



# **Social Pedagogy Strategy**

**2016 - 2018**

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## 1 Our story: Social Pedagogy in Derbyshire

*Following on from a parenting group one MAT team developed a relationship with the local adult education centre and collaborated on cooking skills course where parents and children come together alongside a chef/tutor from adult education and the family support workers. The course sees children from eight working alongside their parents supported by workers to develop their pedagogic relationships with their children.*

*By cooking together and then eating the meal together the sessions helped families see the value of good food, shared together, as a way of informally catching up through shared family time. It allows workers to more effectively coach and mentor families. Staff also contacted the local veg shop and butcher who agreed to make offers coincide with the recipes being prepared for each session. These community links creatively emphasised the sort of social connections which social pedagogy sees as a vita.*

Example of Social Pedagogy in a Multi-Agency Team setting.

*'I care for a girl, who due to her disability is not able to communicate verbally. I had believed that touching children was a no-no, and only to be used when absolutely necessary.*

*Social pedagogy has taught me that myths like this can lead to me, and others, being risk averse as a practitioner. For the first time I felt that I had permission to do simple things that I would do with my own children, like tickling, or using a child's feet to create motion on a swing, it's been a bonding experience for us both.'*

Example of social pedagogy from a Foster carer.

*Following a child entering residential care amid allegations and disclosures the residential workers, alongside clinical psychologists, assessed the balance of risk and despite some concerns from staff about spending one to one time together with her the results of doing so were spectacular. That very weekend, staff spent one to one time with the young person emptying the room and preparing it for redecoration.*

*The time spent in close proximity working together and not worrying about the possibility of repercussions had immediate results with the young person being far more relaxed than they had for many weeks. This highlighted the need for a social pedagogy approach to prioritise and build relationships and thoughtful management to balance safeguarding and authentic relationships.*

Experiences and reflections of social pedagogy by residential care workers.

*As Derbyshire's Virtual school we definitely work using our 'head, heart, and hands' and it is good to share this way of being not only across the authority but with our outside partners and agencies. A partnership was struck up between Chatsworth House which explored ways of improving the services we offer to the children and young people in our care. Project days have been developed where everyone learns together.*

*Young people are always encouraged to come along with their carers, siblings, social workers, mentors etc. and all the activities involve everyone doing, playing and being together. Sharing life experiences is such an important part of what social pedagogy is about and we make sure that stays right at the heart of what we do in this partnership. Spending time working with the family groups allows us to build closer working relationships so that people feel they understand the Virtual School better and they can then feel comfortable about asking for our support for the education of the children they look after.*

Experiences and reflections from the Virtual School.

*The Behaviour Support Service is a team of experienced teachers who are encouraged to reflect, train, and learn together in developing more inclusive learning communities. We use the social pedagogic principle of working alongside - in the same life space – as the vulnerable student.*

*In our creative use of 'the common third', we develop a relationship, trust and confidence with the individual that articulates their voice and un-met need. This enabling process informs person centred approaches such as Multi-Element Plans with the aim to remove barriers to learning, enhance the individuals' well-being and ultimately reduce their risk of exclusion.*

Experiences and reflections from the Behaviour Support Service.

This strategy follows on from its predecessor, which covered 2014-16. It recognises Derbyshire's initial steps exploring social pedagogy and the case for making social pedagogy an underlying strengths based approach for all Children's Services. It recognises Derbyshire's unique approach to developing social pedagogy practice which continues to be nationally recognised as the 'Derbyshire Way'. It emphasises a grassroots, practitioner led approach to realise DCC's ambition for social pedagogy to grow and touch the lives of all its children, families and staff.

