



Coventry City Council

## Briefing note

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**To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**

**25<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

**Subject: Children's Services Workforce Development Strategy**

### **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To inform the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) of the revised Workforce Development Strategy.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Education and Children's Scrutiny Board:
- 1) Note how the strategy will build on the progress of the service over the last two years, and support its aim of achieving the right capacity, capability and culture that is needed to confidently face organisational challenges.
  - 2) Identify any further recommendations for the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

### **3 Information/Background**

- 3.1 The Strategy embraces the priority of Children's Services to put children and young people at the centre of all its work.
- 3.2 Children's Services faces a number of significant challenges and to secure continued improvement the service trusts and values the contribution of all employees. It recognises that its success is dependent on the commitment and dedication of the talented people who work here. In this context, the Strategy sets out key priorities for continuing to value and develop employees. It views them as central to maintaining and building on current successes, with the goal of becoming a service with a reputation, regionally and nationally, of delivering quality services to children, young people and their families.
- 3.3 Children's Services has developed a range of recruitment and retention strategies to increase the number of good quality staff within the organisation. Learning and development plays an integral role in this by promoting skills and capabilities that are required to ensure that Children's Services meets its objectives and organisational responsibilities. The Workforce Development Strategy embraces this role and supports the vision of ensuring that children and young people within the city are kept safe through high quality services provided by a qualified, resourced and skilled children's workforce.
- 3.4 The Workforce Development Strategy is embedded in the Council's Behaviours Framework which forms part of the overall approach for achieving the Council's vision, purpose and values. The Framework aims to enhance both individual and organisational performance: it is an integral part of our day-to-day work, recruitment, selection, induction, learning and development and performance management. The Framework describes the behaviours that all staff across the Council are expected to demonstrate regardless of their specific role.

- 3.5 This report provides an update on the six key priorities for workforce development and how they will be achieved.

#### **4 Six Key Priority Areas**

##### **5 Priority 1: To draw on national and regional strategies and opportunities to enhance the recruitment and retention of social workers.**

- 5.1 Children's Services and Human Resources will use workforce data to analyse and identify gaps in the workforce and use retention strategies that will further support recruitment and retention.
- 5.2 Children's Services has developed a clear and enticing brand for social work in Coventry in order to ensure a continual supply of qualified and experienced social workers. The new recruitment campaign "We're With You" went live on 11th February 2016. The micro-site has also been re-designed to make it more dynamic and user friendly and social media has been utilised to attract qualified and experienced social workers to Coventry. A market supplement of £5,000 is being offered to staff working in the hard-to-recruit areas of the service e.g. Referral and Assessment Service and Neighbourhood teams.
- 5.3 The link to the new campaign <http://www.coventryiswithyou.co.uk/>
- 5.4 Sanctuary is supporting Children's Services with finding qualified and experienced social workers. CV's for experienced Social Workers who meet the minimum requirements from the Sanctuary database will be forwarded to Human Resources for consideration.
- 5.5 Children's Services will be participating in the Birmingham COMPASS jobs Fair on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016 to recruit experienced and newly qualified Social workers.
- 5.6 The Service is committed to offering high quality placements to social work students and this will assist with recruitment. Children's Services will also participate in Step-Up-to Social Work and Frontline. These are government funded social work programmes to recruit highly trained students as social workers, targeting areas where there are staff shortages.
- 5.7 Retaining high quality and experienced social workers is essential, this will be achieved by providing a robust induction programme, maintaining an in-house Approved and Supported Year in Employment Academy, providing continued professional development programmes and career opportunities for all staff; providing access to Research in Practice and Community Care Inform and, access to the Council's corporate 'Grow Our Own' initiatives, such as the 'Aspiring Leaders Programme' and 'Future Leaders Programme'.

##### **6 Priority 2: To align the workforce with the needs and priorities of the organisation to ensure it can meet its legislative, regulatory, service requirements and organisational objectives.**

- 6.1 Children's Services will continue to embed the national guidance in the Standards for Employers (2014) by engaging in effective workforce planning systems to ensure that the right number of staff, with the right level of skills and experience, are available to meet current and future service demands. Social workers will be provided with regular reflective supervision and have the necessary equipment to undertake social work tasks.

##### **7 Priority 3: To continue to train and offer workforce development opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and values of staff.**

- 7.1 Children's Services is committed to equipping staff with training that is targeted and provides them with the knowledge and skills to undertake their roles well and with confidence. Children's Services with assistance from the Workforce Development team has a very robust learning and development programme. All of the training is mapped to the governments Professional Capabilities Framework and the Knowledge and Skills

Statements. The service has a robust programme for newly qualified social workers, supported by three professional practice educators and a two- year early professional development programme that is designed to support practitioners in continuing in their career pathway. Children's Services recognises the pivotal role of senior practitioners having in modelling good practice and they are supported by the Principal Social Worker and have access to bespoke workshops.

## **8 Priority 4: Enhance leadership, management and supervision to improve the quality of social work practice across Children's Services.**

8.1 Leadership and supervision is integral to staff support and management decision-making. Managers in Children's Services have a shared commitment to supervision and support and to promoting a culture of continuous learning to improve the quality of social work practice. This has been achieved by having a clear organisational vision that is focussed on improving outcomes for children, young people and families and higher management modelling required behaviours. A Champions Forum has been implemented which enables front-line practitioners to report the views of staff to all levels of management.

