

Southampton Children and Learning Services Academy



Our Vision

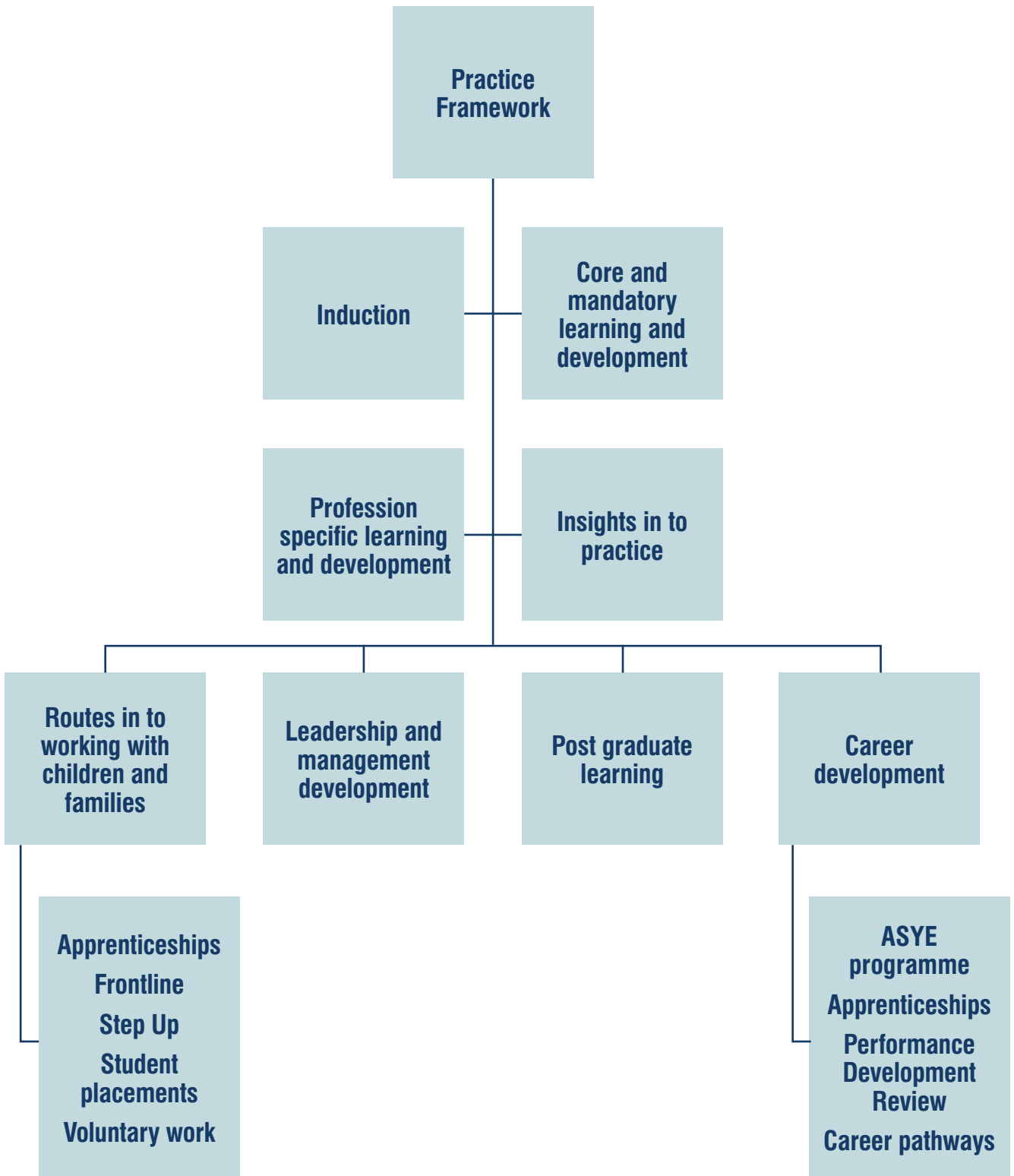
"We want all children and young people in Southampton to get a good start in life, live safely, be healthy and happy and go on to have successful opportunities in adulthood".

To achieve this, we will develop a skilled and stable workforce and learning culture in Southampton that continually drives up improvements and standards to deliver the very best support to children, young people, and families.

To realise our vision, we have created a Children and Learning Academy that provides a framework to deliver our learning and development programme for new starters and newly qualified staff to senior leaders.

The academy will:

- Invest in our early help, education & social care staff and support them to have the right knowledge and skills to safeguard children, young people and their families and meet our practice and management standards.
- Support development opportunities to support and embed our Practice Framework, ensuring that training on the core components Restorative Practice, Trauma Informed Approach, Motivational Interviewing and Strengthening Families are embedded and mandated within our training programme.
- Build and sustain a learning culture which supports our workforce to have the right tools and the practice conditions for early help, support and social work to flourish.
- Promote evidence-based practice, including Research in Practice literature and events.
- Support staff to develop and maintain professional practice standards linked to regulatory bodies, including the social work reform agenda.
- Build adaptive and systemic leadership skills and capacity across all services, for children and their families, to lead our journey to outstanding.
- Support career progression pathways for all staff including routes into social work for differently qualified staff.
- Support retaining a workforce of proud, competent and motivated practitioners.
- Facilitate staff conferences 3 times a year, quarterly Practice Weeks and regular Practice Hub bulletins.
- Develop group and individual reflective supervision and learning opportunities, alongside interventions to support the emotional wellbeing and resilience of staff.



