
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

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

Developments in Children's Services

2. Darlington is in the process of developing a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) that will be a co-located service to enable improved information sharing between agreed partners in a secure environment. The aim is to reduce risks of significant harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults, and to agree the levels and type of support to be provided following an immediate assessment of aggregated information about the child/vulnerable adult/family situation. The launch of the MASH is planned for April 2013.

Schools

3. Academy Schools - on 1 February, Skerne Park Primary School converted to an Academy sponsored by Hummersknott Academy Trust. St Augustine's RC VA Primary School and Holy Family Primary School hope to convert to Academy status by 1 April 2013.
4. Ofsted Inspections - on 18 and 19 December, Abbey Junior School was inspected by Ofsted and was rated Grade 2: Good in every category. On 16 and 17 January, both St Aidan's Academy and Cockerton C of E Primary School were inspected by Ofsted. Both schools have been judged as Grade 3: Requiring further improvement. Both schools are developing and implementing robust improvement plans, with the support of LA and other schools in the Borough.
5. Head Teachers - at the beginning of January, Catherine McCoy joined Darlington as the new Principal of St Aidan's Academy and John Armitage started as the Head Teacher at Rydal Primary School (formerly Dodmire).

Children Looked After

6. The number of children Looked After by Darlington Borough Council was 198 on 31 January 2013. This figure represents five fewer children than at 30 November 2012.

7. Ofsted Interim Inspections have taken place at Eldon and Gilling Children's Homes. Both homes were rated as "making good progress" since their Key Inspections in 2012 when they were rated as "good".

Child Protection

8. By the end of December 2012, 107 children were subject to a child protection plan. 72 per cent placed under the category of neglect, 18 per cent under emotional abuse, 9 per cent under physical abuse, and 1 per cent as a result of sexual abuse. When aggregating the data on age groups, 4 per cent of all children subject to a child protection plan are aged between 0-5 years, with 34 per cent as a result of neglect. This shows a slight increase over this quarter in neglect below the age of 5 years old.
9. From 1 April 2012, 103 children have been removed from plans; 42 per cent of these children were no longer at risk of significant harm, 21 per cent were currently in foster care, 9 per cent had moved out of Darlington, and 9 per cent of the children were living with other relatives.
10. Domestic abuse continues to be a significant risk factor within child protection. However, over this last quarter there has been a significant increase in both alcohol and substance misuse as risk factors leading to the imposition of a child protection plan. The Independent Chairs of Conferences have raised issues regarding very young children with significant dental problems to an extent of requiring most of their teeth removing.
11. Although there are feedback mechanisms following every conference, the Review and Development Safeguarding Unit annually collate feedback from parents and carers and professionals attending Child Protection Conferences. For 2012, this was collated over 20 conferences held in November and December. This feedback has been used to change how the unit chairs conferences.
12. Feedback was received from 23 parents:
 - (a) 100 per cent of parents felt that during the conference they were able to voice their views;
 - (b) 100 per cent understood what was happening during the meeting;
 - (c) 100 per cent of parents were very clear about what the outcome of the conference was, and what they need to do as part of the child protection plan.
13. When asked how we could improve conferences, comments included:
 - (a) No they do what they are here to do;
 - (b) No, everything helpful;
 - (c) Never been in one before so didn't know what to expect, everything fine;
 - (d) Possibly more communication;
 - (e) You provide an excellent and needed service.

Darlington Children and Young People Collective Update

14. The Children and Young People Collective met in February and March and considered presentations about the proposed Free School delivered by Education Village, the Special Educational Needs Pathfinder and the Healthwatch arrangements for Darlington.
15. eVOLution hosted a children and young people's engagement and involvement event at Fire station on the 26 February 2013 on behalf of the Children and Young People Collective and young people from a variety of groups attended to share their views with Councillor Cyndi Hughes. The event was called 'Youth Shout Out' and young people attending the session developed video clips about their groups and the activities they are involved in for these sessions. More information about the outcomes from this session will be available for the next Council report.
16. At it's March meeting the Children and Young People Collective considered how it will work closely with Darlington Healthwatch from April 2013. The partnership are excited to be working with new arrangements to take forward Health engagement and participation of new Health and Social Care arrangements for Darlington's children and young people.

Meetings

17. Some of the activities with which I have been engaged since the last meeting of Council, include:
 - (a) Attending a special Meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny on 31 January, 2013 at which the Call In in respect Kids and Co. was considered;
 - (b) Attended the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board;
 - (c) Met with the Chief Executive of evolution;
 - (d) Attended a Mega Motion Assembly at St. Augustine's RC Primary School;
 - (e) Attended the Executive Meeting of the Darlington Partnership;
 - (f) Attended a meeting of the 3 Borough Collaboration Group;
 - (g) Visited Jobcentre Plus to discuss apprenticeship support for businesses;
 - (h) Met with Neighbourhood Policing lead, Louise Guest;
 - (i) Chaired the Children's Collective;
 - (j) Met with the Director of People and Democratic Services to discuss SACRE;
 - (k) Spoke at the Darlington Partnership's prioritisation session;
 - (l) Hosted a young person event organised by evolution;
 - (m) Attended a board meeting of the Darlington Partnership;
 - (n) Attended the Vibe Awards;
 - (o) Attended a meeting of Darlington Head Teachers;
 - (p) Attended the Darlington Local Safeguarding Children Board;
 - (q) Attended a Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE) meeting; and
 - (r) Attended a foster carer drop-in session.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Children and Young People Portfolio