



Northumberland County Council

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 as a result of, primarily, their disability.

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 learning disability
- A significant and enduring communication disorder
- An Autistic Spectrum Condition which has a significant impairment on functioning
- A significant sensory impairment

What can DCT do to help?

Care and short breaks services

All children need time away from their parents/caregivers as they grow older to allow them to develop independence and social skills, meet up with friends and develop new interests and to allow parents to have a break from parenting. This is no different for families with a disabled child and, for most families of disabled children, they can access community activities available to all children or attend targeted community groups which are set up to include disabled children.

We know though that for some families with disabled children this is not as easy and the needs of the child and the caring role which parents play means that they need to have a more targeted or specialist short break.

An assessment of need will help to determine whether a family with a disabled child need additional support with care and short breaks which mean that the local authority should fund this.

We can arrange support with registered private and voluntary sector organisations. Some families prefer to have a direct payment and employ care staff.

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 community activities
- Support workers to care for your child in your own home

The type and level of care service offered depends on the individual needs of each child and their 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 and siblings

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. The child and family assessment is a whole family assessment and will include the strengths and needs of siblings and parents. It will include any support needed for siblings as well including if they need support as a young carer.

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.

Safeguarding

Our social workers are trained in safeguarding. 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 a **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 or for them to be included in social activities. 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.

What other support is available?

Not every family who have a disabled child will want or require the input from a social worker, whether that is through the DCT or one of the other social work teams in Northumberland. Children and families may prefer to access support through an Early Help Assessment. Further information about Early Help Assessments and how they can support families can be found here.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Family/Support.aspx>

or you can find information about other support services on the local offer

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

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