

**Access to Support/Services for Children with Disabilities and complex needs**

**(December 2023)**



**Introduction/Statement of Purpose**

This document explains how the council will support disabled children and their families through its available funding and how Social Workers and other workers within the Social Care team and Early Help services may be able to support those in need.

Often children who use social care support are also supported by Special Educational Needs Services and the NHS, therefore Social Care workers will work closely with staff in Education and Health. Children with additional needs can receive support from a number of professionals including Children’s Continuing Care, which does not need Social Care input.

Our oversight and support for our disabled children and young people in Newcastle includes a range of input and support from colleagues in health and voluntary sector agencies. There are a number of commissioned services in place that do not require Social Work involvement, but the budget and responsibility for some of this support is managed within the Children with Disabilities Team.

The Government in 2014 set out the rights of disabled children and their parents to support from Education, Health and Social Care in the Children and Families Act. This Act introduced a joined-up approach to planning called the Education, Health and Care Plan. How councils and the NHS should put into practice the new law is set out in Statutory Guidance and the Code of Practice.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/342440/SEND_Code_of_Practice_approved_by_Parliament_29.07.14.pdf>

Community activities and Newcastle’s voluntary sector are also in place to support disabled children and young people and their families. The guidance and information around available services, support and advice in Newcastle is regularly updated in the local offer/support directory, and information provided about our local offer to children with disabilities and special educational needs. The “Local Offer” can be viewed at:

<https://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk/what-local-offer>

Councils are now obliged to provide Education and Social Care Personal Budgets to eligible children as part of the duties of Councils set out within the Children and Families Act. The NHS is obliged to offer Personal Health Budgets to children entitled to Children’s Continuing Care.

This document is mainly about Social Care funding for short breaks and Personal Budgets and set out below are the factors that the council considers to decide if children and young people are eligible for support and how the council agrees this with families. The eligibility criteria is considered to be a fair and transparent way of identifying those with unmet needs and those who require additional support from Social Care in respect of this. Disagreements about eligibility and funding can be addressed through the complaints procedure, which is detailed below:

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/communities-and-neighbourhoods/compliments-and-complaints>

The council has key responsibilities through legislation (including the Short break duty) and ambitions in its work with disabled children, young people and their families. These ambitions and priorities are set out the key priorities of ‘safe, equal and achieving’ for our disabled children and young people. Newcastle Children’s Services also aims to be ‘proud, fair and ambitious’ and this is the ethos of the work we do with our children and young people.

Newcastle is a diverse City, with a over 2,500 children with additional needs supported by Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). As such, there is a high demand in the request for services for our disabled children and young people. This threshold document has been revised in order to provide an overview on careful and considered assessments of need, which enable Social Work staff to reach decisions about any suitable services which may address any unmet level of need. It is important for our children, young and their families that decisions about who will receive a service are provided in a fair, open and transparent way.

The Children with Disabilities Team is one of a range of provisions that can provide support to children and young people with complex needs, and we hope that any offered support would address unmet needs for the children and young people, and that the support would similarly have a positive impact on the family. The CWD Social Work Team provide a service to those children/young people requiring additional resources in respect of their disability, where the disability has a profound impact on the child/young person’s life.

**Who are the Children with Disabilities Team (CWDT)?**

The term disability covers a broad spectrum of support needs. The Children with Disabilities Team at the council similarly support children with a broad range of needs. The list below is not an exhaustive and exclusive list of additional needs which are considered, but more broadly outlines the client group of the children known to the service.

As of August 2023, there are 2,637 children/young people in Newcastle with an Education, Health and Care Plan. This is more than twice the number of EHCPs in the last 6 years alone (1292 in 2017) and an increase of almost 600 plans in the last year alone. As a result, children with additional needs and disabilities do not all have a Social Worker, and our graduated approach and short breaks offer, alongside the Local Offer; is designed to meet the needs of the children and young people in our City. Any assessments will be undertaken by the best person to do this at the time if a Social Care or Early Help assessment is required. Our children and young people with complex needs and/or disabilities are supported by a number of different professionals, rather than CWDT alone.

