

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
05 January 2026

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2024 - 2027

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides an update to Childrens Scrutiny on the Children and Young People's Plan 2024 - 2027.

Summary

2. The Children Act (2004) introduced powers for the Secretary of State to require local authorities to produce plans to show how partner agencies with a duty to co-operate under the act were discharging their duties in respect of children's services.
3. Although there is no longer a requirement to produce a Children and Young People's Plan, it is considered good practice to still produce a strategic document across partners (there is still a statutory duty on partner agencies to co-operate to support and safeguard children). The draft plan supports the vision and seeks to contribute to the ambitions of the Council Plan, the overarching strategic plan for Darlington until 2027.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that:
 - (a) Scrutiny considers the content of the updates for the CYPP 2024 – 2027

Christine Shields
Assistant Director Commissioning Performance and Transformation

Background Papers

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

Council Plan	This report contributes to the priorities agreed in the Council Plan
Addressing inequalities	There are no implications arising from this report
Tackling Climate Change	There are no implications arising from this report
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report supports the efficient use of resources through shared partnership priorities
Health and Wellbeing	This plan supports the strategy to improve the health and well-being of children and young people
S17 Crime and Disorder	This plan will support measures to reduce crime and disorder amongst young people
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All Children and Young People
Budget and Policy Framework	There are no implications for the Budget or 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 plan supports all children including Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) is one of the identified delivery plans within the Council Plan and identifies what key actions will be taken to deliver the agreed priority for children – the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations.
6. This is a partnership plan which shows how organisations and agencies in Darlington will work together collectively to improve outcomes for all children and young people in Darlington. A multiagency Steering Group has been in operation since 2017 and will continue to be responsible for implementing the CYPP over the next three years.

Membership of the group includes:

- (a) Darlington Borough Council
- (b) NHS partners from the Integrated Care Board, primary care (GPs) and hospital trusts (County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust and Tees Esk and Wear NHS Foundation Trust)
- (c) Local schools and colleges
- (d) Police
- (e) Fire Brigade
- (f) Parent Carer Forum
- (g) Darlington Hippodrome
- (h) Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations including Healthwatch, YMCA, Family Action, Blue Cabin, Darlington Mind and Youth Focus North East

Outcome of Consultation

7. Following extensive data analysis and engagement activity with children, young people and key stakeholder agencies and organisations, five priorities were identified which formed the basis of the Children and Young People Plan.
8. Priorities:
 - (a) Health – Being as healthy as possible
 - (b) Education – Schools and learning
 - (c) Family and Carers – Life support and growing towards independence
 - (d) Employment – Training and real opportunities
 - (e) Community – Being part of Darlington's activities, opportunities and environment
9. A poster and video have been produced by children and young people as part of the engagement activities undertaken to develop the CYPP. These can be reviewed in the link below.

www.darlington.gov.uk/cypp

10. Five sub groups of the CYPP Steering Group have been established leading on each of the priorities. The groups have published updates on the work being undertaken, which can be viewed on the website, but are outlined below:

Health Update

Following on from extensive engagement and involvement with partners and children and families, the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) are developing a single Tees Valley Wide Getting Advice Signposting and Getting Help Service, as part of implementing I-Thrive. This will support children and families to access both digitally enabled support and face to face support as part of early intervention and needs led support. This new service will go live on January 1st, 2026.

In preparation of the National roll-out for 100% coverage of Mental Health Support Teams (MHST's) in Schools, NENC ICB have commenced a review of the MHST's across Tees Valley, including Darlington. Darlington are currently achieving full coverage with 2 MHST's. We hope to engage with partners and across education settings in September and directly with children and families accessing support and to understand what's working well and what isn't to help shape the future of MHST's in schools.

As part of our commitment to improving health outcomes for children and young people in Darlington, the Public Health team continues to deliver and expand a range of preventative initiatives. School Nurses play a vital role in supporting emotional resilience among children and families, offering tailored interventions both within school environments and in community settings. Looking ahead, work will commence on a Healthy Weight Plan for Darlington, aiming to promote healthier lifestyles through coordinated action across schools, families, and local services. Alongside this, the development of a new Oral Health Strategy will strengthen our efforts to reduce dental health inequalities. Building on existing work, the supervised toothbrushing programme will be expanded to reach more early years settings, reinforcing good oral hygiene habits from a young age. In addition, a review of the Physical Activity Strategy Action Plan has been undertaken one year on, identifying progress made and areas for

further development to ensure children and young people have increased opportunities to be active in their daily lives.

Education Update

Children get the most out of starting school if they are well prepared for their next steps. We are working with partners to offer children, parents and professionals support in developing children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive skills. For example, all families with a child under five have access to Growing Healthy 0-5 Team consisting of health visitors, early years practitioners and infant feeding specialists. Supporting children to be as ready as they can for school is a crucial part of their role. They offer support for areas such as speech and language, toileting, sleep and behaviour. The team is community-based and is accessible at a range of different venues including the family home, family centres and community venues. The service works in partnership with other agencies to ensure all families receive individualised and appropriate support.

We have written an Inclusion Charter that all schools and colleges have signed up to. The Charter recognises the importance of being present, of engagement, achievement and belonging. Schools and colleges are working together to enhance their inclusive practice. For example, education staff have participated in professional development about inclusive practice. We set up an Evidence Exploration Partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation to help education providers identify changes that can be made to support inclusion.

