

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL ASSESSMENT 2011

Ofsted's annual assessment of Children's Services in Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council says we perform well. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are judged good or better and provision helps children and young people learn and stay safe. There is very little inadequate provision and most settings have maintained good or better performance. Main strengths remain similar to last year and areas identified for improvement have not changed significantly.

Successful multi-agency working and co-location of multi-agency staff within First Response and duty teams are highlighted as particularly strong features of the services.

OFSTED FULL SAFEGUARDING INSPECTION

The department has just received notification that a full inspection will take place on 23 January 2012 and the on-site phase will last for 2 weeks. The preparation and data analysis is taking place for two weeks commencing 9 January 2012.

SOCIAL CARE

Demand

Demand for services remains high particularly at the Front Door, with approx 720 contacts per month, although we have seen a steadying of Looked After Children (386) and those subject to formal child protection plans (248). The "Think Family" approach has been used with some of our larger more complex families allowing children to remain safely at home.

Inspections

Fostering and Adoption Services await their inspections which are both due before the summer.

Foster Carers

We continue to recruit our Foster Carers successfully and despite increasing demand for placements we are managing to place most children with our own carers locally. Some 130 children enjoyed their annual Christmas Party at Livesey All Age Centre. It was a delight to see so many of our children with loving supportive carers.

Training and Development for Social Workers and Managers has been a priority over recent months, with workers undertaking training to enhance their day to day skills and practice. This forms part of the department's ongoing development plan.

SUMMARY OF OFSTED INSPECTION RESULTS 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2011

- Ofsted launched a new inspection framework for Children's Homes which was implemented on 1 April 2011. 4 Homes were inspected under the old framework, 2 were judged outstanding and 2 good. Since 1 April, 5 Homes have had their full inspection (4 of which were inspected earlier in the year under the old framework), 3 were judged outstanding and 2 good.
- 7 Children's Centre inspections, of which 6 were judged good and 1 satisfactory
- 7 inspections of Children's Centre Child Care (Early Years provision), of which 2 were judged outstanding, 4 good and 1 satisfactory.
- 1 Nursery School inspection which was judged outstanding
- 17 Primary School inspections, of which 12 were judged good and 5 satisfactory
- 5 Secondary School inspections (including Darwen Academy), of which 2 were judged good and 3 satisfactory.
- 1 Special School inspection which was judged good.

The majority of the inspections carried out also highlighted many areas of outstanding work/features.

FAMILIES, HEALTH & WELL-BEING CONSORTIUM

The Families, Health and Well-Being Consortium was officially launched in November 2011 at the Boulevard Resource Centre. The launch event was attended by 50 people representing VCF organisations and statutory partners in the Borough.

The Consortium has been established by a working group including Groundwork, Child Action Northwest, Lifeline, BRFC, Brook, Women's Centre, Wish Centre and Homestart.

EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

Reforms, recently introduced by the Department for Education, include a drive to intervene much earlier with primary school children displaying poor school attendance and encouraging Head teachers to make greater use of education penalty notices and other related legal measures. Magistrates are also being urged to impose harsher sanctions on the parents/carers of persistent absentees who end up in court

From next month, Ofsted inspectors will judge schools' attendance records under a revised system of tough targets which also focus on pupils' behaviour. Schools not doing enough in these areas now risk having their overall rating downgraded.

In addition, the DfE has recently confirmed that only Local Authority employees can exercise prosecution responsibilities under section 444 of the

Education Act 1996. This means that independent private providers cannot be contracted to instigate court proceedings over the non-attendance of academy pupils and the Local Authority is still legally bound to consider making a Parenting Contract and/or an application for an Education Supervision Order.

SCHOOLS FUNDING SETTLEMENT 2012/13 -Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

DSG will continue to be funded using the current methodology of Guaranteed Unit of Funding (GUF) multiplied by funded pupils for 2012/13, adjusted for recoupment of funding for Academies.

Basic GUF level has been cash frozen at 2011/12 rate (£5,416 per pupil for BwD).

Pupil Premium will continue in 2012/13. There are 3 main elements:

- Deprived pupils (now based on Free School Meals eligibility in any of the previous 6 years known as Ever 6) at £600 per eligible pupil
- Looked After Children (for children who have been LAC for greater than 6 months) at £600 per eligible pupil
- Service Children £250 per eligible pupil.

BSF

In November Pleckgate School celebrated the opening of the school with a community open day which was a chance for parents and local people to look around the new facilities.

The demolition of the old school has commenced with scheduled completion of external works for April 2012. This will see a new access created off Pleckgate Road with pupil drop-off and pick up on the school site. The temporary access road off Ramsgreave Drive is being reinstated to its original state and traffic management will be removed by April.

An official opening of the facility will take place after Easter 2012.

Projects in Construction

All projects in construction have experienced some delay during the build phase predominantly due to extreme weather. The Local Education Partnership is confident that the following planned service availability dates will be achieved:

- Darwen Vale 1 June 2012
- Witton Park 20 August 2012
- Blackburn Central (Blakewater College/Crosshill School) 6 August 2012

New Project Development

St Bede's and TIGHS are continuing in parallel through the second stage of the design development phase. Construction for St Bede's will commence on 23 April 2012 and TIGHS 3 September 2012. OLSJ is also progressing through the second stage of design development. Construction is due to

commence on OLSJ in August 2012. Initial engagement sessions have commenced with St Thomas's PRU which will be a single stage design with commercial close aligned with OLSJ on 13 July 2012. The planned completion dates for the 4 schemes, still in design development are:

- St Thomas's Centre March 2013
- Tauheedul Islam Girls High School May 2013
- Our Lady and St John RC High School September 2013
- St Bedes High School June 2014

MUSIC SERVICE CHRISTMAS CONCERTS 2011

Cathedral Carol Concerts 5/6 December

Over two nights 360 pupils' from 16 different primary schools performed carols and readings about the Christmas story for 700 parents, friends and family.

Music Service Christmas Concert, 14 December

I along with an audience of 200 parents and friends were entertained, not only by the Music Service Big Band and Senior Steel Pan group, but also a scratch orchestra. This involved over 60 young pupils from 16 different schools learning pieces in their peripatetic lessons with our music tutors. For most of the pupils involved it was the first time they had played as an orchestra or performed outside school. All performers were great and the whole evening was well received - many positive comments have been sent in from schools and parents.

APPRENTICESHIP PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Apprenticeship 'year' is from August to July and the last complete year's figures have now been reported. The following figures are for Blackburn with Darwen residents, wherever they undertake their work or learning for their Apprenticeship.

In 2010/11, 391 16-18 year olds started an Apprenticeship, compared with 309 in 2009/10 – an increase of 26.5%. For 19-24 year olds, 458 started an Apprenticeship in 2010/11, compared with 376 in 2009/10. In total, 849 young people aged 16-24 started an Apprenticeship in 2010/11. Data shows that 92.7% of young people remained in work or further learning after completing their Apprenticeship in 2010/11 compared with 89.3% in 2009/10.

The most popular sectors recruiting Apprentices in 2010/11 were business administration, retail, engineering/manufacturing, health and social care, construction and leisure, travel and tourism. The LSP's Prosperous Theme Group has chosen Apprenticeships as one of its priorities in helping to deliver a more prosperous Borough.