



## Social Care Newsletter

Ofsted has recently published their Social Care Annual Report 2013/14, drawing findings from over 5,600 inspections of social care services. The report found that Child social care is “inadequate” or “requires improvement” in three-quarters of the local authorities in England inspected by Ofsted last year. The watchdog also says demand for children's services has been rising continually for the past seven years.

The main findings of the report are:

- The current system to help, care for and protect children and their families is geared towards reactive practice and policy.
- Children and young people who are at risk of harm need more help when difficulties first arise, throughout their time in care and as they move into adulthood.
- There are problems in many areas with high turnover rates of staff.
- Ofsted say that they will launch a programme of targeted area inspections that will be conducted jointly, these inspections will evaluate how local agencies work together to protect children, focused on specific areas of concern such as the sexual exploitation of children and young people.
- Ofsted say that they will continue to focus attention on the consistency of inspection and the quality of reports, bringing in stronger regionalisation of their social care functions. They also say that they will continue to be a strong voice in shared debates about what inspection must and should address and how it can be deployed to improve services.

You can access the full report online [here](#). We are particularly interested in finding out your views on the following areas.

- Do you agree with the main findings of the report?
- What issues does the report fail to address?
- What are your views on Ofsted's ability to inspect the sector?
- What staffing issues would you highlight in response?

Please send any responses to Chris Round, UNISON Local Organiser [c.round@unison.co.uk](mailto:c.round@unison.co.uk).

## **Ethical Care Charter**

UNISON's new homecare website [www.savecarenow.org.uk](http://www.savecarenow.org.uk) has now been launched. It is there to provide support to UNISON branches and activists and to allow the general public to get involved in our campaign to get more councils to adopt our Ethical Care Charter.

Since the website was launched at the start of March, over 2,000 members of the public have completed the email action on the website <http://www.savecarenow.org.uk/email-your-council/> calling upon their council to adopt our Ethical Care Charter. We hope that the added pressure from their constituents will make them more amenable to this.

## **Naming of Social Workers in Court Judgements**

You may recall that UNISON nationally has raised concern over the naming of Social Workers in Court Judgments, more info is available [here](#). Last month Staffordshire UNISON raised the issue with the Council to establish what support is offered to Social Workers in Staffordshire. The council's response is set out below.

*"Families First provides our social workers with the following training and briefings:*

*As part of the Families First Induction and ASYE Social Workers complete an introductory court skills course, the content of this is delivered by SCC legal services and has been running successfully over the last 5 years. This one day course compliments the training and skills of social workers by introducing them to presenting evidence in court, both verbally and in writing, working within the court environment and indeed managing the environment. Further training and support is provided through coaching and mentoring by our senior practitioners and team managers. We also look to ensure that newly qualified social workers work jointly with experienced social workers and are not the case holders for children subject to court and care proceedings.*

*In response to the public law outline and indeed judgments that have been made about the potential naming of social workers the organisation has responded to this in the following areas:*

- *Legal Briefings around the public law outline*
- *Case Law briefings and working with case law*
- *Support from the Principal Social Worker and Senior Managers on sharing good practice, research and insight*

*We have developed an advanced court skills course that builds on the introductory day, there is a clear focus on support and managing the adversarial nature of reporting to court in child care proceedings, this also includes what support is offered when there is a risk of social workers and other practitioners being named in complex court judgements.*

*Through supervision social workers are supported in their personal and professional development, our team managers understand the challenges and are acutely aware*

*of the professional challenges faced by social workers through being potentially named in judgments or indeed through social media. Our senior leadership team has worked extensively hard to mitigate this, when there is the likelihood of media intrusion or confidentiality they have worked with legal services to manage this and look at all legal remedy that is available to the Local Authority to support our social workers.*

*We have a strategic group that is chaired by Deborah Ramsdale/Vonni Gordon who review care proceedings and court practice, members of this group include operational county managers who have a clear line of sight to practice and are able to respond in a proactive manner. This group is also supported by our legal services who provide timely support, advice and assistance on court work as appropriate to front line social workers.*