The Children with Disabilities Team (CWDT) is a statutory Social Work team who will work with children where their disability is impacting on their ability to have opportunities to be equal, be safe and to achieve; and where the needs cannot otherwise be met with the input of universal services, early help services, specialist services and voluntary/charitable partner agencies.

We will consider assessments to respond to **unmet needs** and consider services which could meet these needs, for children with professionally diagnosed disabilities where the needs cannot be met elsewhere or by families. Although it is recognised that a child may have a disability and not have an Education, Health and Care Plan, the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) are multi-agency plans which outline a child’s needs and how they can be met via various professionals. These plans would inform us of the level of need and the impact of this. The EHCP process is designed to address, from a multi-agency perspective, how the child’s needs can be thoroughly understood and addressed. The team will need to have a thorough understanding of a child or young person’s presenting needs in order to establish how these can be met, and by whom.

Appropriate referrals to the CWDT include, but are not limited to:

* Children with significant, permanent and enduring physical disabilities such as Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy and other physical disabilities that significantly impact on the child’s wellbeing.
* Children/young people with significant learning needs, including but not limited to severe/significant learning disabilities, which impact on the child’s ability to be safe, equal and achieving. The eligibility criteria is discussed more thoroughly in the remainder of this document.
* Children/young people with a diagnosis of Autism and associated disabilities which have a significant impact on their communication needs, social and behavioural development.
* Children/young people with multiple or severe disability.
* Children/young people with complex physical disability and health needs and/or life limiting conditions.
* Children with significant or severe sensory impairment, where there is an impact on the child being safe, equal and achieving.

The CWDT does not usually work with children whose main issue focuses around their emotional/behavioural development or whose main need for support is connected to a mental health diagnosis or where the nature of the worries is predominately related to complex and challenging behaviour. The CWDT do not ordinarily work with children and young people with autism where there is not a significant associated learning disability, or where the impact of the autism does not impact on communication needs, social and behavioural development, or limit their opportunities to be safe, equal and achieving.

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Similarly, where a child/young person has needs like dyscalculia, dyspraxia and dyslexia, support is available through their school and therapy services. CWDT do not provide services as a response to support children/young people with a diagnosis of Attention Deficit (Hyperactive) Disorder who need a response to the challenge of ADHD alone. Further information in relation so SEN support is outlined below, and in the Local Offer. We do work with some children who have a complex disability and ADHD. School services and the NHS Children and Young People’s Service (CYPS) are better placed to offer information and advice to these children and their families.

The eligibility criteria for CWD are more specifically outlined in this document with respect to a range of needs, rather than prescriptively outlining particular conditions as exclusion criteria.

**Duty to Assess**

The Children with Disabilities Team are often asked to undertake assessments when professionals and families request a statutory assessment. As outlined in this document, statutory Social Work involvement should only be considered when all other options have been explored, and the needs cannot be met elsewhere. If an assessment is required, this will be a needs led assessment supported by the best person to do this at the time.

Local Authorities should consider carefully how the needs can be identified and met via assessment, and which assessment is most appropriate and proportionate.

The primary duty in relation to children ‘in need’ is to assess their needs in the family

context. There is not a duty to provide services to every child ‘in need’. Compliance with section 17(1) requires Local Authorities to provide a range and level of services appropriate to the needs of disabled children in the area which helps safeguard and promote their welfare and support their upbringing by their families. These services are outlined in this document as well as the Local Offer/Support Directory.

In relation to the duty to assess, the House of Lords has determined that if a child has a recognised disability and is therefore a ‘child in need’, an assessment can be requested however the remit of the assessment is not set out in the legislation. Whilst traditionally needs assessments have been completed by Social Workers, the High Court judgement highlights clearly that depending on varying levels of need, the specific assessment can be undertaken in varying forms, including assessments which fit more within the remit of Early Help Services.

**Identifying early solutions – other options to think about.**

Think family.

In Newcastle we adopt a relational strength-based approach. This means working together with families to improve outcomes for our children and young people and working with families rather than doing things to or for them. Our services offer high support and challenge to give families the means to find suitable and sustainable solutions to the difficulties and challenges they face, and to provide outcomes for children and young people and their families, to strengthen resilience and to allow our parents and carers to continue to provide a high standard of care of our most vulnerable children and young people.

