

WELLBEING

RECRUITMENT

DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNICATION

SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2022-2025

DEVELOPMENT

SUPPORT

GROW OUR OWN

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	3
Introduction	4
National and local context	5
Wirral Workforce Snapshot	6
Our priorities	7
Priority 1: 'Growing our own' through recruitment and development	8
Priority 2: Support Continuous Professional Development to deliver a motivated and skilled workforce, with an emphasis on supporting staff retention	13
Priority 3: Develop high performing social work managers that support a performance management framework that reflects 'high support high challenge'	16
Priority 4: Develop new and revised ways of working building on existing strengths to support children, young people and their families	19
Priority 5: Communication and change management	22
Underpinning theme: wellbeing	24
Evaluation and measuring impact	26
Governance	26

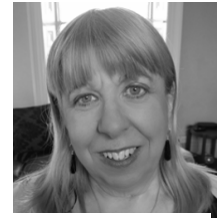
FOREWORD

Councillor Wendy Clements, Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee



At the heart of every organisation are the people who work in it. Building success, creating services that are high quality and delivering improvements means supporting and developing people. In Children’s Social Care, this includes frontline practitioners, managers and senior leaders who are all pivotal in shaping support and providing the right help for children and families when they need it.

I am delighted to introduce the Social Care Workforce Strategy 2022-2025 which sets out how we will work over the next three years to attract the skilled workforce we need, to support their development in ways which match our strategic priorities, and to ensure that their managers and leaders are as skilled as possible.



Simone White, Director for Children, Families and Education

In Wirral, we want to improve the lives of children, young people and families to keep them safe, and to fulfil their potential. This can only be achieved through a confident, competent and highly skilled children and young people’s workforce that understands its responsibilities and works in partnership with others to deliver relevant, responsive and high-quality services.

It is essential that we, as the council, put the right support, development and infrastructure in place to enable all our social care practitioners to deliver high quality services to help vulnerable children and families to achieve their full potential. We want our social workers to be proud of what they do and the quality of work they deliver - this is our most powerful tool to recruit and attract others.

The Strategy sets out a clear ambition: to attract, retain and support the development of a stable, talented, and committed workforce which has the skills, knowledge and motivation to improve children’s lives. This will be underpinned by a respectful organisation that values the role of social workers in supporting vulnerable children and families. It is characterised by an environment that provides “high support and high challenge” to social workers to be reflective, analytical and professionally curious in their practice. We must celebrate and recognise good practice and support others to do the same building and creating a strengths-based model that is recognised across the country and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

The Social Care Workforce Strategy 2022 – 2025 sets out how the local authority will attract, retain and support the development of a stable, talented, and committed workforce which has the skills, knowledge and motivation to improve children’s lives. It will set out our direction of travel for building a strong and stable workforce and outline the best route to get there and about how we will embed good practice and strong ethos of the right values, behaviours and culture as part of our work each day.

The Strategy will also respond to the challenges facing councils in recruiting and retaining the workforce, by thinking innovatively about how to ‘grow our own’ experienced practitioners who have the right skill set and expertise.

The Strategy will seek to address some of the financial challenges for the local authority as well by reducing the number of agency workers that will both improve stability for children and young people and reduce costs.

The Strategy identifies five key priorities to drive change and improvement over the next two years:

- **Priority 1:** ‘Growing our own’ through recruitment and development
- **Priority 2:** Support Continuous Professional Development to deliver a motivated and skilled workforce, with an emphasis on supporting staff retention
- **Priority 3:** Develop high performing social work managers that support a performance management framework that reflects ‘high support high challenge’
- **Priority 4:** Develop new and revised ways of working building on existing strengths to support children, young people and their families
- **Priority 5:** Communication and change management

Good health and wellbeing are critical in supporting a successful workforce strategy and this will be the underpinning priority across all the work carried out.

A planned programme of work will be outlined with SMART actions, timescales, responsible officers and intended outcomes. A set of key performance indicators aligned to each priority will enable robust monitoring. This will also be supported by regular ‘pulse’ surveys to assess the impact of the Strategy on the wellbeing and views of the workforce.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

Nationally, regionally and locally in children's social care there is an increasing shortage of newly qualified and experienced children's social workers. Government reporting on the Children's Social Care Workforce in 2020 showed that there were 6,100 FTE children and family social worker vacancies on 30 September 2020, up from 6,000 at the same point in 2019. Many local authorities across the country are seeing increasing number of vacancies due to several factors including fewer people choosing social work as a career, and increased rates of social workers leaving the profession.

