

Public Document Pack

Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group

Monday, 27th January, 2020

6.00 pm

Meeting Room A - Old Town Hall, Blackburn

AGENDA

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest in items on this Agenda**
A form is attached for completion by Members declaring an interest in items on the agenda.
Declaration of Interest Form 3
3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2019**
For the Group to agree the Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group meeting held on the 14th October 2019.
Minutes of Previous Meeting 4 - 8
4. **Corporate Parenting Dashboard and Highlight Report**
Corporate Parenting Dashboard Jan 2020 9
5. **Placement Stability Audit Report**
Placement Stability 10 - 20
6. **Report of Virtual School including: Rate of Completion of PEPS to date, Attainment of Cared for Children, Attendance and Numbers of FTE, part time timetables for Cared for Children**
Report of Virtual School 21 - 22
7. **Health Assessments Audit Update**
Verbal update
8. **Assurance Overview Regarding Care for Children Placed in Out of Borough Placements**

Date Published: 17th January 2020
Denise Park, Chief Executive

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

Members attending a Council, Committee, Board or other meeting with a personal interest in a matter on the Agenda must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and, if it is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or an Other Interest under paragraph 16.1 of the Code of Conduct, should leave the meeting during discussion and voting on the item.

Members declaring an interest(s) should complete this form and hand it to the Democratic Services Officer at the commencement of the meeting and declare such an interest at the appropriate point on the agenda.

MEETING:

DATE:

AGENDA ITEM NO.:

DESCRIPTION (BRIEF):

NATURE OF INTEREST:

DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY/OTHER (delete as appropriate)

SIGNED :

PRINT NAME:

(Paragraphs 8 to 17 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Council refer)

Agenda Item 3

CORPORATE PARENTING SPECIALIST ADVISORY GROUP
Monday, 14 October 2019

PRESENT – Councillors; Gunn (In the Chair), Afzal, Batan, Bateson, Davies, Gee, Kay, Liddle, Oates and Whittle.

OFFICERS –

Alyson Hanson - Interim Head of Permanence

Caroline Waldron - Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and LAC

Jaffer Hussain - Participation Officer

Jayne Ivory - Director of Children's Services

Joanne Siddle – Head of Education

Paula Quinn – FCA Fundraising Manager

Sam Briggs – FCA Secretary

Firoza Hafeji – Governance Officer

Wendy Bridson – Governance Officer

RESOLUTIONS

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Brookfield, Smith D, McFall, Daley and Taylor. Apologies were also received from the Care Leaver (Vice Chair).

2 Declaration of Interest in items on this Agenda

There were no declarations of interest received.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 8th July 2019

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th July 2019 were approved as a correct record and were duly signed by the Chair.

4 Vice Chair update on behalf of Young People

The Chair provided a verbal update on behalf of the Vice Chair, which was fed back to the Group. In particular, the Chair highlighted the following;

- The Vice Chair had been visiting children in care and talking to them about their experiences. Any arising issues would be fed back to the Group at a future meeting.
- A buy/swap shop was in the process of being established. This would be run by Care Leavers which would give them a little work experience. A venue was still to be found.
- For those Care Leavers who were setting up home for the first time, the Vice Chair was preparing a Starter Pack List of all the essential items she needed when she was leaving care.

- Discussions took place around the transition period of being in care to leaving care and the need for a personal advisor providing information about how to get a home, how to set up home etc. The Vice Chair had fed back that help and assistance from professionals helps to instil trust which was invaluable for a Care Leaver.

Discussions took place around the need for PEPS to be monitored continuously. Jayne confirmed that links were being built with credit agencies so that Care Leavers could learn how to manage money – this would be feedback to a future meeting.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted by the Group.

5 Update on Participation

The Group received an update of activities that had been undertaken by the Participation Officer since the last meeting of the Group in July 2019.

Interview Skills

Jaffer informed the Group that further to the Interview Skills Training Sessions held in July and August, 15 young people had been trained up on interview skills ensuring that they were involved in the recruitment and selection of key personnel working with young people. The Group heard that this would be a rolling opportunity with further training being delivered next Spring.

Advocacy, Independent Visitors and Mentoring Commission

The Group heard that support to Barnardo's had been re-established to ensure that the commission met its aims and objectives. A bi monthly meeting was being scheduled and Barnardo's was continuing to send quarterly reports of what was being achieved.

