
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. The Children's Service's Improvement Board continue to monitor performance management and quality of practice. The Board last met on the 10 January 2018 and sought reassurance of the processes in place to ensure that improvements were made in service areas where practice improvement was needed. The vital role of the Advanced Practitioners and the Principal Social Worker was noted in supporting the delivery of improvement actions plans. Further positive development has been down to direct work with social work teams and individual social workers and the powerful impact of the imbedding of the Signs of Safety model.
3. The Board received a report outlining the background to the development of the Early Help Strategy, an update on what it comprises and the likely timeframe for completion. The Strategy is currently out for partner engagement and input, with an expected sign-off date this month.
4. A report submitted by the Independent Chair of the LSCB gave a number of illustrations of how the partnership arrangements were being consolidated and what they were beginning to deliver. Reference was made to the importance of ensuring that progress was maintained and that the strengthening culture of partnership working was carried into the new arrangements that would arise from the changes brought about by the Children and Social Work Act 2017
5. It was reported that a key area of concern for all Safeguarding Boards, including Darlington, was internet safety and a presentation was given to the work of the Multi-Agency Internet Safety Partnership which had been launched in our Borough with the aim of building digital literacy and resilience skills in children, young people, professionals, parents and carers.
6. Children's Services continue refine the delivery of a Audit and Quality Assurance Programme, designed to continue to ensure the approaches used to monitor practice improvement and drive up social work standards are robust and effective.
7. I have thanked the Director of Children and Adults Services and her staff for all their hard work in successfully progressing the many improvements that have been made within Children's Social Care.

The Children's Trust

8. The Health and Wellbeing Board met informally on the 18 January 2018 as a development session with the aim of agreeing a focus for the work of the Board for the next twelve months. The Health and Wellbeing Plan is a five year programme with fifteen priorities. Emerging priorities to focus on include mental health improvement and youth unemployment. The next meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board (which includes Children's Trust arrangements) is on 15 March 2018, an update on the work of the Board will be provided for the next Council report.

Corporate Parenting Panel

9. The Panel met on 30 January 2018 where they received a number of reports on how partner organisations promote education, training, work experiences and apprenticeships for care leavers and children in care. The report demonstrated a wide and varied offer to young people from health, local authority and the Darlington Foster Carer Association.
10. A presentation was given by the Chief Executive of the YMCA on its current offer to young people in the promotion of taking up education and work experience opportunities.
11. The panel also received a report from the Darlo Care Crew who advised of two young people who helped facilitate training for prospective foster carers on 27 October 2017. The training consisted of personal role play and real life scenarios. The feedback from the young people was inspirational and they enjoyed delivering the training. Written feedback from participants said they thought the training was 'excellent'.

Education

School Admissions 2019-20

12. Cabinet gave approval for the adoption of the co-ordinated Local Authority's Admission Arrangements for the 2019/20 Academic Year, for maintained schools in the Borough.
13. In line with the School Admissions Code, we are required to annually determine the admission arrangements used to allocate places for schools for which it is the admission authority. Once approved, there is a statutory duty to forward a Co-ordinated Admission Scheme for both primary and secondary schools to the Secretary of State by 28 February 2018. The deadline was met.

30 Hour Places

14. The supply of 30 Hour places is being monitored and to date no parents have reported difficulty in accessing a place. At 30 January 2018 764 Darlington parents had a valid 30 Hours HMRC eligibility code. Development work is underway on the

Local Authority's 'Free Childcare for Two Year Olds' and the Early Years Pupil Premium on-line eligibility checkers, to ensure that by mid-February they are Universal Credits threshold compliant.

15. In mid-December 2017 the Local Authority submitted a funding application of £40,760 to the Department for Education (DfE) '30 Hours Delivery Support' Fund to assist with 30 Hours delivery in the following areas:
 - (a) To conduct a ward level parental demand and provider supply survey and a local employer survey
 - (b) To fund provider business sustainability and partnership working support
 - (c) To enable an increase in take-up of places by children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Darlington's bid was successful. A grant of £40,760 has been allocated from the Department for Education's 30 Hours Childcare Delivery Support Fund.

The award is to be used to create (directly or indirectly) 30 Hours places for the summer 2018 term and to ensure sustainability for the second year of the 30 Hours delivery.

Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

16. Children and Families Act 2014 (Part 3) introduced a duty on Local Authorities to undertake the transfer of statements of special educational needs on to the new Education Health and Care Plans (EHC). The transitional period for transferring children and young people with Special Education Need (SEN) to the new SEN and disability system (for those children and young people who meet the criteria for an EHC plan) is from 1 September 2014 to 1 April 2018.
17. Darlington's SEND service completed all transfers of statements to EHCPs in February 2018 ahead of the statutory deadline. Work is underway to mirror the audit approach in Childrens Social Care, to ensure good quality plans are in place.

