



Redcar and Cleveland Council
Children and Families
Workforce Development Strategy
Social Work & Early Help
2023-2025



Thriving children, fulfilling their dreams.



Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Our Workforce	4
3. Our vision, values and priorities	5
4. National, regional and local drivers	6
5. Equality and diversity	9
6. Implementation, reporting and evaluation	9
7. Our Learning & Development Offer	9
8. Our Workforce Development priorities	11

Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	Oct 2016	Angela Wright & SMT	Original strategy
2	Nov 2019	Rachel Palmer	Review and update
2.1	Dec 2020	Louise Walker	Review and update
2.2	Dec 2022	Mandy Davis	Review and update



1. Introduction

Welcome to Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council's Workforce Development Strategy for Social Work & Early Help. This document should be read alongside the two complimenting strategies for our Education & Skills Workforce and our Health Visiting & School Nursing Workforce.

We recognise that in the Children and Families Directorate the workforce is our greatest asset. It is our workforce who best understands the needs of the children and families living within the borough and our workforce who supports them. We are ambitious for the children who live within the borough and are committed to ensuring a workforce that is highly skilled and exhibits the values, behaviours and insight needed to ensure a brighter future for our children and young people.

The purpose of this Workforce Strategy is to support the development of our people to deliver the vision, values and priorities of the service and council in line with the practice framework adopted across the whole of Children's' services. We are committed to ensuring we have the right people, with the right skills and knowledge in the right positions. This strategy encompasses recruitment, retention, performance management and learning and development of the workforce. This strategy needs to be able to meet the current agenda but also needs to continue to adapt and to anticipate changes in service configurations and priorities, it is therefore intended to be dynamic.

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council look forward to continued engagement with partner agencies across the Tees Valley and the North East Councils, to ensure we maximise opportunities for collaborative working where and when possible. This partnership working creates an environment in which our workforce can flourish; through learning, supporting and challenging each other and developing the flexibility and skills required to meet quality standards that will deliver a safe, effective and well-trained workforce, wherever and wherever they are. The workforce will be supported to develop new skills, work in different ways and improve integrated working to ensure sustainable and successful services which are linked to local and national drivers.

The council has invested heavily in a variety of programmes, partnerships and initiatives that aim to support our culture shift in which our workforce can flourish through learning, supporting and challenging each other and developing the flexibility to embrace new ways of working to meet the current and future challenges. As a Directorate we have adopted a practice approach across all services which supports a strengths-based approach; putting families at the centre of all of our work, keeping things simple and based on the principle that children and young people are best supported to remain with their families wherever it is safe to do so.



The challenges are still as great as they were in our previous strategy as we continue to:

- Focus on prevention and early interventions
- Engage in a more collaborative way with children and families
- Focus on building safety in families and their connected networks in order to manage risk more effectively.
- Have effective commissioning arrangements in place to ensure value for money in getting the best outcomes for children and families
- Be bolder in our working arrangements and be more collaborative across public, private, voluntary and community sector to ensure the best outcomes for children and families.

1. Our Workforce

The workforce across the Children's and Families directorate are currently grouped into 3 service areas with an Assistant Director responsible for each area. All three service areas are independent upon each other, and skills, knowledge and expertise need to be shared across the structure boundaries for an effective service delivery. Some service areas may need specific training to their area of practice, this can be commissioned or provided in-house, some elements of our learning offer are generic and accessible to all service areas.

The senior management team will be responsible for working with the Workforce Development team to identify each service area's training needs for the coming year through annual appraisals, performance and quality assurance activity alongside local and national learning requirements.





Workforce planning is about predicting the future demand for the different types of staff and seeking to match this with supply. It is by nature a dynamic process and should be a key component of all service planning and development plans. Senior leaders need to know their workforce, support succession planning and invest in staff to retain and develop their skills.

When carrying out workforce planning and development activities within the service we need to consider both the demographics of the workforce and the community we serve.

Competition from neighbouring Local Authorities can have an impact on both the ability to recruit and retain a suitably qualified and experienced workforce. We have developed a recruitment and retention strategy to promote Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council as an employer of choice.

