

20 April 2015

Agenda Item: 05

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

### **PRINCIPAL CHILD AND FAMILY SOCIAL WORKER (PC&FSW) ANNUAL REPORT 2014**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide a progress report on the work of the Principal Child and Family Social Worker for 2014.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. The key purpose and responsibilities of a Principal Child and Family Social Worker (PC&FSW) were outlined in The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report A child-centred system (May 2011) which recommended the "designation, in each local authority, of a Principal Child and Family Social Worker, who is still doing direct work, to advise on enhancing practice skills relaying the views of social workers to all levels of management."
3. The summary below outlines the key priorities for Nottinghamshire's PC&FSW, Diana Bentley, the actions which have been taken and the outcomes.

#### **Create a clear line of communication between frontline staff and senior management, championing best practice and encouraging a 'reflective approach' to social work**

##### Development of a quarterly Children's Social Care Practice Forum

4. The Forum is now well established, has terms of reference and meets on a quarterly basis. All Forum meetings are attended by the Service Director for Children's Social Care (CSC), the PC&FSW and representatives from all Children's Social Care service areas. Issues which have been discussed at the Forum have included: the health and safety of staff; recruitment and retention; and how to facilitate a good team meeting. Information from the Forum has directly influenced developments in these areas.
5. Members of the 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 for Children's Social Care and the PC&FSW.

##### Establishing a 'complex case' forum process

6. This has now been achieved with the Multi-agency Problem Solving (MAPS) meetings being formally launched in September 2014. These meetings are facilitated using the

Circle of Adults Methodology which enables a reflective and more creative problem solving discussion. The feedback received has been very positive, showing that CSC staff and professionals from other agencies have welcomed the opportunity to have structured reflective case supervision. A formal evaluation of the MAPS meetings will be completed in April 2015.

#### Professional Consultation

7. Diana Bentley, the PC&FSW, has offered professional consultation with the Transformation Team who have been developing recruitment and retention strategies for the children's social care workforce.

#### **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**

#### Completing the Children's Social Care Annual Health Check

8. An annual health check is undertaken to assess the 'health' of the organisation as an employer of social workers and provider of statutory services to vulnerable children and families.
9. Diana Bentley completed the Children's Social Care Annual Health Check and Action Plan 2013 and has been the lead officer for the implementation of the action plan. An update report was presented to the Children and Young Peoples Committee in July 2014.
10. The Health Check 2014 has recently been completed which represents the views of social workers in all CSC teams. This has been shared with all levels of management and has informed an action plan for 2015/16. The Health Check 2014 is an agenda item to also be considered at the Children and Young People's Committee meeting on 20 April 2015.

#### Attending Scrutiny of Safeguarding Meetings

11. Diana Bentley, PC&FSW, represents CSC social work staff at Scrutiny of Safeguarding Meetings, chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by the elected Member with the lead responsibility for Children's Social Care and the Chair of the 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 practitioner's 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**

#### Developing a process for obtaining Service User feedback

12. Diana Bentley, PC&FSW, helped to develop the process for Social Work Practice Consultants obtaining service user feedback from children and young people. This is now an established element of the Quality Management Framework providing valuable information to the audit and themed audit from a service user perspective.

#### Message in a Bottle

13. Diana Bentley, PC&FSW, established the process for children and young people who are giving their feedback to also choose to write a letter ('message in a bottle') to the Service Director for Children's Social Care. This process enables the Service Director to maintain a direct channel of communication with children and young people.

#### Adoption Panel Membership

14. Diana Bentley, PC&FSW, became a member of a Monthly Adoption Panel in July 2014. 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.

### **Act as a 'critical friend' providing quality assurance on social work practice, including observation of practice**

#### Observation of Social Work Practice

15. To date only one formal observation had taken place with the South Assessment Team in September 2014. There remains a commitment that further observations will take place.

#### NSCB Audit

16. Diana Bentley, PC&FSW, is Children's Social Care's lead representative on the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board audit sub-group. In this role Diana participated in multi-agency audits and has been the lead auditor for the multi-agency audit of Child Sexual Abuse Referrals and Initial Child Protection Conferences which have been presented to the Safeguarding Board and informed practice development.

#### Case Audit

17. Diana Bentley participates in the CSC case audit process and offers professional consultation to the Quality Assurance Team when analysing the findings and developing action plans to support practice improvement.

#### Member of the Pay Progression Panel

18. The pay progression panel sits twice per year to review social work practice and decide whether social workers have attained the level of an "experienced Social Worker" able to progress from Band A to Band B. The consistent membership of the pay progression panel ensures that decisions are made consistently and equitably.

