

**Derby People's Services Department**  
**Children's Workforce Strategy 2022**

**Introduction**

The vision of Derby People's Services Directorate Early Help and Children Social care is to have a workforce capable of meeting the needs of the children, young people and families that we serve, with the knowledge, skills, values, motivation and capacity required to deliver effectively. Using a strengths-based approach, the aim is to achieve greater stability and reduced risk for children and young people, and in doing so increase their wellbeing and the resilience of families. Successes will be measured in the positive outcomes achieved for children, in line with People's Services plans and strategies.

The People's Services - Children workforce comprises:

- Early Help Professionals
- Front line staff working in a range of teams and settings, both single and multi-professional, generic and specialist administrative support staff
- Professional staff with a specialist or support function front-line, middle and senior managers
- Foster carers and family carers
- Residential services

It is clear that the workforce depends on colleagues in other Council Departments and other agencies to be effective and provide holistic and targeted provision.

The strategy sets out how we will ensure:

1. sufficient capacity within the workforce (there is a separate strategy for foster carers)
2. selection of staff to meet both safety and suitability standards
3. competency of staff both those in front line services and those in managerial roles
4. opportunities for staff development
5. progression for staff within and across grades and posts
6. consistency of approach by staff
7. quality management and support for staff
8. effective leadership

## 1) Capacity

Derby is no different from local authorities across the region and nationally where it has been reported that resources are shrinking whilst demand is growing. It is for this reason why there is an expectation that services are delivered efficiently and effectively, and in some cases differently. This may well involve harnessing the support of the voluntary / third sector colleagues to jointly work with children, young people and their families. However, services to Children are a statutory requirement of a Local Authority and are subject to rigorous external inspection regimes to ensure standards are sufficiently high.

The Council where possible, capacity will be monitored through

- Caseloads
- Staffing ratios / shifts covered
- Sickness rates – short and long term
- Vacancies and uncovered posts Staff turnover
- Agency staff & temporary contracts
- Ratio of experienced and/or qualified staff to inexperienced and/or unqualified staff

Capacity of the workforce will be achieved principally through timely recruitment, effective retention and flexibility of the workforce.

Retention is critical, both to reduce vacancies but also to ensure a stable, experienced workforce. It is a key management task, to ensure that staff feel valued and supported, and operate in a context and environment where they can feel proud of the work they do. Where retention is problematic, senior managers should review the service and consult with staff to understand why staff are leaving and address any issues.

Recruitment activity will be prioritised, to minimise any gaps in cover, and there should be no barriers to recruiting to posts in statutory or critical services, long term absence such as maternity leave will be routinely covered although agency staff will only be used as a last resort. Where recruitment is problematic, or turnover is high, senior managers should agree a specific approach to recruitment in that area.

Difficulties in recruitment and retention can be helped by a flexible workforce, with the opportunity for staff to move between teams or posts at the same level, without an internal recruitment process. This can also contribute to staff development.

It is important that teams have an appropriate balance between experienced and inexperienced staff. The Department wishes and needs to support new staff entering the workforce, but to maintain effective services and to provide a positive learning environment for new staff, there needs to be a predominance of experienced staff in teams.

## **2) Suitability**

Selection process will be in line with Council procedures, staff will be selected according to their fit to the person specification of the post and the selection criteria. Safe recruitment practice will be rigorous; staff will be subject to checks and references as appropriate to the post. DBS checks will be obtained in every case where the criteria are, or may be, met, and will be up-dated every three years for identified staff groups.

## **3) Competence**

The necessary competencies for each post should be specified. In many cases these will be set out in national competency frameworks, eg for social workers, child care staff, residential managers. In these, and other cases, competencies should be incorporated into person specifications and performance management. Qualifications requirements and membership of regulatory bodies will be adhered to for relevant posts.

For each post, core competencies will be clear and will always include :

- Safeguarding
- Professional standards
- Recording and information governance Respecting diversity and equality of opportunity User participation and engagement
- Partnership and integrated working

Additional competencies will be identified, or prioritised, for posts as necessary, and will inform the development plan for each individual. Individuals may also be required to evidence other competencies, as Council employees.

