

Public Document Pack

Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group

Thursday, 3rd March, 2022

6.00 pm

Virtual Meeting, Microsoft Teams

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Apologies

To welcome those present to the meeting and to receive any apologies for absence.

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.

Declarations of Interest

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3. Minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2022

For the Group to agree the Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Specialist Advisory Group meeting held on 10th January 2022.

Minutes 10th January 2022

4 - 11

4. Care Leavers Update Data

Imran Akuji, Head of Service for Partnerships, Intensive Support, Policy and Performance will provide an update along with a presentation on NEET data.

5. Participation Update

For the Group to receive a verbal update on Participation from Care Leaver.

6. Corporate Parenting Dashboard

For the Group to review and consider the latest monitoring reports on Looked After Children in the Borough provided by Emma Ford, Deputy Director Children's Social Care.

Corporate Parenting Dashboard

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7. **Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024**
For the Group to receive a report on the Corporate Parenting Strategy from Jayne Ivory Strategic Director Children and Education, and Emma Ford Deputy Director Children's Social Care.
- Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024** **13 - 43**
8. **Update on Lytham Road and Apple Trees Inspection**
The Group will be provided with an update following Ofsted visits to Lytham Road and Apple Trees Children's Homes. The updates will be provided by Helen Kane, Service Leader Placements and Jeremy Wood, Team Manager Children's.
- Lytham Road Ofsted Inspection - full report** **44 - 63**
Appletrees Children's Summary
Appletrees Ofsted Inspection - full report
9. **Subject Access Requests for Care Leavers Files**
For the Group to receive an update on Subject Access Requests for Care Leaver's Files.
10. **Foster Carers Update**
For the Group to receive a verbal update from Foster Carer's Carol Smith and Sam Briggs, Foster Carers Association.
11. **Out of Hours Response**
Helen Kane, Service Leader Placements will provide an update on the Out of Hours Services.

Date Published: 23rd February 2022
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 10th January 2022

PRESENT – Councillors: *Pat McFall (In the Chair), Parwaiz Akhtar, Maureen Bateson, Stephanie Brookfield, Jim Casey, Samim Desai, Katrina Fielding, Jackie Floyd, Julie Gunn, Akhtar Hussain, Iftakhar Hussain, Mahfooz Hussain, Shaukat Hussain, Mohammed Irfan, Yusuf Jan-Virmani, Mohammed Khan, Zamir Khan, Suleman Khonat, Sylvia Liddle, Vicky McGurk, Jane Oates, Zainab Rawat, Salim Sidat, Brian Taylor and Ron Whittle.*

OFFICERS –

Jayne Ivory – Director Children’s Services & Education

Emma Ford – Deputy Director, Children’s Social Care

Judith Fennell – Head of Service Permanence and Corporate Parenting, Children’s Services

Joanne Siddle – Deputy Director, Schools & Education

Alison Hartley – Team Manager, Childrens

Elizabeth Clarkson – Participation & Inclusion Manager, Children’s Services

Charlotte Hesketh – LAC Virtual Head & Assessment Officer, Education

Julie Edmonson – Leaving Care Personal Advisor

Care Leaver - Vice Chair

Paula Quinn – FCA Committee

Sam Briggs – FCA Secretary

Susan Clarke - Head of Safeguarding / Designated Nurse (Children), NHS Blackburn with Darwen CCG

Amelia Brummit - Specialist Safeguarding Practitioner, NHS Blackburn with Darwen CCG

RESOLUTIONS

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair Cllr Pat McFall, welcomed all present to the virtual meeting. Apologies were received from Martin Eden and from the following Councillors: Dave Smith, Damian Talbot, Abdul Patel, Jean Rigby, Lilian Salton, Kevin Connor, Mark Russell, John Slater, Jacqueline Slater, Jim Smith.

2. Declaration of Interest in items on this Agenda

RESOLVED - There were no Declarations of Interest received.

3. Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 20th October 2021

RESOLVED – The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th October 2021 were approved as a correct record with no matters arising.

4. Participation Update

The Vice-Chair informed the Group that since the last update plenty of activities had been taking place and there was also lots planned for the near future.

The VOICE Groups were starting to meet again, starting from this Thursday and one of the topics for discussion would be 'what makes a good social worker'.

A recent trip to London had been very well received, with young people visiting the Supreme Court and the London Eye. Unfortunately the House of Commons was closed due to renovations which was disappointing, but the Group used that time for team building activities as well as learning some very important life skills. The Group enjoyed the independence and also the time spent learning and helping each other develop.

The Group heard that further to some recent upgrades at Kaleidoscope, young people would now feel more comfortable and motivated as they had assisted with how they would like it to look and feel.

Liz Clarkson informed the Group that Kaleidoscope was now being utilised more as a venue for various meetings and the Group agreed that it would be nice to have a CPSAG meeting there in the future.

The Group also heard that a group of leaving care young people would be discussing how to access information and how this could be improved. Young people felt this was very important to work on as not only would it help them but also younger people requesting access now and in the future.

Finally the Group were informed that the young people were also looking forward to re-establishing the Respect training. Liz was working hard behind the scenes to ensure that this happened so that young people with lived experience can provide training for social workers, foster carers and corporate parents.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

5. Corporate Parenting Dashboard

The Group was presented with an update from Judith Fennell on the latest monitoring report of Children in Our Care as of the 2nd December 2021, and heard that the total number of children in care was 393.

Of those, 46% were female and 54% were male. Members noted the age profiles of children in care with 108 children aged between 15 to 17 years old. 76 children were aged between 12 to 14 years, 48 children aged between 9 to 11 years, 49 children aged between 6 to 8 years, 45 children aged between 3 to 5 years and 67 children aged between 0 to 2 years. The Group then looked at the age range of children entering care between December 2020 and November 2021.

Judith informed the Group that 78% of children in our care were of white / UK ethnicity followed by 9% being Asian / Pakistani ethnicity.

Of the total number of Children in Our Care, Judith highlighted that a high proportion of children were placed in the following:- 118 were placed in in-house foster placements, 66 placed with parents, 63 placed with family and friends, 68 placed with agency foster placements. The total number of children entering care in 2021 was 108 and the number of children leaving care was

86. This figure was less than normal and this was possibly due to the delays in court proceedings caused by covid.

The Group then looked at the destinations of Care Leavers with 21% being placed on special guardianship, 6% had reached the age of 18, 23% had returned to parents, 7% had moved in with relatives and 19% had been adopted.

Judith highlighted our performance against the national, regional and comparator averages with the Group noting that the number of children in our care was higher than the national and regional averages.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

6. Oral Health Update

The Chair welcomed Amelia Brummitt, Acting Deputy Designated Nurse, to the meeting who provided an update on the current position to the Group.

The Group heard that information had been gathered from key people who were involved with dental and oral health for children in our care.

Amelia informed the Group that the poor state of dental health for our looked after children and care leavers was discussed at a BwD Dental Looked After Children Performance meeting. In that meeting, it was discussed that a significant number of looked after children did not appear to have attended a dental appointment within the last 6 months. It was queried if this was a recording or a reporting issue, given that the Government required an annual dental check and that this could be a possible explanation as to why BwD had lower figures than their neighbouring authorities regarding dental dates.

Amelia confirmed that the requirement was for an annual dental health assessment only for those children who had been looked after children for 12 months or more.

It was noted that BwD was one of the more deprived local authorities in England with the highest rate of dental decay and that the BwD Oral Health Improvement Partnership Strategy 2021-2026 which was shared by Shane Morgan (Dental Surgeon / Education Supervisor for Education North West / Chair of the Local Dental Network Lancashire and South Cumbria) was very much welcomed. Shirley Goodhew (Consultant in Public Health) had also shared the Oral Health Improvement training for frontline workers to the Corporate Parenting Executive Board.

The Group heard that the role of the Enhanced LAC Nurse Team in addressing any dental issues, was:-

- To support School Nurses and Health Visitors in ensuring that all looked after children are registered with a dentist, including the Specialist Dental Service if this is required and an awareness of accessing emergency dental treatment for looked after children and care leavers and;
- To ensure that oral health promotion is discussed as part of the statutory health assessment process, this is audited as part of the quality assurance process undertaken by the Enhanced LAC Nurses.

Amelia informed the Group that NHS England were responsible for commissioning all primary, specialist, and hospital preventative and clinical care for oral conditions. This included general dental practices and community dental services and both hospital inpatient and outpatient care. The Group heard that the importance of maintaining good oral hygiene for looked after children was incorporated into the bespoke training package devised and facilitated by the Enhanced LAC Nurses, this was available to all health practitioners who were responsible for undertaking statutory health assessments for looked after children.

