



LOCAL AUTHORITIES THAT ARE CHILDREN'S SERVICES AUTHORITIES

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1. The safety and welfare of children and young people is the responsibility of the local authority, working in partnership with other public organisations, the private and third sector, and service users and carers. Integrating the delivery of these services at the frontline can help to maximise their effectiveness. An integrated and preferably co-located workforce that includes active partners from the police, health visiting services and other relevant health services, can enable these services to be provided both more effectively and more efficiently. Local authorities should work with partners to ensure that all services are working together effectively at an operational level, for example by meeting regularly to help build and develop positive professional relationships, share information, discuss issues and improve working practices. Local authorities, together with their Children's Trust partners, should look closely at any opportunity to integrate and co-locate services, taking into account specific local needs and circumstances.
2. As part of exercising statutory responsibilities, and in order to ensure that specialist services are commissioned effectively, it is important that local authorities work through the Children's Trust Board and wider co-operation arrangements to agree, in consultation with the LSCB:
 - governance arrangements and systems to support commissioning of specialist services between relevant partners;
 - a strategic approach to understanding needs, including a sophisticated analysis of data and effective engagement with children, young people and families;
 - a strategic approach to understanding the effectiveness of current services, and identifying priorities for change – including where services need to be improved, reshaped or developed;
 - integrated and effective arrangements for ensuring that priorities for change are delivered through the Children and Young People's Plan by the Children's Trust partners; and
 - integrated and effective approaches to understanding the impact of specialist services on outcomes for children, young people and families, and using this understanding to constructively challenge progress and drive further improvement.
3. All services that are commissioned and/or delivered by the local authority will have an impact on the lives of children and families, and local authorities have a particular responsibility towards those children and families most at risk of social exclusion.
4. Local authorities have responsibilities for ensuring appropriate arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children are in place for all children residing within their area, including:
 - children excluded from school/receiving alternative provision;
 - home educated children; and
 - those placed in custody
5. In order to ensure that children are protected from harm, local authorities commission, and may themselves provide a wide range of care and support for:
 - adults, who may in turn be parents or carers of children and young people;
 - children and families, including those groups whose needs may not be immediately obvious such as disabled children, children involved in gangs, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and children within the immigration system;
 - older people;
 - people with physical or learning disabilities;

- people with mental health problems;
- people with substance misuse problems;
- ex-offenders and young offenders, including those in custody and their families;
- families, especially where children have special needs, and/or where children are growing up in special circumstances as set out in the *National Service Framework for Children Young People and Maternity Services*²⁴ and families experiencing multiple and complex problems;
- adults and children affected by domestic violence;
- children who need to be looked after by the local authority, through fostering or residential care; and
- children who are placed for adoption. Local authorities also have a duty under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to do all they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in the exercise of their functions.

6. Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, provided that this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child's needs. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child's race, religion, culture and language and that takes account of the child's wishes and feelings. Services might include childcare for young children, after-school care for school children, counselling, short breaks, family centre services, practical help in the home or targeted parenting and family support.

7. Within local authorities, children's social care staff act as the principal point of contact for children about whom there are welfare concerns. They may be contacted directly by children, parents or family members seeking help, by concerned friends and neighbours, or by professionals and others from statutory and voluntary organisations. The need for family support should be considered at the first sign of difficulties, as early support can prevent more serious problems developing. Contact details need to be clearly signposted, including on local authority websites, on notice boards in schools, health centres, public libraries and leisure centres, and in telephone directories. Specific consideration should be given as to how children and young people will be made aware of whom they can contact if they require advice and/or support: this includes children living away from home in educational, health or custodial settings, for example. Good practice in information sharing and processes such as the CAF and the lead professional role should be fully embedded throughout the Children's Trust co-operation arrangements.

8. Local authorities, with the help of other organisations as appropriate, also have a duty to make enquiries if they have reason to suspect that a child in their area is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare (see Chapter 5).

9. Where a child or young person is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, children's social care staff have lead responsibility for undertaking an assessment of the child's needs, the parents' capacity to meet these needs and to keep the child safe and promote his or her welfare, and of the wider family and environmental circumstances. The child's own account of their needs, concerns, the capacity of their parents to protect them and promote their welfare, as well as other factors, should be taken into account as part of the assessment and subsequent interventions.

10. A well-supported workforce is essential to the effective and safe delivery of these functions. It is important that local authorities ensure that high quality, experienced social workers undertake key management and supervisory roles in intake/duty teams and receive high quality, specialist training in these roles.