

Blackpool Council

16 June 2021

To: Councillors Burdess, D Coleman, Critchley, B Mitchell, M Mitchell, O'Hara, Owen, Stansfield and Wing

Dr Elaine Allen and Ms Helen Sage (Co-opted Members)

The above members are requested to attend the:

INFORMAL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 24 June 2021 at 6.00 pm
Via Zoom

A G E N D A

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare any interests in the items under consideration and in doing so state:

(1) the type of interest concerned either a

- (a) personal interest
- (b) prejudicial interest
- (c) disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI)

and

(2) the nature of the interest concerned

If any Member requires advice on declarations of interests, they are advised to contact the Head of Democratic Governance in advance of the meeting.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 22 APRIL 2021 (Pages 1 - 10)

To agree the minutes of the last meeting of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee held on 22 April 2021 as a true and correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

To consider any applications from members of the public to speak at the meeting.

4 RE-APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS (Pages 11 - 14)

To consider the re-appointment of Dr Elaine Allen as Roman Catholic diocesan co-opted member and Ms Helen Sage as diocesan co-opted member to the Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/2022.

5 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT UPDATE (Pages 15 - 20)

To receive an update on Children's Social Care Improvement including an overview of the Children and Families Partnership Board and relationships with third sector partners.

6 YOUNG INSPECTORS (Pages 21 - 32)

To receive a presentation on Young Inspectors.

7 SEND PROVISION (Pages 33 - 36)

To provide an overview of SEND provision in Blackpool.

8 BLACKPOOL BETTER START SCRUTINY REVIEW (Pages 37 - 56)

To consider the final report of the scrutiny review of Blackpool Better Start with a view to approving it for consideration by the Executive.

9 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2021/2022 (Pages 57 - 66)

To consider the contents of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee's Workplan for 2021/2022.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date and time of the next meeting as 7 October 2021, commencing at 6pm.

Other information:

For queries regarding this agenda please contact Elaine Ireland, Democratic Governance Adviser (Scrutiny), Tel: (01253) 477255, e-mail Elaine.ireland@blackpool.gov.uk

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Agenda Item 2

MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING - THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2021

Councillor Hugo (in the Chair)

Councillors

Clapham	Critchley	Stansfield
D Coleman	Mitchell	Wing

Dr Elaine Allen, Roman Catholic Co-opted Member

In Attendance:

Councillor Maxine Callow, Chair of the Scrutiny Leadership Board
Councillor Kath Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration
Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council (Children)
Mr Robert Arrowsmith, Performance, Systems and Intelligence Manager
Ms Victoria Gent, Director of Children's Services
Ms Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Service
Ms Jeanette Richards, Interim Director of Children's Services
Mr Philip Thompson, Head of SEND and Early years
Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services - Education
Mrs Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser

Mr Stephen Ashley, Independent Scrutineer for Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Stansfield declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda item 6 'Children's Social Care Improvement Plan – Child Exploitation and Homelessness' due to his volunteer work undertaken with Streetlife, supporting homeless young people in Blackpool.

Councillor Hugo declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda item 6 'Children's Social Care Improvement Plan – Child Exploitation and Homelessness' due to her position of employment at Streetlife, supporting homeless young people in Blackpool.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 28 JANUARY 2021

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the last meeting held on 28 January 2021 be signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Committee noted that there were no applications to speak by members of the public on this occasion.

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2021**

**4 YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN - CHILDREN IN SECURE
ACCOMMODATION**

Ms Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Service updated the Committee on the progress of the Blackpool Youth Justice Service Improvement Plan theme area of 'Children in Secure Accommodation'. She explained that early in 2020 the Youth Justice Board had requested that all Youth Offending Teams complete a self-assessment based on the updated Standards for Children in Youth Justice Services (2019). Five self-assessments had been completed, one of which had focused on 'In Secure Settings'. Ms McCartan summarised the findings of the self-assessment and subsequent audits and sought any questions from the Committee.

With regards to the cited concerns raised over children at the Secure Training Centre which had been visited by Ofsted, the Committee sought assurance around the interventions put in place by the Youth Custody Service to address the issues identified. Ms McCartan reported two custodial cases currently and advised that recent concerns were around Covid-19 related restrictions, with young people being detained in their rooms for long periods of time. She reported that this had been challenged by the Council to ensure that suitable provisions were in place during times of isolation due to the pandemic. The Committee requested that regular updates be provided in order that the situation could be monitored going forward. Committee Members noted the significant reduction in the use of custody and recognised the hard work of the Youth Offending Team for the progress made in this area.

The Committee welcomed the reported reduction of unnecessary court appearances for young people under 18 years of age and sought clarification around the greater use of community interventions which had been introduced as an alternative and asked how successful they were proving. Ms McCartan explained that a multi-agency panel had been established to identify a range of options tailored specifically to meet the needs of the young person and their family. She provided a number of examples of the interventions in place, such as wraparound support for the whole family aimed at diverting the young person away from their offending behaviour; a caution with conditions to include the writing of a letter of apology; or active community service with an element of restorative justice.

Further to the reported disproportionate number of our children who were open to the Youth Justice Service, the Committee sought details of the work that was underway to address the situation. Ms McCartan identified a coordination of service areas across the Council to raise awareness of any cases where our children had been identified as being at risk of offending and subsequent measures put in place to plan positive interventions following any resulting release from custody. She further highlighted work aimed at reducing criminalisation of our young people by encouraging alternatives to the reporting of anti-social behaviour immediately to the police. Ms Jeanette Richards, Interim Director of Children's Services reported that the disproportionate number of our children known to the Youth Justice Service, whilst unacceptable, was an issue reflected nationally and as such more proactive care planning was underway to identify and address the holistic needs of our children with the aim of diverting them away from criminal activity. Ms Richards reiterated the need to influence wider partners, including the police, to provide appropriate support to our children.

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2021**

The Committee agreed: To request regular updates in relation to the concerns raised around children at the cited Secure Training Centre.

5 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - CARE LEAVERS

Ms Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Service introduced a report on the progress of the improvement journey in respect of services for Blackpool's young adults who had experienced care. She informed the Committee that during the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services in December 2018 the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers had been judged as 'Requires Improvement to be good'. The inspectorate had stated that a strategic and coordinated approach to providing support for care leavers to improve their outcomes, including in education, employment and training was required. Ms McCartan reported that this had been a key priority within the Children's Social Care improvement plan and outcomes for Blackpool's care experienced young people had improved as a result.

The Committee noted that five per cent of Blackpool's care leavers had been identified as living in accommodation defined as 'unsuitable' and sought clarification of what the term meant and how long care leavers were permitted to remain in such accommodation for. Ms McCartan informed Committee Members that the majority of those cases reported as 'unsuitable' were young people in custody. Further to those cases, there were also a small number of young people who elected to stay with friends rather than securing their own accommodation and this would be deemed as 'unsuitable'. She also noted that whilst Blackpool would always aim for 100 per cent of its care leavers to be living in suitable accommodation, at 95 percent the service was performing above the national average of 86 per cent. Committee Members appreciated the clarification and suggested that such an explanation be recorded alongside the data to improve clarity.

The Committee raised the reporting of those young people who left care in another local authority area and then moved to Blackpool, questioning whether such cases would be included within Blackpool's data. Ms McCartan advised that in such cases, the data would be included within the figures of the responsible authority which the young person had move from and likewise, Blackpool Council maintained responsibility for any young people leaving care who moved to another part of the country. Further to this, the Substance Misuse and Sexual Health element of Blackpool Council's Adolescent Service would receive referrals for any young person living in Blackpool up to the age of 25 years, which would include care leavers who had moved to Blackpool from other areas of the country and the service would link up with the young person's personal adviser from their responsible authority.

With regards to the noted figure that half of all Blackpool's care leavers were not in employment, education or training, the Committee sought further details of any plans in place to improve the situation. Ms McCartan assured Committee Members that assisting young people into education, employment or training remained a key priority for the service and reported a number of interventions being introduced to help achieve this. These included, a financial support package for care leavers wishing to pursue higher and further education routes; employment vacancies within the Council being ring fenced, with priority given to our young people, 'kickstart' placements were being targeted

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2021**

towards our young people and close working with the Council's wholly owned companies continued to provide work placement opportunities for Blackpool's young people.