Service Reports

The quarterly Participation Services reports had also been re-established after a period of redesign following consultation with colleagues across Children's Services and the 3rd Sector. The now simplified one page report asked for participation activity, one challenge or learning from the last quarter, and up to 3 plans for the next quarter. 23 reports had been submitted to date.

Champions Network

The Participation Champions Network had been re-established with it's first meeting taking place on 9th October. The event was well attended and received some great feedback. Time was spent looking at what the next Participation Strategy should focus on as the current strategy was due to expire next year. The next meeting of the Champions Network was scheduled for 29th January 2019.

Integration Programme

Work was continuing on building links between the Champions Network and the Integration Programme. There was also still a plan to support young people in care to engage in the Ambassadors programme either through Blackburn Rovers or Blackburn Youth Zone.

Investors in Children

Support was continuing to be provided to organisations who needed it to ensure that they could achieve Investors in Children.

Redrafting Guidelines

Some young people in care were working with UCLan on a project which was commissioned by NICE and aimed at redeveloping the guidelines for social workers and carers. Young people will be taking on the role as young researchers developing tools and techniques to ensure as many young people can input into the research and the subsequent redevelopment of the guidelines. The project will come to end next Summer with young people reporting back their findings to a group of seniors decision makes at NICE.

Participation / VOICE Relaunch

The Group were informed that the event would be taking place on 25th October 2019, between 12-3pm at Ewood Park.

RESOLVED – That the updates be noted.

6 Update on the education results for the CIOC pupils

The Group was provided with a brief update on the GCSE results for the CIOC pupils.

Figures were provided for KS1, KS2 and KS4 with the Group hearing that the results were provisional at this stage.

Outcomes for the young people were generally good and there was a lot to celebrate already as the results were higher than the national average in 2018.

It was agreed that the item come back to a future meeting with an depth analysis of the results.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

7 Highlight Report; Corporate Parenting dashboard

The Group was presented with an update on the latest monitoring report for Children in our Care for July to October. The Group heard that there wasn't a huge amount of change since the last update in June.

Members noted that as of 2nd October 2019, the number of children entering care in 2019 was 117 and the number of children leaving care was 100 with 50% of children aged 0-2 years old. It was noted that currently there were 403 children in care which consisted of 55% males and 45% females.

RESOLVED - That the update be noted by the Group.

8 Feedback on the SEN inspection

The Group received feedback from the recent SEND Inspection which took place 17th June – 21st June 2019 and heard that the inspection involved considerable stakeholder participation which included meetings with children and young people with SEND; parents and carers; and Local Authority and NHS officers.

The findings for Blackburn with Darwen were positive. There were some areas of improvement but these had not resulted in the need for a WSOA (Written Statement of Action).

Key areas of strength as highlighted in the report were noted, in particular:

- Provision for SEND is a key priority for all partners
- There is a real enthusiasm, and can do attitude, to work closely together to make sure children and young people get the best support
- Since 2014 the local area has made considerable progress in implementing the reforms and recent changes to leadership and governance has accelerated this
- Families feel listened to and the majority feel their children receive the help and support they need
- Local area demonstrates a clear capacity for improvement
- Leaders have an in-depth knowledge of the local area and have made considerable progress in addressing issues
- Local area's coproduced SEND Strategy
- Quality, coproduced Local Offer website

Key areas for improvement were noted as follows;

- Leaders' and managers' accurate knowledge of the local area is not fully reflected in improvement plans and Improvement planning is too process, rather than outcomes, focussed
- Better use of data is required to inform/evaluate commissioning and strategic planning
- Provision for young people when they leave school is not sufficiently well developed
- Parents have concerns about their child's transition into adulthood and feel anxious about their future
- Parents tell us they are not listened to when their children's needs are less obviously visible which can lead to delays in accurate identification of needs
- Demand for psychological services for those with lower-level mental health needs is exceeding capacity
- Lack of clear targets in EHC plans reduces the ability to measure, monitor and evaluate improved outcomes

Next steps were identified as:

- Areas that have been identified for further improvement will form the basis of the revised SEND Strategy Action Plan for the local area
- This plan will be coproduced with stakeholders and co-owned between Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackburn with Darwen Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Outcomes based planning framework is to be adopted to support SEND improvement planning, performance monitoring and accountability, to ensure effort remains impact focussed

RESOLVED - that the Group note the SEND Inspection findings

9 Update on Care Quality Commission inspection

The Group were provided with an overview and key findings from the CQC review of Health Services for Children Looked After and Safeguarding.

