

ACTION NOTES

Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group 23rd March 2015

Attendance: Cllr Pat McFall, Linda Clegg, Sara Barr Frost, Christy Walsh, Sammy Partington, Karen Barrick, Samantha Briggs, Sharon Burns, Aldo Staffa, Cllr Karimeh Foster, Cllr David Foster, Cllr Roy Davies, Cllr Sylvia Liddle, Cllr Ron O’Keeffe, Cllr Eileen Entwistle, Cllr Frank Connor, Cllr Andy Kay, Robert Arrowsmith, Ben Aspinall, Shannon Gardiner.

Apologies: Cllr Maureen Bateson, Cllr Stephanie Brookfield, Cllr Brian Taylor, Cllr Paul Browne, Patricia Harrison, Sheila Morris, Martin Eden, Jessica Byrne.

ITEM NO	ITEM	ACTION
1.	Action notes from the meeting held on 26 th January 2015 were agreed as a correct record.	
2.	<p>Aldo Staffa, Children In Our Care Education Manager, took the group through a report on Pupil Premium.</p> <p>Aldo informed the group that he had received a very positive response with over 95% of schools reporting how they spent their Pupil Premium and a 100% response from all schools situated in Blackburn.</p> <p>Aldo then informed the group what the Pupil Premium had been spent on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1:1 tuition – In core subjects such as English and Maths at both Primary and Secondary level.• IT Equipment – Laptops, iPads, and specific software/programmes needed to enhance the Childs education.• Educational trips.• Out of school activities - football, swimming, singing lessons, music lessons, and karate all to improve social skills and support friendship groups. <p>The group were advised that the Virtual Head and CIOC Education Manager had completed a review of over 50 Personal Education Plans (PEP’s). It was fed back that the child’s voice was strong in the majority of PEPs but there were some discrepancies on how it was planned to be spent and how it actually had been spent. All had been identified, addressed and made aware of the problems directly.</p>	

Members questioned why the PEP plan only reflected the majority of children and not all. The group were advised that occasionally a young person had not wanted to participate in the planning of their PEP as they did not like to fill in paperwork or speak to authority but it was still possible to complete the PEP on their behalf.

The group were advised that in those circumstances the authority would still ensure support was in place to achieve or excel expected outcomes.

The group questioned if there was a clear mechanism that young people were aware of if they wished to report that their plan was not being progressed. The group were advised that this was often done through the carers. Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) also review what was in the PEP and if elements had not been achieved challenges were made.

The group noted that there was an independent Advocacy Service where Looked After Children, if they feel they have any concerns with their care could refer themselves to and formal responses would be taken up on their behalf.

3. Robert Arrowsmith, Head of Service (Policy, Planning & Performance), gave a presentation on expected and achieved grades for Looked After Children at the point they entered care along with the grades they attained.

Robert informed the group of national expected progress within primary schools and that primary schools expected progress was two levels higher e.g. KS1 are expected to add 2 to the assessment measured. Once broken down a child was expected to achieve half a levels progress each year.

The group were advised that having analysed the Looked After Children cohort the expected progress (except one) were below the Key Stage level. Most children entering care during KS2 however despite the obvious upheaval, progress beyond expectations were generally made.

A number of the cohort entered care at a preschool age and very few were at expected levels when entering KS2 and attaining lower levels at the end of the journey. At a nationally expected level there was a significant drop (approximately 15% 5A*-C). In terms of expected progress at secondary school the focus was very narrow and focused on English and Maths.

The group questioned what was the Local Authority doing about improving progress. The group were advised that secondary schools being bigger were a different educational experience which made it more difficult to identify and address the needs of young people.

It was reported that every child in care has a Personal Educational Plan and that Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council reviewed them every term, instead of every six months and Looked After Children are monitored by the Authority and designated teachers who work very closely with each other.

Robert informed the group that effective support such as 1:1 tuition had been delivered by using Pupil Premium and focusing on the core subjects (English and Maths) to achieve nationally expected levels.

The group were also made aware that placement stability can have a distinct impact on educational outcomes especially in year 11 when sitting GCSE's.

4. Councillor Sylvia Liddle advised that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been given a full and comprehensive appraisal about the journey young people in care experienced with their Pathway Plans which had been explained in great detail.

It was reported to the group that the Pathway Plan covered the transition from education to moving to independent living and ultimately into their own home.

Councillor Liddle advised the group that the Leaving Care Grant was discussed and the urban myth was once again dispelled that the grant in its entirety was not given to the individual it was carefully monitored, reviewed and audited

It was reported by a VOICE representative that one of the negative aspects with the Pathway Plan, was the length of time it took to sort out one individuals claim through Universal Credit (four months) and that the individual had to rely on support from the food bank.