Final Report:

Evaluation of the South Yorkshire Teaching Partnership

Interface

March 2019

Interface is an independent organisation with a mission to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, individuals and families. We are national leading experts in early intervention and prevention. Interface was established in March 2010, by members of the former Families Delivery Team, Families at Risk Division at the Department for Education (DfE). We were successful in receiving £2m grant from DfE (Families at Risk) that later moved to DCLG Troubled Families' team to support with this agenda.

Over the last 8 years we have worked extensively with education, local authority and the PVI sector to build capacity within their workforce and improve leadership, systems and approaches.

We have a strong track record of evaluation, strategic management and service redesign, as well as excellent knowledge of the local landscape. Our added value arises from our familiarity with many of the issues, dynamics and pressures that individuals and staff may experience when delivering this type of support.

For more about us see www.interfaceenterprises.co.uk

Contents

Addendum: Assessed and Supported Year for Aspiring Managers pilot programme (AYSAM)

1. Introduction

1. Interface was commissioned in September 2018 to conduct an evaluation of the South Yorkshire Social Work Teaching Partnership. The evaluation activities took place between October 2018 and February 2019. We would like to thank all the stakeholders involved in the evaluation for their time and insight, on which this evaluation is largely based.

Background

2. The South Yorkshire Social Work Teaching Partnership is part of the national Social Work Teaching Partnerships (SWTPs) programme funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

3. The programme was developed by central government to improve the quality of education and experience received by social work students and practitioners, following reviews such as Narey and Croisdale-Appleby[1]. These reviews highlighted the need for a greater focus on practice-based training, higher quality CPD and a clearer skills and career development framework for social work.

4. Key drivers for the Social Work Teaching Partnerships (SWTPs) national programme are to:
   - Enhance partnership arrangements between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and employers;
   - Attract more able students;
   - Embed the knowledge and skills statements (KSS) into academic curricula and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for existing workers;
   - Raise the quality of social work practice.

5. The first phase of the national SWTP programme was launched in 2014, through government seeking applications from local authorities. The South Yorkshire partnership was successful in the first round, and commenced activities in April 2015. Since then the partnership has been funded annually on a decreasing basis, with DfE providing a final contribution to end March 2019, to facilitate sustainability of activities.

6. The South Yorkshire Teaching Partnership (SYTP) is a collaboration between:
   - The University of Sheffield (UoS)
   - Sheffield Hallam University (SHU)

---

[1]Martin Narey (2014). Making the education of social workers consistently effective. Report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of the education of children's social workers. Prof. David Croisdale-Appleby (2014). Re-visioning social work education. An independent review.

- Sheffield City Council (Lead Partner)
- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Lincolnshire County Council (Children's Services)
- Doncaster Children's Services Trust.
- Doncaster MBC

7. The partnership is led by senior managers in workforce development, social work and academics. It brings together Principal Social Workers, Workforce Development leads, Social Work academics and researchers, frontline practitioners and young people and adults who have experienced social care.

8. The partnership is funded to deliver the stretch criteria set by DfE. The partnership aims are:

- To work together to develop and deliver high quality social work education and training that ensures effective provision for people who use our services;
- To be innovative, creative and sustainable as a partnership and remain responsive to the changing needs of the social work profession;
- To achieve a standard of excellence whereby regional employability rates from initial training through to roles in statutory social work are raised, and all local authorities in the partnership can recruit and retain high calibre social workers;
- To be committed to improving lifelong professional development and career development, and to grow leaders for the future;
- To improve standards and decision-making that will increase public confidence in the quality of the social work profession;
- To become a nationally recognised centre of excellence and innovation in relation to social work education and the qualifying and post-qualifying levels;
- To offer courses that are co-designed and co-delivered, with improved teaching and sharing of resources;
- To ensure that each student will be ready to practise in frontline fieldwork services by guaranteeing them two placements in statutory settings;
- To work in partnership to provide continuous professional development courses which support clearly defined career pathways, which are aligned to the workforce development needs of the partnership, and which are linked to national requirements and to systems for assessment and accreditation;
- To embed research mindedness across the partnership, and offer opportunities for students, practitioners, managers and service users/carers to engage with a programme of research that is informed by a robust understanding of local and regional needs;
- To engage people who use services and their carers in the development and delivery of social work education and training – including admissions, teaching and placements.

Evaluation Delivery

9. The purpose of the evaluation is to:

   - identify and explore the achievements of the partnership to date, in terms of benefits and outcomes for students, social workers, partners and clients, in the context of the strategic aims and vision;
   - understand the challenges and enablers of effectiveness (past/future);
   - explore added value and sustainability;
   - make suggestions to support the future development of the work.

10. An inception meeting was held in October 2018 to discuss the needs and focus of the evaluation. Specific areas of activity were highlighted to be of particular interest in terms of benefits, outcomes and sustainability. These were the:

    - Advanced Practice framework (which gives access to accredited CPD modules to all social workers, which can count towards their Masters degree);
    - Post Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Management (UoS Management School);
    - Assisted and Supported Year for Aspiring Managers (ASYAM);
    - the Practice Consultant Role;
    - statutory placements.

11. The evaluation method has comprised:

    - a review of documentation, which has included annual reports, newsletters, case studies and other useful information;
    - a range of stakeholder research, including a steering group workshop, focus groups and individual semi structured interviews (face to face and telephone). Stakeholders for inclusion have been identified jointly by the partnership and evaluators.

12. The following stakeholder consultation has taken place:

    - Workshop with the Strategy Board
    - Professor of Social Work (UoS)
    - Senior Lecturer SHU
    - Director Performance, Quality and Innovation (LA)
    - Focus group with Practice Development Group (Children's) (n7)
    - Focus group – UoS students (n3: two 2nd year and one 1st year MA students)
    - Practice consultant x2
    - Principal Social Workers (Children's Services) x2
    - Head of Social Work Dept, UoS
    - Workforce Development Manager (LA)
    - Senior Manager – Service Improvement Team (SYTP Programme Manager) (LA)
    - SYTP Project Manager

- Asst Director Safeguarding and Quality Assurance (SYTP Strategy Board Chair)
- Director of social work (UoS)
- Lead for service user involvement
- Focus Group: Practice and Placement Development Group n2 (+1 individual interview)
- Focus Group Practice Development Group Adults n4 (+1 individual interview)
- Focus Group – ASYE (n12)
- Focus Group Practice Educator (n8)
- Post Grad student (n1)
- Focus group – ASYAM (n1)
- Academic Delivery Manager (SHU)
- Focus group - SHU Students (n7 year 3 students)
- Focus group - Social workers who have attended CPD modules/courses (n3)

13. Research tools were developed for each stakeholder group and consultation method. These are based on an evaluation framework, comprising the following topic areas:

- Effectiveness of the partnership working
- Benefits, outcomes, impact and sustainability
- Challenges and enablers
- Perspectives on added value.

