

SECTION 1

A TRANSFORMATIONAL OVERVIEW

1.1. Context and Vision

What Darlington is Like

Darlington is situated in the North East of England and forms part of Tees Valley sub-region, which, as a whole, comprises five unitary authorities and has a population of around 650,000 people. Darlington Borough is a compact area of some 76.2 square miles, comprising the town of Darlington and a number of surrounding villages. The Borough has a population of 99,344 people living in 45,000 households. 2.1% of the population come from BME backgrounds. Almost 90% of the population live in the urban area.

The Borough retains its market town character and functions as a sub regional centre for employment, shopping and culture. The town has a wide catchment area with over a million people living within 20 miles of the town centre, attracting people from neighbouring North Yorkshire, South Durham and Teesdale.

About three quarters of the working population of the Borough have jobs based in Darlington. Employment has shown an overall increase in recent years. Almost 45,000 work in the Borough each weekday in over 2,800 businesses. There has also been a significant change in the structure of the Darlington economy. Employment in manufacturing has declined dramatically, but in contrast, the service sector has grown strongly and service sector jobs now account for over 80% of jobs in Darlington. Like all other areas of the country, firms are affected by the credit crunch and there is currently an increase in the number of adults claiming unemployment benefit.

The Borough has a strong housing market, especially the West End of the town and many of the villages, and is a popular location for new homebuyers. The area has an outstanding and entrepreneurial college of further and higher education offering a wide range of high quality learning opportunities. The town's Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College is recognised as one of the top performing sixth form colleges in the country. Many of the area's other services, in particular primary health care, are co-terminus with the unitary Borough Council which makes for effective joint planning and delivery of high quality services.

Darlington is ranked as the 95th most deprived local authority and was not eligible for regeneration funding. Approximately 19.1% of children live in household dependant on benefits and the Council is carefully monitoring the effects of the current economic down-turn as regards this. There are some significant inequalities in the Borough, for example, there is a 13 year difference in life expectancy between different wards in the authority.

At the community level, Darlington has a strong voluntary sector encompassing over 500 voluntary and community groups which involves over 10,000 volunteers contributing to the building of a strong and caring community.

Recent Progress with Children at the Heart

Darlington's spirit of innovation, ambition and enterprise quite literally changed the world before through railways, bridge building and heavy engineering and the same spirit lives on in the partnerships within the Borough. The Darlington Local Strategic Partnership has agreed a clear programme for improving prosperity, raising educational standards, promoting safer and healthier communities and promoting sustainable living. Within the broader Tees Valley city region, the authority is part of an innovative multi-area agreement which will play a significant role in regenerating disadvantaged communities. The existing Darlington Gateway strategy has already brought 2,000 new jobs into the Borough and funding and land has been provided to open a University campus in the Borough. The local area agreement has prioritised participation in learning, qualifications achieved and the engagement of communities in decision making.

Darlington Borough Council is a 4* local authority, improving strongly. In Children's Services, performance at all Key Stages is in line with national averages and on an improving trend, but has not yet made the step change required to achieve attainment targets set out in the national Children's Plan. The authority has prioritised educational attainment in each of its corporate plans and evidence of this commitment and of stakeholder engagement was the agreement in 2006 to develop a pilot Local Area Agreement which was wholly focused on improving outcomes for children and young people. Further evidence is shown by the fact that by 2009, the local authority will have replaced or significantly remodelled 14 out of 40 schools over an eight year period.

The vision for education and children's services in the Borough is based on the following priorities agreed by all partners:

- Addressing disparities in attainment by both raising the performance, attainment and achievement bar and by narrowing the gap
- Ensuring swift and easy access to support services
- Easing transition between settings and phases
- Ensuring that people leaving education do so with the skills required to become successful employees or entrepreneurs
- Engaging more with employers to improve the skills level of the workforce as a whole
- Providing high quality and sustainable learning facilities for all
- Supporting people to develop aspirations and engaging parents more in decision making in teaching and learning
- Create easy access to sport and leisure
- Promote emotional health and well being

We want to use the opportunities offered through Building Schools for the Future to move forward on these priorities, transforming educational experiences for all young people as they move to work, training and challenges as young adults.

Secondary Schools in Darlington

There are six secondary schools in the local authority as well as an Academy. Hurworth School, Maths & Computing College is a Foundation School. Carmel

RC College is Voluntary Aided. Branksome School, Haughton Community School, which is in a hard federation with a special school and a primary school, Hummersknott Language College and Longfield School are Community Schools. There is one all age special school and two registered pupil referral units. All schools have specialist status. Branksome will become a specialist science college from September 2009.

GCSE results have improved. In 2008, Darlington achieved 69.5% of students gaining 5 GCSEs at grade A*-C and 47.7% gaining five passes at grade C or above, including English and Mathematics. (These figures include the results of students at the Eastbourne CE Academy) The increase in value added scores places Darlington at the top of the national performance tables. Attendance rates in Darlington schools have improved dramatically and Darlington is ranked first in the country for increasing school attendance rates. Exclusions from schools have been halved.

The Phoenix Centre, the town's pupil referral unit, has come out of Special Measures. Its management committee includes all of the secondary Headteachers and there is a commitment to keeping children in education and encouraging participation and achievement. We are proud of a recently formed partnership with the Ruskin Mill Trust, which will make it possible for some of the Authority's most vulnerable children to receive continued education and accreditation. Work is under way to register a second unit, the better to provide education and training for vulnerable and disengaged pupils.

There are some groups of pupils in Darlington who are not currently able to make the most of educational opportunities as they currently stand. Work is being carried out specifically to address the needs of those who have learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), those who are not in education employment or training (NEET) and young offenders. Partnership working with an independent sector provider has been entered into to help to address some of the identified concerns.

Educational Challenges

BSF partners will concentrate on raising standards in all schools to drive down the inequalities in performance and to make a positive drive for aspiration with all students. Our BSF strategy will encourage personalized learning and use to the full information and communications technology. In order to secure sustainable leadership, we have worked with the National College of School Leadership and the University of Teesside to establish a Darlington Leadership College. This delivers an annual programme of support and development to all staff at all levels of entry into the profession and leadership responsibility.

