

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Panel:	Children and Families Advisory Panel
Date:	9 February 2021
Title:	Principal Social Worker Children and Families
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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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

2. That the Children and Families Advisory Panel 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 of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker.
4. Hampshire's Children and Families Principal Social Worker (PSW) role came into being in 2017. Recommendation 14 of the Munro¹ 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

¹ 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.

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.'

5. 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.
6. The core aim of this role is to ensure strategic direction and decision making is informed by the realities of social work practice. The PSW is a key link in the feedback loop and links the real-life experience of those who deliver and manage social work with those on the receiving end of practice. This brief is fulfilled through providing leadership and driving excellent practice through the development of our practice model and the Hampshire Approach which underpins this model, including assessment, planning, decision making and direct work with children and families.
7. 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.

The PSW role - Leading Outstanding Practice

8. The Hampshire Approach - the PSW is involved in the development of the Hampshire Approach which is our strength based and family focused approach to working with families. We have been developing this approach for over three years and have a well established process for assessment. In the autumn of 2020, the PSW supported the work to roll out the new Family Plan and planning process with families. The focus for the coming year is to embed the new plans and support the use of our practice model in direct work with families using motivational interviewing, solution focused practice and restorative practice.

9. Case File Audits and Practice Observations – The PSW remains close to front line practice through interactions with social workers, completing case file audits and undertaking practice observations regularly.
10. Identity, ethnicity and culture - there has also been a timely focus on the area of Identity in case work (this is identified as an area for continuous improvement and is also reflective of the national focus and discussion of the 'Black Lives Matter' movement) – with practitioners welcoming reflective discussion on the impact of ethnicity and culture on the lived experiences of children and families. The PSW has completed thematic file audits and is leading on a key piece of work in this area – which includes sharing the learning from the audits with staff and strengthening the recording of identity, ethnicity and culture in case work to reflect the understanding of the lived experiences of children from Black, Asian and Ethnic minority backgrounds.
11. Service Development - the PSW is well positioned within the organisation to respond to priorities in continuous improvement and service development. In the role of Service Development Lead in the Sector Led Improvement and Service Development Team, there is scope for the PSW to influence service planning, to contribute to the self-assessment and response to Ofsted inspections, to support the management team in the creation and updating of policies, procedures and guidance, to shape priorities for the future of the service based on need and resources available and most importantly, receive and analyse feedback from the most important stakeholders, the children and families we work with.
12. PSW Buddy Network - The size and reach of Hampshire County Council's services to children in need of help and protection means that the PSW must influence the practice of a wide range of staff in all the districts undertaking the core business of safeguarding, county services such as Fostering and Adoption, the Youth Offending Service, our residential Children's Homes and the Independent Reviewing Service. This is achieved by having members of staff who work in these districts and services, acting as PSW buddies. They form the feedback channel between their colleagues and the PSW, and in turn the senior management team, thus ensuring that any strategic decision making takes into account and is responsive to the realities of frontline work.
13. PSW Regional and National Networks - the PSW is part of the regional PSW network with the Isle of Wight, Southampton, Portsmouth, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The PSW also provides consultation to colleagues from other local authorities in respect of best practice and raising the profile of Hampshire and the status of social work as a profession. The PSW is a member of the Community Care

²Advisory Council, a select group of PSWs from eight local authorities who advise Community Care on practice and service priorities.

The PSW role - Supporting our Staff

14. PSW Health and Wellbeing Events - these events are run by the PSW and are opportunities for operational staff in the Children and Families Service across the county to share successes, practice challenges, examples of excellent practice and any issues with regard to their wellbeing. In the last year, these events have focussed on the wellbeing of staff in relation to working during a pandemic and adapting their work with children and families in a safe and responsive manner. The PSW has facilitated reflective sessions with staff which have enabled open dialogue about what is working well and what could be better, with suggested solutions where possible. The PSW buddies form part of this picture and link with their colleagues to take forward wellbeing initiatives. Staff are also invited to complete a health and wellbeing questionnaire which gives the leadership team measurable and reportable evidence on how staff view their working environment.
15. Social Work Survey - there are various means for Hampshire as an employer to understand the views and thoughts of our staff. The Social Work Survey takes place annually in which social work staff can respond to survey questions about workload, wellbeing, management support and learning and development opportunities. The findings of the survey are analysed and informs staff wellbeing and development initiatives, and importantly, our work with children and families.
16. Exit Interviews – these are another valuable source of feedback and the information we receive is analysed by the PSW and used to develop our retention strategy including any staff support programmes.
17. Black Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) Development Group for Newly Qualified Social Workers - the PSW has set up a working group of district and service managers, workforce development managers and the Chair and Vice Chair of the HCC Staff BME network. This group looks at the support needs of our newly qualified BAME social workers and the setup of a development programme to address these. This work forms part of the commitment from John Coughlan and the Children and Families Management Team to keep the conversation about Inclusion and Diversity alive and provide opportunities for BAME and non BAME staff to take action to promote racial equality in the council. There is a wider piece of work in train in this area and the PSW is part of the Inclusion and Diversity Working Group.

² Community Care is a social care publication run by the Mark Allen Group. They are involved in publication of news articles and research, alongside supporting the sector in recruitment and continuing professional development.

18. 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.

Conclusions

19. The Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker role is an active, evolving and responsive role and champions a strength-based approach in social work.
20. The role has a symbiotic relationship with other senior operational roles like the district managers and service managers in the Children and Families Branch and works through enabling and influencing best practice and supporting the wellbeing of all staff. Accountability for excellent practice and wellbeing of staff is shared and owned by all. The PSW presents a half yearly update report to the Children and Families Management team which captures all the activity for the preceding six months.
21. The future trajectory of this role is guided by priorities identified through legislation and guidance, direction from elected members and senior leaders, and input from colleagues and the children and families we work with and for.

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
OR	
<p>This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:</p> <p><i>NB: Only complete this section if you have not completed any of the Strategic Plan tick boxes above. Whichever section is not applicable, please delete.</i></p>	

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

Other Significant Links

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

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<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	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

See guidance at <https://hants.sharepoint.com/sites/ID/SitePages/Equality-Impact-Assessments.aspx?web=1>

Equalities Impact Assessment:

This is a report informing/updating the Panel on the work of the Hampshire Children and Families Principal Social Worker and as such has no impact on groups with protected characteristics.