The review was carried out from 29th April to 3rd May 2019 and a link to the full report was contained within the main report. The report was submitted to CQC for their approval on the 31st July with the CQC advising on some minor amendments. These had since been incorporated into the revised plan for Quarter 2. The CQC had requested an update on progress by the end of February 2020.

Some of the key issues highlighted in the report were as follows:

1. Key lines of enquiry within the review including the experiences and views of children and their families; the quality and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in health; and the quality of health services and outcomes for children who are looked after and care leavers

2. Key strengths identified within the review including;
 - Early Help and Child in Need
 - Child Protection and Looked after Children
 - Leadership / Management / Training and Supervision

3. Key areas for action within the Combined Action Plan including;
 - Improving safeguarding practice within primary care
 - Initial health assessment, performance improvement
 - CAMHS and Transitional arrangements for 16-19 year old children

RESOLVED – that Members note the contents of the report and action plan.

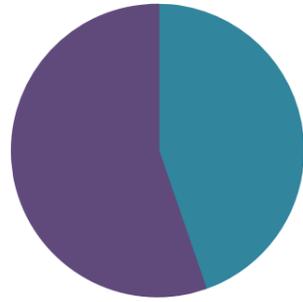
Signed:

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed

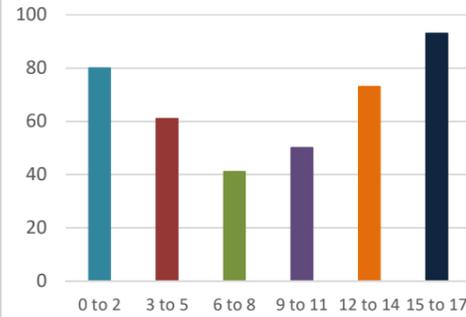
Children in Our Care - 23rd January 2020

Gender of Children in Our Care



Female	178	45%
Male	220	55%
Total CIOC	398	

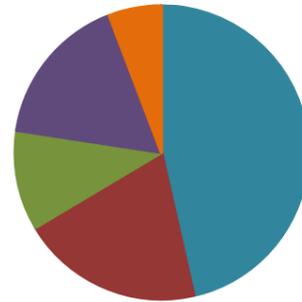
Age Profile of Children in Care



0 to 2	80	9 to 11	50
3 to 5	61	12 to 14	73
6 to 8	41	15 to 17	93

Entering Care Jan 19 to Dec 19

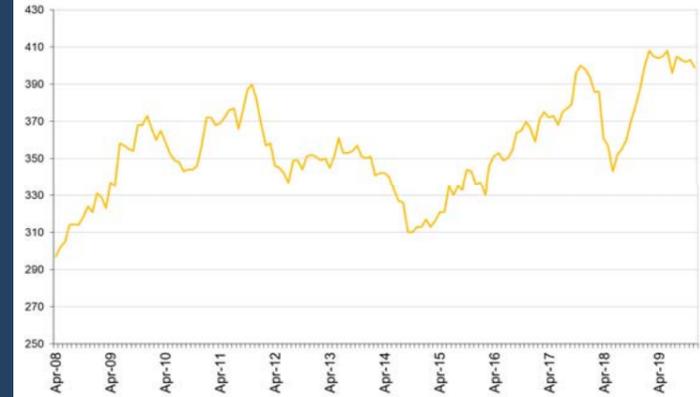
Age of children entering care



0 to 2	72 (46%)	11 to 15	26 (17%)
3 to 6	31 (20%)	16+	9 (6%)
7 to 10	17 (11%)		

