

Blackpool Council

14 April 2021

To: Councillors Clapham, D Coleman, Critchley, Hugo, Mitchell, Owen, Stansfield and Wing
Dr Allen and Ms Sage, Co-Opted members

The above members are requested to attend the:

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 22 April 2021 at 6.00pm
Via Zoom

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 28 JANUARY 2021 (Pages 1 - 10)

To agree the minutes of the last meeting of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee held on 28 January 2021 as a true and correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

4 YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN - CHILDREN IN SECURE ACCOMMODATION (Pages 11 - 16)

To update the Committee on the progress of the Blackpool Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan theme area of Children In Secure Accommodation.

5 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - CARE LEAVERS (Pages 17 - 26)

To update the Committee on the progress of the improvement journey in respect of services for Blackpool's 'care experienced' young adults.

6 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - CHILD EXPLOITATION AND HOMELESSNESS (Pages 27 - 34)

To update the Committee on the progress of the improvement journey in respect of services for vulnerable children and young people, with particular focus on children at risk of or experiencing exploitation or going missing, or young people who are at risk of homelessness.

7 CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING ASSURANCE PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT (Pages 35 - 68)

To consider the Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership Annual Report.

8 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY LOCAL PROVISION (Pages 69 - 72)

To provide an update in relation to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) theme of: 'To develop a continuance of local provision and services to meet the needs of children with SEND.'

9 BLACKPOOL LITERACY STRATEGY (Pages 73 - 114)

To consider the Blackpool Literacy Strategy prior to approval by the Executive, subject to any final amendments and additions.

10 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2021/2022 (Pages 115 - 140)

To consider the contents of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee's Workplan for 2021/2022.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the provisional date and time of the next meeting as 24 June 2021 at 6pm.

Other information:

For queries regarding this agenda please contact Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser, Tel: 01253 477255, e-mail: Elaine.ireland@blackpool.gov.uk

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MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 28 JANUARY 2021

Present:

Councillor Hugo (in the Chair)

Councillors

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Clapham | Critchley | Stansfield |
| D Coleman | Mitchell | Wing |

Dr Elaine Allen, Roman Catholic Co-opted Member

Ms Helen Sage, Diocesan Co-opted Member

In Attendance:

Councillor Maxine Callow, Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board

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

Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council (Children)

Mr Robert Arrowsmith, Performance, Systems and Intelligence Manager

Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services

Ms Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Service

Ms Jeanette Richards, Assistant Director of Children's Services

Mr Philip Thompson, Head of SEND and Early years

Mr Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion

Mrs Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2020

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the last meeting held on 19 November 2020 be signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

4 YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN - TRANSITIONS

Ms Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Service updated the Committee on the progress of the Blackpool Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan theme of 'Transitions'. She explained that early in 2020 the Youth Justice Board (YJB) had requested that all Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) complete a self-assessment based on the updated Standards for Children in Youth Justice Services (2019). Five self-assessments had been completed, one

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of which had focused on Transitions. The Committee was informed that the Transitions theme was a child first approach which focused holistically on the variety of transitions a child might make. The Youth Justice Board had acknowledged that Transitions was a new area for YOTs to develop and as such would require a substantial commitment from partner agencies to achieve progress and practice development. The YJB planned to undertake moderation and validation visits to authorities where needed and in January 2021 Blackpool Youth Justice Service had been notified that the YJB assessment team felt that Blackpool had given an honest National Standards assessment of Blackpool's improvement journey. The YJB acknowledged that Blackpool was now at the stage of implementing and adopting tools, systems and processes and therefore no further action from the YJB was needed.

Ms McCartan reported that at the end of December 2020 the Council had been informed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) that Blackpool had been chosen to be part of a Northwest area pilot thematic inspection of youth to adult transitions across criminal justice agencies. The inspection would set out to see what influenced the decision to transition a young person and what a good transition looked like for them at each stage. In response to a question from the Committee as to the anticipated date for the inspection, Ms McCartan informed Members that the inspection would begin on the week commencing 17 May 2021 and that the requested data had already been submitted to the Inspectorate.

With regards to the Youth Court, the Committee sought clarification over when the new Court building would be opened and whether specific facilities for the Youth Court would be provided. Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services confirmed that the need to provide suitable facilities to accommodate young people had been made clear and she anticipated that the new arrangements would be an improvement on the previous facilities.

In relation to the areas identified by the self-assessment as requiring improvement, the Committee asked whether these would be fed into the YOT Improvement Plan. Ms McCartan assured Members that the Improvement Plan was a robust framework for improvement which focused on five themes in line with the Youth Justice Board's National Standards for Youth Justice, with each of the themes identifying a designated lead person from the YOT partnership:

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

The Committee was informed that the Improvement Plan had been drawn up by the partnership and was monitored through the governance of the YOT Executive Board.

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Whilst Ms McCartan acknowledged the progress and strengths identified via the self-assessment audit, she noted that the area of Transitions required further work and a wider, more holistic approach which was underway.

The Committee requested further information in relation to the assertion that Our Children who were looked after were disproportionality supported by the YOT service. Ms McCartan identified the issue as a national trend and anticipated improvements would be made via the outcomes of the working party established specifically to consider the issue. The Committee requested that the data be reported back to a future meeting as appropriate.

The Committee agreed: That the data relating to the proportion of Our Children who were looked after be reported to a future meeting of the Committee following the outcomes of the working party examining the issue.

5 CHILDREN'S SERVICES MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Ms Jeanette Richards, Assistant Director of Children's Services introduced the Children's Services Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). She outlined that the MTFP called for significant additional investment into Children's Services over a two year period and that the focus would be around the five work programmes underpinning the plan as follows:

- Fostering Service Transformation;
- Edge of Care Services;
- Therapeutic Children's Home and Step Down;
- Placement Stability; and
- Discharges from Care.

In relation to the therapeutic children's home, the Committee sought clarification around the cited delays as well as questioning where the children would be recruited from and where they would be placed following completion of the 16-week placement. Ms Richards advised that the children identified for the therapeutic children's home project would be carefully selected for their suitability and during the 16-week period they would be supported to step down into foster care. The aspiration being for a reduction in placements within residential children's homes and a supported move into foster care.

The future plans for the former children's home located on Bispham Road were questioned. Mrs Booth, Director of Children's Services informed the Committee that the Council was in talks with Blackpool Coastal Housing to examine the feasibility of converting the building to supported accommodation for care leavers.

The Committee requested additional information around the reported numbers of children discharged from care, specifically seeking clarification around where they had been discharged to. Ms Richards reported that the majority of the children had stepped out of public care via a special guardianship arrangement order which added permanency to their care as provided by either foster carers or family members. She added that a

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small number of these children remained as Looked After but under the care of their parents whilst under supervision and review and with the provision of support as necessary.

With regards to the Council's preference of keeping children with their families or within the local authority area wherever possible, the Committee questioned whether appropriate training had been provided to the Planning Committee in order to ensure cohesion of policies across the Council. Mrs Booth advised that she was aware that this had been identified for inclusion on the programme of training for the Planning Committee and would seek clarification of when the session had been scheduled to take place. Mr Robert Arrowsmith, Performance, Systems and Intelligence Manager clarified that the intention was not for the addition of more residential children's homes within Blackpool but for more children to be looked after within family homes, for example via foster carers.

In response to a question seeking clarification around the cited tighter management of the fostering service, Ms Richards explained that part of the fostering transformation programme had included the creation of three bespoke teams in the following areas:

- Recruitment and training of foster carers;
- Supporting carers and children through to permanence of placements;
- Supporting foster carers.

Ms Richards advised that the purpose of the bespoke teams was to create a more structured approach to the recruitment, assessment and training of foster carers and a subsequent alignment of skills with the fostering payment system. The Committee questioned whether the transformation programme had been created in response to previously identified areas of concern within the fostering service, with Ms Richards identifying that staffing resources within Children's Services had previously been diverted elsewhere which had resulted in a reduction in the training being offered to foster carers. Mr Arrowsmith suggested that the high number of children placed within residential children's homes reflected the abilities of Blackpool's foster carers to meet the needs of the children in their care and he anticipated that an increase in the skills of carers should result in a reduction in the need for residential children's home placements. In addition, the introduction of the therapeutic model of foster care added a further level of training for Blackpool's foster carers and aimed to better match the needs of the child to the most suitable foster carers whilst simultaneously providing better support and appropriate training.

The Committee requested details of the success of the current recruitment drive aimed at attracting suitable foster carers, in response Ms Richards reported that following the official launch of the recruitment campaign on 13 January 2021 there were 11 ongoing assessments for potential foster carers within the mainstream fostering service. This was an encouraging improvement on the five newly recruited foster carers for the whole of 2020. In addition, four prospective carers were being assessed for addition to the therapeutic fostering team who would potentially be providing foster homes for children on completion of their journey through the 16-week therapeutic programme, with Ms

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Richards advising that 12 carers would be required in total. The Committee was informed that a combination of approaches was being utilised to include a balance of digital campaign methods and more traditional recruitment techniques. Mr Arrowsmith reported that due to the importance of the need to recruit, a team specifically dedicated to the recruitment of foster carers had now been established. In response to a question regarding remuneration of Blackpool foster carers in comparison to other local authorities, Ms Richards advised that rates of pay were now set at competitive levels but that also of importance was the provision of adequate support for carers and the presentation of foster caring as a career. The Committee requested further information on how prospective candidates could begin the application process, which Ms Richards agreed to provide to Committee Members following the meeting.

Members discussed the circumstances which might cause a breakdown of foster placements, with Ms Richards acknowledging that there was a complex combination of reasons which differed for each individual child and which often became more complex as the age of the child increased. In relation to the disproportionate number of teenage children in care in Blackpool, the Committee suggested that this mirrored the decline in academic achievement across the education phases whereby attainment levels of primary phase children declined as they progressed through the secondary phase. The Committee noted the correlation and asked for information on any plans in place to address this. Ms Richards reported plans to coordinate adolescent services with other support services offered across the Council to young people. She advised that an early help offer for teenagers was in the process of being formulated and a new structure for implementation being devised. She agreed that schools played an integral role and acknowledged the importance of working closely with them to ensure a coordinated approach to early help.

The Committee requested details of what young people asked for from the Council, with Ms Richards reporting that they often requested the development of different leisure activities and opportunities to keep them occupied. She added that Looked After Children had previously reported that they felt they could have been better supported to remain in their family homes. The Just Uz group would ordinarily be included in gathering the views of young people but Ms Richards advised that their meetings had been impacted by the pandemic and as such were not currently taking place. The Committee sought further clarification around how, in normal non-Covid times, young people were consulted and engaged with and asked for details on the methods utilised to capture their voices and valuable input. Ms Richards noted that the wishes and feelings of young people were at the centre of plans for restructuring and remodelling of services and that their input was factored into the consultation process for all major changes within Children's Services, along with the views of previous users of a service via engagement with young people and their families who had been key recipients of a service in the past.

With regards to any anticipated budgetary reductions arising from the MTFP, the Committee asked when any positive impact on the budget might become evident. Mr Arrowsmith advised that due to the longer-term nature of a number of the interventions as well as the increased initial spend required to implement them, the financial modelling

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indicated that it would be two to three years before any reduction in spending would be realised.

6 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) STRATEGY

Mr Philip Thompson, Head of SEND and Early Years provided an update on the implementation of the current Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy. Within his accompanying report, Mr Thompson had highlighted that one of the priorities of the SEND Strategy was to develop a continuance of local provision and services to meet the needs of children with SEND and he outlined that the consultation with mainstream schools to open SEN provision units within their schools had resulted in five successful applications from primary schools. The Committee requested an update in relation to the provision of SEN units within Blackpool's secondary schools, with Mr Thompson reporting that talks were currently ongoing with one of the town's special schools. The proposals centred around the potential of two classrooms being made available within one mainstream secondary school to be accessed and utilised by pupils attending a special school. The plans included proposals for the pupils to gradually transfer to the mainstream school fully over a period of two years.

With regards to the five successful applications for the SEN units, the Committee sought additional information on the consultation and recruitment process. Mr Thompson explained that all schools had been included in the consultation and had been asked to submit expressions of interest to be included in the project. As all applications had successfully met the suitability criteria, the decision had been taken to approve all five schools.

In response to a question around the status of the Oracle building, Mr Thompson reported that the current timescale aimed for completion by September 2021 with the building to be used as a sixth form SEN provision from that date. He advised that the building had undergone appropriate building surveys to assess its suitability and to provide estimated costings for any necessary modifications. The Committee was informed that a total budget allocation of £100,000 had been reserved for the work from the SEND capital works budget but that if costs exceeded this amount then funds would need to be allocated from alternative sources.

Mr Thompson reported that the Lotus free school for children aged 10 to 16 years was now open and had 21 pupils across years six, seven and eight. The Committee questioned whether this was as planned for this stage in the school's development, with Mr Thompson confirming that a total of 24 places had been commissioned for the first year, as agreed with the Department for Education. He outlined that from September 2021 this number would be expanded to 40 places and that 36 children had already been identified as looking likely to be suitable for most of those. By year five of the school, Mr Thompson anticipated that up to 67 pupils could be in place. He advised that the pandemic restrictions had impacted the settling in period for some of the pupils, with teaching staff reporting that the disruption of repeated periods of lockdown had been difficult for some of their children and advising that the pandemic might delay the introduction of additional pupils until the settling period had been completed for all current placements.

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Members considered the need to balance parental choice against the benefits of pupils remaining within a mainstream school, particularly at the transition point from primary to secondary. Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services identified that a common perception was that mainstream schools were unable to adequately cope with the needs of SEND pupils and that work was ongoing to help redress this misconception with parents and to demonstrate that pupils were often better placed within the mainstream system.

The Committee noted that the current strategy was due to expire at the end of 2021 and that the working party would begin to review and create a new strategy from February 2021. Members welcomed the opportunity to be involved in this process.

7 EDUCATION ASSESSMENT UPDATE

Mr Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion updated the Committee to inform Members that GCSE, A Level and AS examinations for summer 2021 would not be going ahead and that the Office of Qualifications and Examinations (Ofqual) and the government were now beginning a consultation on how best to proceed. In addition, all primary school assessments scheduled to take place between April and July 2021 had been cancelled, which included KS1 teacher assessments, KS2 tests and teacher assessments and phonics screening checks. Mr Turner added that schools would not be required to complete any further activities to prepare for these assessments and that local authorities would not need to undertake monitoring or moderation activities.

When asked whether Blackpool pupils were adequately equipped to undertake appropriate home learning, Mr Turner reported that a rolling programme of laptop provision was underway but that not all pupils had as yet been in receipt of the necessary computer equipment, however no child in Blackpool would be unable to complete any school work during this time. Councillor Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration informed the Committee that schools had been working in innovative ways to source the necessary equipment and suggested that should Councillors wish to support their local school then they might want to consider utilising some of their ward budget towards contributing to school equipment.

In response to concerns over the long-term academic impact of pupils being unable to adequately access home schooling provisions, Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services assured the Committee that dialogue was ongoing with the Department for Education regarding the unacceptable delays in the delivery of laptops to schools and she highlighted that the most deprived areas should have been prioritised. The Committee acknowledged the Department for Education's responsibility in providing IT equipment and internet capabilities to pupils but also noted the duties of schools to ensure that devices were promptly delivered to all pupils and where possible to utilise available school budgets to purchase additional equipment.

With regards to the potential impact on pupils' attainment, Mr Turner advised that future strategies, for example the Literacy Strategy which was currently in the process of being

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developed, would aim to address the impact of the pandemic on learning and would look for ways in which to incorporate methods by which pupils could catch up for any learning missed. Mr Turner praised the efforts of all the school leaders and staff for their dedication to their pupils throughout the pandemic and assured the Committee that efforts would be made to address any remaining issues once pupils were permitted back to school.

8 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN

The Committee reviewed the contents of the Workplan for 2020/2021. As part of its monitoring of the implementation of recommendations and actions, the Committee received a progress update from Mr Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion on the recommendations resulting from the reviews of the School Response to Covid-19 Pandemic and Inclusion in Education. Mr Turner advised that all recommendations were ongoing and were achievable and he agreed to provide a full progress update at the next meeting of the Committee in April 2021.

The Committee considered the scoping document for the scrutiny review of Blackpool Better Start and agreed to approve the document.

Consideration was given to the proposed addition of SEND Funding and Capacity as a future topic for scrutiny, as suggested by Councillor Hobson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change. Due to the number of existing items within the workplan, the Committee agreed that the proposed item be included for consideration as part of the programme for work for the next Municipal Year.

The Committee agreed:

1. To approve the addition of SEND Funding and Capacity to the Committee workplan for consideration as a scrutiny topic in the following Municipal Year;
2. To approve the scoping document for the Blackpool Better Start scrutiny review;
3. To receive a full progress report on all outstanding recommendations resulting from the School Response to Covid-19 Pandemic and Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Reviews from Mr Turner at the next meeting of the Committee on 22 April 2021.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Committee was noted as Thursday 22 April 2021, commencing at 6pm.

Chairman

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(The meeting ended at 7.32pm)

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: | Jeanette Richards, Interim Director of Children's Services |
| Date of Meeting: | 22 April 2021 |

YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN – CHILDREN IN SECURE ACCOMMODATION

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To update the Committee on the progress of the Blackpool Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan theme area of Children In Secure Accommodation.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 For the Scrutiny Committee to have oversight of progress made on the theme of Children In Secure Accommodation in order to provide scrutiny, challenge and support.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

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

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

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

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 No other alternative options to be considered.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

6.0 Background information

6.1 The Youth Justice Board (YJB) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Prison and Probation undertook an unannounced inspection of Blackpool Youth Justice Service in October 2018.

6.2 The findings of the inspection resulted in Blackpool Youth Justice Service receiving an inadequate rating. Prior to the inspection it had been recognised that improvements were needed 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 to achieve good outcomes.

- 6.3 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 (Led by the Head of Criminal Justice, Lancashire Constabulary),
 - In Court (Led by Legal Team Manager, Blackpool Magistrates Court),
 - In the Community (Led by Independent Reviewing Officer, Blackpool Council),
 - In Secure (Led by Business Development Manager, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Children Safeguarding Assurance Partnership).
 - On Transitions and Resettlement (Led by Education Inclusion lead, Blackpool Council).

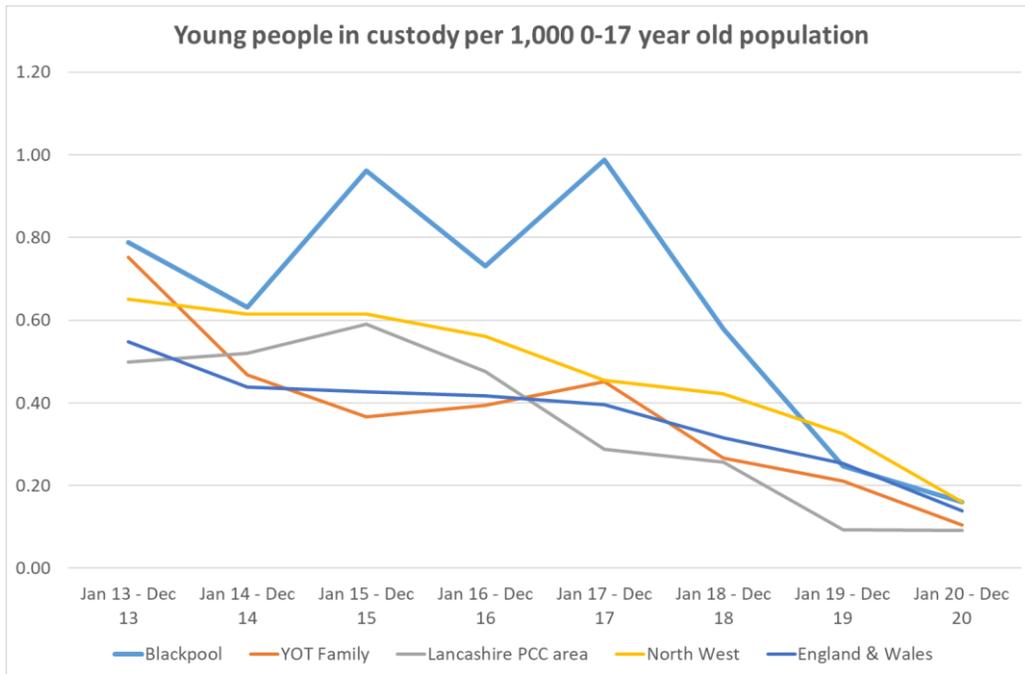
The Improvement Plan has been drawn up by the partnership and is monitored through the governance of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) Executive Board.

- 6.4 Early in 2020, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) 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 'in secure' settings. To inform the self-assessment, the YOT Service Manager and Team Managers completed a number of audits which identified improvements to practice already made and further work to be undertaken by the Young Justice team. These key areas for development have fed into the 'In Secure' themed action plan and the working group meet on a regular basis to drive practice improvements. The progress against the action plan is shared and reviewed by the YOT Executive Board on a bi-monthly basis.

- 6.5 The self-assessment completed in early 2020 and subsequent audits have found that:
- Communication and information exchange between YOT and the secure establishments, is in line with the Youth Custody Service (YCS) requirements. Children's YOT assessments, pre-sentence reports and post court reports are being completed in a timely manner and shared with the YCS to ensure relevant child information is available to the secure estate to support admission.
 - Work is ongoing to ensure that children within the secure estate receive appropriate assessments within the establishment. Where these have been completed these need to be recorded on the YOT case management system and used to inform AssetPlus assessments and plans for resettlement. When relevant assessments are not completed by the secure estate the YOT will challenge this.
 - The YOT is working with secure units to ensure sentence planning meetings are held on a regular basis and are informed by the views of the child as well as professionals involved.
 - In terms of safeguarding children within the secure estate, regular communication between the YOT and establishment takes place, with formal sentence planning meetings involving the child, parent/carer, YOT and secure unit. Safeguarding concerns are shared by the secure estate with the YOT and safety planning put in place. There have been some concerns over recent months regarding children at one particulate Secure Training Centre, which Ofsted visited. However the service has been assured by the YCS that intervention is being provided to this unit to ensure service provision for our children is in line with national requirements.
 - Whilst custody numbers are low, further developments are required around resettlement, resettlement is an essential part of practice to ensure that when released the child can be re-integrated back into the community as smoothly as possible. Resettlement planning needs to involve partners from across a variety of services to ensure the child's needs can be met on release. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) has recently shared that it intends on

developing its inspection framework with an additional focus specifically on resettlement.

- 6.6 Since April 2019 custody panels have taken place in Blackpool to review all children who are placed within the secure estate on either a remand to youth detention accommodation or sentenced. These are chaired by the In Secure theme lead and attended by representatives from the YOT, Children's services and the National Probation Service. The panel assesses whether all available actions were undertaken to mitigate the risk of a custodial sentence or remand to youth detention accommodation and whether the custodial period has been managed in accordance with expected standards. These panels have now started to review the resettlement plans for children and will focus on their release period.
- 6.7 Blackpool's 'children first' approach means that the use of custody must be a last resort and the Youth Justice Team works proactively to divert children away from custody. The Youth Justice partnership has been working to reduce unnecessary court appearances by children aged under 18 years old. Preventing children from having to attend court is key to building successful lives and something all partners are committed to achieving. It is a priority for the YOT Executive Board to prevent children from entering the criminal justice system by early take up of Out of Court Disposals. The service has strengthened its Out of Court Disposal approach to include a swift turnaround, a multi-agency youth disposal panel that considers the full range of out of court disposals available for a child and a greater range of community interventions to be undertaken with the child.
- 6.8 The graph below shows that Blackpool's custody rate has decreased to a rate of 0.16.



- 6.9 The reduction in the use of custody is also due to an increase in confidence in the service by Blackpool courts therefore granting court bail/remand to care of the Local Authority rather than custody. The Council's Youth Justice court officers are better prepared in advance of a child's hearing, ensuring that assessments have been completed and discussions with the child, their parent/carer and solicitors have taken place to ensure an appropriate bail package can be put in place for the child.

6.10 The YJB planned to undertake moderation and validation visits to authorities where needed. In January 2021, Blackpool Youth Justice Service was notified that the YJB assessment team felt that Blackpool had given an honest National Standards assessment of Blackpool's improvement journey. The YJB acknowledged that Blackpool is now at the stage of implementing/adopting tools, systems and processes therefore no further action from the YJB is needed.

6.11 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 None.

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 The YOT partnership will fund the service in 2020/2021 through the budget outlined below:

| AGENCY | STAFFING COSTS (£) | PAYMENTS IN KIND – REVENUE (£) | OTHER DELEGATED FUNDS (£) | TOTAL (£) |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| LOCAL AUTHORITY | 129,051 | - | - | 129,051 |
| POLICE SERVICE | 43,674 | - | 41,941 | 85,615 |
| NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE | 40,000 | - | 5,000 | 45,000 |
| CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP | 39,974 | - | 15,444 | 55,418 |
| POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER | - | - | - | - |
| YJB GOOD PRACTICE GRANT | 327,141 | - | 4,499 | 331,640 |
| OTHER | - | - | 294, 535 | 294,535 |
| TOTAL | | | | 941,259 |

There are no current budget pressures.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 There are no legal implications to consider.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

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

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 In Blackpool young people from a White ethnic background accounted for 96% of all young people receiving a youth caution or court conviction. Those from a Black ethnic background accounted for 1%, those from an Asian ethnic background for 0% and those from a mixed ethnic background for 3% (data from Executive Board September 2020). 28.5% of the children open to the youth justice team in Q3 20/21 are Our Children. Work is underway to address this disproportionality.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 There are no sustainability, climate change or environmental factors to consider.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 The work in developing the In Secure setting theme relies on working closely with internal and external colleagues. There is a regular multi-agency meeting in place, where partners will be consulted and involved in service developments.
The service continues to strengthen its consultation and co-production approach with Blackpool's young people and victims to support improved service delivery.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None

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| Report to: | CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| Relevant Officer: | Jeanette Richards, Interim Director of Children's Services |
| Date of Meeting: | 22 April 2021 |

SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – CARE LEAVERS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To update the Committee on the progress of the improvement journey in respect of services for Blackpool's 'care experienced' young adults.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 For the Scrutiny Committee to have oversight of progress made on the strategic and coordinated approach to providing support for care leavers to improve their outcomes in order to provide scrutiny, challenge and support.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

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 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 No other alternative options to be considered.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

6.0 Background information

6.1 During the Ofsted inspection of Children's Service in December 2018 the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers were judged as 'Requires Improvement to be good'. The inspectorate stated a strategic and coordinated approach to providing support for care leavers to improve their outcomes, including in education, employment and training was required. This has been a key priority within our Improvement Plan and outcomes for our care experienced young people have improved as a result.

