

Agenda Item 55.

TITLE:	Innovations Programme
FOR CONSIDERATION BY:	Children's Overview and Scrutiny
Ward	None Specific
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR	Judith Ramsden, Strategic Director of People Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The Munro review of Child Protection (2011) led to the development of the England Innovation Programme, designed to support Local Authorities to move away from a culture of 'fearful' compliance and paternalistic practice and to work with families in a more collaborative and reflective way by implementing the Signs of Safety (SOS) practice framework.

There are three basic principles to the Practice Framework that need to be embedded within the culture of the organisation: **working relationships** are paramount and should enable honest and respectful discussions, the skilful use of authority and a shared understanding of what needs to change, **thinking critically**, within a culture of reflective practice, and assessment and safety planning that is **grounded in the child's everyday experience**.

Signs of Safety is a strength based, safety-focussed approach to Child Protection. It comes from the stance that it is the child's family/ network that provide for the safety and wellbeing of their children and families should be empowered to build on their strengths to develop family led plans that build safety around the child. The focus is on how the worker can build collaborative and positive relationships with the family in order to address serious concerns by creating a common language and understanding, using a questioning approach. It creates a clear format for undertaking risk assessment and is designed to be used throughout the families' journey with Children's Services. It creates a strong emphasis on Social Workers spending more time in direct work with Children and the use of direct work tools including the use of 3 houses and words and pictures.

RECOMMENDATION

This briefing is to update Overview and Scrutiny about how Wokingham Borough Council are progressing in the implementation of the Signs of Safety Practice Framework and how this is making a difference to practice.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report will show the steps in implementation, our progress so far, and outline next steps in the programme.

Wokingham are implementing the Practice Framework across Children's Services for Children in need of Early Help Services through to children who need permanency arrangements outside of their immediate family. The project involves a redesign of recording systems, a new model of supervision and the development of Participatory Conferences with an emphasis and focus on family networks.

Wokingham started its implementation in 2014, by rolling out the 2 day and the 5 day Practice Leader Training for the children's workforce. Initially resources were focussed at the front door (DTA) where the first steps were taken in using the practice framework tools both in the Early Help Hub and in statutory assessment using Group Supervision to guide reflective practice which has helped inform the organisation in its next steps. Feedback from the inspection in 2015 was that where Inspectors could see SOS being used in practice, risks were clearly identified.

The key implementation activities are:

- 1. Learning** - including core training, that flows into specific continuous learning methods.
- 2. Leadership development** - that builds congruence between how the organisation is led and managed and how work is expected to occur with families.
- 3. Organisational alignment** - so that structures and processes enable practice
- 4. The development of meaningful measures** - through participatory quality assurance encompassing key practice data matched to the results logics of the practice approach.
- 5. Information technology for casework and performance information** - to provide case and performance information consistent with the practice

1. Learning

Implementation science is usually framed and focused on the installation of an intervention with demonstrated fidelity. By contrast, our work in the Innovations Project set out to enable local authorities to use the Signs of Safety as a vehicle to create a learning organisation that monitors how it is implementing the work, that reviews outcomes, successes and failures, and that establishes across the organisation participatory learning methods focused on the practice, allowing them to continuously adapt to change as necessary while keeping to the key principles of the approach. To achieve this, attention needs to be given to how the new way of working interacts with existing parts of the system, and how the system in turns aligns with the intervention. (Action Research Final Report, Turnell, Murphy, Monro. 2016)

Based on the 70-20-10 learning model:

- 10% of learning is formal. There is a rolling 2 day SOS training programme for all staff and we have purchased places on the twice yearly 5 day SOS practice leader training.
- 20% learning and developing with and through others from coaching, observing others and collaborative learning. This is supported through our monthly Managers Leading Change forum, our monthly Practitioners Leading Change forum, Group Supervision programme, Practice development days and monthly Case Consultations with MTM. All staff have been asked to pilot Learning journals, for their personal development but also to inform organisational

development. The feedback that we have received so far from staff has supported the creation of a learning trajectory based on key themes and learning needs. The trajectory and training is currently focussed on trajectory planning with families, safety planning. The learning journals also support the development of ‘best questions’ in identifying strengths and safety.

- 70% learning and developing through day to day tasks, challenges and practice. This is supported through our 1-1 formal supervisions, informal supervisions and case discussions, group supervisions and use of appreciative/critical enquiry in any case related discussions/meetings, with a particular focus on workers demonstrating and showing how they have used the specific direct work tools, learning from each other.

