

Proposal	Comment/Impact/Idea
Employee Pay Freeze	Although no one would want to see a pay freeze, if it saves jobs then that is the best option. Having more people in work on a relatively lower wage is better than the alternative of fewer people employed on a higher wage. In two years time the pay should really start increasing with inflation at least so that the real salary value remains unchanged, otherwise it is effectively an annual pay cut.
	My only issue with a pay freeze is that it really effects the lower paid staff within the council, who may have also have had mileage and overtime rates cut. Employees got a well below inflation rise last year and no pay rise this year. So that will be almost 5 years before a pay rise with inflation at 2-3 % per year and VAT rising in January. A lot of council staff are going to struggle particularly as mortgage rates rise. This will also affect private rents.
Library Service	Library Survey – done, tick!! Please keep the libraries open!
Library Service	Library – and lets hope the council take note of what people actually feel is important. We use Cockerton Library on a weekly basis – more regularly when the children were small and we used the baby groups too and even travelled over from the other end of town before we moved closer. This library is small, friendly and could so easily become more of a community focus. Don't be short sighted and close it for small monetary gains. It would never be replaced.
Cycle and Pedestrian Training	It is a real shame that we don't think that saving children's lives is worth a tiny amount compared to the costs of bailing out the failed bankers. I'm sure I read in the paper that Darlington was top in the country for road safety. And how much does it cost the NHS every time a child is hit by a car? Surely this is a false short term economy.
Supported Bus Services	As a pensioner I would not mind paying say 50p for all journeys on the local buses. This action would also help concessionary bus pass users who need to travel before 9.30am. On a recent visit to Nottingham I had to pay full fare to use the local tram service whilst local pensioners travelled free. Surely the concessionary fare system was set up so pensioners could travel in their own districts free. It seems silly that you can afford to go on holiday to say Bournemouth but travel on their buses free. A nice perk but in the present economic climate unaffordable.
Public Toilets – closure and introduction of charging	The toilets in the Dolphin Centre will get used more. The main public toilets in town are still grim. Better to close them I think. Keep the Cornmill and Dolphin Centre and charge for both (loo users only as Dolphin Centre).
Public Toilets – closure and introduction of charging	I consider it actively anti-social/ageist (for both young AND older people) to reduce even further the provision of a necessary facility for the Borough's council tax payers. Cockerton toilets disappeared overnight. Often one finds the Cornmill ones closed. This is dire. When you've got

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	<p>to go you've got to go! It also adds to the stress of travelling long distances by buses, maybe in order to get to work, for those who don't have cars and may have to change before the toilets behind the market open (e.g. getting from Bishop Auckland to Middlesbrough). To charge is to penalise those with continence issues. However, even St Petersburg is now providing pay 'cubicles', which is certainly preferable to finding there's simply nowhere to go! Please remember the health and psychological implications of such proposals - such as an increase in the number of people suffering with agoraphobia and the cost implications of treatment. Evidently council members have no comprehension of or empathy for those who need quick access to loos.</p>
Cultural Services	<p>Wonders what it will take for someone from Darlington BC to listen to me and see sense – we need an empty shop creative hub in the town centre.</p>
Cultural Services	<p>I don't believe I am alone in views. I am about to open a business opposite the Civic and its closure would be devastating.</p>
Cultural Services	<p>Where is that (show) going to be held at considering you're closing the Civic and Arts Centre and killing off anything to do in Darlington?</p>
Cultural Services	<p>Run the Dolphin Centre as streamlined profitable pool/gym, move everything including subsidy to Arts Centre.</p>
Cultural Services	<p>I feel shocked and hugely disappointed that the Darlington Council would even consider withdrawing financial assistance to The Civic Theatre and selling off the Arts Centre. What is Darlington without these? There are very few attractive, creative, community buildings that facilitate so many community activities around Darlington. I think it is a big mistake to withdraw them. Surely there are other ways of utilising these buildings more creatively.</p>
Cultural Services	<p>It would be folly to close both the Civic and the Arts Centre and leave Darlington with no real entertainment centres. The Dolphin whilst ideal for the purpose it was built for could do very little in putting similar events as the civic and art centre. Once closed both venues would be difficult to revive in their present form.</p>
Cultural Services	<p>This is a short-sighted proposal. Once arts services have been cut they cannot simply be restored when the economy has sufficiently recovered. They require sustained investment for the benefit of the economy of the town a whole. Closing the Civic will cause that area to be a ghost town in the evenings. The Arts Centre is a vibrant centre for multiple activities and events and brings many visitors to the town</p>
Cultural Services	<p>Resident makes a very good point. Although we are in an economic rut at the moment give it a couple of years and we should be okay again (touch wood), but minus the Arts & Civic centres, which would be a real shame as I fear they would be gone forever. It is at least worth a very hard try to attract private interests to keep them going.</p>
Cultural Services	<p>I find it absolutely disgusting that closing the Civic/Arts Centre has even been proposed! (I am</p>

