

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

TARGETED HELP TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WITH SAFEGUARDING AND COMPLEX NEEDS

OUR VISION

Children's Social Care are committed to improving the life chances of the most vulnerable children in our City through delivering effective, targeted help, in a timely way or in other words providing 'the right help at the right time'.

In 2013 we set out our vision for Children's Social Care. The key elements of our vision are:

- We believe that children are best brought up in their own family;
- Where this is not safely possible, we will seek to ensure alternative and high quality care arrangements;
- For most, and when appropriate, this will be in a local family placement.

To achieve this we will:

- Spend more time working in partnership with families to effect positive change;
- Provide strong professional development and professional support for our social workers;
- Manage risk, understanding that uncertainty and risk is a feature of child protection work;
- Make a difference by working together.

We said that we would know we were succeeding when we had safely reduced our numbers of children in care and the number of children subject to child protection plans. Over the past three years we have gone some way towards achieving this, but we know that there is more to do, including:

- Further improve the quality, timeliness and proportionality of assessments across the service;
- Achieve the right sort of permanency, at the right time, for children and young people;
- Have sufficient local and appropriate placements for our looked after children;
- Continue to improve the professional support, development opportunities and tools available to our staff;
- Continuing to build a workforce that is knowledgeable, skilled and confident in using evidence based methods of working.

Relationship based practice, characterised by real, honest and respectful engagement with children and their families, lies at the heart of our vision.

OUR SERVICE STRUCTURE – DELIVERING THE VISION

The overarching aims of the structure are to make best use of our available resources in order to strengthen the quality of our decision-making and planning, to improve outcomes for children.

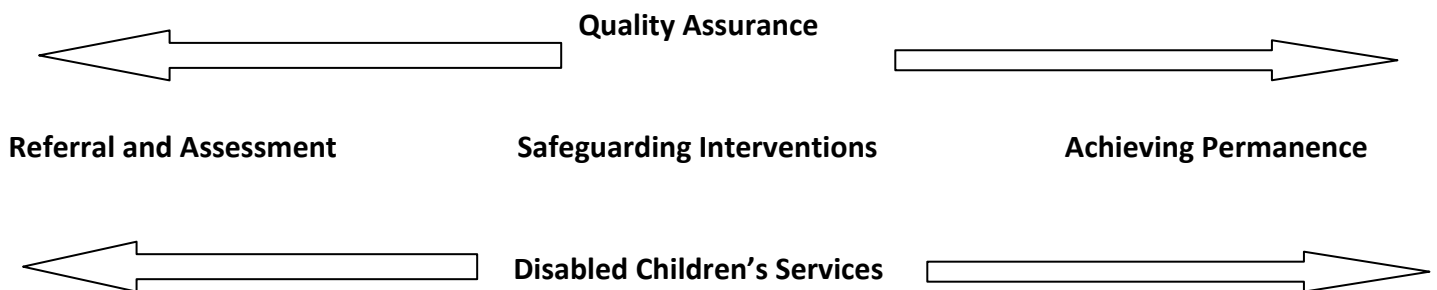
Our structure is designed to reinforce good social work, keeping relationship based practice at the heart of everything that we do, whilst building in the latest research, empirical tools and standardised measures to support timelier decision-making, permanency planning and evidence based professional judgements.

A recent internal review of assessment practice made a number of recommendations around use of specific assessment models and tools to support assessment of risk and assessment of children's relationships with their parents or carers. These recommendations are informing the ongoing development of practice models and assessment frameworks used.

SERVICE GROUPS

To achieve our vision, services are pulled together within Service Groups which, along with a Quality Assurance Group, follow the journey of a child. We have not built rigid boundaries around the Service Groups - where a service is needed it will be offered to a child whichever Service Group the child is 'held' by and whichever Service Group the particular service is provided by.

Children's Social Care Service Groups



We have consolidated and improved the **Independent Review** of work across the Service and we use this to continue to drive up standards.

Within our **Referral and Assessment Service** we focus on delivering child centered and outcome focused responses to children in need and at risk of significant harm. We also provide an immediate response service, designed to provide a crisis intervention service and prevent escalation of concerns.

We have expanded our capacity to offer Family Group Conferencing by training a number of additional staff who can deliver this service alongside their substantive roles. We use this offer to support families wherever possible to find their own solutions.

In our **Safeguarding Interventions Service** our staff are freed up to work with complex cases within the Family Courts to focus on the child, their parents and on assessment and care planning for them.

We have improved the support we provide to children and young people in care by creating a dedicated team within the **Achieving Permanence Service**. We aim to 'Make York Home' for most young people in care and better support permanence for them, including to those children who have been adopted. We have a specialist service identifying or commissioning placements and providing support to these placements, and a separate service specialising in assessment of carers including kinship or connected person carers.

