

## Using a relational approach to transform children's services

Sharmeen Ziauddin: Hi and welcome to another episode of The Social Work Community podcast. This episode is in collaboration with Gloucestershire County Council. I'm Sharmeen Ziauddin, senior commercial editor here at Community Care.

Now, Gloucestershire has been on quite the journey, from an 'inadequate' and 'requiring improvement' rating from Ofsted in 2017, to 'good' and 'outstanding' in two areas – that is the impact of leaders on social work practice for children and families, and outstanding in the progress and experience of children in care. But how has this been achieved?

To talk about this, we have Paul Shallcross, director of children's safeguarding and care, and Beccy Pullinger from one of the children and families teams. And later on in this episode you'll hear from two young people who are ambassadors for Gloucestershire County Council's children's services.

But for now, let's speak to Beccy and Paul.

Becky, you've been in Gloucestershire since you qualified, doing your ASYE to senior social worker to advanced practitioner, and very recently in a new role as a team manager. How do you think things have improved over the last few years in Gloucestershire County Council's children's services? [0:01:14.9]

Beccy Pullinger: I had a good think about this actually, and about the journey and being part of that, and it made me think about those shared goals, like that shared vision that we have for children and families. And I think that is something that's definitely changed, and it feels like in the authority, when you're there, when you're with social workers and with our senior leaders, that there is this sort of shared desire, hope, goal of working with families in a relational way. And I think that's the big [audio cuts out – 0:01:51.2] that's coming from our leaders down, which is really important, and coming from our social workers up. So the practice...like the curious practice, the relational practice is there, and it's really well supported. So I think you have...it's like a joined vision. And I think that's what you can feel in Gloucester now.

Sharmeen Ziauddin: We can come back to the relational and systemic way of practising in a bit. Paul, as senior leader, what are some of the things, you know, management and your colleagues there have done in children's services to have got to this point? What things have you implemented? [0:02:27.8]

Paul Shallcross:

We've done lots of things, really. I guess a couple of bits to start off with, I've been here for just over two years now and I took over from Ann James, who is our current director of children's services. So she'd been with Gloucestershire for a year before that. So we've had a really good kind of continuity in that senior leadership space.

We've done some really practical things in terms of supporting our social workers to do the best job they can. So we completed a remodelling of our children and families teams, which apparently had been going on for I don't know how many years, Beccy, but more than we care to mention, but we managed to get that over the line and in place and really smoothly. So we created the structures which we think are going to support our systemic model of practice.

The support to our newly qualified social workers throughout this time has been fantastic, and that comes via our social work academy. We've got highly skilled and experienced advanced educators who work with team managers to provide kind of reflective opportunities for newly qualified social workers to learn and develop. We keep their caseloads manageable so that they're not kind of drowning in work. We make sure that they are allowed to kind of grow into the role as a newly qualified social worker.

We've managed to increase our numbers of permanent social work staff as well, and reduced our numbers of agency social workers. We still have quite a lot of agency social workers in Gloucestershire and we really value what they have to offer us, but our aim is to have permanent staff in place who can kind of keep that continuity for our children and families.

We've reduced our caseloads over the last two to three years. We'd like to do that even further but certainly going back to 2017 our staff, our social workers, were working with far more children and that didn't give them the opportunity to kind of think about the quality of their work.

So that also means we have fewer changes of social worker for children and families, which is a really important aim for us in terms of our practice model.

And we've done some stuff which, on the face of it, looks quite boring. But we've got much clearer policies and procedures to kind of help social workers do their job.

But I suppose the biggest thing for me that we have tried to do – and Beccy alluded to that in her initial answer, really – was to think about the culture that we work within. And we've tried to create a culture which is about being respectful of each other, really hearing the voices of our staff, listening to what gives them the opportunity to do the best job that they can, recognising that we as leaders don't have all the answers at all – we are, you know, we are an experienced and hopefully skilled team but actually, the social workers and managers on the ground are the ones who know their job best – and so we really want to hear their voices and give them the opportunity to speak up, whether they agree with us or whether they don't agree

with us. We want to hear that and we want to kind of stay humble in that space. I think that's a really important bit of what we do.