14. Please note that the AYSAM programme element of the evaluation is included as an Addendum, as we did not receive enough feedback through this method to form reliable findings. However, the small amount of feedback we received is included here for information, with additional context from documents provided by the partnership.

2. Effectiveness of the partnership

15. The partnership has delivered an impressive range of activities, which has enabled the partnership to achieve considerable progress across priority aims –particularly in:

    - building a lifelong learning culture underpinned by a strong Continuing Professional Development (CPD) offer;
    - developing a rigorous placement model;
    - strengthening practice in the curriculum, particularly through the work of the Practice Consultants (PC).

16. Some areas of work have proved a challenge to embed or improve consistently and these are raised in the discussion below, with a view to further supporting the development of the partnership.

There are economies of scale when working as a partnership where pooling of resources and using collective knowledge results in strong partnership delivery, improved quality and sustainability. [Board]

Governance and Operations

17. The structure of the partnership is as follows:

    - A Strategy Board chaired by Sheffield local authority - comprising senior managers, principal social workers and workforce leads from LAs and senior subject leads within the 2 universities. The Strategic Board meets monthly, receiving reports from the operational groups.

    - 5 operational groups: Curriculum Development; Practice Development (Adult's); Practice Development (Children's); Workforce Leads; Placement Planning and Development [Finalised in April 2018, previously there were 4].

    - 3 subgroups: the Social Work Education Panel, the Research Group and the Practice Educator Network [A reduction from 7 previous subgroups April 2018.]

    - 7 workstreams – Governance, Admissions, Placements and Curriculum, Academic Delivery, Practice Support and Development, Workforce and Labour Market Planning, Progression and Academics' Experience of Practice each led by a named individual from within the partnership.

18. The partnership structure has evolved over time to reflect changes to national policy, local stakeholder needs and new partners (Lincolnshire Children's Services joined in 2017 and SHU joined in April 2018). The partnership has tightly managed elements of

its growth, providing very high-level scrutiny of SHU when it joined the partnership. Stakeholders perceived significant benefits from having two HEIs within the partnership and a broader range of LAs in terms of bringing a broader range of expertise, Partner in Practice status and achieving wider consistency. Shared understanding between partners has been a key benefit of the partnership.

> *"By bringing together universities, workforce development leads and employers, needs are identified and addressed. It also allows the partnership to make the most of the skills and expertise within it."*

> *"The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The partnership is most effective when members are collaborating to meet needs."*

19. There is a clear governance and operational structure, supported by a performance framework. At Board level, there is a common understanding of the purpose of the partnership and its fit with national drivers and the strategic objectives of the home institutions. Across the partnership, the board is generally considered to have focused on the right priorities and to have developed corresponding implementation plans. There appears to be a reasonable level of consensus about the strengths and challenges of the partnership but less consensus on the way forward. The partnership is entering a new phase where it may need to review and streamline its structure to ensure key functions are embedded and key priorities are sustained.

> *"The partnership is not dependent on personalities, rather [it is] an investment in the identified role of working in partnership and organisational commitment to it as it makes good business sense."*

> *"I am confident that all those involved in the teaching partnership including the HEIs are committed to making a real difference to the lives of vulnerable children and that is their aim."*

> *"The teaching partnership should be an improvement journey but it's not always clear how it does this. We need to think about what we can pick up and put down, what we can run with and support."*

20. There are a number of issues that reduce the effectiveness of the Strategy Board. There are consistent reports (across a range of stakeholders) that decision-making is affected by:

- frequent changes in individuals attending the monthly meetings;
- members lacking a mandate to make decisions;
- poor preparation by attendees;
- too much time spent dwelling on previously taken decisions and tasks;
- decisions sometimes happen outside meetings;
- meetings can be too long and meetings;
- being bureaucratic, including sub groups not given autonomy to make decisions without reference back up to the strategic board and duplication across the sub groups.

21. Effectiveness could be improved by less frequent changes to individual membership, better preparation for decision-making, clear minutes and more rigorous challenge between stakeholders. A clearer performance framework, particularly capturing systematic reporting to and from subgroups would strengthen communication, decision-making and accountability.

> *The Board acknowledged that they know where they started from and where they are now but also that they need to do more thinking about where they want to be in the future.*

22. The membership composition of strategic and operational groups is inclusive and reflects the range of institutions involved. Not all partners feel 'equal' and there is a perceived mixed commitment across Local Authority partners and across Adults and Children's Services.

- There is significantly more evidence of Children's Services involvement than Adult Services, but this seems largely due to a more limited capacity in Adults Services and many restructures. Indeed, those Adult Services staff interviewed came across as committed, particularly the Adults PDG staff who confirmed that this group would continue whether or not the TP did. However, some also sat on the Strategy Board and found the time commitment difficult because there are fewer AS staff to share the workload. A clearer performance framework could also lead to a reduction in the number of Strategy Board meetings, perhaps from monthly to quarterly, thereby improving regular attendance.

- Across Children's Services, there are perceptions that two local authorities were less active participants, which was attributed to key changes in personnel.

23. At an Operational Group level, it was consistently reported that there are good, or very good, working relationships. Indeed both the Adults' and Children's Practice Development Groups and the Placement and Practice Development Group said they would continue to meet even if the Teaching Partnership did not continue.

"[There are] good, trusting working relationships, we are able to state problems and share challenges."

24. The voice of the service user has been strengthened as a result of the partnership. The teaching partnership effectively draws on the work of Sheffield City Council's Service User Empowerment Manager to ensure that service users are genuinely contributing to the development of social workers. This is evidenced in admissions processes, use of user experience in masterclasses, the living library and through user experience workshops and events, for example the Film Festival. There is some commitment to further strengthen 'experts by experience' by the HEIs, and to trying to extend user recruitment across all local authorities (as most users are from Sheffield). This will potentially support the partnership to bring a greater spread of experience at all levels of its work.

"We provide workshops for students on placement, titled 'It ain't what you do it's the way that you do it'. The workshop focuses on messages for social workers from children and young people in care and uses the award winning film from our Children in Care Council. Foster carers facilitate the small group discussions throughout the workshop, and to date feedback has been excellent."

"I have noticed a massive increase in confidence levels of service users involved in any teaching partnership activities."

25. A communication strategy is in place, in line with national good practice. Good quality annual reports, newsletters and several case studies have been produced to support communication, sharing good practice and accountability. However, there were mixed views on the effectiveness of internal communications. Some individuals showed considerable knowledge about current priorities and activities of the TP, but others felt divorced from it, this is particularly true for adult services staff working within the Mental Health Trust. Some staff who work within the remit of the SWTP feel they don't always hear of important decisions made by the Strategy Board quickly enough through formal channels.