Strategic School Improvement Fund

18. Carmel College have successfully bid for funding through the Department for Education Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF) to lead a project to improve Maths teaching in the Tees Valley.

Inspection Outcomes

19. Ofsted has published the following inspection reports:
 - (a) Hummersknott Academy published on 2 January 2018 – graded Requires Improvement

- (b) Abbey Junior School was inspected published on 5 February 2018 – graded Good

Childrens Social Care

Early Help

20. The revised model for Children Centre delivery is now operational with the provision of a varied programme offered to families across the Borough. There continues to be an increase in the number of Early Help assessments being offered to families and schools continue to extend the use of the assessment tool to support pupils, ensuring needs are identified at the earliest opportunity. The impact of Early Help Services on families is measured in a variety of ways, using both customer feedback, learning journeys for children and a vulnerability score which is used to measure a families vulnerability at the commencement of services and their vulnerability at the end of the involvement with the service. The impact can also be measured by the number of families who pass through Early Help services and then escalate into statutory services. At the end of December 2017 only 6 per cent of those who had received a service from Early Help escalated into statutory services over a nine month period.

Workforce

21. The social work workforce continues to stabilise, with the number of vacancies continuing to reduce. The 'Darlington Offer' clearly details the positives of practicing social work here, with manageable caseloads playing a significant role. This has been recently reported nationally through the DfE report 'Experimental Statistics: Children and Family Social Work Workforce in England, Year Ending 30 September 2017', with our caseload numbers per social worker being ranked fourth best in the Country.

Care Leavers

22. The DfE National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, Mark Riddell, is visiting the Council on the 9 and 10 May 2018, to give us additional assurance on our development of the Care Leavers' Offer, which is required as part of the implementation of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The timetable will include meetings with the Leader of the Council, myself as Children's Portfolio Holder, officers, Care Leavers and also children in care.

Commissioning and Contracts

23. We continue to undertake collaborative procurements with the Tees Valley Councils and across the North East Region. This has included the re-procurement of the Tees Valley Independent Foster Agency (IFA) contract, which came into effect on 12 January and participation in the new regional NE12 procurement (involving 12 Local Authorities and 10 CCG's) for the provision of Independent Special Schools, Residential Care and Short Breaks, which came into effect 1 February 2018.

24. Darlington aims to provide the right support at the right time in the right place. A key benefit from participating in these procurements is that a greater range of contracted care and support is available for vulnerable children from Darlington who require care and accommodation.

Meetings

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

- (a) Spoken at the launch of Darlington Building Society Ambassador, Pete Barron's book, "Darly" at Theatre Hullabaloo. The proceeds from the sale of this book will go toward providing reading materials to children and young people in our borough;
- (b) Attended a community retirement tea for the Rev. Sheilagh Williamson (St. Columba's and St. John's Parishes);
- (c) Attended a Cornmill Security Meeting to better understand the recent rise in anti-social behaviour in the town centre and how these actions are being addressed;
- (d) Attended the Corporate Parenting Panel;
- (e) Lunched with a group of Yr. 7 and Yr. 8 pupils at Carmel College to listen and learn about current issues they are thinking about;
- (f) Attended a Mutual Gain meeting;
- (g) Visited Whinfield Primary School at the invitation of the Head Teacher;
- (h) Delivered a workshop on "Working with School Governors" for the Dioceses of Hexham and Newcastle;
- (i) Held two young persons advice centres at the Dolphin Centre (on the 3rd Saturday of each month from 11am- noon);
- (j) Attended the Darlington Chinese Association's New Year Community lunch;
- (k) Attended the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee;
- (l) Attended the Darlington Partnership Executive Board and Full Board;
- (m) Attended the Darlington High Needs Conference at the Mowden Arena;
- (n) Attended an event with the Regional Schools Commissioner's team;
- (o) Chaired a borough-wide meeting of governors (from academised, multi-academy trust and maintained sectors);
- (p) Attended the Darlington Local Safeguarding Board;
- (q) Attended the March Citizenship Ceremony;
- (r) Attended Schools Forum;
- (s) Attended the count to determine the next Darlington Youth MP and Deputy Youth MP;
- (t) Attended the Health and Wellbeing Board;
- (u) Attended the Schools North East Patron's Dinner;
- (v) Attended the launch of the Children and Young People's Plan 2018-2020; and
- (w) Attended regular briefing meetings with the Director of Adults and Children's Services and members of her team.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Children and Young People Portfolio

