Who wants to be an Executive Officer?

Does the burden of accountability outweigh the motivation to progress to the top job?

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Executive Summary

The objective of this study was to identify and consider the restrictions of managers moving towards higher level leadership roles in the fields of Education and Social Care, where the risks of such leadership and the potential of far reaching consequence and reputational damage are significantly high. Media conjecture has identified a potential 'looming Headteacher crisis' [1]. The on-going pressures of Ofsted inspections and subsequent media attention only add to the strain of roles within Education and Social Care departments.

Cases of child neglect following a number of systematic errors in child protection services across the country have sparked significant media interest and often reputational damage for those charged with the responsibility of running such systems of care. Of particular interest during this research was the case of Sharon Shoesmith, where the tragic event of a child death led to the, 'sacking and demonisation of the head of Haringey Children's Services'[2]. Although 10 years ago now, this case remains prevalent in the media and appears to have set the scene for subsequent cases across the country.

In addition to the above, a number of other serious case reviews were also taken into consideration as part of this study, particularly in respect of the impact on senior leadership and the media attention these have attracted.

Primary research was carried out across two local authority organisations and a number of external sources from outside were also utilised to gain a better understanding of; the views of taking on such responsibility, what the barriers may be and what lessons have been learnt.

Acknowledgments

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[1] https://www.recruitment-international.co.uk/blog/2016/11/the-supply-register-responds-to-looming-headteacher-crisis

[2] https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/aug/19/sharon-shoesmith-baby-p-haringey-social-services-interview

Introduction

Does the burden of accountability outweigh the motivation to take the top job? This topic was chosen in the wake of the Grenfell Fire tragedy, and the growing focus of media attention towards those who were considered to be accountable.

Alongside this national tragedy, work was being done locally in Solihull with Deputy Headteachers in the form of a conference hosted by the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT). This work focussed on the well published perceived shortage of Headteachers in the coming years and whether current Deputy Headteachers were aspiring to take on this role.

Methodology

Primary and secondary research forms the basis of this report and enabled the project group to gain a greater understanding of the issues faced by public sector organisations when recruiting for and retaining those in high level leadership roles. Secondary research was mainly in the form of media articles, which identified a significant gap for the Education sector and a potential crisis for future recruitment. Although much of the media sources identified the theme of a future crisis, it was necessary for primary research to be carried out to establish the first hand views of those actually undertaking the roles in question and those who were moving up the career ladder. The group set out to understand the motivation of these individuals, or lack of, to adopt such jobs. For roles within the Education sector, due to the higher numbers of Teachers, it was decided that research should be carried out in the form of an anonymous questionnaire to encourage maximum participation over a wider area.

For roles in Social Care, particularly Children's Services, a more qualitative approach was taken as it was identified that further explanation was required to fully understand the barriers and motivation to career development. For these cases, face to face interviews formed the basis of our research, the aim being to draw upon themes in responses to identify whether there was an issue in the recruitment of future leaders and to establish recommendations which may assist.

Secondary research was also undertaken utilising reports from the media and taking into consideration previous cases which have been prevalent in media reports over recent years.

As part of the research questionnaires were sent to two groups - Deputy Headteachers and Newly appointed Headteachers (appointed 2015) in Solihull. Statistics relating to the results from these questionnaires are shown in **Appendix A.**

In addition, 10 Heads of Service/Assistant Directors/Directors were interviewed using set questions although depending on the responses to questions, these did differ throughout each interview. In addition to the above, 2 particularly interesting interviews were undertaken. These were with Mark Rogers, Ex CEO of Birmingham City Council and Jo Davidson, ex Director of Children's Services in a number of Local Authority Organisations and now working in a consultancy role. Both individuals were able to provide valuable

insights into the accountability placed on those in very senior posts and their own personal experience of this level of responsibility. Further information regarding these interviews can be found in the Appendices.

