

# Working for Children's Services

 Social Worker recruitment pack



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Durham County Council's Children's Services are seeking experienced social work practitioners and managers to join our forward thinking and ambitious service.

If you choose to apply for a job with us you have taken the first step to a rewarding and enriching career with one of the largest employers in the North East.

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## Dear Applicant

Thank you for the interest you have shown in working as a Social Worker for Children's Services in County Durham. We have prepared this information pack to tell you more about us and the exciting developments that are taking place across our service.

As you will see from the information provided, we are an ambitious service that is focussed on ensuring children, young people and families receive the highest quality services.

Working for Durham County Council, you will be part of an award winning organisation which is one of the largest public sector employers in the North East. The council as a whole has an excellent track record of ensuring services work together to meet the needs of our communities, especially the most vulnerable. We embody our "Altogether Better" philosophy. Our newly appointed Chief Executive has made "putting families first" one of his top priorities.

Working for Children's Services, you will be part of a dynamic, energetic and creative workforce, who all aspire to make sure our families are supported and that our children are safe and able to reach their full potential.



Your role will be challenging. You will help us to achieve the ambitious targets we have set ourselves to improve outcomes for children and families in County Durham. We want to:

- Keep children safe;
- Reduce the numbers of children suffering from neglect;
- Offer help to children and families that makes a difference;
- Offer services of the highest quality.

In return, we will support you in your work and your career development. We understand that you need manageable caseloads in order to do your best. We have excellent training and development and you will have access to supervision from both your team manager and a social work consultant who will support you to be a reflective practitioner.

If you are a self-motivated and resilient individual, with a real drive to succeed, this is a great opportunity to join a forward-thinking, children and young people focussed service where your skills, knowledge and expertise will be valued and your professional development supported.

I look forward to your application.

Yours sincerely

**Carole Payne**  
Head of Children's Services



# Working for Durham County Council



County Durham is a beautiful county that brings with it numerous benefits:

- World Heritage Site Cathedral City
- Host of the bi-annual Lumiere Festival of Light
- Good theatres
- Excellent road and transport links to Metro Centre, Newcastle, Sunderland
- Coastal towns
- Beautiful rural scenery and communities

## About our council

The council is made up of an elected assembly of 126 councillors accountable to over 516,000 people in County Durham. We are responsible for providing a wide range of public services to the people of the county.

We also represent and promote the interests of County Durham when dealing with regional, national and international affairs. Through effective local government, we allow local people to look after their own affairs and to decide how and where money is best spent in their area. Our powers and responsibilities are determined by Parliament with county council elections held every four years. The most recent election was held in May 2013 and the next one is expected to be held in 2018.

## Our services

We provide services to all parts of the county to meet the needs of our residents and help everyone in County Durham to achieve their ambitions.

Following the appointment of a new Chief Executive, the council is being restructured into five directorates as follows:

- Children & Young People's Services
- Adult & Health Services
- Resources
- Transformation & Partnerships
- Regeneration & Local Services

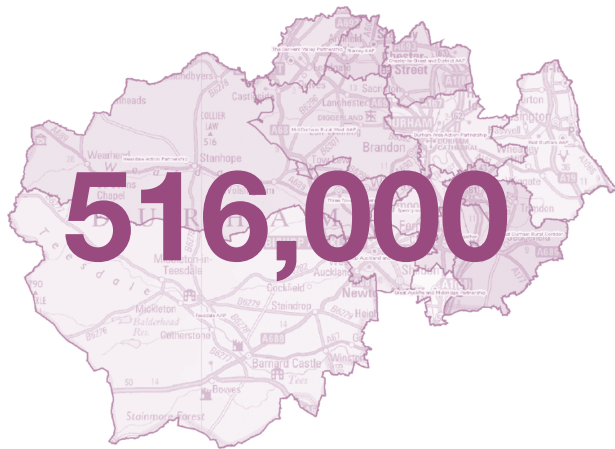
These Directorates are responsible for providing a wide range of services for the people of County Durham.





