

Your Journey through Children's Services

A guide to the people you might meet if you are being supported by Darlington Children's Services.



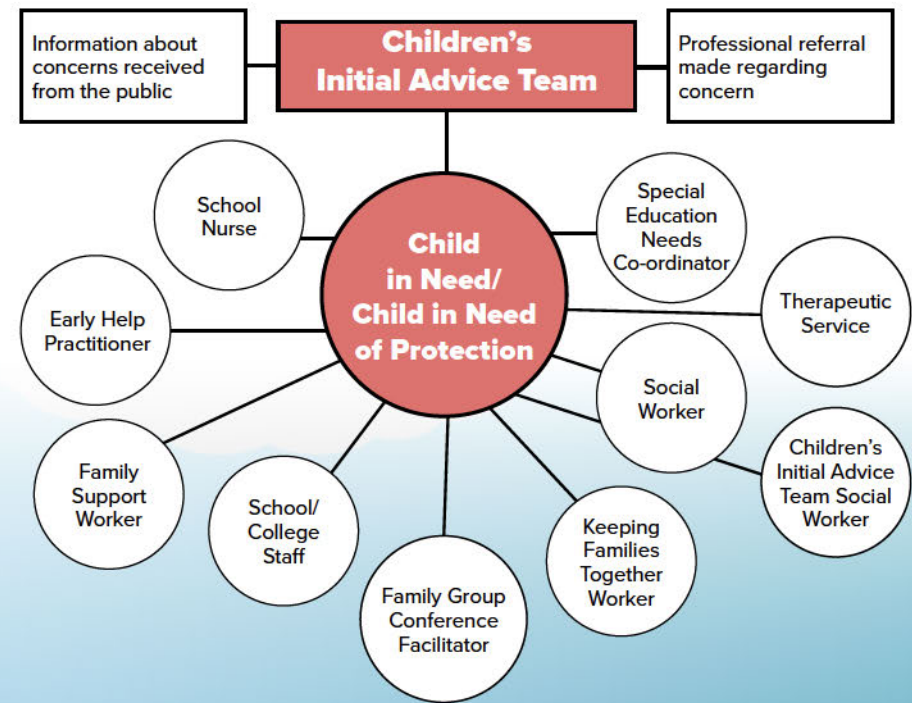
DARLINGTON
Borough Council



WHY AM I A CHILD IN NEED OR A CHILD IN NEED OF PROTECTION?

Children's Social Care feel that without additional support for you and your family, your basic needs may not be met, and you are at risk of being disadvantaged or harmed.

While you are a Child in Need or a Child in Need of Protection you may meet some or all the people detailed on this page. A description of who they are and their role is in the who's who section of this leaflet.



WHY AM I IN CARE?

Your family have experienced a variety of challenges and due to this a decision has been made that you need to be cared for elsewhere.

Your Care Team will support you within your new home, promote family contact/time, support your education and ensure your health needs are met.

Where will I live? You will live with Foster Carers (who may also be family members or friends), or in a Residential Children's Home.

While you are in Care you may meet some or all the people on this page. If you move from being a Child in Need or a Child in Need of Protection and come into Care these people may still have the same job title but be a different person as they are from a different team. A description of who they are and their role is in the who's who section of this leaflet.

