

Solihull Adult Social Care Principal Social Worker Annual Report 2024-2025



This report highlights the role of Solihull's Adult Principal Social Worker (PSW), details the impact made throughout the year and outlines the key priority areas of work for 2025-26

The Care Act 2014 and the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) outline the role of PSWs:

- Be visible across the organisation, including to people who use care and support services.
- Lead, support and oversee excellent social work practice
- Lead and support the career development of social care practitioners
- Oversee quality assurance and improvement of social work practice
- Have a broad knowledge base relating to safeguarding and Making Safeguarding Persona
- Advise the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and/or wider Council in complex casework and on legislation relating to social work practice

Abbii Henry has been the Adult Principal Social Worker since March 2022. She has worked for Solihull Adult Social Care for over 20 years in various roles and brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the role. She is passionate in representing and promoting the uniqueness of social work, as well as continuing to promote and develop excellent social work practice.

Achievements in 2024-2025

Strengths-Based Approach – Driving Cultural Change

Quarterly completion of the Strengths Based Performance Dashboard, and analysis of impact of the strengths-based approach.

Chair of the Strengths-Based Leaders' Group, intended to share good practice, continually develop the practitioner's toolkit, and raise awareness of strengths-based practice across all teams.

Continuing to build on effective working links with the Community Development which has enabled monitoring of community engagement and the increased use of TEC, Direct Payments, and local resources.

Continued improvements in recording of protected characteristics (religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability).

Ensuring that strengths-based principles are intrinsic throughout all practice guidance.

Chair of Direct Payments Champions Group to drive and promote good practice and performance.

Research

Launch of the Adult Social Care Research Evidence Approach to embed evidence-informed practice.

Facilitated access to National Institute for Health and Care Research, the West Midlands Teaching Partnership research tools and the British Journal of Social Work.

Supported an Assistant Team Manager in applying for NIHR research funding, further demonstrating how this strategy is encouraging innovation and leadership among staff.

Engagement and Coproduction

PSW is a member of the Involvement Oversight Board that coordinates Directorate engagement activity.

Has an overview of and contributes to Team Engagement Plans to effectively engage with residents.

Development of a caseload dashboard for managers, which enables greater oversight of caseload management and case progression, resulting in better outcomes for people we are working with.

Engagement with ICB in the implementation of the Joint Health and Social Care Squires Stroke project.

Contributed to the implementation of the Moving Social Work Research Programme.

Attendance at CHC health events and the Change NHS 10-Year Plan conference, which provided opportunities to influence strategic discussions around integration and eligibility.

PSW Visibility

Utilising a range of formal and informal mechanisms to capture feedback, share learning, and celebrate good practice with practitioners and managers.

Participation in the PSW Regional and National Networks and Local Government Association, which serves as an important mechanism for benchmarking progress and sharing best practice across the sector.

Contributed to regional peer challenges in Herefordshire and Sheffield local authorities as part of their self-assessment and quality assurance processes.

Mentored a newly appointed PSW from Telford, offering structured support over a six-month period. This included discussions on equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) practice, leadership development, and use of practitioner engagement tools.

Met with the Principal Social Worker and Learning and Development Lead from North Yorkshire in April 2024 to provide detailed insight into Solihull's progress in embedding strength-based practice, developing audit infrastructure, and ensuring consistent onboarding for new starters.

Learning and Development

Supported a successful Learning Fortnight with the theme of Prevention and Early Help, which included delivery of 33 sessions with nationally recognised speakers and was attended by over 333 people from across Adult Social Care, Public Health and Children's Social Care Directorates.

Led and delivered induction in person induction sessions for all new starters, which has contributed to new practitioners and managers having a strong understanding of practice expectations.

The Principal Social Worker has also worked closely with the Safeguarding Team Manager in ensuring that practitioners maintain excellent safeguarding practice, which fosters a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that adults are protected from abuse and neglect.

Continued collaboration with the People and Organisational Development Team in ensuring that the Solihull Social Care Academy is meeting the learning and development needs of ASC Practitioners and Managers.

Collaborating regularly with the Children PSW, Safeguarding Team Manager and the Principal Occupational Therapist to develop and share practice.

Practice Quality Assurance

Supported readiness for CQC inspection through mock interviews, case audit summaries and structured templates.

Further developed and implemented a comprehensive audit framework which, alongside general practice, includes Safeguarding, Emergency Duty Team, The Carers Trust and BID who deliver services for people with visual and hearing impairments.

Developed and delivered case audit training for managers to enhance consistency and reflection.

Further developed and implemented a reaudit process and feedback loops to strengthen learning from practice.

Oversight of supervision activity across adult social care and facilitating related surveys to obtain practitioners' and managers' experiences.

Review and refresh of the practice guidance suite including, Caseloads and Allocations and Community Dols and Deputyship and Appointees.

Apprenticeships and the Assessed Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) Programme

Supported with successful recruitment to the social work apprenticeship programme.

Been a panel member for ASYE reviews, which support the development of individuals entering the profession.

Collaborating with the Solihull Social Care Academy to ensure it continues to meet the needs of ASYEs and apprentices.

Professional Standards and Practice Development

Implementation of a Risk Enablement Panel for complex case decision-making.

