

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Informing our approach to fairness

Proposal: Keeping Families Safely Together

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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 wellbeing and welfare. This is how we support families to stay together safely. We do this through the following services:

- **Initial Response, including the Emergency Duty Team, Screening Team, five social work teams 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.
- **Children in Care and Care Leavers Service:** These teams provide social care support for our children in care and to care experienced young people (aged between 18 and 21 years' old) 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 disabled children and those with complex health needs and their families.
- **Edge of Care Service:** Provides targeted support and intervention aimed at reducing demand for care, including our Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), MST Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN) and Intensive Family Intervention Teams. In 2021 we launched our new Family Group Conferencing service which aims to prevent children entering care and also supports reunification plans.
- **Children's Safeguarding Standards Unit:** Through Independent Review Officers, facilitate 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 parents 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 supports 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 in Newcastle so they can stay connected to their friends, families, school and community. Corporate Parenting includes the following services:

- **In-house 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 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 five children's homes across the city. These homes provide a range of support from short breaks for disabled children to medium to longer-term homes for young people with complex needs.
- **Placements:** This team works closely with Commissioning and Procurement colleagues to commission external placements if 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 financial and non-financial support 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, 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 carry out a range of activities on our behalf, including:
 - recruiting, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters;
 - matching and supporting families with plans for adoption; and
 - providing post adoption support to adoptive families.

2. Who do we deliver this service / function / policy for?

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 18 up to the age of 25.

Demand for CSC locally and nationally has grown significantly over the last 10 years. In January 2020, the Local Government Association (LGA) reported that councils had seen a 53% increase in children on Child Protection plans and a 28% increase in Children in Care – a 10 year high. Subsequently COVID-19 hit, impacting children, young people and families in Newcastle, nationally and globally. Child poverty before COVID-19 rose to 41% and Free School Meal applications rose 29% to August 2021.

Feelings of stress, anxiety and isolation and cases of domestic abuse are reported to have increased nationally. These factors can lead to increased demand for services, which are exacerbated by the impact of austerity and recently led the Guardian to comment that, “with resources eviscerated by austerity cuts, the pandemic has made the problems more acute” [in children’s services].

Despite a challenging environment partners in Newcastle, including the council, have come together to support children, young people and families to ensure every baby, child and young person can benefit from fantastic experiences to shape a path to a successful future, and be happy and well.

A city where every child can. Through carefully considered work with children, young people and families we have been able to work differently to keep families safely together.

As of 30 September 2022:

- We were working with **811** children and young people with a Child in Need Plan.
- We were working with **388** children and young people with Child Protection plans. A rate of **65.8 per 10,000** which is below the rate of our statistical neighbours (75.7 per 10,000 at 31 March 2021).
- There were **681** children and young people in our care. A rate of **115.6 per 10,000** children compared to a rate of **115.3 per 10,000** for our statistical neighbours (at 31 March 2021).
- We were also working with and supporting **228** care experienced young people.

3. Why do we deliver this service / function / policy?

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 in 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 the places a duty on local authorities to take steps to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation in the city, to 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, which amended the Children Act 1989, includes 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: £25,197,550

Gross income: £1,143,210

Net budget: £24,054,340

Comments: The budget covers the cost of all Children in Care placements, 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 / function / policy?

Number of posts: 449

Number of full-time equivalent officers: 409.39

Comments: This is the total Children's Social Care workforce across the entire service.

Section B: Proposal for future service

1. How do we proposed to change the service / function / policy?

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 are improving outcomes for children, reducing the numbers and costs of

children and young people needing care and reducing 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.

Our Family Valued programme which launched in January 2021, is starting to make a difference. Staff are commenting that they are beginning to work differently – ‘working with’ children and families rather than doing things ‘to’ them. The Family Group Conferencing service has supported embedding this relationship-based way of working.

Anticipated benefits

By continuing to work in this way – supporting families earlier through Children and Families Newcastle, working differently as children, young people and families work with statutory CSC and safely keeping families together through the use of edge of care services – we will continue to reduce demand for and costs of care. We anticipate that the number of children in our care will reduce .

As a result of working differently to keep families safely together, we will spend £1.660m less in 2023/24.

