

Children's Social Care People Strategy

2022 – 2024 (August 2022)

“People who are influenced so that they feel more in control of their role, more engaged with the organisation and who feel they are contributing to the wellbeing of others are more likely to be self-motivated, loyal, productive, creative and healthy.”

Stuart et al, 2015

(Neuroscience for Leadership: Harnessing the brain gain advantage)



akeADifference #MakeADifference #MakeADif

Sefton Council



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Introduction

Message from Dwayne Johnson, CEO

Hi, I am Dwayne Johnson, a Qualified Social Worker. I have been employed with Sefton Council since 2016; as Chief Executive Officer since May 2019. I am very proud to be the CEO of Sefton Council.



In Sefton, we have high aspirations for our children and young people; we want them to be heard, happy, healthy and achieving.

We want exactly the same for one of our employees – our people.

We recognise that our people are our greatest asset and understand that we need to engage with employees and support them to promote and maintain stability in the workplace; which in turn benefits the work we do with children, young people and families. We are committed to getting the best out of our employees and know that this is easier if they are happy coming into work; feel valued, supported, and heard.

We want all employees in Sefton to have opportunities to develop and to be able to achieve a good work life balance. It is important for me to highlight that diversity and difference will not prevent anyone from achieving great things in Sefton. Everybody deserves opportunities in the workplace.

Sefton Children's Social Care is on an improvement journey and it is imperative that we bring our people along with us. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted hugely on public sector service delivery, recruitment and retention of social care employees and our capacity to deliver services.

The way we work has changed significantly with increased use of technology; the need for new skills and continuous learning to keep abreast of change. Agile working has increased and we have become more focused on our health and wellbeing ensuring we strike the right work life balance and provide safe working conditions for our people whether they be working from home or in our office bases. Home working has had the potential to blur lines between work and personal life whilst bringing other flexible benefits and reduced commuting.

I would like to personally thank any of our people who are reading this document for their commitment to Sefton Council, our children, young people, and families during the pandemic and into the future.



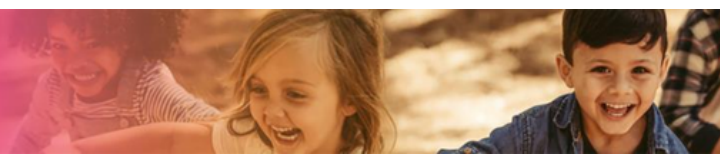
Welcome to Sefton – your confident and connected borough

Sefton really is a great place to live and work; a northern borough of Liverpool City Region with more than 273,000 residents. Sefton boasts 22 miles of stunning coastline; it is a leading coastal tourist destination with a flourishing visitor economy. Spanning the busy Port of Liverpool, the famous Antony Gormley's 'Another Place' installation, attractive beaches, and dunes, to the resort town of Southport.

The diversity of the borough provides a unique mix of urban and natural setting. Those who choose to work in Sefton will have access to a world renown racecourse and famous golf courses alongside National Trust nature reserves where people can relax and have fun. With excellent transport links Sefton is well placed for accessing cities across the North West, including Liverpool and Manchester and is close enough to the Lake District and North Wales for short weekend breaks away.

With vibrant town centres, intimate commuter towns, beautiful villages and stunning coastal and rural locations, everyone can find their perfect home in Sefton which offers access to suitable and affordable housing.

Sefton Council has excellent links with partners, businesses and communities who are integral to the delivery of our products and services. This includes being a founding member of 'New Realities', a 'can-do' collaborative agreement for Sefton Council and Sefton's Voluntary, Community and Faith sector, working collaboratively to improve the wellbeing of everyone in our communities.

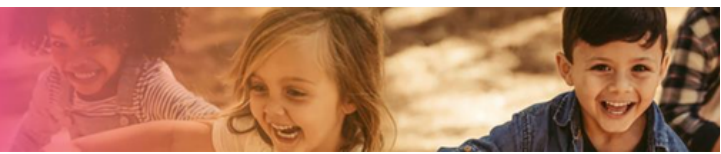


Purpose of our People Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to explain how we will attract, recruit, retain and develop our workforce. We want to attract the very best people to Sefton and ensure that we offer them the right support and guidance from the outset; along with rewards, recognition and opportunities so that they can do their best work, progress their own careers and contribute to our overall vision for children and young people.

We apply the same principles to our people as we do our children and young people – we want every employee in Sefton Children's Social Care to be heard, happy, healthy and provided with opportunities to achieve. Our aim is to keep our children, young people, families, communities, and employees at the heart of everything we do.

We know that there is a national shortage of Social Workers currently; not assisted by the pandemic. Our neighbouring Local Authorities will also be finding recruitment and retention difficult. This strategy will set out what creative measures Sefton Council will take to make Sefton an employer of choice.



Vision, Council Core Purpose and Values

Sefton Council's 2030 Vision

Our overarching aim is to have “a confident and connected Sefton”.

In order for our people to #MakeADifference; our people need the right tools, knowledge, training, and support to remain confident and connected. 2 of our priority 2030 outcomes for Sefton relate to our workforce. Sefton 2030 vision seeks to create a positive environment where:

- People live independent, economically active lives, providing for themselves, their families, and communities
- People are happy, safe, and healthy and feel supported in and by their community.

Together a stronger community

In 2030, Sefton residents look out for each other. We focus on our similarities and diversities but never on our differences, working together to live a fruitful life. We are supportive communities, aided by a vibrant voluntary sector, where everyone has the opportunity to live an independent and proactive life. We know our neighbours and we help each other out in any way we can, from sharing a drop of milk to lending a caring ear. Our communities are strong, knowledgeable and informed.



A borough for everyone

In 2030, Sefton is a borough that has everything we need to live, learn and age well. From the moment we are born we are part of the community, with parent and baby groups & outstanding nurseries and schools. Quality apprenticeships, vocational training and university access mean we can follow our dream career path. We live happy, healthy lives in Sefton. The borough is accessible for everyone and positive approaches are in place for those living with mental health issues and disabilities. When it comes to enjoying our free time and living socially, there are clubs and groups for everyone.



A clean, green and beautiful borough

In 2030, Sefton is internationally recognised for its outstanding natural beauty and commitment to sustainability. We are a borough celebrated for its fantastic coast line and respected green spaces. Together, we work hard to preserve our assets, such as the marina, woodlands, parks and canals and ensure that all future generations can enjoy them. Through eco-friendly and green solutions, we have set the bar in sustainability. Everybody works together to keep Sefton clean and green, with a commitment to recycling, low pollution and better air quality.



