

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Report

<b>Panel:</b>	Children and Families Advisory Panel
<b>Date:</b>	6 February 2023
<b>Title:</b>	Principal Social Worker Children & Families Annual Report 2023
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

**Contact name: Kavitha Maxy**

**Email:** kavitha.maxy@hants.gov.uk

### **Purpose of this Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the panel with a high-level briefing of the roles and responsibilities of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker and to update the panel on the current and future priorities of this role.

### **Recommendation(s)**

2. The Panel is aware of and notes the role and work of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker.

### **Executive Summary**

3. This report seeks to provide the Children and Families Advisory Panel with an overview of the role and activities of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker in 2022.
4. Hampshire's Children and Families Principal Social Worker (PSW) role came into being in 2017. Recommendation 14 of the Munro<sup>1</sup> report of 2011 states that 'Local Authorities should designate a Principal Child and Family Social Worker, who is a senior manager with lead responsibility for practice in the local authority and who is still actively involved in frontline practice and who can report the views and experiences of the front line to all levels of management.'

---

<sup>1</sup> Professor Eileen Munro's government commissioned review of child protection (2011) in England urged ministers to back a set of reforms designed to cut bureaucracy and place more trust in professionals. Munro set out 15 recommendations in this report that included reform proposals to enable professionals to make the best judgements to help children, young people and families.

5. It is worth noting that the PSW role profile can vary depending on the local authority, where some appoint to a dedicated Principal Social Worker post, while many other local authorities have a hybrid role. In Hampshire, the functions of the Principal Social Worker are embedded in the Service Development Lead role and shared with the Assistant Head of Workforce Development, who leads on student placements including apprenticeships, training of newly qualified social workers and aspects of the role that fall under the learning and continuing professional development umbrella.
6. In Hampshire, the objectives of this role as agreed by the Children and Families Management Team are listed below:
  - Continuous professional development, high quality practice placements and the creation of a learning environment in which excellent social work can flourish.
  - Quality assurance monitoring of front-line social work practice and the provision of advice, guidance and direction to ensure the implementation of best practice across the whole social work / social care workforce.
  - Become a key communication link between front-line staff and senior management, to ensure that the views and experiences of front-line staff are given due regard in operational and strategic decision-making processes.
7. The PSW role evolved significantly in 2022, with aspects of it changing. The most significant strength was the PSW's participation in branch management meetings on a fortnightly basis, allowing a clear communication channel between the workforce and senior leaders in the branch. The role continued to drive the development of practice and has, in the last 12 months, contributed to the development of the Hampshire Approach through leading the Hampshire Approach celebration month in January 2022 and designing the next tranche of Hampshire Approach training on Family Meetings and writing SMART plans.
8. Wellbeing has been a major priority, with the focus being on strengthening our strategic approach to staff wellbeing. The PSW has led, with our Senior HR Business Partner, on exploring the need of the workforce and understanding the offer available to other LAs and agencies, so that a comprehensive wellbeing offer can be developed. A paper on the proposed wellbeing offer for the Children and Families Branch was presented to senior leaders in November 2022 and a task and finish group is now working on the logistics of the offer.
9. The PSW had the strategic lead for Participation until August 2022 and led the development of the C&F Participation Strategy 2022-2025 which was signed off in April 2022. There is also a Participation Action Plan 2022 which sits under this strategy. The lead has now passed to the Service Improvement Team who have developed a comprehensive action plan for the next 6

months, including the launch of the children in care and care experienced adults councils.

10. The successful completion of the four Resilience in Social Work sessions for our newly qualified social workers from ethnic minority backgrounds is a highlight of the last six months and staff who attended this have said they appreciated the opportunity to discuss structural inequalities based on race in an open manner.

## **Contextual information**

### **The PSW role - Supporting our Staff**

11. Wellbeing - The PSW has met with individuals and groups of staff to discuss their wellbeing in the last 12 months. These have been both as planned sessions during peer inspections and also in response to a request from the relevant district or service manager or the PSW Buddy for that service. Group sessions have been held with staff in Out of Hours Service, Basingstoke, the Occupational Therapy Service and IOW. A recent positive development is the introduction of sessions with social workers facilitated by CFMT members during a peer inspection. This session gives senior leaders a first-hand opportunity to hear from frontline staff and fulfils one of the key recommendations Munro put forward for senior managers to hear about the experiences of front-line staff, to help inform strategic decision making.
12. Graduate Trainees and their support - Another responsibility of the PSW is to meet with each of the GETS cohorts at the six-month point. This meeting has two main purposes, the role of the PSW is promoted and a well-being check is undertaken with the NQSW's to ensure they are well supported in their roles. Recent sessions have reverted to face to face, as the interaction and nature of the session benefits from people being in a room together. Generally, feedback at this point is positive, with most NQSWs feeling that the support they receive is good. On occasions, following the meeting, there has been a request for a follow up one-to-one meeting where specific issues have been discussed.
13. Ongoing work to develop a wellbeing offer – there have been several sessions with CFMT and D/SMs to develop this offer. The DM workshop in March concluded that the general focus of the offer should look to prioritise a 'universal' offer for all staff in the branch which could prevent a decline in wellbeing by building resilience through structured self-help techniques. It was also felt that a targeted offer for a small number of staff who were acutely affected by work related trauma could be considered. The PSW then led a task and finish group of DMs in May, and the first draft of the wellbeing paper was presented to CFMT in November 2022. This is an ongoing priority, and the plan is for the wellbeing offer to be finalised by March 2023.

