

Executive Member response to municipal year 2011-12 recommendations

to

Children's & Health
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Maureen Bateson

Portfolio Update

Context

Budget Pressures

- Budget savings over the past 2 years: For 11/12 there was a reduction in the base budget of £16.2m and an additional £3m savings in 12/13.
- Looking at a further 20% savings across the board for 2013/2014

Impact of cuts

- Service delivery reduced and concentrated on those most in need / statutory services
- Staffing pressures and limited resources
- A 25% rise in Children's Social Care contacts from 653 in May 2011 to 893 in May 2012
- Third sector delivery under threat

Portfolio & Structural Changes

- Children's Services portfolio split into 2 separate portfolios: Children's Services (Cllr Bateson) & Schools and Learning (Cllr Humphrys)
- Departmental structural changes: Department lead by an Executive Director (People) in place of a Strategic Director. Director of Children's Services and Director of Education report directly to the Executive Director who also has responsibility for Adult Social Care.

Key legislative changes / review recommendations:

- Health & Social Care Act 2012 – significant impact on how services are commissioned and delivered locally
- School Funding – schools are now responsible for their own budgets
- Family Justice Review –required a fundamental review on how services are delivered (including timescales)
- Munro Review – performance indicators evaluated and tested

Recommendations & Response

“Youth Offending Team Service – increase in YOT numbers”

Headlines

- Updates on performance are provided monthly to Children’s Services and Education SPTs
- Funding difficulty but the Youth Justice Service has been remodelled. There have been no staff reductions since 2012/11 and it remains high performing.
- The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is not yet in office, however, the Youth Justice Service Manager is in liaison with the PCC’s office and is working jointly with Lancashire and Blackpool to influence the developing agenda.

Prevention and Promotion:

- YJS (Youth Justice Service) contributes to wider prevention strategies.
- YJS manager has presented to secondary head teachers on the role of the YJS and prevention.
- Various initiatives (Staysafe, Re-connect, Anti-Social Behaviour, AIM (Assessment, Intervention & Moving On) and Chanel (preventing violent extremism) are supported by the YJS.
- All young people have access to the Youth Zone as it is a universal service and this is promoted.
- Work is ongoing with the Communications team to identify best ways of communicating with the media and as Executive Member I show my support of the work of the YJS in the local media.

Training of Volunteers

- The Referral Order panel is well established however there has been a delay in training for volunteers pending the YJB providing an updated training manual for Referral Order members.

Number of First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice system

- First Time Entrants have increased from 670 to 694 per 100,000 over the past year. Significantly lower than neighbouring Youth Offending Teams (Lancashire 867 and Blackpool 1448).
 - Monthly meetings held with the Chief Inspector responsible for Criminal Justice issues.
- A number of prevention activities undertaken including Triage, Re-Connect, Staysafe and work with Children’s homes and Foster Carers.



Recommendations & Response

“Increase in Not in Education and Employment (NEET) and impact of changes to the Connexions Service”

Budget Cuts impact

- The budget cuts had an impact on both NEET and 'Not Known' figures during the first part of the year, however revised working practices have brought the NEET figure for Sept 2012 down to 385, 7.3% compared with 438, 8.2% in Sept 2011. This has involved directing all possible resources at the September Guarantee for 16 and 17 year olds, and has been supported by the council's Connexions Commission for universal Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) running up to 31 August (schools responsibility by law from 1 September 2012).

Targets and Resources

- The Children, Young People and Families Plan, 2011-2013 retains the indicator for NEET as a key target and is reported to the Children's Trust in the data book on a regular basis.
- The 'Risk of Need Indicator' prediction model (RONI) is to be used to determine the allocation of resources to high schools from the Connexions Commission from April 2013. It is currently in test phase, and the Blackburn with Darwen model has been adopted by Bolton, Blackpool and Durham.

Vulnerable Groups

- The revised Connexions Commission is targeted at vulnerable groups, and as Executive Member I contributed to the definition of the scope of the new commission.
- The Connexions service has put in place a plan to offer to families in the Think Family pilot.
- A joint post with the CAMHS team has been retained to work with Connexions. Advisers continue to work with the most vulnerable and are trained in signposting young people with acute mental health issues.

Promotion

- Groundwork Pennine Lancashire has agreed to work alongside Connexions to reach young people who are not currently in contact with Connexions to support the service.
- Meetings have been held with the Youth Forum to discuss developing a Jobs website by the Via Partnership. Views from the Youth Forum have fed into the first version, and they are invited to comment on this to feed into the next upgrade. Text messaging has also been introduced so young people can access services quickly.



Children's Task & Finish Recommendations Update

Case Management

- The frontline has continued to be a priority throughout the year and caseloads continue to be carefully managed.
- Across the year, there has been a reduction in the number of children open to children's social care, the number of children in need; the number of children in care and in the number of children with child protection plans. This has had a positive impact on the average caseloads of individual social workers. It has also enabled the service to reconfigure its establishment to remove agency social workers and replace them with permanent employees, which in turn helps with the stability and continuity of support for individual children.
- Open cases have been managed downwards chiefly through a rigorous on-going review process for open cases, but also through careful scrutiny of cases at critical points of transfer within the service area. Thresholds have not been lowered to achieve this.

Early Help Strategy

- The Borough's Early Help strategy is currently under review and will be re-launched over the coming year.
- it is critical that Early Help in the future is squarely focused on the prevention of children entering care, where appropriate, and the early identification of those families that are unlikely to change sufficiently to address the underlying safeguarding risks for the children within them.

Budget Pressures

- Over 70% of Children's Social Care is spent on the 350 children in care and associated support services/placement costs etc. On average, each child in care costs over £40,000 per annum.

The department's long-term strategy is to recruit additional foster carers and adopters (as adoption is one of the main exit routes for children from care - and often the best in long term outcomes).