



Children's Social Care Workforce Development Strategy

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Welcome to the updated Children's Social Care Workforce Development Strategy 2016-2019

Introduction

Our social workers do great work. Our children and young people have told us and we consistently see this from colleagues working day-in-day-out in a hugely challenging profession.

The Children's Social Care Workforce Development Strategy builds on the strong work that has been done at Somerset County Council developing a talented and resilient workforce. It was written to support the Somerset Children and Young People's Plan and as such underpins the development of a 'Think Family' approach to our work.

The first version of this strategy was developed in 2016 and complimented our Children's Social Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy. This update now includes our work on the recruitment and retention of social worker colleagues, as a core part of the development of the Somerset workforce. We also highlight the progress that has been made since September 2016, across recruitment, retention and development.

The Somerset Children's Social Care Workforce Development Strategy follows two themes, 'Growing Our Own' and 'Looking After Our Own', and is helping to provide the right conditions for social workers to develop their careers in Somerset. We have identified very clearly that investment in our workforce will result in improved lives for our young people and their families; the plans within this strategy set an ambition for our social care staff and their colleagues to work in collaboration with one another and across agencies.

Vision

The vision in our Children & Young People's Plan (CYPP) is for Somerset children and young people to be safe, healthy and happy. They will be ambitious for their future and will be able to develop skills for life.

The Children's Social Care Workforce Development Strategy underpins this vision. It is helping to support current and future colleagues to be safe, healthy, happy and ambitious for themselves and for the children and families that they work with.

Somerset County Council's approach to the development of Children's Social Care staff:

- Centres on the child and family – keeping children, young people and their families at the heart of everything we do;
- Focuses on a motivated, stable and ambitious workforce;
- Is innovative in its use of marketing and retention strategies;
- Emphasises 'growing our own' and 'looking after our own';
- Supports colleagues with health and wellbeing;



- Celebrates great social work.

The first year of this strategy focused on the development of the Children's Social Care Workforce. The second year (2017-18) has seen its ambition extended, so that it focuses on fully supporting the entire Children's Services workforce, including partner organisations and the voluntary and community sector.

This Workforce Development Strategy therefore supports the Somerset Children & Young People's Plan and plays a key part in keeping the child and family at the heart of our work.

The update to the strategy showcases a lot of challenging and often innovative activity, supported by a number of talented professionals across children's and corporate services. It is therefore the product of colleagues working effectively with one another and with partners outside of the authority, modelling the changes and practices that we are seeing within Children's Social Care at Somerset County Council.

Chris Squire

Director of HR & Organisational Development



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1. THE SOMERSET STORY

Where have we come from?

The overall judgement of the Ofsted 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 in 2015 was that services and arrangements to safeguard children were inadequate. This follows a previous Inadequate rating in 2013. For a number of years, Somerset County Council saw a gradual loss of experienced Social Workers. Ofsted have highlighted the potential risks of a high number of locum staff used to cover managerial and social work posts. The effect of this has previously limited the Council's ability to achieve a consistently acceptable standard and quality of social work practice, with children experiencing too many changes of Social Worker. However, in just one year (2015-16) turnover reduced from twenty-seven per cent to sixteen per cent. This has reduced further, to 13%, and there is a commitment to continue this reduction.

Throughout 2015 and early in 2016 Somerset County Council worked on a nine-point priority action plan which was developed to address the immediate issues raised by Ofsted. A major part of this plan was establishing how the authority would improve the capacity and capability of Children's Services senior leadership, managers and Social Workers. Through the Children and Young People's Plan 2016-19, the nine priorities have become improvement themes and these will be based on collaboration, integration and being child and family focused. There is also a move to support personal responsibility for health and wellbeing, the building of thriving and resilient communities and enabling independent living.

Where are we now?

Building relationships with children and families is key to effective social work and this is becoming a fundamental part of our approach to recruitment and workforce development.

The County Council revisited its offer to Social Workers and Team Managers to ensure that we are attractive to candidates. We also recognise that to develop a successful workforce it is essential that current employees feel equally valued. Therefore in addition to our work in attracting new employees, we have:

- Increased capacity across fieldwork teams by working towards the reduction in fieldwork caseloads to an average of fourteen;
- Reduced the maximum number of direct reports for each manager to six to ensure that all staff receive regular high quality reflective supervision;
- Developed a clear career path to provide progression opportunities and include alternative routes for those Social Workers not wanting to become managers;
- Established our Social Work Academy;
- Put in place a benefits programme, offering staff a variety of discounts and salary-exchange schemes;
- Put a real focus on appraisal and effective supervision;
- Supported colleagues with resilience and mental wellbeing in the workplace;
- Run leadership and team development programmes;

- Trained managers in effective appraisal and performance management processes;
- Celebrated our Social Workers through monthly and annual awards, including asking children and young people to vote for their social worker in the Council's Social worker of the Year Awards.
- Helped to deliver a workforce that was sixty per cent permanent in 2016-17, rising to ninety per cent permanent in 2018-19, with a "Think Family" approach at its heart.