#### **4) Development**

Derby People's Services Department strives to be a learning organisation, and expects staff to fully engage with this process. This means that all staff are expected to continuously reflect upon their practice, welcome feedback and seek to improve and extend their knowledge and skills – referred to as continuous professional development.

New staff will be provided with an appropriate induction process, in line with corporate guidance, to ensure they understand and are able to meet the requirements of the post. This will include a corporate induction completed on-line, so they are familiar with key policies, and may include e-learning elements appropriate to the role. Additional elements will be arranged by their manager locally and in accordance with their WFD learning induction and pathway. [Induction \(derby.gov.uk\)](http://derby.gov.uk) [Pathways of Learning \(derby.gov.uk\)](http://derby.gov.uk)

Subsequent performance, and development needs, will be monitored and identified through the Council's Great Performance Conversation (GPC) process. Each individual will have from this a development plan. For many roles/staff groups, there will be a national framework defining expectations, eg for social workers, and their development plan should reflect this. For other roles/staff groups, a local development pathway may be created. The GPC process should incorporate personal reflection, management observation and views, QA and performance feedback, etc.

Managers should also identify learning and development needs through a business planning process, reviewing practice within their service as a whole and taking account of anticipated changes in the organisation and legislation or practice requirements. This should be incorporated and written in to the Team GPC. Local demographic or other contextual changes may also generate a need for different skills within the workforce. Each service business plan should include a staff development plan, reflecting individuals' and business needs within the service.

In all cases, development should be about :

- securing and improving competence in their existing post
- addressing any skills or knowledge gaps, or poor performance specifically responding to external changes in legislation, context, practice, etc responding to local learning or changes
- developing a specialism or extending knowledge or skill base
- acquiring new knowledge or skills to meet a business need, including succession planning
- sharing skills and knowledge with others, especially from other professional groups supporting individual career development
- maintaining an active approach to professional development
- meeting any professional requirements

Development needs can be met in a variety of ways, a traditional “training course” being just one. Others include :

- Personal reflection & self-directed learning
- Mentoring
- Supporting the learning of others through practice education / workbase supervisor roles
- Feedback from observation by peer or manager
- Shadowing
- Group reflective learning

Development will be most effective where it is not isolated, but is linked in with what others are doing and is supported and followed up after the event. Individuals and managers have a responsibility to ensure the learning experience results in a sustained change in practice or behaviour.

Managers are responsible to develop their teams training needs which will inform the training commissioning process and strategic training matrix. This will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by key personnel.

## 5) Consistency of approach

**Derby has an on-line procedures manual which all staff are expected to be familiar with and to follow alongside the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children’s Procedure.**

Derby People's Services – Strength based working also incorporated within Contextual Safeguarding, Domestic Violence Risk Identification Matrix and risk assessment model; Graded Care Profile; reflective supervision. All staff who are expected to use these models, along with their managers, will be appropriately trained in their use, and this will be reflected in the service and individual staff development plan.

To embed models and approaches resources are continuously updated and are available to all staff [Practice information and resources \(derby.gov.uk\)](https://www.derby.gov.uk)

Development opportunities should be pursued where they are consistent with these models and can be sustained, rather than an ad hoc, opportunistic approach.

## **6) Progression**

Salary progression within a grade is by annual increments. Progression from ASYE grade to social worker grade is linked to satisfactory achievement of the ASYE. Beyond that, progression is by means of application for more senior roles.

Individuals may be supported to enhance their skills and knowledge, to improve their chances of success in applying for specialist or more senior posts. This may be linked with succession planning or in shortage or priority areas where there is a specific recruitment or retention plan.

## **7) Management**

Managers have a key role to play in the development of the workforce. As described above, they have responsibility for maintaining and monitoring capacity, retaining and recruiting staff, selecting appropriately and then supporting their development to secure an effective workforce.

