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| Report to: | RESILENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| Relevant Officer: | Delyth Curtis, Director of People |
| Date of Meeting | 1 September 2016 |

CHILDREN'S SERVICES REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To inform Scrutiny Committee 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 areas in order to allow effective scrutiny of services.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 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 continue to meet statutory monitoring, challenge and support obligations.
- 2.3 To identify any further information and actions required.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 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 Local Authority retains a statutory responsibility to monitor all schools in order to support improvement and raise the attainment and progress for all children in the 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 considered:

None.

4.0 Council Priority:

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

5.0 **Reports**

5.1 **School funding reforms**

- 5.1.1 The Secretary of State for Education has announced a delay to the planned implementation of a national funding formula for schools. The first stage of a consultation which began in March this year incorporated proposals for a new formula to be introduced from April 2017. The intention was that there would be two years of a “soft” national formula, with some retained local discretion to re-distribute funding between a local authority’s schools. The “hard” formula would then commence in April 2019, with each school’s funding determined at a national level.
- 5.1.2 The statement by the Secretary of State confirmed that the soft national formula will now not be implemented until April 2018, although it is anticipated that there will only be one year of local discretion, with the hard formula coming into effect in April 2019 as originally planned. There will be a second stage to the consultation following summer recess, and this will set out the detailed proposals, with illustrations of the financial effect at school and local authority level.
- 5.1.3 The Council is also awaiting the second stage of the High Needs consultation (which covers funding for aspects such as special schools, special educational needs, and the Pupil Referral Unit), as well as proposals for a national formula for Early Years education, and reforms to the funding of Alternative Provision. Further information will be reported to Scrutiny Committee when available.

5.2 **School Inspection Outcomes**

- 5.2.1 Since the last report there have not been any full inspections. There has been one HMI Monitoring visit which was held at South Shore Academy. The outcome stated sufficient progress was being made.

5.3 **School Structural Changes**

- 5.3.1 Mereside will convert to an Academy on 1 September 2016 as part of FCAT (Fylde Coast Academy Trust).

5.4 **White Paper**

- 5.4.1 Following the meeting outlined in the last report on the 13 June 2016 between system leaders and the Regional School Commissioner, a further event on 14 July 2016 was scheduled. This date incorporated opportunities for Headteachers and Chairs of Governors to meet with the Regional Schools Commissioner (Vicky Beer) and National School Commissioner (Sir David Carter), to discuss the changing

landscape in the light of the White Paper. The event took place at the Winter Gardens and was attended by over 90 representatives. This date is the first of a series of dates, to be determined, which will address the changing landscape for school accountability.

5.5 **Safeguarding**

5.5.1 The School Safeguarding Advisor and a number of other staff from the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and partner agencies have been trained by the NSPCC to deliver the "Graded Care Profile 2" assessment tool for considering whether Neglect is evident within a family or home environment. LSCB will now roll out training to partner agencies so that they can complete the assessment tool and will better understand and / or identify neglect when it is occurring. The first round of training will occur in September.

5.5.2 The LSCB has also developed a new training package for school Designated Safeguarding Leads at schools and colleges in Blackpool, which will be delivered in October 2016 and February 2017 initially. This will significantly increase the depth and breadth of training available to schools and is initially free of charge. Additionally, Blackpool Organisation and Workforce Development and the LSCB have developed a training offer to schools and colleges which incorporates both online and face to face training at a price which provides significant cost savings when compared to training that is procured through external agencies. This is comprehensive and covers national and local safeguarding and child protection agendas and will allow schools and colleges to meet the requirement of annual updates to training and an ongoing cycle of learning.

5.6 **SEND**

5.6.1 Blackpool recently received a congratulatory letter from the Department for Education (DfE) for completing all Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans within the statutory time limits, something achieved by only a few other local authorities nationally. The Local Authority is also on target to convert all Statements into EHC Plans within the time scales, also something that not all authorities are on target to do.

5.6.2 Much work has gone into preparation for the new local area inspections of SEN and disability (for 0-25 year olds resident in Blackpool classified as such, and their families). A process for the visit of the inspectors, including the setting up of a SharePoint site to log information they request to see has occurred. A self-evaluation framework, written by all relevant agencies, has been developed and is updated regularly. 20 storyboards, outlining the work that has occurred are updated every 6 months. These will be available for both inspectors and interviewees when the inspection takes place.

5.6.3 A summary of the first three published inspections has been provided, with implications for Blackpool highlighted. Learning also occurred from a peer challenge

event with other North West local authorities. These will be further explored in terms of any new actions required in the next few weeks. One highlighted weakness from self-evaluation was coproduction with young people and work has occurred here, with the help of community engagement, to set up a young person group(s) to capture the views of those with SEN and/ or disabilities. Work has also been undertaken to gather a central data set, with central government for the first time publishing in such a way to compare local authorities. This information has been fed into next actions. These will be reported to the next scrutiny committee

5.7 **Education – Connexions**

5.7.1 Supporting the transition of school leavers into Post 16 education and training:

5.7.2 The “Summer Ventures” courses have been delivered in partnership with Blackpool and the Fylde College. The courses were designed to engage young people in a variety of courses over the summer to help their transition into further education and training in September. Of the 70 young people who participated in the courses, 68 completed and all of whom finished with progression plans to continue their further education or training.

