

Question to Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee – 13 December 2021

In the light of the recent appalling death of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes there has been a great deal of focus on the workload and inexperience of many front line children’s social workers. Can you please advise:

- How many cases an ordinary level children’s social worker at Surrey County Council is dealing with at any one time?
- What is the maximum children’s social worker caseload that Surrey County Council sets?
- If and how Surrey County Council is ensuring that senior children’s social workers with significant experience accompany less experienced workers on family visits to provide on-the-job training to spot parental deception and ensure that the child is spoken to directly, without parental involvement?

Response

- We are able to monitor the caseloads of all practitioners supporting children, young people and families. As of 7 December 2021, the average caseloads for our social workers and other practitioners are as follows:

Team	Cases	Case Holders	Average Caseload*
Assessment Teams	1,192	72	16.6
Children with Disabilities	803	49	16.4
Family Safeguarding	1,917	119	16.1
Fostering & Adoption	133	26	5.1
Leaving Care	783	51	15.4
Looked After Children	768	62	12.4
Other	11	4	2.8
Safeguarding Adolescent	642	42	15.3
Overall	6,249	425	14.7

(*Caseload is based on headcount, not FTE)

- There is no fixed ‘maximum’ caseload for social workers or other case holding practitioners within children’s services. We do however have an aspiration for no social worker to hold more than 15 cases at any one time. This does differ depending on the complexity and nature of the social work cases and managers are routinely assessing the workload of practitioners to ensure it is suitable and manageable.

- Regarding the support we provide to Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs):
 - In terms of induction NQSWs have a two week induction which covers Motivational Interviewing, Emotional Resilience and Self-Care, Personal Safety, Abuse & Neglect, Social Work Law, Genograms/Ecomaps/Chronologies, Home Visits and Charing Meetings, Safeguarding Approach- Social Work Practice Model, What does 'Good Practice' look like and speakers from Health, Police, Children's Single Point of Access, Fostering, User Participation.
 - Then in their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), the NQSWs are supported by their Team Managers who provide them with reflective supervision on a weekly basis for the first six weeks, then fortnightly from six weeks to six months and thereafter on a monthly basis. In addition, the quadrant based ASYE Assessor facilitates monthly ASYE Learning Events which incorporate Action Learning Sets and provides the NQSW with monthly supervision on an individual or group basis.
 - NQSWs are provided with two days each month of protected time; one day to attend the monthly ASYE Learning Events and one day to work on their ASYE portfolio.
 - The caseload for NQSWs is 25% of a 'standard' caseload at three months, 50% at six months and then from six to twelve months in the role, this increases steadily (to 90% of a normal caseload) and complexity.
 - The quadrant based ASYE Assessor undertakes the assessment of the NQSW at the review stages of three, six and eleven months, in partnership with the NQSW and their Team Manager.
 - NQSWs also have a 12-month probation period.

**Liz Bowes, Chairman – Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture
Select Committee**