We know that having a Social Worker involved with a family is a significant event for any child, and that if a Social Worker becomes involved with your child from CWDT, this will likely be for a long time, so we do not make this decision lightly. We therefore encourage families to seek help from universal, specialist and voluntary services before referrals to CWDT.

Think SEN support

Newcastle's Graduated Response to meeting special educational needs includes the SEND Advice and Support Allocation Panel (ASAP).

The intention of services available through SEN ASAP is to provide free specialist advice and guidance to support mainstream inclusion.

These services are available to mainstream schools within Newcastle City Council Local Authority:

<https://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk/newcastle-send-advice-and-support-allocation-panel-send-asap>

Think EHCP.

It is useful for parents to be aware of the duties placed on schools by the SEND Code of Practice. Education, Health and Care Plans place a responsibility on Local Authorities to address needs in health, social care and education. We know that getting the right school placement and support can improve the wellbeing of our young people and contribute to them being safe, equal and achieving. Specific and targeted support via the EHCP is instrumental in ensuring that children and young people’s needs are fully understood and addressed before seeking any additional support outside of this process. There are responsibilities from the EHCP on local authorities which are detailed below. SENDIASS are well placed to provide additional support in ensuring educational provision meet the needs of our disabled young people in the City:

-Schools must be sure to identify and address the special educational needs (SEN) of the pupils under their care.

-Parents and pupils should be actively involved in all the decision-making processes.

-Schools are expected to use their best endeavours to ensure children with SEN receive adequate support.

-A teacher has to be assigned as responsible coordinator for all SEN provisions, other than in academies for 16 to 19 year olds.

-All schools must have a member of the Governing Body or sub-committee allocated to oversee the SEN and disability provision.

-All pupils with SEN should engage in the same activities alongside other pupils.

-Schools are required to inform parents when they are making special educational provision for pupils.

-A SEN information report must be prepared.

Think universal/specialist services.

We know that our colleagues in mental health (CYPS) are able to offer more specialist support around managing complex behaviours, and that this is an area of support that our colleagues in early help can provide support in also.

Think children’s continuing care (CCC)

When children have particular additional needs related to health or otherwise very complex needs, any professional working with a child can make a referral to children’s continuing care. This can allow additional support for children, young people and their families, supported by our health colleagues. A Social Worker is not always required when considering a package of support from CCC. Our colleagues in health such as health visitors, paediatricians, psychology/psychiatry, community nurses and any other professional who knows a child particularly well can ask for support from Children’s Continuing Care.

Think Early Help.

Extra support may be needed at any point in a child or young person’s life, and we know that this may be needed particularly when parents are caring for a child or young person with additional needs.

Being a parent can be a tough job and sometimes we all need a bit of help. Our Early Help services will work with you and your family, to start working together to make things better for your family. Whether you are looking to tackle an ongoing problem or prevent one from happening, Early Help can support your family to stay on track.

Once you reach out, we will work together with you and your family to decide what steps are next. We will listen to what you say and discuss the resources and contacts available.

If your family and our team decide there is need for extra support, we can link you with a Family Partner. They can find local support for a range of things parents and carers may be struggling with, such as supporting a child with further needs, money problems or teenage depression and anxiety.

Community hubs are vibrant social spaces that offer a range of practical, educational and wellbeing activities for babies, children, young people and families.  Activities offered in each local area are shaped by their local communities.

The community hubs offer a range of services including:

• Support for your family

• Community midwifery

• Mental health support

• Children’s therapies

• Childcare

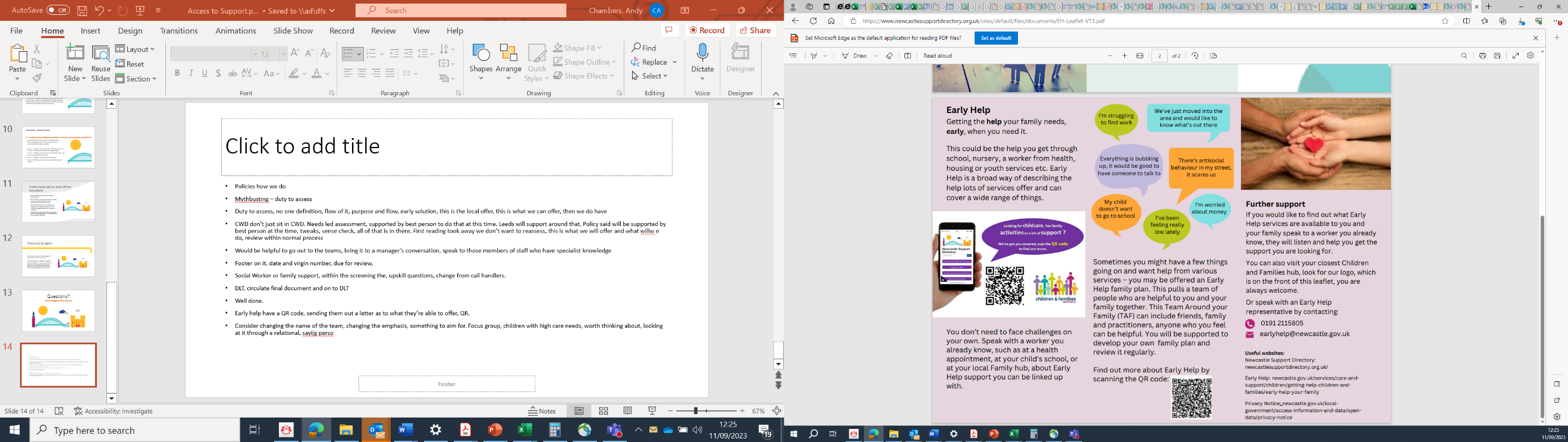
• Services for youth groups aged up to 18

• Training opportunities and employability services

• Health visiting

To find your closest hub and what is going on in your area, please use the postcode checker on the Newcastle Support directory. For more general enquiries, contact Children and Families Newcastle by calling 0191 211 5805.

Children and Families Newcastle will help you build on the good things in your life, so we’ll talk with your children and other family members, if that helps.



Think Local Offer/Support Directory



A Local Offer gives children and young people with SEND, and their families, information about what support services the local authority think will be available in their local area. Every local authority is responsible for writing a Local Offer and making sure it is available for everyone to see.

<https://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk/>

Think voluntary and community resources.

There are a number of commissioned services within Newcastle that can offer support to Children and Young People with additional needs without the need for a Social Worker or a needs assessment, these include:

* **Disabled Childrens Register** - <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/children/getting-help-children-and-families/helping-children-disabilities>
* **MAX Card** (and or DLA offer letter) – many national and local venues offer various offers, check out anywhere you are going to visit and web site [www.mymaxcard.co.uk](http://www.mymaxcard.co.uk)
* **Newcastle Support Directory** - [www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk](http://www.newcastlesupportdirectory.org.uk)  is the website for children and families and children with Special Educational Needs (SEND) in Newcastle.
* **Newcastle Carer’s** – provide support for parent carers including a carers grant, [www.newcastlecarers.org.uk](http://www.newcastlecarers.org.uk)
* The **Family Advice and Support team**works with disabled children, young people and their families. The team includes Pass it on Parents, Family Advice Workers and project workers working together to provide co-ordinated support for families. Find out more at [www.skillsforpeople.org.uk](http://www.skillsforpeople.org.uk)
* **Get Connected** are specialists who can help children and young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities get involved in activities. They will explore what the child/ young person is interested in and recommend organisations and activities that are suited to them. Please contact [lynncam5@aol.com](mailto:lynncam5@aol.com), 07906854092
* **Access fund** – this is a grant to help disabled children and young people to participate in activities in their local community.  This can be any daytime, evening or weekend activity that the child or young person enjoys whilst their parent/carer has a break from caring.   The Access Fund seeks to support children and young people to take part in inclusive activities alongside their non- disabled peers. Contact [nunsmoorcentre@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:nunsmoorcentre@newcastle.gov.uk), 0191 2774400
* **Newcastle Youth Link** - [www.children-ne.org.uk](http://www.children-ne.org.uk) this is a free young people’s peer mentoring service.  Youth Link works with young people aged 11 – 18
* **Bus pass and companion card** – [www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/adults/help-get-out-and-about/concessionary-travel-older-or-disabled](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/adults/help-get-out-and-about/concessionary-travel-older-or-disabled)
* **CEA card** – [www.ceacard.co.uk](http://www.ceacard.co.uk) this is for use at the cinema please check out for eligibility
* **Newcastle Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)** offer impartial and confidential advice to parent carers about matters arising to their child’s needs. [**sendiassadmin@newcastle.gov.uk**](mailto:sendiassadmin@newcastle.gov.uk)