Our Children's Services Workforce Development Strategy remains underpinned by national and local approaches and priorities. These are presented in Appendix One.

In supporting the Children and Young People's Plan, we also recognise the changes needed in ways of working for the entire Children and Young People's workforce across all agencies in Somerset. This challenges the ways in which we have worked previously and means we need to become more flexible and creative in finding solutions that meet individual needs. We need to, where possible, give families control over what affects them and work across organisational and service boundaries. This will therefore be a core theme in the recruitment and development of Children's Social Care staff at Somerset County Council.

2. GROWING OUR OWN

2.1. Culture and Embedding a 'Think Family' Approach

The culture of an organisation is probably the single biggest determinant of whether its people and functions can work together to deliver outstanding services. Somerset County Council will work with its staff across the organisation to look at a culture of high-performance and extend this to Children's Social Care to explore and embed a 'Think Family Approach'.

Research shows that addressing the needs of a family in a holistic way is more likely to lead to sustained improvements for children.

The outcomes we want to achieve are:

- Vulnerable young people and families are more emotionally resilient and capable of resolving problems;
- Vulnerable young people and their families are directly involved in helping themselves and encouraged to help others through volunteering or peer mentoring;
- Young carers of parents with mental health problems and drug and alcohol problems have access to advice and support and know how to call for help when needed;
- All professionals and staff who work with adults and children and young people understand the concept of 'think family' and are alert to the effects of adult behaviours on children and young people and know how to act to respond appropriately.

We will:

- Work with staff across Somerset County Council and specifically within Children's Services on analysing culture, where this needs to be set and how to get there;
- Ensure that the voice of the young person is a part of this culture.

What We've Done

- Since October 2016, we've been looking at the culture of Somerset County Council and talking with groups of staff about what it's like to work here: the good, not so good and how to change things. This work will result in a new People Strategy for the organisation;
- Over 700 staff have taken part in these workshops, including many Children's Services staff. Colleagues were asked to come together in teams and identify a simple piece of improvement they could work on together, known as 'Culture Hacks'. A list of these hacks is shown in Appendix Two;
- We collect, analyse and work on the views of staff, using the Somerset County Council Staff Surveys and the Annual Health Check of Social Work. Results from our 2017 Local Government Association Health Check show:
 - Morale has improved;
 - Staff feel well supported by management;
 - Mindfulness programmes help with work stress;
 - Regularity of team meetings is good;
 - Supervision is regular.
- Young people are represented on interview panels, sitting alongside our professionals as equal partners in the process;
- We also ensure the voice of the young person is reflected in the appointment of our experienced social workers through consultation and the inclusion of questions set by them in the interview process.

"It is great to know that we are starting to make a real difference and participation of children and young people and the voice of the child in Somerset are on everyone's agenda. Thank you..." (SEND worker)

2.2. Practice Standards

Social Workers need the best support, leadership and resources that we can provide. We have developed a Social Work Contract which sets out the detail of our vision for Children's Social Care and performance standards for staff at all levels. This supports us in working towards providing outstanding social work services for children and their families, based on clear principles and values that we have already adopted.

The contract outlines what Social Workers in Somerset can expect from their service and what the service expects from them. Although we are a developing service, putting clear structures and systems in place to support best practice will enable our workforce to achieve and deliver.

We will:

- Support our social workers and their teams in understanding the Social Work Contract, its principles and values;
- Link the Social Work Contract to supervision and appraisal processes.

What We've Done

- Developed a Social Work Contract that clearly states the expectations of social workers and what our colleagues can expect from Somerset County Council;
- Discussed the Social Work Contract at team meetings;
- Appointed 12 consultant social workers to help reinforce performance standards;
- Run workshops exploring the importance of corporate culture on service outcomes.

