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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO**

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

**Schools**

2. The Council approved the School Organisation Plan for 2013-2017 and for the release of Basic Need capital funding to support the creation of additional primary school places across the Borough. The School Organisation Plan aims to provide an overview of current supply and future demand of pupil places across Darlington and in consultation with schools the Plan identifies the priorities that will be considered when planning future provision and these have been used to identify a range of expansion projects in five primary schools to meet the need for additional school places. Approval of these projects will provide an additional 385 places across the primary phase of education.
3. We have approved the Local Authority's Admission Policy for the 2014/2015 academic year and the co-ordinated arrangements for all schools in the Borough. The Local Authority is required to annually review the admission criteria used to allocate places for maintained primary and secondary schools in Darlington and consultation has been undertaken in line with the School Admission Code. The co-ordinated Admissions Scheme was forwarded to the Department for Education before 15 April 2013.
4. On 1 April, Holy Family RC VA Primary School and St Augustine's RC VA Primary School converted to Academy status.
5. On 1 March, children applying to start secondary school in September 2013 were informed of their allocation of a school place. 96 per cent of applications were successful in being allocated one of their preferences, this is an increase from 95 per cent in the previous year. Unfortunately, successful applications for a first preference was down to 86 per cent (92 per cent in the previous year). A breakdown of the figures shows that the change in statistics is because one particular secondary school received a record number of first preference applications, with over 200 applications being made in excess of the total number of places available.
6. On 16 April, children applying to start primary school in September 2013 were informed of their allocation of a school place. 96 per cent of applications were successful in being allocated one of their preferences. This is an increase from 85

per cent in the previous year. 87 per cent of applications were successful in obtaining their first preference (94 per cent in the previous year).

### **School Organisation Plan**

7. In March 2013, Cabinet approved the School Organisation Plan and released capital funding to provide additional school places to meet the increasing demand across our primary schools. Discussions with Skerne Park Academy and St Teresa's VA RC Primary School have enabled additional places to be made available from September 2013, a year earlier than originally planned.
8. Discussions are underway with the other schools proposed for expansion, particularly St George's Academy as the number of places currently available within the school were sufficient to meet the demand of all children who expressed the school as their first preference. This means that all children living in the village or within the parish boundary were able to gain a place at the school within the current number of places already available. It is likely that proposals for this school may be put on hold pending the outcome of next years admissions round but discussions are on-going with the Head teacher and Governors.

### **Children Looked After**

9. The number of children Looked After by Darlington Borough Council was 206 on 31 March 2013. This figure represents eight more children than at 31 January 2013.
10. Ofsted Interim Inspections have now taken place in the Council's three mainstream Children's Homes (Dunrobin, Eldon and Gilling) with ratings of "good progress" since the previous Key Inspections, when they received an overall rating of "good". An Ofsted Interim Inspection has taken place at the Short Break Centre for Disabled Children (Harewood Hill Lodge) with a rating of "good progress" since the previous Key Inspection, when they received an overall rating of "outstanding".

### **Child Protection**

11. At the end of February 2013, 77 children were subject to a child protection plan. This is a significant reduction from December 2012 when 107 children were subject to plans. 71 per cent placed under the category of neglect, 14 per cent under emotional abuse, 14 per cent under physical abuse, and 1 per cent as a result of sexual abuse. When aggregating the data on age groups, 53 per cent of all children subject to a child protection plan are aged between 0-5 years, with 34 per cent aged between 5-10 and 13 per cent aged between 10-15. Between January and February, 35 children were removed from plans.
12. Domestic abuse continues to be a significant risk factor within child protection. However, more recently parental drug and alcohol misuse and parental mental health have been identified as significant risk factors leading to children being made subject of a plan.

13. In March 2013, the first stage of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) commenced. This initial phase has focused upon bringing together Children's Social Care and the Police to be co-located. The initial feedback from this has been very positive, and practitioners have reported a significant improvement in timely information sharing to safeguard children. The next phase will be for Adult Social Care to work to join the MASH and then health professionals.

### **Children and Young People Collective**

14. Darlington's Children and Young People Collective met with Darlington Healthwatch to discuss how we will co-ordinate engagement activity with children and young people in the Borough. The Collective has agreed to develop a framework for engagement with Darlington Healthwatch and to ensure all partners of the Collective work with Healthwatch to make sure this works well in the area.

### **Meetings**

15. Since the last meeting of Council, I have:-
- (a) Addressed the Foster carer drop-in session at McNay Street Children's Centre;
  - (b) Met with visiting French civil servants to discuss children's services and partnership working;
  - (c) Attended the Darlington Partnership Executive;
  - (d) Met with PC Liam Robertson to discuss issues affecting young people;
  - (e) Met with representatives of Healthwatch about how the Children & Young People Collective can work with them;
  - (f) Met on a number of occasions with the Director of People and officers from Children's Services;
  - (g) Attended a Darlington Head Teacher's conference;
  - (h) Chaired the Children and Young People Collective;
  - (i) Attended the Children and Young People scrutiny committee;
  - (j) Attended the Schools Forum; and
  - (k) Visited the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

**Councillor Cyndi Hughes**  
**Children and Young People Portfolio**