Halton
Children & Families Service

Workforce Development Strategy 2018-2020
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Aim

Halton Borough Council’s approach to staff development within the Children & Families Service Department focuses on the child and family to keep children, young people and their families at the heart of everything we do. This ensures that we have a motivated, stable and ambitious workforce with colleagues supported to maintain their health and wellbeing being a pivotal factor.

We aim to grow and look after our own as we recognise that our workforce is our greatest asset. This Strategy has been developed to ensure we deliver first class professional development opportunities and career pathways for our staff. Halton is an innovative and inspiring place to progress professionally within a good learning organisation and employer of choice.

Improving outcomes for children and families is our key objective which can be achieved through our excellence in Children’s Social Care practice. This Strategy outlines our approach to develop the competencies, skills and knowledge of our workforce to achieve this.

Vision

The vision within Halton’s Children, Young People and Families Plan (CYPFP) is:

“Halton’s ambition is to build stronger, safer communities which are able to support the development and learning of children and young people so they grow up feeling safe, secure, happy and healthy, ready to be Halton’s present and Halton’s future”

The Council’s Children & Families Service Department is committed to this vision.

This Strategy will enable the Department’s current and future workforce to be safe, healthy, happy and ambitious for themselves and for the children and families that they work with.

Helping us to improve recruitment and retention of staff and develop a skilled permanent Children & Families Service Department workforce.
Key Objectives

Through these objectives we want to inspire, grow and nurture our workforce so they can:

- Develop and learn new skills, knowledge and experience;
- Improve the outcomes and lives of children, young people and their families.
National Context

This Strategy has been developed against a background of a rapidly changing set of national legislation, guidelines and policy, whilst this list is not exhaustive the key ones are:

- Knowledge and Skills Statement for Children and Family Social Work
- Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) and the College of Social Work’s (TCSW) Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)
- ‘High Expectations, High Support and High Challenge’
- Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (AYSE)
- Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework

Ofsted Inspections: The new framework, Inspection of Local area Children Services (ILACS) is seen by Ofsted as a step forward that will make a genuine and positive impact on children’s lives. Regular contact with local authorities is at the heart of the new system meaning that Ofsted will have more frequent contact with Halton giving the opportunity to identify any issues of concern sooner enabling the Council to act swiftly to address them rather waiting until the next inspection to find out what/if practice has deteriorated.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced new requirements for Local Authorities:
- Corporate Parenting Principles and Children in Care duties
- Education duties to previously looked after children
- Care leaver duties expanded
- Abolition of safeguarding children boards
- Further regulation of social work
- Compulsory relationship and sex education in schools

- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Children and Family Act 2014
- Child Poverty Act 2010
- Care Act 2014
- Health and Social Care 2012
- Single Equalities Act 2010
- SEND Reforms 2014

The Education and Adoption Act 2016 gave Council’s key roles in education for children, young people and families
- Make sure every child has a school place
- Ensure the needs of all vulnerable pupils are met
- Act as champions for children and families

The Act also gave new powers to arrange adoption.

Children and Social Work Act 2017 – changes on the horizon

The new Regulatory Body ‘Social Work England’ that will set standards for social workers through a National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS)
Where we’re at?

Following a review of recent social care model pilots, the Systemic Practice model provided the strongest evidence of achieving impact and outcomes for children, young people and their families. As a result, Halton is now implementing this approach over the next 2 years. Commencing with first line management, an immediate impact has evidenced that managers have become more reflective in their role and using this approach in their management and supervision of their staff.

The first phase of Improving Access to Psychological Therapies training has commenced, with 3 Social Workers training to become Systemic Family Practitioners. The training takes 12 months during which they will undertake direct family therapy work with children, young people and families whilst receiving clinical supervision and case work via North West Boroughs. These new skills will enable our Social Workers to:

- Work more intensively with children;
- Complete more structured Systemic Family Therapy;
- Help prevent the families’ needs escalate which could result in children and young people entering care;
- Improve placement stability, by working differently with Foster Carers and other agencies that support Children in Care.

In partnership with North West Boroughs and Leeds University, we have introduced a phased training programme for staff around Systemic Family Practice and engagement. This will include staff from across the teams working with children at all levels of need, including early intervention and will move us towards adopting a strength-based systemic model, which is more resilient and less risk averse than current ways of working.
Who does this Strategy apply to?

This Strategy applies to all the staff working within the Children & Families Service Department, as at May 2018 this consists of approximately 225 staff.

The majority of these work across all levels of need, support and intervention either working directly with children, young people and their families or oversee this work.
1. Recruitment and Retention

Aim: To build upon existing processes, skills and knowledge to ensure that the Children & Families Service Department can attract, retain and nurture its workforce.

Key Actions

- To revise, implement and embed the following:
  - Induction Programme for Social Workers Booklet;
  - Student Social Work Placement Policy;
  - Recruitment and Retention Charter;
  - Foster Care Service: Intensive Placement Support Service;
  - Supervision Policy;
  - Social Work Progression Guidance.

