

**COUNCIL**  
**30 JANUARY 2020**

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**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Children and Young People Portfolio.

**Corporate Parenting Panel**

2. The Panel held an informal session on 11 December 2019, which was predominantly a Christmas social occasion to enable the young people, Members and officers to strengthen their relationships. Young people in care, Members and Officers developed the Children in Care 'Promises Tree' which was formally approved at the meeting. This will be launched in the New Year. Governance arrangements with an action plan will be in place to ensure progress is being made against the 'Promises' agreed by Darlington's Corporate Parents to the children and young people we look after.

**Education**

3. Cabinet has given approval for the Education Village Academy Trust (EVAT) to take over the site of the Haughton Children's Centre on standard lease terms under the Academies Act 2010 to provide Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) placements at Beaumont Hill Academy (BHA).
4. The use of the site will support Darlington's strategic aim to educate more pupils with SEND in the borough, address the increasing demand in Darlington for specialist placement for pupils with SEND; and to reduce the need for high cost out of area placements.
5. The Schools Forum met for a special meeting on 21 November. The meeting concerned the proposal to move 0.5 per cent of the schools block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) to the high needs block of the DSG to contribute towards budget pressures in the provision of special educational needs support. The Forum agreed to this proposal and to the parameters for setting the 2020/21 school budget share calculation.
6. The Education Partnerships Team is working with schools to explore aspects of successful transition from primary to secondary school. Gathering pupil voice will be an important part of this work and will help to inform transition arrangements in the future.
7. This academic year (2 September 2019 to 12 December 2019) Educational Support Officers have issued 286 Penalty notices of which 261 were for leave of absence (holidays).

## **Engagement Work**

8. From September to December 19 The Box staff have run a total of 135 planned sessions working with children and young people referred via Early Help Services, Social care teams, schools and colleges. The work carried out within these sessions included developing social skills, support for issues around low self-esteem and confidence through to providing positive activities for socially isolated children and young people. In addition to these planned sessions, The Box also ran 71 drop in sessions. The total attendance for all sessions Sept to Dec is 989 children/young people.
9. 24 "Internet safety sessions" have been delivered across various primary schools in Darlington under the Cyber Squad project and in support of Darlington Internet Safety Partnership. These sessions were delivered to children, parents and teaching staff and included an internet safety workshop on behalf of Darlington Safeguarding Board within a local women's refuge.

## **Child Protection/Looked After Children Statistics/Care Leavers**

10. The universal offer through the children's centres provides on-going support for families in areas of deprivation, and the number of families attending activity groups from within 30 per cent of the highest areas of deprivation remains high, with the centres being busy. This enables practitioners to support families through universal work, but also identify those families who may benefit from early help support, and offer the service to them.
11. At the end of November 2019 there were:
  - 455 children supported by Early Help services
  - 386 children in need
  - 94 children subject to child protection plans
  - 282 children in care
  - 118 care leavers

## **Children's Commissioning and Contracts**

12. A Tees Valley wide commissioning exercise, where the total contract value is £32 million, was successfully led and completed by Darlington Borough Council. This resulted in the award of the Tees Valley Residential Framework contract to a number of providers. A Children and Young People residential provider forum will meet in the summer of 2020, to further develop the strong rapport between service providers and service commissioners. The forum will continue to facilitate high quality, timely and accessible placements for local young people.
13. Over the last quarter contract monitoring has been undertaken with Independent Foster Agency (IFA) providers operating on the Tees Valley IFA contract. The contract monitoring process has been further enhanced this year to include direct feedback from Foster Carers. Positive feedback was received.

## **Fostering Services**

14. A celebration evening was held prior to Christmas at Bannatynes Hotel to thank our foster carers and supported lodgings' providers for the work they do. The event was well attended and was a huge success.
15. We continue to see an increase in the number of mainstream foster carers recruited, and maintain a focus on the recruitment and retention of carers. The service continues to assess and support connected carers (family members) and as part of our Strengthening Families work, we are looking to develop our offer to connected carers and for post Special Guardianship Order support.

## **Darlington Safeguarding Partnership**

16. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners continue to meet, in line with the new arrangements. Issues considered have included ongoing updates on the closure of West Lane Hospital. Statutory Partners have written to NHS England to establish whether any bed provision will be provided in the local area following the closure of West Lane Hospital.
17. A key piece of work progressing through the Quality Assurance and Performance Management Sub Group includes the development of a revised multi-agency performance scorecard and dashboard. Further work will be undertaken with a Quarter 3 themed report being presented to the partners in April.

**Councillor Paul Crudass**  
**Children and Young People Portfolio**