1. Leadership development

- Places are spot purchased on the 5 day SOS Practice leader training to ensure that we capture new starters and that our Managers, Assistant Managers, and Practice consultants and CP CHAIRS/IRO's are all trained.
- The focus for the monthly case consultations with MTM is on the development of the Practice Leaders and how they both lead practice and facilitate supervisions and family meetings (including Child Protection conferences and reviews).
- Social Care and Early Help facilitate a formal monthly group supervision process monthly where Practice Leaders facilitate a group supervision outside of their own team with an observer, this process is there to support the ongoing development in line with the 2 year Practice Leader Development Trajectory and the plan is for the supervisions to be filmed to support the Practice leader development.

2. Organisational alignment

- In order to support whole system alignment to the implementation of the Practice Framework, all relevant policies and procedures are being re-written, to align with the practice. This is a work stream in our Phase 2 implementation plan and is an ongoing project, the product being Wokingham’s Signs of Safety Handbook.
- A task group representative of all teams in social work worked with Judith Ramsden to redesign the Supervision Policy. Group Supervision was incorporated into this design. All practitioners in Early Help and Social Work were involved in a staff consultation process in order to provide feedback where the final version was agreed. We have also implemented this into the induction process for new staff and intranet pages Examples of best practice are being uploaded to the intranet to support SW’s learning from each other on the ground.

- The monthly group supervision programme was launched in June 2016 and then adapted in December 2016 to promote the development of the practice leaders.

3. Meaningful measures

- The QA Strategy has been aligned and a collaborative audit programme is in place giving both qualitative and quantitative information about the use of SOS in practice and assists our understanding of each team's implementation of the Practice Framework and future learning needs.
- The audit process also allows for self-reflection of the practitioner.
- The Quality Assurance Framework was designed to measure the depth of practice in accordance with the Practice Framework and is aligned with the Social Care Quality Standards.

4. Information Technology

- MTM are working with Wokingham to support the aligning of assessment paperwork that reflects the Practice Framework to current assessment forms which has now formed a phase 2 pilot. The final documents will be implemented when our IT platforms have moved to MOSAIC. The change forms embedded into the system would support the ongoing implementation of the practice framework.
- SW's are currently piloting a 3 houses app for direct work with children on tablets.

“The Munro review identified the need to significantly improve the involvement of children and young people in the social work that is about them, seeing this as a key requirement of moving to a child-centered system.[...] My Three Houses app was created, tested and refined together with English practitioners during the Innovations Project and is the first purpose built app for statutory children’s service work” (Action Research Final Report, Turnell, Murphy, Monro. 2016)

Staff Survey and Parent engagement strategy

“The Munro Review described how, over the years in the English system, reform efforts that had been intended to improve front line practice had, gradually and inadvertently, created a defensive compliance culture where anxiety was high, process took precedence over content, and social workers were increasingly limited in their time and flexibility to engage well with families (Munro, 2011). These developments create ‘latent conditions for error’ (Reason, 1990),” (Action Research Final Report, Turnell, Murphy, Monro. 2016)

“Staff surveys were developed to capture information about the workforce’s views on the reforms, their confidence in using the new methods, and the organisational culture in which they were working. Most of the survey was an attitudinal questionnaire but there were also open-ended questions that provided more qualitative information about people’s positive and negative views on the reforms.” (Action Research Final Report, Turnell, Murphy, Munro. 2016)

To ensure that we are collating 360 degree feedback we are facilitating staff surveys. The staff surveys are based on the Kings College research undertaken in EIP1:

The survey gives us a clear benchmark to show ongoing implementation and staff analysis of the programme and model.

Wokingham have recently completed an annual Staff Survey based on the implementation of the Signs of Safety model, the survey asks a variety of questions including which areas of the practice framework they use the most, those that they feel most confident with, workload, support from management, learning environment and culture and the difference that working with the practice framework is making in relation to working with families

- Staff have fed back that they value the space that has been created to facilitate whole service conversations addressing successes and barriers to the implementation of the Practice Framework.
- Clear communication and a direct link between the Leadership Team through to practitioners is enabled. Best Practice is shared and celebrated.
- Practice Leaders have fed back that they value the space to be creative and innovative following the consultations and have identified the model is not rigid but fluid, enabling the basic principles to be expanded and supported but remaining disciplined in line with the values of the model.
- Practice Leaders have also stated that they value the support and insight from MTM consultations into the cases that they are working on in relation to clarity of danger, worries and complicating factors.

We will also facilitate a Parent and Carer Survey and the Survey will also be based on the research questions from Kings College for EIP1 to ensure continuity for understanding and family voice. We will follow the same pattern as the Staff Survey and ask for an Annual Overarching Survey as well as Thematic Surveys, Closure Feedback and Parent Engagement Group.

We are therefore ensuring that we are receiving regular feedback from staff and families and are using it to shape, build and change our services and delivery.

