
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board

14 April 2016
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Name of Cabinet Member:

Children and Young People – Councillor Ed Ruane

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director People

Ward(s) affected:

All Wards

Title:

Recommendations from the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Supervision of Social Work Staff

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

At their meeting on 18th June 2015, Members of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board agreed to establish a task and finish group to look in more detail at the supervision of social care staff, to support the improvement plan.

The Task and Finish Group met four times to look in detail at the work that had already been done to improve supervision of staff, talk to existing managers and analyse information from a staff supervision survey undertaken in 2014 and 2015, to be able to identify other areas of improvement.

Recommendations:

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) is recommended:

- 1) To endorse the recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
- 2) That Scrutiny maintains oversight on progress against the recommendations and any future changes in performance, receiving a report in 6 months and 12 months' time.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is recommended to instruct officers:

- 1) To update the Supervision Policy to take into account the following:
 - a. That regular sample audits of supervision be undertaken to monitor both quality and quantity of supervision.
 - b. The quality control section of the Supervision Policy reflects Members' oversight
 - c. That supervision training is part of the induction for new managers.

- d. That reflective supervision is used as a standard part of regular supervision session.
 - e. That children's views and wishes are discussed and these discussions are recorded during supervision sessions
- 2) To ensure the updated supervision policy is implemented and complied with across the whole service.
 - 3) That all managers with casework responsibility to have received recent supervision training within 6 months, then all managers across the service within 12 months.
 - 4) That a statement of intent regarding levels of caseloads is developed.
 - 5) That good practice is identified and shared across the service, not just teams.
 - 6) That within 3 months all staff to have a supervision agreement.
 - 7) That Research In Practice to be promoted to all staff to make use of current research and evidence to inform their practice.
 - 8) That annual appraisals, using the Council's behaviours framework are undertaken alongside monthly supervision sessions.
 - 9) That a staff survey is undertaken on an annual basis to enable oversight of the impact and implementation of the policies and practice across Children's Services.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1: Supervision Policy (February 2015)

Appendix 2: Managers Focus Group Notes

Appendix 3: Supervision Survey Oct 14

Appendix 4: Supervision Survey Oct 15

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes

Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2) 14 April 2016

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

Yes – *Supervision of Social Work Staff Task and Finish Group of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)*

Will this report go to Council?

No

1 Context (or background)

1.1 The Ofsted inspection of Children's Services undertaken in February-March 2014 identified serious weakness in the supervision of staff.

"Social workers do not always receive the right level of supervision from their managers to enable them to discuss cases fully and make the right decisions for children and young people, to improve their outcomes and ensure their safety and welfare."¹

1.2 Improvements to supervision of social work staff were included in the improvement notice issued by the DfE on 20 June 2014 and included in the Children's Services Improvement Plan under section 5. Leadership and Governance - Effective Supervision and reflective practice.

1.3 At their meeting on 18th June 2015, Members of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board agreed to establish a task and finish group to look in more detail at the supervision of social care staff, to support the improvement plan.

1.4 The Task and Finish Group met four times to look in detail at the work that had already been done to improve supervision of staff, talk to existing managers and analyse information from a staff supervision survey undertaken in 2014 and 2015, to be able to identify other areas of improvement.

1.5 The membership of the group was:

- Cllr Bains
- Cllr Bigham
- Cllr Lepoidevin
- Cllr Mal Mutton (Chair)
- Cllr Seaman

2 Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 Option 1 – Do Nothing

Members decided that considering that Children's Services was under a DfE Improvement Notice that to do nothing was not a viable option. This option is not recommended.

2.2 Option 2 – Support the current implementation of the Improvement Plan and refreshed Supervision Policy with no additional recommendations

When Members looked into the current situation in more detail, including a focus group with managers and the results of a supervision survey undertaken by staff they were able to identify areas of further work for priority and improvement. This option is not recommended

2.3 Option 3 – Make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People for further ways to improve supervision of social work staff.

Members felt they were able to identify areas of further work for priority and improvement that could contribute to the Improvement Plan. This is the recommended option.

2.4 Members heard that following the Ofsted inspection and notice of improvement there had been a Principal Social Worker appointed, whose role it was to improve practice and renew the supervision policy. Members heard that this work had been completed in February 2015 and that the new policy was now in place. (Appendix 1)

2.5 Members wanted to listen to managers within the service who were implementing this policy, to find out more about their experiences of both giving and receiving supervision.

