



# Principal Social Worker Report January 2022

# Agenda

- The Principal Social Work role, the Practice Development Team, The Children and Learning Academy, The Better Together Staff Reference Group
- Staff feeling – PSW engagement and Senior Leadership responsiveness
- The Practice Framework & Academy
- Recruitment, retention and embedding practice change
- Revision of supervision across the service

## The Principal Social Worker, Practice Development Team and Children and Learning Academy

The Principal Social Worker has the lead responsibility for practice in a local authority and can report the views and experience of the frontline to all levels of management.

The Principal Social Worker should:

- Champion good practice – to inspire and challenge to improve
- Fulfil a quality assurance role – beyond auditing
- Bring reflective practice into supervision
- Promote evidence informed practice
- Promote the importance of Continuous Professional Development



## The Children and Learning Workforce Development Academy

### The Academy was launched in May 2021.

It provides development opportunities to embed Our Practice Framework: Making the Difference, ensuring that training on the core components Systemic Practice, Restorative Practice, Trauma Informed Approach, Motivational Interviewing and Strengthening Families are embedded and mandated within our large scale training programme.

It will invest in our early help, education & social care staff and support them to have the right knowledge and skills to safeguard children, young people and their families and meet our practice and management standards.

- Build and sustain a learning culture which supports our workforce to have the right tools and the practice conditions for early help, support and social work to flourish.
- Promote evidence-based practice,
- Support staff to develop and maintain professional practice standards
- Build adaptive and systemic leadership skills
- Support career progression pathways
- Support retaining a workforce of proud, competent and motivated practitioners.
- Facilitate staff conferences 3 times a year, quarterly Practice Weeks and regular Practice Hub bulletins.
- Develop group and individual reflective supervision

## Staff Reference Group (SRG) Report – Better Together

- Better Together was established in response to a recommendation from an investigation reporting in 2020 which identified the need for senior managers to consult with relevant staff to build an opportunity for free flowing feedback between operational and strategic workstreams and managers.
- All teams in Children and Learning volunteered a representative, with 35 members making up the Better Together group.
- The aim of the group is to shift the culture within parts of the service and enable an open dialogue between decision makers and front line staff.
- All areas of the directorate can contribute to service improvement and hold accountability for the collective vision to best meet the needs of children and young people.
- The group meets monthly and reports to the Improvement Board. The Co-Chairs of Better Together act as a conduit between the two. The Principal Social Worker also attends. The Chief Executive and Deputy Director have both attended the group in recent months.

# Staff feeling – PSW observations

- High levels of engagement with staff – professional forums, team meetings, facilitating learning events, induction, ASYE, apprentices, co-producing supervision policy and model with groups of staff and managers, task and finish group for Practice Week. 13 1:1s in last month.
- Positive strides forward re cultural and reputational change work including Senior leadership and Staff engagement, the Better Together Group and the development and launch of the leadership pledge.
- Pockets of resistance to change still exist in the context of a national shortage of social workers.
- Enormous efforts into grow our own, recruitment and retention and embedding practice change.

# Staff feeling

Main matters raised in 1:1s/ team meetings with PSW

- The death of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes
- Wishing to register an interest in systemic practice training
- Advice around career development
- Queries around Destination 22 – where will I be? Staff needing reassurance and support.
- Advice regarding SWE re-registration
- Workloads – as blockers to relationship-based social work practice, supervision, reflective supervision, training and wellbeing – exit interviews
- No concerns being raised in respect of decision making or thresholds – my observation of SLT decision making – child centred.
- In the main SLT are responsive to concerns raised by the PSW.

# Making the Difference Practice Framework

Systemic Practice

Restorative Practice

Trauma-informed Practice

Motivational Interviewing

Strengthening Families

- Revision of Practice Framework and associated documents.
- Large scale training plans - areas of core training already in place, providers identified for others and commissioning in progress.
- Work ongoing to commission the Institute of Family Therapy who will assist us in development of systemic practice and the creating of a grow our own systemic psychotherapist pathway. Launch for Spring 2022. Very positive response from PSW led staff sessions.



# Recruitment and Retention & Embedding Practice Change

- 4 new apprentices have joined our other two cohorts. PSW led reflective groups for 3 cohorts have commenced. Additional sessions requested.
- 5 Step Up To Social Work candidates start January 2022. Induction programme complete and first placements being sought.
- 4 Frontline candidates completed their first CLE. 3 candidates have commenced as Family Engagement Workers with a plan to commence their social work training in 2022. Plan to have two hubs next year. Recruitment for second CSW post to commence.
- Providing 20 student placements from Solent and Winchester Universities. Training for Placement Supervisors delivered, support drop in sessions and student induction delivered.
- Practice Educator (PE) CPD launched 21<sup>st</sup> October with Thank You event and reflective resources. First session led by Siobhan McLean received positive feedback. Staff wishing to undertake their PE training now.
- PDT are currently supporting 18 Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs). In December 3 NQSWs passed their ASYE.

# Recruitment and Retention & Embedding Practice Change

- Staff induction written, launched and delivered to 3 cohorts. Roll outs planned for January and February 2022.
- Career pathway development work concluded including development of Senior Social Worker post. JDPS and progression policy authored.
- Revision of ASYE policy to include external moderation panel, and post ASYE support programme.
- Recruitment fairs and university career workshops being attended and Solent and Chichester Universities in the New Year.
- New recruitment resources developed with comms and the design team - stands, banners and logo products.
- International Recruitment via Tripod has progressed.
- Sponsorship of Social Worker of the Year Awards.
- Launch of the Making the Difference Staff Awards.

- Love our Diversity Practice Week in December 2021. Launch of the systemic training pathway is drawing particular attention. PSW visiting teams and managers to inspire.
- Successful launch of the Making the Difference Practice Development Forum - November session focussed on the NAI Thematic Review. Learning shared with service.
- SWE re-registration session with Kate Metcalf, Regional Lead, SWE.
- PSW 1:1s and PSW tracker under development for SLT attendance. PSW has undertaken 13 1:1 sessions with staff across the service in last four working weeks.
- Making the Difference Practice Development Days planned for January 2022.

# Supervision, reflective supervision & reflecting teams model

The way that staff supervision is delivered across the service is being reviewed. This is in light of the:

- Staff Survey
- Social Work Health Check
- Feedback from the Better Together Working Group
- Supervision Survey conducted by the Practice Development Team
- PSW engagement sessions with teams and managers.

Likely outcomes given data received:

- Policy and tool rewrite
- Restructure of how reflective supervision is delivered across the service –wellbeing and systemic reflecting teams model
- Research in Practice SWORD tools will utilised and Action Learning
- Professional Development Supervisor training and leadership training





## **Principal Social Worker Report**

**Karen Biddle**

**January 2022**

**For further details contact :**

**Karen Biddle, Principal Social Worker, Southampton Children & Learning Service**

**02380 83 3372 or [karen.biddle@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:karen.biddle@southampton.gov.uk)**