

Report to:	RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Delyth Curtis, Director of People
Date of Meeting	17 March 2016

CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To inform scrutiny of the work undertaken by Children's Services on a day to day basis and to update on the progress and implementation of developments within the area to allow effective scrutiny of services.

2.0 Recommendations:

- 2.1 To note the contents of the report and to ensure that current work continues to meet statutory obligations and that work to prepare for external inspections continues.
- 2.2 To assist the Council to continue to meet statutory monitoring, challenge and support obligations.
- 2.3 To work with schools to support improvement and preparation for external scrutiny and support the work of the Blackpool Challenge Board in order to improve the progress and attainment of Blackpool Children especially at KS3 and KS4

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

- 3.1 For Members of the Scrutiny Committee to be fully informed as to the day to day work of the Children's Services Directorate and have assurance that Blackpool is continuing to meet its statutory obligations for future inspection requirements. The LA remains retains a statutory responsibility to monitor all schools in order to support improvement and raise the attainment and progress for all children in the Local Authority Area.
- 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 Reports

5.1 School Improvement Processes

5.1.1 The School Improvement Team is in the process of carrying out the Spring visits to maintained schools. A focus within the visit is reviewing gaps between Pupil Premium children and other pupils in school. School Improvement Partners will also be asking for judgements within Early Years regarding any gaps.

5.1.2 In the Autumn term, the visit notes were redesigned to reflect a clearer and more focused way of working. In addition, a cross section of School Improvement Partner visits will be monitored and quality assured this term to review outcomes and clarity.

5.1.3 At the beginning of this term, School Improvement carried out an informal review of existing school categories to consider whether any new evidence would impact upon categories agreed in the autumn term. The only variation in categories was made with St Cuthbert's, where the school moved to category 1. The Head of Service was involved in the collection of evidence alongside the Executive Headteacher.

5.2 School Inspection Outcomes

5.2.1 HMI Monitoring Visits:

There have not been any monitoring visits to date this term.

5.2.2 Full Inspections:

There has only been one inspection carried out under the new framework to date, which is:

- **Anchorsholme** The report has now been published. The outcomes of this

visit suggest: 'The school continues to be good'.

5.3 **Children's Social Care /Safeguarding**

5.3.1 Volume of Work: The numbers of contacts to the front door and referrals for services are still high – further work needs to be done to understand the reason for the high number of contacts. This includes the interface with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) (in January 303 contacts came from MASH and only 42 converted into referrals) and the number of referrals, which do not meet threshold and should have been managed at a level two. An analysis of these issues will be undertaken and this will be reported to the next Children's Services performance meeting. Part of this will include reviewing the conversion rate from referral to assessment which is reported in November as 67.4%. Work is planned to support schools to share the work they are doing at level 2 as there is some excellent practice but this is not consistent. The Chair of the Safeguarding Board will also support this work.

5.3.2 Caseloads: Caseloads are currently high due to sickness and maternity leave across the social work teams - these are being covered by agency where possible but this has put an increased pressure on the teams and created challenges in meeting court timetables. All vacancies have been advertised and five new members of staff have been appointed.

5.3.3 Children subject to child protection plans: The lowest figures for 2015 for children on plans were recorded in November. A more rigorous approach is being taken to reviewing those on a plan for over 12 months and in February, Service Managers in Safeguarding and Service Managers in Long Term teams reviewed nine cases and agreed that eight children should no longer be on a plan. The introduction of a new approach to reflective supervision has helped in this area as has a more robust approach to working with other agencies and challenging them to provide clear reasons and risk analysis to underpin their desire for children to remain on plan.

5.3.4 Numbers of Our Children (Looked after Children): Although the November figure (the most recent complete performance book) seems to be in the lower level recently there has been a significant increase and rates of over 450 consistently. This is due to an increased demand and a number of serious injuries to young children.

