

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN CARE & CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE INFORMATION

Recent regional analysis and national publicity has pointed to increasing demand pressures on children's services. In particular, the North West region and the North generally has seen rising numbers of children in care over the past 12 months, with particular pressure around children and young people in older age groups with very complex social and behavioural issues. Over the past year, Blackburn with Darwen has moved towards the regional norm with a marked rise in the number of children in care placed in the most costly residential placements.

The number of Children in our Care is 346, a fall of 50 since the start of the new year, reflecting the impact of several recent initiatives, such as Family Group Conferencing and the Complex Case multi-agency Hub for high-risk domestic violence cases. The number of children subject to child protection plans remains high and steady at 263, and the total number of children and young people open to Children's Social Care remains high at 1,749. In addition, 591 children are being supported by Early Help services, 6 children have been adopted since April 2017 and 19 children are currently placed in adoptive placements.

FOSTER CARE FORTNIGHT 2018, 14th-27th May

Foster Care Fortnight saw a really positive response on social media with 81 new followers and our posts viewed on nearly 25k screens. Over 4k people liked, commented and shared our posts spreading the fostering messaging further than ever before. We worked closely with local radio station 2BR over the fortnight and a number of our looked after children went to the station to be interviewed. The 2BR website was taken over and fully branded with LetsFoster.co.uk messages and adverts aired to spread the message.

The campaign closed by linking in with The Secret Santa charity which fundraises to provide presents for underprivileged children at Christmas, as well as making sure that older members of the community are not left alone. To raise money for the charity I, along with Youth MP, Elle Walsh, took part in a duct tape challenge raising £500.

ADOLESCENT REVIEW

To help shape the department's developing Adolescent Strategy, consultations have taken place with a cross section of young people, the children's workforce and partner agencies. A consultation with lead Members also took place on 5th July to explore the issues facing young people and how they can be supported. The borough-wide Adolescent Strategy has started to take shape to identify clear aims and priority areas and will look to address key challenges experienced by young people.

A key area of focus is to review the residential service and this area of business has been prioritised due to demand and pressure on the service. Work is underway to transform the offer which may involve consolidating the two Children's Homes to allow the service to extend the Adolescent Support Unit prevention offer.

NEW WEBSITE FOR YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICES <http://bwd-yps.co.uk/>

The Blackburn with Darwen Youth Forum has launched a new Young Peoples Services (YPS) website. The site lists all current YPS provision as well as maps, photographs and contact information and gives advice, guidance and support on issues affecting young

people including mental health, bullying, substance misuse, sexuality, child sexual exploitation, bereavement, road safety, smoking cessation, online safety and contraception.

INCLUSION HOLIDAY CLUB FUN

Children and young people with moderate to complex needs enjoyed a packed programme of activities at the Inclusion Holiday Club programme over the Easter and May school holiday period. Activities included World Book Day celebrations and a Bear Grylls themed day with survival and camp craft activities, scavenger hunt and shelter building. The Blackburn Rovers Community Trust Inclusion Team delivered inclusive sports activities and the young people also enjoyed visits to Thornton Hall Country Park and swimming.

YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICES EASTER PROGRAMME SUCCESS

The YPS Easter programme and family fun days were delivered across three centres in the borough. Children and young people enjoyed arts, crafts and sporting activities whilst learning new skills, developing friendships and keeping safe.

The MUGAS were delivered from 5 different locations with particularly good attendance at Olive Lane in Darwen and Greenfields. More young people joined in the fun this year compared with last, attracted by activities including Anderton Centre adventure days, barge residentials and Queens Park water fun.

CHILDREN'S CENTRE NETWORK SUMMER ACTIVITIES

The summer lunchbox campaign, in partnership with the Kingdom Outreach charity, is back for 2018 and whilst the offer will be universally available the Early Help and Support service will work with schools, children's social care, family support, and Troubled Families to promote to families most in need.

