

**Children and Young People's  
Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**18 November 2019**



**Update on the Progress of the  
Recommendations of the Role of the  
Social Worker from a Child's Perspective Review**

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**Report of John Pearce, Director of Children and Young People's  
Services**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 The purpose of the report is to update members of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress made against the recommendations from the committee's review – Role of the Social Worker from a Child's Perspective.

**Executive summary**

- 2 A review group was established from members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look at the Role of the Social Worker from a Child's Perspective.
- 3 The review gathered evidence from December 2017 until June 2018 and a report was taken to Cabinet in December 2018 which presented the review group's key findings and their recommendations.
- 4 Cabinet were asked to report back to the committee on the progress to implement the review group's recommendations and this can be found at appendix two.

**Recommendations**

- 5 Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to note the progress made on each of the review group's recommendations and comment accordingly.

## Background

- 6 At its meeting on 21 November 2017 Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the terms of reference to carry out a review on the Role of the Social Worker from a Child's Perspective.
- 7 The aim of the review was to investigate the role of the social worker assessment and in the safeguards of children from a child's perspective to ensure that the views of the child are included and reflected in plans relating to them and how this impacted on the social care work force.
- 8 The review followed six key lines of enquiry:
  - a) How are children's social care cases referred into the service?
  - b) How cases are allocated to social workers including numbers of case files and their complexities.
  - c) How has the new training academy performed in its first year? Are places filled for the following year? What mentoring, support and career development is in place for social workers?
  - d) How robust is the approach in Durham in relation to continuity and stability for the child? How is the voice of the child reflected in casework? How does Durham compare regionally and nationally?
  - e) How are children prepared for care? Are they involved in the decision and how is this communicated to them?
  - f) What do children who have had contact with children's social care in County Durham say about their experiences?
- 9 The review group found that service improvements were helping to provide stability and consistency for children using the service. That there was a wide variety of training and development programmes available to social workers and the Newly Qualified Social Worker academy has allowed Durham County Council to grow its own social workers.
- 10 The review group considered that the emotional wellbeing and mental health of social care staff was as important as their training and development.
- 11 The review group learned of the establishment of two new teams, the pre-birth team and the supporting solutions service that would help to prevent children from entering the care system.
- 12 Members of the review group heard from young people during the review and stressed the importance of stability and consistency of social worker to a child. The communication between children and their social worker is important for the relationship to work and trust to grow.

- 13 The review was presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 12 December 2018 and all seven recommendations were accepted. The review report was also shared with the Children and Families Partnership for information.
- 14 Cabinet were asked to provide a progress update on the review's recommendations and the action plan attached at appendix two details the actions taken to address each of the review's recommendations.

## **Conclusion**

- 15 Members of the committee are reassured that the recommendations they made are addressed and are progressing forward.

## **Background papers**

- Cabinet Report: Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Review: Role of the Social Worker from a Child's Perspective 12 December 2018.

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**Contact:** Chris Ring

Tel: 03000 268657

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Not applicable

### **Finance**

Not applicable

### **Consultation**

Not applicable

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

An Equality Impact Assessment initial screening was carried out on the review report. A full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken by the relevant Service Grouping following agreement of the recommendations contained in the review report.

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable

### **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable

### **Staffing**

Not applicable

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable

### **Risk**

Not applicable

### **Procurement**

Not applicable

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT – Role of the Social Worker from a Child’s Perspective**

**REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS CONSIDERED BY CABINET ON: 12 December 2018**

**UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS – 18 November 2019**

<b>Review Recommendation 1</b>	<b>Progress report of action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p>The Corporate Director of Children and Young People’s Services continues to monitor via performance information the number of children allocated to each social worker to ensure consistency and stability for County Durham children in contact with Children’s Social Care Services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liquid Logic electronic social care system went live on 1<sup>st</sup> February and associated performance dashboards are now live and supporting management oversight of practice in real time.</li> <li>• Caseload levels have significantly improved. At the end of September 2019, 54% of Social Workers/ASYEs had a caseload of less than 20, compared to 33% in July 2018. There were 5 WTE Social Workers with a caseload of more than 30 (4 FT and 1 PT).</li> </ul>	<p>Keith Foster</p>	<p>Complete</p>

