

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES – COUNCILLOR TAYLOR

Social Care

The Blackpool Improvement plan continues to be a focus and key priority for both children's services and partner agencies. The priority actions as highlighted within the Ofsted Report 2014 have been identified and supporting evidence is being collated to present to the Improvement Board in March 2015 identifying those actions that have been completed. The plan highlights areas of action that need to be improved to ensure services to children young people and families are coordinated to support improved outcomes of the people in Blackpool.

The evidence presently identifies improvements in the areas of care leavers, outlining that a review of caseloads of Personal Advisors took place to ensure that plans were being delivered consistently and that there were planned interventions to this group of young people. There continues to be improvement with health assessments of looked after children and there is a steady increase in the personal education plans of looked after children being completed. Children's views are regularly sought and a vast majority of children and young people attend their reviews and actively participate in the discussion about plans for their future. Alongside this, there is also evidence that the timelines of private fostering assessments have improved and these are completed in line with both the legislative framework and Blackpool's policies and procedures.

As an Authority, the improvement journey is on track, with a coordinated response from all partners.

Looked After Children and Children's Homes

The number of Looked after Children in Blackpool remains high in comparison with neighbouring statistics and national comparators. The Head of Service and Service Managers review those children becoming looked after to ensure a consistent response to decisions to remove children from their families.

Bispham Children's Home was recently inspected in January 2015. This was a key inspection and the home was rated as outstanding. There have been changes to the regulation 33 visits to children's homes; this is currently being reviewed to ensure that as an Authority we are responding in line with changes to regulations.

Further new regulations will come into force on the 1 April 2015, which govern looked after children placements and expectations on Local Authorities placing children outside of the child's home area. Procedures are being updated to ensure the Council is compliant with these regulations.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is now embedded in Blackpool and based at South King Street. There is a commitment for agencies to support the MASH process, which involves multi-agency sharing of information to safeguard the children and young people of Blackpool and support families. Funding has now been obtained for an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) to be located in the MASH to support the Domestic Abuse strategy and the vision is that this new addition will support families who are victims of domestic abuse at an early stage and reduce the referrals to MARAC.

Safeguarding (Local Safeguarding Children's Board)

Blackpool Safeguarding Children's Board held a development day on the 30 January 2015 and all professionals and agencies attended. The aim of the development day was to consider plans and

priorities' for the next year, discussions were very helpful and will inform business planning.

From March 2015, Blackpool Safeguarding Children's Board will have a shadow safeguarding board in place attended by frontline practitioners. This Board will be consulted on a range of issues and will comment on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Blackpool.

Children's Centres

All seven of Blackpool Children's Centre cafes have achieved the Public Health Healthy Catering Award. The Children's Centres have been providing evidence against 97-point criteria, which covers Healthier Cooking Methods, Environment, Fruits, Vegetables and Salads, Starchy Foods, Protein Sources, Dairy, Fats and Sugars, Salts, Hot and Cold Beverages, Engagement, Communication, Promotion and Marketing. Children's Centres will be presented with certificates from the Royal Society of Public Health at an awards ceremony in March.

Adult, Community and Family Learning.

A Family Learning Functional Skills course has been piloted in Holy Family School, which has proved to be successful with most learners passing the qualification. Cooking on a Budget has really made an impact at Kincaig with learners giving feedback on meals they are cooking for themselves.

Basic skills continue to be a key priority. English and Maths courses continue to be popular in children's centres and across the community. Adult Learning is also co-ordinating drop in advice sessions including IT. This shall be starting shortly at Claremont Community Centre and the City Learning Centre, targeting vulnerable adults through the Family Intervention Team and the Council for Voluntary Services.

14 -19 Strategy.

The Blackpool Skills and Careers Event was held over two days in January 2015. A wide range of organisations including the local colleges and training providers took part providing exciting "hands on" activities for young people to inspire them to think about their future. The event was also used to raise awareness of apprenticeship opportunities with young people and parents, as there is evidence of a lack of knowledge about apprenticeships. An evaluation report is being collated but in summary over 1500 young people (primarily Year 9) from all Blackpool schools attended over the two days with a further 280 (provisional figure) visitors attending the evening session.

Blackpool Council is facilitating collaboration between the Blackpool Provider Group of training providers and colleges and the secondary schools on a common interest form for apprenticeships. The aim of the pilot is to simplify the application process for apprenticeships for young people by using an 'App' to register interest. This also aims to raise awareness of apprenticeships with young people.

Early Years.

Ofsted inspections

Early years settings, five group childcare and four childminder inspection reports have been published since my last report. One setting provides out of school care including for children in the Early Years age group and maintained the Outstanding judgement awarded at their previous inspection. Of the four other group settings inspected, two received a judgement of Good, one was Requires Improvement and one was judged to be inadequate. The setting judged to be inadequate is being challenged and supported to improve by members of the Early Years and Childcare Team. An action plan is in place and the setting has already taken steps to address the concerns raised by Ofsted. The Early Years and Childcare Team will continue to work with the setting until they are re-inspected by Ofsted in six months time.

