



# **SWINDON PRACTICE FRAMEWORK AND VISION and PRINCIPLES FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

**DECEMBER 2019**

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## Swindon's Practice Framework and Vision

### Our vision:

### ***One children's service - consistently good everyday***

#### Our objectives are to enable:

- **Healthy, attached and resilient children to live in families where they are valued, respected and cherished – support children to be the best that they can be**
- **Families (especially parents, but also young people) who are able to make positive changes to their behaviour**
- **Children and young people who are protected from significant harm**

### Our purpose:

- To primarily ensure that children are protected from significant harm and their development and wellbeing are promoted. We do this by working openly with children and families and collaboratively with partners across Swindon.
- To support children to remain within their family wherever possible. We value the importance of direct work and family support with families as a means of enabling change.
- To work openly with children and their families to bring about change, in solution-focused ways, building on their strengths, to help parents and carers to be able to provide good parenting
- To build trusting relationships with children and families that encourages independence and conversations about what matters to them
- To deliver purposeful assessments and care plans that includes direct work with children and families (evidence informed practice and what works)
- To work with families to begin permanency planning from the start of our work, considering permanency options to include staying at home, living with relatives, living with matched and good long term foster carers or special guardians or being adopted.
- To provide high quality substitute care for children within family settings when care at home is not possible. We will try to identify settings within or close to Swindon, and to maintain links with birth family whenever this is in the child's best interests.
- To ensure that we are aspirational for our children in our care and care leavers, and that we deliver stability through high quality support and care planning from us as corporate parents. We are signed up to the Children in Care Pledge to ensure accountability to our children in care and care leavers.
- We recognise that enabling change and building resilience in families, who are often very disadvantaged, is difficult and challenging work, which requires skilled, empowered and confident social workers and family workers. Our purpose is to promote and cultivate a strong learning and supportive culture and to deliver good leadership management and supervision (high support and high challenge).

- To support, develop and value the professional disciplines in social work and social care through the framework of the Swindon Borough Council's Social Work and Leadership Academy.

The Children's Services Leadership Team wants to maximise the impact of the commitment and enthusiasm of front-line staff and managers by:

- valuing and listening to our front line colleagues
- supporting their learning and professional development and
- decreasing the complexity of systems and processes,
- procedures that support and align to the practice framework
- giving staff the permission and tools to work in a systemic, strength and outcome focussed way, which engages and empowers parents, but holds the child's needs and lived experience at the centre.

### **We are committed to developing high quality systemic and relationship based social work practice**

Our Social Work and Leadership Academy supports a 'learning offer and approach' which is predicated on participative learning, learning through doing and through observation, which is reflective and puts 'working with children and families' at its centre. It aims to deliver a learning journey from the students who we welcome into our service and profession, our newly qualified social workers who complete their assessed year of employment in Swindon, through to our experienced practitioners who stay with Swindon. We are committed to our practice being shaped by and responsive to:

- experts from within our service, who want to share their expertise with their colleagues.
- young people who have been in care who are confident that their lived experience will help other children and young people in the future if they contribute to the learning opportunities of social work staff.
- parents and carers who are experts through their lived experience and who, if engaged successfully can help shape learning and service design.
- external colleagues and partners, who are still close to practice; and
- our partnerships with higher education institutions.

Our learning will enable the service offer to become more consistent. It will offer the tools to front line social workers and family support workers to develop strong and meaningful relationships with children, young people and their parents/ carers and to enable children to express their view and feelings so that they can where appropriate inform their plans.

We will deliver improved outcomes:

- by using restorative, relationship based practice
- by championing and becoming skilled and confident in outcome focussed social work

- by developing more fit-for-purpose policies and procedures that support good practice
- through service managers leading on the permanency agenda across the whole service
- by extending the voice and influence of children and young people and inviting them to co-produce the improvement and development agenda.
- by having a service wide relentless focus on improving analysis, plans, and children's outcomes
- by quality assuring our practice and impact for children and families and learning from it

The service wide **relationship and outcomes based approach** builds on work the service has developed over time, for example, the recent work to create a consistent and strong analysis approach within MASH and ACP, the restorative work within the YOS, the solution focussed work in the early help services and the participation approach championed for our children in care in their child care reviews. The approach will also form the foundation of our future work, for example, the development of a new child protection conference model and the implementation of the Family Safeguarding model.

