

# Brighton & Hove Children's Social Work Our Journey



**Brighton & Hove  
City Council**

# Our Position: 2014

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- Parts of the system did not work - from processes to management
- Performance was not consistent across the service
- Too many transition points for children and their families and too many changes of social worker
- Lack of focus on the child and family
- Lack of clarity around management roles
- Demand and making the most of resources - large teams; divisions of service with skills in one area and weaknesses in others; retention of social workers; not able to recruit Practice Managers; lots of agency managers and not making the most of our talent.

# Our Position: 2014

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## What children and young people told us



We want social workers who have time for us

We want social workers who see us regularly and build a relationship with us so we get used to them

We want social workers who get to know us

We want social workers who stay with us

# What parents and carers told us



# What social workers told us

Admin demands prevent social workers building relationships

Not enough support and guidance from managers

Lack of opportunity to develop expertise

Supervision not reflective

Blame culture

# Our Aspiration

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- Children & families at the heart the service
- Shared priorities and targets across the service
- Accountability with performance understood across the organisation
- A learning organisation
- A focus on evidence-based impact
- Openness & honesty – Trust!

# A New Vision of Excellent Social Work

**Working closely with our social workers we developed a vision of excellent social work practice;**

- To be people focused not system focused
- To be flexible, innovative & creative
- To have space and time to reflect
- To work closely with all professionals involved and create shared outcomes for the child and family
- To value the relationships Social Workers build up with families to have continuity of social work through the child and family journey
- To have trust in autonomous, knowledgeable, emotionally aware practitioners
- To be solution focused
- To comfortably hold tensions and manage risk
- To feel valued within the organisation
- To have the time to support and plan effectively with families
- To be outcome and impact focused

# Making the vision become reality!

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Learning from others' experience, including:

- Developing links and discussing ideas with external partners including the University of Sussex, the Tavistock Institute and the Centre for Social Work Practice
- Visiting other local authorities who had made changes, such as Southwark and Essex;
- Consulting with our staff about what we wanted to do and why – workshops for all staff when we were first thinking of the new model and a formal consultation when the proposed model was clear;
- Working with our admin staff to create a new business support model to proactively support social workers and families;
- Working with an advisory group of children and young people to develop the model and oversee its implementation.

# The New Model of Practice

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- Model of Practice – relationship-based practice
- Service redesign to support relationships and provide containment for staff – the Team Around the Relationship
- Supporting safe and stable family lives by:



# The New Model of Practice

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- Small teams, pods, that support children and families throughout our service;

1 FTE Pod Manager  
Up to 2 FTE Senior Social Workers  
Up to 5 FTE Social Workers  
At least 1 Social Worker in Training  
Business Support Officer

# The New Model of Practice

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- Continuity of social worker;
- Collaboration between social workers, sharing skills and covering for each other in the pod;
- Collective responsibility underpinned by weekly group supervision;
- Clarity of accountability and reduced layers of management;
- Reflective Practice Groups to facilitate good practice and emotional containment;
- Lead Practitioners to support good practice across the service;
- Business Support Officer proactively supporting the pod;
- New role for Senior Social Workers supporting the development of others.

# Ofsted Inspection:

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- ❑ Ambition is high but realistic, and sustainable changes are being made
- ❑ The 'transformation of social work' programme has been informed by the careful consideration of models of practice in other areas.
- ❑ The vision for the new model of practice is coherent, with the right balance of care for social workers, relationships with families and performance management.
- ❑ It is being introduced in a measured way through constructive engagement with staff.
- ❑ Managers are currently implementing a new model of working that will minimise case transfer points and further support continuity of social worker for looked after children.

# Planning and implementing the model

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- Relationships in Practice Conference for all staff with Jenny Molloy and Donald Forrester – what does relationship-based practice look like and what difference does it make?
- Evaluation of social workers' training and development needs and tailored programme of skills workshops before redesign;
- Systemic Leadership training for all managers by the Tavistock;
- Workshops for pod managers on the new role and group supervision facilitated by the Centre for Social Work Practice;
- Reflective Practice Groups for all social work staff supported by the Centre for Social Work Practice;

