
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.

Children, Families and Learning Capital Programme 2012/13

2. Approval has been given to release capital funding to the value of £1,092,839 for a range of projects and initiatives across Schools and Sure Start facilities in the Borough and agreed the proposed prioritised capital investment programme for Children's Services, with delegated authority to the Director of People to manage the authorisation of this funding.
3. The release of these funds will enable capital investment to be undertaken in areas identified with the greatest need.

Corporate Parenting Panel

4. Corporate Parenting Panel met on 2 October. The Panel received the Looked After Children Annual Report, which outlined the services, activities, challenges and achievements of the past months.
5. A presentation on 'Achievements of Looked After Children' gave some of the stories behind the report, including individual successes in leisure, education and work.
6. We have also supported the recommendations of the Review Group established by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to examine the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The recommendations will strengthen the support for the Corporate Parenting role and enhance the good work which has already taken place and also ensure that corporate parenting responsibilities are fulfilled in an open and transparent manner.

Looked After Children

7. The number of children Looked After by Darlington Borough Council was 205 on 30 September 2012. This represents an increase of one child since 30th June 2012.

8. Educational Outcomes for Looked After children for school year 2011-12 showed improvements in both achievement and attendance.
9. Plans are progressing for the merger of the Looked After Children Social Work team and the Leaving Care team. This should lead to a more streamlined and cohesive delivery of services for long-term Looked After Children and those Leaving Care.

Child Protection

10. At the end of September 2012, 94 children were subject to child protection plans representing 43 families. Of these, 64 children were placed under the category of neglect, 17 under emotional abuse, 9 under physical abuse, and 4 children as a result of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse has significantly increased over the last quarter, however, this relates to a single sibling group. When aggregating the data on age groups, 48 per cent of all children subject to a child protection plan are aged between 0-5 years, with 31 per cent as a result of neglect.
11. From April to September 2012, 86 children have been removed from plans. 45 per cent of these children were no longer at risk of significant harm. 21 per cent were currently in foster care seven per cent had moved out of Darlington, and seven per cent the children were living with other relatives.
12. Domestic abuse continues to be a significant risk factor within child protection. Over the last quarter period 50 per cent of all registrations were as a result of domestic abuse, however, this number has reduced from 65 per cent from the first quarter period.

Ofsted Visit

13. Ofsted visited the Council's Family Learning Service, based at The Coleridge Centre on 18 and 19 September to undertake a good practice visit. Ofsted commented that the information gathered during the visit was 'invaluable' and it will be publishing the Service as a case study of good practice on the Ofsted website in due course.

Schools

14. Northwood School is progressing through the Academy conversion process. Skerne Park Primary School is progressing to become an Academy sponsored by Hummersknott Academy Trust and Dodmire Primary School is progressing to become an Academy sponsored by Longfield Academy Trust. Skerne Park and Dodmire Primary Schools have indicated preferred conversion dates on 1 December. Cockerton Church of England (VA) Primary School and St Augustine's Roman Catholic (VA) Primary School have also begun a consultation process to seek views on potential academy conversion.

Home to School Transport Developments

15. Darlington's School Forum met on 9 October and agreed to fund non-statutory Home to School Transport from the academic year 2013/14 onwards for the sum of £70,000 per annum with an agreement in principle to fund the arrangement for five years but with the inclusion of an annual review. The decision was taken following the Council's decision in February 2012 to move to a statutory minimum for Home to School transport services; this included removing the associated transport criteria and changing the eligible distance criteria for Secondary school children from two to three miles. The decision by Schools Forum was taken to ensure stability could be provided for parents making applications for a Secondary school place for the 2013-14 academic year.

Darlington Children and Young People Collective Update

16. On 2 October 2012 I welcomed 19 organisations and 13 young people who represented six Darlington based young people's groups to a session which affirmed our commitment to involve young people at the heart of shaping the design of Darlington children and young people services and ensuring young people participate in the decision making process of all organisations in Darlington.
17. Young people attending the event included DAD Young Leaders group, YMCA Young Adult Carers group, Darlo Care Crew, Top Deck, Darlington Youth Partnership and Emily O'Hara - Darlington's Member of Youth Parliament. Young people listened to organisations outline their plans to involve young people in their organisations and in turn young people shared their ideas and information about their groups with organisations at the event.
18. The organisations represented at the event included Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group, Darlington Borough Council, eVOLution, County Durham & Darlington Foundation Trust, Darlington College, Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form, Durham Police Authority, Durham Constabulary, Darlington's Safeguarding Children's Board, Job Centre Plus, University of Teesside, Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust, Durham Probation Service, DAD, County Durham and Darlington Primary Care Trust and Darlington Secondary Schools and Academies.
19. Following the session agencies and young people placed their hand print on a collage to illustrate their commitment to continue to work together and the newly launched Children and Young People's Collective will co-ordinate activity to ensure this is implemented. The collage inspired the design of the new logo for the Children and Young People's Collective.
20. The 'CLICK To Do' Facebook page is posting information to young people from the Children and Young People's Collective and is one of our key communication mechanisms with children and young people in Darlington.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Children and Young People Portfolio