Amelia highlighted some of the dental data collated in December 2021 and it was noted that the data was based on one day and whilst it did not evidence data for a comparative figure with other Local Authorities it did provide an overall recorded picture.

From the data the 6 month figure was:

Out of 376 children, 225 had out of time checks. Of these 29 were highlighted as having covid impact. As a percentage (including the one year olds) this was 57% out of time or 43 % in time.

The 12 month data was:

Out of 392 children (including under ones) 109 were recorded as out of date of the 12 months (28%) which would mean that 283 or 72% were within the year.

A follow up meeting was planned to further discuss the figures and recording but also to discuss the best way of following up those children and young people who had been highlighted as out of date for a dental check.

Following on from the data that was received, information was sought from NHS England who were the lead commissioners for dental, enquiring what was the current dental offer and expectation for dentists to be seeing Looked after Children. The response received back was that ordinarily (non-covid), the frequency of which a child should see a dentist (often referred to as 'recall interval') was determined by their oral health risk score. Dental teams were following the national guidance 'Delivering Better Oral Health' which would help support decision making for a clinically appropriate recall interval, with normal recall intervals being from 3-12 months. However, currently (during COVID) dental teams were following interim guidance which accommodated the reduction in capacity due to COVID that the teams were working through. This interim guidance meant that routine recalls were deferred or stretched to longer periods to enable a clinical prioritisation of patients who were in more urgent need of care.

It was also noted that there was a network of urgent care centres across the ICS to ensure all patients had access to urgent care and pain relief within 24 hours of first contact, and there was a pilot up and running for stabilisation of children's oral health who needed follow up care having had an urgent intervention but did not have dentists.

Amelia then informed the Group of the next steps going forward:

- Oral health to be added into the health section of the Corporate Parenting Strategy following the workshop held at the end of the last Corporate Parenting Executive Board

- An update has been requested from the children's commissioners at the CCG in relation to elements of the oral health strategy for an update on their involvement
- To add oral health to the Health Sub-Group as an action and to continue to monitor and consider who is best placed from Public Health to attend if this is going to be added
- To liaise with Public Health and NHS England as required as they are lead commissioners for Dental and Public Health
- To have a follow up meeting regarding the data following review and to discuss how to follow up those who have been identified as out of time dental checks
- The Rossendale Dental Pilot was ongoing which both NHS England commissioners and lead dentist for the ICS were involved in. The hope was that following the pilot this would be rolled out support and prioritise our children in our care dental needs. (for information it commenced in Rossendale due to the dentist coming forward and identifying the need and therefore commenced in his area).

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

7. Virtual School Head Teacher Annual Report 2020-21

Further to the detailed report that was circulated with the agenda, Charlotte Hesketh provided an overview of the Virtual School Head Teacher Annual Report for 2020-21.

The Group was informed of the background and the purpose of the report with the key responsibilities being highlighted.

Charlotte drew the Group's attention to next steps and areas for development as highlighted below:

1. *Ensure that CIOC attendance is closely monitored following the disruption due to the Covid 19 pandemic with a clear plan for those where issues arise*
2. *Implement systems to monitor and promote educational attainment and achievements of CIOC and care leavers to improve outcomes, which include reviewing the 'recovery' support in place in their schools*
3. *Develop and implement specific systems and process for monitoring VS SEND pupils with/or potentially in need of an EHCP, wherever they live or are educated*
4. *To improve practice and outcomes through high quality PEPs, effectively delivered and monitored*
5. *Pupil Premium Plus policy is implemented to ensure its use has clear impact on the outcomes for our CIOC*
6. *CIOC and PLAC make good progress through supported, trained and developed Virtual School staff/governors, designated teachers, social workers and parents/carers.*
7. *Give priority support to CIOC and care leavers aged 14-18 to increase education, employment and training (EET) activity*

8. *Ensure Virtual School staff have a safe working environment and opportunities for professional development*
9. *Implement a new service offer for our previously looked after children*
10. *Further develop our understanding of the specific educational needs of BwD children with a social worker and implement a response to the new duties for Virtual Schools.*

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

8. Overview of Celebration of Achievement 2021

Charlotte Hesketh provided an update to the Group on the annual Celebration of Achievement for Children in our Care and Care Leavers, which took place on 1st December 2021.

It was great to return to a face to face event at Ewood Park, after an online celebration last year. Children and young people in care and care leavers who attended were nominated for awards by their carers, schools, Children's Services and Education staff in the categories of, academic achievement / progress, attendance, behaviour, sport, music/the arts and making a positive contribution. In addition, there were a number of special awards for those who had particularly excelled in these areas.

Those who were now University students and those who had gained apprenticeships – 2 within the council, were also celebrated.

Although the event was smaller this year in terms of numbers due to maintaining a Covid safety there were 120 people comprising of children and young people in care and care leavers, foster carers, parents, Mayor and Mayoress, Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services and a range of officers from Children's Services Department. Those who were not able to attend were able to join via a secure livestream.

The special guest for the evening and presenting the awards was comedian and actor Ted Robbins and there was a visit from Santa. At the end of the evening, a special performance from one of our young people was provided. The event was proudly sponsored by OSMIS Education Limited and the John Bury Trust. As well as receiving a certificate and gift voucher, children and young people were also provided with a gift from Santa.

The event had been very well received and the next one was already being planned.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

9. Care Leaver's Update

The Chair welcomed Alison Hartley to the Group who provided an update on care leavers who attended university and the support they received whilst at university.

Alison informed the Group that currently, there were 19 young people at University, all at various stages. 7 young people were new starters, 7 young

people were in the second year, 5 young people were in the last year and one young person had an internship.

Young people were allocated a Personal Advisor until they finished their degree. They received a £2000 bursary at the start of the degree, how this is spent is discussed with the young person and the detailed spend is documented in their Pathway Plan.

Alison further informed the Group that the care leaver's accommodation costs are also paid for, and that this can range from the Halls of Residence to staying put to Shared Accommodation or Independent living. It was noted that young people are still be able to access their Leaving Care grant if needed.

The Group was informed that Personal Advisors support the young people with the move to University and holiday returns. They continue to have a pathway plan throughout their degree period and once the degree is completed, the PA will support with accommodation and support in to work.

Following the update provided by Alison, Julie Edmonson (Personal Advisor) joined the meeting and provided the Group with a detailed case study on one young person's academic journey. Alison and Julie were thanked by the Group for their presentation.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

10. Foster Carer's Update

Paula and Sam were invited by the Chair to provide an update from Foster Carers.

Paula informed the Group that 204 children had been taken to the Christmas panto and everyone that attended had an amazing time. Local shops had donated selection boxes for the children which had been very well received.

The Group heard that the Christmas Party had also been a successful event, held at the Legends Lounge at Ewood Park, with approximately 200 attending. The evening was packed with lots of entertainment including a DJ, Tim Perkins, Santa, Circus, and an outside fire display.

It was hoped that a similar event would be able to take place in Spring 2022 with a focus on fundraising and also using the event as a recruitment opportunity too.

Paula highlighted that the Celebration of Achievement was a great event, especially as it was held in person. Paula expressed her thanks to Charlotte and also Liz for securing Kaleidoscope as the venue.

The Group were informed that Foster Carers were concerned about the lack of out of hours support that could be tapped into. Jayne informed Paula and Sam that Judith and Helen would look into this. The Chair asked that an update on this be brought back to the next meeting.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted and that an update of out of hours contacts for foster carers, be provided at the next meeting.

