Disabled Children's Social Work Team (DCT) - Eligibility Criteria

The Disabled Children’s Team (DCT) provides support for disabled children and young people where their disability has a substantial and long term effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities **and**

There are significant difficulties in meeting needs within their family, broader support networks or through local universal or early help provision.

Whilst eligibility decisions are based on individual need and professional judgement, including to what extent the impairment affects their lives and the lives of those who live with and care for them, it is likely that a disabled child or young person will fit into one or more of the following definitions:

* A significant, permanent and enduring physical disability
* A significant global learning disability
* A severe and enduring communication disorder
* Autism with a significant global development delay and may have challenging behaviour
* A significant sensory impairment

DCT may also work with young people aged 18 and up to 25 years if they still have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

You can find out more on the Preparing for Adulthood pages in the Local Offer area of the Northumberland County Council Website:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Northumberland-Local-Offer-SEND-0-to-25-years/Preparing-for-adulthood.aspx>

**What can DCT do to help?**

Care and short breaks services

Many parents and carers need a regular break from their caring role. Short breaks can also help children and young people to meet others, do activities they enjoy and increase their independence. We can arrange support with registered private and voluntary sector organisations. Some families prefer to have a direct payment and employ care staff.

Children who need lower levels of support may be able to access support through an Early Help Assessment or their EHCP. For further information about this please contact One Call on 10670 536400

Further information about some of the short break providers available can be found in the Northumberland Guide to Services which can be found here:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Campaigns/SEND%20local%20offer/SEND_2018_interactive.pdf>

**Typical care services might include:**

* Day care, in school holidays, after school or at weekends
* Overnight or weekend stays with short break carers or a residential unit
* Specialist support to help a child take part in activities
* Support workers to care for your child in your own home

The type and level of care service you will be offered depends on the individual needs of your child and your family. You will decide on your own support plan so you will have choice and control over this.

Advice and assistance

We will do our best to advise you or we will find the best agency to do so. We work with health professionals, schools and other agencies.

Support to parents and carers

When a child or young person is assessed, parents and carers can be offered a carer’s assessment to take into account these needs in the child’s plan.

Full time care

We aim to support families so that children can continue living at home. If children or young people can no longer live with their family we arrange for them to be looked after.

Child protection

Our social workers are trained in child protection. If a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, we work with families and other agencies to reduce the risk of harm.

 **How can I get support from the Disabled Children's Team?**

A child or young person can be referred to the Disabled Children’s Team by a professional like a teacher or a doctor, or families can ring up and talk to staff in the One Call service on **01670536400** They will advise you whether the Disabled Children’s Team may be able to carry out an assessment of your needs.

**What happens next?**

First we will visit you at home to make sure we fully understand what your child and your family need. This is called an **child and family assessment** and is carried out by a social worker. The social worker will look at:

* The additional care and support your child needs because of their disability
* Care and support needs which can be met by the family and those which can’t
* The circumstances of the family and what support is already available in your wider family and local community

The social worker will then assess what additional support is needed for your child to be cared for by their family. Families get a copy of the assessment.

If the assessment shows that you need additional help to care for your child the social worker will draw up a  **care plan** with you and your family which sets out clearly what needs your child has which require additional support, how these can be best met, who will undertake to meet these needs (eg if it is a health need which health professionals would be involved to meet it). This would include any needs which you or your family have as carers which had been identified.

Needs can be met either through services which are already provided for children and families in Northumberland funded by the local authority, health and education. Alternatively some young people and families may choose to purchase their own support through a direct payment or personal budget. Further information on what these are can be provided by the social worker undertaking the assessment for your family.

**What if your needs change?**

Plans are reviewed regularly, and can be changed. There should be regular meetings called **care team meetings** which involve everyone working with your child and family coming together with you to discuss how the plan is working. If you have questions, problems with the service, or your circumstances change you can contact your social worker. If your need is urgent ask to speak to a duty social worker if your allocated worker is not available.