

## **Appendix B – Progress and Updates**

### **Priority 1: ‘Growing our own’ through recruitment and development:**

The following key achievements have been made to date:

- We have continued to engage with the corporate Communications Team and there has been great progress in updating our ‘brand’ which will be used alongside our marketing campaigns through social media and at future job fayre’s/events – a draft is has been shared with the project board group in December, and we intend to agree a design and launch early this year (see appendices C).
- Five colleagues have successfully begun their Social Work Degree Apprenticeship Programme, two of which are in year 2 of studies and the other 3 are finalising year one. Two further suitable candidates have been put forward to join cohort 3 which has just begun this January.
- We have concluded shortlisting for our eighth cohort of Step Up To Social Work students and have 27 trainees beginning the programme this month. Four of the students have been placed with Wirral and will be beginning their first placement in April.
- Frontline Programme 2023 Wirral Children’s has welcomed its 5<sup>th</sup> Frontline unit of 4 participants who commenced in September 2023. Our 4<sup>th</sup> unit completed in September with 3 of our 4 participants remaining with us as Newly Qualified Social Workers.
- Social Work in Wirral Website has gone live following a ‘soft launch’ - Feedback from applicants has been positive.
- Our offer on a page has now been launched and details can be found on our microsite. We also plan to use this tool throughout our social media campaigns (appendices D).
- We have obtained a sponsorship licence to allow us to support international students with their studies – this provides us with additional opportunities for recruitment and ensures we are promoting equality, diversity and inclusion amongst staff.
- Following the Department for Education agreeing to provide £250,000 in 2022 to fund an innovation programme, which will see the development of a non-for-profit recruitment agency and led by Capacity, great progress has been made including;
  - A name being developed for the project so it’ll now been known as ‘Yonder’,
  - A programme lead has been recruited,
  - The legal structure for the project has concluded,
  - Capacity have begun discussions with local authorities around the membership offer.

In the coming months this project will begin to see the recruitment of social workers and Wirral will be one of the main beneficiaries of market testing. (see appendices E for further updates).

- We have remained strong with our ASYE programme and offer and as of 31.8.23 there were 24 NQSWs actively involved in the programme with another 17 to be registered over the next couple of months who are awaiting SWE registration (see appendix F for further information).
- Over the past 12 months, we have seen a reduction in staff turnover and an increase in number of social workers in post – these figures and comparisons from last year can be found embedded in the cover report.

Work planned for the next 12 months will include:

- Launch of communication and marketing campaign with promotional videos, recruitment adverts and social media posts.
- Further develop the grow your own project with Cheshire West and Chester Council exploring routes into schools and colleges. This year Wirral has supported 2 Social Work Students on the Grow our Own Project and in 2024 we shall support a further 2 students from our local HEI's.
- Continue to support and develop our staff through the different programmes we run with the aim of growing and nurturing excellent Social Workers.

**Priority 2: Support Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to deliver a motivated and skilled workforce, with an emphasis on supporting staff retention:**

This sub-group has met on a regular basis and below summarises the progress made to date:

- We are continuing to offer our new coaching and mentoring programme to staff following the launch in January 2023. We have also been offering shadowing opportunities which has seen one aspiring Social Work shadow our Assistant Director, Kerry Mehta, for a number of weeks to gain insight into her line of work – feedback has been very positive on the experience.
- The Staff college have been commissioned and has delivered training to Operational Leads, HOS and AD's. We have recommissioned this for a further year following funding being granted through the 'supporting families transformation grant'.
- Regular bi-monthly audits are still in place to identify good quality practice and areas for improvement. In line with this we continue to hold Learning and Celebration events quarterly to share and celebrate the excellent work of our social workers. The sessions have been very well received by colleagues. They provide teams with an opportunity to come together and share success stories and compliments received for staff; have a conversation about learning from recent QA activity; feedback from families; any other key topics/presentations of interest.
- Social Workers continue to progress under our Progression Framework and accurate data is maintained to support planning. Shadowing

opportunities have been advertised. Interview training has been developed and offered to social workers to support their development.

- Our Social Work in Wirral website has gone live. This website provides information on our CPD offer, ASYE offer, opportunities for progression and information on wellbeing and engagement. Visitors to the site have access to a number of recorded videos hearing first from colleagues about our offer and their experiences of working in Wirral Children's Services. Some of our young people have also been filmed sharing their thoughts on what makes a good Social Worker.

The next steps for this priority include:

- To continue to develop the mentor data base for children's services and to develop communications to support.
- To continue to promote the coaching and mentoring offer.
- To continue to promote and offer shadowing opportunities.
- To further develop and update the Social Work in Wirral Website.
- To continue to offer formal interview training for social workers to support their progression and success with interviews for internal opportunities.

