

Hampshire County Council

Workforce Transformation

Summary (100 words)

In responding to the continual challenge of year on year rises in the number of children in need of help and support, Hampshire County Council has made bold steps in order to transform its social care practice and its workforce – taking a strengths-based approach in doing so. The resulting transformation has led to an increase in the number of children being able to stay safely in their family home, and a significant reduction in children subject to Child Protection Plans. Our innovation and its impact have been recognised by Ofsted, rating Hampshire Children’s Services ‘outstanding’ in all areas (June 2019).

Introduction

Over the last five years Hampshire County Council’s Children’s Services has significantly transformed social care in Hampshire. This transformation of our workforce began with the Innovation Programme in 2014, followed by our Partners in Practice work which commenced in 2016. Our Transforming Social Care programme then evolved from this, enabling us to better manage our portfolio of change. The programme is designed to deliver a strategic whole system change to create an efficient and effective service fit for the next decade.

This has only been made possible by the commitment and enthusiasm of our workforce not only in embracing change, but also through their contribution to what our future workforce and practice should look like.

We began by asking a group of frontline workers to brainstorm ideas as to how they felt the service should run. Immediately it became clear that our staff wanted a workplace that recognised the resilience and personal strengths of our workforce. Staff commented that whilst they are capable and all feel well supported, they felt constrained by process or bureaucracy in some areas. They felt they could do more for families if they could become more innovative and had parameters to work within that felt more supportive than rules that felt confining. From this feedback our transformation programme was born, and our workforce has transformed as a result.

How has this been achieved?

The key areas of workforce transformation include:

- Changes to the structure of our services – including the introduction of our Children’s Assessment and Safeguarding Teams (CAST)
- Developing our strengths-based practice framework – The Hampshire Approach
- Introducing a model of intensive working to support more children to stay safely at home
- Delivering a series of process and technology improvements to increase productivity

Restructuring our Services

One of the first deliverables of our transformation was the introduction of CAST. This saw us combining our Assessment Teams with our long-term intervention teams. The outcome resulted in

less transition points for the family; a reduction in the number of times they had to tell their story meaning they feel heard and safer in the hands of a Social Worker they know and trust, whilst our Social Workers felt that had more ownership of a child and family's journey from the outset, ensuring the right children, receive the right support, at the right time.

The outcomes have been fundamental to our transformation as it has led to:

- A reduction in caseloads across the service, as better-informed decisions at the outset means less cases need to be escalated to the district
- A reduction in cases requiring long term planning
- A further increase in staff morale – as staff enjoy the mix of intake and long-term work, and simultaneously build their skills as they work cases for longer
- Permanent, sustained changes in families.

Staff were taken on this journey with us. CAST was initially piloted in one district and the staff response to the new structure was carefully considered before the changes were rolled out across the county. Seeing their morale increase further and their skills sets developing as a result of this change was an added benefit of this new way of working, which was one of the pioneering and largest transformations to our service.

The Hampshire Approach

In 2017 we began engaging with our social work practitioners to develop a Practice Framework which would underpin all our work with children and their families. We deliberately took an iterative approach to evolving this framework, because we recognised this was the most powerful way to gain input from teams. We held a series of workshops, presentations and activities over the course of 18 months, always testing, refining and adapting what was developed in line with staff feedback. For example, aspects of the framework were initially tested by our Children with Disabilities teams as part of their work supporting families to devise personal budgets. We used the learning from practitioners and families to feed into our approach to working with all families. In order to ensure that the changes being implemented were sustainable, a strong foundation was laid through working with Winchester University, who worked alongside us to develop the framework and ensure it was fit for purpose.

A coherent learning pathway was designed and delivered to all front-line staff to help embed the Hampshire Approach and transform the way they work. This was delivered in two stages:

- Stage one – Introduction to Strength based working
- Stage two – In depth sessions to underpin the Hampshire Approach:
 - Motivational Interviewing
 - Solution focused therapy
 - Restorative Practice

This was a huge investment to ensure all staff were taken on the journey with us, and this has helped to create a strong foundation for the existing and future transformation of our service.

Recognising the importance of staff willingness to adopt these changes was considered when planning and devising the approach. There was an understanding throughout that, as this was a considerable culture change, much work would need to be done to ensure staff felt involved, their opinions considered, and their concerns eased. As such, a dedicated communications resource was introduced to continuously convey the new ways of working to staff, using traditional and innovative methods to ensure the entire workforce felt they were connected to the changes taking place. From the outset, there was an appreciation for the fact that a culture change of this scale can take years

to fully embed, therefore two-way communication continues, as staff adopt the changes to their practice and transform the work we do as a result.