2. Our Vision, Values and Priorities

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council Priorities

Of the four key priorities for the Council, the directorate contributes most significantly towards 'Meeting Residents' Needs.' As set out in our Corporate Plan 2021-2024:

- We shall improve long-term physical health and mental well-being, get young people more active, and ultimately save lives.

- We shall take more preventative actions, to keep people safe, to enable more children and older people to live safely at home, with the right support at the right time.
- We shall further strengthen partnerships with schools and colleges to ensure young people's aspirations are raised, they get a better secondary school experience and acquire the skills they need for future jobs

Children and Families Services Vision

Our Vision for the Children and Families Directorate is for **'Thriving children, families and communities'** and our mission is **'working with children and families to build better futures together.'** Everything we do is underpinned by the following values which set out how we work with children and families.

Child-Centred

- Offering the love, kindness and patience we would want for our own child; supporting them to flourish and fulfil their dreams and aspirations.
- Encouraging and allowing children to speak out and be heard. Listening and responding to their thoughts, feelings and opinions.
- Sticking with children, especially when things are most worrying.
- Recognising that all children need to be loved by a network of trusting people around them so that they can thrive as children and develop the skills they need to enjoy a happy, safe adulthood.

Respectful

- Valuing, trusting and supporting each other to achieve the best for our children and families.
- Embracing our diversity and differences, not only in our children and families but across our relationships with colleagues and partners.
- Communicating openly and honestly so that everything we do is fair, transparent and understood.

Creative

- Being bold and ambitious, embracing change and looking for better ways to deliver our services.
- Building and sharing new skills to create services that suit the needs of each child and family.



- Striving for excellence and not just doing what we've always done if it isn't getting the results our children deserve.

Our directorate priorities which staff at all levels of the organisation will contribute to are as follows:

Priority 1 - Children and their families are healthy, safe, enjoying and achieving

Priority 2 - Quality of service and practice is improving through a process of continuous learning and development

Priority 3 - There is capacity within the system to deliver for children and families

We want our workforce to be able to deliver our vision with courage, commitment, and determination. Our managers will lead with a 'One Team' approach, appreciating the skills and strengths of individuals contributing to a whole service approach to improving outcomes for children and their families. We need to harness the creativity, flexibility and innovation of the workforce, partners and the wider social care workforce.

3. National, regional & local drivers

National Drivers

Statutory and legislative frameworks

As a children's services Directorate the majority of our work is underpinned by legal frameworks and statutory guidance issued by central government. All of our workforce should be familiar with the relevant frameworks for their service area. Any changes to legislation and statutory guidance need to be reflected in our learning offer, for example we are expecting the transition from the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) to the new Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) in 2023, significant parts of children's services will need training in respect of understanding the new framework and the impact on practice.

Regulatory bodies

Some of our employees need to be registered with their professional regulatory body to carry out their role such as social workers and Social Work England (SWE) have clear standards that professionals must meet to maintain their registration including keeping their knowledge and skills up to date through regular continuing professional development (CPD). Our learning and development offer for staff must keep up to date with national



developments for staff to ensure their practice is up to date and support their continued registration.

Inspection frameworks

It is critical that the Children and Families workforce know and understand the requirements of the inspection framework relevant to their service area. Ofsted undertaken a number of inspections of local authority services under the Inspection of local authority children's services framework (ILACS) or the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) inspects social care establishments and agencies. The multi-agency Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) are undertaken by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMI Probation). Ofsted and CQC jointly inspect local areas to see how well they fulfil their responsibilities for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The service has robust inspection preparation arrangements, and this has been shared with the workforce. An annual self-evaluation will be completed in preparation for the following year's inspection programme. The workforce contributes to this document; it is an opportunity to reflect on what we are doing well and where we need to focus development work, whether this be in relation to policy or practice developments. Action or improvement plans will be developed from each inspection, the learning needs for the workforce should be identified in these plans and incorporated into the Directorate Learning Offer.

