
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) **National Review of 14-19 Funding** – Cabinet approved arrangements for the development of proposals to transfer funding for 16-18 year olds from the Learning and Skills Council to local authorities.
 - (b) **14-19 Commissioning Strategy** – Cabinet approved submission to the Department for Children, Schools and Families of proposals to work in collaboration with other Tees Valley local authorities to secure future education, training and skills development.
 - (c) **Proposal to amalgamate Dodmire Infant and Nursery School with Dodmire Junior School** - Cabinet agreed the to commence the statutory process to amalgamate Dodmire Infant and Nursery School with Dodmire Junior School and to the establishment of a temporary governing body for the proposed new primary school.
 - (d) **Primary Strategy for Change** – Cabinet approved the Primary Strategy for Change and approved capital projects for submission to the Department for Children, Schools and Families.
 - (e) **School holiday and term dates** – Cabinet agreed school holiday and term dates for 2009/10 and 2010/2011.
2. Developments in Children’s Services
 - (a) Children ‘looked after’ by Darlington Borough Council

There are currently 134 children and young people ‘looked after’ by the Authority (as at 31 July 2008). This is a slight reduction on the last figures presented (140 at May 2008).

During July, seven young people ceased to be ‘looked after’ and three young people became ‘looked after’. Young people may move on to a long term placement home with extended family or through the adoption process. Others may return home to family, once relationships have improved.

Young people who have become ‘looked after’ during July have been teenagers. Often behaviour problems lead to parental rejection. Intensive work is put in place to try and return these young people home as quickly as possible. Currently 31 young people in the ‘looked after’ provision are aged over 15 years.
 - (b) Child Protection

On 31st July 2008 there were 52 children and young people who had a child protection plan – by 18th August 2008 this figure had increased to 64.

31st July 2008

52 children and young people have a protection plan.

Main reason for plan:	Physical abuse	16
	Neglect	35
	Emotional abuse	1
	Sexual abuse	0

Age breakdown:	Unborn	2
	0-4 years	22
	5-10 years	19
	11-15 years	9
	16 years+	0

In the past 12 months there has been an increase in children and young people where protection is of concern. In September 2007, 37 children had a protection plan, with the highest figure of 72 in May 2008. Detailed analysis of the cases is taking place, to provide a basis for increasing joint work with universal and early intervention services, where issues of neglect can be addressed at an early stage.

(c) Children with Disabilities

Central Government has produced guidance – “Aiming High for Disabled Children” – with a focus on improving short break provision for families. In conjunction with partner agencies and families, a Darlington Disability Strategy and action plan has been produced – the draft is currently out for consultation.

(d) The School Condition Group met on 28th August in line with the guidance set out in the Local Authority Procedures and Protocols for Engagement with schools.

(e) The Key Stage 4 Engagement Centre relocated to the former McMullen House site catering for students educated other than at school.

(f) National Challenge plans were submitted to the Department for Children, Schools and Families ahead of the nationally agreed schedule in respect of Haughton and Longfield schools.

(g) The Newly Qualified Teachers Celebration event was held at Headlam Hall with David Haskett from Haughton School was Secondary NQT of the Year, and Haley Wells from North Road Primary School gained the accolade of Primary NQT of the year. 47 teachers completed their NQT year in 2008 in Darlington.

(h) Common assessment framework – 1200 practitioners now trained and over 100 CAFs received. An interim evaluation shows that 49 services have been involved in teams around the child meetings.

(i) Locality profiles which bring together a diverse range of data about children and young people is now being refreshed and will be shared with all practitioners involved in supporting young people in the next few months.

(j) The Youth Service is working with partners to develop a bid for ‘Myplace’ funding. This capital funding is aimed to offer improved youth facilities in the Borough.

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

(a) Friday 4th July

I met with the School Council at Heathfield Primary School and received an interesting powerpoint presentation on aspects of school life.

I met with the Manager of the YMCA at their town centre building, and visited the facilities and service provision they offer.

I later visited the Phoenix Centre to meet with the manager and staff of the behaviour support team.

(b) Wednesday 9th July

I attended the ‘Transforming Schools, Transforming Lives’ event organised by Children’s Services at Darlington Football Club, the keynote speaker being Sir Bruce Liddington, Schools Commissioner at the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

I later met with a representative from the Association of North East Councils for a briefing on the Regional Improving Efficiency Programme.

(c) Thursday 10th July

I visited the Education Village to see a project being run by Year 7 pupils.

I later chaired a meeting of the Children’s Trust.

(d) Thursday 17th July

I met with Cllr Alex Cunningham, Lead Member for Children’s Services at Stockton Council to discuss areas of mutual interest.

(e) Friday 18th July

I attended as an observer, a meeting of the Groundwork Steering Group.

(f) Monday 21st July

In my capacity as Chair of the Children’s Trust, I attended a meeting of the Executive Group of Darlington Partnership.

(g) Friday 25th July

I met with Malcolm Wright, a journalist from ITV to discuss a national project that he is leading on which involves developing resources for deaf and hearing impaired children.

I then visited McNay Street Children’s Centre to meet the manager and staff as well as those children and parents accessing this provision.

I later attended South Park where children and parents from Dodmire Children’s Centre were having a picnic event.

I then visited Crown Street library for an update from staff on this service provision and plans for events during the summer school holidays.

(h) Wednesday 27th August

I attended a meeting of the Play Strategy Group, in my capacity as the ‘Play Champion’ for the Borough.

(i) Thursday 28th August

I visited Dunrobin children’s home where I met residential social workers and some of the young people who live there.

(j) Friday 29th August

I visited Carmel RC College to meet with the Headteacher and congratulate him on the excellent A level and GCSE results this year. We also discussed developments in the College this coming term.

I met with officers to discuss developments for reducing the number of school leavers designated as “NEET” - ‘Not in education, employment or training’.

I met senior managers from Darlington PCT for an update on children and young people’s health issues.

I later visited the childcare duty team at Central House.

(k) Monday 1st September

In my capacity as Chair of the Children’s Trust, I attended a meeting of the Executive Group of Darlington Partnership.

I later visited Gilling children’s home where I met residential social workers and some of the young people who live there.

(l) Friday 5th September

I joined the induction session for Children’s Services held at Eastbourne Sports Complex to meet with new members of staff who have joined the department.

I later visited St John’s CE Primary School to meet with the Headteacher, staff and pupils in the new school term.

(m) Wednesday 10th September

I attended a meeting of Darlington Partnership Board at Maidendale House.

(n) Tuesday 16th September

I visited Salters Lane Children’s Home – to meet with the staff and young people who reside there.

Councillor Chris McEwan
Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People