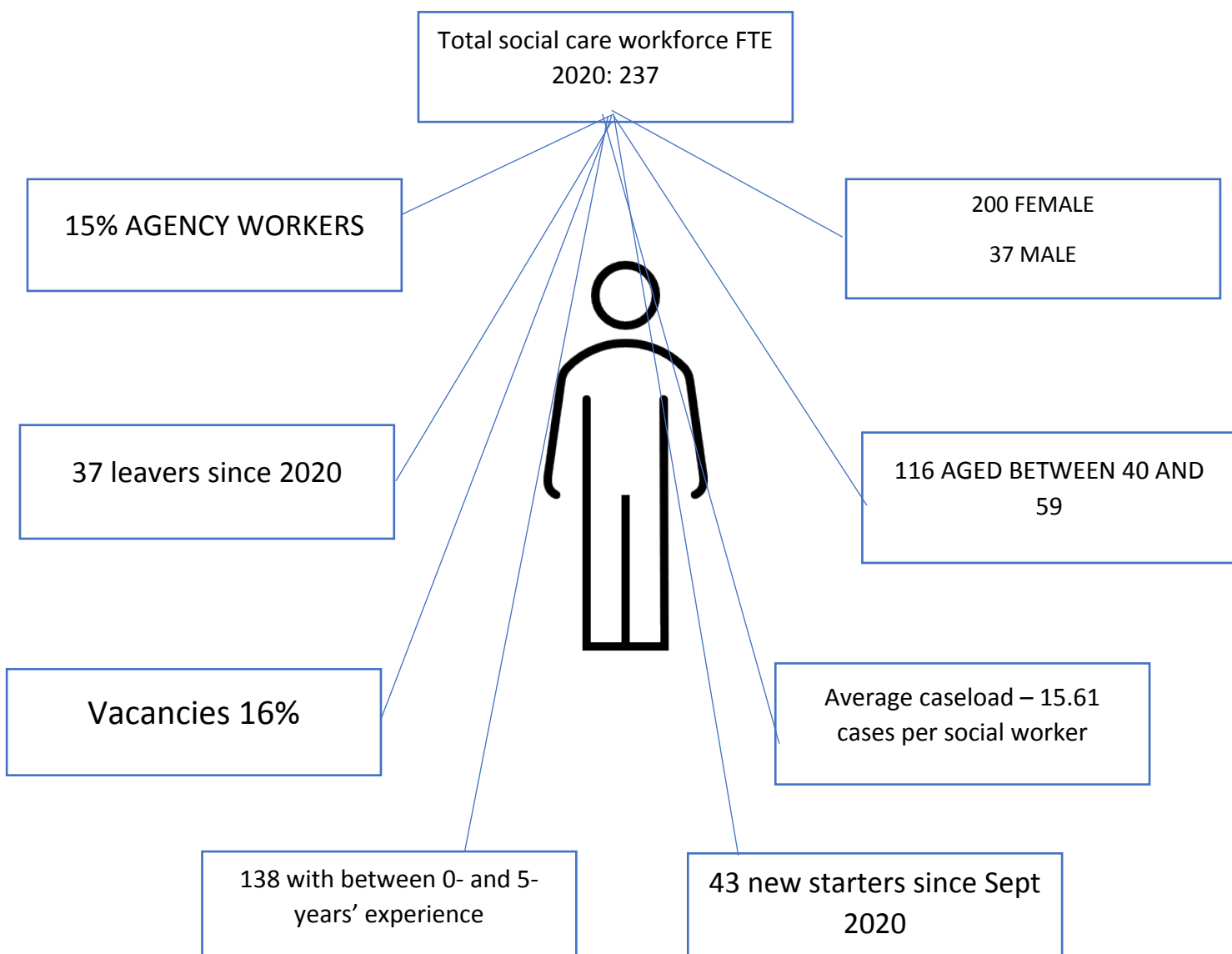
Additionally, social workers don't necessarily seek the job security of local authority employment, often choosing to move between local authorities or more likely to work in the agency market.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the challenges. A recent study by the Department for Education reported a higher number of social workers to be experiencing work related stress, being over-worked and a fall in job satisfaction.

Whilst Wirral has benefitted for several years in having a stable workforce, more recently there is greater evidence of staff turnover and instability. This is impacting upon the workforce in managing staff vacancies, an experience gap in only being able to recruitment predominantly newly qualified social workers, and a greater reliance on agency staffing.