6.2 Outcomes for Our Care Experienced Young Adults:

- Each of our young people is supported by a Personal Adviser before they leave care and into

their adulthood. Our Personal Advisers maintain very good contact with our care leavers and nurture relationships to support our young people with their independence. During the pandemic, at least weekly contact for our young people was introduced to support emotional wellbeing, reduce isolation and ensure essentials in place including food, gas, electric, phones and digital access in addition to direct work to support our young people's development.

- The vast majority (95 per cent) of our young people live in suitable accommodation. The Positive transitions model provides young people with appropriate housing and additional tenancy support through Blackpool Coastal Housing. The Council works alongside housing partners to facilitate creative approaches to support young people, with traditionally limited options, find a home.
- Our young people have their say on shaping their service, this includes the Care Leavers Forum led by the Council's participation officer. Our young people coproduced their Care Leaver Offer in 2018 and recently refreshed that offer and will continue to hold us to account to ensure the offer remains aspirational.
- The proportion of our care leavers in education, employment and training has improved over the last six months. This remains a priority area for improvement as half of our young people do not currently have a positive outcome in this area and this is compounded by the impact of the pandemic on employment opportunities. Key leads across the authority are developing a strategy to create opportunities and address barriers earlier for all of our children. As an authority, Blackpool continues to create opportunities for our young people via apprenticeships, ring fenced opportunities, work placements and the new KickStart scheme. In addition to Personal Adviser support, through Opportunity Areas and Positive Steps, our young people are supported by three Young People's Employment Advisers to support their career journey.
- Over the last two years there has also been an increase in financial oversight to ensure Personal Advisers are supporting young people to budget and plan ahead, along with the Council's corporate parent contribution towards council tax, as a result, our young people are developing skills to manage their money.

6.3 Within the Adolescent Service, learning and development continues to be supported in a variety of ways including a suite of virtual training such a Blackpool Families Rock, Neglect, Contextual Safeguarding, Exploitation Domestic Abuse, preventing unplanned pregnancy and themed National Leaving Care Bench Marking Forum events. As a result Personal Advisers and their Managers are better prepared to support our young people transition into adulthood.

6.4 During the recent Ofsted Focused Visit, in February 2021, inspectors found care leavers were overwhelmingly positive about the support provided by their personal advisers during the pandemic. The inspectorate observed that the Adolescent Service responded quickly and adapted its offer in recognition of the vulnerability of those care leavers who were at risk of isolation during the first lockdown. This ensured that a minimum level of weekly contact was offered, although contact was often more frequent depending on need. The inspectorate also acknowledged that the monthly clinic attended by various partners, including mental health services, also ensured that care leavers were prioritised for mental health support promptly. Please refer to Appendix 5(a) for the full Focused Visit findings.

6.5 Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 5(a) – Focused Visit Findings.

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 There are no financial implications to consider

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 There are no legal implications to consider.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 Care leavers priorities within the Improvement Plan are currently on track.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 There are no legal implications to consider.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 There are no sustainability, climate change or environmental factors to consider.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 Our young people coproduced their Care Leaver Offer in 2018 and recently refreshed that offer and will continue to hold us to account to ensure the offer remains aspirational. Regular updates regarding the Offer and Care Leaver Opportunities are heard at Corporate Parent Panel.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

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9 April 2021

Jeanette Richards
Director of Children's Services
Executive Support Team
Blackpool Council
Number One
Bickerstaffe Square
Blackpool
FY1 3AH

Dear Ms Richards

Focused visit to Blackpool children's services

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

This letter summarises the findings of a focused visit to Blackpool children's services on 23 and 24 February 2021. The inspectors were Lorna Schlechte, Brenda McLaughlin, Nick Stacey, Kathryn Grindrod and Paul Williams, all of whom are Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The methodology for this visit was in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. However, the delivery model was adapted to reflect the COVID-19 context. This visit was carried out fully by remote means. Inspectors used video calls for discussions with local authority staff, carers, key stakeholders and young people. They also looked at local authority performance management and quality assurance information and children's case records. The lead inspector and the director of children's services (DCS) agreed arrangements to deliver this visit effectively while working within national and local guidelines for responding to COVID-19.

What needs to improve in this area of social work practice

- The consistency and quality of work for children subject to child protection plans, to reduce drift and delay.
- The development of pre-proceedings work, to ensure that the tracking of children's cases leads to timely decision-making, including timely applications to court where appropriate.

- The quality assurance of casework, including case auditing, to ensure a consistent benchmark for practice improvement.

Findings

- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been keenly felt in Blackpool, where much of the population is dependent on employment linked to the tourism sector. Strengthened partnerships have planned and delivered an effective, collaborative response to the challenges of the pandemic, in a town with the highest levels of deprivation in the country and a transient seasonal population. A partnership mailbox was established promptly to coordinate information about the most vulnerable families. COVID-19 risk assessments inform visiting arrangements to see children and families, and staff have been well supported throughout the pandemic. The local authority has continued to focus on its improvement priorities, which are outlined in the social work improvement plan, despite the challenges of the pandemic. This has led to positive changes in some areas.
- Senior leaders know that there is still a lot more work to do to embed a consistent quality of practice across the service. They continue to engage well with three partners in practice, have facilitated a high level of virtual training during the pandemic for social workers and managers, and understand that more support and training is required in relation to the response to neglect and pre-proceedings.
- Recruitment is a continual challenge and does significantly impact on the quality of practice in some parts of the service, especially in those Strengthening and Supporting Families (SSF) teams where there has been considerable staff turnover of social workers and managers. More than one third of the workforce consists of newly qualified staff in their assessed and supported year of employment (ASYE). Although these staff hold complex work, there is additional support on offer to support them. The use of agency staff has reduced in recent months. Staff were positive about working for the Blackpool local authority, which they said is a supportive learning environment.
- A new model of practice, Blackpool Families Rock, was co-produced with families and young people shortly before the pandemic and is beginning to influence supervision and reflective practice discussions. Training in relation to this new restorative approach was initially impacted by COVID-19 but has since been rolled out. More work is planned to embed the approach across the service.
- The judiciary and other stakeholders report positively on the engagement of senior leaders to address court delays linked to backlogs in the family court during the pandemic. It is positive that a high number of discharges of care orders have been progressed during this period, in accordance with improvement plan objectives and an overarching financial strategy aimed at achieving permanence and reducing the numbers of children in care.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of performance data, which supports an understanding of their improvement journey. Auditing activity has continued at pace throughout the pandemic, although the quality of audit varies, and different styles and

formats are used. This means that there is an inconsistent benchmark of progress in relation to measuring children's experiences and outcomes. There is more to do to ensure that auditing leads to consistent analysis and prompt remedial action in order to impact sufficiently on practice improvement.

- The Access to Support Hub is now made up of permanent and suitably experienced staff. Decision-making continues to be responsive and timely, identifying risk promptly and applying appropriate thresholds. There is effective consideration of historical information to inform decision-making, consent is sought from parents appropriately and management oversight is clearly recorded.
- The co-location of early help staff and other partner agencies in the hub aids communication, and this has been maintained effectively throughout the pandemic, even when some staff are working from home. Partner attendance at the virtual daily risk meetings has increased, which ensures that the needs of children who are missing and at risk of exploitation are considered promptly within a multi-agency context. Early help pathways are understood and thresholds for stepping cases up or down to early help are appropriately applied.
- Assessments are completed in a timely way and there is evidence of management oversight at the conclusion of the assessment. This oversight is not always evident at the mid-review checkpoint, set by the local authority to review progress. Children are visited regularly, and individual COVID-19 risk assessments inform the frequency and nature of contact. This has mostly been in the form of face-to-face contact since early in the pandemic. There have been some recent improvements in the quality of assessments to support children in need, although there is some evidence of over-optimism regarding parental capacity to sustain change.
- When children need immediate protection, strategy meetings are held promptly and are well attended by a range of partner agencies. However, the rationale for progressing to a S47 child protection investigation is not clearly recorded in some cases, and the consideration of historical factors is inconsistently reflected in management decision-making. This means that there is sometimes too much focus on the presenting issue, without sufficient analysis of historical concerns and their impact on children's experiences.
- The quality of social work practice for children subject to child protection plans is highly variable, especially in the SSF teams where there is significant workforce churn, with high caseloads and a high proportion of less experienced staff. Although most core groups meet regularly, analysis and progress are not consistently measured against the plan. Senior leaders acknowledge that the response to risk for some children has been insufficiently identified, including in the children with complex needs team (CWCNT). This has sometimes led to avoidable drift and delay. Action is now being taken in the CWCNT to address the improvements needed.
- There is evidence of routine monitoring and challenge by child protection conference chairs and independent reviewing officers (IROs), although this is stronger in some areas of practice than others. When it works well, this provides important checks and balances to decisions about children's welfare, but it is not always making the necessary impact to reduce drift and delay.

- The quality of pre-proceedings work within the Public Law Outline (PLO) is of an inconsistent standard and this has led to some drift and delay for children. Although some specialist assessments have been delayed due to COVID-19-related issues, other delays are due to the timeliness of assessments of family members by social workers. There are different panels which provide management oversight of this area of work, and there is evidence of reflective discussions prior to escalation to panel. However, the quality of decision-making is hampered by staff turnover and levels of experience. Further training on pre-proceedings and the preparedness of social workers for court is planned but has been delayed due to COVID-19-related issues.
- For those children who go missing or who are at risk of exploitation, the co-location of a dedicated, multi-agency Awaken team has led to reliable and responsive information sharing and effective disruption activity. Relationship-based work, compatible with the Blackpool Family Rocks model of practice, is making a positive difference in this area of work. Multi-agency mapping meetings help identify, track and plan interventions to protect children.
- The number of children being electively home educated has increased during the pandemic. Leaders have developed a suitable monitoring process so that children's well-being can be tracked and monitored. The local authority's work, in collaboration with school leaders, has also been successful in promoting children's attendance at school. Staff diligently follow up reports of children missing education. They are persistent in tracing the whereabouts of all children, particularly those who have moved away from the area.
- Threshold decision-making for children who come into care is appropriate. However, despite appropriate efforts to divert children from coming into care, some children do not come into care quickly enough. This is sometimes due to legacy issues in relation to long-term neglect. There is also an over-optimism about parental capacity to sustain change in some current cases. The new Families Together Intervention Team, which offers support to vulnerable children on the edge of care, has been launched in recent months during the pandemic.
- Children in care have their physical and mental health needs attended to appropriately and family time is thoughtfully planned and promoted. The lack of choice of suitable foster placements limits the ability of social workers to identify the best possible match for children. Placement planning meetings take place appropriately, and the IRO footprint is clear on the case record.
- During the last year, virtual school staff have developed increasingly effective relationships with headteachers and designated teachers in schools. As a result, children in care have received appropriate help to continue learning during the pandemic. Despite this, the proportion of children who do not achieve a place in employment or training when they leave school remains high.
- Care leavers were overwhelmingly positive about the support provided by their personal advisers during the pandemic. The service responded quickly, and adapted its offer, in recognition of the vulnerability of those care leavers who were at risk of isolation during the first lockdown. This ensured that a minimum level of weekly contact was offered, although contact was often more frequent, depending on need.

The introduction of a monthly clinic attended by various partners, including mental health services, also ensured that care leavers were prioritised for mental health support promptly.

- While 95% of care leavers live in suitable accommodation, there are some vulnerable children at risk of exploitation living in unregulated settings who are not always as ready for independent living as outlined in their plan. The management oversight and monitoring of these placements is not always sufficiently robust.

Ofsted will take the findings from this focused visit into account when planning your next inspection or visit. I am copying this letter to the Department for Education. It will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Schlechte
Her Majesty's Inspector

Pre-publication

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|--------------------------|--|
| Report to: | CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| Relevant Officer: | Jeanette Richards, Interim Director of Children's Services |
| Date of Meeting: | 22 April 2021 |

SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – CHILD EXPLOITATION AND HOMELESSNESS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To update the Committee on the progress of the improvement journey in respect of services for vulnerable children and young people, with particular focus on children at risk of or experiencing exploitation or going missing, or young people who are at risk of homelessness.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 For the Scrutiny Committee to have oversight of progress made on the strategic and coordinated approach to providing support for children at risk of exploitation, going missing or at risk of homelessness, to help improve their outcomes by providing scrutiny, challenge and support.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

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

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 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 No other alternative options to be considered.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

6.0 Background information

6.1 Relevant findings from the Ofsted 2018 Inspection

Children going missing and/or at risk of exploitation

"Children at risk of exploitation do not consistently receive holistic assessments of their needs and risks. The language used in records to describe children's vulnerabilities is sometimes inappropriate

and places the responsibility on children for the risks they are exposed to. “

“The Awaken team specialises in child sexual exploitation and has a more informed understanding of exploitation, although weak assessments and plans undermine this. Direct work is undertaken with children by Awaken, although the impact of this is unclear as the risk assessment tool is not used consistently to evaluate and measure risk.”

“Children who go missing do not always receive a timely return home interview. There is limited intelligence gathering to explore risk in more detail or consider wider factors, as the interview is limited to an account from the child. Return home interviews do not include a clear risk assessment or actions to reduce further risk.”

Homeless Young People

“Young people who present as homeless were not systematically offered the opportunity to become looked after following an assessment of their need for support. A small number of 16- and 17- year olds are experiencing unsuitable accommodation, such as bed and breakfast and sofa-surfing. This increases their exposure to risk and their views are given insufficient consideration, even when they have requested to come into care.”

These deficits were summarised as the following needing to improve:

“The response to children at risk of exploitation, and those young people who are homeless, and the extent to which their vulnerabilities are fully recognised and lead to responsive intervention to keep them safe.”

- 6.2 Since the inspection there have been many changes to both the strategic approach to child exploitation and to the Awaken service itself. Strategically, the most critical ones include:
- Governance for missing and exploitation is now clearly in place, with the Exploitation Strategic Board meeting bi-monthly, with representation from the Blackpool Council Head of Service and Contextual Safeguarding subgroup Chair. The Board has now developed a contextual safeguarding strategy that will allow for the adoption of common principles and objectives throughout Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire, while continuing to allow local teams the flexibility to meet the needs of their children.
 - A performance data framework is also being developed and Blackpool has had initial discussions about its requirements and what this may look like.
 - Oversight of the strategy is the responsibility of Blackpool’s exploitation subgroup which meets bi-monthly and monitors the action plan in place and is the intermediary with operations.
- 6.3 The Awaken service itself has undergone significant changes to systems, processes and structures. Strong partnership working now enables the team to know its most high risk exploited and missing children, who receive a bespoke package of direct work to reduce risk and improve outcomes. Central to this improvement is the collaboration and colocation of partner agency professionals from health and police and virtual links with Community Safety Partnership, education, Youth Justice Services, Early Help, Licensing and Substance Misuse services. Important changes include:
- Redesign of the assessment and planning tools used by the service and a redesign of the management information system to support their use.

- A change in approach so that workers in the Awaken service are co-workers, with overall responsibility for the child or young person remaining with their social worker. The Awaken social workers act as the specialist worker, providing knowledge and expertise and offering an enhanced service to families with the most complex needs and/or where risk is considered high.
- A Daily Exploitation and Missing Meeting (DEM) that brings together virtually operational leads from Awaken (social care, police, health, Missing From Home (MFH) Co-ordinators, licensing), Blackpool Request for Support Hub (RfSH), Youth Offending, wider social care staff, drug and alcohol Services, education, Targeted Intervention Services and the Community Safety Partnership team on a daily basis each morning.
 - The DEM meeting reviews referrals, intelligence, crime submissions and multi-agency information to build a picture of children who have been missing from home, those who are being exploited or at risk of exploitation and to raise awareness of offenders and locations of concern. By sharing information at the earliest opportunity, allowing for exploration of contextual safeguarding, mapping of associates, hot spots and persons of concern, multi-agency partners are able to agree and progress actions without delay, to protect and support children.
- Practice of the Awaken team is on a strength based, trauma informed and relationship based model which enables trusted relationships to be built with the young person to reduce risk and improve outcomes.
- A new practice guide/operating procedures for the service, clearly outlining the processes and practices of the team, the expected contribution and approach of all partners, but also stating the purpose of the service and its core principles and values and including a section on the appropriate use of language:
 - Language implying that the child or young person is complicit in any way, or responsible for the crimes that have happened or may happen to them, must be avoided. Instead, language should reflect the presence of coercion and the lack of control young people have in abusive or exploitative situations and must recognise the severity of the impact exploitation has on the child or young person.

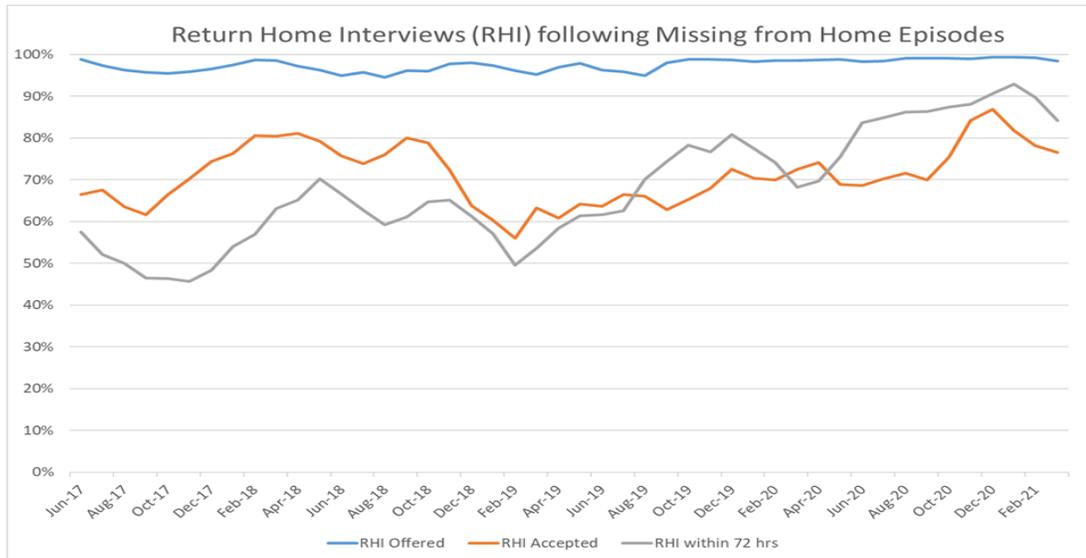
This is particularly important, as victim-blaming language may reinforce messages from perpetrators around shame and guilt. This in turn may prevent the child or young person from disclosing their abuse, through fear of being blamed by professionals.

- 6.4 **Missing from Home (MFH)** episode return home interviews are now undertaken by workers within the Awaken service itself, where the young person is resident in Blackpool or placed within a reasonable distance (where the young person is in care and placed outside of the town's boundaries within two hour travel distance). Young People placed further away will receive a return home interview from a specialist commissioned service in that area as arranged by the allocated Social Worker.
- 6.5 The MFH return home template has been re designed to incorporate contextual safeguarding, so we can understand emerging patterns and trends. In addition, information and intelligence captured enables mapping of associates, hotspots and persons of concern which will influence service delivery

and disruption tactics. Any relevant information is always fed back into the DEM meeting for consideration of next steps.

- 6.6 Blackpool introduced Trigger Plans in December 2020 for all children where the number of missing episodes are a concern. The plan is designed to assist carers, the police and partner agencies in locating the young person at the earliest opportunity and reducing missing from home episodes. The trigger plan is updated with any new information or intelligence to ensure its continued relevance.
- 6.7 A new pilot initiative begins this April focusing on out of hours disruption work. This is a collaboration with Community Safety Partnership and Awaken social care staff. Most activity involving young people takes place at weekends and evenings – the pilot will provide an additional window into the lived experience of the child/young person. This will include a visible presence in areas/locations of concern including arcades, train and bus stations.
- 6.8 Finally, Blackpool recognises that exploitation does not end when a child reaches their 18th birthday, however services in place to support and protect often end at this point. In Blackpool the service is exploring what transitional support could be pulled together for vulnerable young adults from a number of currently available services and initiatives such as Blackpool’s Young People Service, Young Adder and Adult Risk Management meetings and how this could be further developed and built up.
- 6.9 **Impact of Changes**
The positive impact of these changes has been recognised both by the Council’s own internal quality assurance processes and by external reviewers. Ofsted in their recent visit noted that “Partner attendance at the virtual daily risk meetings has increased, which ensures that the needs of children who are missing and at risk of exploitation are considered promptly within a multi-agency context.” Furthermore, they also noted that “For those children who go missing or who are at risk of exploitation, the co-location of a dedicated, multi-agency Awaken team has led to reliable and responsive information sharing and effective disruption activity. Relationship-based work, compatible with the Blackpool Family Rocks model of practice, is making a positive difference in this area of work. Multi-agency mapping meetings help identify, track and plan interventions to protect children.”
- 6.10 Ofsted’s assessment aligns with the Council’s own view on an improving service, the recent independent audit of work undertaken by the service found:
- Good co-working between social worker and Awaken worker – initial discussion and joint visit and frequent discussions to ensure that respective roles remain clear.
 - The Quality of CE2 assessments (specialist child exploitation assessments) has improved, with the inclusion of information from other professionals – health information is much more evident than previously – and evidence of management oversight and input from Awaken meetings and good exploration of history – including research and analysis.
 - Good Police intelligence, mapping and interventions to protect young people and prosecute perpetrators and proactive action in use of Section 2 Child Abduction Warning Notices.
 - Awaken health assessments were on file where appropriate and provided a good overview of health needs and actions taken to address specific needs e.g. sexual health, referral to CAMHS or Youth Therapy.
 - Direct work is more consistently recorded with good examples – although not always consistently recording the tools used or uploading copies of the work.
 - Good voice of the child – although there could be more on the child’s daily lived experience.

6.11 Finally, performance data also shows an improving picture around missing from home return home interviews: the consistency of the offer to all those reported missing and the increasing proportion of those offers that are accepted by the young person as well as the proportion held within 72 hours of returning home – see chart below:



6.12 It is likely that the success of this work is also evident in the 15 per cent drop in the number of missing from home episodes and in the increasing concentration of those episodes amidst a smaller number of young people going missing frequently (often children in public care). In 2020, children and young people going missing five times or more accounted for 69 per cent of the total number of missing episodes in Blackpool, with just 20 young people accounting for over 40 per cent of all missing episodes in the calendar year 2020.

6.13 Housing and Homelessness

Housing Options still offer a single point of access for customers and professionals with a wide range of services, including:

- In house temporary accommodation for homeless families, including a number of self-contained dispersed units.
- In house supported accommodation for 16/17 year olds.
- In house tenancy training programme.
- Access to Social Housing Waiting list.
- Access to Social Lettings Agency hosted by My Blackpool Home (Council owned company) to facilitate access to good quality, affordable, accommodation in the private rented sector.
- Family Mediation Service for 15 – 18 year olds.
- Access to money advice.
- Negotiation with landlords.
- Tenancy Support.

6.14 Over 90 per cent of families receiving help with housing were supported through early intervention and prevention, avoiding homelessness. As a unitary authority, Blackpool Council also takes a pragmatic approach to intentionality in homelessness decisions, only finding families intentionally

homeless when absolutely necessary and then still helping colleagues in CSC providing move on support. Only one family was found to be intentionally homeless in 2019. When households do unfortunately become homeless, they experience short stays in Temporary Accommodation. 97 per cent of families are moved into long-term accommodation in less than six months.

6.15 16/17 year olds are never placed in Bed and Breakfasts by the Council. There is now a joint protocol on homelessness with a strong focus on prevention and a toolkit to support frontline Social Workers and Housing Options Officers. The protocol provides a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities and a joint focus on prevention to keep young people with their families, wherever it is safe to do so, in addition to simpler pathways to access emergency accommodation when needed. Training sessions have now taken place internally with all relevant staff, albeit during COVID lockdown. Where 16/17 year olds cannot remain at home, whether temporarily or permanently, emergency accommodation is available through both housing and social care and family re-unification remains central to the plan for the young person. The Council has also developed William Lyons House to provide additional supported accommodation sourced by the Council and managed by Blackpool Coastal Housing (BCH) for young people (for 16 to 25 year olds, but predominantly 18 to 21 year olds).

6.16 A “Housing Clinic” continues to plan from age 17 for children and young people getting ready to leave public care. The Positive Transitions Housing Model provides transition for young people leaving care (from 17.5) where they move into a Council property (managed by BCH – the Council’s ALMO) and receive support for as long as required. The tenancy is held in trust until 18 and then the young person becomes a tenant in their own right. The impact of this approach can be seen in the fact that very few young people who have left care are deemed to be in unsuitable accommodation (typically 95+ per cent in suitable accommodation, with those that are not generally being in custody).

6.17 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 None.

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 There are no financial considerations to consider.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 There are no legal considerations to consider.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 There are no direct equalities considerations. However, it would be appropriate to note that children and young people from more deprived backgrounds are, on average, more vulnerable to risks during

their childhood.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 There are no sustainability, climate change or environmental factors to consider.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 None.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

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|--------------------------|---|
| Report to: | CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| Relevant Officer: | Stephen Ashley, Independent Scrutineer for Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership. |
| Date of Meeting: | 22 April 2021 |

CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING ASSURANCE PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership Annual Report.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To consider the contents of the report, provide challenge and identify any issues for further scrutiny.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To allow Members of the Scrutiny Committee to be fully informed of the work of Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership.

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

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

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

6.0 Background information

6.1 This is the first annual report of the Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP), covering the period of its inception on 29 September 2019 to 30 September 2020.

6.2 This report sets out how CSAP has come together to create the new safeguarding partnership arrangements and highlights the work carried out together to identify and then respond to the issues

that have the biggest impact on children, young people and families across the Partnership.

6.3 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 7(a) – Children’s Safeguarding Assurance Partnership Annual Report for the Year Ending 30 September 2020.

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 None.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 None.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING ASSURANCE PARTNERSHIP

Annual Report for the year ending
30th September 2020

For Blackburn with Darwen,
Blackpool and Lancashire



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FOREWORD

This is the first annual report of the Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP), covering the period of its inception on the 29th September 2019 to 30th September 2020. This report sets out how we have come together to create our new safeguarding partnership arrangements and highlights the work we have done together on identifying and then responding to the issues that have the biggest impact on children, young people and families across our Partnership. Our first task was to ensure that we use our combined efforts to have an impact on our top three priority areas of risk outside the home to children (contextual safeguarding), neglect and domestic abuse.

