

People and Communities Select Committee

Date: 21 January 2022

Time: 10:00am

Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Norwich

SUPPLEMENTARY A g e n d a

Advice for members of the public:

This meeting will be held in public and in person.

It will be live streamed on YouTube and, in view of Covid-19 guidelines, we would encourage members of the public to watch remotely by clicking on the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdyUrFjYNPq5psa-LFIJA/videos?view=2&live_view=502

However, if you wish to attend in person it would be most helpful if, on this occasion, you could indicate in advance that it is your intention to do so. This can be done by emailing committees@norfolk.gov.uk where we will ask you to provide your name, address and details of how we can contact you (in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak). Please note that public seating will be limited.

Councillors and Officers attending the meeting will be taking a lateral flow test in advance. They will also be advised to wear face masks at all times unless they are speaking or are exempt from wearing one. We would like to request that anyone attending the meeting does the same to help make the event safe for all those attending. Information about symptom-free testing is available [here](#).

8. Adults and Children's Services – Key Workforce Challenges

Appendix A

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Report by the Executive Director of Adult Social Services and the
Executive Director of Children's Services

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Adults and Children's Services – Key Workforce Challenges

**People and Communities Select
Committee - 21 January 2022**

Craig Chalmers – Director of Community Social Work, ASSD

Phil Watson – Director of Children's Social Care, CS

Briefing on current workforce challenges

The Committee requested a briefing on Adults and Children's Services key workforce challenges

This joint briefing provides a **spotlight on Social Worker recruitment and retention** activities as this remains the key workforce challenge for both departments, and covers:

- Overview of the social work role
- Key issues/challenges
- actions we are taking or planning to take to address these challenges.
- Highlights areas for further support for Committee Members to consider in addressing these challenges

The Social Worker Challenge – the role

Social workers aim to improve people's lives by helping with social and interpersonal difficulties, promoting human rights and wellbeing. Social workers protect children and adults with support needs from harm. From helping keep a family under pressure together, protection from abuse, to supporting someone with mental health problems, social work is a varied, demanding, often emotional and very rewarding career. (British Association of Social Workers Union)

Social workers must have completed a Social Work England approved degree level programme, work to their professional standards and maintain registration by updating an online continuous professional development record that is reviewed annually.

What Social Workers do

- assess and intervene where there are child protection concerns within a family or from elsewhere
- manage the adoption and fostering processes, and support children with a disability
- work with looked-after children, young offenders, children who have experienced or are at risk of abuse, children with physical, social and/or emotional needs - and with their families
- work with older people, people with learning or physical disabilities.
- work with people with mental health problems to promote their independence
- work with older people who have care and support needs
- Safeguard children and people with care and support needs
- Work within legal frameworks – eg Care Act, Children's Act, Mental Capacity Act

The Social Worker Challenge – the role

- **Difficult decisions** – deprivation of liberty, child protection, safeguarding, Mental Capacity Act assessments
- Increasingly **difficult work** – increased case complexity, mental health issues, financial issues, domestic abuse, discharge to assess arrangements, criminal and sexual exploitation of children, including through gangs and county lines.
- **Holding risk** for safeguarding and protection is a key responsibility and challenge
- **Complex needs** – longer term conditions, children with disabilities living longer, unaccompanied asylum seekers
- **Crisis management** can be a regular demand
- **Emotional demands** – working with trauma, neglect and abuse
- **Lone working** is often necessary/part of the work
- **Work life balance** can be a challenge
- **Covid risks** – must be balanced against the need/requirement to make in person visits/contact
- **Impact of vacancies on teams** – increases pressure and workload on others
- **Public perception of role** – media attitude and public impressions of social workers are often negative - fairness compared to other groups? e.g. 'NHS heroes'
- Increased case numbers is a challenge in the system and to **sufficiency of resources**

The Social Worker Challenge – the role

Social Care Health check 2020 (Local Government Association) Factors influencing Desire to Stay

- I can discuss workload and stress issues helpfully with my supervisor or manager and agree satisfactory ways forward
- I am confident my organisation would support me if I challenged unsafe practice or reported other concerns about services
- I feel safe in my role and the work I am expected to do

Children's Services Social Care Health check 2020 – main findings

- Survey perceptions that Covid-19 created higher workloads
- Also perceptions from some respondents that they were not able to prioritise their CPD due to increased demands due to Covid-19
- Responses demonstrated positive areas e.g. quality of practice is effectively monitored, staff report they work effectively with partner agencies, increased visibility of service managers and directors

Adult Services Social Care Health check 2020 – main findings

- Increase in number of days of annual leave not being taken (20% with 6 or more days untaken)
- Impact of Covid -19 resulting in improvements in respondents feeling that the department provided access to suitable internet, mobile connections or appropriate office space
- Just over half of respondents felt that the appraisal was useful.

The Social Worker Challenge – Covid impact

Phase three of the *Health and Social Care Workforce Study*, May to Jul 2021, found social workers:

- were more likely to feel overwhelmed, than social care workers, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals
 - had declining wellbeing
 - reported quality of working life decreased throughout the pandemic
 - reported feeling significantly more burnt out
 - struggle to work from home – they missed sharing their thoughts and concerns with colleagues at work after a bad day before going home.
-
- One of the report's authors, Jill Manthorpe, said “a long period of stress takes its toll”, and that social workers found it harder to cope in the first half of 2021 compared to earlier in the pandemic because it was no longer seen as a “short-term” emergency.

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services said the report's findings reflected the fact that social workers “have been pushing themselves for a long time now and that this takes a personal toll”.

