
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.

Update on Children's Services Improvements

2. Regular updates on the improvements to date within Children's Services following the Single Inspection carried out in June 2015 continue to be produced and monitored by Cabinet, our improvement partners, Red Quadrant and the Improvement Board.
3. Highlights relating to improvements in practice include :-- A Getting to Good Seminar led by Ofsted on 18 April 2016, a Social Work Summit held on 21 April 2016 for all social workers in Children's services; the appointment of a Head of Performance to drive forward and embed the improvements highlighted in the inspection; and the mapping and rationalising of current governance arrangements to provide clear, unambiguous roles and responsibilities for key groups and individuals.

School Term Updates 2017-18

4. We have approved the publication of the Model School Term dates for Darlington Maintained Schools for the 2017/18 Academic Year.
5. In line with previous practice, all North East and Yorkshire Local Authorities have co-ordinated school term dates with authorities in the two regions using the previously agreed Guiding Principles.

Children, Families and Learning Capital Programme 2016/17

6. Cabinet has agreed to release a total School Condition Allocation of £515,756 and the proposed prioritised capital investment programme for maintained schools, with delegated authority to the Director of Children and Adult Services to manage the authorisation of this funding.
7. Cabinet has also agreed the proposed Basic Need Investment for St. George's Church of England Academy to provide new primary places to meet projected demand in Middleton St. George, with delegated authority to the Director of Children and Adult Services to manage the authorisation of this funding.

Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

8. The Board met on 18 May 2016 and received the training annual report, which provided assurances that, during 2015/16, the demand for children safeguarding training has increased by ten per cent, 97 per cent of learners rated the quality of training as either good or outstanding and 98 per cent of the learners rated their knowledge and skill level post training (3 months after completing the training) as very good or outstanding.
9. The year-end budget report was received which demonstrated reduced funding from partners due to agencies own financial savings programmes. Some agencies have agreed to a one per cent increase in their contribution, however, this is not the case for all agencies that contribute to the Board. Risks were identified in relation to being able to resource serious case reviews and possible long term impact on the staffing arrangements of the business unit if funding remains on a downward trajectory.
10. The performance management framework was a focus as the Board must demonstrate it has a robust understanding from a multi-agency perspective of how the safeguarding system is working for children in Darlington. The Council has offered the Head of Performance and Head of Review and Development to support the Board with facilitating this process and it is envisaged a year end multi-agency performance report will be presented to the July board for scrutiny.
11. The Board received a report on the issues and progress made in respect of the children missing and/or absent from home and education.
12. Initial Health Assessments will remain as a Board priority. The Local Authority and the Clinical Commissioning Group will jointly communicate the issues and developments that impact on sustaining the improvements to timescales (within 20 working days) for all Looked After Children to receive their initial health assessment.
13. Work is in hand to train to understand the approach for young people turning 18 who are assessed as being at medium or high risk of child sexual exploitation. Initial work has been undertaken with Adult Services and the Board agreed to work with Darlington and County Durham Safeguarding Adults Boards via a task and finish groups to agree transition arrangements for these young people.
14. The Board is considering two cases for a Serious Case Review. The Local Authority is sharing information to inform the decision making. No decision had been determined at the time of writing this report (2 June 2016) by the Independent Chair as he is waiting for clarification on questions he has posed to statutory agencies.
15. Finally partners attended Board and provided an update on their contribution to the Children's Services Improvement Plan.

School Forum

16. The Forum met on 17 May 2016. The agenda included regular reports concerning the 2015/16 budget position and commissioned school services. The Forum was notified of the final budget position for 2015/16, which included unallocated underspend of approximately £190,000 that was agreed to be held in contingency for the expected changes in funding from 17 April.
17. The Forum also received summaries of the DfE proposed changes to school and high needs funding from 17 April.

Education

18. Ofsted conducted a monitoring inspection at Darlington School of Mathematics and Science on 22 April. Inspectors found that Senior Leaders and Trust Directors were taking effective action to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The contribution of the local authority in providing some external support to the academy was recognised in the report.
19. The successful Community Mental Health Pilot delivered by the Council's Learning and Skills Service in collaboration with Darlington Mind has been extended by the Skills Funding Agency until the end of July. This should enable us to engage and support a further 80 individuals with mild to moderate mental health needs.
20. The Rydal Academy Primary School, which was previously graded a satisfactory school, was inspected by Ofsted in May 2016 and was graded a good school. The Ofsted inspectors praised the determination and focus of the Headteacher who has driven improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour. The inspector noted that school staff are well motivated and work hard to achieve good outcomes for pupils.
21. Springfield Primary School and Holy Family RC Primary School, which were both graded as 'requires improvement' by Ofsted in February 2016, have robust improvement plans in place and are being held to account by improvement boards. Both schools are drawing support from a number of consultants to address their key areas for improvement as highlighted in the inspection reports.
22. Corporation Road Primary School, inspected by Ofsted in February 2016 and graded 'inadequate', has put in place significant improvement actions including the appointment of a deputy Headteacher. School to School support is providing the support and challenge to address the key areas for improvement.
23. There have been several childminders inspected by Ofsted recently. The inspection grades of childminders are improving overall. New childminders attend initial training delivered by Darlington Childcare Development Officers. Two new childminders inspected by Ofsted gained 'Met' status and one was graded 'good'. Childminders that have been delivering services longer showed improvements overall. After significant improvement support, two childminders progressed from

'Requires Improvement/ Satisfactory' to 'good' grades, one remained 'good' and one improved from 'good' to 'outstanding'.