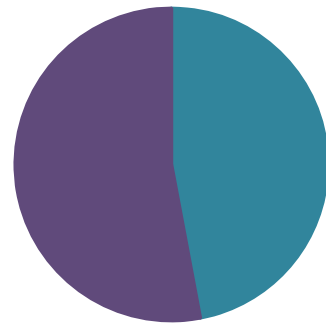
Signed:

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed

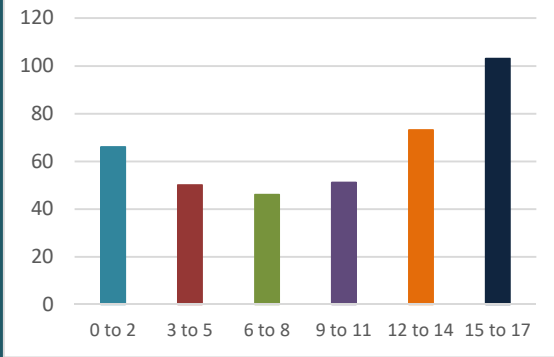
Children in Our Care - 21st February 2022

Gender of Children in Our Care



Female	183	47%
Male	206	53%
Total CIOC	389	

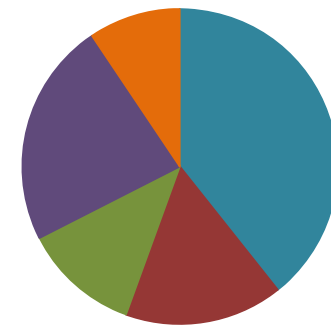
Age Profile of Children in Care



0 to 2	66	9 to 11	51
3 to 5	50	12 to 14	73
6 to 8	46	15 to 17	103

Entering Care Feb 21 to Jan 22

Age of children entering care



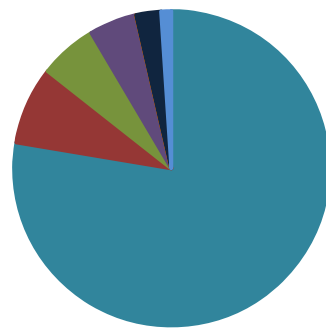
0 to 2	46 (39%)	11 to 15	27 (23%)
3 to 6	19 (16%)	16+	11 (9%)
7 to 10	14 (12%)		

Children in Our Care since 2008

Number of Children in our care since 2008



Ethnicity of Children in Our Care



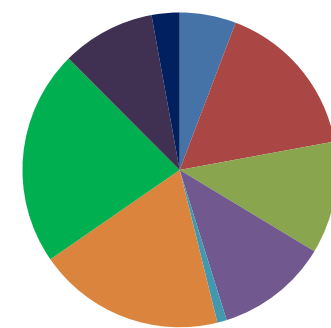
White/UK	302	78%
Asian Pakistani	31	8%
Other	23	6%
Mixed	19	5%
Black	0	0%
White Other	10	3%
Asian Other, incl Indian	4	1%

Where are children in care placed?

Foster Placements (in-house)	130
Foster Placements (agency)	68
Friends & Family	62
Placed with Parents	52
Children's Homes (agency)	24
Res Accom Not Subject to CH Regs	21
Adoptive Placements	16
Other	7
Children's Homes (in-house)	7
NHS	1
Secure	1
Prison/HMYOI	0
Family Centre/Mother and Baby Unit	0
Residential School	0
Independent Living	0

# Children in Our Care with a Disability	24
% Children in Our Care with a Disability	6%

Destinations of Care Leavers



Reached 18	6 (6%)
Returned to parents	17 (16%)
Moved in with relatives	12 (12%)
Other reason	12 (12%)
Child Arrangement Order	1 (1%)
Adopted	20 (19%)
Special guardianship	23 (22%)
Aged 18+ remain current carers	10 (10%)
Independent Living	3 (3%)

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
Total in 2020	110	134	-24
Total in 2021	117	102	15
Total in 2022	4	8	-4

*Please note this table is calculated by calendar years

CLA as at 31st March

	2020/21	2019/20
CLA as at 31st March	374	411
Male	207 (55%)	228 (55%)
Female	167 (45%)	183 (45%)
0 to 2	57 (15%)	73 (18%)
3 to 5	55 (15%)	63 (15%)
6 to 8	49 (13%)	52 (13%)
9 to 11	43 (11%)	52 (13%)
12 to 14	78 (21%)	77 (19%)
15 to 17	92 (25%)	94 (23%)
White/UK	291 (78%)	327 (80%)
Asian Pakistani	37 (10%)	42 (10%)
Other	15 (4%)	13 (3%)
Mixed	20 (5%)	18 (4%)
Black	0 (0%)	1 (0%)
White Other	5 (1%)	4 (1%)
Asian Other, incl Indian	6 (2%)	6 (2%)

Entering Care / Destinations of Care Leavers

	2020/21	2019/20
Age of children entering care		
0 to 2	39 (44%)	57 (38%)
3 to 6	13 (15%)	35 (23%)
7 to 10	12 (14%)	20 (13%)
11 to 15	20 (23%)	31 (21%)
16+	4 (5%)	8 (5%)
Destinations of Care Leavers		
Reached 18	27 (21%)	34 (24%)
Returned to parents	26 (21%)	32 (23%)
Moved in with relatives	5 (4%)	10 (7%)
Other Reason	14 (11%)	19 (13%)
Child Arrangement Order	2 (2%)	3 (2%)
Adopted	21 (17%)	21 (15%)
Special guardianship	31 (25%)	23 (16%)

*Please note the 2020/21 figures are provisional

Performance compared with national, regional and statistical neighbour averages

	Current - BwD***	Statistical Neighbour*	Regional Average*	National Average*
Number of children in our care (CIOC) per 10,000 0-18 year old population	101	91	97	67
% in foster care	67%	72%	67%	71%
Of which - in-house provider or family and friends approved care	49%			
Of which - Other provider	17%			
% in adoption placements	4%	4%	2%	3%
% in residential/resi schools/secure/other residential provision	14%	14%	14%	15%
% placed at home with parents	13%	10%	13%	7%
Placement Stability (% of CIOC with 3 placements or more in a yr)	11%	8%	8%	9%
Placement Stability (% of CIOC in same placement for past 2 yrs & in care for 2.5 yrs+)	67%	71%	71%	70%
% of Care Leavers aged 19-21 in touch with the LA	95%			
% of Care Leavers aged 19-21 years old in Education, Employment or Training	48%	50%	50%	52%
% of Care Leavers aged 19-21 years old in suitable accommodation	97%	90%	91%	88%
Adoption Scorecard (rolling 3 yrs) - entry into care to adoption placement (days) (A1)	475			
Adoption Scorecard (rolling 3 yrs) - Placement Order to matching (days) (A2)	238			
% of children in our care aged 10-17, in care for over 12 months, who have offended	0.6%			
Number of unaccompanied asylum seekers in care	9			

*Comparable information as at March 2021 **CIOC offending data for Q2 2021/22 only ***Current BwD data as at 21st February 2022



Blackburn with Darwen's

Corporate Parenting Strategy

2021-24

*Version for BwD's
Corporate Parents*

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Foreword

Councillor Julie Gunn

When I am asked 'what does it mean to be a corporate parent?' I reply that it is the most important part of any councillor's role. Sometimes, councillors don't even know that until they are in the job. In my mind, being a corporate parent is about:

- Being a positive role model and showing children and young people how to take on the challenges that life brings, even if we are not sure how ourselves
- Making sure we help children and young people to aim high and don't just settle for 'good enough' when we could achieve much more
- Supporting children and young people to become confident to speak out and to be confident that their voice will be heard
- Seeking out children and young people's views and feelings, celebrating their successes, and helping them work through the things that maybe didn't go so well
- Proudly standing up for children and young people with experience of care

We will do all of this so that, together, we learn how to deal with whatever life brings. In short, being a good corporate parent is about being a decent parent, and that is the promise that we have made to children and young people in our borough.



Foreword

Jayne Ivory, Director

Being a good parent is the most important role that those of us who are fortunate enough to have children undertake. At the time of writing this introduction, we are corporate parents to you and 372 other children and young people in Blackburn with Darwen.

Parenting doesn't come with a job description and we know the well-known saying 'it takes a village to raise a child'. In Blackburn with Darwen, we have a real clear vision of what we would like as outcomes for our care-experienced children and young people.

Our vision is that they will grow up to have a happy and healthy life, experience success and overcome challenges. To make sure this happens we will work with them, the people that love and care for them, and their corporate parents to get them the right help at the right time so that they can each benefit from effective support.

We have worked with care-experienced children and young people in Blackburn with Darwen to develop this strategy for how we plan to improve things for our cared-for children and care leavers.

This strategy sets out what they want and need from us, our partners and communities. This is because it's important that we demonstrate that we are fulfilling one of the most important responsibilities we have as a local council - that we are ambitious Corporate Parents and Corporate Grandparents.

Over the next few pages of this document you can see how the council will plan to do this.

01.

Introduction

This strategy sets out how corporate parents in Blackburn with Darwen will work together to ensure that children and young people in care, and those who have left our care, can grow up to lead happy, healthy lives and experience success.

When a child or young person comes into care, the council and our partners become their corporate parent. This means our elected members, officers and partner agencies have a collective responsibility for ensuring that every looked after child is given the best possible start in life so they can grow up to lead happy, healthy lives and achieve their full potential.

