

**CHILDREN AND HEALTH
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Wednesday 13th March 2013**

PRESENT – Councillors O’Keeffe (Chair), Entwistle, D Foster, Groves, Hussain, Patel, Pearson, Riley, D. Smith, John Slater, Julie Slater and Walsh.

Co-optees - none.

Also Present –

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| Cllr M Bateson | Executive Member for Children’s Services |
| Cllr T Humphrys | Executive Member for Schools and Education |
| Linda Clegg | Director Children’s Services |
| Lisa Bibby | Director for Schools and Education |
| Robert Arrowsmith | Head of Policy and Performance |
| Mike Zammit | Director of ITM&G – Link Chief Officer to the Committee |
| Dr Helen Lowey | Public Health Consultant (for Director of Public Health) |
| Ben Aspinall | Scrutiny Manager |

RESOLUTIONS

42. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were received from Councillors Evans, Brookfield, and Walsh, in addition to the apologies from Dominic Harrison the Director of Public Health, P Harrison and B Simpson.

43. Minutes of Meeting held on 16th January 2013

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16th January 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

43. Declarations of Interest in items on this Agenda

No Declarations of Interest were received.

44. Executive Member for Children's Services response to recommendations

The Chair welcomed the Executive Member for Children's Services to the Committee and invited her to respond to the recommendations made by the Committee in the first half of the Municipal year.

Recommendations and responses:

- 1. That the Committee endorse the principles of early intervention strategies, but wish to be provided with the fundamental review of Think Family as previously requested before fully endorsing that policy.**

The final evaluation report for the project has not yet been completed. There is an interim report available (attached).

Research undertaken through the project suggests that:

- There are positive indications of improved outcomes on a family by family basis.

However,

- As the families selected for the project were not those with the greatest statutory needs, but rather those with episodic contact with statutory services; the benefits from the project will be seen in the improved long-term outcomes for the families concerned (and their absence from statutory intervention), rather than short-term financial benefits to the borough's agencies.
- The benefits of the Think Family approach have been significant enough for it to form the basis of the approach to work with Troubled Families.

- 2. That before the beginning of the next Financial Year the Executive Member for Schools and Education revisits and promotes child safeguarding through the Pupil Premium with Head Teachers reporting the outcomes to Committee in six months time.**

For the Executive Member for Schools and Education to respond.

- 3. That the Executive Member for Children Services considers funding partnership provision in line with the Local Authority Settlement (i.e. 2 years) and revises Service Level Agreements on that basis to increase and improve performance in line with increased length of Agreements.**

The majority of Children's Service commissions are for 3 years (with an option to extend for a further 12 months - subject to performance/funding).

We only commission for 1 year if there is a requirement for a short term piece of work

We currently have 36 commissions running (not including any joint health ones) that are over 1 year.

There are plans to integrate Children's, Adults and Public Health commissioning in one team. Decisions around commissioning will be driven in future from that team, with a consistent approach across all three areas.

- 4. That the Local Safeguarding Children's Board consider a fundamental review to ensure it is fit for purpose and fit for the future, with robust arrangements and policies in place that will withstand the new Ofsted inspection challenges to supporting organisations.**

The LSCB is an independent statutory board, separate from the Local Authority.

The LSCB recently undertook a review to ensure that it is fit for purpose. A new chair has recently been appointed to the LSCB. One of their on-going tasks will be to ensure that the arrangements put in place around the LSCB remain fit for purpose under changing inspection frameworks.

The Committee may wish to consider inviting the new Chair of the LSCB to a future meeting.

- 5. That all Child Protection Plans contain Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Time-led child focussed outcomes and that this development be reported back to the Committee at 13th March 2013 meeting.**

This recommendation arises from the inspection action plan following on from Ofsted safeguarding and looked after children inspection in February 2012.

As part of the action plan, there has been an extensive revision of plan templates. In addition, discussions have taken place in team meetings with social workers and during supervisions to raise awareness of outcomes focused care planning. Workshops are being planned during Spring 2013, led by two advanced practitioners, to train staff on new plan formats and to reinforce the importance of outcomes focused planning.

In addition, the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) – who Chair every Child Protection Conference – have a key role in improving the quality of planning through their independent scrutiny role. Recent discussions with IROs would indicate that the SMART-ness of plans is improving.

