



Children Gateshead

**The plan for Children, Young People
and Families in Gateshead**

Gateshead Children's Trust

2014-2017



**GATESHEAD
STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIP**

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Foreword

I am delighted to present to you the new plan for children, young people, and families in Gateshead.

I remain so proud of the work we all do in Gateshead to secure the best outcomes for children and young people, despite the huge challenges many families are facing. The desire amongst all organisations to continue to work together, to share ideas, information and good practice is what sets us apart, and will enable us to stay focused at a time of great change.



We should be immensely proud of what we continue to achieve – reducing youth offending rates, great school results, the way our social care and family support staff continue to deliver excellent levels of care and help for families, and the hugely valuable contribution of the voluntary and community sector in helping to tackle poverty on the ground.

There is no doubt that these challenges will continue, and that is why this plan is so important. It sets out how we want to work, how we are organising ourselves and what we will do next. There are big issues in here, from learning from and embedding the learning from the Families Gateshead programme, to ensuring that families get early help when they need it and ensuring that we continue to deliver high standards of education for all children.

I'm confident that together we are clear about where we want to be, and that this plan sets out how we will get there.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to make it happen.

A. Douglas.

Cllr Angela Douglas
Chair, Gateshead Children's Trust

Introduction

This plan sets out our priorities for children, young people and their families. It is about children and young people but it also addresses the wider issues of family and community which have an impact on life chances, aspiration and success and so is more closely related to Vision 2030 the overall community strategy for Gateshead.

Vision 2030

The Vision for Gateshead is:

Local people realising their full potential, enjoying the best quality of life in a healthy, equal, safe, prosperous and sustainable Gateshead.

Our Plan focuses on the application of this vision to children, young people and families, recognising that we need to do more to create the opportunities for young people to flourish by addressing some of the key barriers and challenges facing them and their families.

The Children and Families Plan concentrates on the key areas where partners working together need to make a difference. It is a single plan about the needs, priorities and services for children, young people and their families and has been developed by the partner organisations that form Gateshead's Children's Trust.

Role and purpose of plan

This plan is the key document for all partners delivering services to children, young people and their families in Gateshead. It sets out:

- The vision that we have for our children and young people
- The key priorities and actions we commit to undertaking in partnership
- The improved outcomes we want to achieve for children and young people

Our plan describes how partners will work together to mitigate the effects of child poverty on the life chances of children and young people. We aim to improve outcomes for all children and young people and their families, with a particular focus, however, on those who are disadvantaged.

National picture

National policy has changed and there is an increasing focus on localism – enabling local authorities and their partners more flexibility to do things differently at a local level, and removing some of the duties and requirements around structure, planning and performance. Local areas are encouraged to develop their own approaches to their own local challenges. Funding has changed too – there is less funding available for initiatives and projects now and an increasing focus on payment by results as a model for ensuring the right services are developed.

Over the last 2 years the way health services are commissioned and delivered has changed with a reorganisation that saw public health return from the NHS to the Local Authority and the newly established Public Health England (PHE).

The way the welfare system works is a major factor in influencing what we need to do at a local level, especially with significant reductions in public sector funding over the next few years. Government policy puts significant emphasis on early intervention services to ensure that all children have the best possible start in life. Increasing scrutiny across all services for children, including education, echoes this message – that only 'good or better' is good enough in order to provide children with the support they need to develop to their full potential.

Through this plan Gateshead Children's Trust seeks to reaffirm its commitment to children, young people and their families and aims to address the inequalities in health and life chances that exist between children living in disadvantaged circumstances and those in better-off families to ensure all children and young people get the best possible start in life.

Our approach

At a time of significant change, it is more important than ever that all partners agree a shared vision, principles and objectives for how we work, and how we make a difference to the lives of children and young people and their families.