Research Findings

Much of the information used to inform the Aspire presentation was taken from quotes from those individuals who were able to provide a personal view regarding accountability in senior roles. What became clear as we interviewed the individuals was that accountability was not the primary reason for a reluctance to move up the career ladder, although there were mixed views regarding the impact that this had. At one end of the scale individuals reported that accountability was, 'part and parcel of the role' and that 'making decisions regarding this was part of the job'. In addition, Mark Rogers had a very clear view on the decision to take on that level of responsibility. He claimed that, 'you look at the role, decide if you are interested and accept what comes'. Mark Rogers in particular felt that the level of accountability was not a burden as such and although it should be take seriously, it should not deter an individual from moving on in an organisation.

Others who were interviewed had a similar reaction and felt that it was simply something that came with the seniority of a post but should not deter someone from taking on that responsibility. What was clear from all participants was the understanding of the role that the media played in situations similar to that of Sharon Shoesmith and that there was a need to be able to manage the media as much as possible, something which people are generally unprepared for and given very little training and development.

Sally Hodges, Director of Children's Services at Solihull MBC stated that, 'it was a national sport to vilify people', while Jo Davidson, following a number of years experience at a senior level identified that, 'managing the media and public perception can be integral to achieving success in the role'. Both understood the necessity around media management but identified that more could be done to prepare future Directors to tackle this effectively.

Mark Rogers stated that, 'there will be no favours from the public, no favours from the press, it is the flip of a coin whether or not your organisation supports you'. It was the general consensus of the whole group that a good organisation would support you, that accountability no longer ended with the Local Authority but also stretched to partner agencies such as the NHS and Police so that when something did go wrong and the media were involved, it was more accepted now that a number of organisations would play a part in the safety and well-being of vulnerable individuals. Although this was not evidenced in the case of Sharon Shoesmith who was very much the blame figure for the media at that time and paid the price with a very public dismissal which failed to follow any form of process, it is acknowledged that this took place almost 10 years ago in December 2008 and that more recent cases have identified a number of organisations as being responsible at the same time for such incidents.

Literature review

Much of the literature around this has been taken from media reports and real life scenarios, in particular the case of Sharon Shoesmith, Director of Children's Services for Haringey Council at the time of the death of 'Baby P' in 2007. Although there were a number of child deaths in this year (The Guardian cited a total of 56 child homicides in the same year, none of which provoked the reaction of Baby P), a politically led agenda seems to have motivated such harsh criticism of what was suggested as a Labour party failing in their management of child protection services. Sharon Shoesmith herself identified that, 'Having spent a lifetime working for children, I was unable to countenance being held responsible for the murder of a child. My resignation would most certainly have signified personal responsibility, and the many distortions of what had been reported in the media would remain unchallenged. I was being invited to take the blame, or be the scapegoat, for the killing of Peter Connelly, presented as my 'public accountability'.

The very public dismissal and subsequent media attention has been well documented and much of the research sought to understand whether this was a driver in recruitment issues facing high leadership roles within public sector departments, particularly those tasked with the well-being and education of children. A further case from Salford identified failings by Social Workers in the case of a child death which resulted in the dismissal of the DCS at that time. 'The panel chair, Bill Hinds, said she had the right to appeal. "The panel was told there had been a loss of trust and confidence ... in Mrs Baker's ability to lead and manage the children's services directorate. This meant she was unable to honour the terms of her contract, which is a fundamental breach of contract and therefore gross misconduct.[3]

In addition to the potential media attention and subsequent impact if an incident were to happen, the on-going burden from Ofsted inspections can provide additional pressure to senior leadership. A more recent Ofsted inspection into children's services in Gloucester has identified significant failings of senior management, in a report which summarised, 'deteriorated significantly" and that there were "serious and widespread failures for children in need of help and protection". As of October 2017, there are a further 33 Children's Services departments in England currently holding an 'inadequate' rating.

Furthermore, Birmingham City Council was identified as, 'having made improvements to the way it runs its children's services, but this progress has not yet gone far enough, fast enough'. This adds to the pressure of making significant improvements within a timescale which may not be considered as realistic.