5.3.5 Emotional health and wellbeing of Our Children: All of Our Children undertake an annual Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to look at their emotional needs. In previous years SDQ scores have not been used to sufficiently drive planning and improvement for individual children. This year Children's Services will be ensuring there are robust links in place to trigger the use of pupil premium plus

and access to HeadStart support.

5.3.6 Personal Education Plans (PEPs): PEP completion is at its highest rate. This is a significant achievement and the SDQ work outlined above will enhance the quality of the PEPs which are in place and which currently stand at 96%.

5.3.7 Young people not in education training and employment (NEETS): There has been an increase in the figures. It is anticipated the Core (the new care leavers drop in centre) and the work planned to be delivered at the Core, plus the vulnerable adolescent hub will improve performance. Development of a project search programme for Our Children for September 2016 is also being considered. This will support around eight of Our Children in a yearlong programme for them to access intensive job coaching and support. The project will build on the 19 pledges made that related to employment support from the Corporate Parenting Conference.

5.3.8 Access to therapeutic support: The Council has been successful in a bid to the Police and Crime Commissioner to establish a new pilot programme, Enlighten, to enhance therapeutic support to young people who have been sexually abused. The funding will be £100,000 for a one year pilot programme.

5.4 **Early Years – Ofsted Inspections**

5.4.1 Three childminder inspection reports have been published since the last report. Two childminders were judged Outstanding and one good. No additional group settings reports have been published. One registered out of school club, which had a previous judgement of inadequate, has resigned its registration, and the school (Bispham Endowed) has taken over responsibility for out of school provision. This means that we currently have no inadequate settings in Blackpool.

5.4.2 The overall percentage of Good and Outstanding:

Blackpool	Nationally
Childminders - 92%	83% CMs
Childcare on non-domestic premises - 85.7%,	87% PVI's
All registered provision – 89.5%.	85% all provision

National figures are as at 31 October 2015. (Currently in Blackpool, due to numbers of settings awaiting a grading inspection, 1 PVI setting = 2.8%).

5.5 **Bid for Early Implementation of the 30 hours free childcare**

5.5.1 Both Houses have now agreed on the text of the Bill which now waits for the final stage of Royal Assent when the Bill will become an Act of Parliament. There are to be eight Pilot authorities for the 30 hours free childcare initiative: Wigan,

Staffordshire, Swindon, Portsmouth, Northumberland, York, Newham and Hertfordshire. Only York will be offering additional hours to all eligible children in their area and they will be piloting an online application system. The North West Early Innovator areas are Stockport, Bolton, Trafford, Bury and Cheshire West & Cheshire. Local Authorities and providers will be working on a variety of projects to deliver the additional entitlement such as for children with Special Educational Needs or the Homeless.

5.6 **Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) take-up**

5.6.1 The figures below are based on a Department for Education estimate of 643 eligible children in Summer term when all three intakes are present in the system.

Summer 2015 term take up was 546 (85%)

Autumn 2015 term take up was 355 (55%)

Spring 2016 term take up is 409 children (64%) to date (15th Feb 2016)

Funding released to childcare settings for 2015-2016 to Dec 2015 is: £ 100,000

5.7 **Free entitlement grant for 2 Year olds**

Take up of the grant is still increasing and reached 748 children (81%) in Autumn Term 2015.

5.8 **Better Start**

5.8.1 Parks and Open Spaces: Work on parks is now underway commencing on George Bancroft Park and Revoe Park in January. Both sites have been part of an extensive community consultation exercise. A development worker has been appointed in partnership with Left Coast and Blackpool Coastal Housing to take forward consultation in the Mereside area around the use of green space. Two Park Rangers are being appointed to work with parents of 0-3's as part of the Parks developments. They will cover all parks in the seven target wards of the Better Start programme.

Two pilots are starting this year to encourage outdoor activities with families. These are the development of the Fit2Go scheme to Early Years and Sports Blackpool Volunteer Development Sport Coaching scheme.

