
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the areas of work under my Children's Services Portfolio: -

Cabinet has received reports on the following:

- (a) **Children and Young People's Plan** – Cabinet recommended the report be referred to Council to approve the first Children and Young People's Plan.
- (b) **Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) - Inspection of the Fostering Service** – Cabinet received and noted a summary of the findings from an inspection of the Fostering Service conducted during February 2006 together with details of the action plan submitted to CSCI in response to their recommendations.
- (c) **The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) - Inspection of the Adoption Service** – Cabinet received and noted a summary of the findings from an inspection of the Adoption Service conducted during February 2006 together with details of the action plan submitted to CSCI in response to their recommendations.

2. Developments in Children's Services

- (a) In August we received the A Level (Key Stage 5) and GCSE (Key Stage 4) results for Darlington. Whilst acknowledging that there is much to do in raising attainment, it is also important to celebrate success. Many of our secondary schools achieved good GCSE results this year, with Hurworth and Longfield making big step changes. Results are as follows:

A Level (Key Stage 5) results

A town average pass rate of 99.4% for A level at grade A-E

GCSE (Key Stage 4) results

For pupils receiving 5 or more A*-C grades:

School	% - 5 or more A*-C grade
Haughton Community School	42.5
Carmel RC Technology College	82.4
Hurworth School, Maths & Computing College	93.5
Longfield Comprehensive	55
Hummersknott School & Language College	70.3
Branksome Comprehensive	46
Eastbourne Comprehensive	19.7

- (b) The following is a breakdown of educational achievement of our Looked After Children for 2006 (out of 10 young people eligible, 8 sat at least 1 GCSE):

Overall results	%
3 X 5 A-C	30%
5 X 5 A-G	50%
8 X 1 A-G	80%

- (c) **Skills+ Programme**
116 students have enrolled on the Skills + programme from September 2006.

3. Youth Service Issues

(a) **Youth Service restructure**

All new posts created as a result of the increase to Youth Service core budget have now been filled and the Service is moving to an internal restructure to ensure that front-line delivery teams are organised as Locality Teams in keeping with wider planning around Extended Schools, Street Scene and the Local Area Agreement. Appropriate management arrangements are also being developed to support Locality based teams.

(b) **E Vibe**

E Vibe, the dedicated site for young people within the Council website, was launched on 1st August. The site was set up in consultation with young people who will continue to assist in its design and development. Although primarily ‘information based’ at the moment, there are plans for interactivity with a weblog (“blog”) from the Borough’s Member of the Youth Parliament and a virtual youth worker page where young people can log questions and comments.

(c) **Summer Programme**

The Service provided a wide range of activities across the Town throughout the summer school holiday period. Highlights included a pilot project in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust on sexual health awareness for young people; 51 young people participated in 4 sites across the town and a peer education team was recruited who will continue to develop work on this topic; the launch of a new youth club in Northgate Ward based at Corporation Road Baptist Church and developed in partnership with the town’s Racial Equality Council; and a two-day Sports Challenge in conjunction with Community Development Workers at Alderman Leach School which saw 55 young people participate over the two days.

(d) **Vibe Awards**

This year’s Vibe Awards are scheduled for Monday 9th October at the Civic Theatre. Over 220 young people have been nominated for a Vibe Award making it the biggest Awards evening to date. The evening will be hosted by myself and our Youth MP, Ashleigh Trevarrow, and will feature a guest appearance from Darrien Wright recent winner of BBC TV’s Strictly Dance Fever.

(e) **UK Youth Parliament elections**

A report on UKYP elections held across Local Authority areas (percentage participating – 85%) at the beginning of 2006 has revealed that the turn-out for Darlington (26.08%) was tenth highest in the country, significantly above the national average of 10.21% and the highest of all Local Authorities in the north-east region. Youth Service staff are determined to build upon this significant

interest in local democracy in Darlington at next year's elections.

4. Visits and Meetings since last Council

(a) **14th July 2006**

I was pleased to visit Hummersknott School & Language College to meet with the Head Teacher who provided an update on progress at the school. I also had the opportunity to tour the school and meet with teachers, staff and students.

(b) **21st July 2006**

I was pleased to participate in the "Olympics 2012 Roadshow" which came to Darlington Market Square as part of its visit to the North East. Meeting with representatives from the Olympics Committee gave me an insight into the level of commitment our gifted sporting young people in the Borough will have to demonstrate to achieve membership of our Olympics team in 2012.

The Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Tony Blair MP, officiated at the opening of the Education Village on Salters Lane South. This was a proud day for all involved in the concept, planning and building of the tremendous facilities at the Education Village, along with those who teach, work and study at the schools which make up the Education Village.

(c) **11th August 2006**

I met with the Executive Director, Dame Dela Smith, at the Education Village.

I later attended a joint meeting between officers from the Local Authority and Darlington Primary Care Trust. The main discussion was the development of positive joint initiatives to improve our children's health in the Borough. I have asked to be included in a future update meeting, which is being arranged for me later in the year.

I then met with Lynn Kilpatrick from Connexions in Darlington who was able to provide me with an update on developments for young people as they are helped to move from compulsory education onto employment, training, or further education.

(d) **17th August 2006**

I joined a tour of the newly constructed Darlington College on Haughton Road, ahead of opening its doors to students. This was a super opportunity to view the fantastic state-of-the-art facilities on offer to young people and adults seeking to improve their vocational skills.

(e) **18th August 2006**

I met with the Chief Officer of Darlington's Council for Voluntary Service, Ian Rogers, as I am keen that the voluntary sector is more involved in improving outcomes for children in the Borough.

(f) **8th September 2006**

I visited Corporation Road Community Primary School to meet with its Acting Head Teacher and to tour the school's classrooms and meet the children. The school has recently received its Ofsted Inspection Report and I discussed with the Acting Head Teacher the school's action plans for improvement.

I later visited Eastbourne School to meet its new Head Teacher, Elaine Richardson. This was my first opportunity to meet with the Head Teacher since the GCSE results for 2006 were published. We discussed how she and her staff are going to develop effective teaching mechanisms in order to return the school to its trend of improving results which we have seen in recent years.

(g) 11th September 2006

I visited Abbey Infant and Junior Schools to congratulate the Head Teachers and staff on successfully bidding for Targeted Capital Funds from central government available to Federation Schools.

(h) 13th September 2006

I was pleased to present certificates to those staff within Children's Services who had been nominated for a range of categories as part of the Council's "Employee Excellence 4 Star Awards" scheme.

(i) 15th September 2006

I visited Hurworth School, Maths & Computing College to meet with the Head Teacher, staff and students. Having received excellent results at GCSE this Summer, I was keen to congratulate all staff involved, and wish them good luck for another successful year.

I visited North Road Primary School, again to meet with the Head Teacher and to tour the school and its facilities.

**Councillor Chris McEwan
Cabinet Member with Children's Services Portfolio**