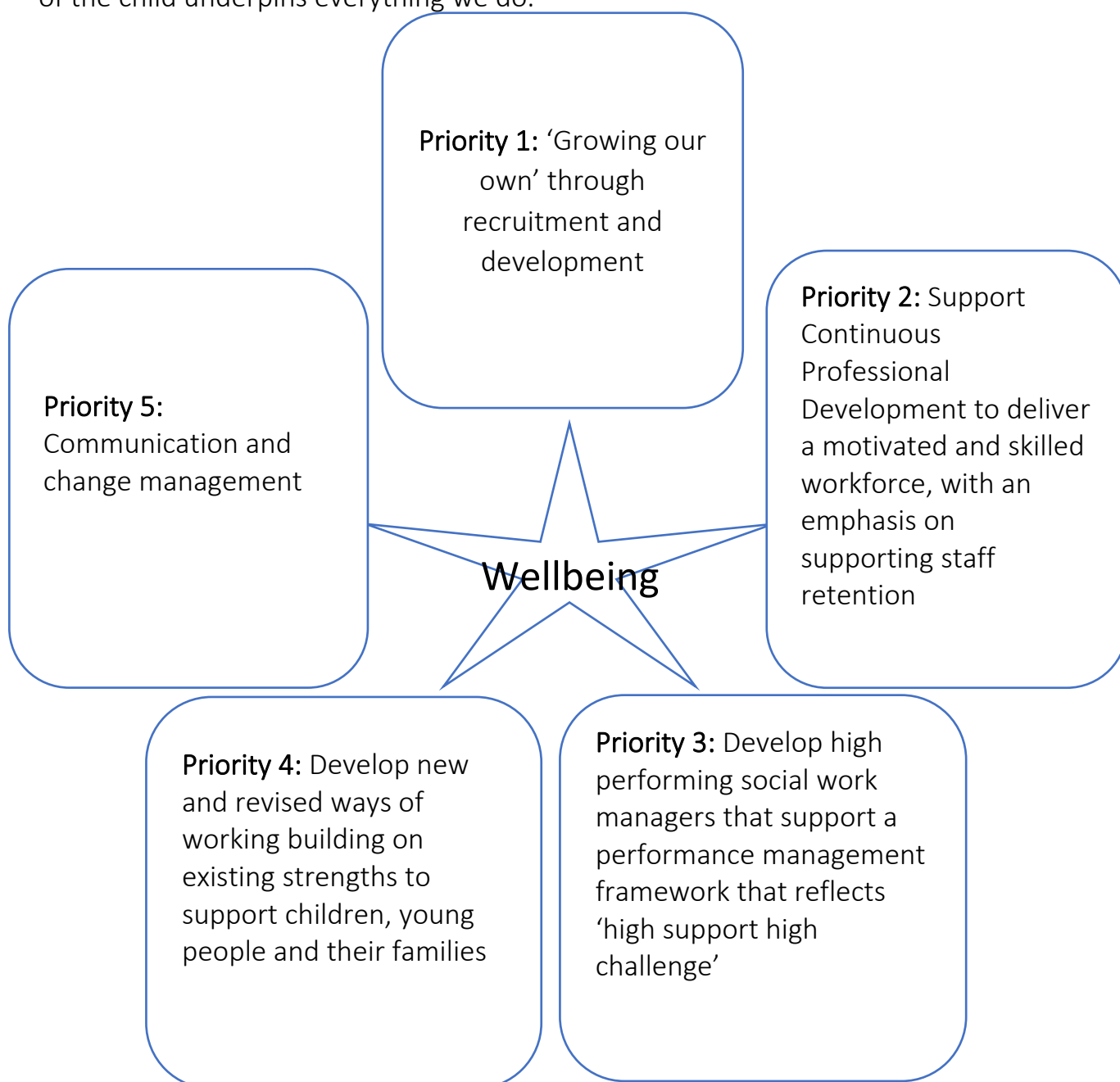
WIRRAL WORKFORCE SNAPSHOT

As of September 21 – workforce census



OUR PRIORITIES

As a council and children's services, five key priorities have been identified that are the workforce strategy. These priorities describe the environment required for an effective workforce that will deliver our vision and ensures that the voice of the child underpins everything we do.



Each priority will have its own action plan setting out the activities and timescales for delivering them together with how we will measure progress. The action plan will be reviewed regularly.

PRIORITY 1: 'GROWING OUR OWN' THROUGH RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Having a robust, timely and impactful recruitment programme is fundamental to ensuring that the workforce does not become overwhelmed and fatigued. The previous Workforce Strategy 2019 outlined a focus on growing our own practitioners through various recruitment initiatives.

The Step Up to Social Work programme has proved successful each year with positive conversion rates from students to the ASYE programme. Many of the students from the original cohorts in January 2020 continue to work in social care professions in Wirral.

The continued positive relationship with the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership has offered new and ideas and concepts to support the grow our own approach.

These have been complemented by recruitment campaigns, events and incentives to advertise the offer and benefits of working for Wirral Council.

