

The Best Start in Life for Every Child and
Young Person
Darlington's Children and Young People's Plan
2014 - 2017

Foreword

The partners of Darlington Children's Trust are pleased to introduce our Children and Young People's Plan for 2014-2017. The previous Children and Young People's Plan was produced at a time of changing national policy and increasing budget pressures and this one has been produced in equally challenging times but with the experience of how needs have developed, how services have been transformed and how priorities have been set over the last 4 years. As a result, this plan describes not only the remarkable achievements made over the last 4 years but also the changing behaviours and arrangements that we hope will continue these good achievements over the next 3 years

The economic climate for public sector services has been a difficult one, where agencies were forced to think and do what they had previously thought to be the 'unthinkable'. The fact that this plan includes such an impressive range of achievements and improvements in outcomes is testament to the leadership demonstrated by the Children's Trust partners and to the relationship the partners have with the wider community in Darlington. The Peer Challenge of the council which took place in June 2013 commented on the strength of the partnerships and of the leadership of the place; the feedback included the comment 'partners to die for' as the clearest evidence that good partnership working is a reality in Darlington and a key tool that will be used to ensure that children, young people and their families continue to have improved outcomes or are supported to mitigate the impacts of the recession that are most biting on them.

This plan sets out how we will work together to deliver the best start for all of our children and young people and how we will support children and young people to achieve their best possible outcomes.

Alasdair MacConachie

Chair of Darlington Partnership

Councillor Cyndi Hughes

Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services

Section 1: Introduction

Although we have refreshed our Sustainable Community Strategy, all partners across all sectors have agreed that there continue to be two over-arching priorities in Darlington. First articulated in 2007 and subsequently agreed in 2008, these two priorities have shaped the relationship between the public, private, voluntary and community sectors and between them and the broader population ever since. The priorities continue to be the title of the Sustainable Community Strategy - One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. They can be summarised as follows:

One Darlington: articulating an approach to people, and specifically the need to make sure that people are not disadvantaged by their lack of income, where they live or by any other potential disadvantage that could cause them to miss out on opportunities.

Perfectly Placed: describing Darlington as a place and helping shape investment decisions, spatial planning and care for the environment.

In 2014, the Darlington Partnership (and as the Children's Trust) reviewed its Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and committed itself to the delivery of 8 strategic aims; including *the best start in life for every child*. This plan, therefore, describes the actions which will be taken and the investments which will be made, in order to deliver the best start in life for every child and young person in Darlington. Reference will be made to other strategic aims in the SCS, such as strong communities and people getting enough support when it is needed.

The Children's Trust partners have also agreed 3 essential conditions for the medium term to ensure that we have a thriving community and these underpin the design of this plan. The conditions are:

- Building strong and resilient communities that care for themselves
- Making sure that every public pound is well spent
- Growing the economy for the benefit of all

These two priorities were revisited and reaffirmed during the Summer and Autumn of 2013 by the Darlington Partnership (the Children's Trust Board) and they refreshed the actions that the Sustainable Community Strategy will deliver. In particular, the Partnership has called for every child and young person in Darlington to have the best start in life - from a good birth and early development, through to good education and a route into employment and citizenship. The Children and Young People's Plan 2014-2017 (CYPP) describes how these ambitions will be delivered and the way in which children and young people will be engaged in designing the services which we provide.

Darlington's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) is a key document which covers, in one place, the single strategic vision for all young people aged 0-25.

Vision of Darlington Children's Trust

Darlington Children's Trust has agreed the following vision for Darlington's children and young people in 2008:

Darlington's children and young people are our future. We will build on progress made and support all of our children to aspire and achieve their own potential. Enjoying life as active participating citizens free from poverty, ignorance, neglect, crime, harm, abuse and distress. We will achieve this by working together to ensure families have access to effective, high quality integrated services.

In 2014 this can only be delivered by taking some hard choices about which services to commission and which services to decommission; which services will lead to narrowing the gaps in inequality between groups of children and young people and which would be nice to have but are currently unaffordable. Elected Members and partners have reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring that there are effective early intervention and preventative services in place to work with children and their families to reduce the incidence of abuse and neglect, family breakdown, social exclusion and poor outcomes. This builds on the commitment made in the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14 which included an early intervention commissioning strategy based on the research evidence produced by Graham Allen MP and the Marmot review and which has delivered improved outcomes for children and young people.

