

Review of Social Work Services for Children and Families

For all staff in Children and Families Service and partners

Newsletter1

Dear Colleague

Welcome to this first newsletter, which is intended to keep you up to date with the review of Social Work Services for Children and Families.

The review is one of a number that have been taking place around “Change for Children” and the requirement to have Children’s Trust arrangements in place by April 2008.

The overall aim is to improve outcomes for children and young people by providing better joined up services, to ensure that all children, young people and their families get the services that they need.

The restructuring of social work services for Children and Families will deliver a continuum of integrated services from area based teams through to specialist social work services.

How will social work services be organised?

The social work service will be delivered on a borough wide basis, with the teams having responsibility for all statutory social work functions in each of the five neighbourhood areas. Other area working arrangements in Learning and Children, to develop local multi-agency teams have been put into place and are beginning to take shape. This restructuring will enable services to work more closely together.

Progress so far

The structure for the reshaped children and families service has been approved by Cabinet. It includes:

A single Referral and Assessment Team, (recently reconfigured) to provide a single point of access and ensure consistency in response and thresholds. An additional social worker and two assistant team managers will join the team. Two supporting families outreach workers will also work with families to prevent young people from becoming looked after. There will also be a new post of family group conference co-ordinator.

Two Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams (from the reconfigured Children in Need Service) will work with children on the child protection register, children in need where there is a significant risk of harm and looked after children prior to permanency or where court proceedings are ongoing. The teams will be based at Blaydon District office and the Civic Centre.

An Integrated Service for Looked After Children will bring together the Leaving Care Team, Therapeutic Services and part of the Children in Need team. A Connexions worker will work closely with the service.

This service will include two new teams based at the Young People’s Resource Centre and co-located with the LAC Health team:

- A Looked After Children’s team – working with looked after children under 14 years old. An additional senior practitioner post has been created.
- A Looked After Young People’s team – working with looked after children aged 14 years and over.
- The fostering, adoption teams and residential units will continue to deliver provider resources for looked after children.

The Safeguarding Children Unit, based at Prince Consort Road offices will continue to support the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). A new business manager post for the LSCB will help to meet the increasing safeguarding responsibilities of the Board.

A Children with Disabilities Team
Management arrangements for the Emergency Duty Team will be aligned with the Children with Disabilities Team, continuing to provide a generic service across the borough. The strategic review of services for Children with Disabilities is still ongoing. We’ll feedback with more information as it happens.

Family Support Services

Family centres and family support coordinators will continue in their current form, with two family centre coordinators having responsibility for managing the service. The strategic review of Family Support Services identified some excellent practice and some areas for improvement. You can find out more at: www.gatesheadcyptrust.co.uk

A Youth Offending Team (YOT)

YOT prevention and early intervention services have been integrated within the new area based working arrangements. The remaining YOT statutory services will be retained as a single specialist borough wide team with responsibility transferring to the Head of Service for Children and Families. The new structure will have a service manager responsible for managing the service with an operational manager and 6 team leaders.

Business Support Service

Andy Crabtree, Head of Service for Business Strategy and Support has lead responsibility for business support in the restructured service. Teams are being reconfigured to meet changing needs in the new service.

How are posts being filled?

Appointments for service manager and team manager posts have been made from existing staff.

Who's Who in the teams?

In addition to responsibility for a key service each service manager will hold a lead responsibility for a strategic theme and also to link into one of the five neighbourhood areas.

The service managers are:

- **Maurice Woodward** as service manager for Family Support and Care Planning. Maurice will lead on Early Intervention/Family Support and will be the representative linked to the central area.
- **Karen Arnold** as service manager for Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting. Karen will lead on Corporate Parenting and will link into the East area.
- **Debra Patterson** as service manager for Disabled Children and the Out of Hours Service. Debra will lead on Access and Empowerment and will link into the inner west area.
- **Joanna White** as service manager for Safeguarding (Quality & Improvement). Joanna will lead on Safeguarding and Quality and will link into the west area.
- **Susan Butler** is service manager for Youth Offending. Susan will lead on Youth Crime Prevention and Anti-social Behaviour and will link into the south area.

The social work team managers have also been appointed and are:

- **Viv Hogg** for the Referral and Assessment team
- **Jackie Ingram** for the Looked After Children's team (under 14s)
- **Heather Brown** for the Looked After Young People's team (over 14s)
- **Tony Allen** and **Berni Heppell** for the two Safeguarding and Care Planning teams and
- **Ken Heppell** for the Children with Disabilities team and Out of Hours Service

Other staffing updates include:

- Marjorie James and Lesley Richardson have been appointed as assistant team managers for the Referral and Assessment team
- The social workers for the Safeguarding and Care Planning teams have been appointed
- Supporting Families team workers have been selected
- Social work auxiliary posts for the reconfigured teams have been made
- Recruitment for the new Looked After Children teams is ongoing

Other vacancies will be advertised as appropriate.

How do we make sure our new arrangements don't create new gaps in services?

Brian Langley Head of Change for Children is leading a working group to ensure that the responsibilities of each service at each stage are clear.

Next steps

As part of the reshaping of Children's Services, Wrekenton District office will close at the end of May. The members of staff currently based in the office, will be moving into the new borough wide Safeguarding and Care Planning teams or into the Integrated Looked After Children's and Young People's teams. Business support staff will be relocated across the reconfigured teams.

All other new arrangements will be in place from 2 June 2008.

A top priority over the coming months will be to embed these arrangements to ensure that the individual needs of all children, young people and their families are met through joined up arrangements.

The reconfiguration of the service will take place through a phased approach, with the co-location with partners forming a second phase. Developments are likely to continue throughout 2008/9 at least, including changes in the organisation and responsibilities of Learning & Children Group Management Team. We will keep you informed through further newsletters when information becomes available.

Contacting the team

If you wish to discuss any points highlighted in this newsletter, you can contact any member of the management team below:

Frances Powell	433 2704
Maurice Woodward	433 2475
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For any queries or comments about the newsletter, contact: Bríd Graney 433 2752.