

Partner Newsletter

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Darlington Borough Council Children's Services are 'performing well'

Children's services are performing well and have improved over the last twelve months according to Ofsted - the independent inspection agency for children's and young people care and education services.

Members of Cabinet received the Ofsted services assessment at their meeting held at 5pm on Tuesday 6th December at the Town Hall, Darlington.

The assessment states that 'recognisable improvement' has been made, particularly in relation to the local authority adoption agency and the increased proportion of good and outstanding children's homes. The report also recognises that Darlington's Children's Services help children and young people to stay safe and enjoy their learning.

Cllr Cyndi Hughes, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People at Darlington Borough Council, said: "As a local authority, one of our most important duties is to protect the young and vulnerable and to give children the very best start in life; but it can also be one of the most complex and emotive areas too.

"The fact that we have been able to work with children and young people, parents, carers and partners to continue to improve services against a backdrop of reduced funding, is a real cause for celebration and a true demonstration of our on-going commitment in this area."

In addition to good results in adoption and children's homes, the assessment also states:

- the Council's specials school and sixth form are outstanding... independent special schools are also good or better;
- a further inspection completed earlier in the year shows that arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection showed satisfactory and strong performance; and,
- one of the four local authority children's homes is outstanding and the local authority fostering agency is good.

The report outlined the key strengths in education:

- very good performances of nursery and primary schools have been maintained;
- very large majority of primary schools are good or outstanding; and,
- young people have access to outstanding provision for learning in two colleges and one sixth form.

Cllr Hughes continued: "The results in education are great; we are currently the most improved Borough in the country for exam results at Key Stage Four - this truly shows the level of hard work and commitment of young people and teaching staff throughout the area."

"There is much to celebrate but there is always room for improvement and while we are performing well there are still areas to address and we will continue to work with our partners to tackle these areas."

Areas for improvement include:

- increasing the number of good child-minding facilities;
- continued work to ensure all secondary school provision including the pupil referral unit consistently improves.
- Whilst improvements have been made, further development is required in areas such as screening of contacts and referrals for children in need and children who may be in need.



Domestic abuse message at market

CHARITIES and organisations, which support the victims of domestic abuse, promoted their message at Darlington's outdoor market in December.

Staff and volunteers from a range of organisations ran market stalls throughout December and at the Christingle market in Darlington.

The stalls were used to promote awareness of domestic abuse and to give out information to people who are affected by the issue or who are concerned about others.

Council Leader Bill Dixon said: "Domestic abuse can take many forms, both physical and mental, often leaving victims feeling isolated and alone.

"By joining traders in the outdoor market, we hope to show that abuse behind closed doors will not be tolerated, as well as showing victims that there is help out there for them."



Official launch of C:TheBox

A UNIQUE media hub for young people in Darlington was launched on Tuesday 29 November at a special launch event for invited guests.

Situated on Priestgate in Darlington, C:TheBox is a media hub for young people. It provides them with an opportunity to develop a wide range of media skills from film creation; production; scripting and editing; music creation; animated short films; pod-cast creation; gaming; photography and much more. The facility also has a state-of-the-art recording studio with the latest green screen technology and iMacs with full production and editing software.

Training on the equipment can also be delivered in various school/college/community settings supporting partners and targeting those young people with additional needs.

C:TheBox is a partnership project between The Northern Echo and the Media Team within Darlington Borough Council's Early Intervention and Prevention Team. The Media Team has worked with The Northern Echo over the last four years on the rE-view project, an internet platform for young people to voice their opinions and views in a written format.

C:TheBox is the next step in this project and will enable young people to voice these opinions and views in a variety of innovative ways and showcase these media creations online.

The team has been based within the facility for the past year and has already

established a number of successful youth groups and projects. For example Exposure, a group of young people from Hummersknott Academy who, following work experience at C:TheBox, now produce a weekly news film on issues affecting young people. They have also produced a number of films to promote projects such as the Safe Places to Be scheme and the Blue Print (Darlington's Children and Young People's Plan), as well as interviewing famous guests such as Duncan Bannatyne.

