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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO**

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

**Children and Young People's Collective**

2. The Collective met on 11 November 2015.
3. Items covered were the Health Watch Value Your Health Campaign, Ofsted Inspection of Services to Children in Need of Help and Protection Children Looked After and Care Leavers and issues around children and young peoples' mental health.
4. As a result of inconsistent attendance and questions relating to governance and accountability raised in the recent Children's Services Ofsted report, I am currently taking stock of the role that the Collective plays in supporting the One Darlington Partnership in its statutory responsibilities as the Children's Trust. Discussions are underway as how best to use the expertise of the Children's Collective to move forward priority issues for children and complimenting, rather than duplicating the work of other partnership boards such as the Local Safeguarding Board or the Health and Wellbeing Board.

**Corporate Parenting Panel**

5. The Panel met on 24 November 2015. At this meeting members were informed by way of written reports and verbal updates on current performance regarding education, fostering, adoption and health assessments for looked after children. In addition, the manager of the Family Intervention Service informed panel members of a new service that began in June 2015 which is providing therapeutic support to looked after children and additional training to their carers.
6. During the panel meeting three young people from the Darlo Care Crew spoke about their experiences of leisure activities and the valuable work they were doing in developing an animated film to explain the Pledge to Looked After Children.

**Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)**

7. The Board met on 18 November, 2015. A request was made for a Vice Chair nomination from existing Board Members.
8. Durham Police and partners have launched two initiatives:

- (a) 'Intervene to Protect a Child' (IPC) which aims to identify individuals who have a sexual interest in children prior to committing an offence; and
  - (b) 'Checkpoint' an innovative approach to managing offenders by transforming the way in which they are dealt with by Durham Police through Police custody suites with the aim of diverting them from prosecution (where appropriate). A meeting was held with agencies in December to take the IPC programme forward and a separate meeting was held to investigate the possible benefits of utilising Checkpoint for the offence of child neglect.
9. The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) Annual Report which is a joint report with Durham was shared. It will be made available on the Darlington Safeguarding Children Board's (DSCB) website.
10. Feedback from a facilitated development day in September has informed the draft business plan and priorities for the Board. The business plan and priorities are agreed in consultation with the members and a finalised draft was circulated prior to Christmas 2015.
11. Performance reporting has been identified as an area for improvement from the DSCB Ofsted inspection and progress has been made to include benchmarking data. Inclusion of and analysis of this data has improved our discussions and scrutiny function. This work will be further developed once the priorities have been agreed. As the initial health assessments have been an ongoing area of monitoring for the Board, the timeliness of these assessments have improved to 85 per cent in Quarter 2 from 77 per cent in Quarter 1. However, it was claimed that the timeliness of the paperwork being received by the LAC nurse has declined; this is being explored between Children's Services and the Looked After Children (LAC) nurse.

### **School Forum**

12. The Forum met on 6 October 2015. Members of the Forum discussed the following:
- (a) School Funding Formula 2016/17 - The Finance Manager explained that there have been limited changes to the guidance produced by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) in July for the funding formula for 2016/17. The Forum agreed that the same formula factors be used in the 2016/17 formula as were used in 2015/16.
  - (b) Funding for Young People with Special Educational Needs (SEN) - A research report, regarding future reforms of SEN funding was discussed. The issues facing Darlington are common to the Local Authorities surveyed in that report. The report defines a key recommendation for the Department for Education (DfE) to remove the allocation of high needs based upon historic levels, and move to a formulaic approach. The Forum will be updated once further guidance is received from the DfE.
  - (c) School Resource Base Panels - The School Forum Officer outlined the implementation of the resource base panel process which includes monitoring,

approval of place requests and receiving monitoring reports on those pupils already placed in a base.

## **Education**

13. The Darlington School of Mathematics and Science was inspected by Ofsted on 11 and 12 November. The school was deemed to require improvement in all areas. The Longfield Academy Trust is drawing support from a number of agencies including the local authority to address areas for improvement.

## **Locality Teams**

14. December saw the celebration of volunteering in the localities. Children Centres currently have 28 volunteers delivering nine groups across the town. The groups have had an annual attendance of 749 families using them for peer support and children's activities. The volunteers have been offered a range of training including First Aid, Food and Hygiene, oral health as well as completing accredited courses in literacy and working with children and young people. The volunteering experience has helped five volunteers move into employment in a child care setting; two have gained employment in retail; two volunteers have expanded their volunteering to other voluntary organisations; and one volunteer has commenced a university course in nursing.

## **Child Protection/Looked After Children Statistics**

15. 189 children and young people were looked after by Darlington Borough Council on 24 December 2015. Of those 189 children and young people, 55 were aged between 0-5 years old and 13 were in placements with their prospective adopters waiting the granting of Adoption Orders.

## **Children's Commissioning**

16. Darlington is currently working with the other 11 North Eastern Local Authorities and 10 Clinical Commissioning groups, to collaboratively commission placements in Department for Education (DfE) registered non-maintained independent special Schools and Colleges for Children and Young People 0-25 years, day, boarding and residential placements. Newcastle City Council is leading the commissioning process.
17. Darlington is leading a collaborative commissioning process with Hartlepool, Redcar and Cleveland and Middlesbrough Councils, to develop a framework of providers of Children's Residential Homes.
18. The aims of both commissions are to improve choice and quality of placements to ensure good and improving outcomes for children and young people, by developing the market available and achieve improved financial transparency and value for money.

## **Meetings**

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

- (a) Attended Two Improvement Board Meetings. A draft Improvement Plan, outlining our planned actions, has been endorsed by the Board and now submitted to DfE and Ofsted. The new performance management framework has been presented to the Board and will form the basis for more robust management of performance. A training development programme for all Members in relation to Children's Services is being updated.

20. Since the last meeting of Council, some of the meetings/ events I have attended include:--

- Attended meetings with Red Quadrant, our improvement partners;
- Corporate Parenting Panel;
- Attended a dinner at Darlington College to recognise and celebrate Alasdair MacConachie's OBE, DL contribution to FE in Darlington;
- Spoke at an all school assembly at Skerne Park Academy;
- Attended Year 11 Presentation Evening at Carmel College;
- Attended a creative writing celebration with Pete Barron with Yr. 8 students at Carmel College;
- Had various discussions and meetings with my LGA mentor, Cllr. Joe Caluori from Islington;
- Opened the SACRE Syllabus Launch at a training event at the Morrison's Centre;
- Attended weekly briefings with the Interim Director of Children's Services and the newly appointed Director of Adults and Children's Services;
- Opened the PSHE Quality Mark Launch Event at Teesside University;
- Attended the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee;
- Attended the School Forum;
- Attended the Darlington Partnership Board;
- Attended the "launch of manifestos" of the Youth MP candidates;
- Attended the Health and Wellbeing Board;
- Attended the Local Safeguarding Children's Board; and
- Attended the Primary Schools Eurovision Song Contest as a judge.

**Councillor Cyndi Hughes**  
**Children and Young People Portfolio**