2. What evidence have we used to inform this proposal?

Internal care management systems

These provide a range of demand and impact data – how we review demand, case and caseload data and assure ourselves that our transformation plans are delivering. Specifically, these reports confirm the number of children and young people on each plan type and how our performance compares with our statistical neighbours and other groups. These reports also confirm the increases in children newly eligible for Free School Meals.

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 CSC services both locally and nationally.

Range of data on socio-economic conditions, including the impact of COVID-19 (Office for National Statistics, End Child Poverty Now, Centre for Mental Health)

Nationally and locally the number of children living in poverty has increased in the last 10 years and demand for mental health services is forecasted to increase.

Independent reviews

In summer 2021, we benefitted from an independent review of CSC in Newcastle by the LGA. The review team considered the strength of what we achieve with and for children, young people and families. The team noted high quality practice, strong leadership, commitment to relational and restorative practice amongst the workforce and early signs that our approach was starting to make a difference.

In Spring 2021, Mutual Ventures, as part of our Department for Education sponsored Family Valued programme, reviewed progress in implementing our new way of working. They commented that there was good awareness and support amongst the workforce. We have built on this in the subsequent months by working hard to embed the approach with the workforce and develop awareness with our partners.

Ofsted Inspections

In our Focused Visit in September 2019, Ofsted Inspectors found that we had made progress in our improvement journey with a clear commitment to improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Our December 2021 Ofsted inspection judged children's services to be 'Good'. Inspectors highlighted that the majority of children 'make good progress' and that support for children in care helps them to flourish.

What parents and carers tell us

When we have engaged with parents and carers, they have shared some of the following comments:

- "My future now looks brighter for both myself and my children... My children are engaged well in education, have brighter prospects for their future, have good routines and most importantly we are happier again." Parent feedback re Early Help, March 2020.
- "She's actually listened to me and believed in me when not many people have. I've had social workers in the past and I don't usually get along with them, I'm usually the one shouting at them but this one has really listened." Parent feedback during CSC Practice Week, March 2021.
- "Having support just makes everything easier...[my social worker] has always reassured me and supported us as a family. They made sure I have all the support I need to get me to where I want to be". Parent feedback during CSC Practice Week, November 2021
- "Working with [my social worker] has improved everything" Parent feedback during CSC Practice Week, November 2021

What children and young people tell us

We work with children and young people to gather their feedback. Young people have shared the following comments with us:

- “I love my Social Worker.” Feedback from a child during our LGA Peer Review, July 2021.
- “I live with the best carer in the world. I love her because she is very understanding and fair and is always there when I need her. I very much love living here.” Feedback from a child during CSC Practice Week, March 2021.
- “It’s great being in care.” Feedback from a child during our LGA Peer Review, July 2021.
- “She took out family from a really dark place...She has helped mum be strong...We are happy now. I love her.” Feedback from a brother and sister during CSC Practice Week, November 2021

Feedback through previous consultations has also informed the development of this proposal – more information is set out below.

3. What will be the financial impact of this proposal?

As a result of working differently to keep families safely together, we will spend **£1.660m** less in 2022/23 in the following ways:

- Reduction in demand and costs of placements for children in our care (£1.585m). 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. We will also look to bring our services together to provide a cohesive care offer.
- Reduction in expenditure on support to children in care payments (£0.025m). As the number of children in our care reduces, we will spend less on miscellaneous support to them.
- Reduction in expenditure on legal costs for care proceedings (£0.050). With fewer children and young people requiring formal care proceedings, as families are supported to stay safely together, we will reduce legal costs

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

- **Number of FTE:** 0 FTE
- **% of workforce:** 0%

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.

Section C: Consultation

1. Who did we engage with to develop this proposal?

Who: Mutual Ventures

When and how: Ongoing since June 2021 to date via a series of staff engagement events

Main issues raised: The purpose of the engagement events was to hear our staff's aspirations for the Family Valued approach and their experience to date.

Feedback was that staff were pleased that Family Valued encouraged creative thinking and approaches to keeping families together and they feel more confident in their decision making which would see more children staying safely at home with families.

Who: Newcastle residents

When and how: December 2021 – January 2022 ongoing budget consultation via Let's Talk

Main issues raised: 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.