Culture Workshops with Children's Services:

"... well presented and 'inspired' them in terms of moving the service forward. Workers felt there was a good balance between...information and listening and taking ideas from individuals." (Fostering & Adoption)

"I thought it was a fantastic session and it led perfectly into what we did in the afternoon." (Virtual School Team)

2.3. Recruitment & Retention

Our Recruitment & Retention Strategy was originally written in 2015 and sets out an ambition to place the child and family at the heart of our recruitment work, through the use of opinions and feedback from our children and young people. We will ensure that we have the voice of the child at the heart of everything we do.

Our Recruitment & Retention Strategy presents the themes and actions that we will deliver.

We will:

- Increase the supply of 'home grown' social workers;
- Be a motivated and stable workforce with appropriate skills and competencies;
- Effectively market the Somerset offer;
- Help staff with health & wellbeing;
- Celebrate great social work.

I enjoyed my ASYE with Somerset. I felt that I was very supported by my mentor who was always available for advice and guidance. The training was extensive and covered a variety of roles, issues and themes. The peer support was very important and having the ability to meet up regularly in training or group supervision was very helpful. The course work was challenging but not unmanageable and we were able to meet as a group with our mentor to work on each task over the period of the ASYE so that we did not leave it to the last minute!

What We've Done

Recruitment is the single most important activity for people services within an organisation. It acts as the 'shop window' for those interested in exploring opportunities and showcases whether the organisation can work as a system.

Recruitment Services at Somerset County Council have moved on tremendously over the past 2 years, with new techniques used and a real understanding of the importance of how to promote the organisation. Activity has focused on several areas: Recruitment of qualified social workers, locums and graduates (for the Assisted and Supported Year in Employment – 'ASYEs').

- We have recruited 71 ASYE's since August 2015 (69 of whom are still with us);
- Findings from our annual health survey in 2017 informed us that over 70% of our current ASYE's intend to stay in Somerset for at least three years;
- We map the individual strengths of our ASYEs to teams where vacancies occur and to ensure new appointees are consulted and matched accordingly;
- Our recruitment activity since August 2015 has resulted in 165 permanent social worker appointments. This includes 72 qualified social workers, 6 consultant social workers, 16 Team Managers, 2 Operations Managers and 69 ASYEs;
- We have started to recruit to teams rather than vacancies, using a process known as values-based recruitment; this helps us to assess the fit of the individual to the team;
- Adverts are shorter, punchier and are using the language of the team that the candidate will be working with, rather than recruitment jargon. Team-members help to write the adverts and are contactable to talk about practice and the team candidates are interested in joining. We invite social workers to come and 'Try Before They Apply', visiting the offices and meeting prospective colleagues;
- The recruitment micro-site is reviewed regularly to ensure that content is fresh and relevant; this has included, for example, staff contributing to a blog on working in Children's Services at Somerset County Council. We have now replaced the original micro-site with a new design, placing an emphasis on Somerset as a learning organisation and somewhere for colleagues to develop personally and professionally;
- We continue to develop our use of social media and use of web-tools to promote our micro-site and job adverts;
- We have built a presence at social worker recruitment fairs, presenting Somerset County Council to prospective candidates using an approach that uses HR and Children's Social Care colleagues. Our attendance at the Community Care Live event in September 2017 included partnering with Visit Somerset and Mindfulness UK;
- Retention for all social worker roles has reduced to 13%, from a peak of 27% in 2015-16. Turnover for frontline social worker roles now stands at 8.3%, down from 23% in February 2017;

- As at October 2017, Children's Services have 22 apprentices in post (in 15/16 the service had just 2), A further 10 apprentice positions are in the pipeline. Six current Children's Services staff will also 'upskill' via the apprenticeship levy in a range of different areas and we are part of a group looking at the development of degree level apprenticeships;
- We've introduced a 'Talk Before You Walk' scheme, which aims at having open discussions with social workers about things that may cause them to leave;
- We have re-introduced our corporate face-to-face induction sessions, introduced by the Leader & Chief Executive, and well-attended by Children's Services colleagues.

"Very helpful & good idea to make us feel we belong, often hard to feel part of an organisation so this was a very worthwhile approach. Most seamless induction I've had" (Educational Psychologist, Mendip Area Hub)

2.4. Leadership and Management

"I have worked for Somerset County Council for the past 7 years and have been part of tremendous change and development throughout this time. Throughout my career here as a Social Worker, I have been supported, nurtured and mentored by many inspirational and experienced Staff.