Children in Our Care since 2008

Number of Children in our care since 2008

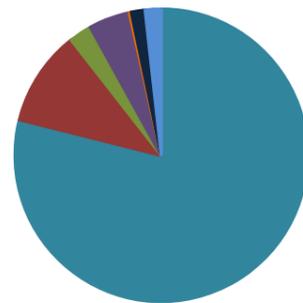


Entering/Leaving Care since 2001

	Entering	Leaving	Net
Total in 2001	111	95	16
Total in 2002	103	117	-14
Total in 2003	131	134	-3
Total in 2004	102	104	-2
Total in 2005	119	100	19
Total in 2006	94	104	-10
Total in 2007	97	92	5
Total in 2008	114	104	10
Total in 2009	151	94	57
Total in 2010	112	123	-11
Total in 2011	155	128	27
Total in 2012	125	149	-24
Total in 2013	123	120	3
Total in 2014	89	125	-36
Total in 2015	163	139	24
Total in 2016	170	139	31
Total in 2017	161	143	18
Total in 2018	162	153	9
Total in 2019	155	144	11

*Please note this table is calculated by calendar years

Ethnicity of Children in Our Care

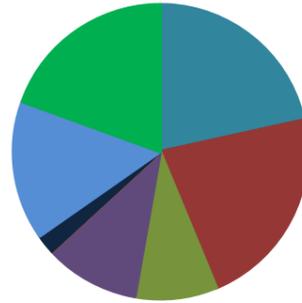


White/UK	314	79%
Asian Pakistani	42	11%
Other	10	2%
Mixed	18	5%
Black	1	0%
White Other	6	1%
Asian Other, incl Indian	7	2%

Where are children in care placed?

Foster Placements (in-house)	131
Friends & Family	66
Placed with Parents	63
Foster Placements (agency)	61
Children's Homes (agency)	27
Adoptive Placements	18
Res Accom Not Subject to CH Regs	16
Other	8
Children's Homes (in-house)	3
Prison/HMYOI	2
NHS	2
Residential School	1
Independent Living	0
Secure	0
# Children in Our Care with a Disability	22
% Children in Our Care with a Disability	6%

Destinations of Care Leavers



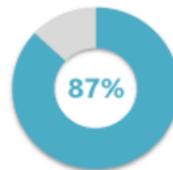
Reached 18	31 (22%)
Returned to parents	32 (22%)
Moved in with relatives	13 (9%)
Other reason	15 (10%)
Moved into supp.accomodation	0 (0%)
Child Arrangement Order	3 (2%)
Adopted	22 (15%)
Special guardianship	28 (20%)

Health - as at 1st October 2019

261 current open CLA looked after for at least 12 months

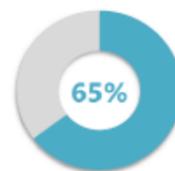
Health assessments

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months with an up to date health assessment (in the last 6 months for CLA aged under 5, and in the last 12 months for CLA aged 5-plus)



Dental checks

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months who have had a dental check in the last 12 months.



Performance compared with national, regional and comparator averages

	Current - BwD	Comparator Median	Regional Average	National Average
Number of children in our care (CIOC) per 10,000 0-18 year old population	103	98	91	64
% in foster care	65%	73%	69%	73%
Of which - in-house provider or family and friends approved care	50%			48%
Of which - Other provider	15%			25%
% in adoption placements	5%	3%	2%	3%
% in residential/resi schools/secure/other residential provision	12%	12%	12%	13%
% placed at home with parents	16%	8%	13%	6%
Placement Stability (% of CIOC with 3 placements or more in a yr)	16.0%	9%	10%	10%
Placement Stability (% of CIOC in same placement for past 2 yrs & in care for 2.5 yrs+)	62%	71%	71%	70%
% of Care Leavers aged 19-21 in touch with the LA	100%			
% of Care Leavers aged 19-21 years old in Education, Employment or Training	48%	51%	50%	51%
% of Care Leavers aged 19-21 years old in suitable accommodation	97%	88%	87%	84%
Adoption Scorecard (rolling 3 yrs) - entry into care to adoption placement (days)	457			520
Adoption Scorecard (rolling 3 yrs) - Placement Order to matching (days)	172			220
Average Caseload in Assessment and Safeguarding Teams	27.2			
Average Caseload in Children in our Care Teams	22.9			
% of children in our care aged 10-17, in care for over 12 months, who have offended*	1.8%			
Number of unaccompanied asylum seekers in care	2			

*Comparable information as at March 2018 **CIOC offending data for Q2 2019/20

Placement Stability Measures

Those children and young people who have had 3 or more placements

Those young people who have been in care for more than two and a half years who have been in the same placement for two years or more.