Cyndi Hughes, Darlington Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, said: "This ceremony will recognise the huge impact that C:TheBox has already had on young people in the town. It is a state-of-the-art facility that opens up the creative world of media technology and enables and empowers these young people to get their message across to their target audience.

"Many thanks to our community-focused partner, The Northern Echo, who has generously worked with our team to achieve the success so far."



Common Assessment Frameworks in Darlington

Darlington Children's Trust and Darlington Safeguarding Children's Board are commencing a piece of work to analyse Common Assessment Frameworks that are undertaken by all partners in Darlington.

Rapid Improvement Workshop Events will take place in January to focus on Darlington's CAF processes and any actions from this Rapid Improvement Workshop Event will be driven forward by Darlington's CAF Development and Assessment Officer Julie Bell.

For more information about this please contact julie.bell@darlington.gov.uk

Raising of the Participation Age

From 2013 all young people will have to stay on in learning until they are 17, and from 2015 until they are 18. How will this affect you and the young people you are in contact with?

What duties does the raising of the participation age place on local authorities, learning providers, young people and employers? For more details click here:

http://www.darlington.gov.uk/dar_public/documents/_People/ChildrenFamiliesLearning/14-19/Partnership/Raising_of_the_Participate_Age_-_Stakeholder_Briefing.pdf



Talk before you walk

NHS 111 is a new free to call phone number which makes it easier for the public to access the local health services they need when they need them.

If you think you should go to A&E or another NHS urgent care service, because you need help fast but it's not life threatening; you need help but your GP surgery is closed or you are just not sure which local service could help you best then you should call NHS 111. By dialling 111 your needs will be assessed and you will then be quickly directed to the service that can best meet your needs. Obviously in the case of an emergency which is life threatening people should not hesitate to call 999, however in cases of Emergency if you call NHS111 an ambulance will also be dispatched immediately without the need for any further assessment.

Berenice Groves, Programme Director NHS 111 Service North East said: 'People are often confused by the number and type of healthcare services available to them locally and NHS 111 is designed to simplify this decision making process. By encouraging people to talk to us before they set off we aim to ensure patients are re-assured and then directed to those services that are closest to them and which can best meet their healthcare needs. We hope that by making sure patients access the most appropriate service in the shortest possible time we will be able to deliver a positive patient experience and higher levels of patient satisfaction.'

At the moment the NHS 111 service is only available across the County Durham and Darlington area but will be rolled out over the North East area by April 2013.

NHS 111 is a simple, easy to remember number which is free to call and means that people will have one number for accessing urgent health care services. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and all calls from landlines and mobiles are free.

It's not a 999 emergency.
But you need medical help fast.

There's now



number to call.



when it's less urgent than 999

Talkback

Your say on health in Darlington

Stopping smoking, reducing alcohol related deaths, improving dental health, tackling obesity and reducing teenage pregnancies have been highlighted as some of the priorities you want to see tackled in the Borough by the emerging Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) as it looks to take on more responsibility for health services in the area.



Clinical Commissioning Groups are being set up by the Government to bring together health professionals, including nurses, midwives, GPs, hospital consultants, doctors, physiotherapists and other medical staff, to have a greater role in agreeing what is most important for health and care services.

A Talking Together event, organised by Darlington CCG and Darlington Borough Council, was held at the Dolphin Centre to give people the chance to have their say about the health services that are important to them; how they can get involved in how local health services are commissioned (planned and purchased); and, how they wish to be engaged and communicated with in the future.

People attending the event also found out more about the plans for the emerging Darlington CCG, which forms part of the Government's reform of the NHS, and how the NHS and Council will work more closely together in the future.

More than 75 people attended the event.