Through the strategy of schools@onedarlington we will ensure that lesson quality across all the Borough's schools reflects best practice and that schools with specialisms and expertise are encouraged and expected to share their working with partner establishments. schools@onedarlington is made up of all of the Borough's schools and operates along the principles of the co-operative movement. Funding for school improvement will be channeled through this body to facilitate the collaborative approach. The approach is viable because the

authority is small and knowledge of the 40 schools is high and the ability to share expertise is manageable.

While improving the quality of secondary education, we are aware of the need to embed improvements in primary practice and of the need to ensure smooth transition between school phases. Our BSF strategy will be informed by our knowledge of school performance.

We know that in 2008, contextual value added scores for individual schools from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 was below a 1000 for only one LA school, with all six LA schools and the academy showing an improvement. Darlington's over all improvement in Key stage 2 - 4 CVA scores was the highest in England.

From Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 contextual value added in 2008 was negative for four schools and significantly negative for two;

From Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 contextual value added was negative for three schools and positive for four. Of those two were significantly negative and two were significantly positive.

Additionally, three schools' performance was below the 30% floor target for 5A* to C including English and Maths in 2007. However in 2008 one school became the eighth most improved school nationally increasing its percentage of 5A* to C grades (including English and Mathematics) from 29.3% in 2007 to 48.9%, thereby moving out of the national challenge focus. One school remains part of the National Challenge. The third is an Academy and therefore not part of the Challenge.

1.2 Choice, Diversity and Access

Maintaining Provision and Expanding Diversity

Darlington local authority is fully committed to supporting diversity of provision and meeting parental preferences. The authority already has an Academy, a Foundation school and a voluntary aided school in the secondary sector. All schools work within the family of schools to support each other and to enhance the well-being of their communities. They do this through their commitment to schools@onedarlington. The local authority supports increased engagement from partners in improving educational standards across the Borough and supports the strengthening of self-governance of schools.

The demographics of the area are well served by schools in their current locations. Hurworth School is in a rural location, serving smaller, dispersed communities as well as part of the deprived urban fringe. It has the ambition to provide extended services and easy access to provision for the communities it works with. Branksome serves a very deprived community and the development of community facilities through BSF would be central to the regeneration and sustainability of the community infrastructure. Longfield is the school of choice for the northern part of the Borough and has the site most easily developed to deliver the extensive community sports facilities expected of a specialist sports college. The impact of parental preference and of local demographics indicate

that there needs to be a small reduction in surplus places at Branksome and this is fully supported by the school.

The BSF programme will allow us significantly to improve how schools work together, how they influence each-other and how they use personalization to meet pupil needs. Building Schools for the Future gives us the opportunity to innovate, to create new learning environments and to provide seven schools of choice. BSF is essential to the introduction of the diploma programme in Darlington. All routes to success for learners would be valued and gaps in provision for disabled young people and for those with complex needs would be addressed. Parents will be able to choose between seven schools that are very different in character and governance, and make the best match with their aspirations and values for their children. Our home to school transport policy is more generous than the statutory requirement, providing free transport to any pupil who lives more than two miles away from their local school.

Meeting the Needs of a Diverse Community

The Sustainable Community Strategy, *One Darlington Perfectly Placed*, introduces a Darlington-wide commitment to overcoming barriers to educational achievement, through tackling poverty, disparity in performance across settings and groups and supporting school leadership. The strategy also includes improving transitions, engaging more with parents so that they take more responsibility for their children and delivering more services earlier in order to prevent difficulties from occurring or to minimize the impact of difficulties.

Although there is a strong sense of community in the Borough, there are also some significant differences in quality of life. There is a 13 year difference in life expectancy between our most advantaged and disadvantaged wards. We have used a deprivation review of the Dedicated Schools Grant to target money effectively at schools educating children living with higher levels of disadvantage and we are narrowing the gap in schools' performance.

Darlington has an impressive track record of ensuring that capital schemes support community development and regeneration. Firthmoor estate, for example, has seen the demolition of some poor quality social housing, their replacement with private housing, community ownership of land, a new primary school, an Academy, easy access to major employers and a community owned centre. BSF partners will demonstrate the same commitment to transforming the communities they serve.

Providing a High Quality School Place for Every Pupil

At present the seven secondary schools in Darlington reflect the diversity of its population in terms of aspiration, achievement, healthy lifestyles and experiences – reflecting the disparity in outcomes between the more affluent communities and the others as shown in the Sustainable Community Strategy. We will use the opportunities offered by BSF to 'raise the bar' and to continue to 'narrow the gap' in performance so that every school is a school of choice. We are proud of our record in meeting parental expectations and choice for admissions, with over 86% of children receiving their highest ranked preference in the 2008 admissions round. 93.7% of Young People received one of their three highest ranked

preferences. Currently we have four schools which are oversubscribed with 4% surplus capacity overall in the secondary sector. Our success in meeting parental choice derives from a strong partnership with our schools and other stakeholder Admissions Authorities.

We review our admissions policy annually and have made great progress as regards common transition from KS2 to 3. A workshop for all key stakeholders took place in November 2007 to consider the current policy in relation to transition from primary to secondary education in Darlington and to consider and discuss a range of possible options for further development. The Transition Action Group TAG made further recommendations for change in December 2008, and these will be implemented across the Borough for pupils joining the secondary phase in September 2009.

Our strategy, for BSF, will further expand choice and diversity and improve access to high quality, high performing learning centres but will also build on and develop a key strength of current provision, a well developed partnership approach towards secondary school improvement to build well educated communities.