In 2010 I was nominated by my Line manager to begin the post graduate diploma In Advanced Social Work with Children and Families at Bristol University . Initially returning to study and completing assignments felt rather daunting. The demands of managing a case load alongside part time study and a busy family life is not for the faint hearted and I have spent many hours, lunch breaks and late nights completing assignments and juggling my case load. My Managers have supported my progress and reduced my case load throughout this time to enable me to complete the course.

The course is designed to complement the work we do in the field and has given me lots of new insights into emerging research and links to other local authorities expertise which has been invaluable to me as practitioner. I have been able to take this learning back to my teams and into my work with children and families.

Not only has this course supported my educational development, it has supported my career development. I am now working as a Consultant Social Worker within Somerset County Council. This post embraces improving the quality of practice within the authority and my learning experience at Bristol University has really supported my progress and my confidence in developing this role. As a new member of the management team I am now supporting new Social Workers in their careers and now have an influential role in the future of social work

The development of leadership and management skills within our Children's Social Care workforce is an essential part of this strategy. We need our managers to recognise, encourage and celebrate good social work, developing their teams so that the 'Think Family' approach is embedded across the service.

Leadership skills are critical at all levels so that colleagues believe they can act in the best interests of young people and their families. Our approach to developing these skills will include formal schemes, such as our Systemic Leadership programme, as well as more bespoke one-to-one work, including coaching and mentoring.

We will:

- Model best practice in line management support, career development and supervisions within Children's Social Care;
- Continue programmes related to succession planning, such as our existing Aspiring Team Managers programme;
- Encourage management and leadership development across Adults' & Children's Services for specific development of social worker leaders, but also include within Somerset County Council programmes to encourage a rounded view of services.

What We've Done

- We have commissioned The Institute of Family Therapy to deliver a comprehensive programme of systemic leadership and supervision training for all Children's Social Care managers. The aim of this is to embed a culture of high level expectations in accordance with the professional standards expected of senior managers and their staff;
- We have run an Aspiring Operational Managers programme, to identify suitable candidates for deputy ops manager posts;
- We have developed an Aspiring Team Manager programme;
- Two senior managers have completed the national Aspiring Directors of Children's Services Programme;
- We have designed and implemented a systems leadership programme for organisations across Somerset, called the Somerset Academy. This includes all NHS organisations, each district authority, police, education, local enterprise partnership and the third sector. One of the projects within the programme is looking at transitions into adulthood for young people with disabilities.

2.5. Talent Management and Succession Planning

We will identify our critical posts in Children's Services and develop staff to take on these more senior roles. This includes, for example, extending our Aspiring Team Managers programme which provides mentoring to a group of staff who have expressed an interest in and have the potential to move to more senior posts.

Talent Management and Succession Planning will help to both retain staff and to attract new recruits, by demonstrating clearly defined career pathways and opportunities. It will link to appraisal and supervision processes, identifying key roles and staff who aspire to those posts.

We will:

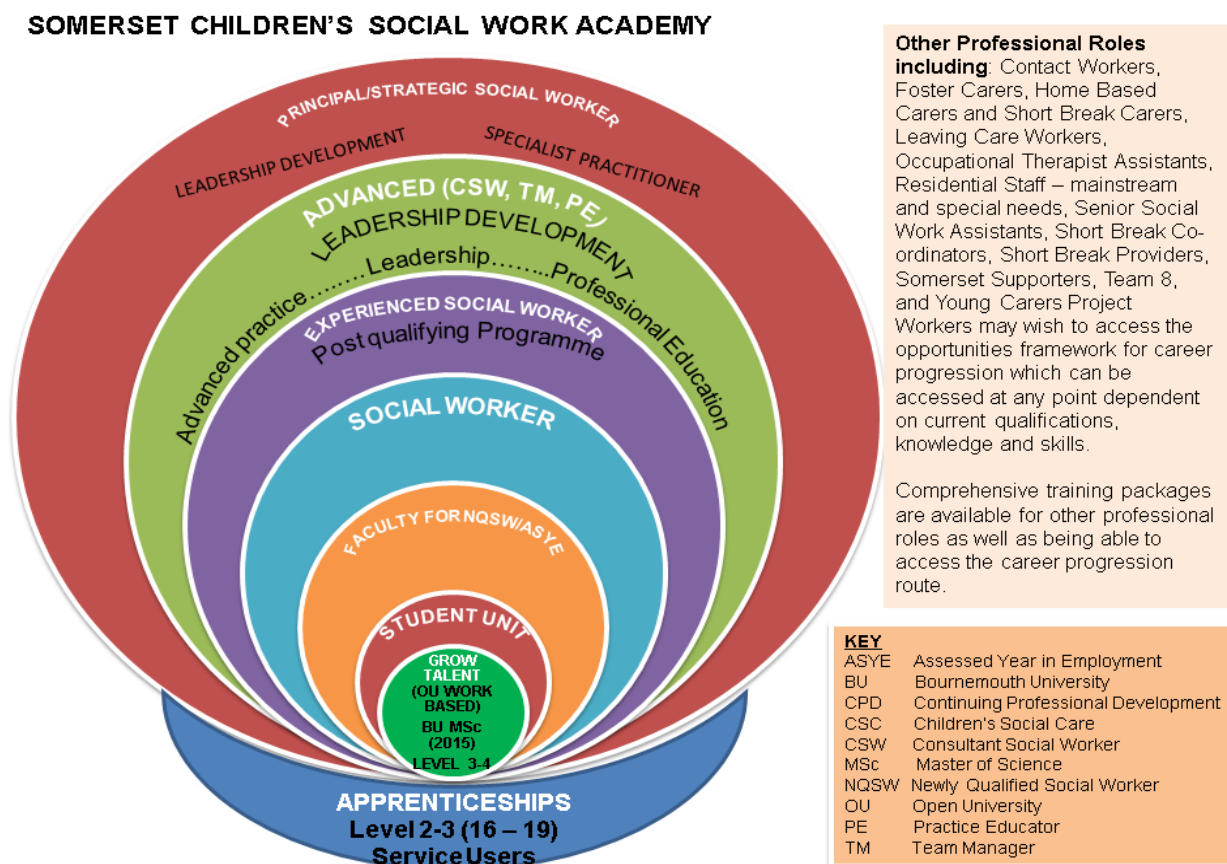
- Develop a framework for talent management & succession planning and ensure this is part of appraisal and supervision.

What We've Done

- We've put in place several programmes to develop a pipeline of talent for critical posts. These include Aspiring Team Managers, Aspiring Operational Managers & Aspiring Directors of Children's Services;

- We also run assessment centres for colleagues who aspire to become Experienced Social Workers and then progressing towards Consultant Social Worker roles;
- Our Systemic Leadership Programme covers all those in management roles, with the aim of establishing consistently high management and leadership behaviours across Children’s Social Care;
- We’ve developed our Social Worker Academy (figure 1), clearly showing the career framework for children’s social workers at Somerset County Council

Figure 1 - Social Work Academy



2.6. Social Value

This strategy also provides a clear link between the development of the workforce at Somerset County Council and improving outcomes for young people, through the provision of work placements and apprenticeships. Our ambition is to help raise aspirations through offering opportunities to experience the broad range of work available in the authority and across the public sector.

This work is a focus of our Young People’s Strategy and the increased numbers of apprentices at Somerset County Council. Somerset County Council already has a Pathway to Employment Scheme, which provides a platform for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, including care-leavers, to find opportunities for

traineeships, apprenticeships and work experience across different areas of the council.

We will:

- Link our programme of recruiting more apprentices to care leavers and special educational needs.

What We've Done

- We have adopted a concept of 'something for everyone', in response to concerns that there are barriers to accessing opportunity (such as prior educational attainment). These relate, for example, to the 'pre-apprenticeship' group;
- In partnership with Microsoft, we arranged an experience day at Microsoft's UK headquarters for a group of Care Leavers. This led to 2 of the group returning to education to improve their qualifications;
- We've arranged a week-long activity and employability residential week for 19 Care Leavers, on Exmoor in October 2017;
- We continue to work with our partners to engage them in social value, including our major contracting partners of Skanska and Viridor. These companies have schemes for our Care Leavers to access – the intention is for these concepts to be commonplace when awarding contracts;
- In conjunction with Microsoft, we have access to refurbished laptops that can be provided to our vulnerable young people upon request, in the first 6 weeks of these being available, 20 laptops were provided to our young people.

2.7. Workforce Planning

Somerset will implement an effective workforce plan, so that we reduce the number of agency staff we employ, increase the number of newly qualified staff and offer career development opportunities for colleagues at all levels. This will help to embed the Think Family approach through growing our own staff, helping retention and resilience amongst the workforce.

We will:

- Work with our senior managers on workforce profiling and planning, reporting through the Children's Services Workforce Development Board;
- Ensure that Establishment Control processes are operating effectively for all recruitment activity.