According to the British Association of Social Workers union, the main stressors for Social Workers are high case and administrative loads and lack of resources for service users. (BASW 2018 survey findings – summary)

The Social Worker Challenge – Professional Standards

- Promote the rights, strengths and well-being of people, families and communities
- Establish and maintain the trust and confidence of people
- Be accountable for the quality of my practice and the decision I make
- Maintain my continuing professional development
- Act safely, respectfully and with professional integrity
- Promote ethical practice and report concerns

Social Work England website December 2021 - [Professional standards - Social Work England](#)

These professional standards are specialist to the social work profession and apply to all registered social workers in all roles and settings

The standards are the threshold standards necessary for safe and effective practice and are expanded in a further 40 sub-statements that Social Workers must comply with

Our Challenges - Nationally

- Nationally there is a shortage of qualified Social Workers. Social work has been listed on the Shortage Occupation List since 2014 and this shortage is reflected across the UK, with additional challenges in rural and sparsely populated areas such as Norfolk
- Additionally, an increasing number of Social Workers are considering leaving the profession. A longitudinal study of child and family Social Workers conducted by the DfE and released in September 2021 suggested that of 2500 Social Workers interviewed, 14% expected that they would not be in local authority child and family social work in 12 months' time [*Longitudinal study of local authority child and family social workers \(Wave 3\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014202/longitudinal-study-of-local-authority-child-and-family-social-workers-wave-3.pdf)
- Social work is generally acknowledged as a highly pressured career with 60% of those interviewed in the DfE study feeling stressed by their job. The complexity of the role has also been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic with over two thirds feeling that complexity of cases (68%) and workloads (69%) had increased due to Covid-19.
- The above has culminated in a crowded market as local authorities vie to recruit Social Workers. Many councils have reviewed their reward packages to stand out, introducing welcome payments, market supplements, retention payments and increasing their relocation payments.

Our Challenges - Norfolk

Common challenges for Adults and Childrens:

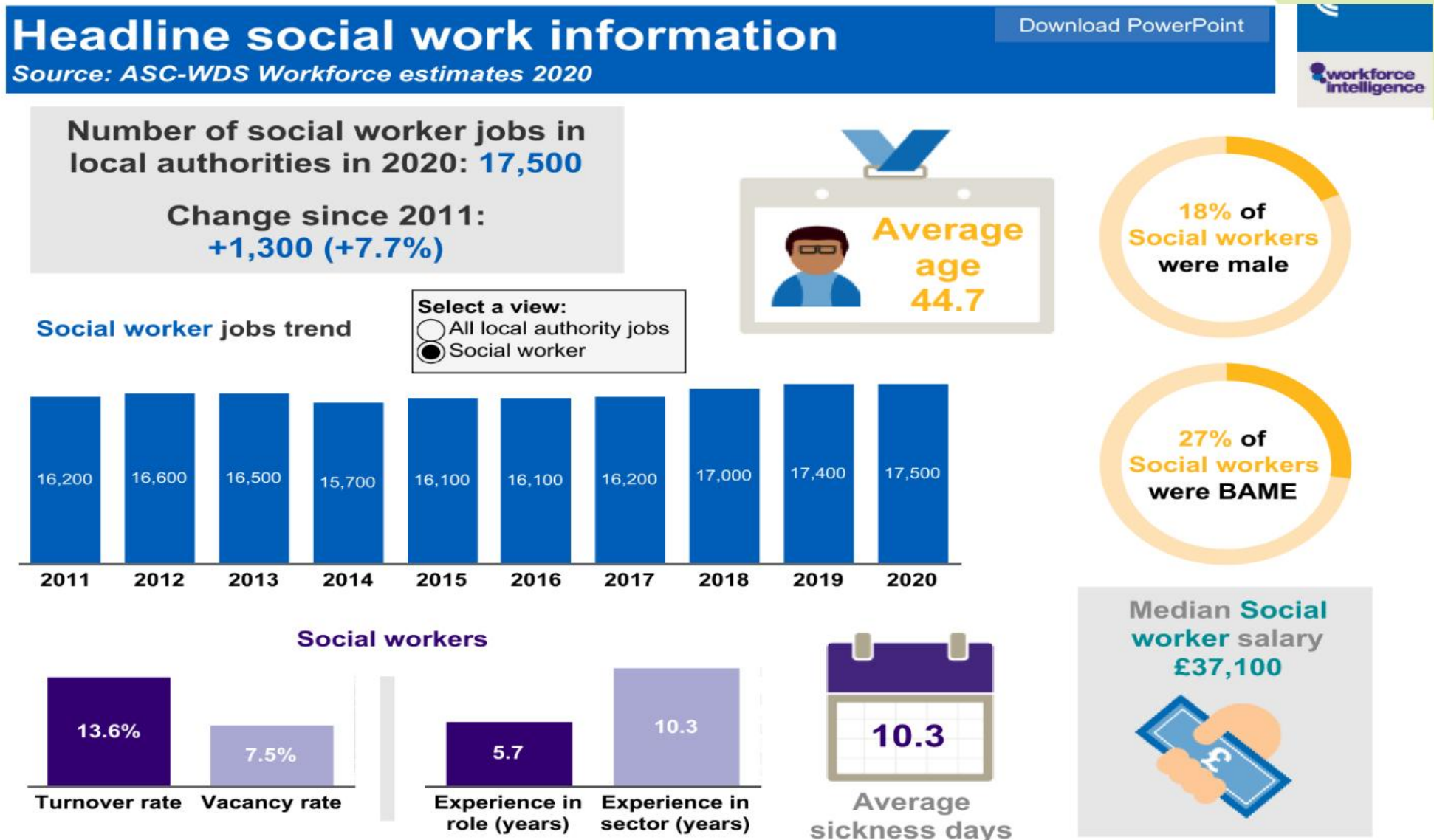
- Increased Service Demand/Sufficiency of workforce
- Budget Pressures
- Geography - attracting experienced social workers to Norfolk isn't helped by geography – it usually involves relocating and can be seen as then difficult to move on to further your career

