

Northumberland
County Council
Service Statement
2017/18

Children's Social Care

April 2017 Update



Children's Social Care

Introduction and vision

Children's services and social care is about changing lives and making a difference. From the recognition of a need for early help to specialist intervention, those working in children's services have the ability not just to improve the circumstances of vulnerable children but to transform them completely. We want every child in Northumberland, whatever their background, whatever their age, whatever their ethnicity or gender, to have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Children's services along with our multi agency partners within Northumberland have a vital part to play in identifying and providing the right support for children and families when the need arises - whether by providing interventions to promote welfare and development, keeping children safe from harm, finding the best possible care when children cannot live at home, or creating the conditions that enable children to thrive and achieve.

To make that happen, it is essential that everybody working within children's services has the commitment and motivation to want to make a difference and the knowledge and skills to do their jobs well along with challenging but supportive organisational leadership and culture to help keep improving.

Purpose:

To provide services that: protect children and young people from significant harm and offending, including providing foster care for those who cannot live with their families and residential accommodation for the most vulnerable; supporting families through early help and intervention thereby avoiding involvement of statutory services.

Primary functions:**Social work**

- First Contact
- Locality-based social work services
- Services for disabled children and young people
- Hospital and health liaison
- Multi agency risk assessment

Looked After Children

- Residential care homes
- Kylee House secure unit
- Fostering Services
- Adoption
- Family Support (incl. Supervising direct contact, task-centred daycare and holiday schemes)

Northumberland Adolescent Service

- Youth Offending Service
- Participation and Programmes (including advocacy)
- SORTED substance misuse team
- Accommodation & Support Team
- Adolescent Social Work Team
- Youth Service

Safeguarding Standards Unit

- Designated officer (management and oversight where there is an allegation or serious concern about an adult working/volunteering with children)
- Independent reviewing service / Child Protection Conference chairs
- Local Safeguarding Children Board manager

Early intervention and prevention

- Children's Centres
- Early help locality services (0-19)
- Children's Support Team

Key Service Facts and Figures

Figures relate to year ending March 17 unless stated otherwise

Early Help

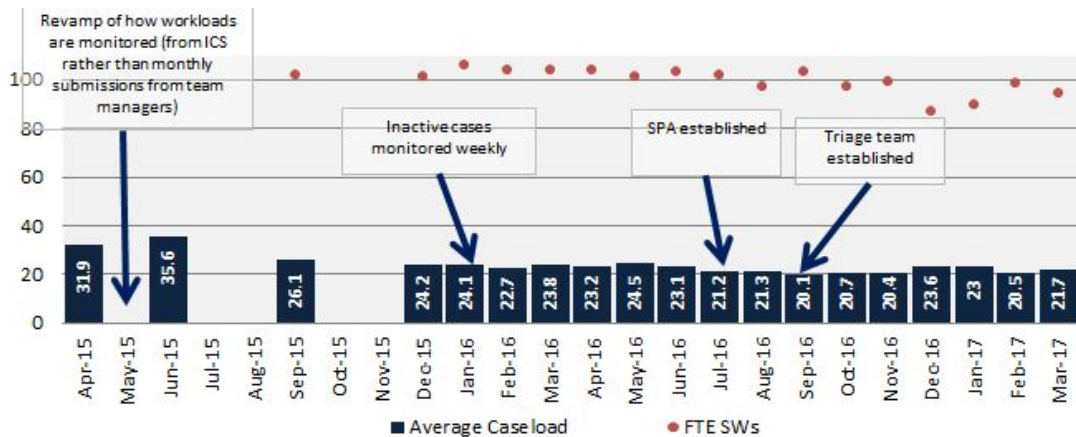
- There are currently 16 children's centres in 4 localities. 42% of the under 2's in the 30% most deprived areas regularly access the children's centre.
- 1112 families have been identified as part of the Supporting Families phase 2 programme and 418 have made significant and sustained progress to date.
- There have been 3102 referrals made to the four locality early help hubs in the year ending August 2017, this has decreased from 3657 in the year ending August 2016.

Adolescent Service

- The Youth Offending team has reduced the number of first time entrants by 88.3% (September 17) since the 2008/09 baseline.
- Rates of custodial sentences aged 10-17 are low and therefore positive, the rate in March 2016 being 0.22 per 1000 (April 2016 to March 2017)), compared to a national average of 0.37.
- There were 61% of young offenders in Education, Training & Employment in 2016/17, a slight decrease from the 2015/16 figure of 69%.
- There were 98% of young offenders in suitable accommodation in 2016/17 and increase from the previous years figure of 96%.

