

## NCC Briefing 1

### Summary: Childrens Social Care National Framework

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#### What is children's social care?

'Children's social care' refers to the different kinds of support that children, young people, and their families receive from their local authorities when they need extra help. The local authority is the organisation who provides for the people in your local area, and they can support you.

Its purpose is to be there for children and young people, so that they can be safe, and so they can grow up to be healthy and happy.

#### What is the National Framework?

It has been created by the Department for Education (DfE) to tell everyone involved in providing support what children's social care is supposed to achieve and how it should work. Its purpose is to clearly explain what should be expected from the help and care that is provided.

#### What are enablers?

The National Framework and Dashboard identifies aspects of the children's social care system that facilitates effective support for children, young people, and their families. They are called enablers. Enablers are the foundation of good practice.

#### **Enabler one:** Multi-agency working is prioritised and effective.

Local authorities, police, health, and other relevant agencies, including early years, education settings, and voluntary organisations have responsibilities to work together so that children and young people can be supported for their safety and wellbeing.

#### **Enabler two:** Leaders drive conditions for effective practice.

All leaders from local authorities and children's Trusts, including Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services, Directors of Public Health, and Lead Members for Children's Services, should conduct their responsibilities in ways that support and empower the wider children's social care workforce to achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people, and families. They promote the use of evidence to inform and improve how services are commissioned and delivered.

#### **Enabler three:** The workforce is equipped and effective.

The whole children's social care workforce plays an instrumental role in delivering good outcomes for children, young people, and families. They should bring empathy, energy, and motivation to their daily work. They should be supported, by their organisation, to use the breadth of their knowledge and skills to transform the lives of children, young people, and families.

**What we need to do:** Complete the reflective mapping [tool 1](#) within the **NCASP** (enabler one), **social care leaders** (enabler two) and **social care workers, managers and leaders** (enabler three). This will help us to understand the role and effectiveness of the three enablers for Northumberland, and to identify any gaps.

## What are the principles of social care?

People working in children's social care should follow six principles when they are working with children, young people, and their families.



These principles inform everything that children's social care hopes to achieve. They also contribute to things the National Framework focuses on. These are called outcomes.

## What are the outcomes?

These are the areas of children's lives that children's social care is there to help with the most. The system is designed so that the focus is on family because families can often provide the best support for their children.

However, it is not always the case that children can stay with their own family. When this happens, children's social care is there to find them a loving home somewhere else. In all cases, the safety of children is the most important thing.

**What we need to do:** Complete the reflective mapping [tool 2](#) separately with **workers, managers and leaders** in children's social care to triangulate the findings. This will help us to understand how we are meeting the four outcomes in Northumberland, and to identify any gaps.

**Outcome one:** Children's social care will help your family stay together.

Children's social care works with parents and family members to help them cope with any difficulties they face. Children's social care is committed to keeping children and young people within their family wherever it is safe and appropriate to do so. This is so that the important people in your life are in the best position to provide you with safety, stability, and love.

## How will we achieve this?

1. Hearing children's voices or how best they communicate.
2. Listening to the family, to understand how services work properly.
3. Supporting children to understand children's social care.

4. Helping families access the right support at the right time.
5. Supporting families to make decisions about the help a child with a disability can receive.
6. Using the views of parents in the child or young person's plan to keep them safe.
7. Encouraging children and young people to share their wishes and feelings separately from other people in their life.
8. Respecting the culture of the family and challenging discrimination.
9. Providing practical advice for support with money and housing from people in the community.
10. Trying to understand what has happened in children's lives.
11. Helping children to cope with things they find difficult.
12. Understanding the importance of education in keeping children safe and helping them reach their potential.

### What activity within our quality of practice framework tells us.

#### What we are already doing:

- There is a good understanding of assessment processes.
- Assessments consider a child's safety.
- Children are placed with family members wherever possible.
- The Legal Gateway Panel is understood and used, which provide challenge and scrutiny of decision making for children.
- There are appropriate and prompt timescales when concerns escalate to legal frameworks.
- There is knowledge about available resources and referral mechanisms.
- There is good multi-agency working.
- Children's views are sought as part of assessments, reviews and plans.
- Children's views and experiences are recorded in bold or in blue in their records.
- Direct work is completed with children and young people.
- Mind of my Own is available across the service.

