

Report to:	RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Delyth Curtis, Director of People
Date of Meeting	4 February 2016

THEMATIC DISCUSSION: SOCIAL CARE PLACEMENTS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To enable Members to discuss Social Care Placements in detail and undertake scrutiny of services.

2.0 Recommendations:

2.1 To receive and scrutinise the presentation at the meeting.

2.2 To consider and discuss the report, identifying any further issues for scrutiny.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

3.1 To ensure effective scrutiny of social care placements.

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

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

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

Services are subject to national and statutory frameworks.

4.0 Council Priority:

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

5.0 Background

Blackpool has the highest number of Our Children (looked after children) per 10,000

population in the country and this has been the case for a number of years. Whilst numbers are now consistently reducing (at a time when numbers nationally are rising) we have a small number of young people who are very difficult to place and for whom the placements are extremely high cost.

Current LAC by Legal Status		
Legal Status	Number	Percentage
Section 20	75	16.3%
Interim Care Order	55	12.0%
Full Care Order	254	55.3%
Placement Order Granted	73	15.9%
On remand, or committed for trial or sentence, and accommodated by LA	2	0.4%
Total	459	100.0%
Current LAC by Placement Type		
Placement Type	Number	Percentage
Foster Care	321	69.9%
Children's Homes	38	8.3%
Residential accommodation not subject to 'Children's homes regulations'	8	1.7%
Residential care home	1	0.2%
Family centre or mother and baby unit	2	0.4%
Young Offender Institution or prison	1	0.2%
Placed for adoption with placement order	32	7.0%
Placed with own parents or other person with parental responsibility	42	9.2%
Independent living	14	3.1%
Total	459	100.0%
Breakdown of Foster Care Placements		
Legal Status	Number	Percentage
Approved Family Fostering	23	7.2%
Emergency Friend /Relative Care	21	6.5%
Internal Fostering	206	64.2%
Independent Fostering Agency	71	22.1%
Total	321	100.0%

Breakdown of Residential Care Placements		
Legal Status	Number	Percentage
Internal Children's Home	11	28.9%
External Children's Home	27	71.1%
Total	38	100.0%

5.1 Current situation

We have a number of current challenges, which are reflected in the discussion at the January multi agency independent placement overview panel:

- The impact of the Southwark judgement. We have had three 17 year olds that have opted to become section 20 looked after in January. This means that they are now entitled to full support including leaving care.
- Poor service provision from mental health and very high levels of need. We had 3 young people sectioned under the mental health act, 1 that required a therapeutic placement (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)) assessment was rejected) and 1 young person that needed therapeutic support in relation to sexual aggression for whom a referral is being made to GMAP as there are no available local services.
- Lack of in house foster placements, 4 children went to an Independent Fostering Agency as there were no in house placements.
- Rise in the need for mother and baby placements. This month 2 were required. This seems to be linked to recent case law, which is requiring additional assessment prior to making a plan for adoption.
- Extreme difficulty placement very complex and high need children.

The case study below outlines some of the challenges which our children and young period are currently experiencing.

5.2 Case Study - The Gardens Family

Jo Garden is 15. He lived with his mum in central Blackpool. Jo has a recent history of increasingly aggressive behaviour and has been cautioned by the police for anti social behaviour. His mum is saying he is beyond her control and he needs to be in care. She was offered a range of support but after a couple of months this breaks down and she refuses to allow him back into her house. There are no other family members that will take him and therefore he is placed in emergency foster care by the emergency duty team over a weekend. The foster placement breaks down due to persistent missing from home episodes and Jo continues to return to his mum's address. She calls the police and he is removed from her premises on a number of

occasions. Following the most recent of these incidents he ran in front of a car stating he wishes to be dead. On 2 recent occasions he has also cut his wrists and been found with a ligature around his neck. He has been placed in a number of residential placements but these break down due to his challenging behaviour and self harming. He has been referred to CAMHS but the diagnosis is that his actions are behavioural and not due to mental health issues. His current placement provider has now given notice to end the placement due to his behaviour.

5.2.1 Challenges

This sort of case poses a number of challenges. Placements to meet needs of this type are very difficult to find and the lack of a diagnosis makes access to therapeutic support very difficult. Typically these young people end up in out of county placements which are very costly and often are not able to appropriately meet needs.

5.2.2 Financial Implications

The lack of access to mental health provision and the placements to meet the needs of these very complex children has very significant costs to the council. We currently have 10 children costing in the region of £1.9million per year in addition to education and therapy costs for some of these children. The placement budget is significantly over spent.

5.2.3 Recommendations and planned Next Steps

We are currently working on a number of service reviews and bids for additional resources which aim to take a whole system approach to support better placements for our young people and reduce the need for these highly costly and challenging placements.

5.3 Prevention for the need for care.

We are working on two main pieces of work in this area:-

Pause project; This project is designed to develop intensive family support to families that have had a baby removed to reduce the prospect of further future children being brought into care. This type of project has been very successful in Hackney and other similar boroughs. We are aiming to develop a pilot project, linked to Better Start and Adult Learning for the new financial year. This will be funded by Better Start.

Vulnerable adolescents' hub; We are currently reviewing services for vulnerable adolescents to reduce duplication and create a "no wrong professional" approach.

We are aiming to target services towards improved outcomes and also looking at service gaps. One area that has already been identified is the need to support young people that have been sexually abused. Therefore we are developing a bid to be submitted to the police and crime commissioner to establish a pilot therapeutic team in this area. We are also looking at increasing edge of care support which includes a crash pad model that Blackburn have developed as an emergency placement option.

5.4 Increasing and improving placement provision

We are currently reviewing our children's home provision and these reviews are on an all options basis, in addition to reviewing the sufficiency of our placements more widely. As part of these reviews we will be looking at the possibility of the development of therapeutic foster placements so we can support a movement for children from residential into a home setting and the possibility of developing intensive support therapeutic residential services.

These reviews will report in early February. The Scrutiny Committee may wish to request a further update following the reviews reporting.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 The statutory obligations are monitored and continue to be met.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 None

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 None

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 None

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 There is a duty under the **Children’s and Families Act** to co-produce all policies with parents and children/ young people (CYP). Positive feedback has occurred from parent and charity groups to the DFE about parental engagement and engagement with children/ young people was seen as not being a major concern on a DFE monitoring visit. However, it has been highlighted by internal self-evaluation that engagement with CYP could be better and work is ongoing with the Chief Executives department to put in further structures to enable this to improve. It was also recognised that “hard to reach” parents views have not been obtained and a parent telephone survey is proposed.

There is a requirement under **the 2011 Education Act** to progress a School Led System. This is achieved through the work of the Challenge Board, School Federation and School Forum.

13.0 Background papers

None