5.8.2 Evidence Based Interventions: Since September 2015, parents in the seven Better Start wards have had a universal, evidence based anti-natal offer consisting of Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) for all parents under 20 and Baby Steps for all new mothers over 20. To date 278 have been registered for Baby Steps through the midwives at their first appointment. The Baby Steps team is made up of Health

Visitors, Family Engagement Workers, Midwives and Star Buddies working in partnership through the Children's Centres. FNP is working to the target of offering every eligible parent a place. The Baby Buddy app has been downloaded by 294 Mothers since it went live in Nov 2014. The NSPCC has redesigned its Service Centre in Blackpool to focus on the pre-birth to three age group. The staff will be moving into the two main Children's Centres and will be trained in and delivering the following programmes;

- Video Interactive Guidance – from Feb '16
- Safecare – From March '16
- Parents Under Pressure – from April '16
- Survivor Mum's Companion – pilot from May '16

The Mental Health Alliance, funded by the Big Lottery, is working with the Centre for early Child Development and Blackpool partners to develop a holistic Perinatal Mental Health Pathway across the town

5.9 **Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability**

- 5.9.1 The large scale changes for SEN and disability (SEND), associated with the Children and Families Act continue to be implemented. Blackpool is one of the few authorities nationally to be meeting the statutory timescales for the completion of new Education, Health and Care Plans and the converting of Statements of SEN, whilst doing so in a person centered way. Two recent visits, from the Education Funding Agency and Preparing for Adulthood (a body working closely with the DfE) have both verbally praised the work and progress Blackpool is making. Work is ongoing to form a children and young people's council to represent the views of those with SEN and/or disability. A DVD is also being produced to represent their views to all of the work groups. All locally produced video material on the Local Offer web site have BSL signing and text to enable access.
- 5.9.2 A parent conference will be held, organised by the Parent's Forum on the 18th March from 10am until 2.30pm at the Football Club. This will enable parents to contribute their views on the Local Offer for children and young people with SEND, and their families, in Blackpool.
- 5.9.3 In March the Equalities and Human Rights Commission is due to visit the town on the invitation of a local charity, for deaf young people and their families, Sign Hi, Say Hi. The charity has asked them to visit, in part, to discuss the good working relationships they have in coproduction with the Local Authority.

5.10 **Early Help**

5.10.1 Inner Strength: The Perpetrator Programme moves onto its second cohort of four. The shared responsibility for the delivery of the programme is progressing well and to date Children's Social Care, Families in Need, Police and Mental Health staff have all been part of the assessment and delivery of the sessions receiving excellent feedback from the participants.

5.10.2 Parents as Partners : The training of staff to deliver the Tavistock Foundations evidence based programme "Parents as Partners" has taken place and 14 professionals from different disciplines completed the training and the delivery of the programme will commence in the near future. This programme will reinforce and strengthen the co-couple relationship and focus on the fathers or partners as well as the mothers.

5.10.3 Organised crime, prevent and protect: The Families in Need Service is delivering and coordinating a programme as part of a wider pan Lancashire project that is funded through transforming public services network. The work in Blackpool is focussed on vulnerable young people who are currently interlinked and have multiple risk taking behaviours thus making them vulnerable. By coordinating activity using current data and a targeted approach to provide effective and timely support to the young people and their families their vulnerability and risk will be reduced.

5.10.4 Troubled Families: The latest Troubled Families return was submitted to The Department for Communities and Local Government in January and 89 families were successfully turned around delivered through the Families in Need Service. The services latest quarter three figures show that they have worked with a total of 549 families 785 adults 1285 children. The number of families stepped down to a level two services in quarter three is 107. The number of children and young people supported to be reunified from a care placement to live safely back with their family is 25.

