



North
Northamptonshire
Council

The Chief Principal Social Worker's

Annual Report 2021/22



Welcome

I have been a social worker since 1997, when I began my career in an Older People's Mental Health Team for Leicester City Council. I continued to work for LCC until I moved here in August 2021, working across a variety of teams both front line and in Contracting, Performance and Service Development but finally managing their Adult Mental Health services.

The move to North Northamptonshire Council was an opportunity to take on a new challenge, to work in a new Council and be part of developing the Adult Social Care services that the people of North Northants want and supporting the development of the social workers and social care staff who provide those services.

We're here to serve the people of North Northants and it's my role to support our social care workers so that they're providing the very best service they can, and are enjoying, developing and progressing in their role and career.

Sarah Morris

The Chief Principal Social Worker

Background

Northamptonshire County Council and the Boroughs within Northants were re-organised at the start of April 2021 to form two unitary Local Authorities: North Northants Council and West Northants Council. The Chief PSW for Adults for Northamptonshire joined West Northants and so North Northants was without a Chief PSW for Adults until I joined the Council at the start of August 2021.



North Northants Adult Social Care in 2021/22

2021/22 has been a year of establishing North Northants Adult Social Care and developing the culture of the new organisation.

There were a number of vacancies within the management structure initially and credit must be given to those who worked across a number of areas, supporting colleagues whilst new appointments were made. The new Authority inherited Northamptonshire's policies and these are being prioritised for review. Northamptonshire had worked with Newton Europe to design and implement a new Target Operating Model; new structures and ways of working aiming to deliver strengths-based practice and a better service for the people of Northamptonshire.

North Northants has been keen to review these new ways of working to ensure that they are delivering the improvements intended; this review is underway and details of it are included within the work reported below.

It is of concern however, that workers do not feel that the changes of culture have happened as quickly as they would have hoped they would. The feedback from the Local Government Association's Annual Health check for social workers detailed that workers do not feel that they are able to access continuous professional development, and do not feel that the Council shows a commitment to anti-racism and supports everyone to develop.



Warwick University - Social Work Apprenticeship offer

**3 Apprentices;
5 more from
September 2022**

We also did not score well in several questions that were around how training, supervision, and appraisal supports social workers and their development/registration requirements. Workers said that they wouldn't recommend North Northants as an employer to friends. There were, however, areas where we scored well. Workers feel they're able to make autonomous decisions, using their professional judgement, they know where to get help within the organisation for their wellbeing and they feel a sense of pride in the work that they do. It must be acknowledged that there was a low response rate; 21 out of approximately 60 responded. However, it does give us a picture of the areas we need to discuss further with workers and address.



- **Strength Based Working**
- **Best Practice Forum**
- **Policy Reviews**
- **Case File Audits**
- **Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Strategic Board**
- **Disaggregation**
- **Professional Development Standards Group**
- **Teaching Partnership**
- **World Social Work Week**
- **Promoting Training Opportunities**
- **Peer Supervisions**
- **East Midlands PSW Network**
- **Workforce Retention and Recognition**

2021/2022



I chair a forum for practitioners from across our social care teams to come together, identify barriers to best practice and find and implement solutions for these. The practitioners are workers sitting within a range of roles and come with a strong commitment to breaking down those barriers and providing the very best service that we can.

The team were asked to choose a name for the group and chose 'Steering the North to Make it Happen'. The group shares best practice and good news stories, promoting these across their teams, and acts as a forum for senior management to consult with. In the future, we would like to broaden out the members of this group to include colleagues from across Adult Social Care.

Work Undertaken During the Period

I have appointed, and manage, a Principal Social Worker responsible for supporting teams in the roll out of strengths-based working and the 3 conversations model.

These new ways of working had been developed within Northamptonshire County Council in 2020 and rolled out following successful innovation sites. There is, however, a recognition that the pressures of workload have meant that some teams have 'slipped' from the model of practice that was envisaged, and that there are gaps in workers' knowledge and confidence that prevent them from practising as they'd wish. There are also gaps in our links with our communities which form barriers to us delivering the service we'd wish to for the people of North Northants.