¹ Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers And Review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board – Ofsted 21 March 2014

- 2.6 A focus group was arranged with seven service managers, covering different areas of the service, including the neighbourhood teams, Fostering and Adoption Service, RAS, MASH and Family Placements Service.
- 2.7 Members questioned the managers and key issues that were highlighted were:
- Managers felt that workload pressures were a barrier to effective and regular supervision and that they were chasing targets rather than focussing on quality of practice.
 - Good practice was identified within teams or neighbourhoods but not shared more widely across the service.
 - Not all managers make use of Research in Practice at the moment.
 - There was lack of clarity how the Supervision Policy sat alongside the Council's Behaviour Framework.
- 2.8 The questions and responses from the focus group can be found at Appendix 2
- 2.9 Members also heard that a survey had been carried out with all staff about their experiences of supervision in September 2014. Members requested that this survey was repeated to enable officers and Members to see if any progress had been made as a result of changes to the supervision survey. Summaries of the results can be found at Appendix 3 and 4
- 2.10 Members were able to compare the results from two consecutive years and were able to highlight the following issues:
- There is inconsistency across the service on the delivery of supervision and therefore the effectiveness of supervision.
 - Not all staff have a supervision contract.
 - Not all managers had received recent supervision training.
 - Not all managers make use of Research in Practice at the moment.
 - Not all staff are confident in their use of reflective practice.
 - The proportion of staff who used information on children's views and wishes was only 42%.
- 2.11 Having highlighted the issues above, members of the task and finish group were able to make the following recommendations.
- 2.12 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) is recommended:
- 1) To endorse the recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
 - 2) That Scrutiny maintains oversight on progress against the recommendations and any future changes in performance, receiving a report in 6 months and 12 months' time.
- 2.13 The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is recommended to instruct officers:
- 1) To update the Supervision Policy to take into account the following:
 - a. That regular sample audits of supervision be undertaken to monitor both quality and quantity of supervision.
 - b. The quality control section of the Supervision Policy reflects Members oversight
 - c. That supervision training is part of the induction for new managers.
 - d. That reflective supervision is used as a standard part of regular supervision session.
 - e. That children's views and wishes are discussed and these discussions are recorded during supervision sessions

- 2) To ensure the updated supervision policy is implemented and complied with across the whole service.
- 3) That all managers with casework responsibility to have received recent supervision training within 6 months, then all managers across the service within 12 months.
- 4) That a statement of intent regarding levels of caseloads is developed.
- 5) That good practice is identified and shared across the service, not just teams.
- 6) That within 3 months all staff to have an agreed supervision agreement.
- 7) That Research In Practice to be promoted to all staff to make use of current research and evidence to inform their practice.
- 8) That annual appraisals, using the Council's behaviours framework are undertaken alongside monthly supervision sessions.
- 9) That a staff survey is undertaken on an annual basis to enable oversight of the impact and implementation of the policies and practice across Children's Services.

3 Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 As part of the task and finish group Members consulted directly with a group of Social Work Managers from a cross section of the service. They also made use of a service-wide survey on supervision that had been completed in September and October 2014. Members recommended that this survey should be repeated to show whether any progress had been made. The survey was repeated in October 2015 and members of the task and finish group were able to use the analysis and comparison between the two survey to identify progress and areas for further improvement.

4 Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 Recommendations in this report can be implemented as soon as the Cabinet Member has made a decision. The Education and Children's Scrutiny Board has requested an update on progress on implementing the recommendations within six months of a decision being made.

5 Comments from Executive Director, Resources

5.1 Financial implications

All recommendations can be implemented within existing resources. These recommendations will support the Workforce Strategy within Children's Services which will contribute to a more stable workforce, less reliance on agency staff and therefore support savings targets.

5.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications of implementing these recommendations.

6 Other implications

Any other specific implications

- 6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

These recommendations will contribute to the Council Plan under:

Locally committed

Improving the quality of life for Coventry people

Protecting and supporting our most vulnerable people through:

- ★ keeping children and adults safe from harm.

Delivering our priorities with fewer resources

Making the most of our assets

Change how we work to become more flexible and adaptable, by:

★ developing our workforce and new ways of working through culture change.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The recommendations made by the task and finish group support good social work practice. The risk of not achieving the recommendations set out is that social work practice is compromised; quality of practice suffers and impacts on future inspections. The consequence of this would be that the DfE improvement notice would not be lifted.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

These recommendations will support the Children's Services Improvement Plan which is delivered through the Improvement Board and monitored closely by the DfE.

These recommendations will support meeting the requirements of the DfE improvement notice and as well as improving the quality of practice, therefore the quality of the workforce and in turn improve the quality of Children's Services.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

None.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None.

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Appendices