National Safeguarding Reviews

The national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel is an independent panel commissioning reviews of serious child safeguarding cases. Set up to ensure national and local reviews focus on improving learning, professional practice and outcomes for children. Reports are shared with all local authorities and should contribute to local lessons learnt and workforce development plans. Our South Tees Safeguarding Partnership should drive the learning from these reviews.

Research informed services

All of our workforce should have their practice informed by evidence-based research, to ensure our professional judgements are informed by the latest research, legal rulings and good practice. As a region we have commissioned access to Community Care Inform for the whole Children and Families workforce.

Apprenticeships



Thriving children, fulfilling their dreams.



As an employer with a pay bill over £3 million each year, the Local Authority contributes to the apprenticeship levy, we therefore access the levy to support the continuous professional development of all our staff. We will actively support the development and implementation of the apprenticeship programme across all teams, including the Higher Degree Social Work Apprenticeship, Leadership and Management Apprenticeships. We will work collaboratively with other local authorities across the region and HEIs to ensure a consistent approach to the development of programmes and assessment models.

Local Drivers

Feedback from children, young people and their families

To ensure we are responsive to the needs of our service users we will seek their views about the services we provide and use these, alongside learning from complaints and compliments, to inform practice and service planning. Feedback is collated into an annual report presented to the Senior Leadership team and then shared with all teams. Any thematic learning from service user feedback compliments or complaints will be built into the learning plan for the workforce training and development.

Safeguarding Children Practice Review (SCPR) /Learning Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR)

Recommendations local practice reviews should be built into both single and multi-agency training programmes, led by the South Tees Safeguarding Children's Partnership subgroups.

Quality Assurance Framework

We have a newly established quality assurance and performance framework which sets out with the principles which underpin our quality assurance activity, sets out clear expectations of practitioners and managers alongside a programme of quality assurance activity including audit work and direct observations of practice. The delivery of quality services is dependent upon a whole system approach which reflects continual development and evidences a learning organisation. Any practice learning from our audit activity needs to link into our programme of formal training and practice workshops.

4. Equality and Diversity

We are committed to having a workforce able to meet the needs of the local community we serve and reflect its diversity, with a continuing focus on promoting equalities, diversity and inclusive practice. We will endeavour to make Redcar and Cleveland a place where



everyone feels accepted as part of the community including our workforce. We recognise that there are those who are more vulnerable and disadvantaged than others, but we want our communities to be places to live where no one is ignored or forgotten about regardless of their race, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

It is not enough for our workforce to be aware of anti-racist/anti-oppressive practice they need to actively promote and challenge all forms of discrimination. We need to have a workforce confident enough to be able to put this into practice and recently commissioned specific social care training to enhance practitioners' awareness and knowledge.

5. Putting the Strategy into Practice – Implementation, Reporting and Evaluation

The Senior Management team in Children and Families Services will continue to work together with the Workforce Development Team on the implementation, reporting and evaluation of both the workforce strategy and the learning plans. We need to be confident of the quality of our learning offer, we need assurance that we have robust identification of and compliance with mandatory training and assurance of the impact of our learning offer – both on the workforce and on the families who receive our services. The feedback from the workforce from course evaluations, impact surveys and the Annual Health check will inform progress against the action plan and the effectiveness of the strategy. Progress will be monitored through performance management forums.

6. Our Learning Offer

Our Learning Offer sets out the learning, training and development activities which are available to ensure that the workforce can meet the demands of the current service and future developments. All of the learning opportunities should be aligned to our practice framework and discussions take place in supervision about the impact of training and development opportunities have on practice and families' experiences of our interventions.

Each learning opportunity/training course should be mapped against any professional requirements e.g., the Knowledge & Skills Statement for Child & Family Practitioners and Practice Supervisors. Training courses are commissioned through Council procurement processes, we have a range of providers that will deliver our planned programme but have the flexibility to meet any requirements that may be needed outside of this. We also recognise the huge pool of knowledge and skills within our workforce and actively encourage the



sharing of this informally through team meetings and practice forums but would also want to encourage this on a more formal basis through job shadowing and job swap (including secondment) arrangements and opportunities.