Outcome Measures:

- The Children & Families Service Department meets current and future budgetary, workforce and capacity challenges.
- A knowledgeable, skilled and experienced workforce that realise and are inspired to achieve their full potential.
- A reduction of skills shortages in key areas by devising and implementing new initiatives and future schemes.
- Appropriate links are made to annual appraisals and Continued Professional Development initiatives.
- A stable workforce exists effectively delivering the Children & Families Service Department outcomes and objectives.
- To enable everyone within the Children & Families Service Department to have satisfying and rewarding careers.
Once finalised and approved, these policies will be available to access online through our 
Children & Families Service Online Policies, Procedures and Guidance (tri.x)

**Induction Programme for Social Workers Booklet**

The Children and Young People Policy Team will work with the Practice Manager for 
Social Work Professional Development to review and develop a new Induction 
Programme for Social Workers Booklet. Following approval by the Children & Families 
Service Department, the Booklet is to be fully implemented and embedded in practice.

**Student Social Work Placement Policy**

Following approval by the Children & Families Service Department, the Policy is to be 
fully implemented and embedded in practice.

**Recruitment and Retention Charter**

Following approval by the Children & Families Service Department, the Charter is to be 
fully implemented and embedded in practice.

**Foster Care Service: Intensive Placement Support Service**

Working in partnership with three neighbouring Cheshire Local Authorities, Halton is 
planning to increase the number of Foster Carer households locally. This will allow us to 
place more children in our own local Foster Carer provision, which will keep children more 
local to their family, services and resources. The Foster Carers offer is to include an 
Intensive Placement Support Service, to better train and support our Foster Carers to 
enable them to manage more complex children. This will involve a Secure Base Model, 
which complements our Systemic Family Practice Model which is being rolled out across 
the partnership.

**Supervision Policy**

Following approval by the Children & Families Service Department, the Policy is to be 
fully implemented and embedded in practice.

**Social Work Progression Guidance**

The Progression Guidance is to be fully implemented and embedded in practice.

See Career Pathways Summary Chart below.
Pathways Summary Chart

Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) - Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Programme (ASYE)

Social Worker

Experienced Social Worker

Advanced Practitioner Social Workers

AYSE Pass moves to Social Worker

AYSE Full Progression Pass moves to Experienced Social Worker

Progression Panel(s)
2. Training, Learning and Development

**Aim:** To encourage opportunities for everyone to enhance their knowledge, skills and behaviours in order to achieve a high quality and appropriately trained workforce across all levels of need.

**Key Actions:**

- To provide varied learning and development opportunities to inspire, grow and nurture our workforce and improve the outcomes and lives of children, young people and their families.

- To fully implement the Systemic Practice Model over the next 2 years, ensuring full integration into working practices for all staff.

- To build on the first phase of training on Improving Access to Psychological Therapies to increase the number of staff trained to become Systemic Family Practitioners.

- Sustain the North West Boroughs Teaching Partnership arrangements with Leeds University to ensure the continuance of the Systemic Family Practice training programme for staff working across all levels of need.

**Outcome Measures:**

- A range of new training and learning initiatives are available to staff across the Children & Families Service Department, who are inspired to continue their professional staff development throughout their careers.

- Staff trained in the Systemic Practice and Family Therapy Models have fully adopted and embedded this new approach into their ways of working.

- Staff providing early intervention, adopt and embed a strength-based approach e.g. Solihull Approach, Nurturing Parenting and Triple P, to ensure that they complement the Systemic Practice and Family Therapy Models.
Training, Learning and Development Opportunities (Offer)

Corporate and Health Training and e-learning Opportunities

The workforce have opportunities to access a broad range of training and e-learning through Corporate Training delivered by the Council’s Learning and Development Department and Health Training delivered by the Council’s Public Health Improvement Team. These training opportunities are available through the Training Calendar.

Supervision

Every member of staff within the workforce has access to regular high quality reflective supervision. Reflective supervision underpins good practice. Social work is a demanding and challenging job and in order for us to really understand the context of the child's daily lived experience we need to think about many complex and competing issues. Good quality reflective one to one supervision provides a space for practitioners to go beneath the surface of their work. Both supervisor and supervisee explore practice situations and this is a means of increasing the understanding of the worker and supporting practice development. This approach enables social workers to develop self-awareness, critical thinking and sound decision making, developing their knowledge skills and competencies in order to make difficult decisions and ultimately keep children safe.

External – Post Entry Training

The Council recognises that it is not always possible to meet all the development needs of our workforce by internally delivered training programmes. In our commitment to growing and nurturing our own workforce, annual funding is available through the Council's Organisational Development Strategy. Staff can apply for Post Entry Training to undertake qualifications to meet their professional development needs. The Council benefits through staff implementing their improved service delivery, new skills gained, good practice shared and up-to-date theoretical knowledge gathered.

Dedicated Support via the Practice Manager for Social Work Professional Development

Halton’s commitment to enabling Social Workers to meet their professional responsibilities is evidenced by having a dedicated Practice Manager for Social Work Professional Development. The Practice Manager for SW Professional Development provides essential support by delivering and supporting their continued learning and professional development.

