



# **Children's Social Care Service Statement 2019 – 2021**

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## 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.

The purpose of our social care services is to: support families at the right time to ensure needs are met promptly and to avoid more formal intervention: protect children and young people from significant harm and offending and supporting them to live with their families wherever possible: Where children cannot remain with their families, to provide a range of placements and services to meet their needs, and when necessary, providing permanent alternative placements for them promptly.

Our leadership pledge underpins our commitment to working in partnership with children and families and with our partner agencies and that we will strive to do and be the very best we can to make things better for our children and young people. 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.

As part of our continuous improvement, we undertake an annual self assessment to ensure that we know what we are doing well and in what areas we need to improve. From this we develop and update our continuous improvement plan with clearly identified priorities as we strive to deliver our vision.

**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.**

## 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 Kyloe House secure unit
- Fostering Services
- Family Time Contact Service
- Adoption Services
- Virtual School for Looked After Children

### **Northumberland Adolescent Service**

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

### **Safeguarding Standards Unit**

- Independent reviewing service / Child Protection Conference chairs
- Local Authority Designated Officer (dealing with allegations against those working with children and young people)

### **Early intervention and prevention**

- Children's Centres
- Early help locality services (0-19)
- Edge of care services: 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
- Missing, exploited and trafficked children and young people

## **How children's social care work links to the corporate plan**

### **Living: *We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for***

Our early help services along with partner agencies identify and respond to children and families to meet additional support needs at the earliest possible stage and to prevent those needs from escalating.

Children's social care along with partner agencies ensure that children in Northumberland are safeguarded and that risks are identified, responded to promptly and managed and reduced as quickly as possible.

For children who become looked after, we do our very best to place them as close to home as possible, where it is safe to do so, to maintain their links with family, friends and support networks.

We support and prepare our looked after children for adulthood and independent living as well as possible and this is supported by Northumberland's development of the care leavers covenant to maximise opportunities for our care leavers.

### **Learning: *We want you to achieve and reach your potential***

We have a dedicated Virtual School which supports and aims to continuously improve the educational outcomes for our looked after children

We continue to develop the quality and effectiveness of the social care contribution to education and health care plans for children and young people with SEND.

Children's social care have been involved in targeted work to reduce the number of children who are excluded from schools

### **Enjoying: *We want you to love where you live***

We continue to develop the links between our services and local community provision to ensure children and young people are supported as effectively as possible in their communities and to enjoy and benefit from this.

### **Financial prudence**

Overall, there are significant financial challenges for the provision of social care services nationally, regionally and locally and we work hard to reduce our overspend and to work within the medium term financial plan for the council.

## **Always listen and consider views**

A key element of our quality assurance is to listen to the views and participation of children, young people and their families with whom we work and this remains a priority in our strategic planning and continuous improvement work.

**Key Service Facts and Figures (Final year end figures will be inserted in August on completion of the 2018/19 statutory returns. See page 17 for the most current benchmarking data.)**

### **Early Help**

- 16 children's centres, 4 localities. 13250 children under 5 are registered with a Sure Start children's centre out of a possible 14360. 24% of under 2's in the 30% most deprived areas regularly access the children's centre.
- 1375 early help episodes ended in 2017, with 268 requiring a referral to the social work teams after closure, and 209 requiring a referral within the following 12 months.
- 2425 families identified as part of the Supporting Families phase 2 programme; 1280 have resulted in successful claims under the Significant and Sustained or the Continuous Employment outcomes to date.
- 5198 referrals made to the four locality early help hubs compared to 2234 the previous year.
- 2233 referrals were referred to another agency, 2207 of these referrals were signposted to universal services and 491 were managed by an early help worker within the local authority. The main agencies receiving referrals from the hub were; School Health (750), schools (330), Primary Mental Health (174), CYPS (126), and Health Visitors (84).
- 799 Early Help Family worker cases (EHFW) have started in the last financial year.
- 1207 episodes closed that were allocated to EHFW's, 56% (669) closing due to achieving the desired outcomes within that period of intervention and 197 were stepped up to social work
- Of the 1474 episodes that closed during 2017/18, 79.5% did not lead to a social work referral and were managed effectively at the early help stage.

### **Northumberland Adolescent Service-Youth Offending Service**

- 85.8% reduction since the 2008/09 baseline in the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system.
- 0.11 per 1000 of 10-17 year olds had custodial sentences in 2018, low and therefore positive.