Section 2: Darlington Children's Trust Arrangements

Darlington Children's Trust Board

All partners with a duty to co-operate under the Children Act 2004, as well as a broad coalition of other partners and agencies, have jointly established a formal Board and governance arrangements to oversee the delivery of *One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, the Sustainable Community Strategy*. This Board, constituted as the Darlington Partnership, also encompasses the role of the Children's Trust Board. Membership includes the Lead Member with responsibility for the Children and Young People portfolio on Darlington Borough Council's Cabinet, the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, the Director of Children's Services (Director of People), Police, Schools, Colleges, Health, the Third Sector, private companies and community representatives.

The Board meets 6 times a year and holds a series of Assemblies on key issues for the Borough. It has a monthly meeting of its executive group, which includes the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, and this group determines the business of the Board and reviews progress and partnership working. It is serviced by a Partnership Director.

Children and Young People's Collective

The Darlington Partnership operates with a sub-group, the Children and Young People's Collective, which is chaired by the Cabinet Member and which meets monthly. This group, with a broad and inclusive membership, monitors delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan, reviews practice and performance and proposes innovation and development. Its business is managed by the Assistant Director for Commissioning, in partnership with the Third Sector.

The Darlington Partnership has agreed to focus on 3 key activities for the duration of this plan:

Developing Social Capital;

Good Friends; and the

Foundation for Jobs.

These are the direct response to the 3 actions agreed by all partners as the way forward. Developing Social Capital will contribute to the need for resilient communities that care for themselves. Similarly, Good Friends is the volunteering scheme that meets social and health needs. It too helps to develop communities that care for themselves but the scheme also ensures join up between agencies and sectors to ensure that public money is well spent. Finally, the Foundation for Jobs is the Darlington Partnership scheme to annually deliver 100 new and sustainable apprenticeships, 100 new internships and 1,000 young people engaged with employers; helping to grow Darlington's economy. Each of them will directly contribute to delivering the best start in life for every child and young person.

Ashleigh's Rules

As well as setting the broad strategic vision and agenda for children and young people in Darlington, the Darlington Partnership also acts in a timely and decisive manner when the need arises.

In 2009 Darlington teenager Ashleigh Hall was murdered by a stranger she met through social media. The Darlington Partnership, working alongside the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee, moved swiftly to ensure that all young people in the Borough were made aware of the dangers associated with relationships developed over the internet. With the support of Ashleigh's parents, a conference of all secondary school and college councils was convened and from that stemmed 3 key products. The first was a simple, credit card sized leaflet called Ashleigh's Rules which gave basic safety advice when using social media. The second was a powerful film, made by young people, which played out a scenario of people meeting through the internet and finally a teaching pack was developed to support the use of the film and the information leaflet

The Darlington Partnership will continue to play its part in swiftly bringing all partners together at executive level whenever required.

A Protocol is in place between the Children's Trust and the Safeguarding Children Board. The Lead Member and the Director of People Services are members of each of the both Boards and of the Health and Well Being Board.

Section 3: The Darlington Context

Darlington's population is expected to rise steadily to 110,771 by 2021 from its current 105,000. There are currently 15,478 children in our primary and secondary schools (Spring 2014 census) and this number is projected to rise until at least 2020. Darlington saw the 4th fastest growth rate in the child population in the whole of the North of England between 2010 and 2011.

About three quarters of the working population of the Borough have jobs based in Darlington. Employment has shown an overall decrease in recent years; with a peak for employment and prosperity in the Borough recorded between 2008 – 2010 (at around 72%) and the employment rate currently stands at 68.4%. As with many employment indicators, this is a higher percentage than the rest of the North East but is lower than the rate nationally. The one notable exception to this trend is the household earnings rate, where the weekly household income in Darlington is lower than both the North East average and the national rate. There has also been a significant change in the structure of the Darlington economy. Employment in manufacturing has declined dramatically (to 9.2%), but in contrast, the service sector has grown strongly and now accounts for almost 80% of jobs in Darlington. The public sector, including local government, national government and health, is a major employer. The November 2013 NEET rate in Darlington is 6.8%, a decrease from March 2013. Of the 1,105 18-24 year olds claiming Job Seekers Allowance, 195 of them have been claiming for over 12 months.

