

Report to:	RESILIENT COMMUNITIES AND CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Diane Booth, Director of Childrens Services
Date of Meeting	7 December 2017

CHILDREN'S SERVICES UPDATE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the work undertaken by Children's Services on a day to day basis and to update on the progress and implementation of developments within the areas.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1
- To note the contents of the report and to ensure that current work continues to meet statutory obligations and that work to prepare for external inspections continues.
 - To continue to meet statutory monitoring, challenge and support obligations.
 - To work with schools to support improvement and preparation for external scrutiny and support the work of the Blackpool Challenge Board in order to improve the progress and attainment of Blackpool Children especially at KS3 and KS4.
 - To identify any further information and actions required.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 For Members of the Scrutiny Committee to be fully informed as to the day to day work of the Children's Services Directorate and have assurance that Blackpool is continuing to meet its statutory obligations for future inspection requirements. The LA remains and retains a statutory responsibility to monitor all schools in order to support improvement and raise the attainment and progress for all children in the Local Authority Area.

- 3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

- 3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

Other alternative options considered:

- 3.3 Services are subject to national and statutory frameworks.

4.0 Council Priority:

- 4.1 The relevant Council Priority is 'Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience'.

5.0 Background Information

5.1 Children Social Care

5.1.1 Audit

- 5.1.2 Children's Services have launched its new audit framework with all of our early help/children's social care and safeguarding Senior Management Team, all having attending a half day briefing. This will provide Children's Services with greater capacity within its services to complete audits and thus provide a more comprehensive understanding and ownership of the quality of our practice. In addition Children's Services has recruited two independent agency auditors who have undertaken more than 100 full case audits and 120 specific audits looking at thresholds and management oversight in respect to child protection enquiries. The full case audits completed included looking at the following areas:

- Neglect cases as part of a possible Joint Targeted Area Inspection
- Compliance and quality of Looked after Children cases
- Compliance and quality of Strategy Discussions/ Sec 47 Enquiries/ Assessments
- Compliance and quality of Care Leavers services

- 5.1.3 The above audits have identified the following overarching themes which require improvement:

- **Voice of the Child:** Whilst the voice of the child is often evident in the file, the impact is not always transparent
- **Analysis within Assessments:** There is inconsistency in quality of analysis within assessments
- **Plans:** Generally plans are not considered to be SMART, outcome focused and not always linked to the assessment.
- **Supervision and Management Oversight:** Supervision is occurring, however this could be improved upon by scrutinising case work more thoroughly and focusing on SMART actions and tracking of such. There is inconsistency across the service in evidence of management footprint at critical decision making points.
- **Basic Details/Case Summaries/Chronologies:** These remain outstanding on some cases and a plan is in place to address these.

5.1.4 Action Taken

- Sharing of audit findings with all Social Care Senior Management Team, Service Team Managers and at Service development days.
- Findings shared with Safeguarding Quality and Review Team and IRO's asked to monitor future practice and highlight any practice areas where improvement not being made
- Training and Learning Circles being set up to address the voice of the child/lived experience, SMART planning.
- Risk Sensible training commenced which addresses areas of understanding/analysis of risk in assessments, child's experience and SMART planning.
- Safeguarding supervision completed with Team Managers with positive feedback on the quality of training and how this will be put into practice.
- Reports have been made available to Team Managers via Report Manager which highlight outstanding documentation/performance.

5.1.5 Performance Management

- 5.1.6 A review of our performance framework has taken place and the suite of performance reports has been revised. Work has been completed in conjunction with managers and our Business Intelligence Team to provide frontline managers with up to date performance information in which they can performance manage. The new suite of performance reports available on Report Manager was launched with managers on the 6 November 2017. This provides managers with performance information in relation to their service area/teams and individual workers in areas such as chronologies and case summaries on file, assessments completed within timescale. It also provides managers with information of other social work activity that is due and enables them to ensure workers have these in their diary to complete.
- 5.1.7 A Performance and Practice Improvement Meeting has also been established which presently includes Service Managers from across Children's Services. This meeting reviews present performance across a range of social work practice from Contacts/Referrals to Care Leaver information and links performance and findings from audit, thus providing both quantitative and qualitative information. It also measures our performance against National, regional and statistical neighbours' performance.
- 5.1.8 A performance dashboard which is linked to our improvement plan has been developed which has challenging targets. This is monitored on a monthly basis and progress is being made against a number of these:

- There has been a reduction in Contacts/Referrals as a result of robust triage arrangements in place with the Police to review PVPs at the front door, as part of the wider MASH review. Triage is also being carried out on all referrals to the front door, with those not appropriate for social care being diverted to the Early Help hub, which directs work more appropriately and provides guidance and support to partners in managing need at a universal, or early help.
- The numbers of children subject to child protection plans have reduced
- The numbers of children ceasing to be subject to child protection plans three months or less has reduced. An audit is presently taking place to review child protection plans three months or less to review thresholds and decision-making and provide assurance that children have been signposted to appropriate services to manage the risk.
- The numbers of LAC has reduced from 548 in June 2017 to 529 in October 2017 with an increase to 533 in November related to a large sibling group. We continue to identify children and young people who can safely leave our care, and tracking progress to ensure no drift, but this work is behind schedule. We also continue to develop our edge of care offer to prevent children needing to be looked after.

