

**FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
7 March 2019**

TITLE OF REPORT: Children and Families Social Work Recruitment and Retention

REPORT OF: Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

POLICY CONTEXT

1. It is well understood that Social Work is a tough and demanding career that requires people who are highly skilled, resilient and intellectually able. Over the years many tragic child deaths have led to Government commissioning reviews and reforming statutory guidance and legislation.
2. In July 2016 the DFE (Department for Education) published its strategy to transform Children's Services due to ongoing concerns that the reforms of the previous years had not improved the quality of work with children and families. **'Putting Children First'** describes fundamental reform using 'three pillars' the DFE identify as significant in the children's social care system as it stands:
 - **People and leadership** – bringing the best into the profession and giving them the right knowledge and skills for the challenging but hugely rewarding work ahead, and developing leaders equipped to nurture practice excellence
 - **Practice and systems** – creating the right environment for excellent practice and innovation to flourish, learning from the very best practice, and learning from when things go wrong
 - **Governance and accountability** – making sure that what is being done is working, and developing innovative new organisational models with the potential to radically improve services.
3. A significant part of the reform thus far has also involved the DFE and the Chief Social Worker for children, Isobel Trowler, publishing Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) for Children's Social Workers (to be known as Approved Child and Family Practitioners) and their Team Managers (to be known as Practice Supervisors) and Senior Managers (to be known as Practice Leaders). The holders of these posts will be subject to an accreditation and assessment process delivered through the DFE over the next few years. Local Authorities are expected to ensure that Social Workers working in the 3 tiers described above are ready for the accreditation and assessment process by endorsing their practice.
4. The Government introduced, and currently supports, two fast track training programmes for would be Social Workers. The first, called 'step up to social work', launched in 2010 is a graduate scheme for those switching career. Evaluation of the

programme has indicated that it has generated a group of highly capable and committed new entrants to social work.

5. The second, is called Frontline, launched in 2014 and is based on the Teach First fast track model. High-flying graduates, typically from Russell Group universities are recruited and trained as Social Workers. An evaluation of Frontline in 2016 found that early indicators were 'most positive'.
6. Both of these programmes involve partnership arrangements with interested Local Authorities of which Gateshead is one. The quality of practice delivered by the participants and graduates from both schemes is extremely high.

Background

7. At the OSC meeting held in March 17, the Principal Children & Family Social Worker (PCFSW) presented a report, which outlined the difficulties experienced by teams in recruiting and retaining Social Workers in Gateshead. We knew that most Social Workers remain in the North East and move between the region's Local Authorities so in recruitment terms the available pool is a small one. Due to this Gateshead along with the other regional Local Authorities are always going to be vulnerable to local pressures such as the deleterious effects of negative Ofsted judgements. The recruitment and retention allowance was therefore proposed on the basis of a Local Authority benchmarking exercise, taking into account some known and some future anticipated outcomes in the region.
8. To recap, as at April 2016 sixteen (16) Social Workers left the Council's employment during a very short period of time. A rolling programme of recruitment advertising for both newly qualified and experienced staff was put in place due to the difficulties experienced in attracting sufficient experienced staff. Although the appointment of newly qualified Social Workers is helpful in terms of a longer-term strategy to 'grow our own' the limits placed on newly qualified Social Workers prevent a full caseload and the allocation of complex cases. Therefore, there is a limit to how many newly qualified Social Workers the services can tolerate without the need for additional capacity.
9. In response, Gateshead Children's Services had to rely on procuring experienced agency staff to maintain safe levels of capacity within its Social Work teams.
10. The report also referenced six outcomes to mitigate the difficulties in retention and recruitment. The first of which included a plan to enhance Social Work salaries across the board and align our recruitment processes to the KSS. The report further noted what efforts would be made to make Gateshead an authority where Social Workers want to work and remain. Cabinet approved the recruitment and retention package for Children & Families Social Work that came into force in May 2017 and confirmed in December 2018 that it should continue for a further 2 years.
11. In March 2018 the Principal Children & Family Social Worker (PCFSW) presented a report to OSC, which noted a marked improvement in successfully securing Social Workers to permanent posts in Gateshead and a 62.5% reduction in Social Workers

leaving the Council. The report covered the period from the R&R allowance being agreed by Cabinet (May 2017) to 28th February 2018.