The UK Commission for Employment & Skills (UKCES) completed a major survey of employers during 2011, including 1,300 in the Tees Valley. The majority of employers felt that their recruits from education were well prepared for work. Where they were not satisfied, this was more related to attitude and motivation rather than any failings of their education. Encouragingly, 62% of Tees Valley employers reported 16 year olds were well prepared for work (higher than the 55% nationally) and 68% found 17-18 year olds from school and 73% from FE colleges well prepared for work. Also, 81% of local employers found that new graduates were well prepared for work.

Employers who found young people not well prepared for work cited lack of working or life experience and poor attitude or motivation as the reasons. Poor literacy or numeracy was only mentioned by a very small proportion of employers.

The impact of the national economic situation and resulting budget cuts have had a disproportional impact on Darlington, due to higher reliance on the public sector for employment. Furthermore, it is estimated that welfare reform changes introduced from April 2013 will take £14 million out of the Darlington economy annually. Child poverty levels had been falling in Darlington over the last 10 years and the authority was shortlisted for a Beacon Council award for its work in reducing child poverty levels. However, the latest data showed a small increase in the number of children living in poverty.

Since the introduction of the Sustainable Community Strategy in 2008 and our first comprehensive Children and Young People's Plan at the same time, we have worked to improve the 'kit' that we have in the Borough; the services and facilities that can give every child the best start in life. Our children's centres are judged to be good by Ofsted, the vast majority of our childcare settings are judged to be good or better and our primary schools top the national league table for the percentage of them which are judged to be good or better (2013 data).

Other services are also judged to be good or better, including provision for fostering, adoption, youth justice, respite care and residential provision. We have established the Family Support service - multi-disciplinary teams across health, education and social care for children and young people aged 0-19 – creating 3 teams working in localities across the Borough. We have established specialist teams across health, care and policing to work with troubled families, those with complex social needs and those causing the greatest disturbance in their communities. We have appointed an independent chair of our children's safeguarding board. In 2013 we established the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) with health, police, adult services, children's services and housing to improve the co-ordination of all referrals of children in need. We ask young people about their behaviours through the Social Norms survey. We have established the Foundation for Jobs to improve employability skills and employment opportunities. We have a new building for the further education college and the University of Teesside opened a Darlington campus in 2011.

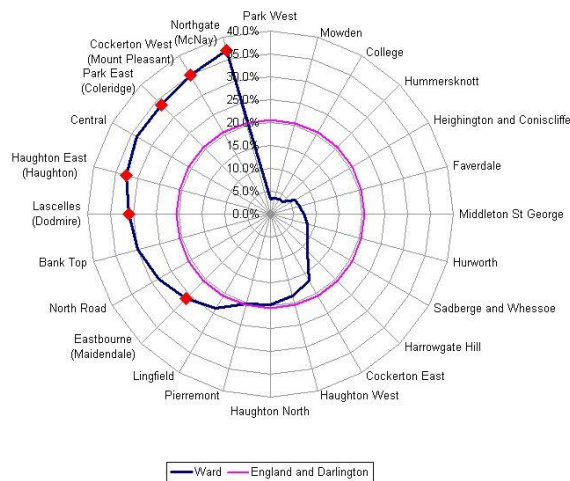
If the provision itself is good, then it is essential that it benefits the right people. Children's centres reach 6,605 children, 2,905 of whom live in the 30% most deprived parts of the Borough. In surveys of users 98.9% said that they were happy or very happy with the services provided. There are fewer children coming into care (a 10% sustained reduction since 2011/12) as a result of the Family Support Service effectively targeting families in need and reducing the number who go on to have a breakdown in trusting and safe living conditions. We have a very high percentage of children who are measured through the national programme at Reception age and at 10 and we have an increasing number of mothers who choose to breastfeed. Figures in June 2014, however, showed there had been a steady increase in the number of children subject to a protection plan over the previous 12 months.

The services provided are making a difference. Standards in education attainment have improved from an already good level to some of the best in the country. Darlington has, on occasion, topped national league tables in a number of indicators since 2008. Attendance at school in the Reception year is higher than the national average. The timescale that children wait between a court decision on their placement permanence and placement with, for example, an adoptive family, is the best in the country. Educational attainment of looked after children, children from Black and ethnic minority communities, children with disabilities and those in receipt of free school meals are improving and generally closing the gap between them and their peers. Youth offending rates are low and episodes of remand are very low. Restorative justice sanctions are high. Teenage unemployment did rise for a period but has fallen between 2012 and 2013. Self-reports of substance misuse and risk taking behaviours amongst young people is falling.

