

15th March 2021

Agenda Item: 13

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL WORK

PRINCIPAL CHILD AND FAMILY SOCIAL WORKER ANNUAL REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The report outlines the key priorities for 2020 for Nottinghamshire County Council's Principal Child and Family Social Worker and the actions which have been taken to meet these objectives and goals for future work.

Information

2. The Munro Review of Child Protection (2011) recommended that each local authority designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker 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.
3. In 2018 the Department for Education in Working Together¹ determined that Principal Child and Family Social Workers 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.
4. The Local Government Association, Standards for employers of social worker's in England² states that Principal Social Workers must understand and manage the organisational responsibility across all standards.
5. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker is managed within the Children and Families Service, Service Improvement Team, 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.

Recruitment and retention

6. Child and family social work is challenged by high turnover with the number of experienced workers significantly outstripping supply. The Department for Education estimates that the

¹ [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612212/Working-Together-to-Safeguard-Children-2018.pdf)

² [The Standards for employers of social workers in England | Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk/standards-for-employers-of-social-workers-in-england)

average child and family social worker stays in the profession for seven years and will stay in a front-line child protection role for only three years.

7. Since January 2017 the Principal Child and Family Social Worker 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 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 2019/20 Nottinghamshire Children's Services offered 73 (first and second) placements for students from Nottingham Trent University, The University of Nottingham, University of Derby, Sheffield Hallam University and Manchester Metropolitan University (Step-up and Grow Our Own). In the academic year 2020/21 there are going to be approximately 65 placements (reduced number from previous year as there are no Step up or Grow Our Own students having placements).
10. In 2020, 23 of the 44 Newly Qualified Social Workers recruited had their final social work placement with the department, and so far in 2021 the department has already recruited 24 Newly Qualified Social Workers who had their final social work placement with the department.
11. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker is also the lead officer with oversight of the department's engagement with training programmes which enable existing members of staff to gain their social work qualification and practice as registered social workers.
12. In January 2019, seven existing employees joined the regionally commissioned Grow Our Own fast track undergraduate training programme and in January 2020 a further seven members of staff were able to start the programme. Members of staff completing the programme continue to work in their substantive posts whilst also completing their study. The Council has paid £3,000 of the course fees with the students self-funding the remainder by accessing a £10,000 Career Development Loan from the Council. The first cohort of seven students have now all completed their studies, graduated, and have all started work as Newly Qualified Social Workers. Of the second cohort, one person had to withdraw, with the remaining six people on track to complete their studies in April 2021 and should move into Newly Qualified Social Worker positions this year. This programme has been successful, providing career progression opportunities for existing members of staff but has not been re-commissioned in 2021 by our regional partners.
13. In November 2020 the Children and Young People's Committee approved a proposal to establish a Social Work Apprenticeship programme in Children's Social Care Services.
14. Following an internal recruitment process four Children's Apprentice Social Workers were recruited and commenced their three year training programme in January 2021.

15. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker is the lead officer with oversight of the Council's engagement with the Step-up to Social Work programme³. This Department for Education sponsored 14 month, national fast track training programme is designed for people with previous education and 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.
16. In February 2020, seven Step-up students joined the Local Authority, and are due to complete their training in March 2021, six of these students have chosen to remain working with the Authority as Newly Qualified Social Workers.
17. Nottinghamshire County Council has agreed to host up to eight Step-up to social work students in the next cohort. The recruitment process will begin in February 2021 and successful candidates will join the Local Authority and commence their training in January 2022.

National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS)

18. The Department for Education has an ambition that experienced childcare 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 supervisors⁴.
19. The Department for Education promotes NAAS as a vehicle for improving the quality of practice and the outcomes for vulnerable children.
20. In the Ofsted Framework, evaluation criteria and inspector guidance for the inspection of local authority children's services⁵ 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.
21. In March 2019 Nottinghamshire's Children's Social Work service joined the national phased rollout of the NAAS.
22. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker is the NAAS lead for Nottinghamshire and is co-ordinating the embedding of the post qualifying standards and preparing staff to undertake the assessment.
23. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker was the Council's first practitioner to successfully complete the accreditation, with a further 15 workers successfully completing the accreditation in 2019.
24. The ambitious plans that up to 100 Nottinghamshire County Council Child Care Social Workers would complete the voluntary accreditation assessment in 2020 were disrupted by the Covid-19 public health emergency forcing all assessment centres to close for the whole year.