To build on this, our Workforce Strategy for 2022 will articulate plans to continue to 'grow our own' and expand our current offer and campaigns. The Strategy will outline how it will attract and recruit the best candidates, creating an environment for them to flourish and provide the opportunity for them to develop their careers and become our experienced social workers and team managers of the future.

Successful recruitment initiatives

- ✓ Holding events with universities which present us with the opportunities to talk to students
- ✓ Successful fast track social work programmes including Step up to Social Work Programme and Front-Line Programme
- ✓ Targeted external recruitment campaigns with Jobs Go Public #Bring it On Campaign, #Be the Difference
- ✓ Assessment Centres and Recruitment Days
- ✓ Targeted Agency to Permanent
- ✓ Contribution of £50 towards HCPC registration
- ✓ ASYE offer and support: The Service has focussed on recruiting newly qualified ASYEs
- ✓ Step Up to Social Work programme – This has run for the past 13 years and has seen six successful cohorts go through the programme with a seventh beginning, consisting of 33 students.
- ✓ Frontline – Another successful scheme which is currently underway on its third cohort, consisting of 4 students.

WHAT WE WILL DO OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Theme 1: Growing our own

We will continue to be part of the Step Up to Social Work Programme and offer placements for students on the BA and MA programmes. Our Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) offer for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) is already strong and we have further developed our pay and rewards in this area.

To build on the previous successes of these programmes, we will also:

- ❖ explore the option of creating a **second 'Frontline' Team**: Wirral is currently part of the Frontline programme and has successfully recruited a full social work team. Due to the success of this programme, Wirral would be looking to expand the current programme further to incorporate a second Frontline Team.
- ❖ Implement and evaluate the **Social Work Apprenticeship Degree programme** –A social work apprenticeship degree programme was introduced in 2021 and seeks to provide opportunities for 'Family Workers' to develop their skills and careers in social care whilst being financially supported. We will continue to support the programme (with 4 employees) over the next three years with education and work-based placements to achieve the social work degree. This offer seeks to build on the skills and knowledge of workers who already have direct involvement with families and understand
- ❖ We hope to embark on a new and exciting **Step into Social Work Schools Project** which will see an offer being given to sixth form students who are making their university and career decisions. This programme will provide an opportunity for 50 year 12 students to find out more about careers in social work and social care from professionals who know. Students will also be given support on the application and interview process.
- ❖ We will also build on our current offer to **university students** through our involvement in the Grow Your Own pilot with the CMSWTP. This pilot will provide an opportunity for a small number of students to undertake both social work placements within Wirral. In supporting and developing these students over the duration of their Social Work Degree, we hope that

they will want to continue their professional journey with us and secure a permanent position.

Theme 2: Branding and marketing

Wirral has a lot to offer as a place to work and live. We want to showcase the benefits of working in social care and the many employee benefits, utilising a range of different forums and media to deliver a positive and fit for purpose branding that will resonate with those embarking on a career in social care, as well as existing social care professionals. To do this, we will:

- ❖ Develop and deliver a planned programme of **recruitment campaigns** using the current Jobs Go Public website but also exploring new ways of promoting roles in Wirral. We will explore how to use events and advertising to have the most impact as well as interesting ‘practice-focussed’ web articles and social media to promote innovative practice. Virtual and face-to-face recruitment events will be held throughout each year, both targeted and universal.
- ❖ **Re-brand and renew the current advertising and marketing plans** and strategies, continuing to build and enhance on the current #bethedifference branding. A refreshed job description and regular cycle of reviewing adverts will continue to ensure that marketing is timely and impactful. Measuring the impact of these campaigns and strategies will help shape future programmes/plans.
- ❖ **Design and develop a ‘package on a page’** will provide a visual and user-friendly guide to promote the benefits of working in Wirral. This will be used as part of the branding and promotional campaigns but also will be shared with professionals and partners to help promote the offer available to colleagues and friends.
- ❖ **Develop a Social Work Academy website** which contains detailed information about working for Wirral. This will allow anyone considering applying for a role in Wirral to understand the progression framework and what to expect at each stage in their career. The Practice Improvement Team offer and support as well as wider packages of support e.g. wellbeing/emotional support will all be included here and easily accessible to anyone wanting to ‘find out more’.
- ❖ **Strengthen and further investment in our ASYE programme** recognising that most of the social worker recruitment will be newly qualified. This

will mean a higher proportion of our workforce will be newly qualified social workers who will be supported through their ASYE programme.