Children and young people with 3 or more placements

63 children and young people were listed in September 2019 as having had 3 or more placements .

- Teenagers – 24 young people listed are aged 13 and over. 9 of these young people had experiences of long term foster care (over 2 years in same placement) and once this placement disrupted we were unable to resettle.
- 19 /63 children listed as having had 3+ placements were babies and children under 5 years old .
- There were 6 examples of the court ordering parent / child placements which broke down .
- 5 placements in foster care disrupted as a result of allegations against the foster carer the majority of which were later found to be unsubstantiated.

Continued

- Older children – 4 examples of short breaks to cover carer holidays that count as placements and take child to 3+
- A number of older children experienced 3 plus placements because of the difficulty in identifying placements when they entered care

Children and young people in care for more than 2.5 years who have NOT been in their placement for 2 years or more

- In November 2019 there were 402 children in our care and of these 182 children have been in care for more than 2.5 years, 45%.
- Of the 182 children 61 children have not been in placement for 2 years or more, ie 33% of those who have been in care for more than 2.5 years.

61 children

- 11 young people are aged 16/17 and have moved to some form of supported accommodation which for some is a positive move.
- 2 children have stepped down from residential to foster care because of the positive progress they have made.
- 14 young people have moved from foster care to residential care. This is a group of adolescents with complex needs presenting behaviours that foster carers have found to be too difficult to manage. The majority have had multiple foster placements which have disrupted.
- 13 children and young people have experienced changes of foster placement but remain in foster care.

.....continued

- 1 young person has experienced foster care, residential care, secure accommodation and is currently in custody.
- 1 young person has experienced multiple foster placements, residential care, secure accommodation and is currently in hospital.

Learning from Disruption

- Disruption meetings are held whenever a long term matched foster placement disrupts. In 2019 12 cases were referred and disruption meetings held for 8 cases.

Key themes

- * 3 out of 8 disruptions were independent agency placements
- In house foster placements – case audits identified praise for the support of a SSW in one case and identified a lack of support in another case. No consistent theme.

.....continued

- Identifying appropriate long term placements for young people has been compromised by the shortage of foster carers with the skills to manage adolescents
- The impact of changes of SSW was identified as having contributed to disruption and in 5 cases children had also experienced a change of social worker in the 12 months prior to placement breakdown. In 2 of the 5 cases children had also experienced a change of IRO.
- Revive support – Revive was involved in 4 out of the 8 cases but in some of these there was lack of engagement by foster carers and a delay in asking for support, waiting until the placement reached crisis point. Delay in referring to Revive was in part also due to changes of SSW and SW .

- Pathway planning – 3 out of the 8 cases were out of timescale for pathway assessment
- Provision of short breaks – a number of cases identified that short breaks would have been helpful to carers either to sustain placements or to enable a planned rather than emergency move.

Conclusion and Actions

- Impact of increased number of babies and very young children coming into care
- Tracking unborns
- Pre – birth offer
- FFA and concurrency
- Development of a pre-birth assessment tool
- Early family finding

Maintaining Adolescent Placements

- Review of Revive
- Develop support hub
- Prioritise long term matching cases
- Independence training for young people
- Clarify IFA support

CORPORATE PARENTING SPECIALIST ADVISORY GROUP 27TH JANUARY 2020

REPORT OF VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Rate of Completion PEPS to Date

All children in our care are required to have a personal education plan (PEP) that is updated termly. For the 2018/19 academic year the average completion rate for PEPs was 84%. At the start of the academic year 2019/20, the Virtual School implemented a new system for PEPs – the delegation portal – which links directly to the social care recording system (Protocol, Liquid Logic) and can be securely accessed via the internet by schools. Whilst the implementation of the new system has not been without its challenges, we have worked through the issues with the PPP Team to resolve and can report the completion rate for the autumn term 2019/20 is 97%.

Attendance

Average attendance for the academic year 2018/19 was 94%. Average attendance for the autumn term 2019/20 was also 94%. Attendance is monitored daily by the Virtual School utilising the Welfare Call system. When a child/young person is absent, the social worker receives an email notification. The Virtual School analyses attendance data and following up issues with attendance with school, social worker, IRO carers and Inclusion team as appropriate. Children on care orders at home are often a cause for concern with regards school attendance.

