

# Partner Newsletter

## EDITORS

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## Darlington sets out plan to tackle child poverty



**Darlington Borough Council Cabinet members approved a Child Poverty Strategy for Darlington at its meeting on Tuesday 1st November 2011 at Darlington Town Hall.**

The Strategy has been published following the publication of the Child Poverty Act 2010 which sets out a duty for all local authorities to complete a child poverty needs assessment and strategy.

The Strategy highlights the relationship between child poverty and the areas where general levels of unemployment are high or where parents and carers are experiencing health problems or substance addiction.

The Strategy sets out a range of work which will target families and individuals to help lessen the impact of poverty on children and young people.

This includes early intervention and prevention with target groups, housing and financial support as well as the provision of advice and support on health issues and employment, education and training opportunities.

Councillor Bill Dixon, Leader of Darlington Borough Council said: "Young people and children growing up in poverty can experience limited opportunities and face a range of different challenges.

"We hope this targeted approach to tackling child poverty will bring about big changes to the way these youngsters view themselves and their opportunities for the future."

The Child Poverty Strategy will be delivered through a range of organisations including Darlington Borough Council, Darlington Children's Trust and other organisations working with children and young people."

For more information about the Child Poverty strategy contact Josh Slack at [josh.slack@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:josh.slack@darlington.gov.uk).

The strategy is available to view at the following link:

<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Children/childrenstrust/Child+Poverty+in+Darlington.htm>

# Anti-Bullying Week

## 14th – 18th November 2011

The theme for Anti-Bullying Week 2011 is: 'Stop and Think – Words can Hurt' and focuses on verbal bullying – 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.

Some children and young people may not do name-calling face-to-face or verbally bully, but may be involved in bullying online. Cyberbullying needs to be addressed in the same way as any other form of bullying. Children and young people need to understand that what they post online is as important as what they say face-to-face offline – and that they may be committing a criminal offence.

A survey of over 4,000 children and young people showed that 21% had received a message showing someone had been talking nastily about them online; 16% had received a threatening message; 17% had received a message with unwanted sexual suggestions, jokes or threats; and 12% had received a message with racist comments or name-calling.

(The Cybersurvey Essex. Youthworks Consulting 2010)

15% of children received nasty or aggressive texts or emails, with a year-on-year increase in the number of children who are bullied using new technology. ('1 h8 u': Findings from a five-year study of text and email bullying. Noret and River 2007)

CorpoRadio, Corporation Road School's radio station will be spearheading

Darlington's Anti-Bullying Week. In 'Darlington Goes Live', schools are being invited to come and broadcast songs, raps, poems and plays on the topic of Anti-bullying during the week. Podcasts of the broadcasts will be available on the Darlington Borough Council website.

On Friday 18th November, Jenny Chapman MP has agreed to be interviewed by children and young people about bullying and schools have been invited to send in questions.

A series of Anti-Bullying Roadshows will be taking place at Darlington primary schools, with workshops run by the Behaviour Support Service, the Traveller Support Service, the Youth Offending Service, Community Support Services and the Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator. A student from Queen Elizabeth's Sixth Form will be joining the team for a week of work experience – as a former Anti-Bullying Mentor for the Safe Places to Be scheme in the summer, she will provide valuable support.

McNay St Children's Centre will be holding a Parents Anti-Bullying Workshop, with parents exploring the different aspects of bullying and their attitudes towards it.

The media team of young people 'Exposure', based at C:TheBox will be producing an Anti-Bullying DVD. No details are available yet, but based on their previous work it should be quirky, hard hitting and effective.

Schools have been invited to share their Anti-Bullying activities, and further details will be on the Local Safeguarding Children Board website.

**Further details are available from Gena Birchall, Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator Email: [gena.birchall@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:gena.birchall@darlington.gov.uk). Tel: 01325 388801**



# Darlington has country's best GCSE results

**THE hard work of pupils and teachers has led to Darlington being named as having the highest percentage of pupils getting five GCSE's at grades A\* to C in the country.**

The town is also the most improved place in the country for GCSE (Key Stage 4) results.

