Hounslow Children’s Services Workforce Strategy 2008

Hounslow’s Integrated Children’s Services Workforce Strategy sets out our partnership approach to developing a world-class children’s workforce to deliver fully integrated services to improve the outcomes for children and young people. This strategy is integral to the Hounslow Children and Young People’s plan 2007-2010 which is built around the 5 outcomes for children and young people as set out in the Children Act 2004. The workforce strategy reflects the commitment from all agencies working with children in Hounslow, encompassing the whole range of workers from statutory, independent and voluntary sectors.

Vision

In Hounslow we want all children and young people to be:

• Safe, resourceful and free from all kinds of crime and harassment
• In good health
• Enjoying life, progressing and achieving well
• Economically secure and thriving
• Making a real contribution to the world they live in and
• Laying the foundations for an emotionally secure and successful future.

Central to our vision, which is set out in detail in the CYPP, is

• the belief the child or young person must be at the heart of everything we do
• a recognition that outcomes matter - what matters most is what makes a difference to the lives of children, young people, their families and carers
• a commitment to partnership working - we must ensure that children, young people, families and carers, the Hounslow community, statutory services, voluntary agencies and the private sector all work together and
• a recognition that how we work is important – we will ‘be the change we want to see’.

Partners

Hounslow’s Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership brings together all of the agencies from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors that work with children and young people in the borough.

The Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership has a broad membership, which includes representation from Housing, Community Safety, parents and carers, schools, voluntary and community groups and young people. This has enabled full and informed debate on key local issues, and the impact on all services of Hounslow’s changing population. It has helped to ensure that the views and interests of a broad range of parties are able to influence developments and opportunities for enhancing partnership working.

Partnership working with the voluntary sector has been developed considerably through ensuring appropriate representation at all levels of the partnership. The Director of the Council for Voluntary Services in Hounslow is a member of the Children and Young People Executive Board. Nominated representatives from the Voluntary Sector Children and Young People Forum sit on the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership. There is also appropriate representation from the voluntary sector on the themed outcome sub-boards.
Scope

This strategy addresses key challenges identified at national level alongside locally identified issues:

1. Recruiting more people to the children’s workforce
2. Developing and retaining a skilled workforce
3. Strengthening inter-agency and multi-disciplinary working and workforce re-modelling
4. Promoting strong leadership, management and supervision
5. Developing a workforce that is representative of the local community

Current position and analysis

Integral to workforce planning is the need to have a clear picture of the composition of the current workforce in terms of age profile, ethnicity, length of time in post, turnover, management structures, skills audit.

A comprehensive analysis of the children’s workforce has been undertaken by the constituent members of the partnership board in order to identify areas of priority in relation to recruitment, development and retention. These are outlined below.

Social Work

Hounslow employs 370 staff within the Specialist Division CS&LL with the remit of undertaking level 4 work with children and families. As identified in the Hounslow Children & Young People’s plan – 1 year on 2007-08 Review, 328 children and young people are “Looked After” and 146 children and young people are registered as needing protection from some form of abuse.

A recruitment and retention strategy has been formulated for this service, which outlines the key areas for development in detail focussing on qualified social work staff and managers.

The national shortage of Social Workers has resulted in competition particularly between the London Boroughs in recruiting and retaining staff. This shortage is reflected within the management structures, as the managers are also required to have a Social Work qualification.

Within Hounslow, due to chronic Social work shortages in 2004, we embarked upon a major international recruitment campaign between 2005-2007, which resulted in the recruitment of 33 Social Workers mainly from the USA, and a handful from India. This reduced the vacancy rate considerably up until recently.

The problem of recruitment and retention is not universal to the Social Work teams. The child protection teams have the highest vacancy rates and turnover. There is a noticeable one-way movement of staff from the child protection to the more specialist teams, which also have a more mature workforce. In particular there is a difficulty in recruiting to the current Assistant Team Managers in the child protection teams. In terms of ethnicity, a high percentage of Social Workers qualified abroad which has assisted us in making the workforce more representative of the local community.
Key Issues
1. Over reliance on non UK trained professional (63% of qualified SWs on work permits)
2. Over reliance on locum cover
3. Key shortages in child protection teams
4. Overall Social work vacancies 32% highest in child protection teams
5. Difficulty attracting UK experienced social workers (72% of applicants currently newly qualified)
6. Movement of social workers from child protection teams to specialist teams not vice versa
7. High turnover in child protection teams
8. Difficulty in recruiting and retaining Assistant Team Managers in child protection teams
9. High caseloads in child protection teams.