Living, working and having fun

In 2030, Sefton is the perfect place to enjoy your life. With a variety of jobs and professions, Sefton has fantastic opportunities for everyone, from full time workers to part time workers. While a range of housing, including affordable and luxury, has made the borough one of the most desirable places to live in the country. Our children and young people enjoy access to some fantastic schools, colleges and universities, meaning they can go on to fulfil their dreams and follow their chosen career paths. We enjoy shopping on Sefton's vibrant high streets and being social at one of the many bars and restaurants, plus a wide variety of sports facilities, clubs and events help inspire residents to keep active and enjoy sport. We are a borough that offers it all with many people moving to the area and students returning to lay down their roots following graduation.



Sefton

2030

A confident and connected borough

Sefton Council







On the move

In 2030, Sefton is easy to move around and well linked with the wider city region and beyond. Night buses, better train links and affordability means that public transport is safe and available to everyone. We can also enjoy the use of the many bicycle and walking friendly routes, meaning we can keep active. Investment into the borough's public transport system and road networks have helped reduce congestion and have made it even easier for residents and visitors to reach homes, businesses and attractions.



Visit, explore and enjoy

In 2030, Sefton has something to offer residents and visitors of all ages. We enjoy activities on our beaches and floral greenspaces, while the rush of adrenaline at Southport Air Show brings visitors from far and wide. Sefton is home to a number of great events and festivals, while international sporting events return year after year. Known for its cultural scene, Sefton has something for everyone.



Ready for the future

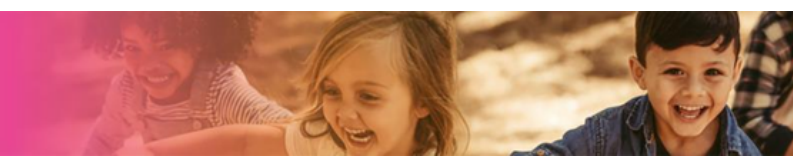
In 2030, Sefton is at the forefront of technology and research. Investment in technology means that the borough is covered by comprehensive free Wi-Fi and strong, fast connection speeds. By embracing change, we are ready to seize any opportunity and Sefton is now known across the world as a centre for advancement and research. We are well connected to the rest of the world and we are always looking to the future. Sefton is a borough connected by people, supported by technology.



Open for business

In 2030, Sefton is home to businesses of all sizes, from international organisations and small start-ups to social enterprises and community organisations. We are a borough with a global outlook, exporting many of our services and goods via the port. Sefton is also a leading coastal tourist destination, with businesses flourishing thanks to our strong visitor economy. While strong support for SME's and Start-ups, coupled with the creative use of commercial space, has resulted in vibrant high streets. With strong public sector partnerships, an entrepreneurial culture and a strong work force, Sefton is the perfect home for any business and we are flourishing.





Our Core Purpose and Values

In Sefton we have developed a clear set of “One Council’ Values – these relate to how we deliver services and the way in which we treat one another and talk about Sefton to others.

We want our people to be happy in their work, proud that they work for Sefton Children’s Social Care; willing to tell their friends about their place of work and encourage others to consider opportunities within Sefton.

Our “One Council” values are to:

- Put people at the heart of what they do
- Listen, value, and respect each other’s views
- Develop a culture of challenge, ownership, innovation, and improvement
- Be ambassadors for Sefton
- Be responsive and efficient
- Be clear about what they can and cannot do.

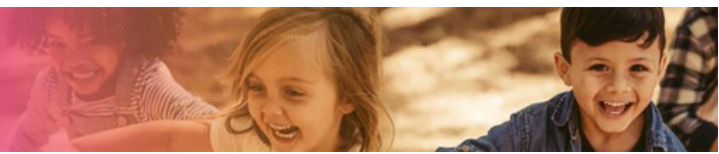
Developing Sefton’s Workplace Culture

Organisational transformation takes time; culture, behaviour’s and motivation need to be well understood so that we are clear what motivates people to come to work, remain or leave Sefton Council. We know that we can make the greatest difference to the lives of vulnerable children and young people if our employees have access to consistent and high-quality support within their teams to guidance, and professional supervision. This applies to a wide variety of roles across Children’s Social Care not just qualified Social Workers

Our aim in Sefton is for every Social Worker to have a manageable caseload; for every Manager to have sufficient capacity to oversee and support practice so that services can be delivered effectively. We want all employees to have the capacity to access quality training and see the value of professional development.

Work is underway to deliver a series of organizational culture workshops to gain an accurate picture of the current climate/culture of Sefton, that is representative across the different service areas. This includes the different behaviour’s, practices, beliefs, and micro-cultures that may exist within our teams, and to challenge specific areas of the workforce that needs more intervention.

To help us gain a clearer understanding of our culture we will deliver a series of culture workshops starting with Sefton’s Senior Leadership Board then cascading the workshops down to team level, with support from our One Council Champions. One Council Champions are a network of employee volunteers who proactively support our Core Purpose and 2030 vision, and act as ambassadors for the Council. Culture sessions which commenced in April 2022 will help the organization to determine the culture, values and behaviours it wants the Council to live and breathe, including how we measure our successes.



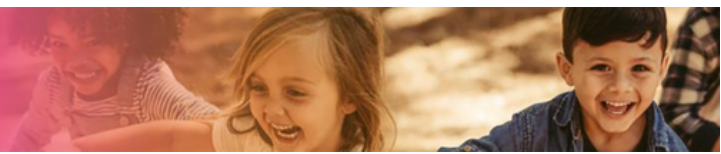
Following delivery, a culture change and engagement action plan is being developed, to deliver and build on the key themes identified. The aim of the plan is to future proof the organization by reviewing our core 'reason to be' and to ensure we develop a learning culture that is positive, authentic, embedded and engaging.

We are committed to embedding a culture of continuous learning, high support, and high challenge. Communication with our people will remain important as we develop services and plans. We currently have a variety of communication methods for sharing key messages.

All our people receive regular organisational briefings from their Manager as well as information from:

- Sefton Scoop – Children's Services regular newsletter which is informative and celebrate achievements
- Sefton Works Well – Sefton Council monthly wellbeing newsletter
- One Council Brief
- Chief Executive Officer (CEO) engagement – Dwayne's Teams Hour
- Monthly staff engagement meetings with the Principal Social Worker (PSW)
- Regular staff engagement meetings including Quality and Assurance sessions with the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and the Assistant Directors (AD)
- Monthly team meetings
- Yammer/Twitter/internal intranet communication
- Social Work week in March and practice week in October each year

Audit feedback learning sessions will take place upon implementation of our refreshed Quality Assurance and Impact Framework.