No report covering this period could fail to mention that impact of the global Covid 19 pandemic. First and foremost we would want to acknowledge the pain and loss that many in our communities have suffered, but also pay tribute to our frontline practitioners and others who have worked tirelessly through this time.

For CSAP, the pandemic has forced us to adopt new ways of working and it has undoubtedly meant that we have progressed our priorities and quality assurance activity differently to how we originally envisaged. This has not necessarily been to their detriment though and there is much that we can be proud of during the period covered by the annual report.

Looking forward to the forthcoming year in which many in our communities will be placed under considerable strain, we will continue to seek to champion the right of children to be safeguarded from abuse and neglect and to hold the partnership to account for our combined role in this.

Jayne Ivory

Director of Children's Services,
Blackburn with Darwen Council

Diane Booth

Director of Children's Services
Blackpool Council

Edwina Grant OBE

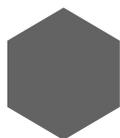
Executive Director Education and Children's Services
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Joanne Edwards

Assistant Chief Constable
Lancashire Constabulary

Margaret Williams

Lancashire and South Cumbria
Integrated Care System (ICS)
Safeguarding Health Executive



OUR MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS

Everyone in Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire shares a commitment to and responsibility for safeguarding children. However, under Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)¹ the three safeguarding partners of the local authority, police and health hold the statutory responsibility to support and enable local organisations to work together to safeguard children.

The three local safeguarding partners jointly leading CSAP are:

- Blackburn with Darwen Council, Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council
- Lancashire Constabulary

The eight Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) of Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Chorley and South Ribble, East Lancashire, Fylde and Wyre, Greater Preston, Morecambe Bay and West Lancashire, who are represented through the Safeguarding Health Executive

In response to the changes required by Working Together, the safeguarding partners in Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire made an early decision, in spring 2019, to bring together the three former Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB), in order to harmonise multi-agency responses wherever possible and therefore achieve the best outcomes for children. It was created with the following statement of purpose:

“ The safeguarding partners and all relevant agencies that work with children and families are committed to ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are of the highest quality, that they consistently promote the welfare of children and effectively safeguards them whatever their circumstance ”

The work of CSAP is driven by the Executive Board, which has a membership of the safeguarding partners noted above. During the reporting period the Executive Board has agreed the safeguarding priority areas for CSAP (contextual safeguarding, neglect and domestic abuse) and overseen the development of the governance and business structures that will support its work in these areas.

¹Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
(publishing.service.gov.uk)



Supporting the work of the Executive Board are the North, Central and East Tactical Groups on which the safeguarding partners are joined by the designated relevant agencies in order to oversee the delivery of work tackle the safeguarding priority areas and to gather evidence of the effectiveness of local arrangements. Toward the end of the reporting period reporting processes were agreed for the tactical groups, which will collate evidence from the local operational groups for each safeguarding priority area and, in turn, report to the Executive Board. All agencies are able to report any emerging safeguarding themes into tactical groups for consideration and potential escalation to the Executive Board.



Tactical Groups

- North corresponds to the police west division and covers Blackpool, Fylde, Lancaster and Wyre local authority areas
- Central corresponds to the police south division and covers Chorley, Preston, South Ribble and West Lancashire local authority areas
- East corresponds to the police east division and covers Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley and Rossendale local authority areas

CSAP forms part of the wider partnership architecture for Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire, which includes Children's Partnership Boards, Local Safeguarding Adults Boards (LSAB) (both of which are supported by the same joint safeguarding business unit as CSAP), Health and Wellbeing Boards and Community Safety Partnerships. There are standing items on Executive Board and Tactical Group agendas for updates from other boards, while there has been close operational linkage established, for example, with Community Safety Partnerships and the Violence Reduction Network (VRN), in our response to domestic abuse.

CSAP is required to provide for independent scrutiny of its arrangements, and has done so by the appointment, in July 2019, of Stephen Ashley as Independent Scrutineer. Stephen acts as chair of the Executive Board in order to provide independent perspective and challenge to these meetings, while also reporting as requested on identified thematic issues to the partners. Finally, Stephen's independent scrutiny of this annual report is included at page 24.

Business management and support is provided to CSAP by the joint safeguarding business unit. This has been created from the business units for the three former LSCBs and also provides support to the three corresponding Local Safeguarding Adults Boards and Children and Family Partnership Boards.

Existing LSCB financial arrangements were rolled over during the reporting period. A working group that reports into CSAP Executive Board has been tasked with reviewing partnership financial contributions and recommending future funding arrangements under the new joint safeguarding business unit arrangements. Work is underway on a financial model that sets out the budgets for key business areas of CSAP for the new financial year 2021/2022.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

Contextual Safeguarding

Why is it a priority?

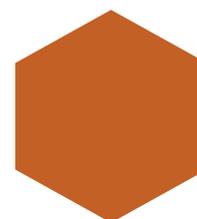
Contextual safeguarding is the umbrella term for work to safeguard children from abuse and exploitation that children may experience outside their family home. The term itself has only come to the fore in recent years, although a recognition of the threat to children of sexual exploitation (CSE) and criminal exploitation (CCE) is well established and subject to multi-agency action nationally and locally.

Contextual safeguarding was adopted as a priority by CSAP in view of national statutory guidance and reviews (the CSPR Panel's *It was hard to escape²⁾*, and learning from local reviews in recent years, for example the Blackburn with Darwen Child G serious case review (SCR). Contextual safeguarding is an area that requires a strong multi-agency operational approach that was already provided through well-established multi-agency exploitation teams across the area.

Governance arrangements

The Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Board was established in March 2020, assuming responsibility on behalf of the CSAP Executive for contextual safeguarding. It was agreed that this remit would include CSE, CCE, Child Trafficking and Modern Slavery, and Missing from Home.

The initial focus of the group has been concerned with establishing clear terms of reference and membership; effective governance arrangements for reporting to CSAP Executive and linking with local operational groups; and the development of a Contextual Safeguarding strategy. The strategy will provide the principles by which the operational teams respond to local needs. A business plan is also in development, setting out how, why and when objectives will be achieved.



Three operational groups have been established in order to address contextual safeguarding issues in light of local needs. The groups operate on a local authority footprint and have oversight of the multi-agency operational teams in their respective areas.

Operational response

The operational response to contextual safeguarding is provided by multi-agency teams situated throughout the Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire area. At their core they are made up of police, children's social care and health practitioners, with some local variations depending on identified needs. During the reporting period the teams have continued to expand their focus on CCE, alongside their longer term work to address CSE and MFH. This has been increasingly framed within a contextual safeguarding framework, which allows practitioners to consider the needs of individual children holistically.

Contextual safeguarding principles are applied in specialist assessments completed by social workers within the teams, which will consider the child's needs and strategies to disrupt perpetrators. There has been a move away from social workers within the contextual safeguarding teams being statutory case holders and instead having the time and space to develop a trusted relationship with the child, while a named statutory social worker manages safeguarding processes. This serves to build experience of contextual safeguarding within wider social work teams and allows the contextual safeguarding team social workers to become points of reference for the wider workforce.

The teams will draw on the expertise of practitioners in other agencies, for example youth justice and schools, both to develop their understanding of a child's needs and to intervene to keep them safe. During the reporting period these processes have been formalised in Daily Exploited and Missing meetings in Blackpool and in adolescent panels in Blackburn with Darwen. Strong links with licensing colleagues throughout the area support disruption activity, which has resulted in a focus on fast food venues in Lancashire and training for taxi drivers in Blackpool. Meanwhile joint working in Blackburn with Darwen has directly contributed to the success of a significant police operation leading to charges against 18 adult individuals for drug supply, money laundering and trafficking offences, helping to protect vulnerable children.

In order to better understand risks to children, Lancashire Constabulary commissioned Project EMPRA in 2019 to analyse data held across six live exploitation investigations. By linking together information about victims and perpetrators the project contributed to the conviction of five offenders and the safeguarding of their victims, but also provided significant learning about partnership responses to contextual safeguarding. A case study involving responses to missing from home drawn from the project has been used locally to develop responses and delivered to national missing working groups. Lancashire Constabulary have these three principles as a formal Safeguarding, Investigation, Prevention (SIP) model with clear awareness, advice and training to officers to recognise and take personal responsibility for vulnerability. Further training has been developed by the partnership in conjunction with the VRN to create Trauma Informed Approach training resources being delivered to staff across our partner agencies.

Neglect

Why is it a priority?

Neglect is the most common form of child abuse in the United Kingdom and the main cause of concern in 47% of all child protection plans in England. While the proportion in each local authority in CSAP is lower, neglect has been a significant feature of a number of recent SCR (Blackpool Child BY and Lancashire Child G) where it has been seen to co-exist with other forms of abuse. Operationally, Lancashire Constabulary continue to record approximately 3 – 8 neglect crimes per week.

Governance arrangements

In the 18 months prior to the inception of CSAP, each of the three LSCBs agreed its own neglect strategy, which remained in place during the reporting period. While the overarching aims of the three coincide, namely to drive a consistent multi-agency response to neglect that enables practitioners to identify, respond to and ultimately prevent neglect, there are some areas of divergence in practice, for example, the agreed assessment tools. CSAP oversees the delivery of these strategies through three operational groups for neglect, based on local authority areas, which report to the tactical groups. These were either in place or in the process of being established at the year end.

Operational Responses

The safeguarding partners have an ambitious goal to empower the wider children's workforce to identify neglect at the earliest possible opportunity and provide families with the means to overcome the adversities that they face, without the need for intensive interventions. All three areas have therefore placed an emphasis on training and practitioner awareness raising, which has continued throughout the pandemic. This has included neglect awareness raising training provided by CSAP, together with a large scale strategy launch in Blackpool, awareness raising materials including a Think Neglect booklet in Blackburn with Darwen, and a neglect champions' network. All three areas had already adopted assessments tools, the focus during the reporting period has therefore been embedding the use of the tools, with a screening tool also being developed at the year end.

By successfully delivering on their strategies the safeguarding partners expect to see consistent use of language that enables practitioners to name neglect in a wide range of situations. This has resulted in the clinical commissioning groups developing a 'Was Not Brought' policy for primary care, which prompts practitioners to question why a child has not been brought to an appointment and what the impact of this is. As previously noted, Lancashire Constabulary has supported the delivery of the strategies through a large scale internal Think Neglect campaign. Work to address neglect should also be placed within the context of broader changes to practice, for example the Family Safeguarding model in Lancashire that will provide a more holistic response to the whole family and the Blackpool Families Rock way of working that provides a strengths based, restorative approach that has been co-produced with children and families.

Each area is committed to the ongoing evaluation of the implementation of their strategy, in order to support its effective delivery. This has been undertaken in Lancashire through the multi-agency neglect subgroup and in Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool through local authority case tracking and audit. This will be supported through CSAP multi-agency audits in 2021. In order to promote a consistent response to neglect, the safeguarding partners will work toward agreeing a single CSAP neglect strategy by March 2022. This will build on the findings of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) underway at the year that will provide learning in respect of responses to the neglect of adolescents and children with additional needs, and medical neglect.



Domestic Abuse

Why is it a priority?

A significant proportion of the partnership's operational safeguarding activity consists of protecting children from domestic abuse (DA). Lancashire Constabulary responded to 32,825 domestic abuse related incidents and crimes in the year ended March 2019³. While there is no corresponding data for the number of children affected by these incidents, we do know that 3,274 children were in households discussed by Marac in the year ended March 2020⁴. Overall, Women's Aid estimate that nationally one in seven children will experience domestic abuse at some point in their childhood⁵. More seriously, domestic abuse was a significant feature of a number of recent national and local SCR, including Blackpool's Child BY and Lancashire's Child LI and LL.

Domestic abuse requires a multi-faceted response that responds to the needs of the victims, perpetrators and children in the household. CSAP identified this as a priority in order to ensure that the children's element of this response was co-ordinated and effective.

Governance arrangements

Due to the number of domestic abuse groups and forums in operation across the area, CSAP initially sought to ensure that it had an accurate understanding of the governance arrangements in place between the groups and seek assurance that approaches were aligned with existing legislation and the proposed Domestic Abuse Bill. This scoping exercise has mapped existing groups and identified proposed changes to meet the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Bill. Additionally, the Lancashire Community Safety Partnership (LCSP) accepted a recommendation in September 2020 that it establishes a Domestic Abuse Partnership Board as a sub group of the LCSP in order to provide a strategic level of

³www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesdatatool

⁴safelives.org.uk/practice-support/resources-marac-meetings/latest-marac-data

⁵www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/children-and-domestic-abuse

governance and accountability (LCSP incorporates the 12 district councils of Lancashire, who are responsible for Community Safety Partnerships, together with the two unitary authorities of Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool). To complement these arrangements and to ensure that the needs of children who are exposed to DA are identified and responded to, CSAP was establishing operational groups, mirroring its arrangements for contextual safeguarding and neglect, at the end of the reporting period. These will link into other local strategic arrangements and provide assurance to the CSAP tactical groups about work to safeguard children from DA.

Operational responses

Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass is an initiative which allows the Police to share information in respect of a child with whom they have had contact with a school's trained 'Key Adult' prior to the start of the next school day. This was initially in respect of DA incidents but now covers all vulnerable person notifications. This enables appropriate support to be given to the child, dependent upon their needs and wishes.

Encompass launched in Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire in April 2019, and has over 700 schools signed up. It has:

- Shared policies and documentation with all schools, including for distribution to parents;
- Provided training to for schools, providing information on roles and responsibilities; domestic abuse and the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences;
- Developed a database of over 700 school Encompass contacts which was shared with Lancashire Constabulary;



- Developed an Encompass toolkit of materials for schools to use with children about whom they receive notifications;
- Shared an average of over 1,200 notifications with schools per month, achieving steadily increasing rates of compliance as officers become more used to the process.

The initial roll out was confined to children in Years R to 11, in forthcoming months post 16 providers will be included in notifications, while work has started to plan how early years providers could be included.

One involved school has reported:

“Since May we have received 9 notifications about incidents outside of school that have increased the vulnerability of the children in our care.

Because of this we have been able to make prompt and fully informed plans to care for the children involved and where appropriate offer support to their families. Examples of the difference made by receiving this information are:

- Support given to suicidal Mum who agreed to work with Addaction, this family is beginning to stabilise with a full multi-agency approach in place to support Mum and family, initiated by school as a result of Encompass information.
- School fully informed when invited to attend strategy discussion with CSC, instead of running from behind to try to catch up with fast moving events.
- Several children offered support from Learning Mentors on the day of referral received and subsequently as required, ranging from informal chat over breakfast, to therapeutic input to address trauma and understand how to respond and remain safe.
- Some children have spent the morning in Rainbow Room, a therapeutic environment, snuggled up on sofas, with breakfast, drinks, expert support and cuddles where needed. This has made all the difference, allowing them to go back to their classrooms feeling nurtured and supported.
- Parent arrived in school wanting to talk to us because they knew we would be receiving a notification.

I would really like to thank our colleagues in the Police force who have helped us to offer support that is immediate, appropriate and makes a difference to children and their families at point of need.

Too often in the past we were working blindfolded with children who were in urgent need of support. Now we know who to help and how to help and are confident that we will not let another child who needs our help down because we didn't know what had happened to them.”



Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising Campaign: April 2020

CSAP Executive Members expressed concerns about a drop in Domestic Abuse reports to supporting agencies during early Covid 19 restrictions in late-March/early-April. It was decided that there was a need to urgently publicise that support remained available for both children and adults experiencing the impact of domestic abuse during lockdown.

Having collated details of support services (many of which were enhanced during the initial lockdown), a series of eight key messages (three with a focus on children) and accompanying graphics were developed and circulated to partners to disseminate through their social media channels. A review of the initial core messages through the @LancsSguarding Twitter account demonstrated significant engagement over the following weekend period, reaching c. 2,000 impressions on the National DA Helpline message alone (c. 5,300 for all of the posts). Engagement was highest on Saturday 4th April and continued to increase from Monday 6th April onwards as colleagues returned to work.

The online campaign was followed up with the development of 5,000 posters and leaflets for distribution to supermarkets, shops, pharmacies and community hubs, funded by CSAP and distributed through neighbourhood policing units.

This campaign demonstrated the ability of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies to work together to provide a timely response to an emerging risk. The support of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the VRN was similarly crucial for this work. Further Domestic Abuse activity was subsequently identified as a Lancashire Resilience Forum priority with the #NoExcuseForAbuse campaign commencing in June 2020. This campaign included 230 convenience stores displaying materials, the distribution of 10,000 posters, 342 local radio adverts, 28 towns visited by a branded van and outreach to 1.3 million people via Twitter. This resulted in 2,047 unique visits to the campaign website. The success of the 'one voice' approach to communications has resulted in the CSAP Executive agreeing to adopt this approach for future campaigns, with a partnership contextual safeguarding communications strategy being in development at the year end.

Marac review

Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (Marac) are the key forum for multi-agency information sharing and co-ordination of actions to safeguard victims and children from domestic abuse. The 3,045 cases discussed in Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Maracs in the year ended March 2020 represent a considerable time and resource commitment on the part of agencies, as a consequence of which a review of the effectiveness of the process was underway at the start of the reporting period.

Of particular relevance to CSAP, the findings highlighted that due to this high demand Maracs did not always hear or record the voice of children, that they sometimes pressured families to split up when it was not in the child (or victim's) best interests and that actions were not always completed or completed within timescales. Practitioners working within the system described it being no longer fit for purpose.

The review continued to propose and pilot a new model that is made up of a core team of agencies (children's social care, health, police, independent domestic violence advocates (IDVA) and probation). This core team will share information and formulate a response more rapidly than under the old model which relied on fixed meetings, while remaining able to include other agencies as and when required. The new model will actively seek the views of the victim, children and perpetrator, ask them what their needs are and provide solutions by working with

them and other agencies. By doing so the model aims to get to the root cause of the problem and provide a more holistic approach to all involved parties.

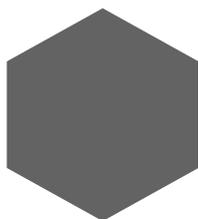
The new model will be rolled out on an area by area basis, during which CSAP will hold partner agencies to account to ensure that children who are exposed to domestic abuse are effectively safeguarded.

The children of Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire

Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire is a large and diverse area with a child population of over 315,000. By monitoring broader population trends the safeguarding partners can develop an understanding of current and emerging needs, ensuring that help is provided at the earliest possible opportunity, without the need for more invasive safeguarding interventions.

Within this wider child population a small number of children will require the involvement of statutory services to ensure that they are kept safe from abuse and neglect. The safeguarding partners seek to monitor and understand this cohort, to ensure that interventions are timely and effective throughout the area.

This has been done through the collation of weekly high level local authority data covering contacts, referrals, section 47 enquiries, timeliness of assessments, children in need, child protection and looked



after children. This is set alongside police data in respect of missing children, domestic abuse, online crime, and child sexual abuse and exploitation. By doing so the safeguarding partners were able to respond to emerging trends during the pandemic, for example increasing numbers of children going missing. In the longer term this will form the basis of work to better understand the three priority areas.

This data provides a snapshot of how children progress through the safeguarding system in each of the three local authority areas, allowing monitoring of longer term trends and benchmarking against similar areas. What it does not provide though is any reassurance as to how each child experiences interventions or how well practitioners work with children and families to secure the best outcomes for children. Understanding this will therefore be a focus of future CSAP quality assurance work.

A key factor in the safeguarding partners' decision to bring together the three former LSCB areas was to provide greater consistency in approach and practice, thereby ensuring that children receive a consistent response irrespective of the area that they live in, and reducing complication for practitioners who operate across local authority boundaries.

The foregoing chapter has demonstrated some of the work that has been undertaken to harmonise the approach to the safeguarding priority areas. This will be supported by shared principles and guidance for how all agencies and practitioners work with children, whatever their level of need. These are set out in *Working Well with Children and Families in Lancashire*, which is the threshold document that the safeguarding partners are required to publish, and also includes guidance to enable practitioners to assess a child's level of need (at the end of the reporting period it had been implemented in Blackpool, with ongoing preparations for its launch in Blackburn with Darwen and Lancashire).

Working Well with Children and Families in Lancashire sets out shared values for practitioners as:

- Being respectful. Building relationships by working alongside parents, children and young people and seeking their informed consent and agreement;
- Being understanding, kind and empathetic. Recognising and working to families' strengths – especially those of parents and carers and take the time to understand their needs fully.
- Being purposeful. Focusing on preventing problems before they occur and offer flexible responsive, constructive support when and where it is required;
- Being constructive. Helping to build the resilience of parents, children, young people and communities to support each other;
- Being open and transparent with each other as well as with families. Working together across the whole system, engaging well with communities and aligning our resources so we can best support families and do what needs to be done when it needs to be done;
- Being fair. Basing all that we do on evidence and analysis of both what is needed and of what works and being brave enough to stop things that are wrong;
- Being honest. Being clear and consistent about the outcomes we expect, and judging what we do against them.

Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Facts and Figures

| | Blackburn with Darwen | Blackpool | Lancashire |
|----------------------|---|--|---|
| Population | How many people live in Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire and what proportion of the estimated populations are children?⁶ – Understand the demographic breakdown | | |
| | The total population of Blackburn with Darwen (2019) was estimated to be 149,696 | The total population of Blackpool (2019) was estimated to be 139,446 | The total population of Lancashire (2019) was estimated to be 1,219,799 |
| | 38,742 (25.9%) are children and young people aged 0-17 years | 29,215 (21.0%) are children and young people aged 0-17 years | 251,042 (20.6%) are children and young people aged 0-17 years |
| | 12.1% of the total child population across the County resides in Blackburn with Darwen | 9.2% of the total child population across the County resides in Blackpool | 78.7% of the total child population across the County resides in Lancashire |
| Academic Achievement | Level of development at the end of Reception⁷ – A key measure of early years and childhood development. | | |
| | In Blackburn with Darwen, 68.4% of children achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception. Lower than the regional average of 68.9% and the national average of 71.8%. | In Blackpool, 67.9% of children achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception. Lower than the regional average of 68.9% and the national average of 71.8%. | In Lancashire, 69.2% of children achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception. Higher than the regional average of 68.9%, but lower than the national average of 71.8%. |
| | Level of educational attainment at Secondary School⁸ – An indicator of learning, educational achievement and development of skills important for a children's wellbeing and future prospects. | | |
| | In Blackburn with Darwen, 46.4% of children attained an average GCSE score of 8. Compared to 45.6% regionally and 46.9% nationally. | In Blackpool, 39.2% of children attained an average GCSE score of 8. Compared to 45.6% regionally and 46.9% nationally. | In Lancashire, 46.6% of children attained an average GCSE score of 8. Compared to 45.6% regionally and 46.9% nationally. |
| Health Inequalities | 16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET)⁹ – young people whose life chances are being compromised and who may be more vulnerable to safeguarding risks. | | |
| | In Blackburn with Darwen, 4.5% of 16-17 year olds are not in education, employment or training (NEET), this is lower than the regional average of 6.3% and the national average of 5.5% | In Blackpool, 6.2% of 16-17 year olds are not in education, employment or training (NEET), this is comparable with the regional average of 6.3% but higher than the national average of 5.5% | In Lancashire, 10.0% of 16-17 year olds are not in education, employment or training (NEET), this is higher than the regional average of 6.3% and the national average of 5.5% |
| | Infant mortality¹⁰ – The infant mortality measure is the number of children aged under 1 who die compared to the number of live births. Infant mortality is an indicator of the general health of the population. It reflects the relationship between causes of infant mortality and upstream determinants of population health such as economic, social and environmental conditions. CSAP has worked to reduce infant mortality through the safer sleep campaign and ICON campaigns. | | |
| | The rate of infant deaths in Blackburn with Darwen is 5.0 per 1,000 live births, compared to 4.5 regionally and 3.9 nationally. | The rate of infant deaths in Blackpool is 6.4 per 1000 live births, compared to 4.5 regionally and 3.9 nationally. | The rate of infant deaths in Lancashire is 4.2 per 1000 live births, compared to 4.5 regionally and 3.9 nationally. |
| | Population Vaccine Coverage¹¹ – MMR for one dose (2 years) – The percentage of 2 year olds who have received 1 dose of the MMR vaccination. The MMR combined vaccine protects against measles, mumps and rubella; 3 highly infectious, common conditions that can have serious health complications. | | |
| | In Blackburn with Darwen, 92.4% of 2 year olds have had 1 dose of the MMR vaccine, compared to 90.6% nationally and 91.9% regionally. | In Blackpool, 92.0% of 2 year olds have had 1 dose of the MMR vaccine, compared to 90.6% nationally and 91.9% regionally. | In Lancashire, 91.4% of 2 year old have had 1 dose of the MMR vaccine, compared to 90.6% nationally and 91.9% regionally. |

⁶Population information – ONS mid-year 2019 population estimates

⁷School Readiness data – 2018/19. Fingertips Public Health data – Child Health Profiles

⁸Educational attainment – 2018/19. Fingertips Public Health data – Child Health Profiles

⁹NEET data – 2018. Fingertips Public Health data – Child Health Profiles

¹⁰Infant Mortality – 2017/18 *new data* - Fingertips Public Health data – Child Health Profiles

¹¹MMR Population vaccine coverage – 2019/20 – Fingertips Public Health data –Early Years Supplementary Information

Complex Needs

Percentage of school pupils identified to have social, emotional and mental health needs¹² - (based only on those pupils with a Special Educational Need).

