



Cabinet Meeting

19 July 2017

Report title	Principal Social Worker Annual Report	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson, Children and Young People Councillor Sandra Samuels OBE, Adults	
Wards affected	All	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Accountable director	Linda Sanders, People	
Originating service	Adult Social Care/Children and Young People	
Accountable employee(s)	Louise Haughton	Principal Social Worker
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Report to be/has been considered by	People Leadership Board	

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

Support the main priorities for the Principal Social Worker identified for 2017-18.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide a progress report on the work of the Principal Social Worker to promote and improve the quality of social work practice and outline priority areas of work to be undertaken 2017-2018.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Designated Principal Social Workers (DPSW) were first proposed by Professor Eileen Munro in her review of child protection in 2011, which identified the importance of better communication and understanding between social workers and senior management. Munro stated that Principal Social Workers should:
- Create a clear line of communication between frontline staff and senior management
 - Champion best practice
 - Encourage a “reflective approach” to social work
 - Help to reduce bureaucracy and the amount of time spent on process-driven activities
 - Support social workers to use their core skills and interventions which make a real difference to people.
- 2.2 Following this, the College of Social Work championed the extension of the role to include adult social work. As with the Children’s Principal Social Worker (PSW), the role of the PSW for adults also takes a professional lead across the organisation.
- 2.3 The Care and Support Statutory Guidance update May 2016 provided further clarification around the role of the PSW for Adults. The Guidance states that the PSW should be visible across the organisation, from elected members and senior management, through to frontline social workers, people who use services and carers. PSW’s should also have a broad knowledge base on safeguarding and Making Safeguarding Personal. It also states that Local Authorities should make arrangements to have a qualified and registered social work professional practice lead in place to:
- Lead and oversee excellent social work practice
 - Support and develop arrangements for excellent practice
 - Lead the development of excellent social workers
 - Support effective social work supervision and decision making
 - Oversee quality assurance and improvement of social work practice
 - Advise the director of adult social services (DASS) and/or wider council in complex or controversial cases and on case or other law relating to social work practice
 - Function at the strategic level of the Professional Capabilities Framework”
- 2.4 The PSW (Louise Haughton) for both Adults and Children and Young People was appointed in March 2016.

- 2.5 The decision to appoint one PSW for Adult's and Children's Services was informed by a commitment to promote and embed a whole family approach in Wolverhampton. A key function of the PSW role is to promote a "think whole family approach" that will enable better working together across services, inspire greater aspirations for children, families and adult's with additional needs as well as ensuring the concept of wellbeing features in all of the work undertaken by Social Care.
- 2.6 The PSW reports directly to a Service Director as per best practice guidance. The work of the PSW is overseen and prioritised by the People's Social Work Development Board supported by a wider workforce development board for Children and Young People and for Adults that also informs the work of the PSW.
- 2.7 A degree of independence is required of the role in order to provide challenge within the organisation. Effectiveness is then supported by having a direct line of access to the Service Director for Adult Social Care and the Service Director for Children and Young people.
- 2.8 The regional and national networks of PSWs also provide information to the Chief Social Workers for adults and children's (Lynn Romeo and Isabelle Trowler respectively) and regular consultations are held in respect of issues such as social worker health checks, Knowledge and Skill statements, Accreditation, legislation, practice and learning developments.
- 2.9 In accordance with best practice an annual report will be prepared and formally presented within the Council's governance arrangements.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 The PSW for Adults and Children in Wolverhampton has a key responsibility for Policies and Procedures and the Quality Assurance and Improvement team. The function of this unit is to implement and further develop the Quality Assurance Frameworks for Adult Social Care and Children and Young People, to support inspections and peer review work and support the sector led improvement programmes.

- 3.2 Highlights of the work undertaken by the PSW since March 2016 is outlined below:

3.3 Generic Work

- 3.3.1 The post holder has facilitated greater opportunity for Adult's and Children's social workers to learn together and share good practice. The first annual People's Social Work Conference was reported in the previous PSW report, since then the first practice share between adults and children's social workers has taken place on the theme of risk assessment, risk management and positive risk taking. The feedback from the session

was positive with social workers sharing a range of tools that they could adapt to their areas of practice.

