
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) Darlington Safeguarding – Position Statement

Cabinet received a report regarding Darlington's child protection system and agreed that regular updates on child safeguarding should be brought to Members' attention as the protection of children within Darlington is a key statutory responsibility of the Council. Cabinet also requested Member briefing sessions should be agreed as Members need information and understanding of the child protection processes and performance of services to ensure those responsibilities are fulfilled.

(b) Children's Services Annual Performance Assessment 2008

Cabinet received and noted an information report on the outcome of the Annual Performance Assessment of the Council's Children's Services for 2008, undertaken by Ofsted. Judgements are ranked from 1 to 4 (where 4 is the highest and 1 the lowest). The final judgement scores for Darlington's Annual Performance Assessment are as follows:

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded
Overall effectiveness of Children's Services	3
Being Healthy	4
Staying Safe	3
Enjoying and Achieving	2
Making a Positive Contribution	3
Achieving Economic Well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services	3

(c) Joint Area Review of Services for Children and Young People

Cabinet approved an Improvement Action Plan developed in response to the findings of the Joint Area Review of Services for Children and Young People in the Borough, which took place in Spring 2008. The grades from the findings of the Joint Area Review - which are graded as 4: outstanding; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate – are as follows:

	Local Services Overall
Safeguarding	3
Looked After Children	3
Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities	2
Service management	3
Capacity to improve	3

(d) Strategy for Young People's Services in Darlington 2009/12

Cabinet approved the Strategy for Young People's Services in Darlington 2009/12 which will allow for young people's services in the Borough to be developed and improved, with the Council working in partnership with a number of organisations.

(e) Alternative Provision Pilot Programme – Release of Capital Funding

Cabinet received a report regarding the Ruskin Mill Educational Trust's development of a pilot programme which will support the delivery of alternative education opportunities for a large number of 14-16 year olds in Darlington who may otherwise be at risk of missing out on education, training or employment opportunities in the future. Cabinet agreed that support be given to the Trust to develop this programme; that £1,750,000 of capital funding be released to undertake the agreed works; and that a Memorandum of Agreement will protect the Council's interest whilst also allowing maximum flexibility to the voluntary organisation.

2. Developments in Children's Services

(a) Officers from Children's Services provided Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with training on use of schools data.

(b) The School Condition Group met and carried out an interim review of all schools' classification in line with our agreed procedures and protocols.

(c) The 14 to 19 Trust considered and adopted a Partnership agreement.

(d) Children Looked After

Darlington Borough Council has 132 children and young people 'looked after' (at 31 January 2009), a slight increase on my last reported figure.

During January three young people ceased to be 'looked after' and seven children became 'looked after'. Three of these seven children were under 1 year, two children were aged between 1-2 years, and the other 2 aged over 11 years.

The majority of children are placed with foster carers. Darlington currently has 54 'fostering households', eight of which provide respite/short breaks only. There is an urgent need to increase this 'pool' of carers and during 2009 a fostering campaign will be launched.

(e) Adoption

Ofsted recently inspected our adoption panel and services and have verbally reported the services as satisfactory.

From 1st April 2009, Darlington will take on all the functions currently undertaken by DFW (Durham Family Welfare).

(f) Child Protection

There are currently 79 children in Darlington with a child protection plan – this continues the upward trend.

	<u>October 2008</u>	<u>December 2008</u>	<u>February 2009</u>
Children with a child protection plan	50	63	79

The increase reflects the rise in referrals during this time, and could result in an increase in 'looked after' numbers over the next months.

The increase in referrals is being monitored to ensure the service is able to respond in a timely and appropriate manner.

- (g) The Vibe Awards evening was held at a packed Civic Theatre on 28 January where over 400 young people received certificates for achievement in arts, sports, services to the community and for overcoming personal challenges and obstacles. Sponsors attended to present certificates and there were performances from individuals and groups on the theme of 'youth music'.
- (h) Positive Activities on Friday/Saturday. There is a full programme every Friday and Saturday night until the end of March. These include trips, events at the Arts and Dolphin Centre, football coaching, sports competitions, games competition, raves at Escapades and drop-in facilities. Statistics to the end of March indicated that 566 young people attended activities in November and December and 1353 attended activities in January and February.
- (i) Darlington was successful in obtaining funding in the region of £1m to enhance and develop play sites and equipment across the Borough. Further consultation is planned around this.
- (j) Attendance during the academic year 2007/2008 continued to improve compared to 2006/2007 with Darlington's overall attendance improving by 0.5%, this was divided into primary attendance maintaining the same level and a 1.2% improvement in secondary performance; these figures do not include the Eastbourne C of E Academy. Including the Academy our overall improvement is 0.8% with the secondary improvement standing at 1.7%. As far as Persistent Absentees are concerned the LA total for 2007/2008 was 3.2% (3.6% including the Academy) and for secondary schools 4.7% (5.4% with the Academy) this means that the LA are on track to meet the DCSF target of no more than 5% of secondary Persistent Absentees by 2011, this is now the only national indicator we have for school absence.

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

(a) Monday 12th January

I attended the Executive Group meeting of Darlington Partnership – in my capacity as Chair of the Children's Trust.

(b) Friday 16th January

I was pleased to officially open the 'Early Years Professional Status Conference' held at Middlesbrough Teaching and Learning Centre.

(c) Wednesday 21st January

I attended a meeting of the Darlington Partnership Board at Maidendale House.

(d) Friday 23rd January

I chaired the Children's Trust Board meeting.

I chaired a Local Authority School Governors Appointments Panel.

I later visited the Principal at Eastbourne Church of England Academy, and had a site tour of the new Academy buildings which are under construction.

(e) Wednesday 28th January

I was delighted to participate in this year's Darlington Vibe Awards, held at the Civic Theatre. This annual event recognises a range of talents and skills which our young people in the Borough have displayed in a variety of ways to benefit the community during 2008.

(f) Friday 13th February

I was accompanied today by two students from Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College.

I attended part of a professional development day on maths at the newly opened Dodmire School.

I met with the Head of Community Safety from Co Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service to discuss the engagement of young people in positive activities to reduce the incidence of arson related incidents.

(g) Saturday 14th February

I attended the launch of Darlington's new Parents Forum for parents and carers of disabled children which was held at the Arts Centre. On behalf of the Council I signed the Every Disabled Child Matters Charter also signed by the PCT.

(h) Tuesday 24th February

I attended a workshop event hosted by Children's Services on Section 10 of the Children Act in relation to commissioning services.

(i) Wednesday 25th February

I was pleased to officially open the Turnaround School along with the Director of Children's Services and to meet the children who are benefitting from this initiative.

I visited Hurworth Primary School where I met the School Council who gave me a presentation of what they like about school and what services they wish to see improved for their age group in the Borough.

I later visited Dodmire School to meet with the Deputy Headteacher and the School Council to hear views from the children.

(j) Monday 2nd March

I attended a meeting of Darlington Partnership Executive Group, in my capacity as Chair of the Children's Trust.

(k) Wednesday 4th March

I chaired the Spring term meeting of Local Authority school governors.

(l) Friday 6th March

I was accompanied today by two students from Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College.

I visited Hurworth School, Maths and Computing College to meet with the Deputy

Headteacher and the School Council. Members of the School Council gave me an interesting presentation on their views on services for young people in the Borough.

I later attended Redhall Primary School where again I met with the School Council members to hear from them what they like and dislike about school and what can be improved for them in the town.

(m) Wednesday 11th March

I attended the Darlington Partnership Board meeting at Maidendale House.

Councillor Chris McEwan
Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People