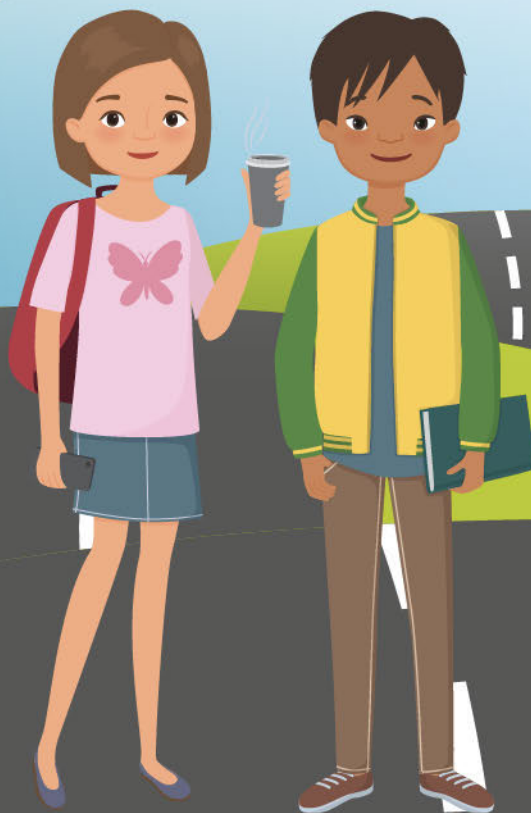
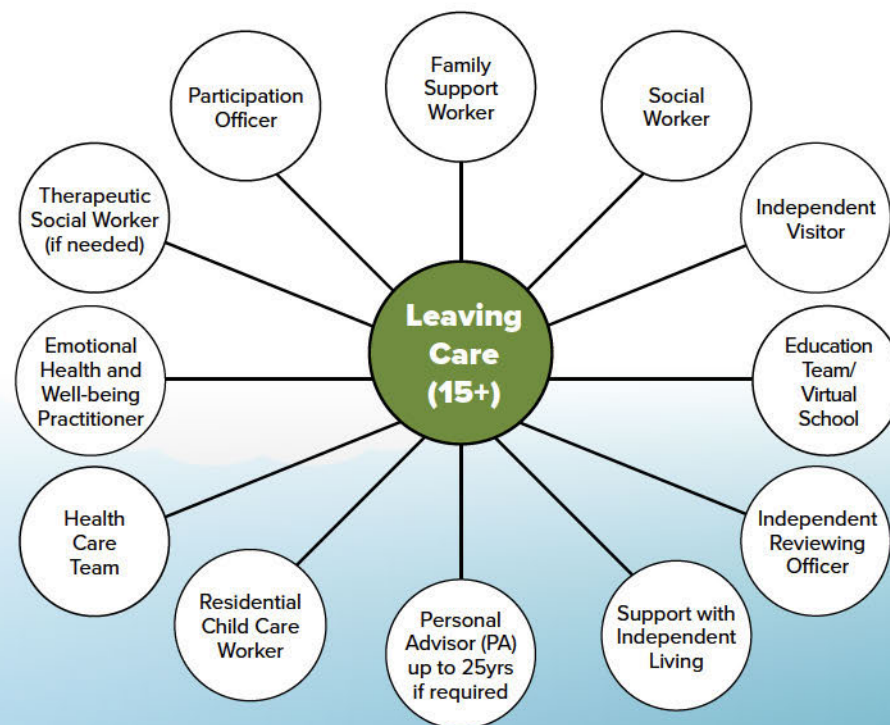


WHAT DOES LEAVING CARE MEAN?

At 15 ½ years old you will be allocated a Personal Advisor. They will work alongside you and your Social Worker and will assist in your preparation to leave care. They will also support you into further education, employment or training. **Please speak to your PA and request a copy of the Leaving Care Leaflet.**

More information on this can be found www.darlington.gov.uk/education-andlearning/childrens-socialcare/leaving-care-and-the-local-offer

If you remain in Care past your 15th birthday some of the people in your Care Team might change or you may become involved with different services. While you move across into Leaving Care you may meet some or all the people detailed on this page. A description of who they are and their role is in the who's who section of this leaflet.







YOU
ARE
HERE

WHO'S WHO IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES?

Below is a who's who list of some of the people you may meet or hear about while you are being supported by Darlington Children's Services.

GROUP DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

What they do: They are in charge of Children's Services. The Group Director of People must make sure that the service does the best it can, to keep you safe and well.

How they help: You might never meet this person but it's their job to ensure you are getting the best possible support.

TEAM MANAGER

What they do: They decide which workers in their team are going to support you and make sure they're doing a good job. They meet regularly with workers, providing advice and approving decisions to ensure your plan is being progressed.

How they help: They can attend meetings where important things are discussed. Sometimes getting your views across to them helps make sure things get done!

SOCIAL WORKER

Who: If you move across from the Safeguarding and Assessment Teams to become a Child in Care then your Social Worker will change and be from the Looked After Through Care Team. If you have a Social Worker from the Disabled Children and Young Adults Team and become a Child in Care you will stay with the same Social Worker from that team.

What they do: Social Workers are there to support you. They make decisions about your care on a day to day and long term basis and are responsible for progressing your care plan. They should be in regular contact with you and visit you on a regular basis (there is legislation which outlines their minimum visiting requirements to you).

How they help: They must listen to you and include your wishes and feelings in your care plan. They should explain decisions and ensure you know how to get your voice heard. You should always have your Social Worker's contact details and don't forget to ask them about how you could use Mind Of My Own to communicate with them.