Thriving children, fulfilling their dreams.



7. Our Workforce Development Priorities

Our priorities can be identified under four interdependent themes. Together they will support us in delivering our strategic priorities for children, young people and their families with Redcar and Cleveland.

- To attract and retain an experienced and quality workforce
- To ensure different progression routes are available to staff
- To ensure the workforce has the opportunity to expand their own experience within the authority.

- To ensure we remain forward thinking in our delivery of services and that we invest in new ways of working. This will ensure high quality provision and evidenced based practice is provided to children and their families within the borough.



- To ensure our workforce has the right skills, behaviours and knowledge to deliver high quality services.
- Develop a workforce that is confident to challenge and be professionally curious.
- To work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities and local HEI's to ensure our workforce has access to high quality training.

- To ensure our leaders and managers have the right skills and knowledge to lead teams and services by example.
- To ensure our leaders and managers are visible and able to offer consistent support to staff.
- To ensure that our leaders and managers have the adequate training to ensure good quality practice is consistently delivered and where this falls short, they have the support and the skills to appropriately challenge and improve practice.

1. Recruitment and Retention

This priority is to address some of our high-level vacancies and retention issues within certain professions e.g., social workers based within our Front door, locality and assessment teams and our in house foster carers. Within Redcar and Cleveland, we want to be perceived and understood as an employer who recognises and values the work of staff that have positions within hard to recruit service areas. This ensures we retain our workforce and become an attractive employer to those seeking work.

What we do well

- Our student placements are well coordinated and provide a rich learning environment, in which each student is provided with an in-house Practice Educator, who supports their growth and development as a practitioner; ensuring they are able to deliver high quality practice to the children and families living within the borough. We deliver support sessions to our students in the student forum sessions which gives opportunity to reflect on their learning into practice. We have received praise and recognition from the North East Social Work Alliance (NESWA) as an authority which demonstrates dynamism and creativity in their approach to placement provision.
- We offer support and development sessions to our Practice Educators, which allows for encouragement and growth. The sessions provide an opportunity for staff to feedback areas in which we can development and improve as a supportive employer. As a result, we have been able to review policies and procedures and are leading on the development of a Practice Educators Handbook, which has attracted interest from other authorities.
- We have an updated an established and supportive Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme, in which staff are assisted through attendance at Portfolio and learning Development Sessions. Redcar and Cleveland lead on external moderation sessions, in which the regional authorities meet to provide peer support and feedback as to the progress and development of our NQSW's.
- We have an established mandatory training programme for our NQSW's.
- We participate in the national post graduate programme, Step Up to Social Work, to develop newly qualified social workers. This programme is employer led working closely with universities and the regional partnership which is made up of 12 Local Authorities.



- We have a committed and skilled workforce who understands the needs of children, young people and families they work with.
- The progression routes available to staff within certain areas of the children's workforce have been reviewed and have led to the creation of deputy managers. This provides assistance and support to team managers and leaders which in turn strengthens their availability of support to staff.
- We have a good track record of supporting apprenticeships across the Directorate who then go on to secure permanent positions within the Council.
- 10% of the apprenticeships we offer are ring fenced for our children in care and our care leavers.
- We regularly promote the staff rewards and benefits package.
- We celebrate NQSW success in passing their assessed year and actively celebrate social worker success and praise within practice weeks, sparkle moments and celebration events.

What do we need to do next?

- 1) To continue to undertake annual workforce planning for the children's workforce to ensure we meet future challenges.
- 2) To maximise continued opportunities for targeted recruitment and various pathways into social work e.g., Social Work Apprenticeship, Step Up and to consider Frontline as an agency to collaborate with.
- 3) Review the recruitment and retention strategy and the Redcar & Cleveland 'offer'.
- 4) Continue our positive links with our HEI establishments and deliver practice teaching to students and promotion of our NQSW Childrens Social Work Academy.
- 5) Formal launch of the Childrens Social Work Academy, which will support the knowledge and skills of those who join the academy, this will in turn support recruitment and retention of difficult to recruit areas and support reduction of agency social workers within the directorate.



