

Developing the Role of Senior Social Workers

13th April 2016



Brighton & Hove
City Council

The Context

- **Prior to the reorganisation the extent SSW's performed a distinct function was variable**
- **High level of experience and skills but post-promotion focused on managing a high number of complex cases**
- **Opportunity to develop other functions of the role limited**



Embedding the Role – Why

Now?

- Reorganisation has provided a timely opportunity to review what the role should comprise of
- SSW job description has been rewritten with an emphasis on providing support and taking a lead in promoting best practice in the teams.
- A number of new SSW's were promoted during the reorganisation providing increased opportunities to work with them as a cohesive group.
- Pods occupying a shared space means that SSW's experience and expertise can be more visibly demonstrated and shared in a consistent way
- Pod emphasis on collective work may allow processes for joint work and mentoring to be more formalised with SSW's taking a lead on this
- The importance of continuity of relationship relies on retaining experienced social workers on the front-line
- Pod managers taking a more strategic leadership role may mean there is a need for SSW's to work at the interface between pod manager and social worker in the teams.



Consultation Process

- Designed to explore the following questions:
- What is the function of SSW's in the pod structure?
- What tasks should SSW's be expected to undertake to embed this function?
- What will be needed in order to achieve this?
- How will this be evaluated?
- To what extent should the role of SSW's be replicated to other teams?



Key Dilemmas

- How to address the balance between SSW's own complex cases alongside leading, supporting and developmental aspects of the role?
- How to embed a role which is flexible enough to respect needs of individual pods and the needs and skills, interests and identities of individual workers? What functions and tasks should be prescribed or discretionary?



What is the function of SSW's in the pod structure?

- To model the social work role and promote professionalism, critical thinking and skilled use of self that can be shared and utilised by the wider team
- To model and help others to develop communication, assessment and intervention skills to promote change in families
- To develop a learning environment for the pod by developing and disseminating knowledge and skills in particular areas of practice
- To support managers to ensure a high level of reflective supervision and critical reasoning to ensure effective decision-making for families

What tasks should SSW's undertake to embed this function?

- Hold responsibility for a number of complex cases
- To mentor and joint work cases with less experienced members of the pod including accompanying them to panels and Court
- Take the lead role in the support of students and ASYE social workers including observation and assessment
- Support the facilitation of group supervision – various ways, facilitating discussion with pod managers in attendance? Deputising for manager?

What tasks should SSW's undertake to embed this function cont.?

- Take the lead in coordinating self-audit, feedback and reflection on key learning for individual practitioners
- Participate in a community of practitioners to develop areas of expertise that can be shared across the pods
- Share expertise in group supervision to inform decision-making for families
- Play a key role in training of social work students at local universities

Next steps

- Consultation on the SSW role to ensure plans are realistic and achievable - 6th May
- Each pod manager to devise an action plan with their SSW's to set priorities for the SSW role within the pod and how this will be achieved – 20th May
- Establish a developmental support plan to be delivered to the SSW's to achieve proposed plans
- Ongoing SSW working lunches to develop identity and share experiences
- Individual mentoring for SSW's by Lead Practitioners

Next steps

- Development of bespoke learning and development opportunities for SSW's to address aspects of their role
- In the longer term to establish a clear pathway for SSW's such as practitioner education/teaching; advanced skills in specialist practice and gateway to management



Initial Discussion

- Do you agree with the priorities identified for the SSW role? Are there others?
- What do you foresee the key barriers to this will be? How might they be overcome?
- Specialist teams – should the priorities be the same? Are there any significant differences?

