

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>AUDIT COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	Victoria Gent, Director of Children’s Services Chris Coyle, Assistant Director Children’s Social Care Kate Aldridge, Head of Corporate Delivery, Performance and Commissioning, Strategy
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	27 July 2023

**STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER DEEP DIVE – OPERATIONS**

**1.0 Purpose of the report:**

1.1 To consider a progress report on individual risks identified in the Council’s Strategic Risk Register.

**2.0 Recommendation(s):**

2.1 To consider the controls being implemented to manage the strategic risk relating to operations.

**3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):**

3.1 To enable the Audit Committee to consider an update and progress report in relation to an individual risk identified on the Strategic Risk Register.

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 risk impacts on the community priority.

**6.0 Background information**

6.1 At its meeting in March 2023, the Audit Committee agreed to continue to invite Strategic Risk Owners to attend future meetings to provide updates and progress reports in relation to the individual risks identified on the Strategic Risk Register.

6.2 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

**7.0 List of Appendices:**

7.1 Appendix 4(a) - Strategic Risk Register Deep Dive – Operations

**8.0 Financial considerations:**

8.1 The controls being implemented will be done so within current budget constraints.

**9.0 Legal considerations:**

9.1 Risks need to be effectively managed in order to comply with relevant legislation.

**10.0 Risk management considerations:**

10.1 The Audit Committee to gain assurance that strategic risks are being effectively managed.

**11.0 Equalities considerations:**

11.1 Equality analysis should have been undertaken, where necessary, when decisions were made in relation to the identification of the actions identified in this document. As this report presents monitoring against pre-agreed actions, no further equality analysis has been undertaken as part of this report.

**12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:**

12.1 Sustainability, climate change and environmental matters should have been considered, where necessary, when decisions were made in relation to the identification of the actions identified in this document. As this report presents monitoring against pre-agreed actions, no further analysis has been undertaken as part of this report.

**13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:**

13.1 The progress report has been prepared in conjunction with risk owners.

**14.0 Background papers:**

14.1 None.

## Appendix 4(a) - Risk Category: Operations

**Risk Appetite: Minimalist**

**Risk: a) Failure of Children's Social Care.**

**Risk Owner: Director of Children's Services, Director of Strategy (Assistant Chief Executive)**

<b>Gross Risk Score</b>	<b>25</b>	Impact – 5	Likelihood – 5
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### What impact does this have?

- Preventable death / injury to a child.
- Unsustainable costs for looked after children.
- Disjointed external market reducing access to suitable and cost effective care packages.

### What opportunities does this create?

- Consider options for shared services and opportunities for flexible use of new funding streams.
- Implementation of robust working practices in a Council run Children's Services.
- Focus on preventative work to avoid the need for Child Protection interventions.

### What controls do we already have in place?

- Recommendations made by OFSTED are articulated in clear plans which drive the work of the senior leadership team in Children's Social Care.
- Performance and quality impact information is accurate and kept up to date to ensure a comprehensive view of actual performance and financial position.
- Regular engagement with OFSTED and the DfE.
- Participation in national reviews, such as the children's care review, to consider wider system issues with the care service.
- Early Help Strategy in place which aims to prevent children entering into the care system.
- Better Start Partnership Board in place to help improve opportunities for early years.
- Safeguarding processes and procedures in place including regular audit.
- Getting to Good Board in place to drive improvement.
- Robust supervision, training and personal development for social workers and managers.
- Contract monitoring and quality assurance procedures in place for commissioned services.
- Commissioning Team in place to work with the marketplace to ensure access to appropriate services for social care.
- Strategic Children and Family Partnership Board in place, governing and monitoring improvement across the whole system.

<b>Net Risk Score</b>	<b>15</b>	Impact – 5	Likelihood – 3
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### What are we doing to further manage the risk?

**Continue to reduce numbers of Looked After Children in a safe, sustainable way through improvements of the social care system.**

Since June 2022 there has been a reduction of 10% in the number of looked after children and the

service is moving towards a target of 500 which will bring it in line with other comparable authorities. However, the reduction in numbers will only occur when it is safe and secure to do so and would not be based on a financial decision when there was a significant risk or safeguarding concerns.

