



# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Executive Member for Children, Young People & Education
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	Strategic Director of Children's Services
<b>DATE:</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> June 2022

<b>PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:</b>	Children, Young People & Education
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	<b>YES</b> ✓ <b>NO</b>

**SUBJECT: Update on Children's Services ILACS Inspection**

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blackburn with Darwen Children's Services received an Ofsted 'Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services' (ILACS) across the three week period 24 January 2022 and 4 February 2022. This report sets out progress since the Inspection on the key areas and seeks approval for financial and governance arrangements to monitor the effectiveness of improvement activity.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Delegates the scrutiny of the delivery of the Post ILACS Inspection Action Plan to the Achieving Excellence Board
- Gives approval to a supplementary revenue estimate of £906,000 to fund the delivery of the Action Plan (Appendix) in 2022/23 to be funded from contingent sums earmarked for Social Care (and acknowledge that, subject to review as part of the Council's normal budgetary procedures, the estimated full year cost of the Action Plan (estimated to be £923k) will form part of the Council's Budget from 2023/24)
- Notes that subject to the refinement of the Action Plan, any further financial implications arising from the delivery of the Action Plan will be considered in line with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules.

## 3. BACKGROUND

In April 2022 the Executive Board was informed of the findings and recommendations of the ILACS inspection and of the plan to establish a multi-agency partnership 'Achieving Excellence Board' to monitor improvements and build on existing strengths.

The Board met on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022 for the inaugural meeting, and agreed a terms of reference with a focus on ensuring that the lived experiences of children and young people and the feedback from the workforce is captured and influences the work of the Board. The action plan will be phased to focus on the three main areas; multi-agency strategy discussions; data and assurance, and our services and support for care leavers up to the age of 25.

In June the key theme will be Support for Care Leavers; the August focus is Quality Assurance and the theme for October is progress on the effectiveness of multi-agency strategy discussions.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS**

Progress in the three main areas of focus since March 2022 is:

##### **Care Leavers:**

- All Pathway Plans for Care Leavers are being reviewed to reflect their living arrangements, and this process will be completed by the end of June. Pathway plan training is planned with an external provider to ensure all that pathway plans are SMART and ambitious.
- New leadership of the Leaving Care Service is in place and a full service review has been initiated.
- A Leaving Care Forum for young people and young adults has been launched, and met for the first time in April. Care Leavers are taking an active role in developing the Leaving Care Service, including the scrutiny of the Achieving Excellence Improvement Plan and the development of a young person version of the plan.
- As part of the service review, systems and recording of data has been scrutinised to ensure that performance information is accurate and reflects practice.
- The Duty system in place at the time of the inspection has been stepped down and replaced with an appropriate service to respond to queries from our care leavers.
- Training and development across Leaving Care Service is underway including training on case recordings, and further training planned on trauma-informed practice and systemic practice.

##### **Strategy Discussions**

- The quality of strategy discussions is being reviewed weekly and the percentage of good and outstanding discussions has risen significantly since March.
- Children's Services and Police senior management continue to meet regularly to review and address any concerns to ensure that necessary improvements in practice are sustained and any learning is embedded.
- For practitioners, a mandatory workshop has been delivered jointly by the Police and Children's Social Care to share good practice.
- A partnership approach has been established to review the contact and referrals coming into the Children's Advice & Duty Service.
- Social Care leads have worked collaboratively with Team Managers and Social Workers to share audit findings, deliver individual learning and share good practice.

##### **Quality Assurance:**

- The quality assurance framework is tracking and monitoring all aspects of Children's Services Activity through audit, complaints and compliments, data and feedback.
- The framework will be reviewed in the next quarter, and from June 2022 the service is piloting a revised routine audit toolkit which will enable data to be gathered on compliance, quality of practice and our use of the systemic model.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Governance arrangements have been reviewed and the Achieving Excellence Board will oversee and drive the delivery of the Action Plan, to address the recommendations in the Inspection report and improve the impact on outcomes for children and young people in the borough.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The estimated cost of delivering the Action Plan set out at Appendix A is £906,000 in 2022/23. This recognises that, whilst rapid action will be taken in relation to some actions, it is likely that the employment of staff set out in the Action Plan will be subject to the normal recruitment processes (advertisement, interview and notice periods) and may be subject to a short delay.

Some elements of the Action Plan comprise one-off measures to deal with acute matters arising from the Inspection (auditing of activity, training etc). As a consequence, the full year effect of the investment is estimated to be £923k.

It is intended to fund this additional investment from a contingent amount of Social Care grant held back in anticipation of demand pressures in Social Care during 2022/23 (and on an ongoing basis). This is sufficient to fund the investment in 2022/23 and on an ongoing basis without any additional drawdown from the Council's reserves. However, to the extent that those demand pressures arise, the Council will need to consider what other measures may be necessary to ensure the budget for the year remains in balance.

As indicated above, the Action Plan will be subject to further refinement as the financial year progresses acknowledging that the Council's response needs to be both immediate, to deal with some of the issues raised in the Inspection, and developed, to ensure that the improvements in the service are sustained to deliver the best outcomes for Children in a way that remains affordable for the Council.

Finally, to ensure that the Executive Board is sighted on the outcomes being achieved by this investment, and aside from any updates provided on progress with the delivery of the Action Plan, this matter will be considered as part of the regular Budget Monitoring reports submitted to the Executive Board. Equally, the extent to which additional investment is sustained and any measures to mitigate the financial impact for the Council will be considered as part of the development of the Council's budget for 2023/24.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The action plan has been drafted in compliance with The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities Regulations 2007) following publication on 18th March 2022 by Ofsted of the report on their inspection into the effectiveness of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Children's Services.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

A benchmarking exercise has been undertaken to address areas for improvement.

Staffing levels and entitlement offers for young people have been reviewed. This includes staffing models and capacity and strengthened management oversight to improve the quality of practice and effectiveness of the service.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1  Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2  In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3  In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

The Achieving Excellence Board have approved the improvement plan and associated activity. The membership of this Board comprises of an Independent Chair; Executive Member for Children, Young People & Education; Chair of the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee; Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Chief Executive; Senior Leads across Children’s Service, Lancashire Constabulary and Clinical Commissioning Groups; Local Government Association Improvement Advisor and a Workforce representative.

The views and experiences of children and families are central to monitoring the effectiveness of the action plan, and focus groups are planned to explore key areas. This is in addition to routine participation activity delivered as part of the Children & Young People Participation Strategy (2021-2024).

## 11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council’s Code of Corporate Governance.

## 12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

<b>VERSION:</b>	<b>1</b>
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<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Jayne Ivory, Strategic Director of Children’s Services Justine Westwell, Business & Governance Manager, Children’s Services
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<b>DATE:</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
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<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	Appendix A – Post ILACS Inspection Action Plan Additional Expenditure
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