**Eligibility for support – where needs cannot be met elsewhere.**

In order to consider a fair and transparent distribution of resources, and to ensure that all of our disabled children and young people who require a service are in receipt of this, the CWDT funds a number of projects outlined in this document, and as of August 2023, community short break services in Newcastle are under review to consider the need for the increase in demand for service and the increase in number of children and young people with diagnosed disabilities and an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Safe, equal and achieving

Though the threshold and appropriate referrals may appear to exclude those with certain conditions, the threshold is based on the level of need and any unmet needs. Newcastle Children’s Social Care aim to ensure that all children are safe, equal and achieving and on that basis, there are a number of available provisions and support for our disabled young people. The threshold is not based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, but based on the graduated levels of need, to ensure fair distribution of resources which are designed to meet any unmet needs. Children who do not meet the criteria will have support elsewhere from partner agencies or specialist services, and may not need a Social Worker, as per the threshold document. We believe that those who do not meet criteria for support can be supported and have access to a service through our local offer and partner agency support. Families in receipt of DLA for children are also able to, and encouraged to use this for their child’s needs, and can use this to privately fund support or to secure services or equipment for example. All new referrals and re-assessments are considered on individual circumstances and need, and as part of a graduated response as to how any needs are addressed.

Learning difficulties and learning disabilities

In considering the criteria for access to support, we may consider learning disability rather than learning difficulties; depending on the significance and level of need. In order to consider fair distribution of resources, the Children with Disabilities Team focusses the work and resources on children with high levels of need. This does not mean that other disabled children and young people are not able to access support or resources, but there may be resources to meet the need at a non-statutory level through early help support, grants and commissioned short break support from the CWDT, without the need for a Social Worker. The needs of our children and young people are considered with a graduated approach, and those with significant learning disabilities are those who are less likely to be safe, equal and achieving and therefore those who may be in most need of support. As part of a graduated response, those with learning difficulties may be more suitably supported in school and by partner agencies, and depending on the complexity of the level of need, learning difficulties alone may not criteria for support. A child may have additional needs that do not meet threshold for support from CWDT but may otherwise be able to access assessments through early help or other Social Work teams.

A *Learning Difficulty* is a term used to describe any one of a number of barriers to learning that a child may experience.

A child has a *learning difficulty* if:

* He/she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his age.
* He/she has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of his age in schools within the area of the Local Authority.
* He/she is under the age of five and is, or would be, if special educational provision were not made available for him, likely to fall within the two above paragraphs when of, or over, that age.

A *Learning Disability* includes the presence of:

A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, and to learn new skills (impaired intelligence), along with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning) which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development.

In line with reviewing thresholds for support, Newcastle City Council has considered a graduated threshold of need, considering holistically the child and family’s needs in different domains and ensuring that there is a proportionate response to children and young people in the City who require additional support. The areas of need as described below are considered alongside our guidance on appropriation of funding and provide an understanding around indicative levels of need. The below provides indicators of levels of need based on various issues related to disability.

**Threshold criteria.**

Appropriate referrals are considered above, the information below considers the varying degrees of level of need, and would provide sufficient information to determine whether a referral or assessment is required. A child will meet the criteria for an assessment and/or support if they:

1. Are aged up to 18 years old and would ordinarily reside within the area of Newcastle upon Tyne. Has a physical disability or may have significant learning needs, such as a learning disability. The criteria may also include a chronic, life limiting condition or autism which significantly impacts on the child’s emotional wellbeing and ability to be safe, equal and achieve, or has a profound sensory impairment which means that they are unable even with support to be safe, equal and achieving.
2. There must be clear evidence that the child’s additional needs impact on family’s choices and their opportunity to enjoy ordinary life. The degree of time, effort, energy and planning for support to meet the child’s needs are far more significant that would be required to meet the needs of a neurotypical or non-disabled child of the same age. There needs to be evidence that the child’s disability/ies have a profound and significant impact on their ability to enjoy ordinary day to day life, and to be safe, equal and achieving.
3. Evidence of complex needs (in addition to any behavioural problems including ADHD and that may be present) or have a serious or life-threatening illness. If the child or young person has autism, there needs to be evidence that there are complex needs associated with the diagnosis which show a clear and evidenced impact on the young person’s ability to be safe, equal and achieving. We know that some young people with autism are in receipt of support from schools, colleges and partner agencies and do not always want or require significant amounts of support. For children and young people with autism, we need to understand what the additional role for a Social Worker would be that couldn’t be met elsewhere, and have a clear understanding of any additional needs associated with autism, and the impact of these. We need to establish the impact of any diagnosed disability on the child or young person and their family and be able to appropriately signpost if required.
4. There must be evidence that the child or young person’s additional needs impact significantly on their ability to enjoy day to day activities, to achieve, and stay safe.
5. The day to day care of the child or young person must require a more significant level of input than the typical needs of a non-disabled peer of the child the same age. For example, the level of supervision required for a 15 year old would be minimal for a neurotypical or non-disabled young person than it would be for a child with particularly complex needs.
6. The child or young person’s level of disability cannot otherwise be met with the input of health professionals, mental health professionals, the EHCP process, education or specialist services such as Early Help or children’s continuing care that do not require a Social Worker.
7. They must require a significantly higher level of support in multiple areas of support as defined in the indicators of need guidance associated with the child and family assessments. This level of need compared directly to what would be expected for the typical needs of a similarly aged child who has no additional or complex needs.
8. Have a level of unmet need. This is particularly crucial in fair allocation of resources, as we know that some young people have similar needs and are in the same classes in specialist schools. The impact of a child’s disabilities varies and every child is different, and we know that the impact is likely to be higher for those children and young people who have one person who supports their day to day needs, compared to children and young people with more than one parent, and those with significant family networks who provide a range of practical and emotional support that lessens the impact of the caring role.
9. Highlighted several of the ‘lots’ or ‘exceptional’ bands of support as highlighted in the indicators of need document.

The indicators of need document is not an exhaustive list, but intended to identify descriptors of need and provide examples of what would typically determine a particular level of need.

**Indicators of Need**

On the basis of the above criteria, it is recommended that the following responses to assessment and criteria are considered.

Level 1 – Children, young people and families who are in need of information, advice and signposting.

Not all children with a disability want, need or require additional or specialist support. These would typically be children or young people who would score low on the table above, and whilst they may have additional needs, these can be met via community resources such as youth clubs, peer mentoring and access to inclusive activities. Parent carers for children with this level of need would likely benefit from extending their network with other parent carers, being signposted to coffee morning and parenting groups, or early help support. The Local Offer/Newcastle Support Directory would be a helpful tool to use with the family to identify community resources. The children considered at this level would not meet criteria for support as they may not have the level of need required where additional support is needed. This may also include young people with autism where there are no additional needs identified, and where our universal and partner agencies are able to offer some additional support.

Children and Young People in this category may attend mainstream school, have learning difficulties rather than a learning disability, and they may be able to maintain a circle of friends. Needs around behaviour, mental health, education and social needs are likely to be met by Universal or specialist services that do not require a Social Worker. A Social Care Personal Budget is not the best service to support children and young people within this band and they are not usually eligible for this funding. The indicators of need document is not likely to have highlighted many, or any areas of need in the ‘lots’ or ‘exceptional’ categories.

Level 2 – Children, Young People and Families who may need some additional support.

Although families caring for a child with complex needs may be using the services described above, they may be of the view that some additional support would help them to care for their child, as doing so is presenting a number of challenges. They may feel that they are not able to do all the things that other families can, and they may be feeling the impact of their caring responsibilities. They may also have other family or health difficulties.

This level of support shows that the young person needs a little additional support on a continual basis or a lot of support to manage change. The indicators of need document may have indicated several areas of need in the ‘some’ or ‘lots’ areas.

