

Report to:	RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Delyth Curtis, Director of People
Date of Meeting	26 January 2017

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW 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 LA 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 Background Information

5.1 Connexions

5.1.1 Connexions and the Virtual School are continuing to work together to provide all 16-24 year old Looked After Children who are in education with specialised Careers Guidance, financial advice and early intervention for those at risk of disengaging. This project has also allowed us to know what the current destination of each of Our Children is, including the qualifications they are undertaking and progress against them. Currently 11 of Our Children are undertaking degree level qualifications. Blackpool Council's Connexions service has continued the delivery of its pre-traineeship programme 'Advance' for long term NEET 19-24 year olds with the support of the Adult, Community and Family Learning team. The 2016/17 academic year has started well with nine young people completing the first programme and the second programme now delivering to ten young adults. To date, 37% have found employment following the courses with a further 14% undertaking further training and 3% undertaking volunteering.

5.2 Adult Learning

5.2.1 A review has been undertaken of the 2015/16 Skills For Employment Programmes to assist development in 2017. A pathway is provided which particularly targets individuals furthest away from the labour market. Courses are provided at a variety of venues across Blackpool and are delivered by Blackpool Council Adult Learning Tutors and through sub-contracting arrangements with Blackpool and the Fylde College and UR Potential. In 2015/16, 796 learners participated in short courses with 82% progressing into further training, volunteering or employment. Developments planned include aligning new courses as part of the new Health Works offer and refining courses to meet the needs of JobCentre Plus service users following meetings with JobCentre Plus managers.

5.3 High Needs Block Funding

5.3.1 The Department for Education consultation on the new High Needs Block financial allocation has been published in the second stage. The High Needs Block funds, special educational needs and disability funding in schools and colleges for children with an Education Healthcare (EHC) Plan. Proposed figures for each Local Authority

do not show an increase for Blackpool's block of funding despite increasing need within the town. Blackpool is investigating further as to why this is the case but it may be based on overall demographic changes in area populations. The budget to meet high needs will have to be maintained within the allocated High Needs Block.

5.4 Special Free School Bid

5.4.1 The bid for the special free school which would provide 48 places for pupils aged 10-16 years with social, emotional and mental health needs has been submitted to the Department for Education. Many other Authorities have bid for this also within the limited national resource. The Blackpool case is that there is not enough local provision to meet need and increasingly we are using expensive out of borough provision. Blackpool special schools have seen real pressure on places with few currently having any available.

5.5 School Improvement

5.5.1 The School Improvement Board:

The Blackpool School Improvement Board Executive Group met on Monday 9 January 2017 to set the agenda for the next Board meeting. Sub groups for each priority will meet before the next Board meeting to focus on actions from the previous meeting and agree success criteria and ways forward to achieve possible outcomes. The sub groups are made up of educational representatives from across Blackpool including MATS, Academies, Maintained Schools, Trusts, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Inclusion, Teaching Schools, Regional School Commissioner and the Local Authority. Each sub group has a lead who will report back to the Blackpool School Improvement Board on agreed outcomes and progress in relation to their priority. The next Blackpool School Improvement Board Meeting is on 1 February 2017.

The Priority areas are:

- Priority 1: Aspiration and Achievement
- Priority 2: Developing Leadership
- Priority 3: Teaching and Learning
- Priority 4: Inclusion and Support
- Priority 5: Effective Transition.

5.5.2 Inspections:

Since the last report the following schools have received a HMI Monitoring visit:

South Shore Academy – outcome is yet to be published

Aspire Academy – Requires Improvement

The following schools have received a full inspection:

Revoe Learning Academy – Requires Improvement (was Serious Weaknesses)

St Bernadette’s RC Primary School – Good (was Good).

St George’s Academy – Requires Improvement (was Requires Improvement)

5.6 **Inspection of SEN and Disability**

5.6.1 Preparation for a potential inspection of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and disability in the area continues. The most recently published inspections have seen a more critical stance being taken by OFSTED/ CQC and lessons are being learnt from these.

5.7 **Director of Children’s Services Recruitment**

5.7.1 Mrs Delyth Curtis has been appointed as Deputy Chief Executive at Cheshire West and Chester Council and will leave Blackpool Council on the 31 January 2017. The interviews for her replacement will take place on the 24 and 25 January 2017.