## **9 Priority 5: Assuring Quality in Children's Services**

9.1 The Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework has been revised and provides a clear overview and strategy, with the aims of achieving and monitoring quality against strategic principles and quality standards. The framework will utilise a four lenses approach that has been adopted by a number of local authorities as a basis for viewing quality. The four lenses are independent challenge; provider challenge; citizen challenge and professional challenge. Quality is defined by the degree of excellence in the service provided and/or the degree of worth derived from a service by children, young people and their families.

## **10 Priority 6: Implementation and embedding of Signs of Safety**

10.1 Signs of Safety provides a risk management framework that is child-centred and solution-focused and includes a suite of principles, disciplines, processes and tools that guide the work. It enables Children's Services to move towards a strengths-based, solution-focused model that empowers families and enables them to make changes that they need to make to safeguard their children and support them to reach their full potential. The Signs of Safety approach will improve the quality of social work delivered to families and improve the engagement of families. Over time the Service expects to see a reduction in the number of children subject to child protection plans and the need for children and young people to enter the care system.

## **11 Action Plan**

11.1 The Workforce Strategy and action plan (Appendix 1) sets out the strategic actions based on the six key priority areas discussed above.

## **12 Key Areas of Progress to date:**

12.1 A social work recruitment campaign is to be launched in early February 2016 and the package of financial support to aid retention has also been agreed. The micro-site has been redesigned and the recruitment agency has made full use of social media as part of it recruitment campaign.

12.2 The Principal Social Worker has met with the Head of Social Work at Coventry University and discussions are under way about setting up a student unit within the Service. This will increase the numbers of social work students and provide additional income to the service. This income will support the development of practitioners who wish to access the Graduate Certificate in Practice Education with Bournemouth University.

12.3 Work is underway to plan the new learning and development programme with Workforce Development Service and the Local Childrens Safeguarding.

- 12.4 A new programme of workshops has been developed for senior practitioners, starting with 'learning from audit' in March.
- 12.5 The first meeting of the Champion Forum took place on January 11<sup>th</sup> 2016.
- 12.6 A response to staff following the 'Coventry Social Worker in Practice Initiative' has been discussed by Heads of Service and an action plan has been developed.
- 12.7 A new audit tool has been implemented and shared with team managers and service managers at the Practice Improvement Forum.
- 12.8 Large numbers of staff have completed the Signs of Safety training.
- 12.9 The action plan will be monitored by the Workforce Development Board that incorporates colleagues from Children's Services, Human Resources and the Workforce Development Service to ensure its delivery and review on a regular basis.

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## Appendix 1

# Children's Services Workforce Strategy 2016

### Foreword

Children's Services recognises that the workforce is its most valuable resource. A key element in delivering high quality services is improving the effectiveness of the recruitment of permanent social work staff across all teams and strengthening the service's ability to retain a high quality experienced workforce. Support, training and development of the workforce are fundamental to service innovation and improvement and help make Coventry a great place to work and live. Existing work and good practice is being consolidated by continuing to cultivate a culture of on-going learning and development.

This strategy builds on the priorities in the 'Coventry Pledge' which are to:

- Improve the health and well-being of children.
- Listen and involve children and young people in decision-making.
- Invest in children and young people's future.
- Ensure that children and young people are well prepared for adulthood through high quality learning and development.

Practitioners across the whole of the children's workforce are central to the achievement of these goals and ambitions for children, young people and their families in Coventry.

Cllr Ed Ruane

## **Introduction**

This Strategy has been developed to reflect the workforce needs of Children's Services. It builds on the progress the service has made over the last two years and supports the aim of achieving the right capacity, capability and culture needed to confidently face organisational challenges. The Strategy embraces the priority of Children's Services to put children and young people at the centre of all its work.

Children's Services faces a number of significant challenges and to secure continued improvement the service trusts and values the contribution of all employees. It recognises that its success is dependent on the commitment and dedication of the talented people who work here. In this context, the Strategy sets out key priorities for continuing to value and develop employees. It views them as central to maintaining and building on current successes, with the goal of becoming a service with a reputation, regionally and nationally, of delivering quality services to children, young people and their families.

## **The Vision**

Children's Services has developed a range of recruitment and retention strategies to increase the number of good quality staff within the organisation. Learning and development plays an integral role in this strategy by promoting skills and capabilities that are required to ensure Children's Services meets its objectives and organisational responsibilities. The Workforce Development Strategy embraces this role and supports the vision of ensuring that children and young people within the city are kept safe through high quality services provided by a qualified, resourced and skilled children's work force. In order to achieve this vision, the service will:

- Put the child at the centre of all its work.
- Create and promote a learning environment and support the workforce in achieving its objectives.
- Create a sense of 'us' across the service.
- Empower the workforce to participate in all aspects of service delivery and development.
- Value diversity and promote equality of opportunity for all staff to fulfil their potential.
- Provide a professional environment of openness and trust to support staff to do their jobs.

## **Coventry's Approach**

The Workforce Development Strategy is embedded in the Council's Behaviours Framework, which forms part of the overall approach for achieving the Council's vision, purpose and values. The Framework aims to enhance both individual and organisational performance; it is an integral part of our day-to-day work, recruitment, selection, induction, learning and development and performance management. The Framework describes the effective core behaviours that all staff across the Council are expected to demonstrate regardless of their specific role.

