

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION

COUNCILLOR

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICERS: Strategic Director
of Children & Education (DCS)
Thursday, 20 July 2023

Every child and young person to have opportunities to fulfil their potential

Early Help and Protection

The impact of Early Help (EH) has been evidenced through our quality assurance work. The current focus is on utilising what works well in EH into social care services. EH are supporting the quality of practice through the following:

Voice of the child and family –

The voice of the child and family is included in step down plans from Child in Need to case closure/Child and Family Assessment (CAF) ensuring all family members and professionals understand their ongoing role in supporting the family.

Child Advice and Duty service (CADs) –

CADs offers a safe response to children at risk of immediate harm and threshold are applied well in most cases. A task and finish group is in place to achieve this with the direct reporting of progress and impact to the quarterly CADs Strategic Partnership Group, next due to meet in July.

Duty and Assessment -

Duty and assessment has seen improvements being made in some areas of practice, impacted by increased staff stability. We are currently doing a deep dive on our work within child in need to ensure we understand the impact of our partnership practice upon outcomes for our children.

Child Protection (CP) and Court:

We are increasing our focus on CP plans over the next 9 months, introducing 'moving forward meetings' where reflective discussions take place between professionals. This is moving to a multi-agency approach in the next few months. We continue to have timely outcomes for children within our court proceedings.

Corporate Parenting and Permanence Placements

Foster carer fortnight was an exciting time for the team. The event kicked off with a 'Big Bang', with Indian drummers and a parade around the town centre and then an information stall within Blackburn Market. We had various events over the fortnight; cake and coffee mornings at the local children's centre, information evenings at Blackburn College; Walks at local parks, as well as a community litter pick. These events were successful in spreading the word of our Fostering Strategy in recruiting new foster carers. Our recruitment strategy is ongoing, the team had a presence at Pride within Blackburn Town Centre, which was an exciting day, the team successfully secured some enquires around becoming a foster carer/s. The team also supported the launch of the Family Hub's within Blackburn. This week there is an event at Witton Park where the team will be supporting a fun day event linked to Breastfeeding awareness on Saturday 2nd July 2023. The Royal Lancashire Show is coming up on the 21st- 23rd July 2023 at Salesbury Hall, Ribchester, where the Show Gates Open 9.30am - 5.30pm, the team will again be

visible and promote recruitment. It is clear from the events that networking helps to strengthen community links.

Since May 2023 there has been a lot of interest shown when talking to people. As such, there has been an increase in enquiries and hopefully these will progress onto assessment. The team are successfully receiving positive enquiries, these are vastly coming from social media and advertising. In terms of statistics we have six households whom we are 'Keeping Warm', and having ongoing conversations with. We are well on the way to being able to approve twelve households filled with love for our children and young people this year.

Finally, the service is streamlining the recruitment application process through a digital platform, which is being coproduced with our Foster Carers. There is a meet and greet for foster carers to test this for us whilst providing support around caring for our children and young people via a coffee morning. The team are incredibly proud of the commitment from our foster carers to transform the service and prepare us for future reform.

The Revive Service.

The service continues to deliver the foundations of attachment course which is a 6 session programme (6 x 3 hours) to help our foster carers and parents nurture their attachments with their child. It is designed specifically for those caring for children whose capacity to emotionally connect has been compromised as a result of attachment problems, trauma, and loss or separation. Revive are just coming to the end of the second group with carers in BWD. Eight carers attended the first group that included both foster and kinship carers and five for the second group. Attendees have commented on how useful they have found the group, which has helped them to build better relationships with their children and think differently about the parenting needs they require. Some carers have commented on the group also helping to stabilise their child's placement with them (as a result of them feeling more confident and having better understanding and skills). Analysis of the impact will occur after the second group with all carers of both groups completing measures of how they feel and think about their child, their own abilities as well as their child's behaviour.

