

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Informing our approach to fairness

Proposal:	Children's Social Care – Keeping families safely together
Date of assessment:	November 2020
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Version:	2 – updated following consultation
Planned review date:	June 2021

Section A: Current service

1. What does the service / function / policy do?

Children's Social Care (CSC) provides our statutory social work function for the care and protection of children in need and children and young people at risk of significant harm.

Our service structure falls into two main categories of responsibilities that arise from a range of legislation (including but not limited to the Children's Acts 1989 and 2004). The first group of services relate to child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and the second group of services relate to corporate parenting responsibilities.

Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children

These services are responsible for working with children, young people and their families to prevent harm or neglect and promote a child or young person's well-being and welfare. This is how we support families to stay safely together. We do this through the following services:

- Initial Response (including the Emergency Duty Team, the Screening Team and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub): These teams act as the first point of contact for anyone who is worried about a child's safety or welfare. They provide initial assessments and interventions to keep children and young people safe.
- Long Term Social Work: These teams provide social care support to children and young people who are classified as a child in need, are subject to a child protection plan or who are in our care. They work with families to keep children and young people safe, completing assessments, and developing and progressing plans to improve the circumstances of the children.
- 16 Plus: These teams provide social care support to older young people who are either classified as a child in need or who are in our care. The teams also support care experienced young people (aged 18-21-year-olds) as they move into adulthood. They also provide social work support to unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors.
- Children with Disabilities and Hospital Social Work: these teams provide social work support to children with disabilities and those with complex health needs and their families.
- A number of targeted services aimed at reducing demand for care, including our Multi-systemic Therapy (MST), MST Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN) and Outreach. These teams support and work with complex adolescents and children at risk of abuse and neglect and their families to reduce risk and prevent entry to care or to reunify families where a young person has already entered care.
- Children's Safeguarding Standards Unit: This team is responsible for the provision of an Independent Review Officers Service which facilitates child protection conferences, reviews for children in care, reviews for children placed for adoption and the provision of continuous oversight of child protection and children in care plans.

Corporate Parenting responsibilities

As corporate parent we want the best for our Children in Care just as any parent would. It is our responsibility to provide the best possible care for our children in care and support them to thrive. The Corporate Parenting service enables this by providing safe, stable homes that meet the individual needs and support the achievement of good outcomes for children and young people in our care. Wherever possible and appropriate we aim to provide our children in care with family homes within Newcastle so they can stay connected to their friends, families, school and community. Corporate Parenting includes the following services:

- **Fostering:** these teams are responsible for the recruitment, assessment and support of our in-house foster carers. In-house foster carers are paid by us to provide a range of respite, short-term and permanent family homes for the children and young people in our care. Foster carers may also receive “Staying Put” payments where a young person who has left care continues to live with them.
- **In-house Residential Care:** We run six children’s homes across the city. These homes provide a range of support from short breaks for children with disabilities, to emergency and longer-term homes for young people with complex needs.
- **Placements:** This team works closely with Commissioning and Procurement colleagues to commission external placements in cases where we are unable to meet needs through our in-house provision. Placements are commissioned from the independent residential sector and from independent fostering agencies through an established regional framework to ensure quality, choice and value for money.
- **Family and Friends Carer Support:** We provide support, both financial and non-financial, to family and friends carers. A ‘family and friends carer’ is a relative, friend or other person known to the child or young person who cares for that child full time. This arrangement may be put in place through a private family arrangement or through a formal Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangements Order, a Connected Persons arrangement or Adoption.
- **Adopt North East:** The Corporate Parenting service is also responsible for oversight of our adoption arrangements. Newcastle is part of the regional adoption agency Adopt North East and we contract them on our behalf to:
 - recruit, assess, approve and support prospective adopters;
 - match and support families with plans for adoption; and
 - provide post adoption support to adoptive families.

2. Who do we deliver this service for?

Children’s Social Care (CSC) is a critical part of the safety net that ensures all children remain safe and free from harm. As above and where necessary we also care for children and young people from age 0–18 and up to age 24 where a young person has a significant learning need. We provide leaving care support to young people from the age of 18 up to the age of 25.

Demand for CSC locally and nationally has grown significantly over the last 10 years. The Local Government Association reported in January 2020 that councils have seen a 53% per cent increase in children on Child Protection plans and a 28% increase in Children in Care – a 10 year high. This increase cannot be seen in isolation. The last ten years have seen rising levels of child poverty – in Newcastle nearly 4 in 10 children are now estimated to be living in poverty and the government have overseen cuts in council

budgets of a combined £16 billion over the last 10 years. Reducing our ability to work with vulnerable children and families at the time our support is needed most.

