

# **Family Help Guidance**

**Our approach to helping babies, children,  
young people, families and each other**

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## **Our Vision**

We want Newcastle to be a place where every child and family get the help they need, when they need it. We will work together to make sure support is kind, quick, and focused on what families say matters most.

We'll build a system that:

- Puts families first.
- Help to improve the lives of children and families.
- Works together across services.
- Builds trust and supports lasting change.

Every decision we make will start with the question:

***“How can we best support this child and family?”***

## **How We'll Make It Happen**

### **Better Services**

- CFN Connect: A single, easy way for families to ask for help and get support quickly.
- Family Help Teams: Join up Targeted Early Help and Child in Need service delivery into one service, delivering support into locality areas.
- Child Protection Teams: a joined-up approach to assessing and managing and reducing risk of significant harm to children.
- Child Protection Lead Practitioners: Experienced social workers to guide and support when children are at risk, located within Multiagency Child Protection Teams including members from Police, Health & Education and others when relevant.
- Family-Led Decision Making: Use Family Group Conferences more often and include family led decision making in every area of our practice so families lead their own plans and decisions.

### **Stronger Workforce**

- Train our workforce across the multi-agency system.
- Provide ongoing training in trauma-informed and restorative ways of working.

## **Clear Leadership**

The Families First Strategic Board will lead the work, check progress, and make sure we stay on track; supported by a multiagency steering group and specific Working Groups.

We will use data and feedback to keep improving.

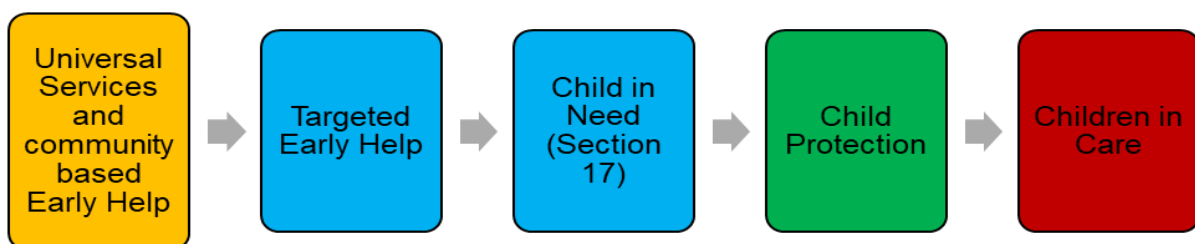
## **Measuring Success**

- Fewer children going into care or needing Child Protection Plans.
- More families feeling happy and involved.
- Fewer repeat referrals and subsequent Child Protection Plans.
- Better school attendance and fewer exclusions.
- More families leading in the development of their plans.

## Family Help

The ambition for Family Help in Newcastle is for **families to receive the right support at the right time and at the first time from the right people**. The level of support can vary depending on the needs of the family. Family Help is underpinned by relational practice. In Newcastle, we have established a Family Help Service which provides a seamless service throughout the targeted Early Help and Child in Need spectrum. Within Family Help there is a range of skills and experience delivered by Family Help Keyworkers and Social Workers which encompasses our **Family Help Lead Practitioners** and support provided by Family Support Workers who can deliver specific help to families. Family Help in Newcastle is locality-based, meaning that professional relationships are established to support families and encompasses 8 locality-based Family Help Teams plus the Additional Support Needs Team, all of which are led by a Social Work Team Manager and supported by Social Work Assistant Team Managers.

### An integrated system of Family Help and Multi-Agency Child Protection



As detailed in the diagram, Family Help encompasses traditional targeted Early Help and Child in Need and includes identifying support needs based on a Family Help Assessment and providing support through a Family Help

Plan. Family Help is connected to Community Family Offer and the Child Protection system and there is effective interface between all parts of this system to ensure children and families are supported at the appropriate level of need and risk on the continuum. Families receiving support from the Family Help Service have one assessment and plan: **the Family Help Assessment & Plan.**

### **Newcastle Family Help**

Working Together 2023 provided an opportunity to trial the Family Help model in Newcastle. The role of Family Help Keyworker was developed and tested within our Children with Disabilities Team (now Additional Support Needs Team). The role proved successful and there has been a range of positive feedback from professionals and parents. The Family Help Lead Practitioner is a key role in our Family Help offer who is allocated a range of families from across traditional targeted Early Help and Child in Need spectrum. A key role of the Family Help Lead Practitioner is completing Family Help Assessments and the progression of Family Help Plans to ensure we provide the right support to families in a timely way.

