

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

### COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW - IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES (AS AT 21.10.10)

Cuts of 29% will inevitably impact on the most vulnerable children and their families and significantly affect the prevention strategy. These measures will also lead to increased complexities within families which will very quickly escalate to statutory intervention with more children having to enter public care.

The £2bn social care grant funding will be for Adult social care through the NHS to support joint working and **not** for Children's social care. This is very disappointing given the growth in the numbers of children in need of protection in Blackburn with Darwen.

The Sure Start scheme will continue but will "be refocused on its original intention of improving life chances for individual children" - with no explanation of what this means.

The unknown impact of the grant cuts will add to the significant pressures on the department to keep our most vulnerable children safe.

The DfE's non-schools budget will decrease by 12% in real terms, with no indication of what the impact will be on non schools spending covering areas such as child protection.

In the next months the DfE will set out how the school system and children's services will be reformed and how the education spending settlement will be spent. These include a Schools' White Paper, a Special Educational Needs and Disability Green paper, further announcements about allocating voluntary sector grants, and confirmation of LA allocations for schools and early years provision.

Other key announcements:

- Educational Maintenance Allowances to be replaced.
- "Personalised budgets" for "special educational needs" - details not given.
- The schools budget will increase by 0.1% each year which includes funding for the £2.5bn pupil premium.

### THE NATIONAL YEAR OF SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION 2011-12

Blackburn with Darwen Children and Young People's Trust is supporting the National Year of Speech, Language and Communication through the local initiative 'Hear and Be Heard; Here and Beyond'.

Communication, speech and language are crucial to success. To achieve the vision of a better Blackburn with Darwen we must continue to minimise the impact of deprivation on the educational outcomes and life chances of our children and young people. Hear and Be Heard; Here and Beyond is a proposed local initiative for improving the lives and life chances of current and future generations of Blackburn with Darwen citizens

The Trust is holding the launch event on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

## **BSF PROGRESS UPDATE**

### **Sample Schools: Pleckgate High School and Darwen Vale High School**

The Contractor started on site at Pleckgate on the 4 January 2010 and at Darwen Vale on the 2 August 2010. The construction works are ongoing and are progressing well with both schemes remaining on programme. The new Pleckgate High School will open in September 2011 and the Remodelled Darwen Vale High School will be re-opened in September 2012.

To ensure minimum disruption to the education of students from Darwen Vale during its major remodel, the school has decanted to the old Darwen Moorland site. Work to improve the learning environment at the decant site took place over the summer holidays. Additional transport arrangements have been put in place to include new bus routes with pick up and drop off points available at the original Darwen Vale site.

### **Phase 1 Schools: Witton Park High School & New East Blackburn Learning Community**

Final design proposals for Witton Park and the New East Blackburn Learning Community were subjected to a robust evaluation process and were approved by the BSF Project Board and Strategic Partnering Board in September 2010.

The Final Business Case was approved by Partnerships for Schools on the 15 October 2010, securing Department for Education funding to develop both schemes. All necessary negotiations were successfully completed early, which allowed Financial Close (when contractual agreement is reached) to be achieved on the 15 October 2010, some six weeks earlier than originally planned.

Construction is scheduled to start in January 2011 and the new schools will be fully operational for the start of the autumn term 2012.



## **Phase 2 Schools : St Bedes, Tighs, Our Lady & St John & St Thomas Centre**

Transformation Strategy Workshop held on the 23rd September with all 4 schools & LA colleagues. The Design brief will be developed through the Autumn ready for Stage 1 design development starting in early 2011.

### **STAY SAFE WEEK 16-22 OCTOBER 2010**

Stay Safe Week, which is a joint venture between the Local Safeguarding Children Board, Children and Young People's Trust and Community Safety Partnership took place between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2010. The theme was 'Street Safety' with the main focus on risk taking behaviour and road safety. A range of activities were arranged during the week across different neighbourhoods including driver awareness sessions at Blackburn College and cycle training and pedestrian safety sessions at various primary schools. The launch event was an emergency scene outside the Town Hall involving the Police, Ambulance and Fire Services.

### **THINK FAMILY**

The Think Family launches have now taken place within the three identified areas; Bastwell, Shadsworth and Sudell with Darwen Aldridge Community Academy. The aim was to highlight the work to a wide range of service practitioners from across all sectors, with a view to engaging their support and involvement in the work. There has been an overwhelming response from colleagues and the events were well attended. An additional five briefing sessions have been made available and will take place between October and December.

An analysis of attendees will be undertaken to see if any key partners have been missed so that they can be actively encouraged to contribute to the additional briefings. Feedback from the evaluations will also be used to inform the content of any additional sessions. It is anticipated that the learning from the pilots will inform the development of a borough wide roll-out of a Think Family model.

### **TAKEOVER DAY - 12<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2010**

Takeover Day is a national event, coordinated by the office of the Children's Commissioner for England, offering children and young people across the country the chance to work alongside adults and get involved in decision-making in a wide range of organisations. This year's takeover day will take place on Friday 12th November and locally, departments within the council and some voluntary agencies have already agreed to take part.

The types of opportunities available include:

- Shadowing Senior Officers and officers for the day.
- Shadowing the Mayor on her visits that day.

- A 'Young Person's Task & Finish Group' –a project that a group of young people could run for the day, with support from officers.
- Leading assemblies in schools and shadowing a Headteacher or Governor.
- Shadowing Councillors.

## **UNANNOUNCED SAFEGUARDING INSPECTION**

On 7<sup>th</sup> / 8<sup>th</sup> October the department had a two day Unannounced Safeguarding Inspection. Staff worked incredibly hard during the two days and were rigorously tested in their ability to robustly safeguard and protect our most vulnerable children and young people. Ofsted were very clear that they had raised their 'bar' in terms of their judgements of us being able to adequately protect children.

The outcome for BwD was very positive, with lots of areas of good practice being identified, in particular:

- The Common Assessment Framework is promoted and supported by all partner agencies
- Effective multi-agency working with confident partners, especially around Domestic Abuse

The official report does not become a public document until 5<sup>th</sup> November. Of particular significance and challenges are two areas for development; increasing capacity in terms of team managers and lowering caseloads which will challenge us significantly in light of diminishing resources and budget pressures. We now have to prepare for our full integrated safeguarding inspection, which is expected within the next 12 months.

## **SOCIAL WORK PILOT**

On 12th October 2010, representatives from Children's Services met with the Department for Education to confirm Blackburn with Darwen's position.

It was agreed that:-

- Blackburn with Darwen did not wish to pursue the formal model of the pilot (social enterprise model)
- Blackburn with Darwen did want to be considered as part of the pilot in terms of 'learning lessons' and evaluation and comparison of successful practice.
- Blackburn with Darwen did want the Department for Education to consider further funding that has been held back due to the withdrawal of the formal pilot
- Department for Education will consider their position and advise as soon as possible whether the borough can remain part of the pilot and receive funding without going into the 'formal' model



**CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER (MAGGIE ATKINSON) VISIT – 30<sup>TH</sup>  
SEPTEMBER 2010**

Dr. Maggie Atkinson, the Children's Commissioner wrote to all Directors of Children's Services earlier in the year, asking to visit Local Authorities and requesting to meet with a wide range of children & young people. The Children's Commissioner's role is independent of the national government and seeks to promote the views and best interests of children and young people in England.

In her tour of the borough, the Commissioner toured a wide variety of the borough's provision and support for its children and young people meeting staff and young people at all sites, including Griffin Park School, St. Thomas's centre ( PRU), Ash Grove 'Reach Out' project ( Darwen); and Darwen Knott Street Youth Centre.