Our Social Work Workforce (Nov 2020 – Oct 2021)

- ❑ Social Workers are our largest single professional group and are needed/required to fulfil a range of the Authority's statutory safeguarding and support functions
- ❑ Overall, although rates fluctuate, generally recruitment has previously approximately balanced the rate of leavers/turnover, but does not close the vacancy gap
- ❑ The COVID pandemic suppressed/reduced turnover rates for a time, but these have started to increase over the last few months
- ❑ Our turnover rates are not significantly different than national turnover rates for the profession
- ❑ The skills gap is increasing in some teams, where experienced staff are leaving and are replaced by newly qualified practitioners

The Social Worker Challenge - Adults

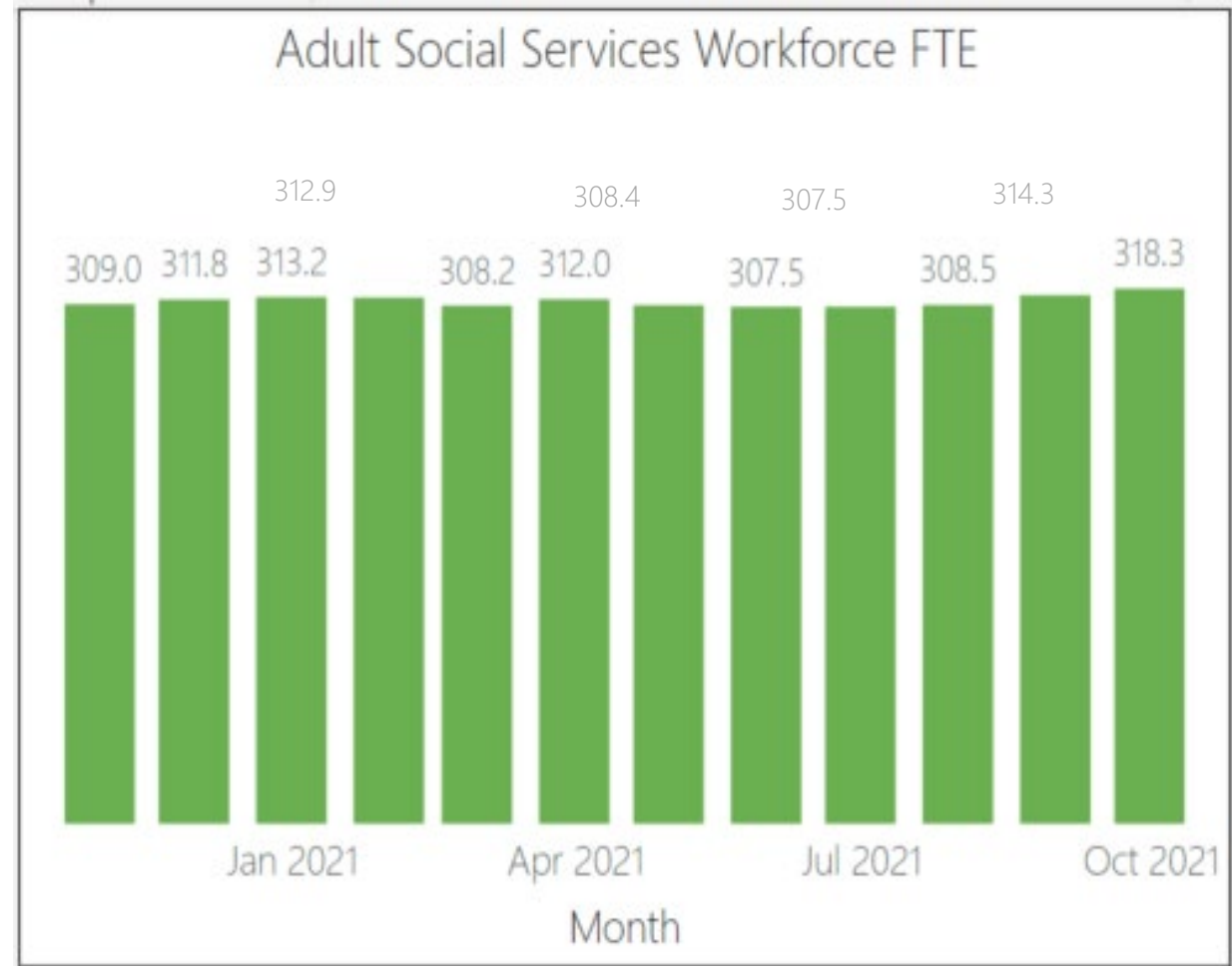
The National Picture Adults – as at Sept 20



Our Social Work Workforce (Nov 2020 – Oct 2021)