The combination of increased demand and swinging cuts was already challenging. These challenges have been exacerbated through the COVID-19 pandemic – new eligibility for Free School Meals increased by 97.55% in the period April to October 2020 compared to the same period in 2019, unemployment has increased sharply – with a record increase in redundancies across the country and 1.5 million children and young people and 8.5 million adults will require new or additional mental health support as a result of the pandemic. This all increases the pressure on families in the city and drives demand for CSC.

Demand for CSC services in Newcastle is high:

- We receive in excess of 24,000 contacts each year, relating to around 1 in every 25 children in the city
- At the end of October 2020, we were working with 515 children and young people with Child Protection plans (a rate of 88.1 per 10,000 children compared to 62 per 10,000 for statistical neighbours)
- At the end of October 2020, there were 685 children and young people in our care (a rate of 117 per 10,000 children compared to 106.6 per 10,000 for statistical neighbours)
- We were also working with and supporting 215 care experienced young people at the end of October 2020.

3. Why do we deliver this service?

We have overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in the city. We have a number of statutory functions under the 1989 and 2004 Children Acts, including specific duties in relation to children in need and children suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, regardless of where they are found, under sections 17 and 47 of the Children Act 1989 ('the Act').

- Section 17 of the Act places a general duty on all local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need. A child in need is a child who needs additional support from the local authority to achieve their potential.
- Under section 17 (6) financial assistance in terms of goods or services, or in exceptional circumstances cash, can be provided to a child, parent or carer to address identified needs to safeguard and promote a child's welfare where there is no other legitimate source of financial assistance.
- Section 47 of the Act requires the local authority to investigate the child's circumstances where they have 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm,' and to 'take any action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare'.
- Section 22G of the Act places a duty on local authorities to take steps to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the city, which meets the needs of children that we are looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in our area ('the sufficiency duty').

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 amended the Children Act 1989 include duties in relation to planning for children whose status as children in care will be ending. This Act places a duty on us to assess and meet the care and support needs of eligible and

relevant children and young people and to assist former relevant children, in particular in respect of their employment, education and training.

4. How much do we currently spend on this service / function / policy?

Gross expenditure	Gross income	Net budget	Comments:
£25,769,590	(£641,640)	£25,729,940	Based on 2020-21 Base budget The budget covers the cost of all Children in Care placements (excluding the in-house residential service), plus the associated budgets for Section 17, Support to Children in Care and Legal fees.

5. How many people do we employ to deliver this service?

No. posts	No. full time equivalent officers	Comments:
455	419.16	This is the total Children's Social Care workforce across the entire service.

Section B: Proposal for future service

6. How do we propose to change the service / function / policy?

Update following consultation: We have considered the feedback provided during the consultation period (see Section C). As a result, there are no significant changes to the proposal.

Children's Social Care (CSC) is transforming how it works with children and families to safely reduce demand for services and to keep families safely together. By supporting families to stay safely together we will improve outcomes for children, reduce the numbers of children and young people needing care and reduce costs associated with formal child protection processes.

Background to our proposal

In 2018, in response to rising numbers of children and young people entering care and higher than average numbers of children on Child Protection plans, we began work to radically transform how we work with families. The Right Child, Right Care Transformation Plan was developed focusing on:

- strengthening and developing our workforce to better meet demand;
- using systemic social work approaches to working with families;
- growing our in-house fostering provision to bring more children back to family settings in Newcastle; and

- reducing the use of external residential provision.

Our Right Child, Right Care plan has made a positive difference. Pre-COVID our use of agency social workers had halved, we were working with 20% fewer children and families across the service and more of our children in care were living closer to their friends, schools and communities in Newcastle. In 2019, to accelerate our transformation plans we successfully bid to be part of the Department for Education's (DfE) Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme, to work with Leeds City Council to implement Family Valued in Newcastle.

Family Valued seeks to create a shift in culture towards 'working with' children and families rather than doing things 'to' them. Strengthening relationships are at the heart of this, as is drawing on existing strengths and relationships in the wider family network. The Family Valued approach works with the wider family and any extended support network to encourage long term changes at home that keep children safe, boost family resilience and create stable homes where children can thrive. The independent evaluation of this approach demonstrates its effectiveness in reducing the number of children subject to Child Protection and safely and sustainably reducing the numbers of children in care. Following confirmation of investment from DfE, this ambitious programme started in November 2020 and has been enthusiastically supported by staff and partners in the city.

