

Blackpool Council

2 September 2020

To: Councillors Clapham, D Coleman, Critchley, Hugo, Mitchell, Owen, Stansfield and Wing

Ms Sage and Dr Allen, Co-opted Members

The above members are requested to attend the:

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 10 September 2020 at 6.00 pm
Via Zoom meeting

A G E N D A

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare any interests in the items under consideration and in doing so state:

(1) the type of interest concerned either a

- (a) personal interest
- (b) prejudicial interest
- (c) disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI)

and

(2) the nature of the interest concerned

If any member requires advice on declarations of interests, they are advised to contact the Head of Democratic Governance in advance of the meeting.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2020 (Pages 1 - 6)

To agree the minutes of the last meeting of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee held on 13 February 2020 as a true and correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

To consider any applications from members of the public to speak at the meeting.

4 FORWARD PLAN (Pages 7 - 12)

To consider the content of the Council's Forward Plan, September to December 2020, within the remit of the Committee.

5 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS (Pages 13 - 16)

To consider the Executive and Cabinet Member Decisions within the remit of the Committee which have been taken since the last meeting.

6 YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM IMPROVEMENT (Pages 17 - 26)

To update the Committee on the progress of Blackpool Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan theme areas - Out of Court and In Court.

7 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE - RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION (Pages 27 - 32)

To provide an update of Children's Social Care Improvement in relation to the recruitment and retention of Children's Social Care employees.

8 INCLUSION IN EDUCATION SCRUTINY REVIEW FINAL REPORT (Pages 33 - 58)

To consider the final report of the scrutiny review of Inclusion in Education.

9 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2020-2021 (Pages 59 - 70)

To consider the contents of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for 2020-2021.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date of the next meeting of the Committee as Thursday 19 November 2020 at 6pm.

Other information:

For queries regarding this agenda please contact Elaine Ireland, Tel: 01253 477255, e-mail: Elaine.ireland@Blackpool.gov.uk

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Agenda Item 2

MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2020

Present:

Councillor Stansfield (in the Chair)

Councillors

Clapham

Critchley

Hugo

Wing

D Coleman

Farrell

Hutton

Dr Elaine Allen, Roman Catholic Co-opted Member

Ms Helen Sage, Diocesan Co-opted Member

In Attendance:

Councillor Kath Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration

Councillor Lynn Williams, Deputy Leader of the Council (Children)

Ms Kate Aldridge, Head of Delivery and Performance

Mr Robert Arrowsmith, Head of Performance and Systems

Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services

Mrs Elaine Ireland, Democratic Governance Senior Adviser

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Debbie Coleman and Stansfield both declared a personal interest in Item 5 'Children's Social Care Improvement and Residential Children's Home Provision', the nature of the interest being that they were employed by residential children's homes.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 9 JANUARY 2020

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the last meeting held on 9 January 2020 be signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record subject to the following amendment: Councillor Coleman's name to be deleted from Item 1 Declarations of Interest from those declaring an interest in Item 9 'Corporate Parent Panel Annual Report' as she had not declared an interest in that item.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Committee noted that there were no applications to speak by members of the public on this occasion.

4 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan, March-June 2020 relating to the portfolio of the Deputy Leader of the Council (Children) and the Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration. Members noted that the Forward Plan contained two items relevant to the Committee: 'To progress the acquisition of the former Job Centre Plus building at 43 Queens Street to accommodate Children's Services in a single location, in

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2020**

line with the preferred delivery model following the Ofsted review' and 'The implementation of a regional adoption agency with Lancashire County Council in November 2019, in accordance with the regionalising adoption agenda'.

Councillor Mrs Callow, in her capacity as Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board enquired as to the anticipated cost to the Council of the potential relocation of Children's Services to the former Job Centre Plus building, as well as seeking details of the proposed lease arrangements. Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services responded that the purchase of the building was one of the options being considered.

Further information on the implementation of the regional adoption agency was requested. Mrs Booth confirmed that the decision would be considered by the Executive on 1 April 2020 and that the proposals would recommend joining together with Lancashire County Council to provide adoption agency services across both areas.

5 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT AND RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOME PROVISION

Mrs Booth, Director of Children's Services presented her report outlining the progress of Children's Social Care as well as the outcomes of the review of residential children's home provision.

Members queried the lack of an action plan in relation to the residential children's home provision, as previously requested by the Committee. Ms Kate Aldridge, Head of Delivery and Performance explained that a Sufficiency Strategy for 2020-2023 would form part of the action plan, with the strategy currently undergoing internal consultation prior to publication. Ms Aldridge confirmed that once finalised, the action plan would be shared with the Committee. The anticipated timescale for the implementation of the Sufficiency Strategy was queried, with Ms Aldridge explaining that whilst elements of the strategy had already been implemented, finalisation of other features were still outstanding.

As outlined within the report, Members noted that of the 63 children requiring residential provision, only 23 had been placed within the area and the remaining 40 had been placed out of the Borough. Whilst the Committee acknowledged that the residential providers were operating commercial businesses, the question was asked of whether the Council could have any influence over ensuring our children were placed in Blackpool. Ms Aldridge advised that there were 70 residential places available across Blackpool and that efforts were being put in place to help safeguard the places for Blackpool children by strengthening relationships with providers. Ms Aldridge explained that providers often charged rates that Blackpool was unwilling to pay and which other Local Authorities would pay, thus keeping the prices at a high level. She informed the Committee that relevant Local Authorities had been contacted to raise awareness of the situation and to ask them to ensure that Blackpool was a suitable location for their placements. Ms Aldridge outlined a number of avenues being explored to discourage providers from building residential children's homes within unsuitable areas of the town, for example via the planning regulatory process.

In response to a question raised on the high cost of placements, Ms Aldridge explained that specialist out-of-Borough placements were sometimes necessary and the number of

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such provisions across the country was limited. The increase of £7 million towards placements to support looked after children was discussed, with the Committee expressing the view that the high level of increasing costs was unsustainable. Assurance was sought that all residential providers in Blackpool were Ofsted registered, with Mrs Booth confirming that all places used by Blackpool were.

Mrs Booth explained that three key factors were being implemented to address numbers of looked after children:

- Working with partners to improve early help provisions and reduce the number of children brought into care;
- Recruitment of appropriately trained and experienced staff;
- The timely discharge of children out of care.

With regards to target-setting, Mrs Booth advised that a financial planning meeting would be held imminently and agreed to share Medium Term Financial Planning (MTFP) information at the next meeting of the Committee.

A question was raised on the percentage of children in care that ultimately returned to living with their families. Mrs Booth advised that previously only low numbers of children had been returned to their families but that improvements were being implemented, such as the consideration of short-term placements and the regular review of cases to consider if children could be safely returned. In addition Mrs Booth identified that social workers with less experience needed to be taught the skills required to recognise cases where children could potentially be returned to their families, acknowledging that such skills took time to develop. The Committee was also informed that children had entered the social care system in the past when perhaps they should not have but in such legacy cases it was still difficult to reunite the children with their families. Discussion was held around the causes of large families with multiple siblings being placed into care and the complex nature of the many contributory factors.

In response to the recent findings of the monitoring visit undertaken by Ofsted, Mrs Booth stressed that the specific context of Blackpool had not been referenced or acknowledged within the findings. In response to the statement that progress had been identified as too slow, Mrs Booth highlighted the importance of a thorough approach to the improvement journey in order to ensure lasting changes were implemented. The Committee requested evidence of longer-term planning which Mrs Booth stated would be detailed within the Children and Family Strategic Partnership action plan, which would be circulated to the Committee on completion.

A summary of specific Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data was requested by the Committee, which Mrs Booth agreed could be added to future Committee agendas. Mr Arrowsmith, Head of Performance and Systems advised that a monthly performance update was provided to the Getting to Good Board and confirmed that partners from Health, the police and Council Members sat on the Board.

In response to the Ofsted monitoring report, the Committee raised the issue that the large numbers of cases requiring support within Blackpool and the recruitment of suitably experienced social workers were issues that needed to be addressed as these situations were unlikely to change. It was instead suggested that any action plan for improvement

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needed to include working methods and systems which made allowances for the specific conditions in place within the town, for example ensuring that case notes were detailed and accurate to allow for the potential change of social worker if required. The Committee requested a strategic overview for the following three years in order to seek assurance that the issues raised by Ofsted were being adequately addressed. Mr Arrowsmith and Mrs Booth agreed to make the reporting of the quality of practice the focus for future reports to the Committee and would bring the Practice Improvement Plan to the next meeting.

Further to the discussions on the Sufficiency Strategy, the issues around the shortage of foster carers within Blackpool were raised. Mr Arrowsmith explained that the current remuneration offer for foster carers within Blackpool was lower than the package offered across Lancashire and by independent fostering agencies, with the need to address this being acknowledged by Mrs Booth. The age at which care ceased for a young person was also discussed, with the various options available being noted by the Committee. Mr Arrowsmith provided data on the distribution of young people across different care provisions within Blackpool, with Committee Members requesting an age breakdown of each category to be provided, which Mr Arrowsmith agreed to produce and circulate.

The Committee agreed:

1. That the Children and Family Strategic Partnership action plan be circulated to the Committee upon completion;
2. To receive a summary of specific Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data within future reports.
3. To receive the Practice Improvement Plan to the next meeting of the Committee.
4. That Mr Arrowsmith produce and circulate an age breakdown of each category of care provision across Blackpool.

6 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

Committee Members considered their annual workplan and requested the following items:

Placement Sufficiency Strategy – 23 April 2020.

Medium Term Financial Planning information in relation to Children's Social Care – 23 April 2020.

Residential Children's Home provision action plan – once finalised for publication this would be included within the MTFP.

Positive Transitions report – to be circulated to Committee Members by Ms Aldridge.