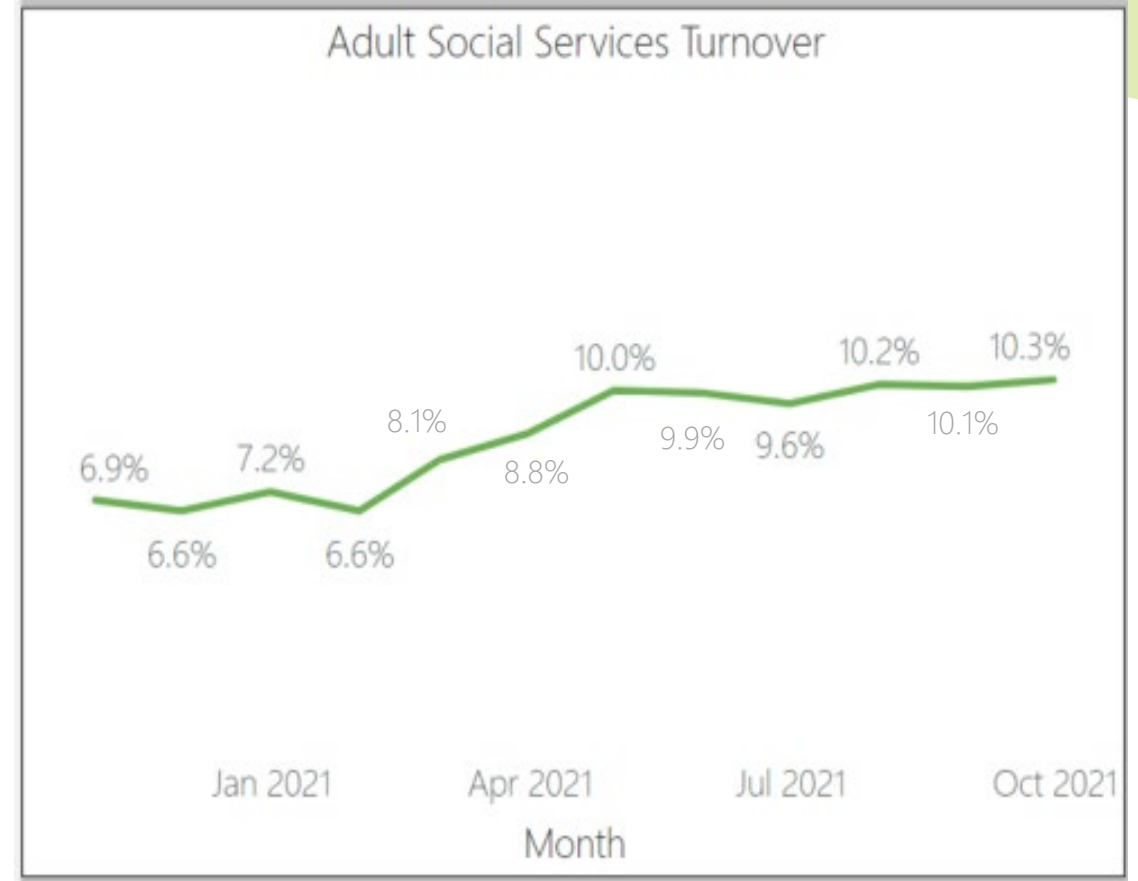
Adult Social Services

- Norfolk has an aging population with complex needs and care market supply issues
- All localities and teams are seeing higher turnover and increased sickness due to work related stress
- Local NHS partners who have significant financial, workforce and performance challenges



Adults Social Workers

Starers/Leavers (Nov 2020 – Oct 2021) & Annual Turnover (May 2020 to Oct 2021)



The Social Worker Challenge - Childrens

The National Picture Childrens – as at Sept 2020 (DfE data)

Number of children and family social workers at 30 Sept (FTE)

31,854

an increase of 3.7% from the same point in 2019.

Average caseload (per FTE)

16.3

down from 16.9 last year

Absence rate throughout year (FTE)

2.9%

down from 3.1% in 2019

Vacancies at 30 Sept (FTE)

6,113

similar to the same point in 2019.

Number of agency workers at 30 Sept (FTE)

5,806

similar to the same point last year

Agency worker rate (FTE)