The PSW has worked with teams to observe their practice and offer support, advice, learning from other teams, identify priorities for staff development and support, and to then deliver tools that support practice by providing examples of good practice.

She and I have delivered short training sessions to teams on working with people with mental health problems (which had been identified as a priority) and are now finalising a similar course on Mental Capacity.

I have been involved in reviewing, and in some cases writing, a number of policies which were reconsidered following the establishment of North Northants Council; this includes:

- No Recourse to Public Funds,
- The Supervision Policy,
- Ordinary Residence,
- Persons in Positions of Trust policy,
- Using the Ethical Framework in Making Decisions.

I have reviewed and re-drafted a case file audit tool and procedure for us; this has been circulated to managers for comments and is just awaiting final sign off from Service Managers to send live to pilot it.

All managers will audit a case file each month where feedback will be given to the worker, their manager and myself. Service Manager colleagues and I will be responsible for moderating these, agreeing themes and how these should be addressed.

A Workforce Retention and Recognition working group has been established and I have undertaken work to design a social worker career pathway. I have worked with colleagues to review our job descriptions and forecast the numbers of workers we would want within each social work 'level' and am working with HR and Finance to scope our options for taking this work forwards.

Pathways through Social Care



I have worked with the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards team, and colleagues in our Transformation Team, to disaggregate the service between the two Councils on 1st April 2022, and then to successfully apply for a re-evaluation of the Best Interests Assessor post.

With West Northants, Northamptonshire Children's Trust and Health colleagues have begun to plan for the implementation of the Mental Capacity Amendment Act, under which the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards will be replaced by the Liberty Protection Safeguards. This was intended to be implemented on 1st April 2022 but has been postponed by Government with no agreed implementation date yet. However, I have begun work to estimate the numbers of people who might fall within the remit of the new legislation, and with Learning and Development colleagues to plan for the training that will be required. The consultation on the draft Code of Practice and regulations has been published and I am leading North Northants' response to this.

In the last quarter of 2021/22 Adult Social

Care established a Professional Development Standards Group; I chair the Social Worker Development workstream of this Group.

The Adult Social Worker Development Workstream will audit and review the training and development opportunities for social workers and aspiring social workers, consider the gaps in those opportunities, make recommendations to the PDSG on future requirements, and prioritise these.

The initial priority that the workstream will be looking at is supervision and putting in place an assurance process so that we can be confident that all workers are receiving quality reflective supervision that supports their development and progression.

In July 2021 North and West Northants Councils, Northamptonshire Children's Trust, and the University of Northampton were awarded the status and funding of a Teaching Partnership.

I am North Northants' representative on the Operational Group and attend the Executive Board.

The Teaching Partnership has funded an

additional cohort of Practice Educator training and has agreed that we will fund research into the experiences of students and newly qualified social workers from a variety of ethnic minorities. This will enable us to understand any barriers to people accessing the same opportunities as their peers so that we can remove these and provide any additional support required.

I was part of the group across North and West Northants, and the Northamptonshire Children's Trust, which organised a series of events across the week of World Social Work week.

We invited a range of external speakers to talk on a variety of contemporary social work issues; The Teaching Partnership funded the costs of any of those speakers who charged to attend.

I take a lead on arranging and promoting social work training opportunities. Over the last year I have identified workers that we will support to train as BIAs and AMHPs, Practice Educators and Social Workers on the Apprenticeship Degree Course. North Northamptonshire will be supporting 5 new SW apprentices who will begin their degree course with Warwick University in September 2022. I have also worked moderating newly qualified social workers' Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) portfolios and sit on the ASYE moderation panel for North and West Northants, and St Matthews.

I have attended and participated in a number of social work peer supervision sessions and have been involved in discussions as to how we provide the same offer across all social work teams. I have therefore completed a survey with Social Workers as to what they want from peer supervision and will be facilitating them by setting up a number of groups across Adult Social Care and then supporting them to run these for themselves.