- 64% of young offenders were in Education, Training & Employment at the end of their intervention of work, a reduction from the previous year.
- 95% of young offenders were in suitable accommodation at the end of their order in 2018/19 which was within the target set for the year.

### **Safeguarding and Social Work**

- 613 referrals per 10,000 of the under 18 population were received by the social work service.
- 692 social work assessments were completed per 10,000.
- There were 18.9 cases per social worker, a decrease when compared with the previous years figure of 19.3, but higher than the national and regional average (17.4 and 17.8, respectively). These figures are sourced from the national workforce return in Sept 2018 and are the means by which we can benchmark. In some social work teams, staff are working with caseloads that are higher than we would wish. A workload weighting system shows that 72% of social workers had a caseload within the desired level in March 2019,
- There were 54.4 (LAC children and CP families) cases per Independent Reviewing Officer, a significant reduction since the SIF in 2016 and this is within the national guidance for caseloads numbers.
- There were 71 per 10,000 children subject to child protection plans in March 2019.
- 18% of children and young people who became subject to a child protection plan did so for a second or subsequent time in 2018/19.

### **Care Proceedings and Looked After Children**

- 174 Care Proceedings cases have concluded over the previous 12 months. 26% were subject to a Care Order (46) with a further 16% subject to a Care Order and/or Placement Order (27). 25% were subject to a Special Guardianship Order (44) (which is higher than the regional average of 19%). 16% were subject to a Child Arrangements Order (27). 7% concluded with a Supervision Order (13) (lower than the regional average of 15%) and the final 2% concluded with No Order (3).
- 39% of cases over the previous 12 months concluded within the national target of 26 weeks.
- 372 children and young people are in the care of the local authority as at March 2019, working out as 63 per 10,000.
- The number and percentage of children leaving care to return home has increased to 28% (44 out of 156) at the end of March 2019. This latest performance figure is in line with regional (40%) and above national averages (31%). The numbers and percentage of children who are entering care for a second or subsequent time have decreased over the last year from 20% (37 children) to 20% (31 children)

- Of Looked After Children & Young People who had been in care for 2.5 years or more, 68% (March 2019) remained with the same carer for 2 years or more.
- 170 children are placed with Northumberland County Council Foster Carers at 31/03/2019, this represents 66% of all those in foster care.
- 43 children are placed with independent foster carers at 31 March 2019, having reduced from 57 in March 2018.
- There are 5 children's homes, each inspected annually, and 100% are judged good or outstanding as at March 2019, compared with the national average of 80%.

### **Looked After Children Education Attainment**

- No looked after children have been permanently excluded from school since 2008. However, 13.8% had at least one fixed term exclusion which is higher than the regional and national averages according to the most recent DfE data (2016/17).
- Persistent absence increased to 13.8% in 2018 and is above the national and regional averages. Overall absence has increased slightly from 4% to 6%.
- In 2018, 25% of children achieved a good level of development in the Early Years Stage compared with 43% in 2017.
- In 2018 75% achieved the Phonics standard, compared with 80% the previous year. This is well above the national average of 64% for looked after children.
- At 71%, attainment at Key Stage 1 improved significantly compared with 20% in 2017.
- Key Stage 2 attainment remained constant at 30% (compared to 29% in 2017) and is below the national average of 35%.
- At Key Stage 4 18% of Year 11 pupils achieved at least grade 4 in English & Maths GCSE combined (the Basics) which is slightly above the national average and compares with 17% in Northumberland in 2017.
- Numbers of learners progressing into further education at 16 has remained consistently high over the last three years and is significantly above the national average, although the current figure of 70% does represent a drop since last year.
- School placement stability continues to be very good in all phases. The most recent Stability Index published by the Children's Commissioner shows that school placement stability for looked after children in Northumberland is very good compared to other local authorities: 8% had a mid-year school move in 2016-17 compared to 10% nationally, and 2% had at least one school move in both 2015-16 and 2016-17 compared to 4% nationally.