Family Help Lead Practitioners within the Family Help Service come from a variety of disciplines who lead and coordinate support for families. Family Help Lead Practitioners will work with families to build strong relationships based on respect and work in a strengths-based way, recognising that families, and family networks, will often have solutions to their own challenges. Specific Family Led Decision Making guidance will support practitioners to develop family led and inclusive assessments and plans.

The Family Help Lead Practitioners will remain the main point of contact for the family for as long as they require support; the involvement of the Family Help Service will be regularly reviewed with Social Worker oversight from the Assistant Team Manager and Team Manager. The Family Help Lead Practitioner will be alert to all forms of significant harm and will work with CFN Protect (Multi-agency Child Protection Team) and Child Protection Lead Practitioners (CPLPs) seeking advice and consultation where necessary. They will have the knowledge and skills to draw on relevant evidence-based interventions and to collaborate with and identify the relevant agencies or individuals required to meet a family's unique set of needs.

Children and families have said they want a consistent, trusting relationship with a practitioner. Families have informed us they value consistent and stable relationships and that changes/transfers can negatively impact trust and progress; we know that outcomes improve when there is consistency in worker. To support and preserve such relationships, Family Help Lead Practitioners should carry out or co-ordinate all or most of the direct work with the family.

Family Help Lead Practitioners will operate from the Family Hubs and locality bases but also have a central base as a wider service. Within each locality, the Team Manager will work closely with staff to identify the most appropriate person to be the Family Lead Practitioner in a particular case.

It is a key principle of Family Help to keep changes of Family Help Lead Practitioner to an absolute minimum, and where a change is required, a clear handover takes place to help avoid disruption and to maintain a positive and trusting working relationship. Rationale for changing Lead Practitioner within Family Help will need to be evidenced.

## **Family Help Assessment & Plan.**

There is one assessment in Family Help. A new single assessment has been developed. Having a single assessment and plan aligns with the ambition that families will have consistent Lead Practitioners, and the system will wrap around them. The single assessment is designed to be underpinned by relational practice and to build upon, where appropriate support already provided through universal services, including from family hubs.

The Family Help Assessment is initiated on Eclipse. Training is provided for all Family Help Lead Practitioners on undertaking the new single assessment.