As part of a PhD research project which explore DCC's workforce development approaches, interim findings indicate that... "initial resistance has been superseded by a 'light bulb moment' when it became clear that this approach can bring improved outcomes for young people and a better, more satisfying, working experience for staff". Chavaudra, N., Moore, N., Marriott, J. & Jakhara, M. (2014). International Journal of Social Pedagogy. Available: [www.internationaljournalofsocialpedagogy.com](http://www.internationaljournalofsocialpedagogy.com)

*"[Social Pedagogy]...is not a solution, but a journey. It isn't a silver bullet but offers a broad framework for reflection."*

*Worker following Social pedagogy training*

*"[Social Pedagogy]...will benefit us, it will benefit the child and it will open a whole new way of working, with the child's needs being the important thing, through learning."*

*Practitioner on achieving the level four University of Derby qualification*

*"[Social Pedagogy]... helped me to remember that you should involve the young person. Without a little creativity there isn't much risk taking and you're just holding parents and children back. They need to see that you can take some risks."*

*Practitioner's reflection on social pedagogy*

*"Young people see that you're participating and see you in a different light - there's a level of authenticity because adults aren't standing on the side-lines."*

*Worker's reflection*

## 2 Mission and Purpose

The common sentiment is that in Derbyshire social pedagogy will underpin the way we create a culture that attracts and grows positive, thoughtful, warm, enthusiastic, reflective and value based practitioners who will be the heads, the hearts and the hands of our services for children, young people and families: supporting and inspiring them to be the best they can be; safe, health, happy, learning and working, through:

- The use of theory in practice
- Creative approaches to working with children
- An emphasis on positive relationships
- Use of reflection to improve practice
- Understanding and facilitating holistic learning
- An acceptance of the whole person
- A framework of principles and values – a way of being (Haltung).

Derbyshire County Council is committed to using and promoting strengths based approaches that have a clear evidence base. The Stronger Families Safer Children (SFSC) operating model provides a framework in which social pedagogy is integral to our practice development. Within Stronger Families Safer Children, social pedagogy is valued as being implemented as a grassroots initiative having started in Residential Units and now is identified as an underpinning approach for the entire Children's Services workforce, including Looked after Children's Services, Multi Agency Teams (MAT's) etc.



These strengths based approaches are:

1. Person Centred Approaches - adopted within Children's Disability Services for a number of years and are also extending into MAT's and other services
2. Systemic Practice - across all Social Work teams.
3. Social Pedagogy - an underpinning approach for the workforce.

(Source Stronger Families Safer Children® A Handbook for Managers, Practitioners and Partner Agencies)

These strengths based approaches naturally complement each other. With Social pedagogy complimenting them with its own focus on supporting our practitioners to better understand and reflect upon the capacity they have to make a difference to the lives children, young people and families.

Social pedagogy is in a key relationship with practitioners and teams reflective practice. This requires manager, practitioners and teams to find the space and time to develop their practice and engage with each other through training, steering groups and their own team development and supervisions in order to embed and to develop social pedagogy practice. Growth in practice is linked to where practitioners have had either a 'eureka or lightbulb moment' at a personal level (often promoted by

the training) or have been exposed to teams where it is enabled within team and working cultures (i.e. team meetings/development sessions, reflective practice, MyPlan, service delivery plans etc.)

This strategy runs to 2018 and recognising that this is work in progress integrating the continuing programmes of awareness raising, staff development and practitioner growth with extensions and development that will ensure the development of social pedagogy practice and knowledge for all staff. It will build on the work to date to make social pedagogy practice sustainable throughout Children's Services through being given the opportunity to grow and flourish in all services.

### 3 Context

#### 3.1 What is social pedagogy?

Social Pedagogy is a conceptual framework at the meeting point between care and education. It is concerned with the educational dimension of social issues and the social dimension of educational issues, and aims to create a fertile environment for children which is conducive to their well-being and learning, developing their own resources and connecting them to society. Social pedagogy is both a field of practice, and a field of enquiry that crosses disciplines such as social work, education, community development and psychology. (Further details about social pedagogy can be found on the Derbyshire County Council social pedagogy webpages.)