### **Care leavers**

- 93% of 19-21 year old care leavers live in suitable accommodation, the same figure as the previous year and favourably compared with a national average of 84%.
- There are 51% of 19-21 year old care leavers in Employment, Education and Training compared with 58% the previous year - in line with the national average of 51%.
- 81% of care leavers have an updated pathway plan in the past 6 months compared to 67% last year. No national average is available.
- In terms of young people who stay put, we have 23 young people, twelve of whom have stayed with in-house carers, eleven of whom have stayed with IFA carers. This has increased from 15 young people in staying put arrangements at February 2018.

### **Adoption**

- 37 children or 21% of children left care due to adoption compared with 15% the previous year and a national average of 14%.
- Of those adopted in the 12 months ending March 2019, on average it took 486 days from entering care to them being placed with their adoptive family, better than the previous year's figure of 558 and better than the national average of 486 days.
- It took an average of 172 days between the Council receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and deciding on a match. This is better than the previous year's figure of 223 and the latest national average of 201 days.
- 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 2019**

Number of FTE posts	Staffing Expenditure	Non Staffing Expenditure	Income	Capital Investment
654.37	26,405,200	22,852,120	-8,066,170	200,000

**External Validation: Inspections**

The current framework for inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS) dictates much more ongoing engagement between Ofsted and local authorities, consisting of focused visits by Ofsted on a particular area of practice, annual conversations and the main inspection which, for Northumberland, will be over two weeks as we are currently judged to require improvement from the last inspection in 2016. (Local Authorities which are judged to be good or outstanding get a one week inspection).

As part of this process and our continuous improvement work, we now undertake a detailed annual self assessment of our services. This self assessment has been subject to rigorous regional peer challenge and has subsequently formed the basis for our annual conversation with Ofsted which took place in February 2019. The executive director, service director and three senior managers met with Ofsted senior regional managers viewed the self-assessment as accessible and evidencing clear progress from the SIF in 2016. Ofsted were clear that evidence of this was important as they reinforced within the conversation the level of concern about some of the findings at that inspection.

Children's social care however, were part of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspection of the local area services. This resulted in Northumberland being required to produce a Written Statement of Action to bring about improvements, and there is more detail about this in the Education and Skills service statement.

Arising from the self assessment and the findings of the SEND inspection in relation to social care, we have developed a continuous improvement plan which is monitored and reported to senior leaders every month. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), as the improvement partner, receives a report and act as a critical friend. The Council's scrutiny committee and Corporate Parenting Advisory Group also receive regular reports and updates through which appropriate oversight and challenge is given.

## **Other inspections**

- All local authority children's homes are judged good or better. Two are outstanding based on recent inspections, and three are good. All local authority managed residential homes for Northumberland children and young people have leadership that is judged to be outstanding by Ofsted.
- There have been no further inspections of the Youth Offending service in 2018/19, although it did take a key role in the Leaving Care Peer Challenge.
- 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.

## **Regional peer challenge: care leavers**

The Care Leavers peer challenge took place in September 2018. The findings from this were consistent with our own self assessment of the service. The challenge team felt that the staff were positive about the young people they were supporting and the young people spoke positively to the team about their staff and the support they received. An action plan is in place to take forward the areas for improvement identified.

## **Regional peer audit**

Northumberland received the first regional peer audit as part of regional improvement work. The audit focused on our permanence planning and the findings have contributed to our internal audit and quality assurance work and has fed into our overall improvement work

## **Our performance and quality assurance work**

We have worked hard over the last year to further develop and coordinate our performance management and quality assurance processes as part of our continuous improvement work. Alongside a comprehensive range of performance management information, we have further developed senior management oversight of the quality of front line practice through monthly practice days and the annual practice week.

## **Practice days and practice week**

Monthly visits for one day by service director, head of service and CSM/senior manager to service areas on a rotating basis. Annual practice week involves directors and senior managers from children's social care and wider council including

education and skills, adult social care and health spending one week across all service areas.

- To ensure senior managers have a regular and direct line of sight to frontline practice
- To assist in identifying local and county wide strengths and areas for development.
- Along with other QA processes, identify improvement actions and to assess the impact of those actions on the quality of practice
- To maintain senior manager contact with front line staff
- To get staff used to the practice and processes of inspection

### **Audits, complaints and customer feedback**

We continue to develop our audit programme and processes to support a more detailed understanding of the quality and impact of our work. Findings from complaints inform our planning. A key element is further developing our ways of gaining the views of children, young people and families of the services that they receive, some of which are detailed here.

