

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, with particular pressures in the North and North West. The North generally has seen rising numbers of children in care over recent years, 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 356, a fall of 40 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 236, and the total number of children and young people open to Children's Social Care remains high at 1,730. In addition, 595 children are being supported by Early Help services, 7 children have been adopted since April 2018 and 21 children are currently placed in adoptive placements.

SUMMER LUNCH SCHEME

A total of 17,705 lunches were distributed to children across the borough as part of the Summer Lunch Scheme. 150 lunches per day were distributed to children accessing Youth Zone, which meant that Youth Zone could offer free places for families who would not normally access or afford the activities. Any food left at the end of the day was distributed appropriately to charitable organisations supporting children and families.

50 volunteers were involved in the preparation and distribution of lunches each day at Kingdom Outreach Volunteers and a further 20 Children Centre volunteers supported the handing out of lunches.

Comments from children and parents were captured and will shape future plans. Feedback included, *"They were delicious and I didn't get hungry"*; *"Made things easier for my mum"*; *"It made me get out and about every day and allowed us quality time as a family"*.

APPLE TREES SUMMER FUN DAY

The Apple Trees 'Festival of Fun', jointly organised by the Children's Disability Service and the local parent/carer forum, Parents In Partnership (PIP), took place on 18th August. The event was supported by local charity, Secret Santa, who kindly donated prizes.

Families registered to the Disability Links Information Service, Parents in Partnership or who have a package of support from the Children's Disability Service were invited to join in the fun and find out more about short breaks and the support available from local service providers. The families enjoyed arts and crafts, tombola, bouncy castle and a penalty shoot out and the £101 raised was donated to the Secret Santa charity who continually support families accessing the Apple Trees service.

YOUTHFORIA

The Council hosted the regional 'Youthforia' youth forum on 9th September and welcomed 120 young people from across the North West. 23 local authority youth councils took part, and young people shared ideas, common campaign themes and positive practices of gaining votes in readiness for the 'Make Your Mark' national youth consultancy campaign, which has now commenced.

The young people engaged in debates and stood for election for various roles on the Steering Group. Aliyah Shah, Deputy Youth MP for Blackburn with Darwen, was voted in for a second year as the Lancashire Youthforia representative and will join the North West Youthforia Board representing the whole of Lancashire.

YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICES SUMMER PROGRAMME

The Young People's Services summer programme for children and young people aged 8 to 19 years was once again a resounding success with 7500 attendances across four weeks. This year's programme included a new popular daily session in the West Area in Mill Hill this year. The weekend Fun Days were also well attended by families and served as an opportunity to promote services to parents.

Additionally, over 900 attendances were recorded at Kaleidoscope for children and young people with additional and complex needs taking part in the Inclusion Offer programme. Activities included trips out to the SPACE centre, Ribchester Park, water sports at Queens Park and Thornton Hall Farm, plus fun packed indoor sessions.

A number of children and young people attended the project for the first time across all three groups (5 -7 years, nurture group and additional needs) and have started to develop friendships and build positive relationships with staff.

PROVISIONAL GCSE RESULTS

Recently released national figures about the performance of children at the end of Primary school show that pupils in Blackburn with Darwen primary schools do better than the national average (or the average for Lancashire as a whole) in the main measure: being at expected levels or above in Reading, Writing and Maths, with a particularly marked rise in reading performance in the year – up 7%. Very early indications from reported GCSE results show the borough's secondary schools also performing in line with the national average in terms of overall attainment, and doing particularly well in those students achieving a strong pass or a standard pass in their English GCSE.

SCHOOL INSPECTIONS

The St Thomas' Centre Pupil Referral Unit was judged Outstanding in all areas at a recent Ofsted Inspection in July. Inspectors praised leaders and the management committee for moving the school forward and also commended teachers for working exceptionally well together to meet the individual needs of each pupil.

Griffin Park received a Requires Improvement judgement due to quality of teaching, learning & assessment and outcomes for pupils, with the report stating that the quality of teaching is improving, however not consistently enough across the school to help pupils make good progress in all year groups. Strengths identified were good leadership and management, progress in early years and 'overwhelmingly positive' feedback from parents and carers.

BLACKBURN IS HIRING

The region's largest careers fayre 'Blackburn is Hiring' took place at Blackburn Cathedral on 13th September. The event was organised by the council's New Directions team who were supported by Blackburn College, the Department for Work and Pensions, local businesses and wider council departments.

Open to all ages from age 15 upwards, 1900 Year 10 and Year 11 students attended from schools across the borough, an increase of over 400 from last year's event, plus several hundred 16-18 year olds. 102 local education and training providers and businesses offered interactive opportunities with representation from the public sector, manufacturing, education and retail. A range of workshops were offered with themes covering apprenticeships, job applications, interview techniques and diverse employment options at the Council.

NEWFIELD

Practical completion of the Newfield School Autism Specialist Facility on the former Crosshill School site has been achieved. The £5.6m new build will see pupils enjoying a sensory space, multi-use areas and a new hall and kitchen facilities linked through a corridor into the existing Newfield school. The school will be ready to welcome pupils after the October half term.