

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

COUNCILLOR FRANK CONNOR

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: LINDA CLEGG**

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

At the end of September 2014 there were 315 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 quarter we have seen a further reduction of looked after children. The number of children subject to Child Protection Plans has dropped significantly to 135. The number of open cases has risen slightly in the last month to 1489 but this remains much lower than its peak in the winter of 2011/12.

LYTHAM ROAD ADOLESCENT SUPPORT UNIT CONFERENCE SUCCESS

The Lytham Road Adolescent Support Unit was the focus of a seminar at this years Children's and Adults National Social Care Conference in October. The Unit was selected to present on 'Alternatives to Care' and a short video featuring the young people and families who access the Unit was shown to national Directors and social care experts.

The workshop demonstrated the success of the department in reducing the numbers of teenagers coming into care from 47 in a year to only 18 in 2013/14. This reduction has been achieved by working more positively and flexibly with families and offering short breaks for young people where there is a risk of them coming into care either in a crisis, or due to sustained risk taking or extremely challenging behaviours.

To coincide with the seminar success, The Guardian national newspaper visited Lytham Road and met with families and staff to write an article highlighting the work of the Unit as a positive alternative to coming into care by providing improved outcomes for young people and better value for money (publication date 29/10/14).

ADOPTION SUCCESS

Figures were released from the Department for Education in early October showing a significant increase in the numbers of children adopted from care. In Blackburn with Darwen, that figure increased from 20 in 2012/2013 to 45 in 2013/2014 which represented the second highest proportion of Looked After Children adopted in the country!

In Blackburn with Darwen we have also successfully reduced the numbers of children waiting for adoptive families from over 60 to 10 over the last year. There is always a need for more adopters for older children or children with disabilities as they tend to take longer to find families for.

LSCB LOGO COMPETITION WINNER

A pupil has won her former school an iPad after winning a logo design competition. Fatema Latif, a former pupil at St Silas Primary School, Blackburn, came up with the winning design of a new logo for the Blackburn with Darwen Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The brief was to design a logo which represents children being kept safe. Dozens of children entered and the winning design was decided by a judging panel made up of members from the Local Safeguarding Adults Board and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.



INVESTING IN CHILDREN – EARLY YEARS

The Early Years Children's Centre Network has achieved the participation accreditation for 'Investing in Children' membership. The award recognises and celebrates examples of imaginative practice with children and young people.

The evaluation report particularly highlighted how the Early Years Service demonstrated many ways in which children were listened to and how staff made changes in response to the views of the children. These included the children participating in the design of a play area and contributing their ideas when writing the children's centre rules.

The children, parents and carers ultimately had the final say on whether to grant accreditation to the children's centres, which gives the award even more value and credibility.

ENGAGE INTERNATIONAL "OUR VOICES" PROJECT

The Engage team has been accepted as one of three British members of the 'Our Voices' project. 8 young people from Blackburn with Darwen aged between 14 and 21 will take part in this three-year, pan-European initiative to promote the involvement of young people in efforts to prevent sexual violence against children across Europe.

The project was launched in September and will include activities to explore the scale, nature, and impact of sexual violence and create a knowledge bank of resources, models and tools on young people's participation to prevent sexual violence against children. The project will also document the learning on engaging with young people affected by sexual violence.

The young people involved in the project are keen to influence, change and design future services.