Six month Commissioner review – to be circulated to Committee Members by Mrs Booth.

7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as Thursday, 23 April 2020, commencing at 6pm.

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2020**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.35pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser
Tel: (01253) 477255
E-mail: Elaine.ireland@blackpool.gov.uk

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Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager
Date of Meeting:	10 September 2020

FORWARD PLAN

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the content of the Council's Forward Plan, September to December 2020, within the remit of the Committee.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 Members will have the opportunity to question the Leader of the Council and/or the relevant Cabinet Member in relation to items contained within the Forward Plan within the portfolios of the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration.

2.2 Members will have the opportunity to consider whether any of the items should be subjected to pre-decision scrutiny. In so doing, account should be taken of any requests or observations made by the relevant Cabinet Member.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To enable the opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny of the Forward Plan items.

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? N/A

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None.

4.0 Council Priority:

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

5.0 Background Information

5.1 The Forward Plan is prepared by the Leader of the Council to cover a period of four months and has effect from the first working day of any month. It is updated on a monthly basis and subsequent plans cover a period beginning with the first working day of the second month

covered in the preceding plan.

5.2 The Forward Plan contains matters which the Leader has reason to believe will be subject of a key decision to be taken either by the Executive, a Committee of the Executive, individual Cabinet Members or Officers.

5.3 Attached at Appendix 4(a) is a list of items contained in the current Forward Plan. Further details appertaining to each item is contained in the Forward Plan, which has been forwarded to all Members separately.

5.4 Witnesses/representatives

5.4.1 The following Cabinet Member is responsible for the Forward Plan item in this report and has been invited to attend the meeting:

- Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council (Children)

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices:

Appendix 4(a): Summary of items contained within Forward Plan September to December 2020.

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 None.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 None.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 None.

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 None.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.

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EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN - SUMMARY OF KEY DECISIONS**(SEPTEMBER 2020 TO DECEMBER 2020)***** Denotes New Item**

Anticipated Date of Decision	Matter for Decision	Decision Reference	Decision Taker	Relevant Cabinet Member
October 2020	To progress the acquisition of the former Job Centre Plus building at 43 Queens Street to accommodate Children's Services in a single location, in line with the preferred delivery model following the Ofsted review.	35/2019	Executive	Cllr Williams

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Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager
Date of Meeting:	10 September 2020

EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the Executive and Cabinet Member Decisions within the remit of the Committee which have been taken since the last meeting.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 Members will have the opportunity to question the Leader of the Council or the relevant Cabinet Member in relation to the decisions taken.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure that the opportunity is given for all Executive and Cabinet Member decisions to be scrutinised and held to account.

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? N/A

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None.

4.0 Council Priority:

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

5.0 Background Information

5.1 Attached at Appendix 5(a) is a summary of the decisions taken, which have been circulated to Members previously.

5.2 This report is presented to ensure Members are provided with a timely update on the decisions taken by the Executive and Cabinet Members. It provides a process where the Committee can raise questions and a response be provided.

5.3 Members are encouraged to seek updates on decisions and will have the opportunity to raise any issues.

5.4 Witnesses/representatives

5.4.1 The following Cabinet Member is responsible for the decisions taken in this report and has been invited to attend the meeting:

- Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council (Children)

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices:

Appendix 5(a): Summary of Executive and Cabinet Member decisions taken.

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 None.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 None.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 None.

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 None.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.

APPENDIX 5(a)

DECISION / OUTCOME	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER	DATE	CABINET MEMBER
<p>REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S HOME PROVISION</p> <p>The Executive agreed the recommendations as outlined below namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To endorse the results of the review of residential children's provision, as summarised in the report. 2. To formally confirm the permanent closure of 331 Bispham Road with effect from 1 March 2020 and to notify OFSTED accordingly. 3. That the property be retained within the Children's Services estate in the short term while alternative uses for the property be fully explored. 	<p>To consider the review of residential children's home provision, in particular in relation to 331 Bispham Road which has been temporarily closed since July 2019.</p>	<p>EX12/2020</p>	<p>10/02/2020</p>	<p>Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader(Children)</p>
<p>IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LANCASHIRE AND BLACKPOOL REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY</p> <p>The Executive agreed the recommendations as outlined below namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To confirm, in line with previous decisions, to merge the delivery of the Council's Adoption Agency to form a Regional Adoption Agency with and hosted by Lancashire County Council from 1 April 2020. 2. To agree to transfer the current Blackpool Council funding of £997,816 for running the Council's Adoption Services into the Regional Adoption Agency pooled budget. 3. To delegate authority to the Head of Legal Services to sign off any required legal agreement on behalf of the Council. 	<p>Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council have been working together since May 2018 to design and develop the 'Adoption Lancashire and Blackpool' Regional Adoption Agency, with Lancashire being the Host Authority. The purpose of the decision was to agree the final steps on behalf of Blackpool Council including confirmation of the pooled budget.</p>	<p>EX16/2020</p>	<p>23/03/20</p>	<p>Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader(Children)</p>

DECISION / OUTCOME	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER	DATE	CABINET MEMBER
<p>UPDATED CHILDREN'S SERVICES MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY</p> <p>The Executive agreed the recommendations as outlined below namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve the updated Children's Services Medium Term Financial Strategy and the revised modelling. 2. To approve the funding of a £1.2m per year for two years for a specific project to step-down from residential care via a therapeutic children's home into specialist foster placements. 3. To approve the funding of £460,000 including investment of £300,000 necessary to transform the Council's fostering service. 4. To approve the changes in payments to foster carers at a cost of £1.1m. 	<p>To seek approval for the updated Children's Services Medium Term Financial Strategy. The report detailed the activities already ongoing and previously agreed measures to address the current overspend in Children's Social Care. The report sought agreement for further investment to more swiftly address particular cost drivers – spend on residential placements and spend on foster homes provided by independent fostering agencies.</p>	<p>EX31/2020</p>	<p>13/07/20</p>	<p>Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader(Children)</p>

Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services
Date of Meeting:	10 September 2020

YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM IMPROVEMENT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

To update the Committee on the progress of Blackpool Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan theme areas - Out of Court and In Court.

2.0 Recommendations:

For the Scrutiny Committee to have oversight of progress made and provide challenge and support.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

To fulfil the Committee's role in scrutiny in seeking assurance.

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|-----|--|-----|
| 3.1 | Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? | No |
| 3.2 | Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? | Yes |

4.0 Council Priority:

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

5.0 Background Information:

- 5.1 The Youth Justice Board and Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Prison and Probation undertook an unannounced inspection of Blackpool Youth Justice Service in October 2018.
- 5.2 The findings of the inspection resulted in Blackpool Youth Justice Service receiving an inadequate rating. Prior to the inspection it had been recognised that there were improvements which needed to be made both in the strategic partnership and the operational teams and a comprehensive improvement plan was put in place.

The outcome of the inspection reinforced the need for pace and focused resource to support the change that was needed to improve the service and ensure that children are well supported across the partnership and achieve good outcomes.

5.3 The improvement plan focuses on five themes (in line with the Youth Justice Board’s National Standards for Youth Justice) and each of the themes has a lead person from the partnership:

- Out of Court (lead- Head of Criminal Justice, Lancashire Constabulary);
- In Court (lead- Legal Team Manager, Blackpool Magistrates Court);
- In the Community (lead- Service Manager Targeted Intervention Service, Blackpool Council);
- Transitions (lead- Education Inclusion lead and Youth Offending Team (YOT) Service Manager, Blackpool Council);
- In Custody (lead- Business Development Manager, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Children Safeguarding Assurance Partnership).

The improvement plan has been drawn up by the partnership and is monitored through the governance of the Youth Offending Team Executive Board.

5.4 **Out of Court Disposals (OoCDs) – Outcome: Fewer children are exposed to the justice system because issues are dealt with proportionately.**

Blackpool’s triage service was decommissioned at the end of September 2019 and a new diversion service pathway developed. A partnership launch was held to share the new pathway, which provides a diversion approach for low level crime through the use of Community Resolutions and referrals onto relevant services through the Blackpool Council Early Help Hub.

Numbers of Community Resolution outcomes and referrals through to the Early Help Hub are steadily increasing and continue to be monitored closely by Lancashire Constabulary and the YOT. The increase in the use of Community Resolutions has resulted in a reduction in the number of children entering the Youth Justice System as first time entrants.

5.5 Lancashire Constabulary share monthly data with the YOT which details all OoCDs given during the period. This data assists the services in monitoring trends and outcomes for children.

Month	Community Resolutions	Youth Cautions	Youth Conditional Cautions
November 2019	9	1	1
December 2019	7	0	0
January 2020	4	0	0
February 2020	10	5	1
March 2020	6	2	0
April 2020	14	1	1
May 2020	8	1	1
June 2020	5	3	1

5.6 In February 2020, Blackpool YOT invited a peer review team into the service to provide an opportunity for the YOT and local partners to gain a fresh perspective

regarding practice. One of the key lines of enquiry required the peer review team to consider whether the First Time Entrant (FTE) diversion model was robust, of sufficient quality and having a desired and significant impact. The peer review found a clear commitment from partners to getting a robust working OoCD model. They reported that assessments and reports were prepared for the OoCD panel in a timely manner and that early data showed the revised OoCD model was beginning to make an impact. The peer review report highlighted however that the current OoCD panel process was quite resource intensive and that the service may wish to consider a place-based approach which would focus on the specific needs of Blackpool communities, utilising the informed knowledge of local practitioners who work within the vicinity.

- 5.7 Early in 2020, the Youth Justice Board requested that all YOTs completed a self-assessment based on the updated Standards for Children in Youth Justice Services (2019). Five self-assessments were completed, one of which focused on OoCDs.