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	<p>aware that the proposal is to cut the subsidy that *may* lead to closure, but as the choice is now between closure or privatisation it is pretty much the same thing.)</p> <p>I moved to Darlington 6 years ago and liked the town precisely because it appeared to have a vibrant, diverse arts scene. Killing that off would not only remove one of the few things that makes me want to stay, it could also potentially cause me to lose my business as well as cost countless other jobs directly and indirectly, and it would mean that my daughter grows up here without the same facilities that everyone else has enjoyed for generations.</p> <p>The Civic is a beautiful proscenium arch theatre which is a rarity in itself, and it is a listed building. It makes Darlington stand out in the region, It is a great asset for the local residents and a tourist attraction. If forced to close, the Council would still have to pay out to maintain the building which seems counterproductive. It would also adversely affect the restaurants and other local businesses around that area - most of the restaurants offer a pre-show menu for example. The whole idea of closing the Civic completely goes against the Council's plans of developing the "town fringe" around the Yarm Road area and also the initiative to create the "Cultural Quarter" around Parkgate. There are so many boarded up shops along Yarm Road anyway, the road already looks run down and depressing. Closing the theatre and potentially ruining the other businesses at the bottom of Yarm Road is only going to confound the problem.</p> <p>As for the Arts Centre: At the public meeting last night, the council members suggested vague notions of moving some of the facilities to the Dolphin Centre, and getting the Arts groups to meet there. However, none were able to explain how to get a cinema, studio theatre, dozens of 6th form arts students, a film editing suite, rehearsal space and gallery - to list just a few - into the Dolphin Centre. Even if this were possible, surely the cost of moving everything would prove fairly expensive anyway! Better surely to downsize the Dolphin Centre, run it as a commercial pool and gym, and move everything else, including the subsidy to the Arts Centre?</p> <p>I could go on, but I think I've made my views pretty clear already!</p>
Cultural Services	<p>I do feel that a lot of the suggestions of cuts made will take residents, day visitors, and tourist trade away from Darlington. If all the cuts suggested go ahead, the Arts Centre and Theatre will close, the Dolphin Centre will have reduced hours and services (no tourist information officer) already its looking shoddy and smelling in the changing village and gym equipment broken for weeks and covers split. The streets will be awash with more litter and dog dirt than ever. The lack of places for people to go and openly documented reduction in Community Safety Officer's will once more return Darlington to the dirty crime ridden 'Bronx' it was in the late 80's when you could buy a house near South park for a couple of thousand and everyone cemented broken glass to their yard walls. There is little point trying to promote business to invest in the Town Fringe when we can't even keep the Theatre open in that area.</p> <p>Yes, cuts must be made, but these decisions seem quickly made and short sighted and in the short and long term will mean economic disaster for Darlington. Ask the people of Darlington</p>

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	<p>what they can do without first. This could have been done cost effectively during the register of elector's yearly exercise. A questionnaire could have been issued and sent back in the same envelope. Having a Consultation paying lip service to decisions already made isn't fooling anyone.</p>
<p>Cultural Services</p>	<p>I wish to ask the council to think again about withdrawing the Arts Centre grant all in one go and relying on a cultural collective to take over the running. If the subsidy could be reduced over time, rather than axed, it would give people time to consider how the arts can be protected and promoted.</p> <p>The Council has worked hard and invested a great deal of it's and Arts Council money to make the Arts Centre a place envied by both surrounding areas and performers from around the world. It has taken years to develop it into the thriving multi-arts facility that brings in people of all ages. The Arts centre was one of the three reasons we came back to live in Darlington in 1990. The jazz is phenomenal, the life drawing a huge success. It contains the only gallery space for visual art. It supports a wide range of arts groups who add to the life of the town. It promotes co-operation and collaboration between the various arts forms. It is a gem.</p> <p>I understand from the public meetings and a private meeting with Vane Women (named after Vane Terrace as the arts centre gave birth to this group, Recently described by Harry Mead in The Northern Echo as 'a phenomenon, remarkably accomplished as a group and as individuals') that the proposal to cut the subsidy is not a 'done deal'. Let's urge our elected members to consider what they have and what will be lost to the heart, soul and economy of the town.</p>
<p>Cultural Services</p>	<p>Much has been said about the damage cutting the Arts can have on communities across the nation. I can add only this: Darlington thrives on cultural and artistic stimulation, the Arts Centre is a building and an organisation to be proud of as is the Civic Theatre. I remember my first visit to the Arts Centre but I can't imagine my last and I shouldn't have to. If the council can really be so short sighted as to think cutting funding to the Arts will benefit Darlington then they need to consider if they truly have their Constituents best interests in mind.</p>
<p>Cultural Services</p>	<p>There must be other alternatives to closing both the Civic Theatre and the Arts Centre. Maybe ticket prices will need to go up slightly. Simple, but hot, evening meals could be served at the Arts Centre to people coming along for courses starting at 7 pm, film nights and other performances. There are no cafes/restaurants nearby, so quite a reasonable income could be generated doing this, as many people might choose to come to the Arts Centre straight from work. At the moment, there's little on offer but tea and muffins (very nice, though they may be) after the lunch period is over.</p> <p>Additional, but different, courses, such as music, instrumental, etc., could be offered - again generating further income and using all available space. At present, the courses are all rather 'visual arts'-based.</p> <p>'Friends' of both the theatre & Arts Centre could be formed to carry out fund-raising events;</p>

