

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN CARE & CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE INFORMATION

The number of cases open to Children's Social Care has stabilised over the past 6 months to between 1,700 and 1,800, but remains over 200 higher than 18 months ago. We continue to cope with the higher level of demand through a contract with an external agency providing an extra social work team.

The number of Children in Care is 368 and has remained at this level over the past 6 months which is 30 higher than the equivalent period 12 months ago. The most pronounced rise has been in the number of children subject to Child Protection plans, which stands at 342 – an increase of over a third across the past year. Over 450 children are being supported by Early Help services, with half of the lead professionals co-ordinating support for children and families being drawn from school staff.

COMMUNICATIONS PASSPORT

The Communication Passport tool for children and young people with disabilities has been relaunched at Apple Trees Hub following consultation with young people. The passport is used within Children's Social Care to share information and involve children and young people in their care planning arrangements. The new design and format will appeal to a broader age range, and cater for those who want to communicate through drawings.

OFSTED SINGLE INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

Additional dates for Ofsted inspections under the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) have been released this month; up until recently, the 10th July was expected to be the last inspection date for SIF inspections of local authorities. However, 6 additional dates have now been released: 11th and 25th September, 9th and 30th October and 6th and 13th November. We are one of the last 6 authorities who have not been inspected under the current framework. The next 6 months will see the last 6 authorities inspected, a number of the 28 inadequate authorities re-inspected and also some pilot inspections of the new framework that will commence in January 2018. Of the 134 published inspection reports, a third of local authorities achieved a good or better inspection judgement. Just under half were judged to require improvement and a fifth were inadequate.

SUMMER ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Free nutritious meals for children will be provided through the Children's Centres network over the school summer holiday period. Lunch boxes will be provided by the charitable organisation 'Kingdom Outreach' and meals will be prepared by local volunteers and delivered to each children centre each day over the holidays for those children who have registered. Families can eat together and there will be a full calendar of fun activities to encourage families to participate and this will give staff the opportunity to engage with children and families who do not normally access children's centre services.

Young People's Services has developed a varied programme of summer activities for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities throughout the six week summer holiday period for children aged 5-8 years. Furthermore, for the 8-19 age group there is an Additional Needs Scheme for children with more moderate needs who can participate in

small group activities and a Complex Needs Scheme for children and young people who need 1:1 supervision.

NORTH WEST LEAVING CARE FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

The Blackburn with Darwen Leaving Care team was proud to host the 2017 North West Leaving Care Football Tournament, following their undefeated win in 2016. 9 teams from across the region were cheered on by more than 50 supporters at the 5 a side event at Witton Park on 29th June.

The Blackburn with Darwen Team comprises of 7 young men, aged 16-21, who are currently supported by the Leaving Care team. The team has been undergoing weekly training and matches since March which paid off with the team winning the runners up trophy after a narrow 1-0 defeat in the final to Wirral. Congratulations to all who took part.

COMMUNITY REPARATION CELEBRATION EVENT

The positive contribution of young people within local communities whilst carrying out Community Reparation has been acknowledged at a celebration event on 26th July organised by Child Action North West. The event allows this group of young people to show how they have turned their efforts to achieving positive outcomes in their community.

After completing their reparation hours young people are offered the opportunity to return as volunteers to achieve a recognised accreditation (ASDAN) for volunteering their time in support of others.

30 HOUR FREE CHILDCARE OFFER UPDATE

A communication and marketing plan is well underway to promote the 30 hour free childcare offer. Activity includes a strong digital campaign using staff payslips, bulletins and Facebook which has worked well alongside promotional posters, leaflets and t-shirts and attendance at the Race for Life event in June.

Data drawn from the successful parent application dashboard as of 11th July shows that 373 parents have made a successful 30 hour eligibility claim. Of these successful applications, 128 have been submitted to the Local Authority for validation in readiness to take up a place in September 2017. Blackburn with Darwen officers were informed at a regional event in June that Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is 5th in the league table for completing validation checks.

To date 131 providers locally have expressed an interest in delivering the 30 hours which includes the borough's children centres, 2 Nursery Schools, Childminders and Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) early years providers.

FOSTERING RECRUITMENT

Foster Care Fortnight - Foster carers, their children and staff from the Council's Fostering team marked the start of Foster Care Fortnight in May with a 'walk and talk' event around Entwistle Reservoir. Photographs from the day were used as part of the service's online campaign to raise awareness of the need for more carers in the borough. During the fortnight, local radio 2BR was used as the main platform to raise awareness and this activity was supported with local events, press opportunities and ongoing social media activity. The campaign won praise nationally as an example of good practice on the social media

channel 'GovUK' as *'the best social media data from government communications across the UK'* and *'great government communication'*.

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School (QEGS) Uganda appeal - The Council's Let's Foster service supported the effort to collect clothes to send out to children in Uganda. Around 20 school children from QEGS headed to Uganda on 4th July with local radio station 2BR, taking donations of clothing, shoes, glasses and underwear for orphaned children and raising money to pay for building work at the school and for teacher accommodation.

Locally we have many children who are waiting for a foster family and hope that by linking in with this campaign it will help raise awareness, both of the need for more people to consider fostering and also the global need to help children living in these difficult conditions.