

## CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY HEALTH REPORT

<b>Report Title</b>	Principal Social Worker 6 Monthly Report – June 2017
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	July 2017
<b>Report Author</b>	Fiona Francis - Service Manager Quality Assurance and Review Service
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	<p>To provide the Director Children Services, Head of Service and Lead Member an update on the progress of the Principal Social Work Role in Swindon children's social care over the last six months and a view from social workers about their experience of being employed within Swindon Borough Council.</p> <p>c.c. CF&amp; CH Senior Management Team &amp; LSCB</p>
<b>Summary</b>	<p><b>Context:</b></p> <p>'A core aim of the Principal Child and Family Social Worker is to ensure strategic direction and decision making is informed by the realities of social work practice. Thus a feedback loop.....links the real-life experience of those who deliver and manage social work with those on the receiving end of practice.' Stanley and Russell (2014)</p> <p>Professor Eileen Munro's Review of Child Protection recommended that each Local Authority should designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker who is a Senior Manager with lead responsibility for advocating higher practice standards and the development of organisational learning cultures within local authority.</p> <p>The Principal Social Work role in Swindon is about how to drive up standards of practice in a way that is not bureaucratically led but holds the child and their family as the central focus.</p> <p>The ethos of Swindon is to develop a learning culture and the way in which we have embedded the Quality Assurance Framework reflects this. We aim to be child focused at all times and are challenging all we do from the child's lived experience.</p> <p>Swindon's vision for the Principal Social Work Role is to develop the role within a systems approach via a Practitioner Board.</p> <p>The lead function of the Principal Social Worker (PSW) in Swindon continues to be incorporated into the role of the Service Manager for Quality Assurance and Review Service.</p>