Of the childminder reports published, one had no children present so was judged to be meeting

requirements of the Early Years register, the other three all received a judgement of Good. Based on published reports, the overall percentage of settings and childminders with Ofsted gradings of good or outstanding is 89%, with 91.6% of child minders and 85.7% of group childcare settings. This compares to national figures (as at 31 August 2014 which is the most recent data available) of 80% overall, 78% of child minders, and 83% of group settings.

Early Years Pupil Premium

Blackpool is one of seven Local authorities piloting the implementation of the Early Years Pupil Premium from January 2015, before it is rolled out nationally in April 2015. The early implementers will test the eligibility checking and funding systems so that full roll out, from April 2015, is smooth and successful. The pilot is underway and the Free Entitlement Grants (FEG) database has been developed to link directly with the Department for Education's Eligibility Checking Service. Checks are being carried out to identify eligible three and four year olds.

School Support and Advice.

The Inspection of Blackpool Council's arrangements for supporting school improvement was undertaken by Ofsted in December 2014. The report published this month is balanced and highlights the strengths and weakness within the Blackpool Education System as well as the progress made since the last inspection.

The Local Authority School Improvement Plan is being revised to incorporate the recommendations made by Ofsted and the identified Secondary improvement themes are being addressed in conjunction with the Regional Commissioner for Schools, local Academy Sponsors and the Council.

Governor Services

In line with the need to recruit more highly skilled Governors onto Governing Bodies, Local Authority Clerks to Governors are now supporting Governing Bodies to undertake annual skills audits on their members, and providing an analysis of the audit. In addition to identifying where there are skills gaps, the analysis will be used to identify future training needs and will be fed into the planning of future training provided by Governor Services. The majority of Governing Bodies now have a requirement for all newly elected/ appointed Governors to complete a skills audit prior to being formally accepted onto the Governing Body.

School Organisation and Buildings

Old Christ the King School (Bathurst Avenue)

The Council now has possession of Christ the King Primary School (Old School) and will be undertaking some minor refurbishment works in there during the next three months in preparation for it to be used as a Pupil Referral Unit (to be named Pegasus), as previously reported.

Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP) – Phase 1

Work at the former Collegiate site as part of the Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP) is now well underway, with the steel frame being completed and external wall panels now having been erected. The site will accommodate Aspire Academy and Highfurlong. Building works are due to be completed in autumn 2015, with external works due to be completed by January 2016. The Education Funding agency (EFA) is managing the scheme and has confirmed that works are on schedule.

The planning applications for the other two new build schools under PSBP Hawes Side Academy and South Shore Academy were approved on the 14 January. The EFA has selected Morgan Sindall as their preferred bidder for this phase of the Priority School Building Programme with programme delivery between 2015 and 2017. Both these schemes will be delivered under the Private Finance Initiative.

Priority School Building Programme (PSBP) – Phase 2

The Local Authority made four applications for works under phase 2 of the Priority Schools Building Programme. Applications were made for works to Moor Park Primary, Revoe Learning Academy, Roseacre Academy and Woodlands Special School. None of the above applications were successful.

Inspection and Intervention of Schools

Since the last report dated November 2014, the following schools have been inspected:

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| • Norbreck Primary Academy | Inspection Date: 25/11/14 | Overall Effectiveness: 2 (2) |
| • Highfield Humanities College | Inspection Date: 8/10/14 | Overall Effectiveness: 4
– Special Measures |
| • Claremont Primary School | Inspection Date: 11/2/15 | Unpublished Report |
| • Highfield Humanities College | Inspection Date: 13/1/15 | Positive
– Monitoring Visit |

Continuing Professional Development, School Workforce and the City Learning Centre

The termly schools review continues to identify key areas of Continuing Professional Development for schools. Brokerage for these areas, involve a number of local, regional and national key partners. Education London, Bill Thompson, FCTSA and Bright Futures have been active this last quarter. Active working parties are examining pupil premium and the role of teaching assistants. Her Majesty's Inspectorate has now completed their support series of workshops, which have proved successful. Opportunities for the school workforce to develop continue to be encouraged throughout the professional development pathways at all levels. The recent Ofsted inspection highlighted the need for continued brokerage for schools drawing in expertise from outstanding sources.

Education Diversity and Support Units/ Service e.g. Pupil Referral Units.

The Team is progressing with a remodelling of the Service to enable an increase in the staff/ student ratios across all settings. This will support a much more proactive approach with individuals and provide the opportunity to provide even more wrap around support to remove barriers to learning and make positive behaviour change.

A new initiative involves the creation of a vocational curriculum within one of our Centres and the early signs are really promising. A number of young people who previously struggled with their attendance have improved dramatically and are really engaged in their learning. The Team is working in partnership with Blackpool and Fylde College from whom we are commissioning tutors to deliver the learning. One of the crucial objectives of this initiative is to increase the number of young people who go on to pursue Post 16 accreditation pathways, building from the foundations of the level 1 and 2 qualifications they are studying.

Special Education Needs, Assessment and Support and Psychological.