26. At an operational level, wider workforce awareness of CPD is high. However, some stakeholders were unaware of the role of the TP and didn't appreciate that activities they heard about were linked to it or funded by it. Some respondents felt they heard about courses too late, almost as they were due to start or had started. Limited workforce capacity to manage and distil communications exacerbates this challenge.

"I had no awareness of the TP and it was not mentioned during selection or induction" (first year student MA)

27. The teaching partnership has been well supported through infrastructure roles as follows:

    - Programme Manager 0.4 FTE (also the Workforce Development Manager for Children's Social Care in Sheffield and lead co-ordinator for the Yorkshire & Humber Step Up to Social Work)
    - Project Manager (as part of other roles until Sept 2016, then full time between Sept 2016 and October 2018, funded through the DfE second round funding). A new part-time Project Manager was appointed in November 2018.

28. These posts have supported the strategy board with a range of activities including planning, monitoring and communication, clarifying expectations and setting up specific groups. The roles have been critical to facilitating pace, communication, stakeholder engagement and operational accountability for workstreams.

29. It is important to note that the location of the lead partner and two HEIs is Sheffield and this has resulted in a widely held perception that the partnership is Sheffield centric. The perception is that there is a bias towards meetings, training and other activity happening in Sheffield. The area is geographically quite large, especially given the inclusion of Lincolnshire, and whilst some partners are able to travel, frontline staff can find this a challenge. The partnership is aware of this and some attempts are made to offset it, e.g. holding PPDG meetings/PE network outside Sheffield. Using technology to support meetings in some instances may be an option. One stakeholder suggested the governance needs to be more distributed and that moving the strategy board and operational meetings to other local authority venues would be symbolic.

Admissions

30. The workstream on admissions has successfully focused on recruiting high quality graduates. All outputs and milestones in relation to admissions have now been achieved[2].

31. From inception of the teaching partnership – and on joining – both HEIs have adopted the DfE stated criteria of 120 UCAS points (BA) and a 2:1 (MA) which is even maintained at clearing (for SU). Both HEIs follow a rigorous admissions process,

---

[2] SYTP Highlight Report Jan 2019

designed by the partnership. The process includes entry tests including written assessments, verbal reasoning, group discussions, interviews and role play.

32. Practitioners and service users have historically been involved in the SU and SHU admissions processes but this is now better organised and prioritised by LA staff as a result of the TP. Across both HEIs, service user involvement counts for 25% of the overall assessment score. Users are well trained and supported in their role and they feel valued, particularly by SHU. Stakeholders report that involving service users in admissions has brought benefits to both the process and user engagement. Students, in particular, highly valued the 'Experts by Experience' input into the interview and selection process.

33. The vast majority of stakeholders report that the teaching partnership has played a role in increasing the quality of recruits. It is recognised that this is difficult to measure reliably, either quantitatively or qualitatively and attribution is affected by other factors that will have an impact such as Step Up to Social Work and Apprenticeships. However, the fact that entry requirements and the interview process are more rigorous would logically suggest there should be an improvement in the quality of new students entering courses.

> *"I have noticed a significant improvement in the quality and calibre of the students coming into practice since the TP was established and employers have been more involved in the training of students."*

Curriculum

34. All curricula have been fully assessed and matched against the KSS/PCF to ensure compliance. Courses are advertised with clear explanations of which KSS/PCF are being addressed and the KSS/PCF are clearly embedded into all aspects of learning. All teaching and practice support is linked back to the KSS and PCF. The two student 'core placement offer' documents demonstrate how the component parts link to the PCF domains.

35. Practice Educators are clear that the links to KSS are evident to them and to their students. This was also evidenced by students themselves, who appeared to be very aware of the KSS and what was expected of them in their work and in terms of putting together their portfolios.

36. Significant work has gone into developing an effective balance between academic and practical needs of students in the curricula. Initial cultural and ideological differences over this balance have lessened through joint working. All curricula have been

reviewed to maximise appropriate practice input and ensure social work students are prepared for the workplace. The evaluation feedback suggests that, particularly as a result of the work of the PCs, the curriculum is more up-to-date, more responsive to changes in the workplace and the universities are responding to changes in the context and needs of practitioners.

> *"There was a community focus perspective on social work by the Universities, but now there is a stronger focus on the statutory framework".*

37. In March 2018 an additional review of the MA curriculum was carried out to identify areas where further input from practitioners and service users/carers would be beneficial. The Practice Consultant posts helped to ensure that the curricula are practice focused and that practitioners are involved in co-delivery and development. From April 2018, practitioner involvement in the delivery of SHU's BA curriculum is embedded; being led by the CPD lead, the practice consultant for childcare and the adults' lead practitioner based within SHU.

38. Effective revised structures are now in place to enable ongoing continuing development of adult and children specific practice in the curricula, through the PDG Children's and PDG Adult's groups. Whilst the rationale for this split is as a result of identification of different needs, some stakeholders expressed concerns about potential duplication, or that it may be counterproductive to thinking whole family and community as an approach to social work practice.

39. Students place very high value on practitioner input to courses as well as the involvement in the curriculum by foster carers, adult carers, care leavers and young carers, who have been trained to participate to input to the curriculum in both universities.

40. The TP employs two Practice Consultants to ensure the curriculum is appropriately focused on practice, and to ensure the practitioner viewpoint is input to the curriculum via teaching and learning (drawing on a pool of practitioners), and by providing feedback to the HEIs.

   - One 0.5 Practice Consultant (Children's) is appointed to work with SU. The post holder also sits on the Children's Practice Development Group and chairs the AYSE moderation panel. Examples of achievements include: Development and delivery of an AYSE module; Integration of child-care practice within the MASW curriculum; Development of a practice curriculum supporting child-care specialism for placements.

   - From March 2018 a 0.5FTE Practice Consultant was appointed to work with SHU.

The other 0.5FTE is used to chair the PPDG where the co-ordination, management and quality assurance of student placements takes place. Achievements include developing the PLE3 module for delivery from Sept 2018 which will support practitioners to develop their teaching, coaching and mentoring skills and will lead to the fellowship of the Higher Education Academy.

41. In addition to the valuable practical activities undertaken by the PC's, the role has improved understanding between academic and practice partners, supporting the development of collaboration within the partnership.

42. The recruitment and deployment of Practice Consultants (PCs) has been very effective, and the roles are considered critical by stakeholders across the partnership.

43. It is worth noting that issues around poor student attendance on BA and MA courses were raised, which could affect the ability of the curricula to make the expected difference in quality of learning. There is a view that minimum mandatory requirements would support universities to insist on a minimum attendance level and that the Teaching Partnerships nationally are in a position to influence this.