### **Customer perception**

A variety of mechanisms exist for children, young people and adults 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. For children and young people, we utilise a range of methods of gaining their views and enabling their participation with our services.

### **Looked after children and care leavers**

#### **Care Leavers**

From the results of the most recent care leavers survey, the care leavers participation group identified the following areas to work on:

- Effectively supporting young people for independence.
- Website development: to provide a range of information including finding out their rights, who they can contact, independence skills.

- Peer mentoring - Developing ways in which care leavers could give advice and support to other young people

The survey also gave feedback on care leavers views on their accommodation and their participation, the majority being fully satisfied in both areas. They identified that too many care leavers had had too many placement moves and needed time to prepare for moves wherever possible.

More recently, our care leavers are developing an approach to further ensure all looked after children have the right information from the point at which they become looked after.

### **Voices Making Choices (VMC)**

We have a group of looked after children who meet monthly and we are continuing to develop the range of ages and the ways in which their views effectively inform and support work with all our looked after children. The group meet and liaise regularly with the directors and with corporate parenting advisory group as part of supporting effective participation. They are also involved in a range of activities including training and staff recruitment.

### **Residential homes**

Children and young people in all our residential homes are regularly consulted about and influence matters relevant for them and this is reflected in the detail and judgements of the Ofsted inspection reports.

### **Wider consultation with children and young people**

As part of the development of the new partnership children and young people's plan (CYPP) a consultation was held to gather what young people were seeing as most important to them. The survey received over 1700 responses from young people across the county and their responses form a central part of the plan and its development. Key responses were:

- Making sure adults and services communicate in a way that suits young people
- Safety: Developing safe spaces for children and young people to go
- Knowing where to go for advice and support on mental health, bullying, drugs, alcohol
- Having fun: Being able to do things with your family and friends.

- Insufficient means being a barrier to taking part in things
- The importance of the Curriculum for Life

## **Make Your Mark**

Make Your Mark is a national youth consultation that takes place on an annual basis to inform the UK Youth Parliament on what young people see as their priorities. The voting was also held here in Northumberland too with over 6000 young people from across the County casting their vote during September 2018. The top three issues from Northumberland were mental health, curriculum for life and ending period poverty and these have fed into strategic developments.

## **Parental and family feedback**

Parental and family feedback is obtained in a range of ways. Through our standard monthly audits, feedback has been obtained from 46 families over the year. The vast majority of the feedback is positive, with clear evidence of service users experiencing support that makes a difference to their lives. 83% of service users who were spoken to (38 out of 46) stated that they felt that the social work intervention had made a positive difference to their lives.

*‘Yes I feel that they really listen to me and i can talk to both C and L and they give me pep talks and tell me I can do it and to keep going. I am so grateful for the help and support that they have given me it is because of them that my life is changed.’*

*‘Really good, to be totally honest, at the end of the phone when needed very open, listened to my views, lovely approachable, she is very open and honest. Her involvement has made a huge difference to me and family, she always got back within the day. She adjusted appointments in emergencies and met my needs.’*

This positive support was reflected in the family's perceived confidence in the service and their willingness to feel able to make an approach in the future as necessary. 39 out of 42 (93%) families who were asked the question felt that they did have confidence in the service and would feel able to come back for help in the future.

The information received provides a richness and insight into the quality of practice and service user experience that can help shape future interventions and lead to

quality improvements. Areas for improvement are around responsiveness, social workers not always communicating effectively (which is often reflected in complaints), and consistency of the workers who are involved with families.

### **Practice Week**

During practice week, the vast majority of families who were contacted families were positive about the support and services they were currently receiving. In some cases, previous difficulties and challenges were acknowledged but the vast majority reported current workers to be approachable and helpful. They were clear on the concerns that professionals had and the vast majority of parents stated that they were able to give their views in ongoing work as well as in formal meetings.

*“I will be both sad when the support finishes, but also happy as I have achieved a lot with that support”*

However, an area for development identified from practice week were the missed opportunities within services to seek feedback from families. Most feedback heard was positive but there are missed opportunities to learn from our families and what they tell us.

### **Children’s centres**

There is an annual children’s centre parental satisfaction survey and the most recent survey indicated:

- 98% of parents felt they could speak to staff confidentially if required,
- 99.4% were satisfied with the group/service they attended,
- 98% were satisfied with the information and advice given,
- 98% were satisfied with the staff overall,

### **Staff Feedback**

#### **Practice days and practice week**

As part of the above work, staff views and opinions are sought. The findings indicate that workers are extremely positive about the support that they receive from their managers, formally and informally. There is regular management oversight of casework and the varied training opportunities are appreciated by staff.

