

CORE OFFER BUDGET FOR SOCIAL WORK AND INDEPENDENT REVIEW

WHY DOES THE COUNCIL HAVE TO PROVIDE THIS SERVICE AND WHAT DOES IT NEED TO COVER?

The Children Act 1989 defines a range of statutory duties that Local Authorities have for the protection of children in their area. The statutory duty of a local authority to provide services for children in need of protection is subject to external scrutiny through a statutory arm's length Independent Review Service.

The Children Act 1989 provides definitions of a Child in Need and Child Protection. Working Together 2015 defines the process and roles of the social worker in providing such services as well as other agencies. Everyone who works with children – including teachers, GPs, nurses, midwives, health visitors, early years professionals, youth workers, police, Accident and Emergency staff, paediatricians, voluntary and community workers and social workers – has a responsibility for keeping children safe.

The number of active cases open at 27th January 2016 is 964.

The services are screened by the Children's Access Point to ensure they meet the threshold for statutory intervention. Children who are in need of immediate protection are dealt with by the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub in conjunction with Police, health and other agencies. Children who are in need of assessment under the children act section 17 are dealt with via area social work teams. This will include court work where required. Children who are looked after or have left care are dealt with via the Looked After Through Care Team.

Local authorities have the overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined in Working Together 2015 as protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's health and development, ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care and that all agencies take action to enable all children to have the best outcomes. Under Section 10 of the Children Act 1989 all agencies are required to cooperate with the local authority at all levels to ensure effective support of children's wellbeing. Working Together 2015 emphasises the need for all agencies to work collaboratively at all levels from universal needs to specialist needs to support children.

The IRO handbook defines the role of the Independent Review Service.

HOW DOES THE CORE OFFER BUDGET MEET THE COUNCIL'S OBLIGATIONS?

The core offer provides the necessary staffing structure to meet the statutory requirements of the council's role in child protection as well as management oversight in accordance with the requirements of the Children Act, Working Together 2015 and the requirements to meet external inspection by Ofsted.

Social Work Services

The local authority has a statutory duty to provide services for children in need of protection. The Children Act 1989 provides the definitions of a Child in Need and Child

Protection. S17 covers the provision of services to children in need. The Local Authority has a duty:

- (a) To safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need
- (b) So far as is consistent with that duty to promote the upbringing of such children

S47 lays out the Local Authority's duties to cause enquiries to be made to secure the safety of a child in their area who is suffering or at risk of suffering, significant harm. Working Together 2015 defines the process and roles of the Social Worker in providing these and other partner agencies services. All children in need of protection who are subject to a child protection plan are required to have an allocated qualified Social Worker to oversee and manage their plan, which is also subject to external scrutiny. During 2014-2015 there has been a significant increase in the number of children being subject to Child Protection plans and those requiring services through the Child in Need processes, this has placed added pressure on social work staff where caseloads exceeded the national average. The quality of some practice to children in need of help and protection was judged by Ofsted to not be of the required standard in July 15.

The 45.76 posts, in the four area teams, cover all the statutory duties of the local authority from referral, assessment, intervention, court and looked after to closure. The recent increase of 9 posts has been implemented to bring caseloads to within prescribed national levels which will contribute to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and provide improvement in the capacity to contribute to the quality of social work.

Retention and recruitment of social workers is a major national issue and one of the key issues within this is manageable workloads. In order to improve the retention of social workers Darlington needs to ensure that its workload ratio is at least in line with national standards.

The current management structure is under review to ensure that there is robust and sufficient management oversight of all areas of practice.

The Independent Reviewing service

The Independent Reviewing service (IROs) provides statutory services as set out in the IRO Handbook which provides statutory guidance for Independent Reviewing officers and Local Authorities on their functions in relation to case management and reviews for looked after children. The appointment by Local authorities of an IRO for all children looked after is a legal requirement.

The IRO service has a duty to monitor the local authority's overall performance as a Corporate Parent for all children who are looked after by the council. Their main statutory role is to chair independent meetings for all looked after children, at a regularity set out in statute.

In addition the IRO's also Chair multi-agency Child Protection Case Conferences as set out in Working Together. Through this role they have a responsibility to quality assure child protection practice and to ensure that all agencies fulfil their statutory duties under S11 Children Act to ensure children who are on child protection plans are well protected. IROs also have responsibilities for chairing statutory foster Care reviews on

an annual basis, chair Disruption meetings where a placement breaks down and Secure Centre Reviews for Children placed within such settings.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of child abuse. It happens when a young person is encouraged, or forced, to take part in sexual activity in exchange for something.

- The reward might be presents, money, alcohol, or simply emotional attention.
- It can happen to any child or young person.
- It might seem like a normal friendship or relationship to begin with.
- It can happen online or offline, and without the young person being aware of it.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 introduced a range of offences specifically focused on the protection of children from sexual exploitation.

There is a project jointly resourced by Barnardos and DBC with input from the Police and Crime Commissioner that works directly with children and young people directly affected by CSE as well as raising awareness of CSE with partner agencies.

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

MARAC provides a consistent approach across agencies to risk assessment which identifies those victims who are at most risk of serious harm of domestic abuse.

The aim of MARAC is:

- To share information to increase the safety, health and well-being of victims – adults and their children
- To determine whether the perpetrator poses a significant risk to any particular individual or to the general public
- To construct jointly and implement a risk management plan that provides professional support to all those at risk and which reduces the risk of harm
- To reduce repeat victimisation
- To improve agency coordination and accountability
- To improve support for staff involved in high risk domestic abuse cases.

MULTI-AGENCY PUBLIC PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS (MAPPA)

The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 re-enacted by the Criminal Justice Act 2003 imposed duties on the Police, Probation and prison service to establish MAPPA. As a 'duty to cooperate', Children, Families and Learning will:

- attend MAPPA meetings where it is evidenced that we have an active role
- attend MAPPA meetings where there is knowledge that the identified offender poses a direct risk to children
- attend MAPPA meetings where there is an identified need for a representative from Children, Families and Learning to attend in relation to child welfare issues

DOES THIS DIFFER FROM THE CURRENT SERVICE?

There is an increase of Social work posts to ensure that caseloads are at an acceptable level.

WHAT IS THE CORE BUDGET MADE UP OF?**2019/20 - £3,715,480 (Net of income and grants)**

£2,501,163	49.76 Social Work & Supervisory posts
£269,055	5 Independent Review staff
£30,000	Child Sexual Exploitation Contract
£10,000	Staff counselling Service
£7,500	Contribution towards Multi Agency Risk Arrangements (MARAC)
£6,000	Contribution towards Sexual Assault referral service (SARC)
£10,000	Complaints
£200,000	Legal fees concerning child protection cases
£681,762	Overheads