Placements

44. The Placement and Practice Development Group is responsible for managing placements and for organising Practice Educator (PE) training (supported by UoS). The collaborative work around student placements is well established and all members of the group felt this work is embedded and would continue whatever happened in the longer term to the partnership.

> *"The PPDG is the powerhouse of the TP, agency co-ordinators work hard to make sure that student placements are managed and well planned, it being a more complex process than some imagine. The 5 LAs and 2 universities work as a team, despite the universities being in competition with each other".*

45. Students are supported on placement by Practice Educators, who are overseen by the PCs. The work of the PCs is guided by the PPDG which ensures there is PE training available, quality assures and validates PE portfolios in line with standards set out by the national Practice Education framework, runs the PE quarterly network meetings and ensures they have access to mentors.

46. The Partnership has produced a number of detailed guidance documents that provide a clear view of what is expected of all parties prior to and during a placement across both Adults and Children's Services: Placement Protocol and Governance; Adult Social Work Student Core Placement Offer; and a Social Work Student Core Placement Offer (Children's Services). However, our evaluation research indicates that some of these expectations are not always achieved, particularly in relation to placement matching

and notification. This applies to students at both HEIs. Students cited examples of being advised very shortly before a placement was due to start and others of arriving and feeling that they were not expected and had no desk, computer or telephone ready for them. One even, cited an example where she turned up for placement to find her workplace supervisor was off sick and no-one spoke to her in the office for three days.

47. The partnership developed a new placement model with SU in order to increase quality of practice. Initially the teaching partnership (SU only at that time) provided two statutory placements – a first placement of 70 days and a second placement of 100 days with 99% of students having two statutory placements (in line with DfE stretch criteria). However, from February 2017 the first placement from SU was increased from 70 to 100 days, with the 30 additional days incorporating workshops and skills days within a practice framework. SHU have retained 1 x 70 and 1 x 100.

48. 99% statutory placements have been maintained across Children's and Adults services. Conceptually, this model is supported by stakeholders including students, although it is an ongoing challenge to meet the statutory placement criteria.

49. There is a mixed view on the value DfE have placed on purely statutory placements. Some feel that this is too purist and more flexibility is needed to widen the skills learnt by student social workers and provide insight into the wider work of social workers. Others feel it this better ensures students have core experience of working within statutory frameworks.

50. In Children's Services there is a view that more emphasis on other areas of social work practice (outside statutory placements) would be welcome, e.g. fostering, adoption, looked after children, youth offending. Adult Services feel that students would benefit from more access to practice around mental health capacity and safeguarding experience – perhaps through observation or co-working.

51. When DfE funding for the partnership ends (March 2019), a hub and spoke model will be introduced. This will open up placements in services such as fostering and adoption etc. This will require further ideological discussion to arrive at a final model.

52. The teaching partnership has paid much attention to the placement curriculum. At both HEIs, a wide range of development workshops are provided as part of the first placement and more advanced workshops are provided to those on their final placement. Workshops are delivered by experienced social work practitioners across both Adults and Children's Services, at different venues across the SYTP, and on a series of subjects.   These aim to increase employability and transition to qualified practitioner. The workshops also aim to enable the provision of specialist pathways, by

enabling students to select workshops that are linked to their chosen area of specialism in either Children's or Adults' Services. Examples of workshops include:

- Case chronologies
- Case recording
- Time management
- Service user involvement
- Values and ethics
- Mental health and parenting
- Serious case reviews
- Mental Capacity Act
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- Recruitment and Employability
- Working together – child protection conferences

53. The partnership's own evaluation of the workshops has returned positive feedback, with students reporting the workshops to be an excellent opportunity to link key theories and concepts to their practice within their placements.

54. Our research also found that students were, in general, positive about the workshops and training days. Some second year students felt that the training days were superior to HEI lectures because of the practice based focus. Developing emotional resilience is an additional workshop theme suggested by students in our research.

55. However, several students remarked that there were too many days and there was sometimes repetition with existing learning – including an example of an identical training day and lecture, by the same lecturer. Students suggested that perhaps lecturers should always be present during a guest lecturer's session to avoid duplication. The partnership appears to be already aware of this issue through their own continuous improvement processes.

56. Students are supported by a growing number of PEs, as a result of the particular focus on CPD activity on PEP levels 1,2 and 3. The 'Guide for all Practice Educators' was issued in Sept 2018 and sets out expectations of work and tasks which can be offered to students and demonstrates how they are linked to the PCF domains.

57. Students report that they feel well supported by PEs, although they did not feel processes and support was consistent for all students in terms of placement allocation processes and support on placement. Several students reported a sense of frustration about the allocation of placements with students frequently being given a placement they didn't want and then that impacted on the second placement, e.g. "you can't do CWD placement if you've done CP". We are not clear how widespread this.

58. Students reported that where PEs and/or practice supervisors were based in the same

office, access to ongoing supervision and open dialogue was much simpler.

59. Morale amongst social workers, particularly in statutory teams appears to be low. All students we spoke to referred to the negative comments they received from practising social workers and how off-putting this is when the students are just starting out on their career pathway. This may have an impact on retention and needs to be addressed if the good work done by the TP is to maximise its impact.

"I felt protected by the PE when my team had high expectations re allocation of statutory work."

"Placement quality can be 'hit & miss."

"On occasions the PE/PS is not properly prepared to supervise a year one student – they seem to be more geared up to a year two placement."

PE Support and Development

60. Under the partnership, PEs feel better supported in terms of their access to high quality PE training and input from the Practice Education Networks to support their students. Improved PE training has led to changes in the way students are supported, for example, PEs reported that they:
    - have changed their approach from modelling and teaching to being facilitative;
    - are drawing on a wider range of input to enrich the student experience;
    - are providing reflective group supervision;
    - feel more confident to be honest about uncertainty in practice.

61. Several PEs felt well supported with time off to fulfil the PE role, including some PEs who reported having 6 hours per student.

62. Many PEs said they were allocated 3 hours per student (as per the guidance), but that this time was not protected. They concluded that there is a lack of support from their LAs to ensure they have the time to carry out the PE role as well as they would wish. It was consistently felt among the PEs directly engaged in the evaluation that six hours was a more realistic level of time needed (as opposed to 3 hours), and that it needed better protecting. The perceived or actual lack of LA support was considered a barrier to recruiting more PEs.

"This really gets you down. It's a real struggle. Guidance is needed on a set amount of time required to be a practice educator. Local authorities need to sign up for this as it is a very important job. I did PE1 and 2 but there are lots of assignments and portfolios and it feels like a long slog. I lost motivation."

> *"How would you quantify three hours? Is it one case less? Three cases less? I think nobody is able to define this and therefore it is not clear and in reality does not happen."*

> *"Many people are interested in becoming practice educators, but they are just not given the support to carry out the role and this puts them off."*

63. Students feel this tension and are very aware of the additional pressure PEs and practice supervisors find themselves under.