#### Areas we need to develop:

- Better use of family networks at an earlier stage.
- Better identification and use of Family Group Conferencing.
- Improved understanding of the capacity of Mind of my Own and its use with all groups of children.
- The use of Total Mobile to capture feedback from children, young people, and their families.
- Develop improved information to give to children, young people, and families regarding service delivery.

### Outcome two: Children's social care will support your family network.

Often there are wider family relationships and networks that can help families that are experiencing problems. Support from these family members can improve children's lives, but sometimes these family members need help from children's social care to make this happen more effectively.

#### How will we achieve this?

1. Asking questions to understand who the child or young person considers to be part of their family.
2. Asking questions to understand how the family network could look after the child or young person and what support, love and trust they provide.
3. Considering the views of the child when arranging support from wider family members.

4. Asking the family how much support they receive from children's social care and if it is enough.
5. Bringing a family together to understand their experiences and providing an opportunity to answer any questions.
6. Exploring the support a child has outside of their family, like from friends, other workers in their life or people in their community or other networks.
7. Considering support for a family to strengthen relationships or to repair difficult ones.
8. Offering support when a child's family or network cannot look after a child.

#### What activity within our quality of practice framework tells us.

##### What we are already doing:

- Using genograms and ecomaps.
- Direct work with child(ren).
- Including parents and children in assessments and creating of plans.
- Recording of the child's voice in bold or in blue within records.

##### Areas we need to develop:

- Better use of family network meetings at an earlier stage.
- Better understanding of a child's lived experience.
- Better understanding of and the use of Family Group Conferencing.
- Supporting family members to care for children and ensuring information is communicated regarding short-, medium- and long-term planning.

#### Outcome three: Children's social care helps to keep you safe.

The National Framework makes it clear that children's social care wants to protect children and young people from harm and if they might be being harmed, work out exactly what is going on. This applies whether harm is occurring at home, where they live, in the community, or online.

##### How will we achieve this?

1. Asking the child or young person questions to understand their safety and wellbeing and what needs to change so that they can be safer.
2. Acting quickly to protect children and young people if they are experiencing or at risk of experiencing harm.
3. Sharing regular information with children and young people so they can understand the decisions that are being made about their life.
4. Hearing the views of children and young people whatever their age or how best they communicate with others to understand their points of views.
5. Building relationships with children and young people to try and understand everything that is happening in their life.
6. Understanding how harmful events may happen; to try and help children and young people, to keep them safe and recognise that even if children or young people harm others they still need help and support.
7. Treating everyone fairly and addressing any discrimination.

#### What activity within our quality of practice framework tells us.

##### What we are already doing:

- Multi-agency decision making at the earliest opportunity- MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs) for new referrals.

- Accessibility to managers.
- Prompt strategy meetings/discussions followed by appropriate timescales for Section 47s and decision-making when families progress to ICPCs.
- Senior management oversight of decision making.
- Robust review of child protection plans in RCPCs.
- Core group meetings being held regularly.
- The child's voice and experiences recorded in bold or blue in their records.
- Use of direct work.
- Use of Mind of my Own.

**Areas we need to develop:**

- Safety plans to be written with parents/carers.
- Better use of family networks to keep children safe.
- Plans to be used in meetings as a mechanism to identify progress, drift, and delay.
- Better use of Mind of my Own.
- Development of and use of Total Mobile to seek and use feedback.
- Launch the contextual safeguarding pilot.

**Outcome four:** Children's social care will help to give you a loving home.

If children or young people cannot remain living with their family, within a family network or with others, the local council will provide the support they need. Children's social care should provide homes that offer love, care, protection, and stability. The support that children and young people receive will help them understand their feelings and address any issues they may have while making sure they are safe. It will give them the basis for a healthy, happy life.

**How will we achieve this?**

1. Asking children and young people questions to understand where they want to live and what is important to them if they cannot live with their family.
2. Providing regular updates to children and young people about the decisions being made, so they can be clear about what is happening and why.
3. Giving children and young people regular opportunities to share your hopes and dreams, which will be reflected in how they are provided with support.
4. Encouraging children and young people to share their views, including using advocacy services so someone can represent their views, wishes, and needs without judgement and supporting to make a complaint if they need to.
5. Providing a safe and loving home if children and young people cannot live with their family or family network.
6. Supporting children and young people to stay in touch with their family, friends, and community, and especially with their siblings, if they move to a new home.
7. Taking seriously a child or young person's mental wellbeing and supporting them to get support.
8. Supporting children who are adopted to bond with their adoptive parents from the first time they meet.
9. Supporting children who have travelled to England without their parents and their needs and experiences will be considered.