The YOT Service Manager and Team Managers have completed a number of audits with Lancashire Constabulary colleagues as part of the standards for youth justice self-assessment. The audits evidenced some areas of good practice and identified areas which require improvement. Future case audits will be undertaken as part of future monitoring of areas requiring improvements.

Whilst there was evidence that Blackpool YOT had made some positive developments in practice around OoCD, there were a number of recommendations made for further service developments. These related to record keeping, the assessment and OoCD panel process, quality checks and case audits and future strategic planning. These will be taken forward, along with recommendations made in the YOT peer review, by a small working group involving key partners and practitioners from the YOT.

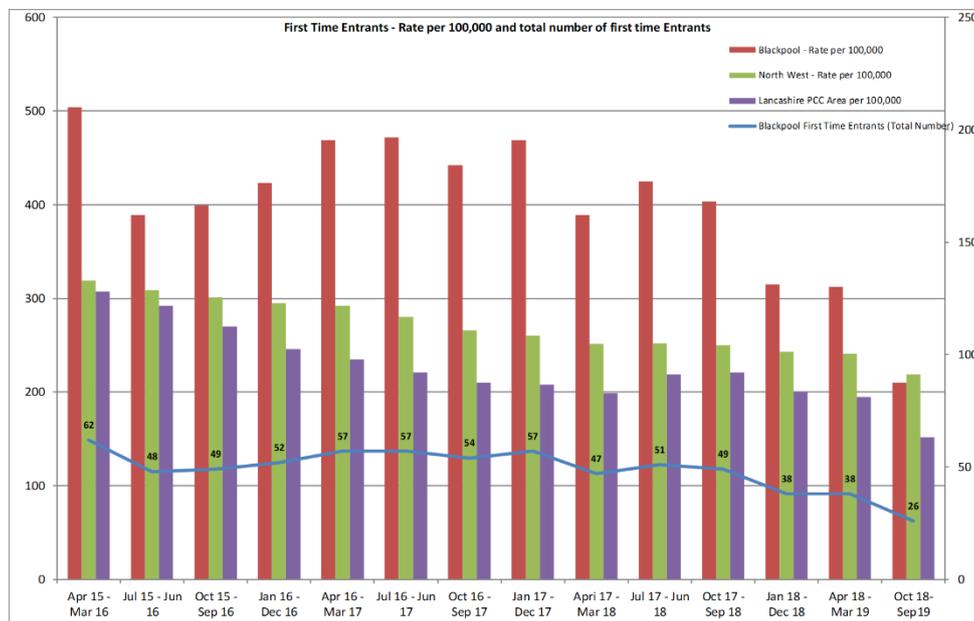
- 5.8 Work has been completed to identify learning from other areas of the country from those who are deemed to have good practice in relation to Out of Court Disposal work. Partnership visits undertaken to other Local Authorities, learning from other YOTs inspections and the recent YOT Peer Review will continue to influence our improvement work.
- 5.9 Significant work has been completed as part of the improvement journey to raise awareness of OoCDs within Lancashire Constabulary, including briefings to all front line officers and police personnel. The Blackpool YOT seconded Police Officer completes regular training events with Lancashire Constabulary new recruits to ensure they have a thorough understanding around OoCDs from the start of their police career.
- 5.10 New Pan-Lancashire materials have been developed and launched to support practitioners when explaining OoCDs to young people and their families. As a

result, children and their families have a better understanding of the implications of receiving an out of court disposal.

- 5.11 In response to inspection findings a refreshed Out of Court Disposal panel was developed to facilitate joint decision making between the Youth Justice Service and Police. A further review of this, including feedback from the recent Peer Review will inform next steps, this may include a dedicated Blackpool panel with wider partnership representation.
- 5.12 Work has been completed to improve the timeliness of referrals for Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions to the Youth Justice Service to ensure that children are supported at the earliest opportunity. The YOT and Lancashire Constabulary have developed flow charts for practitioners and managers to utilise to improve a consistent approach. Timeliness is scrutinised on a regular basis between Lancashire Constabulary and the YOT at an operational and strategic level. In addition the YOT is fully engaged with the Lancashire Criminal Justice Board's multi-agency OoCD scrutiny panel and ensures learning is implemented into practice.
- 5.13 A range of interventions continue to be developed to support the delivery of OoCDs. During the recent Covid-19 pandemic the service has seen some fantastic creative examples of virtual interventions completed by YOT staff with children to achieve positive results. Whilst face to face interventions have now resumed with all children open to the YOT, learning from virtual contacts will be considered as part of future interventions.
- 5.14 Restorative justice opportunities are explored for all OoCDs. There is a good level of victim contact and some excellent examples of direct work with victims and indirect restorative justice interventions taking place. There have been some good examples of joint work between the YOT and Lancashire Constabulary Restorative Justice team in delivering restorative justice as an approach as opposed to criminalising children.
- 5.15 The Pan-Lancashire Joint Agency Protocol for Dealing with Offences in Children's Care Homes, which is in line with the National Protocol on Reducing the Criminalisation of Looked After Children, has been developed and launched. A process is in place too for the Youth Justice Service and Police to regularly review offences that take place within Blackpool children's homes to ensure that partner agencies are adhering to the process. Lancashire Constabulary have identified link police personnel who have regular contact with local children's care homes to encourage them to consider alternative ways to deal with children who may commit low level criminal behaviour within the units. Further work was planned to be completed with the local children's care homes, however this has been delayed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.16 It has been identified in analysis of quarterly performance data that the YOT has an over representation of looked after children within the whole cohort. To address this, a small working group has been established to review the National Protocol on Reducing the Criminalisation of Looked After Children to develop a Blackpool focused strategy and approach.

5.17 The First Time Entrants (FTE) rate (per 100,000) data table provided by Ministry of Justice Youth Data Summary shows a continued decline in the numbers of children coming into the Youth Justice System in Blackpool. This data shows a promising reduction, however it is acknowledged that the data is only provided up until September 2019 and more up to date data is required to provide a more current picture. The next set of YDS data was due in May 2020, however it has been delayed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.



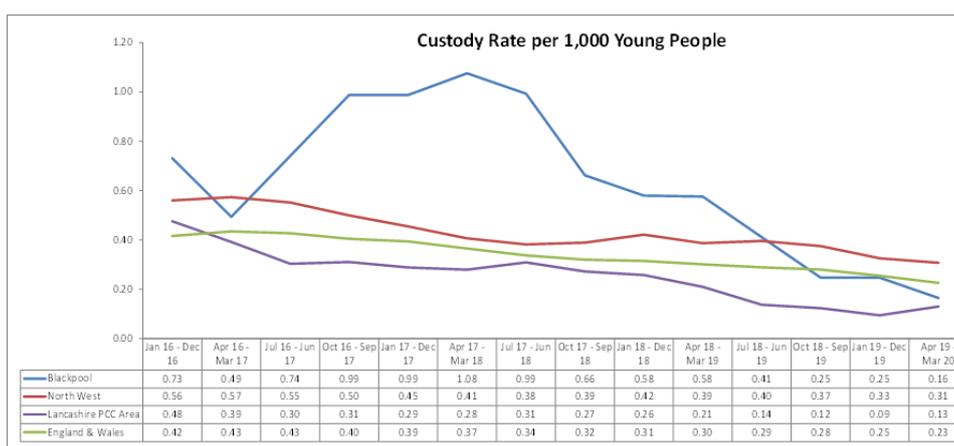
5.18 **In Court: Outcome- Children who are exposed to the criminal justice system achieve good outcomes and are supported to make positive changes**

All YOT officers currently attend court rather than having a dedicated court team. This ensures that all YOT officers have the necessary skills and experience to undertake the role and ensures that there is a confident and knowledgeable team. The YOT officers have supported and built positive relationships between the service, Her Majesty’s Court and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) and the judiciary. The YOT Court Officers provide a consistent approach, building confidence amongst the judiciary in relation to recommendations for sentencing.

5.19 YOT Court Officers attend daily pre-court planning meetings between the YOT, Legal Advisers, Crown Prosecution Service and solicitors to facilitate the business of the court and identify issues early. This assists with the swift administration of

justice for children appearing before the court.

- 5.20 The YOT has established stronger links with HMCTS court staff and the judiciary and the YOT Service Manager attends regular local Youth Liaison meetings as well as Youth Panel meetings with the Lancashire Magistrates and Youth Panel Chairman. The YOT Team Managers have regular communication with HMCTS, with regards to day to day court appearances for children.
- 5.21 HMCTS has provided training for YOT Court Officers regarding court etiquette and expectations at court. This was received well and has clearly impacted on the practice and relationships within the court arena.
- 5.22 A process has been developed between the YOT, Lancashire Constabulary, Her Majesty’s Court and Tribunal Service and the Crown Prosecution Service to regularly review cases which are bounced back from court for consideration of an OoCD. This review enables process issues to be identified to reduce the numbers of children appearing before the court, when an OoCD is a more appropriate outcome.
- 5.23 The YOT has worked hard to reduce the number of children being remanded to custody by developing practices to ensure strong bail proposals are being presented to the court as a direct alternative to custody. The Ministry of Justice has provided an updated Youth Data Summary for custody rates. The graph below shows that our custody rate continues to reduce and is below the average for the North West and England and Wales. This data is taken from the YDS (April 2019 – March 2020) which provide a relatively up to date picture for the service.



- 5.24 A pan-Lancashire process has been developed and implemented to provide feedback on the quality of pre-sentence reports completed by the Youth Justice Service. A written feedback form is presented to the court after each sentencing episode to enable the judiciary to provide detailed feedback. The feedback received has been helpful in shaping service delivery and the service has received some excellent feedback from the judiciary about the improvement in quality of

pre-sentence reports which address vulnerabilities and factors to prevent re-offending.

