

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
20 OCTOBER 2025

SELF ASSESSMENT - OVERVIEW

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Scrutiny with the Annual Self- Assessment for Children's Services so that constructive 'critical friend' challenge takes place to drive improvement in public services.

Summary

2. Darlington Children's Services update each quarter an assessment of social work practice, inclusive of Early Help, based on changes in performance data. To bring the information into a stand-a-lone easy read document an annual self-assessment overview document is completed.
3. The self-assessment draws on existing documentation and activity and reflects the local authority's business for children's services. It identifies what leaders are doing to maintain or improve good practice for children and their families, demonstrating the effectiveness of our actions and address weaknesses in practice, with clear, appropriate plans to improve services.
4. The self-evaluation should answer three questions:
 - What do we know about the quality and impact of social work practice in our local authority?
 - How do we know it?
 - What are our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?
5. The self-assessment is used as part of our engagement with Ofsted and plays an important role in their understanding of local authorities and how they work. It helps them see assess if leaders and managers have a grip on practice and are taking suitable action.
6. Following our last Ofsted Annual Engagement Meeting we were advised by Ofsted to expect our next Inspection of Local Authority Childrens Services (ILACS) between 1 April 2025 and 1 April 2026, and therefore our next Inspection is imminent and the Self Assessment will form a key part of our preparation for the Inspection and the evidence we will submit to that inspection.

Recommendation

7. It is recommended that the contents of the report are considered in terms of Children's Services role and functions and critical challenge is afforded to improve outcomes for children and their families.

Chris Bell
Assistant Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Sharon Raine - Head of Performance and Transformation

Council Plan	This report contributes to the Council Plan by involving Members in the scrutiny of practice relating to the delivery of key outcomes with regards to Children and Young People
Addressing inequalities	This report involves members in the scrutiny of the level to which Children's Services contributes to ensuring that opportunities are accessible to everyone, with a focus on ensuring a good job, home and/or social connections for all.
Tackling Climate Change	This report does not identify any issued relating to climate change.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report allows for the scrutiny of practice which is integral to optimising outcomes and ensuring efficient use of resources.
Health and Wellbeing	This report supports practice improvement relating to improving the health and wellbeing of residents.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report supports the Councils Crime and Disorder responsibilities.
Wards Affected	This report supports improvement across all Wards.
Groups Affected	This report supports improvement which benefits all groups.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report may have an <i>impact</i> on their emotional and physical health, social development, education, and future employment.

MAIN REPORT

See attached Self – Assessment Document