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| In Blackburn with Darwen, 2.56% of school pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs, compared to 2.39% nationally and 2.35% regionally. | In Blackpool, 3.08% of school pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs, compared to 2.39% nationally and 2.35% regionally. | In Lancashire, 1.77% of school pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs, compared to 2.39% nationally and 2.35% regionally. |
|---|---|--|

Percentage of school pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)¹³ – based on the number of children identified as having special education needs.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| In Blackburn with Darwen, 18.1% of school pupils have Special Educational Needs, compared to 14.4% nationally and 14.6% regionally. | In Blackpool 17.9% of school pupils have Special Educational Needs, compared to 14.4% nationally and 14.6% regionally. | In Lancashire 12.3% of school pupils have Special Educational Needs, compared to 14.4% nationally and 14.6% regionally. |
|---|--|---|

Rate of hospital admissions for mental health conditions¹⁴ - One in ten children aged 5-16 years has a clinically diagnosable mental health problem and, of adults with long-term mental health problems, half will have experienced their first symptoms before the age of 14. Self-harming and substance abuse are known to be much more common in children and young people with mental health disorders. Failure to treat mental health disorders in children can have a devastating impact.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| In Blackburn with Darwen, the inpatient admission rate for mental health disorders is 91.0 per 100,000 of the 0-17 population, compared to a national rate of 88.3 and a regional rate of 104.3. | In Blackpool, the inpatient admission rate for mental health disorders is 138.4 per 100,000 of the 0-17 population, compared to a national rate of 88.3 and a regional rate of 104.3. | In Lancashire, the inpatient admission rate for mental health disorders is 94.1 per 100,000 of the 0-17 population, compared to a national rate of 88.3 and a regional rate of 104.3. |
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Percentage of households with dependent children or pregnant women who are homeless¹⁵ – Every child has a right to an adequate standard of living. Children from homeless households are often the most vulnerable.

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| In Blackburn with Darwen, 0.6% of households with dependent children or pregnant woman are homeless compared to 1.0% regionally and 1.7% nationally. | In Blackpool, 0.3% of households with dependent children or pregnant woman are homeless compared to 1.0% regionally and 1.7% nationally. | In Lancashire, 0.4% of households with dependent children or pregnant woman are homeless compared to 1.0% regionally and 1.7% nationally. |
|--|--|---|

Finance and Benefits

Percentage of all school children who have free school meals¹⁶ – The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals. This measure is a proxy measure for the number of children from low income families. Poverty can, but is not always, be associated with neglect.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| In Blackburn with Darwen, 14.8% of all school children have free school meals compared to 16.0% regionally and 13.5% nationally | In Blackpool, 25.3% of all school children have free school meals compared to 16.0% regionally and 13.5% nationally | In Lancashire, 13.4% of all school children have free school meals compared to 16.0% regionally and 13.5% nationally |
|---|---|--|

Percentage of adults claiming benefits¹⁷ – This information indicates the health of the labour market and the demand for support from the Welfare State.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| As of 10/09/2020, 8.2% of the working age population were claiming benefits in Blackburn with Darwen compared to 6.6% nationally and 7.1% regionally. | As of 10/09/2020, 11.7% of the working age population were claiming benefits in Blackpool compared to 6.6% nationally and 7.1% regionally. | As of 10/09/2020, 6.0% of the working age population were claiming benefits in Lancashire compared to 6.6% nationally and 7.1% regionally. |
|---|--|--|

¹²Social, emotional, mental health needs – 2018 – Fingertips Public Health data – Long Term conditions and complex health

¹³Special Educational Needs – 2018 – Fingertips Public Health data – Long Term conditions and complex health

¹⁴Hospital Admissions for Mental Health Needs – 2018/19 – Public Health data – Long Terms conditions and complex health

¹⁵Family homelessness – 2017/18 – Fingertips Public Health data – Child Health Profiles

¹⁶School meals – 2018 – Fingertips Public Health data – school age children, supplementary indicators

¹⁷Adults claiming benefits – 10/09/2020 – the data is very recent and may be impacted by COVID19 www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/datasets/claimantcountbyunitaryandlocalauthorityexperimental

Our response to Covid 19

The safeguarding partners, through the CSAP executive, responded quickly to the safeguarding threat raised by the first national lockdown. Throughout the period they received reports on any changes in the volume or type of contacts that they were receiving, with more detailed information being reviewed for emerging areas of concern, for example, a reduction in missing from home episodes being reported and the work of Operation Encompass during lockdown. The CSAP executive agreed to become the children's subgroup of the Lancashire Resilience Forum (LRF) Humanitarian cell, on which the CSAP Independent Scrutineer represented the safeguarding partners. In doing so he was able to ensure that consistent multi-agency safeguarding messages were disseminated and provided a further layer of assurance and scrutiny on practice during Covid-19. Issues that have been raised include concern about growing numbers of domestic abuse referrals and oversight from a community safety partnership perspective, and concern about increase in acuity of children's safeguarding referrals, including malnutrition. The safeguarding partners have responded to these emerging risks through a public domestic abuse campaign, raising practitioner awareness about neglect, especially with Support Workers in Community Hubs, and raising awareness with regard to mental health of children and young people.

At the end of the reporting period the impact of the lockdown for children in Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire is yet to be fully understood. Emerging work, for example in respect of the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children, is indicative of potential long term negative impacts. The safeguarding partners will continue to monitor data to identify any emerging safeguarding issues arising from lockdown. More positively, the pandemic has also driven changes in operational responses allowing new ways of working with children to be developed and closer working relationships to be developed, for example through weekly partnership operational meetings in Blackpool, the Education Response team in Blackburn with Darwen and the Family Safeguarding model in Lancashire. Operationally, Lancashire Constabulary maintained their front line responses to incidents throughout the pandemic and were therefore able to access family homes to see children. To support this their internal 'Think Child' campaign was reframed as 'How's the child – be their lockdown lifeline'. Health colleagues supported this approach through the provision of a 24/7 mental health helpline and through health IDVAs attending domestic abuse incidents alongside police colleagues as part of Operation Provide in Blackpool and Lancaster.

LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

Arrangements for learning from practice

Working Together requires the safeguarding partners to make arrangements to review serious child safeguarding cases, and others where there may be learning, in order to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents. Rapid review meetings, held within 15 days of the incident coming to the attention of the safeguarding partners, will gather facts about the case, identify whether any immediate action is required to secure the child's safety, whether there is any immediate learning, and whether a local or national Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) is warranted. Where a decision is taken to commission a local CSPR this will be led by an Independent Reviewer using a systems methodology, and will seek to involve practitioners and family members, including surviving children. Final review reports will be published. Learning extracted from the case at any stage during the process will be acted on and disseminated to agencies and practitioners as soon as is possible.

Serious child safeguarding cases (SCSC) notified to the safeguarding partners during the reporting period by locality:

| | SCSC notifications received | Rapid Review Meetings held | Local CSPR commissioned |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Blackburn with Darwen | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Blackpool | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Lancashire | 13 | 11 | 5 |

As a consequence of the Covid 19 pandemic the national CSPR Panel relaxed the expectation that CSPR would be completed and published within six months of their being commissioned. The 7 local CSPR commissioned during the reporting period were therefore all ongoing at its end.

Learning themes from the 15 notifications received have included non-accidental injury (NAI) and abusive head trauma in infants under one year of age was, alongside the role of fathers and significant other males within a family. This is a theme that has been seen in previously commissioned Serious Case Reviews in Blackpool and Lancashire. As a result of this the I-CON Campaign was launched in May 2019 and continues to be embedded across the multi-disciplinary workforce by the Pan-Lancashire Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). The campaign supports practitioners to provide information and advice to new parents about how to cope with crying babies. Additionally, CSAP will await the learning and recommendations from the National CSPR into NAI of children under one year of age and the role of fathers and will produce an action plan with multi-agency partners on how to address the issues raised and implement any learning identified.

Suicide was a common theme amongst young people and will feed into the Child Death National Mortality Database national review and the North West CDOP Group suicide thematic report focussing on Adverse Childhood Experiences and Children Looked After.

Three of the commissioned local CSPR relate to neglect and the interim learning from these has been used to influence the work of the operational groups, noted above. Cross border

working between agencies to safeguard children has also been identified as a theme in the current reporting year and the CSAP Business Unit is due to undertake a piece of work to better understand this.

Finally, issues were raised around elective home education and a lack of any mechanism for any reception age children who don't apply for a school place and also young people who drop out of school after a very short period of time. Learning from Rapid Review Meetings is passed to the relevant group either within CSAP or externally, with single agency actions monitored by the business unit.

LSCB were given a grace period of one year to complete and publish outstanding Serious Case Reviews, after which they were required to hand them over to the safeguarding partners. This period ended on the 29th September 2020, at which point Blackpool LSCB handed material relating to 2 SCR to the safeguarding partners and Lancashire LSCB 11. The safeguarding partners will review this material and make a decision as to how best to use it to transparently secure learning that improves outcomes for children. Full details in this respect will be included in the next CSAP annual report.

Workforce Development

The safeguarding partners are required to consider what multi-agency safeguarding training is required locally and make arrangements to evaluate the effectiveness of that which is commissioned.

As would be expected training provision has been significantly disrupted by the Covid 19 pandemic. The reporting period has nevertheless been one of considerable progress in the development of the training offer that will enable the delivery of high quality multi-agency training in future years irrespective of circumstances.

This work has been driven by the Learning and Development subgroup, who initially sought to co-ordinate and consolidate the training offer of the three LSCBs (training was and continues to be delivered to the children's and adults' workforces in conjunction with the three LSAB). Over this period face to face training continued to be delivered, albeit with an increasing focus on the three CSAP priority areas of contextual safeguarding, neglect and domestic abuse. This was with the (ongoing) intention to deliver one training programme across the area, through a multi-agency training pool, with some allowance for variations in content and courses to meet local needs.

Face to face training abruptly ended in March 2020, after which there has been a focus on developing both the technological means and content to deliver virtual training. Priority has been given to courses relating to the three CSAP priority areas (and their LSAB equivalents), although other courses, for example, Problematic Gambling have been hosted where this has been easily possible.

A half day 'Domestic Abuse: Impact on Children' course (alongside an adults equivalent) has been written to be delivered by trainers from the safeguarding partners and commissioned DA services, who have been grouped into three locality teams. This will initially be delivered virtually from January 2021 on a monthly basis, but has been written to be able to be converted to face to face delivery once this is resumed. Awareness raising for the wider workforce will be supported through the development of 'Talking Head' videos, which will be made available on the CSAP website. The first two will cover Domestic Violence Protection

Orders and Notices, and Clare's Law. In the meantime two virtual DA courses are being delivered on a monthly basis by an experienced commissioned trainer who specialises in DA and coercive control.

The face to face 'Identifying and Overcoming Childhood Neglect' training that was already in the process of being developed, has been converted into a one day virtual course, delivered by a commissioned trainer on a monthly basis since June. The training covers the multi-agency neglect strategies and aims to increase practitioners' confidence to identify and address neglect. Practitioners are also able to access the 'Self-neglect Awareness and Pathway' courses, which while adult focussed is of relevance to the children's workforce, while Graded Care Profile 2 assessment tool training is provided to Blackpool practitioners.

A one day Contextual Safeguarding course has been developed building on material from previous child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, modern day slavery and missing from home courses. It is currently being delivered as two half day virtual courses, with the longer term intention of it becoming a full day face to face course. Due to having three multi-agency contextual safeguarding teams operating in the area the course will be based on locality. This was in place for Blackpool based practitioners by the end of the reporting period, with content and a training pool being established for wider delivery in 2021.

In total 347 practitioners attended virtual training between 1st June 2020 and the end of the reporting period (this does include some courses with an adult safeguarding focus), which is a considerable achievement given the need to develop content and technological means. During the forthcoming year work will be required to develop more rigorous means of evaluating training, including the impact on practice. In the meantime participants at virtual training are asked for an on the day evaluation:

"Child Exploitation section was really informative and well delivered. Lots of useful information and scenarios discussed"

"Virtual training is definitely the new way it was very effective and worked well, it means we will be able to link with more professionals further afield and learn more"

"The up to date content and the actual real life examples bring this course alive"

"The fact that the course included Blackburn as an area, as opposed to being the usual generalised statistics and information"

CSAP's formal training is supported by a wide ranging e-learning offer. Following a review of the three LSCBs' previous e-learning offers a decision was taken to consolidate this onto the Blackburn with Darwen platform, which was made available to practitioners in Blackpool and Lancashire. This includes Level 1 and 2 Safeguarding Children training, courses in respect of each CSAP priority area and other specific areas of safeguarding practice.

CSAP has continued to promote good practice through the publication of 7 Minute Briefings¹⁹, which may be prompted by changes to guidance and legislation, learning from reviews, or emerging safeguarding themes. Briefings published in the reporting have included Concealed and Denied Pregnancy, and the Mental Capacity Act and 16 and 17 year olds. In response to specific areas of concern during the initial Covid 19 lockdown, 7 minute briefings were produced covering Covid 19 and Professional Curiosity, and Covid 19 and Safeguarding for Volunteers, together with a poster for professionals and the public to promote the reporting of concerns about neglect.

Online Safeguarding

The safeguarding partners employ a specialist online safety advisor in order to ensure that good practice is identified and disseminated, in what is a rapidly changing area of practice. Online safeguarding has seen a range of activity over the reporting period and challenges for children continue to develop at a pace, both in terms of scope and complexity. The quality of advice and guidance for schools, and the wider workforce, continues to be a challenge, as the number and range of opportunist providers broadens. However, the period has also seen a significant increase in practitioner engagement with the CSAP provision, which demonstrates a continuing need for balanced and informed expertise in an increasingly complex and high-profile safeguarding area.

The well-established Online Safety Live sessions, delivered by colleagues from the UK Safer Internet Centre, were delivered in January 2020. Over 400 delegates from across the children's workforce attended five sessions across the geographical area and feedback was once again been hugely positive, both in terms of the content delivered by UK Safer Internet Centre partners and the continued hosting by CSAP. The sessions were again used as an opportunity to formally survey delegates in terms of the issues experienced and support required which are used as an invaluable evidential dataset to support and inform future approaches.

The advent of Covid-19 restrictions has seen a considerable increase in engagement with CSAP's online provision, specifically through the CSAP Twitter presence (a 500%+ increase). In response to significant local and national concerns regarding heightened online risks during



lockdown restrictions, a 2-week Online Safety campaign was conducted during April and May which saw in excess of 16,000 engagements across North West England, the wider UK and EU. The highly-popular CSAP publication - Making Sense of... Keeping Children Safe in Education was updated in August 2020 to reflect the latest developments in the Department for Education's statutory guidance, along with the release of the CSAP Governor Online Safety Self Review Tool²⁰. Both publications, now in their fourth editions, continue to attract significant attention both within and outside of the CSAP area.

Online Safeguarding, by its nature, continues to develop and evolve with an ever-increasing profile. It is anticipated that this will continue to increase as the UK Government's Online Harms White Paper progresses and further focus is seen on Social Media platforms and potential regulations to help keep children safe online.

CHANGES TO PUBLISHED ARRANGEMENTS

As would be expected in the development of any complex partnership structure, there has been a degree of finessing of the arrangements for CSAP during its first year of operation, as a result of which there have been a number of changes to the original published arrangements²¹. Working Together (2018) requires that these changes are set out within the annual report, together with timescales for implementation.

The published arrangements included a somewhat different subgroup structure than that which has been adopted. Instead of the original envisaged Policy and Planning, Quality Assurance and Performance Monitoring, and Communications and Engagement subgroups, CSAP has agreed a subgroup structure primarily based on the three safeguarding priorities of contextual safeguarding, neglect and domestic abuse (groups are on local authority boundaries, resulting in a total of nine operational groups). These groups will be responsible for the policy and planning, communications and quality assurance work in respect of their priority. This structure will be in place by the end of 2020. The Learning and Development subgroup has not met during the Covid period, but will be reinstated when circumstances allow. Finally, the Business Management Group has not been established due to there being no identified need for additional co-ordination of work. See appendix A for the revised governance structure.

The safeguarding partners agreed from the outset of CSAP arrangements to reduce the membership of the Executive Board to solely the Safeguarding Partners, with the focus of relevant agencies' involvement being in tactical and operational groups. It was also agreed that there would be no representation of Elected Members on the Executive Board. As the focus of CSAP developed a number of the initially named relevant agencies have ceased to be involved in the formal arrangements, although this is not to say that their operational responsibilities to safeguard children alongside multi-agency partners is in any way diminished. These are local universities, Cafcass, British Transport Police and Border Authorities, and Local Authority Adult Social Care.

In order to maintain the independence of the role, the safeguarding partners have agreed that the Independent Scrutineer will no longer chair the tactical groups from January 2021. The groups will be chaired by a representative of the safeguarding partners, in the first instance

²⁰Schools & the Children's Workforce - Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board

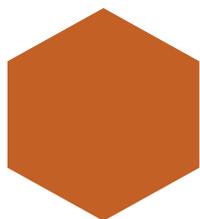
²¹ BwD-BP-Lancs-Safeguarding_CDR-Arrangements-FINAL-screen-June-2019.pdf (lancshiresafeguarding.org.uk)

this will be the Directors of Children's Services for Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire at East, North and Central tactical groups, respectively. Co-ordination of the tactical groups will be provided by the Executive Board to which the Directors of Children's Services will report.

Finally, the published arrangements make reference to a range of quality assurance activity, including seeking single agency self-evaluations, multi-agency auditing and engagement with multi-agency practitioners. As a consequence of the focus on establishing arrangements to address the safeguarding priority areas and to respond to the Covid 19 pandemic, this quality assurance activity has been delayed but will be set in motion in forthcoming months.

PRIORITIES FOR 2020/21

During the forthcoming year CSAP will maintain its current safeguarding priority areas of contextual safeguarding, neglect and domestic abuse; working to fully establish its governance structures in this respect and to deliver the associated action plans. This is not to say that these priorities are set in stone and all partner agencies are actively encouraged to report emerging safeguarding issues into tactical groups, where consideration can be given to the need for a CSAP response. Indeed, following the year end the safeguarding partners agreed to add a fourth priority area of understanding and mitigating the risks to children that have emerged as a consequence of the Covid 19 pandemic. There will be an increasing focus on the quality assurance functions of CSAP including single agency self-evaluations, multi-agency audits and performance framework monitoring. As this becomes more established we will seek to better understand the effectiveness of our work through the most important lens of its impact on our children.



INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY

As the independent scrutineer I am able to confirm that this annual report provides an accurate reflection of the work carried out by the Safeguarding Partners from the beginning of October 2019 to the end of September 2020.

Since March 2020 the work of the partners has, of course, taken place under the shadow of the Covid 19 pandemic. Large parts of the county of Lancashire have been under the strictest of restrictions for most of the year. This has clearly had a major impact on safeguarding and the way in which protection is provided to our vulnerable children and families. I make further comment on the arrangements and how they have been adapted later in this section.

The pandemic has also impacted upon the scrutiny process. I have had to ensure that undertaking effective scrutiny was balanced and proportionate given the huge demands being made upon partners. It is to the credit of all partners and other relevant agencies that there has remained a real focus on scrutiny and a real willingness to ensure that this process has been maintained throughout.

In fulfilling my role, I have regular meetings with the three local authority lead members, chief executives and council leaders; senior police officers, including the Chief Constable; and with Directors of CCGs and senior safeguarding officers from health

commissioners and providers. In addition, I have one to one meetings with each member of the Executive Board. I have had one to one meetings with two district council chief executives and, as a member of the community recovery cell of the Local Resilience Forum, have direct contact with all of the district councils. I have attended a number of other partnership meetings including the Health and Wellbeing Boards, the Local Resilience Forum and Council Scrutiny Panels. I have not had the opportunity to meet with as many children and young people as I would like, and this is an area for my personal development this year, although a degree of care will be needed to ensure that this is meaningful and groups are representative of a diverse cohort of children.

Key themes

Structure

It should not be underestimated what has been achieved by the Safeguarding Partners and relevant agencies. Partners across three upper tier local authority areas, eight CCGs and one police force have combined the work of three LSCBs to create a new structure. This was an ambitious decision and has taken considerable work to embed. The structure in place has developed into a robust one in which partners are able to agree and action child safeguarding arrangements. The structure of the partnership consists of three key groups



as described below. These three groups are at different stages of development. The structure of the Safeguarding Partnership is fit for purpose and represents a model that fits with the legal requirements of section 16 and 17 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the statutory guidance in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (as amended). The structure also provides a robust structure in which safeguarding strategies and positive outcomes can be achieved. There are areas for further development and despite competing pressures partners are holding a development day in January 2021 to review progress of the scrutiny process.

Executive Board

The Executive Board consists of senior member of each Safeguarding Partner. Those members have been able to make decisions on behalf of their agency. The Board membership is restricted to the three statutory partners. Meetings have taken place on a flexible basis with short one hour meetings taking place weekly during key periods, and reverting to monthly meetings at other times. This flexibility is a strength that has proved to be of value to partners. This approach has been particularly beneficial during this period and it is intended that this approach will be maintained through the next year.

There has been considerable work undertaken to develop clear scrutiny processes. This work is complete, but both myself and partners are aware that levels of scrutiny need to be increased.

Membership of the board has not been considered since inception and it is now being reviewed, to consider whether current membership is optimum for delivering positive outcomes on the key priorities.

Tactical Groups

There are three local tactical groups in place and meetings are well attended. During this period much of the focus has been on Covid-19 related issues. There have been important areas of work discussed. One example being child suicide; where partners resolved issues relating to governance that has seen a more streamlined response to suicide prevention. The partnership priorities have remained an agenda item at each meeting.

Membership of the tactical groups has largely been based on the membership of the previous LSCB. As a result, there have been high levels of attendance at meetings and a very broad range of both safeguarding partners and relevant agencies attend these meetings. Membership is currently being reviewed.

I have been responsible for chairing these meetings over this set up period but it has been agreed that a senior partner will now chair these meetings.

Operational and Other Groups

Each tactical group area has an operational group for each priority area. A chair is in place for each of these groups and initial meetings have taken place.

It was agreed that partners would build on operational groups already in existence in each of the tactical group areas. This was a pragmatic approach taken by partners. Groups already existed and it was seen as sensible to build on these. Good examples are the work around domestic abuse in Blackburn with Darwen and the Awaken (contextual safeguarding) team in Blackpool. This picture is repeated across all of the operational groups. It was a pragmatic approach to get these groups working and to ensure that the tactical groups were able to move forward.

In addition to the operational groups, there is also a contextual safeguarding strategic board. This board provides a real emphasis on this issue and has developed an action plan for the operational groups.

There is currently a review underway across all three local authority areas as to the structures for the governance of domestic abuse issues. This is, in part, driven by the likely requirements of the Domestic Abuse Bill when it is enacted. There needs to be more clarity in this area which I hope the review will provide.

Each Director of Children's Services currently chairs a Children and Family Partnership Board or equivalent. These are multiagency groups and much of their work focusses on issues that fall outside of the remit of the CSAP. Whilst there is considerable crossover I have been invited on to these Boards as an observer and it is clear that they are now dovetailing with the work of CSAP.

Priorities

The three priorities were determined following detailed discussions between safeguarding partners. There is little doubt in my mind that these three priorities are entirely justified.

There is evidence across all three areas that considerable work is being undertaken to improve outcomes in the priority areas. However, more needs to be done to understand this work and whether there are any gaps in service provision.

The CSAP should be regarded by partners as an opportunity to highlight the strong safeguarding work they are undertaking. This will enable partners to learn from each other. It would be useful to use CSAP as a depository for good practice. This will be especially useful in understanding how practice is improving.

Neglect

Each area has a neglect operational group feeding into the tactical groups. There is a neglect strategy in each area, but these are based on local authority boundaries. Whilst these strategies are appropriate it would be useful for partners if they could be combined into a single strategy. This would particularly help those agencies whose frontline staff work across borders. There needs to be a better understanding of the overall picture of neglect in the CSAP area. This will be critical once society returns to a more normal state.

Whilst the local authorities have taken the lead around this issue other partners are playing a significant role and are able to identify improvements in the way front line staff are able to identify neglect and make referrals for the appropriate support.

Partners have recently agreed to undertake a neglect multi-agency audit which will be undertaken in the second quarter of 2021.

Domestic Abuse

There is evidence of considerable work being put in place around domestic abuse. Examples of this work include:

- Operation Encompass
- Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising Campaign
- MARAC review
- Targeted work by the VRN in prisons and in custody office interventions

Due to the number of domestic abuse groups and forums in operation across the three local authority areas, CSAP initially sought to further understand the governance arrangements in place between such groups and seek assurance that approaches were aligned with legislation and the Domestic Abuse Bill. A scoping exercise was completed, setting out the various groups, their terms of reference, membership and reporting mechanisms. Responses to this exercise demonstrated that further work was required and this is now in progress to review and refresh approaches across the county.

Contextual Safeguarding

The Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Board has been established and deals with all issues relating to contextual safeguarding. The Board has terms of reference and takes the strategic lead on behalf of CSAP in this area. An action plan has been developed with clear expectations around outcomes. This Board ensures that local operational groups are able to work together to achieve the required outcomes.

It has been identified that whilst there have been a number of high profile and successful prosecutions in this area there remains concern that the full picture around child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, modern day slavery and missing from home was not complete. As a result, partners have agreed to fund an analyst for an initial period of two years to produce a problem profile. This should ensure that gaps in knowledge and understanding are filled and partners are able to match their response to the needs of children at risk in this area.

The Journey of the Child

This area of work concerns the child protection process and examines the effectiveness of statutory processes for children who are subject to child protection. Each of the three local authority areas currently have in place a Getting to Good or Improvement Boards. For example, Blackpool have in place a Getting to Good Board. This Board is required as the local authority is currently graded as 'inadequate' by Ofsted and is on an improvement journey monitored by the Department for Education. There is an independent chair of this Board and I have been invited to it. This board looks at multi-agency processes as well as the work of Children's Services. The depth of analysis of performance data and the standard of that analysis is exceptional. I have experience of a number of authorities who have been in this position and the effectiveness of the Getting to Good Board is the best I have experienced. This has resulted in sustained and rapid improvement in Children's Services and a step change in the engagement of partners in the child protection system.

There are similar arrangements in place in both Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen local authority areas albeit the emphasis is slightly different given that neither of these authorities is in any form of intervention. I am confident that these three Boards are able to provide the correct level of assurance in the child protection system and areas for improvement are identified and dealt with.

Voice of the child

The partnership and this includes the independent scrutineer need to consider how they are to better include the 'voice of the child' in their work. All partners engage with children, young people and families but both the CSAP and independent scrutineer need to formalise this process.

Scrutiny

Process

The scrutiny process is in place and has been agreed. This year has been one of development, and whilst it has been important to get building blocks in place there now needs to be an acceleration in this process. Developing the systems and processes has been important and challenging, especially at the time of a pandemic, but that development is complete, and I intend as the independent scrutineer to increase the level of scrutiny this year.

Independent scrutineer

I have been provided with an open invitation to multi-agency partnership meetings and have found all agencies to be open and transparent in their provision of information and documentation. I am able to undertake my role in the way that statutory provision allows.