We need to focus on:

- empowering families as the primary influence in children's lives
- tackling the root causes for family difficulties rather than addressing the symptoms of failure
- more integrated, responsive and personalised services that can intervene earlier and prevent problems from getting worse
- progressively shifting resources towards prevention and early intervention to reduce the demand on specialist and crisis services, and to do this we need to focus on early identification of those children and young people with high risk factors, and design new ways of supporting them
- addressing entrenched and acute problems faced by some families around debt and low incomes.

Our key principles

Vision

Our aspiration and vision for our community is that “all children and young people are empowered and supported to develop to their full potential and have the life skills and opportunities to play an active part in society.” We will achieve this through a focus on commissioning - basing what we do on a continuous process of needs assessment, listening to the voices of the children and families of Gateshead, testing out how best to respond to need and holding deliverers to account for their performance.

We recognise that Gateshead is changing in response to economic and regeneration opportunities. Our aim is to equip our children and young people to contribute fully and reap the benefits of growth and innovation. In achieving this aim we will provide support to our children and young people in all areas of their lives to promote their intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Alongside our identified priorities there are a number of strategic steps that will underpin the work of the partnership and will be the focus of significant work.

Focussing on vulnerable groups

Collectively the Children’s Trust wants the best for all children and families who live in Gateshead but recognises that some need more help than others. The Children’s Trust recognises the need to target services at those children and families within our communities whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. The Council has a clear role as corporate parent and will aim to make the aspirations and attainment of our Looked after Children and Care Leavers their highest priority. The Children’s Trust will ensure that additional support is provided for vulnerable children to ensure their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

The principles underpinning this plan are:

1. Involving, respecting and hearing the voice of young people
2. Giving all children and young people the best chance of success
3. A focus on families
4. Early intervention and prevention
5. Focussing on outcomes and what works – taking an evidence led approach

Our priorities - progress

In 2012 we identified four strategic objectives for partners to achieve, backed by a new focus on commissioning as the basis for how we will deliver them:

- 1. Safeguarding children and young people**
- 2. Tackling poverty**
- 3. Starting and staying healthy and safe**
- 4. Attainment, achievement and ambition**

Safeguarding children and young people

We identified the main challenges in 2011/12 as:

- rising numbers of children subject to child protection plans
- increasing numbers of children being taken into care
- continuing concerns over the levels of children and families living in poverty
- the prevalence and impact of domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse in families
- preventing young people from being involved in youth crime
- the particular issues faced by families with multiple needs where traditional ways of working do not seem to work

Progress so far

During the last two years we have:

- embedded an effective approach to safeguarding and child protection – validated within the inspection of child protection arrangements in March 2013
- established an ongoing dialogue between schools and the front door children's social care (R&A)
- developed an Early Intervention Strategy which has been signed up to by partners
- established the Family Intervention Team to deliver targeted provision to families and which is the cornerstone of our FamiliesGateshead programme
- commissioned the voluntary sector to deliver a new family stability programme with a Payment By Results element
- reduced the number of young people entering the youth justice system
- increased the use of family group conferencing as an effective intervention to support positive family functioning
- placed greater emphasis on the corporate parenting role for our looked after children

Tackling poverty:

We identified the main challenges in 2011/12 as:

- increasing child poverty rates
- working age people on out of work benefits reduced
- cultures of low aspiration and low ambition in families and communities

Progress so far

During the last two years we have:

- built on the FamiliesGateshead programme to raise the profile of worklessness within families
 - developed stronger links with Family Wise through our use of CAF and TAFs
 - continued to work with Credit Unions and through the front line services to address issues of low income, debt and lack of access to affordable credit.
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Starting and staying healthy and safe

We identified the four main challenges in 2011/12 as:

- getting the best start in life: infant mortality and low birth weight; breastfeeding and immunisation rates
- mental health and emotional health and wellbeing
- lifestyle choices, including sexual health and substance misuse amongst young people
- childhood obesity – physical activity and healthy eating

Progress so far

During the last two years we have:

- developed a Risk and Resilience model around risk taking behaviour and building capacity
 - delivered the Healthy Schools programme across schools in Gateshead with all school plans underpinned by emotional wellbeing
 - expanded the number of Health Visitors working in Gateshead, ensuring that those families most in need of support receive the most targeted interventions
 - expanded the Family Nurse programme
 - reviewed school nursing to inform the remodel of existing services
 - implemented a new model for CAMHS across South of Tyne and Wear
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Attainment, achievement and ambition

We identified four main challenges in 2011/12 as:

- refocusing services to support the role of schools in driving forward achievement
- improving levels of attainment for all children
- implementing a new approach to Special Educational Needs
- developing our approach to 14-19 education, including for those with additional needs

Progress so far

- Developed the Early Years SEN Team emphasising inclusion, with some specialist provision
- Strengthened the role of REALAC in supporting the education of Looked After Children
- Developed our approach for children with special educational needs through the tranSEND pathfinder and its focus on integrated assessment and planning, 0-25 approach, key working, personalisation and personal budgets
- Roles and responsibilities clearer at Education Improvement Partnership but a developing marketplace

Our priorities - what's new for 2014-17

What's changing for 2014-17

The priorities we have worked on over the last 2 years remain fundamental to improving the outcomes for the children and families of Gateshead. Building on our progress so far and through consultation our priorities have become more defined and sharpened to enhance their focus on our key areas of challenge.

- 1. Safeguarding children and strengthening families – from early help to statutory social care**
- 2. Tackling child poverty and raising families' incomes**
- 3. Reducing risk and promoting resilience – giving children the best start in life**
- 4. Education – opportunity and achievement for all**

Safeguarding children and strengthening families – from early help to statutory social care

Our first priority is to ensure that children and young people in Gateshead are safe. Research and lessons from practice show that a secure family with strong parental role models is highly influential in a child's wellbeing and development.

Our overall approach should, therefore, be to ensure that we take a whole systems approach to safeguarding and child protection:

1. Ensure that there is a range of broad provision to support families, and that there is information and advice available for those who need it;
2. Support families through targeted programmes where there is a risk of poor outcomes for children and young people;
3. Intervene in families where more specialist support is required to prevent family breakdown;
4. Ensure we have effective approaches to referral and assessment, safeguarding, child protection, fostering and adoption where families are not able to bring up children safely, and where the Council needs to intervene to ensure child safety.

Early help - embedding our work on early intervention is imperative

We know that early identification and early intervention are key to preventing poor outcomes for children and that providing family support at the earliest point can stop issues escalating.

Early intervention in childhood can help reduce physical and mental health problems and prevent social dysfunction being passed from one generation to the next (Early intervention: the next steps). Evidence

shows that poor social and emotional wellbeing predicts a range of negative outcomes in adolescence and adulthood. For example, negative parenting and poor quality family or school relationships place children at risk of poor mental health.

We are continuing to work with the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) as one of 20 Early Intervention places in 2014/15 to ensure that the latest research and evidence of good practice underpin our approach. The purpose of the EIF is to advocate for early, rather than remedial, intervention, rigorously assess what works on the ground and advise those planning and delivering services to ensure children, young people and families get the best support possible.

Within this framework

1. We will be reviewing the role and remit of children's centres to enhance the offer for families stepping down from more targeted or specialist services.
2. We will step up our 'think family' approach in all we do as a more effective model of providing support. We will reinvigorate our CAF and Team Around the Family (TAF) approach.
3. We will place greater focus on how we assess and plan to ensure families receive the services they need and take account of risk.
4. We will develop our parenting approach to ensure parenting programmes are delivered within an holistic family support plan and complemented by 1:1 work.

A Regional Assessment Framework was approved by all 12 Local Authorities in September 2013. The framework highlights the need for all assessments to provide a level of understanding about children and the families to enable appropriate plans to be put in place that build on child and family strengths and address the areas requiring change in order to improve the children's outcomes and keep them safe.