Other priorities identified included:

- improving access and choice to services;
- prevention and education;
- concerns that there is insufficient funding to maintain existing health and social care services;
- better promotion of health checks;
- lack of awareness around commissioning services, and the impact of future changes;
- improving communication with people;
- the need to reduce health inequalities which affect the local population.

Feedback from this event will be published on both the Council's (www.darlington.gov.uk/talkingtogether) and NHS County Durham and Darlington (www.cdd.nhs.uk) websites. Printed copies are available by calling 0191 374 4109.

Dr Harry Byrne, Co-chair of Darlington CCG and a local GP at Neasham Road Surgery, said:

"This event was an important milestone for us in our journey to become a licensed body and take on more responsibility for health services in the Borough.

"I would like to thank everyone who gave up their time to attend and those who contributed to the conversation in other ways via e-mail or online.

"All of this feedback will be used to inform the decisions we make when planning and purchasing health and social care services for local people."

Andy Scott, Darlington Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Health and Partnerships said: "It is important that, as changes in the way health services are delivered get underway, we listen to, and understand what is important to residents.

"We want to make sure that health services reflect the needs of patients and that everyone in the Borough has the best possible chance to live a healthy and happy life."



Missing Children Procedures Launch

Children missing from either their home or care have raised significant concerns for Darlington Safeguarding Children Board and Durham Constabulary.

A working sub group 'Missing and Sexually Exploited Children' has recently been established under the Local Safeguarding Children Board remit.

Professionals from a range of key agencies meet on a bi-monthly basis and discuss issues in relation to those children who go missing on a regular basis, as these children may place themselves at further risk of Sexual Exploitation.

The sub group has recently written and produced procedures that been approved and endorsed by the LSCB Policy and Procedures Sub Group. These procedures are now live and can be located on the following website www.darlington.gov.uk/lscb

In conjunction with these procedures a launch has been arranged with private children homes, agencies and foster carers to share and discuss mutual issues of concerns and raise awareness of 'missing children' in Darlington.

The event will take place Thursday 19th January 2012 at 2pm, Morton Park Business Centre, if you wish to attend please contact Nicola Forster Business Support Officer on 01325 388674.

Within this session there will also be an additional opportunity for professionals to speak with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who deals with Allegations Against Staff, Carers and Volunteers and the Anti Bullying Co-ordinator.

Where a child or young person is considered to be 'missing' in line with the procedures, this should be reported without delay to the Police:

Emergencies: 999

Routine Reporting: 0345 6060365

Contact should also be made with Children Services:

Childcare Duty Team: 01325 346867

Emergency Duty Team: 08702 402994

If you require further information on 'missing children' contact the LSCB Business Unit on 01325 388674.

Anti Bullying Week 2011

Anti Bullying Week was celebrated in Darlington with a wealth of activities to raise awareness of verbal bullying and the harm it can do. The theme for Anti-Bullying Week was 'Stop and Think – Words can Hurt' – using words to deliberately cause someone hurt and distress.

Verbal bullying can include name-calling, threats, manipulation, mockery, slander, and spreading lies and gossip. It is usually carried out face-to-face, but can also include malicious phone calls. Verbal bullying is often prejudice related – such as the use of homophobic insults, sexist words, or racist or disablist insults. Verbal bullying can also be targeted at someone's physical appearance, such as their weight, skin or clothes. Verbal bullying is commonplace amongst young people – even if, as in some instances, younger children use these words without understanding their meaning.'

The programme of events addressed all age groups, from a Parent/Carer Toddler Bullying awareness raising event at Dodmire Children's Centre, to students at St Aidan's Church of England Academy writing their own Anti-Bullying Charter and Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College Students Association doing a three day sponsored silence with funds going to Children in Need. Darlington College focused on Anti-Bullying during tutorial time, a Community police officer talked to Students and a Parent Guide to dealing with bullying was posted on their website.