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

#### Implementation of a revised model for Outcomes-led Child Protection Planning

19. Following an independent review of the quality of child protection planning in February 2014 it was agreed that a more robust process needed to be developed and embedded

into practice. Diana Bentley has worked closely with colleagues in the Safeguarding and Independent Review Service and has successfully:

- developed a revised working model on the electronic case recording system
- written a detailed practice guidance which has been updated and available for all to access on the NCC intranet
- facilitated practice workshops which have been attended by 120 social workers
- presented a session at 4 NSCB conference and training events to approximately 400 people.

20. Diana Bentley and the Social Work Practice Consultant Team are continuing to check that the revised working model has been embedded into practice and that Child Protection Plans are now more child focused and outcomes-led.

#### Revision of the Case Audit Process

21. Diana Bentley supported with the design, development and implementation of the revised case file audit tool which was implemented in April 2014. Diana wrote the practice guidance for staff undertaking case file audit and presented this at the CSC managers' strategy day in March 2014.

#### Revision of the Workload Management

22. Diana Bentley led the review of the workload management process, which was revised in April 2014.

#### Children's Services Workforce Development Commissioning Forum

23. Diana Bentley is the Children's Social Care representative on the newly formed Children's Services Workforce Development Commissioning Forum and in this role is liaising with staff and managers at all levels to identify priorities for future learning and development.
24. Diana will be coordinating with other members of the Forum from across Children, Families and Cultural Services to identify economies through shared learning opportunities and resources

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

#### Participating in quarterly National Principal Social Work Network hosted by the College of Social Work

25. The meetings offer learning and developmental opportunities to PC&FSWs, 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.
26. Attendance at these meetings has provided useful information and has enabled Nottinghamshire County Council to participate in the national debate regarding: development and progress made by other local authorities; Ofsted inspection

(presentation and discussion led by a senior Ofsted inspector and Eileen Munro); and education of social workers.

#### Participating in the bi-monthly Regional Principal Social Work Network meetings

27. This group has been formed during the last 12 months and is now regularly attended by representatives from Derby, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire. By participating, Diana has been able to gain an insight regarding local priorities for service improvement.

#### Collaboration with Local Universities

28. Diana Bentley and the Social Work Practice Consultant Team have facilitated expert lectures regarding child protection, giving students a better understanding of social work practice and participating in research projects. Diana will continue to liaise with local universities to provide expert input into undergraduate and post graduate training courses and participate in research projects.

### **Provide professional individual and group supervision to social workers to improve practice and maintain an overview of the effectiveness of local social work services**

#### Facilitating Social Work Practice Workshops – Recording (plain English)

29. Diana Bentley facilitated four practice workshops for social workers regarding effective writing using plain English, exploring with social workers how to write reports and case recording and how practice can be improved.

#### Team Manager of the Social Work Practice Consultant Team (17.5 posts)

30. As the manager of the Social Work Practice Consultant Team, Diana manages the placement and review of Practice Consultants Placements, ensuring that their skills and knowledge are targeted to the areas / teams where this is needed. Diana ensured that the Practice Consultants maintain a high level of skill and knowledge by providing three-monthly supervision to practitioners who have placements with in district teams and monthly supervision for Social Work Practice Consultants who are working in the central team. Diana leads monthly team meetings which all Practice Consultants attend. At these meetings Diana shares current learning and outcomes of audit and performance monitoring and sets priorities for the Social Work Practice Consultants working in fieldwork teams.

#### Facilitation of two weekly Induction Workshops to Children's Social Care

31. At these sessions new starters to the department are introduced to the departmental structure, team roles and responsibilities, and information regarding practice standards.
32. These workshops have received very positive responses from attendees and in the period 10 October 2013 to 1 October 2014 82 people have attended an induction workshop.

**Provide professional support and supervision to senior social care staff and have a lead role in ensuring there are adequate opportunities for peer support and maintenance of professional identity for those social care specialists working in multi-disciplinary teams**

Co-facilitation of joint event for Police (Child Abuse Investigation Unit) and CSC Managers

33. The aim of this event was to improve understanding of each agency's roles and responsibilities and therefore create better working relationships.

Facilitation of multi-agency training to Health and Education regarding Private Fostering

34. This event was designed to raise awareness of duties and responsibilities towards children who are privately fostered.

**Principal Child and Family Social Worker Priorities for 2015**

35. The priorities for 2015 are as follows:

- managing the Social Work Practice Consultant Service, to make sure that there are experienced, competent social workers working in fieldwork teams who have the skills and knowledge required to support the work and to enable professional development of less experienced workers.
- promoting further practice improvement by the development of tools, resources and workshops to develop the skills of the workforce and improve practice in key areas:
  - communicating with children
  - assessment and analysis
  - outcomes-led planning
- supporting with the development and implementation of a single assessment process and introducing a consistent approach to assessments by November 2015.
- Children's Social Care lead representative for NSCB Audit.

**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**  
**Service Director, Children's Social Care**

**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 07/03/15)**

40. 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.

The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report A child-centred system (May 2011)

Social Work Health Check Action Plan 2014 – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 16 June 2014

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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