Families in these circumstances might for example require assistance with:

* Supporting their child to access social activities, help at home to meet the child’s needs or support with managing complex behaviours and routines.
* Support with doing things as a family or to go out with the child to address any unmet needs where they may be otherwise unable to do so.

Children and young people in this category may benefit from signposting to the access fund for activities and equipment, arts and music connect for inclusive activities, peer mentoring services and supporting parents to strengthen their network with other parent carers through forums and skills for people. An Early Help assessment may be required at this stage to identify any additional support and to coordinate the professionals working with the family, and to make appropriate referrals. Depending on the level of need and any unmet neds, it may be helpful at this stage to undertake a Child & Family assessment if required. The Social Worker exploring this may feel that an Early Help assessment is more appropriate, depending on the age and developmental needs of the child or young person. This may also include young people with autism where there are no additional needs identified, and where our universal and partner agencies are able to offer some additional support.

Level 3 - Families who need lots of support

Some families will need a higher level of support, even if they already receive assistance with social activities or help in the home. The support might be needed to ensure that the child is kept safe and that the parents are able to carry out their caring role. This is likely to mean that a Child and Family Assessment is required in order to identify suitable support with addressing any unmet needs. An Early Help assessment may also be helpful in further understanding the level of need, and including any unmet needs.

Families who feel they might benefit from higher levels of support, for example, breaks from their caring role or a short break for the child will have their needs formally reviewed by a Social Worker who will take the following indicators into consideration when assessing needs, some examples are:

* A child needs a high level of support and supervision.
* A child requires regular care throughout the day and night;
* The carer has their own care needs.
* Behaviours at home (including self-harming, hurting others and damaging property) are impacted by the child’s mental health and additional needs, and managing the behaviour of the child at home dominates family life, and behaviour support is required.
* Parents and carers are significantly impacted by the caring role as a result of the stress of caring for the child, which affects the wider family also.
* There is a concern that, without support, the child is not likely to be safe, equal and achieving.

Level 4 – Families who need an exceptional level of support.

The indicators of need document will highlight a level of unmet need and will likely have highlighted several responses as ‘exceptional’ or ‘lots’. This higher level of need indicates the additionality of the child or young person’s disabilities and complex needs, and the impact on their ability to be safe, equal and achieving.

The support might be needed to ensure that the child is kept safe and that the parents are able to carry out their caring role. This is very likely to mean that a Child and Family Assessment is required in order to identify suitable support with addressing any unmet needs.

Families who feel they might benefit from significantly higher levels of support, for example, regular breaks from their caring role or regular short break for the child will have their needs formally reviewed by a Social Worker who will take the following indicators into consideration when assessing needs, some examples are:

* A child needs a high level of support and supervision, and the needs are difficult to be met with one person alone. For this level of support, it is likely that 2-1 is support is required to ensure that children are safe, equal and achieving. This high support ratio is needed at home, school and in activities in the community and absolutely required for measuring and maintaining safety.
* A child requires a high level of care throughout the day and night; this will likely have a significant impact on parent/carer wellbeing and physical health.
* Children with complex medical needs which may involve the input of specialist professionals on a daily basis to ensure that the child is safe, equal and achieving.
* The child is at serious risk of harm in all environments due to a high risk of injury, continued escalations of risk and likelihood of risk of harm to self and others.
* The needs of the disabled child need so much support that others in the home are significantly impacted, including siblings. It may also be that there is a significant impact on the mental health and/or physical health of parents and carers due to the caring role.
* There is a significant concern that, without support, the child is not likely to be safe, equal and achieving and is at risk of coming in to care.

**Guidance for professionals and parent carers**

Our initial assessments of new referrals will be considered as part of our screening process. We aim to complete our initial assessments of referrals within 24 hours where possible. We know that a Social Worker becoming involved with a family is a significant event and we do not make decisions lightly on whether this is suitable or appropriate. We rely heavily on appropriate information being available at the point of referral, and crucially that there is suitable and sufficient information, and that consent is provided by those caring for the child, or the child where they have the capacity to do so.