- 5.25 A digital system has been developed to send pre-sentence reports directly to court/defence in advance of hearing to prevent delay and adjournments in sentencing for young people, allowing proportionate intervention to begin without delay.
- 5.26 The Problem Solving Court at Blackpool Magistrate's had been developed, however due to the reduction in numbers of children appearing before the court, the approach was not widely utilised. As an alternative Blackpool YOT Court Officers speak directly to all children and parents/carers who attend for a court appearance and provide information regarding services which may assist them. This includes direct referrals onto relevant services and/or further information regarding pathways.
- 5.27 Early in 2020, the Youth Justice Board requested that all YOTs completed a self-assessment based on the updated Standards for Children in Youth Justice Services (2019). Five self-assessments were completed, one of which focused on Court.

The YOT Service Manager and Team Managers have completed a number of audits with the Blackpool HMCTS Legal Team Manager as part of the standards for youth justice self-assessment. The audits evidenced some areas of good practice and identified areas which require improvement. Future case audits will be undertaken as part of future monitoring of areas requiring improvements.

Whilst there was evidence that Blackpool YOT had made some positive developments in practice within the court arena, there were a number of recommendations made for further service developments. These related to reducing the number of 'bounce backs' from the court to the police for consideration of an OoCD, reducing the number of remands specifically for children who appear before the court during the weekend or in an out of area court, further developments around participation and engagement of children and their parents/carers before, during and after court appearances and reviewing data to establish and identify any concerns around disproportionality. These will be taken forward by a small working group involving key partners and practitioners from the YOT.

- 5.28 In relation to court delays as a result of Covid-19, Blackpool YOT is working closely with HMCTS to monitor youth work. The data from June 2020 indicated that there were 39 children whose court appearances were delayed as a result of Covid-19. These numbers are starting to reduce as Blackpool is holding a youth court every Thursday and is dealing with children appearing before them. The impact of the court delays may result in a spike in the YOT cohort numbers for this period, however work with the courts and police will continue to reduce the numbers of

children appearing before the court, where an OoCD may be a more appropriate outcome.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices

None.

6.0 Legal considerations:

There are no legal implications to consider.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

There are no human resources to consider.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

As identified in the narrative above, Blackpool knows its YOT cohort well and has identified disproportionality in the number of our looked after children supported by our YOT service. A working party has been established to consider the issues and take any relevant action.

9.0 Financial considerations:

The YOT financial structure is made up of multi-agency contributions as below:

Agency	Financial contribution 20/21
Youth Justice Board	£327,141
Local Authority	£129,051
Police	1 FTE Police Officer £41,941 additional contribution
Probation	1 FTE Probation Officer £5,000 additional contribution
Health	1 FTE Health practitioner £15,444 additional contribution

There are no current budget pressures.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

There are no issues of concern, appropriate governance arrangements are in place.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

There are no current issues identified.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

As mentioned within the report, the YOT had a peer review undertaken in February 2020 by colleagues from other YOTs. Recommendations from the peer review have been considered by the YOT Executive Board and will be implemented into practice.

We are strengthening our consultation and co-production approach with our young people and victims to support improved service delivery.

13.0 Background papers:

None.

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Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officers:	Linda Dutton, Head of Human Resource and Organisational Workforce Development Kara Haskayne, Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker
Date of Meeting:	10 September 2020

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE – RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide an update of Children's Social Care Improvement in relation to the recruitment and retention of Children's Social Care employees.

2.0 Recommendations:

- 2.1
- To note the contents of the report.
 - To continue to meet statutory monitoring, challenge and support obligations.
 - To identify any further information and actions required.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

3.1 For Members of the Scrutiny Committee to be fully informed about the recruitment and retention of employees across Children's Social Care and support effective monitoring and scrutiny in 2020/2021.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council?

No

3.2.1 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget?

The recruitment and retention approach supports the medium term financial plan.

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

No other alternatives are appropriate

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 Recruitment and Retention Update Report (August 2020)**

5.2 Children's Social Care and Human Resource (HR) and Organisational Workforce Development (OWD) Service have been working together to increase workforce recruitment and retention. This focus is to ensure sufficient workforce capacity and experience to improve the quality of service, to safeguard children and prevent children having the need to be brought into our care.

5.3 **Recruitment activity and outcomes**

5.4 There were **15** permanent qualified vacancies at the end of July 2020, which have been actively sought to recruit to:

- 1 Head of Service
- 1 Service Manager
- 4 Team Managers
- 1 Deputy Team Manager (Families Together Service)
- 1 Practice Development Manager
- 1 Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) Learning Co-ordinator
- 6 Social Workers

5.5 It is pleasing to report that since then two senior leadership roles within the Strengthening and Supporting Families Service (SSF) have been appointed to and their start dates have been expedited to ensure they commence in post during August 2020. The Head of Service is an experienced Head of Service from a North West Local Authority deemed as 'good'. The Service Manager has previous Service Manager experience and has been a Child Protection Chair in Blackpool for the last year, has played an active role in the operational implementation of Blackpool Families Rock across social care and the partnership and has a good insight into the service improvement areas he will be responsible for leading. There has also been further recruitment to one of the Team Manager posts and three of the six social work vacancies.

5.6 A very proactive **Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) recruitment campaign** (newly qualified social workers) continues. To date 28 ASYEs have been recruited, all of which are due to have commenced in role by September/October 2020. The latter start dates are due to some social work students not having been able to complete their placements within other Local Authorities, due to the Covid-19 lockdown and their exam boards therefore being rearranged.

We have had feedback from successful applicants that they have heard about the strong ASYE programme that Blackpool offers, that they share the values and principles of Blackpool Families Rock and want to work in this way with families. If the forecasted cohort of 32 ASYEs by September is met, this would equate to 17.9% of Blackpool's Children's Social Care workforce, therefore the targeted ASYE recruitment campaign continues.

5.7 There are currently three employees on the **Apprenticeship Programme**. Due to the impact of Covid-19 on the local Higher Education Institutes, the 2020-2021 cohort apprentice interviews have been rearranged until Autumn 2020 in preparation for a January 2021 commencement. With regard to the **Step Up Students**, it is currently cohort six of the programme and Blackpool has participated in four cycles of this

initiative, offering three placements in preparation for the cohort commencing in 2021. Blackpool continues to work collaboratively with Blackburn, Lancashire County Council, Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN).

- 5.8 The Council's Relocation Policy has been reviewed to ensure that it maximises candidate attraction. To do this Blackpool has reviewed and reduced the eligibility criteria and has offered financial support for commuting miles over a specified number of daily miles as opposed to mandating that a successful candidate would have to relocate.
- 5.9 To ensure the service has sufficient resource to meet demand, the Council continues to use **agency qualified social worker cover** when required during the recruitment process. At the end of July 2020 there were 27 agency workers in place and eight workers from Innovate, equating to an agency rate of 20 per cent. An Innovate Team has been kept on until the Autumn, to support children exiting from our care and achieving permanence.
- 5.10 Blackpool continues to undertake **targeted recruitment campaigns** for qualified social workers at all levels, to stabilise the workforce and ensure caseload levels are maintained/reduced. 252 (150 External/102 Internal) posts have been filled since 1 Jan 2019, of which 140 (89 External/51 Internal) are Social Work England (SWE) qualified. Average caseloads at March 2019 were 24 and as a result at the end of July 2020 this had reduced to 21.
- 5.11 **Creative and innovative marketing activity** has been undertaken in partnership with our Marketing Team, to support candidate attraction from the wider Regional and National social care workforce. For example recent Community Care articles and 'vimeos' (online videos) about our Families Together Service (edge of care support and family together meetings) and how Blackpool has co-produced and are implementing Blackpool Families Rock principles across Children's Social Care and the partnership. Values based recruitment is also being introduced in line with Blackpool Families Rock co-produced principles.
<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2020/07/20/working-families-building-strengths/>
<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2020/03/11/strengthening-families-core/>
- 5.12 **Retention Activity**
A **survey of new starters** in Children's Services has been undertaken to assess the impact of the promised Workforce Commitment to their actual lived experience and help identify any issues which may impact upon retention. The survey has been sent to new starters with more than three months' service and less than 12 months' service, the results of which are currently being analysed and provided to the Principal Social Worker.

Additional corporate initiatives to support recruitment and retention of social workers who have significant experience and for team management positions have been considered. A proposal based upon evidence of recruitment statistics to date has recently been provided to the Corporate Leadership Team and an attractive 'Golden Hello' offer has been approved for H3 and H4 roles of £1000 after six months and another after 12 months.
- 5.13 Taking the learning from the **AYSE Support Programme** offer, the Principal Social Worker, in conjunction with the HR and OWD Service, has developed a Practice Development Service. Including additional staffing capacity, the four permanent, two 18-month temporary and Senior Practice Development Leaders will work with the Principal Social

Worker and proactively support recruitment and retention activity, including addressing absence and performance issues.

Another function of the service is to develop an **Academy approach** to delivering a **Workforce Development Strategy**, supporting **Continual Professional Development** (CPD) postgraduate and ASYE opportunity, to retain current experienced staff and support future successions and leadership sufficiency planning. This will also provide an attractive offer to experienced external potential applicants, regionally and nationally.

- 5.14 The Principal Social Worker and OWD Service continue to engage in the **Greater Lancashire Teaching Partnership** programme, which helps to provide students as a recruitment source and develops Blackpool's Practice Educators. The Council has actively engaged in the UCLAN Practice Educator virtual offer during Covid-19, and has wrapped support around this via the Practice Development Service, to increase the number of **Practice Educators** across the service. This offers both a professional and personal development opportunity to staff who are best placed to undertake role modelling, mentoring, coaching and buddying to other members of the workforce and students in terms of practice improvement.

This professional development, alongside the **H2 panel**, led by the Principal Social Worker, will support staff evidencing good practice progressing into H3 senior social worker roles in a planned way, in line with succession planning and future leadership sufficiency. Increased Practice Educator capacity will also increase future student placement capacity and subsequently recruitment of high quality ASYEs.

