Background pattern

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**Family Support and Child Protection**

**Children’s Social Work Service**

A group of people reading a book

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**Advanced Practitioner Working Protocol**

**April 2023**

**Background**

1.1 This protocol has been developed to provide clarity in relation the roles and responsibilities of the Advanced Practitioners in supporting social work practice improvement across Children’s Social Work Service.

1.2 The Advanced Practitioner (AP) status was introduced as part of a Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) initiative that was part of a wider program aimed to support employers to address issues of recruitment, retention and reform in social work.

1.3 The Professional Capability Framework sets out the requirements of Social Worker working at an advanced level. It is expected that all advanced level social workers will provide practice and/or professional leadership, through the development of research-informed practice, quality assurance, staff development, knowledge development or management, and will also help to influence and contribute to strategic development in the organisation. Social Workers at this level make a difference by working either directly with people in highly complex situations, or by supporting and/or developing staff or knowledge, to provide better outcomes for people who use services, families, carers and communities.

1.4 *Advanced Social Work Practitioners:*have their practice recognised as exemplary, and provide leadership and professional wisdom to their colleagues and other professionals for work in situations of high complexity. Within the advanced practitioner role it is envisaged that they will;

* Continue to work directly with people who use services, and those who care for them, as well as families and communities.
* Provide constructive challenge to enhance practice, procedures and policies, promote innovation, and introduce new ways of working from recognised sites of excellence.
* Contribute to the development of knowledge and promotion of excellence in their field using evidence-informed practice.
* Make use of sophisticated, critical reasoning and both model and facilitate reflective and evidence- informed practice.

1.5 Kirklees is committed to the AP role as a part of its’ career and developmental pathway for social workers and these are the three main attributes that should characterise their practice:

* They support the allocated social worker and team manager with complex situations with skill and sensitivity;
* They lead and work with colleagues in formulating analysis, offering guidance, facilitating change and improvements whenever necessary; and they are reflective practitioners. Case decision making rests with the Team Manager.
* It is important that Advanced Practitioners have the capacity to undertake their supportive role. There are times when Advanced Practitioners will be allocated specific pieces of work to assist colleagues or as learning experiences. There will also be situations where the needs of the service will require Advanced Practitioners to be allocated work. When this occurs, there should be a clear exit plan for this work.

1.6 The AP status aims to make a difference to the lives of children and families by:

* Encouraging excellent social workers to remain on the front line.
* Promoting standards which other social workers can aspire to.
* Strengthening professional leadership by combining experience with the latest research and thinking
* Enabling employers to identify staff capable of greater autonomy.

1.7 The purpose of the Advanced Practitioner role as defined in the job description is:

* To play a significant role in the development of knowledge and promotion of excellent practice using evidence-informed research.
* To mentor, coach and advise newly qualified social workers and practitioners with specific needs across all Children’s Social Work.
* To provide individual and group consultation for all social work practitioners.
* To support and facilitate development opportunities for practitioners.
* To lead and participate in training and development activities that will support the embedding of excellent practice across Family Support and Child Protection.
* To challenge, monitor and scrutinise practice, recording and decision making of social workers to ensure continuous improvement.
* To promote the use of evidence based practice by providing technical and professional support to meet the needs of staff in order to promote high professional standards and the effective use of resources.
* To undertake specific service improvement work, bringing expertise and innovation to tackle areas of poor performance.
* To work across all disciplines of Children’s social work i.e. looked after children and children with disabilities that will include training, supporting learning and development of agreed service priorities and social work progression.

1.8 Key focus areas of work to be undertaken by the Advanced Practitioner;

* To provide support to all practitioners in the facilitation and development of good practice through direct practice observation and reflective discussion.
* To support and facilitate the delivery of workshops, action learning, reflective conversations and practice learning of Recording, Assessments and Planning. Providing training and development opportunities (informal/formal).
* To provide support/mentoring to all newly qualified social workers (ASYE) and the start of their second year in practice.
* To provide support across all service areas as required to enable the improvement of practice as set out within Service Action Plans.