Safeguarding and Social Work

- The social work service received 3,353 referrals in 2016/17, representing a 33% reduction compared to 2015/16 and now in line with the national rate.
- 730 social work assessments per 10000 of children and young people were undertaken in 2016/17, relatively high compared with the national rate of 500.
- 1,838 children and young people were assessed as being in need of a specialist social care service at 31st March 2017; a 15% reduction from March 2016. In addition, the number of children subject to child protection plans has reduced significantly, down from 61 per 10,000 in March 2016 to 36 at March 2017, compared with a national average of 43.
- There has been almost a 32% reduction in the average number of open cases per full-time equivalent social worker between March 2015 and March 2017. This is as a result of a managed review of caseloads, work allocation (based on the complexity of the case and experience level of the worker) and further development of our early help offer.



- 7.4% of children and young people became subject to a second or subsequent child protection plan in 2016/17, better than the national average of 17.9%.

Care Proceedings and Looked After Children

- 224 Care Proceedings cases have concluded over the previous 12 months where the outcome was provided. 24% were subject to a Care Order (53), 13% subject to a Care Order/Placement Order (30) and 13% were subject to a Child Arrangements Order/Supervision Order or Child Arrangements Order (29). 16% were also subject to an SGO (24) with 23% concluding with a Supervision Order or a Supervision Order/SGO (52). Finally 6% were subject to a Placement Order and the remaining 5% ended with an outcome of No Order (12).
- 392 children and young people are in the care of the local authority as at the end of August 2017, working out as 66.0. per 10,000, compared with a national average of 60.
- Of Looked After Children & Young People who had been in care for 2.5 years or more, on average between 65% and 70% remain with the same carer for 2 years or more, compared with a national average of 68%.
- 165 children are placed with in house foster carers
- 59 children are placed with independent foster carers at August, 2017, a number that has reduced (down from 63 in February, 2017).
- There are 5 children's homes, each inspected annually, and all are judged good or outstanding as at August 2017.

Adoption

- Of children and young people moving in with their adoptive family in 2016-17, on average it took 559 days from entering car (in line with the national average). It took an average of 198 days between the Council receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and deciding on a match – better than the national average.
- 33 successful applications have been made to the Adoption Support Fund to support children and families requiring adoption support

Summary of Service Resources at 1 April 2017

	Number of FTE posts	Staffing Expenditure	Non Staffing Expenditure	Income	Capital Investment
Total for Service	562.74	22,031,310	17,570,653	-7,849,248	0

External Validation

Inspections

There have been no further inspections of children's social work services since the Ofsted inspection of February 2016. This resulted in an overall judgement of Requiring Improvement to be Good, with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) judged as Good. An improvement plan is in place through which progress is monitored and reported to senior leaders every month. The LSCB, as the improvement partner, receives a report at each meeting and the Council's scrutiny committee and Corporate Parenting Advisory Group also has regular updates and provides appropriate oversight and challenge.

- All local authority children's homes are judged good or better - 2 are outstanding and 3 are good.
- Youth Offending is judged as green (good) by the Youth Justice Board and had a highly successful short quality screening inspection in June 2016.

Customer perception

A variety of mechanisms exist for people who use services to express their views of their experience. Much of the activity is qualitative so that they have the chance to fully state how they feel and what, if anything, they would like to change.

There are also surveys, such as the Children's Centre parental satisfaction survey, which provide hard data on customer perception.

- 98% of parents felt they could speak to staff confidentially if required
- 99.2% were satisfied with the group/service they attended
- 99% were satisfied with the information and advice given
- 99% were satisfied with the staff overall

Social care use the themes arising from client complaints to inform its practice and how we engage with sometimes vulnerable and disaffected families and children. Over 2016/17 we have received:

- 2 complaints from care leavers. Both complaints are ongoing and the young people are being supported by an advocate.
- 6 complaints from in house residential units and 12 in relation to the secure unit.

In respect of in-house residential services concerns raised by children and young people were generally about members of staff or other young people. In 2016/17, these matters were resolved internally with positive outcomes for the children and young people involved.

Themes arising from complaints

Key Themes	Responses to upheld complaint
Delays e.g. to arranging a service, appointment or assessment	Set up service, appointment or assessment at the earliest practicable time and issues usually addressed through individual or team supervision as appropriate.
Communication e.g. lack of response to phone calls	Ensure individual and team, as appropriate, comply with existing communication policy. Individual supervision and training as appropriate.
Staff attitude e.g. failure to handle a difficult situation sensitively	Issue addressed through individual or team supervision and training as appropriate.
Quality of service provision e.g. treatment which caused poor outcomes or homecare provision that was of poor quality	On-going monitoring and review of service quality. Service review through contract team and/or operational management.
Questions about the information in reports or assessments	Factual errors are amended, text clarified as appropriate and explanations given about outcomes and conclusions.