*Principal Social Worker and legal services continue to provide regular legal updates, briefings and bespoke training as required in the light of any new case law or developments across the Family Division and Judiciary.*

*Through professional organisations The College of Social Work and the British Association of Social Workers support, and further learning is available to social workers as needed.*

*The Families First strategic training and workforce development plan includes opportunities for Social Workers to access post qualifying and cpd training and education through our local universities. These programmes of study include legal practice for social workers and support practitioners in deepening their skills and knowledge.*

*In terms of continuing support the Principal Social Worker and Strategic Health and Safety are running workshops for social workers and other Families First staff focusing on Looking After Yourself in Professional Practice, these workshops will support resilience, health and safety and what support and tool kits are available to practitioners. These workshops are scheduled to begin in April and will cover this particular issue amongst other areas.*

*In the event that any of our staff are named the support available will include coaching, emotional and practical support and any legal remedy that would be appropriate. Think Well the Councils counseling Service will also be available.*

*At a national level the actual reporting of social workers names has been very limited, we will continue to monitor this and ensure that we campaign robustly through the Family Justice Review Board and other Court Strategic Forums that this practice does not support effective social work practice with vulnerable children and young people.*

*I hope this provides an overview of the key activity that Families First have been undertaking to support our staff."*

If you have any feedback on this information please feel free to email [c.round@unison.co.uk](mailto:c.round@unison.co.uk)

## **Updating Member Records**

UNISON wants to ensure that communication with members is as quick and effective as possible, but it has become clear that much of the information we have on Email addresses, job titles and workplace locations for Social Services staff members is out of date. We have contacted all members for whom we have email addresses asking for the following information:

Name  
Preferred email address  
Current job title  
Current base work location

Thank you to all of you who have responded so far. If you have not yet responded then please do so. If you are a member and have not received our email, please contact [c.round@unison.co.uk](mailto:c.round@unison.co.uk) with the above information.

For us to effectively represent your interests it is vital that we have this information, particularly email addresses so that we can effectively communicate with members.

## **UNISON Families First Team Visits**

Your UNISON Local Organiser, Chris Round, is continuing to attend local team meetings in Families First to remind members about the services UNISON provides and to encourage non members to join. Please do all you can to persuade your colleagues who are not members of UNISON to join as it is in all of our interests to have a strong membership base so that we can influence whatever changes the service will face in the near future.

If Chris has not yet been invited to one of your local team meetings or you need membership forms or other information, please contact him at [c.round@unison.co.uk](mailto:c.round@unison.co.uk) or call him on 07432 735166 to arrange a visit.

## **Win a LENOVO A10 Tablet Computer**

UNISON are holding a series of member surgeries in Local Government across the West Midland on the week commencing 11 May. Locally UNISON will be at the following locations:

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May    Room 1 off reception at Newcastle Civic Centre  
11.00am - 2.00pm

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May    Staff room at Springvale Cannock  
10.00am – 2.00pm

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May    Reception Marmion House Tamworth  
11.00am - 2.00pm

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May    Conference Room St Pauls Burton  
10.00am - 2.00pm

UNISON will also be visiting Families First team meetings at the Old House, Lichfield on the morning of 11<sup>th</sup> May and at The Walton Building on the morning of 14<sup>th</sup> May.

We will enter anyone who comes and joins UNISON, and any existing member who brings someone who joins UNISON, into a prize draw to win a Lenovo A10 tablet so please encourage your colleagues who are not members to join.

If you know of a colleague who would like to join and cannot attend any of the venues listed above, please contact Local Organiser Chris Round at [c.round@unison.co.uk](mailto:c.round@unison.co.uk) who will ensure that all staff who join between 11<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> May are entered into the prize draw.

### **And Finally.....**

Remember that your vote counts on 7<sup>th</sup> May. If you care for it, vote for it.