

2022 Social Work and Workforce Health Checks - Children & Young People's Service

15 March 2023

Courtney Abbott
Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner

Background and progress from 2021

- Key recommendation of the National Social Work Task Force, set up by government after the death of Baby P
- Identify areas of strength and areas requiring greater focus; assists with workforce development planning and supports continuous improvement
- Survey live between 12th September to 21 October 2022
- Response rates lower in both Children's surveys—35% for Social Work and 27% for the workforce despite actions to address this
- Generally positive and some significant improvement since last year, including:
 - **Improvement in quality and frequency of supervision this year** – supervision training for managers, regular supervision audits, first year management portfolio, leadership training
 - **Significantly improved satisfaction with learning and development opportunities for social workers** – Regular training brochures, improved promotion of and access to specialist roles, more face-to-face training, PHD/ SW apprenticeship opportunities
 - **More feel that they are / would be consulted and involved in proposed changes and are happy with communication between senior managers and frontline workers** – Consultation/engagement e.g. hybrid working, face to face practice weeks, monthly updates, HoS presence at briefings

Areas of Strength

- Strong sense of pride – almost all saying they would recommend CWC as an employer
- More Children's workforce reporting manageable workloads this year
- For the second year, vast majority felt that CWC has a clear model of practice that promotes relationship working
- Vast majority of children's workforce never, rarely or only occasionally experience unmanageable levels of stress
- Frequency of supervision increased, with 100% of the Children's workforce reporting this
- Quality of supervision increased for social workers and remained the same for the workforce – >90% across both
- Satisfaction with learning and development opportunities increased significantly – actions from last year's Health Check to improve this has had positive impact
- As last year, almost everyone said CWC was actively committed to tackling inequality and discrimination in some way
- Effective and appropriate communication between senior management and staff with notable year on year improvement
- Social workers spending more time working directly with children, young people and families – actions taken since 2020 health check has supported this
- Most know where to go in the council to support their wellbeing and said CWC makes them feel encouraged and empowered to make time for self-care - they can discuss stressful situations / wellbeing with managers
- More social workers intend to stay with CWC in next year - majority across both surveys

Areas for Improvement

- While most said that their workloads are manageable, there was a decline in this for social workers. Common themes - staffing challenges and demand / complexity
- Whilst most social workers reported that they never, rarely or only occasionally feel unmanageable levels of stress due to work, numbers have reduced
- Fewer across both surveys regularly access research/articles in 2022 in order to develop and support their practice - main theme around this was having the time to do this
- Workforce reported a slight reduction in the time spend working directly with children, young people, families but roles and expectations around direct work vary across the service
- Although the majority across both surveys plan to stay with CWC over the next 12 months, there is a proportion who are unsure - more manageable workloads would persuade them to stay

Key actions:

- Improving response rates – e.g. consultation, exploring incentives, Teams channel, protected time, “you said...we did” and regular updates
- Recruitment and retention activity – rebranding, benchmarking pay/incentives, progression opportunities outside of management, review the interview / recruitment process, supporting different routes into social work
- Develop research circles with University of Wolverhampton to support research mindedness
- Explore the impact and use regionally of clinical supervision and/or consider the use of trauma informed supervision training to further support wellbeing

What our employees said.....

- “I feel very valued”
- “Everyone works well together and there is a feeling of comradery”
- “Workers generally care that they are doing a good job looking after young people, and that feeling becomes infectious throughout the whole workforce”
- “Heads of Services are welcoming and open to discussion”
- “There is such a comradery within the Council, and it is wonderful. People give up their time to volunteer and promote training or get a venture for young people off the ground. I have never known this before!”
- “My department and team are exceptional”
- “Having the opportunity to take on a secondment gave me new challenges and made me feel that I had a better future with CWC”
- “I enjoy supporting families and helping them to achieve better outcomes”
- “I love my job, the people I support and my colleagues, so I wouldn’t want to leave or change”
- “I enjoy hearing of colleagues’ achievements on City People and the CYP Roundup”

wolverhampton.gov.uk