

Adult Social Care and Health **Principal Social Worker** Annual Report 2023-2024



July 2024

PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

| CONTENTS | SECTION |
|--|----------------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Achievements | 2 |
| Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) | 3 |
| Practice Improvement and Quality Assurance | 4 |
| Learning and Development | 5 |
| Safeguarding Adults | 6 |
| Recruitment and Retention | 7 |
| Practice Leadership | 8 |
| Priorities going forward for 2024 - 2025 | 9 |
| Conclusion | 10 |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The programme of work described in this report supports the transformation ambitions of the council, including; good social work practice, supporting learning and development within the wider social care workforce, providing statutory adult social care duties within a sustainable financial model; and to support the priorities in the Mayor's Business Plan 2022-2026.

1.2. The purpose of this report is:

- To provide an update on the key achievements for 2023-2024 of the Adult Social Care and Health Principal Social Worker (PSW).
- To promote the ongoing work of the PSW, and other areas of adult social care practice development.
- To highlight priorities for 2024, including preparations for Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance.

Croydon Adult Social Care and Health Vision (ASCH)

“Enabling people to live in a place they call home, with the people and things that they love, doing the things that matter to them, in communities which look out for one another”.

1.3. The skilled workforce will support and guide people through their options, champion equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure that Croydon residents can get the right support when they need it.

The Role of the Principal Social Worker (PSW)

1.4. The Role of the Principal Social Worker was initiated by the Social Work Reform Board and recommended in the 2011 Munroe Report. It has since developed under the Care Act 2014, and is a statutory requirement to “have in place a designated principal social worker in adult care and support. Local authorities should make arrangements to have a qualified and registered social work professional practice lead in place” - Care Act Guidance (2014) Section 1.27.

1.5. The Care Act 2014 states that the Principal Social Worker should:

- Be visible across the organisation.
- Support and develop effective conditions for practice.
- Oversee quality assurance and improvement of social work practice across the whole directorate.
- Have direct contact with and advise the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and/or wider Council, in complex or controversial cases and on case or other law relating to social work practice.
- Support effective social work supervision and decision making.

- Lead on the career development of social workers.
 - Have a broad knowledge base on safeguarding and Making Safeguarding Personal.
 - Function at the strategic level of the Professional Capabilities Framework (British Association of Social Workers).
- 1.6. This report sets out what the Adult Social Care and Health Directorate has achieved since Sharon Judd was successfully recruited to the permanent position of the Principal Social Worker in November 2022, having moved from a managerial role in Croydon Mental Health Services.
- 1.7. The PSW role is a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and contributes to the strategic leadership of the service, develops and implements standards to ensure a cohesive and high performing social work workforce which embraces cultural change, continued service delivery and practice improvements. The PSW role is one of autonomy and objectivity and thus reports to the Director of Operations in Adult Social Care and Health and meets with the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS).
- 1.8. In addition to the Care Act guidance, other functions of the PSW role include:
- To influence the organisation at a strategic level and ensure that senior managers are aware of the experience of front-line staff.
 - To provide operational and motivational leadership to staff.
 - To promote a culture of social justice and be a champion on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).
 - To embed effective social care performance, practice governance and service quality monitoring.
 - To lead on improving practice standards and ensuring that performance improvements and agreed organisational objectives and targets are met.
 - To develop good partnership working between adult and children's services, and with various partners and stakeholders.
 - To promote and take part in research and practice development.
 - To support a strengths-based practice culture.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS

- 2.1. The Principal Social Worker (PSW) report is an opportunity to review the previous year, reflect on progress and celebrate achievements across the Adult Social Care and Health Directorate.
- 2.2. The PSW role was previously integrated into an Operational Head of Service role. This did not support a dedicated focused approach to address the needs of the social care workforce. As such, it has been necessary for the new stand-alone PSW role to review, undertake a gap analysis and create a list of priorities.

2.3. Due to the breadth of demand across the directorate, the PSW identified the need for additional support to assist with the delivery of statutory functions, improve practice across the directorate and ensure readiness for CQC assurance. The PSW designed and recruited two new specialist Social Work Practice Lead posts who began their roles in 2024. In addition, the PSW oversees two Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Leads (ASYE) and a Student / Apprenticeship / Practice Education Lead (SAPE).