Locality Teams

24. Children Centres continue to deliver the full core offer of activities, including one to one bespoke packages of support to individual families and group activities. There has been an increase in registrations from those families that live in the most deprived wards, currently 78.5 per cent of the children known to be residing in the most deprived wards are registered with a children centre. The early years teams are currently supporting schools with the home to nursery transition programme.
25. The work with those not in employment, education or training (NEET) is performing well, with 86.39 per cent of young people in learning and only 0.35 per cent of the total cohort are unknown to the service. This figure is the lowest in the Tees Valley region figure. The number of young people who are not in either employment, education or training currently stands at 6.03 per cent, the 2nd lowest in the Tees Valley region.
26. The current out turn for assessments for families who do not meet the requirements for statutory services but are in need of additional support is showing a 91 per cent increase in assessments of needs, over a three year period. There are currently 606 children and families who have had an assessment and received a service in the period of March 2015 to May 2016. There have been no complaints regarding the services offered in the same period.

Child Protection/Looked After Children Statistics

27. In June 2016 there were 131 children (77 families) subject to a Child Protection Plan. The main reasons were due to ; neglect (81 children), emotional abuse (43 children, physical abuse (5 children) and sexual abuse (4 children). Domestic violence remains the main parental risk factor leading to children becoming subject to a child protection plan.
28. In the same period, 208 children were looked after by the Local Authority, six of whom are placed with their own parents. All children looked after are allocated to a qualified Social Worker and have an Independent Reviewing officer overseeing their care plan.

Children's Commissioning

29. An Expression of Interest regarding capital funding for the 30 Hours Extended Childcare Offer has been submitted to the Department for Education (DfE). The Local Authority is awaiting the outcome. A national, capital application/bidding process is expected to open in late Summer, the results of which will be available in late Autumn 2016. Darlington has also submitted its response to the Government's draft delivery model for the extended childcare offer. Preparatory work is underway with the DfE regarding the Extended Entitlement/ Tax Free Childcare Checker. We are awaiting national score cards from the DfE regarding take up of free childcare

for two year olds in the Spring 2016 term. We are expecting take up to have decreased slightly from 82 per cent to around 78 per cent, with the national average being 72 per cent; this decrease has been reflected in other North East Local Authorities. It is believed that poor weather in that part of the year is generally a contributory factor to parents/carers not accessing their free place.

30. Advocacy services for children and young people are being re-commissioned as a collaborative exercise across the Tees Valley, with Stockton Borough Council leading the process on behalf of the five authorities.

Meetings

31. Since the last meeting of Council, I have :-

- (a) met with the Chairman of the Governing Body of Darlington College;
- (b) attended the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee;
- (c) been interviewed as part of the Department for Education's monitoring of Children's Services following our Ofsted Inspection;
- (d) attended the Local Safeguarding Children's Board;
- (e) attended and spoke at the Launch of the Tees Valley Youth Employment Initiative Programme in Hartlepool;
- (f) attended the Children's Services Improvement Board;
- (g) attended a lunch with Darlington Rotary Club to accompany and support Darlington's Young Citizen of the Year, Sharifa Khan;
- (h) hosted my LGA Mentor, Cllr. Joe Calouri during a follow-up meeting to Darlington;
- (i) met with the Chief Executive of YMCA, Sarah Hackett to discuss housing provision for Looked After Children leaving care;
- (j) attended weekly briefing meetings with the Director of Children's and Adults' Services and the Interim Director of Children's Services;
- (k) chaired my quarterly All-Borough Governor's meeting at the Dolphin Centre;
- (l) attended the Armed Forces Celebration Day and speaking with school children in the market square about this experience;
- (m) attended and addressed the Vibe Awards which celebrated the amazing achievements of young people in the Borough;
- (n) met with the Director of Humantics about possible learning initiatives;
- (o) chaired the LEA Governors Appointments Panel;
- (p) met, along with Councillor Veronica Copeland, Sharon Brown from Homes North East to discuss homelessness in our region;
- (q) attended and addressed the Volunteers Awards Ceremony at the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College;
- (r) attended an "Intro to Arabic" course as part of DBC's Learners' Week;
- (s) met with young leaders at Carmel College;
- (t) filmed a video clip as part of a Care Crew initiative on "The Pledge";
- (u) attended the Darlington Partnership Executive Board;
- (v) attended the Corporate Parenting Panel; and
- (w) attended a meeting with the Chief Executive of the Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust, Sue Jacques and the Chair of the Trust's Governing Body,

Professor Paul Keane to discuss maternity services and paediatric services at Darlington Memorial Hospital.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Children and Young People Portfolio