

Northumberland
County Council
Service
Statement
2018/19

Children's Social Care

April 2018 Update



Children's Social Care

Introduction and vision

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 and social care services are 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.

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.

Effective Children's Services relies on excellent communication within a multi-agency network and with those families and children receiving those services.

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.

Our vision is to continue to be a service where meeting the needs of children, young people and families is the focus so they get the best out of life.

Purpose:

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

Primary functions:

Social work

- Front Door / MASH
- Locality-based social work services
- Services for disabled children and young people
- Multi agency risk assessment, including police and health liaison

Looked After Children

- Residential care homes and Kylee House secure unit
- Fostering Services
- Adoption Services
- Family Support (incl. Supervised contact, daycare and holiday schemes)
- Virtual School for Looked After Children

Northumberland Adolescent Service

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

Safeguarding Standards Unit

- Designated officer (dealing with allegations against members of the workforce)
- Independent reviewing service / Child Protection Conference chairs

Early intervention and prevention

- Children's Centres
- Early help locality services (0-19)
- Northumberland Families First Team

Authority-wide lead on:

- Tackling poverty
- Domestic abuse co-ordination
- Supporting Families (our response to the 'Troubled Families' programme)
- Local Safeguarding Children Board manager
- Child sexual exploitation

Key Service Facts and Figures

(between April 2017 and the end of February 2018 unless otherwise specified.)

Early Help

- 16 children's centres, 4 localities. 52% of under 2's in the 30% most deprived areas regularly access the children's centre, which is a vast improvement on the previous year's figure of 37%.
- 1613 families identified as part of the Supporting Families phase 2 programme; 680 have made significant and sustained progress to date.
- 2234 referrals made to the four locality early help hubs compared to 1158 the previous year. 1712 of these referrals progressed to 'signpost to another agency' with 551 progressing to an early help episode. Looking at all those referrals that progressed to 'other agency', 827 were allocated to School Health, 155 to Primary Mental Health, 142 to Schools and 84 to CYPS (the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health service). 68 referrals also progressed to Health Visitors, the remaining 436 referrals were allocated to other agencies.
- 1864 cases worked with by the Early Help Family Workers (EHFWs) across all locality teams, 1253 of these being cases started over the current financial year.
- 82% of the 2732 Episodes that were open as at the end of March 2017, did not lead to social work referral and were managed effectively at the early help level.
- 588 Episodes closed that were allocated to EHFW's, 43% (251) closing due to achieving the desired outcomes. This figure has risen from the 29% in the previous year. Of the 337 episodes closing for reasons other than achieving the desired outcomes; 107 were stepped up to social work, 94 went to no further action, 35 closed due to disengagement from clients, 38 withdrew consent, 11 moved out of county and 52 closed for any other reason.

Northumberland Adolescent Service-Youth Offending Service

- 85.3% reduction since the 2008/09 baseline in the number of first time entrants from October 16 - September 17.
- 0.22 per 1000 of 10-17 year olds had custodial sentences in 2017, low and therefore positive, compared to a national average of 0.38.
- 72% of young offenders in Education, Training & Employment in quarter 3 (Oct 17 - Dec 17), an increase from 64% for the same quarter a year earlier.
- 100% of young offenders were in suitable accommodation at the end of their order in quarter 3 (Oct 17 - Dec 17), an increase from 96% for the same quarter a year earlier.

Safeguarding and Social Work (March 2018)

- 609 referrals per 10,000 received by the social work service, compared with 557 the previous year, and a national average of 548.
- 738 social work assessments per 10,000, above the national rate of 548 and a slight increase on 734 the previous year.
- 19.3 cases per social worker, reduced from 20.3 the previous year, but higher than the national and regional average (17.8 and 18.3, respectively). These figures are sourced from the national workforce return in Sept 2017 and are the means by which we can benchmark. However, caseloads have risen in some localities since that date and some teams are working with caseloads that are higher than we would wish. A new workload weighting system shows that 69% of social workers had below the maximum points level in January 2018, and the aim is for that to be as close to 100% as possible.
- 80 cases per Independent Reviewing Officer which is a significant reduction since the SIF in 2016, but is currently above the national optimum level due to an increase in the numbers of children subject to a child protection plan.
- 67 per 10,000 children subject to child protection plans in March 2018, increasing significantly from 40 at March 2017, compared with a national average of 43.
- 11.9% of children and young people became subject to a second or subsequent child protection plan as at the end of February 2018, an increasing trend, but better than the national average of 18.7%.