The Framework outlines the observable and measurable behaviours, attributes and qualities that are displayed by staff in approaching their work. Having a common understanding of the expected behaviours enables the way staff do their jobs to be assessed and provides clarity when identifying how the Council can develop the workforce further in order to continue to deliver quality services for children, young people and their families.

In addition the Strategy contributes to achieving the aims of the Children's Plan (2015), the Early Help Strategy (2015) and the Placement Sufficiency Strategy (2015), which are for all children and young people to be happy, safe, healthy, inspired and enabled to succeed in all aspects of their lives. It also has clear links to the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report (2015), the Children's Improvement Plan (2015), Coventry's Annual Youth Justice Plan (2015 -16) and the Local Government Association Standards for Employers (2014).

## **The Local Context**

Coventry is a predominately urban area, situated in the West Midlands. The population in Coventry increased to 337,428 in 2014. The main cause of population growth in Coventry between mid-2013 and mid-2014 was immigration. 5,950 of the population increase was a result of net international immigration, part of this was a result of increases in the number of overseas students studying at local universities. Coventry's population has a much younger age profile than England in general; the average age of Coventry's residents is 33.5, notably lower than the England average of 40, and is falling. Growth in the number of children in the city is likely to increase the need for school places and other services for children. The city is ethnically diverse, with 33% of Coventry's inhabitants coming from ethnic minority communities compared to 20% for England as a whole.

## **Children and Young People in Coventry**

There are 86,148 children and young people aged 0-19 in Coventry (2014 Mid-year Population Estimates, 2015, Office of National Statistics), which represents 25.5% of the total city population of 337,428. One in six children lives in poverty according to data released by the Department of Work and Pensions (2013). This showed that in the reported year 2011-12, 17% of UK children (2.3 million) lived in homes with substantially lower than average incomes. Coventry is the 46<sup>th</sup> (out of 152) most deprived council area in England based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (English Indices of Deprivation 2015 - average rank, Department for Communities and Local Government) and is also ranked 48<sup>th</sup> in the Income Deprivation affecting Children Index (2015). The Department of Education school census (January 2011) reported 1262 pupils aged 5 to 16 with a statement of special needs. In addition a longitudinal study (Department for Work and Pensions, 2011) indicated that there were 2140 children and young people aged under 16 claiming disability living allowance.

In November 2015, Children's Services had 3919 active referrals, of these:

- 2390 children were Children In Need
- 495 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- 624 children were looked after

## **The Workforce**

There are currently 832 staff in the Children's Services workforce of which 192 are social workers. Agency social workers currently represent 30% of the social work staff (December 2015). There are a number of teams that contain staff who are non-social work qualified and these include staff in edge of care services, children's homes, early intervention and prevention teams, the after-care service and the placement support and contact service. All teams are supported by a range of staff who provide administrative and IT support that is integral to the delivery of high quality children's services.

## **Children's Services Teams**

Children's Services has initiated exciting changes to the way children and families are supported as part of its commitment to delivering quality services to the children, young people and families that it serves.

The Early Intervention and Prevention Team delivers effective early help to children, young people and their families by supporting children in the early years of their lives or early on in the emergence of a problem at any stage in their lives.

The Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was launched in September 2014 and brings key professionals together to facilitate earlier and better quality information-sharing, analysis and decision-making. The MASH is staffed by colleagues from Social Care, Police, Health, Probation, Community Safety and Education. The implementation of the MASH has provided quicker responses to families and improved communication between professionals.

The Child Sexual Exploitation Team (Horizon), launched in April 2015, sits alongside the MASH. Agencies work together in the team to share information about children and young people at risk so that swift action can be taken to protect young people and to take action against offenders.

The Referral and Assessment Service is a city-wide resource that responds to referrals relating to vulnerable children, young people and their families. The team undertake assessments of vulnerable children in order to identify risk and need. Its objective is to protect children and ensure their developmental needs are being met. The team work closely with partner agencies such as Education, Police, Health and the voluntary sector to deliver multi-agency interventions to address risk and need.

Children's Services has three long-term Neighbourhood Teams that are locality-based. The Neighbourhood Teams work with children in need, child protection, looked after children and court intervention.

Edge of care services provide intensive practical support (including evenings and weekends), working directly with young people and their families to prevent them from becoming looked after. They draw on the Family Group Conferencing Service to ensure extended family members are considered in their intervention. The Multi-systemic Therapy Team (MST) is an evidence-based programme that works with children and young people to prevent them from entering care. It offers intensive family support and therapeutic intervention.

Children's Services also has two residential homes. The Grange is home to eight children and teenagers between the ages of 10 and 17 with emotional and behavioural problems and Gravel Hill provides short-term care and assessment of three months or less to children in care.

The All Age Disability Service works with people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, autism and with young carers and carers to promote personal, social care and health outcomes. There are three teams that work with 0-14 years old, 15-25 years old and 25 years and over. The team includes, Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Special Education Needs (SEN) Officers, Community Nurses, Speech and Language Therapists, Consultant Psychiatrists and a Psychologist. Some staff work for the Council and some staff work for Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust, which is part of the NHS.

The Looked After Children's Team is split into two clusters. The Team acts as corporate parents for children who are looked after by the local authority under the Children Act (1989). The Team manage and progress care plans and undertake direct work and statutory visits to ensure that children and young people's voices are heard. Route 21 Team provides social work and personal adviser support to young people aged 15+ who are beginning the transition to leaving care and those who are now living independently. Social workers and personal advisers work directly with young people and undertake a variety of specific tasks in partnership with workers and carers as agreed in the young person's Pathway Plan.

