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CORNWALL
COUNCIL

Turning around children's social care services in Cornwall

Jack Cordery - Head of Service - June 2016

Some things Ofsted said in 2009

- The effectiveness of services in Cornwall to ensure that children and young people are safe is inadequate
- The children's services transformation programme has resulted in a lack of direction in delivering core safeguarding functions
- Ineffective leadership and a lack of clarity as to how services should be delivered have led to unsatisfactory outcomes for children and young people
- Senior managers are ineffective in ensuring that quality assurance and performance management arrangements are used to ensure robust safeguarding systems and practice
- Management support for staff is inconsistent in ensuring that policies, procedures and practice guidance are followed
- Managers do not provide sufficiently effective challenge about the quality of practice
- The inspection of contact, referral and assessment found significant weaknesses in safeguarding

More things Ofsted said in 2009

- A significant number of assessments are not child focused and do not fully take into account the views and feelings of the child
- There are significant delays for some children and families in receiving a timely and appropriate service response
- Some assessments are closed without either the child being seen or without sufficient consultation with other agencies
- 12 cases selected at random by Ofsted found poor compliance with procedures, chronologies not completed, poor quality and unfocused recording, lack of direction and targeted working, and in some cases little evidence of management oversight, including lack of supervision and management decisions
- The majority of cases sampled during this inspection indicate a lack of professional rigour making it unclear what the plan for the child or young person is
- Too much attention has been focused on national and local KPIs with little exploration of the quality of practice

Some things Ofsted said in 2011

- The extent and rigour of focus on operational child protection practice has been insufficient
- Management oversight of social work practice is inadequate
- There is substantial evidence that children's social care does not ensure consistent and robust risk assessment
- Practice leads to an unsafe child protection system that causes drift and delay, leaving children at risk of significant harm
- Performance management and quality assurance are inadequate
- The monitoring and quality assurance of front line practice has been inconsistent and uncertain, leading to unjustified optimism about the safety of practice
- Most safeguarding cases seen by inspectors contained either individual elements or combinations of inadequate practices
- Practice is often not sufficiently focused on the child
- Inclusion of children's views is too variable

More things Ofsted said in 2011

- Managers do not provide sufficiently effective challenge about the quality of practice
- Senior management has not focused sufficiently on the key improvements needed in front line practice
- There is significant drift and delay in assessment, failure to see children, to monitor their circumstances, and a failure to work proactively with the family
- Assessments do not focus sufficiently on the impact for children of key issues, such as lack of parenting capacity, domestic violence and parental mental health issues
- In some cases there is little evidence that any action has been taken to assess or protect children at potential risk of harm
- Leadership and management are inadequate
- The council cannot ensure that children who are referred to children's social care are adequately safeguarded

What Munro said in 2011

- The cumulative effect of previous reforms has been to create a very regulated and prescribed working environment. This has been particularly apparent in social work, where the over-bureaucratisation is reducing the time workers spend with children and families, building strong relationships, so that they can better understand and help them.
- Managerial attention has been excessively focused on the process rather than the practice of work. In social work, targets and performance indicators have become drivers of practice to a degree that was never intended by those who introduced them.
- This top-down approach has also limited the system's ability to hear feedback from children, families or frontline workers about problems in practice.
- Deficiencies in knowledge and skills were at the heart of practice errors.

More of what Munro said in 2011

- Recommendations have tended to focus on increasing compliance with a growing number of procedures.
- The priority given to process over practice has led to insufficient attention being given to whether children and young people are benefiting from the services they receive.
- Ofsted reported recently¹⁸² that, *'the child was not seen frequently enough by the professionals involved, or was not asked about their views and feelings'*.
- The Children's Rights Director¹⁸³ reports that too many children become looked after without their opinions having been sought.
- Refocusing child protection on the needs and experiences of the children whom the system exists to protect is the ultimate aim of this review's recommendations.