What We've Done

We've worked with managers and business support staff in Children's Services to ensure that our HR system matches the operational structure. This ensures that there is now 'one version of the truth' when it comes to workforce reporting and planning. Since 2015 we have:

- Ensured that our systems are accurate and that we have control of the 'establishment';

- Developed a workforce reporting tool specific to children’s social care, which provides key workforce data by team;
- Developed forecasting models to show where recruitment effort needs to focus;
- Implemented a plan to increase our use of ASYEs and reduce the number of agency staff.

3. LOOKING AFTER OUR OWN

Working in Children's Social Care is challenging. In the last five years, sixty per cent of children's social work services in England have experienced retention problems, with burnout, organisational conditions and work stressors cited as leading causes.

This is a hugely important area for Somerset County Council and the community that we serve, as losing skilled Social Workers also has a direct impact on the lives of our vulnerable citizens. We will continue to promote and offer health and wellbeing opportunities to our staff through Somerset County Council's Healthy Workplace Programme. Moreover, we will strengthen our working relationships with colleagues in Public Health, Universities and other agencies to develop resilience amongst staff, focusing on professional and personal support.

Listening to staff, valuing and recognising people’s contributions and having a culture which supports the health and wellbeing of the workforce is essential if we are to provide the best possible service to children and young people.

3.1. Think Family Work - Transitions

Embedding our 'Think Family' approach will only be possible by working closely with partners and agencies across Somerset and our neighbours. We intend to use learning and development to help support this approach, ensuring that our Children's Services staff learn and share experiences with colleagues in Adult Social Care, the NHS, police and other agencies. Stronger relationships amongst colleagues across agencies will result in improved outcomes for children and young people.

We will:

- Extend the Social Work Academy across Children’s and Adults’ Social Care, offering opportunities for personal and career development across both service areas;
- Look at shared learning and development opportunities with colleagues and other agencies, putting in place programmes to support staff to work on a more multi-agency basis.

What We’ve Done

- We have built on the close working relationships between our Adults and Children’s Learning and Development Teams, maximising opportunities for further joint working. This will encompass a more joined-up ‘Think Family’ approach to learning and development;
- The Somerset Academy development programme contains five challenges. One of these asks, “How can we promote independence, health & wellbeing by

joining up approaches to personalisation?” The team working on this has started by recognising that there can be a cliff-edge transition between childhood and adulthood; they are focusing on how a more personalised approach could help smooth that transition.

3.2. Health & Wellbeing

Re mindfulness and its impact on leadership, I feel it has helped me utilise my brain more productively to find innovative solutions to immense challenges. A specific example would be with the current impasse with staff recruitment and turnover in front line Safeguarding teams. Instead of feeling defeated by this I have allowed my brain to focus on how best to utilise, support and direct our ever-changing workforce. This has been achieved in the spirit of the least harmful option and best possible fit under the circumstances for clients.

Practising mindful techniques help me to maintain my love for this special area of work, my humour, my balance and sanity.

Somerset has a Healthy Workplace initiative to support the health and emotional wellbeing of our staff, linked to County Plan priorities. This includes a network of Healthy Workplace Champions, who encourage team and location-based programmes to support physical and mental health & wellbeing.

Somerset’s vision for Children’s Social Work firmly encompasses support and training in key areas and includes an innovative approach to using mindfulness to build and model mindful leadership and build emotional resilience.

We will:

- Continue to make the 8-week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction programme available to all Children’s Social Care staff.
- Encourage take up of more Healthy Workplace Champions within Children’s Social Care;
- Work with children & young people on awareness of resilience and mindfulness.

What We’ve Done

- 69 staff have engaged in the 8-week Mindfulness programme; 66 of whom are still in post. Evaluation of the impact of the course is overwhelmingly positive with statistics showing that the course has had a positive impact on individuals’ ability to manage stress in the workplace and has played an important role in maintaining individuals’ overall well-being;
- Included mindfulness in our Aspiring Managers’ Programme;
- Partnered with Mindfulness UK at the Community Care Live event in September.

We have already heard from a couple of seriously interested organisations heralding the work that you have done in supporting Team Leaders and Social Workers by giving them the opportunity to learn the skills and practices of Mindfulness and Compassion. Praise goes to you, SCC, as a forward-thinking, pioneering organisation offering valued staff the support and resources they need to do their job really well by looking after themselves and creating a kinder environment in which to work. I hope that our presentation and presence on the stand helped to recruit more Social Workers to Somerset. (Mindfulness UK)

Somerset is committed to becoming an authentic learning organisation, encouraging staff to learn and develop through their own reflection, supervision, CPD sessions, sharing good practice and constructive challenge. The aspirations of this approach link directly to 'Growing Our Own' staff and retaining those colleagues.