Children's Services

Our Children & Young People Plan – 2020 – 2025

Our Children and Young People's plan is a single and overarching plan for all services which affect children and young people across Sefton. The plan has been written around four key themes:

- Being Heard
- Being Happy
- Being Healthy
- Achieving



Our priorities incorporate the 7 principles for Corporate Parenting:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- To consider the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people
- To help children and young people gain access to and make the best use, of services provided by the Local Authority
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people
- Children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Wider plans for Children's Social Care are contained within Sefton Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SSCP) Business Plan, the Health and Well Being Strategy, Sefton Corporate Parenting Strategy and Workforce Training and Organizational Development plan (2021 – 2022). Our Children and Young People Plan aligns with Sefton Borough Council's 2030 Vision and Sefton's Framework for Change.

Our improvement journey – Children's Improvement Plan Phase 1

Sefton Council was issued with an Improvement Notice in May 2022 following a series of Ofsted inspections spanning the last 2 and a half years. Our Children's Improvement plan Phase 1 identifies 4 themes of improvement:

- Improving Quality
- Implementation of Learning
- Improving Tools
- Improving Strategic Partnerships

We aim to ensure sustainable improvement by:

- Ensuring the right staff are in the right place at the right time to deliver a consistent standard of good quality safeguarding services to children and families
- Using what we know and learn to continuously improve and enhance the services we deliver for children and families
- Ensuring we have the right tools to enable the workforce to deliver good quality services to children and families
- Effective partnership working to enable the delivery of a high quality multi-agency response for children and families

Governance of the Children's Improvement Plan is undertaken by the Improvement Board which was set up in July 2021 and is chaired by an Independent Chair. A DfE Advisor sits on the Improvement Board to provide external scrutiny and challenge. The board also benefits from oversight by Lead Council Members and partners, and children's employee representatives along with advice from a Commissioner.

Sefton Council is clear what change is required and at what pace. A new permanent Director of Children's Services (DCS) has been appointed and joined Sefton in April 2022. We will continue our improvement journey until we get to outstanding as our children, young people and families deserve to receive services that make a real difference to their lives. We realize that our employees are our key to our progress and success; that recruitment and retention of the right people into the right posts is critical to stability.



Our chosen model of approach – Family Valued - Sefton Stronger Together

A range of practice models have been considered and a shared review of services has been undertaken by Senior Leaders in Sefton who opted to adopt a Family Values approach. Leeds City Council have implemented this approach effectively and will support Sefton with implementation. This approach is based on a very simple hypothesis; that if the practice is right you get the right outcomes for children and young people.

By creating a workplace environment and culture of high support and high challenge; children, families and practitioners can work with each other to achieve best outcomes.

The approach is relationship based; good outcomes are achieved through trusting and respectful relationships, taking responsibility for creating and maintaining effective relationships at all levels. Empowering families by putting them at the heart of what we do; recognizing and enabling their networks and skills within the family; and wherever possible, families determining the direction of plans, care and intervention.

The approach strives to ensure one family, one lead worker, one plan. Working to reduce the number of practitioners involved with a single family; adopting a Think Family, Work Family approach when other agencies are involved; with all plans considering the whole system around a family. The approach is transparent; aims to ensure that children, young people, and families are as fully informed as possible and are always involved in and understand decisions that concern them. It is strength based, affirming and utilizes existing knowledge, skills, and abilities; and adopts an evidence-based approach to assessing needs and managing risk. We will apply the same strengths-based approach to our people.

Sefton Stronger Together will build on all aspects of practice that we know to be useful when assessing, implementing, and evaluating what we do. It will bring together best practice that in itself naturally aligns to working restoratively with both families and colleagues. Sefton Stronger Together will contain five key elements:

- Rethink Formulation
- Sefton Practice Standards
- Outcome Focused Supervision
- Continuous Development
- Multi-Agency Context

Continuous Development



Multi Agency Context



The approach places the family at the central point of convergence of these elements (see below); each element is complimentary and necessary to the other, and in turn they place emphasis on creating effective relationships, staying focused and using evidence based approaches.

Sefton Stronger Together approach will be underpinned by trauma informed principles that focus on a strengths-based practice approach to build resilient people and communities.

- Creating safety – both physical and emotional
- Restoring power – enabling choice and control
- Building self-worth – developing relationships, being compassionate and respectfully collaborate
- Building resilience- developing community connections, building on strengths & develop skills.

Sefton Council has recently recruited a permanent Director of Children's Services (DCS) and is investing in additional capacity and expertise with a focus on strengthening support and challenge for family facing practitioners. Rising costs and demand in Children's Social Care are presenting real financial challenges to the authority.

There is strong political support for Children's Social Care and the Council has agreed significant investment to support transformation to ensure the service is properly funded with savings expected in the medium term once practice and outcomes are improved. Sefton leaders and financial colleagues will work closely to ensure that financial stability and sustainability is planned in at every stage.

Our partnership with Leeds - Strengthening Families Protecting Children will bring other expertise, knowledge and financial support.

Further work will be undertaken with the permanent leadership team to build our understanding of the Family Valued programme in Sefton and to support and inform work with managers and practitioners. A whole-system, whole area approach is required with strong partnerships with schools, police, courts, health and wider stakeholders in business and the community.

There are two main elements to the Family Valued Programme: the 'core programme' of culture, leadership and practice development and the 'change projects' which are tailored to the individual needs and aims of each Council agreed with the partners to improve wider systems and structures.

A Sefton Stronger Together Project Team has been established and a clear vision will be shared, setting out expectations for practitioners and a plan for implementation that includes training and staff development, resources, conversations with partners and infrastructure.

There will be a number of launches throughout the year to enhance engagement. The Family Valued Board has been set up to oversee progress and provide support and scrutiny.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leeds-family-valued-programme>



Stability and capacity of the workforce

Our People Data (July 2022)

Workforce stability has been a challenge in Sefton due to a national shortage of Social Workers, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in senior leadership and following the Ofsted inspection in Spring 2021.

Currently, we have 100.98 FTE Social Workers employed in Children's Social Care. This figure does not include Team Managers, Service Managers or IROs who are social work qualified. The percentage of current Social Workers who are agency placements is 26.74%, however we have engaged some managed teams made up of agency workers, whilst the posts within the teams are above establishment if we took them into account in the calculation of Social Workers on Agency placement, this would increase the figure to 50.55%. The current number of social work vacancies is 41 ; our vacancy rate is 40.60%.

We have 48 agency placements across Children's Social Care; this includes 25 Social Workers and other posts e.g. 1 Assistant Director, 4 Service Managers, 5 Business Support Assistants, 1 IRO, 5 Child Social Care Support Workers, 4 Team Managers and 1 Business Administrator.

There are currently 80 vacancies across Children's Social Care. Turnover impacts on net gains. By way of example, In July 2022 1 new Social Workers joined; however, 1 left.