Not having enough money to meet your basic needs or those of your family (for example food, clothes a safe place to live, heating or things you need for school) has a big impact on children. Darlington Council has made a pledge to make sure every child has the best start in life. We are working with schools to address the barriers to learning that result from child poverty and will be seeking the views of children and young people on how we can help. For example, we run the School Uniform Exchange, bringing schools together with the voluntary sector to help families. Two primary schools in Darlington are taking part in the free breakfast club early adopter programme.

We have introduced a Darlington-wide programme to aid smooth transitions for children moving into Reception, moving from primary to secondary school and from secondary school to post-16 education. For example, in May early years providers and primary schools met to discuss the needs of children moving into Reception. Common transition days are held for children in Year 6. The children spend some time in their upcoming secondary school to help children to feel more confident about the move.

Family and Carers Update

Healthy relationships are a key part of our work with Darlington children and young people. In addition to the support available in schools, a number of service providers working with children and young people in Darlington are using Personal, Social, Health, and Economic education (PSHE) resources alongside specific materials adopted by the local police force. Informal youth work activity sessions are delivered at the Haven (a designated youth space open 7 days a week), community centres and schools.

In addition to personalised support plans. The Tees Valley YMCA have recently been successful in a health bid to support the holistic needs of young people who access

GP surgeries.

The Haven has an extensive weekly programme of youth sessions (including targeted sessions) across a 7-day programme. Young people are proactively involved in the development of the activity schedule to ensure they are aligned to the needs and aspirations of young people as they approach adulthood.

All commissioned services have a requirement for children and young people to be proactively involved in service shaping and development. Holistic lifeskills development is a core requirement in all young people services. We monitor how effective services are regularly.

Darlington Young Carers have been developing a range of videos for other young carers and professionals.

What is a Young Carer?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBkayDql74>

Young Carers- Tips for Young Carers

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=h6V8zifv3LU%3Ffeature%3Doembed%22+frameborder%3D%220%22+allow%3D%22accelerometer%3B+autoplay%3B+clipboard-write%3B+encrypted-media%3B+gyroscope%3B+picture-in-picture%3B+web-share%22+referrerpolicy%3D%22strict-origin-when-cross-origin%22+allowfullscreen%3E%3C>

Young Carers- Tips for professionals supporting young carers

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_dstzpzzH8

The Tees Valley YMCA have a youth advisory group which feeds back on Young People's wants/needs/views which are used to determine how services and activities are developed.

Youth focus NE and the Darlington Borough Council Participation Officer have undertaken a number of thematic engagement sessions with children and young people to shape strategic direction and service remodelling considerations.

Employment Update

All schools and colleges are required to have a programme of careers education and guidance that is published on their website and meets the requirements of the [statutory guidance on careers](#). Schools and colleges are expected to provide a careers programme that meets the eight Gatsby Benchmarks. Performance against the benchmarks is monitored by TVCA on behalf of the Careers and Enterprise Company. For those who are not engaged with school or college, further information on [careers and post-16 options](#) can be found here.

The government's expectation from 2025 is the schools and colleges move to providing two weeks of work experience, broken down to:

- (a) one weeks' worth of work experience activities in years 7 to 9
- (b) one weeks' worth of work experience placement(s) in years 10 to 11

Further details can be obtained from individual schools or colleges.

Nationally published data from March 2024 shows that 92.7% of 16 and 17 year olds in Darlington were participating in education, employment or training (EET). This was better than the North East average of 90.3% and the England average of 92.1%. Those 16 and 17

year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are regularly contacted by the LAs Keeping in Touch Worker.

Community update

Funded by the DfE the Darlington Holiday Activity and Food programme offers a range of activities in the holidays for children aged 5-16 years who are entitled to benefit related free school meals. Activities can be found across the town. The Move More Team engaged 970 participants at Easter. The activities, which are all delivered by professional staff, will include a nutritious meal for every participant at each event, taking place at various locations across the town, which included sports, arts and crafts, cooking and much more. A range of activity sessions were also made available for children and families with additional needs (SEND). For more information contact the Move More Team on 01325 405400

The Dolphin Centre has facilities including swimming, bowling, sports courts and soft play which can be access daily and throughout the summer. A SEND specific programme will be offered throughout the summer holidays. For more information contact the Dolphin Centre on 01325 406000 or visit the website [Healthy Darlington - Dolphin Centre](#)

The events team will be providing activities throughout the year which include move more days with free activities and many other events and activities. For more information visit the website on [Darlington BC - What's on](#)

Hopetown museum is new attraction in the town centre with activities and events scheduled weekly and throughout the summer. For more information visit the website [Hopetown - What's On](#)

Eastbourne Sports Complex offers a wide range of activities for young people from football to athletics and much more throughout the year. For more information please call us on 01325 405400

Darlington has a large number of clubs and community groups in the town providing positive activities throughout the town, For more information visit the Start My Move More journey page - [Healthy Darlington - Healthy Darlington](#)

Darlington Move More Team has supported Darlington Storm Basketball club with a successful Sport England Movement Fund application for £14,500 to provide a specific SEND basketball session alongside the club that will be fully be inclusive and sustainable for SEND participants. The application also offers young aspiring coaches the chance to become qualified and support the club in developing a SEND Basketball team.

Darlington is one of the 53 places eligible for Sport England places partnership funding, the fund supports reducing inactivity and improving the health in areas with high need and focuses on a place based and whole systems approach. The pilot will engage with the local community and partner organisations and will focus on everyday activity, not just sports, and aims to include everyone, especially children and those facing inequality. Local community groups and partners will be encouraged to get involved and help shape the plan. The bid has been submitted for the development phase work which if successful will commence in late 2025.