### **Staff survey**

For staff working in children's social care, the most recent staff survey conducted by the council highlights that:

- The vast majority of staff in children's social care are enthusiastic about their job, feeling trusted to do it to a standard they are pleased with.
- They are very positive about the teams within which they work, the colleagues with whom they work and the support and encouragement they receive from their line manager.
- The training and development that they receive has helped them to do their jobs more effectively for the benefit of the service users and that their skills and knowledge are up to date.
- While staff say that communication with senior managers has got better in the last 12 months and is better than the council average, this needs to be further improved, in particular acting on staff feedback and ensuring staff feel and are involved in decisions.
- Jobs in social care can be stressful and we need to make sure that, as a service and a council, we continue to do as much as we can to mitigate the impact of stress and to support staff who may experience harassment or abuse from service users.
- We need to do more to ensure that feedback from service users is regularly communicated to staff and is used to inform decisions

Overall, this is a positive staff survey with a high rate of return within children's services and it demonstrates continuing progress for the staff from previous surveys. An action plan will be developed in consultation with staff to for those areas identified for improvement

## **Children's social care complaints**

### **Statistical data**

The table below shows that there has been an increase in complaints, however, this can be accounted for due to change within the Client Relations Team and the way in which complaints/feedback are now being recorded and managed.

In addition, corporate complaints in relation to Children's Social Care are now being received and managed by the Client Relations Team.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Social Care</b>	<b>Corporate</b>	<b>Total</b>
2016/17	17	Not recorded	17
2017/18	27	Not recorded	27
2018/19 (to 31/1/19)	44	2	46

Of the 46 complaints received, only 4 were from young people themselves. 2 of those are currently Looked After Children and 2 are former Looked After Children.

### **Themes**

The following table indicates how the complaints were categorised according to the content and nature of the complaint being made.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>
Communications/Information	15
Delay in Service	3
Failure to follow policy/procedure	5
Standard of service	9
Staff manner/attitude	6
Breach of confidentiality	2
Issue with social worker	1
Disagree with officer decision	5

Learning from complaints is undertaken on an individual basis where necessary. The themes arising inform our overall quality assurance and other development activity, and staff have undertaken specific training (My customer, my responsibility) in response to complaints findings.

### **Benchmarking**

Further to the performance and activity data earlier in the statement, the table overleaf shows our performance in relation to regional and national averages. It is used in a quarterly benchmarking exercise that is commissioned by the regional



ADCS, and has been used internally at our quarterly business and performance meetings and monthly Quality, Performance and Audit Group.

Benchmarking analysis	2017/18		Qtr 3 2018/19		Higher/ lower is better	DoT compared to Nland 17/18
	N'land	Eng	Reg Av	N'land	H / L	DoT
Rate of Children's Services Referrals per 10,000 population	608	553	627.6	626.6	L	↓
Percentage of rereferrals, within 12 months of a previous referral	17	22	20.7	20.5	L	↓
Assessments (continuous) completed in the year	735	532	700.6	731.8	L	↑
% of continuous assessments completed by children's social care services	90.0	83.0	82.0	89.9	H	↓
Section 47 enquiries rate per 10,000 children	209	167	235.4	223.3	L	↓
Rate of initial stage Child Protection conferences	103	67	81.6	113.8	L	↓
Percentage of Child Protection conferences held within 15 days	83	77	85.5	92.4	H	↑
Children in Need rate per 10,000	457	341	454.0	430.0	L	↑
Rate of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March per 10,000 children	66	45	64.3	75.2	L	↓
Percentage of children registered on the child protection register, previously registered	16.0	20	21.7	18.1	L	↓
Children looked after rate per 10,000	66	64	101.0	64.5	L	↑
Percentage of LAC adopted during the year ending 31st March	15	13	12.4	15.1	H	↑
Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted	558	486	527.1	377.6	L	↑

Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family	223	201	205.6	120.0	L	↑
The percentage of children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family	40.0	56.0	52.7	53.7	H	↑