Children Centre volunteers will play a part again this year and specific recruitment through the boroughs portal for new volunteers is in place. The Early Help and Support service is also working with Food Power in Darwen, where some of their teenage 'experts by experience' of food poverty will be volunteering to support at Darwen and Higher Croft Children Centres.

The Centres will offer their usual summer activity programme wrapped around lunch time to provide an 'off for fun' programme and will feature family sessions on being active and creative. All the activities will have a focus on enabling children to be school ready and explore fine, gross motor, speech, language and social skills. "Toddler trails" which are short, story walks will be on offer to engage families.

INTEGRATION OF 0-19 HEALTHY CHILD PROGRAMME SERVICE

Front line Lancashire Care Foundation Trust (LCFT) practitioners and administration teams are now based in the four 'hub' children's centres across the borough (Audley, Livesey; Darwen and Little Harwood). This co-location will support the move towards the integration of service delivery for children aged 0-19 and their families. We have already adopted an integrated service allocation process where the needs of children and their families are discussed and a joint decision made about the most appropriate support to be offered.

The plan for the coming year is to rebrand the integrated service, and consultation has been undertaken with children, young people, parents and staff. Marketing companies have been invited to develop a new name and brand, and the successful companies will be invited to pitch their ideas to a group of children and young people, Elected Members, partners and staff in July, after which a formal launch will be planned.

LONGSHAW NURSERY SCHOOL & CHILDCARE CENTRE - INTERIM EXECUTIVE BOARD

The local authority's application to the Secretary of State to remove the Governing Body at Longshaw Nursery School and Childcare Centre (LNSCC) was approved in March 2018. An Interim Executive Board (IEB) was established on 6th March 2018 to replace the Governing Body. The IEB has five members, each bringing a particular specialism covering school improvement, finance, HR, childcare and nursery provision. Initially, the IEB undertook various audits to establish an accurate picture of finance and staffing. Andrea Batley, head teacher at Longshaw Infants, has since undertaken a full analysis of all aspects of provision and will provide interim leadership until the end of this term. There will be a staffing restructure, revised safeguarding arrangements and building improvements. From September, the IEB will enter into a formal collaboration with Longshaw Infant School when Andrea Batley will take up post as Executive Head over both schools for 12 months.

PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

On 16th April, 2018 parents and carers of 2039 children applying for Blackburn with Darwen schools found out which primary school their child will be attending in September as reception pupils. Over 97% of children received an offer of a place at one of their three preferred schools with 88.14% being offered their first preference.

The Place Planning and Admissions Team continue to support the drive for online services with 90% of primary applications being made online. The greater use of online applications has led to savings this year. All parents who applied on-line this year were sent their child's offer letter via email, 1840 in total. Only 199 parents who applied by a paper application had their offer letters posted to them.

MUSIC SERVICE UPDATE

Pupils taking part in Wider Opportunities lessons were accompanied by the world famous Hallé Orchestra at a special concert at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall in June. The Wider Opportunities programme gives Key Stage 2 pupils the opportunity to learn a musical instrument in curriculum time. Other recent events have included the Mini Sing (Key Stage 1) performance at King Georges Hall with 520 pupils across 13 schools coming together to showcase their talents.

REVIEW OF HIGH NEEDS EDUCATION PROVISION IN BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN

The Children and Families Act 2014 requires Local Authorities to keep their provision for children and young people with SEND under review, and a funded independent review of Blackburn with Darwen arrangements has now concluded. Children and young people and their families and a range of professionals across education, health and care participated in the review and have attended feedback events where the findings, recommendations and initial action planning were discussed. The final report will be shared and published.

SEND REFORMS GOVERNANCE

A new SEND reforms governance structure has been put in place which includes the establishment of the SEND Strategic Partnership Board. This Board is chaired by the Director for Children's Services and membership consists of senior representatives from across education, health and children's and adult social care. A key role of the Board is to provide effective support and challenge to the implementation of the SEND reforms and to champion the local area's new 0 – 25 SEND Strategy.