
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council and under my Children and Young People Portfolio, Cabinet has received the following:

- (a) **Annual Performance Assessment 2007** – The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills Annual Performance Assessment judgements for Children’s Services were considered as follows:
- i. Judgement 1 – Overall effectiveness of Children’s Services: Good.
 - ii. Judgement 2 – Being Healthy: Outstanding.
 - iii. Judgement 3 – Staying Safe: Good.
 - iv. Judgement 4 – Enjoying and Achieving: Adequate.
 - v. Judgement 5 - Making a Positive Contribution: Outstanding.
 - vi. Judgement 6 – Achieving Economic Well-being: Good.
 - vii. Judgement 7 – Capacity to improve, including the management of Children’s Services: Good.

2. Developments in Children’s Services

- (a) The Children’s Trust has recently approved a series of actions to improve outcomes for children and young people in the Borough. These include a strategy for the engagement of young people in service planning, a strategy for commissioning services and a strategy for providing more accessible services in local bases.

(b) **Children ‘Looked After’ by Darlington Borough Council**

A review of the Corporate Parenting Panel has taken place and proposals are to be presented to full Council today (31/1/08). The overall aim of the review is to ensure that the Council fulfils its corporate parenting responsibilities to those children and young people ‘looked after’ by raising the awareness and knowledge of member’s of the Council.

Darlington Borough Council ‘looks after’ children and young people aged 0-18 yrs, and retains responsibility for certain groups until 25 yrs.

The number ‘looked after’ fluctuates as young people either return to family or move to permanence (e.g. adoption):-

Month

Number CLA

April '07	139
July '07	141
Aug '07	139
Sept'07	137
Oct '07	140
Nov '07	137

The majority (approx 85%) are placed with foster carers either within Darlington or the surrounding area.

(c) Safeguarding

Darlington Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) is a statutory multi-agency group which oversees the child protection process in addition to the broader 'safety' agenda e.g. road traffic accidents; bullying; home safety.

In April 2008, the Child Protection Register 'ceases' and individual children will be subject to a child protection plan, not formally on a Register. The number of children on the Register fluctuates as situations change and families move in and out of the town.

<u>Month</u>	<u>Number on child protection register</u>
April '07	49
June '07	55
Sept '07	37
Nov '07	38
Jan '08	50

- (d) **Common Assessment Framework:** A comprehensive training programme is now being delivered. The common assessment framework is a national development to ensure that children and families gain swift and easy access to services. Children's Services' teams intend to train 160 practitioners across all agencies represented at the Children's Trust in this process by the end of March. Further training will follow.
- (e) The Early Years service is in the process of completing a comprehensive audit of childcare needs across the Borough. Childcare for this purpose is considered to be for children up to 14 years of age and 18 years for children with disabilities. Initial findings suggest that there is sufficient childcare for children under 5 years but more out of school provision needs to be developed for school age children and for children with disabilities.

Key Stage 1- 4 results

- (f) Darlington's GCSE (Key Stage 4) results in 2007 at 5A* to C rose to 60%, an increase of 2.1% on the 2006 results. 45.9% of students obtained 5A* to C including English and Maths – the new expected benchmark. This was the second best performance in the North East. Individual schools enjoyed their own successes with Branksome Comprehensive gaining its highest ever GCSE pass rate with 59.5% of pupils gaining 5A* to C grades as well as securing a positive Ofsted report and significantly improving attendance. Eastbourne also scored its best ever results and Hurworth and Carmel both produced excellent results.

- (g) Key Stage 3 results also showed a great improvement. English scores rose at L5+ and at L6+. Scores in English improved by almost 10% on the previous year, doubling the national rise. Level 5+ performance was consolidated in Maths and improved in Science and ICT. No schools were below the threshold for causing concern.
- (h) At Key Stage 2 the gains made in previous years were consolidated with further improvement at L4+ in Writing and Science. It was pleasing to note that Darlington schools performance at L5 was greater than the national average in all subjects. The overall contextual value added score for the Borough rose from 100.2 in 2006 to 100.4 in 2007.
- (i) Key Stage 1 results fell slightly overall in Darlington as was the pattern nationally. Teacher moderation is now providing a far more accurate picture of children's ability than testing did previously. In Reading 81.8% of children achieved L2+ whilst 24.2% achieved L3. In Writing 77.3% achieved L2+ whilst 9.1% achieved L3. In Maths 88.2% were at L2+ whilst 18.5% were at L3 and in Science 88.2% were at L2+ with 24.8% at L3.
- (j) The team working on the Director of Children's Services Commission on Transition between Key Stage 2 and 3 presented its final report on 31st December 2007. The team chaired by David Heaton and led by the Assistant Director for School Improvement and Development have made several recommendations to schools which are now being developed by a number of working parties.
- (k) On 4th January 2008, following consultation with schools and other stakeholders, the Assistant Director for School Improvement and Development presented a paper entitled 'Behaviour in Darlington, The Way Forward'. The contents, which include a draft Behaviour Strategy and Action Plan, are now being developed by relevant stakeholders.
- (l) The School Condition Group (SCG), which has members drawn from across Children's Services, has met on a number of occasions to discuss the classification of and support offered to all Darlington Schools in line with the Protocols and Procedures for Engagement with Schools agreed by Cabinet in October 2007.
- (m) All Darlington schools have a School Improvement Partner (SIP) and a Lead Officer as of September 2007. The SIPs have carried out the performance management of all Headteachers across the Borough prior to 31st December 2007 as well as carrying out a review of standards in each school. Their work is coordinated by the SIP Manager in School Improvement and Development.
- (n) A team of Local Authority Officers carried out a valuable training session for members of Children and Young Persons Scrutiny Committee on interpreting school data.
- (o) Officers working in collaboration with Darlington Headteachers and the National College for School Leadership have formulated plans for the 'Darlington Leadership College'. This body will work with a group of up to eight prospective Headteachers each year preparing them for being a leader in Darlington in the future.
- (p) The Pupil Referral Unit has again received a positive monitoring report from visiting HMIs who described its overall improvement since going into Special Measures as at

least 'satisfactory' and in some areas 'good'

- (q) In December, The Director of Children's Services received a note from the Regional Director for the National Primary and Secondary Strategies congratulating Darlington on being the most improved Local Authority in the North East of England in the period June to December 2007. The judgement was based on RAG (Red, Amber, Green) ratings awarded by the National Strategies based on school and LA performance.

(r) **Youth Opportunity Fund (The Dosh)**

52 projects have now been supported in Year 2 of the Funds. A final £22k of the overall allocation remains which the Youth Board will allocate in February through an innovative Dragon's Den style event.

A further £3.5k has been secured from GONE to support the small grants process in this year.

Government has announced a three-year extension of the Funds and staff are putting together a revised plan for the operation of The Dosh for this further period.

(s) **Positive Activities (Youth Offer)**

The Young people's Group recently held a competition to choose the Youth Offer logo via schools, the local press, partner agencies and open-air events in the Market Square. The agreed logo was announced in the press in early January.

(t) **Youth Participation**

The inaugural meeting of the Council of School Councils was held on 4 December and a number of young people from 8 schools/colleges engaged in a lively and positive debate. All the young people who attended thought the idea was positive and several asked that the schools that did not attend were still included in a decision as to the format of future meetings. A follow-up meeting is planned for this term.

The Youth Service has entered the wider Youth participation work to the ANEC Shine Awards.

Voting in the UK Youth Parliament elections is scheduled for 11-13 February and 15 candidates are standing for election.

(u) **Play Strategy**

Confirmation as received in December that the Councils Play Strategy and portfolio of projects has been accepted by the Big Lottery. Funding for Darlington has been released and the Youth Service will be leading on the development of a mobile facility for young people.

(v) **Review project**

Over 450 young people attended the Review premiere evening at the Odeon Cinema in December to hear of the work of the Review Project, view a short DVD of projects and events young reviewers have covered and to watch 'The Golden Compass'.

School Capital Works

- (w) A substantial amount of work has taken place in preparing a design brief for the replacement building for North Road Primary School. The £6.5M project is due to be finished in time for the 2009 school year.

- (x) The process for the design and build of the new Eastbourne CE Academy is underway, a meeting for the staff was carried out in late December and a further meeting for residents living close to the school was held in early January, to introduce the design for the new Academy and seek views on the design concept.
- (y) Refurbishment and re-building work continues at Hummersknott school, the project is on schedule and the new extensions are expected to be weather-proof within the next two weeks.

3. Visits and Meetings since last Council

(a) Friday 23rd November

I sat on the Corporate Parenting Panel.

I visited Harrowgate Hill Primary School to meet with the two Co-Headteachers, staff and pupils and view the modern school facilities.

(b) Friday 30th November

I was pleased to be accompanied today by a student from the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College as part of her experience whilst studying for an A Level in politics.

We visited the Coleridge Centre to meet with the managers of the different services being provided within the centre.

We later visited Crown Street library to tour the building and meet with staff and service users.

(c) Tuesday 4th December

I met with the Principal of Eastbourne Church of England Academy at the school.

I was later interviewed by one of the inspection team from Ofsted visiting the Borough this week to formally inspect the Council's Libraries and Community Learning services.

(d) Wednesday 5th December

I met with the Locality Director of Public Health from the PCT.

(e) Thursday 6th December

Together with senior officers, I attended a briefing by Ofsted in London for those local authorities in Block 18 of the Joint Area Review (JAR) timetable, which includes Darlington Borough Council, ahead of the JAR itself which takes place in Spring 2008.

(f) Friday 21st December

I visited First Stop and met with the Chief Executive for an update on work for the

homeless in Darlington.

(g) Thursday 10th and Friday 11th January

I attended days 2 and 3 of the North of England Education Conference 2008 held in Cardiff. This conference is not only the largest event of its kind, but it draws a top audience of senior representatives from education delivery and policy. Running for more than a hundred years, the conference attracts internationally renowned speakers and delegates. It also provided an opportunity to showcase ideas, to network, and share best practice.

Councillor Chris McEwan
Cabinet Member with Children and Young People Portfolio