
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

SUMMARY REPORT

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

Schools Converting to Academy Status

2. The Academies Act 2010 received Royal Assent on 27th July, 2010 and Governors of 11 schools in the Borough have applied for academy status. Reid Street, Bishopton, Redmarshall and Heighington, Alderman Leach, Hummersknott, Abbey Road Infant and Junior and the Education Village will cease to be maintained by this authority from 1st July, 2011; Longfield and Abbey Road Infant and Junior will cease to be maintained from 1st August, 2011; and Branksome will cease to be from 1st January, 2012. Cabinet have delegated powers to the Director of People and the Director of Resources to liaise with the Department for Education and the Governing Bodies of the schools to negotiate and agree the transfer arrangements and to enter into the special agreements pertaining to the PFI nature of one of the conversions, in line with the Department for Education's standard practice and guidance. The final decision to allow the applications and issue an Academy Order lies with the Secretary of State.

Haughton Children's Centre

3. The Haughton Children's Centre was opened on 25th May by the Mayor, Councillor Lee Vasey. The centre in Salter's Lane South is the sixth Children's Centre in the Town offering support and advice to families with children under five.
4. The Children's Centre, funded by £566,000 of Government money, has been created in a former children's home which was closed in July 2009.
5. Children's Centres aim to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in addition to services that can be accessed by all families in the community.
6. Children's Centres provide childcare, early education, family and health services as well as training and employment advice for parents. Services include advice and support; childcare information, family support, health services, links to the Job Centre and target support to vulnerable families.

Darlington's NEET (not in education, employment and training) Performance

7. Despite removal of the national indicator set, the DfE continued the measurement of the NEET and 'Not Knowns' figures as per arrangements developed and set by the DCSF.

Data is captured for young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, training or employment; across three months November 2010, December 2010, and January 2011; against the cohort of all young people 'in learning' within the Local Authority; and on the basis of a mathematical formula, an adjusted NEET figure and percentage is produced per each month. This is then averaged across the 3 month period to produce a Local Authority's NEET figure.

- For the period November – January 2011, Darlington's NEET figure was 6.7 per cent and the 'not known' figure was 1.3 per cent. This compares with the November – January 2010 figures of 7.1 per cent and 2.4 per cent respectively. Therefore, there was a slight (but significant given the continued economic situation) fall in the NEET figures and sustained maintenance of a very low 'not known' figure (which means that the data held is very accurate and robust). In comparison, within the north east, the NEET/'not known' figure for 2011 was 7.9 per cent and 4.5 per cent; and nationally the figures were 6.0 per cent and 4.4 per cent.

Learners

- A permanent Headteacher has been appointed to the Phoenix Centre. Kay Kelly, who has been acting Head was appointed by the Centre's management committee in May. The Phoenix Centre also had its third monitoring visit from OfSTED in May. It is pleasing to note that progress since the last monitoring visit was judged to be good in all three areas scrutinised: safeguarding, pupil progress and leadership.
- I am pleased to report that national figures on attendance show that Darlington's position has improved in comparison with other authorities and statistical neighbours. The table below shows how our rankings for absence compare between 2009 and 2010. There is still work to be done, particularly in the primary sector, where absence rates continue to be high in Key Stage 1. The introduction of Family Support Teams will contribute to challenge and improvement in this area.

Darlington's Rankings Compared To The Other Local Authorities									
	Total Absence			Persistent Absentees					
			Ranking Change	Missing >27 sessions*			Missing >63 sessions**		
	Autumn 2010	Autumn 2009		Autumn 2010	Autumn 2009	Ranking Change	Autumn 2010	Autumn 2009	Ranking Change
Primary	81	108	27	63	127	64	147	152	5
Secondary	68	122	54	67	114	47	39	53	14
Primary & Secondary	66	124	58	62	126	64	97	137	40

Rankings
out of
152 LAs

* Absent for >20% of the
Autumn term

** Have already been absent for
>20% of the academic year

11. The allocations of school places for September 2011 have been made known to parents. Due to lower cohort numbers this year, more parents have been able to secure a place in the school of their first preference. 88 per cent of primary pupils and 94 per cent of secondary pupils were offered first preferences. 96 per cent of primary pupils and 98 per cent of secondary pupils were offered a place in one of their stated preferences for a school. The Council will retain the responsibility for coordinated admissions procedures in future, for all tax-payer funded schools in Darlington, regardless of Governance.
12. The Government has opened up consultation on Admissions and Appeals, having published a new draft code of practice. The Local Admissions Forum and Headteachers and Governors of schools will be responding to the draft, particularly with regard to Fair Access protocols for pupils who, for a variety of reasons, are hard to place into mainstream schools.
13. Officers of the Authority are coordinating responses from schools, parents and voluntary organisations to the green paper on special educational needs *Support & Aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability*. If enacted, the green paper's proposals would introduce big changes into the way the local authority works with parents and the Health Authority to commission services for children who have special needs.