## **Agreement**

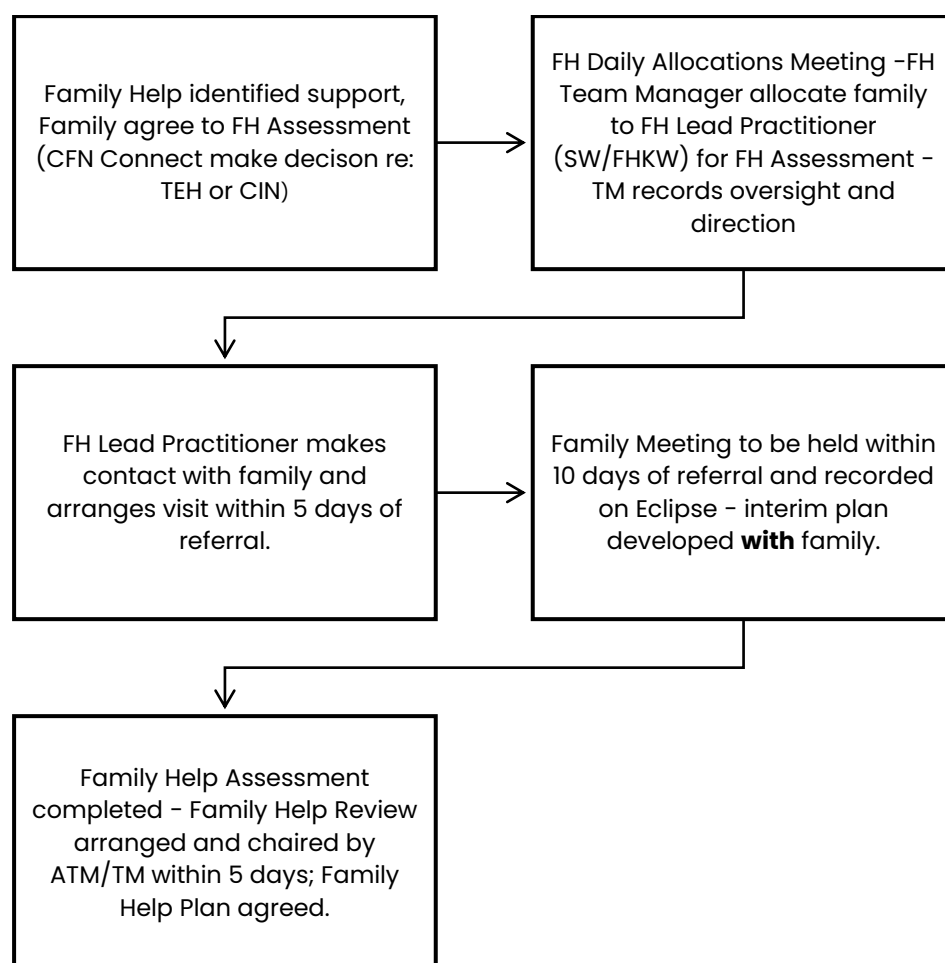
Family Help may be appropriate for children and families who have several needs, or whose circumstances might make them more vulnerable. It is a voluntary approach, requiring the family's agreement to engage in the assessment and/or receive support and services offered. The Family Help Agreement is to be discussed with the family and provides a platform for families to identify the work needed to help them.

If a family does not agree to an assessment or support, practitioners should seek to understand why this is the case, so that they can provide reassurance to the family about their concerns. The practitioner should consider how the needs of the child could otherwise be met, for example,

through provision within the Community Family Offer or by universal services that the family already engages with.

Where agreement is declined, this must be recorded and discussed with the Family Help Team Manager to consider whether the family's situation is likely to deteriorate and consult with the Child Protection Lead Practitioner whether a strategy discussion is appropriate.

### Referral Pathways & Allocation





## **Family Help Lead Practitioner Role**

Within our Family Help Service there are a range of skills and experience. We have a combination of Family Help Keyworkers and Social Workers who lead on Family Help Assessments and Plans; these are known as Family Help Practitioners. We have some specialist Family Help Keyworkers skilled and experienced in working with families where Domestic Abuse has been identified as a concern.

Family Help Lead Practitioners will be the key contact for the family and will coordinate multi-agency working including leading assessments and plans. Our aim is for Family Help Lead Practitioners to:

- Work within Family Help as part of a multi-disciplinary team.
- Build a relationship with the family and remain their main point of contact for as long as they require Family Help support.
- Co-ordinate assessment activity and co-develop the family help plan with the family and support them to implement it.
- Take on a child-centred relational practice approach to working, with children's wishes and feelings sought, heard and responded to.
- Support Family Led Decision Making (FGDM) to establish a network of support for the family from the beginning and arrange and facilitate Family Meetings.
- Understand that family support does not always mean related family members, it includes any person who supports the family or child

- Build a flexible and responsive team around the family, bringing in additional professionals to support families with multiple needs, and be alert to changing circumstances for the child both inside and outside the family home
- Undertake Family Help Assessments within the maximum 45 working days in line with Working Together 2026
- Follow the practice standards around visiting and see children in line with at least the minimum expectations
- Input and maintain records on Eclipse within the expected timescales as described in the practice standards

**Family Help Lead Practitioners who are qualified Social Workers will complete Section 47s within the Family Help Service.**

### **Duty Arrangements & Allocations**

The duty arrangements for Family Help will include representation from each locality. Team Managers will cover duty arrangements on a weekly basis and identify Family Help Lead Practitioners to be available for duty cover. Rotas will be established in advance. The Teams on duty will be physically located together along with CFN Connect, CFN Protect and the Duty Child Protection Delivery Team. Each team will also have a duty worker every day to respond to any concerns/queries in the absence of the allocated Family Help Lead Practitioner.