2.4. Achievements are as follows:

- Completed the Local Government Association (LGA) Employer Standard Health check Questionnaire in 2023 and 2024. This information informs recruitment and retention activity.
- Successfully delivered the ASYE programme. 11 Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) completed in 2022, 11 NQSWs completed in 2023, and there are 11 on the current cohort due to complete their course in October 2024.
- Continued involvement with the Southwest London Teaching Partnership who provide a training offer to the workforce.
- 25 social work students have been placed in the Adult Social Care and Health Directorate, bringing in an income of approximately £38,000 (inclusive of ASYE contributions from Skills for Care). This income is reinvested into the workforce. Historically, the responsibility of monitoring the financial data has not been managed by the PSW. However, the oversight of such data will be aligned to the PSW in the next financial year to streamline governance.
- Successfully trained 6 Practice Educators in 2023.
- Completion of the Approved Mental Health Professional Programme (AMHP), 2 approved AMHPs in 2023, 1 AMHP approved in 2024.
- Successful completion of Social Work Apprenticeship degree - 2 Social Work Apprentices completed their degree with the Open University in 2022 (these apprentices are currently undertaking the Croydon ASYE programme).
- Supported London South Bank University (LSBU) in Croydon with their validation process requirements for Social Work England in 2024. There are two Social Work Apprentices starting with LSBU in September 2024.
- Conducted an analysis of staff supervision experience via a benchmarking questionnaire. Utilised the data to launch appropriate supervision training and a PSW Network Supervision Policy.
- Designed, produced and launched Social Work Forums in March 2024.
- Designed, produced and launched Practice Workshops in April 2024.
- Identified a deficit in the undertaking of Carers Assessments amongst social care practitioners which has been addressed.
- Initiated Carers practice governance, guidance and audits.
- Organised and led the Social Work Week 2023 celebration.

- Designed, produced and delivered Social Work Day 2024 event with internal and external partners.
- Designed, produced and delivered a one-day Social Work Conference in July 2023, and two days in July 2024. These included a range of external contributors and people with lived experience.
- Designed, produced and launched the Adult Social Care and Health Recognition and Excellence Awards in October 2023.
- Conducted and coordinated the assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) celebration ceremonies for two cohorts (August 2023 and April 2024).
- Following Social Work England research and to ensure maintenance of professional Social Work registration, the PSW developed a Continued Professional Development protected time policy (CPD) in July 2023. This has achieved the highest satisfaction rating in the LGA Employer Standards health check results amongst the Adult Social Care and Health Directorate and across London.
- Following identification of the need for a stand-alone risk assessment in the Directorate, the PSW designed and produced a stand-alone strengths-based risk assessment tool with a London PSW Network Subgroup. This has been endorsed by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS).
- Researched, designed and produced a Case Load Weighting Tool, to support staff with even distribution of work, management of risk and promoting staff well-being. This is being piloted currently (July 2024 – October 2024).
- Identified an absence of a Quality Assurance Framework and initiated strengths-based practice audits to highlight learning needs of the workforce. This has resumed quality assurance activity across the directorate.
- Regular meetings established with Children's Workforce Development Consultants.

3. ASSESSED AND SUPPORTED YEAR IN EMPLOYMENT (ASYE)

- 3.1. The (ASYE) programme has been designed to provide Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) with the opportunity to develop their practice knowledge regarding key elements of social work practice. The programme continues to develop in line with relevant guidance from Skills for Care.
- 3.2. Supporting NQSWs is an important strategy for "growing our own" workforce, retaining high quality professionals and achieving good outcomes for service users.
- 3.3. The ASYE provision is well established and managed by the two ASYE Leads who provide an outstanding provision. Skills for Care conducted an evaluation of the programme in 2023 which was positively reviewed. The PSW has operational oversight over the programme and chairs the moderation panel.

4. PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- 4.1. The Social Work Forums were launched by the Social Work Practice Leads on World Social Work Day March 2024 and are rolling throughout the year. These aim to support practitioners in building their knowledge base of processes, teams, pathways and resources available to effectively support residents from a strengths-based perspective in practice.
- 4.2. The Practice Workshops were launched by the Social Work Practice Leads in April 2024 and are rolling throughout the year. These aim to create a space for practitioners to discuss and reflect, explore challenges, pathways and share best practice. The thematic analysis from audits provides the content including, legal literacy, social work theory, complaints and Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARS). The workshops offer an opportunity to dissect cases, explore case law, discuss learning and link these to best practice.
- 4.3. The Social Work Practice Leads launched the PSW Newsletter in February 2024. This disseminates new case law /judgements, Local Government Ombudsman learning, training/development opportunities, the Equality Diversity and Inclusion agenda, anti-racist social work articles and is an effective method of communicating across the social care workforce.
- 4.4. The PSW launched a strengths-based audit to ascertain improvements needed in practice, gaps in knowledge, skills and expertise. It has also been a mechanism to identify outstanding practice, which has been shared and disseminated through a practice workshop.
- 4.5. These practice improvements enable the Adult Social Care and Health Directorate (ASCH):
 - To build, create and maintain a skilled, knowledgeable, competent, and confident workforce.
 - To create an equitable and transparent service.
 - To be held accountable and work from an evidence-based practice model.
 - To embed an organisational social work culture of learning, and development through training and sharing practice, to positively impact the service residents receive from the ASCH.

5. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1. A strengths-based program is being embedded across the Adult Social Care and Health Directorate. This helps to transform culture and enable frontline practitioners in undertaking interventions informed by person centered conversations and relationship focused activity.
- 5.2. The Learning & Development Consultant (L&D) does not sit in the Adult Social Care and Health Directorate. A training matrix has been developed by the L&D Consultant who has been supported to explore training needs across the

directorate, for example to assist with launching the supervision training.

- 5.3. There is an ongoing partnership with the South West London Teaching partnership who offer various training.
- 5.4. **Practice Education and Students** – The Practice Education pathway is co-ordinated by the Student / Apprenticeship / Practice Education Lead (SAPE) lead with oversight from the PSW. The management and oversight of this framework moved from Corporate L&D to ASCH in late 2022. The SAPE lead was appointed in July 2023.
- 5.5. Student placements are arranged predominantly with the Southwest London Teaching Partnership. The directorate is looking forward to continued associations with Kingston University who are the academic institution within the South West London Teaching Partnership. The directorate will also continue to work with other Universities and look to source opportunities for development that will be of benefit to Croydon. Both Children's Services and Adults reciprocate placements for students.
- 5.6. **Social Work Apprenticeships** – The Adult Social Care and Health Directorate's first two social work apprentices successfully completed their degree in early 2023 with the Open University. They are part of the current ASYE cohort and should be joining the directorate's qualified workforce in late 2024.
- 5.7. Two apprentices will be beginning their apprenticeship degree in September 2024 with LSBU (Croydon Campus). The PSW has secured funding from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to support the two apprentices in their first year of their apprenticeship. The PSW and SAPE Lead will continue to support their career development and organisational learning.
- 5.8. **AMHP programme (Approved Mental Health Professional)** The directorate continues to use Bournemouth University for the Masters Level AMHP Programme which offers a Postgraduate Diploma in Mental Health. This course is rigorous requiring much preparation to ensure that that the directorate's Social Workers are appropriately undertaking their statutory functions under the Mental Health Act 1983 (amended 2007).
- 5.9. The directorate is not currently offering to train new Best Interests Assessors (BIA). This will be reviewed in 2024-2025.

6. SAFEGUARDING ADULTS

- 6.1. The PSW is a member of Croydon's Safeguarding Adults Board (CSAB), Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) subgroup; and the Performance and Quality subgroup.
- 6.2. The PSW and CSAB Manager regularly consult to discuss relevant learning and development needs, in particular to explore learning from SARs. This will be reviewed to ensure that the whole workforce is accessing the training (including mental health social care staff). Further meetings with the L&D Consultant will ensure that safeguarding adults training is supported and undertaken regularly.

7. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- 7.1. The Principal Social Worker will support a continual professional development framework via a range of development opportunities comprising of:
 - Annual training programme.
 - A career progression scheme which allows staff to move from social worker, to experienced social worker, to advanced social worker.
 - A training offer to enable career progression by undertaking Best Interest Assessments, Approved Mental Health Practitioner or Practice Educator training.
 - This agenda will be reviewed and developed in 2024-2026.

8. PRACTICE LEADERSHIP

- 8.1. There is a national network of Principal Social Workers which is supported by the Chief Social Worker who sits within the Department for Health and Social Care.
- 8.2. The Chief Social Worker provides a voice for social work in government, supporting key developments in policy, education and social work practice. The PSW receives mentoring from the retired Chief Social Worker.
- 8.3. The PSW is an associate member of ADASS; the national and local PSW Network; and like all practicing social workers in England registered with Social Work England.
- 8.4. The PSW is an Approved Mental Health Practitioner (AMHP) and participates in Croydon's AMHP rota. The PSW instigated and is a member of the AMHP approval panel for quality assurance and governance.
- 8.5. Following nomination from the Director for Adult Social Services (DASS), the PSW is undertaking a leadership course with Skills for Care.
- 8.6. The PSW will be assisting as a Specialist Advisor in undertaking Care Quality Commission assessments and will disseminate learning to the directorate as appropriate. These activities are essential support systems through which updates are gathered on legislation, policy, guidance, research, and practice

issues.