The Community Based Assessment Service (CBAS) works with children and families in pre-proceedings and care proceedings, offering assessments and interventions with families whose children have suffered significant harm. Court work is a key part of the Service. CBAS has strong links with research centres and is currently working with both Lancaster University to develop practice with pregnant mothers and the NSPCC and the University of Warwick on a pre-birth risk assessment model.

The Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) was launched in October 2015 and is the first in the Midlands. The FDAC works with families whose children are subject to care proceedings as a result of parental drug and alcohol misuse. A team of specialists including Social Workers, Domestic Violence Workers, a Psychologist and a Psychiatrist work alongside families during a



period of intensive intervention throughout the court proceedings. The FDAC is attached to the Community Based Assessment Service (CBAS).

The Family Placement Service has three teams. The Assessment Team is responsible for the recruitment, assessment and selection of adopters, foster carers, kinship carers and special guardians. The Support Team supports special guardians and adopters and supervises foster carers. The Permanence Team is responsible for children who have proposed plans for adoption and engages in family finding, matching and monitoring of children through to adoption.

The Youth Offending Service comprises a multi-disciplinary staff team including qualified Social Workers, unqualified Case Managers, Support Officers, Operational Managers, an Education and Interventions Coordinator, colleagues from Probation, the Police, two Clinical Nurse Specialists, a Right Step Careers Advisor and input from Compass, the local substance misuse service for young people. The YOS provides assessments of young people's systems and situations that are causing or likely to cause criminal behaviour and provides interventions to support community sentences imposed by the courts.

### **Children's Services Workforce Development Priorities 2016-19**

A great deal of work has been carried out to refocus and redesign frontline services. Work has also been undertaken with Early Intervention and Prevention, identifying those that need services most and providing appropriate support. Just as there is a need to build resilient families that can overcome challenges, a resilient workforce is required to support them in achieving their aims and keeping children and young people protected.

There are six key priorities for workforce development:

1. To draw on national and regional strategies and opportunities to enhance the recruitment and retention of social workers.
2. To align the workforce with the needs and priorities of the organisation to ensure it can meet its legislative, regulatory, service requirements and organisational objectives.
3. To continue to train and offer high quality workforce development opportunities for staff in order to improve practice.
4. To improve leadership, management and supervision to improve the quality of practice.
5. To assure quality in Children's Services
6. To implement and embed the Signs of Safety approach.

#### **1. To draw on national and regional strategies and opportunities to enhance the recruitment and retention of social workers.**

Children's Services and Human Resources will use workforce data to analyse and identify gaps in the workforce and use recruitment strategies that will further support workforce recruitment and retention.

#### ***Recruitment***

Children's Services will develop a clear and enticing brand for social work in Coventry in order to ensure a continual supply of qualified and experienced social workers by:

- Ensuring that there is a recruitment process in place that is responsive, flexible, fit for purpose and meets the needs of Children's Services by attracting qualified and experienced social workers.
- Developing and using a micro-site which has been redesigned to make it more dynamic and user friendly.
- Making better use of social media to attract qualified and experienced social workers to Coventry.
- Developing a rolling recruitment programme to ensure that vacancies are quickly filled.
- Attending a geographically wide range of recruitment fairs on a regular basis.

- Providing good quality placement opportunities to social work students to support high quality recruitment.
- Recruiting students in the final year of their social work programmes.
- Running an annual conference with local universities with a view to recruiting students in their final year.
- Offering four secondment opportunities to non-social work staff to gain a social work qualification on undergraduate and postgraduate social work programmes.
- Participating in the Fast Track and the Step Up to Social Work government-funded social work programmes to recruit highly trained students as social workers, targeting areas where there are staff shortages.
- Using an assessment centre model to recruit high calibre staff with the skills and knowledge to undertake the role.
- Offering attractive market supplements to staff working in the hard-to-recruit areas of the service.
- Providing car park passes to all staff located in the centre of the city.
- Offering attractive relocation packages.
- Providing a car lease scheme and essential car user allowance

### ***Retention***

Retaining high quality and experienced practitioners is essential in order to deliver quality practice in Children's Services. This will be achieved by:

- Providing a robust induction programme. The programme will: identify the support staff can expect to receive; clarify expectations relating to behaviours, standards and code of conduct; promote awareness of key policies and procedures; identify key contacts with whom staff will work and from whom they can access support.
- Maintaining an in-house Approved and Supported Year in Employment Academy with support and supervision from Professional Practice Educators, a 10% reduction in caseload and four study days to complete a portfolio.
- Delivering four workshops for staff on the Early Professional Development Programme with group supervision from Professional Practice Educators.
- Offering a bonus for NQSWs on completion of their Approved and Supported Year in Employment.
- Paying a £1,000 retention payment each year for all staff.
- Providing Continuing Professional Development Programmes and career opportunities for all staff.
- Providing access to Research in Practice and Community Care Inform.
- Embedding the Social Work Standards for Employers (May 2014) and an annual Health Check to identify issues and areas for development and change.
- Providing opportunities for staff to access the Council's corporate 'Grow Our Own' initiatives, such as the 'Aspiring Leaders Programme' and 'Future Leaders Programme'

## **2. To align the workforce with the needs and priorities of the organisation to ensure it can meet its legislative, regulatory, service requirements and organisational objectives.**

Children's Services will continue to embed the national guidance in the Standards for Employers by:

- Engaging in effective workforce planning systems to ensure that the right number of staff, with the right level of skills and experience, are available to meet current and future service demands.
- Ensuring that staff have safe and manageable workloads. In the Neighbourhood Teams this will be between 16-18 cases.
- Providing social workers with regular reflective social work supervision.
- Supporting social workers to maintain their professional registration through learning and development activities.