<b>Review Recommendation 2</b>	<b>Progress report of action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p>The Director of Children and Young People's Services carries out an evaluation of the new edge of care services and pre-birth services following twelve months in operation to highlight their impact on children, young people and families and on the numbers of children entering into the looked after system.</p>	<p>Our edge of care service, Supporting Solutions, was evaluated in March 2019. In their first year they worked intensively with 79 children on the edge of care aged 10 – 17 of which 73 remained in the care of their parents/carers. By the end of the second quarter of 2019, they have worked with 54 children and 47 have remained with their parents/carers. The outcomes for all these young people are tracked and reported via the Edge of Care Steering Group. The analysis of the outcomes for these young people after 1 year showed that the team are having a significant positive impact on a range of outcomes, not solely preventing their entry to care: Relationships with family members improved; Offending behaviour reduced;</p>	<p>Lisa Wood</p>	<p>Annual report in March 2020</p>

	<p>School attendance improved; Missing episodes reduced; risk of CSE reduced and emotional health of young people improved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our Pre-Birth team is having an impact ensuring that children are able to live in their permanent home in a timely way: Since the creation of the team in May 2018 53 children have been identified as meeting the criteria for the team. Of these 21 children have been placed into their permanent home within 3 months of their life (11 home immediately at birth, 2 formal 'foster to adopt' and 8 into care of family members.) Therefore, approx. 40% of children have been living in their permanent home by the age of 3 months old.</li> <li>• Significantly in the first year of the pre-birth team being established the proportion of our Children in Care aged under 1 decreased from</li> </ul>	Jac Tyler	Annual Report in May 2020
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	10% in 2017/18 to 8 % in 2018/2019.		
<b>Review Recommendation 3</b>	<b>Progress report of action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
That all members of Durham County Council as corporate parents visit the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub at least once during their term of office and that as all members are corporate parents the Corporate Director of Resources give consideration to mandatory Corporate Parenting Training for all members of the Council.	<p>Members of the County Council have an invitation to visit the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. Members of Corporate Parenting Panel have visited during the year.</p> <p>As part of the member induction programme members of the Council receive mandatory corporate parenting training. This is refreshed at intervals during the term of the Council. Any new members to the Council would receive this training.</p>	HR	Ongoing

<b>Review Recommendation 4</b>	<b>Progress report of action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p>Durham County Council's Social Worker Academy has made excellent progress within its first year and Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is keen to monitor its development and asks that arrangements be made for report to be presented to them with information on progress and achievements.</p>	<p>Report of progress written and will be presented on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019.</p>	<p>Chris Ring</p>	<p>18.11.19</p>
<b>Review Recommendation 5</b>	<b>Progress report of action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p>The Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services together with the Director of Public Health consider the establishment and promotion of mental health and emotional wellbeing services for children's social care staff and for supervision to monitor staff dealing with highly emotional/sensitive cases.</p>	<p>Review of Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing of Social Care Staff was undertaken by Public Health in partnership with the Principal Social Worker (PSW) completed in May 2018. Actions have been undertaken as a result:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training offer has been revised and advertised. It includes: Mental Wellbeing in Everyday</li> </ul>	<p>Chris Ring</p>	<p>Remaining actions being monitored by the Raising the Bar Board.</p>

	<p>Practice; Health Advocate; Mental Health for Life; Mental Health First Aid; Mindfulness; Resilience; Stigma and Discrimination – Time to Change Champions; Zero Suicide; Support for your Mental Wellbeing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mental health issues are promoted through regular communication with staff</li><li>• Mental health first aid training has been delivered and we now have 28 staff trained across CYPS.</li><li>• Supervision policy has been updated.</li><li>• Signs of Safety group supervisions embedded within teams and 129 staff have been a part of these. These are a critical part of developing a learning culture within teams and embedding the Signs of Safety practice framework in practice.</li></ul>		
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training for supervisions in delivering reflective supervision commissioned – 23 managers have completed this to date.</li><li>• Funding identified for clinical supervision offer following traumatic events</li><li>• Promotion of a range of celebratory awards / events including: Inspiring People Awards; Social Worker of the Year Awards; World Social Work Day.</li><li>• Strengthened links between PSW and Inspire Team to ensure that staff are connected to the change programme and are able to influence it.</li><li>• Offer of range of activities to support emotional wellbeing has been collated and made available to staff.</li></ul>		
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<b>Review Recommendation 7</b>	<b>Progress report of action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p>The Corporate Director of Children and Young People’s Services establish a communication protocol between social workers and children and young people in their care.</p>	<p>Recruitment of an Engagement and Participation worker to take forward this work.</p> <p>Digital Voice project undertaken to raise awareness amongst all staff of building and maintaining relationships with children and young people and their social workers.</p> <p>Promise (that incorporates communication) co-produced with young people in Bishop Auckland. Plan to launch promise as part of Children’s Commissioners Take Over Challenge 2019 and embedded through teams by Dec 2019.</p>	<p>Chris Ring</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Dec 2019</p>