The Council has recently been awarded £760k in funding from the Department for Education which will be used to further improve the model of practice across Blackpool and should help with reduced numbers of children being brought into care.

Early intervention is also a focus for the team and the Family Hubs, which opened in June, and will be a key element in identifying, at an early stage, the level of need so that appropriate support can be provided. There is some, albeit small, trajectory that the early interventions are starting to take effect but larger scale impacts may not be seen for a number of years.

**Implement any recommendations arising from the February 2023 OFSTED report.**

The overall judgement grade of the inspection was as follows:

- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families - Requires improvement to be good.
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection - Requires improvement to be good.
- The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers – Good.
- Overall effectiveness - Requires improvement to be good.

Work is underway to address the key areas of concern identified in the OFSTED report of which there were four, these being:

- The multi-agency response to children suffering domestic abuse or long-term neglect, and to those children with complex needs.
- Work with partners to strengthen their contribution to early help and neglect.
- Sufficient placements to meet children's assessed needs.
- The timeliness of meeting children's dental and emotional needs.

Steps taken include instigating a review of the governance arrangements for the Strategic Partnership working groups to help develop a cohesive strategic approach which will then meet operational needs.

Practice has changed with regards to domestic abuse cases and steps are being taken to take a broader view of the issues, with our partners, and have more focus on the experience of the children rather than the adults. It is likely that a scrutiny review in this area will be undertaken to help inform the future direction.

As outlined in the previous action, steps are being taken in terms of early help and intervention and the support provided to help prevent children going into care in a safe and appropriate way.

**Implement the new safeguarding arrangements based on a local footprint.**

It is anticipated that this will be formally launched in September. Plans have been put in place to fund

the change and the policy and procedures have been written. The process is currently done via Lancashire so work is underway to assess what impact this may have on employees so that appropriate action can be taken.

**Continue to develop the children’s care provider market to ensure adequate and quality provision in the town and develop sufficiency.**

We maintain a good relationship with providers and currently there is a strong focus on placement sustainability. Work continues to focus on future market needs and some successful pilot work has been undertaken on early help / interventions. The focus is to ensure that when a child needs to be cared for away from home they receive an excellent standard of care and value for money is achieved. It is a nationally challenging market due to the associated costs. In addition, new schemes are being brought in such as for the registration of providers for 16-17 year olds which, whilst it bring benefits to the quality of care for these young people, will result in cost pressures.

<b>Target Risk Score</b>	<b>10</b>	Impact – 5	Likelihood – 2
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**What will these additional actions achieve?**

The actions being taken aim to reduce the number of looked after children and bring these in line with comparator authorities whilst always keeping the safeguarding of the child at the forefront of any decision making. This will be achieved by reducing the number of children entering the care system and reducing the number of children placed in costly residential placements.

Continued development of the children’s care providers is also needed to ensure that excellent care is delivered and value for money is achieved.

**What barriers do we face?**

One of the key barriers is ensuring that our partner organisations effectively work with the Council with the best interests of the child in mind. More work is needed on collaborative decision making and shared protocols so that all partners work in a cohesive way when making decisions.

**Do these actions contribute to the sustainability of the Council?**

Children’s Services regularly overspend due to demands on the service and therefore it is essential that spending is brought under control as failure to do so impacts on the financial sustainability of the Council.

**Do these actions impact on the Council’s finances?**

The full year impact of the Children’s Social Care pressures, as at M7 2022/23, were right-sized as part of the Corporate Medium Term Financial Plan, equating to an additional budget of £5.221m being provided to the service.

However, Children’s Social Care Placements had a worsening position of £5,359k, mainly due to the additional support required following the breakdown of high cost placements and New to Care Placements offsetting the work to step children down coming in at a greater pace than expected. The actual number of residential placements at 31st May 2023 is 83, whereas the plan suggested there should be 60 by the end of March.

There was also an additional Children's Services savings target of £1,924k, of which, only £658k is anticipated to be met this financial year, leaving a further budget gap of £1,266k.

As at the end of May 2023 the Children's Services Directorate is forecasting an overspend of £6,625k for the financial year to March 2024.

Therefore, it is essential that the actions identified in the strategic risk register are effectively delivered in order to meet budget targets.

**How does this contribute to the Council Plan?**

The work of Children's Services contributes to the community priority.