PERSONAL ADVISOR (PA)

What they do: If you are in care and aged over 15 ½ or a care leaver then you'll have a PA. They'll work alongside you and your Social Worker (up to the age of 18) in your care planning and complete your pathway plan reviews. You can have support from a PA until you're 25, if you wish.

How they help: They should stay in regular contact (There is legislation which outlines their minimum contact requirements to you) and help you get into education, training and employment. They also help with things like housing, money (benefits if needed), health and wellbeing to ensure you're ready to live independently.

FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER

What they do: They will support Social Workers to work with children, young people and families. Helping to assess and support their needs.

How they help: Alongside your Social Workers they work with you and your family in supporting you with day to day tasks. This might be making sure you get to school on time, taking you to appointments, helping you see family and friends and giving you information about services and activities you might be interested in.

PARTICIPATION OFFICER

What they do: They work with children and young people from across Darlington to improve the Services they receive. They work specifically with groups such as Darlo Care Crew and Darlington Youth Partnership to ensure young people's views are heard and issues faced by young people are raised and dealt with.

How they help: You could attend one of the meetings they organise to have your say, work with other young people on projects to improve services and the Town, help them promote these groups to other young people, improve your confidence by attending training and learning new skills such as interview techniques, youth proofing documents and attending national and regional conferences. If you have a problem, they can help you find the right person to talk to.

CHILDREN'S INITIAL ADVICE TEAM SOCIAL WORKER

What they do: The Social Worker at the children's front door gathers initial information from a caller about their worry or concern for a child or young person. They may then speak with the young person's school, GP, or possibly police to see if they have any worries. It is also important to speak with parents and see what their views are. If the young person is old enough, we would also speak with them too to gain their views and what life is like for them at home.

How they help: From all of the information gathered they work together with the family to agree which is the best service for them at the current time. With parents' agreement we decided which service would best support your family, so that may be Building Stronger Families or a referral to social care for a children and families assessment. On some occasions we may disagree with parents if we think the worry is going to put a child or young person at risk, so we may have a meeting with lots of professionals called a strategy meeting.

EARLY HELP PRACTITIONER (BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES TEAM)

What they do: Early Help Practitioners often work alongside Social Workers when they decide there is a need to offer a family a helping hand to make changes. They will work with children and young people of all ages as well as parents, grandparents and other important adults in your life.

How they help: Practitioners get to know you to help them understand more about what you and your family want and need. You may see them in a variety of places such as home or school. They can offer help with practical things like improving home conditions, making plans for who will help to look after you, helping grown-ups to manage money. Practitioners also help grown-ups to understand why children behave the way they do and how parenting differently could help. They also make great listeners and can speak up on your behalf when needed.

RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE WORKER

What they do: In a residential children's home there will be a team of staff (Residential Child Care Workers – RCW's) who will act as what is called a 'Corporate Parent'. This means they are people who have 'special responsibilities' to help support you in your daily lives. RCW's will work with your Social Worker and other people involved in your care, to make sure that your plans are kept up to date and that we are listening to you and meeting your individual needs, so that you can reach your full potential.

How they help: RCW's in the home will help keep you safe, using appropriate boundaries and expectations, comfortable and healthy. They will promote a healthy lifestyle and diet, supporting and encouraging you to attend all health appointments. They will also offer you advice and guidance help you access hobbies and interests, listen to you and support you to see your family and friends.

CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE CHAIR (CP CHAIR) OR INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO)

Who: If you have a Child Protection Plan then you will have a Child Protection Conference Chair (CP Chair). If you become a Child in Care that person's role will change and they will become your Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). If you are already a Child in Care you will have an IRO.

What they do: A CP Chair will arrange and chair Child Protection Conference meetings and an IRO will arrange and chair Looked After Child (LAC) Review meetings. Chairing a meeting means making sure people talk about what needs to happen to keep you safe and happy and to check that people have done what tasks they have been asked to do. In your LAC Review meeting you could take over from the IRO and chair your own meeting. In both meetings the CP Chair and IRO will help review your Plan and make sure it meets your needs.

How they help: The CP Chair and the IRO will make sure decisions are made in your best interest, listen to you and ensure your views are listened to. They'll also tell you how to make a complaint and will try to resolve any disagreements you have about the services you receive.

KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER WORKER

What do they do: They are a team of Social Workers and none social work staff. They work with children and their families for up to 12 weeks and try to make sure everyone is doing their best to keep you safe and that you are well looked after in your family home.

How they help: They work with and listen to all children and ensure their voices and wishes are included in all work. They work with families over 7 days from 7:00 am to 9:00pm and support in families homes, schools and out in the community.

FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE (FGC) FACILITATOR

Who are they: FGC Facilitators work independently from Social Workers. They support children and their families to meet with each other and discuss problems and concerns the Social Worker has. Facilitators visit each family member and describe what to expect from a family meeting.

How can they help: The Facilitators help children and families to create their own plans and everyone has a chance to say how they can help. After the plan has been created the Facilitator will meet with the family up to two more times to look at the plan, check it is working and make changes if it is not. A Family Group Conference can be used where there are concerns a child or young person may be at risk of coming into care as well as to help children and young people to return to family from care.

EDUCATION TEAM / VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Who: Virtual School Team, Designated Teacher, Special Education Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO), Careers Advisor.

What they do: The Virtual School work with Designated Teachers to ensure your school/ college understands any issues that might affect your education and keep track of how you are doing.

If you are in Care, they will also be responsible for your Personal Education Plan (PEP), which should help you fulfil your potential. Your education provider will have access to extra funding.

If you have any additional learning needs then you may also have support from the SENCO in your school/college to ensure your learning needs are being met.

Once you start making choices about which GCSE's/A-levels/Apprenticeships you need to take for your future career you may need to speak to a Careers Advisor.

How they help: They'll help your school/ college support you and meet your needs, checking you're involved in setting learning goals and that there's a smooth transition if you change school or courses.

THERAPEUTIC SERVICE

Who: This could be a Therapeutic Social Worker, a Therapeutic Interventions Practitioner, an Emotional & Well-being Practitioner or a professional from CAMHS.

What they do: A friendly team with experience of helping children and young people who might be struggling with their thoughts or feelings. We can do this through talking with you or using different, fun and creative ways such as play, art and sand tray activities.

How they help: You may be finding it difficult to control feelings such as anger, sadness, worry or fear. We will support you and the adults around you to find different ways to manage these big feelings so they don't get in the way of you enjoying life and feeling safe.

HEALTH CARE TEAM

Who: School Nurse, Designated Looked After Nurse, Dentist, Doctor

What they do: Every child and young person will have regular check-ups at the dentist and when needed visit a GP surgery to talk to a Doctor/Nurse about any medical issues. You may also come into contact with a school nurse who may do things like track your height and weight, give you your injections or vaccinations.

If you are in Care, you should have a health check once a year (twice a year for under 5's) overseen by the Designated Looked After Nurse. They'll work with your Social Worker to ensure your health needs are met. As you get older your Social Worker will refer you for a Health Passport, this will provide you with an understanding of your and your family's health history.

How they help: They understand issues facing children and young people and give advice and support with this in mind.

ADVOCATE

What they do: Advocates work for an independent organisation and are there to speak up for you. You can access an advocate should you feel you more need support or don't feel listened to.

How they help: They should make sure your voice is heard, listen to you, help you make a complaint, check you're getting what you're entitled to and that you understand your rights, and support you in important meetings.

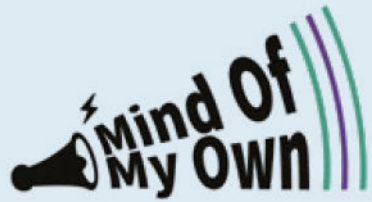
INDEPENDENT VISITOR (IV)

What they do: IVs are volunteers, not connected to the Council, who befriend and develop long-term friendships with a young person in Care.

How they help: They'll be someone to talk to, give advice, help you develop new interests, skills and hobbies or go to the cinema, bowling or for a walk in the park.

HAVE YOUR SAY!

You are always more than welcome to speak to one of the Council's Participation Officers about ways we can improve things for children and young people across Darlington.



Also we'd love to know what you think about this guide – what you like, which bits were boring, did it help you or how can we make it better?

One way to have your say and share your views is through Mind Of My Own. The One app is a communication tool created by Mind Of My Own which makes it easier for you to express your thoughts, experiences, good news and report any problems to the people supporting you.

Visit one.mindofmyown.org.uk to sign up for an account today or download the One app from Google Play or the Apple App Store.

To speak to a Participation Officer you can call **01325 405639** or email mindofmyown@darlington.gov.uk