We will continue to develop high quality training for supervisors and supervisees to support and embed good quality, reflective supervision.

We will:

- Ensure all staff understand their quality assurance responsibilities and how they contribute to improving quality;
- Develop a feedback cycle where challenges are addressed openly and honestly;
- Embed the Social Work Academy across Children's Social Care;
- Review and revise the Social Work Academy, aligned to local and national context and direction of travel;
- Implement our Training and CPD Strategy which outlines our vision for CSC in Somerset and shows how our Social Work Academy model supports the recruitment and retention of our social care workforce.

What We've Done

Our Learning & Development team ensures that there are a range of learning opportunities available from taught courses, access to research, e-learning, innovation projects, mentoring and coaching, as well as self-directed study. The team:

- Is the lead for the regional Step Up to Social Work Programme;
- Engages with national social work training programmes e.g. Step Up to Social Work, Social Work Apprenticeships, Teaching Partnerships;
- Supports additional learning events which value and recognise our staff, such as internal conferences based around a theme of 'Looking After Our Own';
- Provides access to a range of training which enables a skill mix in teams which is determined by the complexity of caseloads, and the aptitudes of staff;
- Promotes ongoing links and partnerships with Higher Education Institutes (HEI) and regional social work degree providers to support specialist 'Master classes' to share current research;
- Liaises with HEI's to provide opportunities for post graduate qualifications in advanced social work practice and accredited leadership development from graduate certificate to masters' level;
- Recognises research findings which highlight the importance of building emotional resilience and commits to this being a core aspect of training;
- Recognises the benefits and significance of including our children and young people's voice in the design and delivery of training plans for frontline staff and managers.

3.4. Speaking-Up

We recognise that specifically for Children's Social Care, we must ensure we understand the needs of Social Workers. This strategy will help with this and will support workforce engagement across Children's Services and its partners. We will therefore work with our Social Workers to understand their needs and the needs of children and young people.

We will

- Encourage staff to speak up and raise concerns;
- Work directly with teams and individual staff to ensure they feel supported and protected at the earliest possible opportunity. This includes:
 - One-to-one meetings with managers;
 - Supervisions;
 - Whistleblowing processes;
 - Coaching;
 - Mentoring.
- Embedding our practice outlined in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) with our own staff when raising concerns – supporting intervention at an early stage;
- Encouraging staff to be more creative and innovative in the way they work – a specific 'Creativity and Innovation in Social Work' award will be handed out throughout the year.

What We've Done

- The quality and frequency of good reflective supervision continues to be a high priority. Our health report in 2017 indicated that quality continues to improve and figures for frequency (i.e. supervision which occurs every 4 weeks) was over 90% in most teams;
- Supervision training is mandatory for all staff, including managers. Six monthly audits are also conducted to ensure continuous improvement and that any issues highlighted are addressed;
- Appraisal completion rates are higher than they have ever been. In 2016/17 completion rates were 90.0% (Children's Commissioning) and 73.3% (Children's Social Care). To support the completion of appraisals, we have delivered Performance Management and Appraisal Workshops which Children's services staff have engaged with and attended.

3.5. Coaching & Mentoring

Coaching & Mentoring are proven ways of helping individuals to improve performance and unlock barriers. Somerset County Council has a strong network of coaches and mentors and can access support from within the local authority and neighbouring organisations.

"Having a coach who is separate from my organisational role facilitates a regular in-depth discussion about the interface between personal qualities and areas for development in the professional context of my job. This has helped me to reflect on stuck issues and to use my coach's greater experience and independent perspective to see things differently and to consider different approaches."

We will:

- Use established mentors for Step Up to Social Work students within Social Work teams;
- Encourage Consultant Social Workers to provide coaching and mentoring support for Newly Qualified Social Workers;
- Offer coaching opportunities for colleagues during their Assessed and Supported Year of Employment;
- Set up and embed mentoring groups across Children's Social Care;
- Develop and embed a programme of mentoring for Social Workers in their second year of practice;
- Offer coaching to staff who aspire to more senior roles.

What We've Done

- Consultant Social Workers coach and mentor new staff through their ASYE;
- Consultant and Experienced Social Workers coach practitioners to help identify and set realistic learning goals;
- We provide social workers with access to Somerset County Council's own pool of coaches, including broader career coaching for senior staff.