In the years up to September 2020 (the latest available national dataset) there was a mixed picture. Vacancies were at 10%, lower than benchmarks but turnover was higher than in similar Local Authorities and nationally, rising to 14.3% in 2020. In September 2020, (during the pandemic) Sefton had one of the highest rates of absence in the country – 7.8%, double or treble the rate seen nationally or regionally. Quarter 2 data (01.07.21 – 30.09.21) indicates 0.94% short term sickness absences; 6.42% long term sickness absence with an overall absence rate of 7.36% which is concerningly high. Agency rates had been relatively positive – 10.9% in September 2020, well below the national average of over 15%.

We have experienced numerous changes to our senior management team. We now have a permanent Director in post and other permanent Assistant Director appointments, other senior permanent posts are planned. There will be a need to work closely with the new team and ensure good engagement with our people; clear vision planning and expectations. The views and thoughts of those undertaking a wide variety of roles within Children's Services will need to be sought to include from other services such as Education, Youth Offending and Targeted Family Support who have recently moved physical location to join our children's social care teams.

High levels of turnover, sickness and agency employees can be barriers to culture and practice programmes and work with partners to embed the Family Valued model we hope to implement in 2022. There is significant investment into recruitment and retention to attract the best people to Sefton and improve stability.

Our Children's Improvement Plan sets out the outcomes we are aiming to achieve:

The Vacancy Rate

Vacancy rate 14.45 % as of July 2022.

Aim to: Reduce vacancy rate

To achieve this aim it is acknowledged that efforts will need to be made to reduce our vacancy rate

The Agency Rate

Agency rate 18.79% as of January 2022.

Aim to: Reduce agency rate

To achieve this aim it is acknowledged that efforts will need to be made to reduce our vacancy rate and sickness rate

Reduction in short term sickness rate

Overall sickness absence rate 7.36% in Quarter 2

The pandemic and impact of the pandemic remains a consideration but as this eases and improvements are made across the service we expect sickness absence to decline.

Increase number of Social Work Apprenticeships

3 opportunities available to Children's Social Care employees in 2021.

Aim to:

- Increase mentors and opportunities by 2 in 2022
- Increase mentors and opportunities by further 2 in 2023
- Increase mentors and opportunities by further 3 in 2024
- With an aim of increasing 9 new Social Work Apprenticeships per year.

We would want to see a reduction in these rates which will be monitored through the Improvement Board.

All new employees to complete an induction

A new induction programme has been launched in January 2022, to support all new starters and managers. This is relevant to all Children's Services employees and can be adapted to suit specific roles.

Aim:

- 100% compliance is expected in this area to ensure employees feel supported and equipped to undertake their role.

The achievement of these targets will allow us to design a Children's Services establishment to include agency roles:

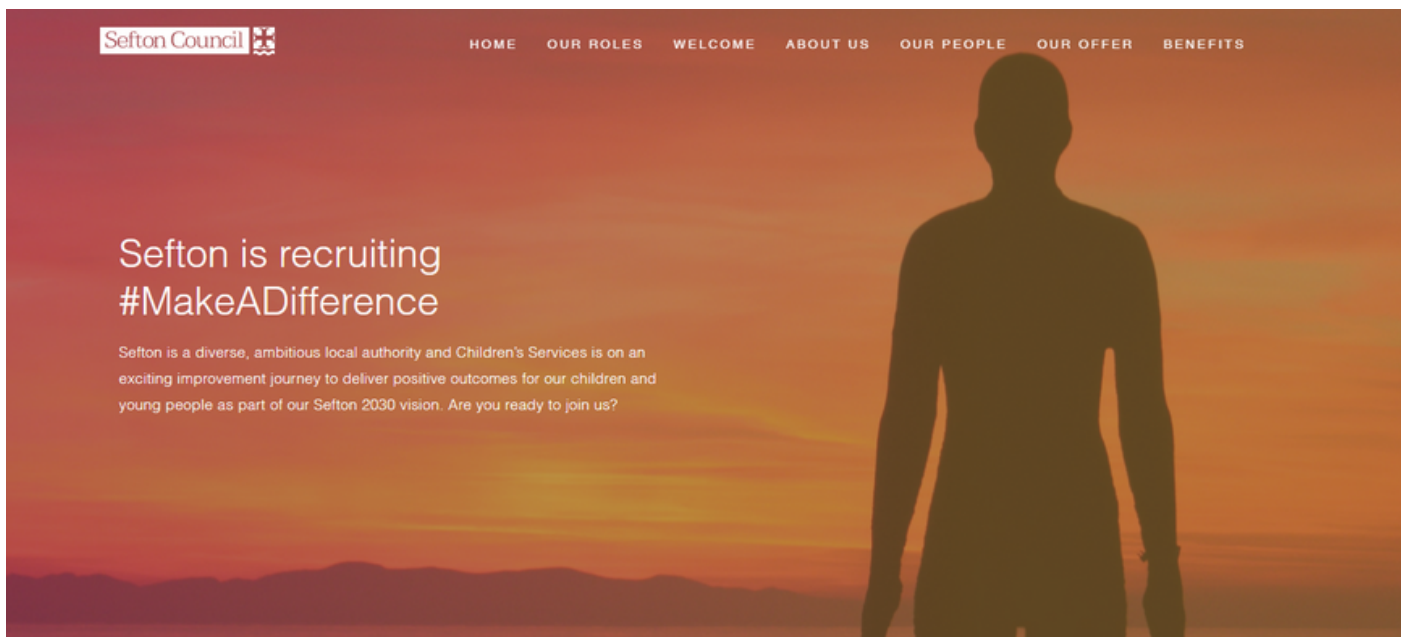
- A 10% agency workforce

We want to achieve a stable workforce who are well equipped to support children and families and have opportunities for their own career development, progression, and succession planning.

- Best use of employees who have insight into the social work role; expertise of working with children, families, and partners in Sefton
- Opportunity to consider a further Frontline programme/ Firstline programmes for managers
- Increase capacity to support Social Work Apprenticeships – “grow our own”
- Development of a Social Work Academy to support Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) in their first year and support professional development and change
- Consideration of internal recruitment
- More stability for children, young people, and families – particularly those going through court proceedings, cared for children, children in foster carer and care leavers
- More stability for our mainstream foster carers, kinship carers, adopters and multi-agency partners who we work with to secure good outcomes for children, young people and care leavers.

Work has been underway since Spring 2021, with initiatives such as a detailed review of the tasks of family facing practitioners; engagement work with our people to identify barriers; recruitment of additional administrative and Child Social Care Support Workers; consideration of Children’s Social Care structure, the remit and function of each team and reorganization of the respective roles of social work and early help colleagues, recruitment of pool of assessors to assist with fostering assessments, use of Innovate Service to support demand.

In November 2021, changes were made to our branding and a recruitment video was launched on our website. In December 2021, we were able to launch a number of recruitment and retention incentives to include a £3000 Golden Hello for new experienced Social Work staff, an ASYE payment incentive, payment incentive to encourage existing agency staff to become permanent and a market supplement of £2000 for certain roles deemed hard to recruit to. Also, a trial project with Frontline to “grow our own” began in Summer 2021.



