
OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

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

2017/2018 School Admission Arrangements

2. We approved the Local Authority's admission arrangements for the 2017/2018 academic year for all maintained schools in the Borough in line with the School Admissions Code.
3. In accordance with the statutory duty on the Local Authority to forward a Co-ordinated Admission Scheme for both primary and secondary schools for the 2017/2018 academic year, the Secretary of State was informed prior to the deadline of 28 February 2016.
4. Offers of a school place for children starting secondary school in September 2016 were announced on 1 March.
5. National Offer day for the allocations of a school place for children starting primary school in September 2016 is 16 April. Parents will be notified of the school allocated for their child in writing, on this date.

School Improvement and Educational Performance in Darlington

6. We received and an update on the local authority's school improvement strategy and a summary of educational performance in Darlington and in doing so approved the Annual School Improvement Report.
7. Officers have also been authorised to continue to review the effectiveness of school improvement strategy and bring forward any proposed revisions.
8. The local authority is responsible for having an effective system for monitoring and challenging school performance in its area and a good education is a key factor in giving young people the best start in life and enabling them to make a greater social and economic contribution to Darlington.

The Collective

9. A Task and Finish group on the mental health of children and young people has been agreed through the Children's Trust arrangements in the Local Strategic Partnership. A report on how we can best utilise collective activity across agencies to build emotional resilience will be produced.

Corporate Parenting Panel

10. The Panel met on 25 January 2016. At this meeting members were informed by written reports and verbal updates on the Young People Leaving Care in Training and/or Employment, Children Missing from Home and Care and Children at Risk of Child Sexual Exploitation. Members of the Panel requested further details about the work done in relation to Children at Risk of Child Sexual Exploitation. Arrangements are to be made for Barnardos workers to attend Corporate Parenting Panel to share more detail about their work in this important area. During the meeting Members discussed the draft Work Programme for 2016/2017 and also the proposed plan of Panel Members Engagement with Services for Looked After children in various settings across the Borough. Revised plans on both of these items are to be brought back to the next Corporate Parenting Panel Meeting.
11. During the panel meeting two young people from the Darlo Care Crew provided information to Members about their plans for a Regional Children in Care Council Conference to be held in Newcastle on 8th July 2016. The meeting also authorised the printing of The Pledge and requested that arrangements for a launch event be explored by the Participation Officer and members of the Darlo Care Crew.

Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

12. The Board met on 20th January and the Board's Business and Improvement Plan was agreed. Highlight reporting and a risk register is currently being developed to monitor the progress of the business plan and to ensure the Board has oversight of the risks and the remedial action to reduce the risks.
13. Board partners have been asked to consider their financial contributions to the Board to enable it to deliver on its statutory functions and to maintain pace to address the Ofsted recommendations.
14. The Board received assurance from its partners that they are discharging their statutory functions appropriately as outlined in Working Together, 2015, section 11 audits. A proposed strategy will be developed to reflect the learning from this audit.
15. The Board's data set now includes statistical comparators and further work has taken place to widen the data set to focus on the child's journey through services and statutory agencies to contribute to a multi-agency data set.
16. Targeted training has been undertaken with taxi drivers in Darlington to raise their awareness of child sexual exploitation (CSE). As a direct result of this training, a

CSE victim (aged 11) was rescued by a taxi driver who recognised something was wrong.

Schools Forum

17. The Forum met on 12 January and considered termly reoccurring papers which review the current year's budget position and provide an update from the School Forum Officer. Additionally the group considered a request from George Dent Nursery School for an exception funding factor and two papers which provided updates around the high needs budget and SEN placements and SEN funding reforms. The Forum also agreed the Budget Setting arrangements 2016/17 including the school funding formula and growth fund arrangements for 2016/17

Education

18. A number of Darlington Secondary and Primary schools attended an Ofsted better Maths conference on 7 January. Across Darlington, Maths has been identified as an area for development particularly in view of curriculum changes in that subject area.
19. The contract arrangements for the provision of home to school transport services have undergone a review and retender process. The new contracts have been awarded and will commence from 1 April. Parents and young people who use this service are being contacted about any changes to vehicles or staffing arrangements prior to the new routes coming into effect after the Easter holidays (11 April).