Practice Framework

Our Practice Framework has been developed using a systemic approach – that is to say, we have picked evidence-based ways of working that focus on relationships and recognise that individuals are always embedded in their social context.

We have adopted **restorative practice** as our overriding approach because working restoratively recognises that the child is at the heart of all that we do.

We have adopted a **trauma informed approach** as it supports a deeper understanding of the impact of past experiences, providing a foundation for effective, emphatic work with families.

We have chosen to **adopt motivational interviewing** so we can provide practitioners with skills for engagement with families, language to use in questioning, listening skills, and to resist jumping in with solutions.

We have taken the decision to use **Strengthening Families** as evidence tells us that it

- supports collaborative working with families and professionals to identify risk
- emphasises the importance of workers' relationships with clients
- seeks to achieve positive outcomes by developing relationships and ensuring that families are listened to, respected and actively involved
- is specific about concerns
- identifies what resources are available to the family and what needs to change to reduce the level of risk to the child
- is characterised by critical reflection on issues, quality practice decision-making and interventions, engagement with families and responsiveness to their needs while maintaining a child protection focus.

Induction

In 2021, our aspiration is to develop a comprehensive induction programme for all new starters in Children and Learning Services. This will include all new starters being able to meet the Director and hear Southampton's vision for Children and Learning Services.

Core and mandatory Learning & Development

The Children and Learning Academy provides a comprehensive offer to support staff develop skills and knowledge in a range of themes and topics. All learning interventions are aligned to Southampton's Practice Standards, Professional Capabilities Framework and Knowledge & Skills Statements.

All staff are entitled to five days protected CPD. The five-day protected offer reflects a blended learning approach that includes traditional workshops/ training interventions, access to research, resources and webinars such as Research in Practice, a suite of e-learning packages and opportunities to shadow colleagues and multi-agency partners. The offer could also include coaching and mentoring from senior leaders and managers.

A core programme is in place, supplemented by profession specific training delivered either by

inhouse subject experts or external high-quality providers utilising the Continuous Professional Development Fund. In addition, the Academy works closely with Southampton Safeguarding Partnerships Board who oversee and facilitate multi agency safeguarding training.

This approach ensures that qualified workers who need to remain their registration to practise meet CPD requirements such as the registration with Social Work England.

Insights into practice

A regular reflective programme is in place to support learning. These include practice discussions arising from audit and case reviews, group reflective supervision, themed Practice Weeks, Practice Hub Newsletters and learning circles.

Routes in to working with children and families

As part of Southampton's Developing Careers Programme, apprenticeship opportunities exist to develop skills and progress careers working with children and families.

The Academy oversees the routes into social work specifically including Frontline, Step Up and the Social Work Apprenticeship degree. We also offer social work student placements working with local universities. We aim to allocate Practice Educators to all students placed in our service.

Sometimes it is also possible to offer voluntary placements in line with the council's Use of Volunteers Policy.

Newly Qualified Social Workers

The Academy manages the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) to enable newly qualified social workers (NQSW) progress successfully into their social work career. All NQSWs are allocated a Practice Assessor and supported through a comprehensive induction and training programme, reflective group supervision and protected caseloads. We will be supporting all eligible social workers in preparation for the National Assessment and Accreditation Scheme as this become available.

Post Graduate Learning & Development

The Academy supports lifelong learning. As practitioners progress in their chosen field, they will be supported to access specific learning opportunities identified through Supervision and their Performance Development Review. This includes higher level apprenticeships, support to undertake further qualifications and for social

workers, an opportunity to study towards a master's degree at Chichester University and the Practice Educator qualification.

Career Development

Our academy brochure defines the career pathways for social work and the Early Help Service, and we will work with managers to confirm the pathways across the wider service.

Leadership and management

Southampton is committed to 'growing our own' and wishes to support staff step up to leadership and management roles. To support this, we offer:

- Training in reflective supervision and coaching skills, essential components for supporting and developing staff
- Comprehensive suite of management training available to all City council managers
- Opportunities to apply for the Firstline management training.

Governance

The Learning and Development Board will be chaired by the Quality Assurance Unit Manager and will oversee all learning and development activity, including introduction and implementation of the Practice Framework. The Learning and Development Board will be a decision-making board, agreeing development activity to be undertaken, prioritisation and whether these can be offered in-house, using internal resources or whether commissioning is required.

The Learning and Development Board activity will be informed by our staff reference group 'Better Together' and our learning loops meeting; a group devised to collate and understand the learning and development opportunities identified from audits, performance data, practice week(s) and other quality assurance activity.