	<p>The model enables the PSW not to be involved in direct practice but to be the lead enabler in allowing for far greater practice insight to be heard by the DCS and Lead Member as views from social workers from across all areas of the Council are sought.</p> <p>The PSW is tasked with seeking creative ways to ensure this broader experience is sought, fed back, valued and has an impact on changing practice for the better.</p> <p>The Principal Social Worker also uses the broader day to day experiences to observe practice, hear views and experiences and then uses a Practitioner Board made up of consultant and experienced social workers to seek their wider views, debate challenges, celebrate success and reflect this back to the management team.</p> <p>This is the second Principal Social Worker's 6 Monthly Report, the last one being completed in November 2016. A "What you told us v What we did" style report was then developed with the Head of Service in response to the issues that had been raised. This was shared across the service via the Quarterly Quality Assurance Board for Children Families and Community Health; with the Council Lead Member for Children and with the LSCB. It received very positive responses and feedback from all these different audiences.</p> <p><b>Progress:</b></p> <p>Since November 2016 the PSW Board has met on four occasions. From February 2017, it reduced its frequency to once every two months, as agreed in the terms of reference following the embedding of the Board into practice.</p> <p>The priorities that were agreed for the last PSW Report have been addressed in the last 6 months work.</p> <p>While it has been a challenge for members to consistently attend we now have membership from the Disabled Childrens Team, Fostering Service and the Adoption Team.</p> <p>The members continue to address the PSW Board work through their own team meetings and have worked hard to provide Good Practice Story Boards which are attached, (shared in appendix 1). The Board is planning to improve these by using the child's direct quotes where appropriate so we can evidence the voice of the child in the good practice examples. The aim is that all the story boards and work of the PSW will be "show cased" at the Children Families and Community Health Conference which has been scheduled for February 2018.</p> <p>We have continued to seek the voice and lived experience of Swindon children's social workers using the Signs of Safety mapping and scaling tools.</p>
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	<p><b>Guest Speakers:</b></p> <p>There has been two guests in attendance at the PSW Board since November 2016. The Named Nurse for Health Visitors and the Lead Coordinator for the Baby Steps Programme. The purpose of these guests being invited was to consider how the Board could raise awareness in their teams of these specific specialist health roles and to identify how we could all work more closely together. The key areas where improvements could be influenced included referrals to the Baby Steps programme and ensuring the coordinators are invited to participate in child protection conference; improved understanding of the health role in MARAC, information sharing and health participation in strategy discussions.</p> <p>It was also arranged to have the Virtual Head for Looked After Children however this was cancelled on the day and will be rearranged.</p> <p>The Policy and Procedures Officer attends part of each Board and continues to develop this ongoing link to share the new policy's which have been developed or amended and to also hear the voice of practitioners regarding the need for any policy or procedure which should be developed. Specifically the Board has been reminded of the LSCB Escalation Policy and the protocol between Children Services and Adult Services that has recently been developed and shared at a workshop for managers. The Board members are also now provided with regular monthly updates from the Policy and Procedures Officer which include research and good practice guides and tools.</p> <p>A number of Board members were interviewed by the independent ISOS partnership who recently completed a Strategic Review of Children's Services in April 2017.</p> <p><b>Reflective Practice Sessions:</b></p> <p>Reflective Practice Sessions have continued, informed by the Quality Assurance Framework and the learning from Serious Case Reviews and Local Case Reviews. These sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning from SCR Child D and Child S</li> <li>➤ Fostering and Adoption Standards – what is expected from carers</li> <li>➤ Practice improvements required following audits of supervision and models of reflective practice; core groups; the Pathway from SD to ICPC; the findings from the Social Work Health Check.</li> </ul>
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	<p>➤ Transfers of children subject to protection plans across boundaries as per learning from LCR Child A</p> <p><b>National and Regional Links:</b></p> <p>Updates have been provided to the Board from both the work of the regional and national PSW networks. Information from these networks has been passed to Board members to share with their teams, including correspondence from Isabelle Trowler the Chief Social Worker for Children.</p> <p>The PSW Board provided feedback to the national consultation on the proposals for Social Work Accreditation.</p> <p>Significant and helpful research has been shared during and between meetings, including :</p> <p>“Not Seen Not Heard” research</p> <p>Bright Spots Survey of Children in Care</p> <p>Parental Capacity- Article Bristol University</p> <p>Repeat Removals- Lancashire University research</p> <p>Concurrent Planning</p> <p>Attachment and contact- Ben Grey research</p> <p>The Board now has access to the virtual issues of Child Abuse Review on Development on the BASPCAN website.</p> <p>Assessing parental Capacity to Change – Harriet Ward et al 2014 ( recommendation of SCR Child D)</p> <p><b>The Voice of children’s Social Workers and their Lived Experience:</b></p> <p>At alternative meetings the Board focuses on what they and their teams experience is like working in Swindon. The following are some of the comments of the practitioners.</p> <p><b><i>What’s working well?</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our commitment to children.</li> <li>• The teams remain child focused and we have good relationships between children and their social workers.</li> <li>• The peer support we have within teams and the building culture that is not a “blame or backstabbing” culture.</li> <li>• Positive feedback from managers and service managers.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PSW Board is a good thing, the teams have felt more informed and also that their complaints are being listened to.</li> <li>• Children feel listened to and we have positive outcomes from Court proceedings</li> <li>• A Care Leaver has received The Mirror's Pride of Sport award. His trophy and photos were shared with the Board to demonstrate what the end result can be for children in care.