

Meeting: Children, Education and Skills Sub-Committee

Date: 21 November 2019

Title: Children's Social Work Assessment and Fostering Teams

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Service: Children's Services

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

To receive an update on what the work involves, experience of frontline staff, experience of ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment), supervision, barriers.

2. Introduction

This report will provide an overview of the work of the social work assessment teams, including the fostering team, the workforce profile, the ASYE support available and the Post Qualifying (PQ) and other CPD opportunities to social work staff.

3. Details

The workforce profile for this report includes details of the number of registered social work staff in each team, the length of time they have been qualified, their status as progressed or non-progressed, their post qualifying qualifications, including Practice Education which enables the teams to provide social work student assessed placements.

The social work teams are organised to follow the journey of a child or young person who is referred to children's services. The Model of practice embedded in children's social care is Signs of Safety which focuses on the strengths and relationships within families.

Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub (Front Door)

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was launched in October 2017 to coordinate support and protection services for children and vulnerable adults.

It is led by North Tyneside Council in partnership with other multi-agency professionals, including police, health, education etc. the hub which is based at North Tyneside Council's head office, brings together professionals in one team to deal with issues quickly and effectively. The hub model aims to improve information sharing between the partners so that safeguarding concerns can be identified earlier and managed more effectively.

In North Tyneside, the Social Work Assessment Team consists of three statutory assessment teams which are small in size consisting of five social workers per team which allows a culture of high support and focuses on the wellbeing of staff. Regular, reflective personal and group supervision sessions take place in order to promote professional development and growth of workers and there is a strong, supportive culture of peer support.

The team works with children, young people and their families under the remits of Child Protection, Child in Need and Children in Care. As a result of this the team often finds itself intervening with families at times of crisis, along with assessing and supporting families to find the correct services and support for them, and in line with Signs of Safety practice strengthening family's wider networks to create and build upon safety for children and young people.

Social Workers within the team are responsible for carrying out Single Assessments, Child Protection Enquiries, Care Planning and managing risk. They are also expected to carry out review meetings and initial case conferences and attend court when initiating legal proceedings against parents when there are immediate risks of harm towards children. Workers are able to develop good assessment writing skills, work with and prioritise timescales and develop the ability to intervene and build meaningful and supportive relationships with children and families on a short term and crisis basis.

Some of the main themes and issues resulting in involvement and intervention with children and their families are around domestic abuse, mental health, child exploitation, substance misuse and family dynamics breaking down. The team operates in a multi-agency arena working with a range of professionals and agencies such as police, health, education and other disciplines involved in the social care system. These professionals are integral to the team's case work with families, as well as being a regular source of referrals.

Safe & Supported teams

Safe and Supported currently have six social work teams; each have one team manager and seven social workers. There is a variety of experience across the teams ranging from a large cohort of newly qualified social workers undertaking their ASYE to progressed social workers who are also practice educators.

The Safe and Supported teams manage a variety of case work including Child In Need, Child Protection, Looked After Children (both long term looked after children and those who we have on-going legal proceedings for), we also have cases where adoption is being progressed and Private Law applications to determine where and with whom a child should live following parents separating or to support applications for one parent to see their child should there be family discord.

The role of the social worker in Safe and Supported is a complex one with risk management being evident in what they do to support families.

There is also a Family Time service that supports the time that children and young people spend with their parents or carers should there be concerns for the child's welfare. This service supports this time to be productive and safe for children as well as trying to support the family to develop skills in parenting and play.

Children's Disability Team

The Children's Disability Team (CDT) is a small specialist team of social workers who provide advice and support to children and young people with severe and complex disabilities until the age of 18. The term disability covers a broad spectrum of needs and it is not always easy to define what severe and complex means as it can be different for different people. Typically, the CDT provide support to children and young people whose ability to stay safe, to enjoy and to achieve is significantly impaired by their disability and would be further impaired without the provision of services. The pathway to the CDT is via a Single Assessment as a Child in Need undertaken by the Front Door

Fostering Team

The Fostering Service separated from the Adoption Service in January 2018 in preparation for the regional adoption agency- Adopt North East launching.

When the services separated two new team managers were appointed and during the past 18 months the team has gradually introduced two distinct service areas. The service has two small teams offering services to both mainstream and connected carers, which includes assessments, training and post Special Guardianship Order support.

Social workers within the connected carers service are responsible for assessing and supervising connected people who present as potential carers for children and young people requiring alternative care arrangements. These assessments can be either short viability assessments or full assessments required by the court. The Social Workers also assess Special Guardians who request support post Order to support them in the care that they provide.

Social Workers within the mainstream service are responsible for recruiting, assessing and supervising foster carers who are not connected to the children and young people they care for. All assessments for both connected persons and mainstream foster carers are presented to the Fostering Panel which sits twice a month. The Panel is supported in its role by the Fostering Service by way of regular training and yearly appraisals of panel members. Additionally, each panel is supported by a Fostering Manager in the role of Panel Advisor.

The Fostering Team provides a wide range of training opportunities to both connected people and mainstream foster carers. This supports the carers by equipping them to meet the needs of the children and young people they care for including those with additional and complex needs.

The Fostering Service continue to provide a dedicated 24 hour advice and support telephone service to all foster carers. This enables all members of the fostering community to speak immediately and directly to a specialist fostering social worker.