In education settings, recruitment of Headteachers has also suffered from adverse publicity, with a study by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) identifying that the retention rate among secondary heads has fallen from 91%in 2012 to 87% in 2015. Meanwhile for primary school heads it has fallen from 94 per cent to 92 per cent over the same period. [4]

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[3] https://www.theguardian.com/society/2009/dec/09/child-murder-chief-sacking

[4] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/04/27/britain-faces-headteacher-crisis-new-research-reveals-school

In a survey of 286 Headteachers conducted by The Future Leaders Trust and *Times Educational Supplement* (*TES*) 28% of respondents said they were planning to leave headship within five years. More sobering was that over half said they did not expect to be a Headteacher in ten years. [5]

The point has also been made by the majority of respondents and across secondary research that schools and local authority departments are increasingly becoming more business like and require a business minded leader with suggestions made that this may contribute to the reluctance of those working in more operational levels to move up the career ladder. A theme identified by the survey responses and also by some of the interview respondents, maintained that the education of children, or the protection of children in social care settings, requires an individual capable of managing large financial resource and dealing with the constraint of an ever decreasing budget - something which they rarely have the necessary skills and knowledge to do. In addition, Ofsted inspections have added to that pressure with some Headteachers taking matters into their own hands with life changing consequences. One Headteacher felt the pressure so much that he amended pupil's exam papers to gain better results. The individual in question blamed the pressure of SATS and Ofsted inspections and was ultimately dismissed from his role. [6]

The Children's Act (2004) put in place a statutory role of Director of Children's Services to ensure a clear and concise line of accountability. The more recent Munro report (2011) maintained that this accountability was necessary for ensuring the success of child services, but also proposed that more effective partnership working under a clear system was utilised and that while a DCS would remain the accountable name, the safety and wellbeing of looked after children was dependant on a number of agencies. The review identified that 'unmanaged anxiety around blame' was a significant factor for those undertaking leadership roles, and that 'while there is a natural tendency when confronted with the horrors of a child protection case to seek to find someone, or some organisation, to 'blame', the harsh fact of the matter is that in the first instance blame, if it is to be attributed, must be laid at the door of the perpetrator or perpetrators'.

Although this clearly sets out a view that organisations must adopt an improved learning culture, the media headlines continue to impact on the motivation behind taking on these roles and that ultimately, those in senior positions and departments within local authorities should be supported in undertaking major change to improve such services. However, where improvement is recognised as necessary, the pressures placed on Senior leadership to put this into action, can be significant. Reading Council dismissed their Director of Children's Services within 4 months of initial appointment due to insufficient improvements being made in that time:

'In a statement, Reading council said: "Conditions of service which apply to all senior council officers state they are expected to make significant achievements in implementing the council's targets and programmes, with progress reviewed at regular intervals. Sylvia Chew

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[5] https://www.ambitionschoolleadership.org.uk/blog/englands-headteacher-shortage
[6] http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/headteacher-says-immense-pressure-sats-11347260

joined the council in July. Following an internal review, the council has decided not to continue with the contract due to serious concerns about performance'.

Interestingly, Reading Council deferred management of Children's Services to the current Director of Adults Services within the organisation, significantly adding to the role of one individual figure and increasing the accountability of that role, which could be argued, increases the risks attached. The question over whether this was a fair reaction towards an individual who had been in the role for just 4 months remains unanswered and media reports do not provide the necessary detail, although this has been widely publicised in the arena of social care, potentially further damaging the motivation of those aspiring to take on more senior roles. While failings are widely publicised, the reasons and decisions taken which lead to these failings is not, making it difficult for those within the sector to learn from mistakes made or recognise what could have been done differently. While these may be more widely shared in case review publications, it is the immediate media headlines which draw attention and build on a culture of accountability and very public action being taken against individuals. [7]

This also appears to be the case for Headteachers who are tasked with orchestrating significant improvements in a timescale which may not be realistic. Although there would be more information and one would assume, a clear rationale for making such a radical decision such as dismissal, media reports naming and shaming individuals in such a manner are bound to have a detrimental impact on those in lower level jobs who may aspire to move up the chain into such senior positions.