1. Priority action in recruiting social work staff
   1. Maintain in-house programme to develop unqualified staff into qualified SWs
   2. Run improved advertising campaigns with unique selling point
   3. Develop partnership with specialist agencies to provide permanent appointments rather than locums
   4. Promotion of Hounslow as an employer to SW students on placements in the borough and “head hunt” exceptional students
   5. Take part in CWDC newly qualified social workers pilot scheme

2. Priority action in retaining social work staff
   1. Review job descriptions and salaries for Team Managers, Assistant Team Managers, Senior Social Workers & Social Workers in child protection teams and Independent reviewing Officers
   2. Delete Senior Social Worker posts and create Specialist Social Work Practitioner
   3. Increase retention bonus in child protection teams
   4. Develop career pathways and succession planning
      • Induction and competency based scheme for newly qualified SW’s and mandatory in-house training PQ consolidation programme at 18 months
      • Specialist PQ modules for experienced SW’s and Practice Teaching opportunities
      • Development of Specialist Social Work Practitioners
      • Mentoring and action learning sets for ATM’s
   5. Invest in management development programme
   6. Maintain links and develop learning opportunities with Higher educational institutions
3. **Strengthening inter-agency and multi-disciplinary working and workforce re-modelling**

3.1 **Implementing the Common Assessment Framework**

There has been a phased rollout of the Common Assessment Framework over the last year, targeting particular parts of the borough and underpinned by a comprehensive training programme. To date, class based training sessions have been delivered to approximately 130 practitioners within multi-agency settings. To facilitate the effective operation of the CAF, an information sharing protocol has been agreed across agencies and a central co-ordination function created. The CAF Support Team provides information and guidance to practitioners and includes a designated CAF Co-ordinator who is responsible for arranging and facilitating 'Team around the Child' (TAC) meetings.

Full roll-out will be completed by March 2009, supported by continued delivery of training to a wide range of practitioners through both class based sessions and the provision of on-line training via an e-learning package.

3.2 **Developing joint commissioning**

There has been joint work between the Council and PCT to develop a strategic approach to commissioning and the main components of a strategic commissioning framework, in collaboration with other partners. Supported by a multi-agency training programme involving key senior managers and aimed at ensuring a consistent and shared understanding of joint commissioning across Children’s Services, we have reviewed governance arrangements in the context of commissioning. This has included revising the terms of reference for the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership and its subsidiary groups to ensure that commissioning responsibilities are clearly articulated and initial work to review the range of groups within which commissioning decisions are made, with a view to ensuring that they all operate within the agreed commissioning framework in the future.

A set of commissioning standards has been developed setting out a clear set of principles to underpin the commissioning of all services by the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership and applying to all providers. A commissioning policy, outlining how commissioners will work with providers and an agreed approach to market development and management has also been prepared. The restructure of the Council’s Children’s Services department has located a strategic commissioning function within a re-configured Resources and Commissioning division. This division brings together needs assessment, strategic planning and performance management activity. It will enable existing good practice to inform the expansion of integrated commissioning into other areas and a coherent approach to needs analysis, planning of service provision, market analysis, procurement, contract monitoring and evaluation across the system.
### 3.3 Changing cultures

We have initiated a programme of cultural change. At a strategic level, the Assistant Director for Children's Services at the PCT is now a member of the Council’s Children’s Services management team, ensuring regular communication and collaboration through attendance at fortnightly meetings. This has enabled closer engagement with the PCT on both the provision of health services for children and young people in the borough and the development of the future model for integrated working.