Children Looked After

14. Darlington Council's Adoption Service has been rated as Good by Ofsted. The Service, which had previously been rated as Satisfactory, underwent an Ofsted inspection in May this year. Darlington Council's Adoption Service is part of a range of local authority services which seek to promote the upbringing of children by their families in accordance with the spirit and provision of the Children Act 1989. Where this is not possible, the local authority undertakes, through the Adoption Service, to find a permanent alternative family in which the child is given the opportunity of a secure and stable environment, taking into account the child's specific needs and circumstances.
15. The Adoption Service works with prospective adopters from initial interest in adoption through to training, assessment and approval to the placing of children. The Service also offers support and guidance to adopters to help children settle into their new lives and surroundings and to help adopters adjust to life with their child/children. The Ofsted report noted that the Adoption Service operates an effective adoption panel; offers a positive approach to equality and diversity and works with prospective adopters approved from a wide range of backgrounds.
16. The report goes on to say that the adoption service has a robust safe guarding policy and procedure and ensures strong links with child and adolescent mental health services. The report also commended on the positive approach to education set in place by foster carers and continued by adopters.
17. Since 2009 the number of children looked after by the Local Authority has continued rise:
 - (a) March 2009 – 130 children looked after (59 per 10,000 population)
 - (b) March 2010 – 147 children looked after (66.8 per 10,000 population)
 - (c) March 2011 – 188 children looked after (86 per 10,000 population).

18. The current figure is 192 children looked after (87 per 10,000 population) and as with children subject to child protection plans this puts a huge demands on resources.

Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)

19. There was a meeting of CPP on 3rd June 2011. The young people ‘looked after’ by the Local Authority, presented to the Panel on local, regional and national work the ‘Darlo Care Crew’ (Children in Care Council) is involved in.

Child Protection

20. Over the last 12 months, the number of children subject to child protection plans remained relatively stable. However, when comparing figures over the last 2 years, there is a marked increase.

31st March 2009	31st March 2010	31st March 2011
79	88	102

21. This is both a national and a local trend which has a significant impact upon resources at all levels.
22. In Darlington the highest category of abuse continues to be neglect with 53 per cent in that category at the end of March 2011. Consequently, Darlington Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) has made neglect its priority theme over the next 12 months.
23. In September 2010, the unannounced Ofsted inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements noted that ‘there is a prompt and appropriate response to safeguard children and young people.’ However, the burden of referrals from the police relating to incidents of domestic abuse continues to be an issue. There has been a recent audit of referrals from partners to assess the appropriateness of the referral, and the quality of information received in informing safeguarding decisions, has recently been completed, and will be an area of work for the DSCB subgroup.
24. When looking at the risk factors associated with children being made subject of a child protection plan, domestic abuse was a factor in 65 per cent of all cases between 2010 -2011. The Vulnerability Strategic Group is currently completing a needs assessment for Darlington to identify and commission services to tackle domestic abuse.

Darlington Children’s Trust Update

25. The Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) is the single, overarching plan for all services, which directly affect children and young people in Darlington. It demonstrates how the local authority and all relevant partners will integrate provision to improve well-being across all five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes and focuses on specific challenges and priorities. Whilst the statutory regulations for producing a CYPP have been revoked Darlington Children’s Trust Board agreed at their September 2010 board meeting to proceed with a new CYPP for the period 2011-2014.

26. In order to ensure that the new Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014 was informed by young people a consultation and action project was developed led by eVOLution and the local authority. From January to April 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. In total thus far 380 children and young people have participated in these consultation workshops. 372 of the 380 young people that were contacted during the consultation process had a Facebook profile. The steering group decided that a Facebook fan page should be developed in order to communicate the CYPP to other young people across the borough. The steering group decided that the name for both the fan page and the project should be 'The Blueprint', with the strap line 'Our Generation, Our Future, Our Plan'.

Meetings

27. Since the last meeting of Council, I have:

- (a) Attended Eastbourne Park Community Festivities;
- (b) Visited the primary school cricket games at Darlington Cricket Club;
- (c) Met with the Editor of The Northern Echo to discuss issues involving children & young people;
- (d) Attended briefings with the Director of People and children's services staff;
- (e) Met with the Head Teacher at Hurworth Academy;
- (f) Attended the official opening of Green Park's community play equipment;
- (g) Met with the Dolphin Centre Manager to discuss issues affecting young people and their families;
- (h) Attended the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee;
- (i) Met with organisers of "Pure Drumming" youth drumming organisation run out of The Coleridge Centre;
- (j) Attended and addressed the Darlington Partnership Board;
- (k) Toured Branksome Science College and met with the Head Teacher;
- (l) Attended Alderman Leach's Academy celebration event;
- (m) Attended a schools choral festival at the Sage;
- (n) Attended and addressed the Schools@oneDarlington commitment event;
- (o) Attended and performed in Carmel College's end of year show;
- (p) Attended the launch of the Foster Care Association;
- (q) Attended and addressed West End Partnership; and
- (r) Chaired the Children's Trust Executive meeting.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People