

Meeting of the Adult Social Care Select Committee - 7th March 2024

Report of the Director of Adult Social Care

Recommendations and developments from ADASS Principal Social Worker Practice Review Programme of Dudley Adult Social Care

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of the report is to present the external Practice Review Report highlighting key strengths and areas for improvement with actions to meet requirements.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended:-
 - that Committee Members scrutinise the report to seek assurance about strengths based practice in Adult Social Care and positive outcomes for citizens.

Background

3. To provide assurance, improve practice and as part of the statutory Principal Social Worker role West Midlands Association of Directors of Social Services (ADASS) conduct Practice Reviews of all Local Authorities. The Practice Review consists of a representative from ADASS, the host Principal Social Worker and three Principal Social Workers from the region. The Dudley review took place in November/December 2023.
4. Dudley identified the theme for the Practice Review as 'the application of strengths-based practice across adult social care teams'.

5. The Practice Review consisted of the following elements:

- A self-assessment outlining the demographics of Dudley Borough related to Adult Social Care, the role of the Principal Social Worker in Dudley and areas of strengths and aspects for development.
- Two virtual meetings with staff, one with front line practitioners and one with Managers.
- An examination of 20 case records. The host Principal Social Worker had asked adult social care teams for a selection of cases that they had audited using the Quality Assurance Framework. These were based on the theme of strengths-based practice. These case records had to have enough information that would allow a Principal Social Worker to examine for the Practice Review. The four Principal Social Workers then audited the case records under 12 headings rating each heading as:
 - Outstanding
 - Good
 - Requires Improvement
 - Inadequate
 - In addition, Principal Social Workers provided an overall judgement on the case record again using the same rating scale.
- Conversations with 5 people who the case recording was about or their relatives.
- The host Principal Social Worker provided assurance and updates for the areas of improvement from the previous Practice Review June 2019.

Practice Review findings

6. Of the 20 cases audited, there were no cases that were referred back to the Council where any significant concerns were identified.
7. In total there were 240 questions rated (20x12) and the overall numbers and percentages are as follows:

Outstanding	59 (25%)
Good	143 (60%)
Requires Improvement	37 (15.5%)
Inadequate	1 (0.5%)

8. The overall judgement on each case record using the same rating scale, demonstrated 5 case records were considered to be outstanding, whilst 13 case records were considered to be good, and only 2 case records were considered to require improvement (see table below):

Outstanding	5 (25%)
Good	13 (65%)
Requires Improvement	2 (10%)
Inadequate	0 (0%)

Observations of the Practice Review Team

9. The Practice Review Team found all practitioners and managers committed, passionate and loyal about working in Dudley, with a real fondness for the local authority. One practitioner stating that they had worked elsewhere “but my heart is in Dudley”. Practitioners and managers talked about the good working relationships that they had developed between each other and that that was what kept them happy at work.
10. There seemed to be good opportunities for development with practitioners and managers speaking about apprenticeships, Best Interest Assessor, practice educator and AMHP training all available. There were some practitioners that had undertaken apprenticeships and others who had progressed into management positions.

Key strengths

- 11.
- Adult social care practice was of a good standard
 - Practitioners and managers are loyal to the local authority, and considered ‘it’s a good place to be’, and they had good working relationships with each other
 - Practitioners and managers felt supported, although further work is required regarding supervision
 - Good offer and support for carers
 - Good training opportunities for staff

Recommendations for practice improvement/development

- 12.
- Examining arrangements, consistency and access to regular good quality reflective supervision for practitioners
 - Examining how management oversight on case records can be improved

- Strengthening the culture and communication process to develop a consistent model of practice, and ensuring there is a central repository for policies and guidance
- Producing and implementing a practice framework, other guidance and tools as the foundations to support embedding strengths-based practice
- Examining the quality assurance process and implementing a consistent and regular approach to auditing of case files
- Embedding strength-based practice by using outstanding examples of practice identified in this review and other best practice examples
- Examining the 'panel' process and potential for not requiring approval for everything and the opportunity for some autonomy for practitioners

Actions to address practice improvement/development

13. All of the suggested improvements made in the Practice Review will be overseen by the Continuous Development Group and have been incorporated into a formal action plan and updated risk log. The Group meets every month and progress with the Development Plan is reported into the Adult Social Care Select Committee.
14. Examining arrangements, consistency, and access to regular good quality reflective supervision for practitioners.