Our plans for transforming secondary education will provide additionality through raising school standards in all of our secondary schools, our special school, our Pupil Referral Units, the Academy and the colleges. Using an enhanced ICT strategy enabled by BSF we will:

- Place schools at the leading edge of schools@onedarlington;
- Develop our strategic approach to specialisms in schools and how these can influence learners across the Borough
- Transform our approach to teaching and learning by using innovative and flexible classroom design to create a quality climate for learning
- Build on personalised learning and ICT projects and developing pedagogy, using schools@onedarlington as the facilitator
- Support self evaluation to achieve the highest standards of leadership, management and quality of education.

The local authority is a commissioner of school places and seeks to ensure that all provision is of a high quality. If a school causes concern as a result of under-performance, the Authority provides urgent intervention and co-ordination of support. Should this intervention not result in rapid progress, the Authority will use its formal powers of intervention, in line with the DCSF guidance. Closer working under BSF and schools@onedarlington will make it simpler for good learning examples from successful schools and facilities to be applied in any examples of underperformance. Successful schools will be able to influence schools facing challenges.

Schools are valuable community resources and the BSF programme will be used to strengthen communities and localities by improving sports, recreational and play provision. Consistent with our locality strategy we will provide on-site integrated services for our centres of learning, to support the localisation of services, and make all school buildings accessible for people with a disability

In order to support the achievement of young people we recognize the need to support the skills development of their parents. Through the BSF programme, partners will increase both facilities and opportunities for Family Learning, return to learning and, through liaison with employers, fill the skills gap in the local economy.

1.3 Identifying and tackling underperformance of schools and groups

As indicated in the introduction, our children and young people come from many different socio-economic backgrounds and face different challenges in their school careers.

- there are considerable barriers to implementing the full secondary curriculum reform programme as three of the secondary schools fall significantly short of the facilities required to deliver a 21st century curriculum.
- three of the seven secondary schools serving the Borough have a school deprivation indicator greater than the national average;
- in three schools the number of students eligible for free school meals is significantly greater than the national average, whilst in one it is just above;
- Darlington as a whole is ranked 95th according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation. This includes 16 super-output areas which are amongst the most deprived 20% in England;
- the percentage of students from the Traveller Community is well above the National Average across Darlington. Many of these students are home educated at secondary level;
- one of the seven schools has sixth form provision and the special school has 6th form provision. Together with Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College and Darlington College they provide post 16 provision for the majority of the young people who remain in full time education. However, our post 16 participation rate in education is only third quartile and at age 17 drops to bottom quartile.
- in 2008 school performance at GCSE is above the national average and higher than that found in similar authorities. Performance is improving faster than the national rate and the gap in attainment levels between the highest and lowest achieving schools has reduced from 74% in 2006 to 47.5% in 2008; and
- there are some differences of achievement at GCSE by gender, young women having higher levels of attainment than young men by around 6.7% across the Borough.

1.4 Learning

Personalised learning will be supported through the roll out of the Assessing Pupil Progress strategy and through the development of strong partnerships beyond the classroom. Assessing Pupil Progress requires the effective tracking of pupils and their prior learning and a focus on the higher level thinking skills which support independent learning, study support and out of class learning. The

partnerships will be supported through extended schools funding and through the engagement of the private, voluntary and community sector.

1.5 Curriculum - Improving Opportunities for the 14-19 age group

Six of the Authority's secondary schools meet the needs of the 11-16 age group. Carmel RC College also has a thriving sixth form. Other tertiary providers include Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, Darlington Further Education College and Beaumont Hill special school.

A new 14-19 Strategy has been agreed by the Children's Trust to enable the 14-19 Trust to move onto the next stage of development. Darlington will deliver 4 Diplomas from September 2009 (IT, Creative and Media, Engineering and Hospitality and Catering). A further eight diplomas are included in our Gateway 3 submission and 3 submissions will be made as part of Gateway 4. Through the NEET Reduction Partnership (part of the 14-19 Trust) £640,000 of ESF funding has been secured to commission tailored learning packages for young people. This will respond to actions in the JAR action plan and will address the post 17 drop out rate in the Borough.

The Skills+ programme has been designed to address the needs of disaffected students and has been particularly successful in securing progression to post-16 education. An electronic area-wide 14-19 Prospectus has been developed to show all courses available to 14-19 year olds in the area.

Successful implementation of the September Guarantee will make a huge impact on continuing to raise post-16 participation rates, as well as impacting on the numbers of young people NEET, by focusing on the most fragile point of transition for young people. Considerable progress has been made in reducing the number of young people presenting as NEET, but much work still needs to be done to include everybody in the further education available. Every young person who has completed year 11, and all 17 year-olds who are in transition, are offered a suitable post 16 learning opportunity. To ensure this, the 14-19 Trust tracks young people in transition, identifies their needs, provides quality impartial information advice and guidance to tackle the barriers to learning and commissions services that provide a flexible mix of learning provision.

14-19 Entitlement

The 14-19 Trust oversees the implementation of Darlington's 14-19 Strategy and the distribution of funding to support development priorities highlighted through the CYPP, the LAA and Borough targets. Within the School Improvement Service, 14-19 is an integral strategy for raising achievement. Effective management structures are well established which include a recently expanded 14-19 Team and a number of sub groups including the NEET Reduction Partnership, Curriculum Development Group, Darlington AimHigher Steering Group, Employer Engagement Group and the Diploma Development Group.

Building on our strong track record of commitment to and leadership of 14-19 education and training, Darlington will deliver four Diplomas from September 2009. The Trust membership is made up of all secondary and special headteachers and college principals from within Darlington, The Local Authority,

LSC, Connexions, employers, the Business Education Partnership and the chair of the local Work Based Learning Providers' Forum. Diploma Development Partnerships are established with a lead institution identified on the basis of specialist status/ relevant expertise and collaborative models of delivery. The continued renewal of our secondary estate will be essential for further innovative development.

The implementation of school-based and collaborative vocational provision and a joint strategic approach to employer engagement has already contributed to improving GCSE results by 14.9% over the past three years to 69.7% 5A* to C in 2008 (including Eastbourne CE Academy). However, we need to continue to improve achievement in English and mathematics at KS3 and KS4 and increase the number achieving 5A* to C including English and Maths.