- Developing 'communities of practice', by ensuring that social workers sit within their cluster groups and have the necessary equipment to undertake social work tasks.
- Maximising the time social workers can spend with children, young people and their families, by reducing bureaucratic systems and utilising smart administrative support.

### **3. To continue to train and offer workforce development opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and values of staff.**

'The provision of a high quality social work service relies upon a well-trained, supported and motivated workforce' (Research in Practice, *Social Work Recruitment and Retention*, 2015:2).

Children's Services is committed to:

- Equipping staff with training that is targeted and provides them with the knowledge and skills to undertake their roles well and with confidence.
- Supporting staff to have the confidence to make professional decisions that enable them to do the right things rather than doing things right.
- Providing training and learning activities that are mapped to the Professional Capabilities Framework ([PCF](#)) the Knowledge and Skills Statement [KSS](#).

Children's Services with assistance from the Workforce Development team has very robust learning and development programmes for staff across the service.

The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) Programme supports Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) to develop their skills, knowledge and capability, thus strengthening their professional confidence. The Programme assures the quality of social workers' practice by assessing NQSWs' development against the PCF and the KSS, preparing NQSWs for 'The Approved Child and Family Practitioner' (ACFP) status. One key component of the ASYE programme is the provision of tailored and mandatory training and development opportunities. Alongside monthly workshops facilitated by the Professional Practice Educators and mandatory e-learning on Research in Practice, NQSWs access wider training from the Children's Services Learning and Development Brochure, which is accessible to all staff. All the training and development activities and resources in the brochure are mapped against the PCF and KSS and are linked to resources on the Research in Practice website.

The two-year Early Professional Development Programme (EPD) is designed to support practitioners in continuing their career pathway through to the next level of the PCF. All social workers start their EPD Programme at the PCF level of 'Social Worker'. On successful completion of the EPD Programme they progress to the PCF level of 'Experienced Social Worker'. The two-year period is not fixed. This acknowledges that practitioners have different abilities, opportunities, constraints and interests and may develop at different paces. During the final year of the EPD Programme, practitioners are encouraged to apply for the Graduate Certificate in Practice Education, accredited with Bournemouth University. This enables experienced social workers to prepare for the important role of teaching and assessing social work students and NQSWs.

Children's Services recognises the pivotal role that Advanced and Senior Practitioners have in modelling quality practice and supporting newly-qualified and experienced social workers. As part of their learning and development the Principal Social Worker (PSW) organises and facilitates monthly two-hour workshops. The workshops enable Senior Practitioners to share their knowledge and skills across the service and provide them with tools, reading and research that they can share with colleagues in their teams and clusters to improve practice.

In addition to the support offered by Children's Services, the Workforce Services Team delivers a range of learning resources and opportunities. The in-house learning and development brochure is produced on a yearly basis and is updated following feedback from audit, supervision and performance and management reviews. The Workforce Services Team provides a range of facilitated sessions that include: 'putting people management procedures

into practice', 'successfully conducting difficult conversations', 'leadership in the context of teamwork', 'leading and managing change', 'delivering good customer service', bespoke 'mandatory briefings', 'handling aggression and dealing with difficult clients' and 'working alone in safety'.