**2.**  **Roles and Responsibilities**

**2.1** **Advanced Practitioners**

* To work with, mentor or support less experienced practitioners as agreed with the team manager where there is an identified performance issue.
* To provide a formal mentoring role with the ASYE’s and Post ASYE progression to support individual development and learning. This may include taking the lead on specific assessments within proceedings. At the Point of allocation a discussion will take place about who is responsible for completing each of the required tasks.
* To contribute to the development and implementation of a training programme that supports social worker training pathway across Children’s Social Work Service.
* Contribute to the development plan for ASYE’s and other Social Workers where required.
* To undertake dip sampling of case file, direct practice observations, reflective learning through individual and group discussion.
* To undertake as agreed developmental lead roles and attend any meetings associated with delivery of that role.
* To provide support and guidance in promoting evidence based informed reflective practice and to work alongside the Social Work Practice Lead to implement and embed learning from audits, compliments and complaints.
* To attend the monthly meeting with the Principal Social Worker to consider personal learning and development.

**2.2** **Principal Social Worker (PSW) role in supporting the Advanced Practitioners**

* To meet monthly with the AP to ensure consistency in role and to develop a wider role in supporting service improvement.
* To enable AP’s to contribute to the evaluation and development of practice across Children’s Social Work Service and the wider partnership.
* To participate in monthly meetings which will look at the workload of the APs.

 2.3 **Team Manager’s Role in supporting Advanced Practitioners**

To line manage Advanced Practitioners assigned to them. This will involve:

* Supervision in line with the Kirklees supervision policy – covering both case and personal supervision; annual appraisal meetings and considering annual leave requests.
* The allocation of any work. Ensuring that the AP has a balanced and equitable workload that enables them to meet the requirements and expectations of the role. This will involve allocating any case work and making sure there is an allocation discussion where case work is being allocated and taking part in joint supervision where the AP is providing support to another social worker.

2.4 **ASYE and Post ASYE Progression**

* As soon as it is known that a newly qualified social worker is due to start in a team, the Service Manager will share this at the earliest possible opportunity and a decision will be made about which AP will support them.
* Advanced Practitioners will complete the 3 month and 9 month review, and Team Managers complete the 6 and 12 month review.
* Advanced Practitioner to provide a monthly report to PSW on ASYE pathway and caseloads to ensure that standards are being met. This will be discussed in the monthly meeting with Service Managers and APs.
* Advanced Practitioner alongside Practice Educator Co-ordinator will contribute to the 6 month ASYE ‘light touch’ panel that will review progress, as well as provide an opportunity to provide feedback, to resolve and address any issues if required.
* Advanced Practitioner will provide support and contribute to the progression of social work practitioners.
* Advanced Practitioner will support Post ASYE progression to Level three and Senior Practitioner.

**3. Working Arrangements**

3.1 The APs are line managed by Team Managers but it has been agreed that a regular meeting as a group with the Principal Social Worker will occur on a monthly basis. This will help ensure that;

* APs are supported to deliver the key elements of their job description consistently across the service
* APs as a group  can develop service wide roles
* APs can co-work and support each other to develop and enhance practice improvement and contribute to developing consistent and relational based social work.

3.2 The Advanced Practitioner will support practice across Children’s Social Work and delivery of key service priorities will be agreed by Service Director, Heads of Service and Principal Social Worker.

3.3 Recruitment to the AP team will be coordinated by the Principal Social Worker with support from colleagues in Child Protection and Family Support.

3.4 The work of the AP is time limited and linked to outcomes from practice learning days, thematic audits, data/performance intelligence and other data or research based sources.

3.6 Where there is a need to take the AP unit away from their core role then where possible this needs to be discussed with the AP group so that they are involved in any planning discussions and can contribute to the decisions made. Any requests need to be timely, clearly defined with a clear exit plan.

3.9 A monthly meeting will take place between the managers of APs, their service managers and the PSW. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that the APs have a fair and equitable workload and that planned work can be allocated accordingly.

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| Document Owner: | Robert Fordyce, Principal Social Worker |
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