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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO**

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**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) **Schools Converting to Academy Status** – We approved delegated powers be given to the Director of People and Resources to liaise with the Department of Education and Governing bodies of schools converting to academy status and to agree the transfer arrangements to complete any requisite transfers of land, in line with the Secretary of State’s direction.

**Developments in Children’s Services**

**Payments by Results for Children’s Centres trial**

2. Darlington has been awarded the Payments by Results for Children’s Centres trial. There are 26 local authorities taking part, Darlington is the only authority in the North East of England.
3. The trial in Darlington is based on supporting mothers who exhibit a number of risk factors which may result in their child becoming looked after (substance misuse, addictions, etc.). Over the past four years 57 babies under one year of age have come into the Local Authority care, in the year 10/11 19 babies came into care 17 of them at birth or within the first few weeks of life the remaining two were about 10 months old. We are looking to introduce new ways to identify these very vulnerable families-to-be at the earliest possible time and then to try and support them with interventions that are built upon evidence based practice or that we know has impact. The aim is to use Area 2 (McNay Street and Haughton Children’s Centres including Red Hall) as the pilot area and the other two areas as control areas, where practitioners will use processes to identify and support vulnerable families. We are looking at introducing the national measures that the Department for Education want us to trial across all of our Phase 1 and 2 centres (excluding George Dent) along with local measure that we will introduce to measure impact of the trial.
4. Cost benefits will be calculated by total costs of interventions against the known cost a child coming into care.

## **Schools**

5. On 20th October the DfE published the national figures and Local Authority (LA) performances for the following performance indicators:

### 2011 Key Stage 4 (GCSE) National Comparisons

6. Darlington's improvement rate (from 2010 to 2011) at 5+ A\*-C and at 5+ A\*-C (inc. GCSE English & Maths) ranked against the other 151 LAs shows that Darlington is the most improved LA in these two measures.
7. Darlington is top of the national league table for the percentage of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at A\*-C at 92% of pupils meeting this standard.
8. Darlington is top of the national league tables for improvement in both 5 GCSEs at A\*-C and at 5 GCSEs at A\*-C (inc English and Maths)
9. Darlington is top of the national league table for the percentage of entered students achieving 2 passes in Science at grades A\*-C
10. Darlington is 4th in the national league table for improvement in the percentage of pupils making the expected progress in English
11. Darlington is 6th in the national league tables for the percentage of pupils achieving any passes at GCSE

### 2011 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) National Comparisons

12. Darlington's performance compares well to the other LAs and National performance, apart from in 'Numbers as Labels and for Counting', 'Physical Development', and the performance of Darlington's Lowest 20% achieving pupils. The majority of rankings are up on 2010's positions.
13. Darlington's performance for % of children achieving a good level of development (6+ in PSED and CLLD, and scoring 78 overall) ranks 16th out of 152 LAs (up 40 places on 2010) and is above national by 6%, and is the 2nd highest compared to Statistical and Regional Neighbours. However Darlington's performance at narrowing the gap between the lowest 20% achieving pupils and the cohort median has fallen 8 places this year to 147th out of 152 LAs, and is below national performance by 4%. Compared to Statistical and Regional Neighbours only Middlesbrough has a wider gap.

### Autumn 2010 to Spring 2011 National Absence Comparisons

14. Darlington's 2010-11 attendance performance has improved on 2009-10; Primary attendance increased by 0.3 per cent to 94.8 per cent, with Secondary attendance increasing by 0.6 per cent to 93.6 per cent. The percentage of persistent absentees (missing >45 sessions / 15 per cent or more absence) in 2010-11 has decreased by 1.4 per cent (98 pupils) in Primary compared to 2009-10, with Secondary persistent absence improving too by 1.6

per cent (94 pupils).

15. Based on DfE's old threshold (missing >63 sessions / 20 per cent or more absence), Darlington's persistent absentee rate has improved by 0.6 per cent (45 pupils) in Primary and by 0.4 per cent (25 pupils) in Secondary.

### **Children Looked After**

16. Since September 2011, Ofsted Inspections have now taken place for a further two mainstream Children's Homes, completing the round of Key Inspections for 2011. The Ofsted ratings for all the Homes are now as follows: Harewood Lodge - 'outstanding'; Dunrobin, Gilling and Eldon - all 'good'.
17. In the period between 1st April and 21st October 2011, 9 children were adopted and 6 were subject to Special Guardianship Orders. This outcome exceeds the performance requirements for permanence for this period.
18. The number of children Looked After by Darlington Borough Council was 194 (88 per 10,000 population) on 21st October 2011. This represents a decrease of three children since 31 August 2011.

### **Child Protection**

19. By the end of September, 90 children were subject to child protection plans, with 51 children placed under the category of neglect, 26 under emotional abuse, 12 under physical abuse, and one child as a result of sexual abuse. When aggregating the data on age groups, 36% of all children subject to a child protection plan are aged between 0-5 years old, and made subject to a plan as a result of neglect.
20. Domestic abuse continues to be a significant risk factor within child protection. 50% of all children made subject to a plan since April 2011, were at risk as a result of domestic abuse.
21. Parental attendance at Child Protection Conferences remains high, and over the last quarter 96% of parents attended Initial Conferences, and Child Protection Reviews also had very good participation with 93% attendance.
22. The Review and Development Unit has recently collated feedback from parents and professionals attending conference to improve the conferencing process. The feedback showed a significant improvement in children understanding and being kept informed about protection planning, and following the restructuring of conferences, parents clearly valued spending specific time with the Chair before and after the meeting.
23. Similarly, in relation to professionals attending Conferences, there has been a significant improvement in terms of preparing for the meeting and understanding what is expected of them during the conference, as well as ensuring all professionals take ownership of the protection plan.