Through our **Disabled Children's Service** we deliver a range of specialist services to children and young people with significant health and disability needs.

CAPACITY TO DELIVER

We have significant management capacity in the service under the direction of a Head of Social Work Services to support staff in the incredible work that they do. Each Service Group has overall management and strategic oversight from a Group Manager. In order to ensure continuity and consistency in service delivery across the whole service, the Head of Social Work Services and Group Managers work together to develop the Service Plan. This sets the strategic aims and priorities for the overall Service.

Each Service Group has an Advanced Practitioner, who works with the managers in their Service Group and also work closely with the Principal Social Worker across the whole Service leading on developing practice and services, and delivering support mentoring and training to staff.

We have a number of other roles supporting the delivery and ongoing development of our social work service. These include the Senior Social Work Practitioner role, offering practice education and advice and support to less experienced staff. We have a Social Care Assistant role, undertaking practical tasks in support of the Social Workers role, freeing up their time to use their skills in working directly with children and their parents and carers.

We also have Social Workers offering professional expertise within our Child in Need Teams and the Contact and Assessment Team.

DEVELOPING EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The Principal Social Worker leads on the development of practice in the service and works closely with the senior management team whilst also remaining closely involved in front line practice. This means that the experience of front line social work in York is understood at a senior level and fed into service development and planning.

The Principal Social Worker represents the service in our teaching partnership arrangements with the local universities and neighbouring Authorities, and through this ensures that the pre-qualifying and CPD training provided meets the specific and developing needs of our service. This ensures that we are able to recruit from a high quality cohort of locally trained and appropriately skilled and educated Newly Qualified Social Workers.

Working closely with Advanced Practitioners and the Workforce Development Unit the Principal Social Worker leads on the Assessed first Year in Employment program (ASYE) for Newly Qualified Social Workers, and on the delivery of good quality practice placements for Student Social Workers. This ensures that students training with us and Newly Qualified Social Workers have access to a consistent and

high quality learning environment and experience that ensures a great start to their professional career and a thorough induction into their roles and our practice methods and models.

The Principal Social Worker also works closely with the Advanced Practitioners in each Service Group and the Workforce Development Unit, in developing practice across the Service that is tailored to the operating models within each Service Group, and that is responsive to the changing practice and policy environment.

The overarching aim is develop excellence in social work practice in York in order to deliver the outcomes for children that we seek.

OUTCOMES

The outcomes we aim for in Children's Social Care are no different to those we aspire to for all the children and young people in our City, that is for children and young people to have the chance to be safe, resilient and achieving.