**Any links to other strategic risks?**

Strategy, Finance, Legal

**Any additional changes to this strategic risk?**

The focus is to continue to ensure that children and young people across the town continue to be safe.

**Risk: b) Failure of Adult Social Care.**

**Risk Owner: Director of Adult Services, Director of Strategy (Assistant Chief Executive)**

<b>Gross Risk Score</b>	<b>25</b>	Impact – 5	Likelihood – 5
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**What impact does this have?**

- Preventable death / injury to a vulnerable adult.
- Unsustainable costs for Adult Social Care.
- Fragile external market reducing due to increased costs and recruitment issues.

**What opportunities does this create?**

- Options for shared services and greater integration with health via the ICB.
- Opportunities for flexible use of new funding streams.

**What controls do we already have in place?**

- The Director of Adult Service has been appointed as a Director of Health Integration and is accountable to the Council and the ICB. As part of this they have a place on the ICB Executive Team as well.
- A local authority Chief Executive (not Blackpool) has been appointed to the ICB to represent the views of local government.
- Robust supervision, training and personal development for social workers and managers.
- Contract monitoring and quality assurance procedures in place for commissioned services.
- Robust inspection regime by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for providers with CQC assurance coming on stream later this year for the whole system of adult care.
- Strong communication links with care providers through a provider forum.

- Access to direct payments and personal budgets to give service users a choice as to their care.
- Safeguarding processes and procedures in place.
- Adult Service Governance Committee in place.
- Commissioning Team in place to work with the marketplace to ensure access to appropriate services for social care.
- Payment of the real living wage in the care sector.

**Net Risk Score**

**15**

Impact – 5

Likelihood – 3

### **What are we doing to further manage the risk?**

#### **Continued participation in the development of integrated care systems to ensure the best health and social care provision for residents.**

The Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) has replaced NHS Blackpool and NHS Fylde and Wyre Clinical Commissioning Groups (which were previously known as the Fylde Coast CCGs), NHS Morecambe Bay CCG, West Lancashire CCG, NHS Chorley and South Ribble, NHS Greater Preston CCGs (previously known as Central Lancashire CCGs) and NHS Blackburn with Darwen CCG and NHS East Lancashire CCG. The Council's Director of Adult Services has been appointed to the ICB and now holds a joint role which is key to helping ensure a coordinated and integrated approach going forward.

At a local level the Health and Wellbeing Strategy articulates the strategic priorities for Blackpool against which delivery is overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Levelling Up – People. Blackpool was represented by Adult Services, Children's Services and by the Chief Executive to feed into the development of the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Strategy 2023-2028.

The Integrated Care Strategy 2023-2028 sets out the priority areas that will be focused on to improve the health and wellbeing of residents, and to make sure that our health and care services are more joined up and easier to access. The vision is that it wants people in Lancashire and South Cumbria to live longer, healthier, happier lives than they currently do.

The Strategy focuses on five key areas of people's lives:

- **Starting Well:** Give our children the best start in life, supporting them and their families with problems that affect their health and wellbeing, and getting them ready to start school.
- **Living Well:** Reduce ill health and tackle inequalities across mental and physical health for people of all ages by understanding the cause of these unfair differences.
- **Working Well:** Increase ambition, aspiration and employment, with businesses supporting a healthy and stable workforce and employing people who live in the local area.
- **Ageing Well:** Support people to stay well in their own home, with connections to their communities and more joined up care.
- **Dying Well:** Encourage all our residents to feel comfortable in talking about planning for dying,

and to be well-supported when a loved one dies.

For Blackpool, a Place Based Partnership is in place which serves as a consultative body at present. This includes representation from the Council, the Acute Trust, Mental Health Trust and a number of partners from the voluntary and private sector. Going forward this group will develop a phased programme which will focus on devolving NHS resources in the community to best meet the needs of the residents of Blackpool. The transfer of funding from the NHS to other local partners will help ensure that the right types of services are available in the community to support residents. Robust governance arrangements will need to be implemented for this going forward and discussions held with the Director Governance and Partnership to start the process of considering options.

The Council, through the joint director post, will be working alongside colleagues in the ICB and all relevant local partners including NHS providers, the education sector, employers and the third sector to ensure a positive impact for the residents who reside in the Blackpool footprint.

