

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.

The Children's Trust

2. The Health and Wellbeing Board (which acts as the Children's Trust) met on 17 January 2019. Representatives from Education were in attendance and participated in discussions about how to promote and improve health. The focus of the Board meeting was a stocktake on the Health and Wellbeing Plan priorities including an update on the Darlington Children and Young People's Plan.

Ofsted Annual Conversation

3. In line with the new Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services, the Director of Children and Adults Services and representatives from the senior management team met for an 'Annual Conversation' on 21 November 2018 with the Regional Director, Senior HMI and Regulatory Officer. An update on progress against the children's service improvement plan and self-evaluation; and an overview on our current performance, was presented. The updates were received positively by the Regional Director who also offered advice on how the presentation of both the improvement plan and self-evaluation could be further enhanced. Moving forward, the possibility of a focused visit in 2019 on Darlington Children's Services' Front Door – the service that received contacts and referrals or, children in need and those subject to a child protection plan, was discussed.

Corporate Parenting Panel

4. The next meeting is scheduled for 31 January 2019.

Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

5. The Board met on 4 December 2018 and received a presentation and workshop facilitated by Suzanne Joyner, Director of Children and Adults Services on the new safeguarding arrangements required to be in place by September 2019, replacing the existing Local Safeguarding Children Board. A shadow Executive Group has been established with chief officers of the three partners and under the new arrangements the formal Executive Group will have joint responsibility for children and adult safeguarding in Darlington. A delivery plan has been established which will be monitored and updated by the Executive Group with updates to be provided to future Children and Adult Board meetings.

6. Board were provided with a position report on safeguarding disabled children and young people in Darlington. The report highlighted there are currently 131 children and young people working with the disabled children and young adults team. Board was assured that there is good cohesion between services and children's social care for children not known to services.
7. Graham Hall, Head of Community Safety, provided Board with an overview of the PREVENT duty arrangements nationally and in Darlington. Members were assured that there has been an excellent take up of training around Prevent and the Channel process in Darlington is very effective. Operation Dovetail will be implemented in 2019 which will transfer responsibility for some elements of Channel from the Police to the Local Authority and a local delivery group has been set up to support with this. A recent HMICFRS inspection provided good feedback on the Durham and Darlington position and Board was assured there is no specific intelligence for Darlington regarding threats.

School Forum

8. The Forum held a special meeting on 27 November to consider the school funding formula for 2019/20. The Forum agreed to a transfer of funding between the schools block and the high needs block of £400,000 to contribute towards high needs demand pressures. As the agreement was above the 0.5 per cent threshold (of the schools block) that Forum can approve (£400,000 is 0.6 per cent) a request has to be made to the Secretary of State to confirm the movement of funds.

Education

9. Public consultations on the draft SEND strategy and funding arrangements and SEND Home to School transport were completed on 28 November. 108 responses to the surveys were received and 99 members of the public and professionals attended consultation events. In addition a number of consultation events were held for children and young people and 50 young people attended these events. Officers are completing their analysis of the results of the consultation and final proposals are due to be considered at Cabinet on 5 February 2019.

Locality Teams

10. 2019 has seen the launch of a new service, 'Keeping Families Together', providing intensive support to maintain children within their family home. The service will work extended hours in supporting families develop strategies within their home to prevent children becoming subject to child protection plans or coming into care. Progress to this meeting will be reported bi-annually.

Child Protection/Looked After Children Statistics

11. Young Ambassador Interviews were held on 18 December 2018. There were five posts available for Children in Care and/or Care Leavers for 6 hours per week each. All posts were appointed to following interviews. These posts have been created and are jointly funded by the 12 Local Authorities in the North East. The role of these Young Ambassadors is to deliver the regional Child in Care Council work. The Head of Service for Assessment, Care Planning and LATC was a member of the interview panel.

12. As at 30 November 2018 the following figures were reported:
 - (a) 103 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan, compared with 93 at the same period last year; and
 - (b) 253 children were in care, compared with 223 at the same period last year
13. The Leaving Care service received an internal audit in December 2018. There were no recommendations made following this audit.

National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers First Year Report

14. The first annual report from the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers has been published by the Department for Education. This covers the period from October 2017 to October 2018. The report is based on Mark Riddell's visits to Local Authorities following the passage of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. It celebrates the findings of what is working well and identifies good practice relating to provision for Care Leavers. The report also identifies some key challenges that Local Authorities will need to address in order to provide consistently high quality services for Care Leavers. Darlington Leaving Care service is mentioned positively in this report.
15. Following Mark Riddell's visit to Darlington's Care Leaver Service on 13 and 14 September 2018, an outcome letter was received in which he noted; *'I was very impressed by the leadership and management approach that was ambitious, aspirational and I got a real sense of passion and commitment to have a better offer for care leavers across the whole service area.'* In relation to our Corporate Parenting Panel he noted *'I got a real sense of a yes we can do this approach and that you know the kids individually, which is very positive.'*

Children's Commissioning and Contracts

14. The Council has completed the annual contract monitoring review on the Independent Foster Agencies (IFA) operating as part of the Tees Valley IFA contract. No issues with contractual compliance were identified, and there was evidence of positive outcomes for children and young people being supported by these providers.
15. A strategic review of community based short breaks for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is currently being undertaken. A presentation regarding this review was made at the annual Parent/Carer forum in November, and consultation with Parent/Carers is being carried out via engagement questionnaires and a series of focus groups, which will be held in early 2019. The review will be concluded in April 2019 and findings will inform future commissioning intentions for the provision of short breaks.

Meetings

16. Since the last meeting of Council, I have attended:
 - (a) Darlington Safeguarding Children's Board;
 - (b) Community Safety Awards Event at Blackwell Meadows;

- (c) addressed the Carmel College 2018 Leavers and Sixth Form Presentation Evenings;
- (d) Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee;
- (e) HM Deerbolt Young Offenders Christmas Carol Service;
- (f) briefings with the Director and Assistant Directors of Children's and Adult Services;
- (g) meeting with the Managing Director of Darlington Borough Council;
- (h) Children's Services Team Event at Central Hall, Dolphin Centre;
- (i) Careers Education Advisory Group Meeting;
- (j) Adoption Tees Valley Briefing for Lead Members for Children and Young People;
- (k) Chaired LA Governor's Appointment Panel;
- (l) Schools Forum;
- (m) observed an adoption panel at the Tees Valley Adoption Agency as part of training to become a panel member;
- (n) met with Graham Hall, Community Safety Lead in relation to youth anti-social behaviour in the Town Centre;
- (o) Health and Wellbeing Board;
- (p) held my monthly Young Person Surgery at the Dolphin Centre;
- (q) Darlington Partnership Meeting at the Hippodrome; and
- (r) Youth Offending Service Board.

Councillor Cyndi Hughes
Children and Young People Portfolio