



Swindon's Practice Framework and Vision

Our vision:

One children's service - consistently good everyday

Our objectives are to enable:

- **Healthy, attached and resilient children to live in families where they are valued, respected and cherished – support children to be the best that they can be**
- **Families (especially parents, but also young people) who are able to make positive changes to their behaviour**
- **Children and young people who are protected from significant harm**

Our purpose:

- Our primary purpose is to ensure that children are protected from significant harm and their development and wellbeing are promoted. We do this by working openly with children and families and collaboratively with partners across Swindon.
- To support children to remain within their family wherever possible. We value the importance of direct work and family support with families as a means of enabling change.

- To work openly with children and their families to bring about change, in solution-focused ways, building on their strengths, to help parents and carers to be able to provide good parenting
- To build trusting relationships with children and families that encourages independence and conversations about what matters to them
- To deliver purposeful assessments and care plans that includes direct work with children and families (evidence informed practice and what works)
- To work with families to begin permanency planning from the start of our work, considering permanency options to include staying at home, living with relatives, living with matched and good long term foster carers or special guardians or being adopted.
- Where care at home is not possible, we seek to provide high quality substitute care within family settings, wherever possible within or close to Swindon, and to maintain links with birth family whenever this is in the child's best interests.
- We have a specific responsibility to ensure that we are aspirational for our children in our care and care leavers, and that we deliver stability through high quality support and care planning from us as corporate parents. We are signed up to the Children in Care Pledge to ensure accountability to our children in care and care leavers.
- We recognise that enabling change and building resilience in families, who are often very disadvantaged, is difficult and challenging work, which requires skilled, empowered and confident social workers and family workers. Our purpose is to promote and cultivate a strong learning and supportive culture and to deliver good leadership management and supervision (high support and high challenge). In order to energise and better connect with what brought practitioners into doing the work in the first place to make a difference.

The Children's Services Leadership Team wants to maximise the impact of the commitment and enthusiasm of front-line staff and managers by:

- valuing and listening to our front line colleagues
- supporting their learning and professional development and
- decrease the complexity of systems and processes,
- procedures that support and align to the practice framework
- give staff the permission and tools to work in a systemic, strength and outcome focussed way , which engages and empowers parents, but holds the child's needs and lived experience at the centre.

We recognise that we need a stronger focus on what constitutes high quality systemic and relationship based social work practice, a practice framework which focuses on outcomes for children.

We have started to develop a 'learning offer and approach' which is predicated on participative learning, learning through doing and through observation, which is reflective and puts 'working with children and families' at its centre. It aims to deliver a learning journey from the students who we will welcome into our service and profession, our newly qualified social workers who complete their assessed year of employment in Swindon, through to our experienced practitioners who stay with

Swindon and help the future cohorts of newly qualified social workers who join the profession and help enable change for the most vulnerable children in our community. It will be facilitated:

- by experts from within our service, who want to share their expertise with their colleagues;
- by young people who have been in care who are confident that their lived experience will help other children and young people in the future if they contribute to the learning opportunities of social work staff;
- by parents and carers who are experts through their lived experience and who, if engaged successfully can help shape learning and service design;
- by external colleagues and partners, who are still close to practice; and
- through partnerships with higher education institutions.

The learning will enable the service offer to become more consistent. It will offer the tools to front line social workers and family support workers to develop strong and meaningful relationships with children, young people and their parents/ carers and to enable children to express their view and feelings so that they can where appropriate inform their plans.

We will deliver improved outcomes:

- by using restorative , relationship based practice
- by championing and becoming skilled and confident in outcome focussed social work
- by developing more fit-for-purpose policies and procedures that support good practice (single practice and procedural framework; including co-produced practice standards)
- through service managers leading on the permanency agenda across the whole service
- by extending the voice and influence of children and young people and inviting them to co -produce the improvement and development agenda.
- by having a service wide relentless focus on improving analysis, plans, and children's outcomes (purposeful work)
- by quality assuring our practice and impact for children and families and learning from it (through a refreshed performance management and QA framework)

The service wide **relationship and outcomes based approach** builds on work the service has developed over time, for example the use of the signs of safety approach within child protection conferences, the recent work to create a consistent and strong analysis approach within MASH and ACP, the restorative work within the YOS, the solution focussed work in the early help services and the participation approach championed for our children in care in their child care reviews.

Where we need to recruit staff, we will actively recruit team managers and social workers who want to do direct work with families to enable change. We will provide 'family kit bags' to our teams to empower them to adopt this engaging approach when working with children, young people and families.

We will develop services for young people and their families which enable the family network to co-produce their own solutions and plans for change, with support that enables adolescents to be diverted from public care and the relationships within the family network to be restored, resilient and life chances enhanced.

We will change how the family group conference model has been utilised to date to ensure that this approach becomes a core part of the relationship-based way of working to support children to remain living at home where it is appropriate to do so.

We will, in parallel to implementing and embedding a restorative approach, empower our workforce through formal learning opportunities and supervision to engage with families and analyse what is working and what worries us about a child's family circumstance to use the lens of **systemic social work thinking**. We will explore with staff the means of providing systemic practice models across and within our service, for example bringing family therapists and workers whose expertise is in adult facing work into social work teams (this will come in the second stage of our service improvement plan).

The practice framework to improve outcomes in summary

- cross cutting priority that is outcome and relationship focussed practice (co-producing a common way of working – single practice model)
- refreshed supporting performance management and QA framework
- empowered staff and managers to reinforce professional accountability
- use professional development opportunities to recruit and retain more staff (our core offer to come and work and stay in Swindon)
- leadership and management training
- re-calibrate the FGC model into the social work pathway
- key service wide practice and procedures framework that includes:
 - what does "good" look like
 - fit-for- purpose policies that are outcomes and practice driven
 - principles, values and behaviours underpinning the way we work together internally, with our partners and most importantly with children
 - refreshed training and development offer to include core training that supports a single practice model. Also opportunities to train and learn with our partners (LSCB).