

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 :-

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

2. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has relocated to a new office in Darlington Police Station. The Health Service is also locating key staff within the 'hub' in addition to Children's and Adults' Social Care.
3. A communication about the move and a formal launch are being arranged.

Education

4. The Department for Education (DfE) has recently published absence figures for Autumn 2012 – Spring Term 2013. Darlington's primary ranking is in the top third of schools nationally. The collection of data on absence in Reception is new and the first released data shows Darlington is ranked 22nd – 0.6 per cent better than national average.
5. The Borough of Darlington continues to experience a high demand for primary school places across the authority. The School Organisation Plan approved by Cabinet earlier this year will see the addition of just over 450 primary school places by the year 2020. However, there continues to be a demand for additional school places. Discussions are taking place with all schools, in the spirit of schools@onedarlington, to identify the most viable solution to deliver the requirement for additional capacity. This includes the recently announced proposals for Free School applications.

Children Looked After

6. At 30 September 2013 there were 189 children Looked After by Darlington Borough Council. This represents an increase of seven children since 31 July 2013. The new admissions include three new babies born in that period who were subject to Protection Plans prior to birth.

7. At the half-yearly reporting date on 30 September 2013, adoption performance was on course to meet agreed targets. Nine sets of adopters had been approved from a target of 18 sets for the full year. Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders were granted in respect of 9.8 per cent of children who had been Looked After for six months or more. The target for the full year is 18 per cent.

Child Protection

8. By the end of September, there were 76 children subject to a child protection plan. 55 per cent as a result of Neglect, 32 per cent as a result of Emotional abuse, 1 per cent under the category of Physical abuse and 12 per cent as a result of Sexual abuse.
9. When comparing this data with trends at the end of September 2012, there were 94 children on a child protection plan. 68 per cent as a result of Neglect, 18 per cent as a result of Emotional abuse, 1 per cent under the category of Physical abuse and 4 per cent as a result of Sexual abuse.
10. The quarter January to March showed a significant reduction in the number of initial child protection conferences (ICPCs) held. In March 2013 there were no ICPCs held. However, over the last quarter this has increased but is slightly lower than the average number of 7 ICPCs held over the last year.
11. When aggregating the data on age groups, by the end of the year 2012 to 2013 45 per cent of all children subject to a child protection plan are aged between 0-5 years as a result of neglect. However, during the first year's quarter, this has significantly reduced to 25 per cent. By the end of March 2013, 58 per cent of all children subject to a plan were aged between 0-5 years.
12. With regard to risk factors, domestic abuse continues to be the largest single risk factor with it being a factor in 44 per cent of all registrations.
13. In order to capture the views, wishes and feelings of children who are within the conference arena, an opt out referral process with NYAS (advocacy services) was implemented on 14 October. This means that all children over the age of 11 will automatically be allocated an advocate to either support them in attending the conference or acting on their behalf in the child protection conference to ensure their views are fully expressed and heard. This will be undertaken in all cases unless children specify they do not want such services.

Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

14. In September the LSCB agreed and signed off its Annual Report and Terms of Reference, which are accessible via the LSCB web-site www.darlington.gov.uk/lscb. The LSCB undertook an independent case review earlier on this year. The case did not fit the criteria of a Serious Case Review

but the child, known as Child A, was known by a number of agencies in Darlington, and due to the level of concerns the LSCB felt a case review should be initiated to identify lessons to improve multi-agency practice. A series of briefings have been delivered to practitioners. Four key messages have been identified for all practitioners working with children and families:-

- (a) Identify - what is the full picture for this child?
- (b) Assess, plan and review.
- (c) Importance of professional challenge.
- (d) Recognising the impact of parent's actions.

15. Additional training is being arranged for individual groups and organisations, further information regarding Child A review is available on the web-site www.darlington.gov.uk/lscb.

16. A meeting has taken place between the Chairs of the Children's Collective, Health and Wellbeing Board and the LSCB in ensuring effective multi-agency arrangements are in place, with an aim of having a better understanding of the work being undertaken by individual forum. This will avoid duplication but will also enable bodies to appropriately hold each other to account.

Children's Commissioning

17. Implementation of the Flexible Free Entitlement for 2 year olds is ongoing. DBC has a Department for Education target to ensure that 288 eligible 2 year olds can access their 15 hours flexible free entitlement to early learning by March 2014. In the pilot phase, 70 children accessed their entitlement; at 3 October 2013 the numbers accessing provision had risen to 187 children.

18. DBC is near to completing a new consortium contract framework with the other Tees Valley local authorities, led by Hartlepool Borough Council, which will provide up to 18 independent Fostering Agencies to improve our capacity to meet a wide range of needs for our children who are looked after.

19. Other opportunities for collaborative children's commissioning across the Tees Valley are also being explored when renewing contracts in order to optimise sustainability.

Meetings

20. Since the last meeting of Council, I have:

- (a) Attending the Executive of the Darlington Partnership;
- (b) Attending the Darlington Partnership Board;
- (c) Briefings with the Director of Children's Services and Children's Services Officers;
- (d) Attended the National Children's and Adult Services Conference

- (e) Addressed a skills event at the Coleridge Centre;
- (f) Met with the Vice-Chair of Governors and the Headmaster of Polam Hall
- (g) Addressed the Darlington Cooperative Party about my work as Lead Member for Children and Young People;
- (h) Met with Police and Crime Commissioner, Ron Hogg;
- (i) Attended the Darlington Partnership Assembly on Social Capital;
- (j) Spoke with students at Longfield Academy;
- (k) Attended a meeting of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Children and Young People Portfolio