Figures released by the Department of Education reveal that, compared to 151 other local authorities, Darlington had the highest improvement rate for 5+ GCSE'S at grade A\*-C and for 5+ GCSE'S at grade A\*-C (including English and maths).

In 2010, 54.7% of pupils achieved 5+ GCSE'S at grade A\*-C (including English and maths) compared to 65.5% in 2011.

In 2011, 91.9% of pupils achieved 5+ GCSE'S at grade A\*-C, compared to 80.5% in 2010.

Darlington pupils also gained the best results in the region for both 5+ GCSE'S at grade A\*-C (including English and maths) and 5+ GCSE'S at grade A\*-C.

The rate for pupils improving three or more grades in English between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 was also good with Darlington ranking fourth out of the 151 other local authorities.

Cyndi Hughes, Darlington Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, said: "These figures are the culmination of the hard work and dedication of our young people and are testament to the teachers who work so hard with our young people. Darlington schools have pledged to work even more closely together in the future so we can build on this success, ensuring all Darlington children can achieve their potential."



## Switch service

**A SERVICE which provides a one-stop shop of advice and help to young people concerned about drugs and alcohol is celebrating a year in new premises.**

A year ago, Switch moved to premises in Beaumont Street West, Darlington and to mark the anniversary of its move, the service is throwing open its doors on Tuesday October 25 from 1pm to young people aged 10 to 18.

Switch runs a range of services including motivational work; positive activities; C-card; smoking cessation; Hepatitis A and B vaccinations; blood borne virus testing; pregnancy and Chlamydia testing; a needle exchange; substitute prescribing;

and holistic therapies such as acupuncture and Indian head massage.

The aim of the service is to help young people who are misusing, or at danger of misusing, drugs and alcohol through a combination of education and practical support.



The team includes a nurse, substance misuse workers, a mental health nurse, social worker and volunteers who work with the young people once they no longer need the full support of the service.

By having all the services under

one roof, young people can get quick access to a range of advice and help and the team can often help identify and deal with underlying issues that the young people may not consider to be a problem.

Young people can be referred to Switch by anyone - professionals, parents, carers or even themselves.

Bill Dixon, the Leader of Darlington Council, said: "Switch provides an invaluable service to young people in Darlington. The team reach many young people who would not normally ask for help because of peer pressure or other issues.

**For more information, e-mail [switchteam@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:switchteam@darlington.gov.uk) or call 01325 267240.**

# Key Stage Two success in Darlington

**RECENT figures published by the Department of Education (DfE) show that pupils' performance in Darlington is higher than the national average in English and maths and amongst the best in the North East region.**

The figures show pupils making "expected progress" (two or more levels of improvement) between Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 for 2011. The results show that Darlington's performance is above the national average by 5% in English and 6% in maths. In maths, Darlington ranks in the top seven of 151 Local Authorities.

Darlington's rate of improvement, at 6% in English and 3% in maths, is better than national and regional improvement rates. Councillor Cyndi Hughes, Darlington Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People said:

"The figures speak for themselves. They are the result of hard work and commitment by pupils, teachers and parents who support their children. However, it is not just about tables and figures, these key subjects will equip young people with the skills they need for life. Well done to everyone involved."

## Safe Place to Be Project

In March 2011, Darlington Borough Council was invited to take part in the Anti-Bullying Alliance's 'Tackling Bullying in the Community' project. Focus groups were held with senior and middle management and grass root workers who demonstrated the wide range of anti-bullying activities taking place in the community and in schools. However, there was a significant gap in support identified for children and young people during the summer holidays when schools were closed. It was decided to set up a short term project to evaluate the effectiveness of providing anti-bullying support at locations in Darlington town centre. Consultation with young people took place, asking them if they felt safe in the town centre and if they would use a Safe Place. 76% said that they felt safe in the town centre when they were with their friends, but only 36% said that they felt safe in the town centre when they were on their own. 54% said that they would use a Safe Place if it was available.

A multi-agency group was formed in May 2011, with representation from: Darlington Borough Council's Library Service, Early Intervention and Prevention services, Park Rangers and The Anti-Social Behaviour

Team, Darlington Church Groups, Darlington College, Durham Constabulary, Health Services, eVOLution and Groundwork, co-ordinated by the Anti-bullying Co-ordinator.