Current update on the six outcomes-period 1st March 2018 to 31st December 2018

Outcome 1

12. **A competitive, if not higher salary offer, than our competitors based on new job profiles aligned to the KSS standard (see also appendix 1 and 2).** Since the last report Gateshead's position has continued to remain stable.
13. In **Referral and Assessment** there have been 2 new starters. Both of whom are experienced Social Workers. One chose to leave their Local Authority to come to Gateshead (relocated from a London Council) and the other chose to stop agency work in favour of a permanent contract with Gateshead.
14. Referral and Assessment lost 2 Social Workers in the period. 1 left on health grounds and 1 newly qualified Social Worker (a Frontline graduate) left to work in a Local Authority nearer to her home area.
15. **Complex Child in Need team** (CCiN/Edge of care team) successfully recruited to 1 vacancy. The candidate was an experienced Social Worker and chose to stop agency work in favour of a permanent contract in Gateshead.
16. There has since been 3 Social Workers leave, 2 to join agencies and 1 to take up a post in another Council.
17. In **Safeguarding and Care planning** (SGCP) there have been 15 new starters, 10 of whom came from other Councils and 5 from Frontline. 6 are newly qualified.
18. Retention in **SGCP** is an improving picture with 9 leavers, 1 transferred internally and 1 left on health grounds. Of the remaining 7, 4 took up posts in other Councils, 1 went into hospital Social Work and 1 left following the birth of her baby.
19. In the **Looked After Team and Fostering service** 2 team manager posts and 2 Social Work posts have been successfully appointed to.
20. There were 5 leavers in the period, 2 on medical grounds. 2 took up posts in other Councils and 1 left to join an independent fostering agency.
21. EDT have remained unchanged.
22. In summary the recruitment and retention policy has continued to secure Social Workers in permanent posts in Gateshead with low number of Social Workers choosing to leave the Council in favour of another Council. Of the 19 social Workers that left their posts only 8 left the authority to work for another Council (42%).
23. The services are currently recruiting to 6 vacancies.

24. The PCFSW initiated a survey in May 2018 directed only at children's social work and aimed at understanding the issues around recruitment and retention of Social Workers in Children's Services. Of the 125 Social Workers surveyed just over 45% returned a completed survey. The feedback was generally positive with Social Workers identifying Gateshead as a good place to work where they felt safe to practice and supported by their colleagues and managers. There were high rates of job satisfaction and the feeling that they are making a difference to the lives of the most vulnerable residents of Gateshead.

Service area	New Starters	Leavers	Total number of NQSW in Service
	01.03.18 - 01.01.19	01.03.18 - 01.01.19	Current
R&A	2	2	0
CCiN	1	3	0
SGGP	15	9	6
Fostering	0	2	0
LAC	4	3	1
EDT	0	0	0
Total	22	19	6
	22 (all new to the Council)	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 transferred internally • 4 left on medical grounds • 1 left following pregnancy • 3 joined an agency • 1 to hospital SW • 1 joined an independent fostering agency • 8 took up posts in other Councils 	

Outcome 2

25. **A recruitment process that is in line with the KSS and selection processes that provides a solid baseline assessment of candidates that can pull through into the employer practice endorsement process.**
26. The Ministers plans for the national accreditation and assessment of Children's Social Workers (NASS) are ongoing, although have not been universally welcomed by the profession. Crucially, at this moment in time the accreditation is not a mandatory process. At this time the intention is still for a 3-phase approach to roll out. Phase one (mid 2018) has involved five local authorities to test the delivery mechanism. Phase two (early 2019) will involve work with a further 12-15 local Authorities to build a working prototype to be rolled out nationally. Both phases will be underpinned by analysis from an independent research partner. Phase 3 (by 2020) will be full roll out involving a four-stage approach to assessment:
- **Stage 1:** individual social worker practice endorsement by the employer – in the workplace over a period of time
 - **Stage 2:** an online assessment of knowledge
 - **Stage 3:** an observed interactive practice simulation in a controlled environment with independent examiners
 - **Stage 4:** a written assessment
27. The PCFSW in collaboration with Gateshead's HR service have already aligned all Social Work job profiles to the KSS and assimilated existing staff to the 4 main levels- Newly qualified entry level, Experienced Child and Family Practitioner, Practice Supervisor and Senior Practice Supervisor. Recruitment processes are now more stretching for candidates at each level and focus on those competencies identified for each KSS.
- The continuous professional development (CPD) offer has also been aligned to the KSS and is intended to contribute to enabling Social Workers in achieving accreditation once they are ready to be sponsored through the process.
28. Workforce Development have developed an addendum to the Corporate Appraisal and Development Tool, which will support Social Workers within Children & Families to clearly map their achievement of the KSS appropriate to their level. This will further support stage 1 of the NAAS "employer endorsement" ensuring only the Social Workers who are fully prepared are put forward for accreditation.

