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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council and under my Children's Services Portfolio, Cabinet has received the following:

- (a) **Playing for Success** – Cabinet approved proposals to develop a Playing for Success centre at Darlington Football Club using a £125,000 capital grant secured through the DfES. Darlington Football Club have agreed to a 'in-kind' contribution of £25,000 per annum towards the running costs. The Centre will offer booster numeracy and literacy programmes with a strong football theme. It will work with students from all schools between the ages of 10-13 who are at risk of falling behind and not achieving their potential at Key Stage 2 and 3.
- (b) **Secondary School Capital Investment** – Cabinet approved a capital investment strategy with the objective of maintaining seven secondary schools of choice in Darlington.
- (c) **Federation of Abbey Schools Targeted Capital Fund Project Update** – Cabinet received an update on progress in developing a new school hall at the federation of Abbey Schools and released £600,000 of capital funding to support the scheme (£480,000 from DfES Targeted Capital Funding and £120,000 to be raised by the school).

2. Developments in Children's Services

- (a) The 14-19 Trust is making excellent progress in building a strong partnership and contribution from all our secondary schools to deliver the new diplomas required to broaden choice for 14-19 year olds. Submissions have been made to deliver the first five specialist diplomas. We will be informed if these will be accepted in March.
- (b) Alison Walton, Assistant Director, left the Authority on 24th January. The post has been advertised (closing date 27th Feb) and interviews are to be held in March. Jan Lefevre (Commissioning Manager) is acting up in the interim.
- (c) The Family Group Conferencing Service is to run a workshop at a Regional Conference, organised by GONE which highlights the effectiveness of the intervention with drug and alcohol abusing parents. A Darlington family, who have benefited from this service, will attend to give their views and answer questions. Dr Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director, will chair the conference.
- (d) Andrew Dunn and Primary Headteachers continue to work closely on the implementation of the Primary School Improvement Partnership programme for Darlington's Schools.

### 3. Youth Service Issues

#### (a) **Youth Opportunities Fund**

Work continues on the promotion and utilisation of the Youth Opportunity and Youth capital Funds. 17 young people from across the Borough have been recruited to the young people's Youth Board and they attended a training residential from 19th-21st January 2007. At the same time the Board considered seven applications from groups of young people and has recommended five for approval, one deferred for further information and one referred to the smaller grants programme.

A further application round for projects in excess of £2000 is scheduled for 5th March and a number of projects aimed at the smaller grants programme (less than £2000) are in development.

Additionally, the Council has been selected as one of 12 authorities across England who will participate in an in-depth evaluative research study for the DfES. Research interviews are scheduled for the end of this month.

#### (b) **Positive Activities (Youth Offer for Young People)**

Further to my last report, a large event for young people (being planned in conjunction with the Voice and Action Group) is scheduled for 12th and 13th April. The aim of this event will be to promote the concept of a 'Youth Offer' to young people, showcase a range of opportunities already on offer across all three sectors and begin an ongoing process of dialogue with young people so that they can shape and inform development of the Youth Offer for Darlington.

#### (c) **Friday Night Provision**

Work is ongoing to extend the amount of Friday night provision available across the Borough. Recent initiatives have included a Friday night youth club in Northgate ward (in partnership with the Baptist Church), regular football sessions at the MUGA (multi use games area) at Whinfield School and detached youth sessions in the wider Haughton and Springfield areas.

#### (d) **Chartered Institute of Professional Development**

Following the Youth Service success at being named organisation of the year, 3 staff delivered an evening presentation/demonstration to the CIPD regional meeting. This was very well received with feedback including 'Excellent event that was inspiring, interacting, and a great example of best practice.'

#### (e) **Highlight Activity**

##### (i) Voice and Action Group

The group are now meeting on a regular basis and are currently developing a questionnaire for distribution to 1000 young people. Young people will identify issues of importance for them within the Borough, giving the Voice and Action group core issues to address as well as assisting in the review and development of the next Children and Young People's Plan. The group is now represented on the Children's Trust and are planning a training and development residential for the

end of March.

(ii) Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme Presentation (24th January)

The Worshipful The Mayor, Councillor Lister, kindly hosted an award evening for over 40 young people who have received DofE Awards at all three levels. The public gallery was full with family and friends and special mention should be made of 6 young people who received Gold Awards and a number of young people from the Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) Service are well on their way to their bronze awards.

(iii) Multi-Cultural Education

The Service is working in conjunction with Branksome School to deliver a multi-cultural training programme to students. Feedback from school and students to initial sessions has been hugely positive and work is on going.

(iv) Music Video project

Youth Service staff are working in partnership with First Stop and The Forum to produce a music and video DVD/show. Young people are attending workshops at Eastbourne Project Centre to develop skills in using video equipment and movie editing software, interviewing skills and design and presentation. The group will then video local bands as they perform at The Forum with a view to recorded footage being available on the Vibe web site.

(v) Ward member report

The first Youth Service ward member report will be provided on 1st March. This will provide more in depth reporting on actual and planned initiatives within each Locality Area and will be updated on a bi-monthly schedule. Information will be sent to all ward members.

4. Visits and Meetings since last Council

- (a) Friday 12th January - I attended the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- (b) Monday 22nd January - A meeting of the Children's Trust took place in which I attended in my capacity as Lead Member.
- (c) Thursday 25th January - I introduced and spoke to the LEA governors briefing session.
- (d) Friday 26th January - I was pleased to open the Workforce Development Away Day, hosted at Blackwell Grange Hotel.  
  
I later visited Whinfield Primary School to meet with the Headteacher and see the facilities on offer for children at the school.
- (e) Monday 29th January - I attended the Holocaust memorial day at Haughton School.
- (f) Friday 16th February - I attended a meeting at Eastbourne School to discuss the Safer Schools Partnership with Elaine Richardson, Headteacher.

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