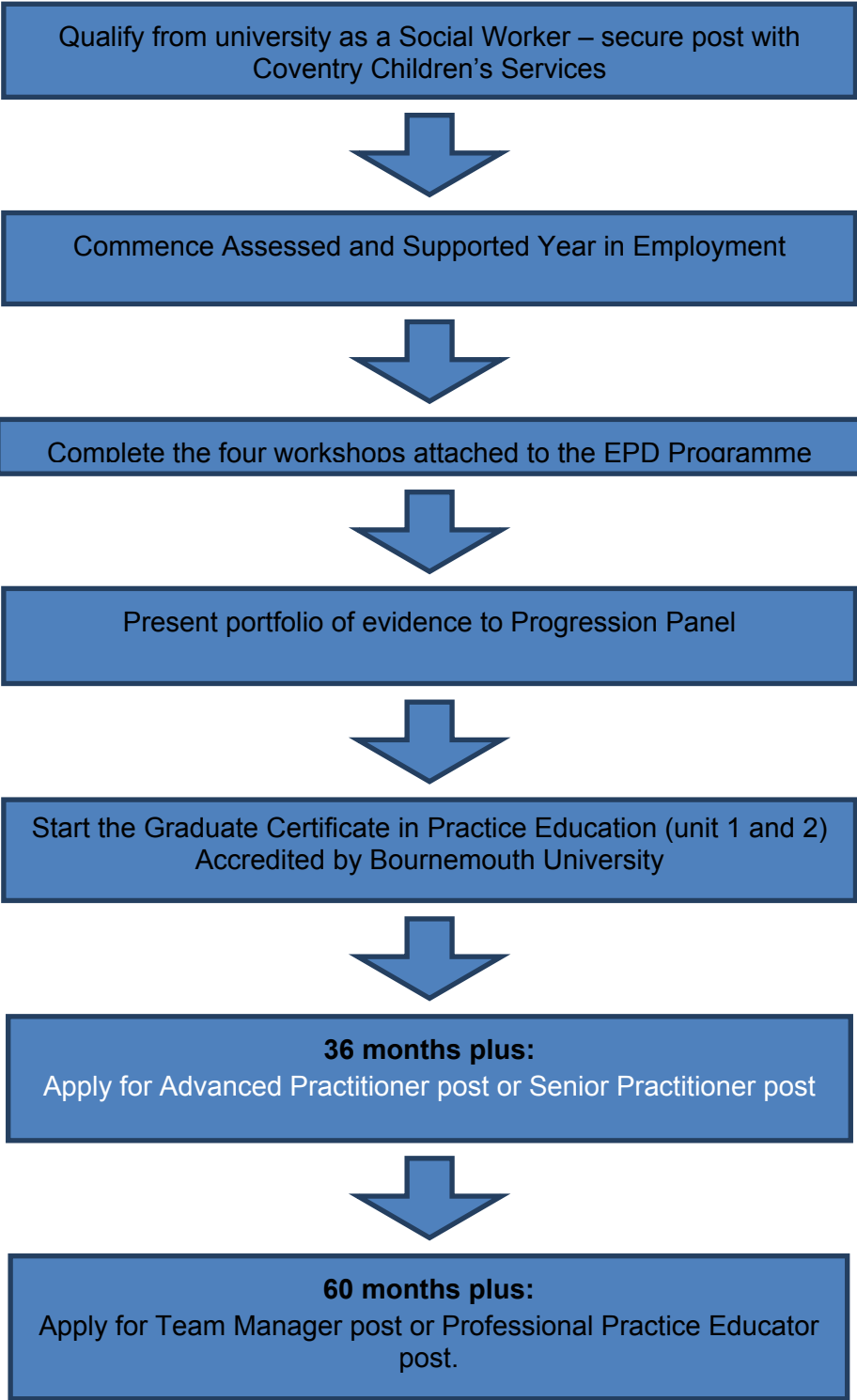
Learning from serious case reviews and other safeguarding training is accessed via the Local Safeguarding Children's Board website.

Children's Services has instigated a robust career pathway for all staff.

Early Intervention and Prevention staff can access 'Working with Parents', levels 3 and 4. The Working with Parents Certificate provides staff with the skills they need to work effectively with parents in order to achieve better outcomes for children and young people. There will also be limited secondment opportunities for staff who are interested in qualifying as a social worker.

In line with the Professional Capabilities Framework, Children's Services has three developmental pathways for social work staff (see diagram below): Professional Social Work Educator, Advanced Social Work Practitioner and Senior Social Worker/Manager. The three pathways, or areas of expertise, whilst distinctive, will not necessarily be mutually exclusive, and many social workers will wish to develop capabilities across the pathways, reflecting their expected career progression. Professional Practice Educators facilitate the learning and development of others. Advanced Social Workers continue to work directly with people who use services and provide leadership and professional wisdom to their colleagues and other professionals for work in situations of high complexity. Senior practitioners nurture and help the team manager manage a team (social workers and others), ensuring the service provided is effective and delivering positive outcomes. Senior practitioners also support, mentor and coach staff to enhance the quality of practice.

Secondment opportunities are available to support portability and to build upon the knowledge and expertise of staff. Staff also have the opportunity to shadow peers and managers across the service to enhance their practice knowledge and build on their professional skills.



#### **4. Enhance leadership, management and supervision to improve the quality of social work practice across Children's Services.**

Leadership and supervision is integral to staff support and management decision-making. Managers in Children's Services have a shared commitment to supervision and support and to promoting a culture of continuous learning to improve the quality of social work practice. Children's Services does this by:

- Having a clear vision that is focussed on improving outcomes for children, young people and their families. This vision has been communicated to and understood by staff as part of the work undertaken on the 'The Coventry Social Worker in Practice' initiative.
- Senior managers being visible and modelling required behaviours. The Director of Children's Services has established a Champions Forum to address the challenge of direct communication between front-line social workers and senior managers. The Forum meets four times a year and is supported by the Principal Social Worker. In addition to the Champion Forum, the Principal Social Worker reports the views and experiences of front-line staff to all levels of management including the Executive Director of the People Directorate and Elected Members.
- Shared ownership and shared responsibility for risk management and complex decision-making.
- Having clear standards and policies on reflective supervision.
- Having a Leadership Programme.
- Providing training for first-line managers.
- Promoting the Talent Management Programme, to support emerging talent within the service and enable succession planning.

#### **5. Assuring Quality in Children's Services**

The Children's Services Quality Assurance Framework has been developed and implemented to provide a clear overview and strategy with the aims of achieving and monitoring quality against strategic principles and quality standards. It focuses specifically on casework services for children provided by Children's Social Care and by the Children and Families First Service. The Framework will utilise a four lenses approach that has been adopted by a number of authorities as a basis for viewing quality. The four lenses are independent challenge; provider challenge; citizen challenge (listening to the voice of the child and young person) and professional challenge.

Effective quality assurance will be underpinned by the following:

- Setting, reviewing and evaluating standards.
- Providing a consistent system for monitoring and evaluating effectiveness (as above).
- Prioritising and facilitating continuous improvements within Children's Services.
- Supporting organisational learning to inform workforce development.