Members discussed the findings from the recent Ofsted focused visit, with the Committee questioning the stability of the Children's Social Care team due to vacancies across the service and reliance upon newly qualified social workers. Ms Jeanette Richards, Interim Director of Children's Services acknowledged that recruitment remained a challenge and a key priority but that progress had been made from the service's previous recruitment position. In response to a question on whether staff who left Blackpool decided to leave the profession entirely or if they sought employment at another local authority, Ms Richards reported that due to the current high demand within the sector nationally, a current trend was being experienced of staff leaving to become agency workers. Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council (Children) highlighted that whilst recruitment remained a national problem, Blackpool was increasingly being recognised as a supportive authority in which to work, in addition to the attractive financial packages being offered to prospective applicants.

The need, as identified by the findings of the Ofsted monitoring visit, to improve the consistency and quality of work for children subject to child protection plans in order to reduce drift and delay was highlighted by the Committee as being essential to address. Ms Richards agreed that continuing to improve the quality of practice delivery to children was Children's Social Care's priority, pointing out that input from other key partners was also a prerequisite for continued improvement.

6 CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING ASSURANCE PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

Mr Stephen Ashley, Independent Scrutineer for Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership (CSAP) attended the Committee meeting to present the CSAP Annual Report, explaining that the report covered the period of time from CSAP's inception on 29 September 2019 to 30 September 2020. Mr Ashley advised that an interim report would be produced at the end of the year and that future annual reports would cover either January to December or April to March.

The Committee was informed of the three priority areas identified by CSAP as being contextual safeguarding, neglect and domestic abuse and the annual report focused on the work undertaken by the partnership over the year in relation to these areas. Mr Ashley highlighted how the impact of Covid-19 had affected the working environment around these priorities and noted that the full repercussions of the periods of lockdown on Blackpool's children were not yet fully understood.

With regards to the data on the rates of hospital admissions for mental health conditions, the Committee queried why Blackpool's rates were considerably higher than both the rest of Lancashire and the country. Mr Ashley reported that a response document in relation to mental health had been requested from the Clinical Commissioning Group and he agreed to circulate additional findings to Committee Members once available.

Ms Jeanette Richards, Interim Director of Children's Services described a number of tools which had been introduced to assist with the early identification of neglect. In relation to domestic abuse, Ms Richards reported that improvements had been made to staff

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2021**

training around the use of risk assessments to identify domestic abuse and the need to establish safety plans around both the victims of domestic abuse and also any children and young people in the household. She agreed to present a more detailed overview of the work in this area to a future meeting of the Committee.

Further details of Operation Encompass were requested, with Ms Richards explaining that it was a national initiative which had been adopted across Lancashire and which allowed the police to share information with a child's school in respect of any incidences of domestic abuse which had occurred in the child's household prior to the start of the next school day in order to ensure that the child's school was fully aware of their experiences.

With respect to the protection of women, the Committee asked Ms Richards if she felt that the Council was suitably proactive in lobbying government to drive the protection of women. Ms Richards described the issue as having two components: the protection of women in their own homes from domestic abuse and the wider issue of protecting women in the community. In relation to domestic abuse, she reported that education around appropriate relationships had been added to the curriculum in schools which would assist in raising awareness of the risks of negative relationships. With regards to improving safety within the community for all women, she reported that the Council gave a consistently strong message of zero tolerance of harassment and threats to women.

The Committee extended its thanks to Mr Ashley for the work undertaken by CSAP and the presentation of the partnership's annual report.

The Committee agreed:

1. To receive further data on Blackpool's mental health hospital admission rates from Mr Ashley once available;
2. To request that further work on the Council's response to domestic abuse be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

7 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - CHILD EXPLOITATION AND HOMELESSNESS

Ms Jeanette Richards, Interim Director of Children's Services presented an update report on progress in relation to the Children's Service's improvement journey in respect of services for vulnerable children and young people, with particular focus on children at risk of or experiencing exploitation or going missing and young people who were at risk of homelessness.

Ms Richards informed the Committee of a new pilot initiative scheduled to begin in April 2021 which would focus on out of hours contextual safeguarding disruption. She explained that it would be a collaboration between the Community Safety Partnership and Awaken social care staff. The Committee was informed that most activity involving young people occurred at weekends and evenings and that the pilot would provide an additional window into the lived experience of children and young people. The pilot would include a visible presence in areas and locations of concern including arcades, train and bus stations. The Committee requested that further information and initial results from the pilot be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2021**

The Committee requested clarification around the term 'intentionally homeless' in particular in relation to families whereby children could not in any way be held responsible for the actions of their parents in becoming homeless. Ms Richards reported that the Council's support services had been working in conjunction with housing services to provide support to families to avoid situations of homelessness and her understanding was that no family in Blackpool had been made homeless in recent times as a result of the commitment to protect children, with support put in place where necessary. With regards to the phrase 'intentionally homeless', the Committee questioned whether the definition would include incidences whereby a family had chosen to vacate a property in another part of the country and then moved to Blackpool seeking accommodation. Ms Richards advised that the responsibility to house such a family would lie with the originating local authority.

Committee Members sought details of the continuing support offered to vulnerable young people on turning 18 years of age. Ms Richards reported that Blackpool's young people who had experienced care remained the responsibility of the Council, with the Care Leavers team offering support. In relation to young people who had not experienced care, but who were in receipt of support from Children's Services, Ms Richards informed Committee Members that only a small proportion would be eligible for support from Adult Services but she advised that offerings of transition support were in the process of being reviewed, along with housing support services. The Committee requested that more specific data around the support given and the number of vulnerable young people accessing services be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

In terms of child exploitation, the Committee questioned if any liaison was undertaken with local business partners, in particular taxi firms, in order to identify any suspected cases of child exploitation. Ms Richards acknowledged the critical importance of sharing intelligence in order to disrupt such activity and to help to safeguard Blackpool's children and young people, assuring the Committee that any such information received would be considered in a multi-agency setting within the Awaken team on a daily basis. In relation specifically to taxi services, Ms Richards advised that robust arrangements were in place around the licensing of such firms, including the condition that all taxi drivers must complete safeguarding training prior to the granting of the licence. In addition, in cases where concerns had been raised in relation to potential criminal exploitation, Community Safety Officers had engaged with taxi companies in order to open lines of communication and gather intelligence from taxi drivers. Discussion occurred around incidences whereby local taxi firms had deliberately circumvented Blackpool's requirement to undertake additional safeguarding training by applying for their licence to another authority in a different part of the country. Ms Richards agreed to highlight the issue to colleagues in Community Safety to investigate further. Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council (Children) acknowledged the identified issue and noted the importance of all local taxi firms adhering to the guidance around child exploitation.

The Committee agreed:

1. That further information and initial results from the contextual safeguarding pilot be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee;
2. That more specific data around the support given and the number of vulnerable young people accessing services be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2021**

8 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY LOCAL PROVISION

Mr Phil Thompson, Head of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Early Years updated the Committee in relation to the SEND theme of 'To develop a continuance of local provision and services to meet the needs of children with SEND'.

Mr Thompson reported that the consultation with mainstream schools to open Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision units in their schools had gone well and that five successful applications had been received. The Committee noted that whilst the reported addition of SEN provisions within primary schools was welcomed, it was disappointing to note the lack of applications from secondary schools. Mr Thompson advised that as academies, the secondary schools were not obliged to introduce SEN units but that negotiations were ongoing with the academies to encourage the introduction of SEN provisions.

The Committee requested a further update on the proposed provision of a post-16 special school centre within the Oracle building. Mr Thompson informed Committee Members that unfortunately the proposal had been paused due to an inability to reach agreement with the providing Trust regarding the details of the provision and that as a result further consideration was being given as to the most appropriate use of the building for SEN purposes. The Committee requested detailed plans of any proposals to be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee.

Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services for Education reminded Committee Members that a new SEND Strategy would be available by July 2021, with considerable consultation occurring before that date. He advised that Members of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee would receive full details of the SEND overview and associated proposals and would be included within the consultancy process for the Strategy.

The Committee agreed: To receive detailed plans of any proposals of SEN provision at the Oracle building at the next meeting of the Committee.

9 BLACKPOOL LITERACY STRATEGY

Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services for Education presented the Literacy Strategy for consideration by the Committee. He noted the Committee's involvement in the development of the Strategy and assured Committee Members that their previous requests for amendments had been incorporated into the final version of the document prior to being considered for approval by the Executive.

The Chair of the Committee reported that Ms Helen Sage, Co-Opted Member had put forward a request for an amendment to the Strategy and agreed to forward the details to Mr Turner following the meeting.

The Committee agreed: To endorse the Blackpool Literacy Strategy subject to Mr Turner's consideration of Ms Sages' suggested amendment.

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2021**

10 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2021/2022

The Committee gave consideration to the draft Committee Workplan for 2021/2022, noting that a Workplanning Workshop would be scheduled to take place following Annual Council and would provide the opportunity to further consider the Committee's workload for the following municipal year and to prioritise areas for scrutiny review.

The Committee considered the updated action plans resulting from the review of the School Response to Covid-19 and the review of Inclusion in Education. In relation to recommendation R2 from the Inclusion in Education action plan, the Committee requested that specific numbers of pupils who had returned to school following an initial decision to opt for Elective Home Education be provided. Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services for Education reported that approximately 350 pupils had currently opted for Elected Home Education (EHE), which was a small reduction from the figure of over 360 which had previously been reported to the Committee. Mr Turner highlighted that many of those children would be appropriately educated at home and that the Council had concerns only for the small number of pupils who were not receiving a good education. The collective message from schools to all families had been that they would welcome back all pupils, with each family being contacted by schools to outline a number of options for their child's education. Replies from parents who had not as yet returned their children to school were awaited. Mr Turner reported that additional funding had permitted the extension of employment for two full time Elected Home Education Officers until at least September 2021, although it was hoped that this would be extended until the end of the following school year.

[Mr Turner lost connection to the meeting at this point.]

The Committee raised a further question in relation to recommendation R7 'To request that Academies consider the reintroduction of Council representation on their Local Governing Bodies in order to allow valuable input from elected Councillors and an additional link with the Local Authority,' which Mr Turner had updated as 'Ongoing'. Committee Members agreed that Mr Turner be asked to update the Committee following the meeting on the progress of the recommendation.

The Committee Agreed:

1. To approve the Committee's draft Workplan for 2021/2022 subject to further consideration at the Workplanning Workshop following Annual Council;
2. That Mr Turner be requested to provide an update to Committee Members in relation to recommendation R7 'To request that Academies consider the reintroduction of Council representation on their Local Governing Bodies in order to allow valuable input from elected Councillors and an additional link with the Local Authority,' in writing following the meeting.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Committee was noted as 24 June 2021, commencing at 6pm, subject to confirmation at Annual Council.

**MINUTES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING -
THURSDAY, 22 APRIL 2021**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.30pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager
Date of Meeting:	24 June 2021

RE-APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider the re-appointment of Dr Elaine Allen as Roman Catholic diocesan co-opted member and Ms Helen Sage as diocesan co-opted member to the Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/2022.

2.0 Recommendations:

- 2.1 The Committee to recommend the re-appointment of Dr Elaine Allen as Roman Catholic diocesan co-opted member and Ms Helen Sage as diocesan co-opted member to the Committee for the Municipal Year 2021/2022 under delegated powers to the Chief Executive.
- 2.2 To note the remaining two Parent Governor co-opted member vacancies.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To ensure the scrutiny process continues to be fully accountable and an important part of the democratic process.
- 3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No
- 3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

- 4.1 To not re-appoint Dr Elaine Allen and Ms Helen Sage as co-opted members of the Committee.

5.0 Council Priority:

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

6.0 Background Information

- 6.1 The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 requires the Council to have Parent Governor

Representatives on the relevant Overview and Scrutiny body dealing wholly or partly with education functions. The representatives are entitled to participate in discussions on any issue but are only able to vote on any question which relates to the education functions of the Council.

- 6.2 The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and the Education Act 1996 require the Council to have Church representatives on the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee which considers education matters. Like the Parent Governor representatives, they are entitled to participate in discussions on any issue, but only able to vote on any question which relates to the education functions of the Council.
- 6.3 The Council's Constitution allows for membership of the following representatives in order to comply with the statutory requirements:
- One Church of England diocese representative
 - One Roman Catholic diocese representative
 - Two Parent Governor representatives; and
 - Such other representatives of other faiths or denominations as may be agreed
- 6.4 At the meeting of full Council on 22 May 2019 it was agreed that the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee should appoint two diocesan co-opted representatives and two governor co-opted representatives.
- 6.5 As agreed by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee, Ms Helen Sage was appointed to the Committee as diocesan co-opted member on 10 October 2019 and Dr Elaine Allen was appointed to the Committee as Roman Catholic diocesan co-opted member on 9 January 2020.
- 6.6 The Scrutiny Manager is continuing to seek appointments to the remaining statutory positions.
- 6.7 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 None

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 The posts are not salaried but the positions attract a payment of £500 each per year.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and the Education Act 1996 require the Council to have Church representatives on the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee which considers education matters.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None

13.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

13.1 None

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None

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Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Jeanette Richards, Assistant Director Children's Services
Date of Meeting:	24 June 2021

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To receive an update on Children's Social Care Improvement including an overview of the Children and Families Partnership Board and relationships with third sector partners.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To challenge the update provided and identify any areas for further scrutiny.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure robust scrutiny of Children's Social Care improvement.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is

- "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience"

6.0 Background information

6.1 **Children's Social Care Improvement – Overview of the Children and Families Partnership Board.**

The Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive of the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Chief Superintendent have established the Children and

Families Partnership Board as primary partners in Blackpool to bring together the collective strategic aims of services in Blackpool and ensure that there is unified vision for children and families. It brings together key members of public, private and third sector organisations with a focus on family life in Blackpool. The primary responsibility of the Board is to develop meaningful and productive strategic oversight to the key challenges facing children and families in Blackpool and drive their respective organisations to developing innovative and shared approaches to addressing these with a joint sense of responsibility and ownership.

The Board's ambition is that by working together across the public, private and third sector we can deliver a transformed Blackpool, where all children and families thrive, are happy, engaged in their local communities, are healthy and safe and have fun.

The Board meets quarterly and receives updates from other boards such as the Getting to Good Board, SEND, Blackpool School Improvement Board and Children's Safeguarding Assurance Partnership.

There are three priority areas, which are:

Inclusion

- How we as partners make sure that our universal and targeted services meet the needs of a varied population- making sure there is equality of opportunity. Inclusion means levelling up – not reducing opportunities that already exist.
- This is not just about education (though it is a key lever) but exposure to employment, skills development, safe and inclusive communities, accessible services, good quality housing, lifelong learning, relationships within and across communities, perceptions and engagement with public services (Health, Schools, Police, Council)

Literacy

- Whole life and community wide literacy – not just children and young people.
- Digital literacy is a factor we need to address for families.

Social Impact of Poverty

- How do we support our already deprived communities collectively to cope with the economic, health and social impact of Covid19 alongside our levels of deprivation?
- How do we address the symptoms of poverty within communities and work with them to develop resilience, strength and improve outcomes?
- How do we support our families, children and young people to live well?
- How do we increase employment opportunities for our communities, and make sure they can access them and prosper?
- What (more) can we do to address the impact of poor quality housing – so that it is less of a feature in our communities?
- How do we reduce NEET for our young people?
- How do we ALL support “second chances” for our young people who have been failed by the system?

6.2 To receive an update in relation to relationships with Third Sector partners

At a strategic level, the third Sector is represented by Mike Crowther (CEO Empowerment) who is a board member on the re-established Children and Families Partnership Board. At an operational level, the Blackpool Families Rock Implementation Group meets monthly and as well as including agencies, parents and young people and carers, there is third sector representation from Blackpool Carers Centre and Empowerment.

