



North
Northamptonshire
Council

The Chief Principal Social Worker's

Annual Report 2022/23



Welcome

This is North Northants' second Chief Principal Social Worker's (PSW) Annual Report and the last year has seen significant developments in Adult Social Care (ASC). ASC has come a long way in NNC's second year and this report will detail the work undertaken this year, the Chief Principal Social Worker's reflections on progress and her priorities for the forthcoming year.

The Care Act guidance states that Local Authorities should have 'a qualified and registered social work professional practice lead in place' (Care Act guidance S1.27). The purpose of the role is to 'lead, oversee, support and develop excellent social work practice and in turn lead the development of excellent social workers and social care practitioners'. (Roles and Responsibilities: Adult PSW). A further responsibility of the PSW is to complete an Annual Report as required; to report on progress made and reflections on the Council's provision of Adult Social Care.

Sarah Morris

The Chief Principal Social Worker

Learning and Development



‘When I left school no one thought I could go to university. It’s an amazing achievement!’
SW Apprentice

The Chief Principal Social Worker is responsible for assessing and supporting colleagues to apply for and undertake accredited courses. In September 2022 the 5 colleagues Adult Social Care had agreed to support began their Social Work degree apprenticeship with the University of Warwick. A further 5 have been identified to support this year and the three who’d begun their degrees before the unitary split completed theirs in February and are registering as social workers. There has been fantastic feedback from them about the opportunity they were given and their excitement at qualifying as social workers; it’s wonderful to see NNC ‘growing its own’.

4 new Approved Mental Health Professionals for Northamptonshire have been warranted over the last year, 2 are just finishing their course and 4 are beginning their second

year with a further 3 starting their first year. There have been a couple of opportunities offered to undertake the Best Interest Assessors (BIA) course and two BIAs have qualified over the last year with others undertaking it at the moment.

6 Newly Qualified Social Workers have been supported to complete their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment. They now have to do a reflective presentation at the end of their year and it’s been great to hear them talk about how their practice and their confidence has developed over that year.

There have also been 2 social workers successfully complete their Practice Educator Professional Standards stage one course, to support students and there are a couple who are just completing stage two. Having more Practice Educators allows ASC to support more students and

show them how great it is to work for NNC.

There are regular recognition events, recognising the achievements of those who've completed an accredited course or gained a long service award.

Alongside the accredited courses the Chief Principal Social Worker supports Adult Social Care colleagues by providing or arranging a range of training opportunities. Over the last year she has provided bite sized learning on Strengths-Based language, Social Care Reform and Learning from Safeguarding Adults' Reviews and has arranged learning on Advocacy, Suicide Prevention and Hearing from Carers. She's also provided training on the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) for colleagues in Housing and is working closely with Housing managers to support them in working with the MCA. The 'Jonathan' Safeguarding Adults Review had identified a need for training on working with people who experience Multiple Exclusion Homelessness, and she has worked with colleagues in Learning and Development (L&D) and Housing to deliver training to Housing and ASC colleagues. A train the trainer event for colleagues across other partner agencies has been arranged for April 2023 to allow them to take that learning back into their organisations.

The Chief Principal Social Worker for Adults chairs the Social Worker Development workstream of the Professional Development Steering Group, chaired by the Assistant Director for Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Providers. The workstream's aim is to review and grow the development and progression opportunities for social workers. Over the last year the workstream members have undertaken a supervision audit and identified the need for support for supervisors in providing reflective supervision; the group will be developing workshops for this over the next months. The group fed into L&D plans for the next year and has agreed a training matrix of which training should be mandatory and

which recommended for roles across social care. Social Worker Development Intranet pages have been created and pages for social workers and aspiring social workers have been designed which give them information on courses and additional roles that they could undertake, and the support that's available to them. Over the next year it is hoped to expand this to include stories of difference (best practice examples) and short interviews with individuals who work within specific roles such as Best Interest Assessor or Practice Educator to advertise these and make them more 'real' for people who might be interested. The Chief Principal Social Worker met with a couple of groups of carers to understand from them what is important in a social worker and from this was able to liaise with colleagues to adapt some of our communication so that it's easier to understand. Recently, the workstream has drafted a risk tool (as this was something that colleagues fed back was needed) and this is being piloted across teams.

The Chief Principal Social Worker has designed and implemented a practice audit, so that all managers are given a case to audit against a range of questions each month. She reviews the findings of these audits with colleagues and feeds back learning to the frontline managers' meeting. Over the early months of next year she will be meeting with teams to discuss the learning from these and how they are supported to address some of the gaps that have been identified.

'It is a real pleasure to be able to support our newly qualified workers and to support them through the transition from student to confident professional.'
Practice Assessor

Northamptonshire Teaching Partnership, and World Social Work Day



Marking the official launch of the Teaching Partnership at the University of Northampton.

