

Report To:	People Group DLT
Report Title:	Social Work Health Check 2021
Report Author:	Jo Davies, Service Manager, Children and Families
Date:	10th August 2022 NB: 27 th July 2022 SLT considered as part of a fuller report named Workforce Strategy review June 2022

Decisions Required		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Endorse Recommendations	<input type="checkbox"/> For Information
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1. The Recommendations of this report are that Children and Families SLT	
No.	Recommendation
R01	Review feedback from social workers/others in C&F as part of the LGA Annual Social Work Health Check. Note that all the learning is incorporated into our annual Workforce review, which is attached for reference.
R02	Agree communication strategy of the social work health check across Childrens and Adults services.

2. Purpose of Report

In 2021 Children and Families completed a comprehensive review of our workforce needs and challenges and formulated a revised workforce strategy and plan based on this information. This full report summarised progress actioning our 'Strengthening our Workforce' plan over the year since it was initiated.

This report focuses on the annual 'healthcheck' of social work and social care staff as well as progress monitoring information overseen in the regular strategy implementation meetings held by the Principal Social Worker.

3. Executive Summary

3.1 The LGA evaluation of performance against the standards for employers of social workers ('social work health check') found that overall we perform well both in absolute terms and also in comparison to regional and national employers.

4. Conclusions

As a whole local authority, Childrens and Adults Services, we were placed 26th (33rd in 2020) in the Country and 5th (3rd in 2020) in the Region. For Childrens Social Work, the majority of standards were in the 'good' range. No areas were graded as requiring clear steps to improve, a small number had moderate scores, ie were capable of improvement. It reports that staff overwhelmingly appreciate and acknowledge that we have a strong and clear social work framework.

Our key strengths from the Survey in 2021:

- 89% agreed with a Strong and Clear Social Work Framework
- 88% felt cared for by their supervisor/manager and encouraged/motivated development
- 87% reported supervision with skilled supervisor, with 84% receiving coaching in professional judgement, creativity and autonomy, with 89% identifying their CPD needs
- 85% know where to get help in my organisation if I am concerned about my wellbeing in respect of amount or nature of work I am expected to do
- 82% agreed that they have been supported to work safely and effectively within a clear social work practice framework and raise any concerns around quality of supervision

Comparing outcomes against the 2020 health check the area showing the highest increase in scoring was Supervision with a jump from 77% to 84% followed by Strong and Clear Social Work Framework.



Ofsted also noted:

Supervision varies in quality. Social workers themselves find supervision and group team discussions helpful, enabling them to reflect on their practice. In teams where supervision is stronger, social workers benefit from reflective discussions, with actions from previous sessions followed up. In other teams, supervision records indicate limited discussion, and actions on casework do not align sufficiently with the child's plan. Leaders are already taking action to improve the quality of supervision.

So, though there was an increase we do need to do further work across all teams.

Areas for Improvement from the Survey in 2021:

The areas for improvement continue to be in respect of workload and CPD and workload:

- 68% felt they had a satisfactory level of control over
 - 62% found the programme they completed for their ASYE was effective.
- Before this annual survey we had sought more detailed feedback on this and incorporated into our Academy planning, feedback is more positive now from the participants.

- 68% felt that they had the time, resources, and opportunity to carry out CPD workload
- 72% felt that they had an effective induction
- 72% felt encouraged & empowered to make time for wellbeing and selfcare activities
- 73% felt that allocation of work was a fair process taking account of workload, capability, health and wellbeing
- 77% felt satisfied with their Continuous Professional Development

All learning has been incorporated into our strategic review and our Action Plan.