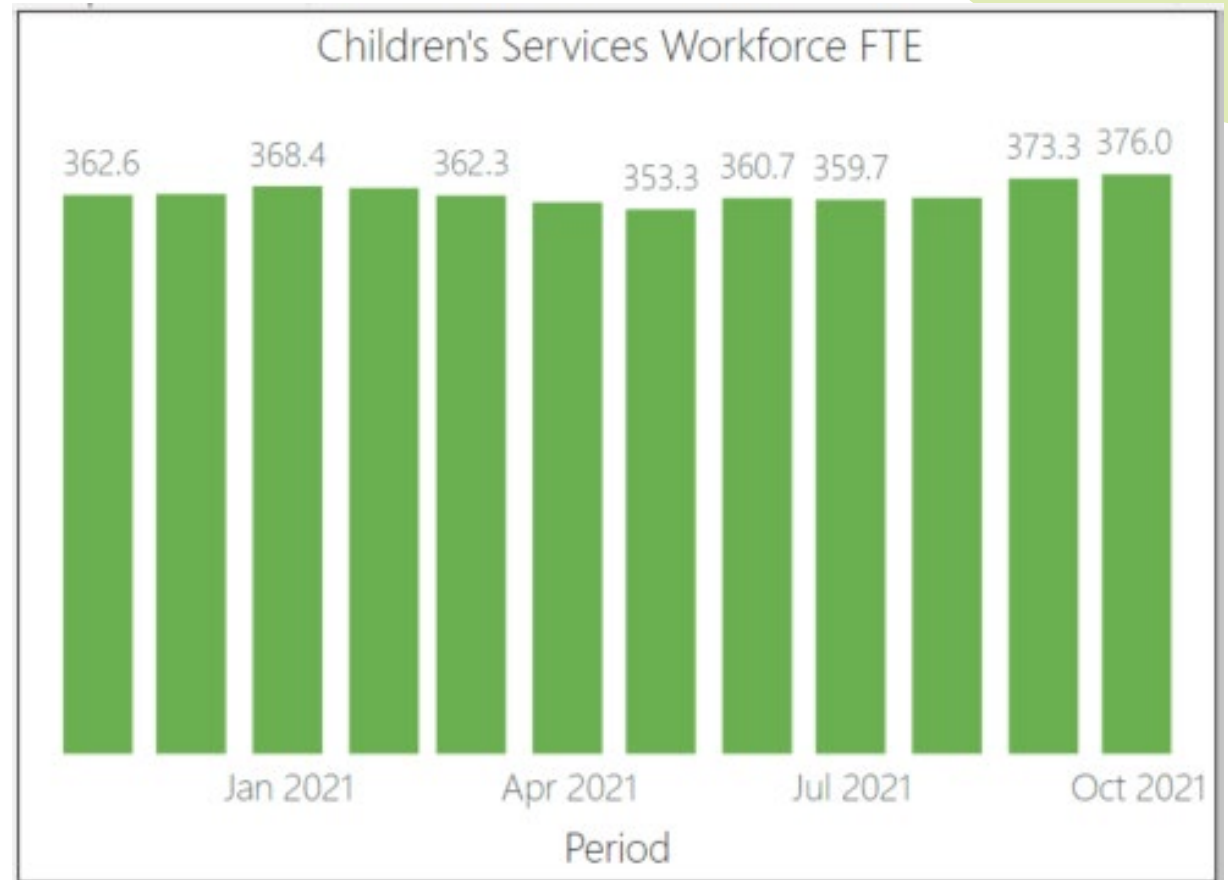
15.4%

down from 15.8% last year

Our Social Work Workforce (Nov 2020 – Oct 2021)

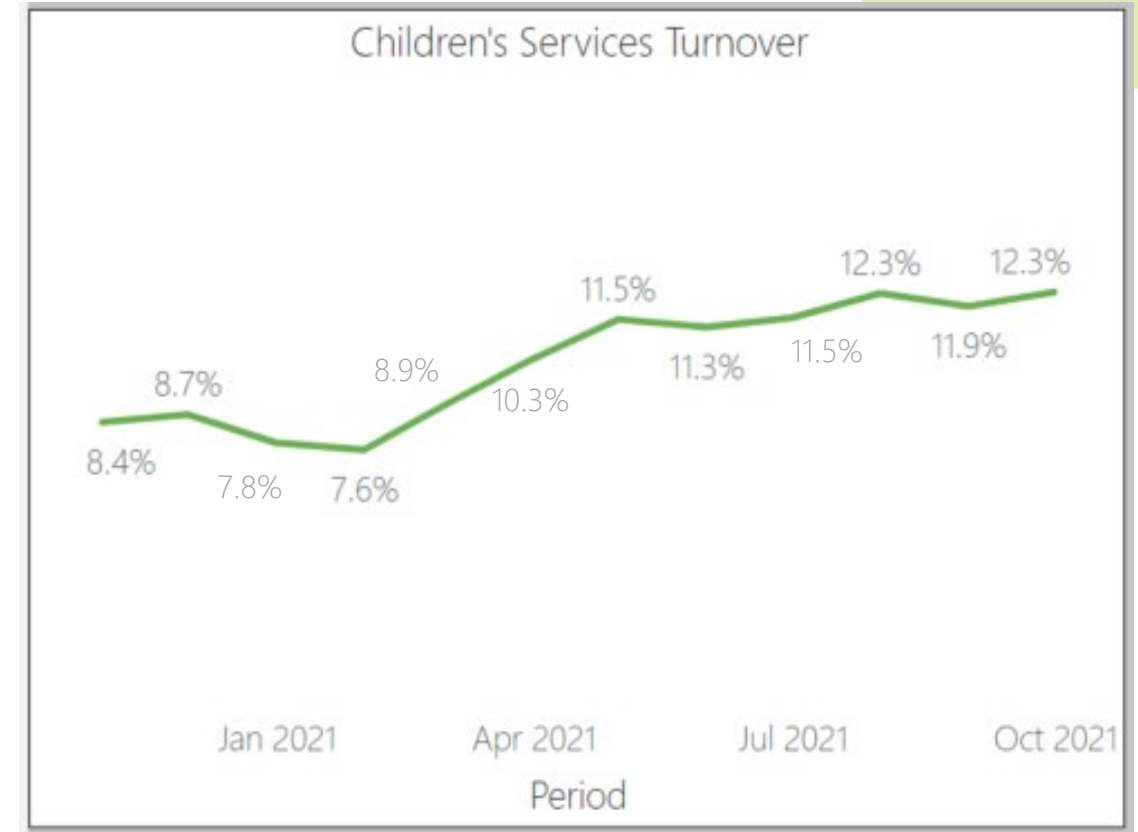
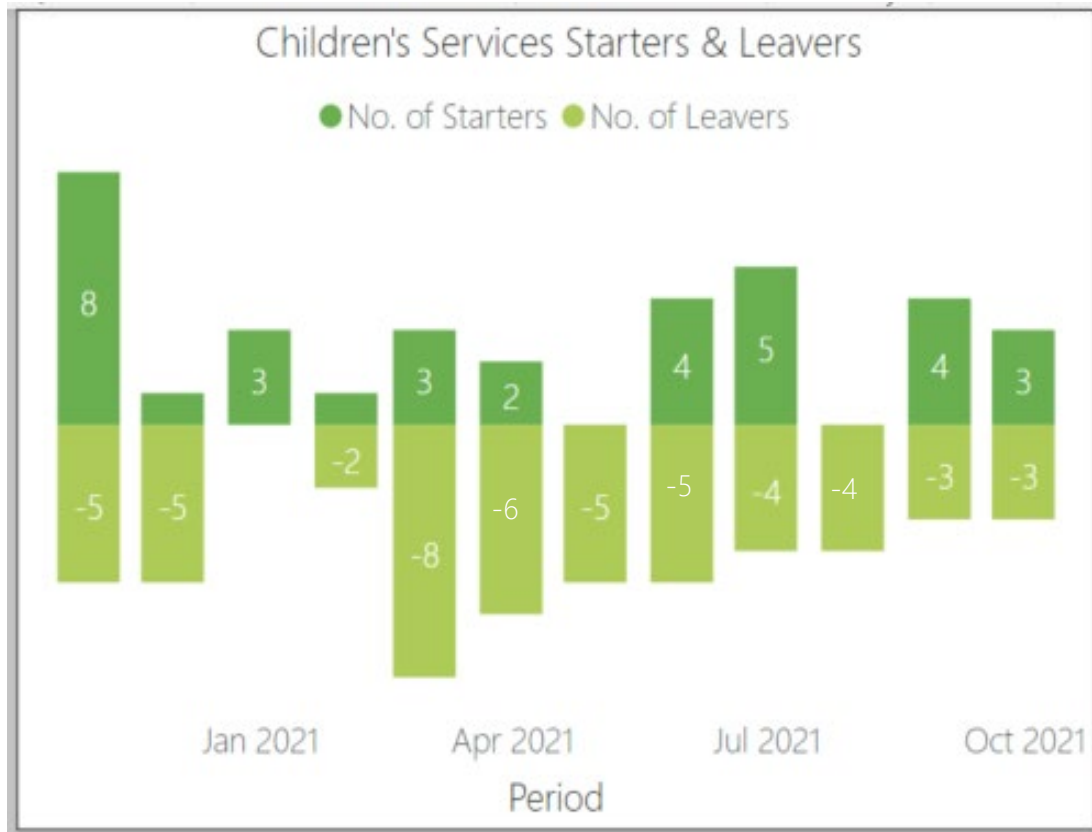
Children's Services

