

CABINET

6 FEBRUARY 2018

SYSTEMIC SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Portfolio Holder: Andrew Mackness, Children's Services (Lead Member)

Report from: Ian Sutherland, Director of Children and Adults Services

Author: Ann Domeney, Deputy Director of Children and Adults

Summary

This report provides Cabinet with information relating to the recent agreement by the Partners in Practice Board and the Department of Education to partner with Medway Children's Services during the course of 2018.

A comprehensive package of support will be provided by the Centre for Systemic Social Work practice, (CfSSW), based in the original tri- borough of Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 The provision of children's social care is both a statutory requirement and part of the Council's policy and budget framework. This package of support, provided by the Centre for Systemic Social Work, will contribute to the Council Plan outcome of building resilient families by supporting social workers to extend their skills in working with families and keeping children at home where it is safe for them to do so.

2. Background

2.1 The Centre for Systemic Social Work (CfSSW) is a new venture, focussed upon working collaboratively with the wider children's social care sector to improve all aspects of practice, supervision and leadership in order to provide the very best service for children and their families. It was established in 2016, as part of the Department for Education Partners in Practice programme, with the aim of learning from those leading the sector nationally about the approaches and leadership required to create excellent social work practice.

2.2 Working in children and families statutory social work is a challenging context in which to practice, where social workers are expected to make confident professional assessments and judgements about the welfare of children,

intervening in order to manage risk and effect change in families. The systemic model of social work relies on the social workers' relationships with families, understanding the dynamics and the impact of the wider family networks and cultural influences and introduces new approaches, methods and techniques which practitioners are supported and encouraged to integrate into their practice.

2.3 Medway Children's Services introduced the concept of systemic practice in September 2016 when the children's social work teams were re-organised into a pod structure. This is a similar structure to the "Reclaiming Social Work" model in Hackney, which was positively recognised in the report of Professor Eileen Munro, "The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report" 2011.

2.4 During the course of 2017, Medway commissioned the Institute of Family Therapy to provide 25 practitioners and managers with a foundation course in systemic practice to support the new model. This course ran for six months at a cost of £30,000.

3. Options

3.1 The Council considered whether Medway should continue to support systemic practice by using the Institute of Family Therapy or other providers in the field to offer an ongoing training programme.

3.2 It also considered whether Medway could go into partnership with CfSSW as part of the Partners in Practice Programme. This was the preferred option.

4. Advice and analysis

4.1 The CfSSW is offering Medway a twelve month foundation course for practitioners, a twelve month supervision course for first line managers and a sixth month course for the leadership team to enable the development of systemic practice across the organisation. There is access to mentoring and additional support.

4.2 There was competition among local authorities to be accepted onto the programme, which is heavily subsidised by the DfE. The CfSSW is seen as a leader in the field, both in terms of being a "Partner in Practice" with the focus of assisting authorities to achieve a good rating in Ofsted inspections and in terms of being a leader in systemic practice.

4.3 Medway was chosen to be part of the programme following a visit by the Director and Clinical Director from the CfSSW Team to Medway Children's Services Management Team.

4.4 The total cost of the programme is £30,000.

5. Risk management

| Risk | Description | Action to avoid or mitigate risk | Risk rating |
|--|--|--|-------------|
| This decision changes the provider for our systemic practice training. The new provider is more recently established than the Institute of Family Therapy. | The quality of the provision from the new provider is less tested. | The Centre for Systemic Practice, although only in its second year of operation, is strongly supported by the Department for Education and the Partners in Practice Programme. Therefore It is likely that, over time, the Centre for Systemic Practice will become the lead provider of Systemic Practice Training. | C3 |

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The CfSSW programme has been offered to Medway at a subsidised rate of £30,000, to be paid from the existing Social Work Academy budget.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 The Cabinet is asked to note the report.

9. Suggested reasons for decision

- 9.1 This initiative is likely to make a significant contribution to improvements in children's social work practice in Medway.

Lead officer contact

Ann Domeney, Deputy Director of Children and Adults
T 01634 331205
E ann.domeney@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

None

Background papers

The Munro Review of Child Protection : Final Report May 2011

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/munro-review-of-child-protection-final-report-a-child-centred-system>