Considering the media attention that many of these failings attract and the theme of blaming one individual, it is understandable that individuals working in more operational levels may be reluctant to move on in their chosen field. Financial reward of more senior roles has been mentioned by participants in survey and interviews, when compared with the enormous pressure and the public accountability placed so heavily on them, it could be argued that salary is not a strong enough driver to encourage improved recruitment. Furthermore, it has been identified by theorists that those working in the public sector are generally motivated through intrinsic, not extrinsic reward systems (Goldfinch et al, 2009) and more specifically, 'a public service ethos' (Coyle-Shapiro 2002) in order to provide the motivation necessary to carry out the role that they do. This can also be related to Social Exchange Theory, a model well used within Social Work qualifications, which proposes that behaviour is the result of an exchange process. The purpose of this exchange is to maximize benefits and minimise costs. According to this theory, people weigh the potential benefits and risks of social relationships. When the risks outweigh the rewards, people will terminate or abandon that relationship. It could be argued that negative media attention and experience of individuals within the sectors are identifying that risks of such roles outweigh the potential benefits, particularly as austerity and having to achieve more, with less, in unrealistic timescales has overshadowed the original purpose of the roles.

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[7] http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2015/11/06/reading-dismisses-childrens-services-chief-four-months

Findings

There are serious case reviews and incidents of child deaths where the director of that service has not been dismissed from role or made wholly accountable for failings made. More recently, it seems that whole organisations are more likely to carry the burden of accountability rather than a lone individual. Many of the respondents that we spoke with explained that there is a sense of shared responsibility and they alone do not own the risk; they have teams and officers who all hold responsibility in some form. However, attention grabbing headlines and a culture of blame remains and is more noticeable for individuals working in these sectors than stories encouraging a "lessons learnt" approach. When the project team began researching this particular topic and had looked at available literature in the subject, the problem seemed to be clearly around accountability and the potential career ending impact that an incident, particularly one which impacts on the health and well-being of a child, could have on an individual who chose to be in a Director position. This is a problem where the solution was not financial but seemed to be more around fundamental changes to the way that the media handles such incidents and the support that organisations provide to their employees.

The issue that has been uncovered following a number of detailed interviews and surveys however is more around development and preparation for such a role. What has become apparent throughout the research is that those looking to take on more senior roles, already fully understand and anticipate the level of accountability that they are expected to take on. Many see it as part of the job and a normal pressure to have.

Where concerns are highlighted is around the preparation to take on this accountability and also other pressures related to the role; in particular the skills to run a business, and handle the management of budgets which seem to continually reduce year on year. One Headteacher responded to the survey with, 'you are moving from an operational role to running a business. Schools are businesses now and people don't have the skills to run a business'.

Another respondent stated:
'Do I lie awake at night worrying that I'm going to be splashed all over the Newspapers? No. I am more likely to be wondering how I am going to make sure we have enough resources to enable people to do a decent job'.

There is an evident skills gap, which respondents reported they are not supported to overcome, and are required to hit the ground running, whilst maintaining high performance.

Conclusion

There is accountability within all senior roles, it is inevitable and part of the job. However, the key factor outweighing progression to the top jobs in Schools, Adults and Children's Social Care is the ability to do the role, to make the jump from Practitioner or Deputy Headteacher, to Manager or Headteacher. Within this there are very clear areas of concern, in particular the management of reducing budgets and resources.

Recommendations

- Succession Planning is fundamental to successfully filling the top jobs. Organisations need to identify early on, those with potential and the desire to progress to the top jobs, and nurture that talent to meet the organisation's objectives.