Tackling child poverty and raising families incomes

Poverty, and the impact of welfare reform in particular, continues to be a major challenge for partners in Gateshead. Central to this is a need to raise income levels in families. Poverty and money worries stop families from participating in other activity. It is a major contributor to mental wellbeing, and a major source of domestic issues, including domestic violence.

Tackling poverty is, therefore, a key focus for all partners. Traditionally this has been seen as about getting people into work, but there is increasing evidence that 'in work poverty' is an increasingly important challenge, linked to low wage levels and zero hours contracts, part time and other flexible labour market initiatives:

1. We will work with Credit Unions to develop their offer and promote their take up as part of a refreshed Financial Inclusion Strategy
2. We will support people into employment through targeted activity, including the ESF Family Wise programme
3. We will support young people into education, employment or training including through SPARC, Youth Contract, traineeships and apprenticeships
4. Embed advice, guidance and support as part of a new children's centre offer

The Government is currently consulting on better ways to understand and measure Child Poverty. Gateshead Youth Assembly have been involved in looking at this across the region. We will continue to listen and work with the Youth Assembly to ensure their knowledge and ideas improve how we support families where money is a challenge.

Reducing risk and promoting resilience – giving children the best start in life

There are significant health challenges for Gateshead and some clear gaps in performance against the national picture or best performance. We know that early years are critical to improving health in Gateshead – specifically the prenatal period to two years old, so early identification and early intervention are key to giving the best start in life. We also know that 1 in 10 women will suffer from post natal depression which can adversely affect attachment with their child. It is crucial that these women are identified and supported appropriately.

We also know that emotional resilience underpins the wellbeing of young people and provides the bedrock for moving into adulthood. Social and emotional wellbeing creates the foundations for healthy behaviours and educational attainment. It also helps prevent behavioural problems (including substance misuse) and mental health problems. That's why it is important to focus on the social and emotional wellbeing of all our children and young people.

The importance of social and emotional wellbeing in relation to healthy child development is set out in a joint Department for Education and Department of Health publication, 'Supporting families in the foundation years' (2011). The primary aim of the foundation years (years 0–5) is defined as: 'promoting a child's physical, emotional, cognitive and social development so that all children have a fair chance to succeed at school and in later life'. The new 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage' (Department for Education 2012) makes personal, social and emotional development a cornerstone of early years learning and education.

1. We will develop an integrated approach covering children from pre-birth to 19, ensuring targeted and universal activities form the cornerstone of our multi-agency strategy to promote and support social and emotional wellbeing in children and young people.
2. 0-19 approach as a framework for integration of health visitors, school nursing and revised children's centre offer.
3. We will review how emotional wellbeing and mental health support are delivered in Gateshead to ensure a responsive and child focused approach.
4. We recognise that the emotional health and wellbeing of parents is crucial to their ability to provide positive parenting. We will work with adult services to explore models of intervening such as counselling and family therapies.
5. We have learnt that developing a family approach to address lifestyle issues such as obesity is more effective.

There are key issues around risk taking behaviour such as around the use of alcohol and drugs and sexual behaviour, including the continuing issue of teenage pregnancy.

1. We will focus on a wellness model to reducing risky behaviour around drugs, alcohol, going missing, sexual health, preventing youth crime and supporting young people.
2. We will continue to prioritise the promotion of sexual health and the reduction of teenage pregnancies – we will review sexual health services to ensure young people have access to appropriate services that intervene effectively.
3. We will target smoking, particularly mothers who continue to smoke during pregnancy.
4. We will build on our partnership approach to drug and alcohol support services ensuring appropriate interventions are delivered for young people, recognising that this work is crucial in preventing substance misuse escalating and becoming a behaviour pattern for later life.

Education – opportunity and achievement for all

Reform of the national education system through the Education Act 2011 has created a more autonomous system for schools, repositioned the financial landscape, and introduced diversity of school type into the marketplace. In addition, the role of the regulator Ofsted has shaped and changed, bringing a greater focus on teaching standards and performance outcomes.