We will achieve this by:

- Working intensively with our National Challenge school to drive up standards as regards the number of pupils achieving English and maths at KS4. This will be supported through the delivery of phase 3 of the Assessing Pupil Progress programme, which aims to improve the delivery chain in schools in the core areas. This programme will extend into science and ICT in the Spring term 2009.
- Piloting functional skills in English, maths and ICT in our schools and colleges. Such skills are seen by Darlington to be strong influences on our young people's life chances particularly when linked with the continued development of our Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme.
- Improving the uptake of science in further education and in the workplace through the L6+ and beyond programme currently running in four secondary schools.
- In partnership with the Police, each secondary school now has a dedicated safer schools team, comprising of police officers and youth workers and the impact of our reprimand scheme and restorative justice work has seen a significant reduction in the number of first time entrants to the juvenile justice system. This has contributed to the reductions in truancy, exclusions and supported the strategy to reduce teenage pregnancies.

Running alongside these priorities will be work in all schools to improve the efficacy and the implementation of personal learning and thinking skills through the new secondary curriculum. We must continue to narrow the gap between our highest and lowest performing schools by targeting all vulnerable groups appropriately. Extensive use of ICT and eLearning materials will enhance curriculum delivery and personal choice through the use of a common Learning Platform for 'anywhere – anytime learning' supplemented by widespread deployment of video conferencing, using the excellent broadband infrastructure already in place, to deliver 'masterclass' lessons. All of these projects are

supported by significant input from School Improvement and Development Lead Officers and School Improvement Partners.

Collaboration and partnership working are also fundamental to our plans for provision post-16. Collaborative courses have been running successfully for a number of years across our schools and colleges. This has been facilitated by an element of common timetabling and the provision of transport where required. Our Higher Education facilities at Darlington College and Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College enjoy co status. The nationally acclaimed Skills+ programme has been designed to address the needs of disaffected students and has been particularly successful in securing progression to post 16 education. Our aim is that by 2013 we provide Darlington's young people with a full entitlement curriculum which has many strands ranging from Apprenticeships through GCSEs to Diplomas and beyond. We will build on the 14 to 19 Trusts successful Transition Support programme, developed with funding from Aimhigher, for students moving to post -16 education provided via Darlington colleges and work based learning providers. Darlington's Connexions service is a key partner in providing quality IAG to all young people across all our secondary schools and colleges as part of this process.

1.6 Integrated Children's Services, ECM and extended schools

In order for Darlington Children's Trust Partners to embrace the principles of the Every Child Matters Agenda and to deliver the DCSF Building Brighter Futures Children's Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan, partners are moving towards an integrated model of service delivery. This model already includes common systems and processes and areas of common governance. The Common Assessment Framework has been implemented as a partnership tool and Contact Point is soon to go live.

In February 2006 'Young People-Our Future' (Darlington's Local Area Agreement) was adopted by Darlington Partnership. 'Young People-Our Future' acknowledged that the majority of services were provided on a whole Borough basis and recommended that some changes be made to help services get closer to communities and foster the types of dialogue and understanding that, particularly, in the most deprived areas, we most need to support renewal.

In September 2007 the Children's Trust Board agreed a strategy for delivering locality based services. The Children's Trust agreed the following principles of local and integrated working to enable them to have a strategic executive function, and to support the further development of effective partnerships in Darlington.

The principles which were adopted are that services would:

- be developed to ensure a holistic approach is achieved embracing a wide range of services for all children and families in the town.
- be delivered at a time and venue appropriate to families – to assist access and support local communities.
- constantly review and challenge the range of funding streams available and ensure that they are pooled or aligned to meet agreed identified needs.

- ensure that we guarantee the offer of ‘a champion for every child’ working to support parents

The BSF programme will support the development of this strategy and provide bases for the locality teams to deliver effective ‘teams around the child’ and to deliver swift and easy access to services.

1.7 Inclusion

Central to our BSF proposal is the concept of ‘One Darlington’, which is contained within the CYPP and our concept of schools@onedarlington. This builds on current collaboration and co-operation across the education sector. Promoting inclusive practice in schools is central to our communities’ long term aim of creating a more harmonious Darlington.

Darlington has one high quality special school, an increasing number of young people with ASD/BESD and a desire to reduce still further those in alternative provision. Our specialist provision has an important role in developing ‘dispersed provision’ across the school sector, by sharing expertise via CPD training and peer support. Developing systems of brokerage and commissioning expertise across the sector will increase staff skills thereby increasing choice to children and their families in accessing high quality provision within all local ‘mainstream schools’. The BSF programme will improve the facilities for children on the ASD continuum at Hurworth School and will enhance opportunities for children to access their local school.

To develop successfully this ‘inclusion ethos’, every aspect of school provision and extended provision will be reviewed. The physical build of the schools will provide spaces which can be used flexibly to support use of the building by young people and their community throughout the day and the year. The school will become a ‘model’ of inclusive practice which will extend this ethos to all local provision. The build will compliment the development of locality working thereby increasing supports available to staff.

Partnership working across the sector, with young people, and the community, is fundamental to the proposal. Inclusion starts with involvement developing the ethos and design to promote the positive experience within the school and beyond – making school welcoming to all including those with additional needs.

1.8 SEN

BSF funding will support the access of young people with SEN into all settings. Currently the authority funding formula supports the increasing inclusion of young people in mainstream settings but the facilities are not always accessible or appropriate. Each secondary school has used funding to establish behaviour partnerships and to make provision for internal exclusion bases but two of the schools requiring significant investment have no suitable facilities to ensure effective management of need.

1.9 Leadership and Change management

All schools in the local authority have agreed to the establishment of a collaborative approach to raising standards - the strategy of schools@onedarlington. This strategy aligns the work of schools with the priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy and as it develops it will support the sharing of expertise to ensure that schools are supported to succeed before they ever fail. Partners have also established a Darlington School Leadership College which ensures that the current and future generations of school leaders are supported to develop the skills required to manage increasingly complex organisations and the shared responsibilities for safeguarding, standards, well being and community cohesion. Each school in the BSF programme will develop its own strategy for change.