- 3.3.2 Adult's and Children's practitioners have completed autism training together allowing them to develop an understanding of how autism impacts families and develop skills to engage both adults and children with autism.
- 3.3.3 The second Annual People's Social Work Conference took place in March 2017 around the theme of improving outcomes for the whole family. Over three hundred social workers employed by the City of Wolverhampton Council attended the event. Feedback from the event was positive, social workers felt that the subject areas were beneficial; for example, most enjoyed hearing how another authority used strength based approaches to help communities help themselves and in particular had developed a programme that enabled care leavers and isolated older people to spend time together and develop a mutually beneficial relationship. This approach is now being explored within Wolverhampton.
- 3.3.4 A career pathway has been developed to enable social workers to successfully transition between Adult's and Children's Services, acquire new skills and share their practice knowledge and experience across specialisms. It has been stated there could be professional benefits when social workers move between specialisms for individuals, people who use services and organisations.
- 3.3.5 Social Workers who move between specialisms often bring a fresh approach and make a positive impact on teams. Children's social workers can bring different assessment and report writing skills to adult teams. Equally, adult's social workers can bring a greater degree of creativity and asset based approaches to children's teams. Changing specialisms within social work can also help integrate professionals and methods of working, promoting a whole family approach.
- 3.3.6 The West Midlands Teaching Partnership is made of nine local authorities and the University of Birmingham. The Partnership has secured a teaching partnership grant of up to £1.6 million for November 2016 – March 2018. The Teaching Partnership has a focus on the development, embedding and evaluation of professional practice leadership across both Children's and Adults Services. This involves further developing the undergraduate and post graduate social work programmes, including increasing the amount of statutory experience that social workers receive and contributing to the post qualifying training of social workers through to senior management levels.
- 3.3.7 The PSW arranges quarterly children's social work briefings and bi-annual adult's social work briefings that provide space for social workers to share their views with senior leaders, ensure important information is shared face to face with frontline social workers. The sessions also have a learning and development focus often chosen by social workers themselves. These have proved to be highly successful with social workers reporting that they are able to apply their learning to practice and generally state in feedback that everything presented is of use to their practice.

3.3.8 Nominations were made to the National Social Work awards for the first time. This resulted in a social worker being shortlisted for the children's social worker completing their Assessed and Supported Year in Practice (ASYE) of the year. This was a huge acknowledgment of the social workers excellent practice with children and families as well as her commitment to the profession. The social worker and her manager attended the event and her achievement was celebrated and publicised locally as well as through social media channels.

3.4 **Adults**

3.4.1 An audit process for adult social care has been developed and implemented as part of the People Quality Assurance Framework. The quality assurance framework also includes observation of practice and brings together the views of the people who use our services. This information is reported to the Transformation of Adult Social Care Board quarterly ensuring senior managers have oversight of the quality of frontline practice and are able to use this information to inform improvement actions.

3.4.2 The post holder has worked closely with the New Ways of Working Team and provided training to the team on asset based approaches, strength based tools, the use of non jargonistic language, managing expectations, the recovery model and using structured reflective practice to consider what else could be done to help a person achieve greater independence.

3.4.3 The post holder also convened sessions with advanced practitioners responsible for supervising workers who were part of the team. The sessions helped them further develop their skills in using performance information to manage individual performance, develop a more questioning approach before authorising assessments and support plans and provided them with the same strength based training that had been delivered to workers within the team.

3.4.4 A bespoke leadership programme for first line managers has been developed with an experienced training provider. It is recognised within social work that the first line managers are significantly influential when embarking on any transformation programme. The programme has been designed to enhance skills around managing change, managing performance, embedding the Care Act 2014 principles and providing an opportunity for managers to practice their supervision and management of people skills. Feedback has been extremely positive with managers reporting that they have benefited from the opportunity to reflect on their practice, develop new skills and share "what works" with colleagues.