Sharmeen Ziauddin:

And how have you listened to them? Do you have regular forums or some way they can feed back? Things like this take time, don't they? What was the actual execution of that? [0:05:20.7]

Paul Shallcross:

Yeah, we do have forums. I guess the...one of the really big bits for me is I try and go out into social work offices as often as I can. So we have offices in six different sites across Gloucestershire – it's a really big county. But I go and visit all the teams as often as I can. So I spend time in the offices, I give people an opportunity to come and talk to me. We have kind of staff sessions where people have the opportunity to ask questions and just let me know how things are going. And of course I get to see how people are doing, you know, on a day-to-day basis just sitting next to social workers who are doing their everyday job, which is fantastic.

We have something called our 'employee voice group', which is – and I think Beccy's been part of that in the past – staff kind of volunteer to become part of that group. They meet regularly with myself or the DCS, and they talk about what's kind of working well for them but also what's bothering them in terms of their roles.

We have regular staff webinars where we give the opportunity for all staff to talk to senior leaders. We have newsletters that we've created – one looking at practice, one looking at service development to try and kind of give people the opportunity to hear about things but also contribute to them.

So lots of ways, I think, that we really want to hear the voices of our social workers and managers in the way that the service is developing.

Sharmeen Ziauddin:

You mentioned going to the offices, and I think visibility of senior leadership and them being approachable is so important, 'cause here at Community Care we speak to so many social workers and one of the things that really helps is being able to see those senior leaders and them being approachable and willing to listen to the issues they have. So that seems really positive.

Beccy, you were part of one of those networks or forums, were you? [0:07:04.3]

Beccy Pullinger:

Yeah. It's a really safe space, I think, that we can go and share what we're thinking. And Paul's right in terms of...Paul...I know who Paul is, which is amazing, isn't it, really? I know who Paul is, and when he's walking around I can say hi to him, I feel like he's approachable. And that's because in the authority there are things like our employee voice group, which does work really well, we can go to. You talk to your team, you explore what's going on, you know, what's working well and what's not working well, and there's a safe space. And that meeting, it has a...it's a formal meeting. It has an agenda and some actions and then they get followed through, which is really helpful. But also, Paul talking about those times where he comes and sits with teams or gives us a space to go and talk to Paul, I think works really well because I think it's right in that it's not always about everybody

agreeing, it's having a safe space to share and have that relationship, and that's what it's creating, isn't it? So if Gloucester wants to create relationships with children and families, where they start all the way through our authority, so they start with our senior leaders as well and come through. So I think most definitely it's something that's made a big difference.

Sharmeen Ziauddin:

As I said in my introduction, Ofsted also recognised that. We can talk about Ofsted for a bit. Obviously it's a huge accolade to have that Ofsted rating. Back in 2017 when Gloucestershire County Council children's services received an inadequate rating and then in 2022 when it required improvement to be good, do you remember Beccy what impact it had on you and your colleagues and how you felt at the time? [0:08:46.8]

Beccy Pullinger:

Yeah. I think there's a sense of, like, sadness, isn't there, and disappointment and...it's quite exposing. It's not what anybody wants. Social workers and our leaders don't want that. They don't want that for families. That's not why we're here, that's not why we're social workers, is it? We want to be here to make a difference and change.

And I think sadly what happens actually when you've had an Ofsted report that isn't positive, you've then got a bit of that that continues for a period of time, 'cause you're trying to find your feet, aren't you? You're trying to find that flow back.

So it probably feels like a long journey, is what I think people would say. But I think that journey's probably...whilst it's difficult, like most journeys are, I guess made a big difference for how Gloucester works, and works with children and families.