A different Inspection Framework

- ❑ The review has set out recommendations for substantial reform of how inspections are conducted, so that more attention is paid to the experiences of children, young people and their families and the effectiveness of help offered to them.
- ❑ In place of the current system, which has been a part of the compliance culture, there should be more attention given to learning and adapting. This will require practitioners, and leaders in particular, to learn to expect the possibility of error, always seeking, and adapting in response to, feedback and making sure that what is learned makes a difference to practice and therefore outcomes for children and young people.
- ❑ The new inspection framework should examine the child's journey from needing to receiving help, and explore how the rights, wishes, feelings and experiences of children and young people inform and shape the provision of services.

A tougher Inspection Framework

- ❑ Only 23% of local authority children's services inspected under this Inspection Framework have been rated 'Good'
- ❑ 75% of local authority children's services inspected under this inspection framework have been rated 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement'
- ❑ Only 12% of local authority children's services inspected under this Inspection Framework have improved to 'Good'
- ❑ Of the local authority children's services rated 'Inadequate' in 2010/11 only Cornwall improved to 'Good' – two either remained or fell back to 'Inadequate'

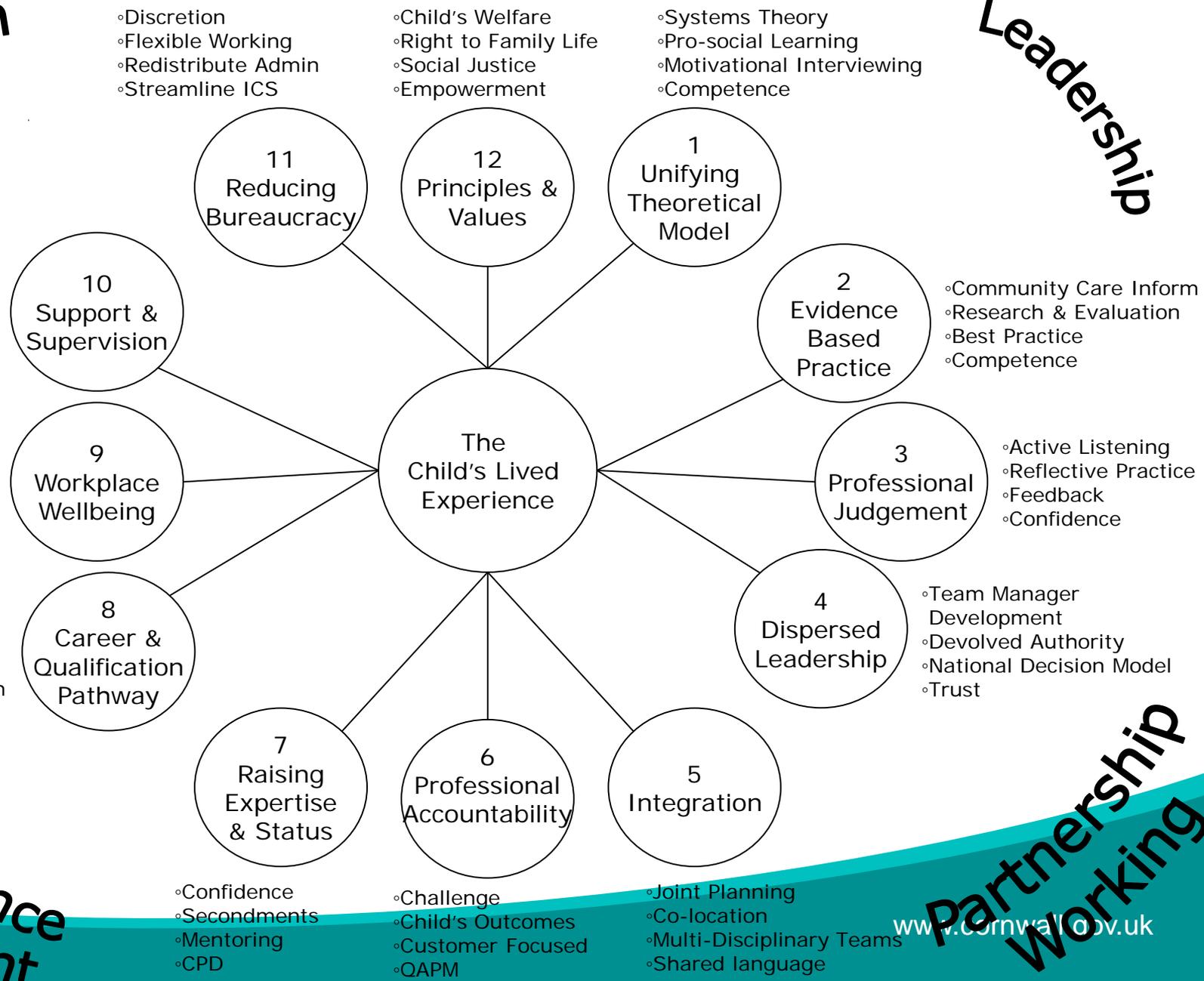
Cornwall's journey to 'Good'