An additional important aspect is the supervision they provide. This should be in accordance with the People's Services - Children supervision policy revised 2021, which recognises the accountability, development and support aspects of supervision.

In supervision managers have an opportunity to provide regular constructive feedback and challenge to staff, to encourage reflection, to give advice, to identify sources of ideas and information, to coach – all of which are effective development

strategies. Good supervision is one of the best tools in developing the workforce, and managers need the opportunity to learn how to do this, through modelling by their managers, reflective practice. However there is a range of both social care and corporate training which managers are able to access.

It is also the place to identify the support needs of staff. This should include support in relation to practice, explicitly addressing issues of workload, stress, fear, anxiety, but also in relation to their health needs and personal situations, where this might have an impact on their work, their ability to cope or their current work/home balance. Managers should follow corporate policies in these respects and ensure they help staff to access the supports they may need.

As a staff group, managers themselves have particular learning and development needs which can be met partly through corporate provision, eg recruitment training, and partly through the approach described in (4) above.

## **8) Leadership**

This is critical in providing the direction and focus for the Department and the workforce and is a core competency for managers. Leaders have the opportunity to motivate and inspire, and the responsibility to secure the best possible physical and financial environment for the workforce to operate in. Their expectations, set the tone for the behavior and performance throughout the Department. Leadership training is available for managers and for workers and includes the wider corporate leadership behaviors framework

<https://iderby.derby.gov.uk/media/intranet/documents/hr/Leadership%20Behaviours%20Framework%20July%202019.pdf>

## **9) Partnerships**

People's Services - Children staff cannot secure good outcomes for children on their own. It is important that all staff and managers recognise their own limitations, the importance of partnerships, and the value of colleagues from other agencies. All staff should have the opportunity to work with, and learn with, colleagues from partner agencies, to promote understanding of each other's roles and effective communication. This should be seen as a core competency and where it does not arise naturally within a post, opportunity should be created.

## 10) Support for the strategy

The Workforce Learning and Development Team will work with services to :

- Assist with identification of competencies for posts
- Identify learning priorities and pathways for posts advise around induction programmes for posts
- Advise re development plans for groups of staff or teams
- Work with individual members of staff around key focused areas of learning identified within their great performance conversation.
- Horizon scan for future developments nationally and implications of forthcoming legislation.
- Develop different ways of delivering training and creating learning opportunities to support the workforce needs.
- To ensure that governmental programmes for the service are delivered in accordance with requirements
- Work with DDSCP and CFLB to identify local issues and their implications for the workforce
- To work with the D2N2 Teaching Partnership, to support social work learning into practice.
- To work with regional colleagues to develop a stronger working practice within the East Midlands
- Embedded throughout training delivery is a strengths-based framework that underpin practice.

They will engage in a commissioning process with services, drawing primarily on service development plans, and provide a range of learning and development opportunities, including training courses, workshops, lunch time learning, seminars, action learning, newsletters, webinars and e-learning. They will increasingly do this in consultation with Adult WLD team, DDSCP trainers, relevant Corporate staff, colleagues in other local authorities and agencies and other education and training providers. This will allow the widest possible range of development opportunities, to be delivered as efficiently as possible. Where services become aware of gaps or needs in staff development, it is important they liaise with the WLD team at the earliest opportunity, so an appropriate response can be agreed and planned.

They have a particular role in social work training and will facilitate and support work placements for social work students, including People's Services – Social work Apprentices, co-ordination, and contribution to the Approved and Supported Year of Employment for newly qualified social workers, the Step Up to Social Work

programme and Continuous Professional Development programmes for experienced social workers, including the DfE implementation of the National Assessed and Accredited System (NAAS)

An annual report will be produced to demonstrate activity and highlight key issues for future workforce development, for consideration at the Performance Improvement Board.

The Human Resources team will work with services to produce reports for managers around workforce data, capacity issues, development activity, DBS status. They will advise and assist in relation to particular issues around retention and recruitment, workforce flexibility and progression.

March 2022