Continuing Professional Development

64. The partnership has successfully emphasized continuing professional development as its core priority, launching a revised, comprehensive CPD framework in 2016. This framework has been developed jointly by SYTP and is designed to support social work professionals to continue to develop their knowledge and skills as professionally capable, reflective and analytical practitioners. It provides accredited CPD opportunities linked to clear career pathways for both social workers and managers. The framework comprises:

   - 4 courses/modules specifically targeted at adult social work practice;
   - 5 courses/modules specifically targeted at children's social work practice;
   - 1 course/module covering both children's and adults social work practice (The Social Worker in the Court Room);
   - the Assessed and Supported Years in Employment course (ASYE) for newly qualified social workers;
   - 3 Leadership & Management courses/modules open to both adults and children's services;
   - 3 Practice Education courses/modules open to both adults and children's services and targeted at those who are or want to be actively involved in the professional development of social workers;
   - Research in Professional Practice module open to both adults and children's services.

65. The courses are delivered by the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University. This was important to those interviewed, who felt that taking time out to go into a university environment and accessing university resources for study was crucial to developing or reawakening a learning culture within themselves. They also appreciated the range of peers on the course, who come from other areas and this added real value compared to 'in house' training.

66. Practitioners cited the benefits of many courses, but in particular the course targeted at preparation for court work. Staff were full of praise for the effectiveness of the course and the Legal Department reported that they had seen a significant improvement in the performance of staff in court who had attended the course.

67. In addition, there were many examples of where the courses have had an impact on practice and/or a desire to do more learning.

> *"The Research in Professional Practice module was brilliant. In general the new courses involved critical reading study, using on-line journals, critical debate, and having access to university staff had a big impact. I have developed a critical perspective directly as a direct result of the course. Because of the research module I am now going for PhD funding to do research, part-time in university and part-time in the workplace".*

68. The PG Certificate in Leadership and Management (level 7) has been developed by the University of Sheffield's Management School on behalf of the South Yorkshire Teaching Partnership. This is a dedicated programme developed and designed specifically for new and aspiring senior managers in social work or social care settings and has been mapped against the Practice Leader and Practice Supervisor Knowledge and Skills statements. The aim is for participants to benefit from increased knowledge of the effective practice of leadership and management as applied to social work or social care.

69. The leadership and management strand of the APF was considered excellent by the small number of students we spoke to (ASYAM and PGL&M) and is considered very beneficial to staff progression. In our evaluation, students reported that the 360 degree analysis feedback and mentoring were particularly beneficial to them in understanding themselves and where they are in terms of their career development.

> *"I learnt a lot about reflective practice and supervision. I now approach supervision differently - it is a shared process and I have responsibility."*

> *"I found it invigorating and it woke up my brain from a long period of dormancy. Current leadership and management styles were explored, and it progressed and deepened my understanding of management and leadership."*

70. Reports from those who have completed the leadership programmes indicate that some participants have already been promoted into leadership & management roles. By offering training for management prior to appointment the partnership feels it is influencing management practice from the outset.

71. In terms of the AYSE, the programme developed by the partnership offers a robust mix of practice, support and continued learning. The partnership's own evaluation of ASYE programmes across Adults and Children's Services reported high levels of satisfaction from NQSWs and reports from LAs that NQSWs are better prepared and better supported as a result of the changes that have been made.

"I feel that the ASYE course supported a more seamless transition from the degree into frontline social work practice and enabled me to be supported to develop the essential components of good social work post qualification."

72. The Interface evaluation, involving 12 NQSWs across all the local authorities and across Adults and Children's Services, found a more mixed picture:
    - all staff knew about the training brochure and had been advised to look out for it;
    - one focus group member said she had been attracted to South Yorkshire for employment because she was aware of the Teaching Partnership and the training on offer;
    - not everyone had a graduated caseload, and most felt that 90% caseload was unrealistic;
    - of the CPD offer itself they felt the masterclasses and the training workshops are good and valuable to them, citing courses on attachment, domestic violence and sexual abuse as real strengths. However, they found a few workshops patronising including time management.

73. However, the greatest area of concern related to the AYSE portfolios. It is perceived that there are very different expectations around ASYE portfolios between Adult and Children's Services with a general consensus that it is easier for Children's Services staff because the portfolio is very structured around the evaluation criteria. A few members of the group were unclear as to what was actually required. They could not understand why there is a difference when the standards should be consistent. There was also a real concern about the time commitment required to produce portfolio evidence, particularly the essays. A few suggested that rather than including so many essays, records of reflective supervision (individual, group and self) could be included in the portfolios to evidence the domains and areas of learning.

"Towards the end it all gets too much. You need to provide 4 x 1750 word essays and 3 x 1000 word essays where you try to demonstrate compliance with the domains – I ask myself am I being reflective or am I making it up to fit the portfolio?"

"The year is called 'Assessed and Supported Year in Employment' but there is a lot of evidence of assessment but less so for support"

74. NQSWs also expressed concern about the varying levels of support they received in the workplace. As was the case with PEs and students, time to provide sufficient supervision and ongoing support was perceived by the NQSWs to be a challenge for those supervising them. The NQSWs did not doubt their supervisors' commitment or ability but felt they simply did not have the time to do what was expected of them. This resulted in some gaps in supervision and delays in the feedback needed for their portfolios.

75. In the main, the CPD framework is well known to social workers who understand there are clear pathways for them to progress and the benefits this brings. By May 2018, 450 practitioners from across the SYTP have completed, registered for, or are currently attending CPD modules. 23 managers have completed the Post Graduate Certificate in Leadership & Management. 113 ASYEs have had their portfolios accredited. The partnership rightly considers this as an indication of the success of the CPD programme.

76. All agreed that the TP has brought better structure and easier access to CPD and made the process more equitable (which had been an issue pre-TP). It is accepted that in some areas not all social workers know about it but it is also fair to expect social workers to take some personal responsibility to explore what is available and to use appraisal to highlight to their managers what they need. Having a PSW at hand who has oversight is noted as helpful. Practical suggestions were made to improve access to the programme:
    - get the brochure out to social workers earlier to give them good time to assess what they most need;
    - TP could consider a focus on those who don't prioritise their own CPD. There are still social workers who are hard to reach who would not recognize the TP has met their needs.

77. A common concern raised by practitioners who had undertaken a CPD opportunity was whether or not all courses should be accredited. It was felt that the popularity of the Masterclasses represented the fact that they are not 'tested'. Some people felt that the risk of 'failing' accredited courses could be disempowering and was definitely a barrier for some people taking up those training opportunities. A few people asked what it actually means if someone did not pass the accreditation because they would still hold their qualification and be a practising social worker. One PE cited the fact that she had 'failed' her PE course but her job description still says she is a PE. However, those who were raising these issues were also very clear that in order to improve practice we need to promote the concept of the "curious social worker" within a learning organisation where professionals expect to continue their learning to maximise their skills and expertise. One stakeholder suggested that offering both an accredited and non-accredited offer may meet the range of needs across partners.

