



York Children's Social Care Vision Update – October 2015



Keeping Families Together – Keeping Children Safe
Our Vision, Ambition and Expectations



Colleagues,

Two years ago, we set off on a journey together to establish for the children and families of York a 'new model of social work'. We did so in acknowledgement that we could not continue to do what we had always done. At the time we set challenging goals for ourselves. We said we would:

- spend more time working in partnership with families;
- provide strong professional development and professional support for our social workers;
- manage risk, whilst understanding that uncertainty and risk are features of child protection work;
- make a difference by working together.

Staff, partners and Members at the time welcomed our ambition and we undertook to keep in touch about the progress we would make together.

In April 2015 it was my pleasure to be part of a memorable day-long event in which staff were able to participate in an honest and open discussion about how we are doing or, as the title of the day asked, whether we are 'thriving or just surviving?' You fed back that much has changed for the better in the services that we deliver to some of the most vulnerable children and families in York. You were also clear that there is much still to do. You expressed confidence in the Vision that we set out two years ago and continue to work towards.

This short document cannot do justice to all the work that has been achieved to date. Nevertheless, it does provide a flavour of the change in style, environment, skills and tools we have made over the past two years. There is much to celebrate and you should be extremely proud of your role in working towards what remains an ambitious Vision for Children's Social Care in York.



Eoin Rush
Assistant Director, Children's Specialist Services

Style of Working Annex C

Progress to date

Over the past two years, the way in which we deliver services has changed. We offer qualified social worker advice at the point of contact, and we assess the needs of families by way of Single Assessment, supported by a range of evidence-based assessment tools.

Our plans are smarter and outcome-focused, and we review them more systematically. We have amplified the voice of the child in all that we do.

Additionally, we have two new senior advisor posts: a principal social worker and a principal advisor. All of this has enabled a culture of high support and high challenge to develop and flourish in York.

What is still to do?

We are committed to continuous service improvement. Some areas for improvement include:

- (1) Further improve the quality, timeliness and proportionality of assessments across the service.
- (2) Achieve the right sort of permanency, at the right time, for children and young people¹.
- (3) Have sufficient local and appropriate placements for our looked after children.
- (4) Improve the quality of recording of what we do.



¹ Bring Them Home Strategy

Environment

Progress to date

Over the past two years our commitment to strong professional support has been centred on improving the quality of supervision. A new policy and process have been introduced. We have established an annual staff survey, senior manager observations of supervision and a monthly 'scorecard' which records whether staff are receiving regular supervision². We have also introduced the annual corporate personal development review process for all staff.

Our practice has been supported by more regular team meetings and regular practice guidance updates.

Caseloads are now monitored systematically and, where issues emerge, additional resources are deployed.

A learning culture has been developed, with regular case file audits and performance data to identify areas of strength and areas for development.

What is still to do?

- (1) Improve communication with staff, using a range of different media.
- (2) Embed a healthy, safe and supportive working environment for staff.
- (3) Continue to improve the quality of supervision.



² Supervision scorecard systematically reported to Executive Member, Chair of the Safeguarding Board, Director and Chief Executive



Skills

Progress to date

Over the past two years, staff have been able to access a wide range of excellent learning and development opportunities to support them in their ongoing professional development.

Additionally, briefings on national and local learning from serious case reviews have been provided. Staff awareness of child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSA&E), missing and children privately fostered has increased through briefings and training.

We have also worked in partnership with the University of York (R&A) and Research in Practice (Hob Moor CP/LAC team) to develop greater understanding of our social work practice in key areas.

Uncertainty and risk will always be part of the work we do, but we remain committed to providing staff with the skills needed to be effective and to do the job well.

What is still to do?

- (1) Clarify further and communicate professional development pathways for all staff.
- (2) Develop a wider delivery model for staff development.
- (3) Develop a process to more proactively identify skill and knowledge gaps.

Tools

Progress to date

An effective service is one in which practitioners are provided with the right tools to do the job. Over the past two years key documents have been reviewed and updated and, where possible, our case management system, RAISE, improved.

We have listened to staff feedback and reduced blockages and bureaucracy. We have put our policies online and created an up-to-date forms library. We have completely revised key policies on child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSA&E), private fostering, missing children and out of area placements.

We have made performance management information available to managers.

Significantly, in April 2014, we commenced a project to replace RAISE with a new system, Mosaic. Mosaic offers a range of functions not available on RAISE, yet does so in a modern, easy-to-use and intuitive way with an emphasis on reducing the screen time required.

Unlike RAISE, Mosaic was designed to reflect the need identified by Professor Eileen Munro in her national review of child protection, to move away from overly bureaucratic processes and focus on outcomes for children and their families.

Mosaic represents a significant financial investment and is driven by a strong commitment to ensure that systems and processes support effective practice and help achieve the best possible outcome for vulnerable children and young people and their families in the city.

What is still to do?

- (1) Successfully implement the Mosaic case management system.
- (2) Implement mobile working across service areas.

The next review of the Vision is due April 2016.

Working in Partnership Annex C

Progress to date

We can only deliver effective services if we work closely with our professional partners. York has a long history of good multi-agency working and this continues.

We have made significant progress in key areas:

- Substance misuse colleagues have developed an innovative service along the lines of the Family Drug and Alcohol Court model.
- Colleagues in Health have developed a streamlined process for their professional contribution to single assessments.
- The Safeguarding Board, in partnership with the NSPCC, has developed the It's not OK campaign, to increase awareness of CSA&E.
- Colleagues in education are piloting the new referral form for Children's Social Care.
- Colleagues in the police are working closely with us to improve our responses to children and young people at risk of CSA&E.
- We have created a specialist post to scrutinise our responses to individual children and young people identified as being highly vulnerable.

What is still to do?

- (1) Continue to work with our colleagues in the police to further strengthen our response to children who are vulnerable, missing, exploited or trafficked.