- A challenge within Children's Services, is the turnover rate for Family Assessment and Safeguarding Teams (FAST) Social Workers, who undertake frontline child protection and assessment. This service has higher turnover/lower retention of Social Workers than in other services within the directorate



Children's Social Workers

Starters/Leavers (Nov 2020 to Oct 2021) & Annual Turnover (May 2020 to Oct 2021)



Recruitment

We are delivering our aim of a permanent and resilient workforce, with lower turnover and reduction in use of agency staff through programmes of activities including:

- **Recruitment Campaigns** – ***Who Cares? We do*** (Children's) and ***Living Well. Changing Lives*** (Adults), including use of search marketing, google analytics & external recruitment consultancy. Recruitment Campaigns are dynamic and raise our profile and brand, but we are competing in a 'sellers' market, where there are national issues reducing the availability of experienced, qualified social workers
- **Community Care Live 2021** – 117 contacts made; 93 of those experienced Social Workers and 24 Newly Qualified, tracking on-going discussions and building talent pipeline
- **Proactive social media approaches** via LinkedIn, building a Twitter presence and content plans
- **Social Worker Apprenticeship programme** – to help support longer term requirement. On target for Jan 2022 intake (third cohort). External & Internal advert attracted 250 applicants - currently offered 10. Currently in progress of procuring additional cohorts (intake date Jan 2023)

Recruitment *continued*

- **NQSWs** – we have a very successful support programme for newly qualified social workers, providing support for two years from appointment. Both Adults and Children's are reviewing how best to utilise this. Target intake 20 ASYE per year for Adults; 50 per year for Childrens
- **International Social Workers** – the pandemic has seen an increase in international recruitment, although affected by pandemic quarantine measures. We are working to attract further numbers of experienced social workers this way in the future whilst remaining conscious of ethical recruitment considerations.
- **Return to Social Work-** supporting those who left the profession to re-register with Social Work England and regain confidence through a fully supported training and development programme
- **Links with Universities (Teaching Partnership)** - advertising directly to those with social work courses

Recruitment *continued*

- **School/college careers events** – we attend events to promote social care careers, highlight the key role of social workers and the routes to qualification
- **‘Refer a friend’ payments** to utilise word of mouth as a key method of attraction
- **Engaging with Social Work Students** - good record of supporting Social Work students on practice placements and subsequently recruiting them into our services.
- **Specialist social work recruitment agency** engaged in August 2021, to support permanent recruitment for Childrens Services
- **Dedicated Social Worker Recruiter** for Adult Services appointed October 2021, to support candidate engagement and talent pipelining, advert writing and pre-screening/longlisting
- **Recruitment Advertising & Marketing costs** – Circa £100k

Routes into Social Work in Norfolk

- **Social Work apprenticeship** – paid work full-time, and study part time for a BA (fees paid by apprenticeship levy). We appoint 20 per year across Children's and Adults Social Services. New route, national development led by Norfolk County Council and Skills for Care
- **NCC Graduate Trainee Scheme (Internal)** – selected eligible employees offered retainer towards living expenses whilst on UEA MA course, if they work for us for minimum 2 years on graduation
- **NCC Graduate Trainee Scheme (External)** – work for 1 year in Children's Services then paid retainer towards living expenses whilst on UEA MA course, if they work for us for minimum 2 years on graduation
- **Step Up to Social Work Programme** (14 months, run once every 2 years funded by DfE) – bursary for living expenses and fees paid. NCC part of Eastern region programme.
- **Return to Social Work** – NCC offer support to Qualified Social Workers to re-register with Social Work England
- **Self-funded BA programme** (3 years)
- **Self-funded MA programme** (2 years)
- **Open University** - BA, MA, Pgrad Dip studied full or part time (Norfolk County Council offer eligible employees paid time off for practice placements)

