
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

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

- (a) **Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011 (CYPP)** – Members endorsed the draft CYPP and referred it to Council for approval.
- (b) **Early Years and Childcare Strategy** – Members approved the draft strategy and referred it to Council for approval.
- (c) **Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education** – Members approved the Syllabus.

2. Developments in Children's Services

(a) Transition between KS2 and KS3

Teams developing policy and practice for Darlington's Children and Young People have continued their work around Transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. This has resulted in better transfer of data between schools and the formation of eleven sub groups to drive this issue forward.

(b) School Condition Sub-Group

The School Condition Sub-Group has met on two occasions to ensure that all Darlington schools are receiving support in line with the Protocols and Procedures for Engagement with schools agreed last year by Cabinet. North Road Primary School and the Phoenix Centre (Pupil Referral Unit) have received monitoring visits from Her Majesty's Inspectorate and were judged to be making at least satisfactory progress.

(c) Chair of Governors meeting

In May a meeting was hosted for Chairs of Governors during which we looked at standards issues across the Borough and the wider Children's Services agenda.

(d) Phoenix Centre Opens

In April the Pupil Referral Unit moved to the site of the former Rise Carr Primary School and was re-named the Phoenix Centre. The Management Committee of the Phoenix is made up of representatives from all Darlington Secondary Schools together with parent and Local Authority members.

(e) Governing Body Self Review

A number of school governing bodies have taken up the Local Authority offer to undertake a self review process which helps them to identify future training needs whilst highlighting where they are making good progress. The process is guided by officers from the School Improvement and Development Team.

(f) Every Child a Reader

Three Darlington Primary Schools have taken advantage of standards fund grants to become part of the Every Child a Reader initiative. This initiative is based on the

Reading Recovery process whereby each child undertakes intensive work which will improve their reading skills.

(g) Attendance figures

Attendance figures continue to show a pleasing improvement. Figures recently released for the Spring term 2008 show that overall a 0.7% improvement has been achieved on 2006/07 figures.

(h) Kids & Co

A feasibility study is being completed to consider the possible relocation of Kids & Co, Town Hall to the Borough Road nursery school building. Staff and parents will be consulted as part of this process.

(i) Play Strategy

Following the launch of the Play Strategy in Autumn 2007 and the success of the Big Lottery bid, work is now underway to appoint play rangers and improve access to facilities across the town.

(j) Common Assessment Framework

Over 1100 practitioners have now accessed training on this important area and nearly 60 CAFs have been developed to ensure children have swift, easy access to services.

(k) Children Looked After by Darlington Borough Council

There are 140 children and young people 'looked after' by the local authority (as at 31 May 2008). This is an increase of 5 children compared to 31st March figures. This level of increase can relate to sibling group, one recent admission involved 4 children. Every effort is made to place family groups together (where safe and appropriate) and support is provided to foster carers able to provide this type of placement. The Corporate Parenting Panel meets on 27th June and will focus on the 'Stay Safe' outcome from Every Child Matters, in relation to children 'looked after'. Each meeting over the year will focus on a specific ECM outcome.

(l) Child Protection

There are currently 72 children and young people in Darlington who have a child protection plan. The service has maintained its high performance in relation to process and timescales for Child Protection conferences.

(m) Children With Disabilities

A draft Children with Disabilities Strategy is currently out for consultation. This has been developed with parents and practitioners, and is linked to the government priority of improving services to families – particularly short-break services. Consultation finishes on 5th July and the implementation will be monitored by a multi-agency group. Specific work will be undertaken with young people to ensure they are fully involved and influence the service developments.

(n) Youth Opportunity Fund

The take-up of The Dosh has been exceptional since the start of the financial year. Sub allocations were made to the small grants scheme, large grants scheme and an outline allocation to the Youth Board itself to pilot the 'commissioning' of Positive Activities. To date the small grants allocation has been fully utilised with £38,000 supporting over 40 individual projects.

(o) Positive Activities (Youth Offer)

Stakeholder sessions are continuing in this second year and free web site training is being made available to all providers in the week beginning 23 June. This will populate the new CLICK web site in advance of its official launch in July.

(p) Aiming High Youth Strategy

As part of the government's 10 year youth strategy, information has been released on the capital grants scheme (myplace). Between £1 and £5m is available to create a 'world class' youth facility. Initial discussions have commenced with partners from both voluntary and community and private sectors.

(q) Headline Activity

The Youth Service provided a range of activities across the recent half term holiday – with a focus on events in parks (North Park, North Lodge Park and South Park). A full summer programme, to complement activity from Leisure and Arts, is now in place.

(r) The Review project fronted the Battle of the Bands finale in the market square at the beginning of June. Over 350 people watched local up and coming bands compete and participated in voting. 'The Hornosexuals' were declared the winning band.

(s) The Area 1 Youth Forum held a successful fashion show at the Kings Head Hotel at the beginning of May involving young people from groups across the Borough. The theme 'Beautiful in every Way' sought to present an alternative look at youth/fashion culture and pressures on young people to conform to stereotypes.

(t) The Youth Service has prepared a schedule of high profile events aimed at celebrating the positive contribution of young people, whilst challenging all young people to become positively involved in activities and their community. This was launched with 'the Battle of the Bands', and further events throughout the summer and autumn will celebrate activity, diversity, voice role and achievement. All events will be promoted and advertised widely.

3. Visits and Meetings by the Portfolio Holder since last Council

(a) Friday 9th May

I visited 'Top Deck' in Parkgate Chambers, a youth provision.

(b) Friday 16th May

I attended a regional event for School Improvement Partners (SIPs), as part of their continual professional development. I welcomed the opportunity to discuss with some of our SIPs the work they are doing with our schools as part of the national SIP programme.

I visited Mowden Infant School where I met the Headteacher, staff and pupils. I later visited Hurworth School, Maths and Computing College for an update from its Headteacher on school developments.

(c) Monday 19th May

I was pleased to join a celebration event at Hotel Bannatyne in honour of our foster carers who make such a valuable contribution to young people in need of short or long term foster care.

(d) Wednesday 21st May

I met with the Vice Chancellor of the University of Teesside, who provided an update on developments in higher education for the region's young people.

I later joined a dinner hosted by Board members from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, which took place at Hallgarth Hotel. This was an opportunity to discuss developments and proposals for improving services for children and young people in the Borough, as well as highlighting our areas of excellence.

(e) Friday 23rd May

I visited Gurney Pease Primary School to meet the Headteacher, staff and pupils. I attended the Youth Offer event at the Head of Steam, McNay Street. I later visited Holy Family School.

(f) Thursday 12th June

I visited Firthmoor Primary School, recently temporarily closed due to technical problems, to see the work being done to rectify these and reopen the school as soon as practicable. I then visited all but one of those educational settings where the pupils from Firthmoor Primary School had been placed, to thank those responsible on behalf of the Council for accommodating the children at such short notice: Maidendale Children's Centre (Nursery), Bishopton/Redmarshall, St George's, Dodmire Junior, and Heathfield Primary Schools.

I later met with representatives from the Regional Development Agency.

(g) Thursday 19th June

I chaired a special meeting of the Children's Trust which discuss and approved the Children and Young People's Plan Review prior to its submission to Ofsted.

(h) Friday 20th June

I joined the Family Nurse Partnership conference which took place at Ferryhill Leisure Centre. This gave me an insight the important multi-agency work which is taking place in this field.

I later met with the Principal of the Queen Elizabeth 6th Form College for an update on how young people are progressing at the college, and to discuss new developments in the 14-19 sector.

(i) Monday 23rd June

I was pleased to be present when the Director of Children's Services awarded a certificate to Alderman Hutchinson for his many years' service as a school governor in Darlington.

(j) Wednesday 25th June

I was pleased to accept an invitation to meet with our new Youth MP, Emily Christer to discuss her vision for services for young people in the Borough and how the Council can support this.

Councillor Chris McEwan
Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People