



Statutory Officers Report for Health and Wellbeing Board

Corporate Director of Children's Services

January 2016

Recruitment Update

Interviews took place in November for our Head of Children's Strategy and Improvement. This role is key in leading on innovative business improvement and transformation, whilst driving continual improvement in performance and practice in a significant, complex service area. Congratulations to Sophie Russell who was appointed to this role.

Association of Directors of Children's Services

I am pleased to let you know that I have been elected as President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services. I commence as Vice President in April 2016, I will become president of the ADCS during 2017/18.

Changes to the Children's Services Operating Model

We have redesigned the 'front door' to our services by strengthening Children and Families Direct. We have added more specialist expertise into the team to ensure that children are able to access proportionate support that will meet their needs. This will facilitate better pathways into targeted group work for families in Children's Centres, Targeted Family Support and, where necessary, children's social work. Partners should continue to call Children and Families Direct on 0115 876 4800 where you want to request support for a child or make a referral. From the 18th January 2016 we will be launching a "Consultation Line" for a small group of professionals. The purpose of this is to provide a dedicated phone number that key partners can use to access social work advice and support when they want to "talk through concerns" without making a referral. We have also launched a Multi-Agency Request Form (MARF) for partners to use to request support for a child or family.

In November and December 2015 we have been piloting new collaborative locality hubs which enable colleagues from Children's Social Care, Targeted Support and Early Help services to work together to transfer cases between locality-based teams in a more streamlined manner. Previously cases open to Targeted Family Support or Early Help services would be escalated through the Duty Teams when any safeguarding concerns emerged. This led to changes of workers for children and their families. In the new model known as open families will be transferred between teams within localities. This will reduce changes and duplication between our family support and social work teams. They will also be undertaking more joint visits and assessments.

The City has been organised into 3 areas (North, Central and South). In each area there will be 4 hub management meetings a month. These meetings will help to ensure that the most complex children, or children whose needs are escalating rapidly, can be considered to ensure that they are being supported appropriately. In Phase One (January to April 2016) these meetings will bring together Early Help, Targeted and Social Care colleagues. Phase Two (April

2016 onwards) will involve partner agencies. These meetings are not allocation meetings but they are an opportunity to look at the children most worrying to colleagues in family support, schools and health partners. Through these meetings we can check that those children have the right service in place and we can ensure that, collectively, we are making things better and safer for each child. These meetings are also a means of assuring me that there are no children you are worried about 'stuck' in the system and will support the escalation process by giving partners a real opportunity to reflect together. The next phase is to consider how partners are able to access these hub management meetings so that you are also able to use these opportunities to flag those children who are of most concern to you. We will be contacting partners in the early part of 2016 to consult on how this can best be achieved.

Ofsted Update

I am delighted to inform you that all of our Children's Homes are now rated as Good or Outstanding. Here is an update on two of our recent inspections:

Crocus Fields has been rated as 'Outstanding', following the full inspection which took place in September. Crocus Fields provides residential Short Breaks and Outreach services for young people with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities aged 7 to 19.

The Beckhampton Road Children's Home has been rated as 'Good' overall, with Outstanding for impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers, following the recent full inspection in October.

Regional Collaboration on Social Work

The East Midlands region is currently working towards a co-operative approach to recruitment and retention of social workers, and agency supply activity. The region's ADCS Group have agreed in principle to work together to manage the agency supply and demand and the associated costs, with a view to securing a more stable and permanent workforce and to address the high levels of vacancies in our frontline teams.

We are looking to establish a regional protocol, which will outline what we will do to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to share good practice in the engagement of agency workers, that we work as a region with providers of agency workers to monitor market rates, and establish a constructive dialogue with suppliers.

We have also established a regional HR Network, which will allow the region to share intelligence and data to inform our recruitment, retention and development strategies for our permanent colleagues and agency workers.

New Body for Social Work

On 14th January 2016 there was an announcement by Nicky Morgan, the Secretary of State for Education, to take forward an ambitious set of reforms to improve the quality of social work. Helen Jones has outlined more detail

around these reforms within her statutory DASS update. Excellent social workers transform lives. These hard working, dedicated professionals have the ability not just to improve the circumstances of vulnerable children but to change them entirely. That is why supporting social workers, and giving them the tools they need, is a priority for this government. We welcome the government's continued investment in the social work profession.

Safe Families for Children Programme

Our Safe Families for Children (SFFC) project continues to go from strength to strength following its launch in July this year.

More and more of our most vulnerable families and children are being helped out of crisis through being able to access support from a cohort of specially trained volunteers. SFFC has been fully integrated into our menu of support to families - and thirty SFFC referrals (mainly from the north of the city) have already been made by our children's Social Care and Targeted Family Support teams, involving well over fifty children.

Volunteers have helped families and children across the spectrum of support available through the SFFC model: a number of children have been "hosted" by volunteer families on a temporary basis; several families have enjoyed the benefit of vitally needed support from volunteers acting as family friends; and we've had one case where a group of resource friend volunteers have redecorated the lounge of a house and helped source children beds for the family which has helped to greatly stabilise and improve the home environment.

I'm delighted to say that feedback on SFFC has been positive from all quarters. We've had really, really positive stories from families, from children, from volunteers and from Social Care colleagues.

Small Steps Big Changes

Read the [latest newsletter from Small Steps Big Changes](#). We are using the first wave of the £45m Big Lottery funding to employ local parents and grandparents as 'Family Mentors'. They will be visiting family homes and delivering early intervention sessions about nutrition, language skills and the social and emotional development of 0-3 year olds.

Family Mentors will be a really innovative new 'peer workforce'. They will be able to complement and signpost to our early help services. Candida Brudenell is on the SSBC Board and we're looking forward to working across the SSBC partnership as the Family Mentor service develops.

Alison Michalska
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Nottingham City Council
(January 2016)