Retention

- **Social Worker Apprenticeships** – created in 2018 for existing Norfolk social care staff to train as Social Workers, with the expectation/hope that they will stay with NCC. Retains existing workers with experience in social care roles. Third annual cohort starting this year, with the first cohort due to qualify next year. Numbers limited due to capacity to provide the intensity of support and appropriate work experience needed to make this successful, as well as retaining a balance of experienced versus inexperienced staff
- **International Social Workers** – We are currently reviewing how best to support in their transition to working for the first time as a social worker in the UK and Norfolk to support retention. Project to develop better a welcome pack, guidance for managers, candidate support to support with onboarding
- **Leaver reviews/Exit Interviews** - to understand and examine exit data/feedback in more detail
- **Research Offers** – ability to undertake professional research for experienced Social Workers, to develop knowledge, professional reputation and career prospects
- **Teaching** – Invitations for experienced staff to teach on SW degree and apprenticeship programmes

Retention ... continued

- **Well-being support to Social Workers through our Well being team and programmes** – Mental health first-aider training, Well-Being Officer support, Norfolk Support line counselling service & Fast track physiotherapy service
 - **Recognition of achievements and contributions** though the County Council staff OSCA'S
- **Other action in Adults:**
- **Creation of a new six-month post to support wellbeing programme in ASSD** – now recruited and will look to support resilience through the winter
 - **Working with NHS system workforce programme** to aid retention and career development in ASSD.
 - **Proposal for legacy Social Worker** has been agreed and recruitment in progress

Retention ... *continued*

○ Other action in Childrens' Services:

- **Reliance on agency social workers in Children's is significantly reduced** – from over 100 in 2019 to approximately 35 FTE currently. Additional top-up costs of front-line agency social worker staff reduced from £2.8m in 19/20 to £1.1m forecast for 21/22
- **Improved Career Progression** – Scale I to J to K progression/development of career pathways
- **Retention/Loyalty payments** for FAST Social Workers
- **Creation of Recruitment & Retention Oversight board** for direction and governance of programme - chaired by Executive Director. Also a Working group to develop and implement new/improved approaches
- **Recognition of excellent practice** by teams and individuals in the Executive Director's weekly staff updates
- **Reductions in Bureaucracy** – encourage proportionate recording
- **Group supervision** to provide group support and case reviews
- **Further external review of retention factors** planned for FAST early 2022
- **Significant investment/approach** - creating the conditions in which practice and practitioners can thrive

A New Deal for Children's Social Care

We have relentless drive to ensure that our social care practitioners spend the maximum amount of time building relationships with families, undertaking direct work and thereby improving children's outcomes.

We want to make this critical, challenging work as manageable and rewarding as it can be.

We have invested in call-in practice co-ordination capacity, new services and technology and improved demand management. We want to build on this

You are the intervention

Spend 80% of your working week with children and families



No more minutes for meetings - we will use the three columns format only



We will significantly pare back our Signs of Safety forms to the essentials of the approach



We will markedly reduce the number of forms you fill out and introduce word limits



We give explicit permission to make case records visual, succinct and analytical. We will provide training and examples to support you to do so.



We will continue to invest in and expect use of technology, e.g. voice recognition software, mobile Liquidlogic, portals

We work flexibly

Have a fulfilling role and a healthy work-life balance



We will give you autonomy over your working pattern e.g. choice of days and time, condensed hours, part-time



Our managers will manage by productivity, not presence



Each professional meeting will have hybrid provision, so staff can choose whether to attend virtually or in person