The group has a future focus upon neglect, a revised Child in Need offer and the launch of an Early Help Strategy.

An Early Help Strategy is planned to be implemented across Blackpool, the responsible officer Joanne Stewart will be engaging with the voluntary sector in order to support them in the delivery of Early Help.

6.2.1 Family Hubs/Early Help

The Family Hub board benefits from wider representation of organisations large and small that work with children and families in Blackpool including the football club, Boys and Girls Club, Magic Club, local churches, Fulfilling Lives and New Routes. As services plan Covid recovery, it is anticipated that there will be more organisations operating services from Hubs or spokes, as Horizon, a drug and alcohol support service, have done who plan to deliver drop in sessions for parents from Hubs in June.

Through the A Better Start work, the Council continues to work with NSPCC as one of the key delivery partners to deliver bespoke programs (such as For Baby's Sake).

6.2.2 HeadStart's work with Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations in Blackpool:

Collaboration Work:

The Resilience Revolution is a collaboration between the HeadStart Team, and two VCS organisations: 'boingboing' and the 'Centre of Resilience for Social Justice'. The Resilience Revolution is founded upon the original concept of 'Resilient Therapy' and its associated inequalities-related research. The Resilience Revolution is a whole town approach to resilience, and in Blackpool, there is an open invitation for all VCS organisations to get involved. Organisations are supported to embed a resilience approach, and there are a number of organisations who have successfully done this, which include The Grand Theatre, Blackpool Football Club Community Trust, Aiming Higher and The Carers Centre.

Apprenticeships:

HeadStart Blackpool offers the opportunity for VCS organisations to apply for a funded apprenticeship, for a young person aged between 16 and 21. The funding enables the organisation to recruit an apprentice, and the apprentice is offered opportunities to link in with the Resilience Revolution, for example – training, attending conferences, being involved

in co-production groups. Two young people have completed an apprenticeship and have gone on to secure full time employment. There is one young person who has just commenced an apprenticeship.

Resilience Resolution:

This project supports young people and VCS youth organisations to work together to bring about meaningful change across Blackpool. The project supports young people to challenge injustice and campaign for change. A team member from the HeadStart Team, plus some young people, will work alongside the VCS organisation. Funding is available for organisations to recruit a Sessional Worker, who will work alongside young people to develop a youth change movement. To apply for the Sessional Worker role, the applicant must be aged between 16 and 21, and is an opportunity for a young person who has previously been supported by the VCS organisation to step up and make the transition into a worker role. There is also funding available to support the identified campaign.

Youth Engagement:

HeadStart's Youth Engagement team work alongside VCS organisations to offer a range of opportunities for young people who are aged 10 – 16. Examples of this include:

- 'Open up the Mic' is delivered alongside ShowTown, and is a project that used stand-up comedy as a means for engaging young people, to develop their confidence.
- 'Digital Arts Award' is delivered alongside The Grand Theatre and a local college, where young people develop their skills around the use of digital technology, in completion the young people will leave an accreditation.
- 'Blackpool Youth Network' – brings together professionals and young people from a range of Blackpool youth organisations to link in with each other and identify opportunities for collaborative working.
- 'Blackpool Youth Climate Group' – this is a group of young people and professionals from various organisations who developed a Citizen Assembly for Blackpool young people to attend. From this, they are now an established group who are looking to engage communities, families, businesses and decision makers to educate and change perceptions and attitudes around climate change and the environment.

6.2.3 Training/Workshops

The team offer a number of different training sessions, which are free for VCS organisations to attend. The organisations can attend open access training, or bespoke training is available if an organisation would like to have their whole staff team trained. Training includes Introduction to Resilient Therapy, Practitioner Resilience, Academic Resilience Approach, and Building Resilience in Parents/Carers. Organisations are offered free spaces on a four day training course, which aims to increase their knowledge on Resilience Therapy and empower them to feel confident in being a co-leader in the Resilience Revolution.

Third sector organisations continue to take up Children Safeguarding Assurance Partnership training opportunities. There has always been good third sector take up for our training – in 2020/21, 279 out of 1,271 attendees were from the third sector (this is across the whole Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire area).

6.3 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 None.

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 None.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 None.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

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Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Victoria Gent, Director of Children's Services
Date of Meeting:	24 June 2021

YOUNG INSPECTORS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To receive a presentation on Young Inspectors.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To identify any further issues for scrutiny.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure Members of the Committee are aware of the arrangements regarding Young Inspectors.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is

- "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience"

6.0 Background information

6.1 The Committee will receive a presentation, attached at Appendix 6(a) on the topic of Young Inspectors.

6.2 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 6(a): Young Inspectors Presentation

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 None.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 None.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

Blackpool Young Inspectors



What is a Young Inspector

- A Young Inspector is a volunteer aged 16 plus who has experienced living in supported accommodation and has been or is one of our children.
- Young Inspectors support the quality monitoring of accommodation by visiting the homes where our children live , speaking to young people living there and assessing how safe and how well cared for our children are.
- They get a feel for how welcoming and homely the homes are and used their own experiences to help them assess the quality.

How do young people get involved and how are they trained ?

- Kirsty and Alicia are always on the look at for future Young Inspectors and recruitment is always at the forefront of their minds as they take part in the various groups and forums. At the moment recruitment is targeted but as the programme gets more well known, young people will hopefully volunteer and be excited to get involved.
- Young Inspectors are fully trained in consultation skills, questioning skills , confidentiality and basic safeguarding. Quality Monitoring officers in the Commissioning team also support by providing an insight into the processes involved in their job.

What's good about being a Young Inspector?

- Improved confidence and self esteem.
- Learning new skills around communication, problem solving, information gathering and presentations.
- Make a positive difference for our children in accommodation
- Training/development programme.
- Reward for the work in form of vouchers
- Work experience helpful for job finding and education opportunities

Why did we start our scheme?

- Being happy, feeling safe and cared for in the home you live in are some of the most important factors for us all : even more so for our children who don't live with their own families.
- For many years this topic has been central to a lot of discussions and consultations with our children
- Blackpool is involved in a Nationally funded pilot scheme around all aspects of supported accommodation and this brought resource to kick-start our scheme as some of the outcomes are the same .

Activity to date

- 4 x Young Inspectors currently 'live'
- 2 x new recruits waiting to get started
- 4 / 10 providers visited ??
- Young Inspectors have undertaken ??? inspections
- 3 x Quality Standards workshops have taken place to co – produce the new Quality Standards with our care experienced young people.

How is it going so far ?

Impact and feedback from Our Young Inspectors
Presented by Charlotte and Tia

Any Questions?



Future plans

- Team Leader post – programme run by young people for young people
- National Children’s Commissioning Conference – workshop presentation by our Young Inspectors.
- Extension of activity to include residential children’s homes and inspection of Children Services internal provisions.
- Joint working with Commissioning to embed the programme in to the Quality Monitoring Processes of all accommodation based services for young people
- Young Inspectors to be involved with any tendering for accommodation in the future
- Formalise the Young Inspector Training so it can be easily accessible by new recruits ongoing.

Future Plans contd

- Launch the new Quality Standards
- New Quality Standards to be used to measure during the inspections to ensure that home is meeting up to the standards set by our young people.
- Young Inspector to be financially rewarded for their time and expertise by becoming casual employees.

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Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services (School Improvement and Special Educational Needs)
Meeting:	24 June 2021

SEND PROVISION

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide an overview of SEND provision in Blackpool.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To consider the information provided and identify any further scrutiny required.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 N/A

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? No

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 Using another Council building.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is

- "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience"

6.0 Background information

6.1 In regards to the current SEND provision in Blackpool, Park school is at capacity, as is Woodlands School and Highfurlong School. Lotus school is expected to be at capacity in two

years.

6.2 In order to realign the SEND place planning and the strategic oversight of SEND, we need to find some temporary capacity. This is planned for The Oracle.

6.3 This will allow some Park students (6th form) to be located at The Oracle from September 2021, freeing up some classroom space at Park Community Academy. Additional building work at Highfurlong Special School will also add some additional capacity.

