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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.

**The Children's Trust**

2. The Health and Wellbeing Board (which acts as the Children's Trust) met on 13 September 2018. Representatives from education and child health were in attendance and participated in discussions about how to promote and improve health. Health and Wellbeing Board partners received a presentation from the Families Information Officers, including a demonstration of the Living Well Directory. Areas of particular interest were the SEND Local Offer and the section on Support to Children.

**Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)**

3. CCP met on 2 October 2018, when panel members were provided with the annual health report regarding children in local authority care.
4. Following feedback from Darlo Care Crew (DCC) members who attend CPP, a workshop was held, involving DCC and Members and Officers, to determine how CPP could become more interactive. As a result of the session, proposals will be shared, based on the workshop sessions, to agree our new approach.
5. Mark Riddell, DfE National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers, visited Darlington Children's Services on 13 and 14 September. Mark met with myself, Paul Wildsmith and Suzanne Joyner regarding progress regarding our local implementation of the new statutory duties to support care leavers up to 25 years. Mark also met with the care leaver service to discuss the operational model for leaving care for 16 to 25 year olds, the impact on a strengthened 'local offer', the Personal Advisor duty to young people aged 25 years, and how Corporate Parenting responsibilities are shared across the service.
6. Mark was impressed overall with service delivery and at the rapid changes made since April 2018 to support care leavers between 21 and 25 years, quoting 'you are not far off outstanding'. The service will receive an outcomes letter from Mark.

**Child Healthy Weight and Oral Hygiene**

7. Cabinet gave consideration to an interim recommendation from the Joint Review Group of the Children and Young People and the Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committees to examine Child Healthy Weight and Oral Hygiene.

8. We have agreed to endorse the recommendation of the Review Group to carry out a technical appraisal for consideration of a water fluoridation scheme in Darlington and/or the Tees Valley.

### **Special Educational Needs (SEND)**

9. Following Cabinet approval of the SEND Strategy 2017/2020 on 5 December 2017, Members considered an updated draft SEND strategy (2019-2022), for which approval for consultation was being sought.
10. This Strategy has been updated in response to the key priorities set out in the SEND code of practice and highlights local strategic aims associated with each priority area for implementation.
11. Amendments to the application of the High Needs Block funding were also considered, which caters for pupils with SEND and funds Darlington special schools, SEN resource bases in mainstream schools, the pupil referral unit and provision of education to those pupils with complex and severe needs. This forms part of the consultation process.
12. Cabinet approved the period of consultation to take place on both of these areas, which was carried out between 10 October and 28 November. The consultation outcome will be considered by Cabinet in February 2019.

### **Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) – Home to School Transport**

13. Cabinet approved a public consultation on the SEND Travel Assistance Policy for pupils with special educational needs and/or disability which was carried out between 17 October and 28 November 2018.
14. The authority has a statutory responsibility to assist eligible children and young people of statutory school age to travel to school. The current Home to School Transport Policy needs updating. The proposed revisions will support children and young people with SEND to develop independent travel skills and offer families greater flexibility in transport arrangements.
15. The proposed SEND Travel Assistance Policy will help to ensure that travel assistance support can continue to be provide to all eligible children and young people in line with increasing demand.

### **Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)**

16. The Board met on 2 October 2018, and received two annual reports for consideration and endorsement:
  - (a) Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) Annual Report
  - (b) Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report and one Annual Report for information from North East Ambulance Service

17. The Board were provided with a thematic report on the key findings from single and multi-agency audits. The report demonstrated evidence of learning from gaps in practice and actions taken to mitigate this. The multi-agency audit programme has been aligned to focus on the introduction of the planned themed Joint Targeted Area Inspections and a presentation was provided to Board on the current position highlighting common strengths and weaknesses found in inspections. Self-assessments were underway across the multi-agency partnership, and multi-agency audits will be completed this month to evidence information contained within the assessments is a true reflection of operational service delivery.
18. British Transport Police (BTP) provided a presentation to Board, to promote awareness of increasing risks around children and the railway. It was noted that Darlington is one of the top ten locations for trespassing on the railways, with multiple trespass points. Every police force reports their missing young people to the BTP, which nationally equates to 30,000 per year. Return home interviews are a key mechanism in obtaining information from young people regarding what modes of transportation they use when they are missing and BTP are keen to link with local authorities to explore if and how this information can be shared. It was agreed explicit questions will be included in the return home interview to identify modes of transport used which may be shared with BTP, with agreed data sharing protocols in place for allow this. Further conversations will be undertaken to improve links between the BTP and the Board.