Our approach to corporate parenting is founded on the principle that looked-after children deserve the same standard of care, love and support that any good parent would want for their child. We ask that all corporate parents consider the following questions: “Would this be good enough for my child? If I were that child, would it have been good enough for me?”

Asking yourself these critical questions will help you ensure that the needs of looked-after children and care leavers are at the forefront of everything you do. Whilst being in care can pose additional challenges for children and young people, it is important to remember that they want what every other child wants - to be listened to, to be loved, and to be kept safe.

This strategy is informed by the corporate parenting principles set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and has been developed in collaboration with looked-after children and young people in the borough to ensure that it reflects the diverse needs of those who come into care. Together, we have co-produced six key priority areas for us all to focus on.

We believe that this strategy will support our joint work on the most important issues, so we can achieve the best possible outcomes for our looked-after children and care leavers here in Blackburn with Darwen. We will also work with the borough’s Voice groups to review the strategy on a regular basis to ensure that it is being used to drive progress and change.

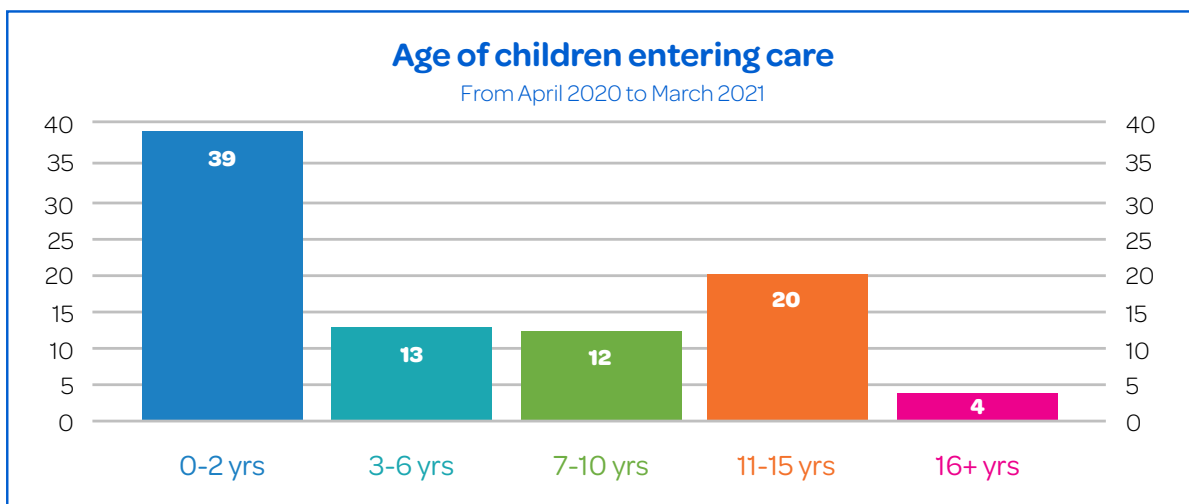
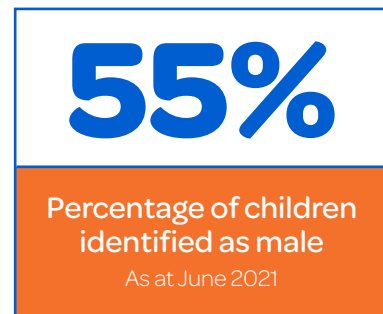
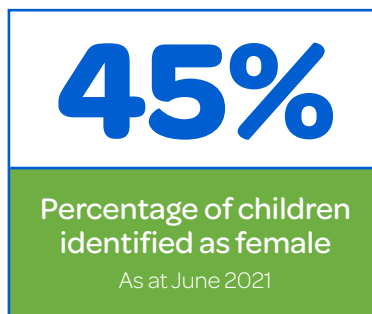
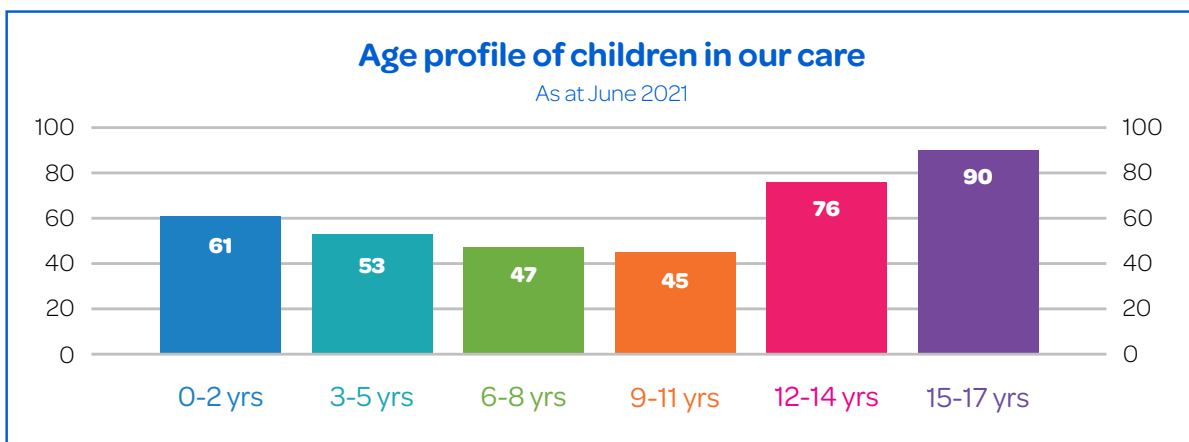


Additional Resources

Statutory guidance on applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers is [available at Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/Statutory-guidance-on-applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers.pdf)

The Local Picture

Key statistics and indicators from the Corporate Parenting Dashboard and other sources. Data correct as at June 2021.



41%

Percentage of Care Leavers aged 19 to 21 in education, employment or training

Comparator average - 51% in March 2020

97%

Percentage of Care Leavers aged 19 to 21 in touch with the council

No comparator data available

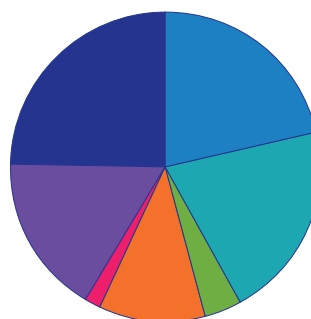
Where are children in care placed?

As at June 2021

Foster Placements (in-house)	121
Friends & Family	64
Foster Placements (in-house)	61
Placed with Parents	60
Children's Homes (agency)	24
Adoptive Placements	14
Res Accom Not Subject to CH Regs	13
Other	8
Children's Homes (in-house)	3
Prison/HMYOI	1
NHS	1
Secure	1
Family Centre/Mother & Baby Unit	1
Residential School	0
Independent Living	0

Destination of care leavers

From April 2020 to March 2021



Reached 18	27	21%
Returned to parents	26	21%
Moved in with relatives	5	4%
Other reason	14	11%
Child Arrangement Order	2	2%
Adopted	21	17%
Special Guardianship	31	25%

96 per 10,000

Number of children in our care per 10,000 of the 0-18 year old population

Comparator average - 107 per 10,000 in March 2020

97%

Percentage of Care Leavers aged 19 to 21 in suitable accommodation

Comparator average - 88% in March 2020

Percentage of children in our care with a disability

From a total cohort of 372

5%

Percentage in adoption placements

From a total cohort of 372

4%

Our Promise to Children in Care

What is our promise?

We have promised children and young people that they will be:

- ✓ able to know and trust their social worker or Personal Adviser
- ✓ listened to and told what to expect throughout their care journey
- ✓ able to tell us what is working well and what we could do better

How will we work with children and young people?

Children and young people will be:

- ✓ treated as an individual and not just a case number
- ✓ listened to and encouraged to contribute to the support they need
- ✓ given enough time to get to know their social worker or Personal Adviser

How will we achieve this promise?

We will make sure that children and young people:

- ✓ are able to talk freely and openly to their social worker or Personal Adviser
- ✓ are listened to about what they like and want, as well as any worries they have
- ✓ are listened to about what they enjoy doing at home and at school, such as hobbies
- ✓ play a role in deciding together about what help is needed for them and their family
- ✓ receive the right help at the right time - this includes from the council's services as well as other key services such as local health providers and their school or college
- ✓ feel comfortable telling us what is working well and what we could do differently

Our Priorities

01

Participation

This priority is about empowering children and young people to express their voices and influence the decisions we make

02

Placements

This priority is about making sure we provide children and young people with a safe, comfortable and caring home

03

Education

This priority is about making sure that children and young people can be happy and successful in their learning

04

Health

This priority is about looking after the health of children and young people including their physical and emotional needs

05

Identity

This priority is about supporting children and young people to build a sense of identity so that they know their own histories

06

Preparation for Adulthood

This priority is about supporting young people to develop the life skills they need to live independently when they grow older



Priority 01

Participation

Our Priority for 2021-2024

Care-experienced children and young people will be supported to make their voices heard so that they can influence the decisions and services that affect them. We will also ensure they are treated with respect and dignity at all times.