Theme 3: Incentives

We want to look at what else attracts and interests people to work and live in Wirral. We know that our committed employees are also our biggest assets, and we want to use them to help promote and support our recruitment campaigns. Incentives can sometimes help motivate and drive people to think differently or make different decisions. Over the next few years we will:

- ❖ Review the **'refer a friend' scheme** and engage with staff to redevelop a more impactful approach. Currently we offer a financial incentive of up to £500 for Wirral employees to have a 'friend' join us. This hasn't yet taken off and so we would like to look at ways in which we can increase the amount and making this offer more attractive.
- ❖ Utilise the Council's **regeneration plans and developments** to promote and showcase new areas of Wirral to live and work. The residential developments at Wirral Waters and in other areas of Birkenhead provide an opportunity to market Wirral as a place to live and use this as part of the marketing campaigns. Further exploration with Council colleagues about any potential offers or incentives as part of a holistic relocation package will also be explored over the next three years.
- ❖ Look at **other incentives** to support professionals to Wirral, seeking to break down physical and financial barriers. For example, local research has found that the tunnel fees from Liverpool to Wirral have been a disincentive for some workers from further afield. A cost-benefit analysis to understand the impact and benefits of incentives to break down barriers is needed to support this priority.

Theme 4: Induction

We know from research and discussions with practitioners, that a positive start to a new role (in any position) is important and allows them to feel welcome and settle in well. The Council's induction programme supports new employees to have a range of information for starting their new role, but it is not tailored to the specific needs of social work professionals. We will:

- ❖ **develop a bespoke induction process** which brings together the offer of the Practice Improvement Team along with other important information about embarking on a career in social care in Wirral.
- ❖ **review the current buddy system** and implement a new buddy system for all new starters not just newly qualified so that there is a ‘helping hand’ for new recruits. This will be particularly important for those who start virtually.
- ❖ **Explore different ways of securing IT equipment** for new starters so that they don’t join without the right equipment in place.

PRIORITY 2: SUPPORT CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO DELIVER A MOTIVATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON SUPPORTING STAFF RETENTION

A strong and stable workforce is key to delivering high quality, effective and consistent practice to our children and families. We need to be clear on our offer so to attract high quality experienced practitioners that want to remain with us. We will promote a culture of continuous professional learning, where

Successful development initiatives

- An ASYE Programme
- An ASYE Co-ordinator
- Progression Framework
- Professional Development opportunities
- Buddy system for NQSW's
- Designated practice improvement team to support the service
- Centralised location and improved technology through Surface pros
- Agile working
- Revised grading structure for Team Managers and IROs
- More robust and effective progression framework – 'fast tracking' through grades
- Training and Development Programme: Core Skills for Managers, DfE Practice Leadership Programme
- Introduction of staff recognition programme (mug of recognition, staff engagement events, Be the Difference awards, etc)

practitioners have access to a range of opportunities that support their development.

Our practitioners will have access to development opportunities that supports their continuous learning and careers. We shall ensure that our practitioners are empowered to take responsibility for their own learning and development ensuring that practice remains excellent and meets the needs of our children

and families.

We want to create an environment where excellent social work can flourish. Our culture will promote healthy challenge and feedback where practitioners feel confident to question and offer solutions. We will listen and respond to feedback from our children and families, from colleagues and partners and we shall drive improvements that deliver the best outcomes for children and families and the practice of our workforce.

WHAT WE WILL DO OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Theme 1: Training and development

We will continue to work hard to attract experienced social workers to Wirral and the work we have completed around reducing caseloads, career progression opportunities and pay and rewards are key areas in supporting this.

- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) – CPD will enable learning to become conscious and proactive, rather than passive and reactive. It is the holistic commitment of professionals towards the enhancement of personal skills and proficiency throughout their careers.

Theme 2: Mentoring and coaching

We want to be a progressive council which takes a strengths-based approach to employee development and wellbeing. Using fellow employees, we want to develop a robust mentoring and coaching offer for social work employees.

- ❖ Develop a **database** of mentors and coaches from across the council and those specific to social care.
- ❖ Outline a clear and planned **programme of mentoring and coaching** using a range of insight methods to target where this would be useful:
including:
 - feedback from managers
 - Insight from audit
 - self-referral/request for support
 - appraisal/check-in information

Theme 3: Audit as a learning tool

We have made significant progress in our approach to audit and in using this as an effective tool to identify good practice and learning. Previously it was regarded as a criticism rather than something constructive and helpful. We need to build on using audit to inform individual training and development needs, using it in supervision and check-ins to explore how audit can shape and direct CPD. We will:

- ❖ **Take a strengths-based approach to audit to ensure that it celebrates and identifies good quality practice and is shared with social workers so they have a good understanding of what good practice looks like and can talk about it.**
- ❖ **Ensure that the views of families, partners are incorporated into audit so that their feedback and learning can be shared and helped to identify learning**
- ❖ **Ensure that audit is captured in supervision and used to inform training and development needs and plans.**