Children's Social Work Workforce as at 31.10.19

Summary for MASH, Social Work Assessment Teams, Safe & Supported Teams and Fostering

Role:	Headcount
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior Manager	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior Social Worker (LADO)	1

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Manager • First Line Manager • Social Worker • Principal Social Worker • Student Social Worker • Apprentice Social Worker 	<p>1</p> <p>17 (15 FTE)</p> <p>87</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p>
TOTAL	114
Number of years qualified:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASYE (Newly Qualified) • Less than 2 years • 2-5 years • 5-10 years • 10-20 years • 20 years + 	<p>27</p> <p>3</p> <p>22</p> <p>22</p> <p>20</p> <p>7</p>
Maternity Leave	5
Number of Leavers in 12 month period	14
Number of vacancies	1
Number of Non Progressed Social Workers	33
Number of Progressed Social Workers who have completed post qualifying training	27
Number of Practice Educators – Stage 1	10
Number of Practice Educators – Stage 2	7

ASYE Programme

There are currently 27 ASYEs and they commence a 12 month programme as soon as their HCPC registration is confirmed. This Programme is in line with that required by the Sector Skills Council, Skills for Care. 10 are due to complete their ASYE programme within the next 3 months. This programme supports the learning and development of the newly qualified social workers and stipulates the regularity of supervision, i.e. weekly for the first 6 weeks, fortnightly up to the 6 month review and then monthly. There is also a 10% reduction in the workload and 10% time allocated for their development. The ASYE is required to undertake a Self-Assessment against the Knowledge and Skills Statements which helps them to identify their experience and their specific learning needs.

The ASYEs attend Group supervision every two weeks with the Principal Social Worker (PSW) and a Team Manager as well as a monthly support session supported by the PSW. Additional reflective supervision is also available by the PSW. Critical reflective supervision enables the ASYEs to focus on the WHY of their interventions with families.

Quality Assurance of ASYE Programme

All completed ASYE portfolios are read at a Moderation Panel. This is attended by the PSW and a Team Manager. The contents of the portfolio are checked for completion and the quality

of the ASYEs critical reflection, observations and feedback from others should demonstrate their overall progression and development. The Assessors reviews are also scrutinized. A feedback mechanism has recently been implemented which will assist the organisation to learn and develop the offer provided to ASYEs.

Post Qualifying Training (PQ)

9 social workers will commence a PQ module in Safeguarding Children at Northumbria University in January 2020. This provides further learning and an opportunity for the social workers to reflect on their practice. The PQ module is a pre-requisite for Progression.

Progression Route

Social workers who have completed the PQ in Safeguarding children can apply, with the support of their manager to become Progressed social workers. This recognises that the social worker can work with more complex situations with less management scrutiny. A Panel, consisting of a Senior Manager, the Principal Social Worker and a Team Manager invites the social worker to discuss a family they are working with, which demonstrates their capabilities against the Professional Capabilities Framework for social workers at the experienced level and their development against the Knowledge and Skills Statements for children and families social workers.

Practice Education (PE 1 and PE2)

There are currently 10 Practice Educators at Stage 1 and a further 7 with Stage 2. 2 Social workers have commenced PE Stage 1 at Northumbria University and will have student social workers on placement with them in December 2019. They will be supported by Practice Educators with PE Stage 2. We have grown the number of PE2s in the last 18 months which enables more social workers to undertake the PE1, the assessment of these students is overseen by a PE2.

Social Work Apprentices

There are 2 apprentices who have commenced the Integrated Social Work Degree at Sunderland University in September 2019. They are in the work place for 80% of their time, working alongside a mentor, and 20% is dedicated to off site learning.

Student Social Workers

There are currently 2 final year students on placement and 4 more will be commencing in December

Practice Quality Assurance

- **Brief Case Review**

A 'Brief Case Review' (BCR) is a brief review by a Manager of the case recording for a particular child, focused on a specific theme. It is part of the audit activity by Managers in Early Help and Children's Social Care. It is intentionally brief, enabling a number of cases to be audited thematically in a relatively short period of time enabling 'snapshot' assurance across multiple cases in relation to particular area of practice.

A Brief Case Review is a 'desk-top' activity, based solely upon an audit of the recording contained within the case record, as well as providing some management oversight of the quality of case recording.

- **Collaborative Case Reviews**

This method of auditing has recently been introduced and focuses on 'core dimensions of effective practice'. It is intended to be undertaken jointly by the worker and the manager. The core dimensions are based on eight practice standards which have been developed in line with the Signs of Safety approach. These are:

- Children will be listened to and we will act on what they tell us;
- Children will have people important to them involved in helping to keep and make them safe;
- Children will have their safety clearly understood;
- Children will have a Safety Plan which tells those who need to know how to keep them safe;
- Children will only have help for as long as they need it (so they can get on with their own lives);
- Children will be able to understand all the things written about them;
- Children will have help which follows the rules;
- Children have help from Workers who get the advice and support they need to do a good job.

4. Background Information

The following documents have been used in the compilation of this report and may be inspected at the offices of the author.

Workforce data as at October 2019. The Supervision Policy and Quality Practice Assurance framework.

5. Appendices

None provided.