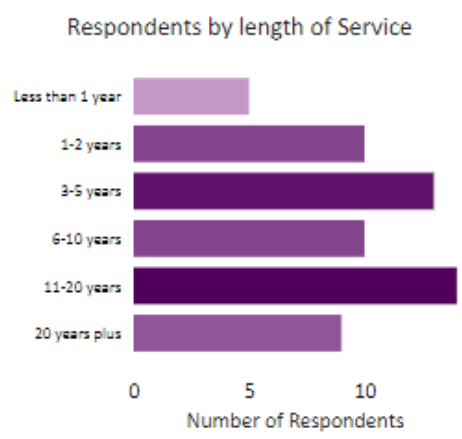
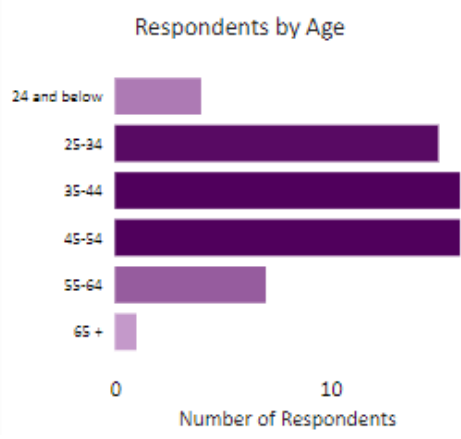
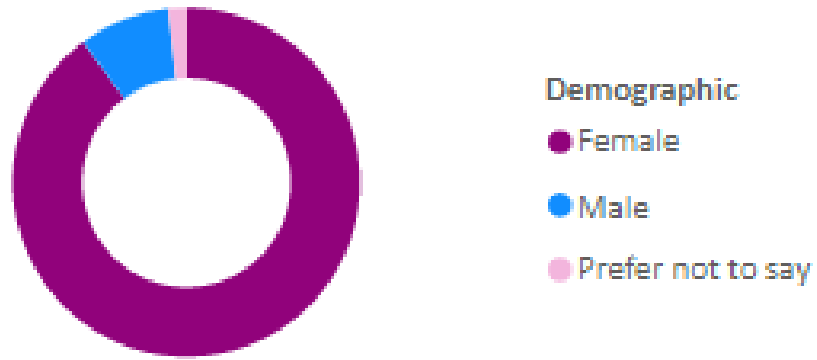
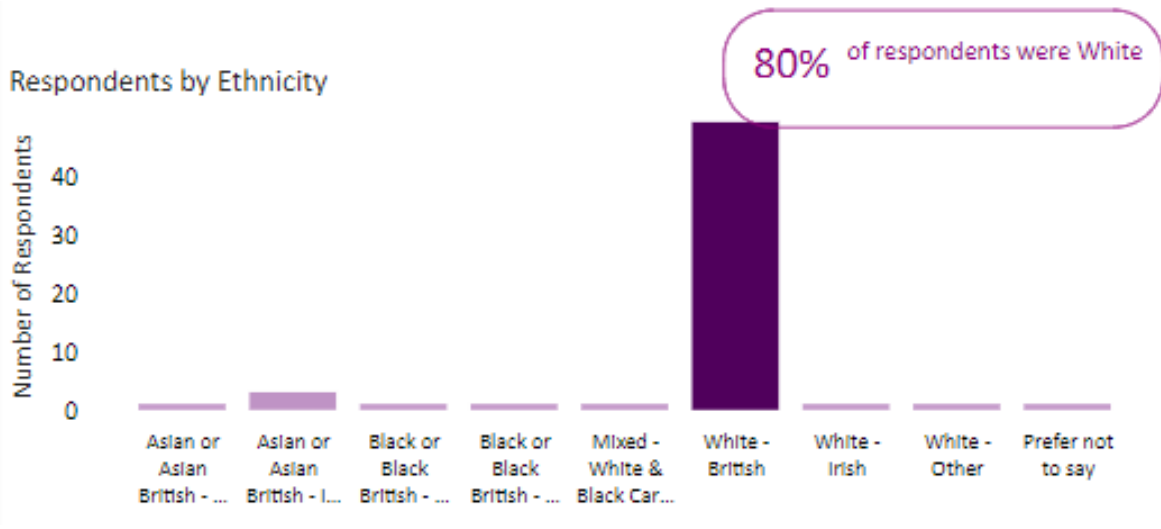
5. Analysis

1. Overview of our current situation:

1.1 LGA annual 'Social Work Health Check' of success against standards for employers of social workers – completed in December 2021

This was completed in Nov-December 2021. Unfortunately, there were only 61 respondents as we were prioritising the Ofsted Inspection at the time of release. This was a slight reduction on the previous year of 88 respondents. We have in the region of 340 social workers employed at the time, including agency.

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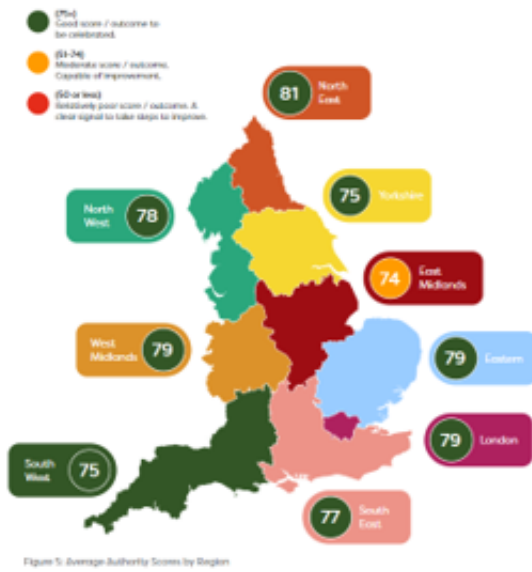


The health check data showed that Warwickshire continues to be an authority which is well regarded by staff as a place to work, and which, bearing in mind the universal challenges of our sector, provides a good environment in which to practice social work. As a whole local authority, Childrens and Adults Services, we were placed 26th (33rd in 2020) in the Country and 5th (3rd in 2020) in the Region. This graph below represents the pattern of ranking in the