2. Developing Professional Practice

This priority is to equip the workforce with the correct skills, knowledge and behaviours to deliver a range of early intervention and prevention services that improve children's and young people's outcomes. It is to ensure that our workforce is innovative, skilled and flexible to avoid duplication of service and maximise resources. We are committed to providing our workforce with the right training and qualifications for their current and future roles.

What we do well

- Within our workforce, we have a well embedded and effective supervision/ one to one framework which integrates staff development and reflective practice. We have also embedded a programme of group supervisions.
- The workforce is provided with annual appraisals to support their development, with 6 monthly reviews.
- We invest heavily in training for our children's workforce. The workforce Learning Plan is updated on an annual basis to ensure the training being delivered remains relevant and pertinent to the roles and challenges faced by our staff when working with our children, young people and their families. Adaptations to the Learning Plan are made in consultation not only with management but also the workforce through staff surveys. The Learning Plan ensures that all our staff have the correct type of safeguarding training to be able to support them in their roles.
- We work closely with the South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership to identify training needs and provide E Learning where possible, we have been actively involved in thematic de elopement session for practitioners in partners with the STSCP. This ensures the workforce has continued access to training and development opportunities, whilst protecting the time they have available to work with our children, young people and their families.
- We support the workforce to access development opportunities within their profession. We invest in post graduate courses and qualifications for staff, through the maintenance of good working relationships with local HEI's.



- We anticipate the likely future of the workforce will include increasing opportunities to work collaboratively with both statutory and non-statutory partners including other Local Authorities. We continue to share and develop our workforce training with other councils and other partners such as the NHS, the private, voluntary and independent sector.
- We continue to develop the wider workforce of commissioned and non-commissioned services including carers by sharing our annual training with the wider care sector.

What do we need to do next?

- 1) We will continue to review the workforce Learning Offer on an annual basis.
- 2) We need to continue to consolidate our group supervision programme and widen to include partners to ensure collaborative planning for children and shared learning.
- 3) We need to develop our process for evaluating the impact of training and development opportunities on practice and staff retention.
- 4) To continue to improve our performance in relation to the number of appraisals completed annually and the quality of these
- 5) We will continue to invest in post qualifying training to equip staff with the specialisms needed to carry out specific and highly skilled work with our children, young people and their families.
- 6) We will ensure that staff have robust assessment and support planning skills, supplemented by strong safeguarding skills, the ability to accredit themselves in legal and court environments. This will be achieved by embedding a variety of practice models that are strength based and family focused, inclusive of Signs of Safety and Trauma Informed Practice. We will continue to develop staff at different levels of investigation training to enable them to conduct effective investigations as part of their role.
- 7) We will continue to work in partnership with the other regional authorities to deliver training to staff. Not only does this provide financial benefit to Redcar and Cleveland, it also leads the way for positive partnership working and a consistent standard of practice across the region.



3. Developing Leaders and Managers

This priority is to build visionary, effective and talented leaders and managers at all levels to meet the future needs of children, young people and their families. Developing skills and behaviours in light of changes to service development and delivery, reducing resources and the need for greater partnership working across communities, public sector services both at a local and regional level. We strongly believe that our leaders and managers should be the best role models for our workforce in delivering high quality practice to the children, young people and the families within the borough.

What we do well

- Leaders and managers responded effectively and swiftly to the COVID pandemic, working together across teams and services ensuring staff were supported and led to continue to deliver services.
- We have a recently renewed and clear career progression pathway for social work staff to support succession planning into management roles, supported by the relevant training/qualifications to progress through this route.
- We have a clear management structure in place, which ensures that the senior management team are visible to team managers to offer support.
- We have introduced deputy managers to support team managers and leaders in increasing their ability to be visible and consistently supportive and available to staff additionally with the implementation of family support workers in teams, to support social workers in their day-to-day role.
- Managers across all of Children's services meet on a monthly basis to discuss common practice issues to learn from each other within the "Learning and Review" session.
- We have IT systems in place to support managers in monitoring and addressing performance management.