Whilst acknowledging these achievements as evidence that systems and services are working and giving children the best start in life there are still areas of concern. Nearly 17% of children in Year 6 are obese and tooth decay in children is worse than the national average. Some teaching is still not yet graded as good or better, too few young people stay in education or training beyond the age of 17, children witness too much domestic abuse, there are a growing number of children living in poverty and some young people are in less than adequate accommodation post 16. Teenage pregnancy rates, though falling, are still higher than the national average. Hospital admissions for self-harm and for non-accidental injury remain areas for further investigation.

The concentration of disadvantage and deprivation in Darlington is highlighted in the ward level child poverty statistics, with 38.7% of children residing in the Northgate ward living in poverty, compared to only 1.7% of children living in the Hummersknott ward. The push for economic growth includes strategies for bringing opportunities to the most deprived areas.

Figure1: Children living in Poverty by Ward



The diagram also shows (in brackets) the location of the children’s centres/delivery points, in the areas of greatest deprivation.

Disadvantage and deprivation is not only visible in terms of economic factors, but can also be seen in terms of health, with a 12.6 year life expectancy gap between the most affluent ward and the least affluent ward in Darlington, wards which are only divided physically by a main road.

Aspirations, and opportunities to fulfil those aspirations, are key to helping young people to benefit from the investments made in education, employment and quality of life in the Borough. Young people have a good track record of active participation in democratic processes. In 2008 and 2009, Darlington had the highest participation rate by young people nationally in the October Democracy Week programmes and the turnout for the election of the Youth Member of Parliament is consistently around 32% (and former Youth MPs continue to play a very active role in youth and community activities). Specialist engagement activity, such as those with disabled young people and with children in care, has led to policy changes within the Borough. Social and digital media, in partnership with the Northern Echo, have been invested in to ensure that young people are able to participate in appropriate ways.

Section 4: What have regulators said about our children and young people's services in Darlington?

External Inspection

Darlington's record of external regulatory inspection is good across the range of services:

Ofsted inspected 23 of our 37 schools in the period 2010-2012 and rated 17 as good or outstanding.

Children Centre Inspections are mainly good

Learning and Skills Service inspection rated as good

Safeguarding and Looked After services are adequate

Fostering Services are good with outstanding features

Adoption Services are good

Local Authority Residential Homes – all rated as good or outstanding.

The Peer Review of Safeguarding Services (July 2011) found areas of strength:-

- One Darlington – strong joint identity owned by all partners
- High ambitions for children
- Strong political leadership for safeguarding
- Purposeful and thoughtful transformation programme based on a unified vision and ambitions for Darlington
- Openness to learning and improvement
- Committed and hard working staff
- Strong investment in capacity and development.

The Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and LAC Services (Nov 2011) found areas of strength:-

- Outcomes for children and young people are good
- Children and young people feel and are safe
- Inspection outcomes from services and settings are generally good
- Robust systems are in place to ensure safe recruitment
- Child Care Duty Team is fully staffed with a good balance of newly qualified and experienced
- Referrals that lead to assessments are allocated promptly

- Previously poor performance in assessment timescales has recently been addressed and has improved
- Ambition and prioritisation are good
- Partnership working is good
- Good inter-agency co-operation underpins child protection work.

Inspection of Police Services

A thematic inspection of police response to domestic abuse concluded that the public of Darlington can have confidence that the police provide a good service to victims of domestic abuse and that they keep help to them safe. Recommended actions are being implemented by the force.

Inspection of Health provision

In October 2013 the Care Quality Commission inspected provision at Darlington Memorial Hospital and concluded that services met the required standards with regard to respecting service users, involving them in their care and in service delivery, their care and welfare, the cleanliness of the hospital.

Section 5: Commissioning for Resilience

The Children's Trust Board, in agreeing three key actions around sustainable and caring communities, every public pound well spent and growing the economy, has had to determine what services to commission and what services therefore may be decommissioned. Collectively, the Board has agreed that partners should commission services which give children and young people the best start in life. The evidence for this was consulted on widely during June and July 2013 as a part of the Money Talks events hosted by the council and was described in the document *Commissioning for Resilience*.