The Anti Bullying Roadshow, with workshops by the Behaviour Support Team, Traveller Support Service, Community Services, Vicky Meaby from the Youth Offending Service, and the Anti Bullying Co-ordinator visited eight Darlington primary schools and worked with over 300 pupils in Years 5 and 6. These were enjoyed by everyone, with comments from pupils:

"It was very interesting learning about not calling people names and hurting them"

"I liked doing all of the challenges and making the worry box"

"I enjoyed learning about the campers and how they cooked the food, where they stayed and how long they could travel for"

"It was really fun and exciting. I hope it taught all year 5 and 6 not to bully"

A teacher commented:

"All the children thoroughly enjoyed the Roadshow. They particularly enjoyed working as a team and the instructive nature of each workshop. The commented that the information they were taught would be very useful for them. They also thought the enthusiasm of each person delivering the workshop was excellent!"

Corporation Road Primary school topped and tailed Anti-Bullying week – they were interviewed by Radio Tees at 8.00 a.m. on Monday 14th November, with pupils, the head teacher, and Abbey Simpson a work experience student from Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College, talking about anti-bullying. On Friday 17th November, Corporadio hosted a radio interview with Jenny Chapman MP, with questions from Darlington College of Maths and Science, Darlington Sixth Form College, St Aidan's Church of England Academy and Corporation Road primary school. Questions included:

- What does an MP do?
- With the funding cuts do you think the government will still be able to fund anti bullying projects in the future?
- How could our school council help stop bullying in our school?

Abbey Simpson said about her work experience:

'What I enjoyed most about Anti Bullying Week was visiting the different schools and seeing the difference in what was acceptable to them when it came to name calling.

The best part was seeing how, at the end of the activity when children had to draw a bully, they picked up on the points that we made throughout previous activities and then brought them together with their own thoughts about bullying. It was interesting to see the different types of bullying children focused on when they drew their bully.

I think anti -bullying week was beneficial to the children as it helped them realise what bullying is as they may have experienced something which they thought was not bullying but is.'

As usual, Anti Bullying Week would not have happened without a lot of hard work from a lot of people, with their common aim of raising awareness of the importance of anti-bullying work and the damage that verbal bullying can do.

Internet Safety - Child Exploitation and Online Protection

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre is dedicated to eradicating the sexual abuse of children.

The overarching aims of CEOP are:

- To identify, locate and protect children and young people from sexual exploitation and online abuse, nationally and globally
- To engage and empower children, young people, parent and the community through information and education
- To protect children and young people through the provision of specialist information and support to professionals, families, industry and community
- To enforce the law by bringing offenders to justice and acting to disrupt and deter future offending
- To enhance existing responses to the sexual exploitation and online abuse of children and young people by developing a safe by design online environment and refining the management of offenders

CEOP's main programme for engagement with children and young people is 'Thinkuknow' – an educational initiative that was launched in April 2006 and which has continued to grow .

The programme, which covers the entire key stage learning cycle, is delivered through a cascade model of dissemination with a specialist group of over 3,500 'Ambassadors'. These professionals are all given bespoke training by CEOP and have in turn worked across all of the UK regions to help train and build a network of more than 70,000 registered users. These registered users are primarily drawn from the education sector, but also include youth workers, social workers, police professionals and members of the wider child protection community. The programme has now been viewed over eight million times by children of all ages across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Locally Gena Birchall (LSCB Anti Bullying Coordinator) , Colin Pearson (Safeguarding Children Officer) and Jan Turner (LSCB Development and Designated Officer) are trained Ambassadors, able to offer free, half day training course giving an introduction to the work of CEOP, demonstrating how young people are using technology, outlining some of the associated risks, and preventative measures that can be undertaken.

Finally the course gives participants access to the Thinkuknow education resources for all ages and trains you in how to deliver the Thinkuknow presentation to children and young people.

See website www.thinkuknow.co.uk or contact Gena Birchall or Jan Turner in the LSCB Business Unit, 01325 388940, for additional information and support.