We know that educational attainment is one of the key determinants of future success. We will, therefore, focus on:

1. working with schools to ensure the best possible educational provision is available
2. ensuring that we are providing the right types of support for those young people who need additional support and help outside school or in different environments, including a specific role in implementing the Children and Families Act proposals around Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
3. ensuring we have an effective way of supporting young people through the raised participation age, and into other forms of education , training or employment.

How we deliver

Gateshead Children's Trust is committed to delivering services to children, young people and families that are:

- **Flexible and timely responsive to the needs of the child and of the family**
- **Commissioned on the basis of robust needs assessment**
- **High quality services – monitored and quality assured**
- **Built around empowerment and personalisation.**

Resources

We know that resources are stretched, and this strategy seeks to deliver services that encourage the moving of resources downstream by intervening early and reducing the need for high end expensive services.

Gateshead's Children's Trust is the accountable body for delivery of this plan. It will be the body which allocates and approves resources; holds partners to account for delivery; and takes a lead on engaging and involving children, young people and parents. The Children's Trust will work closely with the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) to integrate the Children's Trust commissioning priorities with the priorities of the HWB.

Knowing what we do makes a difference: We have an outcomes framework that:

- will ensure children and families are able to voice their feedback about services.
- will ensure children and families are involved when we review how services are delivered to make sure they are appropriate.
- will improve the performance management and audit programme so that it is sharply focused on how services work to improve outcomes for children.
- will take action to effectively evaluate practice and efforts to reduce risk, including reporting on the quality of work and whether outcomes for children have improved.

Trained and supported to work with families: A skilled and committed children's workforce

We want to ensure that the Children's workforce in Gateshead have the core skills to be able to identify, assess and intervene to support families. Practitioners need to be able to provide meaningful assessments in their work with families. Each assessment to involve *'the methodical collation of information which allows the practitioner to identify, through analysis and evaluation, the risks to, and the needs of, the child(ren) and family.'* (Regional Assessment Framework Sept 2013).

Risk assessment has not traditionally been included in the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and work will need to be undertaken with the children's workforce to ensure that assessment of risk can be

undertaken effectively. Successful assessment and management of risk will be predicated on supportive management where managers have the skills to support, facilitate reflection with practitioners on their practice and challenge thinking and decision making.

We want to equip all practitioners with the skills they need in order to develop trusting relationships with vulnerable families and adopt a non-judgmental approach, while focusing on the child's needs. This plan is underpinned by our workforce strategy that focuses on equipping practitioners to:

- identify the strengths and capabilities of the family, as well as factors that pose a risk to the child's (or children's) social and emotional wellbeing
- talk about the aspirations and expectations for the child
- seek to understand and respond to perceived needs and concerns
- discuss any risk factors in a sensitive manner to ensure families do not feel criticised, judged or stigmatised
- collect, consistently record and share information as part of the common assessment framework (CAF) for integrated team working and to ensure continuity of care and avoid multiple assessments.

In order to ensure we get a rounded picture of what is going on for families we will develop improved practice in relation to Quality of Assessment modelling our approach on the Regional Framework and taking into account the 4 assessment domains:

- the child's developmental needs, including whether they are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm;
- parents' or carers' capacity to respond to those needs;
- the impact and influence of wider family, community and environmental circumstances; and
- assessment of risk

We will work with practitioners to improve our support and care planning to ensure plans are outcome focussed, time limited specific and address the needs identified in the original assessment.

We will develop a shared offer across the Children's Trust for family support workers - a set of universal skills that provide practitioners with the expertise to;

- develop clear outcome focussed plans as a result of analytical assessments
- understand the importance of parenting and be able to give parenting advice and access to parenting programmes
- Develop a critical mass of practitioners able to deliver parenting programmes that are determined by the evidence of their efficacy
- Understand the crucial role of communication and ensure all contacts are communication /speech contacts
- Develop a critical mass of practitioners able to deliver universal programmes which evidence from EIF shows are the most effective in relation to speech and communication
- Understand how to assess risk and mitigate against it



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