Evidence base for determining why to invest in early intervention services

The starting point for our work in children's services is that the foundations for virtually every aspect of human development - physical, social, emotional and intellectual - are laid in early childhood, so giving a child the best possible start in life helps to promote the generally accepted desired outcomes of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution to society and achieving economic well-being. The notion of 'the best start in life for every child' was developed by Children's Trust partners in 2007 and 2008 and became a key driver in the planning and commissioning of services. The broad evidence base for our service design and delivery is set out below.

As a consequence of this evidence base, a number of decisions have been taken about prioritising investment in the younger age groups and disinvesting in the older age groups when budget cuts have been made. Investment in all services would be desirable and can be evidenced for improved outcomes; however, it is believed that investment in early years **and** in earlier intervention will give greater benefits from the limited resources available. Furthermore, there are more alternative providers who can meet needs for the older age groups. These include schools, with the Pupil Premium, and the voluntary and community sector with young people's activities.

The best start in life is not entirely confined to early years involvement; it is also about early identification of risk and interventions designed to stop abuse, to tackle risk taking behaviours and to support healthy development and so is about maintaining good services that can impact on these risks for all children and young people.

Everyone who works with children, young people or with their family has a vital role to play in ensuring their development across these outcomes. Development begins before birth when the health of a baby is crucially affected by the health and well-being of their mother. Low birth weight in particular is associated with poorer long term health and educational outcomes (Jefferis BJMH, Power C and Hertzman C 2002. *Birth weight, childhood socio-economic environment, and cognitive development in the 1958 British birth cohort study. BMJ 325:305*).

- This evidence informed our strong commitment to partnership working and our work to promote good health, as well as our integrated service with health.

The first year of life is crucial for neuro-development to provide the foundations for children's cognitive capacities (Perry BD 2002. *Childhood experience and the expression of genetic potential: what childhood neglect tells us about nature and nurture*. Brain and Mind 3:79100). There is good evidence to show that if children fall behind in early cognitive development, they are more likely to fall further behind at subsequent educational stages. (Feinstein L 1999. *Pre-school educational inequality) British Children in the 1970 cohort*. London: Centre for Economic Performance and University College.

- This evidence determined that we would continue to support the Portage service, childcare development officers and Foundation Stage Advisory teachers to promote high quality early childhood experiences.

There is an increased recognition of the importance of early intervention and prevention in work with children and their families to reduce the incidence of abuse and neglect, family breakdown, social exclusion and poor outcomes. Intervention in the early years is also key to breaking long term cycles of disadvantage and increasing aspiration which enables young people to help remove themselves from poverty.

- This evidence informed our decision to retain our children's centres and to locate social work teams alongside the Family Support Service in those centres.

There exists a wide range of need and family circumstance between those children who make overall good progress in all areas of their development with no additional support and those who have a range of complex needs and require specialist services. Family circumstances may change over time, risks will impact differently and provision needs to be flexible enough to respond in an effective and timely way to prevent escalation of difficulties and levels of harm.

- As above, we have maintained whole family support teams in locality bases to provide a timely first response to needs. We have also used the windscreen model, allowing for families to step up to access specialist services and to then step down to access targeted or universal services.

The Social Exclusion Task Force report "Reaching Out: Think Family" 2008 further examines the wide range of individual parent-based risk factors that contribute to the nature of multiple disadvantage faced by families. This has been applied in Darlington's "Think Family" approach, parents deliver more outcomes than any other part of the system and it is necessary to consider what public services are doing to maximise this as this is the most sustainable of interventions in the longer term. Mothers and fathers are the most significant influence on their children's lives, achievements and prospects. Effective, warm and assertive parenting gives children confidence, a sense of well-being, and self worth. It also stimulates brain development and the capacity to learn, and is a hugely protective factor for children's outcomes.

- This research supported investment in Parenting Programmes, the Think Family approach and our work with Troubled Families and High Impact Households.