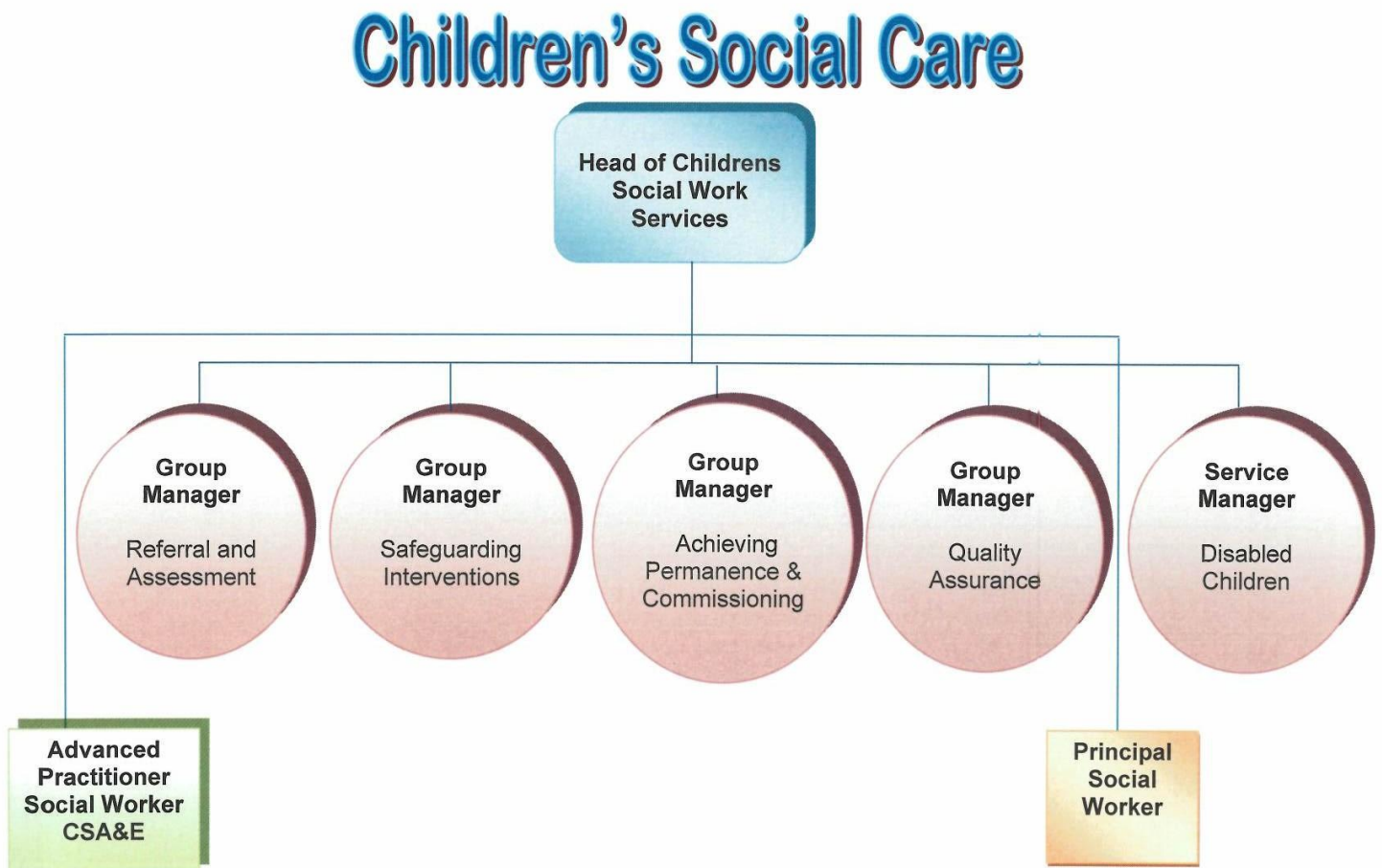
However where children and young people are supported by Children's Social Care it is because they have additional or complex needs, or because they are at risk of suffering, or have suffered significant harm. In order to achieve the same outcomes for these most vulnerable children and young people in the City we:

- **Place the Child or Young Person at the Centre** – working directly with children and young people to ensure that they are at the centre of everything that we do and their voice is heard and we understand their individual daily lived experience.
- **Use an Evidence Based Approach** – using a growing range of standardised measures and evidence based tools e.g. *Graded Care Profile*. We aim to use methods that are known to work.
- **Work in a Relational Model of Social Work** – Social work entails effecting change in people's lives. We know that change can not be imposed. Real change is effected through relationships; hence our model of practice is relational and emphasises a primary focus on the child's relationship with parents or carers as well as a focus on social workers as 'agents of change'.
- **Assess Risk and Need** – making evidence based determinations of level of need and risk within statutory timeframes.
- **Care Plan** – every child has an individual care plan (assessment plan, safety plan, child in need plan, child protection plan, child in care plan, education and health care plan) aimed at ensuring needs are met and risks reduced.
- **Provide Effective Interventions** – We offer evidence based interventions, either commissioned or through direct delivery, that are specific to the identified need or risk e.g. *Changing Lives* programme in relation to substance misuse, *Good Lives* programme in relation to harmful sexual behaviour.
- **Continue to Assess** – Assessment is not a one off exercise. We assess the impact of interventions, and where children are subject to Child Protection Plans, we assess parental capacity to change.

- **Achieve Permanence** – We know that to achieve their potential children and young people need stable and secure parenting and care. The earlier we can achieve this permanence for children the better their long term life chances. Wherever safely possible we aim to do that within their birth family or their extended family. Where that is not possible we aim to provide permanence through adoption, fostering or occasionally specialist residential care.
- **Make York Home** – Children and young people do best when they grow up near their family, friends and schools and are supported by those who know them best. We aim to ensure that wherever possible the care we provide to children and young people in the care of the Local Authority is provided in York.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE STRUCTURE

Children's Social Care is organised into five distinct Service Groups as illustrated below:

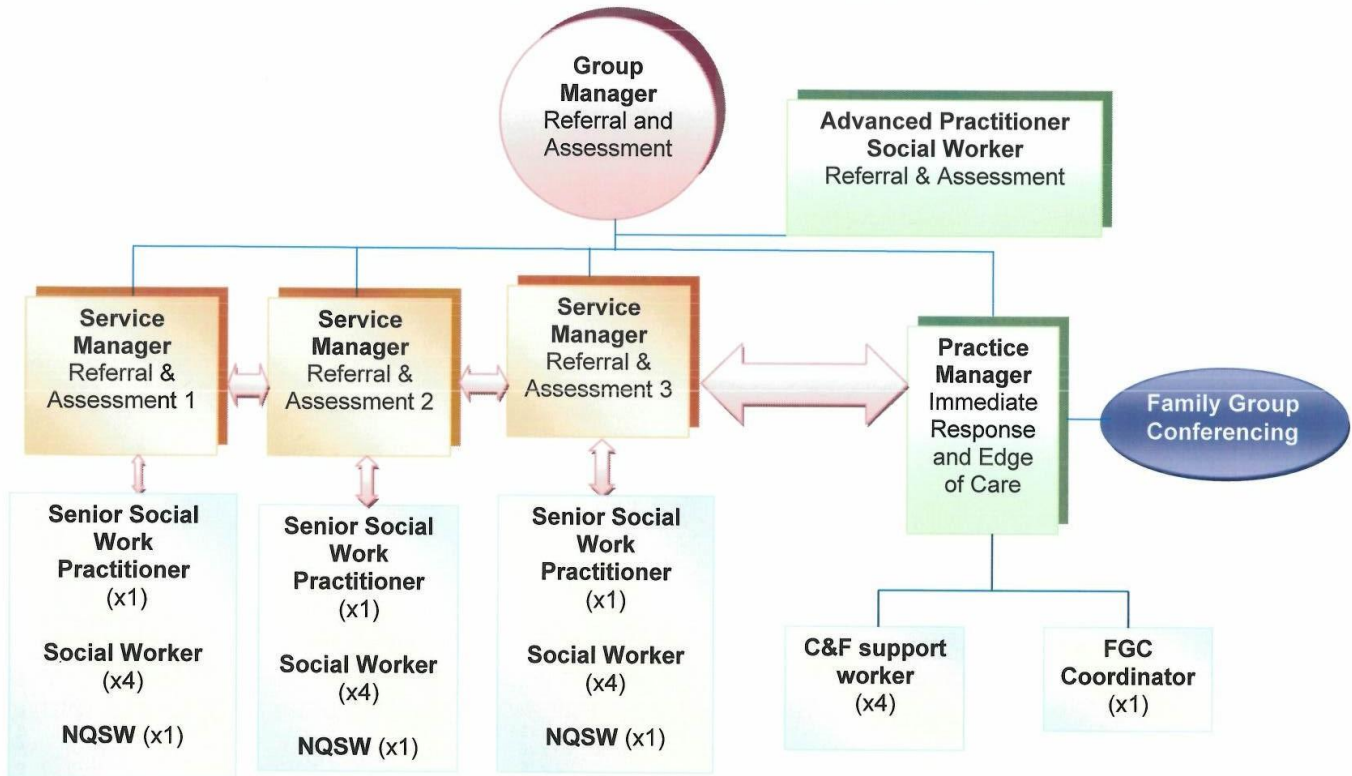


We offer expert advice, support and training across the service around Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation through a dedicated Advanced Practitioner role. This role reports directly to the Head of Social Work Services and also works closely with the Principal Social Worker and the wider Advanced Practitioner Group.

REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT

The Referral and Assessment Service is the 'front door' of Children's Social Care.

Referral and Assessment Service



The overarching emphasis of the service is to use standardised measures and evidence based assessment tools, such as the Graded Care Profile in cases of neglect, to assess risk, harm and need. Within this there is a focus on the child, their daily lived experience, and the quality of the care giving relationship between them and their parents or care givers.

Social Work Teams

There are three Referral and Assessment Social Work Teams. They offer expert social work advice at the point of contact as well as deal with new referrals, undertake S47 enquiries and complete Single Assessments in respect of children in need and children at risk of significant harm.

The teams work on a three weekly duty rota; each team has one week on duty responding to referrals and contacts and the following two weeks are spent completing S47 investigations and assessments.

The teams are co-located and work very closely with each other and also have a very close working relationship with a co-located police presence. A dedicated Public Health professional will join the service in the near future, further enhancing the screening and quality of health information.

As well as the overall management the service being provided by the Group Manager, each social work team is managed by an experienced Service Manager and each team also has a Senior Practitioner who is able to offer practice education to Student Social Workers as well as advice and support to less experienced colleagues.

Immediate Response and Edge of Care

This is service working within the Referral and Assessment Service combines the skills of four experienced Child and Family Support Workers and a Practice Manager.

The aim of the team is to intervene with the highest need children and families at the earliest opportunity; this will take place whilst their Social Work colleagues complete a Single Assessment.

