

Solihull Adult Social Care Principal Social Worker Annual Report 2025-2026



This report outlines the role and contribution of the Principal Social Worker (PSW) across Adult Social Care during 2025–2026. It highlights key areas of activity, impact on practice and outcomes for people and carers, and sets out priorities for 2026- 2027.

Abbie 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.

During 2025–2026, the Principal Social Worker (PSW) has continued to provide strong professional leadership across Adult Social Care, with a clear focus on strengthening practice quality, workforce development and assurance.

This has been demonstrated through the recent CQC inspection outcome, where Adult Social Care achieved an overall rating of ‘**Good**’, with positive feedback regarding the quality of practice, person-centred approaches and practitioner confidence in articulating outcomes.

The PSW has maintained visibility across the organisation, supported the development of practitioners and managers, and contributed to a culture of continuous improvement. The role has remained central in advising senior leaders on practice, quality assurance and the application of legislation, while ensuring alignment with the Care Act and Professional Capabilities Framework.

Achievements in 2025-2026

Strengths-Based Approach – Driving Cultural Change

The PSW has continued to lead the embedding of strengths-based practice across Adult Social Care.

- Oversight of the Strengths-Based Dashboard has enabled monitoring of practice trends, including the use of community assets, preventative approaches and Direct Payments.
- The PSW has chaired both the Strengths-Based and Direct Payments Leaders Groups, strengthening consistency in practice and maintaining effective links between operational delivery and strategic priorities.
- Strengths-based principles have been embedded across practice guidance, supervision and training, reinforcing a consistent approach across teams

This has contributed to improved outcome-focused practice and increased use of community-based support.

Research

The PSW has continued to embed the Adult Social Care Research Evidence Approach, strengthening evidence-informed and reflective practice across ASC.

- Progressed the Moving Social Work programme, supporting the integration of research-informed and relationship-based approaches into practice guidance and resources
- Promoted access to research tools and learning resources, supporting practitioners to apply evidence within supervision, practice circles and day-to-day decision-making
- Strengthened a research culture, linking audit findings, learning activity and innovation to support continuous practice improvement

Engagement and Co-production

The PSW has maintained a strong focus on engagement with practitioners, partners and people with lived experience.

- Learning from complaints, compliments and surveys continues to be used to identify themes and inform improvements in communication, timeliness and decision-making.
- The PSW has contributed to the development of Adult Social Care journey slides, incorporating feedback from people with lived experience to improve accessibility and public understanding of services.
- The PSW has attended a wide range of events, including the Over 50's South Asian Community Group and Solihull Health Partnership Carers Event.
- Participation in the Involvement Oversight Board and wider engagement activity has ensured that co-production remains central to practice and service development
- Practitioner and manager feedback continues to be gathered through multiple mechanisms, including audits, surveys and engagement sessions, ensuring that learning is captured and used to inform improvement.
- Learning from complaints, compliments and surveys continues to be used to identify themes and inform improvements in communication, timeliness and decision-making

This approach has strengthened a culture where practitioners and people accessing services are able to influence change.

Professional Standards & Practice Development

Significant progress has been made in strengthening professional standards and practice development.

- The PSW has continued to embed the Risk Enablement Panel, supporting complex decision-making and promoting positive risk-taking.
- Development and refresh of practice guidance, including supervision frameworks, post qualifying and case audit guidance, has strengthened consistency and clarity for practitioners.
- Guidance relating to digital practice, including the use of AI-supported tools has reinforced expectations around reflective recording and professional judgement.
- The PSW has promoted the LGA Employers Standards Health Check Survey and providing summary reports to senior leaders of the finding
- The development of a Quality and Throughput Project Plan

This work has improved practitioner confidence, strengthened legal literacy and supported high-quality practice.

Learning and Development

The PSW has continued to strengthen workforce capability through a structured and reflective learning approach.

