

# Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

## Informing our approach to fairness

**Proposal:** Children's Social Care – Keeping families safely together

**Date of assessment:** October 2021

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**Assessment team:** Andy Graham, Maria Brady, Ashleigh Robson

**Version:** 1 (for consultation)

**Planned review date:** January 2022

## Section A: Current service

### What does the service, function or 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.
- 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 support 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.
- Targeted services aimed at reducing demand for care, including our Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), MST Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN) and Intensive Family Intervention Teams. 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. In 2021 we launched our new Family Group Conferencing service.
- Children's Safeguarding Standards Unit: which, 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 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 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.

## Who do we deliver this service, function or 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 the age of 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 pre COVID-19 rose to 41%, 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 no child or young person is left behind as a result of the pandemic. Through carefully considered work with children, young people and families, we have been able to work differently to keep families safely together. As of 31 October 2021:

- We were working with 719 children and young people with a Child in Need Plan.

- We were working with 308 children and young people with Child Protection plans, a rate of 52.3 per 10,000, below the rate of our statistical neighbours (75.7 per 10,000 at 31 March 2021).
- There were 639 children and young people in our care, a rate of 108.4 per 10,000 children compared to a rate of 112.9 per 10,000 for our statistical neighbours (at 31 March 2020).
- We were also working with and supporting 274 care experienced young people.

## Why do we deliver this service, function or 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 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, 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.

## How much do we currently spend on this service, function or policy?

**Gross expenditure:** £26,660,230

**Gross income:** £744,570

**Net budget:** £25,916,160

**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.

## How many people do we employ to deliver this service, function or policy?

**Number of posts:** 475

**Number of full-time equivalent officers:** 435.19

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

## **Section B: Proposal for future service**

### **How do we propose to change the service, function or 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. Despite the challenge of increasing poverty and the COVID-19 pandemic, our carefully considered plan is making a difference:

- The number of children and young people working with us subject to a Child Protection plan has fallen from a rate of 101 per 10,000 children aged 0-17 in 2018-19 to 58 per 10,000 in 2020-21.
- The rate of children and young people entering care has fallen from 64 per 10,000 in 2018-19 to 34 per 10,000 at the end of October 2021.
- As of 31 October, the number of children and young people in care has fallen to 639; 505 of these (79%) benefit from a fostering placement in a loving family environment. This was made possible by a dramatic increase (+51) in new in-house fostering placements since May 2019.

Whilst early in its early stages, our Family Valued programme which launched in January 2021, is starting to make a difference with staff commenting that they are beginning to work differently – ‘working with’ children and families rather than doing things ‘to’ them. We expect our new Family Group Conferencing service will accelerate this relationship-based way of working.

#### **Anticipated benefits**

By continuing to work in this way – supporting families earlier through Children & 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 to 554 by April 2023.

As a result of working differently to keep families safely together, we will spend **£2,172,190** less in 2022-23 in the following ways:

- Reduction in demand and costs of placements for children in our care (£2,093,750). 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.
- Reduction in expenditure on Section 17 and support to children in care payments by 5% per annum (£26,190). 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 (£52,250). With fewer children and young people requiring formal care proceedings, as families are supported to stay safely together, we will reduce legal costs.

## 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.

### 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). This confirmed that a social work approach based on the strengths of families can safely and sustainably reduce the number of children subject to child protection and in care.

### 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 on improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.

### 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, 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, 2021.
- “It's great being in care.” Feedback from a child during our LGA Peer Review, July 2021.

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

### **What will be the financial impact of this proposal?**

Through reduced use of independent sector provision and continued growth of in-house services we anticipate we will spend £2,093,750 less on placements for children in care in 2022-23.

In line with the anticipated reductions in children in care, we anticipate a reduction in support provided through Section 17 and support to Children in Care. Given uncertainty about the ending of the Universal Credit uplift and the longer-term uncertainty of COVID-19, we have assumed a modest 5% reduction which means we will spend £26,190 less in 2022-23.

In line with the anticipated reductions in children in care, we also anticipate a reduction in legal fees and associated legal costs, assuming a 5% reduction means we will spend £52,250 less in 2022-23.

### **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**

### **Who did we engage with to develop this proposal?**

**Who:** Mutual Ventures

**When and how:** On-going 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 2020 – January 2021 previous 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 2020 – January 21 via Let's Talk online event as part of previous 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:** 15 January 2021 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:** 15 January 2021 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:** 13 January 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:** 5,12,17 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.

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

**When and how:** 28 October 2019, workshop

**Main issues raised:** Right Child, Right Care Partnership Approach. The attendees welcomed the Family Valued approach outlined in the Department for Education Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme.

**Who:** CSC staff feedback sessions

**When and how:** Various meeting throughout 2019-20

**How:** Mix of in-person meetings and virtual Teams meetings

**Main issues raised:** Staff were keen to hear updates about the DfE Strengthening Families Protecting Children Programme. Staff supported opportunities for working differently with families and undertaking training.

## **Who do we want and 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

## Who provided feedback during the consultation process?

**Who:** To be completed in January 2022 following consultation

**When and how:** To be completed in January 2022 following consultation

**Main issues raised:** To be completed in January 2022 following consultation

## Section D: Impact assessment

The section 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 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.

**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 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.

**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 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.

**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 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.

**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 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.

**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 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.

**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 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.

**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 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.

**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 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.

**How will this be addressed or mitigated?** Not applicable

## Other potential impacts

### 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

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