The aim of the service is to:

- Reduce the number of children and young people coming into the care of the local authority;
- Provide an early response and work to achieve change and step down or case closure within the assessment period;
- To make progress towards change and know better what works well with those children and families who will require ongoing intervention and planning beyond the assessment period.

Family Group Conferencing

This sits within the Referral and Assessment structure but is a service offered across Children's Social Care to families in York with the aim of supporting and enabling wider families to meet together and identify their own solutions to their particular needs. Whilst the service will be offered widely across the service the aim is to target children with the greatest need and at greatest risk, particularly those on the edge of care or legal interventions.

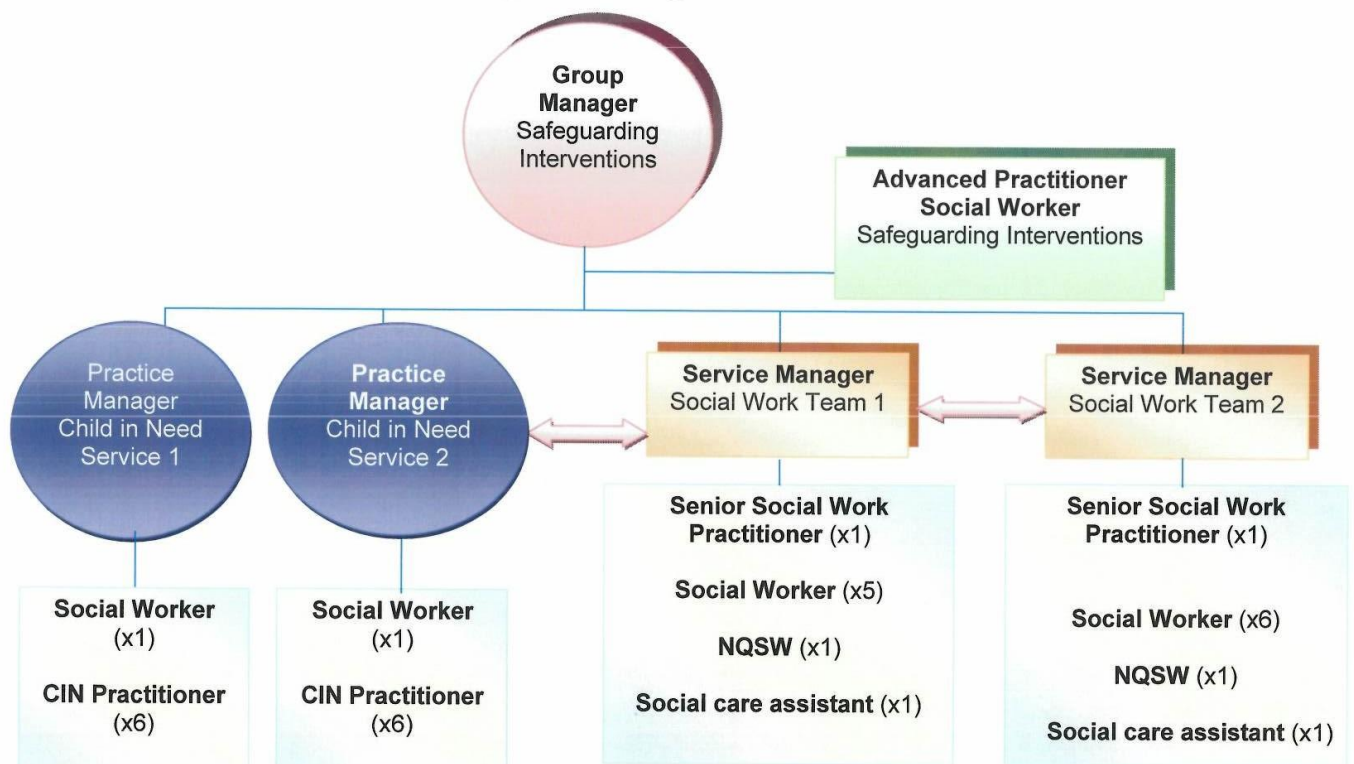
Service Development

Team meetings, service development days and lunchtime learning sessions are a regular feature of the service. The Advanced Practitioner is a practice lead for the service and works closely with the Group Manager and Service Managers in ensuring that staff are supported and have opportunities for learning and development.

SAFEGUARDING INTERVENTIONS

Safeguarding Interventions provide individually tailored packages of support to children who are the subject of either child in need plans or child protection plans. This service is also responsible for pre-proceedings work and public law applications.

Safeguarding Interventions



As in the Referral and Assessment service, there is an emphasis on assessing the quality of the relationships that children and young people have with their parents or carers. There is also a focus on ongoing assessment of need, risk and harm, and critically capacity to change.