There has been much research and comment about the importance of early intervention to prevent supporting a costly crisis later. The DOH/ DCSF in “Healthy lives, brighter futures” commented that “the right services should be in place to meet the specific health needs and expectations of children and their families” and “extra support is provided for those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds”. Graham Allen MP published his report “*Early Intervention: The Next Steps. An independent report to Her Majesty’s Government*” January 2011, in which he says that “Early Intervention is an approach that offers a real opportunity to make lasting improvements in the lives of our children, to forestall many persistent social problems and end their transmission from one generation to the next” and “we need to make sure that all children have the social and emotional capability to be ‘school ready’ at five”.

- We have recognised the importance of early intervention but we have also reduced some budgets of discretionary services. We have protected the budgets for services for those in most need and where evidence tells us the greatest impact can be made.

All partners have had to make informed decisions about how much resource can be made available for particular work streams and have needed reassurance that the available resource is used effectively. In times of plenty, it is possible to achieve targets and yet mask waste in resources. When the resource is much less, then it is much more about how the money is used.

As part of its commitment to reduce the number of children living in poverty the Coalition Government tasked Frank Field MP to lead an independent review on the Government’s Poverty Reduction Strategy. Published in December 2010, “*The Foundation Years; An Independent Review on Child Poverty*” concluded that the UK needs to address the issue of child poverty in a fundamentally different way if it is to make a real change to children’s life chances as adults. It found overwhelming evidence that children’s life chances are most heavily predicated on their development in the first five years of life with family background, parental education, good parenting and the opportunities for learning and development in those crucial years having a greater impact upon children’s life chances than money.

- We have access to all of the evidence which shows the correlation between child poverty levels and the number of children in need in an area. Our Child Poverty Strategy has been effective in harnessing actions to mitigate the effects of poverty, although we collectively recognise there may be significant additional pressures as a result of the welfare reforms introduced in April 2013.

“Fair Society, Healthy Lives” as part of the Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post 2010, chaired by Professor Marmot and published in 2010, concluded that reducing health inequalities will require action on six policy objectives:

- Give every child the best start in life
- Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- Create fair employment and good work for all
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all

- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention

Each of these recommendations is central to the actions agreed by the Darlington Partnership and by the Health and Well Being Board.

Underlying these evidence statements are a set of behaviours and beliefs that support our work:

- ✓ Darlington's "Think Family" approach – children, young people and their families will be at the centre of everything we do
- ✓ The role of fathers is acknowledged and creative methods are used to engage fathers of children of all ages
- ✓ The use of a positive rather than deficit model of support, starting with what families do well and building on their strengths which will help to build confidence and skills in parenting
- ✓ All practitioners acknowledge, understand and respect the diverse nature of family life and arrangements
- ✓ We will "hold the baton"- each practitioner will hold onto families, work with them and where necessary refer them to another service but keeping "hold of the baton" safely so that families are not lost between services
- ✓ Services will be flexible enough to meet the needs of children, young people and their families as and when they require them
- ✓ There is a single assessment through CAF and a single point of contact through the Lead Practitioner which will remove the need for families to struggle through a maze of contacts
- ✓ Services are aligned through single line management structures and geographically based, wherever possible
- ✓ Inter-agency governance is essential to improve family outcomes, with clear strong leadership and protocols setting out agreed responsibilities between agencies which will contribute to the local priorities agreed by the Local Strategic Partnership.
- ✓ Services will attempt to impact positively on levels of children living in poverty and provide opportunities for volunteering and employment of those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Section 6: Reviewing the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014

In 2010, as we were developing the Plan, we gave evidence of what we were doing well and asked for comments about what we could or should be doing better or where we were not doing the right things.

We included in the Plan a list of things that we said we would do. Some of those things were because young people said they were important to them, some were because we got told to do them by inspectors or by the law and some were things that partners thought were the right thing to do at the time. We have set out, below, each of the things we said we would do and whether or not we achieved what we set out to do. In the next Plan, for 2014-2017, there will again be actions that young people say we should do, actions that we have to do by law and actions that we think will make a difference for everybody.

What children and young people told us they wanted to see

Your answers in the Social Norms survey showed that we could reduce health inequalities by targeting alcohol and drug misuse.

Reported drug use has fallen from 9.2% to 2% of 11-16 year olds and use of alcohol has fallen from 29% to 16%.

Looked after children told us that they wanted more stable placements and more local foster placements.

The percentage of children looked after in stable placements has increased from 59.1% to 67.7% The percentage of children placed more than 20 miles from home has reduced from 11% to 5.9%

You told us that we need to help children, young people and adults to develop positive relationships and not to bully.