What Children and Young People said

Whilst developing this strategy, we asked some of the children and young people who take part in the Junior and Senior Voice groups what they thought of our priority for 2021-2024:

Senior Voice member
“Without our contributions, decisions may not hold the young person in mind”

Junior Voice member
“I like people to listen to what I am saying. This makes me feel happy, because I know I am being listened to”

Recent Achievements

Since the last version of this strategy, we have had the following successes:

- ✔ Continued to seek the views of children and young people to improve our services
- ✔ Appointed two care leavers to represent the voice of children and young people at important council meetings such as the Corporate Parenting Executive Board
- ✔ Used digital platforms to ensure access to the Voice groups during Covid-19
- ✔ Involved young people in the recruitment of key Children’s Services personnel
- ✔ Involved children and young people in Investing in Children Membership Award™ assessments for a range of services so they could have their say on the quality of these services, including what has been working well and what needs to improve



Priority 02

Placements

Our Priority for 2021-2024

Children in our care will have a safe, comfortable and caring place to live and grow up. We will ensure their carers have the right skills to look after them and try to make sure that they are able to live close to the place they were born so that they can maintain important relationships with members of their family.

What Children and Young People said

Whilst developing this strategy, we asked some of the children and young people who take part in the Junior and Senior Voice groups what they thought of our priority for 2021-2024:



Senior Voice member
“This priority is good and everyone needs a comfortable and safe place to live. This is something I have”



Junior Voice member
“I am confident that young people will feel supported in placements”

Recent Achievements

Since the last version of this strategy, we have had the following successes:

- ✓ Increase in the number of long-term foster placements
- ✓ Set up two new supported accommodation provisions in the borough, so that young people have an improved choice in placement options when they turn 16
- ✓ Increase in the number of foster carers who developed their skills through training
- ✓ Committed to the ‘Staying Put’ offer for young people aged 18 years or older who wish to remain with their foster carers into adulthood
- ✓ Made sure that transition planning starts earlier to ensure there are no gaps in the services and placement options available once young people are 18 years old



Priority 03

Education

Our Priority for 2021-2024

We will do everything that we can to meet the education needs of children in our care and care leavers by championing their attendance, attainment and progress so they can be successful in their learning and achieve their goals.

What Children and Young People said

Whilst developing this strategy, we asked some of the children and young people who take part in the Junior and Senior Voice groups what they thought of our priority for 2021-2024:

Senior Voice member

“This priority ensures that young people are supported to access education in any circumstance i.e. during Covid-19 or normal day-to-day living”

Junior Voice member

“I think that this priority is fantastic because I have everything that I need to have my dream job as a teacher”

Recent Achievements

Since the last version of this strategy, we have had the following successes:

- ✓ Everyone has a school place that can meet their needs
- ✓ In our most recent set of exams (2019) our Year 6 and Year 11 students performed above nationally expected levels when compared with other children and young people in care
- ✓ School attendance is very good with an average of 94%
- ✓ Setting up the New Directions service from the Virtual School to support young people as they leave school to go to college, training or work
- ✓ Only one permanent exclusion between 2017 and 2020



Priority 04

Health

Our Priority for 2021-2024

We will support improvements in the physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers by promoting access to local health services. This will support children and young people to make healthy choices and develop skills so that they can manage their own health.

This priority involves...

- ✓ Providing regular health assessments with a doctor, dentist and nurse
- ✓ Supporting children and young people to make positive health choices and providing them with opportunities to develop skills so that they can look after their own health
- ✓ Offering children and young people support and timely access to health services
- ✓ Making sure that health professionals know and understand the children and young people they work with, to improve the provision of support and reduce frustrations
- ✓ Using children and young people's views and experiences to shape health services
- ✓ Providing advice and support to help children and young people live healthier lives
- ✓ Supporting timely and effective transitions from Child to Adult health services

What Children and Young People said

Whilst developing this strategy, we asked some of the children and young people who take part in the Junior and Senior Voice groups what they thought of our priority for 2021-2024:

Senior Voice member
"This [is] everything that we can hope for from a Health priority. It covers all areas"

Junior Voice member
"People need to know that we need supporting with our health and wellbeing. I think this is a good priority because our health is important"



Priority 05

Identity

Our Priority for 2021-2024

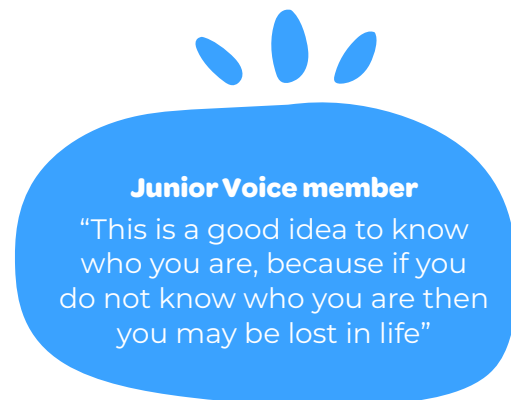
We will ensure that children and young people know who they are, and why they came to be looked after. We will celebrate the differences that make each and every one of them unique and help them to develop their self-esteem.

What Children and Young People said

Whilst developing this strategy, we asked some of the children and young people who take part in the Junior and Senior Voice groups what they thought of our priority for 2021-2024:



Senior Voice member
“This is something that I agree with, we are supported with our identity and what we can achieve”



Junior Voice member
“This is a good idea to know who you are, because if you do not know who you are then you may be lost in life”

Recent Achievements

Since the last version of this strategy, we have had the following successes:

- ✓ Ensured that children and young people in long-term foster care were provided with information about their life story
- ✓ Provided training for social workers to improve their skills in helping children and young people to better understand their life history and experiences
- ✓ Recruited a diverse group of foster carers to make sure that, wherever possible, children and young people are able to live with carers who reflect their cultural and religious background



Priority 06

Preparation for Adulthood

Our Priority for 2021-2024

We will help young people develop life skills by the time they leave care so they are able to care for themselves and live independently when they become an adult. We will also help support access to education, training or employment.

What Children and Young People said

Whilst developing this strategy, we asked some of the children and young people who take part in the Junior and Senior Voice groups what they thought of our priority for 2021-2024:

Senior Voice member
"This leaves me feeling confident, when moving into that stage in my life"

Junior Voice member
"This is really important - as adults we need to be able to look after ourselves"

Recent Achievements

Since the last version of this strategy, we have had the following successes:

- ✔ Increased the number of young people 'staying put' with their foster carers
- ✔ A number of care leavers have attended university and achieved great results
- ✔ We have worked with New Directions and education staff at colleges to make sure young people are able to access advice and guidance about their next steps in life
- ✔ Developed a range of courses to support young people back into education
- ✔ Ensured that the voices of young people are heard in their Personal Education Plans
- ✔ Supported young people to find a safe and comfortable place to live

Corporate Parenting Priorities

Key Actions & Indicators of Success



Priority 1 - Participation

We have committed to...

- ✓ Increasing the range of children's rights and participation training available for people who work with children and for children and young people themselves, including the development of a Young Inspectors model. Where possible, we will accredit that training
- ✓ Offering a range of voice groups and opportunities to make sure we increase the number of children and young people engaging in participation, youth voice and social action activity (meaning being involved in doing something positive in their community)
- ✓ Sharing best practice and promote the achievements of children and young people with staff and partners, the public and other children and young people using all available forums – including social media (when appropriate)
- ✓ Ensuring that participation is as diverse as possible and that activities/programmes are developed and delivered for all young people
- ✓ Increase the range of opportunities for vulnerable children and young people to share their voice and to be able to challenge, question and offer their views locally, regionally and nationally
- ✓ The timely and quality recording and reporting of the impact of participation, youth voice and social action activity
- ✓ Increasing the group of children and young people who have been trained and supported to contribute to recruitment processes
- ✓ Investigating and developing a Young Inspectors programme that has commitment from all partners. This will empower children and young people to inspect the services they receive in Blackburn with Darwen



Priority 1 - Participation

What will success look like?