## Overall Summary

As indicated earlier in the statement, we have further integrated and developed our performance and quality assurance processes and pulling all of our activity together, a summary of the key themes of strengths and areas for improvement at the time of the service statement are detailed below:

### Strengths:

- Workers across social care know children and young people well. They consider their views and experiences and we see really good examples of engagement with children and young people. They are ambitious for children and young people, forge positive relationships, and want the best for them.
- Through all our quality assurance work, no child has been found to be in situations of unassessed or unmanaged risk. Despite challenges for our workforce, there are no unallocated cases.
- Assessments are timely, comprehensive, and purposeful. The quality has much improved.
- Improved and consistent management oversight across social care, including improved monitoring, scrutiny, and challenge by the IRO service.
- Improved quality of recording of visits
- There is evidence of the increased use of Signs of Safety(SoS)across social care, including supporting management oversight.
- Allegations against professionals are managed promptly and effectively, and ensure children and young people are safeguarded.
- Improved response to customer complaints.
- Good record on timely adoptions, including adoption for harder to place children.
- Staff feel supported and motivated and there are positive working relationships with partners.
- All residential homes for Northumberland children are judged as outstanding for their leadership and management by Ofsted.

## **Areas for further improvement**

- Developing and embedding the culture of working with, not doing to, families. There are improvements, but more is needed to implement and evidence this. This is supported by SoS approach, and the leadership pledge. We also need to maximise feedback opportunities from families in our services and ensure that our language and communication is clear and jargon free
- Quality of plans: There has been an improvement in the last quarter in the quality of plans across social care but there is more work to do to ensure consistent quality and user friendliness.
- Focus on and use of plans: We need to ensure that the plan is focused on, used consistently and evaluated at core groups/care team meetings to support timely progress. The use of and focus on plans is more effective in early help/TAF meetings.
- Threshold application: We need to develop a more consistent and proportionate application of thresholds for social care intervention and child protection planning. We have seen a very recent improvement in child protection, but there is further work and embedding to do on this. However, our application of thresholds for accommodating children and young people and our public law outline (PLO) pre-proceedings practice has improved considerably. This approach is supported by the leadership pledge of risk sensible, not risk averse.
- Improve permanency planning consistently for children of all ages and at all stages. We need to embed the practice and culture of thinking about permanence at all points in our interventions. Permanency planning is better in pre-birth work, but is not applied as consistently for older children.
- Children in need (CIN) work: Further improve the quality and effectiveness of our work under CIN
- Recording and capturing work undertaken. Staff could generally speak about excellent practice and interventions but this was not always obvious on the case file. Staff need to ensure all work undertaken is reflected appropriately in case recording in a timely way
- Workforce: Crucial to the achievement of practice improvement is a stable workforce. There remain challenges and fragility in the social work workforce, impacting on the quality and consistency of the work, although there have been improvements in this. We need to note that other areas of social care services benefit from consistent staffing. The leadership pledge emphasises the critical importance of our workforce in delivering good quality services and the support, development and challenge to underpin this.

## **Continuous Improvement plan**

Our continuous improvement plan incorporates those areas where we need to do

more work. The plan includes detailed aims, actions, and time scales and progress is monitored by senior managers on a monthly basis. Further to this scrutiny and challenge external to the department is provided by the safeguarding children board, family and children overview and scrutiny committee and the corporate parenting advisory group.

The plan focuses on eight priorities, within which the top three are paramount:

<b>Ensure all children and families receive the right help at the right time from the right service</b>	<b>Embedding family focused practice</b>	<b>Workforce stability, development and succession planning</b>
<p><b>Key aims/actions:</b></p> <p>Co-location of early help within First Contact to embed early intervention and improve use of early help offer for families</p> <p>Ensure that social work interventions at the front door are timely and proportionate and that thresholds are consistently and appropriately applied</p> <p>Further develop the range and flexibility of services for families with children at risk of entering care to ensure that they are supported to remain at home where safe and that all alternatives to care are effectively explored</p>	<p><b>Key aims/actions:</b></p> <p>Embed signs of safety as the practice model to improve collaborative working with families and ensure that the voice of the child is reflected in assessments and plans</p> <p>To identify and engage with a wider family and friends network at the earliest opportunity</p>	<p><b>Key aims/actions :</b></p> <p>Embed and further develop the ASYE academy and programme, evaluating its impact for children and families.</p> <p>Embed the new staffing structure to maximise development opportunities for current staff and to enhance career pathways.</p>