### **School Forum**

19. The Forum met on 18 October. It was presented with the updated budget position for 2018/19, which is projecting an in-year overspend of approximately £1.5 million in the high needs funding block, these pressures are ongoing from 2017/18.
20. The Forum was updated regarding the Council's SEND and SEN Transport consultation, both of which will inform future service delivery. The Forum was engaged in the work in readiness for the consultation.

### **Locality Teams**

21. The number of early help assessments by external agencies continues to increase month on month and at the end of September 2018, 31 per cent of all assessments were completed externally. This is significant progress in engaging external services in early help and contributes to our performance target of 35 per cent completed by partner agencies by March 18/19 year.
22. The children's centres continue to attract children and families from our 30 per cent most deprived areas with over 61 per cent of attendees, residing in these areas.
23. Two Darlington social workers have been successful in being shortlisted for the Social Worker of the Year award, one being from Children's Services, who is a finalist for the Practice Educator of the Year award. These national awards recognise the success of the profession's most innovative social workers, and is the leading celebration of its kind in the sector. The awards ceremony is on 30

November, when the winners will be announced.

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

24. As at 30 September 2018 the following figures were reported Child Protection and Looked After Children:
- (a) 99 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan, compared with 91 at same period last year; and
  - (b) 254 children were in care, compared with 220 at same period last year.

### **Strategic Commissioning**

25. The Council continues to work with our 12 North East Council partners to develop more productive and value for money arrangements of Independent Fostering provision. A series of informal consultation events are underway to explore key themes such as sustainable and affordable fee arrangements and how councils can secure positive outcomes for children and young people. These events held in mid-November will help inform an approach to Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) where a new commissioning model for services will be issued in a formal consultation process.
26. The Council is also undertaking a contract monitoring review in the Tees Valley region. Each of the five Tees Valley Councils have identified a group of IFAs and will lead the contract monitoring exercise individually. The findings from each monitoring exercise will be jointly assessed and key themes will be identified. The five Tees Valley councils will develop and set out any required improvement actions in a joint plan at the beginning of December.
27. The strategic review of community based short breaks for children with SEND has commenced. This will include a full review of current contract provision and identify and address any gaps. The review will include opportunities to obtain and reflect upon the voice of the child, parent/carer feedback, and stakeholder and provider feedback in the design of future contracting arrangements.

### **Meetings**

28. Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended:
- (a) Darlington Safeguarding Children's Board;
  - (b) The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee;
  - (c) Briefings with the Director of Children's and Adult Services and various officers from Children's Services;
  - (d) The South Park Foundation Launch;
  - (e) Schools North East Summit at St. James' Park, Newcastle;
  - (f) Longfield Academy's Presentation Evening;
  - (g) Schools Forum;
  - (h) Youth Offending Service Board;

- (i) Meeting with Jenny Chapman MP and the Director of Children's and Adult Services;
- (j) Young People's Surgery at the Dolphin Centre;
- (k) Asylum Seekers Drop-in session;
- (l) Coffee morning at Bradford Armory, Neasham Road;
- (m) Creative Care Home Event led by Blue Cabin;
- (n) Adoption Induction at the Regional Adoption Agency;
- (o) Care Leaver Launch at the new Care Leaver Hub;
- (p) Regional Children in Care Conference at St. James' Park, Newcastle;
- (q) SEND Consultation event at the Hippodrome;
- (r) Governors' Meeting for governors and directors from across the borough;
- (s) The Growing up digital conference at the Westminster Education Forum, provided a keynote on Darlington's approach to internet safety;
- (t) The Parent Carer conference at Blackwell Grange Hotel;
- (u) Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education;
- (v) North East Migration Partnership in Sunderland to discuss unaccompanied asylum-seeking children;
- (w) National Children and Adult Services Conference in Manchester;
- (x) Meeting with the Department for Education; and
- (y) Park Auction celebration with Darlington Cares.

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