

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	Delyth Curtis, Director of People
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	8 December 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.

### 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.
  - To continue to meet statutory monitoring, challenge and support obligations.
  - 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.
  - 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 remains and 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 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 Adult Learning Service**

5.1.1 The Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan for 2015/2016 have been completed (whilst the year finished July 2016 the final data is not available until October 2016). Strengths include high Achievement Rates (93% of 3448 learners successfully completed courses), the most vulnerable are targeted (75% of all learners live in the top 30% Lower Super Output Areas) and in comparison with 29 other Local Authorities who are part of a benchmarking club, Blackpool is ranked first in having the highest reach per 1000 population and was ranked second in cost per learner. Areas for improvement include improving further Achievement Rates in Maths and English courses, improving the number of Grade 1 observations and increasing the response rate for learners being followed up after finishing courses to assess impact.

##### **5.2 Connexions**

5.2.1 The Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Scorecard has been published for 2016. The Not in Education, Employment or Training and Not Knowns have been combined which raises Blackpool into the 4th quintile. Blackpool is in the top quintile for re-engaging Not in Education, Employment or Training young people back into learning. However, the key issue is the young people don't always remain in learning once placed. As Blackpool and the Fylde College has the largest number of 16 – 18 learners, a workshop is planned for December involving the Council and the College to review case studies of learners who drop out to identify potential improvements in systems support.

5.2.2 The Journey To Work Partnership tackling youth unemployment focussed recently on new European Social Funded programmes to be delivered by voluntary sector, colleges and training providers. Updates were given by UR Potential, Groundworks and Blackpool and The Fylde Colleges on support for unemployed young people in Blackpool which will be linked into Council support.

##### **5.3 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)**

5.3.1 The numbers of students with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs educated in out of borough specialist provision has been rising to around 70 (dependant on the stage of the academic year, with less in September as Y11 leave and new students commence during the year). For a time we have been discussing, with providers, the possibility of opening up a special free school to cater for some of these students within the town. Central government has just

launched a bidding process to open a number of free special schools. Blackpool has submitted a bid for a 48 place special school for Key Stage 2 to 4 students with Social, Emotional and Health needs.

5.3.2 There is increasing pressure on early years' services for Special Educational Needs and disability as numbers increase. This is due to Blackpool being a net importer of need, more babies surviving, who have additional needs and an increasing diagnosis of autism.

5.3.3 Preparations for a possible inspection of Special Educational Needs and Disability (0 - 25 year olds, and their families) within the Blackpool area continue across all Partners. The self-evaluation framework is currently being updated and the structure of the strategic groups revised in terms of lessons learnt.

#### 5.4 **Blackpool School Improvement Board**

5.4.1 The second meeting of the Blackpool School Improvement Board takes place on 9 December 2016. This Board represents all aspects of education in Blackpool and has identified five priorities which will form the basis of the School-Led System and will be monitored by the Board. The priorities include: Teaching and Learning, Developing Leadership, Collaboration, Inclusion and Effective Transition

5.4.2 Headteachers will have the opportunity to engage in the progress of the priorities through their representative lead. Schools will be encouraged to share practice and activities in these priority areas.

5.4.3 The Local Authority is in the process of commissioning school improvement advice and has now secured the services of an individual who used to work as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). The individual will support the process of school collaboration in this new model and has vast experience of working with other Authorities and Multi Academy Trusts (MAT).

#### 5.5 **Opportunity Fund**

5.5.1 Blackpool has been confirmed as one of ten Local Authorities to become part of the New Opportunities Programme which will look at funded commissions to target across the life span of a young person/child. The work shall be overseen by a partnership board and the Chair of the Blackpool School Improvement Board will be invited to be a standing member. The Department for Education is scoping the way forward.

#### 5.6 **Blackpool Challenge Summits**

5.6.1 The Challenge Summits shall now replace the Board and the following themes have been agreed:

<b>Date of meeting and venue</b>	<b>Agenda circulated</b>	<b>Deadline for reports</b>	<b>Theme for Summit</b>
12 October 2016 Derham Lounge, Winter Gardens	5 October	3 October	Inclusion
24 January 2017 Main Lecture Theatre, CLC	17 January	13 January	Employability and skills
5 April 2017 Main Lecture Theatre, CLC	29 March	27 March	Aspiration and Parental Engagement
5 July 2017 Renaissance Room, Winter Gardens	28 June	26 June	Recruitment and Retention

## 5.7 **Virtual School**

5.7.1 Following the success of the Head Start bid a project to address the needs of “Our Children” on the edge of exclusion is being planned. The project will focus on those children who have already experienced a school exclusion combined with a high Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score. The Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire is completed by carers and this information forms part of the statutory return. Resilience coaches will work alongside the Educational Psychologist for Our Children with the identified cohort, their carers and schools.