3.6. Education Partnerships

Somerset County Council has partnership arrangements with the University of West of England, Bristol University, the Open University, Bath University, Wiltshire College and Bournemouth University both in relation to providing social work students with placements and the delivery of our post-qualification frameworks.

Recognising the need to widen our reach for recruitment, we are actively targeting the top ten universities we have previously recruited from during the past five years and are making connections with other universities to actively promote Somerset as a great place to be a Social Worker.

We will:

- Take an active role with our partners in the Education Partnership, working with other authorities and universities on the future design of social worker education and experience;
- Encourage our senior leaders and consultant social workers to maintain contact with universities and social work students, promoting Somerset as a place to work.

What We've Done

- We work in partnership with universities to provide high quality placement opportunities for social work students;
- Somerset's partnership with the Open University enables us to support talent in the workplace through a selective annual recruitment process, offering existing

staff the opportunity to apply for an OU sponsorship to qualify as a social worker.

- We work closely in partnership with a number of HEIs to develop suitable programmes of post qualifying awards and programmes.
- Somerset supports a limited number of places targeting experienced social workers and above, to undertake graduate level post-qualification units. This helps prepare staff to acquire greater specialist or leadership and management knowledge and expertise, achieve a full post-graduate qualification and higher-level career progression.

3.7. Celebrate great social work

Great work takes many different forms, but it needs to be celebrated. We will do this through a combination of recognition and reward where great work has been done, sharing it with colleagues across the Authority so that we all learn from it. We will encourage young people to participate in this process, so that they feel able to speak up when things are going well.

We will:

- Continue monthly and annual staff awards' processes building on service-user engagement;
- Highlight the work done using blogs and other media, linking in with recruitment work;
- Link great work to reward and recognition, such as additional leave, a course or the Somerset benefits scheme.

What We've Done

- Included a Social Worker of the Year Award in our Staff Awards Ceremony, with nominations from children & young people;
- Instigated an annual celebration event for all Children's Social Care staff who achieve accredited qualifications through our Social Work Academy.

"I've been working with this incredible woman for 3 and a half years. She makes you feel a lot more than a young person on her caseload.."

Appendix One – National & Local Approaches Underpinning the Children’s Services Workforce Development Strategy.

This strategy is informed by the following national and local documents and policies:

- The Munro Review of Child Protection: A Child-Centred System
- Health and Care Professional Council and Skills for Care expectations
- British Association of Social Work - Professional Capabilities Framework
- ‘High Expectations, high support and high challenge’ Ofsted Report February 2012
- The LGA Standards for employers of Social Workers in England
- Skills for Care Standards for ASYE
- Skills for Care standards for Practice Education
- Local Government Association Standards for Employers of Social Workers and Supervision Framework
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to Inter-agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children
- Knowledge and Skills for Child and Family Social Work - DfE
- Children & Social Work Bill (draft)
- Children and Young People’s Plan 2016 – 2019
- Somerset County Council Children’s Social Care Quality Assurance Framework 2015
- Children’s Social Care – The Social Work Contract
- SCC Working Agreement
- SCC Corporate Coaching Strategy
- Leadership Development Framework
- Aspiring Managers Programme
- Aspiring DCS Programme
- Institute of Family Therapy Systemic Leadership Programme



Appendix Two – Children’s Social Care Culture Hacks 2017

Children’s Social Care Culture Hacks

Developing On-Site Health & Wellbeing Centres

Strengthening support networks for carers

Promoting team mailbox - e-mail etiquette

Improve culture of fostering & adoption panels

Use highways assets to promote fostering

Working on moving bi-monthly meetings into a more learning/development session

Mental Health first aid to support emotional wellbeing and sign post where necessary

Focus on the child's journey and life story

Building social connections at work

Improving Mentoring in the workplace

Promoting the use of memory jars for children & young people

All about me! Recording likes, dislikes, memories perhaps using an app/on-line tool

Promoting a culture of constructive & challenging debate for reviewing cases

Better links with the 'front door' to the service - First Response – part of induction, shadowing, social workers & business support staff

Joint L&D Yammer group to share ideas/resources, shared admin resources, major workstreams

Moving forward – improved collaboration between L&D teams

Building Emotional Resilience in a Team

CLA Cross County Forum (CLA Champions)

Improved Matching

Recording the Voice of the Child on LCS