- There is a requirement for more emphasis on workforce planning rather than being reactive. Although financial constraints mean that shadowing a role is difficult, a system should be put in place where individuals are able to shadow their managers and take on pieces of work, attend meetings, with a view to enabling those employees to fully understand; the implication of decisions made at that level, the financial barriers and the wider organisation/national agenda. Organisations should consider implementing a positive culture of encouraging secondments for those wishing to progress and making this part of the overall succession plan. A specific example could be to make use of a 'Green Room' culture where those retiring are able to do so in a phased manner, enabling greater support to people moving up, making use of transitional arrangements and ensuring that the organisation is able to retain skills and knowledge built up over many years.

- There is a clear requirement for training and development on areas of senior leadership including budget management, decision making and an understanding of the whole organisation. Training in financial management, HR, workforce planning will plug the skills gap and enable those aspiring to the top jobs to progress more effectively. These aspects are generic management activities and should feature as the norm when appointing to posts where accountability for these areas exists.

- Options for on-going support through pre-appointment, induction and on-going CPD should be available. It is clear that cost may be an issue, however options could include:
    - ASCL/NAHT/ACDS - Professional Associations
    - Traded services with Local Authority
    - Buy in of expertise
    - Network/mentoring/buddying/alumni

- There needs to be a Culture shift towards becoming learning organisations and moving away from the blame culture. The organisation should develop a reputation for standing by their Directors. This includes reactions from elected members and school governors to encourage a supportive working environment. Tighter control of media attention, good management of PR and communications will also support managers in this area.

- To support this shift, organisation's should consider looking at accountability in a more positive way. A quote obtained from a company called Magnetic Storm sums up in a few short paragraphs how this might look:

"The word 'accountability' strikes fear into many and is perceived as a way to 'get' someone. The truth is, if looked at holistically, it creates a level playing field,

encourages an honest culture and allows people to learn from their mistakes and grow.
Accountability is an individual value. We all know people who take pride in their ability, measure themselves against their output, and want to achieve KPAs: the people we call 'easy to manage' because they are self-led. But this trait doesn't exist in all, and not all organisations foster a culture that allows people to learn from errors. In high-performance teams, peers immediately and respectfully confront one another when problems arise. This drives innovation, excitement, confidence, trust, and productivity, and it frees the boss from playing referee and having to improve morale. While behaviour is individually led, consequences must be led top-down. You need to provide the tools to break the cycle of anti-accountability behaviours: ignoring, denying, finger pointing, covering of trails, confusion, waiting for instruction, declaring 'it's not my job'/'I didn't know'. "

- The Organisation should be more accountable. Leaders of the organisation, including governors and elected members need to fully understand the service that they represent. Turnover of elected members needs to be less frequent (this can be difficult to achieve with local elections) but while that particular individual is elected, they should remain in one particular role and it should be chosen depending on their skills and experience and career. This will ensure robust processes and aid decision making when it is critical.

What can HR Business Partner's do?

- Support the Culture shift towards becoming learning organisations and moving away from the blame culture. Look for learning opportunities rather than following procedures when appropriate to do so. As an example, rather than using the disciplinary procedure to correct behaviour, consider whether 'punishment' is the right responses and whether a more proactive and supportive approach might bring about the desired change. Be a champion for positive change.

- Work with senior management on succession planning; be creative and think of alternative solutions. An example of this, in response to feedback from newly appointed Headteachers that there was no support when they were appointed, and that they had no experience of Finance and HR, was to suggest whether there is an opportunity to transition Headteacher designates into their new role, rather than put them in at the deep end. This could create an opportunity to link into other schemes such as phased retirement. This would be a positive response to a suggestion that operating a 'Green Room' approach would help transition into senior leadership.

Appendices

Appendix A – Primary Research from Deputy Heads & Headteachers
Appendix B – Key Quotes from Mark Rogers
Appendix C – Summary of Interview with Jo Davidson
Appendix D – Interview sample with Head of Social Care (anonymous)
Appendix E – Interview sample with Head of Social Care (anonymous)

Appendix A

Research from Deputy Heads/newly appointed Headteachers:
What are new Headteachers saying?