6. That a review of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) be brought to the Committee in six months time demonstrating;
 - Improved outcomes and the value of Quality Assessments - and therefore improved services.
 - The willingness of agencies to continue to participate in the Hub.
 - A revised toolkit bespoke to Blackburn with Darwen that can be used from 1st April, which supports robust risk assessments.
7. That the Committee appreciates the complexities facing the staff involved with safeguarding of children and the current efforts being made to promote the best outcomes for the children, however more promotion needs to be done of the actual costs of Care, as does the myth that Care is an easy answer.
8. That the Executive Member for Children Services reviews and refreshes The Continuum Of Need And Response, for Child Safeguarding and evidence that refresh to the Committee in six months time.

The Executive Member advised the Committee that the chief value of MASH lies in the ability to gather more intelligence, more quickly to inform the decision as to how to handle the contact. Police, Health and Adult Social Care are all involved in the development of the hub.

In addition, it is worth noting that the following encompasses the new aspects of the strategy of the department in managing the demand for services

1. A single assessment tool to be used across the entire continuum of prevention.
2. Integrating Children's Social Care and Early Help Provision – more clearly targeting the work at those in danger of becoming an open case to children's social care and providing the right help at the right time.
3. A reconsideration of the assessment and management of risk by children's social care –focused on Professor Munro's Risk Assessment principles, being 'risk sensible' and taking defensible decisions.
4. Harder-edged, time-limited involvement with child in need cases. Intervention in families focused on key outcomes and a strengthened review process designed to yield maximum beneficial change with the minimum of social work resource.
5. Strengthened ownership across key partners for children's welfare – particularly education and health.

The above will require a reconsideration of the Continuum of Need and Response. However, that would not be done by the local authority in isolation

from its statutory partners in children's safeguarding and would need agreement at LSCB Board level.

These complement the existing strategy around children in danger of entering care; and in care:

- Investment in targeted prevention services, such as the Adolescent Support Unit (ASU) at Lytham Road, to prevent children entering care. This is particularly important for groups of children likely to enter care and stay until 17 years old.
- Earlier decision making and judgement about a family's capacity to sustain the positive change necessary to ensure a child's safety, which in turn has led to children entering care at a younger age.
- Children entering care at a younger age are more likely to achieve permanence (adoption etc.) more quickly – thereby improving their long term outcomes and the costs to the local authority.
- Ongoing systematic recruitment of more potential adopters; and more foster carers – as the former offer the best outcomes for children entering care; and the latter offer the best outcomes and the most cost-effective placement for children whilst in care.
 - Analysis of our own data shows that in-house foster care placements cost, on average, £24,000 less per year than an agency placement.

However, all of the above needs to be seen in the context of wider social shifts that may have a substantial negative impact on local families, such as the benefit changes taking place in the current calendar year.

We are also aware that the current economic climate and the degree of uncertainty that it creates for families is beginning to make it more difficult to recruit foster carers and adopters: In times of uncertainty people are less willing to take on additional responsibilities.

RESOLVED -

- 1) That the Executive Member for Children's Services be thanked for her responses and;
- 2) That the response to the recommendations be noted.

45. Executive Member for Schools and Education – 2012 School tests and assessments

The Executive Member for Schools and Education supported by the Director and Head of Planning and Performance gave a presentation on 2012 School Tests & Assessments Headline measures

Key Stage 2 / end of Primary School (age 11): Percentage of children Achieving English and Maths level 4+ progress since 2005:

It was explained that Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council will rarely be above national average however where the Council was placed on the chart shown to members, indicated a strong position and that in aggregate the authority was generally stronger than similar neighbouring authorities. What could have been regarded as a spike in 2008 was explained as due to the small numbers involved.

Percentage of children attaining a level 4 or better in English and Maths:

Members were shown a graph of all Blackburn with Darwen schools, where the national floor for primary schools was 60% with the national average being 80% and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council being placed at approximately 78%. Members were advised that of the strength of performance from community schools was very noticeable, and that this was quite impressive in that most of these schools were in the most deprived areas. Members felt that without “value added” it was difficult to know how well a school was doing, and asked if there was anything that could be done to support achievement. Members were advised that there was support and a challenge from the Local Authority to deliver “value added”.

Members were advised that there was a critical role to challenge the school on performance, and that it was critical that Governors feel able to do that: The local authority provides training for school Governors – as this is a difficult role for Governors to fulfil, not being experts in performance. The Director of Schools and Education advised the Committee that it is not a statutory responsibility to train Governors, and as her department is a fully traded service not all schools take up the training offer.