## **Darlington Children's Trust Update**

24. Following a report to the Children's Trust Board on 19th August it was agreed to develop an enquiry group to examine the multiple impacts of the national policy reviews on young people aged 16-25 years old. The focus of the group would be on taking a proactive approach to determine with all partners how we can together mitigate these multiple impacts for this age group of young people.
25. The enquiry group met on the 12th September 2011 and included representatives from 16 agencies including Secondary Schools, Darlington College, Queen Elizabeth and Carmel Sixth Forms, Job Centre Plus, 14-19 Partnership, Local Authority, Health, Probation Services and the Youth Offending Service.
26. The group agreed to:
  - (a) Ensure the scope of the enquiry group was not just Darlington's current NEET population but was broader to look at the 16-25 year age group and young people on the cusp of becoming NEETs;
  - (b) Undertake a piece of research which examines the multiple impacts for this age group re: national policy changes. This research will include financial mapping and some case studies that evidence the challenges young people are facing to remain in education, employment and training at the moment;
  - (c) Undertake some work with young people through the Children's Trust Participation group to capture directly from young people the issues that they are finding challenging, i.e. transport to college, purchasing equipment for courses, tuition fees for university etc.;
  - (d) Pull together a hardship fund with all partners contributing to this resource that would be administered by the Sixth forms and Darlington College to allocate to young people who are at risk of leaving education, employment and training now due to financial constraints such as not being able to afford the appropriate equipment etc... It would be at the discretion of the Sixth forms and Darlington College to utilise this resource to meet the needs of the young people they felt would be at imminent risk.
27. The timescales for this area of work will be end of December 2011.

## **Working with Complex and Troubled Families**

28. The Family Intervention Team (FIT) works with some of the most challenging families in Darlington to provide the support they need to make positive and sustainable changes in their lives. We will work with families where interventions from various agencies have failed to result in long term change. The families could be on the brink of eviction or face enforcement proceedings or be at risk of having their children being made subject to Child Protection Plans or having their children taken into care. Additionally, their behaviour could be having a significant negative effect on the community around them. The FIT works with families to provide them with the intensive support they need to improve the life chances of

their children and have a more positive impact upon their communities.

29. The FIT offers a Whole Family Approach which is both intensive and intrusive in order to manage the family's problems and determine the issues which underpin their behaviour. Alongside the family a plan is developed which identifies the actions of all those involved whether it be family members, FIT staff and any other statutory or third sector agencies.

### **Meetings**

30. Since the last meeting of Council, in addition to regular briefings with the Director and Assistant Director of Children's Services, some of the activities I have undertaken include:-
- (a) Meeting with and addressing newly qualified social workers,
  - (b) Attended an integrated commissioning meeting with health partners,
  - (c) Met with a university student to discuss her research project on early intervention,
  - (d) Chaired two meetings of the Children's Trust Executive,
  - (e) Attended a healthy eating "Sunday Lunch" dinner celebration at Skerne Park Primary School,
  - (f) Attended Corporate Parenting training,
  - (g) Attended a briefing on Dodmire School developments,
  - (h) Visited the Longfield Academy 3G pitch,
  - (i) Attended a meeting to discuss the "Skills Agenda" in Darlington with employers, head teachers, representatives from the colleges, Darlington Partnership, officers and Cllr. McEwan,
  - (j) Attended a Darlington Partnership Executive meeting,
  - (k) Attended and addressed a meeting of SACRE (Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education) at Darlington College,
  - (l) Addressed a "Talking Together" event and met with young people to discuss the Children and Young People's Plan,
  - (m) Met with General Practitioners,
  - (n) Attended a local community book club,
  - (o) Took part in a BBC radio interview on direct payments to families with disabled young people,
  - (p) Attended a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee,
  - (q) Attended Carmel Christmas Fayre,
  - (r) Met with students from Hummersknott Academy's cycle club to discuss their upcoming charity cycle from Lands End to John O'Groats,
  - (s) Visted Eldon's Children's home,
  - (t) Attended the Darlington 4-Star Awards ceremony,
  - (u) Attended a celebration with staff at Carmel College to mark their becoming an academy,
  - (v) Attended the Darlington Partnership Board meeting at Broken Scar,
  - (w) Addressed (as guest speaker) the Hurworth Academy prize giving,
  - (x) Attended consultation events to discuss issues with students at Carmel College, a Catholic Academy, QE Sixth Form College and Darlington College,
  - (y) Attended various briefings on safeguarding issues, and
  - (z) Attended a national child poverty conference at the Sage in Gateshead.

**Councillor Cyndi Hughes**  
**Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People**

Councillor Hughes

Overview of Children and Young People Portfolio  
Council 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2011