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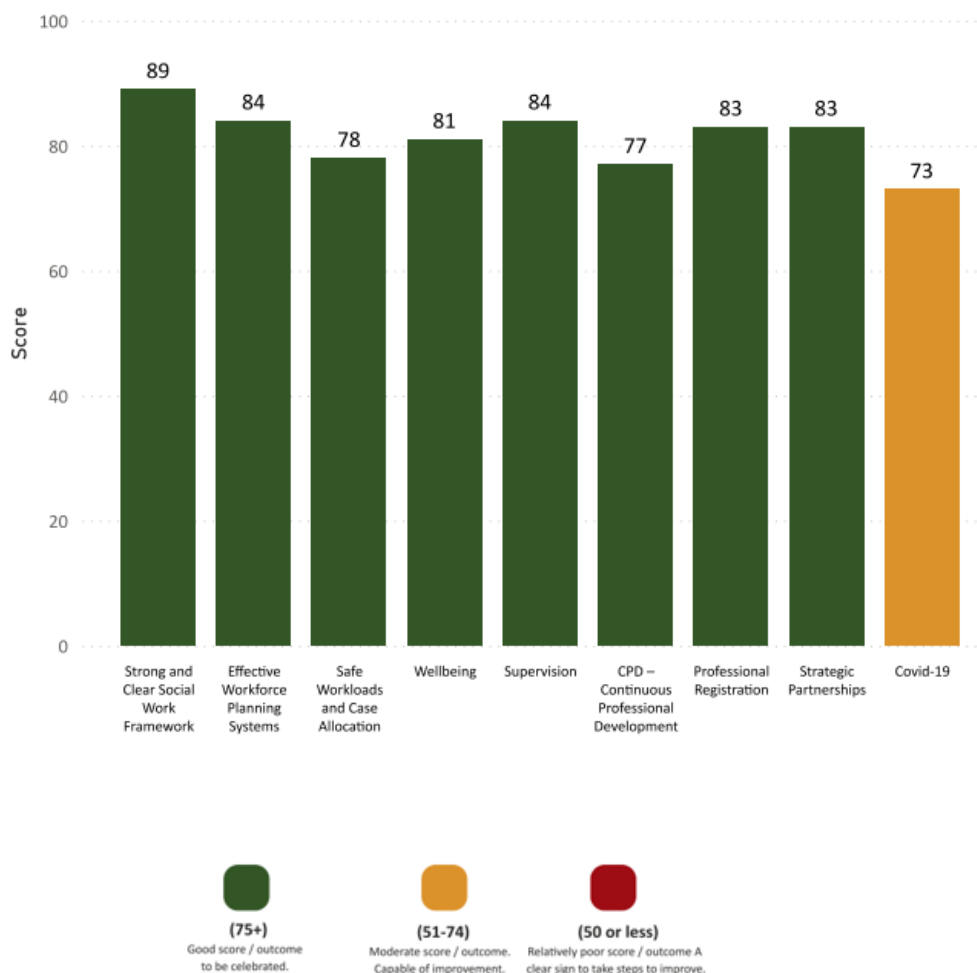
country and region. Unfortunately, this data is not provided as a split within the authority roles.



A separate report is provided for Childrens Social Workers. The majority of standards were in the 'good' range. No areas were graded as requiring clear steps to improve, a small number had moderate scores, ie were capable of improvement. It reports that staff overwhelmingly appreciate and acknowledge that we have a strong and clear social work framework.

The graph below represents the level of satisfaction against each standard, the high level of greens indicate many areas for us to celebrate. All areas saw an increase in score since 2020 with Supervision having the biggest increase followed by Strong & Clear Social Work Framework

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There are some strong scores for drivers for people to stay in their role/authority:

Standard	Score
CPD – Continuous Professional Development	77
Wellbeing	81
Effective Workforce Planning Systems	84
Safe Workloads and Case Allocation	78
Covid-19	73

At a more granular level we are strong in:

- accessibility of senior managers (88%)
- caring and effective systems for responding to concerns about safety (84%)
- have clear policies for recruiting and training practice educators and supervisors (81%)

A word cloud of our perceived organisational personality of children and families service:



For Children's Social Workers:

Our key strengths were:

- 89% agreed with a Strong and Clear Social Work Framework
- 88% felt cared for by their supervisor/manager and encouraged/motivated development
- 87% reported supervision with skilled supervisor, with 84% receiving coaching in professional judgement, creativity and autonomy, with 89% identifying their CPD needs
- 85% know where to get help in my organisation if I am concerned about my wellbeing in respect of amount or nature of work I am expected to do
- 82% agreed that they have been supported to work safely and effectively within a clear social work practice framework and raise any concerns around quality of supervision

Areas for Improvement:

Only 77% felt satisfied with their Continuous Professional Development which was the same score as in 2020. There was most positive feedback about being able to up to date with CPD, non-discriminatory processes, appraisals, accessibility to CPD and a clear plan. However,

- *72% felt that they had an effective induction'*
- *68% felt that they had the time, resources, and opportunity to carry out CPD'*

We have implemented an expectation that staff are enabled to take at least 5 CPD days a year, and a new induction policy/induction guidance. However, this survey response strongly suggests further action is required to ensure all managers are aware of these expectations and that their managers in turn provide quality assurance of their implementation.