**Continue to monitor the long term impact and consequences of the pandemic on the health and wellbeing of our vulnerable residents and respond to different demands including increased complexity of cases and the impact on the care sector linking to the new ICB arrangements.**

This continues to be monitored on an ongoing basis as there continues to be an increase in the Adult Social Care commissioning for residents new to the service and existing service users who have more complex needs. The trajectory of need continues to increase across the board, some of which could be attributed to the impact of the pandemic and others due to ongoing pressures in the health sector which in turn increases demand for social care. There is clear evidence that the acuity of needs is increasing thus resulting in the need for more social care. In Blackpool frailty starts at the age of 45 due to deprivation and alcohol / drug use which adds to the additional pressures in the system.

Population health resources of the ICB are joining together with the Public Health Team at the Council to help work through where there are impacts on health and where we can achieve the best outcome by focusing on particular activities and conditions.

The system is characterised by significant peaks and troughs which is indicative of a system in crisis. A number of factors can contribute to the peaks such as bank holidays and pressures at hospital and further work is required on the development of control charts to better understand this. The transformational work planned to take place across community services will be a key driver in furthering understanding as the intention will be to shift the focus from what is happening in the hospital, with an increased focus on what is happening in the community.

**Prepare for and participate in the planned CQC assurance process of social care**

The new CQC assurance process will be a review of the whole system of which Adult Social Care is part of. Preparations are ongoing for this and the service participated in a peer review in May 2023, of which the findings overall were positive and the areas of improvement identified through this were, in the main, known to the Council.

The peer review found that the Council are very good at 'doing the doing' and having a positive impact at an operational level through the use of good problem solving skills. The review found that there was good leadership across all levels and that the Council was trusted by its providers. However, it did find

that the service has to get better at evidencing what it does, develop policy and strategy around the key areas of work and make better use of data to build a picture of current and future needs. It also found that there was a lack of shared knowledge around equality, diversity and inclusion.

In response to this action, plans are being developed and appropriately prioritised to demonstrate to the CQC the continuous improvement journey in Adult Social Care. To further support this process an internal audit is planned for later this year to help ensure that risks continue to be managed in what is a very challenging service area. It is not yet known when the CQC inspection will take place but feedback from pilot sites has been used to develop and inform the assurance process which will be adopted nationally.

**Continue to work with our partners to manage the hospital discharge process.**

A Transfer of Care Hub is in place which Adult Social Care staff collocated at the hospital as part of a multi-disciplinary team to ensure that effective discharge to assess in the community arrangements are in place. Good working relationships are in place and Adult Social Care staff are integrated into the process and are very proactive. The volume of cases coupled with the more complex needs which require commissioned solutions continues to be a challenge which is impeded in part by challenges across the care sector. Appropriate funding is in place through the Better Care Fund to help manage the increased demand on the service and the staff take a flexible and innovative approach to identify solutions which best meet the needs of the service users.

**Continue to support the care sector who are still recovering from the pandemic and face a number of challenges such as increasing costs and recruitment issues.**

The Director of Adult Services continues to have regular meetings with care providers across the town and ongoing support is provided via Adult Social Care's Provider Hub. There are three provider forums chaired by providers including for residential and nursing care, care at home services and supported living. The Council attends all of these provider forums as a partner.

A Workforce Recruitment and Retention Sub-Group of the Health and Social Care Career Academy is in place where providers are equal partners and meet with Adult Social Care, education providers and Skills for Care to share best practice and ensure appropriate links are in place with the College and the Job Centre. One of the key tasks undertaken by this group was to support providers to register for the Workforce Development Fund and provide statistical data to Skills for Care. This is still work in progress and the outcome will enable a robust data set to inform future workforce development needs and access funding for this via Skills for Care. This data will also be used by Skills for Care to provide an accurate picture of the sector when engaging in national lobbying.

The Adult Social Care team, who along with colleagues from Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Fylde Coast Health and Social Care Career Academy and Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board were highly commended in the Public Partnership Award at the LGC Awards. The submission was for the innovative Health and Social Care Career Academy work taking place across Blackpool and The Fylde coast, which has:

- Worked in partnership on recruitment and retention in health and social care roles.
- Supported the delivery of integrated person-centric care with partners.
- Offered training and support for an integrated model of care training.