The percentage of pupils reporting that they have ever been bullied in the last year has reduced from 47% to 31%

The percentage of pupils in good or outstanding schools and the disparity in performance between different groups.

The attainment gap at Key Stage 2 between those children who are looked after or on free school meals achieving Level 4 in Reading, Writing and Maths has reduced from 20% to 16% during the lifetime of the Plan and at Key Stage 4 the gap in achieving 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Maths has closed from 35% to 33%. Children with SEN have only benefited from a small narrowing of the attainment gap at Key Stage 2 and at Key Stage 4 the gap has widened.

You and your parents told us to improve access to high quality, inclusive childcare and activities for children from birth to 14 years or 17 years for disabled young people.

We reviewed support for disabled children in childcare settings and increased the range and choice of settings which were inclusive

You told us that we should reduce the number of permanent exclusions from Darlington Schools.

The school-led Behaviour and attendance Partnership and the Fair Access Protocols have significantly reduced the number of school exclusions

You told us that you wanted a job or training when you left school/college so we should reduce the number of young people who are NEET, with a focus on disadvantaged or vulnerable groups

NEET rate has decreased from 7.1% to 6.8%

You told us that you wanted more positive images of young people to be seen and one way to do this was to increase the volunteering opportunities for young people

The percentage of young people reporting taking part in regular volunteering has increased from 12% to 26.9%

What the law or inspectors told us they wanted to see

We are required to try to reduce the under-18 conceptions rate.

It is down from 25% below our baseline rate to now over 37.2% below our baseline rate.

We are required to try to reduce obesity levels in children and young people.

Obesity levels have increased in the Reception year group from 8.8% to 9.2% and have fallen in Year 6 from 19.4% to 17.8%.

Inspectors told us to make more use of the common assessment framework

We have made lots of changes to the way all agencies use the common assessment framework (CAF) and the use of CAFs has increased by 53.9% and it means that we have fewer referrals going to the Duty Team and more of those referrals going on to an Initial Assessment

Inspectors told us that we need to increase the proportion of initial assessments that are completed within 7 days and the proportion of core assessments that are completed within 35 days.

Both rates have fallen 64.8% to 56.1% and 81.9% to 63.9% although it needs to be noted that the timescales have been removed by Government now

We wanted to improve the educational attainment of Traveller children.

The gap in attainment levels between Traveller children and the rest of the cohort has reduced from 54% to 14.9% at Key Stage 4 and from 46.3% to 41% at Key Stage 2

We have to improve the educational attainment of looked after children.

At Key stage 4 the percentage of care leavers gaining at least 5 GCSEs at Grades A*-C increased from 6.7% to 30.4% but the percentage of looked after children achieving at least 1 GCSE fell from 66.7% to 60.9%

We have a duty to try to prevent schools from being placed in an Ofsted category.

No Darlington school has been placed in an Ofsted category since 2010.

We have a duty to try to reduce the number of children living in poverty

The percentage has increased from 21.2% to 21.3%

What the Children's Trust partners told us they wanted to see

We were worried about the high alcohol-specific admissions for under-18s.

This has fallen from 154.9 to 86.2 per 100,000.

We were concerned about the rate of unintentional and deliberate injuries leading to hospital admission for young people.

This has increased from 192.6 per 10,000 to 205.9

We wanted Ofsted to recognise the good quality of residential children's homes in Darlington.

They improved their gradings from satisfactory to good and one was graded as outstanding

We spend public money on our children's centres so they should be judged as being at least good quality.

Our first centre was judged to be satisfactory in 2011. All subsequent inspections have graded our centres as good.

We were concerned about school attendance, persistent absentee rates and Year 1 attendance in particular

Our school attendance rate has increased from 94.3% to 94.5%. Our persistent absentee rate has fallen from 7.3% to 5.6%. Attendance in Year 1 continues to be lower than attendance in other primary year groups but has improved from 95.4% to 95.5%

We need to continue to improve transition across all settings, phases and services.

We have run pilot schemes supporting transition from nursery to reception and this work has been evaluated as effective and the scheme is being extended

Support and track all young people with complex needs going through transition.

We have established a Life Stages team dealing with all children and adults with complex needs. Specifically, we have established within the model a service team for 0-25 year olds to improve transition between phases.

We think it gives children the best start if we improve the quality of early years' provision.