What do we need to do next?

- 1) Managers and leaders need to continue to lead the embedding of practice models inclusive of Trauma Informed Practice, Signs of Safety practice and Family Seeing, modelling the key principles in their management and leadership roles. Much investment has been committed to ensure the managers and leaders are best placed to ensure the models are consistently and effectively rolled out across the service.
- 2) We will continue to review the role of deputies to ensure that they have the capacity and skills required to support the managers and leaders in fulfilling their roles.
- 3) To ensure all managers across the children's workforce are highly skilled and have the training and tools required to provide robust management of performance.
- 4) We will ensure that managers and leaders are able to make confident, value for money decisions with existing and new providers in supporting people to use personal budgets through outcome focussed training.
- 5) We will continue to provide training to managers to support them in their roles e.g., supervision training for supervisors.
- 6) We have become affiliated with the Front Line Pathways Leadership Programme, this is a 4 stage Pathway programme for senior practitioners all the way to Director level to support and develop key learning and skills and promote career development.
- 7) We will review our performance management framework to ensure managers are sighted on the key performance information and have the narrative behind the data to confidently explain our performance.
- 8) We need to continue to strengthen our methods of 'closing the loop' and ensure we can evidence the impact of all of the learning opportunities, quality assurance activity, public and staff feedback in our practice and service developments.



4. Innovative ways of working

As a local authority we are challenged to constantly do more with less. This requires a continued commitment from our workforce. We need to build resilience and empower our workforce to meet the challenges and ensure they can be innovative and creative in taking forward any change agenda. We need to ensure that we have a workforce who can work across teams, organisations and sectors to ensure positive outcomes for children, young people and their families. We want our workforce to learn from and respect each other's contribution and work together across all sectors because the children and young people who most need our help will also need the help of others.

What we do well

- We responded really well to the challenges presented as a result of the COVID pandemic, adapting our working practices to continue to provide our statutory functions and identify new ways of working that have been helpful post pandemic period.
- We have developed integrated teams who work effectively in prevention and early intervention and are located within communities.
- Our staff deliver early help and prevention as the standard response, our staff are skilled in delivering person centred support and outcome focussed care.
- We have developed a Duty and Assessment Team which is co-located with our Multi Agency Children's Hub (MACH) front door service. This will ensure our most experienced and skilled staff are able to identify risks at the earliest stages and implement appropriate support. The integration of an early help lead and team within the team ensures that we can signpost and support our children, young people and their families within the appropriate provisions, thus creating a seamless service for those coming into contact with Redcar and Cleveland Children's Services.
- We have developed an Unaccompanied Children's Team, which has allowed for niche and specialist work to be undertaken with this vulnerable children's group.
- We are in the process of developing a Children's Social Work Academy which will aid learning and development of our newly qualified social workers and support staff retention.



- We work jointly with public health in developing new approaches to early life opportunities for children and families.
- Our workforce engages in partnership working to achieve shared outcomes for people who access support.
- Within Redcar and Cleveland Health Visitors and School Nurses are employees of the council and an integral part of our children's workforce. A recent CQC inspection was complimentary about the services provided to our children, young people and their families by our health colleagues. The integration of the service has strengthened partnership working and allows for good practices to be shared across health and social care settings.
- We have strengthened our links with our virtual school and co-developed training offers across the Children, Families and Education partnership.
- We work effectively in partnerships to utilise the skills and experience of multi-agency professionals to ensure that good practice is shared between practitioners.

What do we need to do next?

- 1) We will continue to offer diverse and varied training to the children's workforce, drawing on the skills and expertise of our partners.
- 2) We need to be sighted on new initiatives and development opportunities across the Directorate and support staff to progress new projects such as No Wrong Door and our Children's Society Contextual Safeguarding Bid.
- 3) We will formally launch the Childrens Social Work Academy to strengthen the skills of our newly qualified social workers.





Thriving children, fulfilling their dreams.

