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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) **Children And Young People Scrutiny Committee – Internet Safety Task And Finish Review Group** – A report was presented requesting that consideration be given to the findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, following a Task and Finish Review on Internet Safety. Following discussion it was resolved that recommendations of the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee, be endorsed.
  - (b) **Physical Contact And The Use Of Physical Intervention In Educational Settings – Guidance** - a report was submitted requesting that consideration be given to the Guidance on Physical Contact and the Use of Physical Intervention in Educational Settings in order to assist School Governing Bodies in setting policies. Cabinet resolved that the guidance be endorsed as an exemplar policy as a basis for School governing Bodies to develop their own policies.
  - (c) **Safeguarding – Children’s Social Work Services** – a report, requesting that consideration be given to the identified action taken to address pressures within the Children’s Social Work Service and the support provided by Legal Services, was submitted. Following discussion it was resolved that the identified action to address pressures be supported and that additional resources of £229,097, increasing per annum, which have been built into the Medium Term Financial Plan, were noted as this proposal will ensure that the minimum requirements need to ensure an acceptable level of caseloads and practise supervision is in place.
  - (d) **Play Builder Capital Grant 2009/11 – Release** – to enable the improvement and development of 22 Play Builder sites across the Borough, a report, requesting the release of external funding received from the Department of Children Schools and Families to develop the Play Builder sites over the next two years be released, was submitted. It was resolved that £1,128,558 was released.
  - (e) **Skerne Park Community Centre Security Improvements** – a report was submitted requesting the release of £35,500 of Community Cash back capital grant to make external improvements to Skerne Park community Centre to tackle youth related Anti Social Behaviour incidents. It was resolved that the funding was released.
  - (f) **Comprehensive Area Assessment – Annual Rating Of Council Children’s Services For 2009** – a report was submitted informing members of the outcome of the new annual rating of Children’s Services. The contents of the report were noted.
2. Developments in Children’s Services
  - (a) Councillor Chapman chaired/attended a half day conference on E safety organised by Darlington Partnership in cooperation with John Steel of Children’s Services.

**(b) Children Looked After**

The current number of children ‘looked after’ by Darlington Borough Council is 142 (24/12/09). This continues the stable trend during 2009:-

December 09	142
August 09	143
December 08	129

The emerging picture is of two pressures – children under 2 yrs (23) and young people with multiple problems requiring specialist care. Those in long term care are maintaining stability – 75% of those in placements of at least 1 yr continue in that placement as planned. This cohort is placed mainly in foster care and statistically is most likely to achieve educationally and achieve social and emotional stability. However, a small number of young people have complex issues which need experienced specialist care. This can be difficult to identify and placement ‘break-downs’ can be more frequent, compounding the young persons problems.

Children’s Services are working closely with Health and other local authorities to develop local joint-funded provision for this group.

Darlington also has a number of private childrens’ homes and independent foster carers. Children are placed here by other local authorities. Approximately 70-80 children are placed in this accommodation by other authorities. This has resulted in a pressure on local health services, the Darlington Youth Offending Team and local schools who respond to the issues presented.

**(c) Child Protection**

The figures for December show a continuing increase in these children with a child protection plan. The table below show this.

December 09	-	76
October 09	-	47
August 09	-	49
June 09	-	54
December 08	-	63
November 07	-	38

Monthly variation can be due to a large sibling group being given a child protection plan, however the underlying trend is an increase.

December figures show 25 children under 1 (including 5 unborn) subject to child protection plans. This is the age group where there is most increase. The need for the plan is due to risk to the baby when born or immediately after birth. The risk is assessed by involved agencies and a plan created with parents to protect the baby. The most significant risks are – domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse, chaotic lifestyle leading to neglect.

- (d) Darlington Children's Trust held their annual conference on 27th November - the theme of the conference was Integrated Working. Locally work is continuing to develop early intervention and prevention services in partnership with the PCT. The Integrated management structure is almost fully appointed and the key priorities for the team will develop a core predictable service offer across the borough across the 0-19 age range.
- (e) **Building schools for the Future**  
On 30 November 2009 Partnerships for Schools confirmed that the Council's bid for early entry to the national BSF programme had been successful. The capital resource that will be forthcoming means that it will be possible substantially to refurbish or replace Longfield, Branksome and Hurworth secondary schools. It will also be possible to update ICT infrastructure across the Authority's secondary schools, helping transform learning and teaching, and driving up standards.
- (f) I am pleased to note that the senior leadership teams and some Governors in the three schools have been able to participate in a specialist programme, designed by the National College of School Leadership on getting the best in learning outcomes from the tremendous opportunity involvement in the BSF programme provides.
- (g) **Youth Service Activity**  
UK Youth Parliament  
Emily Christer and Nick Barnard attended the first sitting of the UKYP at the House of Commons on 30 October. Over 300 young MPs from across the country attended to debate a wide range of issues including lowering the voting age, youth crime, public transport for young people, jobs and the economy, university fees. The event attracted a wide range of local and national media coverage.  
In November Emily hosted a visit from the Transport Minister Sadiq Khan who was looking at the Borough's sustainable transport initiatives as well as hearing the views of young people - both Emily and the group of young people who conducted a mystery passenger research exercise on public buses over the summer holidays. Young people are continuing their work and are fully involved in consultation on the Local Transport Plan.  
9 young people are registered as candidates for the forthcoming UKYP elections. Voting will take place in all schools and colleges over the week beginning 22 February.
- (h) **Vibe Awards**  
The expanded Vibe Awards - new categories and over two evenings will take place on the 2 and 3 February at the Civic theatre. Over 525 young people have been nominated for awards - another new record number.
- (i) **Youth Crime Action Plan**  
Through YCAP funding 8 new part-time staff are working alongside experienced full-time staff to engage and support young people on Friday and Saturday evenings. There is a very close working relationship with police and Community Safety colleagues to dovetail deployment and activity with Operation Stay Safe and recognised 'hot spot' areas. A revised programme of specific Friday and Saturday night activity is planned for January-March (including a joint initiative with Police in Red hall on 15 January) and building on successful activities including the 'Mish Mash' event at the Dolphin centre in October and the 'Girls Night In' at Branksome Youth Centre in December.

**Councillor Cyndi Hughes**  
**Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People**