Work is also underway to facilitate the continued use of the building by community groups in the evenings and at weekends as far as is possible.

6.4 Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services (School Improvement and Special Educational Needs) will provide a verbal update at the meeting with additional information pertaining to this item.

6.5 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 N/A

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 Some SEND Capital funding has been assigned to this project to support small modifications to The Oracle building.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 Blackpool Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient Special School places.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 There is a risk that we will not be able to meet our statutory duty related to the provision of Special School places.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 SEND is a statutory responsibility and there is a significant impact upon individuals and families if we cannot provide sufficient SEND places.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 N/A

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 An extensive SEND consultation is currently ongoing.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 2020-30 Education strategy.
Inclusion strategy.
Literacy strategy.

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Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager.
Date of Meeting:	24 June 2021

BLACKPOOL BETTER START SCRUTINY REVIEW FINAL REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the final report of the scrutiny review of Blackpool Better Start.

2.0 Recommendations:

2.1 The Committee to recommend the approval of the final report of the scrutiny review of Blackpool Better Start for submission to the Executive under delegated powers to the Chief Executive.

2.2 To monitor the implementation of the report's recommendations/actions.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

3.1 To review the findings and recommendations of the scrutiny review prior to further approval by the Executive.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None

5.0 Council Priority:

5.1 The relevant Council Priority is:

- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

6.0 Background Information

6.1. At its Workplanning Workshop in July 2020, the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee identified Blackpool Better Start as an area which Members wished to review in order to ascertain the success and impact of the initiative since its inception in 2015. As a

result, Committee Members were invited to join a working group to undertake a scrutiny review of the issue.

- 6.2 The findings and resulting recommendations from the working group’s review are contained within the final report for consideration and approval by the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee, following which the report will be submitted to the Executive for approval.

Once approved, the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee will monitor the implementation of the recommendations.

- 6.3 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

- 7.1 Appendix 8(a): Blackpool Better Start Scrutiny Review Final Report

8.0 Financial considerations:

- 8.1 None

9.0 Legal considerations:

- 9.1 None

10.0 Risk management considerations:

- 10.1 None

11.0 Equalities considerations:

- 11.1 None

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

- 12.1 None

13.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

- 13.1 As detailed within the report, a number of external stakeholders contributed to the review as well as feedback being sought directly from end-users of Better Start services.

The Director of the Centre for Early Child Development has provided feedback on the working group’s final report, with her comments being incorporated into the final version as appropriate.

14.0 Background papers:

- 14.1 None

Blackpool Council



BLACKPOOL BETTER START SCRUTINY REVIEW FINAL REPORT

CONTENTS	PAGE
1.0 Foreword by Chairman	3
2.0 Background Information	4
3.0 Methodology	5
4.0 Detailed Findings and Recommendations	7
5.0 Summary of Recommendations	15
6.0 Financial and Legal Considerations	16

1.0 Foreword

- 1.1 As Blackpool Better Start reached its five-year half way point, Committee members felt it was an appropriate time to undertake a review of how the first half of the £45 million funding had been used and to determine how effective the projects had been, as well as looking ahead to proposals for the remaining five years.
- 1.2 Members recognised the importance of reviewing the projects undertaken by Better Start over the past five years and were eager to assess the impact of the work on Blackpool families.
- 1.3 In addition, the working group wished to consider the planned projects for the remainder of the scheme and to gain information on proposals for continuation and sustainability at the end of the ten year funding period.
- 1.4 As Chairman of the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee and Lead Member of the review I would like to thank my fellow members who participated in the review for their thought-provoking contributions, all the staff and volunteers at Blackpool Better Start and the families who accessed the services and provided valuable feedback on their experiences.



Councillor Jane Hugo
Chairman, Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 At its Workplanning Workshop in July 2020, the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee identified Blackpool Better Start as an area which they wished to review in order to ascertain the success and impact of the initiative since its inception in 2015.
- 2.2 A working group was subsequently formed and members were invited to attend the ‘Five Years of A Better Start Virtual Conference’ as well as being granted access to recordings of any sessions they had missed. This provided a wealth of background information and gave a real insight into the far reaching work undertaken by Blackpool Better Start.
- 2.3 The working group recognised the importance of engaging with users of Better Start services and despite the restrictions in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic, members sought feedback from Blackpool residents on their experiences of Better Start via the distribution of questionnaires. The results of which were reviewed and utilised to further inform the recommendations contained within this report.
- 2.4 The working group comprised of the following Scrutiny Committee members:
- Cllr Kim Critchley
 - Cllr Jane Hugo
 - Cllr Peter Hunter
 - Ms Helen Sage (Statutory Co-opted Member)
 - Cllr Andrew Stansfield
- 2.5 This review relates to the following Council priority:

Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience

3.0 Methodology

3.1 The working group held a total of five meetings, in addition to attending the ‘Five Years of A Better Start Virtual Conference’ and conducting a survey of end-users of Better Start services. The meetings drew on data and experience from a wide range of contributors, as detailed below:

Date	Attendees	Purpose
4 November 2020	<p>Five Years of A Better Start Virtual Conference</p> <p>Access was granted to all members of the working group and Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser as the supporting officer. Any missed sessions could be watched at a later date.</p>	To provide an introduction and broad overview of the achievements and aspirations of Blackpool Better Start.
2 December 2020	<p>Councillors Jane Hugo (in the Chair), Andrew Stansfield, Peter Hunter, Kath Benson and Ms Helen Sage</p> <p>Merle Davies, Director, Centre for Early Child Development Clare Law, Deputy Director, Centre for Early Child Development Colette Golcher, Senior Manager Early Years/SEN Mel Farman, Development Manager Colin Smy, Community Engagement Officer Simone Moore, Health and Community Connector Sarah Peers, Health and Community Connector Vicky Walker, Development Manager Emma Lowrie, Senior Manager, Research and Evaluation Jo Mills, Better Start Trainer Rebecca Calvert, Better Start Trainer</p> <p>Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser</p>	Initial information gathering session.
9 December 2020	<p>Councillors Jane Hugo (in the Chair), Kim Critchley, Peter Hunter and Ms Helen Sage</p> <p>Professor Leon Feinstein, Oxford University Merle Davies, Director, Centre for Early Child Development Clare Law, Deputy Director, Centre for Early Child Development Emma Lowrie, Head of Research</p>	Further information gathering and data review.

	Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser	
1 February 2021	<p>Councillors Jane Hugo, Don Clapham, John Wing and Ms Helen Sage</p> <p>Robert Arrowsmith, Performance, Systems and Intelligence Manager</p> <p>Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser</p>	<p>Presentation on a data study into Children Born Into Care.</p>
11 February 2021	<p>Councillors Jane Hugo (in the Chair), Kim Critchley and Ms Helen Sage</p> <p>Vicki Smith, Investment Funding Manager for the National Lottery Community Fund</p> <p>Emma Whitty Haddock, Volunteer Academy Manager</p> <p>Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser</p>	<p>Gathering feedback from the Lottery Community Fund as to their levels of satisfaction with Blackpool Better Start.</p> <p>To learn more about the work of the Volunteer Academy in connection with Blackpool Better Start.</p>
19 April 2021	<p>Councillors Jane Hugo (in the Chair), Peter Hunter and Ms Helen Sage</p> <p>Elaine Ireland, Senior Democratic Governance Adviser</p>	<p>Review of findings and drafting of recommendations.</p>

4.0 Detailed Findings and Recommendations

4.1 Context of the Review

4.1.1 The Better Start partnership in Blackpool was awarded £45 million over a ten year period and is led by the NSPCC. The partnership is made up of the Centre for Child Development, Blackpool Council, NHS, police and the community.

4.1.2 Better Start is funded by The Big Lottery and partners with the aim of delivering sustainable change to make Blackpool a place where parenting and child development is prioritised and communities are empowered to reduce risk and raise happy, healthy children.

4.1.3 Seven wards where families faced the greatest challenges were identified as the focus for the available funding:

- Bloomfield
- Brunswick
- Claremont
- Clifton
- Park
- Talbot
- Victoria

4.1.4 Blackpool Better Start delivers services for families from the point of pregnancy until the child reaches four years old.