- ✓ Quarterly reporting based on feedback from the individual Champions across all service areas - including what has worked well and what we need to do better, and how services are implementing changes following the feedback from children and young people
- ✓ Good practice that evidences the work of children and young people will be shared, showcased and celebrated
- ✓ Regular reporting on the outcomes and learning from consultation activity with children and young people will be carried out, ensuring their voices are heard and that the impact they make on the improvements in service delivery is recorded and recognised
- ✓ An increase in participation activity with a clear impact on learning and development for children and young people
- ✓ An increase in the number of services achieving the Investing in Children membership award and/or who have committed to participation in the Young Inspectors Model

Priority 2 - Placements

We have committed to...

- ✓ Making sure that children and young people are living in a placement with carers who understand their needs and are able to ensure that these needs are well met to promote their emotional well-being
- ✓ Ensuring that children and young people have regular family time with those who are closest to them, including quality time with the professionals who form their support network
- ✓ Making the recruitment of more foster carers in the borough our focus and priority so that more children and young people can benefit from local placements in Blackburn with Darwen





- ✓ The training and development of our foster carers so that more children and young people, whatever their needs, can be placed within a family in situations where this is possible and appropriate
- ✓ Ensuring that children and young people have positive and supportive relationships to support them as they grow up and approach adulthood, with greater consistency of key professionals in their lives
- ✓ Making sure that children and young people are living with people who understand them, and can provide a nurturing and warm placement where they can feel secure
- ✓ Supporting children and young people to develop your independence skills early in their lives, not just when they are approaching adulthood and preparing to move out

Priority 2 - Placements

What will success look like?

- ✓ We have will have higher number of children and young people in placements with in-house foster carers
- ✓ We will have a growing number of young people who are matched long term with their foster carers to promote their emotional stability and support their permanence plan
- ✓ For those young people who wish to stay with their foster carers post 18, they will be supported to do so with an increased number of 'Staying Put' placements
- ✓ The number of children and young people who have had 3 or more placements over a 2 year period will greatly reduce, achieving greater stability
- ✓ We have fewer out of borough placements overall, keeping our local children in local placements



Priority 3 - Education

We have committed to...

- ✓ Helping children and young people to have a positive return to their education setting after the disruption in 2020/21 and to support them with any issues they might have
- ✓ Checking on children and young people's academic attainment and progress ensuring they are getting the right support at the right time to help them achieve
- ✓ Listening to and responding to children and young people's views on their education and celebrating their successes
- ✓ Training school staff and other professionals to help them better understand the needs of care-experienced pupils
- ✓ Providing help from specialist staff at the times when children and young people most need it

Priority 3 - Education

What will success look like?

- ✓ Everyone will have a school place that meets their needs so they can be happy and successful
- ✓ We will have better academic outcomes at the end of primary and secondary school than other children and young people in care across the country
- ✓ Attendance will continue to be good and increase to at least 95%, and we will have better attendance than other areas across the country
- ✓ After secondary school everyone will have a place to go to in either education, training or employment
- ✓ We will hold a celebration of achievement event every year





Priority 4 - Health

We have committed to...

- ✔ Providing ongoing health support for looked after children and care leavers up to the age of 25
- ✔ Co-ordinating and supporting health professionals and other agencies in all issues in relation to the health needs of looked after children and care leavers
- ✔ Providing training to foster carers and the wider health and social care economy to raise awareness of looked after children/care leavers' health needs and the role of a corporate parent
- ✔ Facilitating the completion of a high quality six monthly/annual health assessment for all looked after children up the age of 18 years
- ✔ Ensuring that all young people leaving care will receive a letter summarising their health details, immunisation status, ongoing health needs and key health contacts, for example, GP and dental details
- ✔ Supporting transitions from child services to adult services - for example, CAMHS/ELCAS to Adult mental health services

Priority 4 - Health

What will success look like?

- ✔ Data will evidence good performance in terms of children who are up to date with dental assessments and their immunisations
- ✔ All children and young people have been offered a health assessment which is subsequently completed within time scales and meets the required quality standard
- ✔ Health summary letters for young people leaving care - a copy to be kept within the young person's health records as evidence. Audits to be undertaken to monitor this



- ✔ Evaluation forms received from delegates who attend training sessions will evidence their effectiveness
- ✔ Evidence of contacts recorded with the Enhanced LAC Nurse team from Personal Advisor, young people and Social Worker
- ✔ Evidence of support for transitions from child to adult services will be recorded on the Health contact spreadsheet
- ✔ Feedback from looked after children, care leavers and the professionals and carers who provide support will be positive



Priority 5 - Identity

We have committed to...

- ✔ Helping children and young people to keep a record of important events, achievements and people in their lives
- ✔ Positively encourage children and young people and celebrate their successes
- ✔ Supporting and helping to strengthen the relationships that are important to children and young people and helping them stay connected to those that they love throughout their childhood and into adulthood
- ✔ Promoting agreed terminology across the partnership to avoid jargon or language that makes young people feel uncomfortable

Priority 5 - Identity

What will success look like?

- ✔ Life stories and other direct work tools will be consistently used to make sure that children and young people can access information about their life stories to understand what happened in their past and provide them with a better sense of their identity



- ✔ Where possible, the professionals in the lives of children and young people (including their social worker) will stay the same
- ✔ Consultations with care-experienced children and young people about their views of life in care will take place and these will inform the work of Children's Services, our partners and other corporate parents



Priority 6 - Preparation for Adulthood

We have committed to...

- ✔ Developing opportunities for care-experienced young people to access local apprenticeship schemes
- ✔ Developing links with local training and employment providers in the borough
- ✔ Ensuring that care-experienced young people have support in all areas, to help them reach their goals and potential
- ✔ Providing young people with a careers advisor to help them access education, employment or training
- ✔ Improving access to the council's mental health services via the REVIVE team
- ✔ Improving access to community leisure facilities in the community
- ✔ Treating every care-experienced young person as an individual with their own unique needs - no 'one size fits all'
- ✔ Doing what we can to make sure that children and young people have stability in their lives and the skills they need to grow into independent adults - this includes a focus on 'Staying Put'
- ✔ Developing training for foster carers on independence and the role of Leaving Care



Priority 6 - Preparation for Adulthood

What will success look like?

- ✔ Increase in care-experienced young people having a safe and suitable place to call home
- ✔ Increase in young people accessing relevant education, employment or training
- ✔ Increase in young people attending, and being successful, at university - if this aligns with their ambitions and goals
- ✔ Care-experienced young people will have a good quality Pathway Plan that is reviewed every six months
- ✔ Young people will have the skills and knowledge they need to become independent
- ✔ Care-experienced young people will receive ongoing support during their remaining time in education
- ✔ Increase in young people accessing community services

Making It Happen

The responsibility for achieving the commitments we have made to looked after children and care leavers is shared by the whole authority in partnership with relevant agencies, such as education establishments and local health services.

Elected Members

Elected members will provide the political and professional leadership of our corporate parenting commitment and will advocate for looked after children and care leavers by prioritising their needs in council decision-making, considering how plans and policies might affect them, and ensuring that the council is honouring the pledges it has made.

Related priorities:

01

02

03

04

05

06

Children's Services

Children's Services staff are likely to have the most direct contact with our children in care and care leavers and are expected to reflect corporate parenting principles when carrying out their duties. This includes a commitment to effective participation and a continued focus on improving the outcomes of each and every child or young person.

Related priorities:

01

02

03

04

05

06

Public Health

The council's Public Health function will support improved health outcomes for looked after children and care leavers through the consideration of their physical, emotional and mental health needs when developing strategies and commissioning services.

Related priorities:

01

04

Health services

Health service providers will play an important role in improving the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of all looked after children and care leavers. This includes the provision of regular health assessments and ensuring timely access to health services.

Related priorities: 01 04

Schools and colleges

Schools, colleges and other education establishments have a range of responsibilities including monitoring the progress of looked after children, making sure that children in care and care leavers are in school and supporting them to achieve academic success.

Related priorities: 01 03 06

Virtual School

The Virtual School will provide leadership, strategic direction and foster partnership working with schools to secure successful educational outcomes for children in care and care leavers, and narrow the attainment gap so everyone can reach their potential.

Related priorities: 01 03 06

Housing Needs

The council's housing team will play an important role in supporting the provision of suitable and safe accommodation options for care leavers who are ready to live more independently. This also includes a duty towards mitigating the risk of homelessness.

Related priorities: 01 06

The Police and Other Services

The police, community organisations and others will provide important services and support for our looked after children and care leavers to keep them safe and meet their individual needs. This includes the provision of advice and guidance, mentoring, victim support, drug and alcohol services, community leisure facilities and transport links etc.