It was agreed to provide eleven Safe Places. The Forum, Darlington Arts Centre, C:TheBox Darlington College, Crown St and Cockerton Libraries, the eVOLution office, the Connexions One Stop Shop, Darlington Town Hall, the Dolphin Centre and the Education Centre, in South Park.

Young People were offered the following options:

- Phoning a family member or friend
- Speaking to a young volunteer anti-bullying mentor (at the end of a mobile phone supplied by Orange)
- Speaking to a member of the Safeguarding Board team
- Sitting quietly until they were ready to leave.

Young people were also offered the opportunity to access further support if they chose by giving their written consent for the Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator to contact their schools for support during the term time and/or the Early Intervention and Prevention Team for 1:1 and group work.

The Safe Places were supplied with phone numbers of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Community Police and Dr Piper House, should further help be required. The Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator visited the Safe Places and held briefing sessions for staff to ensure consistency.



continued over

Publicity leaflets, funded from a generous donation from ShopWatch, were distributed to some secondary schools and given out at events for young people and their parents during the holidays. The project was also promoted at Hummersknott and Carmel schools.

Two young people accessed the project during the summer holidays, at the Connexions One Stop Shop and the Dolphin Centre. Help and support was provided for them both and one young person asked for further support from their school.

The Safe Place to Be group has decided to continue with the project, with five Children's Centres joining the project in February. Sadly, the Park Rangers are unable to continue to be part of the project, due to funding cuts. The Young Mentor Service has been withdrawn for the moment, as it was felt that it was unfair to expect them to volunteer their services for an indefinite period, given their study and work commitments.

The project was very well received by young people, parents and practitioners – it was seen as a simple but effective scheme and in these financially demanding times, virtually cost neutral. It provides a standardised approach for anti-bullying support across Darlington with a very clear brand image. The venues themselves were extremely enthusiastic about the project, seeing it as a natural development of their services.

The project has demonstrated vividly how effective Darlington is at working together to provide an innovative children and young people centred service, at minimum cost to maximum effect.

**Further details are available from Gena Birchall, Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator, Email: [gena.birchall@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:gena.birchall@darlington.gov.uk). Tel: 01325 388801**

## Early Intervention and Prevention Services - Indicators of Concern and Guidance for Operational Processes and Assessment

The development of the Children's Trust in Darlington has extended, enhanced and consolidated the arrangements for joint working across agencies and organisations.

A fundamental part of this development has been the introduction of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Three years on we now have an established process for the CAF with practitioners trained across a wide range of settings.

We have taken this opportunity to review and consolidate thresholds of need that will help practitioners decide whether or not a child or young person and their family needs to access early

intervention or specialist services. These threshold levels have been developed through joint working with Health, Early Intervention and Prevention, Social Care and Commissioning managers.

The new document "Indicators of Concern and Guidance for Operational Processes and Assessment" may be accessed using the link below: <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Children/childrenstrust/Early+Intervention+and+Prevention+Services.htm>

**If you have any queries regarding the document please contact Yvonne Coates on 01325 388437 or email: [yvonne.coates@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:yvonne.coates@darlington.gov.uk) [david.mason@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:david.mason@darlington.gov.uk)**

## Draft Strategies

The following draft strategies are available for you to access on the Children's Trust website:

### **Child Poverty Strategy**

<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Children/childrenstrust/Child+Poverty+in+Darlington.htm>

For more information about this contact [josh.slack@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:josh.slack@darlington.gov.uk)

### **Joint Early Intervention & Prevention Strategy**

<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Children/childrenstrust/ChildrensTrustPublications/CT+Key+Documents.htm>

For more information about this contact [lynne.henderson@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.henderson@darlington.gov.uk)

### **Darlington Domestic Abuse Strategy**

<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Children/childrenstrust/ChildrensTrustPublications/CT+Key+Documents.htm>

For more information about this contact [judith.morton@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:judith.morton@darlington.gov.uk)