## County Durham in numbers

- 516,000 people live in County Durham (Office of National Statistics 2013 mid-year estimates)



- 48,500 people live in the City of Durham major centre (Office of National Statistics 2013 estimates)

48,500



- There are 223,000 households in the county (Office of National Statistics 2011 Census estimates)
- The county covers an area of 223,260 hectares (2,230 square kilometres/862 square miles) (2010)
- There are 12 major centres with a population of over 6,000 people (Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Chester-le-Street, Consett, Crook, Durham City, Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Seaham, Spennymoor and Stanley) (2011)

- The average age of people in County Durham is about 42 years old (2010)
- 53 miles of motorway run through the county (2010)

53 miles

- Durham City is 265 miles from London and 125 miles from Edinburgh (2010)
- 142,000 hectares of the county is agricultural land (2010)
- There are 260 ancient monuments in the county (2011)
- 17% of working people are employed in manufacturing in County Durham (Office of National Statistics 2011 Census estimates)
- 5% of working people are employed in construction in County Durham (Office of National Statistics 2011 Census estimates)
- 77% of working people are employed in service industries in County Durham. (Office of National Statistics 2011 Census estimates)

77%

Employed in  
service industries

- 8% of working people are employed in tourism related services in County Durham (figure included in the services industries above) (Office of National Statistics 2011 Census estimates)

# Children's Services - Who we are

We are an ambitious service and our primary aim is to keep children safe by ensuring children, young people and families receive the help they need at the earliest possible opportunity, so that they are supported to live safe, happy, healthy and successful lives whether in their birth family or in other permanent care.

We strive to ensure our services are informed by evidence based best practice, and we are on a continual journey of innovation and improvement so that the support we offer children, young people and their families in County Durham is both high quality and effective in helping families to turn their lives around when needed. We want to ensure that our services identify the needs of children sooner and address the root causes of problems, so that families can be strengthened and supported to achieve change for themselves and their children.



## Our vision

In County Durham our vision is that:

***“All partners will work together to empower families and communities using the minimum necessary statutory intervention.”***

***“We will work to reduce need by offering effective preventative services, identifying need early and offering practical support. Where a child's wellbeing or safety is compromised, we will act swiftly to ensure safeguards are in place, including use of legal powers where unavoidable.”***

## Our strategic priorities

- **Early Help & Neglect** – identifying need as early as possible so that needs do not escalate, and dealing effectively with neglect.
- **Effective Social Work Practice** – making sure our practitioners use assessment effectively to inform plans that will meet needs and improve outcomes.
- **Quality of Practice** – making sure our work with children and families is of the highest quality and demonstrates impact.

## Structure

In March 2015, the service was awarded £3.2million from the Department for Education as part of its Innovation in Children's Social Care Programme. Since then, we have been transforming our front-line services, creating 11 multi-agency social work led "Families First" teams. The teams are co-located with our early help "One Point" service in localities across County Durham, creating a "total place" approach to understanding and responding to the needs of children and families within communities.

Families First teams are made up of a team manager; a social work consultant post; social workers; specialist lead professionals with a wide range of skills and knowledge from the fields of substance misuse; mental health; parenting support; housing and family workers.

These teams will be responsible for responding to all new referrals for Children in Need; completing single assessments and offering intensive support to families to assist them to make change; conducting enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989; working with families up to the point of Public Law Outline. Specialist court work teams then progress work into proceedings.

The Families First teams are responsible for working intensively with some families with complex needs who may be at risk of becoming subject to safeguarding services and who require intensive, multi-agency co-ordinated support.

Dedicated Court Teams manage cases that are the subject of pre-proceedings work under the Public Law Outline (PLO) and cases which subsequently enter Care Proceedings. They deliver permanence planning through Care Proceedings where this cannot be achieved.

Looked After teams deliver the statutory function under the Care Planning Regulations to supervise all looked after children who are placed with foster carers or in residential care with a care plan of permanence until adulthood. The children are looked after under Care Orders or have long term care plans with the agreement of their birth families and lead on adoption placing children with adoptive families until adoption orders are granted.

The Fostering and Adoption service fulfils the council's statutory obligations to recruit, assess train and support foster carers and adopters for our looked after children. This includes family and friends foster carers.



