
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

Purpose of the Report

1. Since the last meeting of Council and under the Children and Young People Portfolio, Cabinet has received the following:
 - (a) **School Admission Arrangements** – We approved the Local Authority’s Admission Policy for the 2012/13 academic year and co-ordinated arrangements for all schools within the borough.
 - (b) **Northwood School Project** – We gave approval to the funding recommended in the funding strategy for the Northwood Capital Project and that all necessary delegations be granted to the Director of People to manage the next steps of the project. The Assistant Director (Resources) was also authorised to procure necessary legal and technical expertise and to take steps to resolve the contractor’s claim in the Council’s interest.
 - (c) **Hurworth Secondary School Academy Order** – We received a report on the Academy Order issued by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools regarding the conversion of Hurworth Secondary School from a Community School to Academy status. On its conversion to Academy status this Authority will cease to maintain the School and the Director of People has been authorised to liaise with the Hurworth Governing Body to negotiate and agree the transfer arrangements and arrange a conversion date on or after 1st April, 2011 in line with the Secretary of State’s direction.

Schools

2. I am pleased to inform Members that officers and schools have been in dialogue since the start of the budget consultation in November, with a view to securing for schools the services they most value at a time of overall budget reductions. Thanks to the leadership teams at the Education Village, Carmel College, Corporation Road School, Dodmire School, Hurworth Primary School and Mount Pleasant Primary, a group of services transferred to the direct management of schools from April 2011. The Headteacher of Hummersknott School is leading a further review of services on behalf of the local authority, which may lead to further services being led and managed by schools from September 2011. Under the new arrangements, Corporation Road Primary School will manage services for children who use English as a second language, Dodmire School will run a service for Traveller children, Hurworth Primary and Mount Pleasant Primary will manage services for children who have sensory impairments and Carmel College will manage training programmes for school leadership.

This policy preserves important facilities for all schools in Darlington and reflects the strength of cooperation outlined in the schools@onedarlington concept operating in the Borough since 2008. Each school managing a service will do it on behalf of all of the schools in the Borough and children requiring support will still benefit from the service, regardless of which school they attend.

Children Looked After

3. Numbers continue to rise and currently are 186. The figures have been relatively stable at 180 for the past months, but admission of a large sibling group has led to this recent increase. Looked After Children figures have increased regionally and nationally, Darlington has seen a very steep increase over the past 12mths. Focus of the newly reconfigured services is to target services to those families and young people where a cluster of risk factors exist and families are struggling to remain intact.
4. Thresholds for care are based on legislation, and through Court and inspection they are regularly audited. The thresholds within Darlington are in line with legal definitions and judgements - this is reflected nationally.

Child Protection

5. The current figure is 101 which is a far higher number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan than usual. Neglect continues to be the main category. The Local Safeguarding Children Board has Neglect as its focus for 2011 and all agencies will work together to improve community support in this area. The increase has an impact on front line services which are currently working to full capacity.

Darlington Children's Trust Update

6. The Children and Young People's Plan drives forward the priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy 'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. Darlington's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) needs to be refreshed for July 2011. Whilst the regulations for producing a CYPP have been revoked Darlington Children's Trust Board agreed at the September 2010 board meeting to proceed with developing a new CYPP for 2011-2014. Over the next couple of months stakeholder consultation about the proposed priorities for the new Children and Young People will be undertaken.

During January and February 2011 comprehensive consultation was carried out with a variety of children and young people across the town. Contact was made with schools, youth clubs and youth projects across the borough and an interactive workshop based session plan was developed and delivered in settings in order to find out the views and opinions of the young people. DarlingtonE-view Digital Media Youth Work team agreed to film, photograph and take audio podcast recordings in a number of the sessions with the children and young people. 260 children and young people were involved in the consultation process. The settings accessed included HummersknottSchool, Carmel-School, HurworthSchool, Eastbourne Youth Club, Skerne Park Youth Club, Middleton St George Youth Club, The Dolphin Centre Chill out Café, Friday night drop-in, and the Council of Schools Councils.

Results showed that the young people would like to see the CYPP on a Facebook page so that they can comment on it and that it can be updated, making it a live and interactive tool for them. It was also suggested that face to face communications and presentations in schools would be a good way for young people to hear about the new CYPP 2011-2014.

7. Since the last meeting of Council, I have :-
- (a) attended and offered a verbal report on activities of the Children's Trust to the Exexecutive of the Darlington Local Strategic Partnership;
 - (b) attended various briefings with the Director of People;
 - (c) attended a primary school town-wide Netball Tournament at Longfield School;
 - (d) attended a briefing session with the former Assistant Director of Children's Services, Gill Walker, on social enterprise, community development and community centres;
 - (e) attended a social event organised by young people and families with their Spanish exchange visitors;
 - (f) Chaired a Children's Trust Executive meeting; and
 - (g) met with Darlington MP, Jenny Chapman to discuss issues affecting young people.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People