



London Borough Islington, Adult Social Care, Principal Social Worker Annual Report 2023 – 2024

This annual report highlights the role of Islington’s Principal Social Worker (PSW) and details the work achieved by the PSW during the year, outlining the priority areas of work for 2024.

The Care Act 2014 alongside the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) states that the PSW should:

- 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 on safeguarding and Making Safeguarding Personal.
- Advise the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and/or wider Council in complex or controversial cases and on legislation relating to social work practice.

Conor Copas was successfully appointed to the PSW role in March 2023. Conor’s areas of passion include learning and development, equity, diversity and inclusion, workforce, and wellbeing. He leads on collaborative engagement and strengths-based practice. Promoting Islington to be a place made up of strong, inclusive, and connected communities, where regardless of background, people have fair and equal access to adult social care support that enables residents to live healthy, fulfilling, and independent lives.

ASC Vision and Strategy

To deliver what Islington residents have told us is important to them, and in turn support the council’s overarching 2030 Plan. To deliver our vision and enable us to shape how we work, we have co-produced **six adult social care principles** with residents accessing services, carers and our staff. These principles are set out below.



1 Listen to you and involve you in what we do and how we do it.



2 Work with you to strengthen your sense of safety, wellbeing and belonging.



3 Be clear about the choices you have and the support available to you.



4 Offer the right support at the right time, based on your strengths and whats most important to you.



5 Improve the quality and consistency of services and continue to celebrate success.



6 Support you to connect to local voluntary and community groups and to continue supporting and learning from each other.

Achievements in 2023-2024

Raising the PSW Profile

- Maintaining physical presence across social work operational teams to aid best practice.
- Introduced fortnightly PSW bulletin promoting wellbeing, celebrating best practice, and aiding continual improvement. Including a 'meet with me' button to ensure the PSW is accessible.
- Represented LBI at national PSW network annual conference and ADASS spring seminar.
- Individual recognition in LGA peer challenge report stating: *"Throughout the duration of the peer challenge, it was evident that the council's PSW not only had a direct line of sight to the DASS but was an integral and enthusiastic member of the senior leadership team. The peer team saw evidence of the PSW being visible across the adult social care and mental health space with robust oversight in place regarding quality of assurance of practice and performance"*.
- Chairing bi-monthly CPD sessions promoting Social Work England compliance.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

- Led LBI to be the first local authority to sign up to 'See Me First' campaign, continuously promoting its value and membership acquisition.
- Proactive leadership as a challenging inequality champion and responding to EDI queries and concerns.
- Challenging inequality was recognised as a strength by the LGA peer challenge team, Oct 23.
- Investment of Diverse by Design and WRES to further build on achievements.

Workforce Development

- Supporting Social Workers to meet the re-registration requirements for Social Work England; including organising two sessions led by the regulatory body's Regional Engagement Lead, as well as leading on peer reflection sessions.
- Developing bespoke strengths-based practice training and implementation across wider ASC
- Continued development with establishing career pathways and professional qualifications.
- Collaboration work across NCL PSW network co-designing a section 22 statement to strengthen practice for professional challenge with a robust evidence base.
- Led World Social Work Day promoting 'good living' through innovative wellbeing tools.
- PSW is the single point of contact (SPOC) for any adult fitness practice referrals, leading on investigations and responding via sharing learning and improvement plans.

Quality Assurance of Practice

- Implemented new Microsoft Forms practice audit tool across operational social work teams.
- Reviewed and improved induction, career, and development pathways.
- Developed and embedded new supervision template & personal development plan. Including an audit tool and supervision matrix to monitor and quality assure practice standards.
- Led on workforce preparations and robust auditing of cases for LGA peer challenge.
- Reviewed and completed analysis reports on all cases presented at daily integrated quality assurance meetings. Celebrating strengths, proactively addressing areas of improvement
- Provision of wide range of learning and development opportunities including accredited courses, formal and bite-size learning, including revised strengths-based practice training.
- Facilitation of reflective practice sessions, providing feedback and influencing improvement plans.

Impact

- Improvement in strengths-based practice evidenced in integrated quality assurance meeting (IQAM) daily presentations and findings from ASC wide audits.
- Practitioners have taken the opportunity to provide valuable feedback relating to their views and experiences of frontline practice through exit interviews offered by the PSW.
- Strengthened working relationships and collaboration with mental health services improving referral pathways and efficiency of workflow.
- Effective collaboration with housing colleagues reducing escalation of complex cases so they are managed at team level and growth in sharing of financial responsibilities.
- Greater emphasis placed on workforce wellbeing, resilience, and CARE values.
- Increased representation of the voice of social work workforce at senior level.

Apprenticeships, Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS), Assessed & Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) and Practice Education

- Three Social Work apprentices qualified in 2023 and a further two are due to finish in 2024/25.
- LBI provided six social work student placements in 2023/24 (4 x 100 days and 2 x 70 days) and 1 occupational therapist student placement (70 days).
- Eleven newly qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) started their ASYE in 2023/24.
- Three Social Workers and an Occupational Therapist started the Practice Education course in 2023.
- LBI continue to be an integral part of the NCL ASYE Partnership, hosting a career development day for NQSWS.
- Ten two-hour workshops were also facilitated for ASYE assessors and Practice Educators across NCL to support them in their roles promoting continuous practice learning.

Priorities for 2024 - 2025

- Continue to embed strength-based tools and techniques in practice and ensure they are translating into strength-based conversations, recordings, and outcomes.
- Promote continual practice improvement co-producing and learning from the experience of people accessing ASC.
- Proactively collaborate with Principal Occupational Therapist promoting strengths-based practice maximising an early intervention prevention approach.
- Lead on continual practice improvement further expanding working relationships with mental health and housing colleagues.
- Lead operational and improvement teams managing risk and allocations lists.
- Hold workforce board membership prioritising recruitment and retention, ensuring workforce needs are actively responded to.
- Provide robust and dynamic learning and development offer across ASC.
- Remain integral and proactive member of CQC assessment core group.
- Lead on diverse by design and WRES to inform challenging inequality plan for year 4.
- Continue to expand career and development pathways across the wider ASC, including social work and occupational therapist student placements and apprenticeships.