I am a member of the East Midlands PSW Network where we share best practice and discuss shared issues.

I have also attended the National PSW Network and attend fortnightly catch ups with the Chief Social Worker for Adults, Lyn Romeo. The East Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) organises peer reviews across Local Authorities, and I have been involved in discussions as to what key lines of enquiry we wish one of our fellow East Midlands Directors of Adult Social Care to consider when we are reviewed.

I also contributed to the Annual Conversation; again arranged by the East Midlands ADASS, reviewing how prepared we are for the Care Quality Commission inspections which will begin in 2023.

I am a member of the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Strategic Board, and the Learning and Development Workstream.

We organised a Safeguarding week of learning where colleagues from across agencies could attend a variety of training sessions and are planning for weeks in 2022/23.

I have worked with colleagues to respond to the Internal Audit of Safeguarding and to begin to draft an audit for Safeguarding.



CQC Inspections

CQC Inspections

The Local Authority needs to be prepared for the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) inspections that will commence in 2023. Work will be required to ensure that we have the assurance in place to report on, understand and address our performance. Implementing the audit process will allow us to understand the quality of our work within a range of areas (supporting people to be fully involved in their assessment/support planning, safeguarding people, quality recording) and put in place steps to address any issues. Similarly, the work that I am leading on in the PDSG Social Worker Development Workstream will assure us that workers are receiving quality, reflective supervision that develops them, and give us the information to support managers who may have areas for development.

LPS

We do not have an implementation date for the Liberty Protection Safeguards but across 2022/23 we need to ensure that North Northants is prepared for LPS; a working group has been set up which will consider resources, training and systems required. Alongside this we will need to work with colleagues across West Northants and our Health partners as future Responsible Bodies in Northamptonshire, to prepare for LPS.

Co-Production

North Northants needs to develop its approach to co-production and to asking and understanding what people think of the support that we provide. Our performance information is currently very focussed on quantity, we need to understand what this really means for the diverse population of North Northamptonshire, whether our support is having its desired effect. Co-producing support in the future will ensure that the support designed, and provided, is that which is required by the people who will be receiving that support; recognising that people from different communities may want different services, and that we need to understand these wishes and work with those communities to provide what is needed.

Co-production

Equality Action Plan

Workforce Development

Equality Action Plan

Over the next year Adult Social Care will be required to create and implement an Equality Action Plan; reviewing the services that we provide across the communities of North Northants but also ensuring that we support all of our staff and they all feel that they have opportunities to progress.

We need to understand the data in terms of the make up of the people receiving services from Adult Social Care, and the people employed by Adult Social Care compared to the population of North Northants, work with staff to identify and remove barriers to people progressing in their careers with North Northants and identify and provide support that will enable them to do so.

We have an excellent base to take forward all of this work; a staff and management team who are committed to the people they serve and plans in place to support them and provide them with the development opportunities that they want and need in order to progress in their career within North Northamptonshire Council.

Workforce Development and Retention

The development and retention of our workforce is a priority for the next year. North Northants has a number of challenges:

- We need to rebalance our registered and non-registered workforce. The Liberty Protection Safeguards require assessments to be completed by a registered worker and North Northants will struggle to resource this.
- We currently have 13 Social Worker vacancies, and we need to be able to attract and retain Social Workers within North Northants.
- We do not have the Practice Educators required to support students and newly qualified social workers, to give them the positive experience that will encourage them to apply for roles here or continue to work here.
- The AMHP service and EDT are due to be disaggregated over the next year. We need to determine what out of hours service we want for North Northants.
- There is a national shortage of AMHPs and whilst a market forces supplement has been agreed for our substantive AMHPs for a year, we may need to consider the post going forwards to ensure that we remain competitive within the area.

There is corporate pay and grading work underway but the timescales for this are not known and we need to be able to evidence to workers over the next year that we are committed to supporting their development and progression. The Workforce Retention and Recognition work will be vital in this, in establishing a pathway for social workers to develop and progress and for workers to feel that there is that route and choices for them to take to progress their careers.



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