# Philosophy and culture

In Children's Services, in order to achieve our vision, we are guided by a set of principles, values and expectations. These are outlined below:

## **High quality social work with children and families who are the most vulnerable**

Social workers in Children's Services are a dedicated, skilled and professional workforce who aspire to change children's lives for the better. Social workers are committed to working in partnership with children, young people, their families and other agencies to give every child the very best opportunities in life, enabling them to fully achieve their unique potential regardless of their family's circumstances whilst ensuring the safety and welfare of children who need help and protection.

As a social worker in County Durham, we will expect you to be knowledgeable and confident in your decision making and interventions. You will be a worker who thrives in an environment of high expectations, high challenge, and high support. We aim to champion good quality frontline social work practice and management leading to the best outcomes for children and young people. Only good is good enough and excellence is our aspiration. Our quality journey strives to attain the consistent provision of a good, and ultimately excellent, service for every child, young person and family with whom we work, by getting it right the first time

## **A listening culture**

### **Listening to our service users - putting them at the heart of everything we do**

We pride ourselves on placing the views, wishes and experiences of our children and families at the heart of everything we do. We have a strong track record of engaging children and families and consider this to be part of our culture and the way we do things. We are clear that engaging with service users ensures that we understand their needs and how well services meet them. Our innovations programme to date has been informed by the views of children, young people and parents, and services have been designed in response to what they have told us works best for them. Ongoing feedback from service users is critical information which helps us to drive improvement and change.

Some recent feedback from our service users:

***"My children are more settled. They feel the social worker listened to them. They feel supported and trust their Social Worker."***

***"I have had a positive experience with the service. I still have ongoing issues but my family is settled and happy"***

***"My worker has been excellent. She has supported me and the children so well."***

***"Things have been put in place straight away. We were listened to and worries I had were acted on."***

***"I was very nervous to have involvement with a social worker, but I was made to feel at ease. I have nothing but praise for my social worker... I would not be where I am today without her"***



## **Listening to our staff**

Our principal social worker conducts an annual “health check” of the practice and experience of our social workers.

In the most recent survey, social workers stated that their work gave them a feeling of personal achievement and that the service encourages them to develop new and better ways of doing things. They were aware that families valued the work they did with them. They told us that they were confident about the level of knowledge and skills they had to work effectively with families and that they were supported in this by managers who provide them with good quality supervision, which encourages reflective practice. Relationships with managers was reported positively with social workers stating they had confidence to raise any concerns or share ideas and suggestions with them. They also reported they have access to training and development that is relevant to their role and that good partnership and multi-agency working exists in County Durham which supports them to meet the needs of children and families.

We are working hard to reduce caseloads so that every social worker is able to produce work of a consistently high standard.

## **Think Family**

The County Durham ‘Think Family’ approach means ensuring that both parents and children are able to get the support they need, at the right time, to help children achieve good outcomes. We all know that children’s problems do not sit in isolation from their parents. We are using a ‘Think Family’ multi-agency approach to meet the needs of whole families. This means making sure that families receive integrated, co-ordinated, multi-agency, solution focussed support. By identifying problems early, all services can work closely together to help prevent a family’s needs escalating and requiring more intensive intervention. This approach also has a national directive through the Troubled Families Programme known in Durham as the Stronger Families Programme.



## **Partnerships**

Partnership working is a key strength in County Durham. We have a strong and successful track record of working with our key partners, schools, police, the voluntary and community sector and health services both strategically and at a local level. This supports good information sharing, joint working and a shared approach to safeguarding children.



## Early help

We know that the majority of children in County Durham grow up and reach their potential in a supportive environment. However, some children and their families face further difficulties and problems. For these, additional help and support needs to be available at the earliest opportunity to prevent these challenges from escalating and impacting negatively on their future. We will provide early help to children and families to help combat neglect and its causes in County Durham. All partners are committed to identifying need early and to work together to offer support to children and their families that will make a difference to their lives.



## Innovation

We have a strong track record in innovation. Trying new approaches is important to us and is something we have always done.

The main elements of our current Innovation Programme are:

1. Creation of 11 integrated social work led “Families First” teams across the county, co-located with our early help “One Point” service, significantly increasing the range, access, quality and effectiveness of services for the whole family across the continuum of need.
2. Creation and development of third sector alliances in all areas of County Durham to build community capacity and sustainable change for families.
3. An intensive development programme to support the new teams and the whole workforce.
4. Significantly enhanced service user engagement to change the relationship between professional and service user.



