



The 7 pillars of the **Child and Family** Social Work Statutory Guidance 2024

An Introduction to the latest procurement guidance.

The new Child and Family Social Work Statutory Guidance rolled out in October 2024 sets out a robust procurement framework for local authorities, designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children across the UK.

The key objective of this statutory guidance is to ensure that all children, regardless of their background or circumstances, receive the care and protection they deserve. The guidance outlines the legal responsibilities and best practices that local authorities must follow in Child and Family Social Work procurement in order to ensure a consistent and high-standard approach to child and family welfare.

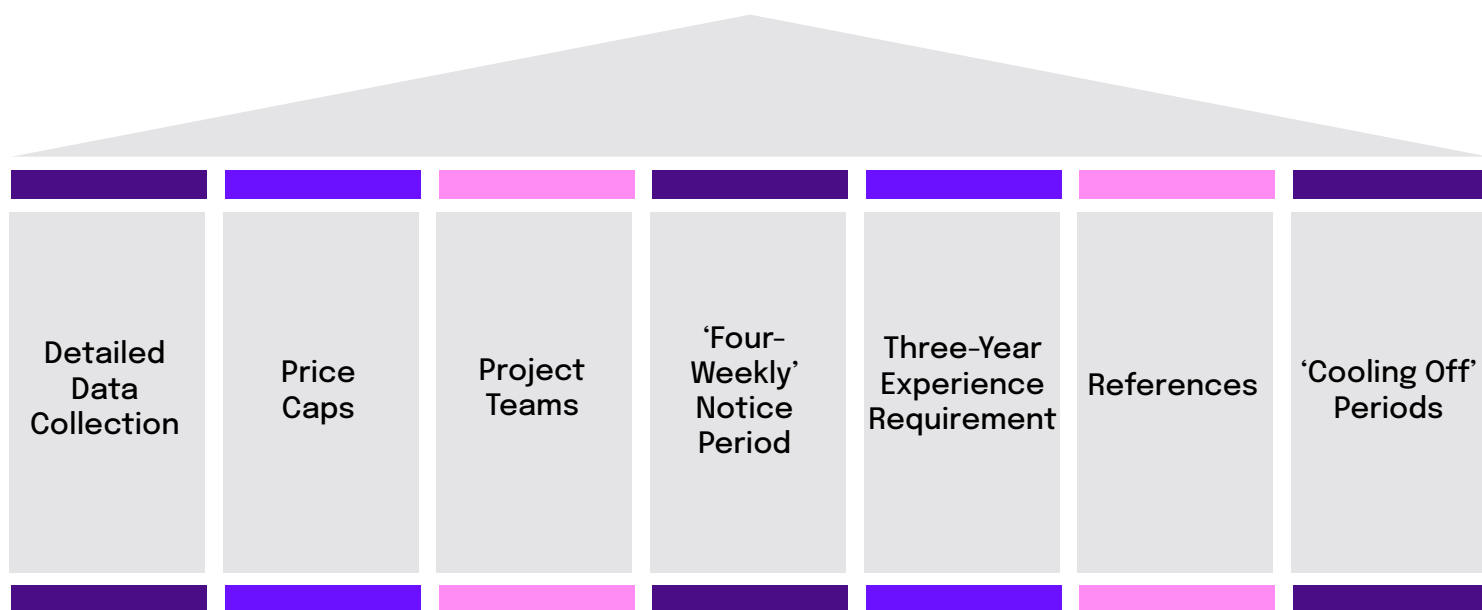
The guidance lays out new conditions under which contingent workers in social care can be utilised. The conditions cover areas such as contract terms, experience requirements, and pay.



We have broken down this new guidance into the 7 key pillars the new guidance is built upon.



The 7 pillars of the Child and Family Social Work Statutory Guidance 2024



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1) Detailed Data Collection

Accurate and comprehensive record-keeping where the full cost of child and family social care is broken down in a modular fashion will ensure decision-makers can monitor the effectiveness of services and interventions.

By ensuring Local Authorities consistently and meticulously collect key data, the DfE can then identify trends, measure progress, and respond swiftly to emerging issues. This pillar acknowledges that reliable data is foundational to safeguarding children's welfare and enhancing the quality of social work practice.

Accuracy is key to legal compliance, which is why Comensura has developed reports to ensure the data the DfE are requesting from the authorities can be provided in preparation for the 1st data collection period.

2) Price Caps

Many local authorities already have what's referred to as a 'Memorandum of Understanding', which each authority in the region will sign showing their commitment to regional price caps to prevent social workers from regularly jumping between authorities.