5.7.3 Blackpool Council is working in partnership with the Calico Group to promote apprenticeship opportunities in the Construction industry in Blackpool. Calico’s award-winning shared apprenticeship scheme Constructing the Future (CTF) is working with contractors Morgan Sindall, Lovell, Bardsley Construction and Willmott Dixon on major development works for a new Energy HQ, housing at Queens Park, the new Lancashire Constabulary West Division HQ, Blackpool, and a number of schools in the Blackpool area. As a result of these developments and the long standing partnership between Blackpool Council and the Calico Group, CTF is now looking to recruit a number of full time apprentices to work on site with the contractors, whilst working towards a construction qualification. A Jobs Fair will take place in August and anyone who is aged 16-24 and lives in the Blackpool area would be eligible to apply.

5.7.4 A wide range of Blackpool Council departments along with other businesses have pledged to provide employment support for “Our Children” either through work experience or jobs/apprenticeships. Whilst this is still in its early days, there have been some successes. The Sandcastle Waterpark has recruited four young people over the summer and two young people have applied for the High Ropes Instructor Apprenticeships in Leisure Services. Young people are being supported to apply for the construction apprenticeships outlined above and there will be opportunities to apply for a Princes Trust “Get Into Retail Programme” which gives the opportunity to apply for jobs with Marks and Spencers.

5.8 **Adult Learning Service**

5.8.1 The Family Learning team has worked with 234 families on projects to directly support adults and children to improve their English, Maths and Language skills. Of those, 38 adults achieved qualifications in Maths and/or English. Accredited courses in Physical Care of Babies and Children and Awareness of Safeguarding have also been delivered with 28 learners achieving qualifications. Courses were delivered in 30 venues in Blackpool, including children's centres, schools and libraries. The Family Learning service continues to work closely with schools and children's centre staff as well as with partners in Better Start, where we have delivered Sharing REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) with Parents and contributed to family literacy events, with colleagues in libraries, supporting Summer Reading Challenge and National Bookstart Week and with the Arts Service to support Save our Stories and Wordpool.

5.8.2 A new course is being piloted over the Summer called "Learn the Tablet, Keep the Tablet" which involves providing new Tablet computers and including the cost in the Tablet course. The learner gets the Tablet in session 1, learns to use this device throughout the three weeks, taking it home in-between and keeps the Tablet at the end of the course. It is designed for the digitally illiterate and the computer phobic who would struggle to transfer their newly learnt skills to another device when they get home. The first class is full with one of the learners asking if the Tablet was second hand and commented that he couldn't believe the opportunity. If successful the course will be rolled out in September and will hopefully encourage those remaining residents who are too afraid to reach out to technology.

5.9 Social Care

5.9.1 There is some very positive news in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff. The service is for the first time fully staffed at first line manager and service manager level with permanent as opposed to agency staff. The service has also been successful in appointing a Senior Service Manager for Social Care. The staff that have been appointed wanted to come to Blackpool having heard positive messages about it as a place to work and two of those appointed have previously worked in the town. Having a stable and permanent team will support improved consistency of practice and service quality. The message of Blackpool being a good place to work is also reflected in the organisational health check which was a survey sent to all social work staff. Nearly three in four (73%) agree completely or in the main that "Blackpool Council is a learning organisation and has a positive learning culture". Employees were also asked what makes them feel positive about Blackpool Council as an employer and the main responses were:-

- Positive spirit and values, both within their team and the Council as a whole
- Feeling supported in their roles
- Good working relationships, including with partners
- Learning and development opportunities which help them to improve

5.9.2 The Social Work Reform Programme for Children and Families Social Workers.

The knowledge and skills statement is an integral part of the governments social work reform programme and will form the basis of the new national accreditation system for social work practice within child and family social work which will require all of those who work as social workers and use the title to become accredited. Whilst the process of the new accreditation system is currently still in its infancy, Organisational Workforce Development and Senior Managers in Blackpool Council have commenced planning to meet the requirements and begun by circulating the knowledge and skills statement on which the accreditation will be based to all relevant staff.

- 5.9.3 So far the social work reform programme has focused on a child and family social worker’s career pathway; alongside this the government is keen to promote depth of practice in key areas of child and family social work. The first of these is focussed on achieving permanence and further detail is set out within the government consultation paper ‘**Knowledge and skills statement for achieving permanence**’ that was published on the 4 July 2016.
- 5.9.4 **Demand and demand management;** Nationally there has been a 21% increase in care applications and in Blackpool the Council is consistent with this but not higher than the immediate neighbours. Demand for early help and social care services remains high – with numbers of open cases the highest since 2012. The complexity of the work is also increasing. However, despite these very real pressures there is some creative and innovative practice being seen across all of early help and social care services with teams working together and “thinking outside of the box”. This has been picked up by outside agencies such as the Courts and the Council continues to receive a significant number of compliments.
- 5.9.5 **Placement costs:** Placement numbers continue to rise significantly. An audit has now been completed on all the cases of children that started to be looked after from 1 April to mid-June 2016. The audit found that all but one of the 49 children had previously been known to Children’s Services and 33 had been subject to child protection plans previously but unfortunately, despite significant input the families had not been able to make or sustain sufficient change to enable the children to be appropriately cared for at home without the need for the Local Authority to share parental responsibility or offer substitute care. Only one child had recently moved to the area.
- 5.9.6 Costs have significantly increased as the needs of the children are highly complex and therefore they require specialist resources. Hence the number in external residential and independent foster placements has risen.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No ~~Yes/No~~ ~~Yes/No~~

List of Appendices:

None

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 None.

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 None.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.