Exclusions

There have been no permanent exclusions for children in our care in the 2018/19 academic year or 2019/20 to date. In 2018/19 21 young people received fixed term exclusions for a total of 135 days. All were of secondary school age with 5 attending alternative provision, 6 in special schools and 10 in mainstream. In 2019/20 autumn term, 16 young people received a fixed term exclusion for a total of 65 days. All were of secondary age with 1 attending alternative provision, 6 in special schools and 9 in mainstream. Reasons for exclusion are noted as physical assault, aggression, persistent disruptive behaviour, verbal abuse and damage. It is of continued concern that fixed term exclusions are rising, this is a picture that is reflected by Virtual School Headteachers across the North West region and more widely in the for all children locally and nationally. Virtual School works closely with schools to try to reduce the numbers of fixed term exclusions and ultimately permanent exclusions. For example, we would look to offer intervention from the Virtual School Educational Psychologist or negotiate more appropriate responses to issues a young person may be having in school.

Part-Time Timetables

Part-time timetables for children in our care are always agreed on a case by case basis between the Virtual School and the school that the child/young person attends. This is for specific reasons and may be if they are at risk of exclusion, due to social emotional and mental health issues, health needs or where the child/young person is transitioning from one provision to another. Part-time timetables are usually for short period of time with a plan to return to full time education. At present there are 11 children and young people on part-time timetables, 2 of primary and 9 secondary age.

Attainment

2019 results are currently provisional; this data is based on all children/young people in care at the time of taking tests/exams. Statistical first release will become available in March 2020 via the DfE, this will allow us to formally report on CIOC for 12 months + and provide up to date comparative data.

KS1 Expected Standard 2019*

	Reading	Writing	Maths	RWM
ALL BWD CIOC	60%	60%	60%	60%
ALL BWD	74%	68%	75%	64%
ALL NATIONAL	75%	69%	76%	65%
ALL CIOC NATIONAL (2018)	52%	43%	51%	38%

KS2 Expected Standard 2019*

	Reading	Writing	GPS	Maths	RWM
ALL BWD CIOC	44%	39%	50%	44%	39%
ALL BWD	72%	78%	80%	80%	65%
ALL NATIONAL	73%	79%	78%	80%	65%
ALL CIOC NATIONAL (2018)	51%	49%	50%	47%	35%

	English 5+	Maths 5+	English & Maths 5+	English 4+	Maths 4+	English & Maths 4+	5 9-4 A*-C inc E&M	At least 1 nationally recognised qualification
ALL BWD CIOC (2019)*	29%	29%	25%	43%	32%	32%	25%	96%
ALL BWD CIOC (2018)	22%	9%	9%	22%	13%	17%	13%	70%
ALL CIOC NATIONAL (2018)	15%	11%	7%	24%	22%	18%	13%	70%
ALL NATIONAL (2018)	60%	49%	43%	75%	70%	64%	60%	98%

* 2019 results are currently provisional

About KS1

- 10 children in the cohort 8 attend BwD schools, 2 out of area (OOA).
- 3 children did not reach the expected standard and 1 did not undertake the tests. of these children 2 were in school in BwD and 2 out of area.
- 9 of the children had been in care for 12+ months.

About KS2

- 18 children in the cohort, 13 attend BwD schools, 5 out of area (OOA).
- 7 children reached the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths. All attend BwD schools.
- Of the children who did not achieve the expected standard all had SEN Support or identified emotional/mental health difficulties.
- 3 did not take the tests, 2 with EHCP and one new to care.
- 15 of the children had been in care for 12+ months.

About KS4

- 28 young people (YP) in the cohort.
- 17 attended BwD schools, 11 out of area (OOA)
- 3 attended special schools, 5 in alternative provision (AP)
- 7 (3 BwD, 4 OOA) achieved Eng/Maths @ 5+
- 9 (4 BwD, 5 OOA) achieved Eng/Maths @ 4+
- 1 YP in AP did not achieve any qualifications.
- YP achieved a grade 9 in Religious Studies along with other GCSEs
- YP had 5% attendance pre care in Year 9 who achieved 7 GCSEs at 5 @ 5+ and 2 @ 4+.
- YP with mental health issues who was in secure provision in Y10 achieved 5 GCSEs @ 4+ including Eng/Maths/Sci @ 5+ whilst placed in AP.
- YP had a placement breakdown and had to move 2 weeks

Out of Borough Placements

Snapshot

- November 2019 when there were 402 children in care in Blackburn with Darwen.