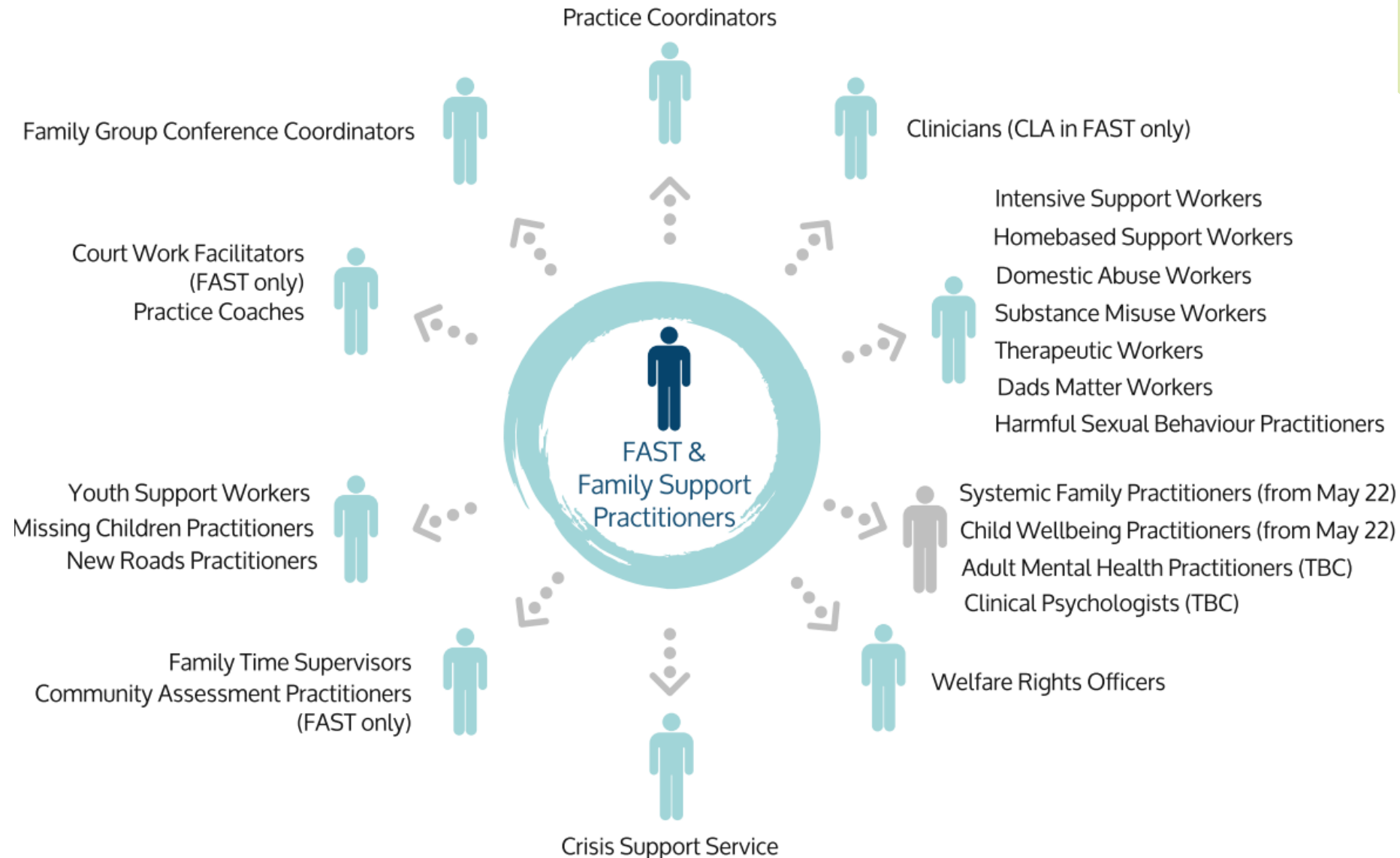


Staff will have access to and use their IT kit (smartphones and tablets/laptops) from day one



Practitioners will receive monthly personal supervision and be freed up for one day a month of training and CPD

Team Around the Practitioner (FAST & Family Support) - Children's Social Care



Stories/Examples of Good Practice & Innovation in Adults

C excelled in advocating for a lady experiencing domestic abuse and significant mental health challenges. She worked with the housing authorities, built relationships, considered and challenged potentially oppressive views, and worked with the individual to make a permanent, stable and safe home. In this C worked in a living well way, considering community resources and partner agencies to achieve a good outcome for the individual.

D was supporting a gentleman, Mr F who experiences an enduring mental health illness, alcohol addiction and has physical health needs too. Mr F had just returned home from an alcohol detox unit elsewhere in the country. Upon returning home safeguarding concerns were identified, that the detox unit had not safeguarded Mr F from harm while under their care. As a result of D's interventions, the local alcohol and substance misuse provider stopped referring to that unit. The family member felt her concerns were listened to, and action had been taken saying *“ I don't normally give compliments, in fact I usually complain if things aren't right, but I have been very impressed with your help.”*

Stories/Examples of good practice & Innovation in Children's

Social Worker E's relationship-based practice made a huge difference to a young person at risk of child sexual exploitation. E got alongside the young person to try and see things from her perspective and how her experiences were impacting on her behaviour. This trauma-informed approach and respectful, partnership work with parents meant that the young person's child protection plan was able to end after 15 months. The missing episodes had stopped, and the young person now better understands safety in relationships and is more contained emotionally.

Social Worker B discovered important information very late on in the matching of a young child with adoptive parents. B did the right thing by bringing it to the attention of the adoption panel, and then undertaking a thorough and complex assessment within short timescales to ensure the adoption panel were able to make well-informed decisions without delays for the child. The assessment will also help the young child understand essential elements of their life-story as they grow up.

Social Worker K did some excellent joint work with Social Worker A in the PfAL team to ensure that a very complex young woman with significant mental health needs was able to successfully transition to Adult Services in a calm and planned way, despite significant anxiety of S, her family and the professional network. They listened to S and worked together to ensure that she remained central to decision-making and felt completely supported with shared messages used throughout. The practice was given well deserved praise by all involved.

What can Members do to support?

Recognising and valuing what Social Workers do and their contribution to Norfolk (rather than gifts)

Political Support/Campaigning – support and lobbying in regional and national fora; with Members, MPs, central government and with others, to support efforts in promoting the value of and recruitment to key roles such as Social Workers

- **World Social Work Day** (15 March 2022) & **Social Work Week** (14-18 March, promoted by Social Work England) – we are arranging activities to celebrate social work in Norfolk

Promotion for Norfolk/NCC

- As a brand(s) and of our reputation – we have every reason to be proud of the good work we do (e.g. Recognition of Children's Services Corporate Parenting by OFSTED - Focused visit Nov 2021)
- Public support for Social Work as a positive career choice
- As a place to work - **We are a good employer:**
 - *Disability Confident* Leader (DWP approved)
 - *Carer Friendly* 'tick' employer
 - *Armed Forces Employer* recognition gold award 2021
 - Employee Survey Results – improved in each of the last 3 years



Key messages to take-away:

- **Recognise and Value our workforce – be proud of us and the work we do**
 - Adults and Children's Services do incredible work to support our residents and communities
- **Recognise and understand the challenges we face:**
 - Of the work itself – accountability/pressure/sufficiency/volume
 - Emotional challenges and the impact on our workforce/Being 'Trauma informed'
 - That there are national recruitment and retention issues
 - Perceptions of the public and the value they place on people such as social workers and public sector workers generally
 - We are inspected more rigorously – we have every reason to be proud of the good work we do
- **Help manage reactions/expectations of others** - Members, MPs, Residents, Service Users, Voters
- **Showcase our great practice and achievements – we are award winning!**
 - In the National Social Worker of the Year Awards, in November 2021:
 - Claire Skilleter won the Practice Educator of the Year Gold Award
 - Our Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Team won the Social Justice Advocate Silver award and was also a finalist in the Local Government Chronicle Awards Nov 2021

Adults and Children's Services – Key Workforce Challenge

Social Worker Recruitment and Retention

Questions?