QUESTIONNAIRE OUTCOMES & VERBATIM QUOTES - HEADTEACHERS IN SOLIHULL (IN LAST 3 YEARS)

Would you have taken the job on with hindsight? (6 RESPONSES FROM 12 ISSUED)

- Yes – 5
- No – 1
- Unsure – 0

CONCERNS RAISED BY THOSE ANSWERING YES

- I work in a blame culture
- I felt like I was in a tsunami when I first took on a Headship
- Work life balance is impossible to achieve due to the responsibility
- Fortunately financial reward isn't a key motivator for me
- Parents need to understand I am a human being
- Budgetary pressures have made the role immeasurably more difficult for the Head
- Every day is unbearable pressure…

BUT THEY ARE ALSO SAYING:

- The positives of working with lovely students and staff outweigh the negatives of being at the whim of erratic political change, increasingly unpleasant and unrealistic parents and a small number of children who have never learned how to behave
- Governors are both supportive and positive
- Headship is incredibly rewarding and worthwhile
- Teaching (and subsequently Headship) is a calling
- I know what I am doing and I am passionate about Education

CONCERNS RAISED BY THE PERSON ANSWERING NO - this individual cited having a poor work-life balance and finding the job impossible. They use school holidays to catch up with administration and planning, thus having little time to relax and re-charge. This person responded anonymously which is a concern given that they are clearly struggling.

QUESTIONNAIRE OUTCOMES & VERBATIM QUOTES - DEPUTY HEADTEACHERS IN SOLIHULL

Do you aspire to be a head? (14 RESPONSES FROM 30 ISSUED)

- Yes – 3 (but 2 said not immediately)
- No – 6

14

- Unsure – 5

CONCERNS RAISED FROM THOSE ANSWERING YES/UNSURE

- Education is increasingly like a business and this is disheartening
- Equally frustrating is the rhetoric around….achievement of grades
- Being a Headteacher and holding overall accountability is a poisoned chalice in the current climate
- Education and teachers maligned in the press….impact on public perceptions
- ….more concerned about the all-encompassing nature of the job e.g. never switching off, never being able to fully engage with other things (family)
- The length of tenure (as a head) is unsustainable (reference to mental health and the Ofsted regime)
- Is headship worth the lack of sleep, stress, anxiety and second guessing – context of the range of responsibilities and diminishing finances/resources
- (as a Head) possible feeling if isolation and not such a member of a team as now (DH)
- Accountability is a worry in terms of support for the Head (with LA support diminishing) – where to go for support apart from HR
- I would not consider a Headship in Solihull due to the appalling funding stream to Schools
- The role of Head is pivotal in a child's education, a vocation that should not be taken lightly – being good enough is very important.

BUT THEY ARE ALSO SAYING:

- The opportunity (is there) to make a difference – huge exciting opportunities out there to shape a school that doesn't exhaust and abandon its staff or limit choices for young people
- I love working with kids and want to positively affect children's lives. I think I have the skills and experience but recognise that school context is crucial.
- It is a waste of gained experience not to use it more fully

CONCERNS RAISED BY THOSE ANSWERING NO TO HEADSHIP

- The role is all consuming and being a Head takes you further away from the children
- Financial rewards not good enough
- Constant external pressures and ultimate accountability
- You have to be an expert in too many things (finance, HR, safeguarding, compliance) and you will be accountable if it goes wrong
- You have to be highly visible, inspirational, calm, in control of your own emotions, emotionally intelligent to others, beyond reproach in every way. Mary Poppins basically.
- It's rare to see a happy contented Headteacher.

- If people are serious about wanting more people to step into headship there needs to be seriously good PR…..to support this person rather than them be the emotional punchbag of the organisation
- I don't believe that new heads or even current heads receive adequate or appropriate support to manage the demands of the role as it has become
- Headship likened to Premier League Football Management – heads roll at the drop of a hat

Appendix B

<u>Mark Rogers - some quotes:</u>

. Mark said he had a simple of view of accountability – you look at the role, decide if you are interested and accept what comes.

Mark sees accountability as what is expected of you in a public service because you are going to be asked what you are doing – it is integral to the role.