The image shows a screenshot of a recruitment banner for Sefton Council. At the top left is the Sefton Council logo. To the right is a navigation menu with links: HOME, OUR ROLES, WELCOME, ABOUT US, OUR PEOPLE, OUR OFFER, and BENEFITS. The main text reads: "Sefton is recruiting #MakeADifference". Below this is a short paragraph: "Sefton is a diverse, ambitious local authority and Children's Services is on an exciting improvement journey to deliver positive outcomes for our children and young people as part of our Sefton 2030 vision. Are you ready to join us?". The background features a silhouette of a person standing against a sunset or sunrise sky over a landscape.

#MakeADifference



Recruitment and Retention Strategy

Priority 1 Recruitment

To recruit enough permanent high-quality people with suitable qualifications and experience.

How Will We Get There?

- Golden Hello payment of £3000 for Senior Social Workers (not NQSW)
- NQSW incentive - £1000 payment awarded to Newly Qualified Social Workers who complete their portfolio within 12 -14 months
- Creation of Assistant Team Manager posts and other specialist roles which will attract interest from experienced Social Workers internally and externally.
- Creation of Assessment Teams; feedback from our people informed our redesign
- Dedicated Children's Services website with improvements planned (during 2022)
- Rebranding #MakeADifference – use of Sefton people as ambassadors in refreshed adverts including branding #readysteadygrSow
- To support launch of Sefton Social Worker Academy
- Use of Sefton people as ambassadors for Sefton – to support marketing, virtual events, career progression policy, People Strategy
- Refresh Job Descriptions/Person Specifications – user friendly versions as new vacancies arise
- New dedicated recruitment website to be launched, showing Sefton's offer and allowing more flexibility when advertising job roles
- Rolling advert for Newly Qualified Social Workers; individualized adverts as required
- Consideration of collaboration with media outlets to showcase Sefton opportunities/our improvement journey
- Improved offer with more detail of incentives to include agile working, leave, relocation packages, emotional wellbeing support
- Recruitment video – talking heads, positive stories, financial and total rewards highlighted –
- Showcasing Sefton location and uniqueness
- Senior Communications Officer attached to Children's Services to support marketing, increase social media, creative communication and engagement
- Targeted recruitment across social media to include but not limited to Twitter, Yammer, LinkedIn and via Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Partnership
- Improved links with Universities and Colleges – Ex students to promote Sefton; support marketplace activity; Alumni articles
- Recruit to Principal Social Worker (PSW) role
- Plans for virtual recruitment event as appropriate with attendance from people in range of roles
- Partnering with Leeds City Council
- Microsoft Teams backdrops created to support word of mouth recruitment; advertise Golden Hello– refer a friend etc
- Consideration of further Frontline programme in Sefton to “grow our own”
- Continued commitment to “growing our own” through the Social Work Degree Apprenticeship scheme; increasing number of apprenticeships year on year, mentors, assessors and practice educators
- Good health and wellbeing offer – Quell, Listening Ear, Kooth, Occupational Health.



Priority 2 Retention

To retain existing employees by supporting them to carry out their roles effectively, and by ensuring that our total offer for new and existing employees is competitive.

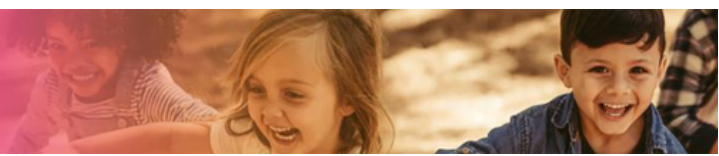
To ensure that opportunities are available within Sefton for career progression and development.

How Will We Get There?

- Introduction in January 2022 of Market Supplement payment for experienced Social Workers, Assistant Team Managers/Team Managers in teams considered “hard to fill.”
- NQSW incentive - £1000 payment awarded to NQSWs who complete their ASYE portfolio within 12-14 months
- Creation of Practice Assessor lead post and Team Managers within a Social Work Academy
- Support for our Newly Qualified Social Workers in their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) through our robust programme of support sessions, portfolio days and mandatory training plan
- Refresh Practice Standards
- Career Progression Policy and programme of professional development to support our Social Workers to progress from completion of ASYE to experienced Social Workers; creating opportunities to develop skills, and promoting clear pathways for career progression
- Appropriate caseloads dependent on level of experience; reduced caseloads for NQSW when academy set up
- Creation of Assistant Team Manager posts and specialist roles offering career progression possibilities; succession planning and opportunities for group supervision and circular learning sessions
- Recognition of experience by introduction of Senior Social Worker status supported by clear Career Progression Policy
- Increased opportunities for peer and manager support around practice and professional standards
- Quality induction for all new starters and those who change roles
- Focus on getting the basics right and completion of mandatory training whilst also offering a comprehensive programme of training, support, and development opportunities to all employees
- Monthly supervision to all our people, with the emphasis on reflective practice
- Flexible agile working options
- Provision of safe spaces and opportunities for reflection and open discussion via monthly Q & A staff engagement sessions, access to HR/Occupational health services and other independent services such as Quell, Kooth, Listening Ear, Menopause support, Sefton Council Christian
- Workplace Groups, Sefton’s Black and Ethnically Diverse Staff Group, Sefton LGBT+ Staff Network, Sefton Disability Staff Network and Sefton Women's Network



- Access to identified, internally trained and accredited Mental Health First Aiders
- Circulation of Sefton Works Well Newsletter, Sefton Scoop and One Council Brief to promote clear communication – also, Dwayne's Team Hour
- A commitment to developing a culture people want to be part of – one of praise, challenge, reflection, and learning
- Refreshed Quality Assurance and Impact Framework to include positive learning, audit learning and feedback sessions
- Regular employee surveys to seek views, feelings and ensure our people feel heard and positive change is considered
- Exit interviews to be promoted to inform future retention planning
- Introduction of movement interviews to be supported by HR to capture what motivates people to change roles, move to certain teams, service areas
- Involvement of our people to support recruitment activity
- Practice week in October and celebration of practice during Social Work Week in March each year
- Observation of practice to provide opportunities for positive feedback and learning; alongside audit activity
- Introduction of point of need support including plans to provide clinical support with Social Work
- Academy support/debriefing for struggling teams – recognising impact of work and compassion fatigue
- Development of mentor support/buddying across all roles
- Consideration of long service awards/opportunities for sabbaticals; extended leave with long service
- Ongoing training offer and support for our mainstream foster carers/ kinship carers, Special Guardians and adopters. Whilst they are not paid employees, they support our children and young people and are valued as being part of the wider team around the child and their stability can contribute to retention.
- Partnering with Leeds Council



Priority 3 Sustain Manageable Social Worker Caseloads

To ensure there is sufficient capacity in the system for practitioners to have the ability to develop meaningful relationships with children and families; ensuring caseloads are maintained at an appropriate level

How will we get there?