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	<p>possibly there are many ways in which to bring in the money needed to run these centres, without the council having to open its purse-strings.</p> <p>I'm all for weaning as many projects and activities as possible from the Council's apron strings, and believe that it's up to us, the residents, to make an effort to keep our cultural and sporting activities alive. I suspect, however, that getting rid of the present Arts Centre is part of the desire by the Council to sell off the premises to the College next door - which has, I understand, been under consideration for a while.</p> <p>I moved to Darlington only two years ago, and the presence of both the Civic Theatre and Arts Centre contributed to this decision. Without these venues, Darlington would be less of a pleasant town in which to live.</p> <p>I'm prepared to become a 'friend' of the Arts Centre. Would anyone like to join me?</p>
Cultural Services	<p>I sincerely hope that DBC will endeavour to keep the Arts Centre running. For me this is the town's most precious resource - a dynamic source of inspiration and nourishment for the 'spirit' in so many ways for so many people - music, drama, film and art lovers, seekers of health and wellbeing (yoga, tai chi classes ...), real ale, folk and jazz buffs I could go on. It would be devastating to extinguish this vital fount –more so even that closing the Civic Theatre, sad though this would be. PLEASE don't sell it off to developers. As a last resort, please consider mothballing parts of the building, at least retaining the 'theatre' and large ground floor rooms so brilliant for classes and functions. The Arts Centre is Darlington's beating heart - irreplaceable ... far more enriching than another shopping centre.</p>
Cultural Services	<p>This is desperately sad. The Arts Centre and the Civic serve not only Darlington, but the whole Tees valley, and their reputation goes far beyond that. The excellent recent Guardian article (http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/theatreblog/2010/nov/16/darlington-arts-budget-cuts) outlines some of the negative impact this decision will have. The fact that the article was published at all shows something of the esteem in which these organisations are held. Darlington is not a backwater. But it will be if you go through with this.</p> <p>If this decision is reversed, Darlington will continue to serve as a cultural hub for the Tees Valley region. As a teenager growing up in Middlesbrough, Darlington Arts Centre and the Civic Theatre were my nearest opportunities to see professional theatre and films on limited release. I travelled to Darlington as often as I could. Half an hour on the train was nothing when it was my only option. There is still time to reverse the decision and maintain this status as a regional leader.</p> <p>Some of the work I saw in those years has stayed with me and continues to inform my work as a playwright and theatre director to this day. Those of my peers who were lucky enough to grow up in Darlington bear witness to far the more profound impact of high-quality arts work on an even more regular basis. To remove twenty years of strength to solve a short-term problem is eye-</p>

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	<p>wateringly myopic. It will take another twenty years to rebuild what you can destroy with the stroke of a pen in an evening. And to suggest that the Dolphin Centre can step in as a cultural hub is disingenuous at best. Of course it brings plenty of visitors into Darlington and deserves preserving in its own right. But it's very separate from and very different to the town's arts organisations. It can't replace them and nor should it be expected to. Please, please think again.</p>
<p>Cultural Services</p>	<p>I totally agree with *****- of the three, the Dolphin Centre is the one that could be privatised or downscaled. It is ludicrous to suggest that it could become the cultural hub of the town. The arts offer in Darlington is second to none for the size of the town and sets the place aside from its neighbours (Stockton, Middlesbrough, even Durham). I can only hope that the suggested cuts have been added to the consultation proposals to stop people focussing on the rest of the cuts that must go ahead. Darlington would be a sorry place without the Civic and the Arts Centre.</p>
<p>Street Scene</p>	<p>There would be no harm in trying to clear the streets or offer grit bins for residents</p>
<p>Street Scene</p>	<p>Bowling Greens</p> <p>I am quite emotive about the plan to decommission four bowling greens. I play bowls myself and I have three home greens these being North Park, North Lodge and South Park.</p> <p>A number of teams play from each of these venues due to various works leagues, men's, ladies, veterans not to mention the town championships and district leagues. The upkeep of some of the greens is occasionally quite dire anyway.</p> <p>East Park and the Dene's bowling greens are not used as much as the others and South Park has two bowling greens, one of which isn't used at all because it hasn't been maintained properly for years and people and animals run around on it etc.</p> <p>I know the Council probably loses money due to the upkeep of some of the greens as they aren't well promoted and the majority of them are locked until someone who has a home team turns up with a key (I know this is because there is a lot of vandalism and theft, especially in the parks).</p> <p>The Council also charges a substantial amount for people to buy their season ticket to use the greens. I have paid for my ticket for the last 4 years and I have never been asked to show it; many people don't buy one for this reason. There is also some provision for people who don't own a ticket to play in South Park through some sort of game payment but I've never seen</p>