Care Proceedings and Looked After Children

- 189 Care Proceedings cases have concluded over the previous 12 months. 23% were subject to a Care Order (43) with a further 16% subject to a Care Order/Placement Order (31). In total this equates to 39% (which is lower than the national average of 50%).
 - 14% were subject to a Child Arrangements Order/Supervision Order or Child Arrangements Order (26).
 - 22% were subject to a Special Guardianship Order or Special Guardianship Order/Supervision Order (42) (which is higher than the regional average of 19%).
 - 18% concluded with a Supervision Order (34) (this is also higher than the regional average which is currently 15%)
 - 1% were subject to a Family Assistance Order (1) or a Secure Order (1)
 - 6% ended with an outcome of No Order (11)
- 48% of cases over the previous 12 months also concluded within timescale and the average timescale for those cases concluding was 34 weeks which is higher than the national average of 31 weeks.
- 395 children and young people are in the care of the local authority as at 13 March 2018, working out as 66.9 per 10,000, compared with 69 the previous year and a national average of 62.

- Of Looked After Children & Young People who had been in care for 2.5 years or more, 70% (February 2018) remained with the same carer for 2 years or more compared with 67% the previous year, and a national average of 68%.
- 231 children are placed with Northumberland County Council Foster Carers at 13/03/2018, this represents 82% of all those in foster care, compared with 254 the previous year (81%), and a significant improvement on 3 years ago.
- 52 children are placed with independent foster carers at 13 March 2018, having reduced from 61 in March, 2017.
- There are 5 children's homes, each inspected annually, and 100% are judged good or outstanding as at March 2018, compared with the national average of 80%.

Looked After Children Education attainment

- No Looked After children have been permanently excluded from school since 2008.
- Fixed term exclusions increased significantly in 2016 and are well above national and regional averages (latest validated data available). However virtual school data for 2017 shows a drop in the number of fixed term exclusions by over a third.
- Persistent absence amongst Looked After Children increased slightly to 11% in 2017 and is slightly higher than the national and regional averages (10% and 8.3%, respectively). Overall absence remains constant at 4%.
- In 2017, 43% of Looked After Children achieved a good level of development in the Early Years Stage, compared with 40% the previous year and against a national average of 69% for all children. Improvement was therefore sustained for a second consecutive year.
- In 2017, 80% of Looked After Children achieved the Phonics standard, compared with 20% the previous year, and a national average of 81% for all non looked after children.
- At 20%, attainment at Key Stage 1 has dipped compared with 44% the previous year (an unusually small cohort). However 60% of the cohort have special educational needs and / or disabilities.
- KS2 attainment more than doubled to 29% achieving the expected standard compared with 11% the previous year, and now compares more favourably to the national average of 32%.
- 17% of year 11 pupils achieved at least grade 4 in English & Maths GCSE combined (Basics) which is a dip since 2016, but is the same as the national average for all LAC in 2017.
- Numbers of learners progressing into further education at 16 has remained consistently high at 80% and over for the last three years which is significantly above the national average.
- 80% of pupils are making at least expected progress in English and 75% in mathematics at key stages 1 and 2. At Key Stage 3 and 4, 82% of pupils are making at least expected progress in English and mathematics.

Care leavers

- 91% living in suitable accommodation, the same figure as the previous year and favourably compared with a national average of 84%.
- 44% in Employment, Education and Training compared with 51% the previous year and poorer than the national average of 50%.
- 67% with an updated pathway plan in the past 6 months compared to 66% in the 6 months to March 2017. No national average is available.