<p>Processes – especially financial, legal and poorly understood assessment processes</p>	<p>Restitution/refund or waiving of charge if appropriate. Emphasis on explaining matters. Review any financial arrangements to make sure that they are correct. Advice/signposting especially in respect of court matters and how adult or children’s services work relates to this. In children’s services, reinforcing contact and safety plans and why e.g. supervised contact is required, that the child and the child’s views are at the centre of decision making (e.g. contact with parent(s) should be positive for them; child choosing not to have contact). On-going monitoring of effectiveness of processes.</p>
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Benchmarking

Children’s Services participates in the regional benchmarking that takes place twice a year on an agreed set of performance indicators (analysis overleaf), and there is a wide range of benchmarking data stored on the web-based Local Authority Interactive tool (LAIT). Highlights from the March 2016 regional benchmarking information for children’s social care show that our position compared to other local authorities in the region is that Northumberland performance improved on 8 indicators; dipped in 6 and remained the same on 2. For direction of travel, we improved on 8 and performance dipped on 8. Key areas for improvement for social care from the range of benchmarking data are:

- volume of child in need caseloads and assessments
- care proceedings time scales
- sufficiency of placement choice for siblings

Of those indicators selected by the region for this exercise, there are no safeguarding performance indicators that are of significant concern in terms of outcomes, but the ‘activity’ indicators are the point of most interest and continue to receive priority attention.. Encouragingly for the YOT, Northumberland is best in the region for low rates of reoffending and custody, and for social care we are well positioned on rates of looked after children placed in our own provision; numbers of adoptions; and repeat child protection plans.

Regional Benchmarking analysis	Higher/ lower is better	2015/16		16/17
		North'land	National Average	N'land
Indicator		North'land	National Average	N'land
Rate of Child Protection plans per 10,000 population	L	60.9	42.9	35.6
Rate of Children's Services Referrals per 10,000 population	L	844.3	548.3	566.4
Rate of Child in Need cases per 10,000 population	L	428.6	337.3	366.9
Rate of Children's Social Care initial (or single) assessment per 10,000 population	L	997.1	475.2	736.1
Percentage of Children subject to second or subsequent Child Protection Plan	L	9.1%	16.6%	7.4%
Rate of children subject to S47 Enquiries, year to 31 March 2016 per 10,000 population	L	223.7	138.2	148.0
No. Of children who became LAC for a second or subsequent time	L	16.9%	17.7%	14.2%
Rate of Looked After Children per 10,000 population	L	64.8	60	65.0
Percentage of Looked After Children in own LA provision	H	68%	56%	68%
Placement stability - 3 placements or more	L	8%	11%	7%
Placement stability - in care for 2.5 years and in same placement for 2 years	H	67%	67%	67%
Percentage of those leaving care due to adoption	H	21%	15%	17%
Adoption - average time between care and placement for adoption	L	627	593	602
Adoption - Average time between court order & match	L	209	223	201
Percentage of former relevant young people who were in education, employment or	H	49%	45%	41%

training - across ages 19-21				
Rate of First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice System per 100,000 of the 10-17 year old population	L	387	357	313
Re-offending rates	L	42	38	38.9
Custody Rate per 1,000 10-17 population	L	0.18	0.26	0.15

Priorities for 2017/18

There have been some significant changes within Children's Services within Northumberland over the last year with a great deal of work targeted around understanding the pressures and challenges that led to the Ofsted inspection outcome. The priorities identified within this statement are focussed upon the improvement journey that is needed to ensure the delivery of appropriate and effective interventions which meet the needs of children and their families within Northumberland.

** denotes those priorities that are derived from the Ofsted inspection.*

Progress is on track with these and 5 of the 15 recommendations are already fully implemented. The remainder appear below as the actions relating to them are ongoing and are therefore tracked monthly to ensure they are having the desired impact.

Priority Area	Key Milestone Dates
1. Improve agencies' understanding and application of thresholds for access to children's social care so that children and families receive coordinated support appropriate to their level of need in a timely way. *	September 2017 This will be analysed via performance data and consultation with partners
2. Reduce social workers' caseloads and ensure that all staff have workloads that are manageable and commensurate with their level of knowledge and experience. *	Caseloads are continually reviewed on a weekly basis.
3. Improve the quality of social work assessments for all children and young people, including care leavers, and robustly analyse risks to individual children and young people within their family. *	September 2017
4. Ensure that all children's and young people's plans, including pathway plans, identify necessary outcomes and how they will be	September 2017