ACTION - The Critical Reflective Supervision policy, procedure and templates is being redesigned and re launched and will be supported by further training. Once re launched audits of supervision are to be part of the Quality Assurance framework and all practitioners will be observed annually.

15. Examining how management oversight on case records can be improved.

ACTION - The Case record policy is to be reinforced and managers reminded as part of the supervision process to record on case notes detailing discussion and direction for practitioners.

16. Strengthening the culture and communication process to develop a consistent model of practice, and ensuring there is a central repository for policies and guidance.

ACTION - The new Adult Social Care SharePoint site which is in development will be launched soon. This includes a central repository for all policies and guidance and all practitioners will have

access via their desktop. Communication will be supported further via “tiles” on the SharePoint site for all service areas including Learning and Development and the Principal Social Worker, and will enable “blogs” to all staff highlighting new areas of interest and any changes in policies and guidance.

17. Producing and implementing a practice framework, other guidance and tools as the foundations to support embedding strengths-based practice.

ACTION - Strengths based practice will be supported and embedded further with the development of a Practice Framework and tools. This is being co-produced and will be launched by April 2024.

18. Examining the quality assurance process and implementing a consistent and regular approach to auditing of case files.

ACTION - The Quality Assurance Framework and audit tools and audit program has been launched. However, it appears not all practitioners are aware. Communication is to be reinforced and assurance gained that Managers are feeding back to staff areas for development as well as exemplars of good practice.

19. Embedding strength-based practice by using outstanding examples of practice identified in this review and other best practice examples.

ACTION - Exemplars of good practice have been requested from Managers and further exemplars will come from ongoing and future audits.

20. Examining the ‘panel’ process and potential for not requiring approval for everything and the opportunity for some autonomy for practitioners.

ACTION - The panel process is being reviewed and data will be analysed to explore potential areas for improvement that provides assurance, robust resource management while supporting the autonomy of practitioners and providing a seamless service for citizens.

Finance

21. There are no financial costs for the developments required as all are within the current resource envelope.

Law

22. Section 1 of the Care Act 2014 states Local Authorities should enable individual's control of their day-to-day life, suitability of living accommodation, contribution to society and requires local authorities to consider each person's views, wishes, feelings and beliefs. This is recognised as being supported by strengths based practice.
23. The role of the Principal Social Worker is a statutory requirement and referenced in the 2016 revised Care Act guidance, section 1.27.

Risk Management

24. There are no material risks.

Equality Impact

25. The Review recommendations are based on provision in the Care Act 2014 which is implemented within Dudley and is consistent with the councils Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy, and policy statement 2022-2025. The work undertaken promotes equality of opportunity, access, and person-centered practice.
26. An Equality Impact Assessment Screening tool was completed and there are no equality impacts identified to warrant an Equality Impact Assessment.
27. There is no effect of the decision on children and young people. Adults who consented were involved in the audits and provided feedback which was used to inform the Review findings and recommendations.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

28. There are no HR/organisational development implications from the proposal.

Commercial/Procurement

29. There is no impact on profit or loss trade, Procurement implications, Social Value and compliance with Contract Standing Orders and Procurement legislation.

Environment/Climate Change

30. There is no impact on the environment or Council priorities to Net Zero target by 2041.

Council Priorities and Projects

31. The Review and improvements/developments supports the key Council priorities to be a place where communities can lead stronger, safer and healthier lives.

32. There is no impact on current wider Council and Borough activity and projects.



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Appendices 1- Practice Review Programme 2022/24 - Report following Practice Review in Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council