

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Wednesday, 16 January 2019

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions)

Report on the Children's Services Social Work Academy

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

The report provides an overview of the Children's Services Social Work Academy, including the background to the Academy, content, evaluation and future plans.

Recommendation

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.

Background and Advice

The Social Work Academy was established in September 2017. The purpose of the Academy is to equip social workers with the knowledge and skills they need to make a positive difference to the lives of the children and families of Lancashire. Our primary aim is to improve the quality of social work practice across Children's Services.

The Social Work Academy provides a comprehensive induction and support programme for all social workers in Children's Services and is part of our wider recruitment and retention strategy. Recruitment and retention is a challenge for all local authorities; the Academy ensures that new social workers receive a positive induction and are well supported in their first year of employment with Lancashire. Supporting and training social workers in managing the demands of the role is important in our ambition to retain an experienced and able workforce, providing stability and continuity of practitioners for children, young people and their families.

The Social Work Academy is organised, reviewed and delivered jointly by the Advanced Practitioner and Learning and Development Teams.

Content

For experienced social workers, the Social Work Academy includes key induction training over 5 and a half days and includes for example, training on the LCS case

recording system, mandatory e-learning and an introduction to the Risk Sensible Model. In addition practitioners are provided with a Yoga laptop and receive training in the use of this.

For newly qualified or inexperienced social workers (completing their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment – ASYE) they continue to remain at the Social Work Academy for an additional 4 days, during which time they complete a package of training titled, 'Journey of the Child'. This provides them with the essential materials and resources in order to understand the journey of the child from the point of referral, including how to complete a comprehensive and holistic assessment and create well designed plans, which are outcome focused, supporting positive engagement with children and their families. Throughout this time guest speakers across Children's Services attend to provide information regarding their service area and respective roles within the assessment process.

Newly qualified (ASYE) social workers return to the Social Work Academy on a 3 monthly basis in their first year. As part of their assessed year in practice they have to complete a portfolio and these recall dates support their portfolio reviews. The recall days are for a 2 day period in respect of both the 3 and 6 month review. The first of both days comprises reflection on the social worker's progress in the morning, supported by the Director of Children's Services and the Principal Social Worker attending, and in the afternoon they continue to work on their portfolios. On the second review day, guest speakers attend to continue to provide social workers with increasing information regarding multi-agency roles and services, increasing in complexity as their first year progresses.

There have been five cohorts of the Social Work Academy since its launch in September 2017:

- Cohort 1 – September/November 2017 – 30 social workers attended.
- Cohort 2 – January 2018 – 14 social workers attended.
- Cohort 3 – April 2018 – 16 social workers attended.
- Cohort 4 – July 2018 – 24 social workers attended.
- Cohort 5 – November 2018 – 36 social workers attended.

Social workers have attended from across all the teams in Children's Services, with the largest number attending the recent cohort which took place in November 2018. Cohort 6 is due to take place on the 7th January 2019 and it is estimated there will be approximately 25 new social workers in attendance.

Evaluation and Impact

After the initial 2 week induction, 6 month and 12 month review, all social workers who attend the Social Work Academy complete a reflection and review document. The document asks social workers to reflect upon their time within their work bases and the Social Worker Academy sessions.

The Advanced Practitioner Team who facilitate the Social Work Academy complete an overall review document highlighting key themes and areas of feedback. The

review is shared with the Learning and Development Team and the key themes shared with the Workforce Strategy Board (held on a monthly basis), to consider whether any changes to the timetable and/or resources are required.

From reviewing the regular feedback, changes have been made to the Social Work Academy timetable to ensure it continues to remain purposeful and effective for all new social workers who commence employment within Children's Services.

From the feedback received the Social Work Academy is highly valued by social workers new to the council. Social workers believe that this offers them a positive start in the local authority and provides an overview of how Children's Services functions. Social workers feel they have the opportunity to voice their opinions on their experiences and understand these will be heard by senior managers should any changes be required.

The overall feedback regarding the Social Work Academy has been overwhelmingly positive from social workers, with positive feedback following the recent Ofsted inspection and the previous peer review of Children's Services. The attendance and open discussion with the Director and Executive Director of Children's Services, supports social workers in feeling valued and listened to.

Themes from feedback are now emerging; to date social workers have advised that they highly value the peer support gained from attending the Social Work Academy. Changes have been made to the initial 2 week induction programme, with the addition of guest speakers from all teams across Children's Services, in line with the increasing attendance of social workers from all service areas. To allow more time for reflection, changes have been made to the recall review dates, limiting the attendance of guest speakers and providing protected time for reflection and the completion of portfolio work.

Mindfulness training has also been added to the November Academy, supporting the health and wellbeing of social workers progressing into practice. This follows feedback from practitioners regarding support in this area.

As noted above, Cohort 1's two week induction period was completed in September and November 2017, totalling 30 new social workers. This cohort were expected to attend 6 recall days over the course of twelve months. The final recall day was held in September 2018. Of those 30 Social Workers, only 3 of those social workers are no longer working in Children's Services. (2 of the 3 workers continue to work for Lancashire County Council, however, sought employment in Adults Social Care and only 1 social worker left the authority).

Cohort 2's induction period was delivered in January 2018. This cohort had fewer new social work starters, with only 14 social workers. Those 14 social workers completed the induction programme and subsequent recall days, with their 12 month recall date scheduled for January 2019. To date all 14 social workers remain employed within Children's Services.

Cohorts 3 to 6 are still in their early stages with a number of recall dates scheduled. Our staff retention rates will continue to be closely monitored, however the data currently indicates the Academy is having a positive impact.

Future Plans

The Social Work Academy Team are now planning for 2019 and 2020 cohorts in order to ensure every social worker that begins their career within Children's Services is able to receive a comprehensive induction programme that is well designed, regularly reviewed and updated to meet their practice needs and support the improved retention of staff.

The Social Work Academy ensures that feedback received from social workers is responded to and supports purposeful programme delivery. In the future we are seeking to produce a more interactive programme with potential role play scenarios to promote engagement.

The delivery and co-ordination of the Social Work Academy will continue to be managed by the Advanced Practitioner and Learning and Development Team who have formed positive working relationships.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Risk management

This report has no significant risk implications.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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NA		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		

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