Where we need to recruit staff, we will actively recruit team managers and social workers who want to do direct work with families to enable change. We provide 'direct work toolkits' to our teams to empower them to adopt this engaging approach when working with children, young people and families.

We will develop services for young people and their families which enable the family network to co-produce their own solutions and plans for change, with support that enables adolescents to be diverted from public care and the relationships within the family network to be restored, resilient and life chances enhanced.

Our family group conference model is dynamic, and a core part of the relationship-based way of working to support children to remain living at home where it is appropriate to do so.

We support a relational, restorative approach by empowering our workforce through formal learning opportunities and supervision to engage with families and analyse what is working and what worries us about a child's family circumstance.

## **The practice framework to improve outcomes involves in summary:**

- a cross-cutting priority that is outcome and relationship focussed practice (co-producing a common way of working – single practice model)
- a supporting performance management and QA framework
- empowered staff and managers that reinforce professional accountability
- the use of professional development opportunities to recruit and retain more staff
- comprehensive leadership and management training
- key service wide practice and procedures framework that includes:
  - what does “good” look like
  - fit-for- purpose policies that are outcomes and practice driven
  - practice standards, co-produced across the service
  - refreshed training and development offer that includes core training along with opportunities to train and learn with our partners (LSCB).

## Practice Principles for Children's Social Care

### *"Relentless about improving outcomes for children"*

#### In Swindon....

- *We start with outcomes for children and then work backwards to develop the key policies and procedures that will support practice and getting the basics right*
- *We need a simple and coherent practice and procedural framework; that paints a clear picture of what is expected but empowers social workers to make sound professional judgements with the child at the centre (part of a wider culture of high support and high challenge)*
- *We focus on what "good" looks like through the eyes and voices of children (lived experience)*
- *We support less paperwork, less bureaucracy, less duplication – more time for direct work with children and families!*

#### Introduction and Purpose

Swindon has a single practice framework that sets out our objectives along with our commitment to relationship based practice and our focus on improving children's outcomes. This includes that: -

1. We work to keep children and young people safe and well
2. We build trusting relationships with children and families that encourages independence and conversations about what matters to them, including them setting their own outcomes
3. We support children to remain within their family wherever possible.
4. We work openly with children and their families to bring about change, in solution-focused ways, building on their strengths and resources, to help parents and carers to be able to provide "good" parenting
5. We deliver purposeful assessments and care plans that includes direct work with children and families (evidence informed practice, linked to "what works")
6. We treat families with respect and honesty and keep them informed throughout any social work involvement. Honesty means being open about what can and cannot be negotiated.

Alongside this, our Children's Services Management Team (CSMT) have set 5 foundation pillars of social work.

1. Visits
2. Assessments
3. Plans
4. Reviews
5. Supervision

We also have our 8 overarching practice principles set out below that are applicable to children's social care services and are consistent with our framework. We also have a range of Practice Standards that set out our expectations in relation to aspects of our work with children and families. Our quality assurance activity enables us to measure impact over time and what is helping and hindering us to achieve consistently a good standard and generate best ideas from staff and service users to do better for children.

## Practice Principles for Working with Children and Families

### 1. We assess children's needs and analyse risk leading to outcome focused plans

*Principle:*

*There is evidence of a full assessment of a child needs that is timely, child focussed and has clear outcomes identified in a care plan (informed by a clear analysis of what we might be worried about and why). We always ask children "what matters to them" now and into the future.*

*What "good" looks like examples?*

*The risks are written using language that is understandable to the young person and their family. The voice of the child is clear and directly quoted.*

*The outcomes within the plan clearly state how they will reduce the risk.*

*The plan has been co-created with the family, carers', child or young person to achieve better outcomes'. We identify family strengths and resources.*

*Our initial conversation is the basis of building a trusting relationship*

*Assessment is part of the intervention or support we offer to families.*

Relevant CSMT foundation pillar: Assessments

### 2. Our visits are timely, purposeful and make a difference for children

*Principle:*

*Every visit is linked to an agreed plan of work with the young person, family and our partners. There are agreed measures of success to support the overall outcome we are trying to achieve together (describes what "good" looks like).*

*What "good" looks like examples?*

*All the visits are planned in advance. The social worker and accompanying professionals arrive on time. If the visit needs to be cancelled an alternative is offered immediately. We are reliable and consistent in our professional approach. We do the things we say we will do.*

*The family/carers', child or young person understand the purpose of the visit and what we are all working together to achieve linked to the plan.*

*We create time for and deliver direct work where there is a need*

### 3. Our interventions and plans are dynamic, child centred and outcome focused

*Principle:*

*We regularly review proportionate plans with children and families and check whether we have treated them well and whether together we have made a difference (use scalable questions to gather evidence of impact)*

*What "good" looks like examples?*

We spend proportionate amounts of time both with the children, young people and the carers/parents.