3.4.5 The PSW has appointed a procedure and protocol officer for adult social care. The officer joined the council in February 2017. Work so far has included involving practitioners in task and finish groups to develop procedures and pathways that ensure practitioners are clear about local processes. A key aspect of the role has also been developing procedures for provider services that meet the expectations of the CQC.

3.5 Children and young people

- 3.5.1 The majority of the work undertaken by the PSW 2016-2017 was focused on improving the quality of frontline practice in order to ensure children and families receive the best possible service whilst contributing to the ambition of achieving a 'Good' Ofsted judgment in the inspection. The characteristics of 'Good' practice was well understood by the CYP management team and the PSW. This post holder contributed to practice improvement by using social work briefings to ensure social workers understood new procedures and pathways as well as showcasing good practice, ensuring all workforce development opportunities linked to the service's strategic objectives as outlined in the CYP improvement plan, and equipping advanced practitioners to model excellent practice at the same time as driving cultural changes in practice at a local level. These areas of work are discussed in more detail below.
- 3.5.2 The post holder has worked with the CYP management team and workforce development to procure training in a strength based and relational methodology (Restorative Practice) that will be delivered to the whole CYP workforce. Work has also begun to embed the approach across the whole of CYP services and develop an evaluation framework. This has involved holding discussions with the University of Wolverhampton. The University of Wolverhampton has now committed funds and resources to the evaluation of the programme. The PSW has also worked with the communications department to develop fact sheets, prompt cards, and presentations for both the internal workforce and external partners.
- 3.5.3 The PSW has project managed the setup of the Frontline programme in Wolverhampton. Frontline is a registered charity that is funded by the Department of Education to deliver a social work qualification that prioritises hands-on-experience through practice based learning. Students will complete more than 200 days practice based learning during the first year of the course, at the end of which they will be awarded a generic social work qualification. The post holder has worked collaboratively with Frontline to appoint a consultant social worker (CSW) who will manage and educate the 4 Frontline students that start their placement in Wolverhampton in September 2017, appoint a deputy CSW, and ensure arrangements have been in place for the provision of shadowing days. The City of Wolverhampton Council has been complimented by Frontline on the quality of paperwork submitted and a brochure for potential participants in respect of the programme.
- 3.5.4 The PSW has provided leadership, mentoring and coaching to the seven advanced practitioners appointed in the CYP Service. Meetings have taken place fortnightly to monitor progression of action plans, share learning and good practice, develop a shared understanding of what good social work practice looks like. Advanced practitioners are then able to model a consistent approach within teams. The role of advanced practitioners was approved on a time limited basis to support managers and social workers across targeted areas in Children's Social Care to strengthen and support practice. Advanced practitioners have provided leadership and expertise to enable practice improvement in the areas of:

- Quality of court work
- Permanency planning
- Managing risk in adolescents
- Quality and effectiveness of practice and planning
- Integrated working

3.5.5 The post holder has worked with the University of Wolverhampton and workforce development to design and deliver an assessed year in practice programme that is joined with a post graduate certificate in children and families social work. The programme is designed to provide newly qualified social workers with the opportunity to develop their practical knowledge about key elements of social work practice including assessing neglect and developing court skills, whilst having the time to embed their use of theory, research and evidence in practice.

3.5.6 The City of Wolverhampton Fostering Team organised the first annual foster carers conference and invited the PSW to speak on permanence and attachment. This session allowed foster carers to reflect on the important role they play in giving children and young people a secure base, that in turn supports them to achieve good outcomes as adults. Foster carers reported a greater understanding of the long term positive impact the quality of their care can achieve and were keen to care for children in an attachment aware way.

4.0 Priorities for Work Plan 2017-2018

4.1 Quality Assurance and Improvement

4.1.1 All appointments have now been made to the quality and improvement team.

4.1.2 The new People Quality Assurance Framework will be further embedded. The framework has a greater focus on the principles of wellbeing, promoting independence, building effective relationships and strength based practice as well as monitoring performance against either national or local standards.

4.1.3 The feedback from audit and observations of practice will enable workers to reflect on what they are doing well and what skills they can further develop. This alongside workforce development activity and strategically led system changes will support effective social work practice that is delivered to the right people at the right time and promotes resilience and independence.

