
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) **Sex and Relationship Education Policy** – Cabinet noted that this policy contributes to several National Indicators and supports priorities within the Children and Young People’s Plan for Darlington. Cabinet agreed that the policy be adopted.
 - (b) **Kitchen Funding and the Release of Capital** – this report requested Cabinet to agree to the release of capital funds in relation to the grant received from the Department for Children Schools and Families for the refurbishment and improvement of kitchen and dining facilities in twelve Darlington primary schools. Cabinet agreed to release the funding.

2. Developments in Children’s Services
 - (a) The termly briefing for Chairs of Governors hosted by the portfolio holder was again well attended.
 - (b) The downward trend in fixed Term Exclusions from Darlington Schools has continued in the last academic year.
 - (c) **Child Protection**

Darlington currently has 47 children and young people with a child protection plan. Neglect remains the main criteria for development of a plan:-

19th October 2009

Neglect – 32
Physical Abuse – 10
Emotional Abuse – 4
Sexual Abuse – 1

The majority of neglect cases have a parental substance misuse (including alcohol) factor which affects the care of their children.

A new Family Intervention Team has been established to focus on this group. The Team has staff from Health, Children’s Services and Adult Services and will work closely with the Police Vulnerability Unit.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board held a development day on Monday 16th November. The items discussed included the Safeguarding Business Plan, the government’s response to Lord Laming’s recommendations about safeguarding and the need for appropriate funding for the Safeguarding Board.

(d) Children Looked After

There are currently 136 young people 'looked after' by Darlington Borough Council.

117 young people are looked after by Darlington 'in house' provision – fostering and residential. 19 are placed in 'external' provision.

The age breakdown is:-

0-5yrs (inclusive)	– 32
6-11yrs (inclusive)	– 44
12-14yrs (inclusive)	– 28
15-18yrs (inclusive)	– 32

Young people 'Looked After' have formed the 'Darlo Care Crew' and are currently meeting staff and managers regarding service development and quality. The young people have also been extensively involved in monitoring residential provision and annually produce a report on the standards. Several changes have been made as a result of these annual reports and the current 'Darlo Care Crew' work is also rightly, holding staff and managers to account for the standard of provision.

(e) Children Leaving care

The leaving care team continues to develop and improve accommodation choice for care leavers. In partnership with Barnardos, the supported lodging scheme currently have ten supported lodgings providers assessed to offer lodgings to young people, who may be ready to commence the long process to full independence. The provision has gone from strength to strength despite the national trends.

The DCSF 'Care 2 Work' programme has resulted in progress in all wave one authorities. Darlington has signed up to wave two, and with the area development worker from Catch 22, has completed the mapping exercise and is awaiting the work plan, to roll out the Care 2 Work programme, with a corporate parenting focus.

The young care leavers are also involved in the Positive Activities for Young People youth programme and the first activity will be walking the Pennine Way at the beginning of November.

(f) Play

Our commissioning of play provision has been highlighted as an example of good practice by the DCSF.

Playbuilder – all 11 year 1 projects are on track and extensive consultation is occurring. West Park, our flagship development, has planning permission.

(g) Youth Service

A series of activities were held throughout Local Democracy Week including sessions in schools and colleges, I'm a Councillor Get Me Out of Here, and Tea with the MYP. Once again the, I'm a Councillor, event was exceptionally well supported by young people across the borough.

The mystery shopping project in conjunction with Transport Policy and Arriva was completed, enabling young people to assess travel by public transport and make suggestions for

improvement. Sadiq Khan, a transport minister met Darlington's Youth MP on the 19th of November to discuss the findings.

The 30th of October saw the launch of Friday/Saturday night provision via an evening of activities at the Dolphin Centre.

(f) Children's Centre

The work of Skerne Park Children's Centre was highlighted in a national magazine article as a case study from a parent's view as part of DCSF's recent national marketing campaign.

(g) Darlington Children's Trust

Darlington's Children's Trust held their annual conference on November 25th.

In October I supported Darlington Children's Trust in my remit as Chair of Children's Trust Board with an aspects survey conducted by HMI Inspectors from DCSF around good practise for Children's Trusts. Following the success of the October visit Darlington has been selected for 2 further visits on 3rd & 4th November and 11th December to enable HMI Inspectors to develop a case study which will be published in a best practise guidance document in May 2010. The November visit focuses on a Safer School Partnership model piloted originally piloted during the first LAA and the December visit will focus on implementation of Common Assessment Framework.

(h) Contact Point

Children's Services have achieved accreditation for ContactPoint.

(i) Persistent Absentees

The number of persistent absentees continues to decline although we have four schools identified as targeted schools St Aiden's, Longfield, Haughton and Branksome. They have reduced the criteria to schools having no more than 6.1% of their population as persistent absentees - obviously trying to bring them in line with the target of 5% for 2011. As an authority we are on track to meet that target but there is an issue for those named schools.

(h) e-Safety

Following the tragic death of Ashleigh Hall I have worked with Councillor Hughes and the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee, with officers and with the Northern Echo to promote internet safety and will continue to work with all partners to do what ever we can to prevent such a situation happening again.

Councillor Jenny Chapman
Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People