Anticipated benefits

First and foremost, this proposal is designed to work earlier and better with children, young people and families so that families stay safely together. In doing so, the independent evaluation of Family Valued suggests that we will see a sustained reduction in children subject to a Child Protection plan and those who come into care from 2021-22.

As a result of working differently to keep families safely together, we will generate in 2021-22 the following budget savings:

- Reduction in demand and costs of placements for children in our care (£2,611,200).
By safely reducing the number of children in our care, whilst also continuing to grow our in-house placement provision we will spend less on placements for children in care from 2021-22
- Reduction in expenditure on section 17 (child in need) and support to children in care payments by 5% per annum (£136,020).
With earlier work with families and partners to strengthen family resilience, demand for miscellaneous payments for children in need will reduce. In addition, as the number of children in our care reduce we will spend less on miscellaneous support to them.
- Reduction in expenditure on legal costs for care proceedings by 5% per annum (£55,000).
With fewer children and young people requiring formal care proceedings, as families are better supported to realise their strengths, we will reduce legal costs.

Note this impact assessment describes proposals and anticipated benefits from 2021-22. We will evaluate progress through 2021-21, however, at this stage we expect these proposals to continue to 2023-24.

7. What evidence have we used to inform this proposal?	
Information source	What this has told us
Our data collection (known as SSRS reports)	It provides a range of demand and impact data, including that Newcastle's rate of children on Child Protection Plans and children in care is high, and above our statistical neighbours.
Local Government Association reports on demand for Children's Social Care	Locally and nationally over the last ten years there has been a significant increase in demand for children's social care services both locally and nationally.
Range of data on socio-economic conditions, including the impact of COVID (Office for National Statistics , End Child Poverty Now , Centre for Mental Health)	Nationally and locally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of children living in poverty has increased in the last 10 years; • Demand for mental health services is forecasted to increase; • Unemployment has increased in the period July – September 2020
Evaluation of Family Valued in Leeds	Independent evaluation of the project's impact on the target population shows that between 2011 and 2017, Leeds reduced the number of children on Child Protection Plans by nearly 50 per cent (974 in 2011 down to 515 in 2017); A social work approach based on the strengths of families can lead to a reduction in children in care, and on child protection plans.
Ofsted Inspections Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (July 2017) Focused Visit (September 2019)	In July 2017, the council was judged to be 'Requires Improvement' with areas of 'good', for example, the Newcastle Safeguarding Children's Board, leadership and management, adoption services and services for Care Leavers. In September 2019, Ofsted carried out a Focused Visit. Inspectors found that the council had made progress in our improvement journey with a clear commitment on improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.

8. What will be the financial impact of this proposal(s)?

Net revenue savings of £2,802,220 in 2021-22.

Summarised as below:

- Reduction in demand for placements for children in care, (£2,611,200)
- Reduction in expenditure on section 17 (child in need) and support to children in care payments (£136,020)
- Reduction in expenditure on legal costs for care proceedings (£55,000)

We expect further savings to be achieved in financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24.

9. What will be the impact upon our employees of this proposal?

No. FTEs	% workforce	Comments: These proposals are based on strengthened relationships between our staff and the children and families they work with. This is key to reducing demand.
None	None	

Section C: Consultation

10. Who have we engaged and consulted with about this proposal?

Date	Who	How	Main issues raised
Dec 20 – Jan 21	Newcastle Residents	Let's Talk	Some responses from the public expressed concern that there could be a shift away from focusing on children and young people's needs and potentially more pressure on staff. A number of people shared ideas for making savings including taking a 'targeted approach', working in partnership with other service providers, such as health services, to streamline services and prevent duplication of work.
Dec 20 – Jan 21	VCS Organisations	Let's Talk Online Event	Attendees at the virtual voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations' event were concerned that changing the way services are delivered risks losing existing good practice,
15 January 2021	Connected Voice	Let's Talk (in writing)	Connected Voice supported working more closely with families through a partnership approach, and were keen for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to be involved in developing and delivering these services.
15 January 2021	Health Watch	Let's Talk (in writing)	Health Watch welcomed the incorporation of the independently evaluated Family Valued approach into Children's Social Care and recognised how the approach could be of benefit to families

