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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, no reports have been received by Cabinet.
2. Developments in Children's Services
  - (a) **VIBE Awards**

The Youth service held a very successful VIBE awards evenings at Darlington Civic theatre. This year over 500 young people were nominated for an award so the event was held over two nights to a full theatre.
  - (b) **Early Intervention & Prevention**

The Early Intervention and Prevention integrated team has now completed appointments to the management team. The three health leads have now been appointed by the PCT.
  - (c) **Strategies for Change**

Branksome, Hurworth and Longfield schools are continuing to work very closely with the Authority over the production of their Strategies for Change, which outline the transformation of learning styles and curriculum developments they will make, following their inclusion in the Building Schools for the Future programme. Further discussions have taken place with all secondary headteachers to explore the learning benefits which could accrue from a closer partnership for the provision of ICT.
  - (d) **School Admissions**

Offers of secondary school places for pupils joining Year 7 in September 2010 were posted to parents on Monday, 1 March – National Offer Day. Due to the work undertaken by the Admissions Team and the Choice Adviser, very few families failed to express a preference for a secondary place, with more families than ever before returning their application forms and making expressions of preference for their child's school. A report on the Admissions Round will be presented to the Local Admissions Forum in due course but early indications show that more than 90% of parents have been allocated their first preference, a substantial improvement on last year's performance and an indication of rising public confidence in all of Darlington's schools.
  - (e) **Children Looked After**

On 31<sup>st</sup> January there were 150 children and young people 'looked after' by Darlington Borough Council. Thirty-five of this group were aged over 15yrs – the majority are aged under 8yrs. This is not a static group of children – during January, 7 children ceased being 'looked after' and 14 children became 'looked after'. This latter group contained two sibling groups of 3 children.

The figure is an increase from December 2009 (142) and reflects the upward trend since December 2008 (129). 'In-house' provision for children and young people is under pressure and currently foster placements from the Independent sector are being purchased for capacity

reasons. There is currently one young person in secure accommodation.

**(f) Child Protection**

There were 79 children with a Child Protection Plan on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010 – 47 of those plans related to neglect. In December 2009 the number was 76, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008 was 63.

The majority of these cases related to the younger age group. The Local Safeguarding Children Board receives regular data regarding the child process and is currently undertaking a Serious Case Review on a small child. This is independently overseen in accordance with ne Government guidelines.

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