4.1.4 Following learning from the Ofsted inspection there will be greater links between quality assurance and performance information. Quality assurance advanced practitioners for both CYP and ASC will attend service performance meetings. This will support greater focus on the whole quality assurance cycle. Where potential performance issues are highlighted the possible causes are investigated through audit, following this a range of actions are undertaken to improve practice. In order to ensure the feedback loop is closed a further audit is undertaken and performance data is used to measure progress. This process will now be monitored and recorded within the same meeting. Performance

data and quality assurance information will also be more closely linked and analysed within the self-assessments.

4.2 Social Work Voice at Strategic Level

- 4.2.1 Undertaking and analysing the annual Social Work Health Check is key to improving social work recruitment and retention. This year the PSW's team will support the development of a specific action plan based on the findings of Social Work Health Check that was undertaken in May 2017. The quality and improvement team will support a greater level of engagement with social workers about the findings and associated actions in order to ensure social workers know their feedback is welcomed and taken seriously by senior managers
- 4.2.2 Attendance by the PSW at the Children and Young People's and the Adults management team meetings on a monthly basis to ensure operational engagement and oversight.
- 4.2.3 Bi-annual meeting with the strategic director for people, the Director for Adult Social Services and the Director for Children's Services.

4.3 Workforce Development

- 4.3.1 A particular role is to continue to ensure that the People's Workforce Development plan incorporates the training required by social workers to undertake statutory work and deliver good social work practice in line with service outcomes.
- 4.3.2 The PSW will continue to promote the 'whole family approach'. Activities to support this will include; increasing the opportunities for shared learning, advanced practitioners will facilitate a quarterly practice share to include all areas of adult and children's social care and where appropriate training will be undertaken in mixed cohorts across adult's and children's social care. Further to this the PSW will seek to encourage a culture of consultation by ensuring workers know how to contact workers who have different specialisms. This will be achieved by creating opportunities for informal networking and sharing of specialist knowledge across the services and between workers.
- 4.3.3 Supporting the embedding of Restorative Practice's across the Children and Young People's Service is a significant priority and will be achieved by aligning procedures and assessment forms with Restorative Practice, providing opportunities for workers to practice and reflect on how they use this approach and modelling the approach through all tiers of management. This approach should improve outcomes for children young people and their families; improve service user satisfaction and build community resilience. Over time the aim must be to support the further reduction demand for services at all levels including Early Intervention, Child Protection and Looked after Children as has been evidenced in other areas.
- 4.3.4 The PSW will continue to provide leadership, mentoring and coaching to the six (FTE) advanced social work practitioners to be appointed in the Children and Young People Service. The focus of this work will be to support the ongoing transformation of children's

services through the ongoing improvement of frontline social work practice. Advanced practitioners will assist with the establishment of consistently “Good” and “Outstanding” practice across CYP services.

- 4.3.5 The PSW will continue to organise quarterly children’s social work & twice annually adult social worker briefings. These are short sessions that aid communication and contribute to the further development of a “learning organisation” ethos across the service. These events are in addition to wider workforce briefings and provide the opportunity for social workers to develop their professional knowledge and skills.
- 4.3.6 Planning for the third annual People’s Social Work Conference is now underway. The Event takes place in March of each year and will take place on World Social Work day in 2018. The event addresses subjects pertinent to both Children and Adult social workers and further promote a ‘Whole Family Approach’. It is hoped that both the chief social worker for Children and Families (Isabelle Trowel) and the Chief Social worker for Adults (Lynn Romeo) will be able to attend the 2018 event.
- 4.3.7 Support the process for the procurement of training in a Relationship and Asset Based Practice methodology across Adult Social Care will be an imminent priority. The training will support the scaling up of the work of the Promoting Independence Team across Locality Services and the Mental Health team.
- 4.3.8 Family Group conferencing in Adult Safeguarding has not yet been implemented. The piloting of this approach within Wolverhampton will be a key priority in 2017 as family group conferencing could further support the making safeguarding approach.