- 5.15 As of the end of July 2020 there had been 26 **leavers from social work qualified posts** over the past 12 months, 14 of which were at H1 level (ASYE). The picture is improving and the more that employee feedback from exit interviews, existing employees and new starters is addressed, it is anticipated this will further improve.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

List of Appendices:

None.

6.0 Legal Considerations:

Blackpool Council takes a transparent and legal recruitment and retention approach.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

All activity is undertaken in accordance with Council policies and procedures and Employment Legislation.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

Blackpool Council's recruitment and retention approach aims to take into the characteristics of the public served in Blackpool. In this Covid-19 period, the Council is responsive to the needs of employees in the context of managing day-to-day life commitments and work life.

9.0 Financial considerations:

Recruitment and retention is at the heart of the Council's medium term financial planning. The Council's workforce is its most valuable resource and without skill and experience there is a risk that inappropriate, costly decisions are made.

10. Risk management considerations:

Covid-19 risk assessments are in place to support the Council's approach and have not prevented it from delivering on its approach. The Council has made best use of virtual recruitment and support measures.

11. Ethical considerations:

Blackpool Council's recruitment and retention planning has a significant focus on social work values and the expectation of adoption of the 'Blackpool families rock approach'.

12. Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

The Council regularly communicates with its workforce to determine 'what works' and address challenges and opportunities.

13. Background papers:

None.

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Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager.
Date of Meeting:	10 September 2020

INCLUSION IN EDUCATION FINAL REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the final report of the scrutiny review of Inclusion in Education.

2.0 Recommendations:

2.1 To approve the final report of the scrutiny review of Inclusion in Education for submission to the Executive.

2.2 To monitor the implementation of the report's recommendations/actions.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

3.1 To review the findings and recommendations of the scrutiny review prior to further approval by the Executive.

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? N/A

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is:

- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

5.0 Background Information

5.1. At the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee on 10 October 2019, Members agreed to undertake a scrutiny review on Inclusion of Blackpool pupils in secondary education.

5.2 Following the scoping of the review and further discussions with relevant officers, it was determined that the review should focus on the implementation of admissions procedures to ensure Blackpool Academies were adequately adhering to the agreed policies.

5.3 The findings and resulting recommendations from the working group’s review are contained within the final report for consideration and approval by the Committee, following which the report will be submitted to the Executive for approval.

Once approved, the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee will monitor the implementation of the recommendations.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

5.4 List of Appendices:

Appendix 8(a): Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review Final Report

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 None.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 None.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 None.

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 None.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.

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**INCLUSION IN EDUCATION
SCRUTINY REVIEW
FINAL REPORT**

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1.0 Foreword

- 1.1 The Committee made the decision to undertake this review following consideration of schools' admissions data and the identification of high numbers of Blackpool pupils out of education for extended periods of time.
- 1.2 Members identified that the reduction of an over-reliance on the Pupil Referral Unit would lessen the high costs associated with placing pupils out of mainstream education and as such wanted to explore ways in which to keep pupils in school wherever possible.
- 1.3 As Vice Chairman of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee I was eager to lead the review in the hope of identifying system improvements which could be implemented to assist pupils and their families to navigate the schools' admissions process and to help reduce the length of time any of our pupils are out of education.
- 1.4 I would like to thank my fellow Members who participated in the review and asked thoughtful and challenging questions, all the Principals and Headteachers from our Academies as well as Officers at the Council who provided information and attended meetings to answer our questions.



Councillor Andrew Stansfield
Vice Chairman, Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 At the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee on 10 October 2020, Members agreed to undertake a scrutiny review on Inclusion of Blackpool pupils in secondary education.
- 2.2 Following the scoping of the review and further discussions with relevant officers, it was determined that the review should focus on the implementation of admissions procedures to ensure Blackpool Academies were adequately adhering to the agreed policies.
- 2.3 The working group also wished to ascertain whether parents of children applying for in-year school places were adequately and appropriately communicated with to ensure the best possible outcome for their child(ren).
- 2.4 Finally, Members also hoped to identify any blockages in the admission process which could cause delays to the placement of pupils within mainstream schools.
- 2.5 All Blackpool mainstream secondary schools are now Academies, with eight in total:
- Armfield Academy
 - Blackpool Aspire Academy
 - Highfield Leadership Academy
 - Montgomery Academy
 - South Shore Academy
 - St George’s School, A Church of England Academy
 - St Mary’s Catholic Academy
 - Unity Academy Blackpool
- 2.6 This review relates to the following Council priority:

Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience

3.0 Methodology

3.1 The working group held a total of three meetings, but gathered the majority of its evidence during an information session attended by a range of contributors, as detailed below:

Date	Attendees	Purpose
1 October 2019	<p>Councillors David Collett, Jo Farrell, Martin Mitchell, Andrew Stansfield and John Wing</p> <p>Paul Turner, Head of School Standards Safeguarding and Inclusion, Blackpool Council</p> <p>Phil Thompson, Head of SEND, Blackpool Council</p> <p>Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser</p>	To consider the issues around inclusion in education and agree a scope for the review.
15 January 2020	<p>Councillors Andrew Stansfield (in the Chair), Jo Farrell, Martin Mitchell and John Wing</p> <p>Paul Turner, Head of School Standards Safeguarding and Inclusion, Blackpool Council</p> <p>Phil Thompson, Head of SEND, Blackpool Council</p> <p>Paul Bainbridge, Schools Organisation and Admissions Manager, Blackpool Council</p> <p>Graham Warnock, Headteacher, St George’s School</p> <p>Chris Wardle, Deputy Headteacher (Inclusion and Academic Support) St George’s School</p> <p>Stephen Cooke, Headteacher, Unity Academy</p> <p>Neil Reynolds, Principal, South Shore Academy</p> <p>Simon Eccles, Headteacher, St Mary’s Catholic Academy</p> <p>Andrew Galbraith, Principal, Highfield Academy</p> <p>John Woods, Principal, Aspire Academy</p> <p>Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser</p>	<p>To receive information relating to the processing of In-Year Admissions.</p> <p>To identify recommendations and next steps.</p>
13 February 2020	<p>Councillors Andrew Stansfield (in the Chair), Jo Farrell and John Wing</p> <p>Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser</p>	To review findings and agree draft recommendations.

4.0 Detailed Findings and Recommendations

4.1 Context of the Review

- 4.1.1 At its Workplanning Workshop in June 2019, the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee identified Inclusion in Secondary Education as an area of concern and proposed that a review be undertaken to ascertain where any improvements could be implemented.
- 4.1.2 The Scrutiny review was established to provide an opportunity for Members of the Committee to learn more about the admissions process across Blackpool’s secondary Academies and to identify recommendations for improvement.
- 4.1.3 During the course of the review, Members recognised the hard work and dedication demonstrated by all of our Academies and noted the commitment to pupil welfare from all the Principals and Headteachers.
- 4.1.4 The approval and publication of the final report was substantially delayed due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on Committee meetings.

4.2 In-Year Admissions

- 4.2.1 The high volume of pupils wishing to change schools within the academic year results in large numbers of requests for in-Year Admissions (IYA). Such volume has been identified by academies as being a major source of delays within the system.
- 4.2.2 Blackpool’s current IYA process was initially introduced in 2009/2010 at a time when there were no secondary academies and the number of requests received for IYA was considerably lower.
- 4.2.3 A reduction in the number of requests for IYA was identified by the working group as potentially beneficial in streamlining the process and decreasing the number of pupils changing schools during any given academic year. Feedback from the Admissions team indicated that parents have largely finalised their decision to request a move by the time they make contact with Admissions. This highlighted the importance of early intervention and positive dialogue with parents within school to try and dissuade from an in-year move.

Recommendation One

(a) Blackpool’s In-Year Admissions process should be reviewed by the School Admissions team as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation One

(b) Academies should maintain clear and positive lines of communication with parents and make efforts to discourage requests for in-year transfers wherever possible. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion should closely monitor all in-year transfers and report any concerns to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.

4.2.4 The working group agreed that consideration should be given to who was administering the admissions code within Academies to ensure that all staff were clear on how it should be applied. They queried whether, for example, office staff who may receive calls regarding admissions had received appropriate training in order to ensure that they were able to give correct advice in a range of situations, particularly for more complicated requests.

Recommendation One

(c) Appropriate training and guidance should be provided to all Academy staff who receive enquiries about admissions to ensure correct and appropriate advice is offered to parents. Academies should maintain records of all training undertaken, with the Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion undertaking annual checks of training records.

4.2.5 Unnecessary delays by Academies in contacting parents to arrange admission meetings and pupil start dates were identified by the working group. Although Members acknowledged that some delays may be unavoidable if an Academy was processing a large number of placements, they agreed that Academies should be adhering to target dates and deadlines to avoid an unnecessarily long break in a pupil's education.

Recommendation One

(d) Admission meetings with parents and start dates for new pupils should be provided by Academies within timeframes agreed with the Council to avoid lengthy delays and prolonged gaps in a pupil's education provision. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion should closely monitor admission meeting timeframes and pupil start dates and report any concerns to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.

4.2.6 The working group was informed that a slimmed down version of the admission procedures were in use which was perhaps more open to individual interpretation. It was felt that a return to more prescriptive admission procedures would be beneficial. In addition, the number of different trusts operating across Blackpool was identified as a

consideration when establishing admissions policies, as each trust implements its own procedures. Members identified that a unification of such policies would help to simplify and streamline the process.

Recommendation One

(e) More prescriptive admissions procedures should be reintroduced by the Council's Admissions Team, with a unified procedure agreed with the Academies and introduced across the trusts. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion should lead on the coordination and implementation of the admission procedures.