1.10 ICT

BSF presents Darlington with the timely prospect of building new physical workplaces. More importantly BSF presents the opportunity of building new *virtual* workplaces in which personalised learning can take place, any time, anywhere. The harmonisation of physical and virtual are essential to Darlington's vision for BSF. Together they will create new and exciting, brave and bold learning environments in which young people will thrive by developing new competencies, new learning relationships and use new and different tools and resources to enhance their progress and amplify their motivation.

Darlington's vision for ICT cannot be isolated from its overall vision for transforming teaching and learning. ICT will, in monetary terms, represent about 10% of the BSF spend, but in real terms the value will be much higher because ICT in BSF is not about buying 'technology' but buying into a partnership with an ICT service provider, or systems integrator, to deliver innovative and flexible outcomes and functionality which transforms learning. Learning will be transformed by:

- exploring the possibilities of more student led approaches,
- increasingly personalised
- not being location specific and using partners' facilities in the libraries, museums, art galleries and work places to support the curriculum.
- students becoming authors of learning content
- students having access to appropriate, industry standard, technologies available at the most appropriate place for their preferred learning styles.

Essential to delivering transformed learning styles is sign-up by all schools to a common ICT service provider. Darlington schools have already begun this journey; they all have the same broadband service provider and all have access and are using the same Children's Services Learning Platform. The platform is more than a virtual learning environment as it also provides LA officers in Children's Services and partner agencies with a 'digital dashboard' to organise, store and access information and data. Contracts for the learning platform and broadband supply are due for renewal over the envisaged period of BSF if funding is brought forward.

Working with an ICT service provider as a partner in transforming learning will enable schools to consider what educational outcomes, functionalities and operational standards are required of the technology against which an ICT service provider can be selected and held contractually accountable for quality of service. Being contractually accountable under strict quality assurance criteria will result in schools' ICT being more reliable – working first time every time – which will enhance staff and pupil confidence.

Our schools are already beginning to discover how the creative and imaginative use of technology is impacting on the 'Enjoy and Achieve' agenda. Lessons are becoming more engaging and content rich with individual learning styles being better catered for. Access to technology, redolent throughout the school and the wider community, has the potential to empower learners to pursue their own learning pathways in collaboration with those on similar learning journeys.

Children's Services has a successful and dynamic eLearning team who are experienced in working, through its 'eStrategy' with all schools to drive forward the 'Harnessing Technology' agenda working alongside identified ICT 'champion' schools and ICT champions in schools.

The local authority has experience in leading the ICT Service Provider procurement with our new Academy.

1.11 KPIs

Key performance indicators to measure the impact and benefits of the BSF programme will be developed alongside the business case and the final capital allocations

2.1 Pupil Place Planning

Pupil projections for Darlington are prepared by the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (TVJSU). JSU was set up in 1996 to carry out this function on behalf of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton on Tees Borough Councils. The data provided by the unit is supplemented by additional information from the Diocese and softer local data to make decisions on the numbers and locations of school places to be provided.

The main trends in pupil numbers depend on earlier trends in births and, lately, an increase in inward migration in to the Borough. From 1981 to 1991 births increased slowly from around 1,200 per year to over 1,400. Births decreased steadily from 1991/92 until 2000/01 to just over 1,000 births per annum – this is to be the main cause of the decline in secondary numbers over the next 6 years. Since 2001/02 births have increased significantly and the latest estimated birth figures indicate around 1,270-1,280 births per annum. These trends mean that secondary entry numbers will reach their lowest level in 2013/14, then increase by around 20% by 2019. As births are projected to rise further from current levels, our current expectation is that secondary entries will continue to rise past 2019.

In addition to fluctuating trends in the birth rate, migration into the Borough has increased over recent years with families moving into the area from other areas of the UK as well as from overseas. In addition, the Army is housing families in 120 houses recently bought in Darlington to accommodate the overspill from its Catterick Garrison. This is due to the permanent relocation of one of the Army's largest brigades to the region, and increasing numbers of Army families is likely to be an ongoing trend, given MOD plans to significantly extend Catterick Garrison.

According to our own latest figures (Spring 2009 School Census) there are currently 6,138 school places in Darlington's secondary schools with 5,745 pupils on roll giving 393 (6.4%) surplus places.

The effect of these projections on planned school organisation

Utilising JSU's latest projections (published in July 2007) and our own calculations showing a reduction in net capacity due to reorganisation of secondary schools (Academy reduction from September 2007, Hummersknott reduction from September 2008 and a reduction in capacity at Branksome as part of BSF) shows a capacity of 5,988 places with 5,191 on roll or 797 (13.3%) surplus. However, by 2019, due to the increased birth rate, the capacity will remain at 5,988 but with 5,754 pupils on roll or 234 (3.9%) surplus.

Projections of pupil data collected from the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit and analysis of school census data shows that there is and will be a continued need for seven secondary schools in Darlington.

Darlington is aware of the need to effectively manage the supply of school places to ensure revenue resources are not wasted on maintaining unnecessary areas

of accommodation. In recent years Darlington has had the need to proactively manage places in the primary sector through a period of high surplus places and which is now entering a time of high basic need. Action has also been taken to manage places in the secondary sector by reducing places at the Eastbourne Church of England Academy when it transferred from a maintained school. Further action will be taken through the Building Schools for the Future programme with the reduction of places at Branksome School. These changes will mean that there are an adequate number of places across the Borough without the creation of unnecessary surplus places.