14. Resilience in Social Work – Four sessions were delivered to an open group of BME social workers in their first year of practice. These sessions were facilitated by district and service managers, who led these sessions. They were well received, and a rich discussion took place, enabling not just the attendees but the facilitators to consider the impact of racism on the everyday life and work of BME workers. An evaluation meeting took place with the working group and facilitators on 17 May 2022 and further steps were discussed in a DM workshop in August. The agreed way forward is for these discussions to become part of the learning agreement and ongoing reviews in the first year of practice. Some feedback below from an attendee:

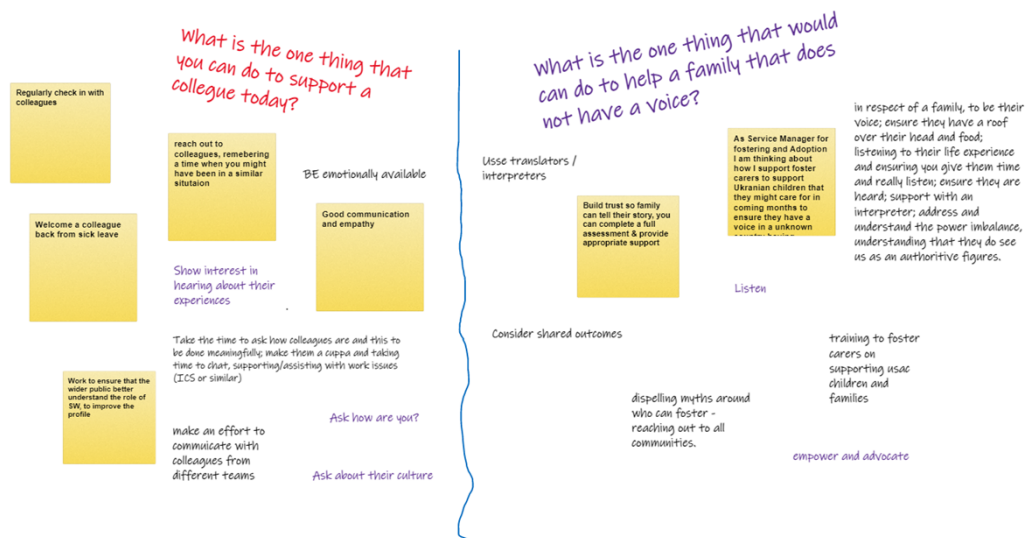
*“I feel that the session was really good. I feel that it gave people the opportunity to share their experiences and discuss how things could improve. I found it particularly interesting to hear of one of the people in group’s experience being of Asian minority and working in Hampshire and I can only speak from experience of being a Black/African Social Worker. I feel it really brought to light that we all need to reflect on our own belief systems and maybe take more time to understand our colleagues and what life is like for them. I feel that this session highlighted to me that if people don’t feel safe in their teams to example speak up or ask for support or even say that they are struggling due to their fears, this will create unsafe practice in terms of people not feeling to supported in making informed choices for our children and families. I feel that it will be beneficial for regular meetings to happen so that people can share their experiences and promote change.”*

15. Input for international recruits – We have started to recruit social workers from other countries e.g., Zimbabwe. The PSW is supporting the designing and delivery of a robust induction and ongoing training programme to ensure these recruits have a successful start in Hampshire.
16. Social Work Survey – The 2022 Social Work Survey was open between 26 April and 31 May 2022 and 131 responses were received to the survey from HCC and IOW staff. Findings were analysed and a report with recommended actions was brought to CFMT in September 2022. There continues to be a very strong supervision offer in Hampshire. Comments from staff indicate that managers are available and supportive and though some feel supervision can be task focused, the strength is that this provides clear challenge and direction.
17. Positively, the social work survey also showed that learning and development, administrative support, toolkit resources and IT/equipment were all strong areas, and the responses were similar to or better than last year’s survey. Although there were staff members who found some IT applications challenging, this was about individual training needs, and the general response was that technology enhanced the ability to work productively.

18. Work life balance is an area for managers to keep an eye on. A similar percentage of social workers felt their caseloads were manageable when compared to last year's survey and there were positive comments from Hampshire staff in this regard. This was seen to be a fine balance though and the ability to work flexibly and from home, which for many avoided a daily commute to the office if not needed, and thus gave them more productive time, was cited as vital in being able to keep up with the work.

