

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES – COUNCILLOR TAYLOR

Commissioned Services for Children

A Customer Journey Mapping Workshop has been held in conjunction with the Public Service Transformation Network looking at positive support and accommodation pathways for young people 16 to 24 years old. Blackpool are one of a number of Local Authorities, nationally, involved in the Positive Transitions project led by Department for Communities and Local Government. The workshop was very well attended and created a huge amount of debate and discussion. A follow up event will be held in early February to reflect on the learning and begin to shape Blackpool's Support and Accommodation Pathway.

The Positive Transitions programme has been set up to tackle youth homelessness and improve services for vulnerable young people. Going forward the work will redesign and shape local provision to improve the outcomes for our most vulnerable young people.

The new draft Commissioning Strategy for Adult and Children's Social Care is now available for public consultation. The new strategy has been prepared following extensive consultation with providers, people who use services and groups of young people. The strategy includes the team delivery plan for 2015/ 2016 with dedicated sections highlighting the actions for Children and Young People. The draft document will be available for comment until the end of January, feedback will then be taken into account and the final document will progress through governance during February.

Looked After Children and Children's Homes

New regulations have come into force governing looked after children placements, whereby Director of Children's Services approval is required for any child moving further than the adjacent Local Authority border. In addition, a consultation has opened on the inspection framework for Adoption support arrangements.

The office of the Children's Commissioner visited Blackpool to explore how we work with child sexual abuse within families and an interim letter of feedback will be considered at the Safeguarding Board. The Department for Education (DfE), the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Home Office visited to look at the management of Child Sexual Exploitation in December and we await feedback.

Argosy children's home has had an interim inspection in December 2014 and the outcome is to maintained Good status.

Children's Improvement Plan

Following the publication of the Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board report on the 8 September 2014 the Improvement Plan has now been refreshed.

Staff, partners and young people themselves were consulted when developing the refreshed Improvement plan and this plan was submitted to Ofsted on the 15 December 2014 and we are awaiting feedback from them.

Safeguarding (Blackpool Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB))

Mr David Sanders (Independent Chairman) is now in post and is beginning to immerse himself in Board business and has fully contributed to the BSCB section of the Improvement plan for Ofsted.

BSCB currently has four Serious Case Reviews underway. The BSCB is required to undertake a Serious Case Review in specified circumstances. Namely, where (a) abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected and (b) either (i) the child has died, or (ii) the child has been seriously harmed and there is cause for concern as to the way in which the authority, their Board partners or other relevant persons have worked together to safeguard the child.

On Friday 12 November 2014 the BSCB published a Serious Case Review. This report is available on the BSCB website via the following link

<http://www.blackpoolscb.org.uk/contents/documents/Child%20BR%20Final%20November%202014.pdf>

Children's University in Blackpool (CU)

We are now starting to implement a project in conjunction with the National CU regarding 'Social Action'. This will involve normal CU participation with an added element of 'Social Action' activities included as part of the CU programme. The project will be evaluated independently by Durham University and is supported by the Education Endowment Fund (EEF). The criteria had to be for 'new' schools, with no previous contact with the CU and we have managed to get Educational Diversity involved with this exciting new project.

We also plan to provide access to any 'Social Action' opportunities/ activities, to existing Blackpool schools participating in CU, outside of the national project, once they have been established.

Another new initiative being developed is 'Code Club'. The aim is to engage and support Blackpool CU's with providing Coding clubs as after school clubs, as part of their CU provision. The aim is for staff in school to be supported in delivering coding clubs as a CU activity. This initiative is particularly relevant now with the introduction of 'programming' into the new ICT curriculum and the national 'Hour of code' campaign, which can be found at <http://code.org>

Adult, Community and Family Learning.

A review of the Academic year 2013/ 2014 has now been completed to inform the Self-Assessment Requirement. The total number of learners who have participated in programmes in 2013/ 2014 is 3596 compared to 2012/ 2013 figures of 3558.

The quality of the service remains high, however despite targeting further vulnerable groups, the Retention of Learners remains the same as last year and stands at 96%. The completion of learning has slipped slightly from 96% to 94%.

Other successes in 2013/ 2014 include:

- "Volunteers - helping the community to help themselves" - Michael Flynn won the prestigious North West Learner of the Year. The Blackpool Volunteer of the Year continues to provide a reading group for those who have learning difficulties.
- "Family Learning - helping to build resilient families" - Family Learning ran 113 courses during 2013/ 2014 and worked with 645 adult learners and their families. The team ran a mixture of accredited (Maths, English, Supporting a Child's Learning and Development) and non-accredited learning. Courses focused on improving the basic skills of parents, their ability to support their children's learning and the development of children's knowledge and skills. A total of 97% of learners reported that they had learned skills to help their family.
- Basic skills - British Computer Society online computer course and accreditation has been highly praised by Job Centre Plus as a good entry level certificate which demonstrates some basic IT knowledge and is a good springboard for the Functional skills ICT or Level 1 ITQ.
- Vulnerable groups; Over 100 members of the community packed Warren Manor to watch a performance of Jack and the Beanstalk given by adults with learning disabilities.