Locality Teams

20. Social Work Locality Teams have seen an improvement in their working conditions through the maximisation of available office space and the movement of a team from one location to another. Additional remote working capacity will be available to them from March 2016.
21. Early Help services continue to deliver a wide range of services from their children centre bases, and a particular emphasis this period has been supporting schools who are delivering the 2 year old provision via a home to nursery provision, building on the success of the 3 year old transitions project which has been undertaken for the last 2 years.

Child Protection/Looked After Children Statistics

22. 191 children and young people were looked after by Darlington Borough Council on 9th February 2016. Of the 191 children and young people, 56 were aged between 0-5 years old, 17 young people 17 years old and 12 were in placements with their prospective adopters waiting the granting of Adoption Orders.
23. 130 children and young people were subject to a child protection plan as of 2 February 2016. This relates to 70 families. The main category of abuse was

Neglect – 88 children. 37 were on a Child Protection Plan due to concerns regarding emotional abuse, four children for physical abuse and one for sexual abuse. Two children have dual status (looked after and subject to a CP Plan). Three cases are pending and are due to be considered at an Initial Child Protection Conference relating to eight children. Since November 2015 the overall numbers on a plan have remained stable being between 128 and 134. At this time last year (February 2015) numbers were at around 90 children subject to a CP plan.

Children's Commissioning

24. The 2015-16 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and its accompanying action plan was reported to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 11 January 2016 for consideration and monitoring. Information about the Department for Education's consultation regarding new plans to give families the 'right to request' wraparound and holiday childcare for children from Reception up to the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9) was reported to the Schools Chair and Link Governor Briefing on 13 January 2016.
25. Marketing of the 'Free Childcare for Two Years Olds' entitlement has continued by means of advertising in 'One Darlington', a continuation of the 'golden ticket' system and an interview on Star Radio.
26. Work is underway to more effectively capture, evaluate and report the 'voice of the child' within the commissioned Advocacy service.

Darlington Youth Member of Parliament

27. Jessica Halliday was elected the Darlington Youth Member of Parliament by the Worshipful the Mayor at a Ceremony held at the Town Hall on 29 February, 2016.
28. Jessica is 16 years old and currently studying A levels at Carmel Sixth Form College.
29. There were 3891 votes cast for the six candidates who stood for Youth Member of Parliament across schools and colleges in the borough with a 40 per cent turnout of voters.
30. Youngsters aged between 11 and 17 who live in the borough were asked to nominate themselves for the role and each candidate delivered their manifesto of three key points ahead of the Election.
31. Jessica lead campaigns to extend the age for a ticket on a bus or train from 16 to 18 because 16 year olds do not have the option to drive; she feels that mental health should be considered as seriously as physical health within schools and should be part of PSHEE or assemblies to ensure that mental health is not an alienated issues; and she aims to encourage local businesses and services to make work experience placements more readily available to young people and that these vacancies are advertised in schools and colleges.

32. Liam White, a fellow Carmel College Student was elected as Jessica's Deputy.

Meetings

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

- (a) Attended the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- (b) Supported Eurovision Song Contest as Judge.
- (c) Attended briefings with the Director of Children and Adults Services and the Interim Director of Children's Services.
- (d) Update meeting with Clive Harrison, Red Quadrant.
- (e) Improvement Board Meeting.
- (f) BBC Tees interview with the Chief Executive on Safeguarding in Darlington.
- (g) Attended Children and Young People Scrutiny.
- (h) Attended an All Member Briefing on the MTFP to answer any questions on Children's Services issues.
- (i) Attended the Darlington College Board.
- (j) Chaired a special Task and Finish Group on the Darlington Partnerships looking at resilience and low-level mental health issues and young people.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Children and Young People Portfolio