Daily allocation meetings will be held between Team Managers to allocate new Family Help referrals across each locality.

A weekly transfer meeting will take place between Family Help Team Managers and Child Protection Managers for children who need to move between Family Help and Child Protection. Examples include:

- Children allocated within the Family Help Service where it is necessary to progress to an ICPC.
- Children subject to a Child Protection Plan with a recommendation for the Plan to end and further support is required from the Family Help Service.

The Child Protection Delivery Teams are responsible for completing Section 47 Enquiries on new referrals where there are Child Protection concerns. On occasions it will be deemed a Family Help Assessment is a proportionate outcome and the Family Help Service will be responsible for their completion. Pathways are in place between the Family Help Service and the Child Protection Service to ensure children who are recommended for a Family Help Assessment after a Section 47 Enquiry are allocated immediately and the relevant help provided during the Family Help Assessment process.

**It is imperative the family is allocated to a Family Help Lead Practitioner as soon as a recommendation is made for a Family Help Assessment and the Family Help Assessment is progressed without delay.**

## **Supervision & Support**

Effective supervision plays a critical role in ensuring a clear focus on a child's welfare and supports practitioners to reflect critically on the impact of their

support on the child and family. Family Help Lead Practitioners will access regular supervision from a Social Work Team Manager or Assistant Team Manager to discuss the level of need and risk, and we have a Group Supervision/Reflection model in place. Please refer to the Supervision Policy for further guidance.

## **Child Protection & Family Help**

On occasions there will be families allocated within the Family Help Service who will require additional support to manage need and risk of harm. Working with children, young people and families with multiple needs requires careful judgement to ensure the right level of support is being delivered at the right time. The situation is often complicated by fluctuating levels of need which may mean that different plans need to be put in place. Social Work led supervision and oversight is an essential feature of Family Help. Such a dynamic situation will inevitably lead to discussions or even disagreements about the actual level of need or risk and the correct level of support for a child or young person.

We have robust oversight and decision-making processes when this occurs. Given there are a high number of staff within the Family Help Service who are alternatively qualified to Social Work, **the completion of any Child Protection Enquiries under Section 47 will be completed by Social Workers or Assistant Team Managers within the Family Help Service** with proactive input from the Multiagency Child Protection Team. The Family Help Lead Practitioner will remain the allocated worker whilst the Section 47 Enquiry will be assigned to the Social Worker or Assistant Team Manager completing the Section 47.

The Child Protection Lead Practitioner chairing any Strategy Meetings and making decisions in terms of risk of significant harm and deciding whether an Initial Child Protection Conference should be convened. Should a child become subject to a Child Protection Plan, the family will be allocated a Social Worker from the Child Protection Service. It is essential that this transition period is managed sensitively and based on the needs of the family and agreed between Team Managers within Family Help and Child Protection Services.

The following steps will be followed when there are disagreements about the correct level of support for a child or young person:

- The practitioner to raise with their line manager
- Line Manager to discuss and seek advice from the Child Protection Lead Practitioner/CFN Protect to understand rationale for decision making.
- If unresolved the issue to be escalated to the Family Help Service Manager to arrange a discussion with the CFN Protect Manager.
- Heads of Service will discuss any unresolved disputes and hold a reflective discussion with relevant practitioners and managers.

**Any disputes must be discussed in a meeting and not via email; any dispute conversations must be recorded on Eclipse.**

If there continues to be disagreement regarding decision making, please refer to the NSCP Escalation Policy below:

<https://newcastlesafeguardingchildren.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/32-Escalation-Protocol-Resolving-Professional-Differences.pdf>

All steps should be evidenced on Eclipse.