- 8.7. There is a network of PSW meetings and events which provide an opportunity for sharing good practice and the national agenda. Learning is disseminated to the directorate as appropriate.
- 8.8. The PSW attends several national and local groups and relevant conferences to support learning and information sharing. This includes:
 - National and London Regional Adults Principal Social Worker networks.
 - Member of South West London & Surrey ASYE moderation panel.
 - Member of the London Branch for the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS).
 - Member of Developing Together Teaching Partnership Strategic Board.
 - National PSW Joint Conference July 2023 and July 2024.
 - ADASS Conference April 2024.
 - Member of London PSW network Working group on Risk Assessment Tool.
 - Attended PSW Care Quality Commission Assurance meetings locally and nationally.
- 8.9. Other key local involvement includes:
 - Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Workforce Board.
 - Adult Social Care and Health EDI Board.
 - Adult Social Care and Health CQC Assurance board.
 - Adult Social Care and Health Audit moderation panel.
 - Adult Social Care and Health Quality Assurance Board.
 - Adult Social Care and Health Mental Health Programme Board
 - Adult Social Care and Health Senior Management Team.
 - Adult Social Care and Health Performance Board.
 - Croydon Safeguarding Adults Board.
 - Quarterly Statutory Officer Meetings.
- 8.10. In addition to these boards, the PSW regularly attends forums and team meetings to support frontline practitioners; and individual sessions with practitioners and managers regarding complex case discussions, workforce issues and development.

9. PRIORITIES GOING FORWARD FOR 2024 – 2025

- 9.1. The Principal Social Worker will continue to provide leadership to the Social Care workforce in Croydon, helping to raise the profile of social work both internally and externally.
- 9.2. As the PSW's remit is broad, there will be continual progress and development of the activities cited in this document. However, the main priorities will be:

Recruitment and retention

- To develop a robust recruitment and retention strategy. This seeks to support the development of a stable workforce and to embed good practice within a consistent staff group.
- To use the Local Government Association Employer Standards Health Check, as a key method to improve recruitment and retention.
- To benchmark and develop a Social Work career progression programme.
- Implement the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standards Framework (SC WRES Skills for Care).
- To continue to support the promotion of staff wellbeing in the Directorate.
- To work with HR ensuring we have accurate data regarding Social Work retention and development.

Learning and development

- To ensure PSW membership on the Learning and Development Board.
- To review the training matrix from a statutory perspective with the Learning & Development consultant.
- To quality assure the current training offer, establishing gaps in provision and learning and to offer solutions.
- To co-design solutions with management and frontline practitioners.
- To embed a rolling training offer, ensuring new starters and existing staff have routine access to relevant training.
- To ensure co-ordination of all training offers are visible and accessible to the workforce.
- To design, develop and deliver bitesize training sessions, by and for internal and external partners.
- To explore accessing and incorporating research skills and supporting staff to embed ethical research into practice.
- To ensure that strengths-based training is embedded in the Directorate.
- To support Mental Health Social Workers with statutory functions (AMHP, Social Supervision and Care Act 2014).

Quality Assurance

- To build on the current quality assurance framework by designing and implementing supervision audits, guidance and governance.
- To continue to work with the Professional Standards team with their quality assurance framework audits.
- To explore, design and develop a meaningful realistic practice week programme connecting senior management and leaders to frontline staff and residents.
- To develop a Practice Standards Framework.

Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

- To promote the EDI agenda across the Directorate and our services.
- To develop anti-racist practice standards in line with other local authorities.
- To review the current supervision policy and implement any changes relating anti-racist practice; and to promote positive practice with the LGBTQIA + community.
- To participate in the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standards Framework programme and utilise its data to address equality issues.

CQC Assurance

- To continue to lead on a Care Quality Commission (CQC) workstream and develop improvements highlighted from the Local Government Association Peer review in relation to Mental Health.
- To gather relevant information needed for the assurance programme, including analysing case files for the audit requirement.
- To prepare the workforce through positive engagement.
- To disseminate learning as a CQC Specialist Advisor to Croydon.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1. Since embarking on this new role and collaborating with the workforce, it is evident the Adult Social Care and Health Directorate is dedicated to serving the residents of Croydon.

10.2. The workforce wants opportunities to develop their practice and give residents their best 'self'. This has been reflected in the most recent Social Work Conference feedback:

"Wow you guys and raising the bar each time. The conference was so professional, and all the little details make a big impact I appreciate it. The PLE [people with lived experience] and other services brings learning and knowledge. I loved hearing about substance misuse team and the message from Mencap re joining annual review together makes perfect sense. I feel

the conference reinvigorates us social workers to go back and continue to work hard with purpose and meaning.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed the day and how the programme was set up. With the remote working it was a refreshing opportunity to relink with colleagues old and new , to learn and have some fun too”

“The event was great. It was well balanced, interesting, informative and fun”.

- 10.3. Through collaboration with the workforce, it is apparent that there are currently inconsistencies in the governance, delivery of support, training, development and practice. Now identified, these matters form the core focus of the Principal Social Worker priorities for 2024/25.
- 10.4. The Principal Social Worker is invigorated and excited by dedicated colleagues who share the same vision and passion for supporting and developing best practice within the workforce, *“enabling people to live in a place they call home, with the people and things that they love, doing the things that matter to them, in communities which look out for one another”.*

**Sharon Judd,
Principal Social Worker
Adult Social Care and Health Directorate**