#### 3.2 Social Pedagogy in the UK

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS, 2013) suggested that the UK could not... 'discount the European evidence on social pedagogy and what this approach offers to remodelling English care provision'. Derbyshire has and remains alongside the forerunners in the growth of social pedagogy as an approach to rebalancing the work of children's services.

The diagram below shows DCC and our key partner the University of Derby alongside other areas developing social pedagogy such as areas involved Government's national pilot schemes and the Fostering Network's social pedagogy programme.



(Source: Thempra 2015)

## 4 Objectives

This strategy seeks to fulfil the following objectives:

- For social pedagogy and its values to be clearly recognised across Children's Services as integral to our strengths based approaches which focus and support our practice development
- To embed and sustain a programme of practice and knowledge development, to include mixed methods, levels and learning styles, and opportunities for staff from different professional group to get together
- To enable and support a network of social pedagogy 'activators' across Children's Services and commissioned services, who openly demonstrate their commitment to social pedagogy in their practice, encourage its influence within their service and suggest how it could be incorporated into the operations of the service
- To enable a clear commitment to social pedagogy from the department's leaders and managers and support their understanding of social pedagogy and ability to manage practitioners who demonstrate emerging social pedagogy practice
- To evolve the governance arrangements for social pedagogy, retaining its own strategic identity but ensuring it is more firmly rooted under the strategic framework of Stronger Families Safer Children while ensuring it retains a place for grassroots leadership and the representation of this grass roots at the strategic level, which provides both for services specific developments, and an over-arching steer which cuts across the different services
- To develop social pedagogy as part of reflective and reflexive culture across the department, where every person in Children's Services is committed to their personal development
- To formulate approaches to raising awareness and understating of how social pedagogy can influence the wellbeing and growth of children and young people in all Derbyshire schools.

## 5 Strategy

### 5.1 Social pedagogical values

Social pedagogy is a value based approach and it is our ambition that its values are reflected throughout the department. Practitioners involved in the steering group's particularly value social pedagogy's principles of equality of voice and non-hierarchical approaches. There is a need to ensure that social pedagogy's strategic home makes the values of equality and enablement evident in its meetings and exchanges between those from all professional groups, including frontline practitioners and carers. In line with this this strategy will ensure practitioners and carers continue to have representation onto the social pedagogy steering and strategy groups.

### 5.2 Programme of Practice and Knowledge Development

Practice and Knowledge Development is founded on the backbone of the ongoing training programme based on the two day internal course and the commissioned University of Derby level four course. The former has reached over 400 staff and by the start of 2018 will have reached up to 750 staff. The ongoing University course has reached almost 100 staff by the start of 2018 will have



reached almost 200 staff. Alongside this a session is delivered as part of the Children's Services induction introducing social pedagogy ideas and principals to all new staff. Additional approaches will address local identified opportunities such as for foster carers a pilot for a single day to raise awareness of the approach and the other training available. There is an appreciation of being able to mix with staff from other professional groups in discussing social pedagogy and debating its development, and future practice and knowledge development will include the opportunity for staff from different services to learn together.

The in-house two-day social pedagogy training has had an impressive breadth of influence and even more impressive feedback from those who have taken part. Currently in very high demand the session will be increased in frequency through the length of this strategy to meet demand. The training is oriented towards staff in all service staff, foster carers and associated agencies, the inclusion of additional practitioners as trainers will continue to be a priority to ensure the relevancy and reach of the course is maintained. Managers will be required to support workers to be involved in this key workforce development role.

Additional to this awareness of social pedagogy will be raised through continued inclusion in Children's Services induction; continued development of the 'knowledge repository' on the website to learning materials, literary papers, key texts, diagrams and information about theory etc.

