



Northumberland County Council

Families and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Date: 6th September 2018

Children's Social Care Practice Week

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, Cath McEvoy

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Wayne Daley

Purpose of report.

To provide details about the findings from the children's social care practice week which took place in January/February 2018

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 1) **Members note the contents of the report**
- 2) **Identify areas which may require additional scrutiny**

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the priority 'Feel safe, healthy and cared for' (LIVING) included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021.

Key Issues

1. The Practice Week was well received by the assessors and the staff which was enhanced by senior managers walking the floor with frontline staff.
2. There were a number of key themes to evidence good practice and also to support actions for future service development plans.
3. Each individual team/service has taken the findings and has used them to inform their service plans but some key findings identified:

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- staff were not always able to recognise their own good practice
- on the whole there is a clear focus on the child but this is not always consistent
- Practice has improved but there is variability across the services and within the teams which managers are aware of and are addressing.
- safety plans and multi agency working was seen to be a strength in most areas.

BACKGROUND

Following the Ofsted inspection in 2016, improvement plans were put in place to address the recommendations identified by inspectors during their visit. As part of the drive to understand what the current strengths and challenges were in relation to practice on the front line, a 'walking the floor' week was planned so that senior managers could experience directly what staff were doing on a daily basis.

Practice week involved all senior managers from children's social care and some from education. It had been hoped that representatives from partner agencies would assist but due to sickness and holidays this did not occur.

Process

Teams of senior managers were allocated to a particular service area which they were not professionally responsible for and for a week they observed practice in a variety of settings including going on home visits, attending meetings, talking to staff and reading case files.

The focus of the week was to consider the customer experience and look at how the voice of the child was listened to as well as a quality assurance process in relation to service delivery.

Outcome

This was the first time that Northumberland have undertaken such a process and there was a lot of information gleaned from the observations and visits undertaken. Significant preparation took place beforehand and senior managers and staff were very welcoming of the opportunity to observe or be observed.

A report of the key findings is available as an Appendix but each service has taken their individual feedback and created an action plan to address the development areas.

Practice week will take place again in the new year but in addition the Service Director now undertakes monthly focussed practice visits and targets a particular service each time to assess their current performance and help to assess progress against the findings from Practice Week.

IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy:	The findings will be used to influence policies and procedures
Finance and value for money:	There were no additional resources utilised other than staff time.
Legal:	This is not a statutory process but will be used to inform any future inspection arrangements.
Procurement:	No issues to raise
Human Resources:	No issues to raise
Property:	No issues to raise
Equalities: (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment:	No issues to raise
Crime & Disorder:	No issues to raise
Customer Considerations:	The learning will be used to influence customer practice.
Carbon Reduction:	No issues to raise
Wards:	All

CONSULTATION

- All staff were consulted in relation to the introduction of practice week

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- **Senior Managers Review of Children's Services in Northumberland: Practice Week 2018, Feedback and analysis**
- **Ofsted Framework for Local Authority Inspection of Children's Services 2018**

Report sign off

Finance Officer	N/A
Monitoring Officer/Legal	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Procurement	N/A
I.T.	N/A
Executive Director of Children's Services	N/A
Portfolio Holder(s)	WD

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