2.2 Estate Planning

In terms of the BSF process, the population projections support the case for maintaining the existing seven secondary schools, which are well located throughout the Borough, with an amendment to the capacity of Branksome Comprehensive. Consultation will initially be on the following options:

Summary of school estate:

School and Current Provision	Outline Proposal
Branksome Comprehensive	Proposed- Major remodeling and new build to include specialist facilities in construction and additional community facilities. The school is on an existing site, which is well placed to serve the local community. Reduce roll numbers from 900 to 750.
Carmel R C College	Major refurbishment funded primarily through TCF nearing completion. Pupil nos. maintained at 900. Aspire to include improved ICT facilities and facilitate work on engineering diploma.
Eastbourne C of E Academy	Academy recently established, and newbuild started in May '08, maintaining pupil numbers at 700. Following completion nothing further required.
Haughton Community School	Newbuild PFI scheme completed in 2005. School has capacity of 900. Further ICT required.
Hummersknott School and Language College	Major refurbishment funded primarily through TCF nearing completion. Pupil nos. maintained at 1200. Further ICT and community work.
Hurworth School, Maths & Computing College	Proposed- Major remodeling and new build of school on existing site, to include training facility and Maths / ICT facility which will be shared with the whole school community.

	Capacity to remain at 652.
Longfield School, A Specialist College	Proposed- Major remodeling and new build of school on existing site, which is well placed to serve the local community and improve on sports facilities in the town. Capacity to remain at 900.

The programme will also benefit the Key Stage 4 engagement centre which is currently housed in unsuitable and temporary accommodation.

Prioritisation of schools within the BSF programme.

Darlington is a small Local Authority with only seven secondary schools. Through the success of securing significant levels of external funding, supported by Council investment the authority has already been able to replace or significantly refurbish four secondary schools.

This success in achieving large scale investment to develop the secondary estate means that Darlington is in the position of only have three remaining schools that require investment through the BSF programme.

The three schools which are part of our BSF programme are located on land owned by the Council, there are no covenants restricting usage for educational purposes. There are no plans to merge or close any schools, nor to make immediate changes of a significant character, requiring statutory procedures and the publication of public notices. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be any requirement for land disposals or change of use consent.

The Local Authority's *Architectural Framework* Partners have already been commissioned to undertake feasibility work in relation to each of the three school sites to be developed. This feasibility work involves stakeholder discussions, non-intrusive surveys and desk top evaluation studies to enable a range of options to be developed for each school. The senior management team in each school has been involved to ensure that realistic priorities have been identified for each site. The feasibility study has also been asked to consider the affordability of the programme and to identify site risks that are known at this stage. This first stage of feasibility is due to report back at the end of March 2009.

In developing the overarching BSF programme and the more detailed plan for each school site consideration has been given to community use of facilities and how these facilities can be enhanced. As the proposals do not suggest the closure or relocation of any of the sites it is envisaged that community facilities will not diminish in anyway but will in fact be enhanced by the improvements that are made to the school buildings and facilities. Community access will be at the heart of all development plans proposed and work is being undertaken with the Leisure Services department within the Council to ensure access to the facilities can be guaranteed outside of the school day all year round.

Longfield School, as a Specialist Sports College, is keen to ensure that the future provision of sports facilities will be of the very highest standard and will attract the use of a wide range of community members. In comparison, Hurworth School,

located in a rural community is keen to ensure that a range of community facilities are provided to ensure all requirements are catered for.

2.3 Consultation and Communication

Working in partnership is and will continue to be a key strength of our strategy. Our visions: 'Transforming Schools: Transforming Lives', 'schools@onedarlington' have already been developed and are ensuring that we fulfill our key aim of communicating successfully with all relevant stakeholders on the key issues surrounding the BSF programme which includes Darlington's vision for secondary education. This strategy is also helping us to engage purposefully with all stakeholders to gain their contribution and 'sign up' to Darlington's vision of Transforming Schools and Lives through BSF.

Our strategy for consultation is designed to inform and encourage feedback from all stakeholders by using and building upon a variety of communications vehicles.

Stage 1 of our strategy was implemented between July and mid September 2008 and included:

- our highly successful conference for: 34 Darlington headteachers and their deputies; college principals; our Lead Member for Children's Services; the Leader of the Council; Darlington's Chief Executive; the chair of our Children and Young Persons Scrutiny panel; representatives of the Dioceses; representatives from the LSC; our PfS consultant; local authority officers and Sir Bruce Liddington (Schools Commissioner). The conference included keynote presentations about the links between vision, standards, teaching and learning, structures and spaces from national speakers.
- One-to-one and group consultation meetings with our secondary head teachers and the two college principals;
- Consultation with elected Members;
- Briefings for officers and Council staff through team meetings;
- A consultation meeting with representatives of the teachers' and staff unions;
- Agenda items on meetings of key stakeholders and partners (e.g. primary and secondary heads, 14 to 19 Trust, Joint Consultative Group (JCG) and the Local Strategic Partnership);

From January 2009 stage 2 of the strategy will build on and extend these communication and consultation activities and include

- Consultation prior to publication of statutory proposals e.g. (proposals for notices of closure; proposals for prescribed alteration to schools)
- Community roadshows / consultation evenings within the secondary schools;
- Student / young people's focus groups;
- Children trust
- Attendance at school governing body meetings and community group meetings; and, Business seminars

Communications planning arrangements

A Communications plan is currently in development and will be presented to the first meeting of the Project Board which is scheduled for March 2009.

The groups of stakeholders with whom we consult are identified below:

- Pupils, parents and carers;
- Community groups, voluntary groups and the wider community of Darlington;
- Connexions, Dioceses and the LSC;
- Council Directorates, wider Darlington Borough Council staff, elected Members and our local MP;
- Headteachers, staff of all schools, Darlington's Governors' Association and all school governors;
- Trades Unions
- DCSF and Government Office North East;
- Local Strategic Partnership
- Local businesses / potential sponsors, local universities and colleges;
- Neighbouring authorities, including other BSF authorities;
- Sport England
- Primary Care Trust;
- Partnerships for Schools;
- Regional Special Educational Needs Advisers;
- Schools Finance Forum and the Schools Admissions Forum;
- The media

Initial stakeholder support for the BSF proposals

The consultation events already undertaken were strongly attended by key Stakeholders from schools, Members, Lead Officers and the wider community. Their views have been sought at key stages and fed into the development of all strategic documentation. Consultation will continue throughout the Building Schools for the Future programme but will be maximised fully over the coming months in the further development of the Strategy for Change and the Outline Business Case.