- ❑ September 2009 SLAC inspection: judged **'Inadequate'** – intervention
- ❑ January 2011 SLAC inspection: judged **'Inadequate'** – intervention continues
- ❑ March 2011 Adoption inspection: judged **'Good'**
- ❑ November 2011 Peer Review: **clear evidence of good progress**
- ❑ December 2011 CRA inspection: **positive**
- ❑ February 2012 Fostering inspection: judged **'Good'**
- ❑ February 2013 CPI inspection: judged **'Adequate'** – intervention ends
- ❑ May 2016 Service inspection: judged **'Good'**

Reconnecting Social Work in Cornwall

Quality of Provision

Leadership



Performance Management

Partnership Working

What Ofsted said in 2016

- Children's services in Cornwall are good. A stable and dedicated senior management team, led by an experienced Director of Children's Services, has worked steadily and purposefully to implement systemic change to services for children and young people in Cornwall. In doing so, they have created a culture of learning, support and challenge in a professional environment that has enabled social work to flourish.
- The number of children receiving early help in Cornwall has significantly risen from a low base to 2700 in 2015-16.
- Practitioners describe a culture change in the last few years and early help is now seen as everyone's business.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors highly value the help they receive, saying it was 'amazing' and brilliant'. They described real improvements in their children's lives as a result of the help they had received.

More of what Ofsted said in 2016

- Managers effectively oversee child protection enquiries which are prompt and thoroughly completed, and clearly outline risk and protective factors.
- Social work reports are comprehensive and include danger statements. Children and young people are encouraged to participate in child protection conferences.
- A particular strength of social work practice is the comprehensive individual work with children using a variety of creative tools to enable them to express their views and inform assessments and plans.
- A particular strength of the local authority is the involvement and consultation with young people.
- Foster carers report that they feel fully included as part of the professional team responsible for children looked after and universally praised children's services for the high quality social work support for themselves and children.

More of what Ofsted said in 2016

- Significant investment in high quality training for social work staff and partner agencies has ensured a whole-system approach to improving outcomes for children.
- Social work staff have manageable caseloads across the services and this ensures that social workers spend time with children and young people.
- Staff feel valued and respected and have access to effective managers who are experienced, approachable and highly visible. As a result, the workforce is stable.
- Leadership management and governance are good. The DCS is a strong and confident leader, effectively supported by the chief executive and the senior management team.
- The lead member is highly visible and well informed and respected for his energy, passion, and advocacy for children and young people.

What would we do the same

- ✓ Develop a Statement of Mission and Values
- ✓ Implement Munro's recommendations
- ✓ Refocus on the child
- ✓ Take a whole system approach
- ✓ Introduce a unified theoretical approach to social work/social care
- ✓ Implement Signs of Safety
- ✓ Invest in the status and expertise of social workers
- ✓ Put in place a Career and Qualification Pathway for social workers
- ✓ Hold our nerve around thresholds
- ✓ Introduce a Framework of a Balanced Workload
- ✓ Develop multi-disciplinary teams

More of what we do the same

- ✓ Introduce a Framework of a Balanced Workload
- ✓ Develop multi-disciplinary teams
- ✓ Reduce the bureaucratic burden on the frontline
- ✓ Focus the Quality Assurance and Performance Management system on the quality of practice and outcomes
- ✓ Move from 'check-and-tick' to learning feedback loops
- ✓ Promote a learning culture through dialogue and reflective supervision
- ✓ Challenge, support and hold partners to account
- ✓ Integrate and innovate
- ✓ Ask

**Some have said, “If
Cornwall can do it anyone
can!”**

We don't mind that.

Questions and Discussion

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