³ [Apply for Step Up to Social Work - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-step-up-to-social-work)

⁴ [Social work post-qualifying standards: knowledge and skills statements - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/social-work-post-qualifying-standards-knowledge-and-skills-statements)

⁵ [Inspecting local authority children's services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services)

25. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker is continuing to work with the Department for Education's delivery partner to ensure that staff who want to do the voluntary assessment will be prepared when the assessment centres re-open in 2021.
26. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker has been recruited as an associate member of the national NAAS Standard Setting Panel.

Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE)

27. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker is the designated ASYE co-ordinator and in this role has oversight of the programme.
28. The ASYE is a Department for Education sponsored, one year employer-led induction programme which develops the skills, knowledge and confidence of newly qualified social workers (NQSWs).
29. In 2019/2020 52 NQSWs completed the ASYE programme and there are currently 55 NQSWs doing the programme.
30. As a result of the Covid-19 public health emergency the 2019/20 and 2020/21 NQSW programmes had to be adapted and re-designed so all training and mentoring sessions for the Newly Qualified Social Worker could be completed via digital platforms.
31. In March 2020, the department along with commissioned training providers had to quickly adapt, initially there were some cancelled and delayed training sessions, but as the year progressed everyone has become more adept to using digital platforms and a full and comprehensive training programme is now being provided.
32. In July 2020, Newly Qualified Social Workers, their mentors and their managers were invited to complete a national 360 analysis of the ASYE programme; in total 42 people from Nottinghamshire completed the survey and identified that every area of the programme was working well. The survey highlighted many strengths including the development needs of individual NQSWs being clearly identified, recorded, and reviewed, NQSWs receiving regular reflective supervision as stated in the Local Government Association Employer Standards and CPD and career progression opportunities following on from the ASYE are in place for social workers.

Social Work Career Progression

33. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker oversees the children's social work career progression process, which is aligned to the social workers Department for Education Post Qualifying Standards for Social Workers⁶.
34. 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.

⁶ [Social work post-qualifying standards: knowledge and skills statements - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-work-post-qualifying-standards-knowledge-and-skills-statements)

35. In 2020 25 social workers attended the career progression panel and successfully demonstrated that they were working at the level of an experienced social worker. This favourably compares with the 19 social workers in 2019 and 17 in 2018 who progressed, and indicates better retention with more social workers staying longer in frontline child protection.

Social Work England

36. On 2nd December 2019 Social Work England become the new professional regulator for social workers. From 1st December 2020 all qualified social workers who wanted to continue to practice as a registered social worker had to complete a new registration and complete a professional development portfolio.
37. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker in collaboration with the Adult Care Principal Social Worker arranged engagement sessions with Social Work England to ensure that everyone had the information they needed to complete their re-registration.
38. In early December Social Work England confirmed that nationally 93% of social workers had completed their re-registration on time, and in Nottinghamshire all social worker (permanent staff and agency) had completed their re-registration.

Social Work Health Check

39. In December 2020 the Local Government Association invited all principal social workers to participate in their social work health check.⁷
40. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker and Adult Care Principal Social Worker completed the survey together and supported and encouraged all social workers in all teams and services in Nottinghamshire to complete the survey.
41. The children's health check survey was completed by 154 social workers, which is a statistically significant number, representing 37% of the completed survey in the East Midlands region and 5% of the survey completed in England.
42. The initial findings provided on 21st January 2021 give a comparison between Nottinghamshire County Council's Children's Social Workers mean scores and the regional and national averages. In every area Nottinghamshire County Council's Children's Social Workers have given higher scores than the national average and scored significantly higher than the regional average. The Health check has not identified any standards where improvement is needed and only one area which requires monitoring.
43. It was pleasing to see that on average social workers were 83% certain that they did not intend to leave the department in the next 12 months.
44. More detailed analysis of the complete results will be undertaken when they are provided and will be used by the Principal Child and Family Social Worker and Adult Care Principal Social Worker to develop a 2021/22 plan.