			and cost effective. However, they want assurance that the effectiveness of the approach is constantly evaluated to ensure that children are not being removed from care inappropriately or placed incorrectly within the spectrum of support, and that staff, parents, carers and children and young people are regularly invited to share their experience of the new approach.
13 January 2021	Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership	Virtual Teams Meeting	Feedback was positive about the developments that will be implemented to support families to stay safely together. Discussion around ensuring interventions are focused in the right places – related to inequality issues, domestic violence, and changes that may occur as a result of Brexit and immigration statuses.
11 January 2021	Education Staff and School Representatives	Virtual Teams Meeting	No issues raised about the proposal
16 December 2020	Children’s Social Care Staff	Virtual Teams Meeting	Feedback was positive about new approaches to supporting families to stay safely together. Staff commented that families need the right support systems in place to support children to remain with their families. Staff also queried whether the financial position might change in the future due to current uncertainties (e.g. COVID).
5,12,17 November 2020	Children’s Social Care Staff, Early Help Staff, Education Staff, external partners from health and the police	Virtual Teams Meeting	Feedback was positive from partners and our staff who welcome the Family Valued approach of working together with families to build on their own strengths and establishing and maintaining relationships of trust. In particular, feedback recognised the strengths of partnership working and the positive impact a shared language and shared understanding of risk will have on outcomes for children and families in Newcastle.
28 October 2019	CSC Staff and external partners from health and the police	Workshop at City Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right Child, Right Care Partnership Approach • The attendees welcomed the Family Valued approach outlined in the DfE Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme.
2019-2020 Various	CSC Staff Feedback Sessions	Mix of in-person meetings and virtual Teams meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff were keen to hear updates about the DfE Strengthening Families Protecting Children Programme; and • Staff supported opportunities for working differently with families and undertaking training.

Section D: Impact assessment

Type of impact (Actual / potential disadvantage or beneficial outcome; none)	Detail of impact	How will this be addressed or mitigated?
People with protected characteristics		
Age		
Potential beneficial outcome	Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work by age and/or based on needs of the children and young people such as including (but not limited to) gender, faith, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and any disability or medical issues.	N/A
Disability		
Potential beneficial outcome	Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work by age and/or based on needs of the children and young people such as including (but not limited to) gender, faith, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and any disability or medical issues.	
Gender reassignment / identity		
Potential beneficial outcome	Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work by age and/or based on needs of the children and young people such as including (but not limited to) gender, faith, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and any disability or medical issues.	

Type of impact (Actual / potential disadvantage or beneficial outcome; none)	Detail of impact	How will this be addressed or mitigated?
Sex		
Potential beneficial outcome	Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work by age and/or based on needs of the children and young people such as including (but not limited to) gender, faith, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and any disability or medical issues. .	
Marriage and civil partnership		
None		
Pregnancy and maternity		
Potential beneficial outcome	Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work by age and/or based on needs of the children and young people such as including (but not limited to) gender, faith, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and any disability or medical issues. .	
Race and ethnicity.		
None	Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work by age and/or based on needs of the children and young people such as including (but not limited to) gender, faith, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and any disability or medical issues.	
Religion and belief		

Type of impact (Actual / potential disadvantage or beneficial outcome; none)	Detail of impact	How will this be addressed or mitigated?
None	Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work by age and/or based on needs of the children and young people such as including (but not limited to) gender, faith, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and any disability or medical issues.	
Sexual orientation		
None	Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work by age and/or based on needs of the children and young people such as including (but not limited to) gender, faith, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and any disability or medical issues.	
Other potential impacts		
People vulnerable to socio-economic impacts		
Beneficial outcome	Children in need and those on a Child Protection plan are more likely to come from deprived areas. Our proposals aim to keep families safely together improving outcomes for children and young people vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.	
Businesses		
None		
Geography		
Beneficial outcome	Children in need and those on a Child Protection plans are more likely to come from deprived wards. Our proposals aim to	

Type of impact (Actual / potential disadvantage or beneficial outcome; none)	Detail of impact	How will this be addressed or mitigated?
	keep families safely together improving outcomes for children and young people vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.	
Community cohesion		
None		
Community safety		
Potential beneficial outcome	Our proposal aims to keep families safely together improving the wellbeing of children and young people and potentially reducing behaviours that may impact community safety.	
Public Health		
Beneficial outcome	The Family Valued approach supports strengthened working across partner agencies to support families to stay safely together. It should support improved health outcomes as children, young people and their families receive the most appropriate support earlier.	
Climate		
None		