Minutes of the Principal Adults Social Worker network meeting
Friday 8 February 2018
Skills for Care London Office, Lynton House, London WC1H 9LT

Attendees and apologies
See Appendix A.

Overview of Previous minutes and actions
Previous minutes/actions were agreed and closed

Chairs Update
See slides
- The chairs introduced the new Facebook group for members of the Adults PSW network
- An EBook is being developed for Social Workers around relationships and building networks and links.
- Call to action days 2019: 21 – 30 June (working with people with sensory impairments (in commemoration of Helen Keller’s birthday). 10 October (World Mental Health Day) is also included

Skills for Care Introduction
Hilary Medway introduced herself to the Adults Network and outlined Skills for Care’s support offer to the PSW networks, please see slides.
PSW Leadership Development Programme: please go here for more information.

Regional Updates
Yorkshire & Humber
- The area is engaging with ADASS and has a current focus on modern day slavery
- The regional network is also looking to engage with World Social Work Day, with members of the Leeds and Wakefield Teaching Partnership
- In October, they held a successful strengths based conference
- When asked whether the regional network feels in touch with national chair activity, the representative felt the links were good
East Midlands

- Vanessa Ward provided an update but there has not been an official chair nominated for the region yet
- The East Midlands has always been a self-led PSW group with minimal links to ADASS in the area – however, the region now has an ADASS sponsor who is attending meetings
- Ideas for World Social Work day

Eastern

- Main focus lately has been working on 19/20 work plan and planning priorities for the year
- Planning to embed all PSWs within ADASS groups as the engagement with them in increasing

North East

- The 19/20 work plan has also been a focus within the North East region
- The PSWs are heavily involved in the teaching partnership and represent the workforce around the KSS

London

- The London regional PSW network is thriving, with some newly appointed PSWs for London in attendance at the event
- Been working on strengthening links with ADASS, and while these links are important, this group also recognises the need to be independent
- In future plan, the group is looking at workforce issues and good practice
- The network is also considering induction and learning development needs for PSWs in order to support excellent practice along with NQSWs who aspire to become managers
- Striving to keep an open space for meetings so the network can talk about specific challenges and tackle the issues

North West

- Marie Lynch is the new chair for the NW PSW network with Sheila Wood as the deputy, the previous long-standing chair has recently retired. The Chair and the Deputy intend to rotate their roles between each other
- The network is a very well attended group
- Been doing some work on the Social Worker Apprenticeship Degree

West Midlands

- The West Midlands network continues to meet 4 times a year and is very well attended
- The website has recently been updated
- There is currently a two year action plan in place and the group is trying to be more thematic in its approach with a focus on strengths based
- The group are also developing some best practice guides, which is in collaboration with some LAs

**South East**

- Current SE chair will be retiring and leaving the PSW chair role
- The network has an ADASS rep and are focussing on audit and quality assurance frameworks
- Going forward with the Social Worker Apprenticeship degree, with the first planned cohort for September 2019
- Linked in with an ADASS representative but not giving the network much work to do at the moment
- There is some frustration around the LGA Healthcheck – what came out of it was not very useful

This led to a wider discussion with the members of the National PSW members in attendance about frustrations with the LGA Health check. Many members agreed with the SE rep regarding the usefulness of the outcomes.

**South West**

- The Co-Chair of the South West explained that there is currently no fellow co-chair
- There is a focus on quality assurance currently, along with quality and effective practice
- Devon are leading on the regional conference for World Social Work Day.

There were also many PSWs new to the network in attendance; from Isle of Wight, Burton, Blackpool, North Somerset, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Northamptonshire, Redcar and Cleveland, Sheffield, Bolton, Oldham, Liverpool, Luton and Norfolk.

**Chief Social Worker's Update and questions**

The Chief Social Worker, Lyn Romeo, provided her update to the network. She acknowledged that we are in a time of uncertainty regarding the current political landscape – the sector is facing challenges and it is everyone’s responsibility to help people within the regions to face those challenges. Lyn reminded the PSWs that they are the voice for their area in these challenging times, and are the moral voice of practice. There have been local resilience forums set up, with important links to community development.