4.3 Elected Home Education

- 4.3.1 The working group received information outlining the current system with regards to Elected Home Education (EHE) whereby parents may opt to withdraw their child from mainstream education in order to educate them at home.
- 4.3.2 The legal responsibility for a child's education rests with his/her parents. In England, education is compulsory, but attendance at school to receive an education is not.
- 4.3.3 If their child is on a school roll, then parents must notify the school in writing if they are taking them out of school. Parents do not need to be qualified teachers to home educate and there is no requirement to teach the National Curriculum, match age-specific standards or observe schools hours, days or terms. They must however ensure that their child receives suitable full-time education, although they do not need to have a fixed timetable or have formal lessons.
- 4.3.4 The working group received anecdotal evidence that there had been occasions whereby parents had been given an ultimatum in the form of an implied choice between their child being permanently excluded or them withdrawing them to be educated at home in order to encourage them to remove their child from the school roll.
- 4.3.5 The Education Act 1996 places statutory responsibility on the Local Education Authority to ensure that children are receiving a suitable education. This means that there is a legal responsibility on the Council's Children's Services to ensure that parents provide an efficient, full-time and suitable education for their child appropriate to his/her age, aptitude and ability and with regard to any special educational need he/she may have.
- 4.3.6 Academies identified the receipt of parental requests for EHE in response to the initiation of court proceedings for pupil non-attendance. Academies would still pursue the court proceedings even after the EHE request, but parents seemingly did not realise this prior to making the request and, it was suggested, submitted notification of EHE in order to avoid further court proceedings and possible penalties.

Recommendation Two

Wider communication and publication of the continued pursuit of court proceedings should be implemented by Academies to discourage Elective Home Education applications in cases where non-attendance sanctions are being pursued. Academy Principals and Headteachers should report their implemented measures to the Council’s Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion.

4.4 School Admission Appeals Process

- 4.4.1 Parents who are unhappy with the Academy they have been allocated can appeal for a place at any other Blackpool Academy via the School Admission Appeals Process which is administered by the Council’s Admissions team.
- 4.4.2 The working group was made aware of the occurrence of incidences whereby Blackpool Academies had refused admissions and had instead directed families to the appeals process despite having suitable places available.
- 4.4.3 In some cases an individual appeal can take weeks to be heard, which subsequently causes a delay to the continuation of a pupil’s education. Following an appeal, a family may still be offered their second or third choice Academy, which may well be an unsuitable or impractical option for them.
- 4.4.4 There had been cases of pupils being placed within the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) as a result of no other appropriate place being made available, which in some cases was linked to the provision of transport to the PRU, with no such provision made for pupils attending Academies.
- 4.4.5 Academy representatives intimated that admissions were allocated unfairly within certain areas of Blackpool, with the suggestion being made that some Academies received significantly more than others. In response, the explanation was offered that location was a limiting factor to some parents, with many being unwilling to travel across the town to an Academy in another area. Additionally, it was clarified that if there were places at an Academy, the admissions code states that a place must be offered unless a school leader believes that the admission should be referred back as an In Year Fair Access case for hard to place children.
- 4.4.6 Questions were explored over the potential issue that parents found the appeals process unclear and intimidating and as such did not fully understand their rights with regards to appealing against the place they had been offered.

Recommendation Three

The appeals process should be clearly explained to parents via the provision of a simple information leaflet clearly explaining the process, to be produced by the Council's Admissions Team and issued by Academies.

4.4.7 Fair Access Process meetings coordinated by the Council had previously been held with Headteachers in attendance but had since been changed, meaning that Council Officers considered the cases independently. A return to the previous system was agreed as beneficial on the proviso that participation and commitment from all Academies could be relied upon in order to make the process workable.

Recommendation Four

The Council should ensure that Fair Access Process meetings should return to their previous format whereby Headteachers were present and involved in the process. Commitment to attend from Academies would be required in order to allow fair and transparent administration of the allocation of places. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion to report back to the Committee on the implementation of the recommendation within twelve months.

4.4.8 There was an acknowledgement that appeals letters could be more factual and user-friendly for parents. Each Academy was operating its own appeals process and, whilst the working group accepted that this would be a large undertaking, agreement was reached that the entire system required review.

Recommendation Five

(a) To address the issue of each Academy operating its own appeals process, the whole system should be reviewed and brought into alignment across the Academies. This would be coordinated by the Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion in conjunction with the trusts.

(b) Appeal letters to parents should be more user-friendly and all Academies should use the same format. This would be coordinated and approved by the Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion.

4.5 Pupil Referral Unit

4.5.1 Educational Diversity is Blackpool's Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) delivering educational provision for pupils who are unable to attend mainstream school due to their social, emotional, behavioural or medical difficulties. The Unit comprises of three centres: Athena, Willows and Pegasus.

- 4.5.2 During the Scrutiny review, the need to reduce the over-reliance on the PRU facility was stressed. Headteachers had been approached by the Council to identify their Academy's specific needs in order that specialist provisions could be put in place over the next 12-18 months.
- 4.5.3 Athena's lack of specialist mental health staffing was made clear, with the staff made up of teachers and teaching assistants. A need for specialist mental health provision was recognised. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion committed to visiting all Academies in order to identify the needs of each setting, including the length of the required provision and the associated cost. The support would be school-financed and school-led in order to meet each Academy's individual needs and with the aim of reducing reliance on the PRU.

Recommendation Six

That the Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion work with all academies to identify the support required within each school for pupils in need of mental health provision, for example in the form of counselling sessions from appropriately trained specialists. Once the support required had been identified, to work with the academies to put that provision in place and report back to the Committee on progress in approximately twelve months.

- 4.5.4 The PRU recognised that its high numbers of pupils had been prohibitive in the implementation of improvements. The Headteacher was in the process of examining examples of good practice from other providers with the aim of introducing improved ways of working.
- 4.5.5 In addition to supporting the education of Blackpool pupils, the PRU is also used by pupils from outside the Borough. The working group was advised that the Council currently recharges the full cost of this provision to other Local Authorities at a rate of £17,500 per year and raised the question of whether this cost should be reviewed and possibly increased.

4.6 Other Considerations

- 4.6.1 The working group noted that prior to becoming Academies, Blackpool schools' governing bodies included representation from elected Councillors. Since the transition to Academies, no such representation has been in place.
- 4.6.2 Governing bodies are made up of a broad selection of people with a range of different backgrounds, skills and experiences who are all committed volunteers who work together for the benefit of the Academy. As an important link between the Academy and the community it serves, elected Councillors are perfectly placed to provide a valuable contribution to governing bodies and as such the working group would like to request that the reintroduction of Local Authority Councillors be considered by Academies.

Recommendation Seven

To request that Academies consider the reintroduction of Council representation on their Local Governing Bodies in order to allow valuable input from elected Councillors and an additional link with the Local Authority.

4.6.3 In order to work towards and promote a sense of co-ownership between Academies and the Local Authority, the working group suggests that the development of a Schools' Pledge could be a beneficial process. The pledge would be created by the Local Authority in conjunction with the Academy Headteachers and would aim to set out an agreement which works towards a co-ordinated approach to the provision of school places for all Blackpool pupils.

Recommendation Eight

A Blackpool Schools' Pledge should be created by the Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion, in conjunction with Academy Principals and Headteachers, with the joint aim of providing timely and appropriate school places for all Blackpool secondary pupils. All Academy Headteachers should be encouraged to sign up to and adhere to the Pledge. The Pledge should be reviewed annually with the Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion reporting any compliance issues to the Committee.

5.0 Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation One

- (a) Blackpool's In-Year Admissions process should be reviewed by the School Admissions team as a matter of urgency.
- (b) Academies should maintain clear and positive lines of communication with parents and make efforts to discourage requests for in-year transfers wherever possible. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion should closely monitor all in-year transfers and report any concerns to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.
- (c) Appropriate training and guidance should be provided to all Academy staff who receive enquiries about admissions to ensure correct and appropriate advice is offered to parents. Academies should maintain records of all training undertaken, with the Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion undertaking annual checks of training records.
- (d) Admission meetings with parents and start dates for new pupils should be provided by Academies within timeframes agreed with the Council to avoid lengthy delays and prolonged gaps in a pupil's education provision. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion should closely monitor admission meeting timeframes and pupil start dates and report any concerns to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.
- (e) More prescriptive admissions procedures should be reintroduced by the Council's Admissions Team, with a unified procedure agreed with the Academies and introduced across the trusts. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion should lead on the coordination and implementation of the admission procedures.

Recommendation Two

Wider communication and publication of the continued pursuit of court proceedings should be implemented by Academies to discourage Elective Home Education applications in cases where non-attendance sanctions are being pursued. Academy Principals and Headteachers should report their implemented measures to the Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion.

Recommendation Three

The appeals process should be clearly explained to parents via the provision of a simple information leaflet clearly explaining the process, to be produced by the Council's Admissions Team and issued by Academies.

Recommendation Four

The Council should ensure that Fair Access Process meetings should return to their previous format whereby Headteachers were present and involved in the process. Commitment to attend from Academies would be required in order to allow fair and transparent administration of the allocation of places. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion to report back to the Committee on the implementation of the recommendation within twelve months.

Recommendation Five

(a) To address the issue of each Academy operating its own appeals process, the whole system should be reviewed and brought into alignment across the Academies. This would be coordinated by the Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion in conjunction with the trusts.

(b) Appeal letters to parents should be more user-friendly and all Academies should use the same format. This would be coordinated and approved by the Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion.

Recommendation Six

That the Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion work with all academies to identify the support required within each school for pupils in need of mental health provision, for example in the form of counselling sessions from appropriately trained specialists. Once the support required had been identified, to work with the academies to put that provision in place and report back to the Committee on progress in approximately twelve months.

Recommendation Seven

To request that Academies consider the reintroduction of Council representation on their Local Governing Bodies in order to allow valuable input from elected Councillors and an additional link with the Local Authority.