Sharmeen Ziauddin:

I mean, on the flip side of that is the stellar report that you've got this year, and did that really uplift you guys as an organisation and on a...frontline social workers, everybody, was it...? I mean, what is the impact of such a great Ofsted report? [0:10:03.2]

Beccy Pullinger:

Oh, I think people feel proud and...you could feel it, couldn't you, Paul, in the authority, like this sense of happiness and achievement and...and it's like right because people have worked really hard. They've worked really hard to do that. So it's recognised and that's...that's everything. That's why social workers are here. They're here to do those things that Ofsted gave us feedback for. So I think everyone just felt, like, joy. It's like a sense of, like, feeling proud about everybody that you work with and the things that you do.

Paul Shallcross:

Absolutely, yeah. I would certainly agree. I think...I mean, there's a relief on top of that as well, isn't there? 'Cause you know, it does feel like something that's hanging over your head all the time until you get to that point where, you know, Ofsted say yes, you're good, or even better.

I think going back to what Beccy said, though, when...I wasn't there at the time of the inadequate judgement but, you know, I've been through that in other local authorities, and I think what's particularly sad about those events, those times, is that social workers are the ones who kind of feel that, and they're the ones who kind of get families, you know, who might say to them, 'Well, you know, why

should I listen to you? You work for an inadequate local authority.' But actually it's not the fault of social workers when services go wrong. That's the fault of leadership and governance and other things outside the kind of...the influence of social workers. So they kind of get the really rough end of the stick. So it's absolutely important that they get the praise and the support and the kind of accolades when things go better because they're the ones who make the difference. And of course, you know, we as leaders contribute to that, and leadership is really important, but leadership without, you know, fantastic skill, enthusiastic, passionate, caring, empathetic social work is nothing, and we kind of have that in spades in Gloucestershire, so we're very lucky.

Sharmeen Ziauddin: That's a really lovely thing to say, actually. I'm sure a lot of frontline practitioners would really appreciate that. But you mentioned families and parents knowing about Ofsted. Do you think they're aware of Ofsted reports? Do they read Ofsted reports? [0:12:05.4]

Paul Shallcross: I think what tends to happen is if you get a really bad report then it's in the news for, you know...

Sharmeen Ziauddin: Of course, yeah.

Paul Shallcross: And you know, it doesn't last for a long time but, you know, it's just...it's just not great, is it? You go out to be a social worker, you go out to a family and of course if they're not happy with you then they will say, 'Oh, well why should I listen to you?' And that's, you know, we understand that. It's right that they should have their say. So it does impact not just on people's feelings but also on the, you know, how they're perceived in the community. But you know, it is what it is. We have to kind of...we have to accept that and Gloucestershire kind of rolled its sleeves up and went through a long, long period of improvement, I think slowed down in the middle by Covid. I think we were one of the longest local authorities in intervention because of the kind of Covid delays. So it really does feel like a massive milestone for us to get past that.

And I think there's something really powerful, isn't there, about working for an organisation that has that label? And we've talked about this quite a lot, I think, as a leadership team, that you have to believe that you're doing a good job. We were doing exactly the same job the day before our inspection as we were the day after, but on one day where it kind of requires improvement and the next day we're good, but kind of getting yourself into that mind space is really important, I think, and kind of presenting yourself as an authority that is doing great work. And now we can do that, not just because we believe it from our own quality assurance information or because of our own performance information, but because we've kind of got that external validation. So I kind of really want to encourage social workers and managers to kind of enjoy that and say, you know, 'We've always got stuff to learn, no question about that. But let's kind of enjoy the fact that we're, you know, we're working from a place of strength now.'