Social Work Teams

There are two social work teams comprising of a Senior Social Work Practitioner, Social Workers, a Newly Qualified Social Worker and a Social Care Assistant. Each team is managed by an experienced Service Manager. All children who are subject to child protection plans, or public law proceedings and children who are in the care of the Local Authority where a permanence plan has not yet been achieved, have a social worker from within one of these two teams.

This service also uses a specific evidence based model for assessing parental capacity to change¹ using a range of standardised measures and assessment tools. Specific aims and goals are agreed with the family and professionals. Targeted and time limited interventions are provided either directly or commissioned from other service or agencies, and the impact of intervention is kept under review and informs on-going assessment. Assessments are updated at each review point in a child protection plan. If children can not be kept safe at home and change can not be achieved or sustained, then public law applications are made in order to secure alternative safe permanent care.

As in the Referral and Assessment Social Work Teams, the Senior Practitioners are responsible for practice education of Student Social Workers and for providing advice and support to less experienced colleagues.

The Social Care Assistant role undertakes some of the practical tasks of the team that do not require direct social work input. This can be very varied but may include for example, brief periods of child care to support attendance at a meeting, help to families with practical tasks in the home, delivering equipment to a family or help transporting parents and children to key appointments.

Child in Need Teams

There are two child in need teams each consisting of a social worker and a number of Child in Need Practitioners. The teams are managed by an experienced Practice Manager.

The service is 'case responsible' for cases where children are subject of child in need plans. They also undertake commissioned work in relation to children who are 'case held' by the social work teams.

All work is delivered in line with agreed plans, either child in need or child protection. The support provided includes direct work drawn from a range of different validated models of parenting support, including for example Mellow Parenting and Parenting Puzzle.

Service Development

As in the Referral and Assessment Service, team meetings, service development days and lunchtime learning sessions are a regular feature of the service.

The Advanced Practitioner is a practice lead for the service and works closely with the Group Manager, Service Managers and Practice Managers in ensuring that staff are supported and have opportunities for learning and development.

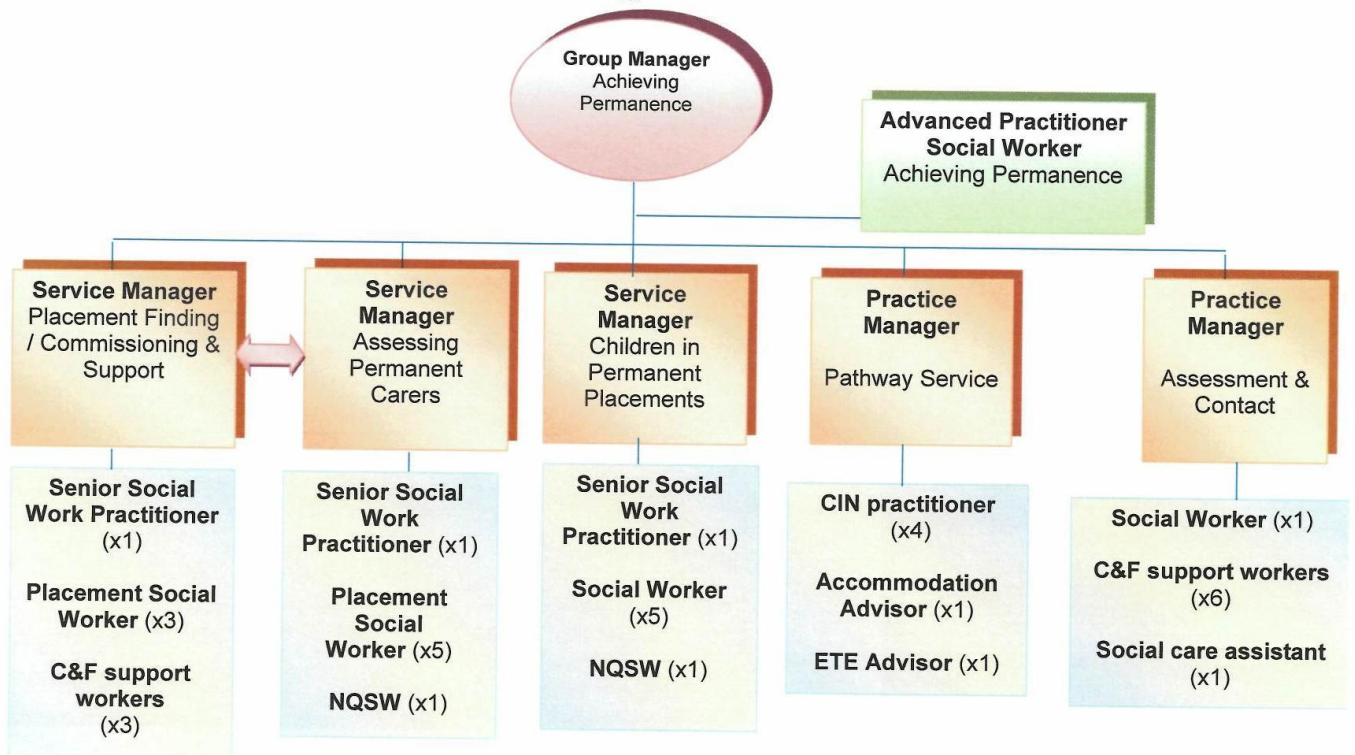
¹ Harnett, P.H. (2007) 'A procedure for assessing parents' capacity for change in child protection cases.' Children and Youth Services Review 29, 9, 1179-1188

