

Partner Newsletter

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Darlington Safeguarding Children Board & Darlington Children's Trust Partner Newsletter

Welcome to the second partner newsletter from Darlington Safeguarding Children Board & Darlington Children's Trust Board. We have agreed to work together to ensure children and young people are safer in Darlington.



Peer Challenge

As part of the ongoing preparation for the Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked after Children Services the opportunity has arisen for the Local Government Group to carry out a Peer Challenge of Safeguarding Services. This challenge takes a critical friend approach and methodology aligned to the Ofsted Inspection processes.

The Peer Challenge on-site visit will take place week commencing 18th July 2011 for one week.

Janet Walke is the person to contact if you have any queries or require any further information regarding any aspects of the Peer Challenge. Tel: (01325) 388949 (ext: 2949) email: janet.walke@darlington.gov.uk

'Home from home' judged to be outstanding

A "HOME from home" care facility in Darlington has been judged as "outstanding" in its latest Ofsted inspection. The latest inspection follows a shorter, interim, inspection in March of this year and a more detailed report a year ago when the centre was rated as "satisfactory".

Awarded the 'Investors in Children' award in January 2011, Harewood Hill Lodge is provided by Darlington Borough Council and offers short break care and accommodation for children with a disability aged from 6 – 17 years.

Key features identified in the inspection include: outstanding levels of close individual support and encouragement; outstanding help with personal care needs; clear commitment to consultation with young people and their carers; encouragement and celebration of achievements of young people; clear practices and procedures to keep young people safe and a well-managed, stable, experienced and motivated team of staff.

Young people and their carers are encouraged to talk regularly with staff and discuss any issues or changes they wish to make to care plans. Staff work hard to ensure that young people in their care have every chance to take part in different activities in the community and support them in leading a healthy and active life.

The development and practice of life skills such as budgeting, cooking and self care is encouraged and recorded to ensure that young people work towards an adult life that is as independent as possible for them. Their

progress is regularly reviewed and discussed.

Manager of Harewood Hill Lodge, Cath Blair said:

"This is brilliant news. In the last year all the staff team have worked extremely hard to raise standards and their hard work has been recognised in this latest inspection.

"I would like to extend a huge thank you to all the team for their efforts, support and determination to improve the service that we provide and that they be recognised for their drive and commitment.

"A short break stay can be a positive option for families and young people. We work in partnership with children, families and fellow professionals to ensure that children have access to the opportunities, resources and support that they may need to achieve a positive future."

Cyndi Hughes, Darlington Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People said:

"Well done to all concerned, it has been a real team effort and I am delighted that their hard work has been rewarded. The comments from the young people detailed in the report reinforce the findings of this inspection. The team really do provide a home from home service where these young people get the care they need and want – even down to menu choices.

"Caring for a disabled child can be very challenging and it is reassuring that this type of care exists in Darlington that can offer parents and carers a much-needed break where their child can receive care in a safe and homely environment tailored to meet their unique needs."

New Children's Centre for Darlington

DARLINGTON'S latest Children's Centre opened On Wednesday 25 May. The centre in Salter's Lane South is the sixth Children's Centre in the town offering support and advice to families with children under five.

Children's Centres aim to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children but provide services that can be accessed by all young families in the community.

Using Government funding, Children's Centres provide childcare, early education, family and health services as well as training and employment advice for parents. The new centre provides a range of services, specifically designed to help young families living in the area. Services include:

- Advice and support to parents/carers
- Information and advice on childcare
- A childminders' support network
- Health services
- Family support
- Parental outreach
- Links to the Job Centre and training providers
- Targeted support for vulnerable families.

The Children's Centre, funded by £566,000 of Government money, has been created in a former children's home which was closed in July 2009.

Extensive work has taken place to provide activities rooms, a kitchen, office, reception area and meeting and staff rooms. There is also a secure play area, garden, outdoor seating and parking.

Cyndi Hughes, Darlington Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, said:

"Children Centres offer essential support to families across Darlington, as well as providing a meeting place for parents and their children and the opportunity for them to try new activities.

"I am delighted that the Haughton area of town now has its own dedicated centre."



Darlington College Childcare Centre Officially Outstanding

Darlington College Childcare Centre Team celebrates after being officially judged to be outstanding by Ofsted earlier this year.

The centre which provides childcare for staff and students of the college as well as the wider community was given the highest rating in every category by Ofsted inspector Donna Lancaster.

The Inspector was impressed by the professional commitment and dedication of staff, and the quality of the facilities on offer at the Haughton Road site.

Ms Lancaster stated in her report "Darlington College Childcare Centre provides an excellent range of effective

learning experiences and play opportunities based on children's individual interests. Consequently, children make exceptional progress in all areas of their learning and development. Children are effectively supported by well qualified and experienced staff members who recognise children's individual uniqueness and provide an inclusive, stimulating and interesting, well organised, safe and secure learning environment."