From the first set of surveys that had responses from 238 parents, combining the top two possible responses of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' indicates that the majority reported an overall positive experience with their social worker, with positive views on one statement being highly correlated with positive views on others. The statements on which they commented are indicators that relate to the disciplines and principles of Signs of Safety. The findings show that:

- 82% of parents felt listened to and understood,
- 73% said that their worker does what they say they will do,
- 85% said that their worker was clear about their concerns and about what needs to happen to stop them being concerned,
- 79% agreed with what their worker was concerned about,
- 79% said that their worker involved them in making plans to tackle the concerns,
- 76% agreed with the plans made to tackle the concerns,

- 81% thought that their worker cared that the family solved their problems, and
- 73% said that their worker had spent time with their child(ren) and listened to what they had to say about the problems and what should happen to solve them.

The two surveys administered in July 2016 with good enough response rates produced very similar results.

A final lesson from the parent surveys is that many parents said they appreciated being asked for their feedback and this had not happened before.

The evidence of good practice revealed in the surveys cannot be attributed simply to Signs of Safety implementation since the items are widely accepted disciplines and principles of social work and workers may have been practicing according to the principles before the reforms.

The answers to the open-ended questions offer some illustration of how parents experience social workers in both positive and negative ways. The biggest single answer to the question 'If you could change one thing about how your worker is working with you, what would it be?' was 'Nothing', often with some amplification of why they had a good opinion of their worker. For example, 'He is very professional', 'She is so good at what she does, she is caring and supportive', or 'This one is good, wish we had had this help and support three years ago'.

On the negative side, the main desired changes were concerned with the workers' reliability, communication, consistency and amount of time spent with children. Complaints about unreliability tended to point to organisational, rather than personal, factors: the frequent changes of social worker ('I've had four different social workers in the past three months. So more continuity needed.'), social workers not having sufficient time, or social workers not having the authority to make decisions but needing to go back to managers before acting on plans made with parents. Complaints about communication were mainly about the difficulty of getting hold of the social worker and the infrequency of visits.

(Action Research Final Report, Turnell, Murphy, Munro. 2016)

Next Steps

- Focus on implementation in Early Help
- Continue to support practitioners in relation to work load and time with families – this may lead to an organisation reshape to support the ongoing learning
- Refresher training for all practitioners based on elements of the Practice Framework that have been identified as a key learning need
- Continue to develop the feedback and learning opportunities to support practitioners
- Ongoing Thematic Staff Surveys
- Support the implementation and communicate ongoing changes more effectively

Learning Lab

- Wokingham have agreed to be the Learning Lab for the South for the MTM and England Innovations Programme. The Learning Lab will be a space where we will share good practice, pilot new tools for direct work and recording, share innovative ideas and practice, such as the development of participatory conferencing and how we have adopted the Practice Framework through case studies and professional and family feedback through appreciative enquiry.

“There is a consensus stemming from the Munro Review that over-regulation gets in the way of good social work practice and prevents social workers and other staff from putting children’s needs and wishes first.” The power to innovate strategy

- What we are potentially asking for is to move away from ‘box ticking’ and compliance with process and move to further align our processes with what the child needs and provide social workers with more direct work time. This will enable us to assess, develop and build resilient networks for the child to create permanency.
- We are collaborating with MTM Consultants in relation to changing our Child Protection Conferencing from current processes to participatory conferencing, the focus being the family network and the child’s Safety Plan.
- We will hold mapping and training events with the MTM consultants and staff and partners to design a Wokingham model, we will then train all relevant and key stakeholders in the new process and continue to receive feedback from Parents, Young People and staff in relation to the new model.

In summary, going forward:

Information Management –

- Effective implementation of our Practice Framework by teams and assurance of the quality of work with children and families.
- Clear and transparent communication to and engagement with the workforce, children, and families regarding progress, updates and sharing best practice.
- Policies and Procedures provide a clear systemic oversight to a service which operates fully in the practice framework
- IT and document systems reflect the Signs of Safety Model enabling children and families, and supporting practitioners to spend more time in direct work with families.

Signs of Permanence –

- An efficient and streamlined Early Help Service which ensures that the right children are provided with permanency outside of their family network
- A stable and consistent use of the Practice Framework for our most vulnerable children.

Family Network Model –

- Social Work Practice refocused on the family's support network, maximising family resources to improve outcomes for children and families.

Practice Lead Development –

- Practice Leaders feel confident and supported in the implementation of the Practice Framework. Training and Practice learning ensures that the Practice Framework is effectively embedded across all Early Help and Social Work teams.

Signs of Wellbeing –

- To devise what signs of wellbeing means in Wokingham
- How we use the signs of wellbeing model across our Early Help Services to create sustainable change.