### **5.3 A Network of Social Pedagogy Activators**

A critical factor to the success of social pedagogy has been informed and passionate 'activators' who have maintained momentum and commitment. The challenge for this strategy is to support practitioners, carers and their management to continue to maintain this passion and to become champions for social pedagogy in their services – 'activators' who openly demonstrate their commitment to social pedagogy in their practice, encourage its influence in their service and suggesting how it could be incorporated into the operations of the service. To maintain practitioners' engagement with social pedagogy continues opportunity to learn and develop will include:

- Service and Department Development days (to develop knowledge, enable reflection, and consider actions)
- Discussion of social pedagogy within team meetings, and integration of social pedagogical values in meetings
- Supporting and mentoring of staff with less experience or knowledge of social pedagogy within teams
- Shared of knowledge through sessions across team and setting etc.

### **5.4 Management and Leadership**

In the former strategy the role of management was identified as being key to enabling social pedagogy to thrive. In order for social pedagogy to thrive across the departments, management must feel a similar commitment to its development, and be active in its implementation. In order to achieve this the following will be undertaken:

- Managers, including middle management, will be invited, and encouraged to participate in training and practice development and to incorporate social pedagogy into team and staff development, including Myplan
- SMT will be engaged as the 'owners' of this strategy
- Appropriate communications with management will be undertaken, whilst securing commitment to the sponsorship of grassroots ideas, developments and challenge and change. (Which might include recognising staff who can act as activators of social pedagogy knowledge and practice within their teams and wider service.) Taking a key role in measuring and identify the impact on practitioner development and services to children young people and families through participating in appraisal within teams and departments, ensuring it is integrated into supervisions and MyPlans and its effectiveness on practice captured
- The current time limited role of the Social Pedagogy Development Officer to be reviewed December 2016 (currently due to end July 2017).

## 5.5 Governance

The steering groups remain the home for social pedagogy growth in practice. It is also recognised that not all service areas will need a separate group for its practice development and existing practice development groups can provide a home for social pedagogy's development linking through to the strategy group.

This strategy identified social pedagogy as one of the key strengths based approaches and that it will require continued and sustainable strategic direction. It is envisaged that social pedagogy will find a more defined and influential place within the continued development of the Stronger Families Safer Children framework. This will ensure a suitable focus on social pedagogy is sustainable in the context of the other strengths based approaches. The current social pedagogy strategy group will feed into the Stronger Families Safer Children framework group. This approach will safeguard the grassroots leadership and the representation of the grass roots at the strategic level, which provides both for services specific developments, and an over-arching steer which cuts across the different services.

## 5.6 Sustainability

Children's Services has benefitted from the support of an investment in Uni-fi from the Council's reserves, and from grants provided as part of the Creative Councils programme which have supported the development of social pedagogy across the department. These resources, however, are finite, and the council is facing unprecedented cuts to its budgets.

Therefore a sustainable model for developing and implementing social pedagogy is required. As such, a costed, practical and scalable model of social pedagogy development and implementation is a necessity if social pedagogy is to thrive beyond 2018. Key to this is social pedagogy defining its place within the Stronger Families Safer Children framework while reinforcing the growth of the practice development steering groups.

## 6 Outcomes and Impacts

As a result of the implementation of this strategy we expect there to be visible, visceral and measurable changes in practice, experience and outcomes for the Children's Services and the children, young people and families in Derbyshire.

We expect to see:

- **A change of system** – a department that is child- and family-oriented, and where risks are managed in the best interests of families and young people;
- **A change of culture** – Children's Services partnerships that are underpinned by an ethical framework that enables the integration of care, education and community; equality; active learning; children's rights; positive experiences; and a healthy approach to risk;
- **A skilled, insightful and empowered workforce** – all those working in children's services are united by a common conceptual framework, and are empowered to bring themselves and their creativity into their practice.

And as a result of these changes, we will see:

- **Better outcomes for children and young people**– improved educational attainment, attendance, and better mental health, with fewer NEETs and improved placement stability for children in care;
- **Different, better, lower cost services leading to improved performance for Children's Trust Partners** – improved retention of staff and carers, better placement stability, fewer complaints, fewer missing episodes and reduced escalation of need for children within the care system.