

## Leeds City Council Children's Social Work Service

### Student Welcome & Introduction

Leeds has undergone a significant improvement journey in recent year, moving from an Ofsted judgement of inadequate in 2010 to good in 2015, with leadership, management and governance rated as outstanding. Leeds is, to date, the only core city to be judged good under the current inspection framework, and one of only a handful to be judged as outstanding for leadership.

We aim to be a **child friendly city**, and the best city in the UK for children and young people to grow up in. To be a successful economically and culturally vibrant city, Leeds needs to be successful in delivering good outcomes for children. This innovative strategy has located children at the heart of the growth strategy of the city.

Our work is underpinned by three behaviours that help us to put children and families at the centre of everything we do:

- **Use of Outcomes Based Accountability**
- **Restorative Practice**
- **Listening to and responding to the voice of the child**

In essence, we ask ourselves one question: What is it like to be a child or young person in Leeds, and how do we make it better?

### What is Children's Social Work?

Social work is the activity carried out on behalf of the Local Authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in partnership with other partners such as health, the police and with the third sector (guide) and schools.

Children's social work is carried out by trained practitioners, the vast majority of whom hold a professional social work qualification. Children's social work practitioners' work with children and young people in need of help and protection whose needs cannot be met in universal or early help services. They also work with looked after children and care leavers. They work within statutory child protection and looked after children and care leavers procedures.

## **What do we have in Leeds?**

In Leeds, we have Children's Social Work Service (CSWS) which comprises: social workers as part of the multi-agency front door; locality social work teams; looked after children social work teams; and also includes our children's homes, our secure children's home and our adoption and fostering services.

## **Duty and Advice**

Duty and Advice is the first point of access for members of the public and professionals who want to make contact with the Children's Social Work Service with concerns about a child. The Duty and Advice Team is based in Leeds City Centre and staffed by teams of social workers whose role it is to decide whether or not the information received is passed onto a locality social work team for further assessment.

## **Locality social work (or cluster based) teams (Child and Families Social work teams)**

These teams work directly with children in need of help and protection and those children subject to care proceedings. They are based in the same localities as other Council, health and third sector services, using the cluster model so that they can work more closely with schools, Early Start teams (health visitors and children centres) and other practitioners involved in working with the same children.

## **Restorative Early Support Teams (RES)**

The Restorative Early Support (RES) Team is a multi-disciplinary team made up of social workers, intensive family Support Workers and targeted services. The team is developing new ways of working with children and families, working across early help and social work and building new ways of working with local schools and services, using the 'Leeds Practice Model'. The social workers in the team hold a reduced caseload of Child in Need cases and work with schools and cluster services to build effective relationships to support the management of Early Help plans. We use the Formulation Model to "re-think" the families we are working with and cases are reviewed in weekly group supervision, this is a very productive way of discussing cases in a supportive environment to ensure we are improving the outcomes for children and young people.

## **Complex Health and Disability Social Work Teams (CHAD)**

We also have social work teams specifically for disabled children and those with complex needs in each of the three areas of the city.

In Leeds, children's social work practitioners hold different roles. These include: social work assistants (non-qualified), newly qualified social workers, social workers, senior social workers, advanced practitioners, team managers, service delivery managers and heads of service. In addition, qualified social workers can be child protection chairs and independent reviewing officers (IROs) (guide) for looked after children.

### **Looked After Service (CLA service)**

The Looked After Service brings together looked after children social work teams, fostering and adoption services, children's residential homes and the city's secure unit.

The service works with children during times in their lives when they cannot live with their birth parents. This may be a short or long term arrangement and children may be living with family members, foster carers or in residential settings including children's homes, residential schools or as part of being remanded in care or custody. Our aim is for children to live in family settings, preferably in their own but where this is not possible we provide a range of placement options.

We have dedicated looked after children social work teams for two different age groups, age 12 and under, and age 13+. These teams focus on the specific needs of looked after children with dedicated time and expertise. The 13+ teams continue to work with young people who leave care, into adulthood (care leavers), ensuring early planning for this important life transition.

