

Children first and at the heart of all we do

Latest Updates: Children's Social Care

Sector Led Improvement Partner Visit – Feedback

Our Sector Led Improvement Partner; South Tyneside joined us for three days over 28 – 30 March 2022.

Six staff members from South Tyneside attended, and during this time had the opportunity to meet with around 70 different colleagues.

Feedback:

Overall, staff were really engaged and supportive of the improvement journey we are on.

Practice leadership:

SMT was considered to be “present, accessible and setting the direction of travel....an increased sense of purpose and vision.”

Areas for development:

- Clarity around the roles of social worker, team manager and service manager
- Provision of clear and straightforward comms
- Greater clarity for IRO dispute resolution, to support impact for children
- To build reflective supervision recording
- Using performance information as a practice tool

Next Steps:

- Supervision training and leadership workshop commissioned for all team managers (Research in Practice)
- Progressing live observation of supervisions (building model of observation as practice tool; all heads of service will have undertaken at least one observation by end May 2022)
- Set out our 5 golden threads from our improvement plan more obviously
- Attend and observe key performance and leadership activities in South Tyneside (TM's and PSW) – Leading to Excellence; Performance to Practice in June 2022
- Build peer learning through PSW lead with our partners in South Tyneside

Assessment:

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Assessment practice has continued to be variable.

Areas for development:

- To build confidence and expectation around use of greater variety of direct work tools
- To drive impact of family solutions through FGC and network meetings
- To minimise the changes of social workers for children
- To look across the region with colleagues at families who move across boundaries – are we repeating assessments?

Next Steps:

- South Tyneside will share with us 'MyPlan' which will support our direct conversations with children and families in their contribution to the plan of work
- To conclude the arrangements to update assessments (use of pre meeting reports for CP conferences and CiC Reviews)
- To maximise the first assessment in relation to pre birth assessment (not completing two concurrently)

Quality Assurance:

Overall, the quality assurance framework is robust, proportionate and is better engaging the practice leadership team across the service in reflecting on and improving practice

Areas for Development:

- Use of thematic audits and deep dives to test for practice impact
- Development of CPP to be working 'with' and not 'for' the teams in learning from audit
- Refreshing the audit circle to support iterative learning more widely (not just from audit)
- Delivery of consistent completion of monthly practice audit
- To review and refresh the real time multi agency audit undertaken as part of Front Door operational group
- To develop practice impact application of performance information

Next Steps:

- Six-month plan (practice development with teams and their managers) building on team level training analysis and front line manager accountability for impact
- Audit circle from June 2022 to include wider learning opportunity

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- To ensure that we follow up audits (for completion and also for action follow up) – we will embed in our weekly management meetings
- To work with South Tyneside and include CPP in our audit refresh for the Front Door – South Tyneside are keen to learn from us in this regard
- For TM and SM to observe the South Tyneside Practice and Performance quarterly DCS forum

Permanence Planning:

Viability and Kinship assessments are now all undertaken in house, which has significantly improved quality and timeliness; this is a very positive achievement.

Areas for Development:

- To bring greater timeliness to quality assessments where families may be best placed to provide care
- To bring rigour across the Directorate in delivering timely care proceedings
- To address rigour of plans for children where proceedings may be required (have we done all we can to support children remaining at home)
- To understand permanence right from the front door

Next Steps:

- To finalise the Initial Viability Assessment checklist (connected carers) and make available for social workers (May 2022)
- Court Progression Manager and Service Manager to meet with key roles in South Tyneside and explore tracking and QA oversight (no equivalent role)
- Pilot a 'pre-legal intervention' panel to bring sharper focus to consider all areas in supporting a child remaining at home or with their family; this will run from June – September 2022
- Permanence from the front door – understanding this not as an exit from our care, but a life without a social worker. South Tyneside will support us with dip sampling on the purposefulness of our recording across the child's journey

This was a valuable opportunity to share learning with peers, and over the summer we are taking up the invitation to meet with colleagues in 'their patch' at South Tyneside. I know you will take the time in your Service Meetings to consider the information (power point shared) and please do not hesitate to speak to your Service Manager if you have any questions.

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Lynn Radley Visit

We have been delighted to host Lynn Radley, a former Ofsted Inspector who spent some time with our front-line staff 16-18 May and 23-24 May.

We reminded ourselves about the Ofsted guidance:

173. When talking to social workers about practice, inspectors are likely to ask questions about a range of issues, for example:

- the quality and impact of supervision and management oversight
- the ways in which they are helped to strengthen families and minimise risk
- workloads and workload management
- the availability, quality and impact of training and development opportunities
- the impact on practice of multi-agency training and the dissemination of learning from national or local learning reviews

I'm sure that you have been looking at the conversations in your team meetings and please do not hesitate to speak to your Team Manager if you have any questions.

Front Door Improvement Update

We are moving from Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to a Front Door as part of our drive to ensure that children and families receive the most effective support at the earliest opportunity. This will support partners to access services directly in the community and deliver a more seamless response to requests for help and support. You might want to invite Wayne Calder or Karen Johnson to come to a future Service Meeting to talk about this in more detail, but a summary of the work is set out below:

Work on the plan for improvements around an integrated door continues and we have identified the following areas that we will be working on over the coming months:

1. One Portal Request for Help Form

- Single point of access for EH and children's social care using one form – change from MARF to 'Request for Help and Support'
- Review & revise approach to gaining consent – consent gained once through good quality conversations by referrer

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- Amend electronic form in LCS and associated workflows – post June

2. Review of Requests for Help & Support

- Recruit and train 3 children and families workers for pilot period – Early Help Experienced - test increased support for referrers around EH assessment and planning. Go Live 27th June

3. Level 3/4 decision making meeting

- Pilot multi-agency meeting to support decision making

4. Improving quality of step-up processes from EH to Assessment

- Develop process to support decision making about children already open to EH where concerns may be escalating
- Weekly meeting for children in receipt of intensive family support via family centres
- Improve conversations with Assessment service – bypassing the Front Door
- Developing support to EH re: plan for the child if step-up not agreed
- Review support for Lead professionals – reducing new Contacts into the Front Door

5. Review Effectiveness of Advice Line

- Improve the Advice line:
- Put dedicated resource in place to ensure advice line calls are answered 100% of the time
- Put in place voicemail and call back procedures
- Promotion of the advice line – reduce Contacts/improved EH advice
- Review if we could make improved use of Front Door partners as part of the advice line

6. Strategy Discussions

- Strategy discussion dip sampling to review the effectiveness of decision making

7. Review of Threshold Document (DSPP)

- Not a formal review of Threshold, but exploration of levels of Need/professional conversations with families and one another

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- Sharing concerns may be a starting point for a conversation but reviewing the support and services available to the child or young person must be made in the context of delivering the best outcomes.