Adoption

- 26 children or 14% of children left care due to adoption compared with 34 children or 15% the previous year and a national average of 14%.
- Of children and young people moving in with their adoptive family in the 12 months ending February 2018, on average it took 549 days from entering care, better than the previous year's figure of 618 and slightly better than the national average of 558.
- It took an average of 216 days between the Council receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and deciding on a match – slightly poorer than the previous year's figure of 208, but better than the national average of 226.
- 59 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 2018

Number of FTE posts	Staffing Expenditure	Non Staffing Expenditure	Income	Capital Investment
637.42	24,522,550	20,741,110	-6,919,930	689,474

External Validation

Inspections

With the implementation of the new ILAC inspection framework, the local authority received one of the new Focused Visits in February 2018. This concentrated on Front Door services where referrals and assessments are undertaken. The findings provided positive messages, with no priority actions, and inspectors noted progress had been made since the previous full inspection 2 years ago. Ofsted said that the local authority knew itself well and that its improvement plans were appropriate with the right priorities. They saw good application of appropriate thresholds, good use of early help services, prompt responses to referrals and some high quality assessments. The improvement plan's progress is monitored and reported to senior leaders every month. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), as the

improvement partner, receives a report and the Council's scrutiny committee and Corporate Parenting Advisory Group also have regular updates and provide appropriate oversight and challenge.

- All local authority children's homes are judged good or better - 2 are outstanding based on recent inspections in March 2018, and 3 are good, one with leadership judged to be outstanding.
- Youth Offending is judged as green (good) by the Youth Justice Board and the last short quality screening inspection in June 2016 had a very successful outcome. A further short quality screening inspection is possible in 2018-19.
- The Children's Centre inspection framework remains suspended with no indication of when it will be reinstated. There have been no further inspections of children's centres during the year.

The recently-planned peer challenge had to be postponed due to inclement weather but has been rearranged for September 2018.

Customer perception

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

Children's Centres

The Children's Centre parental satisfaction survey provides hard data on customer perception each year.

- 98% of parents felt they could speak to staff confidentially if required, equal to the position in the previous year.
- 99.4% were satisfied with the group/service they attended, slightly better than the position in the previous year.
- 98% were satisfied with the information and advice given, 1% lower than the previous year.
- 98% were satisfied with the staff overall, again 1% lower than the previous year.

Care leavers

Results from the over 18's care leavers survey completed in October 2017 identified that:

- Although the majority of young people felt that the place they lived now was the right place for them, a significant proportion of them had moved more than once since they were 16.
- Only just over half felt they had had enough information to make an informed choice about where they lived.
- The majority of the respondents felt they had a good relationship with their support worker and saw them regularly.
- The majority knew what was in their pathway plan and felt they had had a say about it.

Families' feedback on social work practice

Feedback from the small number of families contacted as part of the case file audit process was generally positive.

- Families reported improving relationships with social workers.
- All felt that their social worker had made a positive difference.
- All would feel confident to contact children's services in the future if they needed help.
- Areas for improvement are around written documentation being provided to families in a timely way.

Priorities for children and young people

Young people across Northumberland were asked to vote on how they would prioritise ten nationally identified issues. The areas which received the top votes were:

- A curriculum to prepare us for life
- Transport
- LGBT+
- Mental Health
- Work Experience Hubs for 11-18 year olds

These fit with the already identified priorities for the Youth Parliament and Youth Cabinet in Northumberland and will be taken forward over the next twelve months.

Staff perception

For staff working in early help and social care services, the most recent staff survey conducted by the council highlights that:

- Training and development they have received over the last twelve months, including appraisal, has supported them to do their job.
- Staff understand how their role is important to the values and vision of the council and feel supported to flexibly undertake their role.
- The vast majority of staff are happy to come to work.
- There has been a marked improvement in communication from senior managers to their staff. There is still some work to do, particularly in early help.
- Social work staff were generally enthusiastic about their roles and described supportive colleagues, teams and line managers. They reported feeling trusted and understood their responsibilities with good opportunities for training, development and meaningful appraisal.
- They were not as positive about the council as an organisation to work for, were dissatisfied with their rate of pay and didn't feel that there were enough staff employed to allow them to their job as well as they would like to.