The approach to quality assurance includes the following components:

- Using data to actively manage performance.
- Quality reviews of service areas and teams.
- Assessing quality through observation.

Quality is achieved and evidenced through undertaking the above activities and acting on their findings. It is defined by the degree of excellence in the service provided and/or the degree of worth derived from a service by children, young people and their families.

#### **6. Implement and fully embed the Signs of Safety approach.**

Signs of Safety provides a risk management framework that is child-centred and solution-focused and includes a suite of principles, disciplines, processes and tools that guide the work. It will enable Children's Services to move towards a strengths-based, solution-focused model

that empowers families and enables them to make the changes that they need to make to safeguard their children and support them to achieve their full potential.

Child protection practice is the most demanding, contested and scrutinised area of work within Children's Services, primarily because it focuses on society's most vulnerable children. Professionals must constantly consider and decide whether the family's care of a child is safe enough for the child to stay within the family or whether the situation is so dangerous that the child must be removed.

The Munro Review of Child Protection outlined key recommendations for local authorities to review and redesign the ways in which children and families social work is delivered. The review proposed supporting practice that can implement evidence-based ways of working with children and families and placed social work expertise at the centre of its proposals. At the heart of this approach is working with families in an honest, straightforward and respectful way. The approach has three important objectives:

- Practitioners engage with families so that they understand why social workers are there and what they are concerned about.
- Family strengths and protective factors are included in the risk analysis.
- Children are safer, with professionals and family members being clear about what worries them, what needs to be done and who will be involved with the everyday safety of the child.

The Signs of Safety approach offers a robust and rigorous framework that analyses risk and takes into account family strengths and resources. The clarity of purpose alongside an open and balanced approach will enable the service to:

- Improve the quality of social work delivered to families.
- Improve the engagement of families.
- Reduce the number of children subject to child protection plans.
- Reduce the number of children needing to enter the care system.
- Improve key performance measures such as lower rates of re-referrals, fewer children within the care system, and less cases of drift.
- Focus services on service user need.
- Provide greater clarity to service users about the quality of service they can expect.

### **Action Plan**

The action plan sets out strategic actions based on the six key priority areas. The plan will be monitored by the Workforce Development Board that incorporates colleagues from Children's Services, Human Resources and the Workforce Development Service to ensure its delivery and review on a regular basis.

**Coventry Children's Services Workforce Strategy 2016  
Action Plan**

	<b>Priority Action</b>	<b>Specific Actions</b>	<b>By whom/Job Title</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>1. Draw on national and regional strategies and opportunities to enhance our recruitment and retention of social workers.</b>					
<b>1.1 Maintain innovation around recruitment practices</b>					
1.1.1	Undertake an on-going review of social work vacancies to determine recruitment and retention needs and devise strategies accordingly.	Reporting cycle to be aligned to Workforce Development Board meetings	HoS, PSW and Workforce Services/Recruitment Team	December/January 2015/16	Recruitment campaign to be launched 9 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2016
1.1.2	Continue to develop the micro-site to make it more dynamic and user friendly. Ensure that the micro-site is easily searchable on any search engine. Ensure that all the on-line components of the recruitment strategy are linked together.	Micro-site will be monitored and updated on a regular basis to meet the needs of the service	Workforce Services/Recruitment Team	February 2016	Completed
1.1.3	Make full use of social media as part of the on-going recruitment campaign for social workers.	Children's Services will have a presence on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook	Workforce Services Team and Children's Services	January/February 2016	Completed
1.1.4	Develop student placement opportunities within the service.	Increase the number of practice educators through the GCPE Programme.	Principal Social Worker and Professional Practice Educators	March 2016	Anne Winn and Jan Goode are meeting with Cov Uni to progress.
1.1.5	Organise a conference for NQSWs/students from the two local universities	Liaising with two local universities.	Principal Social Worker and Professional Practice Educators	April 2016	To be discussed
1.1.6	Establish secondments to qualifying social work courses.	Agree funding for secondments.	Assistant Director Resources and Director of Children's Services.	January 2016	JG to discuss with HoS



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	<b>Priority Action</b>	<b>Specific Actions</b>	<b>By whom/Job Title</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
1.1.7	Introduce an Assessment Centre Model for the recruitment of staff	Run a minimum of four assessment centre days per year (as required to meet needs)	PSW, PEs, HEIs and Workforce Services/Recruitment Team	March 2016	
1.1.8	Participate in SUSW programme.	Liaise with Coventry University	PSW	January 2016	Meeting being arranged with Head of SW at Coventry University
1.1.9	Develop packages of financial support to aid retention.	Agree funding.	HR and Finance	January 2016	Funding Agreed January 2016
1.2.0	Dedicated HR staff to work with Children's Services.	Provide expertise on recruitment.	HR - SL	January 2016	HR staff have been allocated
1.2.1	Three-tier induction Programme to be fully embedded across Children's Services.	Provide a structured and safe environment for new starters.	Workforce Services and Children's Services	January 2016	On going
1.2.2	Continue to embed the Behaviours Framework across all teams so there is a common understanding of expected behaviour amongst staff.	Workforce Services to arrange targeted sessions for service teams	Workforce Services and Children's Services	Ongoing 2016	On going
<b>2. To align the workforce with the needs and priorities of the organisation to ensure it can meet its legislative, regulatory, service requirements and organisational objectives.</b>					
<b>2.1 Collection and use of workforce data</b>					
2.1.1	Carry out a workforce audit, analyse findings and identify gaps, including information from the 'health check' questionnaire.	Disseminate information to staff and senior managers	PSW, HR	April 2016	Numbers of staff have been identified for the service for