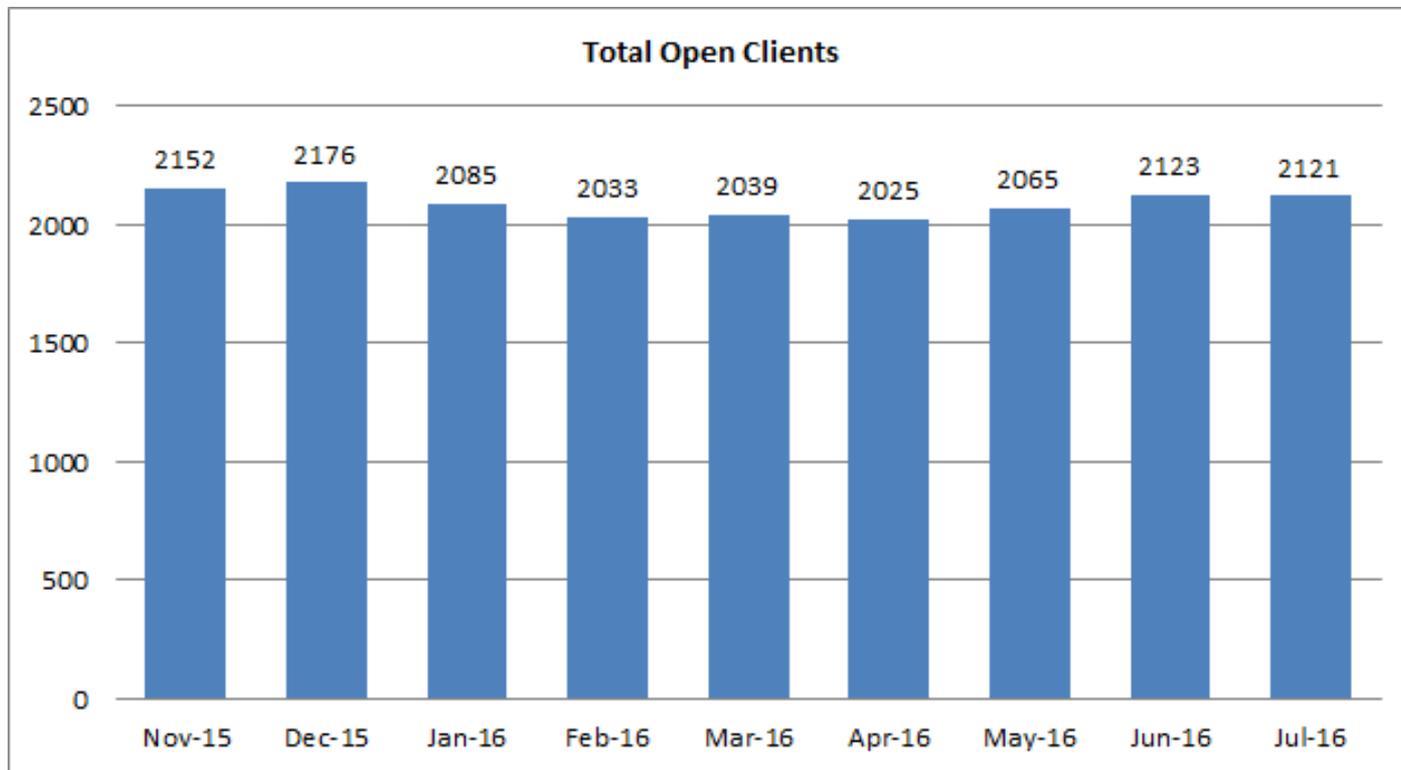
# Planning and implementing the model

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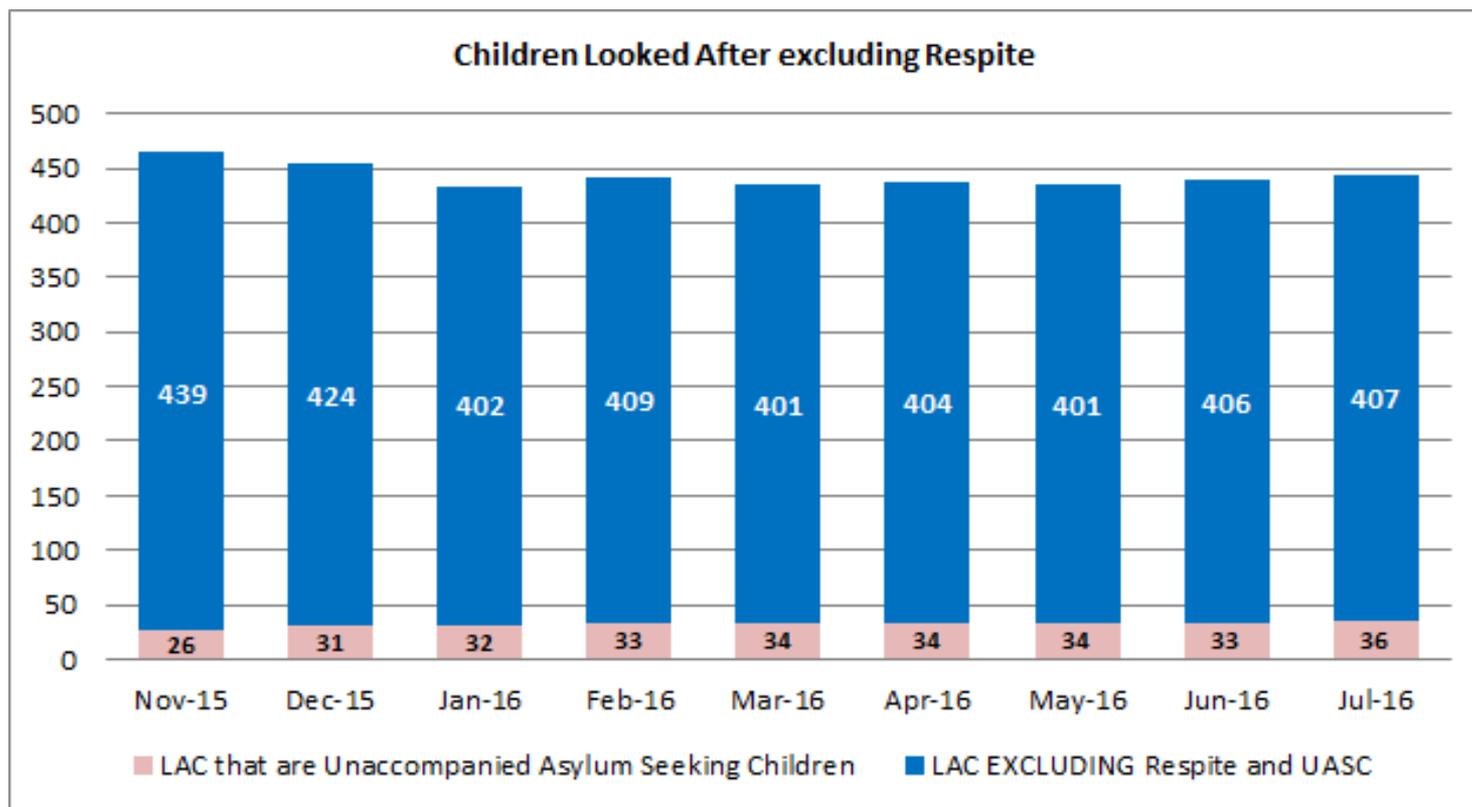
- Changes to our recording system, Carefirst, to reduce duplication, let families tell their story once, and to promote purposeful recording by social workers – the ‘one story’ model;
- A new performance management framework: we have moved towards a self service model to ensure that social workers and managers have access to management information in order for them to effectively manage their caseload and key activity;
- A revised Quality Assurance Framework to reflect the new model of practice e.g. social workers to complete audits with their managers; audits to covers all aspects of the child’s journey; the intelligence from audits to be used effectively to inform the content of learning & development, achieving a circular, joined-up model of learning and improvement.

# Our Story: July 2016

Some highlights from the most recent 'Monthly Monitoring' report of key performance indicators show that from November 2015 to July 2016 the total number of clients open to children's social work has reduced from **2,152 to 2,121**;



the number of children subject to a child protection plan has fallen from **414 to 391**; and the number of children in care (excluding unaccompanied asylum seeking children) has lowered from **439 to 407**.



# Feedback from children and families

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“ I can really trust you, when I talk to you about the problem it helps me to put out the fire”, young person

Feedback from Maternal Grandmother to SW “ Thank you for helping my daughter leave ( a domestic violence relationship) I have had to stand by and watch this for years”

“ Social Worker has been very fair and understanding of our situation and explained things well”, Parent

Feedback from a parent: “The social worker is excellent. She understands the family and she was the only one who maintained a relationship.”