. It is deep in the human makeup to blame people for when things go wrong.

The response to Baby P is not representative to other cases of serious incidents and deaths. It is a response to the pressure and focus that builds up for people in childrens and adults – it feeds or fuels a very basic sense of, not who is to be held responsible, but who is to blame.

People will look at this and think I hope I don't have a serious adult safeguarding issue or child death on my hands as you know the reactions will be that there will be no favours from the public, no favours from the press. It is a flip of a coin as to whether the organisation will respond constructively to that.

how do you get organisations (bearing in mind the public, press outrage) to understand that the most important thing to do if they want to nurture a pipeline of senior leaders, is to become learning organisations. Where your head won't be chopped off if you get something wrong..

Mark said we are talking about England's serial inability to think ahead about what skills, expertise, experience and knowledge it's leaders will need for the next 5 years, rather than the last 5 years. If anybody had got around to doing this properly in 2007/8 it would have been clear that there would be council austerity (sealed by the coalition government in 2010) – nothing has been done in a structured way to equip CEOs, Directors of Adults or Teachers or Headteachers with the skills they need to set austerity budgets.

Some directorates and depts. will be doing better than overs at different points in time and it will go up and down so why fire people when the cycle goes down unless they are incompetent? If this is the case you have to ask how they got the job in the first place.

Appendix C

Jo Davidson

She was a DCS at a number of councils including North Yorks and Derby. DCS since 2002, before that in schools and then senior roles in Children and family roles. Jo stated that she never had aspirations to move up in the career as far as she did and mainly just 'fell in' to the higher level roles that she worked in.

Jo felt that accountability is not a huge issue as a good organisation will spread this throughout although cases like Baby P have been publicised a great deal where Sharon Shoesmith lost her job, in very recent years, there has been a better understanding by media and the public that this was not one person at fault. That there is a whole organisation and system behind these things happening..

Jo doesnt see accountability as a burden....more of a responsibility which is important. There is 'much to lose'. This was a real factor in leaving this type of role as after 30 years in very senior DCS posts, she decided that she didn't want to continue to the point where something might happen, i.e. a child death 'on my watch' which would ruin all that hard work. She had seen it happen to peers. Financially didnt have to be in that level role so decided to leave and do some consultancy type work that she is doing now.

When asked the question whether you alone feel that you own that risk, she responded that this depends on the organisation but the risk is owned by a number of agencies although weighs heavily on DCS. In a good organisation, the whole leadership team and leader and members own that risk. However, this is not always the case and does depend on the organisation that you are working in.

She started as a Teacher, really enjoyed that role and moved into Social Care side of the role but always intended to go back to schools. Would have like to have been a Headteacher. Thinks that the least time someone should spend in a role is 4/5 years. Any less than that and it's not fair to the authority as they have invested in you

When discussing the potential lack of Headteacher candidates in the future, she thought that this was something that had been said a number of times in the past (same as Mark Rogers) and that her view was that there would always be people who wanted to step up to this role.

The main thing missing which may encourage people to step up to more senior roles was around the training received. Particularly around budget management and what is needed in this to manage a large scale service. more needs to be done around workforce planning and rather than selecting a few individuals, larger teams of people need to be selected and developed over time, potentially shadowing senior leaders to learn the role. This is more of a barrier to recruitment of senior people than the accountability issue.

Accountability has moved on since baby P and there are a number of orgs which take the responsibility rather than just one, as was the case a few years ago.

Described when she was interim in a role and had to deal with 2 (?) serious case reviews and deal with media when there was a non existent relationship with the media at that authority. Not hugely pressured as was an interim role and had just stepped in to it. Not nice if you are living it all the way through. Although recognises that at this point in her career she had been in Director roles for 15 years and was probably doing things automatically which would have otherwise had to be thought about. Experience provides you with the confidence to deal with very pressured situations but she didn't always feel so confident in dealing with them. Does not really believe in interim roles

particularly although recognises that they serve a purpose. Would not aim to move into interim roles as would simply be going back into the same line of work. May as well do it on a perm basis.

