
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council and under the Children and Young People Portfolio, Cabinet has received the following:

- (a) Schools Capital Programme 2008-2009 – Cabinet agreed a programme of capital investment in schools for the year ahead and released £26.841 million to support this including: £15.377 million for the new Eastbourne Church of England Academy; £6.5 million for a new North Road Primary School; £1.448 million to support small scale capital projects; and, a further £1.274 million to support larger scale projects in schools.
- (b) School Admission Arrangements for 2009-10 – Cabinet approved changes to the Admission policy for 2009/10.
- (c) 14-19 Strategy – Cabinet approved a new 14-19 Strategy for Darlington. The Strategy will provide the blueprint for the development of educational provision and services for all 14-19 year olds over the next 5 years.

2. Developments in Children’s Services

(a) Joint Area Review

The Joint Area Review (JAR) of Children’s Services commenced on 31st March 2008 for a period of two weeks and the final report will be published on 22nd July.

(b) Children “looked after” by Darlington Borough Council

There are currently 135 children and young people “looked after” by the local authority (as at 31/3/08). 32 of this group are aged 15 years or over and will remain “looked after” until fully prepared for independence, with appropriate housing and employment or training. A “supported lodgings” scheme has recently been developed by the leaving care team to ensure a range of options are available for young people.

(c) Corporate Parenting Panel

The Corporate Parenting Panel met on 4th April 2008 and discussed a range of issues. These included: the services offered to improve the health of children and young people; Inspection reports relating to fostering and residential services; performance data and how young people are developing a “Children in Care Council”. The Panel was observed by an Inspector as part of the Joint Area Review process.

(d) Child Protection

From 1st April 2008, there is no longer a requirement on local authorities to maintain a Child Protection Register. However, the Child Protection Conference system continues, and there are currently 55 children and young people in Darlington who have a child protection plan. The main reason for the plan is neglect (34 cases).

- (e) Darlington Safeguarding Children Board has revised its terms of reference and sub-group structure, in order to ensure it is effective in monitoring and “safeguarding” across services to children.
- (f) Common Assessment Framework – over 1000 practitioners have accessed training in the recently introduced assessment process.
- (g) New protocols have been agreed with the childcare duty team to ensure their non allocated referrals have an appropriate assessment.
- (h) The Early Years and Childcare Strategy has been fully consulted and is nearing completion.
- (i) Consultation with parents is ongoing with respect to the Parenting Strategy.
- (j) Training strategy for ContactPoint has been developed.
- (k) Darlington Council, with the PCT has bought 12 new dance mats for schools and the wider community use. The mats are being used at the Education Village in Haughton, but are mobile and through the Darlington School Sports Partnership will be available to other schools in September. The Darlington Sports Development Team will also be setting up community based activity sessions and using them as part of the Council’s summer programme of activities. The mats, which cost £20,000, were funded by Darlington PCT.
- (l) The Portfolio Holder held his first liaison meeting with Chairs of Governors from across the Borough to discuss issues relevant to school improvement and development.
- (m) The Transition Action Group met for the first time. The group is made up of ‘Transition Champions’ from each school in the Borough. Its aim is to develop a common core package for transition from Year 6 to Year 7 in all Darlington’s schools.
- (n) The Pupil Referral Unit moved to its new premises at The Phoenix Centre on 21st April.
- (o) The 14 to 19 Trust agreed Darlington’s 14 to 19 Strategy which will help to drive forward the development of 14 to 19 provision across the Borough.
- (p) Officers in Children’s Services established the first Darlington Leadership College with candidates drawn from middle management in schools across the Borough.
- (q) Youth Opportunity Fund
A year end report has been submitted to GONE detailing spend and activity for 2007-08. Including our allocation for the year and carry over from 06-07, £194,000 was allocated to 76 projects across the Borough. The Government has confirmed a further allocation of £155,000 to Darlington for each of the following three years.
- (r) Positive Activities (Youth Offer)
Click in the park was held on 12th April at South Park and despite the worst efforts of the weather 42 agencies displayed information and engaged over 300 young people in a wide range of activity. Details of over 280 separate activities and clubs for young people are now detailed in the Children’s Services Service Directory and will feature

in the new 'click to do' web site from June 2008.