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Key aims/actions</b>
<b>Continue to raise the standards of front line social work practice in assessment and specific areas of risk response.</b>	<p>Specific risks (contextual safeguarding/domestic abuse) are identified and addressed promptly and effectively</p> <p>Improve the effectiveness and timeliness of our CIN work</p>
<b>Continue to raise the standards of front line social work practice in the quality and effectiveness of plans and planning.</b>	<p>To ensure consistent focus on plans and progress</p> <p>Ensure the timely achievement of permanence for all children</p>
<b>Ensure effective leadership and management supports and promotes good practice across all areas:</b>	<p>To effectively support the development of quality practice, moving on from compliance and to ensure that impact is clearly evaluated</p> <p>Maximise the use and coordination of all methods of quality assurance to support practice improvements.</p> <p>Further develop systems to capture customer experience to support our continuous improvement</p>
<b>Further strengthen our corporate parenting</b>	<p>Strengthen the leadership and governance of the Corporate Parenting advisory group, including developing the role of elected member champion for children in care</p> <p>Continue to improve the range of placements to support our looked after children, including the development of in house residential provision from agreed council funding.</p> <p>Continue to improve the effectiveness of our services to care leavers including more apprenticeships and mentors for care leavers and the development and implementation of NCC care leavers covenant</p>
<b>Continue to improve leadership and partnership working to deliver better outcomes for children</b>	<p>Launch the children and young people's partnership (CYPSP) with the revised and strengthened Children and Young People's Plan.</p>

	<p>As a regional early adopter, shape the local safeguarding partnership arrangements across Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.</p> <p>Deliver the children's social care elements of the SEND written statement of action (WSOA)</p>
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## Performance Framework

The indicators are based on our key performance measures with a priority for improvement areas identified in the body of this report.

Measure	Eng Av	Outturn			Target		
		2016/17	2017/18	18/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
1. % social workers where caseload weighting is within the desired points level	- LPI	n/a	69	<b>61.3</b>	80	85	85
2. % staff turnover within the social work workforce	13.6	8.4	14.8	<b>13.9</b>	13.7	13.5	13.3
3. Rate of children and young people subject to child protection plans per 10,000 popn	45	40	66	<b>71</b>	65	62	59
4. Rate of Looked After Children (LAC) per 10,000 popn	64	69	66	<b>62.8</b>	60	60	60
5. % of looked after children placed in foster care	73	79	76	<b>73</b>	73	75	76
6. % of looked after children placed in residential care	- LPI	10	10	<b>14</b>	13	12	10
7. Children adopted over past 12 months: average no. of days between a child entering care and moving in with adoptive family	486*	597	533	<b>459</b>	520	490	465
8. Average duration of care proceedings ending (wks)	29	32	34	<b>37</b>	34	30	26
9. % of LAC who have had 3 or more placements in the last 12 months	10	8	13	<b>10</b>	9	9	9
10. % Long term LAC in same placement for the past 2 years	70	67	70	<b>68</b>	71	72	72
11. Number of school aged LAC who had at least 1 school placement move during the year **	- LPI	14	12	<b>12 / 285</b>	12	11	11
12. Rate of proven re-offending	41.4	37.7	50	<b>40.4</b>	35	34	33

13. % of Young Offenders engagement in suitable education, employment or training	- LPI	53	72	63.5	70	72	74
14. % of 19-21 yr old care leavers who are in touch	88	96	94	95	95	95	95
15. % of 19-21 yr old care leavers living in suitable accommodation	84	91	91	93	95	95	95
16. % of 19-21 yr old care leavers in education, employment or training	50	51	43	51	60	65	68
17. No Of Supported Families attached to the Programme (January 2015 to March 2020)	- LPI	949	1465	2383	2120	2120	N.A.
18. Supporting Families cases where there has been significant and sustained progress or continuous employment	- LPI	289	274	1280	1844	2120	N.A.
19. % of EHFV cases closed because desired outcomes have been met	- LPI	N.A.	63	57	70	80	85
20. % of 0-2 yr olds with sustained engagement with their children's centre within the 30% most deprived areas	- LPI	N.A.	N.A.	24	40	50	60

\* measured over a 3 year period nationally

\*\* academic year

LPI = Locally-defined performance indicator, so there is no national average available