

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -  
WEDNESDAY, 27 MARCH 2024**

**Present:**

Councillor Flanagan (in the Chair)

Councillors:

Bamborough	Critchley	Fenlon	C Mitchell
S Brookes	Ellison	Jones	

Gemma Clayton, Co-opted Member

**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

Mrs Rachel Barnes, Head of Service, Supporting Our Children

Mr Chris Coyle, Assistant Director of Children's Services (Children's Social Care)

Ms Laura Chadwick, Head of Transformation/Principal Social Worker,

Ms Michaela Goodridge, Co-Production Delivery Lead

Ms Lisa Harrison, Co-Production Sessional Worker

Mrs Kirsty Fisher, Engagement and co-production lead for Our Children

Ms Leanne Turner, Participation Worker, Our Children and Care Leavers

Miss L Hudson, Young Inspector

Mrs Jodie Stephenson, Democratic Governance Senior Advisor

**1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

**2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2024 were signed by the Chair as true and correct record.

**3 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

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

**4 FORWARD PLAN**

Members considered the items on the Forward Plan within its remit.

Councillor Galley, Chair Scrutiny Leadership Board advised that the Children's Services Medium Term Financial Strategy once approved, would be a regular item on the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee agenda.

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**5 BORN INTO CARE PROJECT**

The Committee agreed to take this item in conjunction with 'Item 6 Blackpool Families Rock' due to the topics being closely related.

**6 BLACKPOOL FAMILIES ROCK**

Ms L Chadwick, Head of Transformation/Principal Social Worker, Ms M Goodridge, Co-Production Delivery Lead and Ms L Harrison, Co-Production Sessional Worker presented the report outlining the progress made in both the Born into Care Project and Blackpool Families Rock and the background surrounding the development following the projects.

Ms Chadwick, explained that following the January 2019, Ofsted Inspection, Children's Services were labelled 'inadequate', it had been evident that a back to basics approach would be required targeting a change in culture. Co-production had been key to develop the services along with peer to peer support.

Co-production consisted of workers and parents, the group had developed and tested a guide for parents, families and professionals that would help them navigate the social care 'system'. The Guide to your Family's Journey would be launched on 10 April 2024, Members were invited to comment on the guide prior to launch.

The Committee raised concern with regards to safeguarding and how the service engaged with the families who were reluctant to be referred for support. Ms Harrison advised that approach was key and the workforce had been trained to have more of a holistic and conversational approach, parents would be included at every step of the process and with every decision made. The Co-production team would include other services to support the family. In addition Members were informed that siblings were an integral part of the consultation to support the family.

Members requested that the data be presented as an individual and not percentages to allow them to understand the number of children and families that were in need. In addition, Members requested that a future presentation to include KPI data and progress of the projects both positive and negative to understand what had worked and what improvements had been made to overcome any barriers.

Ms Chadwick, Ms Goodridge and Ms Harrison acknowledged that continuous improvements would be applied to the service and feedback would continue to be an important factor in supporting and developing the services that would be provided. Members praised the hard work and acknowledged that Blackpool had been identified as a flagship Council in the co-production work and it had been recognised across the North West.

The Team advised that the ethos of Blackpool Families Rock generated a positive, respectful, kind and courteous culture where staff believed that they made a difference.

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**The Committee agreed:**

1. That a report on the implementation and initial impact of the projects be received at a future meeting in order to measure success;
2. To receive, when appropriate, KPI data and a breakdown relating to the number of individuals.

**7 PLACEMENT STABILITY FOR FOSTER CARERS**

Mrs R Barnes, Head of Service, Supporting Our Children provided Members with an oversight of the plans in place to ensure our children experience greater stability in their homes.

Mrs Barnes highlighted the two key priorities within Children's Services:

1. Supporting more children to stay safely within their families (or to live within a family setting where it was not possible for them to remain with their birth family); and
2. To support more children to effectively engage with education. Should children need to reside outside of their families, foster homes were the preference for them and as such Children's Services remain committed to both recruiting and retaining foster carers.

Mrs Barnes reported that an extended psychology offer had been approved to support Our Children and their carers.

In addition the service had been successful in securing a Department for Education (DfE) fund for the Regional Fostering Recruitment and Retention Hub which would go live in May 2024. Members raised concern as to the future of the Hub following the 2 years funded period, Mrs Barnes advised that future funding would depend on the viability and affordability of the Service.

The Mockingbird model was presented to the Committee and Members were advised that Mockingbird had a successful track record in other authorities and it was envisaged that the service would fund itself overtime.

**The Committee agreed:**

1. To note the contents of the report;
2. To receive an update at a future meeting, following the introduction of both the Regional Fostering Recruitment and Retention Hub and the Mockingbird model.

**8 YOUNG INSPECTORS' PROGRAMME**

Mrs K Fisher, Engagement and co-production lead for Our Children, Ms L Turner, Participation Worker (Our Children and Care Leavers) and Miss L Hudson, Young Inspector updated the Committee on the work of the Young Inspectors' programme.

Mrs Fisher provided the background for the volunteer Young Inspector role, and explained that at present there had been no other quality monitoring process available to the ten

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semi-independent homes in Blackpool.

A Semi-independent Inspection Charter Mark had been created following the apparent mixed offer available in the semi-independent homes across the town. The Charter Mark had been co- produced with young people and had been used in all visits to inspect against. Members were advised that 8 out of the 10 semi-independent homes had been awarded the Charter Mark. Mrs Fisher advised that the 2 homes that had not attained the Charter Mark would be re-visited and reassessed on a regular basis.

The Committee were advised that Ofsted Inspections would be introduced, in addition to the Charter Mark.

The Committee praised the role of the Young Inspectors thanked them for their valuable work and commitment. Members were advised that the work with the young people in Blackpool had been recognised nationally, Ms Fisher advised that she would be happy to share good practice with other authorities.

With regards to safeguarding, Members were informed that any concerns raised during an inspection would be reported through Mrs Fisher and directed to other relevant services.

Members were invited to visit the team in an informal capacity to meet the young people in their own environment, to see how the process works. Members acknowledged a number of challenges the young inspectors face, but expressed their gratitude to the young people for providing such a valuable resource.

**The Committee agreed:**

1. To note the report;
2. To undertake informal visits to the team and to meet the young people in their own environment.

**9 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORKPLAN**

The Committee considered its Workplan for 2024/2025 and noted the items within.

**10 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting is subject to being confirmed at Annual Council.

**Chairman**

(The meeting ended at Time Not Specified)

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Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:

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