This is a much more positive staff survey than the one in 2016 and demonstrates the rate of progress experienced by the staff. Each senior manager is developing an action plan to continue the improvements in their area.

Children’s social care complaints

1. Statistical data

a) Stage 1 complaints

	Stage 1 complaints					Response times		
	Received	Closed	Upheld	Partly upheld	Not upheld	0-10 days	11-20 days	21+ days
2017/18	25	17	4	6	7	4	4	9
2016/17	17	16	4	6	6	5	6	5

Where complaints took longer to resolve, analysis suggests that the circumstances around the complaint or the complainant were more complex and agreement to extended timescales allowed for a more comprehensive investigation and suitable resolution to take place. We endeavour to keep complainants informed during the process and offer an open line of contact with the complaints service.

b) Stage 2 complaints

Over 2017/18 we received 5 stage 2 complaints and closed 6 stage 2 complaints compared to 2016/17 when we received 6 stage 2 complaints and closed 6 stage 2 complaints.

Each stage 2 investigation looks at one or more elements of complaint. The stage 2 complaint investigations closed over 2017/18 looked at 55 separate elements of complaint of which 19 were upheld, 19 were not upheld and 16 partly were upheld; there were no findings in one case. Each stage 2 complaint closed over 2017/18 contained a mixture of these outcomes and this is usual in our experience of complaints at this stage.

c) Stage 3 complaints

Over 2017/18 and previously in 2016/17 we held no stage 3 panels.

2. Learning

Listening to the views and experiences of the people who use children’s social care services is extremely important, but what is more important is how we respond to

this.

Many of the issues which children, young people and adults have reported over 2017/18 reflect the kind of situations which can occur from time to time in a large care organisation; for example, delay, concerns about communication, staff attitude or quality of service and questions around reports, assessments and processes. However, we take each one seriously, and take steps to address both the individual situation of the complainant and any wider issues about systems, training and guidance which are raised.

Benchmarking

Children's Services participates in regional benchmarking which takes place 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 recent benchmarking information for children's social care show that our position compared to other local authorities in the country is that Northumberland performance improved on 6 indicators and dipped in 9 compared with the previous year. In comparison against the national average, Northumberland was better on 6 and poorer on 9 of the indicators. Key areas for improvement for social care from the range of benchmarking data are:

- Demand management: volume of referrals, assessments, s47 enquiries and greater numbers subject to child protection plans
- Outcomes for those leaving care

Benchmarking analysis	Higher/ lower is better	2016/17		Qtr 3 2017/18	
		North'land	Nat. Avge	DoT	N'land
Indicator					
Rate of Child Protection plans per 10,000 population	L	40	43	↓	55
Rate of Children's Services Referrals per 10,000 population	L	557	548	↓	623
Rate of Child in Need cases per 10,000 population (excl LAC)	L	421	330	↑	393
Rate of Children's Social Care initial (or single) assessment per 10,000 population	L	548	515	↓	553
Percentage of Children subject to second or subsequent Child Protection Plan	7-12% is best	7%	19%	↑	10.2%

Rate of children subject to S47 Enquiries, year to 31 March 2016 per 10,000 population	L	154	142	↓	190
Rate of Looked After Children per 10,000 population	L	69	62	↑	65
Percentage of Looked After Children in own LA provision	H	72%	54%	↑	76%
Placement stability - 3 placements or more	L	8%	12%	↓	11%
Placement stability - in care for 2.5 yrs and in same placement for 2 yrs	H	66%	68%	↑	70%
Percentage of those leaving care due to adoption	H	15%	14%	↓	11%
Adoption - average time between care and placement for adoption	L	618	558	↑	527
Adoption - Average time between court order & match	L	208	226	↓	234
Percentage of former relevant young people who were in education, employment or training aged 19-21	H	51%	50%	↓	44%
Custody Rate per 1,000 10-17 popn	L	0.15	0.41	↓	0.22

