



16<sup>th</sup> December 2019

**Agenda Item: 9**

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

**REMODELLING PRACTICE WITHIN THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
DEPARTMENT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides a quarterly progress update of the Remodelling Practice programme within the Children and Families Department and seeks approval for external promotion of the Department's strengths-based practice model.

**Information**

2. On 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018, the Committee approved funding to support improvements in the quality of social work practice.
3. On 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018, an update was provided to the Committee on the establishment of a programme of work entitled 'Remodelling Practice'. The purpose of the Remodelling Practice programme is to create a sustainable delivery model for services for vulnerable children and families which is high quality and financially sustainable. The programme aims to develop a positive working environment and provide teams with the tools and support to do their jobs in the most effective and efficient way, enabling the improvement of outcomes for children and families.
4. On 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019, the Committee approved a proposal to embed strengths-based practice as a consistent practice model within Youth, Families and Social Work. Subsequently, this has been adopted as the practice model across the Children and Families Department.

**Embedding strengths-based practice**

5. Strengths-based practice is centred on working with colleagues, partners and children, rather than 'doing to', to assess, plan and manage cases.
6. Through strengths-based practice, workers will:
  - identify the strengths as well as needs and difficulties

- build relationships
- hear the voice of the child and let that voice have an influence
- focus on the whole family
- embrace principles of restorative practice of high challenge and high support, moving away from a deficit and compliance culture towards a restorative model where there is:
  - a shared vision
  - collaboration
  - respect
  - power is shared (discussed and challenged)
  - clarity of process/ expectations.

7. Across the Children and Families Department there are many examples of the workforce already using a strengths-based approach in their daily practice. Therefore, the ambition of the programme is to build on this through creating consistency and ensuring that processes, workforce development and the way we work with each other reflects this approach.

8. In order to align daily processes with a strengths-based approach to practice, priority work areas have been identified by a task and finish group. Frontline staff and managers are supported by the Principal Social Worker, Social Work Practice Consultants and the Programmes and Projects team to review existing processes, develop new ways of working which align with restorative and relationship-based strengths-based approaches and embed changes. As a result, the following have been undertaken:

- group reflective supervision has been implemented across frontline teams within Youth, Families and Social Work, the Fostering teams, Residential Children's Services and within the Independent Chair Service. This allows teams to spend time together reflecting on a case through the eyes of a child, using an informed strengths-based approach. The sessions also support the building of relationships and peer support within teams.
- the Mansfield district is now using a strengths-based approach to plan assessments. This approach will be implemented across other teams on a phased basis.
- work is underway to align Personal Education Plans for children who are Looked After with a strengths-based approach.
- the Independent Chair Service is reviewing its approach to Child Protection Conferences by exploring ways of holding conferences used by other local authorities such as Leeds City Council and Lincolnshire County Council.
- new intranet pages are being developed which will be a hub for information and tools relating to strengths-based practice, latest policies and guidance.
- a comprehensive training plan is being developed which incorporates learning for all staff around strengths-based approaches and how these will be embedded across the service, as well as ensuring that there are learning and development opportunities to gain practice knowledge and skills.

9. As part of the training plan to embed a strengths-based approach to practice, the Social Work Practice Consultant Team held briefing sessions with all teams across the Children and Families Department. The sessions provided an introduction to strengths-based approaches and provided time for the team to reflect on ways in which they were using strengths-based practice, and ways in which they could do things even better.
10. To mark the Department's commitment to embedding a strengths-based practice model, a full-service strengths-based practice development event was held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019. The event featured key note speakers who are experts in restorative and relationship-based practice and allowed the workforce time to reflect on how they will commit to a strengths-based way of working. The event was attended by 550 colleagues, including Councillor Tracey Taylor, Vice-Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee, who introduced the event and pledged her support to this way of working. As of 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019, 94% of attendees said that strengths-based approaches will be beneficial when working with children and families.
11. Colleagues who attended the practice development day were asked to identify key learning from the event and what further training and development they needed. The feedback from staff will be used to inform the development of the next stages of the plan to embed a strengths-based practice model.
12. Branding has been developed which provides a visual identity and commitment to strengths-based practice, under the name of 'Nottinghamshire's Children, Nottinghamshire's Future' with the accompanying statement of 'From Strength to Strength'. The branding can be found at **Appendix 1** to this report.
13. A short film has been produced which showcases the strengths-based work already happening within teams in order to model the approach to practice. This film is currently in use internally within the Children and Families Department. It has been identified that the film, alongside the 'Nottinghamshire's Children, Nottinghamshire's Future' branding and photographs from the strengths-based practice development event, have potential to be used externally as a way of promoting careers within Nottinghamshire County Council's Children and Families Department.