ACHIEVING PERMANENCE

Permanence is the outcome we are working toward with all children and young people, achieving this starts at first contact when we are gathering information about the child and their wider family. Permanence can be within the child's birth family or with professional carers or through adoption.

As is common across the whole of Children's Social Care, the Achieving Permanence Group work to a relational model of practice, the primary focus is on the quality of the child or young person's relationship with their parents or carers. The service is responsible for providing care planning and social work and leaving care support to all children and young people in the care of the Local Authority who have a plan for permanence. Through the 'Make York Home' initiative and careful care planning, matching and support of carers, the aim is wherever possible to provide long term stable care in York.

Achieving Permanence



Placement Finding, Commissioning and Support

This team has a mix of staff including a Senior Practitioner, Placement Social Workers and Children and Families Support Workers. The service aims to identify suitable placements for children and young people and to provide individually tailored and creative packages of support to these carers and the placements.

Support is likely to consist of a range of professional advice and support (including bespoke training, therapeutic consultation advice and support, and development opportunities), practical support, peer support, and particularly with the most complex cases, regular planned stays over with other carers.

Assessing Permanent Carers

This team focus on assessment of permanent carers, including adopters, main stream foster carers and kinship carers, either as foster carers or special guardians. From March 2017, assessment of adoptive carers will be the responsibility of the Regional Adoption Agency.

The Assessing Permanent Carers Team works closely with the Safeguarding Interventions Service in assessing connected persons within Public Law Outline pre-proceedings and care proceedings. This team undertake viability assessments, and where appropriate Schedule 4 temporary foster carer assessments. Where full assessment follows a positive viability or Schedule 4 assessment this is also undertaken in this team. Depending on the care plan for the child developed by the Safeguarding Intervention Service, this assessment could be in the form of either a full fostering assessments or a Special Guardianship assessment.

Children in Permanent Placements Team

This is a social work team who provide on going assessment of children and young people's needs and care planning for children and young people in the care of the Local Authority who have a permanence plan.

In line with our relational model of practice the aim is to develop care plans that support young people's identity and long term relationships with their birth families where appropriate, with their carers and with their professional support network including their Social Worker.

The team aim to work with children and young people, their families and the wider professional network to support them in achieving good long term outcomes, including good health, education, employment, housing and relationship outcomes.

Pathway Service

This team provides continuing support to young people who have left the care of the Local Authority. They offer support and advice around general life skills, education, training and accommodation (including arrangements for young people to 'stay put' with their foster carers).

The service stays in touch with young people up to the age of 21 years or 24 if they are in education.

Assessment and Contact Team

This team provides support and supervise contact for children and young people in care with their birth families, including parents, siblings and other relatives.

They contribute to the assessment of this contact, such as assessment of a relative's ability to work with the birth parents in a Special Guardianship assessment, or assessment of specific parenting tasks in an assessment of parental capacity to change.

The team also undertakes direct work with young people on a commissioned basis from the social work teams.

Service Development

As in other Service Groups, team meetings, service development days and lunchtime learning sessions are a regular feature of the service.

The Advanced Practitioner is a practice lead for the service and works closely with the Group Manager, Service Managers and Practice Managers in ensuring that staff are supported and have opportunities for learning and development.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The service provides a consistent and overarching review and quality assurance function across the whole of Children's Social Care.

Quality Assurance



The Quality Assurance Group delivers on the commitment contained within the Vision for Children's Social Care to 'strengthen independent challenge'.

The Group's Independent Review Service will provide systematic review of Child in Need Plans, Child Protection Plans and Care Plans for Children and Young People in Care. It also delivers independent reviews of carers and residential placements.

The Group's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) service ensures the appropriate management of allegations against staff and volunteers who work with children.

