

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2 SEPTEMBER 2024**

THE UNIFORM EXCHANGE SCHEME

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide the committee with an update on the Uniform Exchange Scheme

Summary

2. The Uniform Exchange Scheme continues to see growth in use. The relocation to a unit in Feetham's multi storey car park has been successful, saving cost whilst providing a good facility for both volunteers and customers.

Recommendation

3. That the content of the report be noted.

**Seth Pearson
Partnerships Director**

Background Papers

There were no background papers used in the compilation of this report.

Author: Seth Pearson
Extension: 07825083796

Council Plan	Addressing inequality.
Addressing inequalities	Supports families struggling with the cost of living
Tackling Climate Change	Reduces waste through recycling.
Efficient and effective use of resources	Run by volunteers.
Health and Wellbeing	Supports families financial health.
S17 Crime and Disorder	N/A
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	N/A

Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Support available to looked after children.

Main Report

4. The Uniform Exchange Scheme was established in 2020. It was initially conceived as a means of supporting families who were struggling with the cost of uniform as a consequence of financial hardship due to the pandemic. However, demand for the service has continued to grow since and it is now providing valued help to thousands of families in Darlington. An important feature of the scheme is that all items of uniform are laundered before being handed out. This was essential during the pandemic but is now recognised as important in avoiding stigma.
5. It was initially located in the Dolphin Centre but as services delivered from there built up after the pandemic, the space was needed for their core activity. The uniform scheme relocated to the Queen Street arcade. In a move designed to reduce costs, in June this year, it moved to an unused space in the Feethams multi storey car park.
6. The unit it now occupies is well suited to its purpose, providing a warm, secure clean environment for those working there and easy access for customers.
7. Concerns that the move would result in a reduction of use have proved unfounded. Between January and July this year the initiative had 2,215 customers and handed out 6,330 items of uniform as opposed to 2,085 customers and 4,965 items of uniform during the same period last year. In total during 2023, the Uniform Exchange scheme served 4,393 customers and handed out 12,337 items of uniform.
8. The Council's communications team have been actively supporting the scheme in maintaining awareness of the and The Northern Echo has promoted it as part of their 'Summer Essentials' campaign. This has resulted in ever growing donations.
9. The scheme is run by volunteers and is managed in collaboration with Darlington Cares. The volunteers are currently preparing for the rush that is experienced before the new school year.