Page 24

- There were 166 children in placements recorded as being outside the local authority boundary

Placement Type

In house foster care	29
Independent Fostering Agencies	44
Family and Friends	14
Residential	35
Placed with parents	10
Adoptive placements	18
Regulation 24 placements	6
Other IA placements	2
Supported accommodation	4
Young Offender Institutions	3
Hospital	1
Total	166

Distance from BwD

- The majority of children in foster care living outside of the local authority boundary are still in the North West with 28 children in IFA placements being placed in Lancashire CC boundary.
- 95 are living more than 20 miles away, the majority of whom are still in the North West – Manchester, Liverpool, Stockport, Lancaster and Morecambe etc.
- 20 children are living a significant distance from BwD ie more than 50 miles away. A number of those living at the greatest distance from BwD are in adoptive or connected persons placements .

How do we know that children living out of borough are safe and well cared for?

- Commissioned placements Fostering
- Placements are commissioned through the North West Framework
- Process of matching and ensuring suitability
- Sharing of information
- Placement planning and reviews

Commissioned placements - residential

- North West Framework
- Policy of 'good' or better
- Process of matching and suitability
- Information sharing
- OFSTED
- Compliance visits

In house fostering

- 29 children in out of borough placements are with in house foster carers
- Rochdale, Burnley, Accrington, Clitheroe, Bacup
- Assessment and approval of foster carers
- Annual reviews
- Fostering service supervision and support
- Unannounced visits
- Role of the fostering panel

Role of OFSTED

- Registration of services
- Inspection of fostering services
- Inspection of residential homes
- Notifications to local authorities

Role of the Social Worker

- All children in our care are allocated a social worker who is responsible for ensuring that children are properly cared for, their needs are met, their voice is heard and they are helped to feel happy and settled in their placement. Social workers undertake this role through six weekly (minimum) visits to the child, liaison with the placement provider , liaison with other relevant professionals and parents, and make referrals to relevant services . Unannounced visits are also undertaken .

....continued

- To monitor the standard of care offered by the placement including the physical standards, house rules and behaviour management strategies;
- To identify whether there are toys or games to play with and the access that the child has to them;
- To monitor how the contact arrangements with family members and friends are working and to discover whether these are promoted within the home;
- To consider the child's sleeping arrangements such as room sharing, display of personal belongings and the physical state of the room. Has the child got clean clothes that are stored appropriately?

Children with Disabilities

Social workers visiting children with disabilities and/or complex health needs also consider the following:

- Whether practices that are being employed are appropriate and do not compromise the child's safety e.g. the method of lifting a disabled child;
- Does the carer have sufficient equipment i.e. bath chair / hoist etc.?
- Managing the child's health appointments
- Ensuring the correct administration of medication?

Role of the IRO – LAC reviews

There are two clear and separate aspects to the function of the IRO:

- chairing a child's review
- and monitoring a child's case on an ongoing basis

.....continued

- Consult the child about his/her Care Plan at each review and at any time that there is a significant change to the Care Plan;
- Ensuring that Care Plans for looked after children are based on a detailed and informed assessment
- Identifying any gaps in the assessment process or delivery of service;
- Offering a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning and the delivery of services;
- Monitoring the activity of the Local Authority
- Problem-solving where there might be difficulties or issues
- Alerting the local authority if there are concerns that the placement is not meeting the child's needs.

Advocacy, Independent Visiting and Mentoring

- BwD commissions a service from Barnardos that offers access to advocacy, independent visiting and a mentoring specifically for looked after children .
- Children and young people living outside of the local authority boundary can access this service which provides an additional layer of support for those children who need it most.

Quality Assurance

- Children's Services have a quality assurance framework that ensures that children's care is safe, meets their needs and helps them to develop. This framework is built around two practice weeks every year and includes:
 - Case file audits
 - QA of assessments and court reports
 - Supervision of social workers
 - Observation of practice
 - Observation of key meetings
 - The voice of children and young people