Supported implementation of digital tools including Tri-X platform updates and promoted Magic Notes for reflective practice.

Provided opportunities for Practitioners and Managers to access training to evidence continuing professional development, including access to Research in Practice and the West Midlands Teaching Partnership platforms.

Encourage practitioners to complete LGA Employee Standards survey and providing summary reports to senior leaders.

Launched the End-of-Life Practice Guidance, which provides a structured and compassionate framework for supporting adults and their families through end-of-life care.

Strengths-Based Practice

Learning from the Strength-Based Dashboard which has demonstrated increased use of preventative services and community assets.

Promoted strengths-based supervision and conversations through practitioners and managers' groups and engagement events.

Promotion of the use of strengths-based language and approaches in practice guidance and assessment processes.

Closer working relationships with the Community Development Lead.

Chair of strengths-based leaders' group – sharing good practice, continually developing the practitioner's toolkit, raising awareness of strengths-based practice amongst teams.

Impact Made

Practice

Continued improvement in practice, as evidenced through case audit findings, has contributed to consistent and transparent assessments and care and support planning.

Our staff surveys evidenced increased confidence in supervision and audit processes, creating a culture of accountability, morale and continuous skill development across teams.

Embedding research into team discussions and supervision has encouraged the adoption of evidence-based practices. This approach promotes innovative thinking and informed decision-making, allowing teams to address challenges effectively and collaboratively.

Updated risk assessment guidance and training has inspired a culture of positive risk-taking, where creative decisions are made with care. Reflective conversations have provided opportunities for learning, growth and ongoing improvement.

A culture of engagement whereby practitioners and managers have been able to influence change has continued to contribute to the coproduction of practice guidance, as evident in the work relating to risk assessments, our strength-based approach and end of life.

Partners

Collaboration with our health partners has contributed shared training opportunities and engagement opportunities for people that use our services.

Operational meetings have also enabled interagency disputes to be resolved at the earliest opportunity, with network meetings between Health and ASC also providing opportunities to build positive relationships.

The Carers Lead Officer has contributed to positive increased engagement with carers and the Carers Trust in delivering support and services.

People who Access Adult Social Care

Analysis of surveys, case audits and compliments inform that people who access ASC services feel heard and respected and that they are consistently kept informed.

Outcome-focused care plans have led to measurable improvements in people's lives, as audits indicate that most identified outcomes are achieved. Whether it's improving mobility, increasing independence, or enhancing mental well-being, people experience tangible benefits.

Our strengths-based approach has encouraged individuals to recognise their abilities, enabling them to take ownership of their care. Direct Payments have further strengthened this independence, giving people control over how they access and fund their support services.

Priorities for 2025-2026

Further Embed Research Culture Through Training and Reflective Forums - Embedding a research culture involves fostering an environment where practitioners consistently engage with evidence-based practices to improve outcomes. This will be achieved through structured training sessions that focus on the latest research developments and encouraging participation in reflective forums.

Launch Second-Year ASYE Programme and Career Development Pathways - The second year Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme will continue to support newly qualified social workers by offering structured learning and development opportunities. Extending this programme into a second year will solidify their professional skills and confidence. Coupled with clearly defined career development pathways, this initiative will ensure ongoing professional growth, retention, and readiness for advanced roles within the Adult Social Care Directorate.

Develop Apprenticeship Readiness and Increase Practice Educator Capacity - Building apprenticeship readiness will involve equipping future practitioners with the knowledge and confidence to excel in their roles. Expanding Practice Educator capacity will ensure qualified mentors are available to guide apprentices effectively, which will contribute to ensuring a high standard of care delivery.

Expand Peer-to-Peer and Thematic Auditing - Peer-to-peer auditing will support practitioners to review and learn from each other's work, promoting continuous improvement and shared accountability. Thematic auditing involves focusing on specific areas of practice or outcomes, such as safeguarding, mental health support, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Expanding these auditing processes will enhance service quality and ensures compliance with best practices.

Enhance Safeguarding Practice - Maintain a culture of continuous learning by consistently sharing insights from safeguarding audits with teams, ensuring they inform best practice training initiatives. Prioritise strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders, including local authorities, to refine and enhance safeguarding response strategies.

Evaluate the Impact of Innovation Pilots – Moving Social Work Programme and The Joint Squires Stroke Project - These pilots explore innovative approaches to service delivery. Evaluating these pilots will provide insights into their effectiveness and scalability for broader implementation

- The Moving Social Work Programme seeks to enhance mobility and adaptability in social work practices to meet diverse needs effectively.
- The Joint Squires Stroke Project focuses on collaborative care for stroke survivors, aiming to improve recovery outcomes and quality of life.

Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) Development - As part of our ongoing work to strengthen support for people experiencing mental health difficulties, we welcomed a new Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) Lead. This dedicated Lead will help ensure that our responses to mental health concerns are safe, timely, and focused on the Person. The AMPH Lead will support staff who carry out assessments under the Mental Health Act, help improve the way we work with partners like the NHS and emergency services and play a key role in shaping mental health services to meet the needs of our local community.

The AMHP Lead will be working closely with our Principal Social Worker (PSW) in ensuring there that there is a strong and skilled mental health workforce which focuses on professional development, best practice, and making sure staff are equipped to meet the needs of our community.