
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.

2018-2019 School Admission Arrangements

2. In accordance with the School Admissions Code we have approved the admission arrangements for primary schools for which we are the admission authority for the academic year 2018/2019.
3. The Co-ordinated Admission Scheme for both primary and secondary schools for the 2018/19 academic year was forwarded to the Secretary of State prior to the 28 February 2017 deadline.

Corporate Parenting Panel

4. The Panel met on 21 February. Darlo Care Crew were in attendance and presented a report which highlighted their recent involvement in the Takeover Challenge that took place in November 2016. Two young people from Darlo Care Crew took part in the challenge and shadowed the senior directorate within Children's services. They have also been involved in a young people's review of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board website to ensure it is child friendly. There is a Celebration Event for Young People and their carers in April 2017.
5. The panel also heard from the Therapeutic Social Workers from within the Family Intervention Team. The team provides services to children on the edge of care and those who are looked after. The service work closely with colleagues from CAMHS to achieve positive outcomes for children.
6. Blue Cabin Arts Project gave a presentation on their continued work with young people, foster carers and residential staff. They outlined a range of open access and bespoke activities involving nine providers offering opportunities in graffiti, theatre, craft, heritage tours, beat box and singing.
7. The Darlington Foster Carer Association (DFCA) advised members on activity throughout December and January with regard to Christmas Party held and a drop in for foster carers. The association also now have a facebook page which is ready for use.

Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

8. The Board met on 25 January, 2017. The Interim Independent Chair (Simon Hart) presented a report submitted to the Children's Services Improvement Board in February. The report included the finalised DSCB Improvement Plan which sets out the Boards commitment as a multi-agency partnership to strengthen safeguarding practice in Darlington.
9. The Board received an overview report of recent engagement work with practitioners who work with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. It was recognised strategic oversight needed to be improved and better coordinated and the Board discussed which strategic partnerships should lead the coordination and support identified for this vulnerable group. Discussions will be held with the relevant Chairs of the strategic partnerships in Darlington.
10. The Board received a first report on the Early Help Offer and recognised that as a partnership it needed to engage and support the work including how as a Board it knows that Early Help interventions is making a difference. Performance frameworks are to be strengthened to include multi-agency data. Further reports will be commissioned from the partnership to seek assurance on the difference early help is making to children and young people in Darlington.
11. The Board received a report on the learning from the Joint Safeguarding (Children and Adults) Boards development day held in December 2016. It was agreed the actions from the development day are to be included in the overarching strategic business plan and an extra-ordinary meeting was held in February with the strategic leads from the Board to finalise the Boards Business Plan. The updated Business Plan was presented at the Darlington Safeguarding Childrens Board meeting in March 2017.
12. The Board approved the [Multi-agency Learning and Improvement Framework](#), which sets out the Boards commitment to developing a learning culture.

School Forum

13. The Forum met on 12 January 2017 and the Early Years National Funding Formula was discussed.
14. The Department for Education (DfE) released a consultation regarding a proposed national funding formula (the formula) for early years on 11th August 2016 that required responses by 22nd September 2016.
15. The DfE published its response on 1st December 2016. The consultation response can be found <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/early-years-funding-changes-to-funding-for-3-and-4-year-olds>
16. The national funding formula will allocate funding for the three and four year old entitlement for both the existing universal 15 hour entitlement and the new 30 hour entitlement for working parents on a formulaic basis.

17. The formula will commence for the existing 15 hours from April 2017 and for the additional 15 hours from September 2017, when the 30 hours of free childcare is implemented nationally.
18. The formula will apply to existing 15 hour entitlement and for the additional entitlement. The funding the local authority receives will be the same for both entitlements.
 - (a) Funding will be provided to the local authority based on the number of children that actually take up both entitlements.
 - (b) The formula will have three funding factors to determine how much funding a local authority will receive per child including:
 - (i) A universal base rate
 - (ii) An additional needs factor
 - (iii) An area cost adjustment
19. More information can be found in paragraphs 24-26 below.