**Coventry Children's Services Workforce Strategy 2016  
Action Plan**

	<b>Priority Action</b>	<b>Specific Actions</b>	<b>By whom/Job Title</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
					2016. Health check to be incorporated into the twice yearly supervision survey
2.1.2	Ensure that social workers have the necessary equipment to undertake social work tasks	Review of IT equipment/phones etc	Jade Skilling	January 2016	On going
2.1.3	Protocol to be reviewed to make it less bureaucratic	Set up meeting.	Protocol Operational Group	Sept 2016	
2.1.4	Workload management	Ensure that staff have safe and manageable workloads	HoS	January 2016	To be discussed at Joint Management Meeting
2.1.5	Monitoring and supporting staff to access learning and development opportunities for professional registration, following performance management review or supervision.	Monitored through performance management and supervision.	Team Managers	Ongoing 2016	On going
2.16	Conduct equality monitoring as part of the recruitment and selection process with a view to having a service that is representative of the service user group that it serves.	Monitor the recruitment and selection process.	Workforce Services and Children's Services	Ongoing 2016	On going
<b>3. Train and offer workforce development opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and values of staff</b>					

**Coventry Children's Services Workforce Strategy 2016  
Action Plan**

	<b>Priority Action</b>	<b>Specific Actions</b>	<b>By whom/Job Title</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>3.1 Learning and Development offer for the year</b>					
3.1.1	Using workforce information, including skills audits to identify learning and development needs of the workforce.	TNAs and Our Behaviours Appraisal	Children's Services and Workforce Services	Ongoing 2016	Audits have been undertaken by WDS
3.1.2	Workforce Services Team to produce learning and development brochure, taking into account the LSCB training prospectus.	Meetings with HoS and PSW	Children's Services and Workforce Development Service	January 2016	Brochure is currently being reviewed by WDS and HoS
3.1.3	Evaluation of the ASYE Programme to improve and align training.	Set up focus groups.	PSW and Professional PEs	Sept 2016	To be discussed as part of the assessment panel in Sept 2016
3.1.4	Ensure that there is a rolling programme of EPD workshops, so that staff can attend progression panel.	Workshops to be commissioned	PSW, Professional PEs and WDS	March 2016	Workshops will be in place for 2016
3.1.5	Increase Practice Educator opportunities to enable high quality student placements.	Recruitment initiative.	PEs	June 2016	On going
3.1.6	Continue to support senior practitioners	Organise and facilitate workshops	PSW	January 2016	Workshops for the year have been finalised and circulated
3.1.7	Develop a social work career progression framework.	Meeting to discuss Career Progression Framework.	Children's Services and Workforce Services	March 2016	
3.1.7	Create acting up opportunities for staff				On going
3.1.8	Create secondment opportunities for staff.				On going

**Coventry Children's Services Workforce Strategy 2016  
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	<b>Priority Action</b>	<b>Specific Actions</b>	<b>By whom/Job Title</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>4. Improve leadership, management and supervision to improve the quality of practice</b>					
<b>4.1 Develop and improve our succession planning</b>					
4.1.1	Develop clear succession policy and framework for identified staff who aspire to be managers of the future	Set up policy and framework	Workforce Development Service and Children's Services	February 2016	Currently being developed by PSW
4.1.2	Roll out 'The Coventry Social Worker in Practice' initiative.	Organise and facilitate workshops	HoS, PSW and SMS	Jan 2016	Action plan formulated.
4.1.3	Organise Champion Forums and focus groups for feedback.	Organise dates	Director of Children's Services and PSW	January 2016	Up and running for the year
4.1.4	Review and evaluate reflective supervision.	Evaluate supervision survey, audits and observations	Director of Children's Services, HoS and PSW	Jan 2016	On going
4.1.5	Set up a Management Development Programme for all newly appointed managers or enable existing managers to access Management and Leadership programmes.	Programmes to be made available to staff across Children's Services	Workforce Development Service and Children's Services	Ongoing 2016	Team managers are currently accessing West Midlands Management programme.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Assuring Quality and Performance Management</b>				
5.1	Provide a consistent system for monitoring and evaluating effectiveness	Embed new quality performance framework	HoS and PSW	January 2016	On going
5.1.1	Use the four lenses approach to gather data and manage performance	Embed four lenses approach	HoS	January 2016	On going with assistance from Debbie Barazetti
5.1.2	Undertake quality reviews of service areas and teams	Set dates for reviews	HoS	Ongoing	On going

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	<b>Priority Action</b>	<b>Specific Actions</b>	<b>By whom/Job Title</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Progress</b>
5.1.3	Assess quality through audit and observations	Set dates for audits and observations	HoS	Ongoing	On going
6.	Implement and fully embed Signs of Safety				
6.1	Commission recurring SoS training programmes at no less than 24 month intervals.	Commission dates with SoS	Workforce Development Service and Children's Services	January 2016	Discussed with WDS and being progressed
6.1.2	Training to be rolled out to partnering agencies.	Discussion to take place with LSCB	JS (SoS lead) and PSW	January 2016	Further discussion needed with LSCB re: funding