### **The PSW role - Supporting outstanding practice to flourish**

19. Hampshire Approach –The Hampshire Approach Celebration Month took place in January 2022 and had a wide-ranging programme with learning sessions, reflective practice circles, sessions on Culture and Parenting, a partner agency session and Mark Finnis, a national expert on restorative practice, delivered a session looking at strength based restorative work, considering the impact of this on our Family Meeting Model, and touching on the impact of trauma on families and our work with them.
20. Practice themes and data analysis – The PSW contributes to discussions on thematic issues (identity, re-referrals into social care, Child Sexual Abuse), writes the Children in Care quarterly thematic report and has undertaken audits in several areas of practice.
21. World Social Work Day 2022 – The PSW led on organising the World Social Work Day events in Hampshire on 15 March 2022. The international theme was 'Co-building a New Eco-Social World: Leaving No One Behind'. In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight our theme was "Promoting and celebrating our collective strengths and diversity".
22. At the World Social Work Day event, there was the opportunity to hear from practitioners in Hampshire including a talk on 'Social Work in British Overseas Territories'. Steve Crocker, Director of Children's Services, opened the event and we had over 50 practitioners attend. We took the opportunity to get feedback from staff on how we can promote a strength based and supportive culture in the organisation and a selection of the comments received is seen below.



23. PSW Buddies - The PSW Buddy network is a group of social workers each representing their district or service and forming another link between the PSW and frontline practitioners. The network is well established and meets on a termly basis. The discussions with the buddies are a useful temperature check for wellbeing and also to understand the impact on the ground of some of the positives and challenges faced by workers.
24. Inclusion and Diversity Lead – The PSW was the branch lead for Inclusion and Diversity in 2022 and is a member of the Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group for the department. The PSW has liaised with corporate and Adults Health and Care colleagues to develop a CSD Zero Tolerance statement and has shared some of the good practice in the branch including the work with BME social workers and identity and culture.
25. Learning and Development Lead – The PSW was the lead for L&D in 2022 and has well embedded links with the L&D team and with the Assistant Head of Learning and Development, who teams up with PSW to undertake aspects of the PSW role. The responsibility for the graduate trainee programme, apprenticeships, the learning and development pathway for CSD staff is with the L&D team.
26. CFMT role – The PSW continued to attend CFMT (the branch management meeting) on a fortnightly basis throughout 2022 and this has been a useful platform to apply the frontline context, in relation to practice and staffing, to the decision-making process in the branch.
27. Social Work England SPOC – The PSW is the single point of contact for Fitness to Practice concerns from Social Work England (SWE), who is the registration body for social workers in England. Any concerns SWE has received about the practice of a social worker, which requires an organisational response, is routed to Hampshire through the PSW.
28. Liaison with other Local Authorities, HSCP and other sector organisations – the PSW is a member of the PSW South East Regional Network which includes the Isle of Wight, Southampton, Portsmouth, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Buckinghamshire and

Oxfordshire. As part of representing Children's Social Care in the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, the PSW sits on the Workforce Development subgroup and the Child Sexual Abuse working group. The PSW also liaises with external organisations like Community Care, What Works Centre, Rees Centre and Social Work England to share and contribute to excellent social work practice.

29. Communication Site and Yammer Page – The PSW has a presence on the Children and Families communication site and also runs a Yammer page to maximise the reach of corporate, practice and wellbeing messaging to staff.

## **Finance**

30. There are no direct finance implications for this report.

## **Performance**

31. The report picks up on impact on performance and service delivery in previous sections.

## **Consultation and Equalities**

32. This has been picked up in points 14, 19, 20 and 23 in this report.

## **Climate Change Impact Assessment**

33. There is no direct impact in relation to climate change.
34. The carbon mitigation tool and climate change adaptation tool were not applicable because this report relates to the role and work of the PSW and is strategic/administrative in nature.

## **Conclusions**

35. The Principal Social Worker role is an embedded part of how we work and support our staff in the Children and Families branch.
36. The PSW is an integral player in the development of practice with children and families, locally, regionally and nationally. This brings opportunities to consider research, information from studies and surveys and not least, the Children's Social Care Review and its implications for practice and service delivery in Hampshire.
37. A closer tie up with the South East Sector Led Improvement Programme (SESLIP) and the SE Regional PSW network was proposed in 2022 and this is being explored further this year. What this means is that Steve's priorities as DCS and as the President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) will necessarily align with and consider the regional and

national picture on key issues like recruitment and retention and placement availability and choice, through input from the regional PSW network.

38. The PSW role is a recognised and defined role within the branch. The importance of this role is recognised by senior leaders and there is a proposal to expand and raise the profile of this role further through making this a standalone post. This is a positive step in the direction of building on our outstanding practice and improving our wellbeing offer to staff.



**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

*NB: If the 'Other significant links' section below is not applicable, please delete it.*

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
N/A	
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
N/A	

<b>Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents</b>	
<p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	