As part of the Northamptonshire Teaching Partnership with West Northants Council, Northamptonshire Children's Trust and the University of Northampton, the Chief Principal Social Worker has arranged bite sized learning for social workers and social work students across Northants. She has made presentations to social work students at the University to prepare them for student placements and to advertise NNC and social work roles here.



Together with colleagues from West Northants and Northamptonshire Children's Trust the Chief Principal Social Worker arranged a number of events to mark World Social Work Day in March. Siobhan Maclean's talk on this year's theme of 'Respecting Diversity through Joint Social Action' was particularly well received.

Supporting our Social Workers



In August the Chief Principal Social Worker arranged for Lyn Romeo, the Chief Social Worker for England, to come and meet with a range of our social workers and managers. Colleagues from across the social care teams told her about the good work they're doing and the challenges they face and were really proud to hear how impressed she was with their stories of good practice. In the early months of North Northants some social workers had set up a couple of peer groups to support each other and as a forum to discuss social work issues and developments. The Chief Principal Social Worker has supported these and facilitated the development of these so that they're available to all social workers. It remains a challenge for colleagues to prioritise the time to attend these, so the Chief Principal Social Worker is continuing to review how best we provide these.

The Chief Principal Social Worker for Adults has supported teams with individual case advice, discussing dilemmas, options and opportunities and considering risk and our responsibilities. She has also provided advice to managers on HR and social worker registration issues and is our single point of contact for Social Work England.

The first Annual PSW Report for NNC reported on the outcomes of the Local Government Association's Annual Social Work Health Check. This year the health check was sent out to



social workers but also to occupational therapists and colleagues in non-registered posts in those teams. Positively, social workers scored NNC higher on all of the standards bar one this year compared to last. This includes a significant increase in their satisfaction with the continuous professional development opportunities they are provided with. This is particularly pleasing as this was an area that the report last year identified as a priority. However, the scores under the standard on safe workloads and case allocation dropped; this is an area that had already been identified as a priority as it impacts on the service provided to the people of North Northants, the morale of colleagues across Adult Social Care and the ability of teams to engage in development work, provide student placements and support individuals to undertake further learning.

However, the work the Chief Principal Social Worker has undertaken with the Assistant Director for Adults Services on workforce recognition and retention, to develop a social work career pathway will hopefully see positive results over the forthcoming year. If teams are fully staffed then they will be better placed to manage workloads and support individuals' professional progression.

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board

In January the Chief Principal Social Worker took on the role of chair of the Learning and Development Sub Group of the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB). She also sits on the NSAB Delivery Board and the Strategic Board. The L&D Sub Group arranged weeks of learning in June and November 2022, and the Chief Principal Social Worker supported social care colleagues to deliver a learning event during the November week, feeding back on good partnership working in a specific case and how this had safeguarded and promoted the independence of a number of adults within a family.

Strengths- Based Working

The Chief Principal Social Worker's work with the Principal for Strengths-Based Working is supporting teams to review and develop practice. They have provided guidance on recording and the Principal for Strengths-Based Working has worked alongside Community Teams to review and improve their ways of working and to provide guidance. Teams have fed back that this has improved systems and made it easier to review and balance the risks in those people awaiting involvement with us. The Chief Principal Social Worker is involved in the work to review the structure of teams across Adult Services to best support the people of North Northants, working within the place-based Integrated Care System approach and ensuring that social care teams are resilient and have the knowledge and tools to do their work.




Work with the East Midlands PSW Network

The Chief Principal Social Worker for Adults has been heavily involved in NNC's preparation for the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) Inspection regime. She has attended a number of East Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Services' (ADASS) events on preparing for assurance and along with colleagues in the East Midlands PSW Network has agreed a Practice Framework, which she is working with colleagues here to ensure is appropriate for North Northants. This will be a commitment from ASC to the people of North Northants but also a commitment to colleagues within ASC as to how they'll be supported to deliver those services and how ASC measures how well it is doing.

The East Midlands ADASS branch organises peer reviews to enable Councils to support one another by providing a critical friend review of an area of work identified by the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS). When Derbyshire led a review of how well NNC is promoting independence through commissioning, therapy and reablement/

enablement activities, the Chief Principal Social Worker worked with the PSW from Derbyshire to arrange a Team 2 Team day, when she and a colleague came and spoke with front line workers here to understand how well they feel ASC is doing, and to facilitate them to undertake practice audits. Similarly, when the Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing (and the DASS) led a peer review team to Lincolnshire in February the Chief Principal Social Worker led a team of front-line colleagues on a day with teams there, discussing how well they feel they're doing and completing audits. She fed the findings from this day into the peer review team and was part of that team that went and spoke with managers, partners and people accessing services. The findings of Derbyshire's review of NNC has been fed into NNC's Self-Assessment to identify actions to continually improve the service provided and the assurance of that.

