
**COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT:
ANNUAL RATING OF COUNIL CHILDREN'S SERVICES FOR 2009**

Children and Young People Portfolio

Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of Children's Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Members of the outcome of the new annual rating of Children's Services.

Summary

2. This report provides a summary of the Annual Assessment of services for children in Darlington.

Recommendation

3. Members are asked to note the content of this report.

Reason

4. In order to be informed of the current performance of Children's Services in Darlington.

**Murray Rose
Director of Children's Services**

Background Papers

Children's Services Annual Rating
Children's Services Performance Profile

Julian Kenshole: Extension 2071

S17 Crime and Disorder	Improvements to the areas identified for development within the Annual Assessment will have a positive impact on Crime & Disorder
Health and Well Being	Improvements to the areas identified for development within the Annual Assessment will have a positive impact on Health & Well Being
Sustainability	There are no specific sustainability issues contained within this report.
Diversity	Improvements to the areas identified for development within the Annual Assessment will have a positive impact on children and young people with disabilities and/or complex needs.
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 for development within the Annual Assessment will have a positive impact on the Aspiring theme of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is required by Section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to undertake an annual review of each local authority's children's services and to award a performance rating for them. The annual rating of Children's Services as part of the new arrangements for Comprehensive Performance Assessment discharges that responsibility.
6. Attached at **Appendix A** is a letter from Ofsted that summarises the findings of the Children's Services annual rating. This scores the Authority as **Performing well (3)**. The letter highlights both areas of strength and areas for development. Judgements are ranked from 1 to 4 (where 4 is the highest and 1 the lowest). Areas identified as strengths include:
 - (a) the performance of the local authority's schools and settings is good overall.
 - (b) the proportion of nurseries that are good or better is greater than in similar local authorities and across the country as a whole
 - (c) an above average proportion of primary schools are good or better.
 - (d) just over two thirds of childcare provision is good or better
 - (e) both school sixth forms are good and the proportion of secondary schools that are good or better is greater than national averages
 - (f) the local General and Further Education and Tertiary College and Sixth Form College are both outstanding
 - (g) the special school is good
 - (h) the joint area review identified that services for young people looked after by the local authority are good
 - (i) the inspection judgement of the local authority's fostering agency is that it is good
 - (j) the joint area review identified good provision for safeguarding
 - (k) completion of assessments and reviews is timely
 - (l) recent data for the stability of long-term placements for looked after children shows improvement
 - (m) attendance at school is good
 - (n) examination results overall have improved and are better than in similar authorities at age 11
7. Areas identified for development over the course of the next year include:
 - (a) only about a half of childminders are good
 - (b) a pupil referral unit is inadequate, but is due to be reinspected
 - (c) one of the local authority's four children's homes was deemed inadequate at the time of the CAA, but all are now judged to be satisfactory or better.
 - (d) private fostering arrangements were previously inadequate for one young person, mostly because of poor maintenance of accurate records and not meeting regulations.
 - (e) an above average number of children and young people are admitted to hospital with unintentional and deliberate injuries
 - (f) the percentage of referrals concerning children in need going on to initial assessment was below average, but is now improved.
 - (g) pupils with a statement of special educational needs do less well than in similar areas in achieving 5 or more GCSEs and fewer young people from low income

backgrounds achieve a level 2 or level 3 qualification by age 19

8. These areas will be prioritised for action as part of the annual review of the Children and Young People's Plan.
9. Improvement plans are in place for all of the areas identified. Since the draft rating was produced, the inadequate children's home has been re-inspected and judged to be satisfactory. Some of the judgements are based on small sample sizes. For example, the private fostering judgement relates to only one child and inequality in performance at age 19 relates to 6 young people.

Outcome of Consultation

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