Being Accountable

Children and young people have told us that they would like to receive feedback on a regular basis to see how well we are using the strategy to improve outcomes. To enable this, we have identified leads for each of the six strategic priorities.

Priority	Lead
Participation	Imran Akuji Head of Adolescents, Partnerships & Performance Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Placements	Judith Fennell Head of Permanence and Corporate Parenting Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Education	Charlotte Hesketh LAC Virtual Head & Assessment Officer Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Health	Caroline Waldron Deputy Designated Nurse - Safeguarding Children and LAC Blackburn with Darwen CCG and East Lancashire CCG
Identity	Elizabeth Mannion Service Lead - Children in Our Care, Children with Disabilities and Leaving Care Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Preparation for Adulthood	Elizabeth Mannion Service Lead - Children in Our Care, Children with Disabilities and Leaving Care Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Messages From Children in Care

When producing this strategy, we asked children and young people who take part in the Junior and Senior Voice groups to share their views and experiences of being in care to help corporate parents, like yourself, get to know them better.

I am 10 years old + have been in foster care since I was 7. My foster carer has helped me when I was home schooling. I have been to lots of fun places in the last 3 years that I have never been. I now attend the Junior Voice group and have made new friends. I have also done archery, canoeing, arts and crafts, sports and baking. My old social worker really helped me with things that I needed like arranged contact with my mum. I feel happy and looked after :)

Maisie, 10 years old

"I am 10 years old. I have been in foster care since I was 7. My foster carer has helped me when I was home schooling. I have been to lots of fun places in the last 3 years that I have never been. I now attend the Junior Voice group and have made new friends. I have also done archery, canoeing, arts and crafts, sports and baking. My old social worker really helped me with things that I needed like arranged contact with my mum. I feel happy and looked after :)"

I am Taome and I'm 9/10 on the 5th of December
I joined my auntie and uncle (foster carer)
when I was 5 nearly 6 so I've been with them
for 4 years they have helped me through
everything I am really enjoying living with
them. I go to the Junior voice and
find it really fun my social worker is
currently helping us get the SGO

Taome, 9 years old

"I am Taome and I'm 9/10 on the 5th of December. I joined my aunty and uncle (foster carer) when I was 5, nearly 6, so I've been with them for 4 years. They have helped me through everything. I am really enjoying living with them. I go to the Junior Voice and find it really fun. My social worker is currently helping us get the SGO".

My name is Amber & I am 15 years
old. I was placed in foster care on the
6th April so roughly about 4 & a half
years. I couldn't ask for anyone else
as my foster carer supports me so
much. I am also very lucky to be
able to live with my brother too!

I have learnt lots of new skills
and has been introduced to lots of
new things like the voice & majorettes.

Amber, 15 years old

"My name is Amber and I am 15 years old. I was placed in foster carer on the 6th [of] April, so roughly about 4 and a half years [ago]. I couldn't ask for anyone else as my foster carer supports me so much. I am also very lucky to be able to live with my brother too! I have learned lots of new skills and have been introduced to lots of new things like the Voice and Majorettes".

Your Pledges To Our Children & Young People



Tracy Lysons

Early Help & Support Service Manager

The Early Help service will mentor and seek to offer opportunities for children and young people, helping to raise aspirations.



Janette Clarke

Head of Social Care - Children's

I promise to strive towards all children achieving a sense of belonging in a permanent family setting where they feel safe, happy and can reach their full potential.



Paul Fleming

Strategic Director, Resources

I will ensure we listen and then apply innovative approaches to support the delivery of improved outcomes for our children.



Jo Siddle

Deputy Director - Education & Schools

I pledge to ensure our children receive the highest quality of Education, listening to need and ensuring our children are at the heart of decisions made.



Denise Park

Chief Executive

I will continue to meet and listen to all of our children and young people.



Shirley Goodhew

Consultant in Public Health

I promise to seek the views of young people to inform local policy and programmes to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

Your Pledges To Our Children & Young People



Andrea Sturgess

Head of Communications & Engagement

I pledge to listen to young people and improve how we target our main communications messages to reach them and meet their needs.



Imran Akuji

Head of Adolescents, Partnerships & Performance

I pledge to ensure we work alongside children and young people to build confidence and develop new skills, ensuring that you are empowered and your views are heard to help influence decisions and shape services you receive.



Dwayne Lowe

Head of Highways & Network Operations

I pledge to work with local learning providers to develop more opportunities for supported internships and work experience providing an exit route for young people with additional learning needs and/or disabilities from education into the workplace.



Anna Haworth

Named Nurse for Looked After Children (NHS)

We promise to engage with children and young people, listening to their health concerns and to support meeting those health needs as quickly as possible



Thank you to the children and young people of the the Voice Forums who have produced this strategy in collaboration with us.



SC360599

Registered provider: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home is registered to provide care for up to four children. The home's statement of purpose states that it provides care for children who, for various reasons, are unable to live with their own families.

The previous registered manager resigned her post in in July 2021. A manager has been appointed and is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021. We last visited this setting on 10 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 13 and 15 December 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 4 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/03/2020	Full	Good
29/01/2019	Full	Good
25/09/2017	Full	Good
29/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children enjoy stable and predictable care. Staff work hard to establish good routines for children. This supports children's health and participation in the daily life of the home.

Children are supported to value the role that education plays in their lives. Staff are persistent in their encouragement of children to attend school and achieve. Most children have good school attendance. Those who struggle to engage daily are offered continuous support from the staff. From their starting points, all children have made progress in this area of their lives.

Staff establish clear and consistent boundaries for children. These boundaries contribute to children's sense of safety and well-being. Over time, children learn how to manage their emotions. On the whole, staff respond appropriately to children's infringements of rules. However, this is not always consistent. On occasion, staff actions have contributed to a situation escalating and a child having to be restrained.

Children enjoy a range of activities that staff provide. These include visiting parks, playing football, swimming, visiting arcades and going for rides on their bikes.

Children have access to specialist input, such as play therapy and the local authority's psychological services. A social worker considered that staff had been instrumental in one child accessing these services, when previously he had always refused. These services have been used to good effect in helping one child to enjoy a family wedding. An independent reviewing officer commented: 'They spent a long time preparing him and, as a result, he had a wonderful day. It was meticulously planned.'

The independent visitor identified that the home has required extensive redecoration and repair for over six months. This was only beginning to be addressed at the time of the inspection. As a result, some children's bedrooms are poorly decorated and have broken furniture and holes in the plasterwork. Many doors are scuffed and plasterwork in the sitting room is damaged.

Some children struggle with maintaining their bedrooms. One child's bedroom floor was strewn with large drawers and the contents laid out on the floor. There was no identifiable plan as to how staff were going to overcome the child's resistance to addressing this. This is despite this having been identified by staff as an ongoing issue.

Staff consult with children about menu planning and activities they would like to do. However, outside of statutory reviews, children do not contribute regularly to their

care plans or setting their goals. There is no mechanism for capturing this in a child-friendly way.

Staff do not routinely record their individual work with children. This significantly limits managerial oversight, opportunities to improve the care that is offered and review its effect on children. The work is not planned in a focused and proactive manner.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Overall, children are helped to become safer and there is regular liaison with social workers and specialist agencies. This liaison assists staff to formulate appropriate responses to the risks that children may face. All professionals consulted felt that children were safe living at the home. Children also said that they felt safe.

Staff understand children's individual vulnerabilities and demonstrate good insight into their previous life experiences. Children have learned to trust staff and begun to share their worries and concerns with staff.

All professionals spoken to considered that staff work hard to establish trusting relationships with children. They considered that these relationships have supported children to navigate the emotional turmoil that can result from care proceedings and family life events.

When children go missing from home, generally, staff respond appropriately. They go looking for children, try to establish their whereabouts, search for them and report them as missing to the police. However, staff practice is not always consistent. For example, in one incident, staff were not proactive in dissuading a child from leaving the home. In another incident, it is not clear why staff returned to the home without the children once they had been located. Children's risk assessments in these instances had not been followed and managerial evaluation of the incidents did not address these issues.

An allegation made against a member of staff was not referred to the designated officer for consideration, nor notified to Ofsted. In addition, the child was spoken to about the allegation by a member of staff about whom the allegation was made. The child's social worker was consulted, as was the child's therapist. Managers present at the time of the inspection took steps to address these omissions.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Since the monitoring visit in March 2021, the previous manager resigned her registration and a new manager has been appointed. The new manager was not available during this inspection.