“We have found [social worker] understanding, supportive and really excellent in helping us cope with a situation that has at times felt completely overwhelming. Because she believes us, it makes us happy to open up to her and to tell her about our fears for the future. Overall we think she is a very positive influence to our child and a great help within the family”, Parent

# Children and Young People

In May 2016 young people attending the Children in Care Council were invited to complete a questionnaire about their social worker. Young people were asked to rate a number of statements about their social worker and this is the response. *Note: Scores under 3 are negative, and over 3 are positive.*

Do you agree with the sentences below:	Mean score n=19
I understand what a social worker is and why they are involved in my life	4.3
My social worker sees me regularly and has taken time to get to know me	3.5
My social worker is someone I can trust	3.9
My social worker listens to me	4.3
My social worker is honest	4.1
My social worker is kind and understands how scary things can be for me	4.0
My social worker helps me to understand things and explains things in a way that makes sense to me	3.9
My social worker does what they say they will do	3.8
My social worker can make decisions on their own	3.1
Overall, I am happy with my social worker	4.1

# Parents

Telephone interviews were undertaken in June 2016 with 23 parents whose children were subject of a Child in Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan. Parents were asked to rate how strongly they agreed with each statement on a 5 point scale. *Note: Scores under 3 are negative, and over 3 are positive.*

Do you agree with the following statements?	Mean Score n=23
My social worker explains their role and why they are involved in my life	4.6
My social worker knows enough about my family situation	3.6
My social worker explains clearly what they think about my situation and what they think needs to change	4.3
My social worker understands what I am saying and how I am feeling even when we disagree	4.2
My social worker involves me in decisions made about me and my family	4.1
My social worker has built a good relationship with me and my family	4.0
My social worker always keeps me informed about what is happening	3.9
My social worker is easy to contact and if they are not available there is always someone I can speak to	3.9
Overall, I think my contact with the social worker has been positive	4.2
Overall, I think the work I have done with my social worker has been successful	4.0

# Customer Feedback

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- The number of **compliments** reported to the BHCC Customer Feedback Team has increased in Q1 2016-17. The majority of the compliments commend social workers for the quality of the work they have carried out with children and families.
- The number of **Stage 1 Complaints** initiated by adults and children has reduced from **41** in Q1 15-16 to **15** in Q1 16-17:



# Feedback from Social Workers and Managers about the Team Around the Relationship

Sharing the responsibility for decision-making in group supervision feels better for social workers and is a healthy way to make decisions – I even like the scaling question!

I have more work but it is feeling manageable, contained and safe, someone's got my back

We have begun to see how duty is different and we are getting to know each other's cases and covering for each other

Freeing up the transfer points already feels different and is helping social workers think differently about cases

"I think my Reflective Practice Group is really going to help"



# Feedback from Social Work Health Check - June 2016

Strengths – what is working well	Challenges – priorities for action
<p><b>Caseloads – the majority of respondents (65% - n=107) felt these were reasonable</b></p> <p><b>Business support considered to be a strength</b></p> <p><b>Group Supervision was seen as a strong positive</b></p> <p><b>Reflective Practice Groups were considered to generally provide containment</b></p> <p><b>Respondents overall felt they were supported to implement good social work practice</b></p> <p><b>Lead Practitioner role seen as very positive (98% of those that used it felt the support had a positive impact on practice)</b></p>	<p>Recording system was a strong negative</p> <p>The role of senior social workers needs clarifying (only 52% felt they had a clear identity)</p> <p>Support for Continuing Professional Development could be strengthened</p> <p>Communication within the organisation was currently seen as a challenge</p> <p>Most people (70%) worked more than their contracted hours</p>

# Feedback from Pod Managers - August 2016

Strengths – what is working well	Challenges – priorities for action
<p>The Team Around the Relationship model</p> <p>Social workers supporting each other and collaborating on each other's cases</p> <p>Less transitions mean families feel contained and this improves outcomes</p> <p>The commitment of practitioners</p> <p>Things are improving – 'social workers are happier and less stressed'</p> <p>Systemic training offered as part of the Team Around the Relationship</p>	<p>Workloads, including recruitment and retention and the recording system – some practitioners are too busy and this means direct work not always prioritised, especially with children in care, and pod managers need to act down to cover the impact of social workers leaving or absent</p> <p>Supervision model being implemented across all levels</p> <p>Embedding the senior social worker role - supporting other workers in pods and teams</p> <p>'Recalibration' of cases across pods, especially after duty</p> <p>Ensuring pod managers work collaboratively and do not feel isolated</p>

## Recent findings from the regular case audits which are completed each quarter;

The social worker has worked hard to build rapport with family members involved and quickly brought care planning back under control and managed the professional network.

The child has had a great outcome, having been adopted with her brother. All her needs are well met.

