
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

SUMMARY REPORT

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

Education

2. Marchbank Free School officially opened on 17 January 2014. The Free School provides an educational environment for primary aged pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. The school is part of the Education Village Academy Trust.
3. The School Improvement arrangements are currently out for consultation and will be subject of a future Cabinet paper. It is proposed to formalise the current Schools@onedarlington agreement to include school to school support, teaching schools and external support.
4. Ofsted inspections have taken place at Houghton Academy, Darlington School of Maths and Science and Hurworth Primary School. Overall, both secondary schools require further improvements but Ofsted noted the good leadership in both schools. Hurworth Primary school was judged to be already good and improving further.
5. The Council is currently reviewing its agreed syllabus for religious education and held its statutory Agreed Syllabus Conference on 17 March 2014, which included consultation feedback from schools. The agreed final syllabus will be proposed to Cabinet in June.

Children Looked After

6. At 31 January 2014, there were 188 children Looked After by the Council. This represents an increase of two children since 30 November 2013.
7. Ofsted Interim Inspections took place at Eldon Children's Home on 8 January 2014 and at Harewood Hill Lodge Short Break Centre on 27 January 2014. Eldon was judged to be 'making good progress' since its previous Key Inspection rating of 'good'. Harewood Hill Lodge was also judged to be 'making good progress' since its previous Key Inspection rating of 'outstanding'.
8. Darlington was one of the top three highest scoring Councils in the Country in the Government's Adoption Scorecard results for the time taken to place a child with

their adoptive family. The national average was 647 days (just over 21 months) and in Darlington it was almost a third less time, at an average of 437 days (just over 14 months). This excellent outcome was featured in regional television news programmes and other media.

9. Darlo Care Crew are currently revising the Pledge for looked after young people, setting out their expectations of services. They are also developing a version for younger children. Representatives from the Care Crew have also taken part in regional events concerned with tackling child poverty and promoting the experiences of looked after children and a representative is involved in a national child poverty initiative.

Child Protection

10. By the end of September 2013, 76 children were subject to a child protection plan. By the beginning of January, the number has steadily increased to 98 and by the beginning of February these had again increased to 110 children. However, although numbers have increased in terms of numbers of children, the number of families has remained relatively stable with approximately 44 families. Within Darlington, Independent Chairs have highlighted large sibling groups as the reason for this increase.
11. When looking at the categories, 71% were as a result of Neglect, 14% as a result of Emotional Abuse, 5% as a result of Physical Abuse and 10% as a result of Sexual Abuse. This last quarter shows an increase in respect of neglect, especially relating to children aged 11-15. The numbers of those subject to a plan as a result of sexual abuse remains high; however, this includes two large sibling groups of five and six children. When comparing categories from the end of March 2013, 45% were aged 0-5 under the category of Neglect. However, at the end of this quarter this has significantly reduced to 28%.
12. Over this last quarter, 25 children have been removed from a plan. When looking at reasons for the removal, there has been an increase in specific parenting interventions. Some of the specific interventions identified were the freedom programme, intervention from the Early Intervention and Psychosis team work achieved from the Community Psychiatric Nurse, and specific counselling provided by the school.

Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

13. For January's LSCB meeting the thematic report considered child protection plans. The discussion focused on 'Do the right children have protection plans and are they implemented in a timely manner?' Part of this review considered:-
 - (a) The views of children and young people subject to protection plans
 - (b) The views of parents when their children are subject to a protection plan
 - (c) The views of professionals in implementing protection plans.

14. LSCB members have started to discuss the Board's priorities for 2014/ 15. They will be agreed and finalised in March. Members have identified that Child Sexual Exploitation should remain as a priority, with an extension into 'e-safety' and the impact that modern technology can have on safeguarding. It is hoped that throughout the year a range of events will be held for professionals, parents/carers and children and young people.

Darlington Children and Young People Collective – Update

15. The collective has continued to meet on a monthly basis with representation from both the voluntary and statutory sectors.
16. Each meeting has focused around a particular theme, which has included reviewing the Children's and Young People's plan; the engagement of children and young people, children with additional needs; preventative services and performance reporting.
17. The Children and Young People's plan is currently being reviewed, with work being undertaken to look back and measure to what extent we have achieved our targets and ambitions over the last four years. We are also focusing on the future plan and as part of this work, we have collated the engagement activity that we have undertaken with children and young people and developed a universal questionnaire to understand what the current issues are for children and young people. This work has highlighted the excellent work the partnership has undertaken to involve children and young people in the design and delivery of services to support them and will ensure the new plan is relevant to their needs.

Meetings

18. Since the last meeting of Council, I have:
 - (a) Chaired a meeting with Governors from schools across the town to discuss issues of mutual concern. This is a termly meeting and is open to any Governor from any school in Darlington to attend and raise questions or discuss issues on the education landscape. Governors discussed the National Leaders of Governance programme, a Department for Education sponsored programme to support Chairs of Governors in their development; the arrangements for Safeguarding training for Governing Bodies and the work currently being carried out around School Place Planning, the demographic pressures on available places at primary schools and the proposal from Polam Hall School to convert to a Free School. For this latter topic, Mrs Sally Pelham, Chair of the Governing Body at Polam Hall School, attended and discussed the details of the proposal with the other Governors present.
 - (b) Chaired a Local Authority Governors appointment panel where we met to consider proposals to appoint and re-appoint Governors to various Governing Bodies across the town. These new appointments are part of the general recruitment process that was launched in January 2014 to increase the number and variety of people to volunteer to be school governors in Darlington. This

process has been successful in sourcing some 30 new applications and work to appoint these people to suitable vacancies is ongoing.

- (c) Attended meetings with Officers from the Governor Development Team regarding Governor training courses. The Team offers a comprehensive range of courses for Governors throughout the Academic year, ranging from basic introduction to governance sessions, more advanced training for prospective Chairs and then specialist courses on School Performance Data and Ofsted Inspections. More than 20 schools and academies subscribe to this training service which is very highly regarded by Governors.
- (d) Attended the official launch of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) at the Police Station.
- (e) Attended the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.
- (f) Visited Darlington School of Mathematics and Science on Safer Internet Day and met with DSMS's Head Teacher.
- (g) Attended the official launching of the BBrandH Academy Ltd and George Dent Nursery Leadership arrangements.
- (h) Chaired a Children and Young People's Collective meeting.
- (i) Attended the Darlington Partnership Executive, Board and priorities setting workshop.
- (j) Addressed a National College Leadership cohort on the "Women intoHeadship" programme.
- (k) Attended the count for Darlington's new Youth MP.
- (l) Met with the Head Teacher of Hummersknott Academy; and
- (m) Attended the Vibe Awards at the Civic Theatre.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Children and Young People Portfolio