

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2023**

Present:

Councillor S Brookes (in the Chair)

Councillors

Bamborough	Critchley	Hoyle	Mrs Scott
Cooper	Ellison	Jones	

Ms G Clayton and Ms Jo Snape, Co-opted Members

In Attendance:

Councillor Kath Benson, Cabinet Member for Young People and Aspiration

Councillor Jim Hobson, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Councillor Paul Galley, Chair, Scrutiny Leadership Board

Annette Algie, Strategic Service Manager, Better Start

Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager

Victoria Gent, Director of Children's Services

Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Services

Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services (School Improvement and Special Education)

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager noted the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair and sought nominations for a Chair for the meeting.

The Committee agreed to appoint Councillor Shaun Brookes as Chair of the Committee for this meeting only.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 be signed by the Chair as a true and correct record.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no requests from members of the public to speak on this occasion.

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5 EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Committee noted the Executive Decisions taken since the last meeting of the Committee.

6 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted the items on the Forward Plan within its remit.

7 BLACKPOOL BETTER START ANNUAL UPDATE

Ms Annette Algie, Strategic Service Manager, Better Start presented the Blackpool Better Start annual update to the Committee. She highlighted the achievements of the previous 12 months including the increase in take-up to the Healthy Start scheme, the Christmas Advocacy event, infant mental health awareness week, oral health and school readiness. A number of schemes had also been introduced and funded by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) which would ensure their sustainability following the end of the lottery funded period such as the Parent Infant Relationship Service.

The Committee was informed that following the submission of a business case to the National Lottery Community Fund, Blackpool Better Start received formal confirmation that the programme underspend could continue into years 11 and 12, two years beyond the original funded period. The additional time would not support a full-scale continuation of Blackpool Better Start's current delivery model but would comprise of £4.5million spend between April 2025 and March 2027. The work would focus on three key identified areas and continue to be supported by the Centre for Early Child Development.

Members praised the work of Better Start undertaken to date and queried how many of the services provided could be sustained following the conclusion of the funding programme to March 2027. It was noted that investment was being made into the workforce to train staff in techniques and models used by Better Start which would ensure some initiatives could be sustained without specific funding. The ICB had also determined to fund some initiatives.

It was requested that case studies demonstrating the work of Better Start be circulated to Members following the meeting.

The Committee agreed:

That Ms Algie provide case studies demonstrating the work of Better Start following the meeting.

8 BLACKPOOL YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE

Ms Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Services presented an update on the Blackpool Youth Justice Service. She advised that the Youth Justice Partnership plan along with performance and resource data was monitored quarterly via the Blackpool's Youth Justice Executive Board providing a multidisciplinary strategic focus on the impact of service

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delivery on children's outcomes. The Executive Board ensured the Youth Justice Partnership was provided with clear and coordinated strategic governance to support with the delivery of high-quality youth justice services. The five priorities of the Youth Justice Services were also highlighted to the Committee.

In response to a question, Ms McCartan advised that those children and young people that were not in education, employment or training and were open to the Youth Justice Service had a specialist worker to advocate and support them. The aim was to ensure access to the most appropriate schooling whether that be in mainstream or special schools.

The details of the case study provided were noted with it queried the number of young people that re-offended. Ms McCartan advised that re-offending was tracked and was broadly in line with national averages. There was a small number of persistent offenders, with local re-offending tracked on a real time basis.

9 STATUTORY ASSESSMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS UPDATE 2022-2023

Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services (School Improvement and Special Education) introduced the update on results and attainment for 2022/2023. He noted that primary and post-16 data had not yet been officially released and therefore further detail would be provided in future reporting on these areas. In regards to secondary school assessment and attainment information it was noted that it was particularly complex to interpret.

Mr Turner highlighted that one secondary school in Blackpool had achieved well and was consistently above national average. From the remaining secondary schools there had been some indications of increased attainment from some schools in some subjects, however, collectively more was required.

The Committee discussed uptake of the English Baccalaureate and the emphasis placed on traditional rather than practical subjects. It was noted that the reading challenge continued with the Literacy Strategy in effect.

In response to questions, the recent poor Ofsted judgement of a local secondary school was noted. Mr Turner advised that the Regional Schools Director was holding the Academy Trust Board to account for the inadequate judgement and failure to improve standards at the school. There were a number of other schools that were currently 'requires improvement' and work was ongoing with the Regional Schools Directors to make improvements.

Members noted the impact of the pandemic on pupils and the gap in data it had created. It was reported that the Government had not yet determined how progress would be measured over the next two years.

10 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE Q1 - Q2 2023/24

Ms Vicky Gent, Director of Children's Services introduced the Council Plan key performance

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data (KPI) relating to Children's Services and highlighted the data relating to the number of children looked after, rates of foster care and Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs).

The Committee queried the details of SGOs and the impact of them on the number of foster carers and it was agreed that a brief training session be provided on SGOs. It was also queried whether previous foster carers who had decided not to foster anymore during the pandemic had been contacted to determine if they might change their minds in light of the new support offer and it was agreed that Ms Gent would clarify this information and report back to the Committee.

The issue of children and young people in foster care remaining in their foster home beyond age 18 was considered. It was noted that it was often good for the young person to remain with their foster parents for as long as possible to provide the stability required for more positive outcomes and it was noted that there had been a significant increase in the number of young people remaining with foster carers beyond age 18.

It was noted that no targets had been provided within the KPI data and that it was not necessarily appropriate to set a target for some of the indicators. It was agreed that this should be reviewed to determine whether an aspiration, a view of the direction of travel or a sense check could be included in place of a target.

The Committee agreed:

1. To receive a short training session on Special Guardianship Orders within the next pre-Committee briefing session.
2. To receive an update from Ms Gent on whether previous foster carers had been contacted since the pandemic to determine if they wished to take up the role again.
3. That Ms Gent consider the 'target' field within the Council Plan Key Performance Indicator data to determine whether an aspiration, a view of the direction of travel or a sense check could be included in place of a target in the next report to Committee.

11 CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING ASSURANCE PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

Ms Vicky Gent, Director of Children's Services introduced the Annual Report of the Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP). She noted that the report covered the period 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2023 and had taken a number of months to complete. Due to the changes to the CSAP resulting in a return to place-based provision, the Independent Chair of the Partnership for the period of the Annual Report was no longer in post.

She advised that the priorities of the Partnership during the previous term – contextual safeguarding, neglect and domestic abuse would continue to be the priorities going forward alongside other key areas such as the front door and early help. The Child Death Overview Panel would remain at a Pan-Lancashire level.

In relation to the data relating to child deaths, it was queried why there was a significantly

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higher number of deaths amongst males than females. The figures also did not add up to 100% and it was agreed that Ms Gent would investigate this data and provide a written response following the meeting.

The Committee discussed the report in detail, noting the positives of returning to place-based arrangements, highlighting the importance of early help and the right direction of travel in the data.

The Committee agreed to receive a written response on the child death data for Blackpool.

12 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Committee noted its workplan, the table of recommendations and the notes of the informal meeting held to consider the Children, Young People and Families Plan.

13 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting as Thursday, 25 January 2024, commencing at 6.00pm.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.56 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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