College Principal Tim Grant said the college was extremely proud of the Ofsted inspection and the childcare centre staff.

"We are extremely fortunate to have such a loyal, professional team of workers and they are a credit to the college and everything we strive to achieve," he said.

Centre Manager Andi Cartwright said "It is great to have the team's hard work and passion to provide the best possible care for all children recognised by Ofsted."

To read the full Ofsted inspection report visit <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Inspection-reports>



Adoption Service rated as Good

DARLINGTON Council's Adoption Service has been rated as Good by Ofsted.

The Service, which had been previously been rated as Satisfactory, underwent an Ofsted inspection in May this year.

Darlington Council's Adoption Service is part of a range of local authority services which seek to promote the upbringing of children by their families in accordance with the spirit and provision of the Children Act 1989. Where this is not possible, the local authority undertakes, through the Adoption Service, to find a permanent alternative family in which the child is

given the opportunity of a secure and stable environment, taking into account the child's specific needs and circumstances.

The Adoption Service works with prospective adopters from initial interest in adoption through to training, assessment and approval to the placing of children. The Service also offers support and guidance to adopters to help children settle into their new lives and surroundings and to help adopters adjust to life with their child/children.

The Ofsted report noted that the Adoption Service operates an effective adoption panel; offers a positive approach to equality and diversity and works with prospective adopters approved from a wide range of backgrounds.

The report goes on to say that the adoption service has a robust safe guarding policy and procedure and ensures strong links with child and adolescent mental health services. The report also commended on the positive approach to education set in place by foster carers and continued by adopters.

Following recommendations in the report, the Council's adoption service will focus attention on more joint training between adoption service and panel members and work to provide individual written agreements with prospective adopters to ensure the service is delivering the intended outcomes.

Cyndi Hughes, Darlington Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, said: "The Adoption Service works tirelessly to ensure that children and prospective adopters are given the right guidance, support and help that they need when working through the adoption process to ensure the most beneficial outcome – a stable and loving home enjoyed the child and their adoptive parent/s.

"The Ofsted report reinforces the incredibly valuable work of the team. I am delighted the rating has improved from Satisfactory to Good."

If you are considering adoption or fostering please contact Darlington Council's Family Placement Team on (01325) 388077.

Darlington's New Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014

A new Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) has been developed involving our partners and children and young people in Darlington. The priorities for 2011-2014 have been identified using information from a comprehensive analysis of the needs of children, young people and their families in Darlington and importantly the feedback and comments received from over 380 children and young people.

From August- October 2010 consultation through the art work was carried out with 140 children aged 0-10 years old and then in January to April 2011 comprehensive consultation was carried out with a young people across the town. Contact was made with schools, youth clubs and youth projects across the borough and an interactive workshop based session plan was developed and delivered in settings in order to find out the views and opinions of the young people. In total thus far over 380 children and young people have participated in these consultation workshops. This is part of an ongoing engagement process designed to continually involve children and young people and will be ongoing throughout 2011/12. The young people decided that there were three key areas of work that they wanted to progress. These are developing a Facebook in order to communicate the CYPP to other young people across the borough, developing a young person friendly flyer should be developed in addition to Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014 and to publicise the excellent work that the young people involved in the process have undertaken over the past 6 months, the steering group decided to develop a short film, detailing the views and opinions of Darlington's young people. The film will sit on 'The Blueprint' Facebook page and will be available as a publicity and training tool. Darlington re-view Digital Media Youth Work team agreed to film, photograph and take audio podcast recordings in a number of the sessions with the children and young people.

The steering group decided that the name for both the fan page and the project should be 'The Blueprint', with the strap line **'Our Generation, Our Future, Our Plan'**.

Young People agreed that 'The Blueprint' detailing the views and opinions of young people should include comments from the Member of Youth Parliament, Ben

Million. They decided that the format of the flyer should be both paper based and electronic and should be included on the Facebook fan page and be sent to schools, colleges, projects and organisations in order to promote the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014.

Stakeholder consultation was undertaken with partners between December and January 2011 on the needs assessment that informed the development of the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014 priorities. Further stakeholder consultation took place between February and April 2011 around the commissioning priorities that would be included within the new Plan.



The new CYPP has been approved by Darlington Children's Trust at the Board meeting in May 2011.

You can access the new CYPP and the action plan that support the Plan at the following link:

<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Children/childrenstrust/CYPP/Children+and+Young+Peoples+Plan+2011-2014.htm>

If you have any queries please contact Melanie Brown, Children's Trust Partnership Manager on (01325) 388219 or email: melanie.brown@darlington.gov.uk