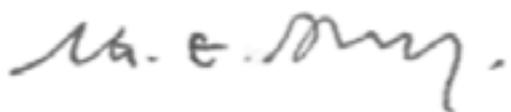
Working under Covid-19 restrictions

In March partners immediately adapted their responses to prioritise vulnerable children and families. Each of the three Children's Services maintained face to face work with vulnerable families and put in place robust staffing structures to deal with staff shortages and a projected increase in demand. The work of our health services is well documented but in addition to the demands of the pandemic, ante-natal and post-natal work has continued. The police service identified high risk areas, in particular domestic violence and criminal and sexual abuse.

Partners worked closely with the Local Resilience Forum.

Conclusion

There is a huge amount of very positive work being undertaken by partners in an environment that none of us has ever experienced. The development of new safeguarding arrangements has progressed well, despite the circumstances, and the processes that have been developed should provide a good foundation for more focussed scrutiny next year.

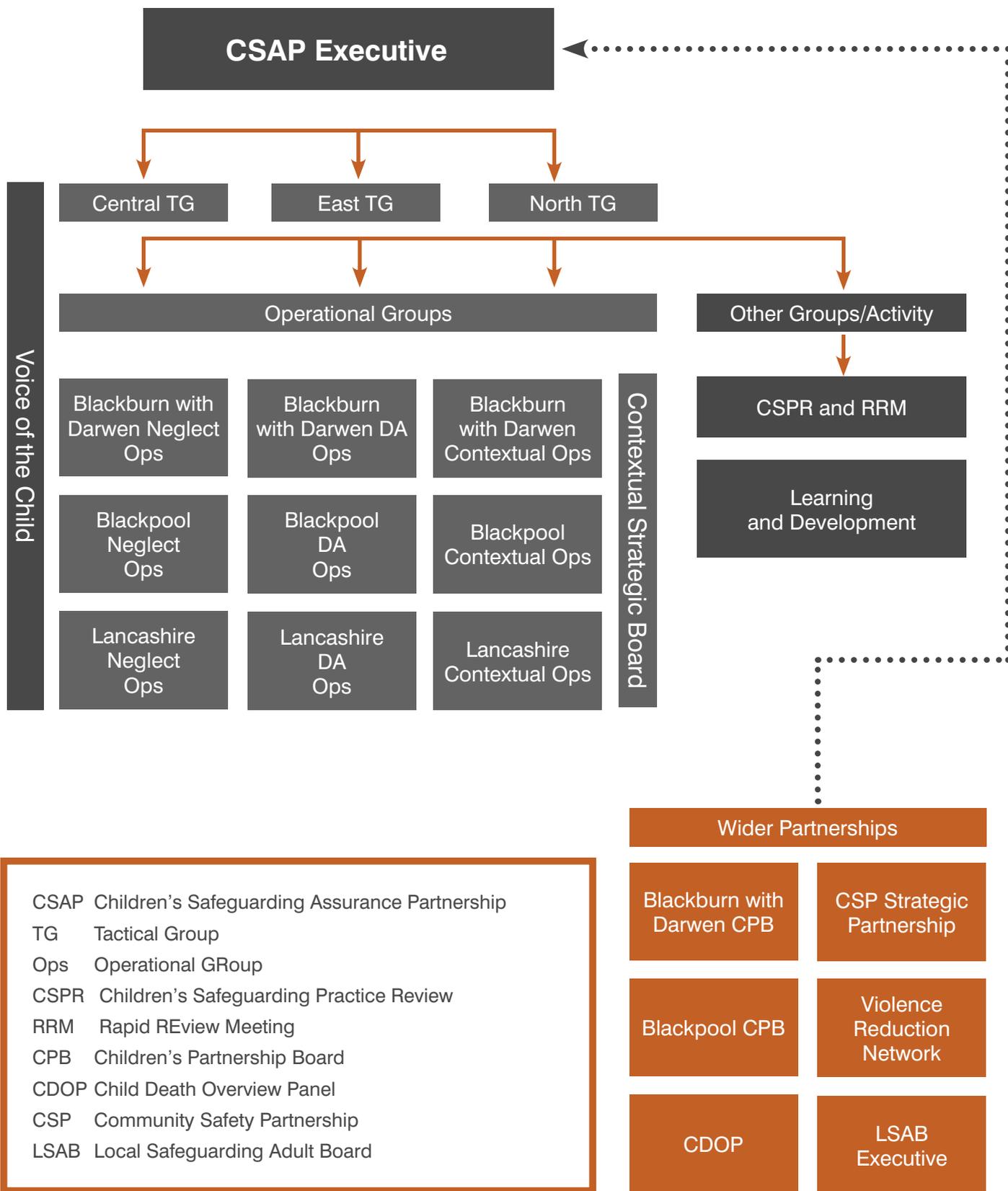


Steve Ashley

Independent Scrutineer

Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire CSAP

APPENDIX - GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



GLOSSARY

| | |
|-------|---|
| CCE | Child Criminal Exploitation |
| CCG | Clinical Commissioning Group |
| CDOP | Child Death Overview Panel |
| CSAP | Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership |
| CSE | Child Sexual Exploitation |
| CSPR | Child Safeguarding Practice Review |
| DA | Domestic Abuse |
| DEM | Daily Exploited and Missing (meeting) |
| LCSP | Lancashire Community Safety Partnership |
| LRF | Lancashire Resilience Forum |
| LSAB | Local Safeguarding Adults Board |
| LSCB | Local Safeguarding Children Board |
| Marac | Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference |
| NAI | Non Accidental Injury |
| SCR | Serious Case Review |
| SCSC | Serious Child Safeguarding Case |
| VRN | Violence Reduction Network |
| YJS | Youth Justice Service |

NOTES



CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING ASSURANCE PARTNERSHIP

Annual Report for the year ending
30th September 2020

For Blackburn with Darwen,
Blackpool and Lancashire

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Report to: | CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| Relevant Officer: | Philip Thompson, Head of SEND and Early Years |
| Date of Meeting: | 22 April 2021 |

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY LOCAL PROVISION

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide an update in relation to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) theme of: 'To develop a continuance of local provision and services to meet the needs of children with SEND.'

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 For the Scrutiny Committee to have oversight of progress made in the area of SEND local provision in order to provide scrutiny, challenge and support.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

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

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

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

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 There are no options to be considered at this time, this report is an update on progress so far.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

6.0 Background information

6.1 **Priority Two of the SEND Strategy - To develop a continuance of local provision and services to meet the needs of children with SEND.**

- In November 2020 the Council received a national award for parental engagement in developing the local offer and provision.
- The consultation with Mainstream Schools to open SEN provision units in their schools went well and five successful applications were received:
- Marton has opened a provision for children with Autism and complex needs for 32 pupils with

Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.

- Mereside will offer a respite provision for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) for 12 pupils.
- Thames has opened a provision for children with SEMH for 12 pupils with EHC plans
- Boundary will open a provision for children with SEMH for 12 pupils with EHC plans in January 2022.
- Revoe has opened a provision for children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and complex needs for 12 pupils with EHC plans.

There are currently no provisions at secondary level as yet but talks are ongoing with these headteachers.

The Lotus Free School for children aged 10-16 is now open and has 21 pupils across years six, seven and eight.

Department for Education approval is still awaited for the changes in status for the schools with the resource provisions, however all school have agreed to open and continue whilst dfe approval is sought.

6.2 **Post-16 Provision**

The Council is working with Special School partners in consideration to extending the estate of the special schools to The Oracle building on St Anne's Road. This provision will create a post-16 centre of excellence for SEND, support the reduction of those Not In Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in Blackpool and support young people into college or work. Discussions are still ongoing around this provision and it is hoped that a further update can be provided soon.

6.3 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 **List of Appendices:**

7.1 None.

8.0 **Financial considerations:**

8.1 The financial implication for the resource provisions have been agreed by the Schools Forum and will be funded through the High Needs Block.

9.0 **Legal considerations:**

9.1 Children and Families Act 2014 compliance is covered by the SEN Strategy.

10.0 **Risk management considerations:**

10.1 There are no decisions to be taken with the report but the risk of the Council not meeting statutory requirements for children with SEND is significant and can impact the Council financially and impact its reputation.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 Children and young people with disabilities have protected characteristics under the Equality Act. Implementing the SEND Strategy fulfils the Council's legal obligation to protect young people with disabilities receive an education.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 Sustainability is covered in the SEND strategy.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 Internal and external consultations have taken place on this priority of the SEND strategy.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None

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|--------------------------|--|
| Report to: | CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| Relevant Officer: | Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services - Education |
| Date of Meeting: | 22 April 2021 |

BLACKPOOL LITERACY STRATEGY

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the Blackpool Literacy Strategy prior to approval by the Executive, subject to any final amendments and additions.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 It is recommended that the Literacy Strategy be supported by the Committee as the strategy is integral to Blackpool's continuing improvement as a town.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 The Literacy Strategy has been co-produced with Scrutiny Committee Members and wider stakeholder groups. It is integral to the 2020/2030 education vision which has been supported, previously by the Committee.

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

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

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 Continue with the current situation, in the absence of a Literacy Strategy, maintaining the status-quo.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

6.0 Background information

6.1 It is proposed that Blackpool works towards the goals and aims that are outlined in this Literacy Strategy. The Strategy will be monitored by the Blackpool Education Improvement Board, the Opportunity Area Board and the Children and Families Strategic Partnership Board. This will be through the leadership of Council Officers such as the Director of Children's Services and the Assistant

Director – Education. Blackpool is still a statistical outlier in terms of educational achievement and standards of literacy across the town, despite recent improvements. This Strategy is integral to maintaining the progress that the town has made and to improving life chances.

6.2 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 9(a) – Blackpool Literacy Strategy

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 None.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 There is significant risk in not adopting the Literacy Strategy as the future life chances of our children and the adults in Blackpool depend upon high quality educational outcomes.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 All Blackpool residents must be able to access the workplace and or further and higher education offers. Currently, a proportion of Blackpool’s population, which is higher than the national average, is excluded from these opportunities. This Literacy Strategy seeks to address this issue.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 Extensive consultation has been undertaken with stakeholders including Councillors, Headteachers and Academy representatives.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

Literacy for life - A journey of joy, discovery and understanding

A place-based approach to improving literacy,
oracy and digital communication in Blackpool 2020-2030



A challenge that can only be completed in partnership

Everybody has a part to play in raising levels of literacy. There must be a clear partnership between schools and families, health, businesses, charities and all elements of a community to really make a difference. Working in isolation dilutes the impact and slows down the processes.

Our collective aim is that everyone who lives in Blackpool is confident at speaking, listens well, enjoys reading and writes with clarity and in detail. These are big ambitions and a big task. We know that many adults wish they could read, write and talk in public more confidently. They understand that these skills help us to enjoy life more and enable us to understand new ideas, helping us to put forward our own thoughts and dreams. They also understand that being confident in oracy and literacy can help us to secure a good job and even help us to start up our own business.

Being good at speaking and listening and reading and writing are important in many ways and their impact is felt throughout everyone's lives.

Becoming literate starts very early on. Children experience a wide range of words and conversations, are encouraged to join in with nursery rhymes and are shown how to handle books. The role of adults in the family is crucial because they are the child's first and most important teacher. If adults are not confident in reading, writing, speaking and listening it will impact on the child. This is why we have called our approach 'Literacy for Life' because to improve oracy and literacy across the town we will need to mobilise everyone from the youngest to the oldest. As they say, it is never too late to start!



Executive summary

To be replaced - awaiting copy.

This ten-year Educational Vision goes hand in hand with the Town Prospectus '2030 Agenda for Change'. A clear vision of how we will improve educational outcomes for children underpins everything we are striving to achieve for the residents and the town of Blackpool.

This Educational Vision highlights the need to focus on improving outcomes at all ages and phases, so that children thrive and achieve their potential in adulthood. The journey starts with the family and with pre-school settings. It continues through school, then college and into the world of training and work. If we all play our part in supporting this journey then children and families will flourish, along with our town. It is our collaborative endeavour that will make the difference.

The document sets out priorities and ways of working that will enable us to achieve this vision.

In summary, our collaborative effort is required to focus on:

- Improving outcomes by addressing **standards of literacy**. We want children to have good language and communication skills from an early age so that they thrive and are ready for school. We also want them to develop their literacy and oracy skills through their school years so that they can access the curriculum and become proficient readers, writers, and speakers. They will use these skills to love reading, pass examinations, enter the world of work and training, and achieve great things. We believe that we can all help with this endeavour. Not only in our schools and colleges but in our libraries, communities, homes, and businesses. You can sign up to our literacy pledge and help us achieve our ambitions.
- Promoting **inclusive practice**. We want children from Blackpool to attend school and college regularly and to benefit from everything that is on offer to them. We also want more Blackpool children taught in Blackpool schools and not educated out of the town, with fewer children excluded from school. For all pupils there will be appropriate provision, which means that they will gain success when they are adults. More children will be in education and training or in the world of work when they are older. You can help us to achieve this in so many ways. The inclusion strategy in this document sets out the details of how.
- **Developing a place-based approach** will encourage schools and agencies to work together in a geographical area, to build upon the assets and strengths of the communities, and to collaborate fully in tackling the shared challenges. In this way children and families will receive bespoke support for the needs in their neighbourhood and will play their own part in building better and stronger communities. This will require the **voice of the young person** to be not only heard, but listened to, and used to shape the services for their area. **Three geographical areas** have been identified. Schools and colleges are at the heart of this place based approach and will be working cross phase so that the early years settings, primary, secondary and post 16 providers share their practice to improve outcomes for children and young people in their area. This **place-based** approach will mean that schools will be working closely with the agencies in their area, to implement an early help approach to issues and challenges, and to collaborate so that children and families benefit and thrive. Wherever your place is in Blackpool, please get involved and be part of this approach.
- **Joining up** the different programmes and funding streams. Blackpool has benefited over recent years from a number of programmes and funding streams. Hopefully, through our '2030-Agenda for Change' there will be more of these in the future. We need to continue to ensure they these are joined up and coordinated. In this way we can maximise the resource to help us address Blackpool's priorities. We can support schools and communities in a bespoke way and help them to build capacity to share good practice and tackle issues collectively, and for themselves. We want to ensure the legacy of recent Opportunity Area, Better Start and HeadStart programmes is maximised and the benefits are felt for many years to come, so that families, communities and businesses do well, and Blackpool is a great place to live and work. We can all play our part in this.

We hope this short summary rallies you to join us in our collective endeavour. Please take time to read this important document so that you can fully understand the role you can play in helping us bring this Educational Vision 2020- 2030 to life.

Neil Jack
Chief Executive

Cllr Lynn Williams
Leader of Blackpool Council



We have momentum but need to improve further

Blackpool has long been regarded as a town with a lot of social and economic challenges. But things are changing. The Council's 2030 Agenda for Action provides an ambitious vision for the future with more jobs, better homes, more employment for 16-24 year olds and an improved perception of Blackpool as a 'can do' place. The Council has agreed with its partners to focus on three Priority Areas, one of which is Literacy.

Our Early Years settings, primary schools, secondary schools, Post 16 provision, special schools and alternative provision are improving strongly, with nearly all judged as good or better by Ofsted. Additionally, Blackpool Adult Learning provision is also judged as good. This sadly doesn't mean that all children are good at literacy and oracy. We know that some settings need to focus even more on these skills so that all children and young people benefit from the joy, discovery and understanding that come from being confident at speaking and listening and reading and writing. We want to encourage more cooperation between Early Years settings and their feeder primary schools and encourage even higher expectations in the training of staff for Early Years settings.

Much good work is underway, including a successful Literacy Project for younger students in secondary schools, Better Start's literacy family learning project and the considerable efforts of an English Hub. Blackpool Libraries have always been at the heart of local communities across the town, but recently they have developed a 4 year Ambition Plan, which redoubles their efforts to become 'the living room of the community.'

The town has many amazing businesses including some with a national and international reputation for excellence. These businesses contribute much to the fabric of our town, providing employment and driving innovation. They require confident and ambitious employees with strong literacy and oracy skills.

It is apparent that we have much good work going on, but every Early Years setting, school, college, father, mother, carer, child, student and resident knows they can improve their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.

To date there has been no overarching strategy for developing literacy and oracy across the town. This plan brings together all of the amazing work that is taking place so that they are better known and better connected.

We are ambitious because we love Blackpool and we want all of its residents, regardless of age, to benefit from the joy, discovery and understanding that comes from strong oracy and literacy skills. Our town's future depends on this plan succeeding. So, get involved!



The vision

This literacy strategy will improve outcomes for everybody in Blackpool by championing literacy at every stage of a person's life. We believe that greater levels of literacy will improve life-expectancy, reduce poverty, increase employment levels and reduce offending rates, as well as many other significant gains.

An often quoted statistic is that just thirty minutes of reading a day can significantly increase levels of literacy.

Our Blackpool "30" challenge will ensure that all children and adults see the real value of reading for pleasure for 30 minutes a day.

The Blackpool 30 Challenge



We hope to inspire all organisations to encourage their employees, members, children and contacts to read for thirty minutes a day. This could be anything from a magazine, newspaper, article or book. The main message is that reading is fun and good for your wellbeing. You don't have to read to achieve a goal or read in a particular place, at a particular time or for a particular reason. Just form a "reading habit" and be part of the Blackpool challenge and your own, personal reading journey.

We want every child and adult to be reading every day. Make it your mission to share the message that reading is fun and that reading with a child is a massively important part of parenting!

A library opens up a world of possibilities and every child and adult should be able to access a local library.



What do Blackpool children enjoy reading

Children have turned to adventure, comedy, fantasy and real life stories during lockdown and have found joy in discovering books they'd never read before



- Children are reading more fiction (genres: adventure, funny books, realistic stories and magical/fantasy), song lyrics, news, non-fiction, etc. with a real uplift in reading on screen, compared with before lockdown
- Almost 1 in 2 (46.3%) children said that they had read new books during lockdown and 1 in 7 (14.1%) had re-read books they have at home

Reading has also provided refuge in this difficult time, supporting children's mental wellbeing and enabling them to dream about the future



- 3 in 5 (59.3%) children and young people told us during lockdown that reading makes them feel better
- 3 in 10 (31.6%) said that reading helps them when they feel sad because they cannot see their family and friends
- Reading is encouraging half of children (50.2%) to dream about the future

While the gender gap in children's reading has widened during lockdown, audiobooks may provide a route into reading for boys



- Lockdown has increased the literacy engagement gap between boys and girls, with the gap in reading enjoyment widening from 2.3 percentage points at the beginning of 2020 to 11.5 percentage points during lockdown. The gender gap in daily reading also widened during lockdown, increasing from a 4.3 percentage point difference at the beginning of 2020 to a 7.4 percentage point difference during lockdown
- Audiobooks might be a way to re-engage boys with stories, as this is the only format where more boys than girls said that they enjoy it more and are doing it more often.
- Overall, slightly more boys than girls (25.0% vs. 22.4%) said they had listened to audiobooks more during lockdown than before
- Audiobooks also appear to offer a way into literacy for boys, with 1 in 2 (51.1%) boys saying that listening to audiobooks has increased their interest in reading, and 2 in 5 (43.2%) saying that it has made them more interested in writing

Source of data, www.literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/children-and-young-peoples-reading-in-2020-before-and-during-the-covid-19-lockdown/



The benefits of reading for pleasure

“

When teachers know more about children’s literature and children’s reading practices beyond school, they widen what counts as ‘reading’ in their classrooms, and authentically recognise diversity in texts and readers. Our research has shown that this, responsively combined with the Reading for Pleasure pedagogy, makes a positive impact on children’s reading for pleasure.

Professor Teresa Cremin, The Open University

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Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future. In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read can be crucial.

A survey of school children for World Book Day in 2002 found that 15 to 16 year old boys spent 2.3 hours a week reading for pleasure, compared to 9 hours a week playing computer games or 11 hours watching television. Girls spent considerably more time reading, namely 4.5 hours a week. However, when boys were reading they did so because they enjoyed it. Specifically, 81% of 11 to 12 year olds and 76% of 15 to 16 year olds reported reading for pleasure.

**Christina Clark and Kate Rumbold –
National Literacy Trust – November 2006**

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“

Evidence suggests that reading for pleasure leads to increased attainment. Clark and DeZoya (2011) found a significant positive relationship between enjoyment and attainment indicating that pupils who read more are also better readers. Although they made no inference about causality, therefore higher attainment may lead to more enjoyment of reading or greater enjoyment may lead to higher attainment. Similarly Clark (2011) in a large scale survey of over 18,000 young people found that those who reported enjoying reading very much were six times more likely than those who did not enjoy reading very much to read above the expected level for their age. Young people who reported not enjoying reading at all were 11 times more likely than those who enjoyed reading very much to read below the expected level for their age. Evidence from the OECD (2002) found that reading enjoyment is more important for children’s educational success than their family’s socio-economic status. Clark and Rumbold (2006) argue that reading for pleasure could be one important way to help combat social exclusion and raise educational standards.

**Research evidence on reading for pleasure –
Education standards research team – May 2012**

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Research shows that children who enjoy reading achieve more highly right across the curriculum. Developing a love of reading is one of the most effective ways a school can improve national test results in all areas but, more importantly, it also sets children up as readers for life, with all the accompanying benefits that follow.

Reading is a passport to the world. The benefits of reading go beyond the opportunities offered by being well-read with a good command of English. Reading great literature opens children up to ideas, experiences, places and times they might otherwise experience in real life. Reading for pleasure gives opportunities to learn about a multitude of things that cannot be covered by a school curriculum.

Building an outstanding reading school – Six strategies for making reading for pleasure work in your school – Oxford School Improvement.

”

“

Billington (2015) undertook a UK-wide study exploring the benefits reported by adults regularly reading for pleasure. The study surveyed 4,000 individuals from diverse demographics through an online poll consisting of fourteen questions designed to elicit participants' perception of their general mood, well-being and levels of social interaction in relation to reading. The findings indicated that reading for pleasure is positively associated with a greater sense of community, a stronger feeling of social inclusion, a stronger ability to enjoy social occasions, and enhanced openness and talkativeness.

The Reading Agency Literature Review: The impact of reading for pleasure and empowerment June 2015

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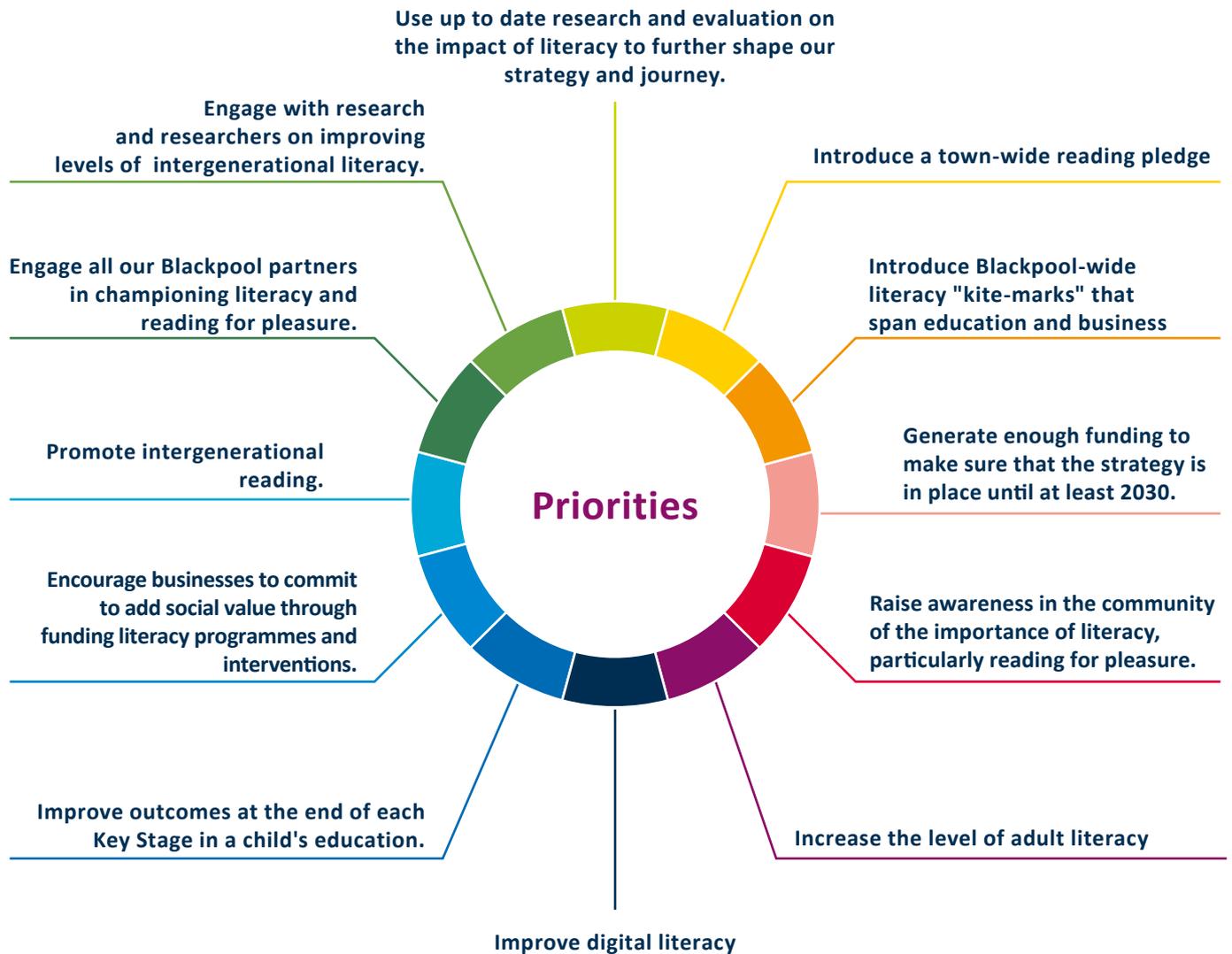
**LITERACY IS
EVERYBODY'S RESPONSIBILITY!**

A lifetime of reading and literacy development

Learning how to read and continually improving the skill through reading for pleasure, is an important part of this strategy. It needs to be embraced and everybody needs to put time aside to read, every day. We can all help to ensure that there is a reading culture in Blackpool.