This is an outstanding example of relationship based practice – the child's identity needs have been carefully considered and responded to sensitively, recognizing the child's previous trauma.

The social worker has worked very hard to form relationships with everyone involved and has achieved so much of this comprehensive and ambitious child protection plan. Brilliant work!

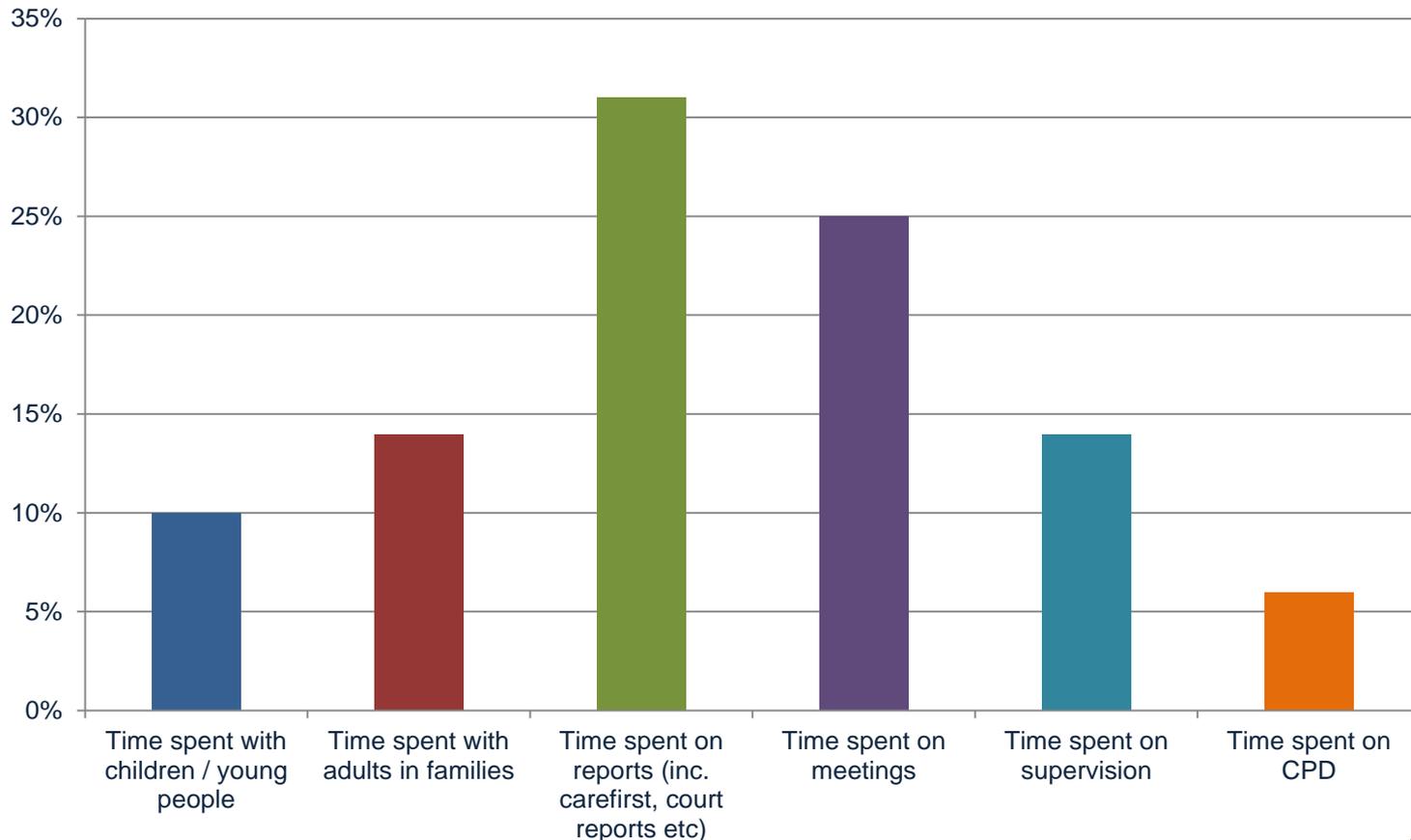
the social worker helped the children to understand their circumstances. The social worker dealt with the case swiftly, appropriately and sensitively.



