

Appendix Two: Corporate Plan 2018/2019: Performance Report
Year-end (October 2018 to March 2019) Exception Reports

Resources:

- Achieve a breakeven or underspend against overall cash limit.
- Reduction in employee absence through sickness
- Information relating to RIDDOR

Environment:

- Reduce the amount of waste going to landfill

Neighbourhoods and Prevention Services:

- Reduction in number of privately run HMO bed spaces
- Total crime figures

Adults Social Care:

- Permanent admissions to residential and nursing care homes for older people (65 and over), per 100,000 population

Public Health

- Reduce differences in life expectancy between BwD and the national average year on year.

Children, Young People & Education:

- Number of commissioned residential placements for Looked After Children as a total of all Looked After Children placements.

Portfolio: Resources		
Priority: Deliver a balanced budget year on year with the resources available.		
Performance Measure: Achieve a breakeven or underspend against overall cash limit.		Good performance is: Higher
Target: Overall 1% tolerance		Baseline:
Quarterly performance	Half year performance and RAG rating (AMBER)	Year-end performance and RAG rating 2.46% (RED)
<p>What is the reason for the performance? At the time of writing this exception report, the final accounts for 2018-19 are not yet closed but early indications are for an overspend of £2.805mill across the portfolio budgets, i.e. 2.46% of the total Qtr 4 provisional portfolio budgets.</p> <p>The reasons for the overspend have been documented and reported to the Executive Board in the quarterly Corporate Revenue Monitoring Reports during 2018/19; at this point in the closedown process, the key components of the overspend are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1.4million overspend – Children, Young People and Education • £0.9million overspend – Environment • £0.5million overspend – Leisure and Culture <p>which are offset by the net over and underspends across the other portfolios. In addition to this, the total overspend has been reduced further, at a corporate</p>		

level, by the savings identified following the refinancing of one of our Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes.

What is the likely impact of continued performance? If the Portfolios overspend against their budgets, Council reserves will need to be utilised to address the gap. This is not sustainable in the longer term and would need to be addressed through the budget setting and the in-year monitoring processes.

What activities have been or are being put in place to address these issues? The budget strategy for 2019-22 was approved at Finance Council in February 2019 and presented a balanced budget for 2019/20. However, for the last 2 years of the strategy, it was clearly articulated in the report that given the lack of information provided by central government on the funding mechanism beyond 31st March 2020, (i.e. the date for the introduction of a new mechanism for Business Rates Retention together with the implementation of the outcome of the Fair Funding Review and the resulting funding distribution formula across all authorities), it is impossible to forecast income streams, and therefore to formulate service and expenditure plans, with any accuracy. For 2019/20 the key area of risk is Children's Services with escalating demand for services and high costs in relation to complex cases.

Are there any decisions likely to be required of Executive Members in the future, in relation to this issue? Finance Council approves the budget for each financial year and the budget position for the Council is reported to Executive Board on a regular basis.

Portfolio:	Resources		
Priority:	Developing the organisation and its people		
Performance Measure:	Staff sickness absence	Good performance is:	lower (less than 8 days)
Target:	8 days	Baseline:	9.24 previous year end
Quarterly performance	Half year performance and RAG rating 4.65 days (AMBER)	Year-end performance and RAG rating 8.81 days (RED)	

What is the reason for the performance? Overall direction is positive compared to 2016/17 (9.37 days), 2017/18 (9.24) and the support and proactive work will need to continue this year.

The Council continues to monitor closely the reasons for sickness absence across the different departments and takes action as appropriate.

Emphasis remains on those departments where performance is continuing to be below expectations and support /advice will be delivered to the managers and areas of concern escalated to Directors as required.

Departmental analysis is undertaken on a month by month basis with specific actions being highlighted to managers for their particular categories of absences, with cost and employee numbers specifically those with 3+ absences. This includes recommendations on how to improve sickness and support can offer to those employees. Below are examples of recommendations sent to managers to implement;

- Review MSK absences, are controls in place to support employees i.e. workstation assessments, are regular breaks being taken, are employees working

from laptops for more than 1 hours per day.

- Staff to ensure they are storing / heating their food correctly, handwashing is important to reduce the spread of Norovirus
- How is absence being managed? Have welfare checks been carried out to review high levels of absence?
- Is flexible / agile working in place to address colds and / or stomach related issues where employees may be able to work from home?
- What support is being offered to those experiencing mental health related absences? Has regular contact been agreed? Is the EAP service being utilised?
- How is Long Term Absence being managed? What support is in place? Have welfare checks been completed? Contact HR for advice.
- Managers must ensure that absences are reported as soon as employee is absent and closed off on date of return to work, as there may be a potential of over/under payment.

It is generally very difficult to bring down sickness absence from a culture of regular absences at the level we have experienced for many years (which remain similar to those of other local authorities), however we remain committed to keep the trend going in the right direction and working towards the organisations 8-day target.

Managers receive emails from HR, advising them of trends in absence, absences giving cause for concern and asking how absences are being managed to ensure a consistent management of absence throughout the Council. It is however essential that all managers adhere to the council's Improving attendance policy and provide absence information to HR in a timely manner. They must ensure they fulfil their responsibilities under the Improving attendance policy if the positive performance trend is to be maintained. HR consultants are available to support managers should they require assistance in managing employees who have absences that are a cause for concern.

Support and advice has been provided to line managers, to ensure the Improving Attendance Policy is being followed along with support in meetings, creation of outcome letters and next steps. Early intervention has been a key area of this support and included advice and analysis of absence patterns and absence history. The sickness team consistently highlights to managers the importance of ensuring sickness absence is managed as a high priority and absence processes are being followed by managers with HR support, guidance, advice and mentoring. The support supplied by the HR service has given managers confidence to deal with absence in a consistent manner.

What is the likely impact of continued performance? A few sick days a year might not seem like too much of an issue to an employee, but when combined it has a huge impact on staff morale and engagement and in turn increase absence within that area and impact on service delivery. Two of the main reasons for absence (musculoskeletal and stress), if early intervention does not take place when these are the reasons it can lead onto long term sick absence and associated high staffing costs.

Emphasis remains on those departments where performance is continuing to be below expectations and support /advice will be delivered to the managers and areas of concern escalated to Directors as required.

What activities have been or are being put in place to address these issues? The commitment to all employees' health and wellbeing is to foster and promote a

culture that increases awareness of ways to improve health, decreases high levels of stress, though monitoring the working environment, protecting employees where possible from workplace injury, offering job satisfaction and flexible working options and supporting employees through having in place, health and wellbeing medical, physical and mental health support and guidance available from a range of practitioners.

There have been a number of initiatives undertaken that have included:

- Part of the HR objectives is to continually review our policies and guidance in order to support Line managers with HR issues.
- Employee wellbeing is at the forefront of the HR service objectives we aim to achieve these, in conjunction with the BwD Wellbeing Service and the EAP offer.
- Bite size sessions have been conducted with teams/departments to support their knowledge/practical use of Improving Attendance policy.
- Health and Wellbeing Week ran in October 2018, the national Wellbeing week. The week was organised by the Council's health, safety and wellbeing team in HR and the Council's Wellbeing Service.
- Committed to changing employee perceptions and behaviours towards mental health.

Following on from the success of the 2017 and 2018 Health & Wellbeing weeks, there has been proactive work to encourage employee engagement and increase improved health and wellbeing in the workplace. The benefits of promoting physical and mental wellbeing are well-known:

- