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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO**

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

**(a) Protection of Children In England Action Plan**

Cabinet noted the contents of the report which provided an update on the Laming Report, Government response and implications for safeguarding in Darlington. They agreed that regional work be supported to address the Action Plan recommendations and improve the child protection system, also that the prioritisation of Child Protection Services be supported.

2. Developments in Children's Services

**a) Children Looked After**

Currently there are 143 children and young people 'looked after' by Darlington Local Authority. This is the same figure as reported in June 2009.

The figure includes those in stable long term placements and a group where care is a short term provision either in a crisis or part of support to a family.

Monthly (on average) five children leave the LAC provision, either returning home or to extended family and a similar number enter the service.

There are 29 young people 'looked after' aged over 15 years.

Following the closure of Salters Lane Children's Home, additional staff have been moved to work with the Intensive Support Team. This Team works with families in crisis, to support them and avoid (if appropriate) an admission to care.

**b) Child Protection**

There are currently 54 children and young people where the risks are significant and a multi agency child protection plan is required. This is a decrease on the previous report to Council.

	<b>4 June 2009</b>	<b>24 August 2009</b>
Neglect	34	34
Physical Abuse	16	10
Emotional Abuse	3	4
Sexual Abuse	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>49</b>

This figure has increased over the past 2 years – 35 children were subject to a plan in summer 2005.

Monthly fluctuations can be due to family size e.g. sibling groups of four or five children, however the underlying trend is an increase in numbers.

During 2009, numbers of children and families referred to the service have continued at a high level – this increase appeared in November 2008 following ‘Baby Peter’ media attention.

The service is under pressure, due to volume of work and also lack of experienced social workers responding to job adverts. Work is currently in place with HR to look at how this can be addressed.

- c) The School Condition Group met on September 4th and carried out their annual review of all schools classification re level of intervention in line with the Councils agreed procedures and protocols.
- d) The Newly Qualified Teachers Celebration Event was held at Headlam Hall in late July.

e) **Capital Programme**

Work has continued over the summer holiday period on the Primary Capital Programme. Reid Street, Redhall and Gurney Pease Primary Schools have had extensive repairs and remodelling. It is pleasing to note that the school buildings were ready for pupils at the start of the new term. Planning and feasibility work is on-going at other schools scheduled for work between 2009 and 2011.

Work at Northwood Primary School, our Pathfinder Primary School rebuild project, is on schedule. The first phase of construction is now complete and building is watertight. Pupils, staff and parents are excited by the developments and looking forward to moving onto the new school.

The Authority has received £378,598 of capital funding to improve kitchens in primary schools. This is welcome news and the capital funds will complement improvements to schools planned under the Primary capital Programme.

St. Aidan's CE Academy opened in its new premises on Hunden's lane on 1 September 2009.

The final phase of refurbishment to Hummersknott School was completed on 11 September 2009.

The National College for school Leadership is offering a development programme to senior school leaders in the secondary phase, to improve their readiness and expertise for the transformation in learning expected from the Building Schools for the Future. Work continues to secure entry to Wave 7 of the national BSF programme.

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

- (a) In early September I hosted our termly briefing for Chairs of Governors as regards the content of LA papers which will be presented to Governing Bodies in the Autumn term 2009.
- (b) I also attended a conference arranged by Darlington's School Improvement and Development team on the new Ofsted framework for schools.
- (c) 21<sup>st</sup> July – I presented prizes to children at Crown Street Library
- (d) 22<sup>nd</sup> July – Gave a joint presentation with the Director of Children's Services to the LSP Board about young people in Darlington.
- (e) 24<sup>th</sup> July – Attended Play Strategy meeting at Groundwork.
- (f) 13<sup>th</sup> August – Met with the Head of the Youth Service to discuss future plans and the Summer programme.
- (g) 18<sup>th</sup> August – Hosted 'What's Going On?', an event celebrating the achievements of our Looked After Children.
- (h) 26<sup>th</sup> August – I held a meeting to discuss a new project to create a television channel for young people in Darlington.
- (i) 28<sup>th</sup> August – I attended the opening of a seating area designed and funded thanks to a group of young people from Red Hall.
- (j) During August I met with Officers from Children's Services to discuss test, teacher assessment and examination results in all Darlington's schools and settings. I was pleased to note that results relating to children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 have improved and that this years Key Stage 2 results place Darlington in the top 15 Local Authorities nationally and as the highest achieving LA in the North East. Darlington's Key Stage 2 result are now the most improved nationally for the period 2005-2009. Our GCSE examination results improved by 3.3% at 5A\* to C including English and Maths. These results are testament to the hard work of Darlington's teachers, parents, governors and young people.
- (k) 2<sup>nd</sup> September – I presented a summary of Darlington children's results from Early Years to GCSE to the LSP Executive.
- (l) 7<sup>th</sup> September – I attended a meeting of the Park East Community Partnership to discuss the future of the Community Centre.

- (m) 9<sup>th</sup> September – I attended a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.  
(n) 10<sup>th</sup> September – I attended Darlington’s Emotional Wellbeing event.

**Councillor Jenny Chapman**

**Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People**