Lyn was encouraged by the stronger links with ADASS in the regions, independence is key but it is a good alliance to have.

The strengths based social work practice framework is ready to be launched, but the PSWs were reminded that the document is there to help. It is a framework, not a policy.

Practice Supervisors Knowledge and Skills Statement – the sector is looking to embed these standards over the next 12 months.
Autism Strategy Review – Caroline Dinenage has been pushing this review which will look at how the sector improves the social care approach with working with these groups.

Carer’s Action Plan – still ongoing, PSWs were reminded to utilise the free resources on the website

The PSWs were recommended to familiarise themselves with the ‘Top 10 Research Priorities for Adult Social Work Research’ which will ensure good social work practice is grounded within strong evidence.

The Green Paper is due to be published soon – with hopefully an aim on strengths based practice. Social Workers are a key part of releasing the Green Paper, when it is published there will be a set of questions.

Priorities for the coming year include supervisor skills and utilising links with ADASS.

The Chief Social Worker was asked if there would be any reference to risk in frameworks and guidance, which she said she would look into.

Lyn requested that the group contact her if they have any questions/suggestions around the challenges currently facing the sector.

Proposals for Guidance by the Chief Social Worker on the roles of social workers in applying the Care Act

See slides

A number of Local Authorities are supporting consultation on the guidance, with the guidance notes expected by the end of March. There is a consultation session this afternoon which attendees had the opportunity to book onto, but this may go to the wider network at a later date for those that were not able to book on.

Social Work Apprenticeships Update

See slides

Some Local Authorities are currently engaged in the procurement process for the apprenticeship, but are not on the official GOV Apprenticeship Providers site.

Concerns were raised when the speakers explained that they were only taking possible candidates who had their Maths and English qualifications already, so they were able to support those who they were sure had the ability to be successful in the role. People were worried that this would block out completely capable candidates who did not have these qualifications already in place. The groups concerns were alleviated when it was explained that this was just one provider operating in this way initially due to different constraints and that other providers may have more support. The point was made that the university degree would have this as part of the minimum requirements for the course.

The speakers were also asked what provisions were in place for candidates when they complete the programme. The group were told that these providers are holding dedicated posts but each provider needs to liaise with their HR leads about what they can guarantee.
Suffolk explained that they were trying to make every effort to provide jobs following the apprenticeship but it was made clear to candidates that there could be no guarantee.

**Developing Professional Capabilities for Social Work with Adults who have Learning Disabilities**

*See slides*

The overarching methodology for Developing Professional Capabilities is to include people with learning disabilities in the research and avoid discrimination by putting people with learning disabilities at the heart of the work.

An interesting outcome of the Literature Review was the lack of literature specific to learning disability, which indicated a need to think less generalist and more specialist.

The group were informed that that when research was carried out talking to those with lived experience, where they place value is always pivoted towards the moral character of a Social Worker and whether they wanted to do the best for someone – whereas when you talk to Social Workers, they defer to technical issues.

**When booking onto the PSW Adults Network Meeting, delegates were given the option to book onto some sessions which took place after lunch. The sessions were:**

13:45 – 14:30

Using research in social care practice, Katy Shorten from RIPFA (Room 7)

Meet with Social Work England (Room 8)

How can we best support social worker to become and be mindful professionals: continuous reflective learning on key situations in English social work, Adi Staempfli (Room 1, 2, 3)

14:40 – 15:20

Using research in social care practice, Katy Shorten from RIPFA (Room 1, 2, 3)

Proposals for Guidance by the Chief Social Worker on the roles of social workers in applying the Care Act, Angela Jenkinson (Room 8)

How can we best support social worker to become and be mindful professionals: continuous reflective learning on key situations in English social work, Adi Staempfli (Room 7)

**Any other business,**

There is a link available to complete an evaluation survey about this network event, and a closed Facebook page to sign up to for the network members.

Jane Goldingham announced during the meeting that she would be retiring from the PSW role and is very happy with the progress the network has made since its fruition.
With regards to the Apprenticeship, many Local Authorities are currently developing their guidance, so the trailblazer group have approached their chair to consider all this information on 25 February.