# Current challenges and priorities:

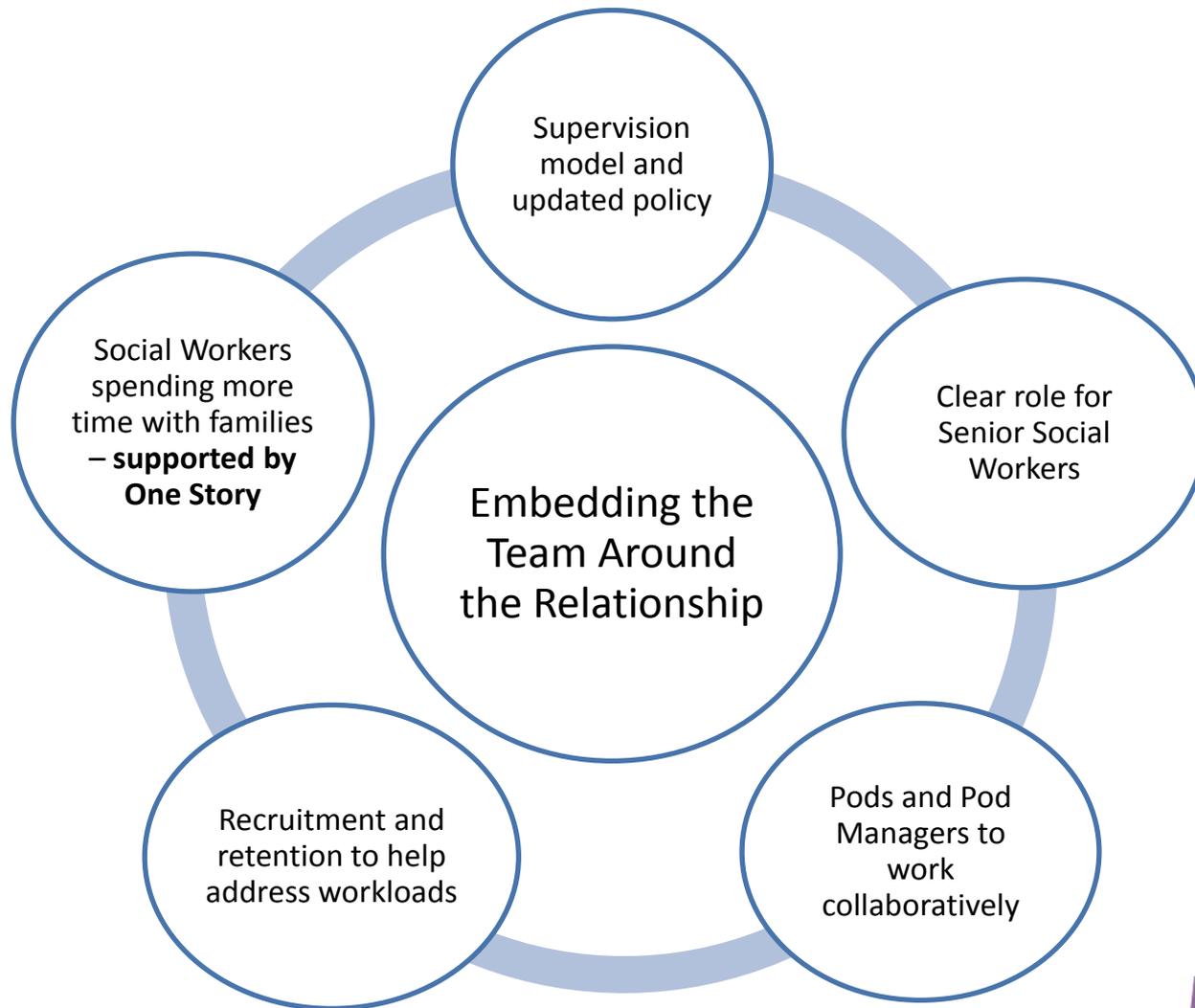
## Social Workers' Time

*How social workers spend their time - Health Check 2016*



# Current challenges and priorities

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A word cloud with the word "relationships" as the largest and most prominent element in the center. Other words are arranged around it in various sizes and orientations, including "parent practice", "ambitious", "support", "containment", "child-focus", "consistency", "co-operation", "group-supervision", "relationship-based", "evaluation", "effective", "direct-work", "child-outcomes", "reflective-practice", "reflective", "manageable", "outcomes", "load", "challenge", "group", "case", "collaboration", "ambitious", "pod", "parent", "practice", "challenge", "group", "case", "collaboration", "ambitious", "pod", "parent", "practice", "challenge", "group", "case", "collaboration".

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meaningful