- We will seek to over recruit the number of Social Workers to provide additional capacity of frontline workers; the launch of the Social Work Academy will support this
- Increase support available to Social Workers by recruiting additional Child Social Care Support Workers and additional business support
- Redesign of front door; ensuring also that our multi-agency partners are delivering appropriate support to children in need; creation of an integrated front door
- Use of managed teams to support teams under pressure
- Creation of Assessment teams to provide greater focus
- Creation of Assistant Team Manager posts across the Service
- Creation of Case Progression Manager post to sit in Help and Protection team to increase support, oversight, quality assurance and timeliness
- Creation of 2 additional teams within the Fostering service; distinct support now available for mainstream and kinship carers/Special Guardians and post adoption support
- Centralisation of teams to Magdalen House to provide greater access to management and create cohesiveness including education and partners
- Through Personal Development Reviews (PDR), caseloads will be reviewed to reflect the level of experience of the practitioner
- Implementation of a new Family Valued approach of practice (Sefton Stronger Together) with more emphasis on Family Group Conferencing; utilizing family networks and strengths with the hope of keeping children within their families and reducing the number of children that come into our care
- Additional training on Family Group Conferencing model and other training as advised by Leeds City Council to embed Sefton Stronger Together
- Focused work to consider children placed with parents and reunification options at safe point in child's journey
- Access to support from agency staff at times of high demand
- Smarter IT systems and processes
- Refreshed Practice Standards to promote clarity of role and responsibilities
- Principal Social Worker role

Priority 4 Career Development and Progression

To provide a clear Career Progression Policy for children's social workers which maps out opportunities to thrive and achieve – setting out career development through student placements to senior management.

To ensure that there are opportunities to develop areas of expertise to support practice excellence and succession planning.

To create as many opportunities as possible to “grow our own”.

How will we get there?

Induction

All new employees will receive a structured induction that ensures they are able to understand the organisation and their role in it.

The induction process will:

- Help employees settle into their new environment and their responsibilities
- Engage new employees in our vision and values, HR practices, health and safety rules and support them into the job they are required to do
- Provides employees with information regarding corporate mandatory training courses that require completion
- Provide employees with opportunities to shadow and co-work as part of their induction
- Information about Social Work England Professional Standards - what a Social Worker in England must know, understand and be able to do
- Key contacts and places to visit

The Children's Services Induction pack should be used in conjunction with Sefton Council's new starter's information that's published on the intranet. This information can be found on the new starter's intranet page - <https://intranet.smbc.loc/personnel/new-starters.aspx>

Core Training Programme

Sefton Corporate Learning Centre has developed a portfolio of blended training and development opportunities for Children's Social Care people. This includes mandatory and best practice training for students, NQSWs, Social Workers, Senior Social Workers, Assistant Team Managers, Team Managers, Service Managers, and Assistant Directors.

The offer is a living document and is constantly refreshed and updated to take account of new training and development priorities. The most up to date version is available on request and updates on training available will be included in the Sefton Scoop and on e- learning site.

The implementation of Sefton Stronger Together approach in Sefton will have a positive impact on our current training offer for Children's Social Care and may lead to the re-design of the core training programme including the development of new opportunities. Sefton Corporate Learning Centre will continue to work closely with Children's Social Care to ensure any learning requirements are maximized.

This includes supporting the development of the following learning activities:

- Restorative Leadership programme for senior managers
- Restorative practice awareness training
- Restorative thinking and practice sessions for all staff
- Relational Middle Leadership Programmes
- Management oversight programmes
- Restorative practice training for schools and other partners as agreed
- Action Learning sets with middle managers to support/embed relational culture and practice with teams
- Restorative 'theory to practice' training for social workers and other key practitioners
- Restorative practice intensive training for local trainers and practice champions
- Relational action learning sets with local leaders and social work teams
- Review of impact on culture, practice, and systems.

Cheshire & Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership (CMSWTP)

Children's Social Care is a primary member of the Cheshire & Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership (CMSWTP).

The Vision of the CMSWTP is to improve the life chances of children, young people, vulnerable adults and their families by improving the recruitment, retention and the training and development of social workers and their practice. Being a primary member grants Children Social Care employees a range of benefits including:

- Free access to training
- Resources
- Facilitated events
- Research Hub to engage in collaborative research projects
- Access to the CMSWTP website to advertise Social Worker vacancies and many other opportunities that support our aims and outcomes.

The Continuous Professional Development Programme is refreshed and updated to take account of any new training, development opportunities and requirements as agreed by the partnership.

The most up to date version of the programme is regularly cascaded to Team Managers for dissemination and is also available on request from the Learning and Programmes Coordinator.

Fostering Network/Kinship Charity

Sefton employees, foster carers and Special Guardians can seek advice and information from these services. BAAF (British Agency Adoption & Fostering) is also a useful contact and advice can be sought from AIM (Adoption in Merseyside) on adoption matters.

Research in Practice (RiP)

Research in Practice offers access to resources including; a broad selection of publications, case law, frontline research briefings, resources, tools, live webinars, podcasts, recorded webinars, resources and tools for best practice, as well as access to tailored support for Sefton, and access to live national events. Everything is free to access / download once an account is created. Staff can create an account by clicking on the following link: <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/>

For a copy of the latest training offer or for further information and advice about Research in Practice, Lorraine Akins, Learning and Development / Children's Services Link Officer can be contacted at Lorraine.Akins@sefton.gov.uk

My Sefton My Space – Performance Development Review (PDR)

My Sefton, My Space is Sefton Council's refreshed Performance Development Review (PDR) process. It is a key part of the opportunity's employees have to develop, grow, and thrive in their role.

The My Sefton, My Space PDR process provides employees with the time and space for a more in-depth and enhanced conversation about the previous 12 months, future aspirations, performance, and development requirements for the following year. All employees should have an annual PDR, and these should be booked in advance, to allow both the staff member and line manager to prepare for the process.

Actions agreed in the My Sefton My Space PDR meeting should be reviewed regularly in 1-2-1/supervision sessions, until the PDR cycle begins again in 12 months' time. Comments and feedback captured during PDRs and supervisions should be used to identify evidence of learning and best practice, including rewards and recognition.

Further information about the My Sefton My Space PDR is accessible on the Intranet at: <https://intranet.smbc.loc/2438>

Measuring Impact

Impacts are the changes people experience because of taking part in something. A common example might be that the delivery of a training course has developed the required skills needed, improved confidence, self-esteem and most importantly, has had a positive impact on the lives of children, young people, and their families.

