

Report to:

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

Relevant Officer:

Laura Chadwick, Head of Transformation/Principal Social
Worker and Bertie Goff, Workforce Development Lead

Date of Meeting:

27 March 2024

BORN INTO CARE PROJECT

1.0 Purpose of the report

1.1 To update the Committee around the Born into Care project and the impact that the key findings and changes can have upon children and families of Blackpool.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 For Scrutiny committee to review the Born into Care project to date, to offer scrutiny and challenge around the next steps.

3.0 Reason for recommendation(s)

3.1 To ensure the Scrutiny committee has oversight of the Born into Care project, the work streams that has taken place and the changes that have already been undertaken as well as those which are yet to be implemented.

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

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

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered

4.1 All Born into Care project work streams so far have considered a variety of options in terms of changes to systems and processes. Any plans from the Born into Care project have been fully co-produced with lived experience individuals and are therefore considered to be the most appropriate and effective changes.

5.0 Council priority

5.1 The relevant Council priority is:

- 'Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience'

6.0 Background and key information

- 6.1 The Born in to Care project and research was undertaken as a result of the numbers of babies being made subject to care proceedings and removed from their birth families. Over the past decade this number has increased. Findings from the research have informed local area actions plans to address challenges in systems and to develop and pilot practice guidelines designed to introduce more sensitive and humane practice when the state intervenes at birth.
- 6.2 Blackpool Council became involved in the Born into Care project due to the high numbers of children, babies in particular, who enter into our care. In Blackpool Children's Social Care we are proud of the fact that many of our key measures are going in the right direction, for example we are steadily reducing is the numbers of children in our care ('Our Children'). However, we know we need to improve our practice and specifically reduce the numbers of babies we remove at birth, or soon after birth. The Born into Care project is focused on how we might do things differently to remove fewer babies from their families and, in situations where babies aren't able to safely remain at home, improve our practice and support to families to ensure it is kind, caring and sensitive.
- 6.3 The Born into Care project has genuinely been an amazing example of a co-produced project in the Blackpool culture and tradition we are building. With parents, health, 3rd sector, academic and other partners, this project has steadily been maturing over the last 3 years. We now understand that good co-production can take time and this project is now at the stage of delivering new and innovative ways of working that have, and continue to be, co-produced. Since the start of the Born into Care project small changes have been made to practice along the way, however we are not at a stage in Blackpool where the learning and the key findings are being used to make system changes, both in Children's Social Care, and other partner organisations such as midwifery.
- 6.4 In Blackpool we are determined to improve the support available to parents who have had a multiple children removed from their care. We are particularly interested in developing new ways of working in order to reduce the risk of more children being removed from their care, and have together with parents produced a suggested practice model to support parents in this circumstance.
- 6.5 **The Born in Care Project So Far:**
June 2020: First statistical analysis new-Born into Care proceedings.
2019 -2022: Ongoing data analysis by the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory (NFJO) Data Partnership.
2021: Blackpool becomes site of Born into Care: Developing new national guidelines for when the state intervenes at birth.
Sept 2022-Feb 2022: Blackpool begins co-production process to look at local response to Born into Care findings.

March 2022: Local multi-agency area workshop held and co-production group's principles shared.

June 2022: Steering group formed to oversee work. Prioritised initial work streams.

Oct 2022: Three co-production work streams.

Jan 2023: Steering group – Theory of Change development.

June 2023: Recommendations from work streams and next step actions agreed.

Sept-Dec 2023: 5 co-production work streams – Practice models, Recurrent care, Lived Experience, Legal & Mapping.

Jan 2024: Steering group – development day.

6.6 **Achievements to date:**

During the course of the project a variety of work streams have worked together to change practice. One group consisting of workers and parents have developed and tested a map for parents, families and professionals that helps them navigate our social care 'system', that empowers parents and families to understand their journey, be more involved in choices and be more in control of their lives. This is being tested and refined and is due to be launched on April 10th.

6.7 In January 2024 a Born into Care development day was held where numerous work streams came back together and agreed that developing a clearer, practical and evidence-based offer for parents who have experienced multiple children being removed is the next step. A proposal for this recurrent offer is being presented to the Better Start Executive Board for funding and support. We hope this offer will sit with Better Start, at an Early Help level, offering both practical and therapeutic support to these families, support that is available before a baby is born and after a baby might be removed. This support will link to both universal services and also to our social work teams. In our new multiagency social work teams we are also looking to develop some teams as specialist pre-birth (or Start for Life) teams that will deliver better assessment and support to families with pregnant mothers and new babies.

6.8 There is a legal work stream that has members of the local judiciary, representation from legal practices locally, health, social care, parents, 3rd sector, academics. This group has national support from the NFJO and is looking at a different approach in court for these parents, babies and families. This is likely to be a longer-term part of the Born into Care project, but has some exciting potential. There are some positive models already to build on and we hope to return in coming months with more concrete updates around this part of the project.

6.9 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 **List of appendices**

7.1 Appendix 5(a) – Born into Care/Blackpool Families Rock 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 and the impact of this decision for our children and young people:

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.