Blackpool is one of four North Western local authorities chosen for a pilot by the Department for Education (DfE) to explore further aspects of the national changes around SEN and Disability for 0-25 year olds. The pilot will test, along with health partners, widening the remit of the SENDIST tribunal to be able to make non-binding decisions on the health and care aspects of an Education, Health and Care Plan. Currently only binding decisions on the education aspects of the Plan can be made. The DfE will give further details on the pilot later in the spring.

A major new resource has been placed on the Local Offer site and sent to all schools. It outlines the reasonable expectations of all Blackpool state funded schools in meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND. This resource was developed in Blackpool with schools, specialist support services (teaching, educational psychology) and external consultants. It will be further explored with SENCOs at their conference next term.

On 23 January 2015, Blackpool Parents Forum, in partnership with the local authority, put on a day for parents at the football club. All relevant services had a stall for parents to look at, outlining the service offer. The three special schools in Blackpool gave a performance of music or acting and there were also national speakers. The day gave many opportunities for the Council and NHS trusts to consult further on how the national changes around Special Educational Needs were being implemented locally. In addition, further consultation has occurred with a group representing the deaf community and groups of young people.

Part of the challenges around the national changes is converting all current Statements of Special Educational Needs (or Learning Difficulty Assessments for post school students up to the age of 25) into Education, Health and Care Plans. Within Blackpool, the Council is currently on track to achieve this within the prescribed three-year period.

The Local Offer is operational as a web site to outline all services available within Blackpool for 0-25 year olds with Special Educational Needs and their families. It meets all statutory duties and currently is being refined, following comment, to make it even more user friendly.

Commissioned Services for Children

The Council has completed a tender process for a Care at Home and Short Break Service for Children with Disabilities. As a result of this process, a new contract framework of six providers has been established of which, four providers are new to delivering children's care services to the Council.

The following providers have been successful in their bid to be on the new framework:

Successful providers
Autism Initiatives (New)
Cherish UK
Homecare For You Ltd (New)
Ormerod Home Trust (New)
Safehand Care Limited
Sevacare (UK) Ltd (New)

The providers who have been successful in gaining a place on the framework have been assessed as part of the tender process, and met the agreed quality and value for money benchmark.

Youth Offending Team

Both the Youth Offending Team and its administrative support are currently undergoing service reviews to be completed in early March.

Practitioners and managers are engaged in two important pieces of accredited training:

- a) Restorative Justice Conference Facilitation training for practitioners and managers is part of the strategy to improve the involvement of victims and their satisfaction with the criminal justice process. A grant from the Ministry of Justice's "Transforming Rehabilitation" Programme has been used to fund a full programme of training in restorative approaches across the service.
- b) The course in the Speech, Language and Communication Needs of vulnerable young people gives practitioners the skills and knowledge to engage with and tailor interventions to meet the needs of young people in the criminal justice system whose inability to comprehend or communicate effectively puts them and others at risk. The course is the second of two phases in a wider programme to prepare staff for the introduction of a new assessment model in 2016, which will be the most significant practice change in Youth Offending Teams in the last ten years.

Blackpool Music Service and Music Education Hub

In January, Continuous Professional Development courses were attended by 95% of Blackpool schools. Outcomes included greater understanding and improved School Music Education Plans.

Council and Parental support for Christmas and New Year events was excellent and exemplified by a grant from the Cherry Tree Area Forum, which will be used to inspire a greater number of instrumentalists to participate in ensembles. Additional support from parents has also resulted in new fundraising initiatives including sponsorship, monthly and annual donations and opportunities for the general public to become Patrons. This will embellish the funds of the Charity Status 'Friends of Blackpool Music Service' organisation.

The school based teaching programme has increased by 25% since September and 100% of instrumentalists have passed their Trinity and Guildhall Examinations Grades 1 to 7. Workshops with Travelling by Tuba have been successfully delivered at Unity Academy, Roseacre Primary Academy, Hawes Side Academy and, Revoe Learning Academy. These fully inclusive activities provided new aspirations for all.

A total of 35 Blackpool schools (including two special schools), two Blackpool Children's Orchestras, Blackpool Concert Band, Brass Bands and, Youth Choir have all performed successfully to capacity audiences as part of Schools Alive at the Grand Theatre (9 to 12 February). This event celebrated the achievements of 1,400 Blackpool children at their very best and received excellent media coverage.

Youth Service

The Specialist Support Team is delivering a number of initiatives across Blackpool, including the mental health pilot that offers young people up to the age of 25 a dual diagnosis service for their co-existing mental health and substance misuse issues and the PSHE project that is supporting secondary schools in Blackpool to offer a consistently high quality PSHE curriculum to year 7 and year 9 students and the self-harm project that is supporting young people on the adolescent ward and linking them into support on discharge.

These projects are being evaluated locally, the results of which will be reported on a regular basis. The team continue to support the excellent partnership work in Blackpool, which has seen the lowest rate of teenage pregnancies since recording began, and a significant reduction in the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system. The hub regularly achieves over 80% of young people completing their treatment either drug/ alcohol free or occasional users.

The HeadStart project is now well under way with the focus on support for young people aged 10-14 both on a universal and targeted level to build their resilience. The project is a pilot until December 2015 with the opportunity for bidding for up to 10 million over five years and is being delivered mainly through a number of pilot schools across Blackpool.