Sharmeen Ziauddin: One of the things you both mentioned was the relational practice, and that's obviously helped improve services to children and families, and

subsequently contributed to a fantastic Ofsted report. In terms of systemic practice, how has that been implemented over the last few years, and how do you think it's benefitted the children and young people and families that you support? [0:14:11.1]

Beccy Pullinger:

I think when we were talking earlier about that shared vision, that shared goal, I think that is a big part of it in Gloucester. So it comes right through in our practice now. So some of those things are embedding some of the principles around systemic practice, relational practice, which is around how we intervene with our families, how we work with them. So how do we act? What are we going to do? We need to be proportionate, we need to be timely, we need to be tenacious, we need to be empathetic. Those things are part of our values and what we're pushing forward. And we need to have some curiosity, which I think is really something that's shifted and changed in Gloucester, and that's how we sort of, how we view things, isn't it? It's how we view the world, how we view families, how do families view themselves, what is their narrative, what's their story – all of those things that help us in that journey of building a relationship and embedding our systemic practice.

And I think there's lots of things that we've done in the authority that have helped social workers with that. Having those...that vision and goal, having some training around it, but also having that from our leadership down, and having that space where you feel safe to do that in your practice. So safe to build relationships, be curious, be creative, hypothesise about things. And that builds on the strengths.

So if I think about Gloucester and think about practice in Gloucester, I think about...we want to work with families to think about their strengths, their relationships and how we can build on that, and how it makes them sustain change.

And there's something that also I think should be celebrated in Gloucester, and that's our... 'cause part of our systemic practice with families is how we engage and work with our partner agencies. Because that adds support for our families but it also creates a better understanding for us as social workers how to intervene. So when we're doing our interventions we do them with our partner agencies, with our parents, with children, and we have a better understanding. And I think that is definitely something that's improved and embedded for us.

Paul Shallcross:

Yeah. I think that's a really good summary. I think, yeah, some of that is training, as Beccy said, and we've invested hugely in, you know, in really high quality support and training for our social workers and managers, and we're able to now train our own social workers because we've got skilled advanced educators in our academy who can do that.

We revised our practice framework a year and a half ago now, and that's based around our systemic principles. But it's also based around some really clear kind of ways that we wish to work with families. So social work is a really difficult and complex job. You can't go to a family and say, 'You need to do this differently.' But you can, but it won't work, and you know, we've seen that over the years. It



just doesn't work. We have to bring families along with us. And what we want to do is give parents and children the skills and the tools they need to manage their own lives the best way that they can because they're the only ones who can do that.

And so we have to...it's a different way of thinking and working. It's not about going in there and being the expert in their life. It's about going in there and helping them to find their own strengths and their own ways of doing things and their own support and their own community networks, their family networks, recognising that we're kind of...we're on the outside maybe trying to tweak a little bit here and there but actually, families are the ones who will make the difference to their own lives. And that's not easy to do initially because we are used to kind of going in there and potentially being seen as rescuers. But we don't want to rescue; we want to kind of empower families to make the most of their lives because they, you know, nine times out of ten they can do that.

Beccy Pullinger:

I think it's important to acknowledge that we...we like to have feedback. So we talk about this a lot at work, and we're talking about it and we're having thoughts about how we get feedback. So we always want feedback from our children and families 'cause it helps us within our practice, and Gloucester's doing some things about how we gather feedback. So it can be really hard for families to do that. But what we're seeing in social work is being really creative about that feedback and being open to it because that's relational, isn't it? So if you were...and systemic practice is about feedback. It's about feedback loops and what that does. So us going into a family and being part of that system at that time means that we have to be having some feedback about what we're doing, and being able to listen to families. Sorry, when Paul was talking I just think it's important to acknowledge that. I think it's a big part of relational practice, and something we do well and we're working on.

Paul Shallcross:

And supervision is a really key part of that, isn't it?

Beccy Pullinger:

Yeah.

Paul Shallcross:

And you have to have supervision which is not just kind of a box-ticking, 'Have you done this? Have you done that?' Supervision has to give time for reflection, for hypothesising. We do talk about hypothesising quite a lot, don't we?

Beccy Pullinger:

Yeah.

Paul Shallcross:

We...you need to talk about kind of exploring ideas and thinking about motivations and, you know, why things are happening. Really...systemic is also really very much about looking at patterns that occur and recur, and thinking about how we can learn from those.