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	<p>anyone collect money and half of the time there is no one around to speak to with regards to playing.</p> <p>Cuts to street cleaning and grounds maintenance</p> <p>The Council wish to cut street cleaning? The streets are always untidy and mostly unclean anyway. If Darlington wants to improve its image and attract tourists or people from the nearest towns then something has to be done about the cleanliness of the main areas and many residential areas and estates will need upkeep in case anyone who is thinking of moving to the area won't think they are moving to a dump.</p> <p>Floral displays aren't of great importance as some people just pick them or uproot them for fun. Grass cutting in parks would be of some importance especially where dogs and dog mess are concerned and street-side grass cutting would be nice as well due to dog mess again.</p> <p>Maybe local businesses could sponsor flower beds in the parks and volunteers could plant things with money invested by businesses for materials and plants.</p>
Street Scene	<p>With regard to litter picking - why not use people given community sentences to collect litter throughout the town and fringe areas. This would cost nothing, and provide an essential service, leaving current paid litter pickers to do maintenance work, etc., in our parks & green spaces.</p>
Street Scene	<p>It might have been economically productive as well as valued by residents if some of those doing community service could have been drafted in to clear pathways for pedestrians through days' worth of snow and ice, and similarly to help in clearing untreated side roads.</p>
Early Years Inclusion	<p>Dear Talking Together,</p> <p>On Tuesday 16th November I attended the Talking Together meeting in the Town Hall. After the initial briefing by Cllr Chris McEwan we were asked to break off in to adjoining rooms to discuss our relevant issues.</p> <p>I attended the Early Years Inclusion Service discussion group. My wife is an Early Years Practitioner (Nursery Nurse) a service which she has dedicated nearly 20 years of her working life to. She, along with 10 others, deal with profoundly disabled and acutely vulnerable children, many of whom do not have a voice. It is not a job it is a "vocation" and requires enormous patience, understanding and love. The majority of the present 11 staff members have been delivering this "1 to 1" care to their "special" children for 20-30 years and are hugely experienced</p>

	<p>and skilled.</p> <p>The service recently underwent a review and the findings and proposals were recently published to staff and interested stakeholders. The recommendations were to improve the service by "deleting" (the author of the reviews HR terminology) the existing 11 loyal and dedicated members of staff and replacing them with 3 Area Co-ordinators whose job description would be radically transformed in to a more supervisory/teaching role. The 3 "lucky"? individuals who will be selected for the new role would cover the 60 - 70 "settings" within the Borough over an extended 52 week cycle. There working hours would be substantially increased, there holiday entitlement slashed and to compensate them for their continued loyalty and commitment there pay scale would remain commensurate with their existing less demanding, less responsible less managerial role. An interesting incentive based offer?</p> <p>A very interesting revelation emerged during the heated emotional meeting which quite frankly questions the validity and legitimacy of the review when the "author" admitted that the questionnaire was not sent out to all interested stakeholders and parents. When challenged on this glaring omission the "author" seemed to suggest that that decision was down to cost implications? A damning indictment of a review and its author and a fact that could be legally challenged at a later date.</p> <p>The most distressing and sad implication was the "betrayal" of the children who have no voice and are without doubt the most vulnerable members of our local community. They deserve an equal chance in life and deserve an education which will allow them to lead a meaningful, constructive role in society and allow them the ability to contribute to society by engaging in employment.</p> <p>These proposals will "alienate" the very vulnerable children that the service is designed to protect and effectively relegate them to a life of "exclusion" and not "inclusion" and they will not be able to access mainstream schooling and will inevitably end up at the Education Village which will be unable to provide the extra resources to cope.</p> <p>The Early Years Inclusion Service needs to "expand" in line with the rising local demand and not be "deleted" and the people of Darlington need to be rightly proud of our "previous" fine record of looking after our most vulnerable members of society - Children with Special Needs!!!</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>NB: This post has been edited in line with the Discussion Forum's acceptable terms of use - Postings will not be cleared which could be judged to be....2. Personal - Including private information about yourself or other people. DBC2.</p> <p>My daughter attends a school in Darlington within Lower Foundation.</p> <p>She has issues concerning her development. The Early Years Inclusion Service is essential for</p>

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	<p>her, not only to help her settle into the school environment but also to provide her with the valuable specialist care and expertise which will and is helping her to progress to the level expected for her age and to give her the best possible start in life.</p> <p>She has been assigned Early Year Inclusion worker. She instantly bonded with the worker and during this short space of time improvements were clearly evident and my husband and I are delighted with her progress to date. Imagine our utter dismay and disappointment however to learn that the services of the Early Years Inclusion Unit will soon be discontinued due to the financial cuts proposed by the Government. The view shared by ourselves and the Educational Psychologist are that these early years are absolutely critical to our daughter's future development. I can't over emphasise the importance of the work undertaken by the Early Years Inclusion Service and the professionalism of my daughter's Early Years Inclusion worker. It has certainly made a massive difference to our little girl's interaction and behaviour with her family and peers. Removal of this service at this stage in our daughter's life will be a major setback to her development and could ultimately mean the difference between her leading a normal life and a life requiring continued support and assistance.</p> <p>We therefore totally oppose the decision to make the Early Years Inclusion Service obsolete and strongly urge you to reconsider the decision made in order to maintain our Early Years Inclusion worker's services and enable her to continue putting her skills, wealth of experience and expertise to good use, not only for our daughter's sake but for any other children who could benefit in the future.</p>
Early Years Inclusion	<p>I am appalled that once again I find myself having to write letters and sign petitions to help save an amazing, highly valued and supportive team from losing their jobs and more importantly the children they support losing the realistic, structured ability to remain in their current settings with the same equal opportunities and experiences as every other child.</p> <p>Does the local council seriously want to regress to the institutionalisation of children with special needs? Because by stripping away the practical help that practitioners gain from the Early Years Inclusion Team, the option to remain in mainstream settings will be virtually impossible to staff effectively, finance privately and at the same time not affect not only the SEN children but all of the children within the settings in any adverse manner at all. And who will take over this support if private additional staff is bought in by schools? This team have many years of experience not only in the understanding of the needs of these children but also how best to support them, the methods that work, the techniques which get results, have tools to overcome</p>