Children In Our Care (CIOC)

The main success for the children in our care service has been the ability to stabilise the workforce. This has meant that the team are fully staffed, and all current posts are filled with permanent social workers. This has enabled a comprehensive review of the CIOC structure which identified the need to create additional Advance Practitioner posts, which will allow for caseloads to reduce to an appropriate level. This will ultimately reduce the likelihood of children and YP having to be re-allocated to a new social worker, allowing our social workers the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with children and YP, allowing them to understand their lived experience. This also allows for shared learning and development across the service, with the current focus being ensuring our social workers are skilled in communicating with our children and young people.

The stabilisation of the workforce has allowed for a renewed focus on meeting the needs of our children and young people with some tangible outcomes, none more so than our ability to meet the health needs of our children. In January 2023, only 59% of our children/ YP were recorded as having had their dental needs met, in that they had not seen a dentist in over 12 months. This number has now increased to over 90%, which is incredibly positive. This has allowed identification of those children who did not want to attend, allowing time to offer support and to identify those struggling to get an appointment. Those who were struggling have been supported through the new oral health pathway, if living in the pan-Lancashire area and those living outside we have supported from multi-agency planning.

Appletrees Short Break Provision

Appletrees continues to offer an outstanding short-breaks service to our children and YP with complex needs. Each month a Regulation 44 visit is completed by an Independent Person considering key themes such as the home environment, supporting education and considerations in relation to safety. Each report has been continued to be extremely positive with the latest three reports all making zero recommendations for improvements. Highlights included the home environment being described as outstanding with the team continually reviewing where improvements could be made. The professional feedback received, was, as it always is, excellent and showed great working relationships with other teams as well as great care to young people that makes a difference to them and their families.

Appletrees has also recently been inspected for the purpose of the Investors in Children accreditation, which it received, again with excellent feedback. The conclusion of this report really did sum up the service offered by Appletrees when the inspector stated; 'It was clear to see throughout my visit that children, young people and families are actively involved in dialogue via a variety of ways. Everyone spoke highly of the service they receive and were able to give numerous examples of how children's interests, likes and dislikes are taken on board and implemented in their time with Apple Trees. I am as always blown away with the impact the service has and its benefits'.

Adolescent Offer

Young people's Services (YPS)

YPS continues to lead and support the development of a new youth work infrastructure organisation named 'BwD Young People's Foundation' (potential future name 'Young BwD') supported by the national Young Peoples Foundation Charity. Spring North are 'incubating' the YPF development with and have appointed an interim CEO. Governance is in place and a draft strategy and website developed.

YPS delivered HAF programmes over Easter for its TYS and SEND cohorts:

TYS delivered 90 hours of delivery (16 hours is minimum required 4 hours, 4 days) and 97 individual C&YP engaged. SEND provision delivered 60 hours and 64 individual C&YP engaged over the period.

YP engaged in a range of activities and visits including, Music, Bushcraft, canal barge, mountain biking, Zoo and seaside trips, and residential

YPS Participation Team delivered a highly successful Climate Change Summit. Over 100 C&YP attended from primary and secondary schools and workshops comprised of recycling, flooding and fast fashion.

Youth Justice Service

The remit and breadth of work undertaken by the YJS has now extended to support children on the periphery of the justice system via government funding from the Ministry of Justice, known as Turnaround. Having been hastily rolled out at the end of the last financial year, this resource is now operational and available for Police, Community Safety and Housing Associations to refer into. Designated YJS practitioners will assess and support eligible children into more constructive, meaningful and sustainable activities to prevent their future involvement in criminality.

The YJS responded to a direct request from HMI Probation to support their training of new inspectors through the production of mock interviews to be recorded and used as training materials. Three separate events took place; the first an interview with a case manager discussing a redacted live case, the second for practitioners to undertake a group discussion under the staffing arrangements and senior managers from the service were interviewed as part of leadership and governance arrangements. The

process appears to have been successful and the YJS received personal thanks from Andrea Brazier, Head of the Youth Inspection programme for HMIP for our support and contribution. We hope this will be beneficial to our future working relationship with the inspectorate and we have offered our ongoing support as they devise future methodology for their inspection framework

Education and Vulnerable Learners

The School and Education team have continued to offer strong challenge and support to all our schools and settings throughout the 2022-23 academic year. This term, has seen the administration of the EYFS baseline assessments, KS1 Phonics Check, KS1 Statutory Assessments (SATS), KS2 SATS, GCSEs and A Levels.