Sefton Corporate Learning Centre currently evaluates all its training courses following delivery. This helps to gain knowledge about whether the intervention has achieved or failed in its objectives, examples include have the learning outcomes been met, identifying what part of the content had the most/least impact and areas of improved knowledge/skills. Evaluation feedback following course delivery helps us to maintain the quality of the training delivery by making any suggested changes/improvements that enhance the experience of training/CPD activities for staff.

Measuring impact goes further than carrying out evaluations following delivery of a training course. To ensure learning is fully embedded into practice, any intervention specific training that requires follow up should be evaluated 3, 6 or 12 months in the future to assess if this has resulted in the desired change for example, has behaviour and/or practice changed and are we seeing improved outcomes for Children, Young People and their families.

To ensure we measure impact effectively, Sefton Corporate Learning Centre will work creatively with Children’s Social Care to develop a model to consistently measure the medium to longer term outcomes of specific training activities. This can be achieved through the circulation of self-assessment questionnaires, informal feedback from service users, staff and managers, as well as focus groups, practice observations (audits) and actual job performance against key performance indicators (KPIs) for the team/service. This can be captured during the My Sefton My Space PDR process and in regular supervision meetings or via observed practice which should take place twice per year. Learning from Ofsted Inspections, compliments and complaints can also be used to help measure impact.

Career Progression

Employees will be encouraged to discuss career progression opportunities with managers during supervision and at the My Sefton My Space PDR meeting. We offer a range of opportunities which includes apprenticeships and specialist training courses that are commissioned to address any specific learning and development needs. There will be personnel audit file checks to generate a training needs overview.

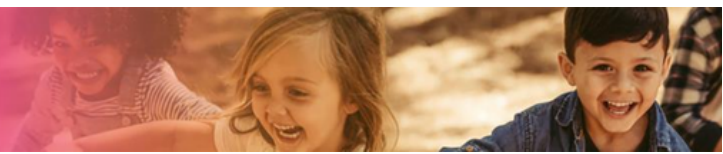
As part of our Framework, each Social Worker role within Children’s Social Care will have the capacity to support career progression from a Newly Qualified Social Worker through to Senior Manager roles, in line with the relevant Professional Development Framework (PCF) levels and standards. This will help us to create not only a stable and secure workforce, but a workforce that is highly experienced, feels valued and supported to develop in their careers within Sefton.

We also want to support employees who would like the opportunity to develop into one of our future Leaders, whether that is by becoming a Business Support Manager, Practice Educator, Assistant Team Manager, Team Manager or Service Manager/Assistant Director. We will ensure that they receive the right support, mentoring and experience to be able to achieve this and recognize good practice.

Apprenticeships

Sefton has a successful Corporate Apprenticeship Programme which includes the delivery of a suite of Management Development courses. These include:

Course title and duration	Details of the standard	Target audience and links to qualifications
Level 3 Team Leader or Supervisor – 12-18 months	For first line managers with operational and project responsibilities or responsibility for managing a team to deliver a clearly defined outcome.	Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers. Link to Qualification: Team leader or supervisor / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
Level 5 Operations or Departmental Manager – 24-36 months	An Operations or departmental manager is someone who manages teams and/or projects, and achieving operational or departmental	IRO/Assistant/Team Managers MASH Managers/Service Managers

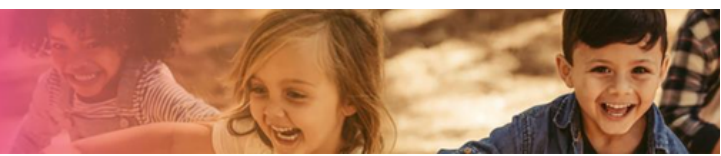


Course title and duration	Details of the standard	Target audience and links to qualifications
	goals and objectives, as part of the delivery of the organization's strategy.	Link to Qualification: Operations or departmental manager / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
Level 7 Senior Leader – 24 months	Senior Leaders where there is a workforce to lead, manage and support. The broad purpose of the occupation is to provide clear, inclusive, and strategic leadership and direction relating to their area of responsibility within an organization.	<p>Service Managers, Assistant Directors and Executive Director</p> <p>Links to Qualification: Senior leader / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education</p> <p>Managers must hold a minimum of a level 5 qualification or equivalent to undertake this course. Applications are reviewed by the Senior Leadership Board and successful applicants are invited for interview.</p>

Testimonials from our people

“I was given the opportunity to complete the level 5 management course as part of the apprenticeship scheme, I was slightly worried at first that as it was a generic management course it may not fit my then role as a newly appointed manager of a Cared for Children Team. However, as well as learning about business models and management theories, the course focused on exploring and identifying my own management style and theories underpinning my practice as well as exploring how my team fitted within the whole of children’s services. As a new manager I found the course really valuable, as it supported my development as a new manager as it involved me researching how teams function and how and what models I could use to support and improve my team’s development. It also allowed me to try out different management styles, which I was then able to discuss with the personal tutor assigned to me, the reflection and discussion away from the office gave me the space to think about my practice and skills as I was learning which gave me confidence in my role as a new manager, I would highly recommend the course to other managers especially new managers.”

Team Manager, Children’s Social Care - Level 5 Departmental Manager Apprenticeship



“I would strongly recommend the L7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship Course to colleagues based on my experiences throughout the programme, which covers knowledge, skills and behaviour applicable to the workplace. The knowledge-based content develops strategic thinking, change management and leading and influencing people amongst others, whilst a significant part of the programme is about understanding yourself as a leader, your areas of strength and where you can develop to maximize personal and organizational performance. It is a challenging programme to balance with full time employment, however every part of it is applicable to your role and enables you to look at your own and the organization’s practice through a different lens. It has been the most insightful and rewarding learning that I have ever engaged in and well worth the effort.”

Senior Manager working across Localities and Children’s Social Care – Level 7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship

Social Work Integrated Degree Apprenticeship (Level 6)

We also offer the Social Work integrated degree apprenticeship to existing social care support employees as a development opportunity and retention measure for those who are unable to access other routes into social work. The course takes approximately 36 months to complete. By completing this apprenticeship, employees achieve a degree in social work whilst also gaining on the job experience to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours required to be a registered social worker.

Sefton’s first apprentice cohort started in January 2021, and our second cohorts started in January and September 2022. We would hope to guarantee social worker apprentices an employment offer on successful completion, subject to placement reports and final grades.

