
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

1. Since the last meeting of Council and under the Children and Young People Portfolio, the following areas of work have been undertaken.

Developments in Children's Services

Darlington's Safe Places to Be

2. A DVD which brings to life the Darlington's Safe Places To Be scheme in Darlington, was launched on Thursday 11 August at 2pm at Darlington College. Darlington's Safe Places To Be is a new scheme aimed at tackling bullying during the school summer holidays and details safe places to go in Darlington for victims of bullying.
3. The DVD has been produced by Exposure, a group of young people working from C:TheBox in Darlington. They describe Exposure as "a comedy news report that brings you the public news from Darlington". The DVD is the first in a series of anti-bullying material to be produced by the group. Future projects include dealing with the issues of cyber-bullying and the promotion of Anti-bullying Week in November.
4. As part of Darlington Safe Places To Be, a series of safe venues have been identified across the Borough where young people who are concerned about bullying can go. The venues offer a quiet place to sit, the chance to phone a friend, family member, anti-bullying mentor or a member of the Local Safeguarding Children Board Business Unit and get information about organisations which can help those being bullied.

Schools

GCSE Results

5. Since securing its position in 2008 as the most improved local authority in England for GCSE attainment, schools in Darlington have continued to build on that performance by celebrating an increase of 11% points in their overall attainment – this means this year more than 65% of young people achieved five or more GCSEs with A* to C grades including English and maths compared to 55% in 2010.
6. In addition, 91% of pupils in Darlington's secondary schools passed five or more GCSEs gaining A* to C grades, this year.

A Level Results

7. Carmel College continues to have a high pass rate of over 99%, and are above the national pass rate of 97.8%, which has increased by 0.2% this year. Carmel's 3+ A*-E and 2+ A*-E performance continues to improved, and their APS per student has improved by 5 points on last year's score. QE's pass rate has risen to 99%.

National Healthy Schools Status

8. Mowden Infants School became the latest school in the Borough to be officially recognised for the work it does with parents, carers, governors, staff and pupils to promote physical and emotional health.
9. The first school in Darlington to achieve the status was North Road Primary School (now Northwood Primary) in 2008 and now all 35 schools in the Borough have followed suit. To get the status, the schools had to show that there were committed to promoting healthy lifestyles, through transport to school, lessons, meals and playtimes. As well as looking at exercise and healthy eating, the schools have addressed emotional health through anti-bullying schemes and peer mentoring.

Darlington Children's Trust Update

Financial Support for Darlington Students

10. Young people have expressed concern about the changes to financial support with the end of the government Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme. The Children's Trust agreed at the August board meeting to join together to ensure Darlington young people are aware of the financial support available to them.
11. Students who plan to study at Darlington's Carmel College Sixth Form, Darlington College or Darlington's Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College can get financial support to help them through their studies. Each college has financial support schemes in place to help eligible students following the end of the government Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme.
12. Examples of support available include financial help with costs of educational visits, equipment and resources. Assistance is also available to students to support them travelling to their college.
13. Bursaries of £1,200 will also be guaranteed for students in care, care leavers, students in receipt of income support or students with disabilities who are in receipt of both Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance.
14. Darlington Children's Trust are advising students wishing to find out more about the financial schemes available at the three colleges should contact the college direct.

Local Safeguarding Children Board

15. For 2011-2012 the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has a Business Plan which contains 5 strategic objectives, this has been significantly streamlined compared to previous

plans. In order to meet the needs of the objectives a detailed 12 month work programme has been agreed by members. The Business Plan is available on the LSCB web-site www.darlington.gov.u/lscb

16. Within this plan Board members have also agreed to tackle the priority topic of 'neglect'. Due to it being the most significant reason for children to be made subject to protection plans. A multi-agency task and finish group has been established to formulate multi-agency guidance for practitioners and arrangements are being made for a multi-agency conference later this year.
17. In September 2010 the LSCB appointed an Independent Chair and in January 2011 two lay members, 'representing the community', were appointed to the Board. Initial feedback from Board members has indicated that these appointments have enhanced the Board and have added additional scrutiny and transparency.
18. The LSCB continually monitors the budget and available resources through routine reporting to the Board. In January 2011 the Board agreed a charging policy in relation to training for those agencies that don't financially contribute to the LSCB. This instigated additional income from some agencies who hadn't contributed to the Board previously.
19. Darlington's first Serious Case Review was published in March 2011, again further details are available on the web-site. Ofsted evaluated the review as 'good'. In addition the LSCB has undertaken a case review on two young people who were convicted of a serious criminal offence. Uniquely this review was undertaken with the support of an analyst from Durham Constabulary. The learning from both reviews has been disseminated across agencies and organisations.

Looked After Children

20. Ofsted Key Inspections under the Revised Framework for Inspections have taken place in two of Darlington's Children's Homes. The Ofsted rating for Harewood Hill Lodge is 'outstanding' and for Dunrobin is 'good'. Key Inspections for 2011 have yet to take place in the other two mainstream Children's Homes.
21. Educational Achievements for Looked After Children at Key Stage 4 resulted in 63% of those who undertook GCSE's obtaining at least five A to C grades. The results include several young people with A and B grades and one young person achieving six A* grades as well as two A grades.
22. The number of Children Looked After by the Local Authority was 197 (89 per 10,000 population) at 31 August 2011. This represents an increase of five young people since July 2011 when the number was 192 (87 per 10,000) and an increase of nine young people since March 2011 when the number was 188 (86 per 10,000).

Child Protection

23. As from 31 August 2011 there were 103 child protection plans, which is an increase of 21.19% on figures for last year at this time.

24. Breakdown of categories:

- 54 - neglect
- 26 - physical abuse
- 20 - emotional abuse
- 2 - sexual abuse
- 1 - sexual abuse and neglect

25. The figure for emotional abuse has risen from three (31 August 2010) to 20 – primarily as a result of domestic abuse incidents, together with substance misuse including alcohol.

Corporate Parenting Panel

26. On 19 September 2011, the Corporate Parenting Panel received Annual Reports from the teams providing services for Looked After Children. They include Children's Residential Services, Adoption, Fostering, Leaving Care and the Looked After Social Work team.

Peer Challenge

27. The Local Government Group undertook a Children's Services Safeguarding Peer Challenge in Darlington during July. The challenge team were invited to Darlington as a 'critical friend' exercise to aid service improvement and learning.

28. The report highlighted key strengths, including; a strong 'One Darlington' identity and vision owned by the Authority and its partners; high ambition for the children of Darlington; and strong political leadership for safeguarding together with investment in capacity and development.

The team found an openness to learning and improvement and a purposeful transformation programme.

29. Specific examples of strengths included:

- (a) improved attendance rates secondary schools;
- (b) substantial improvement in the adoption service;
- (c) parenting support for fathers;
- (d) good accommodation outcomes for children looked after.

30. The team also included areas for improvement and development – these include the need to 'sell' the good work and strengths that were found by the team; to review some of our existing groups eg Children's Trust, Corporate Parenting and Scrutiny to ensure they are focussed and add value.

31. An action plan will be developed to ensure the suggestions are taken forward.

Meetings

32. Since the last meeting of Council, I have:

- (a) Chaired the Executive Group Meeting and the Board of the Children's Trust.
- (b) Held weekly briefings with the Director and Assistant Directors of Children's Services.
- (c) Attended the Darlington Partnership Executive and Board Meetings.
- (d) Met with a young person who raised questions at the July Cabinet.
- (e) Visited the Open Arts Studio Project at the Arts Centre.
- (f) Chaired the Local Education Authority Governors Appointments Panel.
- (g) Attended the Children's and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.
- (h) Attended a meeting with GPs to discuss Children's Health Commissioning issues.
- (i) Attended the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- (j) Chaired the 16-25 Enquiry Group established by the Children's Trust.
- (k) Attended Cabinet.
- (l) Attended a public health symposium.
- (m) Attended a meeting of "Pure Drumming" youth music charity at the Coleridge Centre.
- (n) Attended a meeting of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board

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Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People