Outcome 3

29. **A clear programme of development that can demonstrably attract Social Workers, both newly qualified and experienced, to Gateshead because they will know their practice will be enhanced and developed within an organisation that is prepared to invest in their future development and achieve accreditation.**

WFD have continued to develop a programme of training for Social Workers that meets their CPD requirements and ensures that their practice knowledge is both current and relevant. A significant development this year has been the secondment of the previous Frontline CSW into a pilot role of **Senior Practice Supervisor**

(Quality of Social Work) funded from the income generated by our partnership with Frontline. The focus of the post, in short, is to:

- Contribute to creating a culture where Social Work can flourish
- Support the development of coherent models of Social Work delivery (based on systemic, relational and collaborative practice tools)
- Supporting a learning and service improvement system-this will include a direct input and influence on the ASYE programme in Gateshead.

30. The establishment of this post has enabled the training offer to be expanded, particularly the roll out of a systemic and strength based modular programme for all Social Workers in Children and Families (see outcome 6 for more details).

Alongside this programme WFD have commissioned specialist training on Attachment, Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to compliment the systemic practice training programme. ACEs is a topic which has been identified by the LSCB, SAB, Community Safety and Public Health as an emerging topic and a multi-agency ACEs conference is being hosted by Gateshead. Further training for staff will, following this event, to support staff development in this area across both Children's and Adults Services. WD has provided a variety of other training programmes to ensure social work staff are continually supported in their professional development and to support retention of the workforce:

- Parenting Assessment (PAMs) Training for social workers within the service;
- Jewish Cultural Awareness
- AIM training (Assessment of Adolescents who display Sexually harmful behaviour - under and over 12 years)
- How to argue better – working with parents in conflict
- Children – Capacity, Consent and the Mental Capacity Act
- CIN and CP plan training
- LAC Plan training
- Age Assessment and Triple Planning (Asylum and Refugee)

A series of Practice Shorts have also run, these provide an opportunity for social workers to attend a short workshop on a specific topic without having to commit to excessive time away from their main job role:

- ACEs
- Genograms
- Non-violent Resistance (NVR)
- Activities for Direct Work with Children
- Motivational Interviewing
- Parenting and Nurturing Approaches
- Typical Teen Behaviours
- Resilience Café (Mindfulness)

Outcome 4

31. **A clear progression structure that invests in preparing the talented to become future Practice Supervisors and Leaders.**

32. We continue to provide newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) with the support and guidance they need during their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). There are currently 9 ASYE's in the children's Social Work services at this time from 5 from Frontline and 4 from local HEI's.
33. The calibre of our ASYE's continues to be very high and serves to strengthen the quality of Social Work in Gateshead. The nurturing and supportive approach to ASYEs in Gateshead grows the resilience of future social workers and promotes Gateshead as an employer of choice.
34. The authority has a progression policy for Social Workers who have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience as well as academic evidence to move to the role of experienced social worker. The aim of the progression policy is to ensure that the social workers who can demonstrate a level of ability commensurate with the role of an experienced social worker are able to progress. Upon completion of a demanding and stretching portfolio of evidence all social workers attend an interview with the PCFSW and a Service Manager from the relevant service to establish their suitability for this role.
35. Gateshead continues to support our front line Social work managers to attend the Firstline leadership programme. A fourth cohort started in September. Attendees on this programme is intended to identify and prepare the senior leaders of the future in Gateshead.
36. The continued partnership with Frontline and 'step up' has significantly strengthened our recruitment and retention policy by growing and retaining our own. This year we have two units of 5 Frontline participants who will graduate in July and work with us for their ASYE year. This will achieve our initial target of having recruited at least 20 Social Workers from the two programmes by 2020. It is our intention to take a further unit of 5 in 2019/20.

Outcome 5

37. **Caseloads that are manageable and allow for quality Social Work, whereby risks are appropriately assessed, and proportionate responses provided; helping to manage needs "down" and preventing them from escalating up.**
38. Caseloads continue to be carefully monitored and overseen by managers and leaders at all levels. There is a workload management policy that sets the acceptable caseload numbers across the services within a range of 18-20. There is also a caseload weighting system in place that seeks to measure activity as well as the numbers of cases held by Social Workers. There are inevitably peaks and troughs in numbers and activities. An additional 4 peripatetic posts, (above establishment) have been utilised to manage demand within SGCP and R&A which has meant that demand is currently within acceptable parameters. Average caseloads across the entire children's Social work workforce currently sit at 14 children per worker, although this is a very crude measure of activity and doesn't take into account the experience of individual workers, complexity of case or FTEs.