Academics in Practice

78. The partnership has facilitated academics to spend time in practice. Examples include:

- A pilot for research-minded group supervision, initially in 3 teams in Sheffield City Council - where two academics were allocated to a specific team to support work on selected cases. The academic staff reviewed the relevant literature and together with the team manager and facilitated group supervision sessions for the team using the research. A revised model is being piloted in Rotherham, where academic research is being delivered to practice leaders.
- Protected time for a six HEI staff to spend time in practice (e.g. 5 days).
- 3 staff from UoS spent time in practice in Year 1, 2 in Year 2 and 1 in year 3.

79. There was not a widespread perception/understanding that this had taken place. Only one example was cited, suggesting that despite the fact that some is taking place this is not widely seen/communicated. Participants reported that the lack of focus on this area was a pity. Those who benefited from issue-based research workshops talked highly of the value of that approach. The partnership's own case study indicates the value of HEI lecturers returning to practice.

> *"The experience confirms the value of my previous social work experience and its validity in the current social work setting. The experience has however contributed to my knowledge of the changes in ways services are organised, my understanding of current thresholds and the demands on workers at different levels. This deepening of my understanding is utilised in discussion with practitioners in teaching and on placement visits. The experience also contributes to my teaching of child care law and safeguarding, particularly when considering thresholds for intervention."*
> *[Partnership's own Evaluation]*

Workforce and Labour Market Planning

80. This is an area that has taken longer for the partnership to address, largely due to a number of contextual challenges.   However, positive steps have been taken:

- From Nov 2017, Sheffield CC introduced weekly monitoring arrangements in order to monitor caseload management and to gradually reduce the number of agency social workers because of their negative impact on the retention of experienced staff. The partnership has reported that this has been successful, with lower caseloads and lower attrition rates recorded.

- Improved management information has enabled a better understanding of sickness, maternity, complexity of cases and AYSE case capacity – enabling the partnership to more reliably predict the number of social workers over a 12 month period.
- A training needs analysis of the Adult Social Care staff was carried out in July 2018 by Care-Connect which made 9 recommendations.
- Increased advertising, use of videos', focusing on the comprehensive CPD offer and 'fast tracking your social work career' strapline, are being more effectively used for recruitment.
  A return to social work programme was piloted, with 2 social workers recruited.

81. This work is taking place in a difficult national and local environment, with challenges around DfE return statistics being often unreliable and include social work qualified staff who do not hold fieldwork roles; high pay of agency workers, and fears over high caseloads, lack of support and low morale – and an underlying issue of competition between LAs for staff.

3.   Added value, Impact and sustainability

Added value

79. Across all stakeholders a consistent theme emerged around the added value that has been gained from making contacts in other organisations and understanding each other's organisations better. This applied to both within stakeholder type and across partner type. The relationships and greater understanding that has been built extends beyond the work of the partnership and provides a basis for day to day ease of knowing whom to contact. This supports the ability of partners to discuss arising issues or opportunities, with discussions taking place within in a better-informed context of drivers and challenges.

80. There is also added value created in the synergy between strands, in particular admissions, curricular and CPD strands. Stakeholders report that a momentum is building up, with better quality students coming through seeking to progress their careers and expecting CPD, and existing staff reinvigorated by CPD and thus wanting more CPD opportunities.

81. The teaching partnership approach and stretch criteria have brought a new focus and stimulated a new way of working, particularly compared to previous working arrangements, which were less effective in agreeing, sharing and achieving improvements. The culture of partnership has progressed and most stakeholders felt convinced by the value of a new way of partnership working. This opens up the possibilities of other opportunities, such as working with the wider workforce (outside social workers) who also need support to raise quality of services to adults and families.

Impact

82. As also stated by the national evaluation of initial teaching partnerships (2016)[3], the real impact of the partnership on recruitment, retention and quality of social work practice will not be measurable until more of the current students are practicing social workers and CPD learning and progression have a greater opportunity to embed. In

---

3
 Social work teaching partnership programme pilots: evaluation
Social Work Teaching Partnerships Pilot Evaluation Final research report; Dorothy Berry-Lound, Sue Tate and Professor David Greatbatch – HOST Policy Research; May 2016; DfE

addition, there are a range of other factors that will influence these goals, and in the absence of a robust counterfactual it is always going to be complex to understand how much change is attributable to the TP.

83. However, there is some indicative qualitative and quantitative data that suggest movement towards achieving higher level goals:
    - credible anecdotal evidence suggests the AYSE cohort is the best quality yet;
    - allowing eventual student failure where standards are not met;
    - a strong perception that the quality of social work practice has improved in the area as a result of the APF;
    - three of the partnership LAs have improved OFSTED ratings, which is perceived to have been partly attributable to the work of the TP;
    - examples of individuals who attribute their desire to stay in the TP workforce to the increased CPD on offer;
    - the latest dataset suggests a higher number of graduates are retained into social work, and in the partnership area.

"Investment in training has meant I have stayed working for Sheffield CC"
"It would now be a risk to take a job elsewhere without knowing what training is available"

"Being better at your job makes you more resilient and able to do your job".

Sustainability

"There is no going back to how things were before".

84. The concept of partnership working is well established and is considered important to key stakeholders. Most stakeholders expect and want the partnership to continue. There is evidence of a cultural shift, where the inter-dependence between LAs and HEIs is better recognised. Practice improvement may be the responsibility of the LAs, but they are clear that they need the universities to support them to achieve it. The HEIs expressed how their role should be more than what universities teach, recognising that it is by working together that LAs and HEIs can improve the social work profession.

85. The DfE funding for the partnership will cease in March 2019. From the outset, it was known that the funding would end, and the partnership has embedded a range of processes and activities as BAU, particularly its work around admissions, practice-based curriculum, CPD and to some extent placements.

86. The partnership held a series of meetings Sept – Dec 2018 specifically to plan how to support the maintenance and continued improvement of embedded activity; and develop areas that have been challenging. A sustainability plan has now been agreed which will ensure the continuation of a smaller core team and two PCs using the TP underspend and a limited amount of sustainability funding. This plan effectively recognises the need for partnership management, and the critical work of the PCs.

87. In addition, an existing PC has now been offered a permanent lecturer post at the UoS. The now vacant Practice Consultant post will be funded part time for a further year by one of the HEIs and will be recruited within the specialism of mental health.

88. Systems have also been set up to charge for training places and masterclasses outside of the TP for an income generation source and the TP has met with both universities about a new CPD contract, to include continuation of accredited modules and the Management school PGCert.