5.2 School Improvement

5.2.1 Blackpool School Improvement Board and Inclusion Strategy update

5.2.2 Blackpool School Improvement Board has been re-structured to provide greater focus and improved strategy. This will mean greater collaboration is possible between schools, using a “family” of schools model (Appendix 5a). Each school is now grouped, with representation from primary, secondary and special school partners, to work together to ensure that their needs and priorities are represented at the Blackpool School Improvement Board strategic board. Projects and initiatives that have been funded through the department for education via various strategies are delivered by system leaders through these “families” and data is shared that shows each family’s relative need, in relation to children in need, in need of protection, who may be our children and attendance, exclusion etc.

5.2.3 The impact of the strategies that are in place can then be evidenced at the Blackpool School Improvement Board and new funding streams and initiatives can be cascaded down to schools. A comprehensive data-set has been established to allow all partners to see the outcomes for individual schools and groups of children and a data-sharing agreement has been ratified by partner schools.

5.2.4 School Inspection

Since September we have had two school inspections. Westcliffe Primary Academy maintained Good and Layton Maintained Primary School received an Outstanding judgement.

5.3 HeadStart

5.3.1 A brand new version of the Resilience Framework has been launched, which was co-produced with young people from Mereside School (Appendix 5b). At HeadStart we always focus co-production and have shown what superb outcomes we can reach if we take our time, include young people in the process and really listen and learn from their expertise.

5.3.2 All Year 2 schools are engaging with the Whole School Resilience Approach and from September 'Bounce Forward' sessions are being delivered in eight of these schools. Resilience Coach activity is increasing, for example some good outcomes are being achieved with some of our most vulnerable young people via the Edge of Exclusion programme.

5.3.3 The 'Resilience Revolution' message is starting to spread with a steady increase in social media followers as well as further promotion at The World Mental Health Day event, the Staff Conference, senior leadership team, a Better Start Conference and a two-day HeadStart conference in Wolverhampton. One of HeadStart's apprentices also represented the programme by taking part as a volunteer co-researcher for a drought project in South Africa. A social media campaign was created to link in with World Mental Health Day, and 'Vlogtober' has seen HeadStart staff, young people, parents and carers create a resilient move each day and vlogging their experience. This has been a great success and 'Sophie's' vlog has had over 4,500 views which are continuously being shared.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghVW4SjU0TU&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhMjYnRY5Mw>

5.3.4 The therapeutic benefit of creating digital content has been seen to improve confidence and communication skills for young people and this will need to be researched further.

5.4 Blackpool Music Service and Education Hub Success

5.4.1 The Key Data for Music Education Hubs 2016 has recently been published by the Department for Education and Arts Council England. Birmingham City University collated specific evidence from all 121 Music Education Hubs with a clear focus on the National Plan for Music Education and, School Music Education Plans.

- 5.4.2 Blackpool Music Service is the lead organisation for Blackpool Music Education Hub and our report celebrates 100% School Engagement, extensive School Music Education Plan and Continuous Professional Development support and, that our 99% school support for singing strategies are second to none. In addition, we teach 21% more instrumentalists and vocalists than the national average, 93% more instrumentalists in small groups and significantly higher numbers of musicians in ensembles. All data clearly identifies higher outcomes than the national average, often significantly higher.
- 5.4.3 All schools annually participate in their various programmes with 94% of schools having up to 26 hours of weekly tuition. 87% of our Primary Schools receive our Wider Opportunities programme and 41% of these pupils continue after the initial programme. This too is significantly higher than the national average of 26.6%.
- 5.4.4 The report confirms that Blackpool receives the third lowest national grant allocation which only covers 38% of its work. The remaining financial support (£666,000) is self-funding thus indicating exceptional value for money and totally inclusive support across Blackpool.
- 5.4.5 A copy of the full report is available on line or via Music Adviser, Andrew White.

6.0 National Anti-Bullying week 13-17 November 2017

- 6.1 During November, Blackpool Children's Services in conjunction with the Diana Award Charity hosted the National Anti-Bullying Week event 2017. This was held in the De Vere Village Hotel on Thursday 16 November 2017 with over 350 students and staff attending from all over the North of England. The event was a celebration of all that the young people were doing in their school community to tackle bullying and raise awareness of the key theme for this year which was ***'All Different, All Equal'***.
- 6.2 There was a series of workshops throughout the day for the young people including: song writing; poetry and drama; graffiti art; T-shirt design; dance and expressive arts. All the workshops were displayed at the end of the day in front of all the delegates.
- 6.3 Councillor Graham Cain attended and kindly agreed to be a Dragon for the day in the 'Dragons Den' session to award a cash prize to the school with the best idea which was showcased on the day. Planning for next year's event (in Blackpool) start now.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

Appendix 5(a) – Blackpool School Improvement Board - restructure
Appendix 5(b) – Resilience Framework – YP Friendly

8.0 Legal considerations:

8.1 None

9.0 Human Resources considerations:

9.1 None

10.0 Equalities considerations:

10.1 None

11.0 Financial considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Risk management considerations:

12.1 None

13.0 Ethical considerations:

13.1 None

14.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

14.1 None

15.0 Background papers:

15.1 None