
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:-

2013-14 School Admission Arrangements – Cabinet have approved the Local Authority's admission policy for the 2012/13 academic year and the co-ordinated arrangements for all schools in the Borough. The School Admissions Code was revised and came into effect on 1 February 2012 and amendments in line with the New Code have been drafted into these proposals. In line with the duty on the Local Authority, the Co-ordinated Admissions Scheme was forwarded to the Department of Education before the 15 April 2012 deadline.

Vibe Awards

2. The 17th Vibe Awards were held at the Civic Theatre on 15 March.
3. There were 161 nominations across 6 categories and over 100 young people attended to receive awards; additionally 80 young people performed in groups or individually. An audience of over 500 friends and family appreciated the performances and acknowledged achievements of those young people nominated.
4. This year the focus was recognition and celebration of the achievements of those young people who might not normally get to awards events and to acknowledge what might seem small steps to some are massive steps for others.
5. Nominations for young people came from a diverse range of agencies and teams and included Looked After Team, Youth Offending Service, Early Intervention and Prevention Team, Voluntary and Community Sector, and Schools and Colleges.
6. The event was attended by many from public sector and other community organisations and groups. The feedback from young people and those attending was the atmosphere was positive and a real 'buzz'.

Young Carers

7. I attended an event on 16 March which focussed on Young Carers. A memorandum of understanding was signed. Two young carers spoke about their own situation, this was extremely powerful and clearly illustrated the impact caring for a parent can have. The morning also included a presentation of short play by a professional theatre group which highlighted how important it is for parents, teachers and others to recognise the impact of

caring on young people and how the demands of excessive caring responsibilities can result in personal problems and lost opportunities for young people.

Corporate Parenting Panel

8. The Corporate Parenting Panel was held on 5 March at 'The Box'. Annual reports were presented from Education. Leaving Care services spoke about the positive outcomes for young people within their service. The Safeguarding and Looked After inspection was discussed and the action plan agreed. Two young people joined the meeting and spoke informally about their own situation and the Darlo' Care Crew.
9. A Task and Finish Review (established by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to which Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel were invited) at a meeting on 2 April discussed the Panel remit and terms of reference, in addition to how it ensures all Council Members are aware of the Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

Academies

10. The three schools that make up the Education Village, Springfield Primary School, Haughton Secondary School and Beaumont Hill Special School, converted to Academy status on 1 April 2012. St George's Church of England VA Primary School also converted on the same day. A number of primary schools in Cluster D also converted to academy status on 1 May 2012 – Firthmoor, Heathfield, Hurworth, and St John's Church of England VA as well as the two schools that make up the Federation of Mowden Schools – Mowden Infant School and Mowden Junior School.

School Admissions

11. 1000 allocation letters for children starting Secondary School in September were issued on 1 March. The number of preferences met was 982. Allocation letters for children starting Primary School in September were issued on 16th April. The number of preferences met were 1,199. Due to the significant demand for places this year a few schools have agreed to create places to meet demand. These additional places are in St Teresa's, Corporation Road and Heathfield Primary Schools.
12. Officers have already begun work to consider the details of a School Organisation Plan for Darlington. The development of which will include working with Headteachers and Governing Bodies over the coming months to develop priority areas for investment and the formulation of a strategic approach to manage the demand for school places in future years.

Children Looked After

13. At the end of February there were 196 children 'looked after' - between 31 December 2011 and 29 February 2012, 21 children became looked after. When looking at the age ranges when children become looked after, the two groups with the highest number are between 0 to 5 years, (53 per cent) and 13 to 16 years (19 per cent).
14. In the period between 1 April 2011 and 29 February 2012, twelve Special Guardianship Orders and sixteen Adoption Orders were granted for Children Looked After by Darlington Borough Council. We have been able to provide more permanency for children with these

orders than any other Council area in the North East regional during this period.

Looked After Accommodation

15. Ofsted inspected the Fostering Team during the week of 19 March. This involved meeting staff; foster carers and young people. The overall judgement was 'good' with 'outstanding' in the categories Enjoy and Achieve and Positive Contribution. Thanks to the service who is coping with continued pressure for placements during this time of high looked after numbers.
16. The three 'in house' Children's Homes have received a key judgement of 'good' with a recent interim judgement of 'making good progress' – the highest rating for an interim judgement. Harewood House has a key judgement of 'outstanding' with again an interim judgement of 'making good progress'.

Foster Care Charter

17. I attended an event on 12 March to sign a Charter between the Council and Foster carers clarifying expectations and standards for all parties. The event was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the work of foster carers in providing a safe and stable home for many of those young people for whom we are 'corporate parents'.

Child Protection

18. At the end of February 2012, 101 children were subject to child protection plans. This has reduced from 113 children in January. 70 children were placed under the category of neglect, 16 under emotional abuse, 14 under physical abuse, and one child as a result of sexual abuse. When aggregating the data on age groups, 41 per cent of all children subject to a child protection plan are aged between 0-5 years old under the category of Neglect.
19. Domestic abuse continues to be a significant risk factor within child protection. 65 per cent of all children made subject to a plan, were at risk as a result of domestic abuse.

Early Intervention

20. A review of the Common Assessment Framework has been underway and this has concluded with designing new leaflets for families, new processes and a much easier form for practitioners to complete with the family. Common Assessment Framework Champions are being created following this review.

Children's Trust

21. At the Children's Trust Board on 20 April 2012 a proposal to revise Darlington's partnership arrangements for Children and Young People was considered and agreed. The changes to Children's Trust arrangements are outlined in this report below:-

Under the new structures developed for Darlington Partnership a Public Sector Planning group has been established which includes as core members Public Health, Local Authority, PCT/CCG and Durham Constabulary. This group consists of all of the 'relevant partners' for a Children's Trust Board. This group has already established

formal relationships with the other sector groups, with the Darlington Partnership and with the Cabinet and Council and so it is proposed that the statutory duty for relevant partners to meet as a Children's Trust Board are met in the future through the Public Sector Planning group.

22. In addition, to ensure that partnership working goes beyond just the 'relevant partners', the Darlington Partnership Board would also receive bi-annual reports from the Lead Member for Children and Young People. Performance data would be presented to the Public Sector Planning Group and significant exceptions brought to the attention of the Darlington Partnership Board, as well as to the relevant agencies' executive bodies. There will also continue to be operational meetings taking place between partner organisations as and when required.

Meetings

23. Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended or addressed some of the following events :-

- (a) Informal Darlington Partnership networking event.
- (b) Met with the Darlo Care Crew.
- (c) Attended an informal meeting with staff at St. Augustine's Primary School.
- (d) Attended the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee Meeting.
- (e) Attended and Chaired a meeting of the Children's Trust.
- (f) Met with officers to discuss the use of 'Appropriate Adults' and young people in police custody.
- (g) Met with lead Members for Children's and Adults from other Tees Valley Local Authorities.
- (h) Met with the Chief Executive of Evolution to discuss future partnership collaboration.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Member with Portfolio for Children and Young People

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