**What activity within our quality of practice framework tells us.**

**What we are already doing:**

- Regular contact with IROs.
- Regular Cared for Reviews to review and monitor progress.
- Use of Mind of my Own to record children and young people's views.
- Good offer of training for Foster Carers.
- Children and young people's voice are recorded in bold or blue in their records.
- Use of advocates and independent visitors, if required or appropriate.
- Life story work so children and young people can understand their own experiences.
- Children and young people's contribution to plans including contact arrangements with family members, friends and others that may be important to them.
- Good court timescales around adoption.
- Early introductions to potential adoptive parents.
- Use of the Northumberland promise.

**Areas we need to develop:**

- Increased and consistent use of advocates and independent visitors.
- Improved information for children and young people about social care and its role.
- Considering consultation documents for meetings.
- Better attendance by children and young people at their meetings.
- Better co-production of documents/policies with children and families.
- Improved use of children and young people in recruitment.

**For older children leaving children's social care and approaching adulthood.**

1. Supporting older children to develop and nurture loving relationships with their family networks and friends as you get older and become an adult.
2. Supporting them to live in safe, suitable accommodation and trying to offer a range of options to choose from. You may have priority for social housing and help with accessing rented accommodation. Every effort is made to avoid care leavers becoming homeless.
3. Supporting older children to access education, employment, and training as they become an adult. This might include working with job centres and potential employers to help find opportunities for them to apply for, including opportunities made especially for care leavers.
4. Supporting them to plan because proper education, work and housing is necessary for living a healthy and happy life.

**What activity within our quality of practice framework tells us.**

**What we are already doing:**

- Raising awareness and the profile of being a Corporate Parent across all forums.
- Good EET offer.
- Improved keeping in touch arrangements.
- Good transition processes and keeping young person at the heart of everything.
- Much improved social housing availability.
- Great support regarding budgeting and preparation for adulthood as outlined in pathway plans.
- Improvement in ensuring registered accommodation is offered to young people.

**Areas we need to develop:**

- Further improve the offer of accommodation for young people.

## Relevant Links

- ❑ [DfE Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy.](#)
- ❑ [The FULL Children's Social Care National Framework](#)
- ❑ [The Children and Young People summary of the National Framework](#)
- ❑ [NCC briefing 2: DfE Championing Kinship Care strategy summary](#)
- ❑ [NCC briefing 3: DfE Digital and Data strategy summary](#)
- ❑ [NCC briefing 4: Revised DfE Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance summary](#)

## Reflective tool 1

Enabler 1	Enabler 2	Enabler 3
Multi-agency working is prioritised and effective.	Leaders drive conditions for effective practice.	The workforce is equipped and effective.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How people, including other organisations like the police and health, develop support with children, young people and families?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> WT includes 5 key principles in its expectations for practice (Collaborate, learn, resource, include and mutually challenge). What does adopting these principles look like in practice?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What activities take place to consistently and confidently shape the culture of practice in your local authority?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How are stories about practice shared in a way that shows leadership and reinforces the importance and impact of how you work with families?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How is space made for conversations with practitioners and senior leaders, to reflect on the conditions for effective practice in your local authority?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> High quality supervision is key to giving space for practitioners to reflect on practice and to feel supported. How is this supported effectively in the local authority?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The evidence base for social work is consistently evolving. How are people challenged to keep on top of evolving practice and to communicate this with leaders, managers and practitioners?</li> </ul>

## Reflective tool 2

Outcome 1	Outcome 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What activities does your service do to ensure that the first interaction a family has with CSC is positive, welcoming and empowering? How do you know this?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Family relationships are complicated. How do you support practitioners to work within that complexity, providing challenge and advice?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What needs to be looked at to shape practice so that the use of tools, like family group decision making, are more widely and confidently used? How?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How are practitioners supported to think creatively in circumstances that mean children and young people may not be able to be supported by their immediate family network?</li> </ul>
Outcome 3	Outcome 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How does collaboration with colleagues look now and how does this provide consistent challenge to facilitate curiosity, learning and reflection to help keep children and young people safe?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What relationships and with who need to be built or be improved to support and protect children from harms outside of the home?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> When a child or young person becomes cared for, the whole family is affected. How does current practice continue to support family members and carers, including with reunification (where safe to do so)?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What happens now to advocate for children and young people who are cared for, to achieve the best outcomes?</li> </ul>