But I think it kind of also takes us onto the fact that we have to understand the family and the child's view of the services that we provide, and we have to incorporate that in how we kind of reform and design our services as well. We are really keen on hearing the voices of families in any kind of service redesign that we do. We have a parents' group, parents by experience group, who work with us to

help design our services. They are fantastic and they tell us some great stuff and some stuff that we're not doing so well. We really appreciate their kind of frankness and their ability to work with us. Because people don't always...they don't always like to have a social worker. It's a sad thing in terms of a job, but I think what I see more and more of, though, is so many compliments that come into the service. And we have screens around our office. We display compliments from families, from professionals about social workers. And there's some amazing stuff, fantastic compliments for social workers and how, you know, how they really help to change people's lives. And I think when you're a social worker you probably go into the role thinking, 'I would like to change some people's lives for the better,' and we see that every single day, which is amazing.

Sharmeen Ziauddin:

Could you give an example of – I mean, clearly there's so many, given how you described feedback – an example where systemic practice has really changed a family's life and how that happened?  
[0:20:44.3]

Beccy Pullinger:

We had a family...actually when I first...when we was the assessment... 'cause we were assessment before we was...all the way through. So when I first come down and joined the team there was a family that come through that we had a strategy meeting for that...they'd had a long history with children's services. So the child had actually been known probably since they were about four on and off to services, and then I met them when they was...nine. So that's a long time. So long periods of intervention. And we decided...we was really worried. So having a look at it from...it's come back through, I had a look and there were some patterns for me that were present where things hadn't changed. So that was around addiction and parents' mental health, stuff...worries around school. And in the beginning there was a lot of hesitation from mum, in terms of wanting to...to work with us. And also from the child. 'Cause I think that they were...had met a lot of social workers, had a lot of services, a lot of people come to the house. It makes it really difficult.

So our initial point was just being really brave actually, and just having conversations with mum, and had a focus there. So whilst we were always focusing on the child, he was always in our minds, there was something that was there that was sort of, 'I don't want to talk to anybody right now 'cause this is really difficult.' So we had to find his voice elsewhere, and somewhat of that information come from school and how his behaviour was and his attendance and all those things. So we were able to think about those things. And what we'd done was have...we done our assessment. But within our assessment we looked at mum's life, like her life overall from her childhood to where she was when I met her. Looked at her mental health. So we used some tools around that so we better understood how she was feeling. We done some screening around alcohol use, and then we done some conversations around her substance misuse.

So during the assessment we had a real focus on really understanding what was happening and being able to talk to mum about lots of the history, 'cause we had to...we had a good understanding, there was patterns there. And that moved us into a place of going into a child protection planning because there...there



were significant worries in terms of drug and alcohol use. And then we spent a year and a half with this family offering what I call 'therapeutic intervention' and a multi-agency approach. So really linking up with our partner agencies, so our drug treatment service, community service, 'cause there's a great community where this mum lives, and school and mental health services. And we spent time talking to mum, making sure that she felt supported because the change that we was asking her to make to her drug and alcohol use is a big change, isn't it? That's something that was embedded. From a really young age. We learnt that she started doing that when she was about fourteen. And so we used those patterns to understand where it started. So we hadn't understood that before. So that was something different. And we used some of our time – through relational practice, really – about...and that's what I was talking about earlier, about feedback and having those conversations and reflecting about feelings like shame and guilt, some stigma that she felt in her community. And all of that with a multi-agency approach. So when we were coming together for core group meetings, we would call them 'intervention meetings' and we would talk about the problems that were present. And then we'd have reflective conversations. And some of those interventions within that meeting would be feedback. 'So how does everybody fit into the addiction? So how are we all working? How does she feel about it? What's not working? What's working well?' And then we increased that network by linking in with her family. 'Cause we developed trust. So she was able to see that we were present there, thoughtful, and linked in with her sister and mum, and they become part of our intervention, 'cause they were able to feed back and talk about how life had been.