Supported Internships are an education study programme for young people with additional learning needs/disabilities aged 18 to 24, who want to move into employment and need extra support to do so. They are an exit route from education into paid employment and require the young person to have an active Education, Health and Care Plan.

Blackburn College have offered a small supported internship programme to young people in Blackburn with Darwen for the past decade. In line with the Government's plans for SEND ('Right Support, Right Place, Right Time') the Post 16 Learning Manager is working in partnership with the Blackburn College and other stakeholders to increase the supported internship offer. By September 2023, we are aiming to have 31 young people engaged in one of 3 programmes:

- **Get Ready:** this one year study programme is an introduction to working life and includes placement opportunities within the third sector, employability qualifications and relevant maths and English.
The Get Ready programme leads to either:
- **Get Set:** a one year study programme for 'work ready' young people. Placements within the public and private sector, further qualifications and relevant maths and English.
- **Project Search:** a one year study programme for work ready young people. Fully based at ELHT (Blackburn Royal) with 3 different rotations across the year. Relevant maths and English linked to the workplace.

Each programme will be delivered year on year, recruiting 31 young people each academic year. Further increases are possible if successful outcomes are achieved. Alongside this, the DfE have provided local authorities with some Grant Funding to establish and develop SEND employment forums. This work is being supported by the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) as part of the national 'Internships Work' programme. It is hoped that an employer forum will further enhance partnership working as well as increasing the paid opportunities available when the supported internship is completed.

Key Issues and Challenges:

Engaging employers – having the 'contacts'. Many BwD businesses are SMEs and capacity is stretched.

Achieving paid employment post internship – the host employers are not obliged to offer paid work at the end of the programme, although it is hoped that they will.

Support post internship – during the supported internship, the young person receives the support of a Job Coach and also a tutor. Identifying support that can be offered once they leave education is a challenge.

Designated Safeguarding Manager for Schools

Designated Safeguarding Leaders (DSLs) in schools often take on challenging and emotionally difficult work and do not always have access to appropriate supervision especially when managing the emotional impact that this work entails. A pilot funded by the 'What Works Well in Social Care' through the DfE was launched in September 2021 to offer Supervision to DSLs across a number of schools, BWD was successfully in securing funding to be a pilot authority and have run this pilot for the last 2 years. For us, this started with a randomised controlled trial of 36 schools. The evaluation was to determine whether offering supervision to DSLs within selected schools would have an impact on the children and families to whom we support.

Key Features:

- Ensure strong sharing of DSL's experience and expertise across education.
- Prevent inconsistency in the information coming from a variety of sources, giving potentially wrong and varied information in managing safeguarding concerns or accessing resources.
- Use multi-agency and network connections effectively to ensure that all our children are able to access information readily, which can be disseminated through schools.
- Support schools with children who have extremely low attendance and with the implementation of the 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'.

Supervisions

Supervisions are offered termly, half termly or monthly, with the majority of schools opting for a supervision to be held every half term. Supervisions can last anywhere from 1 hour to several hours. This is often dependent on need, the matters to discuss or the type of supervision. Supervisions are either individual or group supervision, with group supervision taking on forms of reflective discussions. 'Ad Hoc' supervisions have continued to be offered and are mainly via telephone or email.

Through offering this support in terms of supervisions, there has been a decline in referrals from schools across the Borough with contacts into CADS being more appropriate.

What is going well?

- DSL Supervisions
- Established DSL forums for primary and secondary sectors
- Engagement, networking and relationship building across partners resulting in increased access to resources.
- Promotion of Graded Care Profile (GCP) to ensure that all schools are able to access the GCP training.
- Improved understanding of the work of Engage/YJS and other services available to support children and young people