There have been regular opportunities, through existing forums such as SMT and staff meetings, for Council managers and staff to gain a wider perspective on the scope of the department’s work as an integrated Children’s Services department and an understanding of the change agenda. These forums have also been used to share information on key developments and initiatives that will impact on the working practices of a range of staff, such as the implementation of the CAF. Staff from partner agencies have also been involved in events aimed at enhancing understanding of the remit and agendas of the different services that work with and for children and young people in Hounslow. This has included a very successful ‘market stall’ event in autumn 2007, which brought together Council and PCT staff to share information about their services and build on existing networks. Through these means we are increasingly creating a culture where language is shared and knowledge is broadened.

### 3.5 Joint working to develop preventative approaches

Against the background of this wider strategic re-organisation of functions, we have continued to give very high priority to the development of preventative approaches at an operational level to better meet the needs of vulnerable children at an early stage and, ultimately, to reduce the pressure on specialist services. There are many examples of successful inter-agency programmes of work and service developments that are delivering positive results in terms of progressing the prevention agenda. Some of these are outlined below.

In the last year a specialist intensive support programme has been created for those children and young people who are on the cusp of being accommodated. The programme provides individual children with bespoke packages of support drawing on input from a variety of services, including education, youth and counselling services. There are plans to develop the service further over the next year but there are already some indications of positive impact. There is evidence to suggest that children are becoming looked after at a later stage due to earlier intervention by agencies. It is also believed to be a contributory factor to the decline in the numbers of children being accommodated in the last 12 months, together with the corresponding reduction in the costs of accommodation.

The establishment of an integrated family support and community health partnership team at Sure Start has resulted in improved outcomes for children and families. Close working relationships between health visitors and family support workers has meant that problems identified through a family health needs assessment can be referred promptly to the appropriate professional in the multi-disciplinary team.
A particularly successful example of this is the multi-agency delivery of services at the baby clinic held at the Hub which has become a ‘one-stop shop’ where parents are able to access advice and support from a range of professionals, e.g. health visitor, community nurse, midwife, at the same time as attending a variety of activities designed to promote children’s health, well-being, development and positive behaviour. Shared training has ensured that consistent messages are given to parents from all members of the team.

An innovative project to deploy a Council funded senior social worker post with the 0-16 Public Health Team has been piloted since August 2007, with the aim of providing additional capacity to meet the needs of families with complex health and social care issues who do not meet the threshold for social services intervention. The project has resulted in improved communication and collaborative work between professionals, which has, in turn, enabled effective early intervention, and a more rapid response to urgent casework. A particular strength has been the destigmatising of the social worker role, which has facilitated earlier engagement with some families than would otherwise have been the case. There is good evidence that over time this approach will help to prevent costly tier 3 and tier 4 interventions.

3.8 Workforce re-modelling – recent development in schools
Carol McCleod & John Reece

4. Promoting strong leadership, management and supervision
4.1 Managing Performance
A comprehensive regime of performance monitoring has been embedded across the Partnership to ensure that the commitments made in the Children and Young People’s Plan are implemented and that there is regular review of the impact of partners’ action on outcomes. A detailed annual Implementation Plan, setting out the contribution that relevant agencies will make to deliver the CYPP priorities, and assigning lead responsibility to individuals across the partnership, forms the basis of this framework.

Risk management is well embedded within this framework. The sub-boards highlight where there may significant risks or barriers to the delivery of particular outcomes or activities. These are brought to the attention of the CYPSP and there are opportunities to consider where a partnership response may be needed to mitigate certain risks.

4.2 Leadership and management development
Leadership is essential in changing attitudes and involving all staff. Leaders need to have a strategic vision and an understanding of the agendas affecting the whole of the children’s workforce. They will determine the culture, structures and resources required to take the agenda forward.

Without visionary leadership, effective people management and strong management processes, it is difficult to deliver quality services, retain staff, create learning organisations and change the way that staff work to meet the needs of people who use services.
The Hounslow Plan 2006-2010 fully recognised the importance of management development in the realisation of successfully achieving its strategic priorities, staff will require new skills, these specifically include a number of the key skills identified in the workforce development plan as very essential for the future

**Key components**

1. Developing appropriate strategies for leadership and management and for workforce planning and development
2. Ensuring fit for purpose initial training, continuing professional development and support for leaders and managers
3. Developing managers with the skills and capacity to lead and manage change
4. Developing leadership skills at all levels of the workforce
5. Supporting organisations to become 'learning organisations'
6. Active leadership on behalf of social care from central and local government