# Our focus is on quality

Children's Services have recently approved a Quality Improvement Framework. It depicts the culture and working environment that Children's Services aspires to embed, and provides a firm framework to raise the quality of social work practice and casework. Through this a culture of high standards, high challenge and high support will help you be the best social worker you can be.

## **Workforce support and high quality training and development**

We have an excellent workforce development programme, which has received national recognition. Our Stronger Families workforce development programme for staff at all stages of their career, which has received national recognition. Our Stronger Families workforce development programme won the Children & Young People Now Staff Development award in 2014.

Durham is one of the pilot authorities that has helped the chief social worker develop the accreditation and assessment of social workers. We are the lead authority in the North East bid to participate in the Teaching Partnerships project, designed to increase the effectiveness of social work qualification programmes.

If you come to work in Durham you will have many opportunities to continue your professional development, no matter what your current level of experience.

We encourage experienced social workers to share their knowledge and skills by qualifying as practice educators. To recognise the skills of our practice educators we make a payment to them of £10 per placement day (£1,000 for a 100 day placement), we also offer opportunities to act as a link worker, provide shadowing placement or supervise social workers on the return to social work programme.

If you aspire to become a manager, we will support you. We offer an aspiring manager programme. This programme will help social workers to take that step, by providing a range of mentoring, training and hands on experience designed to meet your individual needs. A programme of enhanced support will remain in place for the first 6 months of appointment so that you aren't left to sink or swim.

Our development programme for existing managers includes e-learning courses and short workshops led by subject experts and our own senior management team. This is supported by access to a longer term 'strengthening managers' programme, one-to-one coaching support, and a peer support programme. Managers are also able to access qualifications in coaching and mentoring at level 3, and in management and leadership and levels 5 and 7.



# Recruitment and selection process

## Timescales and selection process

If you apply to Durham, you will receive written confirmation of your application and an outline timescale for shortlisting and interview.

Interview panels are usually made up of Children's Services senior managers and often include a partner representative.

Our interview process usually includes a requirement for candidates to prepare an unseen presentation on a topic, related to the role, provided to candidates on the day. You will normally have 10 minutes to deliver the presentation to the panel before your formal interview.

We aim to inform you of the outcome of your interview as soon as possible. Offers of appointment are always subject to the provision of satisfactory references, health and DBS clearances.



## The benefits of working for us

Working for Durham County Council provides employees with a number of benefits which support you at work...

### Holiday entitlement

Holiday entitlement is 26 days which rises to 31 days once you have reached 5 years continuous service. Continuous service will be recognised for employment with other Local Authorities subject to an accurate record of service being provided.

### Induction

County Durham values its staff, and ensures that all new staff understand the organisation. To help you we will provide you with:

- Detailed induction programme to the council and Children's Services
- Support for your ongoing professional development

### Developing skills

We will support you to develop skills in the following areas:

- Effective Safeguarding
- High Quality Assessments
- Outcomes Focussed Care Planning
- Risk assessment and management
- Reflective practice
- Practical support for families
- Leadership & Management





## **Car salary sacrifice scheme**

Our salary sacrifice car scheme will allow you to use part of your monthly pay to choose a new fully maintained and insured vehicle for up to three years. As the fixed monthly amount is taken from your gross salary, you'll save money on income tax and national Insurance.



## **Wellbeing**

Your health and wellbeing is important to us. To support you we will provide you with:

- Regular high quality supervision
- Time to reflect
- Access to Occupational Health Service if required
- Access to counselling support if required
- Wellbeing at work toolkit if required



## **Pensions**

The Local Government Pension Scheme is a career average scheme and provides you with a secure future income.



## **IT enablement**

We are working to ensure all our staff are supported with mobile telephones and tablet computers so that they can be enabled to work flexibly.



## **Childcare vouchers**

You can choose to sacrifice some of your salary as tax-free and national insurance exempt childcare vouchers.



## **Cycle to work scheme**

The salary sacrifice scheme offers you the use of a brand new bicycle, whilst saving money on the cost of the hire.



## **Flexible working**

Our flexible working scheme allows you to manage your hours and plan your life more easily. NB not all posts are eligible for this scheme; please see the job profile for information.