Priorities for 2017/18

Our Improvement Plan incorporates those areas where we need to do more work. The plan includes detailed actions, milestones and time scales and progress is scrutinised by the Safeguarding Children Board, Overview and Scrutiny committee and Corporate Parenting Advisory group. It is a dynamic plan that is reviewed and updated regularly. The plan focuses on 10 priorities, within which 3 are paramount:

Workforce development	Culture	Demand Management	
Assessment & statutory safeguarding procedures	Planning & timely progression of plans	Management oversight	EET and suitable accommodation for care leavers
Quality Assurance	Sufficiency & quality of looked after placements	Embedding the Early Help model in each area	

The priorities are responsive to and understanding of the broader context, needs and aspirations for our children and young people.

Priority Areas
1. Ensure all children and families receive the right help at the right time from the right service (Demand Management)
2. Improve and promote frontline social work practice in relation to key assessment processes and statutory safeguarding procedures
3. To raise standards of practice around key areas of social work linked to planning for children and ensure timely progression of plans for children leading to assessed needs being met.
4. Ensure effective leadership and management is available to support and promote good practice across all areas (Management Oversight)
5. To ensure all care leavers are supported to participate in employment, education and training (EET)
6. Promote a positive culture to ensure that all staff work with the right environment, enabling them to flourish and thrive in the workplace (Culture)
7. Improve quality assurance processes so it is embedded in all services and is used to promote high quality practice from the start of the child's journey
8. Increase the sufficiency of high quality looked after placements to offer placements for children appropriately
9. Recruit, retain and develop a professional, committed and stable workforce (Workforce Development)
10. Embed the work of the new early help locality model in each area

In line with national legislative changes about information sharing, the service has, and will continue, to place high importance on compliance with the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation).

Performance Framework

Measure	Eng Av	Outturn		Target 2018/19				2019/20	2020/21
		16/17	17/18	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
% social workers where caseloads are within the desired level	-	n/a	69	70	74	79	85	95	95
No.of cases per full time equivalent IRO	-	66	80	78	76	73	70	70	70
% of foster care children placed with Northumberland County Council foster carers	-	75	82	80	80	80	80	80	80
% of residential services judged Good / Outstanding	80	100	100	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	520	597	533	550	550	550	550	535	520
Children adopted over past 12 months: average no. of days between court authority to adopt and matching to adoptive family	220	193	220	200	190	180	170	165	160
Avg duration of care proceedings ending (wks)	29	32	34	32	30	28	26	26	26
% long term LAC in same placement for the past 2 years	70	67	70	70	70	70	70	71	72
Number of permanent exclusions from school of LAC in academic year	N.A.	0	0	0	0		0		0
% referral decisions made within 1 day of receiving referral	-	91.2	97.5	96.0	96.0	96.0	96.0	96.0	96.0
% child protection plans ending that lasted 2 years or more	3.0	8.7	3.1	3.0	2.0	1.0	0.5	0.0	0.0
% children becoming subject to a CPP for a 2 nd or subsequent time	19	6.9	11.9	12	12	12	12	12	12
% reduction in 1st time entrants to Youth Justice system aged 10-17	-	87.2	85.6	80.0	80.0	80.0	80.0	80.0	80.0
Rate of proven re-offending	41.4	37.7	50	50	50	50	50	48	46
Rate of use of custody	0.39	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.20	0.20
% of Young Offenders engagement in suitable education, employment or training	-	53.0	72.0	65	66	68	70	72	74
% of Young Offenders living in suitable accommodation	-	98	94	95	95	95	95	95	95
% of care leavers living in suitable accommodation	84	91	91	91	91	95	95	95	95
% of care leavers in education, employment or training	50	51	43	45	50	55	60	65	70
Average no. of Early Help Assessments initiated per month	-	117	98	110	110	110	110	115	120
No. of Supported Families identified (from Jan 15- Mch 20)	-	949	1465	1220	1351	1482	1613	2120	2120
Supporting Families cases where there has been significant and sustained progress or continuous employment	-	289	274	854	1154	1304	1444	1844	2120