5.7.2 Depending on the notice period of the successful candidate, an interim Director of Children’s Services will be needed for approximately a three month period. Following a review of suitable candidates, taking into account recommendation from other Authorities, the Cabinet Secretary and Chief Executive met with the preferred candidate this week, with a view to making an interim appointment in time for a handover period with Delyth Curtis. An update will be provided at the meeting.

5.7.3 The Committee will also be aware that Amanda Hatton, Deputy Director of People, has also been successful in achieving the position of Director of Children’s Services at Lancashire County Council and will leave Blackpool Council on the 14 February 2017. The arrangements for replacing Amanda will begin once a new Director of Children’s Services has been appointed, in order for them to influence the process. An interim arrangement will be put into place, whilst recruitment continues, which should be agreed by the time of the meeting. An update on this issue will also be provided.

5.8 **Key Initiatives**

5.8.1 There are a number of key initiatives underway at the moment, which address significant areas of need. The project leads will attend to present information relating to the areas below, along with intended outcomes and timescales.

5.8.2 New Opportunities Area

In October 2016 the Education Secretary announced the first six “opportunity areas” in England in a £60m scheme to promote social mobility, supporting schools and links with employers.

The first areas will be Oldham, Blackpool, Derby, Norwich, Scarborough and West Somerset. Plans will be developed to ensure that pupils will get the best start in life, regardless of background.

Education and businesses in the opportunity areas will be expected to work together to “create opportunities outside of school that will raise sights and broaden horizons for young people” with a greater focus on links with industry and better careers guidance.

Graham Cowley, Vice Chair of the Lancashire Economic Partnership will be leading on this initiative across the Borough, supported from a Local Authority perspective by Alan Cavill, Director of Place.

5.8.3 Vulnerable Adolescent Hub

The Vulnerable Adolescent Hub model is now developing at pace. The management structure has been agreed and appointed to and a change management team is now in place to ensure implementation and delivery. It is anticipated that by bringing five to six services together, duplication will be reduced and young people will have a single point of contact and access.

Pathways are now being developed and priorities around skill mix and training requirements are being taken forward. Accommodation options have been explored and there are plans to co-locate all staff to enable full integration, whilst retaining a young person’s facility on Market Street.

5.8.4 PAUSE Project

PAUSE has been commissioned by the NSPCC via the Better Start Programme to carry out a detailed data analysis of repeat removals of children into care in Blackpool with a view to securing funding locally to set up a Pause Practice. The Scoping Exercise/cost analysis has now been completed and is due to report on the 20 January 2017.

5.8.5 Edge of Care Model

Argosy Children’s Home is now nearing the end of a significant service redesign, whereby it will become a four bedded respite unit for young people on the edge and precipice of care, available Friday to Monday each week. The aim of the new model is to prevent placements at home breaking down and young people being accommodated. The objectives of the new service are to:-

- Prevent the breakdown of a family unit
- Reduce the number of children in the care system
- Promote and encourage young people in making informed choices
- Ensure interventions are structured and time limited.

6.0 Children's Social Care

6.1 Demand for Children's Social Care remains high, with 499 children in care and 2,050 current allocated cases. As part of the strategy around demand management, the initiatives described, namely PAUSE, Vulnerable Adolescent Hub and the Edge of Care service model will start to impact on this as they each come on line. Significant improvements have also been made in the following areas, including:-

- Staffing – extensive work has taken place with regard to the recruitment of new staff and the creation of a micro-site. This has resulted in the service having substantive staff now in post along with a corresponding reduction in agency spend.
- Additional Social Work posts have been appointed to into Duty and Assessment and the Safeguarding Teams to manage demand and reduce caseload sizes.
- The development of a placement tracking officer to reduce drifts and costs is now in place.
- Analysis and renegotiation around the top twenty high cost placements has commenced.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

7.0 List of Appendices:

None

8.0 Legal considerations:

8.1 None.

9.0 Human Resources considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Equalities considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Financial considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Risk management considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Ethical considerations:

13.1 None.

14.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

14.1 None.

15.0 Background papers:

15.1 None.