English and Math level 4+ alignment:

It was explained to Members that fewer and fewer children are not achieving, with an increase in attainment between 2011 and 2012.

Analysis of incoming year 7:

Committee were advised that a significant number of the cohort had gone to Walton Le Dale, and that some others had been lost due to geography; for example some of the cohort living in Turton and attending Canon Slade school (Bolton). Members were advised that a study had been commissioned which looked at incentives offered by schools such as train travel, school buses etc. and that early indications were that this years admission round would confirm a small cohort going to Walton Le Dale.

The percentage of students attaining 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C including English and Maths since 2005 (and a graph outlining 2012 results)

It was explained to the Committee that with the senior school there was a similar patten to that of the junior school; in that although there was some movement in

relation to the figures, Blackburn with Darwen still outperformed neighbouring authorities, and the overall picture is one of strength for the Borough.

It was mentioned that the figures for primary schools only covered state maintained schools, whereas those for secondary schools contained independent and Academy schools too; it was explained that there is a substantial variation particularly between Islamic schools, but that this was often to do with cohorts. Notwithstanding that, the standards in Blackburn and Darwen secondary schools was substantially stronger. In relation to statistical neighbours.

Percentage of students making expected progress in English and maths during their secondary school career:

It was explained to the Committee that “value-added” had been removed from the statistics as that was now a Central Government requirement.

Headlines:

In summarising, members of the Committee were advised that:

- The impact of English Language GCSE marking is being unevenly felt across schools and probably knocked 3%+ from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Councils headline figure; yet
- Performance remains above that in similar authorities; and
- No maintained school beneath the national floor levels for the third consecutive year
- Progress in Math’s is particularly strong
- The loss of substantial numbers of children to Walton-le-Dale continues, but not our most able children.
- Blackburn with Darwen also lose children to Bolton Secondary schools as well, but chiefly through geography/proximity.

46. Response to Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust consultation “Working together to improve specialist dementia care services in Lancashire”.

The Chair provided the Committee with an update on the Lancashire Dementia Consultation stating, that a formal submission from the Chair and Vice Chair, on behalf of the Committee had been made to Lancashire care which read as follows

“We understand the rationale behind the proposal for a single site and are broadly supportive of the clinical and professional logic behind this. But, we have repeatedly expressed concerns over a single site serving all of Lancashire in the provision of specialist dementia care (Option 1) for one main reason - the lack of a coherent travel strategy being in place for this option and the impact that this would have on those relatives and carers from Pennine Lancashire who want to visit in-patients at the site.”

We recognise that some work has been initiated and this is evidenced by the page in the consultation document headed “ Addressing the travel issues “ – the problem is that it doesn’t address the travel issues, it merely lists a number of potential solutions without suggesting that any work has been done in the last year to price or test them. As a Scrutiny Committee, we can therefore be forgiven for suspecting that our concerns about potential travel difficulties are not being taken seriously and that NHS Lancashire are hoping to get the issue into the “ long grass “ until after the consultation is concluded when there is a danger that it will be forgotten about. We cannot risk this being allowed to happen.

Put simply, before we can consider supporting Option 1, we need to see a firm proposal defining the transport options and costs (if any) that will be available for relatives and carers, particularly those who wish to visit the Blackpool site but are dependent on public transport to make the journey. “

The Vice Chair advised the Committee that the decision reached by Lancashire Care was that the NHS Lancashire cluster board on Thursday 21 March approved the development of specialist dementia services in accordance with the key principles outlined in the vision and through the implementation of option 1, recognising that an alternative site for the development of the dementia inpatient unit needs to be considered. NHS Lancashire recommended that the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and Local Authority commissioners work in partnership with Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust to undertake an appraisal of the options for the specialist dementia unit location.

47. Committee work programme 2012-13.

The Chair provided Members with an update on the Committee’s Work Programme. Members were informed that both the Children’s Task Group and the Adult (Public Health) task group were both carrying on their work programmes in the absence of any local elections this year. With this in mind both sub groups were looking to make full use of the time available to extend their respective reviews, with an agreement that each would come up with recommendations outside of the Committee in the completion of their work during the Municipal Year.

RESOLVED -

- 1) That the Committees continue their work programmes to the end of the Municipal Year, and
- 2) That the Chair and Vice Chair agree with their respective Sub Groups recommendations on the work programmes.

Signed.....

Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed

Date.....