<p>achieved and monitored. In addition, ensure that children and young people contribute to their own plans and that plans identify contingency arrangements, in particular the action to be taken if change is not achieved within the child's timescale. *</p>	
<p>5. Ensure that management capacity and oversight is sufficient and robust across the service and provides the critical challenge that drives timely progress in individual children's cases. *</p>	<p>December 2017</p>
<p>6. Ensure that early permanence options are considered by a child's second review and that all staff understand and respond to the importance of early permanence. *</p>	<p>September 2017</p>
<p>7. Improve the quality and timeliness of public law applications, including work before proceedings to ensure that viability assessments of family members and connected persons are undertaken in a timely way and have satisfied statutory requirements before children are placed. *</p>	<p>July 2017</p>
<p>8. Ensure that the local authority rapidly progresses fostering to adopt arrangements where this is in the best interests of children. *</p>	<p>September 2017</p>
<p>9. Ensure that managers and staff understand and comply with statutory guidance relating to private fostering, and that all necessary steps are taken to</p>	<p>July 2017</p>

protect and support children who are privately fostered. *	
10. Improve the provision of support to care leavers once they reach adulthood to meet emotional and mental health needs and improve participation in education, employment and training (EET). * Support educational and vocational opportunities for all looked after children and care leavers.	December 2017
11. Continue to remodel services and front of house arrangements to further embed the early help offer and increase the proportion of referrals which result in an Early Help Assessment and Plan. (This is linked to the Early Help strategy).	July 2017
12. Increase the sufficiency of looked after placements to offer placements for children appropriately This is linked to the Corporate Parenting strategy.	3 year plan March 2020
13. Support all residential homes to deliver a good service to Looked After Children. This is linked to the Corporate Parenting strategy.	This is ongoing on an annual basis
14. Review and commission suitable accommodation for care leavers and other vulnerable young people.	July 2017
15. Ensure learning from Serious Case Reviews, Ofsted inspections, peer reviews, service reviews and other opportunities are maximised and improve services.	Ongoing on an annual basis dependent upon reviews
16. Ensure that the Supporting Families outcome plan is embedded in the work of the new early help family work teams.	March 2018

17. Ensure the voice of the child and families are embedded in all form a of practice.	Ongoing and subject to regular audit
18. Ensure the corporate values are reflected in the way the service's workforce undertakes its duties.	September 2017
19. Recruit, retain and develop a professional, committed and stable workforce, incl. targeted recruitment to attract newly-qualified and experienced staff; embedding a co-ordinated and holistic training programme; developing a model to support and manage Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) staff; developing a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) pathway for aspiring senior practitioners and managers.	Ongoing throughout the year
20. Embed the work of the new early help locality model in each area.	July 2017

Performance Framework

Measure	Eng Av	Outturn		Target 2017/18			
		15/16	16/17	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of cases per full time equivalent social worker	20.3	24	22	23	22	21	20
Number of cases per full time equivalent IRO	-	75	66	67	67	67	67
% of foster care children placed with Northumberland County Council foster carers	-	71	75	80	80	80	80
% of residential services judged Good / Outstanding	-	100	100	100	100	100	100
Children adopted over past 12 months: average no. of days between a child entering care and moving in with adoptive family	558	568	597	625	600	575	550
Children adopted over past 12 months: average no. of days between court authority to adopt and matching to adoptive family	226	211	193	200	190	180	170
Avg duration of care proceedings ending in the period (wks)	-	34	32	31	30	29	26
% long term LAC in same placement for the past 2 years	68	73	67	66	67	67	68
% referral decisions made within 1 day of receiving referral	-	93	91.2	96	96	96	96
% child protection plans ending that lasted 2 years or more	2.1	9.8	8.7	9.0	7.0	4.0	0.0
% children becoming subject to a CPP for a 2 nd or subsequent time	17.9	9.2	6.9	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0
% reduction in 1st time entrants to Youth Justice system aged 10-17	-	83.4	87.2	80.0	80.0	80.0	80.0
Rate of proven re-offending by young people	37.7	34.8	37.7	38.0	37.0	36.0	35.0
Rate of use of custody	0.37	0.18	0.22	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20
% of Young Offenders engagement in suitable education, employment or training	-	69.2	53.0	65	66	68	70
% of Young Offenders living in suitable accommodation	-	98.5	98	95	95	95	95
% of care leavers living in suitable accommodation	83	94	86	95	95	95	95
% of care leavers in education, employment or training	49	52	50	55	60	65	70
Average no. of Early Help Assessments initiated per month	-	80	117	110	115	123	130
No. of Supported Families identified (from January 2015 until March 2020 through the expanded programme)	-	613	949	1220	1351	1482	1613
Supporting Families cases where	-	NAv	289	439	589	739	889

there has been significant and sustained progress or continuous employment							
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