Recommendation Eight

A Blackpool Schools' Pledge should be created by the Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion, in conjunction with Academy Principals and Headteachers, with the joint aim of providing timely and appropriate school places for all Blackpool secondary pupils.

All Academy Headteachers should be encouraged to sign up to and adhere to the Pledge. The Pledge should be reviewed annually with the Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion reporting any compliance issues to the Committee.

6.0 Financial and Legal Considerations

6.1 Financial

6.1.1 The recommendations resulting from this review do not impact on Blackpool Council budgets.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from this review.

Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review Action Plan

	Recommendation	Cabinet Members' Comments	Rec Accepted by Executive?	Target Date for Action	Lead Officer	Committee Update
R1	(a) Blackpool's In-Year Admissions process should be reviewed by the School Admissions team as a matter of urgency.				Paul Turner	
	(b) Academies should maintain clear and positive lines of communication with parents and make efforts to discourage requests for in-year transfers wherever possible. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion should closely monitor all in-year transfers and report any concerns to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.				Paul Turner Academy Heads	
	(c) Appropriate training and guidance should be provided to all Academy staff who receive enquiries about admissions to ensure correct and appropriate advice is offered to parents. Academies should maintain records of all training undertaken, with the Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion undertaking annual checks of training records.				Paul Turner Academy Heads	

Recommendation	Cabinet Members' Comments	Rec Accepted by Executive?	Target Date for Action	Lead Officer	Committee Update
<p>(d) Admission meetings with parents and start dates for new pupils should be provided by Academies within timeframes agreed with the Council to avoid lengthy delays and prolonged gaps in a pupil's education provision. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion should closely monitor admission meeting timeframes and pupil start dates and report any concerns to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.</p>				<p>Paul Turner Academy Heads</p>	
<p>(e) More prescriptive admissions procedures should be reintroduced by the Council's Admissions Team, with a unified procedure agreed with the Academies and introduced across the trusts. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion should lead on the coordination and implementation of the admission procedures.</p>				<p>Paul Turner</p>	

Recommendation		Cabinet Members' Comments	Rec Accepted by Executive?	Target Date for Action	Lead Officer	Committee Update
R2	Wider communication and publication of the continued pursuit of court proceedings should be implemented by Academies to discourage Elective Home Education applications in cases where non-attendance sanctions are being pursued. Academy Principals and Headteachers should report their implemented measures to the Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion.				Paul Turner Academy Heads	
R3	The appeals process should be clearly explained to parents via the provision of a simple information leaflet clearly explaining the process, to be produced by the Council's Admissions Team and issued by Academies.				Paul Turner	

Recommendation		Cabinet Members' Comments	Rec Accepted by Executive?	Target Date for Action	Council Lead Officer	Committee Update
R4	The Council should ensure that Fair Access Process meetings should return to their previous format whereby Headteachers were present and involved in the process. Commitment to attend from Academies would be required in order to allow fair and transparent administration of the allocation of places. The Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion to report back to the Committee on the implementation of the recommendation within twelve months.				Paul Turner Academy Heads	
R5	(a) To address the issue of each Academy operating its own appeals process, the whole system should be reviewed and brought into alignment across the Academies. This would be coordinated by the Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion in conjunction with the trusts.				Paul Turner	

	(b) Appeal letters to parents should be more user-friendly and all Academies should use the same format. This would be coordinated and approved by the Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion.				Paul Turner	
R6	That the Council’s Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion work with all academies to identify the support required within each school for pupils in need of mental health provision, for example in the form of counselling sessions from appropriately trained specialists. Once the support required had been identified, to work with the academies to put that provision in place and report back to the Committee on progress in approximately twelve months.				Paul Turner	
R7	To request that Academies consider the reintroduction of Council representation on their Local Governing Bodies in order to allow valuable input from elected Councillors and an additional link with the Local Authority.				Academy Heads	

Recommendation		Cabinet Members' Comments	Rec Accepted by Executive?	Target Date for Action	Council Lead Officer	Committee Update
R8	A Blackpool Schools' Pledge should be created by the Council's Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion, in conjunction with Academy Principals and Headteachers, with the joint aim of providing timely and appropriate school places for all Blackpool secondary pupils. All Academy Headteachers should be encouraged to sign up to and adhere to the Pledge. The Pledge should be reviewed annually with the Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion reporting any compliance issues to the Committee.				Paul Turner Academy Heads	

Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager.
Date of Meeting:	10 September 2020

COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2020-2021

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the contents of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for 2020-2021.

2.0 Recommendations:

2.1 To approve the Committee Workplan, taking into account any suggestions for amendment or addition.

2.2 To monitor the implementation of the Committee's recommendations/actions.

2.3 To agree the scope for the Schools' Responses to Covid-19 scrutiny review.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

3.1 To ensure the Workplan is up to date and is an accurate representation of the Committee's work.

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? N/A

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is:

- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

5.0 Background Information

5.1. Scrutiny Workplan

A Scrutiny Workplanning Workshop was held on Thursday 2 July 2020 to consider items for inclusion on the Committee's workplan for the 2020-2021 municipal year, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 9(a). The workplan is a flexible document that sets out the work that will be undertaken by the Committee over the course of the year, both through scrutiny review and Committee meetings.

Committee Members are invited to suggest topics at any time that might be suitable for scrutiny review through completion of the Scrutiny Review Checklist. The checklist forms part of the mandatory scrutiny procedure for establishing review panels and must therefore be completed and submitted for consideration by the Committee, prior to a topic being approved for scrutiny.

5.2 Implementation of Recommendations/Actions

The table attached at Appendix 9(b) has been developed to assist the Committee in effectively ensuring that the recommendations made by the Committee are acted upon. The table will be regularly updated and submitted to each Committee meeting.

Members are requested to consider the updates provided in the table and ask follow up questions as appropriate to ensure that all recommendations are implemented.

5.3 SEND and Alternative Provision Consultation

Following an invitation to all Committee Members, representatives of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee attended a briefing session with Paul Turner, Head of Schools Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion on the proposed changes to the Council's SEND and Alternative Provision services.

Attached at Appendix 9(c) is a summary of the consultation meeting and resulting actions.

5.4 Schools' Responses to Covid-19 Scrutiny Review

5.4.1 At its Workplanning Workshop on 2 July 2020 the Committee agreed to add the topic of Schools' Responses to Covid-19 to its workplan. As a result Committee Members were invited to join a working group to undertake a scrutiny review of the issue.

5.4.2 A working group was established, consisting of the following Members:

- Cllr Hugo
- Cllr Critchley
- Cllr Stansfield
- Cllr Wing
- Mrs Sage

The working group agreed the detailed draft scope for the scrutiny review with the initial fact-finding meeting taking place on 27 July 2020. Attached at Appendix 9(d) is the scoping document for consideration by the Committee.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

5.5 **List of Appendices:**

Appendix 9(a): Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee Workplan
Appendix 9(b): Implementation of Recommendations/Actions
Appendix 9(c): SEND and Alternative Provision consultation summary
Appendix 9(d): Schools’ Responses to Covid-19 Review Scoping Document

6.0 **Legal considerations:**

6.1 None.

7.0 **Human Resources considerations:**

7.1 None.

8.0 **Equalities considerations:**

8.1 None.

9.0 **Financial considerations:**

9.1 None.

10.0 **Risk management considerations:**

10.1 None.

11.0 **Ethical considerations:**

11.1 None.

12.0 **Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:**

12.1 None.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.

APPENDIX 9(a)

Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee - Work Plan 2020-2021	
Extra Meeting TBC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Headstart Update – To receive an update on the work of Headstart. 2. Blackpool Families Rock - To receive a presentation on the new Blackpool Families Rock working model. 3. Corporate Parent Panel – To receive information from JustUz.
10 September 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth Offending Team Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the YOT Improvement Plan themes of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of Court • In Court 2. Children’s Social Care Improvement – To receive an update in relation to the recruitment and retention of Children’s Social Care employees. 3. Schools’ Response to Covid-19 – To receive an update on the scrutiny review and to consider the impact on primary school results data. 4. Inclusion In Education Scrutiny – To receive the working group’s final report for approval by the Committee.
19 November 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth Offending Team Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the YOT Improvement Plan theme of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Community 2. Children’s Social Care Improvement – To receive an update in relation to the selected Improvement Plan Theme. 3. Children Safeguarding Assurance Partnership – To receive an update on the Pan-Lancashire partnership arrangements (formerly the BSCB). 4. Education – To receive an overview of results data and consider the impact of Covid-19 on attainment levels.
28 January 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth Offending Team Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the YOT Improvement Plan theme of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitions 2. Children’s Social Care Improvement – To review the Children’s Services Medium Term Financial Plan. 3. SEND – To receive an update in relation to the SEND theme of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve Post 16 education, employment and training. 4. Education – To receive an overview of results data.
22 April 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth Offending Team Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the YOT Improvement Plan theme of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children In Secure Accommodation 2. Children’s Social Care Improvement – To receive an update in relation to the selected Improvement Plan Theme. 3. Education/SEND – To receive an update in relation to the SEND theme of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a continuance of local provision and services to meet the needs of children with SEND.

Scrutiny Review Work	
Ongoing	Scrutiny review of Inclusion in Education . Final report to be approved by the Committee before undertaking monitoring and overview of recommendations.