89. In addition, a number of other factors are in place to focus on areas less developed:
    - the Lead Adult practitioner funding is being used to support 3 adult projects and 3 different local authorities are working on these with a view to completion by the end of March 2019;
    - the TP is out to tender for the workforce project;
    - non-accredited sessions for non-qualified social workers are being explored and have the potential to generate a good level of income.

90. The vast majority of stakeholders perceive the partnership to be good value for money, a good indication of commitment to continue to work in partnership.

Challenges to sustainability

91. There are inevitably challenges to the sustainability of the partnership and its work, both at a national and local level.

92. At a national level, there remains a policy and economic context which could restrict the positive effect of the TP or divert its attention - e.g. continued poor financial climate, negative national media around social work, conflicting national policy and introduction of new regulations and frameworks. E.g. Fitness to Practice

93. At a partnership level:
    - significant cuts and restructures of services can quickly change the context and key staff involved in the partnership, affect continuity and test the depth of whole organisational commitment to the partnership;

    - care should be taken to ensure that partners make genuine efforts to understand and appreciate the benefits and contribution of each partner, and

continue to work hard to maximise these benefits. Divergence from this approach may undermine the effectiveness of partnership working.

- LAs and HEIs each have their own agendas and remain engaged where the benefits are clear to them and not outweighed by the efforts, in kind support and finances they need to input. The need to spread the costs more evenly, and payment for training, may be a challenge.

- The HEI Business model – and the need to achieve optimum funding – could give rise to pressure within the universities reducing the agreed admission criteria.

- There is a danger that LA Directors see the TP as aspirational and intangible especially in a climate where every penny matters. Lack of performance data or other clear ways to demonstrate impact may affect the ability of the TP to make the case for the partnership in their organisations.

- The TP has been heavily focused on training for qualified social workers, in a very driven and practical manner, but even the organisations' own learning and development units sit outside of the partnership. The TP is ideally placed with its positive engagement of HEIs to explore how they can work more closely together, not only in expanding the lifelong learning opportunities for all LA staff but also in exploring such things as organisational change and how the HEIs can contribute.

- Staff morale among social working was reported to be low by the students on placements and by some social workers. The impact on students was particularly concerning, as whilst they need to understand the reality of social work and the importance of resilience as a critical skill, they also need to understand the favourable environment the TP is trying to create, and the more positive aspects of social work.

4. Conclusions

1. The teaching partnership has made considerable progress against a range of aims. There has been a shift in culture towards collaboration and willingness to share resources more widely. Specific achievements include:

    - effectively and systematically embedding KSS/PCF across curriculum;
    - greater efficiency in identifying and delivering statutory social work placements;
    - recognition that practice is as important as academic capability, and very high value placed on the role and input of the PCs across stakeholders (including students);
    - improvement in the quality of training for PEs;
    - a comprehensive post qualifying CPD framework including the PG Certificate in Management;
    - a highly valued Masterclass programme.

2. In terms of impact on higher level aims, there is a lack of hard data and attribution of changes directly to the work of the TP is challenging in a complex environment. However, perceptions are that there are emerging signs of impact, for example:

    - the AYSE cohort is of a higher quality;
    - there is a strong perception that the quality of social work has improved in the area, and improved retention;
    - three of the partnership LAs have improved OFSTED ratings, which is perceived to have been party attributable to the work of the TP.

3. There is a perceived huge benefit in having local authorities and higher education institutes talking closely to each other. The increased understanding of each other's needs is seen as an essential and highly valued element of the partnership. Whilst there is a perceived mixed commitment across Local Authority partners and across Adults and Children's Services, we found this largely related to circumstances, not will.

4. The partnership has built on good pre-existing relationships, which has supported its development. However, many stakeholders feel it is too bureaucratic and cite that there is room for improvement in structure, decision-making and communication at Board level. The teaching partnership is mature in age but its maturity of practice is impacted by revolving membership.

5. Service users in Sheffield are consistently involved in the admissions processes of both HEIs and their views are highly valued. They are heavily involved in the

interview and decision-making process, contributing to 25% of the overall score. Although the universities also have service user groups which they involve in teaching, service users from areas other than Sheffield are very under-represented.

6. The training for Practice Educators has significantly improved in terms of quantity and quality. There is a strongly held view that if there had not been funding, the quality of training for Practice Educators would not be what it is now. However, what appears to be lacking is ongoing robust quality assurance of Practice Educator practice and particularly an agreed level of LA support to enable them to fulfil their PE responsibilities.

7. Despite the fact that the practice and placement development group state that they match students and placements, students' perception is that this is not the case and that limited or no matching takes place. This applied to both SU and SHU students. This may be a misunderstanding about what "matching" actually means; universities appear to be matching skills and training needs, whilst students expect to be matched to their preferences.

8. There is a mixed view on the value of purely statutory placements. Some feel that this is too purist and more flexibility is needed to widen the skills learnt by student social workers. Others feel it is essential to prepare students for practice. This is potentially resolved by the Hub and Spoke model that is expected to be introduced.

9. There was a consistent viewpoint from students of both the BA/MA that their experience of social workers currently in practice is very negative in terms of their perception and how they promote the profession. They feel that they are constantly delivered messages about the stresses and real life of a social worker suggesting that they would only have short-term careers in front line social work practice before burning out. Students were aware that social workers were keen to be realistic but felt they went too far. This seems to go against the ethos of the teaching partnership and the considerable effort to make this succeed.

10. The concept of lifelong learning is seen as critical to achieving partnership aims – this has been a clear focus of the partnership and good progress has been made in relation to social work staff. The CPD offer is widely known about and there is a clear pathway for qualified social workers in place.
    a. This CPD offer is good for children services staff and it offers a comprehensive career pathway to ongoing professional development that is attributed to the teaching partnership.

b. The CPD offer for adults is at an earlier stage of development and is now being led by SHU.

11. CPD students feel it is greatly beneficial to have links with other local authorities during training opportunities. The teaching partnership has ensured that courses are equally available to staff in all local authorities and the partnership is appropriately using the allocation.

12. There is a mixed view on the perceived value of accreditation of the CPD program. Some feel that accreditation is onerous and unnecessary and want opportunities to benefit from learning only. Others see this as useful for career progression. Both views are valid, and the partnership should consider whether it can accommodate both preferences.

13. CPD students who failed to attend/complete are seen to have no sanctions in place in practice. They may be advised that if they leave, they will be charged but this is not followed through. This could be as a result of finance being available through the teaching partnership but it will be important to consider this moving forward to ensure that no waste occurs.

14. Attendance on the MA and BA courses can be poor. There is a view that minimum mandatory requirements would support universities to insist on a minimum attendance level and that the Teaching Partnerships nationally are in a position to influence this.

