
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

Purpose of Report

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Children and Young People Portfolio :-

Children Looked After

2. The number of children Looked After Through Care by Darlington Borough Council was 203 on 30 November 2012. This number represents two fewer children than at 30 September 2012.
3. The merger of the Looked After Through Care Social Work Team and the Leaving Care Team has taken place. A team manager for the newly merged team has been in post since 1 December 2012.
4. Performance ratings for Looked After Through Care Children Services remain good in accordance with the Performance Assessment Framework.

Child Protection

5. At the end of October 2012, 101 children were subject to child protection plans. Of these, 70 children were placed under the category of neglect, 17 under emotional abuse, ten under physical abuse, and four children as a result of sexual abuse. When aggregating the data on age groups, 42 per cent of all children subject to a child protection plan are aged between 0-4 years.
6. Although domestic abuse continues to be a significant risk factor within child protection, when risk factors are collated, parental drug and or alcohol use now exceeds domestic abuse when looking at the reason why children were made subject to a plan.
7. The Review and Development Unit have been working to produce a DVD to detail 'the child's journey' in Darlington when they become subject to a child protection plan, or looked after. This will be produced through 'The Box' who will animate individual stories to bring this to life. It is anticipated that this will be used to improve services delivered to children, but also as a training tool for social workers and other professionals. This will be completed in the New Year.
8. Feedback from parents, carers and professionals was sought over the months of November and December on their views of child protection conferences. These responses are currently being collated.

Youth Offending Service

9. Darlington Youth Offending Service (YOS) was recently inspected by HMIP as part of a new programme of inspection. The inspection was conducted 26 to 28 November. The purpose of the Short Quality Screening (SQS) was to assess the quality and effectiveness of casework with children and young people who have offended at the start of any order.
10. In summary, the Inspectors indicated "We saw some very competent work in most areas, including case managers who were really keen and creative".
11. Darlington YOS's performance was assessed as good or better in 3 of the key performance areas and the inspectors commented that we should review the level of detail and information that we include in risk assessments of young people known to the YOS; this is the section that the YOS will focus on in terms of further improvement of practise. There will be a post inspection improvement plan to support this work.
12. Darlington YOS is the fourth YOS nationally (out of 152 YOS's) to go through this inspection process and of the 4, Darlington has achieved the highest ratings.

Darlington Children and Young People Collective Update

13. Students from Darlington College designed and framed the handprint collage that all partners helped create at the launch of the Children and Young People Collective in October. I met with the students at the College where they presented me with the framed collage.
14. The Children and Young People Collective has met 4 times and the sessions are themed to enable all partners to look closely at an area of work and how that will impact on children and young people in Darlington. Examples of areas that have been already considered by the Children and Young People Collective have been young people not in education, employment or training, national health changes and new projects such as Troubled Families, Family Nurse Partnership and High Impact Households which are all being delivered in Darlington.
15. The Children and Young People Collective, Darlington Safeguarding Children's Board and Safeguarding Adult's Board have all agreed to work together to produce joint communications from all three boards and a partner newsletter has been recently developed which has progressed this. The Children and Young People Collective communicates with the community through the Darlington Partnership new public website and Facebook page. Young People are kept up to date about the Children and Young People Collective through the 'CLICK TO DO' Facebook page.

Corporate Parenting Panel

16. A Corporate Parenting Panel was held on 14 December 2012. The Panel "theme" was Family Placement, and covered a range of topics generating discussion. These included the Government's Action Plan for Adoption; Independent Fostering

Agencies; Performance Information and the 'Darlo Care Crew' Young People's Group. The Darlington Foster Carers' Association was represented by Helen Clyde, who gave a presentation on how the Association has developed and its plans for the future.

Academy Schools

17. On 1 December, Dodmire Primary School converted to an Academy sponsored by The Longfield Academy Trust. The primary school has also been renamed and is now known as The Rydal Academy.
18. The conversion process continues for Northwood Primary School and also for Skerne Park Primary School to become an Academy sponsored by Hummersknott Academy, with a proposed conversion date of 1 February 2013.
19. Formal notification has also been received from The Secretary of State for Education to confirm approval has been given for Cockerton CE VA Primary School and St Augustine's RC VA Primary School to become Academy schools. These two conversions have been proposed for 1 April 2013.

Meetings

20. Since the last meeting of Council, I have:
 - (a) Darlington Safeguarding Children's Board;
 - (b) Addressed the Young Carer's Conference;
 - (c) Celebration at Skerne Park School;
 - (d) Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board;
 - (e) Darlington Strategic Partnership Board;
 - (f) Chaired the Children and Young People Collective;
 - (g) Corporate Parenting Panel;
 - (h) Attended a charity evening of young people performances at the Forum;
 - (i) Darlington Partnership Executive;
 - (j) Foundation for Jobs Event at Teesside University;
 - (k) Briefings with the Director of People;
 - (l) Darlington Assembly; and
 - (m) Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration at the Dolphin Centre.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Children and Young People Portfolio