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There are a number of scores which were related to workload, and these indicate pressure upon individual social workers:

- *68% felt they had a satisfactory level of control over workload*
- *72% felt encouraged & empowered to make time for wellbeing and selfcare activities*
- *73% felt that allocation of work was a fair process taking account of workload, capability, health and wellbeing'*

We have worked hard to talk about wellbeing and what this means, it is likely that the lower score for this question is linked to the verb 'empowered' rather than 'encouraged'. Senior Managers are well aware of the pressures staff feel due to increasing demand across the service and will not be surprised this is a lower scoring area. However there is some reassurance that they are at the higher end of the 'moderate' range.

The lowest score overall was for the question asking if social workers who completed their ASYE in the last 3 years found the programme effective in helping them to learn and develop as a social worker, with only 62% agreeing.

This is not surprising because many of the social workers in scope for this question had been learning their new profession under 18 months of the Covid pandemic. During most of 2020 and 2021 there was a reduction of the support provided to the NQSWs. This was due to requirements for workplaces to be COVID Secure which resulted in minimum attendance in offices, so reducing the number of the shadowing opportunities. Much of their learning was also virtual based. At the same time, the Academy Social Workers were also diverted into service delivery, providing less group learning and support. In the summer of 2021, the Academy Social Workers resumed providing co-ordinated support to NQSWs, once again providing an allocated practice educator and structured group learning.

Every Local Authority is required to provide a minimum of 10% of an ASYEs time to be protected for their ASYE programme, which is the basis of 1 day/fortnight being an Academy Day currently. Alongside this there is a general expectation that the volume and complexity of their caseloads are gradually increased to enable them to develop their skills and confidence in the new role. A regional analysis was completed and C&F SLT agreed that ASYEs should have reduced workloads for NQSWs, which would start them at 50% in the first months of the year, progressively increasing to 90% by the final stage. However, this has not yet been implemented due to the demand of work, recruitment challenges, and the high risk of attrition of more experienced social workers. This was agreed in principle, but not implemented until the impact is manageable across all the social workers. Once this is implemented, it would further enable NQSWs to take time for learning and reflection as they consolidate their social work skills.

For those who had been employed as social workers for over 2 years, we were using a different approach to their ASYE programme, commissioning an external provider to provide

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6 one day workshops and we offered 6 half day PSWP run learning sets. Teams were responsible for identifying learning and development activities to make up the remaining 17 days.

Our previous research indicated that ASYEs benefited best from a relational approach to learning, so the Academy was designed to maximise relationship building with other ASYEs across teams, with an allocated Academy Social Worker providing individual support. SLT will recall that several ASYE models were offered for consideration, and a model was chosen in which NQSWs are based in their team from the beginning, with scheduled time in the Academy. The relative merits of a full day a fortnight versus half a day a week were considered, and all agreed that taking whole days less frequently would better meet objectives for service delivery and protected learning time.

Comparing outcomes against the 2020 health check the area showing the highest increase in scoring was Supervision with a jump from 77 to 84 followed by Strong and Clear Social Work Framework.

Ofsted also noted:

Supervision varies in quality. Social workers themselves find supervision and group team discussions helpful, enabling them to reflect on their practice. In teams where supervision is stronger, social workers benefit from reflective discussions, with actions from previous sessions followed up. In other teams, supervision records indicate limited discussion, and actions on casework do not align sufficiently with the child's plan. Leaders are already taking action to improve the quality of supervision.

So, though there was an increase we do need to do further work across all teams.

Other Professionals:

36 other professionals also completed the Health Check across Childrens and Adults Services. The scores for these were all considered good scores (above 75%) with a outcome to be celebrated. They were extremely positive about our seeking support (97%), practice framework (90%), supervision (89%), wellbeing (87%) and CPD opportunities (80%). There also scored higher in respect of COVID (80%). The only areas for improvement were understandably, the inappropriate questions related to social work registration.

ACTION:

- *Communication of the finding in a Blog across the children and adult's workforce.*
- *Areas for improvement have been incorporated into the Workforce Action Plan.*

Recommendation 2 Agree communication strategy of the social work health check across childrens and adults services.

6. Environmental Implications

- There are no specific environmental implications in this report.

7. Financial Implications

- There are no specific financial implications in this report.

8. Appendix