
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:

Annual Assessment of Darlington Children's Services – We noted the Annual Assessment judgement of Children's Services for 2011 and referred the assessment to the Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny for information and consideration. The Ofsted summative judgement of services provided within Darlington is that the services are performing well which is an improvement on the assessment from 2010 where services were performing adequately.

Developments in Children's Services

Darlington Children's Trust

2. **16-25 Research** - Members of the Children's Trust Board have been meeting Young people to listen to their concerns about the challenges they are currently facing and 11 focus groups have taken place with 89 young people in a variety of settings between November and December 2011 to capture this feedback. Young People highlighted that careers advice should start earlier and end later. It was felt that young people would benefit from career guidance before they choose their options in year nine, as this could have a bearing on their future path and that young people up to the age of 25 would benefit from having careers advice to assist them with decisions upon leaving University. Some of the young people had part time jobs, while a large proportion were looking for part time jobs to provide additional income but were finding it difficult to find employment, with many feeling that social networks were more important in getting a job than experience or knowledge; 'it's not what you know, it's who you know'. Two of the biggest concerns for the participants of these focus groups with regard to work were the current recession and its impact on the labour market and opportunities for young people, and the number of employers 'taking a risk' on employing young people, leaving many young people with a wealth of qualifications but no work experience, this was especially pertinent to apprentices who were struggling to find placements to progress onto Level 3 of their apprenticeship.
3. In addition to the focus groups that took place with young people, consultation also took place with stakeholders to gather their views of the reforms and the impacts that they have noticed thus far or expect to see in the future. Five meetings were arranged with Carmel Sixth Form College; Darlington College; Longfield Academy; Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College (QE), and Teesside University. The colleges felt that students would now become consumers of HE, looking around for the best deals and for what was on offer with students now acting as consumers. As such it was felt that students should be supported to look at

courses which lead to employment and/or placement to maximise the opportunities for gaining employment upon graduation.

4. **Common Assessment Framework in Darlington** - In the last month work has been underway to review Common Assessment Framework in Darlington. This has included a workshop with providers in Darlington to capture their feedback about the current process for Common Assessment Framework in Darlington. In week commencing 23rd January, a rapid process improvement workshop was held with key partners to implement some key actions to ensure the Common Assessment Framework process in Darlington is improved.

Schools

5. A number of schools across the Authority have undergone inspections from Ofsted since my last report. Northwood Primary School was visited by Ofsted in the autumn term and was found to be 'good'. Haughton Community School (part of The Education Village) was found to be 'satisfactory' but with a 'good' capacity for sustained improvement. The Pupil Referral Unit had a monitoring visit by HMI and I am pleased to report that 'good' progress has been made since the previous monitoring inspection.
6. Carmel RC College converted to Academy status on 1st November 2011 and has been renamed as Carmel, A Catholic Academy. Darlington School of Maths and Science has become an Academy on 1st January 2012. The local authority continues to work with The Education Village who are progressing with their application for Academy status. Should this conversion be successful, Darlington will be the first local authority in the country where all the Secondary schools have converted to Academy status.
7. There have been a number of recent Headteacher appointments within Darlington Schools. Ann Dixon has been appointed as Headteacher at Firthmoor Primary School and Chris Peacock has been appointed as Headteacher of Holy Family Primary School. We welcome these colleagues to their Headteacher posts, although both are well known in Darlington as previous Deputy Headteachers at their respective schools.
8. The Authority has just published its strategy to support the Government's intention to Raise the Participation Age. The Education and Skills Act (ESA) 2008 increased the minimum age at which young people in England can leave learning, requiring them to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from 2013 and until their 18th birthday from 2015. The Authority's strategy outlines the coming changes and asks schools to increase their awareness raising activities with parents over the coming months.
9. National data shows that Darlington compares quite favourably to other areas in terms of participation rates. The most recent data (2009) shows that 90% of 16 and 17 year olds were engaged in learning, compared with 88% in the North-East and 89 per cent nationally. However, the latest figures (November 2011) for young people in Darlington who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is 11.7 per cent.

Children Looked After

10. Interim Ofsted Inspections were carried out in December 2011 in Children's Homes at Harewood Lodge and Dunrobin Close. The purpose of the inspections was to check on progress since the last full inspections, including monitoring how the Homes' staff consult with young people, their parents, carers and placing social workers. The outcome of the inspection in each of the Homes is that good progress is being made.
11. During the nine months ending on 31 December 2011, 14 children were adopted and nine were subject to Special Guardianship Orders. Performance in this area continues to exceed requirements.
12. The recent recruitment campaign to increase the number of foster carers has had a very positive response, resulting in nine sets of prospective foster carers commencing training, prior to being assessed.
13. The number of children Looked After by Darlington Borough Council was 193 (88 per 10,000 population) on 31st December 2011. This represents a decrease of one child since October 2011.

Child Protection

14. As of 4th January 2012 there were 104 child protection plans, the greatest increase being under the category of 'Neglect'.

15. Breakdown of categories:

- 67 - neglect
- 19 - physical abuse
- 17 - emotional abuse
- 1 - sexual abuse
- 1 - sexual abuse and neglect

Meetings

16. Since the last meeting of Council, I have addressed, chaired or attended :
 - (a) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 9th January, 2012;
 - (b) Meetings with Ofsted inspectors to discuss safeguarding issues;
 - (c) Official opening ceremony at C:the Box;
 - (d) Briefings with the Director of People and officers from Children's Services;
 - (e) Corporate Parenting Panel;
 - (f) Budget consultations;
 - (g) Cabinet;
 - (h) The Healthy Star Settings Seminar;
 - (i) Meetings at Darlington College;
 - (j) Executive of the Children's Trust;
 - (k) Christmas concert at Carmel College—a Catholic Academy;
 - (l) Darlington Partnership Board
 - (m) Meeting of the "Young Leaders" group;

- (n) Local Education Authority Governors Panel;
- (o) Meeting with Youth MP, Ben Million;
- (p) Meeting with North East Lead Members for Children and Young People facilitator;
- (q) Meeting with the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors of Hummersknott Academy;
- (r) Met with the Chief Executive of the Foundation Trust;
- (s) Met with interested parties interested in promoting the Darlington Foundation for Jobs;
and
- (t) Holocaust Memorial Day activities at the Arts Centre.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
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