(s) UK Youth Parliament

Elections held at the end of February saw the election of Emily Christer as our new Member of the Youth Parliament for the next two years. 2530 young people voted – an increase on turnout from the 2006 election. Emily's manifesto contains a range of innovative and exciting initiatives many of which link with priorities in the CYPP and recent governmental policy initiatives.

(t) Headline Activity

A wide range of activity was offered to young people throughout the Borough during the Easter holidays – including arts projects, inter area sports festival, 5 a side football competition, media workshop and Duke of Edinburgh award scheme practice expeditions.

(u) The Council of School/College Councils held their second meeting on 5th March and all schools and colleges are now engaged in this initiative. A final meeting of this academic year is scheduled for July and a sub group is planning to develop a newsletter for all councils to use.

(v) A group of Asian young women hosted a very successful 'East meets West' fashion show at the Dolphin Centre on 4th April. They are now planning a follow-up cultural activity in the Market Square in August which will feature as part of the 'Celebrate Young People' schedule of events.

(w) The Review project is hosting a Battle of the Bands competition for young local bands. Two heats have been held to date (at South Park and at The Forum) and will culminate in a grand final in the Market Square in June.

3. Visits and Meetings by the Portfolio Holder since last Council

(a) Monday 10 March

The Portfolio Holder met with the Headteacher of Dodmire Infant and Nursery School, and later visited Salters Lane Children's Home to meet with the staff and young people who reside there.

(b) Thursday 13 March

The Portfolio Holder met with the Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator to discuss the work being done with young people in the Borough, and the support available to teenage mothers and fathers.

The Portfolio Holder later attended the Children's Trust Board meeting.

(c) Thursday 20 March

The Portfolio Holder visited Heathfield Primary School to meet with the Headteacher, staff and pupils at the school.

(d) Thursday 27 March

The Portfolio Holder attended a woodcraft training course being offered as part of the alternative curriculum offer for 14-19.

(e) Friday 28 March

The Portfolio Holder attended the launch of “Evolution” – formerly the Council for Voluntary Service – at its offices in Church Row, Darlington.

(f) Thursday 3 April

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to attend the Tees Valley Further Education Awards at Tall Trees Hotel, Yarm, as a guest of Darlington College. The Portfolio Holder thought it was a pleasure to join the night of celebration for both young people and adults in further education, where 3 young people from Darlington were nominated for awards.

(g) Friday 4 April

The Portfolio Holder visited Carmel RC College to meet with the Headteacher, tour the school facilities and talk with young people at the college.

The Portfolio Holder later visited Corporation Road Primary School to observe and participate in the Maths Week lessons for children and adults, part of a week long initiative working with the community.

The Portfolio Holder attended the Corporate Parenting Panel in the afternoon.

(h) Friday 11 April

The Portfolio Holder sat on the Academy Advisory Group.

(i) Friday 25 April

The Portfolio Holder visited both Abbey Junior and Abbey Infant schools to meet with staff and young people and felt privileged to view the new sports hall.

The Portfolio Holder later visited St Teresa’s RC Primary school to talk to the children and listen to issues affecting teachers and staff at the school.

A visit to Skerne Park Primary School followed, where again The Portfolio Holder was impressed by the facilities available to young people and the community at the Coleridge Centre.

The Portfolio Holder later met with representatives from the IDEA and ANEC to discuss the role of Lead Members in the region.

(j) Saturday 26 April

The Portfolio Holder facilitated the Talking Together session at the Education Village.

(k) Tuesday 29 April

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to attend Cabinet in the Community at Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College where students put questions to members of Cabinet as part of raising awareness of local democracy.

(l) Wednesday 30 April

The Portfolio Holder chaired the Summer term meeting of Chairs of school governing bodies.

(m) Thursday 8 May

The Portfolio Holder attended a Locality Workshop, one of a series taking place in the Borough as part of the delivery of the Locality Strategy. These events bring together schools, stakeholders, agencies and practitioners working with children and young people to discuss provision of services within their specific Locality, and how best to use funding allocated to that area.

The Portfolio Holder later attended a very useful meeting of the Children's Trust.

Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People