Mandatory Social Work Practice Induction Programme

The induction aims to:

- Enable staff to settle into their team, get to know the job they are going to do and to familiarise themselves with the key people and work place;
- Support and develop social work practice through the understanding of roles and responsibilities, within a legislative framework;
- Access, read and understand our important Children & Families Service Online Policies, Procedures and Guidance (tri.x) to help them do their job effectively;
• Identify and support individual learning and development needs to promote social work practice and continuous professional development to safeguard and improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

**Working Together to Safeguard Children**

It is a mandatory requirement that all NQSW’s/ASYE’s undertake the two day course, which addresses child protection practice, policy and procedures. This training should be completed within three months of joining Halton and before undertaking any child protection casework as a NQSW.

**Core Training Programme**

Working closely with the Children & Families Service Department, the Halton Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) develop and deliver core training to fulfil the key skills and knowledge required by our staff - [Safeguarding and Child Protection Training Schedule](#) and are also responsible for our [HSCB Online Procedures](#).

**Research in Practice**

The Council recognises the value that Research in Practice membership affords by helping us to:

- Improve the outcomes for children, young people and their families;
- Embed a culture of evidence-based practice;
- Develop the skills and knowledge of our workforce.

**Casefile Audits**

The Children & Families Service Senior Leadership Team and HSCB undertake scheduled casefile audits, which identifies areas of learning required by staff.

**Bespoke Training and Themed in-house Workshops**

Using the outcomes/findings from casefile audits, the Children & Families Service Department, Senior Leadership Team can promptly address issues/areas of learning identified by implementing a range of bespoke training.

For example, Court Skills, Single Assessment Framework, Voice of the Child, Children’s Plans, Solihull Approach, Nurturing Parenting, Report Writing, Casefile Recording and Level 4 Certificate Working with Complex Families. Where appropriate these opportunities are open to staff across all levels of need.
New Ways of Working

Systemic Practice Model
To implement the continued rollout of the Systemic Practice Model over the next 2 years and ensure it is fully integrated into working practices for all staff. This will be enable staff to adopt more reflective approaches in their work and in supervision.

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies
To build on the first phase of staff training on Improving Access to Psychological Therapies by increasing the number of staff trained to become Systemic Family Practitioners. Social Workers will be skilled up to:
- Work more intensively with children;
- Complete more structured Systemic Family Therapy;
- Help prevent the families’ needs escalate which could result in children and young people entering care;
- Improve placement stability, by working differently with Foster Carers and other agencies that support Children in Care.

Teaching Partnership
To maintain the arrangements working closely with the North West Boroughs Teaching Partnership and Leeds University to ensure the continuance of the Systemic Family Practice training programme for staff working across all levels of need.

Strength-based Approaches in Early Intervention
To ensure consistency in approach across the wider early intervention children’s workforce, training and learning opportunities will be based around key strength-based approaches:
- Solihull Approach;
- Nurturing Parenting;
- Triple P.
3. Leadership and Management

**Aim:** To ensure we have across the Children & Families Service Department the right people, with the right skills and knowledge in the right place at the right time.

**Key Actions:**

- To acquire key workforce data that will help us to identify skill shortages and make best use of current workforce skills, knowledge and plans for development.

- To undertake the Social Work Health Check and act on any findings required further action.

- To develop new Information Communication Hub to improve communication across all levels of need within the Children & Families Service Department and the sharing of good practice across.

**Outcome Measures:**

- Workforce data is updated and analysed regularly in order to enable better decision making around workforce issues.
  - Capacity and resource issues identified are addressed to improve the services delivered.

- Social Work Health Check allows the Council to measure our effectiveness as a Social Work employer in achieving and meeting the Professional Capabilities Framework.

- The Children & Families Service Department, Senior Leadership Team and Managers respond pro-actively to the Health Check findings/outcomes.
  - Fostering a supportive working environment, culture of learning and opportunities for improvement and reflective practices.

- Successful implementation of the new Information Communication Hub.
  - The new system will be rolled out across the Children & Families Service Department to improve service delivery, shared understanding, communication and encourages colleagues/teams to share good practice.
Social Work Health Check

As a Social Work employer, there are specific standards the Council must meet. All aspects of the Standards are equally important, just as the Professional Capabilities Framework is holistic in nature in order to effectively set out the expectations of social workers themselves.

The Social Work Health Check will allow the Children & Families Service Department, to measure its effectiveness in achieving and meeting these standards. Performance data will be used by managers to support a culture of continuous learning, reflection, improvement and evidence achievement that will help drive forward this Strategy in the years to come.

Undertake the Social Work Health Check and implement findings required.

Information Communication Hub

The Children and Young People Policy Team will work with the Children & Families Service Department, Senior Leadership Team to develop the new Information Communication Hub.

The new system will be rolled out across the Department to improve service delivery, communication and encourage the sharing of good practice across all levels of need.