Outcome 6

39. **A unique selling point that is rooted firmly in Social Work and appeals to the hearts and minds of our existing Social Workers and those who we seek to recruit.**
40. The last report noted that Frontline delivered two conference workshops in Gateshead to help us understand the principles and see the practice advantages of systemic practice as a model for intervention with children and their families. This cemented our resolve that this was an appropriate model that we wanted to roll out. . The development of the Systemic and Strengths Based Practice training programme draws not only on the expertise within the Children and Families Service but also utilises the skills and knowledge of Family Therapy Tutors from the University of Northumbria. The programme runs on a modular basis to allow workers to build their skills and knowledge and to allow greater access to the training. The programme also includes a two-day practical skills session at the UNN Simulation Suite, allowing workers the opportunity to practice the skills they have learnt in a safe but realistic environment. This training will form part of the mandatory training offer for social workers within Children & Families and will be extended to other workers within the service to ensure a consistent approach to systemic ways of working. (See Appendix 1 for the programme details).

Recommendations

Committee is asked to:

1. Continue to champion the work undertaken by the Council's Children's Social Workers.
2. Note the content of this report.
3. Agree to receive regular reports from the Children's Principal Social Worker regarding the progress of work against the six outcomes articulated above.

CONTACT: Steve Day - Service Manager and Principal Social Worker
Extension: 3989

Systemic Practice and Strengths Based Practice Training

Introduction:

Finding new ways of working to engage with vulnerable children and their families is essential if we as a service are to meet the increasing demands placed upon us. The ability of social workers to help families and individuals to achieve change can be achieved by focusing on relationships and the social context of the families with whom we work.

Evidence from research and evaluations of systemic ways of work show that adopting systemic practice not only improves outcomes for children and young people but also increases workers resilience where they are able to exercise a high level of professional skill and autonomy.

We know you want to provide the best service possible to the children and families of Gateshead so with this in mind we are offering a suite of training around Systemic theory, skills and practice.

Systemic and strengths-based social work practice:

This modular training programme 'Systemic and strengths-based social work practice' has been developed for Social Workers and Practice Supervisors and is widely available throughout January, February and March 2019. The programme links theory and models of practice covering strengths-based and systemic approaches.

The majority of the programme will be delivered in-house with a final 2-day, practical module at Northumbria University

The programme is flexible as you do not have to do all the modules sequentially, though please note:

- Modules 1 and 2 must be completed before any of the other modules, but can be done in any order.
- If you have completed the Genograms practice short session in either November or December 2018, you do not need to repeat Module 1.
- Modules 3, 4 and 5 can be completed in any order following completion of modules 1 and 2.
- Module 6 (Practical Simulation) cannot be undertaken until the first five modules have been completed. This is to ensure that learners have all the necessary theoretical knowledge available to them prior to undertaking the simulation exercises.
- Module 7 complements this programme but is not an integral part of it and therefore can be completed at any point.

Programme:

Module 1 – Genograms

This module is delivered in a 2-hour session at the Civic Centre **(no need to pre-register)**.

This presentation introduces some key systemic concepts which underpin the use of genograms in social work practice:

- cybernetics, homeostasis, the family as a system
- horizontal and vertical stressors on the system, social GRACES, family life cycle impacts, cultural organising principles, pride and shame, 'family scripts'

A 'case-study' exercise enables participants to practice building genograms from scratch using a common set of rules and symbols, then build on this to explore social and cultural impacts on the system.

Dates and Times:

10th January	-	12.00 to 2.00pm (Bridges Room)
16th January	-	9.00am to 11.00am (Bridges Room)
29th January	-	9.00am to 11.00am (Bewicks B)
6th February	-	9.00am to 11.00am (Bridges Room)
20th February	-	9.00am to 11.00am (Bewicks B)
6th March	-	9.00am to 11.00am (Bewicks B)

Module 2

This half-day module is delivered at Dryden Road PDC, unless otherwise stated **(pre-registration required)**.

The session will set the whole programme in the context of social work in Gateshead in 2019. It will explore 'why systemic and strengths-based practice?', and 'why now?' It will introduce:

- The Shared Visions and Shared Values frameworks recently developed by Gateshead's social work supervisors
- The notion of systemic and strengths-based approaches as the underpinnings of a shared practice model for Gateshead (including an exploration of where these approaches are already being applied)
- The human systems in safeguarding children; structuralism
- The fundamental importance of context

Dates and Times:

15th January	-	9.30am to 12.30pm (Room 2, Dryden)
21st January	-	9.30am to 12.30pm (Room 2, Dryden)
4th February	-	9.30am to 12.30pm (Room 2, Dryden)
21st February	-	9.30am to 12.30pm (Room 2, Dryden)
4th March	-	9.30am to 12.30pm (Emily Davis, Dryden)
13th March	-	9.30am to 12.30pm (Room 3, Dryden)

Module 3

This half-day module is delivered at Dryden Road PDC, unless otherwise stated (**pre-registration required**).

