

FOI 2663

1st October 2024**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST**

Question 1: Number of Child Disability Social Workers in the Trust Area: How many child disability social workers are there?**Response:**

There are currently 23.85 WTE social workers employed in the Children with Disability service.

There are 2 substantive vacancies which the Trust is actively recruiting to.

Question 2: Prioritisation or Triage Process: What is the process for prioritising a child disability needs assessment?**Response:**

The Children with Disabilities Service operates a referral process which children are allocated a social worker who will undertake an initial assessment under the Understanding the Needs of Children Northern Ireland (UNOCINI) Framework. Referrals will be prioritised depending on a number of factors.

Team Leaders, with oversight from Operational Managers follow the *Guidance for the Management and Monitoring of Unallocated Social Work Cases in Children's Services* to inform decisions around case allocation. In line with this Guidance Team Leaders remain updated regarding the circumstances of children awaiting an assessment and use the UNOCINI thresholds when prioritising cases for allocation.

Social Work Teams have a duty system which means families of children on the waiting list for allocation, and professionals involved with these children can provide updated information. This information is recorded and tracked and can result in children being allocated a social worker more quickly, who will then complete their initial UNOCINI assessment.

Question 3: Direct Payment Application Process: Please detail the forms, submission process, supporting documents, steps post-application, and the process once the Trust submits a needs assessment form.

Detail of Forms and Documentation: Families eligible to receive a Direct Payment are provided with an Information Pack - checklist of all forms and information attached. (See attachment for details)

Submission Process: Once an initial UNOCINI assessment recommends a direct payment and is approved at the appropriate forum, the child's social worker submits a

commissioning form to the Direct Payments Team complete with the service user's bank details.

Process Following Submission: Following submission of the commissioning form the service user will receive their first payment within 4 weeks.

Steps Post Application: Once a direct payment is established this will be reviewed under the UNOCINI Framework every 6 months along with any other supports identified.

Question 4: Average Waiting Time for Direct Payment Assessments for Disabled Children: What is the average waiting time across all trust areas for an assessment?

Response:

There is no specific Direct Payment Assessments. Social workers complete a comprehensive assessment of need under the UNOCINI Framework. Where an assessment concludes that a social work service is appropriate, the range of potential supports recommended may or may not involve the provision of a Direct Payment. The current average waiting time for completion initial UNOCINI assessment is 25 weeks.

Email: FOI.team@southerntrust.hscni.net