4.4 Recruitment and Retention

- 4.4.1 It is the aim of the PSW to utilise learning from both the “Think Ahead” programme in Mental Health and the “Frontline” programme in CYP to enhance the interviewing process for social workers and social work managers. This will involve making greater use of a written assessment that is more closely aligned to the skills required for the roles and using material developed by Skill for Care to enhance interview questions.
- 4.4.2 The post holder will take a lead responsibility along with human resources and workforce development for the implementation of the recruitment and retention strategy and attached action plan. The recruitment and retention strategy seeks to support the development of a stable workforce which is an integral part of any improvement journey. A stable workforce allows the council to embed good practice and provide children, families and adults with consistent workers.
- 4.4.3 It is a key aim to increase the availability and quality of practice educators. Practice educators play a key role in in the development and assessment of students undertaking a social work degree. This year the local authority will provide training to 18 social workers who will in turn provide placements to students, most of whom will be undertaking the University of Wolverhampton programme. The City of Wolverhampton seeks to support the development of good social workers within the region to address

current regional workforce challenges. Practice educators who qualified more than two years ago, will undertake a refresher day to ensure they are congruent with changes to the assessment of students and have a good understanding of the new 'Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers in Adult Services' and the 'Knowledge and Skills Statement for Child and Family Practitioners'.

- 4.4.4 The Assessed Year in Practice Programme ensures social workers are supported to become good social workers who wish to continue working for the City of Wolverhampton Council and the PSW will continue to support this process. Feedback will be collected from the current cohort of social workers completing their ASYE and any learning will be utilised to support the enhancement of the next programme.

4.5 Policies & Procedures

- 4.5.1 Both the Adult's and the Children's policy, procedure and protocol officers have now been appointed. A significant priority for the upcoming year is to ensure all procedures and pathways reflect the council's vision around promoting independence for older people and people with disabilities and strengthening families where children are at risk. This will involve aligning all procedures with the principles of strength and relational based approaches.

4.6 Local, Regional and National Practice Leadership

- 4.6.1 The PSW attends quarterly national principal social work network days facilitated by the Association of Directors of Children's Services. These meetings are learning and development opportunities. It provides opportunity for the national Chief Social workers for adults and children to share the direction of travel, answer questions and receive feedback from PSW's. These events also provide opportunity for the sharing of good practice. Notes are shared with the appropriate leadership team following attendance at these events.
- 4.6.2 The PSW also attends regional network meeting on a bi-monthly basis. This allows regional work to take place as directed by the regional West Midlands ADCS and ADASS.

4.7 Promotion Social Work Practice in Wolverhampton

- 4.7.1 Continued work will take place with Communications Team to raise the awareness and reputation of social work in Wolverhampton through the use of social media as well as promoting good news stories via local and national media outlets.
- 4.7.2 A greater number of nominations will be made for the National Social Work awards in various categories including adult team of the year, adult ASYE of the year, children's ASYE of the year, children's team of the year, and overall social worker of the year.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising directly from this report. Any costs arising from the actions in the workplan and priorities set by the PSW will be met from existing budgets.
[AS/30062017/F]

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
[TC/30062017/F]

7.0 Equalities implications

- 7.1 The role of the Principal Social Work is a key one in our leadership arrangements to continually improve the quality of our social work practice. Social workers provide support to the whole community including the full range of diverse groups. Excellent quality social work practice will be more attuned to the equality issues experienced by individuals, families and communities. High quality social work will more competently deploy required skill in the practice situation. This annual report shows some of the ways being used to strengthen this aspect of social work practice e.g. updating and widening the influence of the social work Quality Assurance Framework.

8.0 Environmental implications

- 8.1 There are no environmental implications.

9.0 Human resources implications

- 9.1 There are no human resources implications. However, it is noted that close collaborative working has taken place over the last year on the implementation of the recruitment and retention strategy and action plan. This includes back office support and attendance at Social Worker interviews and recruitment campaigns.
- 9.2 A new part time Recruitment and Retention Officer has recently been appointed to further the collaborative working and enhance the support to recruiting managers.
[HR/JF/LH/044]

10.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 10.1 There are no corporate landlord implications

11.0 Schedule of background papers

- 11.1 There are no background papers.