4.1.5 Throughout the undertaking of this review, the working group wished to note the cooperation, support and helpfulness of the whole team and to extend recognition of the excellent work implemented across the town by Better Start.

4.2 Better Start Wards

4.2.1 The seven wards identified as being in the greatest need of support were acknowledged by the Lottery Fund, with these areas to exclusively be in receipt of funded intervention. Members were informed that projects are often piloted within one of the seven wards and then rolled out to other non-Better Start wards in order to implement town-wide improvements.

4.2.2 Whilst the working group recognised the beneficial ‘ripple effect’ which inevitably impacts neighbouring wards, data indicated that the initial focus on the original wards had been diluted.

- 4.2.3 By examining ward data covering the period of April 2015 to September 2020, the working group noted that 57 per cent of residents accessing Better Start services resided in non-Better Start wards.
- 4.2.4 In total, Blackpool Better Start has made £1.6 million of investment in eight parks and open spaces and six Children Centres since its launch. The Gardening Club was launched in April 2016 and the Early Years Park Rangers service was launched in June 2019, which includes a Forest School and outdoor engagement activities with green spaces. Not all wards have benefitted equally from this investment however, for example figures for Talbot ward reported that a total of only 29 children had attended a park ranger event in the developed parks and green spaces, compared to 606 children in non-Better Start wards. Similarly, a total of 1,865 children had taken part in Gardening Club activities across non-Better Start wards, compared to zero from Talbot¹.
- 4.2.5 Locality will clearly have an impact on the accessibility of such activities and other Better Start wards did report better outcomes with regards to the uptake of Gardening Club and park ranger activities. Victoria for example reported a total of 1,673 children engaging in park ranger activities and 52 children taking part in Gardening Club sessions. However, the disparity across the wards and between Better Start areas and non-Better Start wards was of concern to the working group.
- 4.2.6 Since its launch, Better Start has funded and delivered many activities for families and children across Blackpool, in a variety of community venues such as Blackpool Children’s Centres, libraries and parks. The data revealed that across non-Better Start wards a total of 3,681 children had attended 15,306 activities during that time. This compares to a total of 3,419 children accessing 13,743 activities combined across all seven Better Start wards. During the five year period, Talbot ward reported just 240 children had accessed a total of 708 activities. This would indicate that the focus has shifted from the original seven wards. Talbot data has been included as an illustrative example as this ward demonstrated the least overall take up of activities.
- 4.2.7 The data revealed a similar pattern across a number of funded initiatives, for example in September 2017 Better Start hired seven Community Connectors to connect families into local services. Then in July 2018 the team was expanded to include seven Health Connectors to support health initiatives across the town. When a Connector has made meaningful contact with a parent, offering advice or signposting to services, this is considered to be a contact point. Data on the number of parents who had generated a contact point revealed that 47 per cent of these parents who had made a meaningful contact with a Community Connector and 46 per cent of those making contact with a Health Connector lived in non-Better Start wards. The remaining parents were split across all seven Better Start wards with Talbot parents making up just 3.4 per cent of

¹ From ‘Blackpool Better Start by Ward: A Visual Representation.’

parents accessing Community Connectors and 4.8 per cent utilising the services of the Health Connectors.

- 4.2.8 Whilst the overall positive impact on Blackpool as a whole was recognised and applauded by the working group, members felt that services should be refocused to meet the needs of those residents living within the seven wards originally identified as needing the most support, with members questioning whether residents living in Better Start wards who have been identified as failing to adequately access programmes would benefit from the services on offer, or the methods used to promote them, being revisited.

Recommendation One

That Better Start should target funds to the seven wards originally identified for funding and in cases where residents of these wards are failing to access Better Start provisions the services on offer should be reviewed to ensure they are suitable and accessible.

4.3 Measurable Impact of Blackpool Better Start

- 4.3.1 'A Better Start' is a national ten-year programme running from 2015 to 2025 costing a total of £215 million. It was set up by the National Lottery Community Fund. Five Better Start partnerships were established across the country based in Blackpool, Bradford, Lambeth, Nottingham and Southend-on-Sea with the aim of supporting families to give their babies and very young children the best start in life.
- 4.3.2 The following outcomes form the basis of the Better Start partnerships:
- Improving children's diet and nutrition to support healthy physical development and protect against illness in later life;
 - Supporting children to develop social and emotional skills so they can develop positive relationships and cope with difficult situations;
 - Helping children develop their language and communication skills, so that they can engage with the world around them;
 - Bring about 'systems change', that is to change, for the better, the way that local health, public services and the voluntary and community sector work together with parents to improve outcomes for children.
- 4.3.3 The Centre for Child Development informed the working group that 'effectiveness factors' are in place to ensure the delivery of services which demonstrate evidence of supporting change. For example, Universal Baby Steps is an evidence-based antenatal programme which is delivered across Blackpool by Midwives, Health Visitors and Family Engagement Workers. Also, the enhanced Health Visiting programme, which was co-designed with Health Visitors and parents, incorporates eight family contact visits and continues until the child is 3.5 years old, concluding with an integrated school readiness assessment. This service has been developed with global experts to implement

- new ways of working, bringing Behavioural Activation and awareness of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences into universal delivery.
- 4.3.4 As part of the review, the working group met with Professor Leon Feinstein, Professor of Education and Children’s Social Care at Oxford University. Professor Feinstein had been commissioned by the Centre for Child Development to undertake an impact assessment of Blackpool Better Start and as such members felt he would be a useful source of information when trying to assess the beneficial impact of Better Start interventions.
- 4.3.5 Professor Feinstein provided valuable insight into the complex nature of data collection and analysis; the requirements in place around the secure use of information and the need to de-personalise and anonymise personal data, as well as the necessity to submit data protection application requests in order to release data from the NHS. He also explained that impact could only be fully measured alongside the inclusion of a comparison group that received no intervention, but that this generated additional ethical issues around only providing interventions in certain geographical areas.
- 4.3.6 When seeking evidence of beneficial impact, the working group was informed that as a long-term system change, Better Start aimed to embed support for families and should not be considered a short-term solution.
- 4.3.7 Findings presented to the working group on Children Born into Care highlighted that the number of children under one year old entering the care system in Blackpool was extremely high when considered alongside national statistics and that a consistent pattern over the past six years was evident. Members were informed that the Council was reviewing which Better Start services were most beneficial for supporting vulnerable parents and that work was ongoing in conjunction with Better Start with regards to a service model redesign for this group of parents. The data also suggested that this group of parents could prove difficult to engage with and as Better Start interventions are reliant upon voluntary engagement, this could be problematic.
- 4.3.8 Key findings from the town-wide research² highlighted the following feedback from partners:
- Eligibility criteria for access to services resulted in many not being eligible
 - Services focussed on specific issues rather than on the whole person
 - Difficulty in achieving engagement from parents with complex issues
 - Insufficient communication between agencies
 - Too much time spent assessing and not enough direct work addressing issues
 - Insufficient work with parents after separation from their child
- 4.3.9 A meeting was held with the Investment Funding Manager for the National Lottery Community Fund in order for the working group to ascertain if the Lottery Community Fund was satisfied with the work to date of Blackpool Better Start. The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive, with Blackpool being praised for its commitment to partnership working and its engagement with the community. The requirement for

² From ‘Born Into Care – Blackpool 2019/2020’ Presentation.