The vision



The Blackpool context

A localised approach is needed to improve literacy and life expectancy in England

- Improving local literacy levels could raise life expectancy in the most deprived wards in England by reducing inequalities in health and socioeconomic circumstances:
 - Compared to people with poor literacy skills, those with good literacy skills are less likely to exhibit poor health behaviours, have lower incomes or live in more deprived communities – all of which are risk factors to longevity.
- Inequalities in literacy and life expectancy are related to geographic community and solutions therefore need to be tailored to meet local need and built on local assets.

Literacy and Life Expectancy - National Literacy Trust 2018



Attainment in Blackpool shows a picture of some challenges in the Early Years with good performance by the end of primary school and a significant drop-off by the end of secondary school, although this is showing early indicators of improvement.

- At the Early Years Foundation Stage 67.9% of children achieved a 'good level of development'.
- At the end of Key Stage 2, 67% of pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- By Key Stage 4 however just 47.8% of pupils achieved a 9-4 pass in English and maths (national 59.8%) and 9-5 pass rate was 26.3% (national 40.1%).

While this shows some challenges within the education system, it also points clearly to work that is needed in the home learning environment.

If we take account of wider factors impacting Blackpool, entitlement to free school meals in primary school is close to double the national average (30.8% - 17.7%) and for secondary age pupils this is even higher (33.3% - 15.9%). Referrals of children to Children's Social Services is similarly dramatic at over 1,000 per 10,000 (national is 544.5 per 100,000). From Jan-Dec 2019, 19.9% of Blackpool households were classified as workless.

Taking these factors together, the challenges which communities face are compounded by deprivation which robs people of self-confidence and self-esteem. This can make parents less active in their children's education especially when their own skills may be low and their experience of education is poor.

A major challenge emerges among teenagers (and young adults) when their comprehension exceeds their ability to decode with fluency. Young people have a far greater understanding of the world, spoken vocabulary and range of interests than they find in texts that they can read independently. Use of graphic novels, comics and other formats which carry complex meaning with a blended offer (text and images) can be useful in strengthening motivation among people to continue reading.

The Millennium cohort study, conducted by UCL, looked at the link between reading for pleasure and vocabulary among 14-year olds. The link was conclusive:

- Teenagers who read for pleasure every day understood 26% more words than those who never read at all in their spare time.
- Teenagers from book-loving homes knew 42% more words than their peers who had grown up with few books.
- Better readers can articulate more clearly.
- Better articulation leads to a better expression of feelings, moods and knowledge.
- Better articulation leads to less frustration in articulation which often leads to poor behaviour and anti social behaviour.

"Even taking into account other factors, like parents' qualifications and their professions, teenagers who read for pleasure still got 12% more words right, while those from book-rich homes scored 9% more."

The ability to read and decode and then express ones self is critical to any aspect of learning and later success in life. A good vocabulary is fundamental to a teenager being able to engage across the secondary curriculum. Subject specific vocabularies in history, the sciences and maths mean young people without that knowledge will do less well, are less likely to select subjects which are optional and are blocked from further education or the job market when those qualifications and knowledge are required.

Once children have developed decoding skills it is often felt that they have learned to read. Parents often feel that it is acceptable to then allow pupils to read unaided. The reality is that children now need to learn for meaning and for pleasure and will need their parent's guidance to do so.

At the same time parental engagement, in role modelling behaviours and supporting aspiration remains important and may be even more important for low-income families. Research has found that parental engagement can help to counteract the socio-economic gap in attainment. For example, the performance advantage among students whose parents read to them in their early school years is evident regardless of the family's socio-economic background (OECD, 2010).

Therefore, what is needed is an approach which starts from an assets-based approach, works to celebrate what is good about Blackpool and fundamentally looks to people in communities to be supported to help one another. Sustained long-term change, through a place-based approach, has an evidence base going back to the first iteration of the Harlem Children's Zone in the 1970s. It requires the empowerment of the community, facilitating greater engagement by them with existing partners and provision and shaping a response which aligns with their life experience and needs.*

Our own place-based reading hubs for families at locations such as Grange Park will support families who have no reading resources in their homes.

Working with families from the start of their lives, in conjunction with Blackpool Better Start, will see levels of early literacy and intergenerational literacy increase in Blackpool.



*With thanks to the National Literacy Trust for providing this contextual section.

Key Blackpool reading indicators

Figure 1a shows is that although many children are able to read at a level above their chronological age, many do not reach that standard by the time they are 8 or 9 years old.

Figure 1a. Reading Age (in years) source - GL Assessments Reading Test 2019 (pupils Y4 are 8 or 9 years old and in Y5 are 9 or 10 years old).

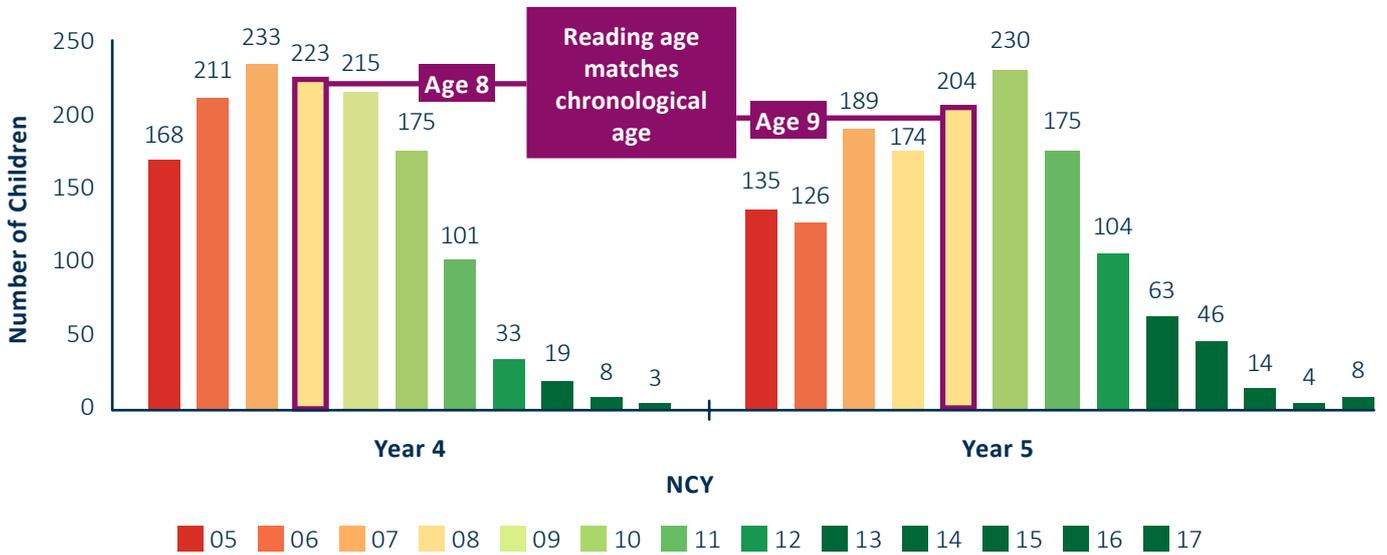
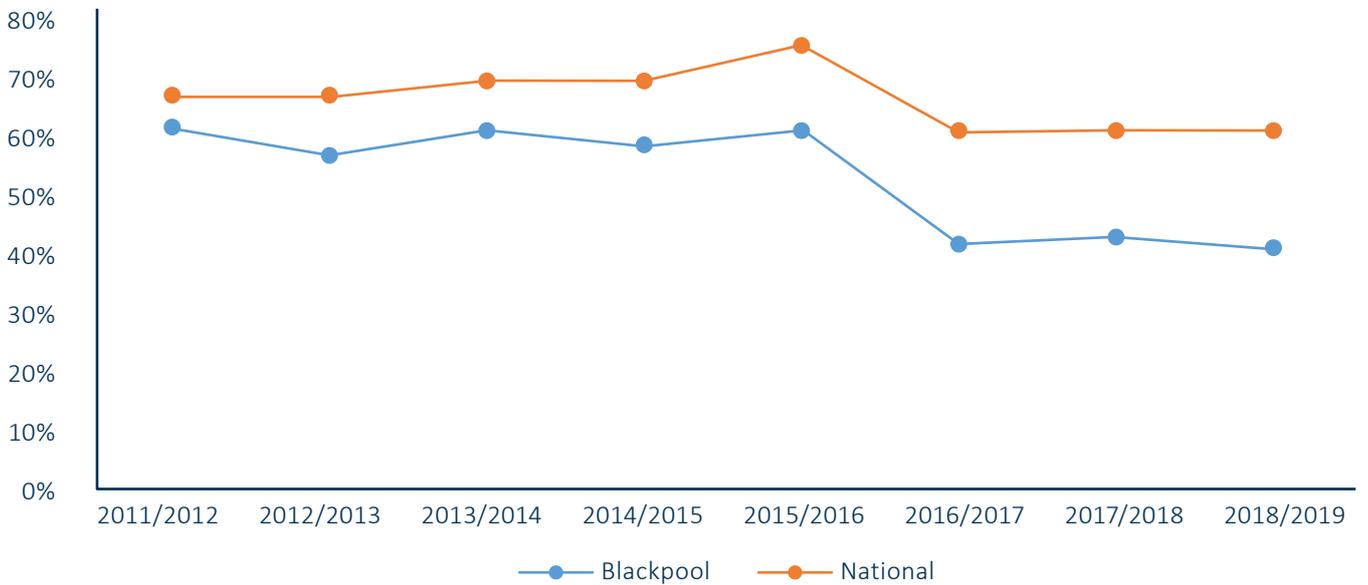


Figure 1b shows that the percentage of children achieving a C grade or Grade 5 at GCSE level in English is stubbornly low in Blackpool and has shown little sign of improving over the last few years.

Figure 1b. KS4 English - Percentage at C+ / 5+



The impact of transience and transition on the Blackpool literacy journey

A strategy that places transience at its heart

As a seaside town, with a significant seasonal element to its economy, Blackpool sees large amounts of movement into and out of the town. Some schools see over 25% of their cohort change on a yearly basis. Where pupils move into Blackpool part-way through their school journey, they may often have lower than average levels of literacy, as may their parents.

If we do not plan for a high level of pupil movement within our strategy we will not make the progress that we require. Unlike some areas that are able to teach a large percentage of pupils all the way through their education, at each major key stage Blackpool has to pick up, or put down provision for many pupils during their childhood.

This break in the continuity of provision and the reduction in progress, attainment and school readiness that this brings, means that we need to have programmes in places for pupils who are consistently educated in Blackpool schools and for pupils who join our system at different points in their lives.

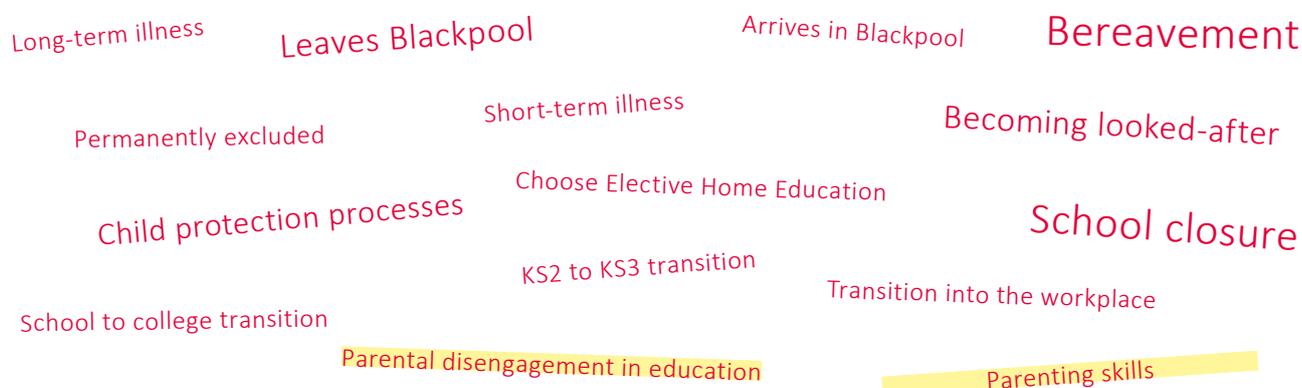
Transition between schools, key stages and life stages is also, therefore, a highly significant element of an individual's literacy journey.

This also applies to adults within our community and how we work with those adults who have low levels of literacy.

The catch-up journey interventions



Barriers to literacy



A literacy journey is never a linear journey.

Our minimum expectations for Blackpool

Breaking the cycle

Blackpool has been the focus of many initiatives over many years, yet Blackpool's outcomes in the key indicators at GCSE level remain stubbornly low.

Interestingly, the quality of education in Blackpool has increased across all phases, with most schools rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted in the Primary phase, Special School sector and Alternative provision sector. Half of the secondary schools are good, with all Post 16 provision good or better.

If the general quality of education is higher, yet the outcomes lag behind, the question is for how long this will persist? When will the improvements in educational quality have a real, tangible impact upon outcomes?

As a town we need to build further upon the improved quality of education by setting ourselves some challenging targets.

Our town-wide literacy targets

- Children receive speech and language support / therapy at the right time, without unnecessary delay.
- At least 80% of all pupils must meet the end of Key Stage 1 expected levels of performance relating to literacy.
- At least 70% of disadvantaged pupils must meet the end of Key Stage 1 expected levels of performance relating to literacy.
- At least 80% of pupils must meet the end of Key Stage 2 expected levels of performance relating to literacy.
- At least 70% of disadvantaged pupils must meet the end of Key Stage 2 expected levels of performance relating to literacy
- At GCSE level at least 70% of all pupils must achieve a Grade 4 or above in English.

A significant element of this strategy is the notion that "you are never too old to learn" and therefore there are also significant key performance indicators related to adult literacy levels.

We must, therefore, strive to raise the level of adult literacy in Blackpool so that it is at least in-line with national averages.

The table below (figure 2) shows that Blackpool has a greater proportion of adults that do not have an Entry Level 1 qualification in English than Lancashire and the North West and people in Blackpool are statistically less likely to have a qualification in English at L2 or above compared to Lancashire and the North West.

| 2011 Council Ward Name | EL1 and below | EL2 | EL3 | L1 | L2 and above |
|------------------------|---------------|------|------|-------|--------------|
| Blackpool | 5.4% | 2.5% | 9.3% | 31.4% | 51.4% |
| Lancashire-14 | 5.0% | 2.3% | 8.6% | 30.3% | 53.8% |
| England | 5.0% | 2.1% | 7.9% | 28.5% | 56.5% |

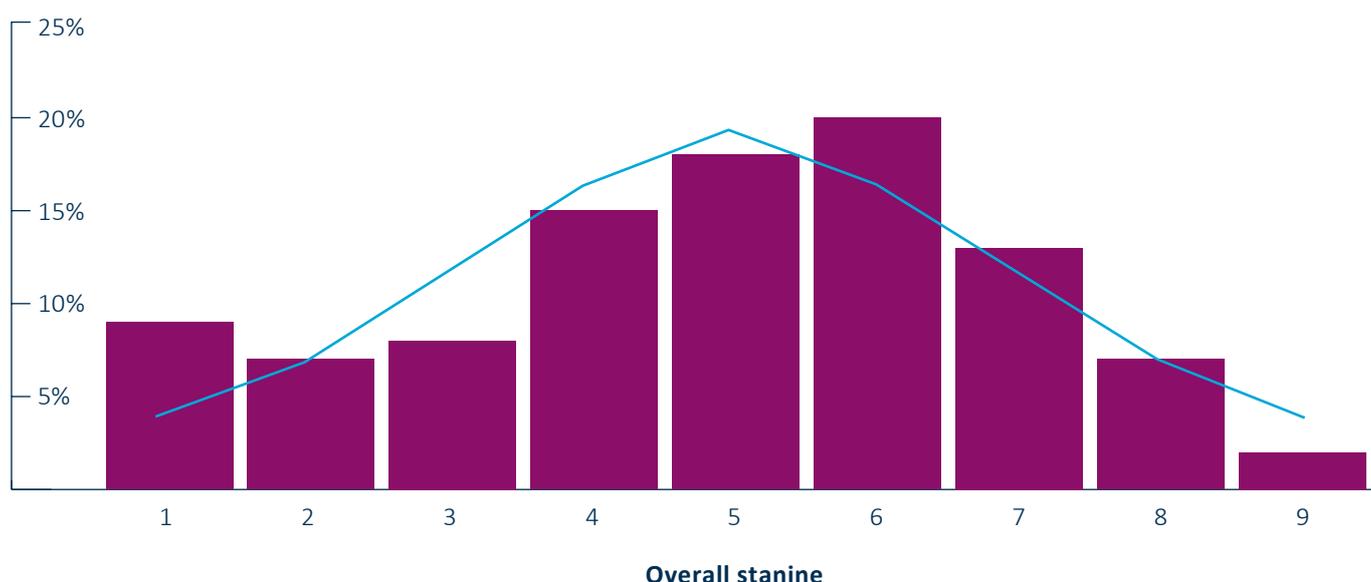
Our focus upon assessment and action at every stage of the literacy life cycle

At every stage of the literacy journey, high quality assessment of the relative position of each child is essential to the delivery of this strategy.

Only by harnessing the power of high-quality assessment data can we intervene effectively and assess the impact that our projects are having on outcomes in Blackpool.

Throughout the lifetime of this strategy we will use data from GL assessments, data from statutory end of phase assessments, validated GCSE (and equivalent data), Fischer Family Trust data and national adult-literacy data to assess our progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of our strategy.

GL assessment overall reading stanines for Blackpool secondary schools (Year 7 pupils) 2020



GL assessment data is able to show us how cohorts of children in Blackpool perform in relation to national cohorts. For example, this chart shows us that Blackpool pupils in Y7 have are overly represented in the 1st stanine (lowest performing) and under-represented in the 9th stanine (highest performing) relative to national.

How we are tackling the issue

We have identified six areas to focus on that will ensure oracy and literacy improves across the town.



Blackpool Families Rock - role in the Literacy Strategy



We should all support families to help themselves to move forwards, becoming self-sustaining.

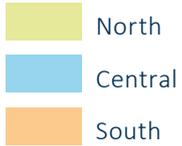
Reading must be a large part of the interactions in the family hubs.

Understanding the impact of poor levels of literacy on families must be a key part of service delivery in Children's Social Care.

We would like all foster carers to sign-up to the Blackpool literacy pledge and we will ensure that all foster carers have the resources and training to improve children's reading and literacy.

Cross phase areas

Blackpool Education Improvement Board Cross Phase Areas



Blackpool Schools

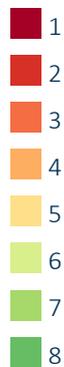
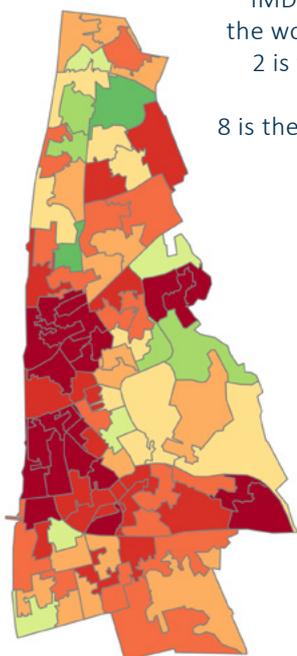


The Literacy Strategy will be developed to incorporate elements of the strategy that are bespoke to the three different cross phase areas shown in this diagram.

We accept, however, that these artificial boundaries do not really take into account how people actually live their lives and that people will move in-between and across these areas to access support for literacy.



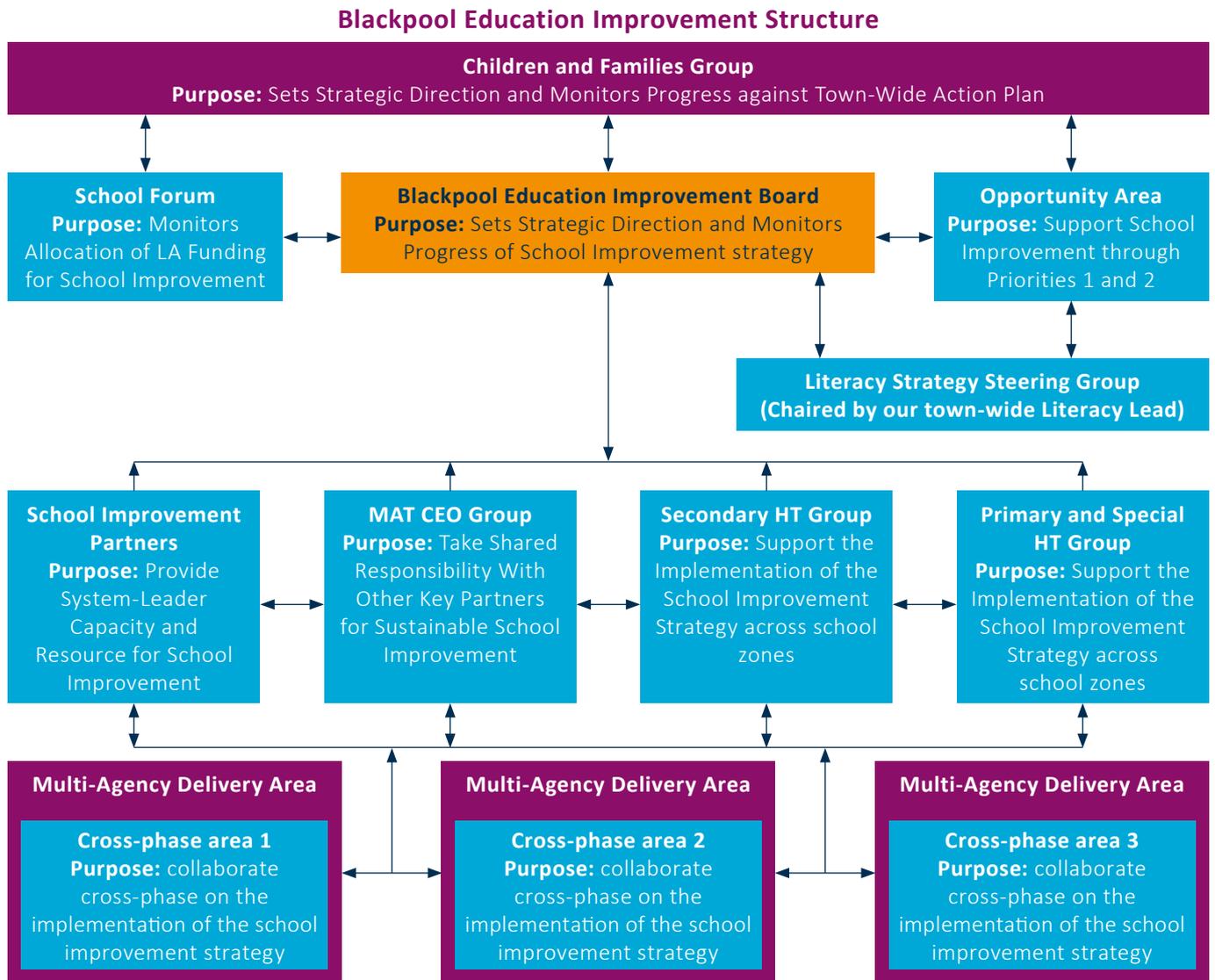
IMD Decile where 1 is the worst 10% in England, 2 is the worst 11-20% in England... 8 is the top 20% in England.



Developing our Blackpool literacy projects



Literacy Strategy Governance



Monitoring and evaluation

The strategy recognises that literacy support can come from many places, community partners, volunteers etc and the strategy commits its members to support/train/provide information for others who believe they can play a part.

We require access to in-depth analysis of our town's data and to be able to see how it is changing in "real-time".

For this we will use the expertise of nationally recognised data analysts and providers of national comparative data to highlight the progress that we have made and the potential next-steps.

We will capture a wide range of qualitative data from all parts of our community to measure the need and to help us to monitor the impact for all, or for different groups within our community.

We will establish a literacy steering group that reports into the Blackpool Education Improvement Board, the Children and Families Strategic Partnership Board and the Opportunity Area Board.

There will be a standing agenda item on the Blackpool Education Improvement Board that measures the impact of our literacy strategy.

We will employ a literacy leader who monitors and evaluates the impact of the initiatives and projects that we deliver.

Evaluation of the different elements of this strategy will be provided by a commissioned higher-education provider who can evaluate over the lifetime of the strategy.



Speech and language therapy

Understanding the scale of the problem

Every child, regardless of circumstance should be able to develop and thrive. There is increasing concern about the numbers of children starting school with poor speech, language and communication skills, with unacceptable differences in outcomes in different areas of the country. Inequalities in early language development are recognisable in the second year of life and have an impact by the time children enter school

(Best start in speech, language and communication, PHE, October 2020)

Early language development and communication skills are recognised as primary indicators of child wellbeing due to the link between language and other social, emotional and learning outcomes. Language contributes to a child's ability to manage emotions and communicate feelings; to establish and maintain relationships; to think symbolically and to learn to read and write (Law J, Charlton, J, Asmussen, K. Language as a child wellbeing indicator. London: The Early Intervention Foundation; 2017). Without support, children and young people with SLCN are at risk of poor outcomes across the life course:

Educational attainment

- 1 in 4 children who struggled with language at the age of 5 did not reach the expected standard in English at the end of primary school, compared with 1 in 25 children (at the age of 5) who had good language skills (Hollo A, Wehby, J, Oliver, R. Unidentified language deficits in children with emotional and behavioural disorders: A meta-analysis. Council for Exceptional Children. 2014;80(2))
- 15% of pupils with identified SLCN achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of their primary school years compared with 61% of all pupils (Department for Education. GCSE results 2017)
- only 20.3% of pupils with SLCN gained grade 4/C or above in English and Maths at GCSE, compared with 63.9% of all pupils

Social, emotional and mental health:

- 81% of children with emotional and behavioural disorders have unidentified SLCN (Hollo A, Wehby, J, Oliver, R. Unidentified language deficits in children with emotional and behavioural disorders: A meta-analysis. Council for Exceptional Children. 2014;80(2))
- children with vocabulary difficulties at age 5 are 3 times more likely to have mental health problems in adulthood and twice as likely to be unemployed when they reach adulthood (Law J, Rush, R, Parsons, S, Schoon, I. Modelling developmental language difficulties from school entry into adulthood: Literacy, mental health and employment outcomes. Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research. 2009;52:1401-16)

Lifelong impact:

- 60% of young offenders have low language skills (Bryan K, Freer, J, Furlong, C. Language and communication difficulties in juvenile offenders. International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders. 2007;42:505-20)
- the long-term negative impacts of language difficulties suggest that their associated costs to individuals, their families, and society across the life course are likely to be high (Law J, Charlton, J, Asmussen, K. Language as a child wellbeing indicator. London: The Early Intervention Foundation,; 2017)

Understanding local prevalence and demand on services

Data regarding the prevalence of Speech Language and Communication Needs SLCN in the early years is collected but, unfortunately, is unavailable for inclusion in this paper. In response to need, A BetterStart has invested in extending service provision – there is evidence that this has resulted in increased referrals to NHS SLT services.

The prevalence of Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) amongst school aged children and young people in Blackpool is higher than the average for similar authorities (this measures all those with identified SEND, so SEN support and those with EHCPs). It has been deduced that the level of identified need is greater than for similar authorities because the proportion of the child population with both an Education, Health and care Plan (EHCP) and identified for SEN support, but without an EHCP is higher than for similar authorities. The proportion of those with those who have SLCN as their identified need is also higher in both primary and secondary schools, but particularly primary schools

Improving the teaching of literacy in all settings, schools and colleges

What we already have in place.

- A Betterstart has supported early family literacy and family learning, alongside family literacy programmes run by Adult Learning.
- A major Key Stage 3 literacy initiative has been implemented that has improved the achievement of secondary students.
- A nationally regarded English Hub has been established in Blackpool to support local schools.
- The English Hub is supporting schools in the teaching and learning of phonics particularly for 5-7 year olds.
- Work is ongoing with Pre-School and Early Years settings to ensure they promote quality talk and improve vocabulary.
- More parents, carers and extended family are engaged to take part in school related and community based activities.
- Professional development opportunities have been established for school staff to accelerate progress in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

1. Improving the teaching of literacy in all settings, schools and colleges

What are we aiming to achieve and how will we do it?

- Improve the quality of literacy and oracy provision in pre-school and early years settings with high-quality adult-child interactions.
- Improve the overall standard of reading for all children in the town.
- Increase the level of enjoyment that children and young people get from reading.
- Improve motivation and engagement to develop persistence and enjoyment in reading
- Extend the role of parents and improve the level of engagement from parents/carers/extended family in supporting their children to enjoy and achieve in reading and speaking.
- Support parent to understand how to help their children learn and improve their communication, language and literacy
- Enable more pupils to achieve above average standards in reading and writing by the time they leave primary school.
- Ensure students capitalise on the good standards achieved in reading and writing by the end of Year 6 when continuing this through into their secondary education.
- Ensure all school staff prioritise literacy and oracy skill development as an important aspect of their classroom work. (Disciplinary literacy)
- Improve literacy across the curriculum emphasising the importance of subject specific support in secondary schools
- Ensure senior leaders and governors/trustees are held to account for standards in literacy and oracy.
- Establish an expectation that all schools in the town engage in peer review audits of practice for literacy and oracy and develop timely actions to address areas for improvement.

Projects that we will deliver to improve literacy

- The Opportunity Area programme has funded a range of activities through the National Literacy Trust.
- Extend the Key Stage 3 Literacy project that has been funded through the Opportunity Area, which works with our weakest leaders and develops effective whole-school literacy practices.
- Continue to allow access for all schools to the range of GL testing / assessments that provide a base-line and show progress.
- Ensure that every school in Blackpool has a functioning, accessible library that contains at least 20 books per child at their appropriate reading age.
- Increased the number of class visits to local public libraries.
- Ensure that every school has sufficient resources to be able to teach a reading recovery programme in every year group.
- Establish a reading school "kite-mark" specific to Blackpool that is peer reviewed and bench-marked against national best practice.
- Establish a network of literacy champions at each stage of a child's education.
- Provide bespoke staff CPD that improves the quality of teaching.
- Assess all pupils in Blackpool twice a year to determine their relative level of "attainment", devise structured interventions and to measure impact / progress.

Improving the teaching of literacy in all settings, schools and colleges

Through our existing School Improvement Partners network that is an integral part of the Blackpool Education Improvement Board's Governance Structure, we will provide training and professional development opportunities that allow our teachers to -

- Break down complex writing tasks
- Combine writing instruction with reading in every subject
- Provide opportunities for structured talk
- Provide high quality literacy interventions for struggling students
- Develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and wider understanding of language
- Use a balanced and engaging approach to developing reading, integrating both decoding and comprehension skills
- Effectively implement a systematic phonics programme
- Teach pupils to use strategies for developing and monitoring their reading comprehension
- Teach pupils to use strategies for planning and monitoring their writing
- Promote fluent written transcription skills by encouraging extensive and purposeful practice and explicitly teaching
- Use high-quality information about pupils' current capabilities to select the best next steps for teaching
- Use high-quality structured interventions to help pupils who are struggling with their literacy
- Develop pupils' language capability to support their reading and writing
- Support pupils to develop fluent reading capabilities
- Teach reading comprehension strategies through modelling and supported practice
- Teach writing composition strategies through modelling and supported practice
- Develop pupils' transcription and sentence construction skills through extensive practice
- Target teaching and support by accurately assessing pupil needs
- Use high-quality structured interventions to help pupils who are struggling with their literacy
- We will ensure that staff at every stage of their career have access to high-quality, continuing professional development related to literacy.
- We would like all schools to adopt, as part of their annual cycle of lesson evaluation and staff appraisal, a focus upon high-quality teaching of literacy.



Improving the literacy curriculum in all settings, schools and colleges.

What we already have in place.

- An improved focus upon literacy in all our schools.
- An alignment of GCSE English curriculums in our Secondary Academies.
- A GL assessment cycle that looks specifically at reading and barriers to reading.
- Literary Canons in place in a number of our Secondary Academies.
- Improved library provision across our schools.

2. Improving the literacy curriculum in all settings, schools and Colleges

What are we aiming to achieve and how will we do it?

- Develop an audit tool for schools to use to identify aspects of literacy and oracy that may require further development.
- Introduce a parental engagement strategy to support early years literacy.
- Provide wider opportunities for debate and public speaking for pupils and students.
- Ensure maximum use of language rich books to develop vocabulary in classrooms.
- Ensure all teachers are supported to understand how to teach children/students to read, write and communicate effectively.
- Align town-wide literacy events such as those made by visiting authors with school and community activity.
- Support Early Years settings to develop their curriculum
- All schools, no matter what their educational phase, have a curriculum that teaches children to read and then how to "read to learn".
- Every school's curriculum will maximise the use of quality, inspiring texts, that captivate young readers.
- We will use the framework provided by the national curriculum and a shared list of high-quality texts that are enjoyed by Blackpool readers, to provide a strong, broad curriculum in every school.

Projects that we will deliver to improve literacy

- Introduce a Reading School Kitemark Framework.
- Draw on resources and training provided by the Library Service, Adult Learning, Oxford University Press, National Literacy Trust, English Hub, Research School and Teaching Schools.
- Businesses agree to being proactive participants in encouraging staff to commit to Literacy and Oracy Pledge.
- Laureate Schools Library Project

Improving access to libraries and ensuring libraries reach out to their communities.

What we already have in place.

We have a network of 8 libraries across the town, providing free access to a wide range of books for all ages; computers, free WiFi and printing facilities; 24/7 online services (including e-Books, e-Audiobooks and e-Magazines and newspapers); learning opportunities and resources; and a range of engagement activities throughout the week.

- We know that libraries are at the heart of many Blackpool communities and have a pivotal role in promoting literacy and a love of reading, in delivering digital access and support and in providing a safe and welcoming place where people can find information, participate in learning and cultural activity. They are also great places to meet and feel part of the community.

- We know that some residents do not have strong literacy and oracy skills so we want to enable them to improve. We also know that many do have secure skills and want to improve these further so we need to make the library suitable and accessible for all.

We removed all library fines from April 2019 and found out that:

- 40,000 people used library services in past three years.
- Over ½ million visits to our libraries occurred in 2019 with over 2k events leading to more usage and over 120k sessions on library computers.
- 90% of Blackpool residents think local libraries are important.
- 80% of those visiting libraries borrow books.

3. Improving access to libraries and ensuring libraries reach out to their communities

What are we aiming to achieve and how will we do it?

- Establish a reading culture across Blackpool that pledges that all employers and forward facing companies and enterprises will champion early reading with children, whether through parents, siblings or their wider family.
- Greater involvement of residents around choosing stock

Our plan focuses on the following core themes:

Future Readers, Future Choices

Reading and free access is fundamental to people's life opportunities so libraries will provide books, information, ICT and activities. We will champion the 'literacy of opportunity'.

Get Connected

Libraries will be 'the living room of the community' so that people have safe and trusted places to go to. We will deliver high quality top services for technology, digital enablement and support to get online and be places where the community we will support people to participate. Libraries will be places where people feel better and less lonely.

Your Library

Stay at the centre of their communities. Do more to get out into and work with those communities. Develop targeted services to appeal to existing and new users.

Projects that we will deliver to improve literacy

Expand "Rhyme-time" sessions across all libraries.

Develop and deliver regular digital story-times for all ages.

Bookstart packs for every Early Years' child in the town.

A vibrant engagement programme and visits to local schools and nurseries.

More support for children in care and care leavers.

Work with Booktrust and steering group partners to develop Early Years literacy offer and widen participation.

High quality learning programmes to enable adults to improve their literacy and oracy skills.

What we already have in place.

Combined face to face literacy classes for adults (when safe to do so) with online courses.

A number of individualised learning opportunities, using online platforms where possible. This includes a new 'Functional Skills English' Facebook page where videos, live streams and posts are shared.

Online classes using Google Classroom; We offer 1:1 meetings to learners to familiarise themselves with 'the classroom'; and we are encouraging all learners to use this.

- An online offer of digital skills courses is now in place through a secure Google Education Suite.
- Digital courses are now being offered through Google Classroom with face to face video weekly sessions to create a blended approach.
- Google has enabled learners to access their courses and tutors on a friendly and easy to use platform.
- Courses are underway ranging from eSafety to spreadsheets, to enable employment.
- We are now able to allow learners to take their ECDL exams remotely through video conferencing invigilation, meaning that they can learn and achieve their full ECDL Level 2 in the safety of their own homes.

4. High quality learning programmes to enable adults to improve their literacy and oracy skills

What are we aiming to achieve and how will we do it?

- Learners who can access remotely will be encouraged to do so (with some preferring to have the face to face option) for all informal and accredited ICT courses.
- The new Digital Skills for Life and Work will be rolled out. Through the British Computer Society we can deliver this accreditation remotely, also with the same exam options. This will mean that with a device and connectivity, learners can obtain Digital Skills qualification from Entry level to Level 2.
- Successful literacy intervention / recovery is more successful when it is embedded into other aspects of work-related learning. So we will work with employers to embed adult literacy programs in their apprenticeships and their training provision.

Projects that we will deliver to improve literacy

Deliver adult reading classes in our community (ideally schools or community locations) that deliver courses such as "Read Easy" <https://readeasy.org.uk/> so that adults can easily and confidentially improve their reading on a 1:1 basis.

Employers will be encouraged to boost the use of literacy in their workplaces.

From September 2020, planning a much more blended learning approach of small classes to learners who are currently unable to access activity online. During these sessions, in addition to the literacy focus we aim to help learners use online platforms, in preparation for the future, in particular, if they have the equipment to do so at home.

Promoting and building digital literacy across the town.

What we already have in place.

Blackpool Adult Learning's offer includes combined face to face literacy (when safe to do so) and online courses.

- An online offer of digital skills courses are now in place through a secure Google Education Suite.
- Digital courses are being offered through Google Classroom with face to face video weekly sessions to create a blended approach.
- Google has enabled learners to access their courses and tutors on a friendly and easy to use platform. Courses are underway ranging from eSafety to spreadsheets, through to those that enable employment.
- Learners are now able to take their ECDL exams remotely through video conferencing invigilation, meaning that they can learn and achieve their full ECDL Level 2 in the safety of their own homes.
- A digital programme of IT courses have been offered that range from the absolute basics of how to switch a device on to ECDL level certification. Adults include complete beginners who need to gain confidence, unemployed adults who need to develop their skills to apply for jobs and employees who need to improve their digital skills in the workplace. These classes have been taught face to face in a classroom environment in a variety of community buildings, mainly libraries.
- Courses have been made bespoke for different groups' needs. The service work with a wide variety of organisations across Blackpool to meet their digital needs. Groups can be as small as 6 learners so they all receive a high level of support to assist their learning.

5. Promoting and building digital literacy across the town

What are we aiming to achieve and how will we do it?

From September 2020 we are planning to have a further blended approach with a mixture of online and face to face (small group) learning.

Free access to computers (>100 across the network), with staff/volunteer support available and free WiFi provision in all libraries; plus the general council WiFi provision.

Projects that we will deliver to improve literacy

The new Digital Skills for Life and Work will be rolled out. Through the British Computer Society we can deliver this accreditation remotely too with the same exam options, this will mean that with a device and connectivity, learners can obtain Digital Skills qualification with ACFL from Entry level to Level 2.

Introductory programmes will be commissioned and delivered in Blackpool that inspire young and old to be digitally literate and to seek employment in the digital sectors.

Improving Early Years outcomes in literacy and oracy and in particular the transition to schools

What we already have in place.

- We have encouraged all Early Years providers and schools to formally meet to discuss how they teach literacy and oracy and how these approaches can be better forged to ensure the most progress is made.
- We have discussed these arrangements with Ofsted and have shared our findings with Early Years providers and schools to ensure that we all have a clear understanding of expectations.
- We are considering how best to support staff in a sustainable way when a Better Start concludes.
- We have raised concerns about the financial viability of some Early Years providers with government and making clear to our school leaders the negative impact this could have on their children in the future.
- We have encouraged schools to extend their professional development programmes to local Early Years settings.
- We have worked with Further Education providers to ensure qualifications in child care contain a level of expectation for learner progress that is appropriate to meet national expectations on entry to primary school.
- We are seeking local solutions so that we can support parents across transition from Early Years to school, especially those who have been unable to access much in the way of Early Years provision for their child.
- Over time the relationship between the various phases of education has improved. The link between primary and secondary sectors has gained real traction in recent years.
- Ofsted inspections have shown improving Early Years provision in all types of provision.

6. Improving Early Years outcomes in literacy and oracy and in particular the transition to schools

What are we aiming to achieve and how will we do it?

- The relationships between Early Years' providers and the schools they send their children to is critical for ensuring a smooth transition.
- In many instances these transition journeys for children are strong but where they are not, it adversely affects the children's achievements. So we must focus more fully on the quality of transition to ensure children make smooth progress in their literacy and oracy skill development.
- This should ensure we have a better understanding of transition expectations in terms of the curriculum and the expected standards.
- Better Start are doing vital work in the town and are improving the health and wellbeing of children and helping parents to better prepare their children for school but we need cross phase systems in place that will last beyond the Better Start programme and well into the future.
- These systems need to dovetail the work of both sectors in improving early years outcomes for Blackpool children.

Projects that we will deliver to improve literacy

Encourage all visitor attractions to advertise and develop a parent and child literacy offer that is embedded in their offer and attraction, through their signs, information boards or activity trails.

The value of reading for pleasure

Our Blackpool challenge to all residents, businesses, employers and employees!

Reading for pleasure is a key part of developing individual literacy skills. It opens up a world of literature that is not always available in schools. Without access to a wider range of texts, an individual's reading journey will be much slower and have less impact.

Children who read regularly, at home, are better readers than those who read solely at school. (Insert stats).

The Blackpool 30 Challenge



Our Literacy Pledge

The literacy (including oracy) strategy is ambitious and we know that it requires total commitment from the entire town, including those involved in the community of each school, College and setting to succeed. Its importance is crucial to the future success of Blackpool so we are proposing to ask an independent reviewer to be appointed to determine the speed of progress against our plan. This will ensure that we maintain our commitment to the work over the next 10 years.

Blackpool Literacy Pledge

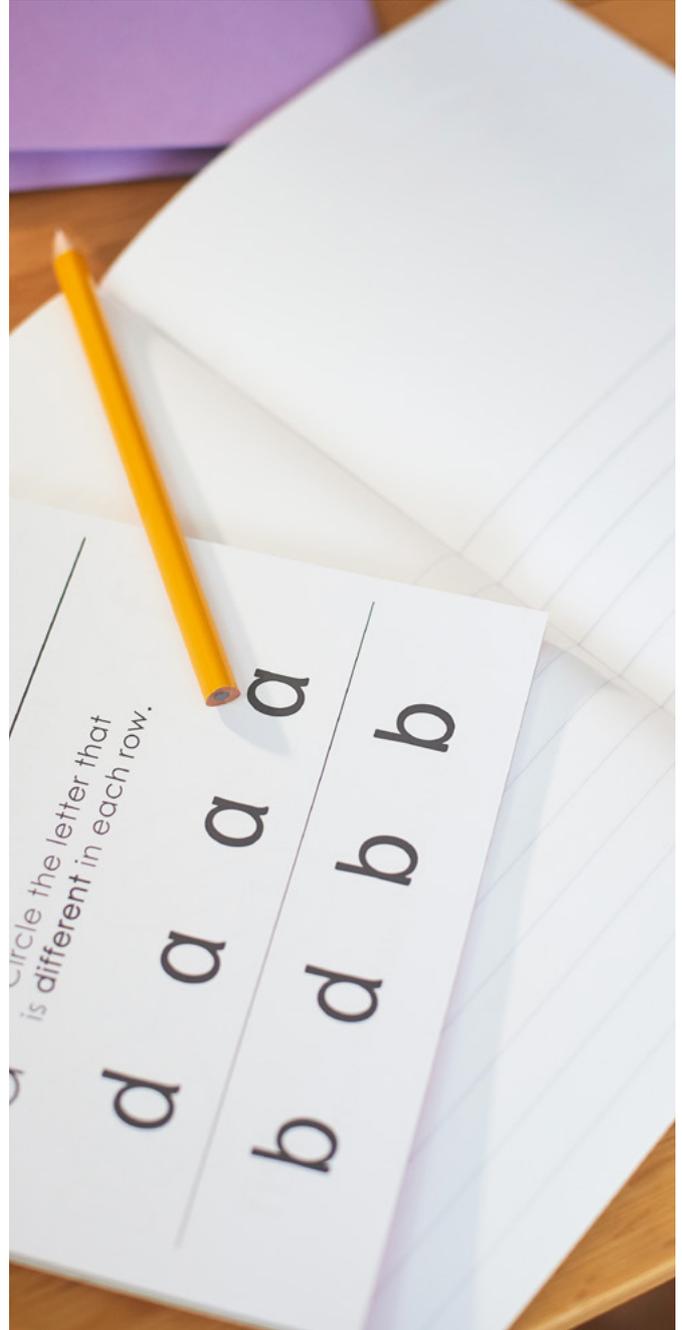
As part of the vision for the future of the town we invite you to commit to you and or your organisation to the following:

You

- I will promote literacy and oracy with all those I meet and live with
- I will lead by example so I will set myself a reading challenge per week and will let others know about it and when I achieve it
- I will encourage all young people and children I have regular contact with to read often and I will, if appropriate, accompany them to the library
- I will consider undertaking training on how better to support children and young people in literacy and oracy

Your organisation

- I will promote literacy and oracy with all those I work with to ensure Blackpool becomes a better place to live, work and play.
- I will encourage the company and/or people I work with to create a plan for encouraging the employees and their families to read more for pleasure
- I will encourage my employer to emphasise the enjoyment of reading in a public space
- I will use Blackpool's Literacy Logo on all communications from the business



Engaging with the community and ensuring impact is felt by the "end-user"

We will champion our three literacy kite-marks.



These kite-marks will be developed by an expert panel and assessed at three-levels (Bronze, silver and Gold).

Literacy timeline



Appendix 1 - The literacy issue - Level of adult literacy

| 2011 Council Ward Name | EL1 and below | EL2 | EL3 | L1 | L2 and above |
|------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Anchorsholme | 4.8% | 2.2% | 8.4% | 30.2% | 54.4% |
| Bispham | 4.4% | 2.1% | 8.1% | 30.0% | 55.5% |
| Bloomfield | 6.0% | 2.8% | 10.4% | 33.5% | 47.3% |
| Brunswick | 5.9% | 2.7% | 9.7% | 31.7% | 50.0% |
| Claremont | 6.7% | 3.0% | 10.8% | 33.1% | 46.4% |
| Clifton | 6.3% | 2.9% | 10.3% | 32.5% | 48.0% |
| Greenlands | 4.9% | 2.3% | 8.5% | 30.1% | 54.2% |
| Hawes Side | 5.4% | 2.5% | 9.4% | 32.1% | 50.5% |
| Highfield | 4.6% | 2.2% | 8.2% | 30.1% | 55.0% |
| Ingthorpe | 5.5% | 2.5% | 9.0% | 30.3% | 52.7% |
| Layton | 5.2% | 2.4% | 8.8% | 30.2% | 53.3% |
| Marton | 4.7% | 2.2% | 8.4% | 30.3% | 54.3% |
| Norbreck | 4.7% | 2.2% | 8.4% | 30.1% | 54.5% |
| Park | 7.9% | 3.4% | 11.6% | 32.9% | 44.2% |
| Squires Gate | 4.7% | 2.2% | 8.4% | 30.6% | 54.0% |
| Stanley | 4.7% | 2.2% | 8.4% | 30.5% | 54.2% |
| Talbot | 6.0% | 2.8% | 10.2% | 32.9% | 48.1% |
| Tyldesley | 5.0% | 2.4% | 8.9% | 31.1% | 52.6% |
| Victoria | 5.2% | 2.5% | 9.4% | 32.5% | 50.4% |
| Warbreck | 5.0% | 2.4% | 8.9% | 31.2% | 52.5% |
| Waterloo | 5.1% | 2.4% | 9.1% | 31.7% | 51.8% |
| Blackpool | 5.4% | 2.5% | 9.3% | 31.4% | 51.4% |
| Lancashire-14 | 5.0% | 2.3% | 8.6% | 30.3% | 53.8% |
| England | 5.0% | 2.1% | 7.9% | 28.5% | 56.5% |

Appendix 2 - The literacy issue

Adults whose first language is English

| 2011 Council Ward Name | ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) | | | | | |
|------------------------|--|--------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| | Mean Estimates | | Lower 95% CI Estimates | | Upper 95% CI Estimates | |
| | ESOL | NotESOL | ESOL | NotESOL | ESOL | NotESOL |
| Bloomfield | 3.0% | 97.0% | 2.3% | 96.5% | 3.5% | 97.7% |
| Brunswick | 3.2% | 96.8% | 2.6% | 96.4% | 3.6% | 97.4% |
| Claremont | 3.0% | 97.0% | 2.3% | 96.5% | 3.5% | 97.7% |
| Clifton | 2.1% | 97.9% | 1.6% | 97.5% | 2.5% | 98.4% |
| Greenlands | 2.1% | 97.9% | 1.8% | 97.6% | 2.4% | 98.2% |
| Hawes Side | 2.1% | 97.9% | 1.7% | 97.4% | 2.6% | 98.3% |
| Highfield | 1.8% | 98.2% | 1.6% | 97.8% | 2.2% | 98.4% |
| Ingthorpe | 2.1% | 97.9% | 1.8% | 97.5% | 2.5% | 98.2% |
| Layton | 2.4% | 97.6% | 2.1% | 97.3% | 2.7% | 97.9% |
| Marton | 1.8% | 98.2% | 1.5% | 97.8% | 2.2% | 98.5% |
| Norbreck | 1.6% | 98.4% | 1.4% | 98.0% | 2.0% | 98.6% |
| Park | 2.3% | 97.7% | 1.8% | 97.3% | 2.7% | 98.2% |
| Squires Gate | 2.0% | 98.0% | 1.7% | 97.6% | 2.4% | 98.3% |
| Stanley | 1.9% | 98.1% | 1.6% | 97.7% | 2.3% | 98.4% |
| Talbot | 3.1% | 96.9% | 2.4% | 96.4% | 3.6% | 97.6% |
| Tyldesley | 2.2% | 97.8% | 1.8% | 97.5% | 2.5% | 98.2% |
| Victoria | 1.9% | 98.1% | 1.5% | 97.6% | 2.4% | 98.5% |
| Warbreck | 2.1% | 97.9% | 1.7% | 97.5% | 2.5% | 98.3% |
| Waterloo | 2.3% | 97.7% | 1.9% | 97.3% | 2.7% | 98.1% |
| Blackpool | 2.2% | 97.8% | 1.8% | 97.4% | 2.6% | 98.2% |
| Lancashire-14 | 3.5% | 96.5% | 3.0% | 96.1% | 3.9% | 97.0% |
| England | 10.8% | 89.2% | 8.4% | 85.5% | 14.0% | 91.6% |

Figure 2. In 2018/19 (Y1 Phonics)

| Ward | Percentage working at expected standard |
|--------------|---|
| Claremont | 70.7% |
| Bloomfield | 74.3% |
| Clifton | 76.3% |
| Greenlands | 79.0% |
| Brunswick | 78.1% |
| Hawes Side | 78.2% |
| Layton | 74.3% |
| Waterloo | 82.6% |
| Bispham | 81.6% |
| Park | 83.3% |
| Highfield | 85.3% |
| Victoria | 81.6% |
| Tyldesley | 88.2% |
| Norbreck | 90.0% |
| Stanley | 88.0% |
| Warbreck | 87.5% |
| Ingthorpe | 87.2% |
| Talbot | 90.0% |
| Squires Gate | 90.0% |
| Marton | 89.8% |
| Anchorsholme | 88.9% |

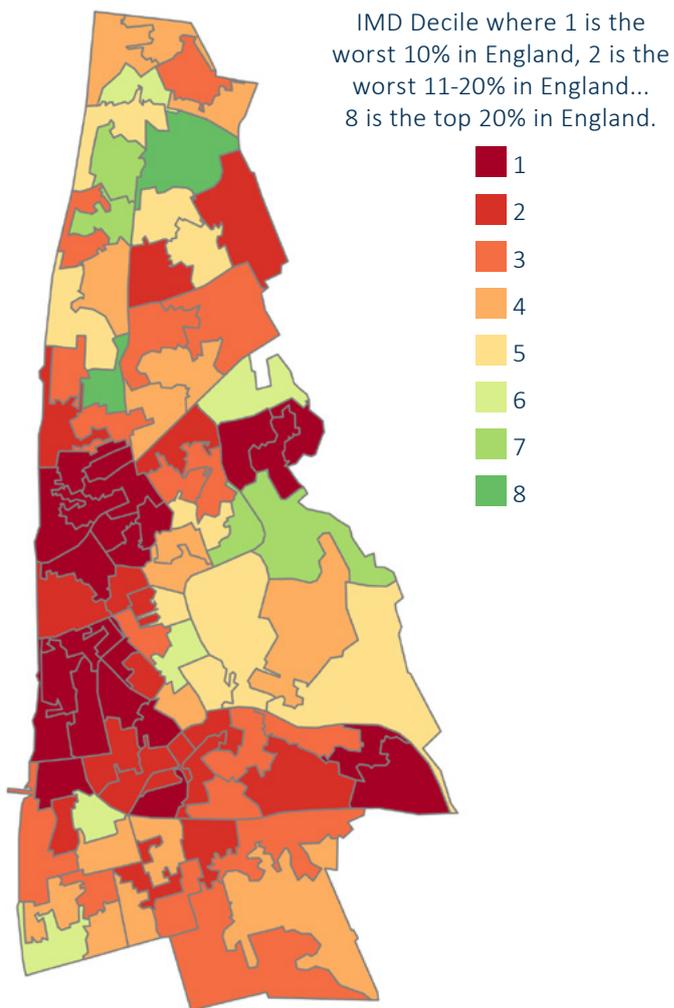
Figure 3. The percentage of children that reached the expected standard at the end of Key Stage 1 (2018-19 school year)

| Ward | Reading | Writing |
|--------------|---------|---------|
| Park | 60.32 | 55.56 |
| Bloomfield | 60.92 | 54.02 |
| Tyldesley | 62.96 | 60.49 |
| Brunswick | 64.47 | 59.21 |
| Claremont | 66.04 | 59.43 |
| Talbot | 67.31 | 63.46 |
| Highfield | 69.7 | 69.7 |
| Victoria | 70 | 64.44 |
| Stanley | 70.21 | 63.83 |
| Clifton | 70.89 | 62.03 |
| Waterloo | 72.55 | 64.71 |
| Hawes Side | 73.33 | 65.56 |
| Bispham | 74.6 | 73.02 |
| Squires Gate | 75 | 64.29 |
| Greenlands | 75.68 | 72.97 |
| Warbreck | 76.12 | 74.63 |
| Ingthorpe | 76.71 | 73.97 |
| Marton | 78.13 | 68.75 |
| Norbreck | 80 | 76.36 |
| Layton | 81.82 | 72.73 |
| Anchorsholme | 85.37 | 73.17 |

Figure 4. In 2018/19 the percentage of children at or above the expected standard for reading and writing at Key Stage 2

| Ward | Reading | Writing |
|--------------|---------|---------|
| Bloomfield | 58.43 | 68.54 |
| Brunswick | 62.35 | 74.12 |
| Claremont | 64.62 | 67.69 |
| Victoria | 64.77 | 69.32 |
| Tyldesley | 69.23 | 72.53 |
| Greenlands | 69.35 | 69.35 |
| Talbot | 70.59 | 67.65 |
| Layton | 74.19 | 80.65 |
| Hawes Side | 76.25 | 81.25 |
| Park | 76.54 | 74.07 |
| Marton | 77.78 | 94.44 |
| Clifton | 78.95 | 75 |
| Norbreck | 79.07 | 81.4 |
| Waterloo | 79.59 | 79.59 |
| Bispham | 80 | 70 |
| Warbreck | 80 | 84.62 |
| Stanley | 80 | 77.5 |
| Highfield | 80.65 | 87.1 |
| Ingthorpe | 82.54 | 79.37 |
| Squires Gate | 85.19 | 66.67 |
| Anchorsholme | 86.54 | 86.54 |

Figure 4.



Blackpool's position in summary

| | 2017 | | 2018 | | 2019 | | 2017-2019 | |
|------------------------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| | LA | National | LA | National | LA | National | LA | National |
| Pupils | 1,689 | 651,237 | 1,668 | 662,047 | 1,723 | 663,363 | 5,080 | 1,976,647 |
| Below KS1 threshold | 387 | 147,351 | 407 | 148,914 | 471 | 153,643 | 1,265 | 449,908 |
| Above KS1 threshold | 1,302 | 503,886 | 1,261 | 513,133 | 1,252 | 509,720 | 3,815 | 1,526,739 |
| Below KS1 threshold, % | 22.9% | 22.6% | 24.4% | 22.5% | 27.3% | 23.2% | 24.9% | 22.8% |
| Above KS1 threshold, % | 77.1% | 77.4% | 75.6% | 77.5% | 72.7% | 76.8% | 75.1% | 77.2% |

If Blackpool were in line with the national average:

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2017-2019 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|-----------|
| Below KS1 threshold | 382 | 375 | 400 | 1,158 |
| Difference versus actual** | 5 | 32 | 71 | 107 |

**This displays the difference between the actual number of pupils below the KS1 threshold in Blackpool and the number there would be were Blackpool in line with the national average. A positive number means there are more pupils below the KS1 threshold in Blackpool; a negative number means there are fewer pupils below the KS1 threshold.

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2017-2019 |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|-----------|
| Below KS1 threshold | 456 | 457 | 484 | 1,397 |
| Difference versus actual*** | -69 | -50 | -13 | -132 |

***This displays the difference between the actual number of pupils below the KS1 threshold in Blackpool and the number there would be were Blackpool in line with a group of matched pupils in similar schools nationally. A positive number means there are more pupils below the KS1 threshold in Blackpool; a negative number means there are fewer pupils below the KS1 threshold.

Source of data FFT Data Lab.

Glossary of terms

Academy – An independent state school.

Alternative Provision – Provision outside of what can be provided in a mainstream school.

ASD – Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Betterstart – A national lottery funded programme.

CEO – Chief Executive Officer.

Co-production – Collaborative, planning and action that involves a range of stakeholders eg: adults and children.

Cognition – Related to thinking.

Cross-phase – working across the different phases of education.

Dedicated Schools Grant – Specific funding ring-fenced for schools.

Early Help – Action to prevent escalation.

Early intervention – Early action to improve access to education.

Early Years Foundation Stage – The first stage of a child's education.

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) – A legal document that outlines a plan to support a child to ensure that they receive the appropriate level of education.

Educational Diversity – Blackpool's Pupil Referral Unit.

Fixed Term Exclusion (FTE) – Where a pupil is excluded from a school for a set-period of time, between 1 day and 45 days per school year.

GL assessments – A private provider of testing for school-aged children.

Good level of development – The expected level for a child at the end of the Foundation stage.

Graduated response – A provision that meets the needs of pupils by working up through a series of types of provision and specialist offers.

High Needs Block – A ring-fenced part of the Dedicated Schools Grant for pupils with additional needs.

Hospital school – A statutory offer from the Local Authority for pupils who are too unwell to attend school.

Inclusion – Involving and / or providing for all pupils in a school.

KS1 – Key Stage 1 – A phase of education at a Primary School.

KS2 – Key Stage 2 – A phase of education at a Primary School.

Literacy – To do with writing and reading.

Local Leader of Education – A local expert in education leadership.

Maintained School – The Local Authority is the employer.

MLD – Moderate Learning Difficulty.

Multi-agency – Involving a number of different agencies in a locality.

NEET – Not in education, employment or training.

NVQ Level 1 – A qualification type that is vocational.

NVQ Level 2 – A qualification type that is vocational.

Ofsted – School regulator.

Opportunity Area – A government initiative that aims to boost social mobility in a select number of areas.

Permanent Exclusion (PEX) – Where a pupil is excluded from a school and may not return unless a successful appeal is lodged.

Primary School – A school that provides education for pupils aged 11 or below.

Pupil Premium – Additional funding paid to schools.

Pupil Referral Unit – A provision who pupils who have been excluded and / or need alternative means of education.

Regional Schools Commissioner – Department for Education Senior Civil Servant.

Resilience – Ability to cope in difficult circumstances.

Secondary School – A school that provides education for pupils aged between 11 and 16, or with a Sixth Form, age 18.

SEMh – Social, Emotional, Mental Health.

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

SLD – Specific Learning Difficulty.

Special Educational Needs Resource Facility – A specialist provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Specialist Leader of Education – An expert in specific aspects of school provision.

Teaching School Hub – A DFE initiative that brings together schools under an umbrella to provide school to school support and training.

Transition – Moving between schools or phases.

Vocational – Linked to work.

Voluntary Aided School – The relevant Church Diocese is the employer.

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Report to: | CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| Relevant Officer: | Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager. |
| Date of Meeting: | 22 April 2021 |

COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2021/2022

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider the contents of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee's Workplan for 2021/2022.

2.0 Recommendations:

- 2.1 To approve the Committee Workplan, taking into account any suggestions for amendment or addition.
- 2.2 To note the updated action plan of recommendations resulting from the scrutiny review of the School Response to Covid-19 Pandemic.
- 2.3 To note the updated action plan of recommendations resulting from the scrutiny review of Inclusion in Education.
- 2.4 To monitor the implementation of the Committee's recommendations/actions.

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.
- 3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No
- 3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? N/A

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

- 4.1 None.

5.0 Council Priority:

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

6.0 Background Information

6.1. 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. 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.

A further Workplanning Workshop will be scheduled to take place following Annual Council and will provide the opportunity to further consider the Committee's workload for the following municipal year and to prioritise areas for scrutiny review. Attached at Appendix 10(a) is a draft of the proposed Workplan for 2021/2022, which will be used as a starting point for further consideration at the Workplanning Workshop.

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.

6.2 Implementation of Recommendations/Actions

The table attached at Appendix 10(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.

6.3 School Response to Covid-19 Scrutiny Review

6.3.1 Attached at Appendix 10(c) is the updated agreed Action Plan of Recommendations resulting from the review.

6.4 Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review

6.4.1 Attached at Appendix 10(d) is the updated agreed Action Plan of Recommendations resulting from the review.

6.5 Better Start Scrutiny Review

6.5.1 The final meeting of the working group carrying out a review of Blackpool Better Start took place on 19 April 2021. A thorough review of all the data collected and evidence gathered has been undertaken. The formulation of recommendations and the production of a report summarising the working's group's findings will now be commenced.

6.6 Literacy Strategy Consultation

6.6.1 Two informal meetings have been held in February 2021 and March 2021 with Members of the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee and the Assistant Director of Children’s Services – Education to allow consideration of and input into the Council’s ten year Literacy Strategy.

6.6.2 Attached at Appendix 10(e) are the notes from the meeting held on 22 March 2021.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 10(a): Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee Draft Workplan
Appendix 10(b): Implementation of Recommendations/Actions
Appendix 10(c): School Response to Covid-19 Pandemic Action Plan of Recommendations
Appendix 10(d): Inclusion in Education Action Plan of Recommendations
Appendix 10(e): Literacy Strategy Meeting Notes

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 None.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

13.1 None.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

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| Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee - Work Plan 2021-2022 | |
|---|---|
| Special 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. |
| 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 children in secure accommodation and care leavers. 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. 4. Ten Year Literacy Strategy – To consider the final version of the Literacy Strategy. 5. CSAP Annual Report |
| TBC June 2021 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth Offending Team Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the YOT Improvement Plan. 2. Children's Social Care Improvement – To receive an update in relation to relationships with Third Sector partners. 3. Young Inspectors – To receive a presentation from the newly recruited Young Inspectors of children's residential homes. 4. Education/SEND – To receive an update in relation to a selected SEND theme. 5. Blackpool Better Start Scrutiny Review - To receive the final report from the review. |
| TBC October 2021 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children's Social Care Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the selected Improvement Plan Theme. 2. Youth Offending Team Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the YOT Improvement Plan. 3. Review of Youth Provision – To receive an update on the progress of the review. 4. Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review – Recommendation monitoring one year on. |
| TBC December 2021 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children's Social Care Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the selected Improvement Plan Theme. 2. Youth Offending Team Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the YOT Improvement Plan. 3. Education – To receive an overview of results data. 4. Schools Response to the Pandemic Scrutiny Review – Recommendation monitoring one year on. |
| TBC February 2022 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth Offending Team Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the YOT Improvement Plan. 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 a selected SEND theme. |
| TBC April 2022 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth Offending Team Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the YOT Improvement Plan. 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 a selected SEND theme. |

| Scrutiny Review Work | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Commenced October 2020 | Input into the consultation process for the development of the Education Strategy. |
| Commenced December 2020 | Blackpool Better Start A working group has been formed to review the work to date of Blackpool Better Start as it reaches its half-way point. Review worked completed April 2021. |
| February 2021 | Input into the development of the SEND Vision and Strategy. |
| February/March 2021 | Input into the development of the Literacy Strategy. |
| | |
| TBC | The Experience of Looked After Children in Blackpool 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: <i>1. Improve the systems and quality of Agency Decision Maker's processes for approval and matching of foster carers and adopters.</i> <i>2. Ensure that our social workers are prepared for court proceedings.</i> |
| TBC | Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools 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> |
| TBC | SEND Funding and Capacity Cabinet Member referral. |

APPENDIX 10(b)

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

| | DATE OF REC | RECOMMENDATION | TARGET DATE | RESPONSIBLE OFFICER | UPDATE | RAG RATING |
|---|-------------|--|--------------|---|--|------------|
| 1 | 20.06.19 | To receive key performance data in relation to A Better Start. | January 2021 | 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 Blackpool Better Start Partnership Executive Board in December 2020, following which the data would be provided to the working group undertaking a review of Blackpool Better Start. | |
| 2 | 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. | March 2022 | Director of Children's Services | This work was never completed by DfE due to Covid-19 and will now be built into a care review launched by DfE in January 2021, with an expected 12 month timescale. Outcomes of care review anticipated by March 2022. | |
| 3 | 09.01.20 | To receive results of YOT re-inspection once completed. | TBC | Director of Children's Services | | |
| 4 | 09.01.20 | To receive the findings of the Department for Education impact study on out of area placements. | March 2022 | Director of Children's Services | This work was never completed by DfE due to Covid-19 and will now be built into a care review launched by DfE in January 2021, with an expected 12 month timescale. Outcomes of care review anticipated by March 2022. | |
| 5 | 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 but anticipated to be Summer 2021. | |
| 6 | 10.09.20 | To seek further information from the Director of Community and | Ongoing | John Blackledge, Director of Community and | Mr Blackledge has advised that lead officers will attend the appropriate CYP Scrutiny Committee meeting to discuss the scope of the review and the | |

| | DATE OF REC | RECOMMENDATION | TARGET DATE | RESPONSIBLE OFFICER | UPDATE | RAG RATING |
|----|-------------|--|---------------|---|---|------------|
| | | Environmental Services on the work underway to review ways to increase youth service provisions across the town. | | Environmental Services | proposed approach that will be taken with regards to consultation and mapping work in order to enable the Committee to feed into the process. | |
| 7 | 19.11.20 | That further updates on the improvement of relationships with third sector partners be reported back to a future meeting of the Committee. | June 2021 | Director of Children's Services | | |
| 8 | 19.11.20 | That Mr Ashley attend future meetings of the Committee to present the CSAP Annual Report and subsequent scrutiny reports. | March 2021 | CSAP Independent Scrutineer | To be completed at the CYP Scrutiny meeting of 22 April 2021. | |
| 9 | 19.11.20 | The town-wide Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) survey data be brought to a future meeting of the Committee. | June 2021 | Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion | | |
| 10 | 28.01.21 | That the data relating to the proportion of Our Children who were looked after be reported to a future meeting of the Committee following the outcomes of the working party examining the issue. | TBC | Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Service | | |
| 11 | 28.01.21 | To receive a full progress report on all outstanding recommendations resulting from the reviews of the School Response to Covid-19 | 21 April 2021 | Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion | To be provided at the CYP Scrutiny meeting of 22 April 2021. | |

| | DATE OF REC | RECOMMENDATION | TARGET DATE | RESPONSIBLE OFFICER | UPDATE | RAG RATING |
|--|-------------|--|-------------|---------------------|--------|------------|
| | | Pandemic and Inclusion in Education at the next meeting of the Committee on 22 April 2021. | | | | |

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School Response to Covid-19 Pandemic Scrutiny Review Action Plan

| Recommendation | | Cabinet Member's Comments | Rec Accepted by Executive? | Target Date for Action | Lead Officer | Committee Update |
|----------------|---|---|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------|---|
| R1 | That further consideration be given by Council officers to the implementation of measures to monitor and address the potential impact on mental health to both pupils and school staff as a result of the pandemic. | The mental health of our school community is a regular consideration at meetings in our governance structure, to include Blackpool Education Board, Renewing Education group (Covid return to school) and our weekly public health Q&A session. Relevant themes and issues are shared across the wider partnership to influence intervention support. | Yes | April 2021 | Paul Turner | Pupil Attitude to School and Self Survey will be completed again in 2021/2022 school year. Wellbeing in Education training has been delivered and will be continued until at least March 2022. Meeting scheduled to plan for Mental Health First Aid training to be delivered to practitioners in our schools again over the summer term. |

School Response to Covid-19 Pandemic Scrutiny Review Action Plan

| Recommendation | | Cabinet Member's Comments | Rec Accepted by Executive? | Target Date for Action | Lead Officer | Committee Update |
|-----------------|---|--|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------|--|
| R1 Continued | | | | | | Meeting scheduled to discuss mental health support teams in schools. |
| R2 | That the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee should continue to monitor academic performance and the impact of the pandemic on affected cohorts. | The every day business of monitoring achievement will continue. | Yes | April 2021 | Paul Turner | No data is available, currently, due to the absence of statutory tests and assessments nationally. Summary "local" testing analysis will be presented in the autumn. |
| R3 | Council officers should continue to review practices in preparation for a second wave. | This work is ongoing and will continue to be responsive to government guidance through our Renewing Education group. | Yes | February 2021 | Paul Turner | |

School Response to Covid-19 Pandemic Scrutiny Review Action Plan

| Recommendation | | Cabinet Member's Comments | Rec Accepted by Executive? | Target Date for Action | Lead Officer | Committee Update |
|----------------|--|--|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------|--|
| R4 | A best practice summary guide should be produced and distributed to schools by the Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion which outlines the key success criteria as identified during the initial closure and reopening. | Best practice is shared through our governance arrangements, specifically through our Renewing Education group and public health question and answer sessions. Learning is already communicated through our governance structures and to every school establishment. A summary guide would therefore be a duplication. | No | N/A | Paul Turner | |
| R5 | A letter of thanks should be extended from the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee to Headteachers and schools for their commitment and efforts in the continued safeguarding of pupils' learning and wellbeing in exceptional circumstances. | This would be welcomed. | Yes | January 2021 | Paul Turner | Cllr Hugo has submitted the letter to Paul Turner for distribution to schools. |

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Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review Action Plan

| Recommendation | | Cabinet Member's 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. | Agreed | Yes | Jan 2021 | Paul Turner | This has been reviewed and it meets the nationally agreed requirements of the school admissions code. |
| | (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. | Agreed | Yes | Jan 2021 | Paul Turner Academy Heads | This has been actively happening since September. The numbers of in-year moves have reduced significantly, although this may be because of Covid as well as action on behalf of the Council and partners. |

Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review Action Plan

| | Recommendation | Cabinet Member's Comments | Rec Accepted by Executive? | Target Date for Action | Lead Officer | Committee Update |
|--|---|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| | (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. | Partly agreed – the Council has no legal jurisdiction over the Academies but will work closely with them to clarify admissions guidance and to act in an advisory role. | Yes | Update Jan 2021 | Paul Turner Academy Heads | This has not yet been offered due to the Covid crisis and demands upon people's time. |

Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review Action Plan

| Recommendation | Cabinet Member's 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>Agreed, however national consultation on proposed changes to the School Admissions Code is currently ongoing and anticipated to be completed by January 2021. These changes will impact implementation of the recommendation but can be incorporated into guidance provided to Academies.</p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>Update Jan 2021</p> | <p>Paul Turner Academy Heads</p> | <p>Ongoing. Timeliness of admissions is very good in Blackpool, currently.</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>Partly agreed – whilst supportive of this recommendation, the Council lacks legal jurisdiction but will seek to standardise admissions procedures across the Academies as far as possible within its advisory role.</p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>Update Jan 2021</p> | <p>Paul Turner</p> | <p>Outside of our scope as we are not the admissions authority for the Academy Trusts operating in Blackpool.</p> |

Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review Action Plan

| Recommendation | | Cabinet Member's 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. | Partly agreed – the Council would advise discouragement of EHE only in cases where provision has been identified as being unsatisfactory and can act in its advisory role to Academies to suggest a tightening up of their procedures. | Yes | Update Jan 2021 | Paul Turner Academy Heads | Ongoing. Families that have opted for Elective Home Education due to the Covid-19 pandemic are being encouraged to return to school. |
| 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. | Agreed | Yes | Nov 2020 | Paul Turner | Appeals information is now clearly outlined and accessible to parents via the Council's website and as such is now easier for parents to access and navigate. |

Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review Action Plan

| | Recommendation | Cabinet Member's Comments | Rec Accepted by Executive? | Target Date for Action | 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. | Partly agreed – Academies have ultimate control over their own processes but the Council is supportive in putting the recommendation to the Academy Chief Executives and Headteachers for implementation. | Yes | Update April 2021 | Paul Turner Academ y Heads | Ongoing. Representatives have again stated that they wish for the In Year Process to remain as it is, currently. |
| 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. | Not accepted. The appeals process is managed individually by each Academy and as such the Council is unable to enforce alignment across the Academies as a whole. | No | | Paul Turner | Outside of our control. |
| | (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. | Partly agreed – the Council is supportive of the recommendation and will work with Academy Trusts to advise on the format of appeal letters. | Yes | Update Jan 2021 | Paul Turner | Ongoing. |

Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review Action Plan

| Recommendation | | Cabinet Member's Comments | Rec Accepted by Executive? | Target Date for Action | Lead Officer | Committee Update |
|----------------|--|---|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 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. | Agreed | | Nov 2020 | Paul Turner | A full time equivalent counsellor, based at Educational Diversity is now available to provide Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to all schools. The service includes a free four week placement on referral through the Athena panel. Mr Turner agreed to report back to the Committee on the impact of the counselling service in twelve months' time. |
| 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. | Agreed – the Council will issue the request to Academies. | Yes | Jan 2021 | Paul Turner Academy Heads | Ongoing. |

Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review Action Plan

| | Recommendation | Cabinet Member's Comments | Rec Accepted by Executive? | Target Date for Action | 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. | Agreed – this can be incorporated into the launch of the 'Ten Year Education Strategy.' | Yes | Jan 2021 | Paul Turner Academy Heads | Ongoing. |

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**Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee Informal Meeting
22 March 2021**

Literacy for Life Strategy Review Meeting

Attendance

Cllr Don Clapham

Cllr Kim Critchley

Cllr Jane Hugo

Cllr Martin Mitchell

Cllr Andrew Stansfield

Cllr John Wing

Ms Helen Sage

Representatives of the Children and Young People's (CYP) Scrutiny Committee attended a briefing session with Mr Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion to review the amended draft of the Literacy for Life Strategy. Mr Turner advised that he was still in the process of making additions to the strategy based on feedback received and he anticipated the completed version of the strategy to be available for final review by mid-April.

Consideration was given to the list of suggestions which had been emailed to Mr Turner by Ms Helen Sage. Mr Turner addressed each in turn and thanked Ms Sage for her input and comments, agreeing in the most part to include her suggested amendments. Ms Sage was in agreement with Mr Turner's assertion of the importance of avoiding making the document too operational in content. He agreed that KS4 required additional focus within the strategy and was in the process of adding further information to this effect. With regards to Ms Sages' request that special schools be included, Mr Turner reported that he had received similar feedback from colleagues within Health Services and was working with them to add a relevant section to address this area.

With regards to the Committee's previous suggestion of the inclusion of greater links to Blackpool Better Start and their work with Early Years, Mr Turner confirmed that he had met with Ms Merle Davies, Centre for Early Child Development Director and Ms Clare Law, Centre for Early Child Development Deputy Director and they were in discussions on how best to weave their Early Years support work into the strategy.

Members questioned how Councillors could help to support parents within their wards to encourage reading and help address issues of adult literacy. Mr Turner reported that the Department for Education's Opportunity Area was funding a town-wide Literacy Officer and the intention was for them to approach ward Councillors to seek suggestions and support on how best to improve literacy across the town. He explained that in order to ensure that any interventions were suitable for Blackpool's specific needs, Councillors' input and guidance would be a valuable tool.

Reference within the strategy to Literary Canons was noted and further explanation requested of its meaning. Mr Turner described a Literary Canon as being a selection of books given to children during their time within education as selected by their school. It would be a selected reading list of a range of genres deemed to be good quality and age appropriate reading. The Committee discussed the potential drawbacks of imposing specific reading material onto pupils, with the risk of disengagement being raised as a concern and the importance of encouraging a love of reading being noted. Members requested that consideration be given to asking young people what their reading recommendations would be and for these to be included within the strategy.

In response to a question of what GL stood for within the document, Mr Turner advised that this was essentially a brand name for a company who provided Cognitive Ability Tests and he agreed to add this explanation to the strategy's glossary for clarity.

Members requested that consideration be given to the choice of photographs used within the strategy, noting that the current images reflected families with older parents and questioned whether this was reflective of Blackpool families. Mr Turner agreed that more suitable replacements would be identified and included. Committee Members also requested that the images and language used within the strategy reflected the diverse population of the town.

Following a question on whether schools had sufficient resources to provide enough good quality reading material for pupils, Mr Turner advised that whilst in previous years funding may have been an issue this was no longer the case. However, he reported that space within schools to provide sufficiently large library areas was an issue and that some schools struggled to find space to accommodate the necessary volumes of books as well as funding to employ a dedicated librarian.

With regards to the layout of the revised version of the strategy, Mr Turner noted that a number of the charts and tables previously included within the body of the document had now been moved to the appendices for ease of reference. In addition he advised that consultation with Blackpool's young people would be undertaken via the JustUz group and Headstart.

It was agreed:

1. That as part of the consultation with young people consideration be given to asking them what their reading recommendations would be and for these to be included within the strategy;
2. That an explanation of GL be added to the glossary;
3. That a link to the Early Years work undertaken by Blackpool Better Start be incorporated into the strategy;
4. That the images and language used within the strategy should reflect the diverse population of the town with consideration being given to the age of parents;
5. That Mr Turner would circulate to Committee Members the updated version of the strategy showing marked/highlighted changes for their comments;

6. That following approval by the Corporate Leadership Team, the finalised version of the strategy would be considered by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in April 2021 before consideration by the Executive.

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