## 5.8 **Childrens Social Care**

5.8.1 The Challenge; currently there are very high levels of contact and referrals to social care. In September there were 1127 contacts of which 350 became referrals to social care and 31 to Families in Need (FIN). The service has the highest number of social work open cases which stands at 2050. Additionally, the Local Authority has the highest number of children subject to a child protection plan and looked after (currently 506 Looked After Children); one in 14 children in Blackpool has a social worker. Nationally local authorities have seen a 65% increase in initial contacts to children’s social care (since 2007 – ADCS, Safeguarding Pressures), numbers of child protection enquiries per 10,000 have risen by 124% and the rate of children starting to be looked after 94%.

5.8.2 In order to strengthen partnerships, consistency of approach at level 2 and collate reliable/valid data, the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board has held an extraordinary meeting to focus on demand management with some clear actions and themes being agreed. Additionally there will be a ‘Think Tank Session’ on 1 December 2016 to work through next steps with Regional/Local Government Association colleagues, staff and partners.

- 5.8.3 Other actions that have been agreed to reduce and manage demand include the following:
- Families In Need has stepped down all level 2 work to free up capacity for their qualified social workers to become the allocated worker for Children in Need cases.
  - A revised Early Help plan is in place which includes a reinvigorated offer from children's centres, the development of the vulnerable adolescent hub, the development of a revised Early Help assessment process and threshold document and the use of resilient therapy as the underlying approach and shared language across all agencies.
  - The Safeguarding Board held a summit on demand management on the 18 November 2016 with all partners and a partnership plan has been developed.
  - The review of in house residential provision has now been completed and the development of a crash pad/edge of care model is in train.
  - PAUSE model scoping has begun to support parents where one child has previously been removed and to prevent further vulnerable pregnancies.
  - Threshold audit and audit of cases into the care system and those not meeting threshold of children's social care have taken place.
  - A pan-Lancashire review of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is underway.

- 5.8.4 Future action planned: Strengthen support to professionals that are working with families that do not require social work in put. There are a number of actions required in this area:-
- The development of the role of Early Help Officer – this role would offer professional consultation to other professionals and also support them to act as the lead professional and develop early help assessments and team around the child work. This role could be resourced from existing services.
  - The development of a rapid response intensive support team which can be immediately commissioned and deployed by social care. This would mirror the models in successful Local Authorities such as Leeds and prevent the need for multiple assessments before early and intensive support is accessed. This service could be created from existing resources and would complement the crash pad and vulnerable adolescents hub which are being developed.

- 5.8.5 Outcome required:
- Reduction in overall contacts to the front door
  - Improvement in referral conversion rates to above 45% (this would be rated good by Ofsted).

5.8.6 **Improved purposefulness of practice and timeliness of social work intervention**

The challenge: currently high and complex caseloads make effective care planning and intervention challenging. Despite this in many areas the service is achieving better than average levels of timeliness for example initial conferences in timescale (97.7%) and statutory visits 86.6%. However, some of the other data suggests a level of anxiety in the system which is created by the high numbers and the

complexity of cases, for example, there are high levels of section 47s (investigations where significant harm is suspected) - this has gone up from 479.7 per 10,000 in March to 614.4 in August 2016 and there are high numbers of children on plans and some that are on plans for too long.

#### 5.8.7 Action already taken:

- Additional social work posts have been agreed to go into duty and assessment and the safeguarding teams
- The development of the placement tracking officer post to reduce system drift has happened
- The development of solution-focused meetings to reduce the number of cases that are “stuck” and are unable to come off a plan are now in place.
- The development of live data reporting for managers to be able to track work more effectively has been taking place.
- Supervision audit and participation in the Research in Practice (RIP) supervision pilot is underway.
- The introduction of new ways of working with agencies in some of the most complex and risky cases, for example, the Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM) process being used for the children involved in anti-social behaviour.
- The introduction of a new performance process for the management team which triangulates data findings and themes.
- The Service has developed legal planning panel to ensure timely and appropriate action in cases that meet threshold for court intervention and discharge of existing orders.

#### 5.8.8 Future action planned:

- The introduction of group and reflective supervision.
- The training and development of all managers in effective practice management and self- leadership (as presented at the social work conference) - this is a four-day course which can be commissioned from the University of Bournemouth.
- The development of a revised assessment and care planning approach across all agencies which is based on the resilient therapies approach this will support better and more consistent practice and improved multi agency risk management. This is also consistent with the approach which underpins Head Start.
- The reduction in the number of children on a child protection plan by working differently with certain groups of young people. The service has already begun to explore this in relation to the Multi-Agency Risk Management process outlined above. There is now a need to look at the process for Child Sexual Exploitation cases and investigate the model being developed pan Lancashire on a strength based approach to working with families where Child Sexual Exploitation is an issue.

#### 6.0 List of Appendices:

None

**7.0 Legal considerations:**

7.1 None.

**8.0 Human Resources considerations:**

8.1 None.

**9.0 Equalities considerations:**

9.1 None.

**10.0 Financial considerations:**

10.1 None.

**11.0 Risk management considerations:**

11.1 None.

**12.0 Ethical considerations:**

12.1 None.

**13.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:**

13.1 None.

**14.0 Background papers:**

14.1 None.