“I had to apply then attend a panel where I was selected for the course with the full support of my line manager at the Youth Offending Team. I officially started the course January 2021 and also started a new job within the social care team. The skills and knowledge that I have gained has really enhanced my work as I am now applying theory to practice in the modules that I am completing in university is helping my work with families and young people. Also, the skills that I am learning has enabled me to develop my working practice further as I am now able to complete children and families’ assessments, something that I would not of been able to complete if I did not start this course. Completing my university assignments has also enhanced my assessments and report writing and this has benefited my work. Although the University work has been challenging especially through lockdown it has been rewarding and I am enjoying every bit of it. I have made key contacts in other local authorities that are completing the course and I am experiencing University life something that I thought I would never do and would recommend to anyone thinking of completing the course to do it as it will only benefit you and the support from your learning mentors, line manager and work colleagues and University tutors is fantastic.”

Family Support Worker, Children’s Services - Level 6 Social Work Apprenticeship

We offer a wide range of apprenticeship opportunities that may support other roles within Children's Social Care, this includes staff working in administration, business support, quality assurance, project management and support roles. Click the following link to access the full list of apprenticeship qualifications [Apprenticeship Standards 2021](#)

Staff can email Apprenticeships@Sefton.gov.uk for further information about the qualifications on offer and/or to arrange a call to discuss options.

Aspiring Managers Training

The CMSWTP offers a comprehensive and intensive learning programme for aspiring managers that covers essential skills and knowledge for social work managers in the early stages of their career. It is designed for individuals who have recently been promoted or who are about to be promoted and are now responsible for managing colleagues or teams. It is also suitable for managers who have been in post for up to 18 months without any management training. This presents an ideal development opportunity for managers or potential managers that have been identified for fast track. There are specific plans to meet with new Assistant Team Managers (ATMs) to offer support and guidance as an ATM as these are newly created roles in Children's Services.

Bespoke Leadership and Management Training

Sefton Corporate Learning Centre can source bespoke Leadership and Management training to address any identified learning and development needs that are not covered by our core training programme, apprenticeships or CMSWTP training offers. This includes working with a training provider called Solace, the UK's leading membership network for public sector and local Government professionals. Solace offers a range of accredited and non-accredited qualifications and short courses to support managers to develop their leadership, management, and coaching skills at the required level.

Solace also offer a range of programmes that support progression into senior management roles, these include:

- Aspiring to be an Assistant Director
- Aspiring to be a Director
- Aspiring Future Sector Leaders
- Aspiring to be a Chief Executive

Further information about the Solace training and development offer can be found here -

<https://solace.org.uk/our-solace/>

Priority 5 Celebration of good practice

We know that social care is a challenging profession which will sometimes come under the microscope and criticism from the media and public.

Our people come into work each day to do a good job and we want to ensure that they feel supported and valued to do their best. Our approach in supervision will be underpinned by the Sefton Stronger Together approach; it will be strengths based, focused on future possibilities, new ways of working as well as allow for reflective learning.

We will seek out good news stories and positive feedback to build confidence and self-esteem and celebrate good practice in a range of ways:

- Via Children's Services Sefton Scoop Newsletter
- Consideration of compliments as well as complaints
- Service user feedback obtained by audit and other means
- STAR (Special Thanks and Recognition) awards, the Council's annual celebration event that recognizes the hard work of its employees
- Celebration of World Social Workday and Social Work Week in March each year
- Focus on Practice week – October each year
- Consideration of NQSW award, team celebration events, long service awards
- Routine gathering/giving of 360 feedback to inform the PDR – SWE new expectation from 2022 for registration to include observation by another.



Staff stars!



I just wanted to send you a quick email. The Social Worker worked really to understand the case and issues to make sure that the statement she prepared was balanced and had the child at the centre. She clearly brought the child alive within her statement and his feelings and needs were central.

From an IRO

Big thanks to Team Managers in Cared for Children and the rest of the team who agreed to cover the shutdown period. You worked really hard, and it was very much appreciated; Christmas Eve was really demanding and we know this took you away from your own plans. Thank you.

From a Service Manager



Measuring success and effectiveness

Sefton Council will evaluate the impact of our People Strategy through quantitative and qualitative measures:

Qualitative:

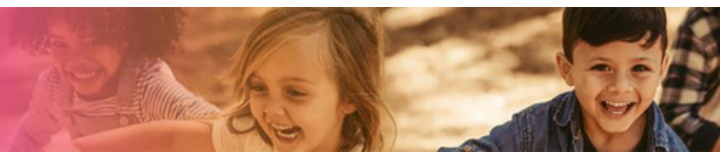
- Feedback from our children, young people, families, foster carers and partners
- Engagement session with our people and social work survey feedback
- Quality assurance and impact process through audit activity and practice
- learning events
- Children's Improvement Board
- Feedback from exit interviews/movement interviews
- Trade Union consultation
- Ofsted inspection

Quantitative:

- Impact of Golden Hello, payments incentives and Market Supplement
- Reduction in the number of agency workers occupying permanent posts during 2022
- Reduction in average caseload for NQSW/ Social Workers
- Increase in number of NQSWs completing their portfolio within their first year of employment with Sefton Council; application of £1000 payment incentive for NQSW
- Appropriate and timely progression of people progressing at 2 years to Senior Social Worker
- Reduction in turnover in of Social Workers/Managers and other roles in future years compared to 2021
- Reduction in staff sickness levels rate for 2022 (COVID-19 context will remain a consideration)
- Reduction in spend on workforce budget – evidence that invest to save approaches in Children's Social Care have benefited through application of Golden Hello, Market Supplements, and incentives for NQSW and agency to become permanent in Sefton.



#MakeADifference



Conclusion

We recognize that Sefton will not deliver desired improvements for children and families without the involvement of capable, skilled, and motivated people employed in roles which support children and young people.

This People Strategy sets out where we will focus our attention over the next 2 years. The Workforce Development steering group will continue to monitor and track progress on a regular basis; providing feedback to Children's Improvement Board as required.

Our people will tell us if we are getting things right for them and making required improvements. We are committed to regular and effective communication and exchange of ideas and will use the results from all engagement events and feedback to inform future planning and review of this strategy. We want our people to play an active part in change; to be able to raise challenge and for this to be valued. Our people data will also highlight any concerns, trends and allow us to better monitor the impact of changes.

We will continue to strive to become a high performing local authority and establish a culture of success in which our people:

- Feel empowered and equipped to practice high standards
- Have a strong voice to influence developments and decisions
- Are proactive in taking responsibility for their own learning and the learning of others
- Are motivated and driven to maintain high aspirations for Sefton children, young people, and families
- Ensure our children and young people are heard, happy, healthy with as many opportunities to achieve as possible.

This strategy will be reviewed in August 2023. Prior to the review date; the policy will be cascaded to our people for consideration and feedback and an action plan will be devised scrutinising each priority area to ensure policies are current and total reward offer to our people is as competitive as it can be.

This strategic document has been cascaded to our people for feedback and consideration prior to finalising.

An action plan will be devised.