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	<p>language barriers and have already dedicated virtually their whole working lives to working alongside children with special needs and promoting their well being, equal and inclusive rights. Will new staff have these qualifications, skills and empathy? Will there then be money to fund training for these skills and if so why do that when we have an already professional team in place, in settings, doing the job and cost effectively as they are already trained?!</p> <p>So we then ask, how many parents, carers and supporting primary carers, schools, head teachers and practitioners did the council contact and receive feedback from to make the objective decision to close down this service? That will be none if I listen to what was discussed at the Talk Together meeting on Tuesday which by all accounts led to the question of whether the mismanagement of this data collecting initiative opened legitimate cause for legal intervention at a later date.</p> <p>Once again if we have to then advertise, interview and train new staff to do fill this role how is that making the most of available funds? How is it building on current effective practice?? How many of these so called advisors for the council actually know what the role of the Early Years Inclusion Team actually is? To my knowledge from asking the team, there have been no such visits to the various settings, to meet the individual children, to talk to the parents or learn about the progress their children have made whilst under the care of this team. How then knowing none of the above has been done can you seriously stand by and allow this service and these children to suffer?</p> <p>This preposterous idea has got to be reviewed accurately, with facts and the thoughts of parents and progress made by the children involved taken notice of!!</p>
Early Years Inclusion	<p>I am writing in response to the Councils, decision to delete the Early Years Inclusion Service. I feel disheartened and disappointed that the Council seems to have decided to get rid of a service that provides hands on support to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in the town. These children have no voice of their own and without the support of our team, are not going to be included alongside their peers in the early stages of their education. The Councils' vision to provide a more inclusive service by reducing the staffing ratio from eleven to three is ridiculous. How can three people ever meet the individual needs of each child, becoming an advisory service is not in the best interests of the children, being visited by a person once a term and settings being handed out a generic sheet on advice, is not an example of good inclusive practice and will be diluting the service we currently provide.</p> <p>The children we support have complex needs; Autism, Down Syndrome, and Cerebral Palsy to name a few .How can the Council leave these children without the support of experienced,</p>

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	<p>dedicated, committed staff who love the job they do. We see, as do their parents the progress these children make with the support from our team. I would appeal to the Council to rethink their decision, it's not just jobs which will be lost ,it is the impact on the children's future education you would be jeopardising</p>
Early Years Inclusion	<p>NB: This post has been edited in line with the Discussion Forum's acceptable terms of use - DBC1.</p> <p>I can't believe and understand why we have to fight to save this fantastic service again! When will the council realise that 2 support workers to cover all of the early years child care settings will NOT provide the current level of excellent service.</p> <p>Our story began following a fight with the HV to get my daughter referred to the child development centre. She was eventually diagnosed by the specialist as an iron deficient anaemic. This has contributed to her having a significant developmental delay. She was in a private nursery from the age of 5 months to nearly 3 years of age. During this time she had 3 different SENCOs. My daughter was labelled as disruptive and we were threatened with her being expelled from this setting because they didn't understand her learning needs.</p> <p>Eventually we moved her to a nursery school with wrap around care near the town centre! In this setting she was assessed appropriately and loved. Very quickly she was taken under the wings of the inclusion team in this setting. Her confidence grew, her communication skills increased and she began to surprise her peers and key workers with her development, this was because she knew and trusted her key worker.</p> <p>She has since left this setting and moved to reception class, we were prepared by her key worker to have an expectation that she would regress! She was taken on transition visits with her key worker; this person also made her a book of photos, so that we could prepare her over the summer holidays. We have not seen any regression, and she has even begun to shine!</p> <p>Our children with extra educational needs must have a consistent link carer! Life is pretty scary for them and to have that friendly and familiar face helps them to build trust. I would like to know where the notion has come from that private nursery's want to have inclusion cover! I would suggest that these nursery settings would rather have 2 children without extra educational need than have one who required constant medical care whilst trying to support them educationally. For these nurseries the only thing that is important is the bottom line.</p>

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	<p>Yes there isn't 100% inclusion cover in Darlington at the present but - parents will take their children where they can get the best care!!!!</p> <p>Use the workers you have! The council needs to train SENCOs for all Nurseries but use the current team as mentors / preceptors /consultants. Part of the training should be a learning contract to make sure the person trained does not leave that setting for X amount of time!!!</p> <p>I would like to challenge the Director of Children's Services and his team who are suggesting this review to spend a week or even a day with the team and some of the children they care for and see if he thinks that what they re-proposing are reasonable!!!</p>
Early Years Inclusion	<p>I am writing in response to the councils ridiculous proposal for the Early Years Inclusion Service, which would see the service deleted and then be made up in to 3 advisory posts.</p> <p>I am a member of this team and I am deeply saddened by the fact that once again we are fighting for our jobs and more importantly we are fighting for the children and families that we work with. These children are certainly some of the most vulnerable and needy members of society and I thought the council were eager to help and protect the needy and vulnerable? Taking away this service certainly will not achieve this.</p> <p>We currently support children who have a wide range of Special Educational needs, we have children who have autism, Down Syndrome, cerebral palsy, some of these children have visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech and language issues, and have not had a great start to life so how on earth do you expect these children to fulfil their potential without specialist support?</p> <p>These children require hands on support from a highly trained and experienced practitioner which the Early Years Inclusion Service provides.</p> <p>I have worked for the Early Years Inclusion Service for 8 years now, during this time I have met and worked with some wonderful families. Not 1 of these families has spoke ill of our service, they have always been appreciative of the hard work and dedication we put into helping these children and the progress that these children make is unbelievable.</p> <p>Some families find it really hard to take their children to an early years setting and leave their child for a session. Whether their child has a Special Educational Need or not, this can be a very worrying time.</p> <p>I currently support a boy who has autism, he has no sense of danger, he will put anything in his mouth, he will walk out of any door and he will try and climb onto anything he can. His mum and</p>