And then because we took some of the pressure off her child, we was able to do really meaningful life story work. Because I think what he noticed was, 'There was people coming into my house that care about my mum that I love.' That's where we start. 'You love your mum. Absolutely. Your mum loves you.' And then we done life story work in which he would be able to talk to us about his life story, which was really difficult and really sad at times but also really happy moments. And we used his life story work as a bit of a therapeutic intervention with mum. 'Let's sit, let's read the life story together,' so she could feel and understand some of those things that happened for him.

She is abstinent. She doesn't drink alcohol or use drugs. She understands her addictions better. She's employed. So we built up her community network. She done some stuff in education as well when we was working with her. And she was able to make some real changes. So those changes now are sustained. Because they're her changes, they're...her family knows about them. So her wider family knew, was able to sort of talk to her, and it's all of that stuff around them being able to hold themselves, isn't it? 'Cause you can't be there forever. And now she's got this different life that's hers.

Sharmeen Ziauddin:

Wow, that's amazing. This holistic approach takes time but it's looking at everything and helping on all levels and empowering her.  
[0:26:42.7]

- Beccy Pullinger: Yeah. Relationships are an agent of change, and I recognised that with her. I was somebody who would be talking to her about really challenging things but somebody who's there, compassionate, 'I show up for you. Yeah, we will talk about hard things but we've got a shared goal of getting things into a better place.' So it's that authentic relationship in which we have to recognise that we are...we're forming part of something for that family. Yeah.
- Sharmeen Ziauddin: Great result. I know a lot of local authorities are trying to embed more systemic practice across children's services, across all levels and all services. Was that one of the reasons you joined, Paul? [0:27:23.4]
- Paul Shallcross: It was, yeah. Very much so. I think I came from another local authority in the south-west where we had also kind of moving into a systemic working space as a leadership team again, undergone systemic training as a team, kind of tried to think about how we worked together as a team to support those kind of principles in action for social workers. And I had a conversation with Ann, who is the DCS, and she talked through what, you know, what she wanted to do and is an amazing leader. You'll see that if you read our Ofsted report. You know, it talks about the kind of inspirational leader that she is. And she is, absolutely. She lives it, like you can read in the report. That is how she kind of lives her life as a leader. She's approachable, she's open, she's absolutely child-focused. But she holds us to account as well. She's, you know, she sets high standards and she expects high standards and we kind of take up the mantle on her behalf and expect the same.
- So I was really pleased to hear about her investment in systemic ideas but also the investment with local authority, and that involves financial investment as well. And you know, I think it's important to note that, you know, when you go through an improvement journey like this your whole council has to be behind you. And in Gloucestershire we've seen amazing corporate support from different sides of the political spectrum, all focused on the children of our county and making life, you know, as positive as we can. So you know, that's been a really, really important part of what's enabled us to get to where we are today.
- Sharmeen Ziauddin: I will link the Ofsted report in the show notes so everyone can have a read of that.
- One of the things highlighted in the Ofsted report was the important role of ambassadors. The ambassadors are young people who are care-experienced or have had involvement of children's services in their lives. They're employed by Gloucestershire County Council. You'll be hearing from Danteiye, who's eighteen. He's been employed as an ambassador for two and a half years now. He's just finished his Health and Social Care Level 3 Extended Diploma and is taking a gap year. And we've got twenty-year-old Shane who wants to have a career in children's social care.
- What do you think has been the impact of the work the ambassadors have done, and how have they contributed to the improvement of Gloucestershire's children's services? [0:29:38.8]