Who: Voluntary and community sector organisations

When and how: December 2021 – January 22 via Let's Talk online event as part of budget consultation.

Main issues raised: 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.

Who: Connected Voice

When and how: January 2022 in writing in response to previous budget consultation

Main issues raised: 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.

Who: Health Watch

When and how: January 2022 in writing in response to previous budget consultation

Main issues raised: 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 wanted 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.

Who: Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership

When and how: 09 December 2021, via an online meeting

Main issues raised: Feedback was positive about the developments that will be implemented to support families to stay safely together. Discussion around ensuring interventions are focused on the right places – related to inequality issues, domestic violence and changes that may occur as a result of Brexit and immigration statuses.

Who: Education staff and school representatives

When and how: 11 January 2021, via an online meeting

Main issues raised: No issues raised about the proposal

Who: Children's Social Care staff

When and how: 16 December 2020 via an online meeting

Main issues raised: 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 (for example, COVID-19).

Who: CSC, Early Help and Education staff and external partners from health and the police

When and how: 5,12 and 17 November 2020 via online meetings

Main issues raised: Staff and partners expressed support for the Family Valued approach, and excitement for the potential to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

2. Who do we want / need to engage with during consultation?

Who: Newcastle residents

When: December consultation period

How: Let's Talk Newcastle online portal, supported by accessible information

Who: Children and young people

When: December consultation period

How: Social media and facilitated workshops

Who: Voluntary and community sector

When: December consultation period

How: Let's Talk Newcastle online portal and online meetings with various organisations

Who: Newcastle Safeguarding Children Partnership

When: December consultation period

How: Let's Talk Newcastle online portal and online meetings with various organisations

Who: Education staff and school representatives

When: December consultation period before school holiday period

How: Accessible Briefing note on Services to Schools Portal. Update to Promise Board.

Who: Children's Social Care staff

When: December consultation period

How: Online meetings and accessible briefing note

Who: All CSC, Early Help and Education staff, external partners from health and the police

When: December consultation period

How: Online meetings and accessible briefing note

Who: CSC staff and external partners from health and the police

When: December consultation period

How: Online meetings and accessible briefing note

Who: CSC staff feedback sessions

When: December consultation period

How: Online meetings and accessible briefing note

3. Who provided feedback during the consultation process? (to be completed post-consultation)

Who provided feedback in the consultation process (to be completed post-consultation):

When and how:

Main issues raised:

Section D: Impact assessment

The section below sets out actual or potential disadvantages or benefits that may arise from implementing this proposal. This assessment is set out for people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 and other broader areas of potential impact.

People with protected characteristics

Age

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: 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.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Disability

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work based on needs of the children and young people including, but not limited to, disability.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Gender reassignment

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work relating to transgender status.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Sex

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work by sex.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Marriage and civil partnership

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work relating to marriage or civil partnership status.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Pregnancy and maternity

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work relating to pregnancy and maternity.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Race and ethnicity

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work by race and ethnicity.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Religion and belief

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work in relation to religion and belief.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Sexual orientation

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: Our proposals will provide a better service for all children and their families, enabling families to safely stay together. This includes tailored work based on sexual orientation.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Other potential impacts

Carers

Type of impact: Actual / potential benefit

Detail of impact: Our proposal aims to keep families safely together improving outcomes for children and young people and their families. When working with families to ensure they are able to look after their child safely at home we undertake robust assessments of individual family circumstances. Our assessments identify the presence of carers and allow us to ensure they receive appropriate support. We do not anticipate any impact on carers.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable.

People vulnerable to socio-economic impacts

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: 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.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Businesses

Type of impact: There is no actual or potential impact or benefit for businesses as a result of this proposal.

Geography

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: Children in need and those on a Child Protection plans are more likely to come from deprived wards. Our proposals aim to keep families safely together improving outcomes for children and young people vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Community cohesion

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: Our proposal aims to keep families safely together improving the wellbeing of children and young people and potentially improve community cohesion.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Community safety

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: 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.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Public Health

Type of impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: 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.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable

Climate

Type of Impact: Actual or potential benefit

Detail of impact: If we can reduce the number of children in our care, then could this also have associated reduction in carbon due to a reduction in transport needs.

How will this be addressed or mitigated? Not applicable