

COUNCIL 5 DECEMBER 2019

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.

In2 Project

2. Cabinet agreed to allocate the remaining budget of £208,000 secured from capital receipts from the Darlington Arts Centre and Eastbourne School, to support a three-year programme of activity, working with Darlington Schools through art and sport to encourage wellbeing and a successful transition from primary to secondary school.
3. This focus has been informed by learning taken from the In2 pilot programme which ran from May to July 2019 and responds to the longstanding challenges facing Darlington and the North East schools around transition from primary to secondary.
4. The proposed three-year programme will focus on work with a small cohort of pupils in depth and seeks to support those children engaged through the transition from Year 6 to Year 8. We will receive annual updates on the three-year programme which is proposed to commence in 2019/20.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Capital Projects – Release of Funds

5. Cabinet agreed to approve the release of £3,099,209 of schools capital funding to support the development of two Special Educational Needs resource bases for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs at Red Hall Primary School for 16 pupils and a unit at Rise Carr College for 15 pupils plus four assessment places.
6. The Council has been allocated £848,337 by the Department for Education from the Special Provision Fund and we have agreed that £700,000 from that fund will fund these two projects and the remainder of the funding will be drawn down from the Basic Need Capital allocation.
7. Development of these units will provide a vital link in the escalation process for children and young people with SEND.
8. The planned construction start date is anticipated for January 2020 with a target occupation by September 2020.

School Forum

9. The Forum met on 15 October. Forum received the regular update on the Dedicated Schools Grant budget, which is projected to be £1.2 million overspend in

year due to high needs budget pressures. Forum were also given an update on the funding arrangements for 2020/21.

Education

10. Marchbank Free School, which is a primary special school in the Education Village Academy Trust, was inspected by Ofsted on 9 and 10 July 2019. The school has been placed in special measures. Darlington Borough Council are liaising with the Regional Schools Commissioner and Education Village Academy Trust to ensure that the necessary steps are being taken regarding the safety of all pupils on roll, as well as improvements in the standard of education provided.
11. Corporation Road Primary School was inspected by Ofsted on 24 and 25 September 2019. The overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be requires improvement. The behaviour and attitudes and personal development of pupils were both judged to be good.

Meet and Greet

12. The Managing Director has introduced a series of meetings with Head Teachers, Lead Member and Senior Officers to establish working relationships and improve outcomes for children within geographical areas.

Childhood Healthy Weight Plan Event

13. In September, a multi-agency event was held to officially launch the Darlington Childhood Healthy Weight Plan. Attendees are scheduled to have further sessions to develop plans for taking the work forward.

Corporate Parenting Panel

14. The Panel had a meeting in the Dolphin Centre on 15 October 2019, at which they had a presentation about an app known as Mind of My Own, and undertook work on how Corporate Parents can share their knowledge and skills with our children in care.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

15. The first meeting of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnership Group took place on Monday 7 October 2019. This was a well-attended meeting with wider partners coming together under the new Darlington Safeguarding Partnership arrangements.
16. The Chairs of the sub groups provided assurance that key pieces of work are progressing well. The Terms of Reference and membership of each of the groups are under review to ensure they are fit for purpose and that the right people, with the relevant skills, are sitting on the groups.
17. A discussion took place regarding the recent issues highlighted at Whorlton Hall, Newbus Grange and West Lane Hospitals. Assurance was provided in respect of any ongoing investigations being undertaken by the police and regulators.

18. Group members highlighted that there is a real appetite to do things differently and future agendas will focus on key themes identified locally, as well as issues highlighted regionally and nationally.

Child in Need/Child Protection/Looked After Children Statistics/ and Care Leavers

19. As at 21 October 2019 there were:

- 391 children in need
- 97 children subject to a Child Protection Plan
- 277 Looked After Children
- 126 Care Leavers

Children's Commissioning and Contracts

20. The re-procurement of community short breaks for Darlington Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is underway. Provider evaluations have commenced for new service arrangements which will become effective from 1 February 2020. Children's commissioners are working alongside Social Workers, providers and parent/carers to ensure a seamless implementation of the new contract agreement, which places a focus on the impact and outcomes from service provision for Children and Young People.
21. The Framework Agreement for Children's Residential Care is also currently out to procurement. This is a collaborative procurement led by Darlington Borough Council involving all Councils within the Tees Valley. The new Framework Agreement will take effect from 1 April 2020.

Fostering Services

22. Due to the improved recruitment and retention for mainstream foster carers, the Local authority continue to see an increase in recruitment activity. Between May and September 2019 there has been approval of eight internal placements and six new fostering households. The service continues to assess and support kinship foster carers, and supported lodgings providers, and also offers post Special Guardian Order support.

Councillor Paul Crudass
Children and Young People Portfolio