

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

COUNCILLOR FRANK CONNOR

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: LINDA CLEGG
DATE: 29 January 2015**

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

At the end of December 2014 there were 314 children in care. Since January 2012 the numbers of children in care have been consistently within the range of 340 to 360 but during the last two quarters we have seen a marked reduction in the number of looked after children. The number of children subject to Child Protection Plans is 180. The number of open children's social care cases has dropped over the last quarter to 1438 and this remains much lower than its peak of 2034 in the winter of 2011/12.

CORPORATE PARENTING CONFERENCE

On Saturday 15th November, Children's Services held a Corporate Parenting Conference which was attended by 70 people. The event, which is held every two years, brings together children in care, their foster carers and care leavers with Councillors and Council Officers. The purpose is to raise awareness of the current issues for children in care and care leavers and discuss possible solutions and service improvements. The conference was compered by two care leavers, who are also members of the Voice group, which represents young people who have experience of being in care. Passionate input came from members of Junior Voice, who had painted pictures especially for the event, to express what it is like living in care in Blackburn with Darwen.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL TREATMENT FOSTER CARE CHILD PROGRAMME (MTFC-C) ACCREDITATION

The Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care Child programme (MTFC-C) has been operational in the local authority since 2009 and has successfully supported 15 children into long term placements. The programme is designed to provide therapeutic placements for a small number of children with very challenging behaviour at home and in school. These are typically children who could enter very costly out of borough commissioned placements and therefore achieving good outcomes for the children whilst remaining in the borough is a significant achievement.

The national MTFC team and the United States MTFC team, who oversee the UK programme, have acknowledged the successful introduction of the model in Blackburn with Darwen and have granted accreditation. Nationally, very few programmes have been accredited and this is testament to the quality of the local authority's fostering service. The service successfully demonstrated that the majority of children who have spent time on the programme

developed the skills and positive behaviours that enabled them to move on to permanent placements with families; placements that might otherwise have been unachievable.

APPLE TREES SHORT BREAKS UNIT OFSTED INSPECTION

The Apple Trees Short Breaks Unit for children and young people with disabilities was inspected by Ofsted on 15th October 2014 and judged 'outstanding' in all areas, which is an improvement on the previous 'good' judgement.

The Ofsted report highlighted that Apple Trees makes a positive difference to the lives of young people, with individualised care leading to significant progress for children. The children using the service appear happy, settled and enjoy their time in the home and this helps build their confidence and self esteem. As part of the inspection process, the views of young people, parents and stakeholders were sought and inspectors concluded that the staff at Apple Trees provide a positive and enriching experience for children.

NATIONAL ADOPTION WEEK (3rd-9th NOVEMBER 2014)

The local authority Adoption Service took part in National Adoption Week in November to raise the profile of the service and encourage people interested in adoption to consider becoming an adopter for Blackburn with Darwen.

A local event produced a large number of brightly coloured handprint paintings, based on the local authority LETSADOPT website logo. Graphic design students at Blackburn College took on the challenge of turning the handprints into art work delivering key messages about adoption. The eye catching art work produced will be displayed around the town centre in the coming months.