- Danteiye: I think as ambassadors we've contributed massively to the improvements across Gloucestershire. We've worked closely with children and young people and families, especially within the leaving care service, to make sure their voices are truly heard.
- And out of that, real change happens. We've supported things like the Bright Spots survey, and we've been, I believe, that bridge between children, young people, their families and the professionals in kind of making decisions about their lives, which in my opinion is amazing.
- I think the impact of our work is all about making sure that young people get what they truly need and deserve, particularly those moving into the leaving care service. I think there's a struggle there. that young people need the right support at the right time. There's stuff lacking there. But I think actually we're making those great improvements as a team moving forward, and they're one of our priorities. And we just want every young person to have the best chance at kind of having a full future and to feel supported as they take those steps. And I can feel that from Gloucestershire.
- Shane: For me, it's getting the children and young people's voices heard. And how I do that is basically, for an example, go to forums, get them to open up. And whatever feedback I get, I would then deliver that to the directors. So for an example, I mentor Paul Shalcross, and we do one-to-one sessions. And I pretty much sit down with him and he will ask me what I've been up to, what events, what I've been doing as an ambassador, and I would just explain what I've been up to and what feedback I've been getting off of young children in foster care. And then hopefully then he will move that up, move it up, and it'll eventually get sorted out.
- But yeah, so just, just being able to, you know, get their voices heard and to be able to deliver it. And seeing the change is such a great feeling.
- Sharmeen Ziauddin: Shane mentioned mentoring. Ambassadors mentor senior leaders, so they get the opportunity to tell them what needs to change and what's working okay. What is that like? [0:31:52.4]
- Danteiye: With mentoring the directors it has been kind of an incredible experience for me. I mentor Ann James, our director for children's services, and Dan Jones, the assistant director for specialised services. And it's amazing that we have those one-to-one relationships to share honest feedback and to have open conversations. And when we don't always agree, those discussions always lead to fair outcomes and help us work towards kind of a better service. And I can see the passion and commitment from those leaders, and it does really, really motivate me to want to do more.
- Sharmeen Ziauddin: What are your favourite parts of being an ambassador? [0:32:29.5]
- Shane: For me it would have to be interviews, just because...well interviews, I love interviewing new people and finding out what different roles are and stuff like that. But for me mainly it's not letting the bad ones in. And just letting the good ones in. Because from my experience with, like, social workers, PAs, foster carers, I've always had...I've had bad ones. So for doing interviews, for being involved in them, making sure

we're only getting good ones in, in my eyes, instead of bad ones, it makes you feel...it makes me feel good. So definitely interviews.

Danteiye:

My favourite projects are definitely the more strategic ones. So like I said, corporate parenting group, those sorts of things. And I just love looking at policies and meeting of leadership. I think it's amazing to see actually there is a passion from professionals which young people don't know, and I love to be that bridge and enable young people and children to see what they don't get to see.

I also really like the participation champions, that work which is where a practitioner or a worker from every team comes together and meets with the participation team to champion the voice of the child. And I just think it shows that participation runs through every part of our service.

Sharmeen Ziauddin:

It seems like the role of the ambassadors is a real integral part of making children and young people heard. Would you agree?  
[0:34:01.9]

Danteiye:

When we kind of talk about including children and young people at every level, I think Gloucestershire is doing some amazing work. We have corporate parenting group, which brings together county councillors, foster carers and the ambassadors, like us, who are participation staff, directors, heads of service. And we even hold voice meets, corporate parenting sessions, so where young people directly meet with leaders to share what's really happening. I just think that's fabulous.

As a team of children in care, care-leavers and care-experienced young people, and also those who are supported by the early help service, I think we have such a strong structure in Gloucestershire. Moving forward I think it's about continuing to strengthen that support and encouraging our directors to keep backing us and pushing us to do more. We all want incredible things for our children and young people, and we'll keep working together to make sure their needs and voices stay at the heart of everything we do. And I truly believe that.

Sharmeen Ziauddin:

Thanks both. That was really informative, and congratulations again on achieving such a great result with Ofsted and obviously providing such wonderful support to children and families in Gloucestershire. Thanks for joining me today.

That was Danteiye, Shane, Paul and Beccy, all from Gloucestershire County Council. If you're interested in the work that they do, then do check out their vacancies, which I've linked in the show notes below, or go to [www.communitycare.co.uk](https://www.communitycare.co.uk), select 'jobs' and then search for Gloucestershire County Council there.

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