July 2020	Input into the consultation process for the proposed Alternative Provision/SEND Plan.
July 2020	<p>Schools' Response to Covid-19 Pandemic</p> <p>Task and Finish scrutiny to review schools' responses to the pandemic and their return to school procedures. Will focus on: the numbers of children who have/have not returned and the reasons for non-return; the potential impact on children's future achievement and how schools are mitigating this impact.</p>
TBC	Close scrutiny of Children's Social Care Medium-Term Financial Plan to include information on the proposed increase in investment in Fostering . Item was referred from the Audit Committee on 25 June 2020.
TBC	<p>Better Start</p> <p>Single Task and Finish meeting to review the work to date of Better Start as it reaches its half-way point.</p>
TBC	<p>The Experience of Looked After Children in Blackpool</p> <p>To gain an understanding of the journey of a cohort of Our Children including scrutiny of their experiences with various partners such as the Police, Health Services and schools. To potentially also include their experiences of Alternative Provision. Links to the following themes taken from the CSC Improvement Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Improve the systems and quality of Agency Decision Maker's processes for approval and matching of foster carers and adopters.</i> 2. <i>Ensure that our social workers are prepared for court proceedings.</i>
TBC	<p>Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools</p> <p>To review the provisions within schools to support the mental health and wellbeing of pupils. Potential link to SEND target of: '<i>Children and young people with SEND to enjoy good physical and mental health and wellbeing emotional health.</i>'</p>

APPENDIX 9(b)

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

	DATE OF REC	RECOMMENDATION	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	UPDATE	RAG RATING
1	12.04.18	To receive the Placement Sufficiency Strategy.	November 2018	Director of Children's Services	Distributed to Committee Members 26/08/20	
2	13.09.18	That Mrs Booth be requested to report on partners who did not engage.	Ongoing	Director of Children's Services	Review of partnership arrangements identified for inclusion on Committee workplan.	
3	13.09.18	To receive an update performance report on HeadStart in 12 months.	April 2020	Programme Leader, HeadStart	Added to Committee workplan.	
4	20.06.19	To receive key performance data in relation to A Better Start.	February 2020	Merle Davies, Director, Blackpool Centre for Early Child Development	Ms Davies confirmed that the first full set of key performance indicators would be available for consideration by the A Better Start Executive Board in October 2019. Ms Davies has agreed to provide the report for circulation to Members after the information has been through the appropriate governance channels.	
5	10.10.19	To receive the action plan resulting from the review of the residential children's home provision.	January 2020	Jeanette Richards, Head of Partnerships and Improvement	Distributed to Committee Members 26/08/20	
6	09.01.20	To receive the findings of the National Association of Children's Services examining the costs of residential placements for children and the impact on Local Authorities.	April 2020	Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services	Delayed due to Covid-19 pandemic.	
7	09.01.20	To receive results of YOT re-inspection once completed.	TBC	Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services		

	DATE OF REC	RECOMMENDATION	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	UPDATE	RAG RATING
8	09.01.20	To receive the findings of the Department for Education impact study on out of area placements.	TBC	Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services	Awaiting information from DoE.	
9	09.01.20	To receive a presentation on the Blackpool Families Rock model of working.	TBC	Kara Haskayne, Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker	To be presented at the Special meeting of the Committee, date as yet to be confirmed.	
10	13.02.20	To receive Medium Term Financial Planning information in relation to Children's Social Care.	18 June 2020	Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services	To be considered at the January 2021 Committee meeting.	
11	13.02.20	That selected KPI information be contained within the Children's Social Care update reports going forward.	18 June 2020 onwards	Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services	Actioned and ongoing.	
12	13.02.20	To receive longer term planning information via the Children and Family Strategic Partnership action plan.	TBC	Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services	To be circulated once available.	
13	13.02.20	To receive the Practice Improvement Plan at the next meeting of the Committee.	18 June 2020	Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services	Actioned September 2020.	

Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee Informal Meeting 14 July 2020

SEND and Alternative Provision – Proposals for Change

Attendance

Cllr Don Clapham
Cllr Jane Hugo
Cllr Martin Mitchell
Cllr Andrew Stansfield
Cllr John Wing

Representatives of the Children and Young People’s (CYP) Scrutiny Committee attended a briefing session with Paul Turner, Head of Schools Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion on the proposed changes to the Council’s SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) services. Mr Turner provided further insight into the previously-circulated document and explained the rationale and purpose behind the consultation process undertaken with schools. He explained that pupils with additional needs had previously not always had their needs adequately met via Blackpool’s education provision and a requirement had been identified for greater diversity and range of provision within mainstream education settings.

Members were informed that the SEND/AP proposals would be incorporated into the 2020-2030 Blackpool Plan, along with a new Literacy Strategy for Blackpool and a town-wide School Improvement Plan. Cllr Hugo requested that going forward the CYP Scrutiny Committee be involved early in the process for any consultations on policies relevant to the remit of the Committee.

Feedback from school leaders, Mr Turner reported, was very positive and they were in support of the Council’s direction of travel as set out within the document. Members queried the heavy use of abbreviations and acronyms within the document, which Mr Turner noted as appropriate for school audiences but acknowledged that a glossary of abbreviations used would have been beneficial for those not from an education background.

The anticipated impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was raised by Committee Members as an area of concern, particularly on the mental health of Blackpool’s young people, with Mr Turner acknowledging that the report did not currently address the anticipated impact that may arise following the medical emergency but that there was an awareness of the risk.

Questions were raised around the proposed reduction of available places within the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), as outlined within Proposal 4 and Members queried where pupils would be accommodated instead. Mr Turner clarified that the PRU would still be able to accommodate 250 pupils but that the majority of these would also remain on-roll at their main school instead of becoming permanently on-roll at the PRU. There were also plans for the future provision of additional needs places at a range of venues, with the aim of distributing high needs pupils more widely across several settings.

In relation to the specialist vocational centres as detailed in Proposal 6, the choice of offering a catering provision was discussed, with the suggestion being made that Covid-19 may impact the availability of catering job opportunities in the immediate future. Suggestions were made for alternative vocational routes, such as agricultural or skilled trades. Mr Turner agreed with the suggestions and stated that additional courses would be planned following the initial introduction of the catering options.

Utilisation of the Oracle building for the delivery of local specialist provision was welcomed by the Committee Members, but questions were raised around the delivery of support for youth services which were originally housed within the building. Mr Turner advised that John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services had been overseeing work looking at ways to increase youth service provisions across the town. Members requested that further information on this project be sought from Mr Blackledge for future consideration by the CYP Scrutiny Committee.

Members were strongly in favour of the proposals to reduce the commissioning of High Needs places from external agencies and the aims to bring provisions 'in-house'. Discussion occurred around the role of the Lotus School and the potential to extend provisions yet further if approved by the Department for Education.

The Members in attendance agreed that the proposals were positive and despite being ambitious would benefit the town once realised.

It was agreed:

1. That consideration be given to incorporating the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic into the new 'SEND and Alternative Provision – Proposals for Change' document;
2. To seek further information from John Blackledge on the work underway looking at ways to increase youth service provisions across the town;
3. That officers give regard to including CYP Members in future consultation processes on policies/projects relevant to the remit of the Committee.

Scrutiny Review Scope	
Proposed Title	Scoping Date
Schools' Response to Covid-19 Pandemic	8 July 2020
Criteria and reasons for selecting topic	
As government regulations recommend schools to re-open following widespread closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee Members felt it was important to review the response to the emergency as implemented by Blackpool schools.	
Which priority within the Council Plan does this topic address?	
Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.	
What are the main objectives of the scrutiny?	
To review schools' responses to the pandemic and their return-to-school procedures. Will primarily focus on: the numbers of children who have/have not returned and the reasons for non-return and the potential impact on children's future achievement and how schools are mitigating this impact, as well as seeking assurance that schools sufficiently safeguarded pupils and staff.	
What possible outcomes are envisaged in terms of service improvements / benefits to the community?	
Assurance that sufficient measures are in place to ensure the safe provision of suitable education opportunities during the pandemic to all pupils and to identify any areas where improvements can be made and lessons learnt going forward.	
How will the public be involved? (consider invitations / press releases for meetings, consultation with community groups / clubs, etc)	
The Panel might wish to gather the views of parents/students through informal discussions in their wards and gather anecdotal evidence on the schools' response from their constituents. Feedback from young people will also be sought via the Justuz group.	
How will the scrutiny achieve value for money for the Council / Council Tax payers?	
Ensuring efficient use of school resources and associated government Covid-19 funding during the pandemic response.	
What primary / new evidence is needed for the scrutiny?	
Schools' data on numbers of children who have/have not returned to school and the reasons for non-return; numbers of pupils successfully accessing home schooling provisions during school closures and the support provided by schools to parents/pupils; specific health and safety measures implemented within schools during the pandemic.	
What secondary / existing information will be needed? (include background information / existing reports (consider Internal Audit) / legislation / central government information and reports, etc.	
'Guidance for Schools: Coronavirus (Covid-19)' government publication to schools.	
Which Council officers / departments will provide information, advice and assistance for the scrutiny?	
Paul Turner, Head of Service for School Standards Safeguarding and Inclusion Phil Thompson, Head of Service for SEND Kirsty Fisher, Engagement Officer for Our Children Kevin Dacre, Health and Safety Advisor Beth Speak, Service Development Manager, Practice and Performance Hannah Cartlidge, Business Intelligence Officer	
What expert witnesses will the panel request input from outside of the Council?	
The Panel might wish to consider speaking to headteachers and governors at schools to gather an alternative	

perspective. Views could potentially be sought via email should time/availability not allow them to attend the meeting in person.
What type of meetings (e.g. fact finding, evidence gathering, consultations, questioning, site visits), and how many in number are envisaged for the scrutiny?
A preliminary task and finish meeting is proposed to undertake fact finding, evidence gathering and analysis of the data presented. A follow-up meeting will then be held in September 2020 once schools have returned for the new term.
Timescales / likely duration of enquiry
Commenced July/August 2020.
Lead Scrutiny Officer
Elaine Ireland
Scrutiny Panel Members
Cllr Jane Hugo Cllr Andrew Stansfield Cllr Kim Critchley Cllr John Wing Mrs Helen Sage