⁷ [New social work health check 2020 | Local Government Association](#)

Implement the Remodelling Practice Programme

45. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker and the team of practice consultants are leading on the design, implementation and embedding strengths-based practice within teams.
46. In 2019 the Council was successful in a national bid to trial the use of Schwartz Rounds⁸ in a children's social care context. Schwartz Rounds are designed to provide a 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.
47. The externally evaluated trial period ran from June to December 2019. Staff attending Schwartz rounds gave positive feedback and a decision was made that the Youth, Families and Social Work division would offer Schwartz rounds to all members of staff from March 2020.
48. Due to the Covid-19 public health emergency it was not possible for groups of practitioners to meet together and all planned Schwartz Rounds had to be cancelled.
49. In the summer 2020, the Point of Care Foundation provided training for our Schwartz round facilitators to enable them to hold Team Time / Schwartz Rounds⁹, 45-minute reflective sessions, facilitated online and providing an opportunity for people taking part to share experiences of their work.
50. In 2020, six Team Time sessions were held across the department, and staff attending valued the opportunity to share their own experiences and to listen to their colleagues' experiences of working during the Covid-19 public health emergency. Due to popular demand a further series of Team Time events have been scheduled from March to June 2021.
51. In 2020, the Council was successful in a national bid to join the What Works for Children's Social Care, Happier, Healthier Professionals research programme, testing the effectiveness of behavioural interventions designed to promote the wellbeing of social workers. In 2021, social workers will be sent an edited video containing messages from Care Leavers ('beneficiaries') from the Local Authority, in which they reflect upon the importance of the role of their social worker and the impact it has had on their life.
52. In 2019/20, the Principal Child and Family Social Worker and practice consultants visited all social work teams to introduce the principles of strengths-based practice. In 2020, complementary training was commissioned and delivered for senior managers, service managers and team managers, and a strengths-based practice development half day was attended digitally by over 600 colleagues from across the service.
53. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker and a lead practice consultant 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

⁸ [Schwartz Rounds | Point of Care Foundation](#)

⁹ [Team Time | Point of Care Foundation](#)

progression of work. In 2019/20 the model was rolled out across all teams and is now seen as 'practice as normal' in field work social work teams.

54. For 2021/22 the Principal Child and Family Social Worker will be designing a further training and development programme to ensure practice supervisors and practitioners have knowledge and access to resources and tools they need continue to embed strengths-based practice.

National Principal Social Work Network

55. In 2020, the Covid-19 public health emergency reinforced the importance of the National Principal Social Work Network. As social work practice developed and changed in response to Covid-19, resources and information were shared between Principal Child and Family Social Workers, the Chief Social Worker, Social Work England, Ofsted and the Department for Education.
56. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker has collated and disseminated Covid-19 guidance and best practice examples and has maintained an intranet site with up to date information for our staff.
57. In 2021 the Chief Social Worker for England, and representatives from the Department for Education, are continuing to have monthly meetings with members of the National Principal Social Work Network to share information regarding national social work reform and agendas for improvement.

Regional Principal Social Work Network

58. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker is the chair of the Regional Principal Social Work Network. Meetings are held every month and provide an invaluable opportunity for peers from across the region to share examples of good practice and innovation.
59. The network has a 2021 development plan and hopes to facilitate regional development sessions on themes which have relevance across the East Midlands.

Adult and Child Care Principal Social Worker joint working

60. The Principal Child and Family Social Worker and the Adult Care Principal Social Worker work together on a number of projects to strengthen relationships and promote positive social work practice in Nottinghamshire, including the Department for Health Workforce Race Quality Standards, a joint Social Work Health Check Action Plan and the education and training of social workers.

Other Options Considered

61. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

62. 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

63. 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

64. 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 Principal Child and Family Social Worker and the existing budget held by the Learning & Organisational Development, Workforce Planning & Development Team.
65. 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 Principal Child & Family Social Worker.

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 (LW 25/02/21)

66. Children & Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

Financial Comments (SAS 26/02/21)

67. 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, £0.964m and the existing budget held by the Corporate Learning & Organisational Development, Workforce Planning & Development Team.

68. 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 £0.300m.

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.

[Changes to the staffing establishment in Children's Social Care to establish a Social Work Apprenticeship Programme – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 30th November 2020](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C1452