

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES
COUNCILLOR MAUREEN BATESON PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: LINDA CLEGG
DATE: 1 October 2015**

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

As at 1st September there were 336 children in care which is a rise of 20 children over the summer period. The number of children subject to Child Protection Plans is 158. The number of open children's social care cases has dropped over the last quarter to 1468 and this remains much lower than its peak of 2034 in the winter of 2011/12.

11 children have been adopted since April 2015, and 27 children were placed in adoptive placements.

QUALITY OF ASSESSMENTS SEMINAR

An Ofsted thematic inspection report has been published on the effectiveness of local authority assessments of early help, child in need and child protection work. Blackburn with Darwen were one of ten authorities inspected as part of the review and inspectors sought the views of children, parents, carers and professionals from partner agencies. The report includes a good practice note on the work of the Lytham Road Adolescent Support Unit (ASU).

Following this inspection, Ofsted have invited Children's Services to host a 'getting to good' seminar on assessments, which is being planned for Autumn.

APPLE TREES SUMMER EVENT

Young people with disabilities, their families and staff came together for the Disability Links and Apple Trees Summer Fair in July. The event at Apple Trees is part of our commitment to families of children with disabilities to hold two events a year.

A wide range of fun activities were on offer, including a free pizza lunch from 'All Fired Up,' face painting, bouncy castle, ice cream van, children's entertainer and even a guest appearance from Mickey Mouse himself. A range of charities and groups who work with children with disabilities ran stalls providing information to families. Over £220 was raised which will go towards a new sensory memorial garden at Apple Trees in memory of Apple Trees staff member, John Amos, who died earlier this year.

SUMMER ARTS COLLEGE

The Youth Justice Service held it's fifth Summer Arts College over three weeks in August at the newly refurbished John Smethurst Annexe.

The project engages with the most hard to reach, challenging and high risk offenders with the aim of ensuring that all participants return to education, training or employment at the end of the holiday period whilst sustaining an interest in the Arts.

7 of the 10 young people were awarded ASDAN Bronze Awards from Trinity College, which are qualifications to develop skills for learning, employment and life.

To mark these fantastic achievements parents, carers and relatives attended a prize giving presentation alongside senior leaders within the Council.

REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY PLANS

The local authority's Adoption Service is exploring the possibility of becoming a Regional Adoption Agency with Bolton, Tameside, Rochdale and Oldham.

It is expected that all local authority Adoption Services will become part of larger regional adoption agencies within the next two years as set out in the Adoption and Education Bill 2015.

The Blackburn with Darwen Adoption Service is currently rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted and in order to retain quality services, the service intends to partner with other high quality providers in the right location to enhance placement possibilities, improve timeliness and reduce service costs..

QUALIFICATION SUCCESS FOR CHILDREN IN OUR CARE

In 2015, 27 children in care were eligible to take GCSE and other public examinations. Eleven of these children (40%) had a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education Health and Care Plan, which is higher than the average of 3% for their peers.

4 of these young people (15%) achieved at least 5 A*-C GCSEs including Maths and English, up 8.4% on the previous year.

CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENT EVENT

The achievements of children in our care and care leavers were celebrated at King Georges Hall on 22nd September with the presentation of 80 awards. The ceremony acknowledges the efforts of our children and young people ranging from improved attendance in education to academic achievement in Key Stage 2 SATs, GCSE and Further and Higher Education. The Leaving Care Football Team which came runner up in this year's North West Tournament were formally congratulated on their fantastic performance.

CARE LEAVERS ACHIEVE HIGHER EDUCATION SUCCESS

Congratulations are extended to four Care Leavers who were awarded degrees in 2015 in the following subjects: Art and Creative Media, Human Resources, Community Studies and Psychology.

Five further students are taking up higher education opportunities in the Autumn term, with four continuing on their chosen degree programmes. All care leavers attending University have the support of a Leaving Care Personal Adviser throughout their studies.