	<p>Supervision audit will identify that social workers do have an up to date EPDR</p>	<p>Development of an EPDR process which incorporates NCC competency framework and social work national capability framework</p>	<p>Diana Bentley Principal Social Worker</p>	<p>Objective will be met Draft document has been completed and will be circulated and placed on intranet for use Q1 (April 2014)</p>
	<p>Health check 2014 will confirm that social workers have an EPDR where their training and developmental needs are identified.</p>	<p>Managers briefing to be developed to support managers undertaking this role</p>	<p>Diana Bentley Principal Social Worker</p>	<p>Objective will be met Draft guidance has been completed and will be placed on intranet for use Q1 (April 2014)</p>
	<p>Identification of appropriate learning and developmental opportunities for experienced social workers and social workers in specialist roles.</p>	<p>Individual training plans to be collated and used to inform the departmental training priorities and training plan for 2014 / 15</p>	<p>Children's Service Managers to collate and pass to the Social Work Practice Support Service</p>	<p>Not yet achieved Will be progressed once above 2 have been completed</p>

Objective Six	Success Measure	Actions	Responsible Person / Resources	Time Scale
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Social Workers should feel safe whilst undertaking their duties with appropriate risk assessments completed and control measures put in place.	Health Check 2014 shows a 10% increase in the numbers of social workers who feel that adequate control measures are in place to ensure their personal safety.	Each team to have a formalised system in place for “signing in and out”, which is understood by everyone.	All Team Managers	Objective will be met Mike Bland – CFCS Health and Safety Advisor is preparing protocol to distribute to all teams April 2014
		Safety of staff to be discussed at the Children’s Social Care Practice Forum so that staff can make recommendations about how to improve their safety	Members of the Children’s Social care Practice Forum	Objective met Initial Meeting took place on 24/10/13, future meetings will take place on 15/01/14, 29/04/14, 22/07/14 and 15/10/14
		All social care staff to be provided with a pocket guide regarding safety	Social Work Practice Support Service	Objective met New document was produced and circulated November 2013 – now available on CSC intranet
		Social work support service to collaborate with the Health and Safety team to devise practice standards for the safety of the workforce. Including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual and Team Risk Assessments • Implementation of lone working risk assessment • Safety planning • Incident reporting 	All Managers	Objective will be met Mike Bland, CFCS Health and Safety Advisor, and Diana Bentley are preparing protocol to distribute to all teams April 2014 Diana Bentley has taken this matter to CSC, OMT, all CSMs now aware of their responsibility
		All managers to access the Health and Safety Learning and Development Programme and	All Managers	Objective will be met Health and Safety training plan for 2014

		ensure that workers are booked onto relevant personal safety training for their role		not yet available. Mike Bland, CFCS Health and Safety Advisor, will devise a bespoke event for CSC Social Workers and Managers
		Learning from good practice regarding staff safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical safety • Emotional Safety (health) i.e. serious incident debrief 	Diana Bentley and the Social Work Practice Support Service to incorporate into a good practice guide	Objective met Good practice guide has been created by members of the CSC Practice Forum
		Induction workshop to continue to introduce new staff to lone working and staff safety issues.	Diana Bentley and the Social Work Practice Support Service	Objective met Workshops to be facilitated fortnightly
		Children's Social Care to re-engage with the Lone Working Technological Solution Project to identify is there are any devices being used within Nottinghamshire CC	Diana Bentley and the Social Work Practice Support Service	Objective met CSC has re-engaged with lone working technological solutions project. Devices will be trialled in the Assessment Teams prior to roll out to others.

Objective Seven	Success Measure	Actions	Responsible Person / Resources	Time Scale
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Social workers will have the technology they require to do their job, including access to appropriate office space, touchdown facilities, home working and mobile technology.		Review of “touchdown” facilities which can be used by social workers – considering the number of spaces available, the location of them and how suitable they are for social care staff that will need to have and receive telephone calls of a confidential nature.	Social Work Practice Support Service in consultation with ways of working	Not yet achieved
		Engagement with the ways of working and IT solutions project to ensure that office space is allocated to children’s social care with a ratio of 7:10 for desks	All Team Managers	On-going
		Review of which workers have access to NCC IT at home	Practice Support Officers	Objective met Pilot ended January 2014 – implementation programme now progressing
		Engagement with the mobilisation project including exploration of how and when it is appropriate for social workers to use mobile devices which they have purchased for work purposes.	Linda Ritson – Social Work Practice Support Service	Objective met Pilot ended January 2014 – implementation programme now progressing
		Exploration of how social workers who need it can access secure e-mail accounts.	Diana Bentley Principal Social Worker	Objective met Information distributed to all managers

Objective Eight	Success Measure	Actions	Responsible Person / Resources	Time Scale
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All Teams will have effective Team Meetings	Health Check 2014 will show that more social workers are experiencing regular and effective team meetings	Social work practice support service to produce practice guidance regarding facilitating and managing effective team meetings.	Social Work Practice Support Service	Objective will be met Draft document has been completed and will be circulated and placed on intranet for use Q1 (April 2014)
	Improved team morale	Learning from examples of well functioning team meetings and disseminating to all.	Social Work Practice Support Service	Objective will be met Staff have been consulted via the CSC Practice Forum. Draft document has been completed and will be circulated and placed on intranet for use Q1 (April 2014)
	Consistent practice within teams			