The attainment gap at the Foundation Stage between those children in the poorest 20% of households and the rest has reduced from 38.1% to 30%.

We wanted to improve the participation of children, young people and their families and carers in the design and delivery of services.

Evidence is provided in our engagement work reported separately

We wanted to increase the involvement of Looked after Children in the design and delivery of LAC services.

The work of the Darlo Care Crew is included in the engagement evidence

We wanted to increase the involvement of disabled children and young people in designing services.

The work of the Young Leaders is included in the engagement evidence

We thought that you and your families would get better support if we increased the links between the Job centre and the Early Intervention teams

The links are much improved; Jobcentre Plus staff have spent time in children's centres and the staff continue to hold monthly meetings together

Local employers told us to improve people's job skills, particularly in relation to engineering

The Foundation for Jobs has delivered 2,531 meaningful pupil contacts with industry, 279 additional apprenticeships and 256 internships (June 2014)

Summary of performance against the Plan

The review of performance shows that we have achieved most of the things that we said we would, even though some of our resources shrank over the period of the Plan. We failed to achieve some of our targets and these include some targets that were more in our control to achieve and some that were less so. There is a continuum of concern that can be illustrated by the following 5 indicators. We should have completed more of our assessments quicker; it is unacceptable that some looked after young people are not achieving their potential and/or leaving school with a good range of qualifications; early childhood obesity levels have increased; unintentional and deliberate injuries leading to hospital admission have increased and child poverty levels have increased.

Between them, these missed targets illustrate the need to improve systems and processes, the need to make better use of the public spend, the need to engage more with parents and the need to tackle the structural issues causing poverty.

The participation of children and young people in decision making about services which affect their lives

Children and young people have been extensively engaged in giving their views about what future priorities should be, including work by specific interest groups, a CYP survey and through the election of the Youth Member of Parliament and the manifestos which accompanied the election. The key areas for work identified by young people are as follows:

Improvement to Events and Activities: Investigate the possibility of introducing a loyalty card to lower costs of activities in Darlington, particularly for leisure services.

Combat Youth Unemployment: More and more young people are struggling to find work when leaving school or further education. There needs to be more of a link to employers and improved careers advice.

Improving health outcomes: Although 80% of respondents state they are healthy, there are areas where children and young people want services to improve particularly in mental health and sexual health

Problem Solving Groups: Young people's lives are affected in different ways in different areas; there should be groups for young people to go to so they can discuss issues and help solve them within their own community.

Disability Awareness: Young people should be made aware about the issues that affect other people in daily life. Awareness needs to be raised for young people to better understand what having a disability means.

Crime in the Local Community: Young people welcome the presence of police officers in the community with 80% of the respondents to the CYPP survey feeling safe or very safe in Darlington.

Develop Anti-Poverty Strategy for Darlington which looks at the needs of young people: Looking at after school clubs, increase the range of pre 16 courses, engagement with people with power, enough to live on, travel subsidy for students

Our priorities for 2014-17

Having considered performance data, the views of young people and the contributions of partner agencies, the following 4 broad priority areas have been agreed (with agreed actions set in italics)

1. Assessing the impact of early help services in giving children and young people the best start in life, including getting the necessary skills to move into employment or further training
 - *Rolling out the Indicators of concern procedures to all agencies*
 - *Implementing the Troubled Families programme*
 - *Supporting all schools to achieve external judgements of at least 'good'*
2. Safeguarding children and young people from harm, with a focus on dealing with risk taking behaviours as well as on community safety
 - *Investigating the profile of self-harm*
 - *Supporting educational settings to deal with self-harm and with child sexual exploitation*
 - *Taking action to reduce non-accidental injury leading to hospital admission*

- *Promote strategies to support emotional health and well being*
 - *A school-led action plan to tackle hate crime, including racism and homophobia*
3. Effectively engaging children and young people in the design of their services
 - *Developing protocols for service co-production*
 4. Narrowing the attainment gap so that all children and young people achieve their potential
 - *Securing all school support to prioritise narrowing the gap in outcomes*

How we will review this Plan and report on it

The Children's Collective receives quarterly performance reports on all agreed priorities affecting children and young people in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Areas of concern and/or underperformance will be escalated to the Darlington Partnership for consideration. Areas of achievement and/or improvement will be celebrated.