Special Educational Needs and Disability

20. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms were introduced in September 2014. All local areas were provided additional resources by the Department for Education (DfE).
21. All local areas were required to introduce Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability and Special Educational Needs statements were to be converted to EHC plans.
22. In April 2016, Ofsted and the Quality Care Commission published the handbook for the inspection of local areas' effectiveness in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. 13 local area inspections have taken place so far.
23. Darlington has a SEND Steering Group that includes partners from schools, health, social care and the voluntary sector. The Group is responsible for implementing and coordinating actions that will improve the identification, assessment and outcomes for children and young people with SEND in the local area.

Locality Teams

24. The Early Help remodelling has commenced and staff consultation regarding the future delivery model and staffing level concluded on 14 February 2017. Staffing reduction by a compulsory means has been kept to a minimum. The model is on target to be operational on 1 April 2017.

25. Partnership working with key agencies i.e. police, health and schools continues to be very positive. The continued commitment to a multi-agency safeguarding hub has been agreed with key health and police staff co locating with Social Care Staff. This co location will provide an opportunity for improved information sharing to assist in safeguarding vulnerable children.

Child Protection/Looked After Children Statistics

26. The number of children who are looked after by Darlington Borough Council has remained steady having risen mid-way through last year due to an increase in applications to the Family Court. This rise in part can be accounted for as a response to changes in case law regarding the use of s20 accommodation.
27. The number of children subject to a child protection plan has significantly fallen since January 2017 and exploration of this is underway within children's services.

Children's Commissioning and Contracts

28. From September 2017, Local Authorities will be required by legislation to ensure that all of their eligible three and four year olds whose parents want a place, can access 30 hours free childcare each week, 570 hours each year, taken over no fewer than 38 weeks. All children are eligible for free 15 hours childcare in the term following their third birthday. This additional entitlement increases that offer for those children who meet the eligibility criteria.
29. The additional 15 hours of free childcare per week will help working families in Darlington to manage the cost of childcare and support local parents into work or extend their working hours. Additionally, the positive outcomes for pre-school children associated with accessing good quality childcare are well documented, with research demonstrating the long-term benefits that high quality childcare has on the social, emotional and intellectual development of children, particularly, those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
30. In readiness for implementation of the 30 hours childcare entitlement, it is important that the local authority's I.T. Support Systems are as automated as possible. In order to achieve this in Darlington we have submitted an application via the DfE. 30 Hours Childcare, Digital Accelerate funding round. If fully successful, this application will enable Darlington to: integrate the 'Free Childcare for 2 Year Olds', the Early Years Pupil Premium and the 30 Hours Childcare in-house checker systems; automate the early years data collection and funding processes; and collect additional data, such as childcare sufficiency information and data relating to child development and child progress in the early years. The local authority currently uses Capita systems in a number of different areas and in keeping with the local authority's digital strategy, Capita software will be utilised to develop the early years systems and processes further.

Meetings

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

- (a) Attended the Darlington Holocaust Memorial Day;
- (b) The Health and Wellbeing Board Development Session;
- (c) The Health and Wellbeing Board;
- (d) Weekly briefings with the Director of Adults and Children's Services;
- (e) Children's Services Improvement Board;
- (f) A meeting with the Leader of the Council, police representative and Jo Benson, Youth Offending Service Manager to discuss anti-social behaviour;
- (g) Met with the Care Crew;
- (h) Helped to judge the Mayor's Primary School Eurovision Song Contest;
- (i) Attended a charity 'Curry Night' at Carmel College;
- (j) Attended the Darlington Partnership Executive and the Partnership Board;
- (k) Met with young people from the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College;
- (l) Met with Cait Barratt from the Darlington Hippodrome art project to discuss how young people may be involved in a community arts project;
- (m) Attended the Corporate Parenting Panel;
- (n) Attended the Gay Rights Darlington Open Day;
- (o) Addressed a Leadership Course at the Durham Centre in Belmont;
- (p) Visited Polam Hall Free School on World Book Day to meet and discuss books and literacy with secondary school pupils;
- (q) Chaired a Borough-wide governors' briefing event; and
- (r) Attended the Schools Forum

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Children and Young People Portfolio