- A Positive Behaviours course is being delivered in partnership with the Wellness Service as an exit strategy for individuals being provided with support from Mental Health services.
- Personal Development courses are being provided at the Women's Centre for women to gain confidence in dealing with complex issues.

14 -19 Strategy.

The proportion of 16 to 18 year olds participating in learning at the end of October 2014 stood at 85.1% compared with 84.6% in October 2013. Overall Participation in Learning has increased by 6% in the last two years.

Connexions Virtual Early Leavers Service

There is now an E-System in place for both Colleges and Training Providers to notify immediately if a young person has left their provision. The Connexions Service then makes contact with the young person within 48 hours. The pilot phase has now completed with the service supporting over 100 young people during its first six months to make a smooth transition into new work and training opportunities when previous placements have not worked out.

Inspection and Intervention of Schools

Blackpool Local Authority School Improvement was inspected by Ofsted between eight and 12 December 2014. The Lead inspector asked for her thanks and that of the team, to be passed to all who have been involved in contributing in any way to the inspection. She praised the highly professional engagement of all concerned.

Overall emerging strengths:

- There are particular service areas where significant improvements have been made
- Where these services have moved quickly to improve, there is clear evidence of impact

Continuing weaknesses:

- Progress has not been fast enough in some areas
- Quality assurance is not sufficiently robust to drive improvement
- There has been insufficient impact on pupil outcomes, especially at secondary

Recommendations:

- Urgently review how we deliver school improvement services
- Involve all key partners
- Support self-sustaining school improvement
- Improve quality assurance and the way in which it drives improvement

Ofsted will not be making any recommendations to the DfE, as it is not Ofsted's role to do this. However, the letter will be subject to extensive quality assurance and moderation, and will be reviewed by the Regional Director (Ofsted) and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI). On publication it will go to DfE. The draft letter is currently awaited. Following this the action plan will need to be updated in response to the recommendations made.

Continuing Professional Development, School Workforce and the City Learning Centre (CLC)

The CLC Media Academy continues to flourish as part of the traded services model with schools. To date it has supported over 3000 students on various projects. It is also a key part of Media support and training for Blackpool Council and continues to be given key projects to develop. Its training arm also supports Council colleagues with the skills and advice needed to achieve high quality visual media outcomes.

The CLC continues to be successful with partners in securing substantial training contracts hosted at the CLC with National organisations to support schools and in the community, also incorporates Area Forums, Grange park community partnership and Community activity programmes.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and School Workforce

The new spring 2015 brochure for schools now incorporates a wider variety of partners in its aim to support and improve upon school led CPD. In partnership with the Fylde Coast Teaching School Alliance an enhanced CPD programme has taken place this quarter and we will assess the impact of this shortly. The Blackpool Schools Partnership (BSP) has completed its conference programme and one cluster-training programme. It has also embraced a major theme of development for our family of schools with a commission to Bill Thompson, a leading national expert on formative assessment. The schools forum deferred the BSP plan to develop its school-to-school programme. A consultation process has begun with all schools to define clearly a way forward. The school improvement team training was well received with good attendance. The impact of this is monitored through regular meetings with School Improvement Partners.

Music Service

The Blackpool Music Education Hub is annually assessed by the Arts Council. This year's report was received in December 2014 and it stated that:

- The service demonstrates excellent reach into surrounding schools, working with 97% of Primary, 100% of Secondary and 100% of 'other' schools, reaching 97% of all schools, 13% above the national average.
- 37% of musicians continue their musical interests between Primary and Secondary schools, 32% above the national average.
- Ensembles numbers have increased by 100% providing a diverse range of opportunities for Children and Young People.
- Engagement with Children and Young People is strong.
- The service demonstrates strong support for singing strategies working in 30 Primary and 8 Secondary Schools.
- Continuous Professional Development is provided in 94% of our schools.
- The service loaned all 3,200 instrumentalists a musical instrument without charge thus responding positively to local deprivation issues.
- The offer involved many large-scaled performances involving thousands of pupils.
- The service can demonstrate 'value for money'.
- Charity status has brought about several new funding opportunities.
- Good partnership work with professional musicians and organisations can be evidenced.

As a result, DfE funding will continue to be devolved via the Arts Council.

On a practical level, events during the Christmas period included more than 1,600 musicians in prestigious venues including the Tower Ballroom and the Winter Gardens. Audiences have been large and parental support has been strong.

The Service is also celebrating that Blackpool instrumentalists have now been offered places in ten of the nation's best orchestras and bands. This is unprecedented in Blackpool.