- Blackpool Better Start to provide quarterly reports and Key Performance Indicator data to the Lottery Community Fund was in place and the Investment Funding Manager regularly undertook visits to Blackpool to meet with the Better Start team. With regards to outcome data, members were informed that there was no expectation from the Lottery Community Fund for evidence of significant impact until closer to the end of the ten year period in order to allow for interventions to become securely embedded.
- 4.3.10 Whilst the working group recognised that system change and longer-term interventions required sufficient time to make a measurable impact, they also noted that Better Start was at its five year point and anticipated that meaningful performance data would be available by this stage. Members were unsatisfied with the suggestion that impact could only be measured at the end of the ten year period and felt that the effects of interventions should by now be reflected across the town.
- 4.3.11 Examples of informal feedback from end-users of a range of Better Start services were presented to the working group and these provided a positive and complimentary appraisal of those activities accessed by a number of residents. The working group recognised the value of such feedback but raised concerns over whether those residents more desperately in need of support were able to access the services on offer and whether they were being adequately reached by the interventions in place.
- 4.3.12 The analysis work undertaken on Children Born into Care provided a valuable and detailed insight into the background of parents requiring support from a number of partners and the pattern of outcomes for very young children within the town. The working group strongly supported the service model redesign and welcomed Better Start's involvement, as well as improved consultation with those parents whose children had been removed to allow their involvement to co-produce and redesign these services.

Recommendation Two

That Better Start works in conjunction with the Council's Performance, Systems and Intelligence Manager to target future interventions, where appropriate, more specifically to those parents identified as being at risk of having their children taken into care, with a periodic review of the subsequent impact on the data of children born into care.

4.4 Communication

- 4.4.1 Blackpool Better Start holds an annual conference to inform stakeholders of its achievements and successes over the past year and to promote planned projects for the year ahead. There is also an active Twitter account with almost 2,000 followers and a Facebook page that is regularly updated. Blackpool Better Start's website is a comprehensive source of information and contains details of how families can get involved, as well as information videos and links to other services.

- 4.4.2 A driving force behind engaging with families is Better Start’s use of Community and Health Connectors. The Community Connectors work with families to let them know about events taking place at Children’s Centres. Two male Dad Community Connectors are also in post to help connect with dads in the community. The Community Connectors would usually attend Family Hubs, nurseries and community events to raise awareness of Better Start programmes, but have been unable to due to Covid-19 restrictions and unfortunately it became necessary to cancel all events during the pandemic. In response to the restrictions, the Community Connectors delivered over 600 Blackpool Better Start packs to parents of children aged 0-36 months which contained books, activities and guidance.
- 4.4.3 The Health Connectors provide information on health services and activities aimed at improving family health and wellbeing, such as dental hygiene guidance and advice on keeping fit and improving nutrition.
- 4.4.4 The working group produced a survey and utilised the services of the Volunteer Centre Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde to seek feedback from end users of Better Start. The responses provided many positive examples of residents accessing a number of provisions and highlighted the beneficial and worthwhile projects in place across the town. A recurring comment however was that of poor communication and a lack of available information about events.
- 4.4.5 Ward Councillors also raised the issue of communication, claiming that events in their wards were not adequately communicated to them and as such they were unable to inform their constituents of forthcoming opportunities which may be of benefit to them.
- 4.4.6 During the review, the working group was informed of the great many projects and positive programmes being implemented by Better Start across Blackpool, but prior to the review they had not been aware of many of the interventions in place. Concerns had previously been raised by Councillors as to the allocation of the Better Start funding and whilst much excellent work has clearly been going on, a lack of communication locally about such work was identified.
- 4.4.7 In recognising the excellent work undertaken by Better Start, the working group felt that wider publication of positive outcomes and community projects would help to raise awareness across residents who had not previously accessed Better Start services, along with a regular bulletin update to Councillors to keep them informed of upcoming events and ways in which they could get involved.
- 4.4.8 A lack of communication with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) was identified as a missed opportunity to engage more widely, particularly with faith leaders and was an area the working group felt could be improved upon. Links with homeless

charities was also identified as a potential route for Better Start to connect with young pregnant women who may otherwise not be reached.

- 4.4.9 There was an acknowledgement from the Centre for Early Child Development that more needed to be done in order to strengthen links with the VCFS, but Merle Davies, Director highlighted that Better Start had committed £125,000 to the refurbishment of a centrally based volunteer centre within Blackpool as well as having a commission to the value of £125,000 with the sector to grow volunteering roles and to inform communities about the work of Blackpool Better Start through Blackpool Community Voice.

Recommendation Three

That Better Start should produce a Communication Strategy within the following six months outlining how best practice will be better shared locally, with the aim of raising awareness of the positive outcomes of Better Start interventions and of upcoming events. This should address how communication will be improved with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector.

Recommendation Four

That Better Start should introduce within the next six months a regular update bulletin to Councillors informing them of recent achievements and forthcoming events, as well as information on how they can get involved in any programmes.

4.5 Future Sustainability

- 4.5.1 The working group discussed concerns over future sustainability of Better Start projects and questioned whether plans were in place to ensure the longevity of programmes once the funding ceased in 2025.
- 4.5.2 Members were reassured to hear that sustainability and legacy planning had been built into many of the Better Start programmes with a succession plan embedded into the training of volunteers and partners to allow for the continuation of selected projects once funding ended.
- 4.5.3 The working group was informed that as Better Start was half way through its funding, the focus of the programme would now be shifting to place more emphasis onto securing future sustainability.

Recommendation Five

That the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee receives annual updates from Better Start on the progress of sustainability planning of Better Start programmes.

5.0 Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation One

That Better Start should target funds to the seven wards originally identified for funding and in cases where residents of these wards are failing to access Better Start provisions the services on offer should be reviewed to ensure they are suitable and accessible.

Recommendation Two

That Better Start works in conjunction with the Council's Performance, Systems and Intelligence Manager to target future interventions where appropriate more specifically to those parents identified as being at risk of having their children taken into care, with a periodic review of the subsequent impact on the data of children born into care.

Recommendation Three

That Better Start should produce a Communication Strategy within the following six months outlining how best practice will be better shared locally, with the aim of raising awareness of the positive outcomes of Better Start interventions and of upcoming events. This should address how communication will be improved with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector.

Recommendation Four

That Better Start should introduce within the next six months a regular update bulletin to Councillors informing them of recent achievements and forthcoming events, as well as information on how they can get involved in any programmes.

Recommendation Five

That the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee receives annual updates from Better Start on the progress of sustainability planning of Better Start programmes.

6.0 Financial and Legal Considerations

6.1 Financial

6.1.1 The recommendations resulting from this review do not impact on Blackpool Council budgets.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from this review.

Blackpool Better Start Scrutiny Review Action Plan

Recommendation		Cabinet Member's Comments	Rec Accepted by Executive?	Target Date for Action	Lead Officer	Committee Update
R1	That Better Start should target funds to the seven wards originally identified for funding and in cases where residents of these wards are failing to access Better Start provisions the services on offer should be reviewed to ensure they are suitable and accessible.				Director of Centre for Child Development	
R2	That Better Start works in conjunction with the Council's Performance, Systems and Intelligence Manager to target future interventions where appropriate more specifically to those parents identified as being at risk of having their children taken into care, with a periodic review of the subsequent impact on the data of children born into care.				Director of Centre for Child Development Performance, Systems and Intelligence Manager	

Recommendation		Cabinet Member's Comments	Rec Accepted by Executive?	Target Date for Action	Lead Officer	Committee Update
R3	That Better Start should produce a Communication Strategy within the following six months outlining how best practice will be better shared locally, with the aim of raising awareness of the positive outcomes of Better Start interventions and of upcoming events. This should address how communication will be improved with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector.				Director of Centre for Child Development	
R4	That Better Start should introduce within the next six months a regular update bulletin to Councillors informing them of recent achievements and forthcoming events, as well as information on how they can get involved in any programmes.				Director of Centre for Child Development	
R5	That the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee receives annual updates from Better Start on the progress of sustainability planning of Better Start programmes.				Director of Centre for Child Development	

Report to:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager.
Date of Meeting:	24 June 2021

COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2021/2022

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider the contents of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee's Workplan for 2021/2022.

2.0 Recommendations:

- 2.1 To approve the Committee Workplan, taking into account any suggestions for amendment or addition.
- 2.2 To monitor the implementation of the Committee's recommendations/actions.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

- 3.1 To ensure the Workplan is up to date and is an accurate representation of the Committee's work.
- 3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No
- 3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? N/A

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

- 4.1 None

5.0 Council Priority:

- 5.1 The relevant Council Priority is: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

6.0 Background Information

6.1. Scrutiny Workplan

A Scrutiny Workplanning Workshop was held on Monday 7 June 2021 to consider items for inclusion on the Committee's workplan for the 2020/2021 municipal year. The workplan is a flexible document that sets out the work that will be undertaken by the Committee over the

course of the year, both through scrutiny review and Committee meetings. Attached at Appendix 9(a) is the Committee's proposed Workplan for 2021/2022.