Due to periods of sickness, and COVID-19-related absences, managerial oversight of the home has weakened. As a result, monitoring systems have not been maintained. There has not been suitable review or evaluation of staff recordings. For example, some incidents were only recorded in 'diary sheets' and not on the expected 'incident forms'. This reduces social worker and managerial insight into children's risks.

Managers are unable to offer an overview or analysis of important areas affecting children's lives. For example, the number of incidents of going missing from home, restraints, sanctions, direct-work sessions, allegations and complaints lacked oversight. Managers recognise this weakness. In response, they have recently developed the means of collecting this information.

Managers have not ensured that the home is maintained and repaired in a timely way. As a result, this does not provide children with an environment that is comfortable, welcoming and homely.

Some serious incidents or allegations have not been notified to Ofsted within a reasonable timescale, or been referred to the designated officer. Some responses to children have not received appropriate managerial scrutiny, challenge or evaluation.

Staff feel well supported by managers and colleagues. This support is formal and informal. Staff receive supervision and regularly meet as a team. These meetings provide staff with opportunities to discuss children's progress and plans. Staff are also guided in their work through regular discussions with the local authority's psychologist.

Staff supervision is well recorded and there is evidence of good practice, such as staff being encouraged to reflect on their relationships with children.

What does the children’s home need to do to improve? Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children’s Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the ‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations, including the quality standards’. The registered person must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(c))</p>	31 January 2022
<p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children’s home’s overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(vii))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the prompt repair of damage to the home, and that the home environment is maintained to a good and welcoming standard.</p>	31 January 2022
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that—</p> <p>helps children to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p>	31 January 2022

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(h))</p> <p>This specifically relates to embedding managerial monitoring systems, capturing children’s progress effectively and an ongoing review of their progress.</p>	
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(vii))</p> <p>This specifically relates to staff following the advice and steps laid out in children’s missing from home risk assessments and staff clearly recording their actions when children go missing from home. This also refers to staff clearly recording incidents in line with managerial expectations and established systems.</p>	31 January 2022
<p>Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children.</p> <p>In particular, the procedures must provide that no person who is the subject of a complaint takes any part in its consideration or investigation, except at the informal</p>	31 January 2022

<p>resolution stage if the registered person considers it appropriate.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (1) (2) (3))</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of the measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; and</p> <p>within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(v)(c))</p> <p>This specifically refers to the manager’s evaluation of events leading up to the incident and ensuring that children are given the opportunity to discuss the incident with the manager or designated person.</p>	<p>31 January 2022</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children take an active and ongoing role in developing their plans and goals. The plans should be written in a way that is easily accessible and meaningful for the child. ('Guide to the children’s homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered person should ensure that up-to-date records are kept regarding work carried out with children and how this contributes to their overall plan and progress. ('Guide to the children’s homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation,

and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC360599

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall, King William Street, Blackburn BB1 7DY

Responsible individual: Judith Fennell

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Pauline Yates, Social Care Inspector

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Summary for children and young people

Name of children's home: Appletrees

URN: SC372511

Date of inspection: 30 November 2021

It was lovely to meet some of you when I visited your home in December.

I enjoyed seeing all the artwork and photos on the walls and being with you when you picked out a photograph of yourself.

You are very safe at the home.

Staff make sure you are happy and content whilst you are there.

It was nice to see you playing games with staff.

The garden is lovely and you have lots of things like swings, bikes and climbing frames to play on.

Staff understand you very well. They know how to comfort you when you might be upset.

I hope you enjoy the Christmas celebrations.

Best wishes,

Pauline

SC372511

Registered provider: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides a short-break service for up to five children at any one time. The service provides care for children who may have learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities and other complex healthcare needs.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted to manage the home since 2015.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 30 November and 1 December 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 26 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
30/01/2019	Full	Outstanding
03/10/2017	Full	Outstanding
28/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children have enriching and life-enhancing experiences when they access this short-break service. They thrive and benefit from the exceptional care and opportunities that are offered by dedicated staff.

Staff offer care that is highly sensitive to children's individual, and often complex, needs. Relationships that develop between staff and children are sustained over many years.

Collaboration between staff and parents is particularly strong. Extremely thorough planning and ongoing liaison ensure that all children benefit from their stays. Staff take great care to ensure that children are given familiar and comforting surroundings, alongside new and fun activities.

Children benefit from a home that is welcoming and very child-focused. The walls are decorated with their photographs and achievements, and the environment is maintained to the best possible standards. When children visit, they have access to a large and well-equipped indoor environment. This offers children good space for play and exploration. The large garden also offers a lot of play equipment, including a new wheelchair swing and newly installed sensory garden. This provides children with greater opportunities to explore and play outside.

Parents expressed the highest level of trust in staff to care for their children. They said that their children express excitement when they go to stay. A great deal of attention and thought are given to matching children's skills, interests and vulnerabilities. This careful matching forms the basis of children's very successful and rewarding stays.

Introductions to the service are carefully planned, in collaboration with parents, schools and other professionals. The introductions move at the child's pace and are informed by detailed observations and feedback by staff and the views of parents.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Staff overcome any communication difficulties children have and engage children sensitively. As a result, children develop trusting relationships with staff and feel safe. The service offers children well-planned opportunities to spend time away from their family home. This increases their confidence and, in turn, reduces their vulnerability.

The environment is arranged so that children can explore freely while remaining safe from hazards or accidents.

Children's vulnerabilities and means of communication are understood very well by the staff. Staff are attuned to how children express themselves and are vigilant to any changes that may indicate discomfort or distress and respond quickly.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding matters. They receive enhanced training to ensure that their skills in communicating with children are well informed and correspond to children's needs. For example, staff receive training in a unique language programme, and all staff have recently undergone accredited advanced training in autism spectrum disorder.

The home has a newly converted area that provides a well-furnished, discrete living space. This area is used creatively to slowly introduce children to the service and avoids children becoming overwhelmed. From here, children can freely choose to join the main group of children staying that night. This area also allows staff to fully assess children's abilities and interests and, in turn, informs the matching process with other children already accessing the service. It has also provided extended stays for children when there have been serious safeguarding concerns. For example, it provided a safe and known place for one child to stay until safeguarding issues had been addressed.

Care provided to children is regularly discussed in detail in both supervision and team meetings. This ensures that any changes to plans, behaviours or concerns are regularly explored by staff and managers. Plans detailing children's vulnerabilities are extremely detailed and offer staff advice on how best to respond to children.

The manager has high expectations of the care staff offer children. On one occasion, when supervision of a child was not as expected, the manager acted quickly and decisively to address the issue. This oversight, which provides a rapid response, keeps children safe.

Staff use their knowledge of children to de-escalate distress or heightened behaviour. This is done successfully and, as a result, physical intervention is rarely required. However, when it is used, records do not capture the names of individual staff who were involved at certain times during the incident.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is very ambitious for the service to continuously evolve and develop. He is confident in his role and has high expectations of staff to provide the best possible care. He leads a stable and highly experienced staff team that is committed to providing children and their families with an exceptional service.

Alongside securing the additional facilities, the manager has organised for parents to meet informally. This is in addition to the more formal parental group. Parents have found this beneficial, with one parent describing it as an opportunity to talk to other parents 'about our struggles'.

A particular strength of the service is the wrap-around support that is offered to parents outside children's stays. Parents spoke very highly of this ad hoc and responsive support. One parent described the service as a 'life saver'.

Liaison with parents of children who access the service is excellent. This open and frequent communication forms the basis of exceptionally strong partnership working. The strength of these relationships was described by a parent as being 'like family'.

Professionals consider the short-break service to be an integral and important part of the services offered to children and families. They find the managers to be knowledgeable, flexible and responsive. A professional described the service offered to children as 'absolutely fantastic'.

There are well-developed monitoring systems in place, which are robust and ensure that all aspects of the service function to the highest standards. Feedback is continuously sought from parents, children and professionals. These strong relationships ensure that the best possible care is offered.

A great deal of attention and care are given to recording children's stays. This offers both insight and assurance to parents and forms an essential part of monitoring the success of children's stays.

Staff receive regular formal and informal guidance and support. Staff supervision, daily discussions and team meetings centre on the needs of the children accessing the service. This ensures that staff are confident in their roles and are continuously motivated to be ambitious for children and a positive influence in their lives.

What does the children's home need to do to improve? Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint detail individual staff's involvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC372511

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall, King William Street, Blackburn BB1 7DY

Responsible individual: Elizabeth Mannion

Registered manager: Jeremy Wood

Inspector

Pauline Yates, Social Care Inspector

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