The session will explore the role of written and spoken language in the social construction of meaning and the theoretical and practical applications of the co-ordinated management of meaning.

It will introduce self, self-reflexivity, relational-reflexivity, Intersectionality, power and prejudice, second-order cybernetics, reframing and positive connotation

Dates and Times:

15th January	-	1.30pm to 4.30pm (Room 2, Dryden)
21st January	-	1.30pm to 4.30pm (Room 2, Dryden)
4th February	-	1.30pm to 4.30pm (Room 2, Dryden)
21st February	-	1.30pm to 4.30pm (Room 2, Dryden)
4th March	-	1.30pm to 4.30pm (Emily Davis, Dryden)
13th March	-	1.30pm to 4.30pm (Room 3, Dryden)

Module 4

This half-day module is delivered at Dryden Road PDC, unless otherwise stated (pre-registration required).

The session will introduce the theory and practice of the Milan and post-Milan systemic approach. Practical exercises will introduce participants to the arts of circularity, curiosity and systemic hypothesising. Relational (therapeutic) practice and change.

It will explore the practice of intentionality in different questioning approaches - solution-focused, motivational and interventive interviewing.

Dates and Times:

18th January	-	9.30am to 12.30pm (Room 3, Dryden)
24th January	-	9.30am to 12.30pm (Room 2, Dryden)
12th February	-	9.30am to 12.30pm (Room 3, Dryden)
28th February	-	9.30am to 12.30pm (Lamesley Room, Civic Centre)
8th March	-	9.30am to 12.30pm (Room 3, Dryden)
15th March	-	9.30am to 12.30pm (Room 3, Dryden)

Module 5

This half-day module is delivered at Dryden Road PDC, unless otherwise stated (pre-registration required).

The session will explore the principles of collaboration and working with 'risk' and 'resilience' in a systemic and strengths-based framework. It will introduce Barry Mason's

model of Safe Uncertainty and revisit the Signs of Safety framework. It will introduce the model of Radical Candour.

Dates and Times:

18th January	-	1.30pm to 4.30pm (Room 3, Dryden)
24th January	-	1.30pm to 4.30pm (Room 2, Dryden)
12th February	-	1.30pm to 4.30pm (Room 3, Dryden)
28th February	-	1.30pm to 4.30pm (Lamesley Room, Civic Centre)
8th March	-	1.30pm to 4.30pm (Room 3, Dryden)
15th March	-	1.30pm to 4.30pm (Room 3, Dryden)

Module 6 - Practical Simulation

This part of the training will be held at the University of Northumbria, Coach Lane Campus. These sessions require a high level of learner participation and all learners will be expected to take part in the sessions. This is an opportunity for learners to practice their newly acquired skills in a safe and supportive environment.

31st January & 1st February	-	9.30am to 4.30pm (UNN, Coach Lane Campus)
6 th and 7 th February	-	9.30am to 4.30pm (UNN, Coach Lane Campus)
20 th and 21 st February	-	9.30am to 4.30pm (UNN, Coach Lane Campus)
18 th and 19 th March	-	9.30am to 4.30pm (UNN, Coach Lane Campus)

Module 7 – Non-Violent Resistance (NVR)

This module is delivered in a 90-minute session at the Civic Centre **(no need to pre-register)**.

NVR is systemic and restorative framework to use with parents who have lost the control in their parent – child relationship. Developed from the field of socio-political struggle, NVR supports parents and adult networks to peacefully resist and overcome violence, coercion, and self-destructive behaviours in children and young people.

This training session will take you through the “what, why and how?” of NVR, leaving you with practical tools to help support children and families you work with.

Dates and Times:

25th January	-	9.00am to 10.30am (Bewicks B)
15th February	-	9.00am to 10.30am (Bewicks B)
26th February	-	9.00am to 10.30am (Bewicks B)
12th March	-	9.00am to 10.30am (Bewicks B)

To book onto training:

To reserve your place on these sessions please email darrenwhite@gateshead.gov.uk, please state your full name, team name, and the title and date of each of the sessions you wish to attend. Places will be allocated as requests are received.