Committee Members are invited to suggest topics at any time that might be suitable for scrutiny review through completion of the Scrutiny Review Checklist. The checklist forms part of the mandatory scrutiny procedure for establishing review panels and must therefore be completed and submitted for consideration by the Committee, prior to a topic being approved for scrutiny.

6.2 Implementation of Recommendations/Actions

The table attached at Appendix 9(b) has been developed to assist the Committee in effectively ensuring that the recommendations made by the Committee are acted upon. The table will be regularly updated and submitted to each Committee meeting.

Members are requested to consider the updates provided in the table and ask follow up questions as appropriate to ensure that all recommendations are implemented.

6.3 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 9(a): Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee Workplan 2021/2022
Appendix 9(b): Implementation of Recommendations/Actions

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 None

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None

13.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

13.1 None

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None

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Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee - Work Plan 2021/2022	
Special Meeting TBC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Headstart Update – To receive an update on the work of Headstart. 2. Blackpool Families Rock - To receive a presentation on the Blackpool Families Rock working model. 3. Corporate Parent Panel Annual Report – To receive the Corporate Parent Panel Annual Report and information from JustUz.
7 October 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children’s Social Care Improvement – To receive further information and initial results from the contextual safeguarding pilot introduced in April 2021. 2. Youth Offending Team Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the recent inspection of YOT. 3. SEND Strategy – To consider the final version of the SEND Strategy. 4. Catch-Up Premium – To receive a report outlining how schools have used the government Catch-Up Premium funding. 5. Review of Youth Provision – To receive an update on the progress of the youth provision review. 6. PASS Data – To consider the town-wide Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) survey data. 7. Inclusion in Education Scrutiny Review – Recommendation monitoring one year on.
9 December 2021	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children’s Social Care Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the Council’s approach to tackling domestic abuse. 2. Mental Health and Wellbeing of Young People - To receive information on provisions to support young people’s mental health and wellbeing. 3. Educational Diversity – To receive an update report on the impact of the counselling service introduced at Educational Diversity in November 2020. 4. Schools Response to the Pandemic Scrutiny Review – Recommendation monitoring one year on and the impact of the pandemic on pupil attainment.
27 January 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth Offending Team Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the YOT Improvement Plan. 2. Children’s Social Care Improvement – To receive specific data around the support given to young people turning 18 and the number of vulnerable young people accessing services. 3. Education/SEND – To receive information on the impact of the pandemic on early language and speech development. 4. Children Born Into Care – To receive an update on the ongoing work looking at children born into care.
24 March 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth Offending Team Improvement - To receive an update in relation to the YOT Improvement Plan. 2. Children’s Social Care Improvement – To receive the findings of the Department for Education Care Review launched in January 2021. 3. Education/SEND – To receive an update in relation to the education priority area of ‘Inclusion’. 4. CSAP Annual Report – To receive the annual report from CSAP.

Scrutiny Review Work	
Commenced December 2020	Blackpool Better Start Following Committee approval, the final report from the review to be considered by the Executive.
February 2021	Input into the development of the SEND Vision and Strategy. The final version of the Strategy is anticipated to be ready for Committee consideration in October 2021.

TBC	<p>The Experience of Looked After Children in Blackpool</p> <p>To gain an understanding of the journey of a cohort of Our Children including scrutiny of their experiences with various partners such as the Police, Health Services and schools. To potentially also include their experiences of Alternative Provision. Links to the following themes taken from the CSC Improvement Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Improve the systems and quality of Agency Decision Maker's processes for approval and matching of foster carers and adopters.</i> 2. <i>Ensure that our social workers are prepared for court proceedings.</i>
TBC	<p>Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools</p> <p>To review the provisions within schools to support the mental health and wellbeing of pupils. Potential link to SEND target of: <i>'Children and young people with SEND to enjoy good physical and mental health and wellbeing emotional health.'</i></p>
TBC	<p>SEND Funding and Capacity</p> <p>Cabinet Member referral.</p>
TBC	<p>Young People classed as Not In Employment, Education or Training (NEET)</p> <p>To consider this cross-cutting issue which disproportionately affects vulnerable young people. To include the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on training/employment opportunities for young people, as well as considering the breadth of the offer in Blackpool and whether young people are adequately directed to available opportunities.</p>

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

	DATE OF REC	RECOMMENDATION	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	UPDATE	RAG RATING
1	09.01.20	To receive the findings of the National Association of Children's Services examining the costs of residential placements for children and the impact on Local Authorities.	March 2022	Victoria Gent, Director of Children's Services	This work was never completed by DfE due to Covid-19 and will now be built into a care review launched by DfE in January 2021, with an expected 12 month timescale. Outcomes of care review anticipated by March 2022.	Not yet due.
2	09.01.20	To receive results of YOT re-inspection once completed.	October 2021	Victoria Gent, Director of Children's Services		Not yet due.
3	09.01.20	To receive the findings of the Department for Education impact study on out of area placements.	March 2022	Victoria Gent, Director of Children's Services	This work was never completed by DfE due to Covid-19 and will now be built into a care review launched by DfE in January 2021, with an expected 12 month timescale. Outcomes of care review anticipated by March 2022.	Not yet due.
4	09.01.20	To receive a presentation on the Blackpool Families Rock model of working.	TBC	Kara Haskayne, Head of Safeguarding and Principal Social Worker	To be presented at the Special meeting of the Committee, date as yet to be confirmed but dependent on current Covid restrictions.	Not yet due.
5	10.09.20	To seek further information from the Director of Community and Environmental Services on the work underway to review ways to increase youth service provisions across the town.	October 2021	John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services	Lead officers to attend the October CYP Scrutiny Committee meeting to discuss the scope of the review and the proposed approach that will be taken with regards to consultation and mapping work in order to enable the Committee to feed into the process.	Not yet due.
6	19.11.20	That further updates on the improvement of relationships with third sector partners be	June 2021	Victoria Gent, Director of Children's Services	Included on agenda.	Green

	DATE OF REC	RECOMMENDATION	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	UPDATE	RAG RATING
		reported back to a future meeting of the Committee.				
7	19.11.20	The town-wide Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) survey data be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.	June 2021	Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion	Item has been delayed.	Red
8	19.11.20	Mr Turner advised that a full time equivalent counsellor, based at Educational Diversity was now available to provide Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to all schools. Mr Turner agreed to report back to the Committee on the impact of the counselling service in twelve months' time.	December 2021	Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion		Not yet due.
9	28.01.21	That the data relating to the proportion of Our Children who were looked after be reported to a future meeting of the Committee following the outcomes of the working party examining the issue.	TBC	Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Service	Target date to be identified.	
10	22.04.21	To receive regular updates in relation to the concerns raised around children at the cited Secure Training Centre.	Ongoing	Sara McCartan, Head of Adolescent Service		

	DATE OF REC	RECOMMENDATION	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	UPDATE	RAG RATING
11	22.04.21	To receive further data on Blackpool's mental health hospital admission rates once available.	TBC	Stephen Ashley, CSAP Independent Scrutineer	Target date to be identified.	
12	22.04.21	That details of further work on the Council's response to domestic abuse be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.	December 2021	Victoria Gent, Director of Children's Services		Not yet due.
13	22.04.21	That further information and initial results from the contextual safeguarding pilot be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.	October 2021	Victoria Gent, Director of Children's Services		Not yet due.
14	22.04.21	That more specific data around the support given to young people turning 18 and the number of vulnerable young people accessing services be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.	February 2022	Victoria Gent, Director of Children's Services		Not yet due.
15	22.04.21	To receive detailed plans of any proposals of SEN provision at the Oracle building at the next meeting of the Committee.	June 2021	Paul Turner, Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion	Include on agenda.	Green

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