We ask that our screening workers consider the questions in the CWD checklist (see appendices and we ask that self-referrals and professionals also consider the information in this checklist as this provides more information to inform our decisions. We will not accept professional referrals without consent as this is a key component of our work with families. Referrals should provide a clear rationale of a discussion with parents and seeking consent, what this conversation detailed and what was discussed. Professional referrals should highlight the child’s needs and any level of unmet social care need clearly.

At the point of a referral to Children’s Social Care we will need to understand as much as we can about the child or young person’s needs in line with the threshold documentation. This may mean that when referrals are submitted, that additional information is required in order to inform our appropriate and proportionate next steps.

If services/support are offered to families, we have a responsibility to ensure that further assessments are undertaken, to demonstrate how needs have changed and if this impacts on decisions around more, or less support depending on individual circumstances.

**Social Work Team**

Social Workers undertake and complete assessments and develop plans to support families with disabled children who have a more complex level of need. The assessment process will identify the child’s need and inform the plan which is likely to include locally based community resources as well as services that may require funding. If the child or young person’s **unmet needs** cannot be otherwise addressed by their family, universal or specialist services, then the Social Work team will explore funding to a family as a Social Care Personal Budget when the child has been assessed as having a complex disability and requires additional funding beyond the available community resources and short breaks services to meet their needs.

**Social Care Personal Budgets**

Social Care Personal Budgets are the way that the social work team allocates council funding to support eligible disabled children and their families. Where this has been established after assessment the family are told how much money approximately there is to plan with. The family then make a support plan with help if needed and the council will consider the plan and work with the family to confirm that the right level of funding has been awarded. The indicative funding allocated before the support planning may change when the plan is agreed if there needs to be less or more funding to meet the child’s assessed needs. The Social Care Personal Budget will be agreed by the council so long as the outcomes of the Children and Young Peoples Plan are met.

The key elements of Social Care Personal Budgets are that:

The support is controlled by the individual. The level of support is agreed in a way which is fair, open and flexible. Any additional help needed to plan specify and find support is provided by people who are as close to the individual as possible. There are clear guidelines on what is an appropriate use of funding, and the supporting should always be child centred, and focus on addressing any unmet Social Care needs, to ensure that the child or young person is more likely to be safe, equal and achieving. The assessment process aims to make clear the nature of the disability, how it impacts on the child/young person’s life as well as identifying strengths and needs of the family. When the social work assessment is completed, it will state whether the child or young person is eligible for funding and if eligible how much funding the child or young person should receive. If the child is eligible, the funding offer is usually made in the form of a Personal Budget. The Social Worker will complete a resource allocation questionnaire with the family which will determine the level of need and required level of funding.

It is the responsibility of parents and extended family to provide care for their children. If children meet the criteria for the service, we will work with other agencies to provide services to support children within the family/extended family.

Children can be eligible for these services; however services are limited by the level of resources made available to us. We also have to consider during our assessments that children and young people may have a range of additional needs, but their needs may be met very clearly by parent carers and family, and we have to consider whether Social Work input is required or able to offer anything additional to the good level of care already afforded to them.

Access to services is determined by an assessment which considers the eligibility factors by looking at the needs of the child, the strengths and needs of the parents/carers and how looking after the child impacts on their lives, and the impact of the child’s additional needs on them being safe, equal and achieving. Decisions about the allocation of resources are made by the CWDT Team Manager on discussing this with the Social Worker following assessments. This is in order to ensure that we are as fair as possible and that we provide the best support that we can for each child or young person.

If services are provided on a longer-term basis they will be reviewed and may be reduced or increased according to assessed need and/or priorities. Re-assessments will determine the level of need and whether there is a continuing need for Social Work involvement, or whether the needs can be met elsewhere.

**Details of Newcastle’s community short breaks are identified in the short breaks statement.**

**Newcastle City Council has a commitment to review this document annually.**

**Legal Responsibilities:**

The legal duties that Newcastle City Council must follow for Short Breaks and provision of service relates to the following documents:

• Children’s Act 1989 and the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011

• Chronically Sick and Disabled Person’s Act 1970

• Children Act 2004

• Children and Families Act 2014

• Equality Act 2010

• NHS Act 2006 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012)

• Care Act 2014 (in relation to transition to adult social care)