Theme 4: Prep for progression

Our progression framework outlines the steps that social workers need to take to develop in their career. Sometimes, workers feel nervous or worried about what the next step might entail in practical terms or struggle with interview technique and preparation. We want to ensure that workers are supported to progress, building on the robust progression framework support. We will:

- ❖ **Ensure that the progression framework is clearly understood and accessible utilising the development of the Social Work Academy as the ‘one stop shop’ of progression information, hints and tips.**
- ❖ **Offer shadowing opportunities for those considering applying to progress to ensure that they feel confident and capable of taking the next step and have direct insight into the practicalities of the roles**
- ❖ **Support employees with interview training and preparation so that they are successful at interview, particularly into more management/senior roles.**

PRIORITY 3: DEVELOP HIGH PERFORMING SOCIAL WORK MANAGERS THAT SUPPORT A PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK THAT REFLECTS 'HIGH SUPPORT HIGH CHALLENGE'

We recognise that our managers and leaders play a pivotal role in setting the standards and behaviours that empower our practitioners to deliver the very best practice. We will ensure that all our managers and leaders and aspiring managers are developed, creating opportunities for them to achieve their full potential.

We want to undertake a skills analysis with our managers and aspiring managers, providing us with the data to inform a development programme that not only develops their confidence and practice but the confidence and practice of others. We shall offer a range of development opportunities including coaching, mentoring, 360-degree feedback and shadowing.

In recent months we have implemented a revised performance management framework intended to provide clarity and security for employees and to support consistent practice. This approach has supported a more coherent and measured way of providing constructive challenge and to identify areas for improvement and development.

We want to build on this with a new supervision policy to ensure managers are clear on how to use reflective supervision to address performance and support improved practice. We need to make sure that actions are SMART and acted upon from supervisions and their impact considered and understood.

WHAT WE WILL DO OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Theme 1: Manager skills audit

We need to understand the skill mix and strengths of our social worker managers to build on strengths and improve on development areas. A robust needs analysis of workers (through skills audit and health checks) will help to shape the training and development offer for managers. We will:

- ❖ undertake a skills audit of social work managers to identify strengths and to shape a manager training and development programme that is fit for purpose.
- ❖ Work with managers to identify development gaps and skills strengths across the management workforce and explore ways to harness these skills proactively.

Theme 2: Manager training and development

- ❖ Develop a competency framework and are exploring change management within the framework before rolling out across the organisation.
- ❖ Developing manager training for all managers and again which will include change management within this offer.
- ❖ Undertake 360 review. This involves obtaining 360-degree feedback & a self-assessment against elements of the competency framework. There are 7 behaviours within the framework including Change Orientation. Subsequent discussions with OD will help individuals to reflect on their individual leadership styles and behaviours. The OD team will review how to roll this out to other levels of management in due course.

Theme 3: Performance management and quality assurance framework

We will

- ❖ further embed the performance management framework so that there is a golden thread of reporting and management from DCS to frontline practitioner
- ❖ Use the performance framework to allow for constructive challenge and to feed into the training and development programme
- ❖ Ensure that managers understand what techniques and tools they can use to address performance that is constructive and strengths-based to support positive improvements.

Theme 4: High support, high challenge culture

We will:

- ❖ Empower managers to understand their roles and responsibilities in addressing improvements in practice
- ❖ Work with HR colleagues to embed a stronger and more asset-based approach to performance management, utilising the tools, pathways and processes available
- ❖ Ensure that training and support is provided to both managers and practitioners in order to implement a positive improvement culture.

PRIORITY 4: DEVELOP NEW AND REVISED WAYS OF WORKING BUILDING ON EXISTING STRENGTHS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES

Working through the Covid-19 pandemic has been challenging for us all, but it has provided us with an opportunity to look at the way we work and how we can adjust to our surroundings. Embracing more remote and hybrid working will mean changing working cultures, systems and behaviours

By working differently, it will enable us to be closer to our communities and work with them to ensure that our services are accessible and designed and delivered to meet the needs of families in the best way possible.

As an organisation, Wirral is looking towards the workforce adopting a ‘hybrid’ working model which incorporates staff working from home, working virtually, and having the option to utilise office space to work or conduct meetings from, if required.

Evidence (from audits and evaluation) tell us that relationship-based practice is working well in Wirral. Social workers are building strong and constructive relationships with families and children and young people, and this is translating into meaningful support and outcomes.

The current practice model works well in some areas, particularly in early help, where the golden thread of the Supporting Families Enhancing Futures is evident in the recording and feedback from families. Independent evaluation and audit have reflected that the practice model needs to be further embedded within the culture and delivery of practice across the social care workforce. We want to build upon some of the good practice that exists as part of the SFEF model and take it that stage further to help support our “practice identity” that is fundamental in how we work alongside children and families to achieve meaning and sustainable outcomes.