### **Fostering Service**

Fostering is where a child or young person between the ages of 0 and 18, who has become looked after (guide), lives with a foster carer in a family home. This is often temporary or short term but is sometimes a long term arrangement.

Leeds City Council recognises that a child's needs are best met by a nurturing family and is committed to placing children who are not able to remain in their own family in appropriate alternative family based placements wherever possible.

The council's Fostering Service is tasked with this work and also aims to place children and young people within the city in order for them to maintain contact with families and friends, to continue at the same school and thrive within their community, where it is safe to do so.

Leeds Fostering Service's main areas of work are:

- Recruiting and retaining foster carers – there is a dedicated team;
- Supporting existing foster carers – there are four teams of supervising social workers, including one specialist team supporting carers of children with complex needs, and one team supporting foster carers with teenagers, and two teams for supporting mainstream foster carers;
- Working with kinship (family and friends) carers (guide). There are two teams, one assessing prospective carers and the other providing support to existing kinship carers.

### **Placement Team**

The Placement Team is the service within Leeds City Council whose role it is to identify appropriate placements for children who are going to be accommodated. It is staffed by dedicated Placement Officers who work to ensure that the most

appropriate placement is identified for children who are not able to live with their parents or families. The Placement Team work closely with a child's allocated social worker to ensure the child's needs are taken into consideration when identifying placements and to match the children with the most appropriate placement available. Placement Officers. This can include visits to the children and their potential carers when considering a match.

### **One Adoption Service**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, One Adoption West Yorkshire was formed becoming the first Regional Adoption in the country. Five Local Authorities; Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield have come together to form a shared adoption service, hosted by Leeds City Council. This new agency is designed to offer an innovative and adopter friendly approach to adoption recruitment, adoption support and family finding for children and prospective adopters as well as high quality training.

The Recruitment and Assessment Team will recruit, assess and prepare adoptive families who can go on to meet the varying needs and backgrounds of the children across West Yorkshire who have a plan for adoption. The family finding service is responsible for identifying positive matches between the child and prospective adopter. One Adoption West Yorkshire will work in partnership with local authority social work teams and fostering services to ensure that adoption planning for children in West Yorkshire is driven by children's needs, avoids delays and is focussed on preparing and planning robust matches and adoption placements. We track children from an early stage to ensure early permanence options and a timely and responsive service for children remains the paramount role.

Adoption Support is available to all prospective adoptive parents throughout their adoption assessment, the matching process, and placement and ongoing through childhood. We offer a range of adoption support services designed for ongoing use if required or to be used as needed. We aim to be holistic in our offer ensuring there is something to suit the needs of all families, including individual support, group work and access to tailor made therapeutic support. We offer social groups and support groups for children and young people of all ages with the overall aim of empowering them to make the most of life's opportunities. One Adoption West Yorkshire offers support to birth parents in partnership with voluntary adoption agencies and community groups.

### **Regional Specialist Social Work Team**

The Regional Specialist Social Work Team offer a dedicated social work service to children and young people with life threatening conditions who receive their treatment at either the Leeds General Infirmary or St. James University Hospital. These include oncology (cancer), haematology (severe blood disorder), haemophilia, renal (kidney), liver and cystic fibrosis. They also offer a service to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit.

The involvement of a social worker often begins at diagnosis and families are usually referred by either their consultant or clinical nurse specialist.

The support offered is very individual and includes any or all of the following:

- emotional support
- financial help and welfare benefits
- liaison with schools, colleges and universities,
- liaison with employers, housing, youth justice, immigration, domestic violence, child protection and local social services department
- referral for volunteer support.

The length of social work support offered to children and young people is dependent upon the outcome of an assessment. If a child or young person dies bereavement support can be provided. The social workers provide a high standard of support for patients and their families; including the transition from paediatric to the adult services.