Whilst making significant changes to the service to improve outcomes for children and families, it was recognised that the ability of staff to adapt to new ways of working would be determined by their values and behaviours. In parallel, work commenced to define the values and behaviours of the future service that would enable us to support staff to adopt and own them and thereby ensure the successful implementation of the future service model. We coproduced our values, seeking input from a cross departmental group from all over the business and county. Approximately 40 staff members were engaged in three separate workshops to develop the values and behaviours for the service. A survey was conducted with all staff in the Children and Families to understand the gaps between the current and desired behaviours. A broader programme has been undertaken subsequently, to communicate these values across the department, ensuring all branches can embed them to transform the way they work. In order to bring the values to life, this work continues and focuses on three main areas:

- People – ensure that our recruitment strategy to attract, induct, develop, retain and manage staff departures is aligned to our values and behaviours
- Optimising Technology – ensure that we have the right support and systems in place to empower staff to use technology to become more efficient and effective, supporting mobile working practices
- Collaboration and continuous improvement – develop and embed an approach to service improvement that is planned, managed and systematic; staff-led and service-user focused

The impact of this programme is:

- A coherent culture evident across Children’s Services, focusing on empowering and supporting staff
- Staff members aware of the values and exhibit the right behaviours
- Staff feel confident to adopt flexible/mobile ways of working
- Staff are actively involved in continuously improving and transforming the service

Intensive Working

The culmination of research, feedback from our staff and the learning gained through our Innovation Fund ‘Edge’ project shaped the development of our Intensive Working model. Dedicated Intensive Workers have been appointed across the county and focus on delivering evidence-based interventions to support families to achieve better outcomes.

To implement this new way of working and roles, we recruited new staff but also transformed the roles of a cohort of existing staff in order to maximise their skills and experience. Core elements to our new way of working were the drive to work more intensively with families but also more flexibly, in order to promote maximum engagement, providing the opportunity to work with families in the evenings and weekends for example, if their cases require it.

To support staff in understanding and implementing this new way of working, we undertook consultation with those in the roles impacted, as well as unions, in order to ensure that staff had a voice and influence in developing this model.

Learning from this exercise was significant and directly impacted our approach to a subsequent large-scale recruitment campaign of Intensive Workers. We listened to the feedback from staff and involved them in supporting a training and induction programme for these new workers. This had a considerable positive impact on the integration of new and existing staff, which led to increased

peer support, sharing of skills and knowledge and the development of Communities of Practice. The training undertaken by staff in relation to the delivery of interventions has driven positive change, giving staff the opportunity to work with families on both a one to one basis and group basis.

Process and Technology

Another element of transforming the way we work was to review and redesign our processes and technology to become less labour intensive and better support future ways of working. A dedicated team who looked at all processes and the technologies used, streamlined these to make working life easier for our staff and improve outcomes for children and families as a result.

Initially, this team spent time identifying and researching opportunities for improvement, prioritising these in order of which would have the greatest impact. End to end process mapping was undertaken along with a service-wide 'week in the life of' study, to fully understand the staff experience. To engage staff in development, 'Product Owners' were identified from within the branch to represent the service, provide requirements and ensure improvements were fit for purpose.

As these technology and process changes were introduced (i.e. all staff receiving hybrid devices, and 'one-click solutions'), full support was provided to ensure staff were confident and comfortable with the changes happening around them. This was done via a multi-channel approach, as part of our wider engagement strategy, including email communications, face-to-face training, demo videos, and within team meetings, IT drop-in sessions across the county, and much more. We continue to track the adoption of these changes through our 'Embedding Change' dashboard to target further support and identify peer champions.

The difference this has made:

- 69% of staff using their hybrid for direct work with children & families – improving communication as a result
- Saved staff time
 - 30% of staff spend less time travelling due to remote working
 - 75% of staff are finding it easier to manage their diaries
 - Releasing admin time from manual tracking through the creation of automated reports
 - Some processes that used to take 10 minutes now take 30 seconds or a single click.

This is one of the largest and most encompassing areas of transformation, which continues to evolve over time, as technology does the same.

The success of the work we have done to transform our workforce can be evidenced through quotes from both our staff, and from Ofsted:

“My device allows me to spend more time with families, as I'm able to work remotely and spend time between meetings completing write ups, without the need for being at an office.”

“The best thing Hampshire have even done...!” - one-click technology solutions

“An ambitious transformation programme [has] created the capacity, training and infrastructure to enable social workers to engage more purposefully with children and their families.” - Ofsted

“Hampshire Children's Services demonstrates a strong commitment to continual learning, constantly seeking to develop and enhance the capabilities and capacity of the workforce.” - Ofsted

“Senior leaders recognise that their greatest asset is their staff.” - Ofsted

Transforming our workforce would not be possible without the involvement of and buy-in from staff, so they continue to inform all our decisions and the work we do.

Further evidence of the impact across the service can be seen in this video created to share our journey: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1FB1pZ2WXc&feature=youtu.be>