**Requirements**

- Develop joint training programmes and initiatives to support the development of leaders and managers, with a focus on management and leadership skills that promote multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working, accredited where possible.
- Explore varied development opportunities including, external courses / seminar, on the job training, formal taught courses, executive coaching, mentoring, line management coaching, secondments, job rotation / shadowing.
- Create networking opportunities for strategic leaders in the local authority and partners in the Private and Third Sectors to provide a focus for all programmes to improve the commissioning and delivery of services.
- Develop new graduate professionals to enhance the profile of childcare and raise the quality of the overall experience for children and young people. These new graduate professionals will be expected to take on management responsibilities and ensure that settings deliver fully integrated Early Years provision among others.
- Identify and develop more junior staff with high potential for management growth and development
- Review training to support foster carers in order to address the challenges of integrated working and improved leadership in foster care
- Identify any gaps in key skills at leadership and management level so that these can be addressed
- Provide appropriate support for supervisors, managers and leaders including drawing clear lines of accountability, effective supervision and management of workload and improving ICT
- Maximise HR support for managers

**5. Developing a workforce that is representative of the local community**

*Not everyone has included this do we want to?*
6. Engaging service users in the quality and design of workforce development and integration

It is good practice to involve service users in changes regarding workforce development initiatives. It is also an effective way of bringing about change because the beneficiaries of the changes need to be aware that these changes are happening to enable them make an input where possible and take advantage of the benefits. Actively engaging children and young people enables them to make a positive contribution to the community thereby achieving one of the five outcomes for children and young people. In the case of parents / carers it helps increase their confidence and build good relationships with the children’s workforce when they are involved in the activities that deal with the competence of the workforce. In the longer term, actively engaging service users could be a useful recruitment approach, helping to market careers within the children’s service to children, young people and their parents / carers. We will:

- continue to identify and promote innovative ways of engaging with service users including children and young people
- involve children and young people in the delivery of any relevant training and development opportunities where feasible

Risk Analysis / Impact

Local risks identified in the national strategy

1. Failure to engage across agencies successfully and lack of sufficient cooperation
   - Local Authorities and their partners may fail to co-operate sufficiently and align their activities into 150 coherent and effective local change programmes with supportive local workforce strategies
   - Insufficient involvement of schools and health services
   - The voluntary and community sector may feel excluded

2. There is insufficient capacity available to move the agenda forward
   - Local Authorities and their partners have insufficient leadership and resources capacity, and may be short on cash as they attempt to realise efficiency savings

National strategies aimed at mitigating local risks:

- Building the capacity of Directors of Children’s Services to lead local change programmes including through Cross Sector Leadership Programme;
- Employing Regional Change Advisors to assist local areas;
- Offering (limited) resource through the Change Fund;
- Developing a communications strategy to stress the need for co-operation, focusing in particular on schools;
- Integrating delivery of the children, young people and maternity National Service Framework into the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme
- Reviewing current approaches so that we improve the sharing and embedding of existing good practice.
Other risks

- On-going changes and new priorities relating to the Every Child Matters initiative could lead to a waste of resources
- Internal disagreement on the way forward within the agencies and services;
- Staff turnover may increase if their perception of the new changes are negative,
- Inability to engage users/lack of interest from users in engaging with the change process;
- Staff turnover could affect the continuity and seamless delivery of the project targets;
- New national legislation from other Government departments could trigger more changes; resulting in a change fatigue amongst the workforce
- Some children’s services providers by virtue of their structure and regulation may fall outside the regular agencies as stated in the national strategy and therefore will not be involved in this new way of joint working
- Lessons learned and good practice may not support the implementation of some of the proposals;
- Pressure to increase the workforce could lead to recruiting unsuitable people;
- Pressure to deliver on national targets could lead to rushing through the process and indeed rushing professionals through training courses;
- Pressure to increase workforce could result in a fall in pass levels in universities and colleges leading to falling standards;
- Agencies not bound by statutory requirements in their provision may not fully engage with the process, e.g. there is no statutory requirement for private schools to do the training currently provided for school support staff
- A pro-longed review of the membership of the Children’s Workforce Strategy group could slow down the momentum and result in disengagement with the private and voluntary sector.