15. Attendance on CPD courses can also be variable, often workload being a key reason for absence. Attendees should be more fully supported by their managers to prioritise their training.

16. LAs' Learning & Development Units seemed to sit outside the TP and there was some confusion as to why that was and whether it resulted in the two working in competition.

17. There are one or two isolated examples of where academics have been into practice, but this is an area of the teaching partnership which has not been prioritised.

18. There is an overwhelming feeling that the partnership is Sheffield centric. This is largely attributed to the fact that Sheffield is the host authority and manages the resource.

19. It is worth noting that there is a view that the evaluation would have been useful a year earlier in order to better support ongoing development and commitment.

20. There is a widespread commitment to continue the work of the teaching partnership and sensible options are in place to ensure continuation of a project management function and PCs, with other activities being embedded into BAU where possible.

5. Recommendations

1. The strategic board needs to be fundamentally reviewed in order to prepare for the needs of the teaching partnership going forward and to move to business as usual.
   a. The partnership needs to consider what its vision is and plan focused on its key priorities. (Maybe a visioning day would be useful)
   b. Membership needs to be reviewed with attendees having authority to make decisions on behalf of their organisations and being prepared to move those forward as participants.
   c. Performance management of the teaching partnership needs to be improved. This needs to include delegated authority to operational groups and systematic reporting from subgroups
   d. Regularity and frequency of meetings needs to be considered and a root and branch review of the function/accountability of sub groups.

2. All partners need to play an active role in the partnership. Each local authority in particular needs to establish or re affirm its commitment to the teaching partnership from directors of both adults and children services. They need to establish what they want from the partnership and voice this within their authority. They then need to send representatives to the strategy board and operational groups with authority to make decisions.

3. If local authorities are truly committed to become/remain learning organisations they need to embed the partnership vision and aims as part of their workforce development and strategic plans more widely using the learning so far to transform the quality of the workforce and become '*the way we work*'. The area is now stable and so all areas would benefit from being involved in the teaching partnership work to build the capacity of the work force.

4. The teaching partnership should use its influence nationally to encourage and support the profession more widely.

5. Consideration should be given to a mandatory minimum attendance for students in order to achieve a pass on accredited programs. A learning agreement should be in place for the students setting out clear expectations. Consideration of the model used in Lincolnshire would seem sensible.

6. Consideration is needed as to what the partnership expects from academics in practice and a plan put in place e.g. work shadowing. However, there are other ways to achieve this which could be beneficial to all partners e.g. academics being a member of a fostering panel or an adoption panel, academic membership of the LSCB.

7. Where practitioners have had the benefit of academics bringing research evidence into the workplace to advise on casework, it has been well received. A more structured plan for the continuation of this would be beneficial.

8. For Adults' Services the CPD offer should be rolled out and evaluated to assess effectiveness. This would contribute towards improved participation in the partnership by Adults Services across the partnership area.

9. Social workers in the Mental Health Trust arrangements described themselves as the "poorest relation" and the TP needs to consider how its social work staff can more readily access the TP programme.

10. There is still further work to do to include service users from all LA areas, and in all elements of the TP. Now that the partnership is mature the board could consider having service user representation on the board as it moves forward.

11. The partnership needs to consider using virtual communication methods to support engagement across the area for partnership meetings and workstreams.

Addendum: AYSAM Programme

Please note that the original intention was to report on the Assessed and Supported Year for Aspiring Managers pilot programme (AYSAM) as part of the main evaluation findings. However, as a result of poor attendance at the focus group (1 individual), and a lack of feedback from other suggested stakeholders, it was felt the evidence was too limited to include as part of the main evaluation findings. After discussions with the partnership, it was decided that information relating to the AYSAM should be included as an Addendum, and some additional documents were helpfully provided by the partnership to support this area of the evaluation.

The ASYAM pilot programme was designed to identify, develop and support aspiring managers and leaders across the South Yorkshire Teaching Partnership (SYTP). The ASYAM combines bespoke, targeted CPD provision along with work-based mentoring and support, with the intention of developing a clear, well-supported career pathway into management for social workers. The programme ran from March 2018– August 2018 and was delivered free of charge to local authority employees.

The programme is based on three inter-related elements: organisational observation as a foundation for knowledge and skill acquisition; deliberate acts aimed at maintaining, developing, and improving knowledge and skills; and social support for learning and practice development. The content of the programme has supported some of the thinking used for the DfE/RIP Practice Supervisor Development Programme being delivered nationally[4]. Key features of the programme design are as follows:

- A 2 day foundation programme
- Individual practice development plans
- Practice development groups
- Individually agreed organisational observations and follow-up practice-reinforcing learning activities
- A series of masterclasses and follow-up practice-reinforcing learning activities
- A one to one meeting with the relevant Director of Services
- Individual practice development and improvement mentors

Out of the 17 people who attended, 11 participated in the external mentoring element and 8 portfolios were submitted. Two local authority areas rated the programme highly and would like to see it running again.

---

[4] Demonstrated by feedback by Tavistock and Portman HNS Trust

Qualitative feedback from the Interface focus group participant, external mentor and partnership AYSAM programme panel meeting is combined below:

- Of the 8 received portfolios received, the overall view was that the standard of work in the portfolios was very high, and demonstrated some good engagement with the programme. An unintended benefit from the programme is the development of new networks and relationships which have continued beyond the duration of the programme.
- Excellent feedback was received around the external mentoring/coaching support provided throughout the programme, however workload, illness and personal circumstances affected overall levels participation in mentoring (with 11/17 participating in some way).
- It is perceived that little guidance was provided on what the course would cover (learning outcomes), expectations during the course and how this could benefit their career.
- Attendees would have found it useful to observe different areas of practice, possibly shadowing more experienced managers, maybe even in a different LA area.

Considerations going forward:

The Teaching Partnership should consider seeking feedback regarding the ASYAM from past students to inform discussions about continuation and development, including around the benefits, views on accreditation and attribution to any impact on progression.

If the course is to be continued:

- The learning outcomes and benefits of the ASYAM should be clearly explained in the CPD brochure to enable aspiring managers to make informed decisions about whether this is the right course for them. This will also help clarify for existing managers that the Practice Supervisor Development Programme is a more appropriate choice for them.
- To consider whether/how the partnership could support aspiring managers to observe different areas of practice, possibly shadowing more experienced managers and/or outside of their own local authority to challenge their thinking/practice.
- Evaluation methods should be embedded within the programme.
- To consider the pros-and cons of accreditation. For the pilot, places were prioritised for social workers who have successfully completed the Introduction to Leadership and Mentoring module – it is suggested by the UoS that an option is to tie the AYSAM programme more firmly to this module, which would enable learners to achieve enough credits for a PG Cert.