PE / Sport and Culture stakeholder groups

Work is currently being undertaken to strengthen the make-up of all stakeholder groups and to ensure that appropriate representation is provided from a wide range of interested parties. In conjunction with Leisure Services, we will use the Sports Network groups that are already established across the town and which have been identified as an area of good practice by Sport England. In addition members of staff from Schools with a strong PE / Sport and Culture background will be asked to be represented on the stakeholder groups. Guidance and advice will also be sought from national representatives of organisations such as Sport England, the Football Foundation and the Lawn Tennis Association.

2.4 Project Planning

The Local Authority will undertake rigorous Project management and project planning arrangements in line with corporate procedures that have recently been revised and updated. Project Planning will also be in line with guidance issued by Partnerships for Schools as part of the BSF programme.

Further details are available in this section and in the section on Project Governance, but in summary the Local Authority can confirm that it will use a myriad of project planning and project management tools to monitor and control the programme.

A full project plan is in the early stages of development with key milestones being identified. The Project Board will monitor action against this project plan and will ensure progress is maintained at all times to meet deadlines.

Initial Stakeholder management plans are already being developed and will continue to be developed throughout the programme. Risk management arrangements have been put in place and will be monitored by the Project Board. A formal change control procedure is in place within the Council which means that appropriate authorisation must be sought to formalise any internal or external requests for changes on the project at any stage.

Risks identification and Risk Management

Effective risk management is the key to ensuring that projects are delivered within time, cost and quality. No project will be completely free of risk, but by giving due consideration to the things that may go wrong or affect quality, it allows preventative measures (or mitigating actions) to be put in place that will reduce either the likelihood or impact of the risk. It is far more acceptable to have to make a change to project delivery as a result of a risk that has been identified and mitigated as far as possible than it is to request a change in response to an unforeseen risk.

The management of risk is one of the most important parts of the job performed by the Project Manager. The Project Manager is responsible for ensuring that risks are identified, recorded, communicated, and regularly reviewed. All risks will be assigned a risk owner and where risks are considered to sit above the risk appetite line, mitigating action should be identified. The risk owner is responsible for ensuring that any mitigating action identified is implemented when instructed by the Project Manager.

Our definition of risk is:

“Uncertainty that matters”

There are broadly four suitable responses to risk:

- **Prevention:** Terminate the risk by doing things differently and thus removing the risk where it is feasible to do so;

- **Reduction:** Treat the risk by taking appropriate action to control either the likelihood of the risk occurring or the impact if the risk occurs; this action is otherwise known as contingency planning;
- **Transference:** Specialist form of risk reduction that looks to insure against or transfer the risks to a third party;
- **Acceptance:** No separate action is identified; the risk is regularly reviewed during the project lifecycle. Should only be used where the risk falls below the risk appetite line

Risks are recorded on the standard Darlington Borough Council Risk Log template. The risk log should provide a description of the risk and its associated impact.

In preparing for entry into the BSF programme, the Local Authority has begun to identify key risks that may have an adverse affect of the delivery of its BSF proposals. Although the project is only in the early stages of feasibility, these risks have been developed into a Risk register which is managed by the Project Team and will be reported to the Project Board on a monthly basis. The risk register is a live document which will continue to be updated and developed throughout the lifetime of the project.

Include these in a risk register: Academy, Managed ICT, PFI, VA school, National Challenge, Stakeholder issues, Affordability

Workstream planning and identification

To further support the development of the BSF programme, 11 Workstreams have been identified as key aspects in the delivery of the BSF Objectives for the Authority (in line with Partnership for Schools Project Planning Guidance). The Project Team will have responsibility for managing these workstream areas and will report to the Project Board on the progress in each area.

To ensure full buy-in to the BSF programme, workstreams will be managed by a range of *key stakeholders* including Council officers from relevant departments (e.g. Sport and Culture), Senior members of staff and Governors from Secondary Schools across the authority and experienced staff within Children's Services. The Authority is also keen to seek independent support and advice for the Project Team and is discussing potential secondment opportunities with other LAs who have already begun their BSF programme.

SECTION 3 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Darlington Borough Council is determined to work with the DCSF to transform the delivery of secondary education throughout the Borough, through working within the framework of Building Schools for the Future.

PFI funding mechanism

DBC has in the recent past, in partnership with DCSF, used both PFI and conventional funding models to deliver the most appropriate schools to deliver the best possible education to children in Darlington. We fully accept DCSF and P4S's view that PFI is the most appropriate funding model for new build schools. However, as it is likely that the majority of work within Darlington's schools will be remodeling and refurbishment we believe it is more appropriate to use a more conventional model of procurement. The Council has used and is comfortable with either model of funding.

LEP model

The Council looks on the LEP as strong model of delivery, and can see potential benefits in adopting the model. We accept that the LEP is DCSF's preferred model. However, as a small authority who will be seeking capital investment in only three schools, over one phase, we would look to discuss this issue further and agree with P4S whether this model can be utilised successfully in Darlington or an alternative model is more suitable in our case.

ICT managed service

Discussions are underway with secondary head teachers and the local Broadband Consortium in order to establish the strongest possible ICT platform for future provision across our Secondary School estate. The Authority is committed to delivering an ICT managed service.

PFS Standard forms

The Local Authority is willing to accept the use of Partnerships for Schools standard forms and has experience of using some of these documents in delivering the Academy project under the Framework contract.

Implications of FM for schools

The long term implications of the life cycle costs for schools are currently being considered and will be developed as part of the feasibility study being undertaken at present. To ensure long term affordability it is imperative that the whole life cycle costs are accurately determined and appropriate arrangements put in place to manage these costs.

SECTION 4 **AFFORDABILITY**

The specific plans for each school within the BSF programme are still subject to development, therefore it is not yet possible to provide clear supporting evidence that the aims and ambitions of each school are fully affordable.

