

**TITLE OF REPORT:**        **Strength Based Practice in Adult Social Care**

**REPORT OF:**                **Joanne Thompson, Principal Social Worker, adults,  
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### **Summary**

The following report describes the practice model Strength Based Practice that is used in Adult Services and explains the methods used to embed the model within the service.

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### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Committee regarding the work undertaken to implement and develop Strength Based Social Work approaches in Adult Social Care.

### **Background**

2. The principles of strength-based practice is focus on a persons strengths and interests, on what people and communities can do, not what they cannot, “what is strong, not what is wrong.”
3. Part of this approach is to look at not only what the individuals’ strengths are but what are the assets in their networks and communities.
4. A strengths-based approach to care, support and inclusion says let’s look first at what people can do with their skills and their resources – and what can the people around them do in their relationships and their communities. People need to be seen as more than just their care needs – they need to be experts and in charge of their own lives.’  
*Alex Fox, CEO Shared Lives, 2015*
5. In 2019 the Department of Health and Social Care published a guidance handbook and framework to support social workers and social care professionals in applying a strength-based approach to their work with adults. [Strengths-based social work: practice framework and handbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/421111/Strengths-based_social_work_practice_framework_and_handbook_-_GOV.UK.pdf)
6. Based on this guidance Gateshead began our journey towards Strength Based Practice in 2019, this has included:

- Writing and implementing a strength-based supervision policy for the assessment service and investing in strength-based supervision training for all colleagues who provide supervision.
- In 2020 we facilitated an interactive practice workshop about strength-based practice so that we could understand what the baseline of understanding of strength-based practice was across the service.

“Very useful as a reminder of how to have more positive conversations and not to make a conversation like a questionnaire as sometimes we can forget this when under pressure.” Feedback from assessment colleague

- Our training offer provides opportunities for colleagues to develop their understanding and confidence in using strength-based practice both in their verbal and written communication skills.
- We have re-written our documentation including our assessment and support plan documents for Adults and their Care Givers with a focus on facilitating a strength-based approach, this documentation went live with MOSAIC in adult services in January 2024.

## **Current Position**

7. Our focus is now on embedding strength-based practice within the service as a practice model.
8. We offer newly qualified social workers undertaking their assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE), a programme that gives them extra support during their first year in employment. Strength based practice is an integral part of the training and support offered within this year. It is also part of our induction training offered to all new members of staff.
9. Our audit framework sets our audit of casework schedule and has practice standards that work can be measured against. The practice standards have strength-based practice at the heart. Team managers across the service complete audits of work completed based on the practice standards that are moderated by the senior management team. The outcomes/themes of the audits and moderations are reported quarterly by the Principal Social Worker to GMT. This framework provides an indicator of how we are progressing in embedding strength-based practice, and we can develop our approach based on the findings.
10. We have developed a set of performance indicators that can be used to measure how well strength-based practice is being embedded within the service. The performance indicators will be reported within the monthly performance clinic sessions so that we can respond in the correct areas of the service to ensure that strength-based practice is embedded.
11. Our training offer is built around developing strength-based practice and amongst other training opportunities we commissioned Acting Out Productions. Acting Out Productions are a training organisation that use live drama to enable colleagues to

observe live drama of interaction between social worker and individual and try different methods of engagement and strength-based practice.

12. In 2023 we implemented a survey across assessment service requesting feedback about colleagues' experience of supervision. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

“Time to reflect on work and not to feel supervision is a tick box exercise. When you are made to feel like someone doing a good job for the people we work with and given the opportunity for open and honest discussion. Acknowledgement of work/workload.”  
Colleague from assessment services.

### **Next Steps**

13. January 2024 sees the launch of our work with the National Development Team for Inclusion, who are supporting us to develop a Community Led Support model. This team have worked very successfully with a number of Local Authorities, on making the shift from traditional case management models to a strengths based model of care, helping people to have better outcomes, and ensuring that our internal processes reflect our ambition for strengths based practice.

### **Impact**

14. Adults in Gateshead who use our service receive support from us that is focused on their strengths, community and people around them. Support is meaningful to the individual and their family because it is focused on their personal goals and outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

15. Committee are asked to note the content of the report and comment on any areas of future development.

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