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	<p>dad were very apprehensive about leaving him as they feared for his safety, so for the first few sessions mum stayed at nursery with him. By the end of his first week he was attending nursery without his mum having to be there, this is because his mum has realized that he is getting hands on support from an experienced practitioner and she trusts me to look after her son. It's a job I take very seriously and take much pride from.</p> <p>I am pleading with the council to save a very appreciated and dedicated service, this should be a service you should be proud of and be thinking of extending, not deleting.</p>
Early Years Inclusion	<p>A Facebook page has been set up with many supporters adding their own thoughts which the council would find interesting reading, realise the heartfelt appreciation of the staff in this team and the absolute need for this hands on service. Many people find this "open forum" hard to find, register and have also spoken of long delays from sending a comment to it being posted. It's this awkward process that is putting many off commenting.</p>
Early Years Inclusion	<p>Following the pertinent and very valid comments made by others on this forum I feel it is so important that we all lend our support to the Early Years Inclusion Team in the hope that someone somewhere heeds our response and recognises just how many people rely on this vital service.</p> <p>I am aware of the financial crisis that this country faces and the impact it has on our very small authority, however as the early years are such a vulnerable point in any child's life I cannot see how removing this service will benefit those children that have been at the forefront of government funding for the last number of years. Like a tired record I endlessly remind people of how important nursery education is in improving the life chances for all children, regardless of government statistics!</p> <p>As an early years professional I have taught nursery age children for most of my career, during which time there have been significant changes to teaching, provision, funding, etc. I have listened carefully to the current proposals for support with little enthusiasm, having had experience of pursuing statements for children who require 1:1 support. All I can see is that after years of developing our inclusion policies to ensure that we meet the needs of all of our children regardless of their need/ability it now looks to me as though we will be forced to discourage those parents of children with additional needs from entering our settings because we will be unable to effectively cater for their children.</p> <p>I am SENCO for my school and I cannot place a value on the support my team have received</p>

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	<p>from the inclusion team during the last few years without this highly dedicated team we would not have been able to offer a fully inclusive education for our most vulnerable children. We don't need advisory staff, we need hands on support!</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>In response to the moderator's comments, whilst you may think £100,000 is a lot of money, if you were to pay someone £10,000 per annum, that would only equate to 10 children being catered for each year which is totally unacceptable. Also, as an outsider looking in, I think the carers within the nursery settings are already stretched as it is and have a lot of other children to cater for. All the training in the world would still not afford them the time to provide the adequate care, one to one support and attention which children with special needs (my child included) require. The proposal, in my eyes, is totally unacceptable. Please, please, don't abolish the current service.</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>Ideas such as making a service like this obsolete always baffle me. We should be investing in our children at all levels and capabilities. These services make such a difference to the children and families that it should be a no go area. In fact if anything it should be an area that attracts more funding. Please rethink this proposal for all our sakes.</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>I am writing as a member of the Early Years Inclusion team I have worked with children with Special needs for twenty years and I am appalled yet again to be having to fight not only for our jobs but for the vulnerable and needy children within our society who, many of them have no voice of their own and cant express their needs. We are a dedicated team who are highly experienced and have gained our experience through hands on not reading from a txt book. The council are wanting to provide 52 wks of the year cover and to do this they think DELETING 11 jobs and replacing them with three advisory posts is going to help. Settings just don't want advice they want hands on support As stated we do offer morning and afternoon term time provision and we are aware that private setting have longer hours and weeks in the year but the council have NOT approached us to see if we would extend the cover for these children who need the extra support. Questionnaires went out last year and all parents and setting were in favour of the service so why haven't the council listened. The cost the council ate wanting to save is minimal for the price they will have to pay in the future. £100,000 seems a lot of money to put into schools but if you have 10 children with special needs attending private and mainstream education that will be a cost of £10,000 per year what happens to the 11 child and so on who will pay for their support. I ask the council PLEASE consider the needs of these children who all develop with the dedication and experienced support of the service.</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>Dear Murray, On Tuesday 16th November I attended the Talking Together forum specifically the Early Years Inclusion Service discussion group. In a highly charged atmosphere several of the</p>

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	<p>parents of the "Special Needs" children in attendance gave Cllr Cyndi Hughes - Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Jenny Cook Asst Director of Education and yourself a direct invitation to visit the settings where there children attend. You have also received further invites from the Early Years Practitioners who deliver this invaluable service and who you recently publically applauded for their loyalty and dedication!! I would request written confirmation from Cyndi, Jenny and yourself to inform those parents and staff when you are going to reciprocate their request and witness at first hand the "challenges" the children pose in their respective settings and the excellent support mechanisms that the Early Years Practitioners professionally deliver in a caring and supportive manner.</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>Dear Murray,</p> <p>Since my initial post on the 16th November I have carried out some in-depth research on the issues surrounding this emotive subject and would like to draw your attention and considered opinion on 3 recent reviews which directly support and legitimise our defence of the Early Years Inclusion Service.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The first report was written by Professor Sir Michael Marmot - entitled "Fair Society, Healthy Lives" a Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post-2010. The Marmot Review was commissioned in 2008 by the Secretary of State for Health. In the Executive Summary in his key messages section of the review on page 10 he outlines point 7 - "Reducing health inequalities" which would require action on six policy objectives. The first objective would be - "Give every child the best start in life". On page 17 he outlines Policy Objective A - "Give every child the best start in life" in more detail and makes the plea on behalf of the review team "that we are therefore calling for a second revolution in the early years', to increase the proportion of overall expenditure allocated there". 2. The White Paper - healthy lives, healthy people: our strategy for public health in England published on the 30th November by the Secretary of State for Health in response to Professor Sir Michael Marmots review - "Fair Society, Healthy Lives". Again in the Executive Summary on page 7 it reinforces the message under para 11(c) "giving every child in every community the best start in life". 3. The NHS Public Health North East review - "Better Health, Fairer Health - A Strategy for 21st Century Health and Well Being in the North East of England" published by Nick Brown Minister for the North East and Dr. Stephen Singleton - regional Director of Public Health. On page 15 under the heading Early Life they announce their vision as " the North East will be the safest and best place to be born and experience early life" and elaborate in the main text by stating " We

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	<p>will aim to become the region with the greatest educational attainment, and the fewest possible left behind" !!!</p> <p>These 3 recent reviews can only reinforce our overarching message that Early Years Inclusion is a "vital" service and one which Darlington Borough Council should be proud of and champion as an example of "best practice".</p> <p>I would appreciate your "considered" opinion on these endorsements from leading world Re-nowned experts in their field.</p>
Early Years Inclusion	<p>Dear Sirs</p> <p>I read with interest the report in the Darlington & Stockton Times (17.12.10) of the £240,000 to be spent on public arts projects which will not be subject to budget cutbacks. This decision seems inappropriate when many Council employees are facing redundancy. Justification for the expenditure is that money for the projects was committed before the announcement of the cuts. It might equally be argued that employment contracts were in place before the cuts were announced.</p> <p>I am particularly concerned that such expenditure is being incurred when the Council is proposing to disband the Early Years Inclusion Service (EYIS). This service is provided to young children with special educational needs, that is, to some of the most vulnerable children in the Borough. Many of the children require one-to-one attention if they are to have equal education opportunities with their peers.</p> <p>The alternative provision proposed by the Council will not be adequate to the needs of these children.</p> <p>The proposed re-organisation of the EYIS will save £60,000 per annum. The service could be funded for another 4 years out of the resources allocated to the arts projects. Children with hearing difficulties; behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; dyslexia; autism spectrum disorders; speech, language and communication needs; and physical difficulties surely demand and deserve priority over arts projects.</p> <p>Dorothy Long may be right when she says of the arts projects '...it is about taking functional objects and making them beautiful. It can be inspirational and it is wonderful for us to have such prestigious pieces in our town.' But I would suggest it is more inspirational to have children with special educational needs given the benefit of individual care and attention by staff who have</p>

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	<p>been specifically trained (at considerable cost by the Council) to meet their needs. It would be more wonderful if these children were valued more highly than 'prestigious' pieces of art.</p> <p>Councillor Heather Scott is reported as saying 'Art is something to be supported...This is a good thing for Darlington.' That may be so, but when economic times are difficult it would be even better if children with special educational needs were given priority over works of art.</p> <p>As a Council Tax payer I am asking the Council to re-think the proposal to disband the EYIS. In the interests of the children served it needs to be preserved.</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>I am currently employed as a member of the Early Years Inclusion Service which under the proposals is to 'deleted'(which was the term used). I feel very strongly that this decision would have a massive impact on the vulnerable children in Darlington.</p> <p>The people in this team are very dedicated and very highly trained in all sorts of areas (too many to mention). You would be hard pushed to find suitable people to use with regards to the pot of £100,000 - thus I feel puts the children's health and safety at risk.</p> <p>The child I am currently supporting needs 1-1 support and came in on the normal intake but was immediately 'flagged up' by staff. What would have happened to that child under this proposed new system by the time the nursery had to go through the process to access money from this 'magic' pot of money???</p> <p>It's a disgrace that these cuts are being made to the detriment of these children with additional needs and all for the sake of saving £60,000!!!</p> <p>We have always provided an excellent service for these children and their families and if anything it should be expanded. Why get rid of something that works so well??</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>I have worked for the Early Years Inclusion Service (EYIS) for many years and I am surprised and disappointed that the Council want to radically change the current service to one which will not have the best interests of children with severe and complex needs at heart.</p> <p>The Council propose to make 9 full time Practitioners redundant, thereby losing all the skills, knowledge and expertise we have of working with children with Special Educational Needs and of supporting their families and settings.</p> <p>Instead the Council propose to employ 3 advisors as well as having a fund of £100,000 which will be centrally held. Settings will access this money on a needs led basis to employ staff who will probably have very little, or no experience of supporting children with SEN.</p> <p>How can this proposal be in the best interests of children with severe and complex needs? Head Teachers, parents and other interested parties have expressed their opposition to the Council's proposal. Is the Council, in the best interests of the children, willing to listen and drop the</p>