### **Further developments within the Remodelling Practice Programme**

14. The Remodelling Practice programme also incorporates projects in relation to:
  - the staffing model
  - the career pathway
  - business intelligence
  - conditions for practice.

### **Staffing Model**

15. A number of initiatives are underway to identify the optimum skill mix within teams to ensure timely support to children and families, alongside boosting morale within teams. These include:

- a pilot to employ Social Work Assistants within District Child Protection Teams. So far, this has been found to improve morale and reduce drift of Child In Need cases.
- co-working between the District Child Protection Teams and the Court Team to provide a more efficient and joined-up response to Court cases.
- planning the implementation of support in relation to domestic abuse into the Assessment Service to provide more timely support to families.
- working with the community Social Workers within Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to more closely align with Youth, Families and Social Work.
- working with Clayfields secure unit to further develop roles in the staffing model with the view to improving recruitment and retention.
- increasing capacity within the Leaving Care Service to respond to an enhanced offer for Care Leavers.

### Career Pathway

16. Progress in relation to the career pathway includes:

- new internet and intranet content providing information regarding routes into Social Work, career development opportunities and job vacancies.
- a comprehensive training plan is being developed which incorporates learning for all staff around strengths-based approaches and how these will be embedded across the service, as well as ensuring that there are learning and development opportunities to gain practice knowledge and skills.
- opportunities for Social Work qualified practitioners and practice supervisors to undertake the National Assessment and Accreditation if they wish to do so.
- aligning the career progression process to the Department for Education Post Qualifying Standards (Knowledge and Skills Statement) for social workers.
- aligning social work recruitment to the Department for Education Post Qualifying Standards (Knowledge and Skills Statement) for social workers, by rewriting job descriptions and interview questions.

### Business Intelligence

17. Work is underway to develop new easy to use dashboards which will provide managers with up to date information about their workforce, capacity and performance.

### Conditions for Practice

18. The Department is currently working with the Point of Care Foundation and Cardiff University on a What Works for Children's Social Care national pilot project exploring the

potential use of Schwartz Rounds within Children's Services. Schwartz Rounds is a multi-disciplinary forum which provides a monthly opportunity for all staff to reflect upon and discuss the emotional impact of the work they do. Nottinghamshire County Council is among the first seven local authorities to pilot Schwartz Rounds. So far, 119 colleagues have attended the sessions with 97% of those saying that the round was 'good, excellent or exceptional'. Attendees have commented that the rounds are a "safe space", providing "time for reflection" and help to develop a better understanding of the "challenges and emotions" of colleagues.

19. In relation to Conditions for Practice, there are also a number of interdependent projects which the programme connects with. These include Investing in Nottinghamshire and IT Projects, such as the roll-out of smart phones. These are enablers to providing good conditions for practice for the workforce.
20. Progress in relation to the programme is detailed in a monthly Remodelling Practice newsletter which is shared with the Children and Families workforce. This highlights progress, celebrates achievements and promotes strengths-based practice.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

21. 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**

22. Costs associated with the implementation of strengths-based practice are met from the Youth, Families and Social Care budget.

### **Implications for Service Users**

23. Implementation of strengths-based practice will improve the quality of service to children, young people and families who have contact with the Children and Families Department.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Committee:

- 1) considers whether any further action is required in relation to the progress update of the Remodelling Practice Programme within the Children and Families Department.
- 2) approves external promotion of the Department's strengths-based practice model.

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**Constitutional Comments (LW 21/11/19)**

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

**Financial Comments (SAS 25/11/19)**

25. 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.

[Supporting improvement in Children's Social Care – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 18 June 2018](#)

[Update on supporting improvements in Children's Social Care – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 17 December 2018](#)

[Youth, Families and Social Work Framework for Practice – report to Children and Young People's Committee on 18 March 2019.](#)

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

All.

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