

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

As at 11 July there were 350 children in care. The number has been steady at this level over the past quarter, but represents a rise across of 19 on the same point in the previous year. This rise returns the borough to levels in line with similar authorities in the north and midlands, following a period when the numbers of children in care was significantly lower than one would expect. It also reflects a continued rise in the number of children in care nationally.

The number of children subject to Child Protection Plans is 249 (59 more than in June 2015) and 501 children have Child in Need plans. The number of open children's social care cases has risen to 1686, which, while it remains much lower than its peak of 2034 in the winter of 2011/12, is 224 more than in June 2015.

5 children have been adopted since April 2016, and 26 children are placed in adoptive placements.

## **REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY UPDATE**

A number of proposals have been explored regarding how the West Pennine Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) should operate.

Department for Education finance for supporting further development of the RAA in 2016/17 is currently under negotiation as the funds offered fall far short of what is needed in order to maintain progress to implementation by 1st April 2017. Therefore, at this point in time a full proposal has been delayed being submitted to the Executive Board.

## **INSPECTION OF THE YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE**

HMI Probation spent three days with the Youth Justice Service between 20th -22nd June as part of a new programme of inspection of youth offending work. The 'Short Quality Screening (SQS) of Youth Offending Work' examined the effectiveness of the service at reducing offending, protecting the public, protecting the child or young person and ensuring that the sentence is served. Good feedback has been received about workers and the full report is due imminently.

## **INVESTING IN CHILDREN AWARD**

The Assessment and Social Work team has been awarded 'Investing in Children' Membership in recognition of good practice and active inclusion and dialogue with children and young people to bring about change. We are one of the very first social work teams in the country to be awarded this.

The report concluded that *"it is clear to see the ways in which children and young people have a voice and get listened to by their social workers. Young people are actively involved in the recruitment and selection of staff, having a say when it comes to their care plans, reviews, contact as well as their thoughts and feelings."*

## **LIFE STORY MONTH**

Children's Services is promoting 'Life Story Month' throughout July and early August to highlight to carers and professional the importance of life story work with children who come into care. It is important for children who are unable to live with their birth family to understand their life story as they grow and develop. Memories, photographs, stories and keepsakes help children to develop positive self identity, no matter how old they were when they came into care.

A series of workshops and drop-ins will share good practice, provide useful resources and ideas and offer guidance about when and how to start this important work.

To complement this, the Adoption Service has launched their own collection of short stories about adoption. Entitled '*Once Upon a Family – A Collection of True Adoption Stories for Those in the Know*', the book contains poetry, short stories and letters written by children who have been adopted and Blackburn with Darwen adopters.

## **RESTORATIVE SERVICE QUALITY MARK FOR YOT & GRADUATION CEREMONY**

The Blackburn with Darwen Youth Justice Service has been awarded the Restorative Standards Quality Mark (RSQM) from the Restorative Justice Council in recognition of high quality practice. The service effectively demonstrated that Blackburn with Darwen processes have had a positive impact upon the victims of crime and the young people who have caused harm. The service was accredited against 6 standards including leadership and strategy, service delivery, working together and training and support.

The Restorative Justice team has also teamed up with Lancashire Constabulary to provide Restorative Justice training to students at Blackburn Central High School who volunteered as facilitators. The training was delivered to 12 students spanning the Year 7 to Year 10 age range and their achievements were recognised at a dedicated graduation ceremony in July.

## **LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD GOVERNMENT REVIEW**

The Department for Education commissioned a review in January 2016 on the remit and effectiveness of Local Safeguarding Children Boards. The review was led by Alan Wood, a former Chair of the Association of Directors of Children's Services.

The Wood Review recommended that the overall functions of LSCBs should cover the child protection agenda rather than the wider safeguarding and wellbeing agenda with local areas given permission to determine which local partnership bodies will cover which part of the safeguarding agenda.

The review also concluded that case reviews should continue, with the most serious reviews commissioned to a separate national body who will undertake cases in the national interest. The review also recommended that the policy and oversight of case reviews of all child deaths be moved from the Department for Education to the Department of Health.