WHAT WE WILL DO OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

We need to build a model which support employees both in the short term and long-term. It is widely recognised that hybrid working is the reality and future

Benefits of a hybrid model

1. **Flexibility and promotion of a better work-life balance:** Service permitting, the hybrid model supports staff to accommodate a working pattern that recognises the conflicting demands of life (such as childcare, caring responsibility, and an individual's own health and wellbeing) and supports the prioritisation of these needs alongside the duty of work.
2. **Environment & Commute** With the understanding that staff can work at a location they feel best suits the priorities for that day, less commuting is required. Not only does this serve well towards our carbon footprint but it also means at the close of business employees are able to immediately switch from 'work' to 'life' mode without traffic, car parking or travel. The organisation can cost save on the running of multiple buildings and offer proportionate collaboration and office space to suit the requirements of the workforce.
3. **Increased productivity** Employees will be able to work from a location that best supports their focus and productivity whether that be from the comfort of home or within the structure of an office. Meetings can be held face to face in an office environment or virtually. Collaboration style will be flexible to support the best use of time and resource and will promote the ability to connect on smaller or larger scales and with colleagues near or far.
4. **Better mental health** Most importantly the mental health of employees is supported within the hybrid model to allow consideration for individual's needs, challenges or pressures and agree an environment that best supports these. The model encourages a more positive balance of work and life as well as maximising the opportunity to achieve successful outcomes within work.

for many local authorities across the country and in Wirral it is important that we embrace the learning and adapt to a new hybrid model.

A new hybrid model for the Council must reflect and support the social work profession and enable social workers to feel supported in their role. Working in partnership with colleagues from a range of fields across the council will ensure that the new model can do this.

Our ways of working needs to be interlinked and connected with our practice model and our structure – all of these must come together to direct our future practice and system.

Theme 1: Effective hybrid working (which meets practitioner needs)

We want to work effectively in partnership to support the development of a corporate hybrid working model which supports social workers and practitioners to effectively meet in work in a safe and relaxed environment in which they can share and discuss cases.

We will:

- ❖ Work with corporate colleagues to explore a new hybrid model which meets social care practitioner needs

- ❖ Implement a 'children's services' bespoke model which utilises assets such as Rock Ferry building to ensure that workers can have access to a place-based support infrastructure.

Theme 2: Relationship-based Practice Model

We will:

- ❖ Review and refresh the current practice model and training for SFEF to ensure that there is wider use and use this to inform evaluation
- ❖ Provide feedback on evaluation of current model and areas of strengths and development
- ❖ Supported by the Department for Education and the Children's Innovation Unit complete an options appraisal of accredited practice models that will complement our social work approach to supporting children and families.
- ❖ Complete systemic practice diagnostic in partnership with other local authorities to explore how it might help build on current strengths e.g. relationship-base practice whilst also providing the necessary tools and support for high quality practice.

Theme 3: Integrated ways of working

We will:

- ❖ Explore new locality-based models of practice which connects and integrated a more aligned early help offer to reduce escalation of need at level 4
- ❖ Explore further opportunity to bring in new services into an integrated framework of support
- ❖ Use new ways of working and integrated models as a 'hook' for social workers who are keen to explore this practice and development
- ❖ Build on learning from pilot programmes including social workers in school programme, Cradle to Career and we can talk about domestic abuse to develop new models of working and delivery.
- ❖ Outline a clear phased approach to place-based working which considers both the long- and medium-term plans.

PRIORITY 5: COMMUNICATION AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Strong, clear communication and engagement supports a culture of openness and transparency: where employees feel empowered, valued and listened to. We already utilise a range of internal communication methods to ensure key messages and information is passed to employees. This includes staff engagement sessions, monthly Director's updates which provide staff with information and good news stories on service developments and achievements. We also make very good use of our Teams channels to send out important announcements and general information.

During the recent SWORD survey this year, 'change' was identified as one of the main points that provided a great deal of negative response. With many practitioners feeling that change wasn't well managed, and information wasn't always readily accessible to them.

We want to provide clear communication which supports consistent delivery of coherent services, which continuously improves outcomes. We also want our staff to feel involved and confident that they are receiving the right information in the best format.

WHAT WE WILL DO OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Theme 1: Change management

Feedback from practitioners

"Sometimes it really feels like information overload, and this can make it hard to keep up with the latest information because it comes in so many formats (email, newsletter, teams etc)"

"Information can be hard to locate because things get so lost in the number of emails received"

"General consensus was that methods of contact that work best are through MS Teams"

"Sometimes messages can feel very corporate."