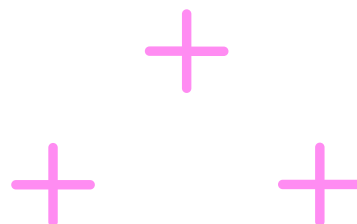
The mandating of this ensures councils are legally bound to these conditions and are unable to exceed these caps to reactively and/or recklessly handle high vacancies and/or case backlogs.

These caps are calibrated to prevent excessive costs while maintaining the integrity and quality of care provided with a fair rate of pay. Setting these clear financial boundaries enables local authorities to allocate resources efficiently and transparently, preventing financial exploitation and ensuring funds reach where they are most needed.

3) Project Teams

This pillar emphasises the importance of clearly defined, measurable objectives and expectations for social care projects, in order that local authorities can ensure a shared understanding among all project stakeholders.

A project team structure was already used regularly by authorities, but this ensures a consistent approach with set rules across all types of contingent worker provision. This creates better collaboration and accountability, with each participant understanding their roles and responsibilities from the beginning. Clearly outlined project teams also enable more accurate monitoring and assessment of results, ensuring resources are efficiently utilised and the desired benefits for children and families are achieved with the highest possible standard of care.



4) Four-Week Notice Period

The new guidance introduces a mandatory four-week notice period for all contingent social workers, unless the permanent equivalent role is less or more than 4 weeks. This notice period is designed to give families and social workers ample time to prepare for transitions, minimising disruptions and ensuring continuity of care.

This pillar is designed to foster a more stable and supportive environment for children and families, not only respecting the rights and needs of the children and families involved, but also enhancing the accessibility and responsiveness of social work services.

5) Three-Year Experience Requirement

This pillar prohibits local authorities from engaging agency social workers who have less than three years of post-qualification experience with an English authority while registered with a UK-based regulator. This will prevent newly qualified social workers from jumping straight into contingent social work without sufficient guidance or oversight.

By doing this, local authorities can better guarantee that their social workers possess extensive practical experience and are proficient in the legal, cultural, and procedural aspects of child and family social work. For this reason, this initial 3 years of experience can also include their first year in assessed and supported employment, known as ASYE.

6) Reference

Moving forward, local authorities should ensure that they provide a detailed practice-based reference for contingent social workers using the agency rules standard template, regardless of the length of the assignment. Additionally, they should require two detailed practice-based references for workers before assignment.

This pillar gives a level of scrutiny that helps to not only ensure that only capable and well-prepared social workers are engaged, but also facilitates better matching of social workers to assignments, enhancing the effectiveness and continuity of care for children and families.

7) 'Cooling Off' Periods

This pillar sets a minimum three-month cooling-off period and minimum regional geographical boundary. This will support greater consistency for local authorities, social workers and children and families. It will also minimise frequent moves at short notice and prevent authorities engaging a contingent worker if they've left a permanent role within that period.

This applies equally to individual workers or those engaged as part of a project team or other packaged model. There may be circumstances where a cooling-off period is not applicable, for example where a social worker is moving to a permanent role, has been made redundant or left during probationary period from a permanent role, or is seeking an agency assignment in a different region. They may sometimes be exceptions on compassionate grounds.



Whilst managing costs and increasing efficiency is mentioned throughout these pillars, the key common thread that runs through them pillars is to ensure quality and continuity of care, support, and oversight: No child or family should slip through the net.

The 7 pillars of the new Child and Family Social Work Statutory Guidance aim to ensure high standards of care, efficient resource allocation, and the consistent application of best practices in child and family social work procurement.

“Regular reviews of this new guidance are going to be essential to both assess its success and adapt to the evolving needs of the community and the social work landscape. By continually assessing and refining these guidelines, the central government can ensure that social care remains relevant, effective, and aligned with best practices. This ongoing process not only helps to address emerging challenges and incorporate new insights but will reinforce their public commitments to providing the highest standards of care and support to vulnerable children and families.”



Aaron Wawman
Sales Director Comensura

“The new Child and Family Social Work Statutory Guidance is a big change in social work procurement, and whilst it is set to have some introductory challenges, the long-term implications could be very positive. At a time where social workers are frequently moving between authorities and opting for contract work as standard for financial reasons, it is a crucial step to ensuring that the services provided are still of the highest quality, safeguarding the well-being of vulnerable children and families. By setting clear standards and expectations, it promotes consistency, accountability, and transparency in the procurement process, ultimately leading to better outcomes for those in need.”



Nicol Nee
Head of Service Comensura

Find out more

For more information on procurement in Child and Family Social Care, **contact the team** at **Comensura** for a more detailed conversation.

You can also find out more about the challenges around local authority talent procurement in our brand-new research report, conducted in partnership with Inside HR: **Transforming Talent in Local Government**.

Download the report.