We spoke a bit about impostor syndrome (although I don't think she used that particular term). Said that she was a number of years in post before she felt totally confident. Thinks this is the case for a number of senior leaders and more training is needed. However, it is generally not the burden of accountability which stops people moving forwards. if they want to do it and work at that level then that's what they want to do.

People at a senior level should not stay in a role for less than 4 or 5 years as they need to commit to seeing the changes through and be part of that organisation. Anything less is not fair on the organisation.

Appendix D

Anonymous-Head of Service Social Care

Sees the role as a privilege and really enjoys watching teams develop, get more confident and take on more senior roles. Enjoys being able to shape the way things are done and how they are done. When asked whether she would move to an executive officer role, Christine stated that there was higher accountability the further up you went and an increased risk of being pushed out of your role, however, this was not the main factor for not wanting to move on. The in issue for her was her age where she felt that people in Head of Service roles are generally in their fifties and therefore don't want to move on and take on that added responsibility, although had heard from a number of her peers that they would not want the additional responsibility that goes with being so senior.

Concerns over more operational based staff and stated that she did not want them lying awake at night worrying about their work. That was for the director or her to do and not for the more operational staff so she felt that there was a burden of responsibility throughout the ranks of the service. They can only be accountable if they have realistic targets and workload. Wants them to feel challenged but not overwhelmed by the situation. Social care is 89% female but at Director level is only 30% female. What is the reason for this? If the job was a bit less exposed and there was more of a work life balance then maybe there would be more woman taking on the more senior roles. Working your way up to a more senior position does not encourage work life balance. One of the main pressures is the austerity that we are feeling and increased pressure on resources. 20 years ago someone with Downs Syndrome would have died in their 40s but they are now living into old age and developing related diseases such as alzheimer's. More resource and money is needed as it's being cut from budgets and this adds to the pressure. The main factor for people not remaining in the role or not wanting to do the role is no longer that accountability alone but it is about the coaching and support you get, particularly as money is being cut. A good director and elected members who understand the service and the pressures of it are invaluable but if you don't have that and are not supported in the senior roles then this adds to the pressure. Ultimately, we need a more coaching culture and for there to be greater support at all levels.

Appendix E

Anonymous - Head of Service Social Care

I don't see my role as being a pressure. Making decisions is part and parcel of the work and as long as you have a sound rationale for making a decision, then that is what's needed. I do not see myself as being ultimately accountable for a mistake made by a social worker somewhere. I am accountable for making sure that they are supported in making the right decisions. I do understand that i could be asked to leave my job at a moments notice due to organisational failing but that would be wrapped up in a severance deal. I work to live and while money is a part of it, that's not my main reason for doing it. I love providing a rationale to a debate and then hearing elected members make the same argument to someone else. I like to have control of what i'm doing but i'm not on a crusade to make the world a better place. That would drive you mad. I find dealing with the decreasing budget and increased need very difficult. I would not go to work in an authority which had serious financial issues and i think that is very difficult to work with in this line of work. Need increases and yet finances are going down.

I move jobs every 2 years. I think that for the first 2 years you are fresh and bringing new ideas, after 2 years you start to repeat what you've already done. YOu are the right person at the right time but you need to remain flexible and move on when needed. There is a concern that a lot of authorities are turning to outsourcing for these roles and interims as this takes away their control. I would go into a director role and the accountability does not worry me. I think a lot of people who would do that role are not scared of the accountability of it. This was a sideways move for me. I could be a director now but i would have to move to a struggling authority and i don't want to do that. I want to focus on the longevity of my career. There is a misconception that people at the top of the tree are more intelligent. This isn't the case. There is a good and bad at all levels. The issue here is that you are moving from a more operational role to running a business. This is particularly the case in schools. Schools are businesses now and people dont have the knowledge or skills to run a business where suddenly finance and managing large budgets is the main part of your job. More support is needed in this area.