

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

COUNCILLOR FRANK CONNOR

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: LINDA CLEGG
DATE: 26 JUNE 2014**

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN CARE AND OTHER CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE INFORMATION

At the end of May 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 dropped to 216, 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 1,478.

FOSTER CARER FORTNIGHT

The 'Fostering Fortnight' campaign launched on 12th May with a flurry of activity including features on TV and radio and newspaper advertising. Information stands were erected across the borough with a week long presence in the Mall.

The fostering team staged a high profile 'Bang the Drum' publicity stunt when shoppers were stopped in their tracks by around 60 council staff who banged drums and other instruments loaned by the school music service during the three-minute lunchtime event outside Primark. The event aimed to raise awareness of the urgent need to recruit 20 new foster carers and a video of the stunt is on Youtube.

To keep the service visible, new recruitment ideas are being implemented including a video feature in all GP surgeries in the area as well as additional information stands at Farmers Markets and the Canal Festival.

Our newly developed brand for fostering '*Letsfoster*' is taking shape with the letsfoster.co.uk website currently under development.

YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE—INVESTING IN CHILDREN ACCREDITATION

The Youth Justice Service has received its 5th consecutive 'Investing in Children' award. Young people who are supervised by the service have evidenced to the external moderators that over the course of the past year, children have been regularly consulted with and changes have been made to service design and delivery as a result. The young people are currently working with the Court Services in Blackburn to help design "Problem Solving Courts".

LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD DEVELOPMENT DAY

The Local Safeguarding Children's Board Annual (LSCB) Development Day was held on 1st May with representatives from health, education and public and voluntary sectors.

The event was facilitated by Sue Woolmore, Chair of the National Association of Independent LSCB Chairs and focused on national and environmental challenges and how the LSCB has had an impact on outcomes for children. The group also reflected on what the Blackburn with Darwen LSCB could do better to improve the safeguarding system locally for the benefit of both children and practitioners.

The Board took the opportunity to set out their priorities and vision for the year ahead, and each member identified what their organisation will do to achieve these objectives.

PARTICIPATION CHAMPIONS

The appointment of 'Participation Champions' across Children's Services and partners has started to bear fruit. A significant amount of evidence is being collected which demonstrates that services are capturing the voice of vulnerable children and young people.

This evidence is being generated at all tiers, from individual cases to strategic projects, such as the Gold Beez Card Scheme, which was recently reformed following challenge by young people at a Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

This Participation Champions model is attracting interest from other local authorities looking to enhance their participation activity. We have also been approached by universities who are undertaking research activities with vulnerable groups. This includes Bristol University who are undertaking a 'Brightspots' national research project into what makes a good journey through the care system for children and young people. Following two successful research workshops, the university has asked the department to host a third workshop for seven to nine year old children in care.