**Priority 3: Develop high performing social work managers that support a performance management framework that reflects 'high support high challenge':**

The work under this priority sits with the CPD Subgroup which meets on a regular basis. Below summarises the progress made to date:

- We have continued to offer the Frontline Social Work Leadership Pathways Programme to relevant colleagues.
- Regular Team Manager forums have been designed to empower managers to understand their role and responsibilities in relation to improving practice.
- Regular staff engagement sessions and the new Learning and Celebration event provide excellent opportunities to develop a positive improvement culture.
- September saw the launch of our new leadership development programme. This programme consists of learning around each of the behaviours related to the leadership behaviour framework.

Areas that require focus and our next steps include:

- Working with corporate OD team to roll out the new Corporate Leadership Behaviours Framework across Children's Services

- Work with corporate colleagues on developing a skills audit for Team Managers
- Work with HR colleagues and the Practice Improvement Team to provide learning opportunities that support managers to constructively address performance and support improvements.

**Priority 4: Develop new and revised ways of working building on existing strengths to support children, young people and their families:**

This priority has focussed on two major change programmes:

- system-wide family approach
- systemic practice

A summary on the progress made to date on these two programmes is provided below:

**System-wide family approach:** A new locality approach to working has been designed and a first phase implemented in social care services on 31<sup>st</sup> October. The locality model has been informed through engagement sessions with practitioners and managers which has included:

- Engagement sessions with all children's social care staff, family matters service in March, August, September and October.
- Engagement session with internal partners who have come together to identify the geographical areas they work in.

Internal partners – Youth Offending Service/ Youth Services/ Family Matters and Early Childhood Services, who have come together and identified lead Professionals to link in with Children's social care.

The approach is being regularly reviewed by operational leads, heads of service and the assistant director for children's social care.

**Systemic Practice:** The Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership has introduced a systemic practice model as the next iteration of the Supporting families Enhancing Futures (SFEF) approach for working with children, young people and families.

Systemic practice emphasises people's relationships as key to understanding their experiences and affecting change. It seeks to make sense of the world through relationships, focusing on the whole family system rather than individuals. Through a systemic approach, change can be achieved by exploring relationship patterns and understanding how they impact on children.

Progress that has been made so far includes:

- A multi-agency steering group has been established to oversee and direct development and implementation of the model. The group has developed a project delivery plan for 2023-24
- The systemic practice model was officially launched on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023

- Warrington Council initially worked with us to support the development of training. DfE funding was awarded for this.
- A systemic practice lead post has been created to support the implementation and roll out of the model and to lead the training.
- Two day in person training courses have been running since October 2022. Over 200 professionals from the Council and another 200 from our partner agencies have attended the training so far. The training has been supplemented by regular skills workshops, which have been attended by 180 staff.
- In October 2023 online training through Flo was developed as an alternative to the face-to-face training for Council staff, and to make the training as accessible as possible.
- In September 2023 the WSCP introduced basic awareness training for the wider workforce.
- The online systemic practice hub was launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> October. This provides a 'one stop shop' for professionals to access support, training and guidance.
- A dedicated web page has been established and is also populated with information.

The next steps for this group over the next 12 months are to:

- Regularly review progress of implementation of the approach through the steering group on a quarterly basis
- Continue with the delivery of in person training, online training and skills workshops and report on Council and multi-agency attendance.
- Continue to populate the systemic practice hub with guidance and resources.
- Bid for additional monies from the DfE to support the introduction of specialist accredited training for children social care staff.
- Develop a quality assurance framework as a tool to evaluate and measure the impact of the model and the difference it is making for children, young people and families.

#### **Priority 5: Communication and change management:**

In order to address this priority, teams have been taking steps to improve the way in which we communicate, and our progress includes:

- Our professional practice officer has continued to offer and deliver training to teams around accessing policies and procedures so that staff can keep up to date with any changes.

- Newsletters continue to go out from our DCS via the performance and improvement team on a monthly basis to keep staff informed of changes, updates and news within the directorate.
- Bi-monthly staff engagement events take place either in person or virtually to deliver service updates and other key messages to staff.
- The practice improvement team continue to host quarterly service events to address audits and deliver messages.
- The performance and improvement team are linking in with colleagues from our corporate OD team every month to discuss Council updates and provide the directorate with further information via our TEAMS channels.
- The 2023 SWORD has been out to staff and recently closed on 13<sup>th</sup> December – we are now beginning to collate the results and provide feedback.

The next steps for this group over the next 12 months are to:

- Continue to plan and deliver meaningful staff engagement events bi-monthly – next one will be our end of year Christmas celebration session which will include a mini awards ceremony to get teams involved.
- Continue to meet regularly with corporate OD colleagues to plan wellbeing events and receive messages that are to be shared with the directorate.
- Collate 2023 SWORD survey results and follow up with 'You Said, We Did'.