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**ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF DARLINGTON CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Cyndi Hughes,  
Children and Young People Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of People**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report is update Cabinet

**Summary**

2. Each year, under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Ofsted publish a summary of inspection judgements carried out in the preceding 12 months in each local authority area and provide a letter summarising the inspection judgements and other related data. This letter is attached, as **Appendix 1**.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that :-
  - (a) Members note the Annual Assessment judgement of Children's Services for 2010, and
  - (b) Refer the assessment to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee for their consideration

**Reasons**

4. The recommendations are supported in order to be informed of the current performance of Children's Services in Darlington.

**Murray Rose  
Director of People**

## Background Papers

### Ofsted Annual Assessment of Children's Services Letter December 2010

Author :Murray Rose Extension: 2099

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific Crime and Disorder issues contained within this report.
Health and Well Being	Improvements to the areas identified for development within the Annual Assessment will have a positive impact on Health & Well Being
Carbon Impact	There are no specific sustainability issues contained within this report.
Diversity	Improvements to the areas identified within the Annual Assessment will have a positive impact on children and young people from vulnerable groups.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	This does not represent a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a Key Decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Improvements to the areas identified within the Annual Assessment will have a positive impact on the Aspiring theme of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
Efficiency	There are no specific efficiency issues contained within this report.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

5. In December of each year, under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Ofsted publish a summary of inspection judgements carried out in the preceding 12 months in each local authority area and provide a letter summarising the inspection judgements and other related data.
6. The list of inspected services includes those managed by the local authority and those run by private, voluntary and independent providers. The inspected services include education settings, childcare and arrangements for looked after children.
7. The additional information used by Ofsted in producing an assessment of a local authority area includes national performance indicators, outcomes from any announced inspections of safeguarding and looked after children provision and unannounced inspections of safeguarding. The assessment would also include the judgements made about any serious case reviews which had been held and any validated data provided by the Department for Education in a statistical release.
8. In previous years, the annual assessment included a site visit by inspectors to the authority and the use of self-assessment information. In 2009 a new assessment arrangement was introduced, with no site visit and no provision of a separate local authority self-assessment. In 2010, a further change to the system saw the introduction of more inspection judgements of services delivered by private providers. The aim of this change was to capture the performance of all services in the local authority area and not just those of the services run the local authority
9. The Ofsted summative judgement of services provided within the local authority area was that the services were performing adequately. The text of the letter then notes that 'national performance measures show the very large majority of outcomes are in line with or above the averages for England or for similar areas' and that 'outcomes for children and young people are improving in Darlington'.
10. The Children's Minister, Tim Loughton, has written to Ofsted to say that he will bring forward legislation to end the annual assessment of children's services because 'it adds little to the understanding of children's services in an area over and above the individual inspections which underlie it.' A further annual assessment may be made depending on the timing of any legislative changes.
11. The overall judgement of performing adequately merits further analysis. The individual judgements which come together to make the summative assessment show that the authority area has some outstanding services and some inadequate services. The outstanding services include those provided by the local authority, such as our nursery, primary, secondary and special schools as well as some provided by private or independent organisations such Darlington College, Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form and some childminders and childcare settings.

12. The services judged as inadequate also include some managed by the local authority such as the pupil referral unit and some private provision such as child care settings. There are improvement plans in place for any local authority service judged as being less than satisfactory and the local authority works with private providers to help them to improve the quality of their provision.
13. Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee has previously considered areas for service development and improvement and continue to play a vital role in holding performance to account.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

14. There has been no consultation in respect of the Children's Services rating. This is an external judgement of Darlington's Children's Services, subject to national moderation and inspection processes.