"Feel that senior managers coming into team meetings and taking on any issues concerns would be better than just conducting a staff survey. Senior Managers can otherwise be out of touch with what happens on the front line."

"Mug of recognition – should go out to families and children and partners too. This incentive seems to be stuck with the same teams."

"Timings of communications make it difficult to read them as they come in – sent too late in the day."

Improve senior manager understanding of change management (provide them with training)

- Create new change management policy of engaging workforce in social care team changes
- The Practice Improvement Team are also offering to work with managers who are looking to implement change to ensure change is well managed and communicated.

Theme 2: Policy and process

- Work with the professional practice officer to ensure all updated documents and procedures are accessible to teams.
- Review and refine staff transfer process.

Theme 3: Communication

- Continue with staff engagement events and look at how we can continue to improve on these.
- We aim to create a MS Teams channel which will be used purely for promoting progression and development opportunities and it will be available for all, across the directorate.

UNDERPINNING THEME: WELLBEING

Workforce wellbeing is not only about supporting employees to be fit, healthy, and motivated but it is also recognising that doing so is key to the success of any organisation. Failure to protect the physical and emotional health of employees at work may mean:

- placing an organisation at risk
- affecting employees' ability to do their job
- affecting an organisation's productivity and effectiveness

During the past 2 years we have had to face many new and unprecedented challenges with the Covid-19 pandemic and so although already firmly on our radar the wellbeing of our people has never been more important.

We have had to take a deeper and more focused look at how we might work differently and how we can strengthen what we do to meet the future needs of our communities. Although a challenging time it is important to recognise that this can create many opportunities for us here at Wirral.

WHAT WE WILL DO OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Theme 1: Recognition and rewards

- Implement DCS 'letters' to staff
- Sparkling Moments
- Exploring other reward options such as long serving awards and incentivised
- The team are also putting in place plans to undertake Serious Success Reviews and Sparkling Moments (one of the suggestions from within the SWORD workbook).

SWORD SURVEY – May 21

Back in May this year we asked colleagues to complete the Research in Practice (RIP) SWORD survey and as part of this wellbeing was covered amongst most questions. Since then, we have spent several months reviewing the results that RIP provided us with and working to address the feedback received.

Overall the results of the SWORD survey were positive: over 70% of staff feeling satisfied, and we also received an excellent response from the separate COVID questionnaire, where the positive response rate was between 70.48%-97.14% for all questions asked.

However, these figures show there is still room for improvement. As such, the team working on the SWORD survey have been working to address those areas where more than 40% of responses were negative and identified the following themes: the demands of the job and the opportunity to debrief/ reflect; all of which are being greatly impacting practitioners' wellbeing.

Theme 2: Bespoke emotional and mental health support

- Roll out an online learning package to build emotional resilience within teams. 36 representatives have been given a place on this course, with specific individuals within this number identified who will roll out the training to the wider service at a later stage.
- Commission emotional health and wellbeing and stress management support specifically for social workers
- Speaking to practitioners and managers about accessing services that currently exist such as Occupational Health (OH) and following the correct procedure

Theme 3: Motivation and staff morale

- The modernisation & support team are now working to update the Wellbeing Manifesto to develop a series of new offers, including a calendar of monthly activities and access to a range of health and wellbeing documents
- TED Talks
- Motivational speakers
- Wellbeing sessions
- Socials

Theme 4: Time for reflection

- Since the survey, the Practice Improvement Team has undertaken work with all teams introducing reflective tools. Following consultation with the practitioner forum the Practice Improvement Team are planning to trail taking reflective spaces to teams rather than working on a referral in basis.

EVALUATION AND MEASURING IMPACT

We will measure successful delivery of the Workforce Strategy using existing data and will continue to measure the “condition” of the organisation through other relevant data, but this will need to be expanded to include new outcome-based measures identified as we develop the strategy. This stage also includes measuring effectiveness, determining success and reporting on key performance indicators.

We will measure the impact of the Strategy through the following subjective approaches:

- Social care health check
- Social care census
- SWORD survey
- Focus groups/engagement sessions – practitioner forums

We have also outlined the following key performance indicators to measure the impact of the Strategy:

- No' of ASYEs successful completion of ASYE
- % Reduction in sickness absence
- % Reduction in sickness due to work related stress
- % of social worker returning to office
- % workers reporting improved mental health and wellbeing

GOVERNANCE

The Social Care Workforce Strategy Working Group will be the lead governance group for monitoring the progress and impact of the Strategy. This group will report progress to Children’s Senior Leadership Team on a regular basis, highlighting achievements and risks where this is necessary and appropriate.

The Children, Young People and Education Committee will also play a role in monitoring progress of delivery through review of the action plan and receipt of regular updates.