	<div>Adult Social Care Practice Framework</div>	<div>with thanks to Bryony Shannon</div>	<div>Why?</div>	<div>We want every person in North Northamptonshire to have the best opportunities and quality of life</div>					
<div>What?</div>		<div>Wellbeing and independence</div>	<div>Information and advice</div>	<div>Active and supportive communities</div>	<div>Flexible and integrated care and support</div>	<div>When things need to change</div>	<div>Workforce</div>		
		<div>Living the life I want, keeping safe and well</div>	<div>Having the information I need, when I need it</div>	<div>Keeping family, friends and connections</div>	<div>My support my own way</div>	<div>Staying in control</div>	<div>The people who support me</div>		
<div>Who?</div>		<div>Everybody</div>		<div>People with urgent needs for support</div>		<div>People with longer term needs for support</div>			
		<div>We listen to people to understand what matters to them, We make connections and build relationships to improve people's wellbeing and independence</div>		<div>We don't make long term plans in a crisis. We work with people until we are sure there is no immediate risk to their safety, health or wellbeing and they have regained stability and control in their life.</div>		<div>If people need longer term care and support, we work with them to understand what a good life looks like for them. We make sure they have resources and support to live the life they choose and do the things that matter to them as independently as possible</div>			
<div>How?</div>		<div>We're kind and respectful</div>	<div>We're trusting</div>	<div>We're transparent, efficient and we demonstrate our behaviours</div>		<div>We're supporting</div>	<div>We're trustworthy</div>		
		<div>We respect and understand people as individuals. We don't make snap decisions</div>	<div>We trust people know what's right for them. We listen and we keep an open mind</div>	<div>We know and follow the law, ethics and best practice. We are always open to improvement</div>	<div>We are open about our procedures, making them clear so people know what they can and cannot expect</div>	<div>We connect and engage well with people. We respond in a timely manner</div>	<div>We are honest about what we are going to do. When we say we are going to do something, we do it.</div>		
	<div>We know the language we use matters, we use plain, respectful and kind language</div>								
<div>So?</div>	<div>Better experiences and better lives for people</div>		<div>Improved morale and satisfaction for our workforce</div>		<div>More sustainable use of resources</div>				

with thanks to
Bryony Shannon

Reviewing The Year's Priorities

In June the Chief Principal Social Worker co-ordinated NNC's response to the consultation on the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) draft Code of Practice and Regulations. The implementation of LPS has since been delayed again, without a planned implementation date but she has been involved in the multi-agency group across Northamptonshire to plan for the implementation, will be again when required and will continue to support colleagues to develop their understanding of the Mental Capacity Act so that they are prepared for this.



Reviewing The Year's Priorities

Alongside preparation for CQC and Workforce Development, the last Chief Principal Social Worker's Annual Report also identified co-production, and equalities, diversity and inclusion as priorities for this year. It is acknowledged that co-production continues to be an area that Adult Social Care needs to develop. There are pockets of this within teams, but it needs to be developed on a wider scale over the next year so that people can have a real say in the services the Council provides, and tools such as the Practice Framework can be developed with them.

The Chief Principal Social Worker has worked closely with colleagues in Health, Safety and

Wellbeing, HR and IT to make sure the Council has simpler systems that support colleagues who need specialist equipment following an Access to Work assessment, and their managers. The Teaching Partnership has commissioned a piece of research from the University to look at the experience of student social workers and newly qualified social workers from the global ethnic majority; to identify whether there are any barriers to them having a good experience and identify how we remove these barriers so that everyone has great opportunities to progress their career here and wishes to work here.

Next Year's Priorities

Assurance and preparation for CQC will continue to be one of the Chief Principal Social Worker's priorities across the next year; how does ASC know how well it's doing and how is this evidenced?

There has been a lot of work to continue to develop strengths-based working across social care teams, but this now needs to be rolled out wider, across all of Adult Social Care and then across the Council so that services are working together to deliver this.

Adult Social Care has achieved a lot in regards of the development opportunities that are available to social workers but there are still challenges in growing the pool of practice educators and practice assessors to support students and newly qualified social workers. There is also a significant challenge in training and recruiting the number of Approved Mental Health Professionals the Council needs; this is a national and a local challenge. It is particularly important if the Council wishes to disaggregate the service which is currently hosted on behalf of North and West Northamptonshire. These are areas that will improve as the numbers of

experienced social workers increase but the Council needs to be able to provide good learning opportunities for students and newly qualified social workers in order to encourage them to stay here. The Social Worker Development workstream will build on the SW Development intranet pages and advertise these specialist roles, their importance and what people can gain from taking on a new role and development opportunity.

Co-production and receiving and responding to feedback continue to be priorities; both in terms of developing services with people so that the Council is designing what people want, and also receiving and responding to feedback so Adult Social Care knows and can evidence how it's doing and can improve services based on what is learned.

Adult Social Care has come a long way over the last 12 months and can look forward to the challenges of the next year, there are some really exciting plans that will continue to improve the services Adult Social Care provides to the people of North Northants and the support it provides to colleagues.



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