

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES****COUNCILLOR FRANK CONNOR****PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR: LINDA CLEGG  
DATE: 24 April 2014****NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN CARE AND OTHER CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE INFORMATION**

At the end of March 2014 there were 345 children in care. Since January 2012 the numbers of children in care have been consistently within the range of 340 to 360. The number of children subject to Child Protection Plans has risen to 221, similar to figures in May 2012. The number of open cases has continued to reduce since its peak in the winter of 2011/12 and now stands at 1,580.

**ADOPTION DATA 2013/14**

Data for 2013/14 confirms that the Blackburn with Darwen Adoption Service has significantly improved its performance. There were 41 children adopted (made subject to an adoption order) during the year. This compares to 19 the previous year and a previous all-time high for the Borough of 25 in 2006. 52 children have been placed with adopters in the year. This is by far the highest ever number of children placed.

There are 39 children waiting for adoptive families in the Borough. This is a major reduction from 60 waiting at the same time last year. There were 29 adopters approved in the year, again an all-time high for this Borough with figures for previous years in the low to mid-teens. A further 22 families are currently being assessed and will be approved to adopt in 2014/15. This suggests that the Borough will be able to achieve its target of approving at least 30 families next year. The on-going adoption recruitment campaign is bringing in adopters from outside of the Borough which will enable local children to be placed with them.

**VOICE- HELP END ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS TODAY CONFERENCE**

Members of the young people's Voice group recently organised a conference to raise awareness of the issue of Abusive Relationships. The HEART conference (Help End Abusive Relationships Today) was attended by 100 people, including 63 young people, and was planned and delivered by the young people from Voice in partnership with Blackburn Darwen & District Without Abuse (The WISH Centre). Delegates, from schools, colleges, youth groups and support groups from across Blackburn with Darwen, were involved in a series of activities designed to engage and educate them about relationship abuse.

A detailed report of the responses is available and will be shared widely with appropriate committees and steering groups. Already, as a result of these responses, the WISH centre has already started to review the way it delivers advice and support for young people.

## **ENGAGE MOVING TO GREENBANK**

From 1st April Lancashire Constabulary reorganised from six to three divisions. As part of this change, the force reaffirmed their ongoing commitment to combating child sexual exploitation and offered accommodation to the existing teams (Awaken, Breakthrough, Cherish, Deter, Engage and Freedom) so that effective multi-agency working could continue. This will result in Awaken, Deter and Engage being retained whilst acknowledging the local differences and contributions made by the three Local Authorities and their partners towards child sexual exploitation.

Engage (BwD) and partners (including Lancashire Constabulary, Lancashire Care Foundation Trust, Brook, PACE, Barnardos and soon to be Princes Trust) have all agreed to co-locating with the Hyndburn Engage and the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Freedom teams at Greenbank, but have also retained office space at Accrington Road Community Centre to ensure that there is an appropriately sensitive venue in which to see children and families.

The move to Greenbank coincides with Engage leading the children missing from home work (including undertaking missing from home return interviews producing missing from home action plans). The planned changes will add further value to the partnership model pioneered at Engage and further support our most vulnerable children and families.

## **LCSB MULTIAGENCY BRIEFINGS**

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) commissioned a series multi-agency safeguarding briefings to raise awareness across partner agencies about the 'Risk Sensible' approach, the revised Continuum of Need and Response (CoNR), Early Help and the revised Child and Family (CAF) Assessment/Plan.

Over 400 staff attended the briefings that were planned and presented by practitioners and managers from Children's Services, Health partners and Police. The sessions provided a forum for discussion and allowed colleagues to explore and understand local safeguarding arrangements.

Initial feedback is very positive and indicates that staff from across partner agencies welcome and support the revised CoNR further, development of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and the new approaches to Early Help and CAF. Additional briefings are being planned for June/July.

## **EARLY HELP STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Early Help strategy is being driven by the Children's Partnership Board. The board is establishing a sub group specifically to look at how the strategy is being implemented and how the impact of the strategy can be best measured. The board will work with the Early Invention Foundation (EIF) to develop a business case for Early Help, with a Blackburn with Darwen specific context to take stock and measure the progress of the Early Help strategy at key milestones through facilitated sessions.