- Equipped employees with the qualifications they need in the industry from entry level to management.
- Shared learning to support other local authorities to address training and recruitment issues and create their own academy.

Skills for England have also advised that the Health and Social Care Career Academy should be the envy of England due to its innovative and effective approach to developing the social care sector.

Adult Social Care are engaged in the call for evidence by the Department of Health and Social Care who are undertaking a consultation on social care workforce reform and looking at ways in which further professionalism can be brought into all elements of the care sector.

**Continue to develop the Adult Social Care market to ensure adequate and quality provision in the town and develop sufficiency.**

It should be noted that Blackpool has the highest proportion of good providers across most of the North West and this is in part due to the really good relationships that are in place with providers across the town and market position statements are in the process of being updated so that the Council is clear about future needs. There is sufficiency for residential placements however demand for nursing placements and dementia care placements are challenging and joint working is underway through the ICB to look for solutions to this. Care at home provision fluctuates in terms of demand and therefore it can sometimes be difficult to access services when demand is high. There is strong provision in place for day care across the town however demand has decreased and work is ongoing to see whether this is a result of the post pandemic era.

Working relationships are in place with Health Watch to enable independent scrutiny of care and also the CQC to monitor provider performance.

The Council pays providers the equivalent of the Real Living Wage to help ensure that they can retain staff on a salary which exceeds the National Living Wage.

There is still fragility in the market place nationally but the Council continues to work closely with its providers to ensure good provision across the town.

<b>Target Risk Score</b>	<b>10</b>	Impact – 5	Likelihood – 2
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**What will these additional actions achieve?**

The Council has limited control over demand and therefore the actions identified aim to manage this as best as they can through ensuring the adequate supply of services / support to meet the needs of vulnerable residents. Through the ICB, further work is being undertaken on preventative measures however the benefits of this may not be realised for years and in some cases will be part of generational change. Through the transformation of community support more focus will be placed on primary prevention which is working with partners to keep residents healthy from an early stage and through each stage of their life. This work will help identify where resources need to be focused in order to achieve the best outcome for this. There will still be a focus on secondary prevention which is for those people who already have long term conditions and need to continue to receive support.

**What barriers do we face?**

Resource is the greatest barrier to managing risk whether this is having adequate funding to meet the demands placed on the service or through recruitment issues across the care sector as a whole.

Reduced staffing or the use of less experienced staff can in itself create a risk as this could result in an increase in safeguarding concerns being identified by or reported to the Council which then also impacts on resource due to the time required to investigate such issues. It is important that all staff are clear about what constitutes a potential safeguarding issue to enable resource to be focused on the risky areas.

**Do these actions contribute to the sustainability of the Council?**

The work of Adult Services has a key role in looking after the vulnerable residents across Blackpool and helping to support them in the community. It also helps provide support to residents of working age by providing some respite from caring responsibilities to help ensure that they can continue to work. The plans being developed by the Place Based Partnership will expand this even further considering all stages of a resident's life, coupled with the work of the Health and Social Care Career Academy in helping people develop skills and get into work.

**Do these actions impact on the Council's finances?**

The service is forecasting an overspend of £800k. £400k of these pressures relate to Out of Area Residential and Nursing Placements fee uplifts being significantly greater than forecast. A further £400k of pressures relate to Care at Home services whereby the current commissioned hours exceeds the budget by 400 hours per week.

**How does this contribute to the Council Plan?**

The provision of Adult Social Care is a key contributor to the Council's community priority.

**Any links to other strategic risks?**

Strategy, Finance, Legal, Security

**Any additional changes to this strategic risk?**

The key change will be the outcome of the CQC assurance review on the whole system of Adult Social Care as this is a new process and therefore it is likely that there will be recommendations which need to be addressed going forward.

Transformational work is taking place across Adult Social Care using the Three Conversations model and we are being supported by Partner for Change to implement this. The Mental Health Service has also received two years fixed funding to help the service transform the way in which they respond to a service user when they arrive at the front door. All of this work will further improve the way in which services users are managed when they approach the service for support.

The Community Transformation work which is being planned by the Place Based Partnership is likely to create risk and opportunities going forward which will need to be effectively managed.