5.11 **Virtual School Governing Body**

5.11.1 It has been agreed that a governing body will be established for the Virtual School. The governing body will consist of an elected member, senior officers, young people in care and representatives from other agencies. It will champion the needs of Our Children wherever they are placed and educated and ensure that strategic policies and practice enhance their educational opportunities. It is intended that the governing body will support the outcomes, priorities and key actions of the Virtual School including its development plan and will receive and approve the Virtual School Head's annual report.

5.12 **Elective Home Education**

- 5.12.1 The Government has been focused on Elective Home Education recently, following a 65% increase nationally over 6 years in children who are removed from mainstream education provision to be 'educated' by their parents at home. There has been a concurrent investigation into "out of school settings" with a focus on unregistered schools and the threat to safeguarding posed by radicalisation. As a result the Pupil Registration Regulations and Children Missing Education guidance, and Elective Home Education guidance may be reviewed because of Ofsted's call for more "destination data" when children are taken out of school.

Ofsted said "we cannot be sure that some of the children whose destinations are unknown are not being exposed to harm, exploitation or the influence of extremist ideologies." Ofsted also said "we do not know whether these children are ending up in unregistered provision."

5.13 **Connexions**

- 5.13.1 The Connexions Youthability Hub is due to complete its second year of activity. Connexions Youthability Hub is a one stop shop for young people aged 16-24 to get a range of support that helps them into employment. This support includes specialist careers advice, NHS counsellor support (from Connect) and direct input from employers alongside other Council/third sector support services. Over the last twelve months employers such as Blackpool Transport, Sainsbury's, Tesco, and Burger King have supported Youthability. Since April last year 855 young people have accessed Youthability during its weekly three hour slot with 71 young people gaining employment and a further 247 in apprenticeships and Traineeships.

- 5.13.2 "The Sixth Our Future", Our Choice event took place at Blackpool Pleasure Beach at the end of January this year. This collaborative event, steered and managed by the Blackpool Guidance Community Network and Blackpool Council, is supported by all of Blackpool's secondary schools, FE colleges, training providers and employers. It is widely recognised as a template for good practice in relation to national aims and priorities. The 2 day event attracts around 1500 young people and in excess of 120 school staff from local secondary schools, including special schools and Pupil Referral Units. This year also saw 10 of Blackpool's Primary schools attending the event.

5.14 **Adult Community and Family Learning**

- 5.14.1 The Family Learning service has been developing and delivering provision in a range of partnership projects. The service worked with the Grand Theatre and nine schools on a Family Learning project which included photography and theatre performance. Accredited Functional English and Maths for parents has been

delivered in four children's centres. Two secondary schools are piloting accredited Maths courses for parents for the first time. The aim of the courses is to then be able to assist their children with the maths curriculum. Family Learning is also being delivered in two new settings (Thames Primary Academy and Stanley Kittens).

There are two emerging exciting partnership projects. Firstly, Family Learning and Better Start are working together on literacy projects and secondly, Family Learning have been working in partnership with the Early Years team to develop and deliver REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) training for practitioners and parents to support children's literacy development.

5.15 **Youth Offending Team**

5.15.1 **Reoffending:** The service now demonstrates consistent reduction and improvement against the national measure of reoffending. The regional and national rates have steadily increased over the same period. 'Live' data for young people under YOT supervision over the last 12 months is better than the national average. Reduction in the reoffending rate and improvement against the performance of YOTs nationally was recognised by the removal of Youth Justice Board improvement measures in Autumn 2015.

5.15.2 **Reducing 'First Time Entrants' to the youth justice system:** Significant reductions made over the last 4 years have been maintained, but remain above the national and regional rates. The creation of an integrated service for young people offers to opportunity to improve co-ordination of systems and services and to make further improvements.

5.15.3 **Reducing the Use of Custody:** Performance has been improved over the last 4 years to reach match the average for the region. In practice this represents a reduction from over 30 custodial sentences per year, to single figures. Performance now reflects the seriousness of some offending, rather than the inability of the service to offer a credible, robust community sentence as an alternative.

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