- Delivery of Practice Circles has provided regular opportunities for peer reflection, professional curiosity and shared learning, supporting practitioners to explore complex practice issues in a safe and supportive environment.
- In partnership with the Social Care Academy, the PSW has supported the delivery of risk assessment training and the promotion of the Risk Enablement Panel, strengthening practitioner confidence in positive risk-taking and defensible decision-making.
- The development of Practice Educator Standards post-qualifying guidance has strengthened the quality of support for apprentices, newly qualified staff and learners.
- The PSW has continued to support the Social Work Apprenticeship Programme, including meeting regularly with apprentices to provide professional reflection, guidance and oversight, contributing to increased confidence and professional identity.
- Learning from Learning Fortnight has informed ongoing workforce development activity, with high levels of engagement and evidence of impact on practice.

Practice Quality Assurance

Quality assurance remains a central focus of the PSW role.

- The PSW has continued to develop the case audit framework, including the expansion to incorporate Best Interest Assessments and strengthening feedback processes to the Emergency Duty Team
- Increased use of re-audits has strengthened the ability to evidence sustained improvement and impact on practice.
- Audit findings are triangulated with complaints, compliments, performance data and practitioner feedback, ensuring a comprehensive view of practice quality.
- The PSW provides regular reporting to the Senior Leadership Team and Directorate Leadership Team, including quarterly audit reports and six-monthly complaints analysis.

This has supported a strong culture of continuous improvement and clear oversight of practice.

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

The PSW has continued to prioritise the development and sustainability of the social work workforce.

- Ongoing support for the Social Work Apprenticeship Programme has ensured that apprentices are provided with structured opportunities for reflection, development and progression.
- The PSW has contributed to the development and delivery of the ASYE programme, supporting newly qualified social workers to develop confidence, competence and professional identity
- Regular engagement with apprentices and ASYEs has provided oversight, support and a clear line of sight to workforce development needs.

This has supported the development of a confident and capable workforce and strengthened future workforce sustainability.

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.

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.

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

- Strengthened partnership working across ASC, including with the AMHP Lead, Safeguarding and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding Team Manager, Social Care Academy, Principal Occupational Therapist and Carers Lead.
- Improved alignment across statutory functions, workforce development and practice guidance.
- Continued collaboration with regional and national networks to share learning and best practice

People who Access Adult Social Care

- Improved clarity of outcomes within assessments and support plans
- Increased use of strengths-based approaches, such as direct payments and access to community resources has enabling greater independence
- Evidence from audit and feedback indicates people feel heard and respected

Priorities for 2026-2027

Priority Area	Intended Impact
Practice Quality and Assurance - Further embed and expand the case audit framework, including AMHP and thematic audits - Strengthen triangulation of audits, complaints, performance data and feedback - Embed learning from complaints, focusing on communication, timeliness and decision-making	Improved consistency, stronger outcomes and clearer organisational assurance.
Partnerships, Engagement and Lived Experience - Strengthen collaboration with key leads (AMHP Lead, Safeguarding Lead, Carers Lead & Principal Occupational Therapist) - Continue trauma-informed and cross-directorate work - Lead regional PSW network priorities - Strengthen the systematic use of lived experience, embedding feedback from people and carers through engagement activity, complaints and surveys to inform practice and drive service improvements	Improved alignment, stronger co-production and more responsive, person-centred services
Performance and Measuring Impact - Develop use of the Strengths-Based Dashboard - Progress work related to the Quality and Throughput Project - Enhance thematic reporting and outcome-focused measures	Clear, robust evidence of impact on outcomes for people and carers.
Continuous CQC Readiness - Ensure all practice guidance is up to date and embedded - Strengthen evidence of impact and outcomes - Support practitioners to articulate practice and impact - Align activity to CQC assurance theme	Sustained inspection readiness and demonstrable high-quality practice.
Research, Innovation and Digital Practice - Embed research-informed practice through training and reflective forums - Progress Moving Social Work and innovation activity - Review and strengthen use of AI tools to support high-quality recording	Improved recording quality, consistency and evidence-informed practice.