However, the authority has been careful to maintain significant capital balances within recent funding allocations (14-19 TCF capital) with the aim of using these funding streams to support the BSF programme. In addition individual schools have been working hard to support the Local Authority's plans by trying to secure additional capital resources where possible. Branksome has recently been successfully accredited with Specialist School status which provides additional capital funding to support school build projects and Longfield School have been developing significant links with Sporting organisations with the aim of obtaining additional capital to support their aims and ambitions for Sports College developments.

The Local Authority is very keen to ensure that any available capital funding is acquired to support the BSF programme and will work to deliver a scheme that demonstrated there is not an affordability gap between the vision and the reality.

SECTION 5 RESOURCES AND CAPABILITY

5.1 Governance, Project Board and Stakeholder Group membership

Darlington Borough Council recognises the unique opportunity represented by the Building Schools for the Future programme and fully recognises the commitment required to ensure BSF is delivered and has the maximum impact for the pupils of Darlington. This commitment is demonstrated by involvement of the chief executive and directors at Project Board level and of Members at Stakeholder Group level.

The Council has been extremely successful in securing funding for and delivering a wide range of capital projects over the recent past. We will utilise the expertise gained in this delivery by harnessing the skills we have developed, but in appreciating the unique nature of BSF, the Council has reviewed and adapted its structure and working practices to ensure we are best placed to deliver BSF.

Darlington Borough Council has established a high level project board, chaired by the Chief Executive which will oversee the management of the BSF programme to ensure projects are managed in a controlled environment. The project board will set parameters, will actively review progress and ensure delivery of the Local Authority's objectives. In line with Partnerships for Schools guidance, this will encompass:

- Gateway Review by 4Ps at mandatory and voluntary stages of the project
- Control point process review, in accordance with DBC's *Project Management Handbook*
- Oversight by the Capital Programme Review Board (chaired by the Section 151 officer)
- Political engagement through regular reporting to Cabinet, Council and the Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- Reports to Corporate Management Team, for the involvement of BSF as a Council wide activity.

Member engagement and support is extensively available to support the BSF programme in Darlington. All Members have been engaged through the political process and are aware of the programme, its objectives and the aims and ambitions for Darlington.

The Stakeholder Group will agree the strategic framework and will provide the programme-wide consultative group. The group will be chaired by the Director of Children's Services. Two Lead Members will take an active part in the Stakeholder Group: the Lead Member for Children's Services and Lead Member for Resources.

The Lead Member or Lead Officer will be appointed as the Design Champion for the BSF programme.

To ensure the aims and objectives of the BSF programme are delivered, a decision has been taken to appoint the Director of Children's Services as Project Sponsor. Due to the relatively small size of the Authority it is felt that this would be the most appropriate choice.

The Project Board

The Board's responsibilities include:

- setting out the key objectives of the project;
- ratifying the Project Team's decisions at key stages;
- managing the interface with members and making recommendations to Cabinet on key decisions, including the latter's approval of the SfC (Parts 1 and 2), Outline Business Case and Final Business Case;
- monitoring key risks and actions to mitigate them as part of an overall risk management strategy;
- addressing the key interfaces, as set out in the PID document;
- approving the procurement arrangements, including signing off all contractual documentation before its submission to PfS for formal approval; and
- selecting the shortlist and choosing the Selected Bidder.

The membership of the Project Board is as follows:

- Chief Executive (Chair);
- Director of Children's Services as the Project Sponsor/Owner;
- BSF Project Director;
- BSF Project Manager;
- Director of Corporate Services;
- Director of Community Services;
- Assistant Chief Executive;

The Stakeholder Group

The stakeholder group's responsibilities include:

- Feeding in local community intelligence to the design team
- Ensuring lines of communication between technical advisers and designers, with students, teachers and wider users of school activities
- Challenging the Project Board on achieving best value
- Providing challenge and support on quality issues and value engineering

The membership of the Stakeholder Group is as follows:

- Director of Children's Services (Chair);
- Cabinet Member for Children and Young People;
- Cabinet Member for Resources;
- Headteachers;
- 14-19 Trust;
- Business representatives;
- Sports Partnership;

- Culture Partnership.

Consideration will also be given to including other interested parties as members of the Stakeholder Group, such as Diocesan and LSC representatives, as appropriate.

5.2 Financial Commitment

The Local Authority is fully aware of the financial commitments required to deliver the BSF programme and is willing to commit Council resources to support delivery. In line with Partnership for Schools guidance it has been anticipated that at least 3% of the total Funding Allocation Model will be made available to support the programme.

A detailed breakdown of how this funding will be allocated between internal and external resources is not yet available. It is anticipated that a Skills Audit to be undertaken in conjunction with 4Ps will enable the Authority to provide further information about the level of resources required.

5.3 Project Team and Support

The Council has recently reviewed and strengthened arrangements for Capital Project Management and a new team has been set up (using secondees from existing departments) to focus expertise and knowledge into one unit. The benefits to the BSF programme are that developed skills in client consultation, planning, and operational building management, have a common reporting structure, cross fertilization of ideas and ready access to expertise and previous experience. As the Council already has agreements with some framework partners, the specialist technical advice available through this arrangement has been used to develop the programme to date.

The Capital Projects Office will, in cooperation with 4Ps, undertake a skills audit so that the most appropriate strategy can be identified, to source specialist advice; internally in the Council, from established framework partners, or through sourcing additional external advice from consultants.

A skills audit will clearly identify:

- Where the Council has the relevant skills, how these skills can be freed up in order that individuals can commit their time to BSF
- Where the Council has existing framework partnerships in place that can plug some of the gaps within the Council's own staff
- Where it is felt it would be beneficial to seek support from external consultants, as either framework agreements don't exist or it is felt that external consultants could offer the best support
- The key post of Project Director will be advertised externally in order to ensure the best qualified individual is secured

Where external consultants are sought a detailed procurement process will be undergone to ensure best quality and value is secured.

Discussions are currently taking place with 4Ps to establish a suitable date for the Skills Audit to take place in either March or early April.
