
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. Red Hall Primary School had an Ofsted inspection on 6 and 7 March. The report, published on 28 March identified that the school was graded 'Good' in all categories.

Children Looked After

3. At 31 March 2014, there were 192 children Looked After by the Council. This represents an increase of four children since 31 January 2014.
4. Ofsted Interim Inspections have now been completed in all of the Council's children's homes. The mainstream homes at Eldon, Gilling and Dunrobin were all judged to be 'making good progress' since their previous Key Inspection ratings of 'good'. The Short Break Centre at Harewood was also judged to be 'making good progress' since its previous Key Inspection rating of 'outstanding'. The annual Key Inspections for all the homes will take place during Summer 2014.
5. There were 20 Looked After children adopted in the year ending 31 March 2014. This represents an increase of 150 per cent from the previous year, when eight children were adopted.
6. Darlo Care Crew participated in training for Elected Members in January and February 2014. They have also enjoyed a visit to the Mayor's Parlour. Representatives from Darlo Care Crew attended the Corporate Parenting Panel on 26 March 2014, where they participated in discussions and provided suggestions for the Panel's Work Programme for 2014/15.

Child Protection

7. At the beginning of March 2014, 127 children were subject to a child protection plan relating to 57 families. 63 per cent as a result of Neglect, 21 per cent as a result of Emotional abuse, 9 per cent as a result of Sexual abuse and 7 per cent as a result of Physical abuse.

8. Since January 2014, the number has rapidly increased. The average number of Initial Child Protection Conferences has risen from an average of eight per month to approximately 12 per month. This increase coincides with the other developments including the launch of the MASH, and an increase in referrals overall over this period.
9. When looking at the age of children subject to a plan, 42 per cent are under five years old, 34 per cent are aged 5-10 years, 22 per cent are aged 11-15 years and 2 per cent are aged 16+.
10. Between April 2013 and March 2014, 93 children ceased to have a child protection plan. This indicates the child's safety improved either because of family work or being placed with other carers.
11. Since November 2013, the advocate process via NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) has operated on an 'opt out' basis, within the child protection process. This improves the 'voice of the child' within the conference and planning system.

Local Safeguarding Children Board

12. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) held an externally facilitated development session on the morning of 19 March 2014 for all Board members. During the afternoon a session was held for all sub-group members. In total, 50 members from different agencies considered 'How will our LSCB actually make a difference to the lives of children in Darlington?'
13. Key areas for discussion included:
 - (a) The Board has a key leadership role in setting the safeguarding agenda. What are the two or three priorities that the Board believes will make the biggest difference to safeguarding in 2014/15?
 - (b) As safeguarding champions, the Board needs to be challenging for improvement. What current practices do you believe need challenging across Darlington?
14. Feedback from this session is currently being collated and further discussions are taking place regarding the priorities and the Board arrangements. A detailed action plan will be presented and worked through at the next LSCB meeting in May.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Children and Young People Portfolio