We work hard to find ways to communicate both concerns and progress while still focussing on the meeting the agreed outcomes in the plan and the needs of the child and young persons.

We work with rather than doing to - "the conversation is the intervention".

We minimise changes in social workers to sustain the relationship. We write good transfer summaries to properly capture the journey of the child.

*Relevant CSMT foundation pillar: Plans*

### 4. We work together to build strong, meaningful relationships with children, families and partners

*Principle:*

*We identify the strengths of children and families (what's working well) and have good conversations about areas of change and demonstrate evidence of actively listening, empathy and rapport (trust). We strive to reduce the changes in social workers for families.*

*What "good" looks like examples?*

We co-create the plan with the family/child/young person which facilitates ownership and common understanding. The reasons for our intervention are clear and the outcomes/ success measures are achievable within an agreed timeframe. From the start we invest time in reflection, planning and pacing of work.

We inform the family, child or young person when progress has been made and the impact this has had on meeting the outcomes.

We monitor and reduce drift and delay in our agreed plans.

*Relevant CSMT foundation pillar: Visits, Assessments, Plans, Reviews*

## 5. We record in a way that children and families understand and what it means to them.

*Principle:*

*We ensure that our recording uses plain language and imagine that the "child is looking over our shoulder" reading what we write. We never forget that children and families have a right to see their file and they should be able to make sense of what is written about them.*

*What "good" looks like examples?*

*The words used are readable by any audience but particularly for the child, young person or family.*

*The reason for our involvement is clear and what is to be achieved by our work with them.*

*We simply explain and evidence in our recording our conclusions and recommendations about the child and family.*

*Our recording is factual and not long.*

*Relevant CSMT foundation pillar: Visits, Assessments, Plans, Reviews*

## Practice principles for supervision

### 6. We measure quality and outcomes for children

*Principle:*

*In recording supervision, we allow time for reflective practice on the quality of work and measurable evidence over time we are making a difference to a child's life. If not, why not and what do we need to do differently? We consider evidence and research and the longer term outcomes for children rather than being reactive and process driven.*

*What "good" looks like examples?*

*Managers lead practice through having conversations with social workers about decisions, chairing key risk management and planning meetings, role modelling relationship based practice expectations. Practice leaders are visible and accessible and respond quickly and flexibly.*

*Managers are curious about children's outcomes and are proactive in their approach.*

*We invest time in good supervision and learning agreements.*

*Provide a safe place for challenge. Use group supervision to extend learning and team involvement.*

*Principle:*

*There is a clear "management footprint" on the file that demonstrates oversight, key decisions and case discussions (there is clarity on who's accountable for what and why; particularly in relation to keeping a child safe). We provide high support and high challenge to staff.*

*What "good" looks like examples?*

*Managers are clear about what training is core and what is mandatory and what professional development is.*

*Managers will support and challenge social workers to make sense of what is going on, to think and act differently.*

*Staff who feel valued will reflect that back.*

*Learning and development is more than a training course, we will create other on the job learning opportunities, including work in other teams.*

*Our training gets the foundations right for great social work e.g. child development.*

*Relevant CSMT foundation pillar: Supervision*

**8. We invest time in continual professional development.**

*Principle:*

*Supervision will always allow time for reflection on training and learning and developmental needs, through appraisal a professional development plan will be included. We invest time in our staff so they can be the best they can be through creating different learning opportunities. This includes opportunities for direct work with children and families.*

*What "good" looks like examples?*

*Supervision takes place every 4 weeks and is protected time.*

*Supervisors focus on agreed outcomes and the actions need to achieve them. Timescales are clear and expectations are realistic. The progress towards the outcomes are discussed and, reviewed and recorded. Managers ask themselves and others "what impact is this having on the child"?*

*Supervisors take a balanced approach to providing care, support and the need to intervene to protect a child from harm.*

*We empower and encourage self-reflection and professional judgement.*