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	<p>proposal? Only £60,000 is what the Council are going to save if they go ahead with their proposal.</p> <p>I invited several Council employees involved in the proposal to disband the EYIS to come and see first hand the day-to-day work I do with the children. Surprisingly and disappointingly, the invitation was not taken up, nor even acknowledged.</p> <p>A 90 day consultation period sounds very good, but only if the people making decisions are in a listening and responsive mode to those who provide and receive the service. The evidence is that the EYIS is a valuable and much needed service and that it should continue to be provided by full time dedicated and highly experienced practitioners - who are all willing to work flexible hours, including non-term time, if this is deemed to be in the best interests of children and parents.</p> <p>Children with severe and complex needs require the services of Practitioners specifically trained to meet those needs. Their parents/families need the reassurance that their children are in the care of qualified staff who will ensure that their needs are met appropriately.</p> <p>Accordingly, the Council should re-consider their proposal to disband the EYIS. Children with Special Educational Needs require and deserve a special service. And that service is best provided by specially trained practitioners.</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>I recently read an interesting article about North-East Council "reserves" some of which amount to millions of pounds. My understanding of these recent revelations is that they are legally required to ensure they maintain a 5% reserve BUT not the many, many millions of pounds they currently have. I would suggest that a cash reserve is primarily utilized to cover any shortfalls in funding streams and "on a rainy day"!!! I would strongly suggest that that "rainy day" has arrived and Councils should release cash from these bulging reserves and give the hard working, loyal and dedicated Public Sector workers presently employed by DBC the guarantee of further employment.</p> <p>It was also revealed recently that DBC Education department also have their own sizeable cash reserves which again should be secured to guarantee the jobs of staff employed within that department!!</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>DBC2</p> <p>Thank you for advising me that the art projects are all funded by organisations external to the Council. However, the source of the funding does not invalidate the point I was making i.e. that the Council should prioritise funding for the education of children with special educational needs (SEN).</p> <p>The Darlington & Stockton Times (7.1.11) carries an appreciation of the work done by Dame Delia Smith (former Principal of the Darlington Education Village) in education and it was</p>

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	<p>interesting to read of her roots, and life-long concern for SEN teaching.</p> <p>In the article she is reported as saying:</p> <p>"Children are children and they all deserve the same high quality education" "A measure of society is how you look after the most vulnerable young people" "If you make the strongest provision for your most needy, then everybody benefits"</p> <p>I would suggest that one measure of Darlington Borough Council's concern, or perhaps lack of concern, for children with special educational needs is the proposal to disband the Early Years Inclusion Service and make the staff redundant. The EYIS team has been specifically trained to meet the needs, often individual needs, of these most vulnerable children in the earliest years of their education. However, the Council is proposing to meet their needs a) from the existing Portage service - which has not been free from criticism b) the appointment of 3 Co-ordinators and c) a £100,000 pool of money - to buy in services from practitioners (should they be available).</p> <p>The Council's proposal can hardly be described as making the strongest educational provision for the most needy children. If the proposal is followed through the Council will be failing in its duty of care to such children.</p> <p>Children with special educational needs deserve the best possible start in their educational life and the EYIS should at the very least be maintained.</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>My son is currently in an early years setting at George Dent and has a fantastic inclusion worker to help him with his autism. Since he started in September he has become a different boy who has progressed in many ways which we were not able to develop ourselves but his practitioner is experienced and a wonderful lady who has changed all of our lives. He has built such a bond with her and knows every day he goes there he will be safe and looked after and it gives him the routine he needs. Without this service I fear many children will miss out on this, these children don't have voices and need us to speak up for them, they are all special children who need and deserve this service to help them have a good start in life, without this service I would not have been able to send my son to a mainstream nursery and there is a good chance he would not have had the one on one service he so needs. For the sake of £60,000 this is one service that should not be even considered changing.</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>NB, this post has been edited in line with our user's guidelines.</p>

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	<p>At the start of this highly emotive "Consultation"? process in early November personal invites both verbally and written were given to The Director of Services for People and some members of his team as well as the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People from the parents of the Special Needs Children and the hardworking, loyal and dedicated members of the EYIS to visit the settings and witness at first hand the excellent work the staff conduct on a daily basis with some of the most vulnerable and complex members of our society - Children with Special Educational Needs. To date these invitations have been ignored. With D-Day fast approaching is it NOT now time to accept those invites and give the loyal and dedicated EYIS staff the courtesy and respect they richly deserve by accepting their invite and visit a setting?? I hope a suitable window of opportunity can be found to visit a setting within the immediate foreseeable future and preferably before D-Day when such a gesture will be meaningless?? !!</p>
<p>Early Years Inclusion</p>	<p>As parents, even although we have had a formal letter from the Council stating that since our children are currently receiving support from the Early Years Inclusion Service, that these services will not be withdrawn, I would still like to voice my disappointment that this valuable service is still under threat from being made obsolete. I can't help feeling sad and angry that children and families in the future may not have the benefit of this worthwhile service. The service provided has certainly made a difference to our little girl's life, something which could not be gained from an individual coming in on an "advisory" basis.</p>
<p>General</p>	<p>Pay the market officers for the hours they actually work (all 8!) rather than a salary</p>
<p>General</p>	<p>In term of wasting money I live near stupid-about at the top of Haughton Road hence cynicism</p>
<p>General</p>	<p>Fireworks were fab! Lets hope there is fireworks next year</p>