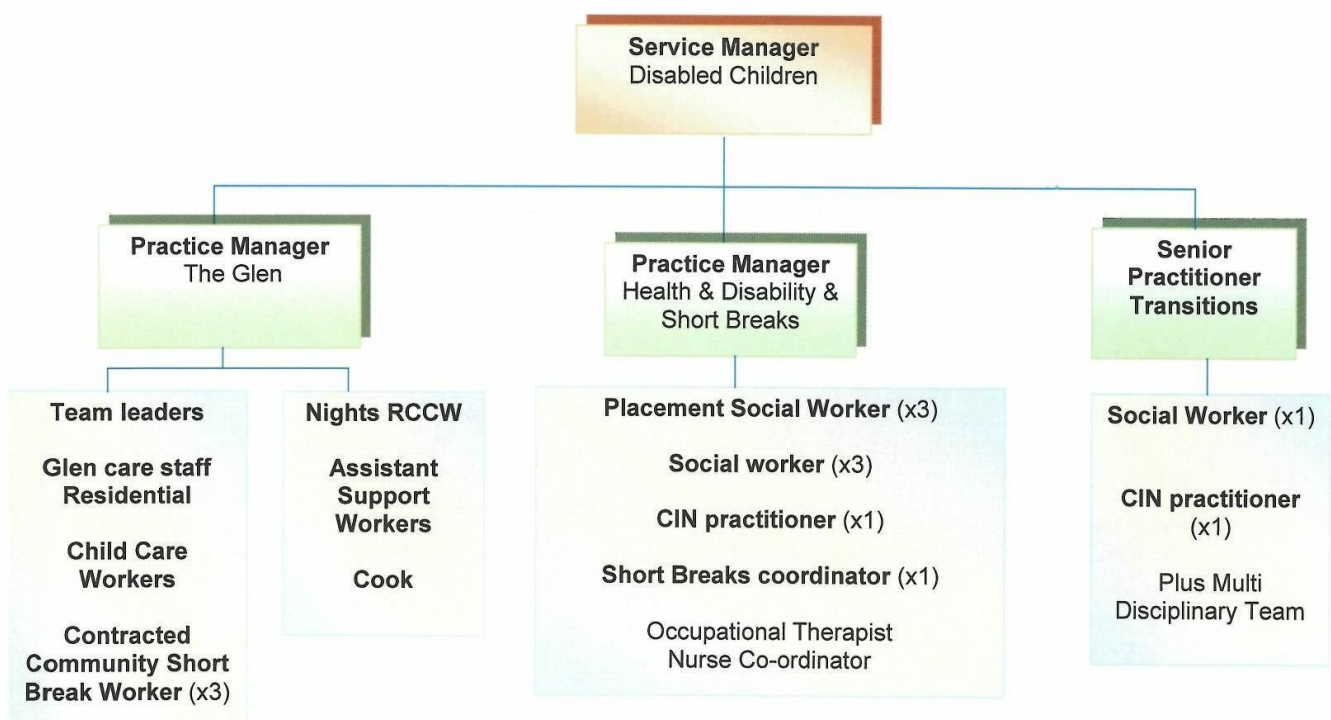
To ensure that quality assurance activity of the Group leads directly to service improvement and improved outcomes for children, the Group supports the wider Audit and Quality Assurance Framework activity of the Service.

Finally the Group has a Business Improvement Delivery Manager. The role builds on the successful implementation of the Mosaic Case Management System and is tasked with developing the system further and introducing a Children's Services portal and mobile working.

DISABLED CHILDREN'S SERVICE

The Disabled Children's Service works with children and young people who have a permanent and substantial impairment or illness which has a profound effect on their health, development and social functioning.

Disabled Children's Service



It is likely that the child or young person's additional needs impact on the families choices and their opportunities to enjoy ordinary life; and the degree of planning and support required to meet their needs is much greater than that usually required to meet the needs of most children of a similar age.

Children can be affected by one or more conditions or areas of impairment including, sensory impairment, physical impairment, intellectual impairment, consciousness impairment (eg epilepsy), a communication disorder (eg autism) or a chronic or life threatening physical illness.

Specific Services

The Disabled Children's Service works closely with colleagues from specialist health and education services.

The range of services includes Residential and Community Short Breaks provision, Assessment and Care Management by Disabled Children's Social Workers for children with the most complex levels of need, specific practical and parenting support from Child in Need Workers and support in moving from Children's Services provision to Adulthood through the Transitions Service.

The service has pioneered parent led assessment and care planning for children with less complex needs, and continues to innovate as it strengthens its relationships with key partner agencies.