</li> <li>• Positive outcomes for child with custodial sentence</li> <li>• Use of wider family for assessments</li> <li>• Partner agencies working well together</li> <li>• Manager working hard to regroup team with team meetings and peer groups.</li> <li>• Improving contact in linked in cases with Personal Assistants and children who are in care over 16+</li> <li>• Recording on ICS – development of the system to make it easier.</li> <li>• Sessions with partner agencies coming into the teams.</li> <li>• New phone system working well at the front door.</li> <li>• New group being launched for children with autism at risk of CSE</li> <li>• Concurrent placements and foster to adopt placements</li> <li>• Adoption orders and permanency for children concluded</li> <li>• "Positive Comments Board" in teams working well</li> <li>• The Fostering Team has been asked to participate in a research project with Rees Centre, University of Oxford, in relation to the mental health of children in care. This was due to the good partnership working during a previous research project of foster care stability.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>What are we worried about</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of placements and the delay in seeking approval to search outside Swindon –it can take all day and the child waiting.</li> <li>• Teams feeling a slight disconnect from senior management team given the changing roles at that level in the last 6 months.</li> <li>• Conflict resolution. Concerns about the service being escalated too high or too soon and too many people are being copied in before the problem is addressed by team manager and the social worker.</li> <li>• Frequent changes in ATM's</li> <li>• High turnover of SW's for some children</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different thresholds across teams. Not consistent, making it hard for other agencies.</li> <li>• The time it takes to complete chronologies             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caseload weighting not realistic, accurate or working.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• KPI's can be hard on workers. Sometimes it is not clear who is responsible for collating information for ICS.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some workers feeling micro-managed which is disempowering.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• ICS not working well. Time it takes to use ICS. Time spent with young people is decreasing due to time needed for recording.</li> <li>• Transport for placements. Taxi's not turning up or refusing to take child/staff member. Funding for transport             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some Social Workers don't feel valued and don't feel there is enough recognition from Senior Management. ( this was on a different day to the positive comment above)</li> <li>• Staff feel that there is a lack of handover and inductions for new &amp; agency staff.</li> <li>• Not enough Social Workers to cover the workload in the timescale expected.</li> <li>• Individual support and reflective supervision is not consistent for all.</li> <li>• Apprehensive of staff changes / staff leaving / lack of permanent staff.</li> <li>• Unclear about changes to adoption when we move to ATV and the possible impact or difficulty finding adoptive placements.</li> <li>• Placement issue - worried that SWs will become expected to care for children overnight. Staff are asked at short notice. Impact of work / life balance and blurring boundaries for children. Feel there is a disconnect with Senior Management on urgency of placements</li> <li>• Lots of changes of IRO's &amp; CP chairs resulting in very different working styles and quality is not what it should be. Danger statements and CP plans are too generic and not specific enough. They also need more context</li> </ul> <p><b><i>What needs to change?</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small manageable caseloads for all staff.</li> <li>• Threshold for a service to be consistently applied across teams.</li> <li>• There should be a change in how a placement is approved so that children do not have to wait for a placement.</li> <li>• Senior Managers should make the changes to placement availability and staff should not be asked to care for children in hotels.</li> </ul> </li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be a consistent approach for what happens when a Social Worker leaves and another agency staff member takes over – across all teams.</li> <li>• Permanent IRO/CP Chairs to be appointed</li> <li>• Performance information, recording V contact with children should be debated.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact of PSW Board:</b></p> <p>A centralised shared drive has been set up by members where all attendees can access the minutes, research, policy and procedure changes as well as story boards.</p> <p>A resource library will be developed as part of Trix to store all the resources the board members have access to and for them to access and share within their teams.</p> <p>The Board has requested that the Swindon Borough Council website for the public is updated.</p> <p>The Board has challenged the LSCB regarding its website and barriers to access the LSCB CP Procedures.</p> <p>Work is being completed by the newly appointed commissioner for placements.</p> <p>Positive comment boards are becoming more apparent in teams.</p> <p>The PSW Board is building connections between teams.</p> <p>The link with the policy and procedure officer is positive.</p> <p>PSW members are reporting that they are feeling more confident as a result of being on the Board.</p>
<b>Decision Required</b>	For the Director of Children's Services to note the contents of this report and share any feedback they wish to the Principal Social Work Practitioners Board
<b>Next Steps/ Actions</b>	For PSW Practitioners to continue as agreed to further embed the role in Swindon Borough Council.

<b>Directors Response</b>	The opportunity for social workers, through the social work Board, to express their views and experiences on service delivery and quality is an important one. The evidence of response and change from senior managers is important and communication to all social work staff of improvements/changes as a result of feedback from the "frontline" needs strengthening.
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	<p>The context and conditions for good social work practice are evident in aspects of this report e.g. learning from SCR's, reflecting on national and local research, establishing specific work for vulnerable groups, voice of the child being heard, supportive managers.</p> <p>There are equally a set of concerns raised by staff that the service needs to systematically address. Some of these concerns will be integral to the developing strategic plan for Children's Services and will be prioritised quickly, particularly thresholds, placement provision, connection with senior managers and consistency of practice. This will be taken forward through the Quality Assurance and Performance Board workshop on the 01/09/2017.</p> <p>David Haley Director of Childrens Services 31/08/2017</p>
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Appendix 1

Story Boards x 5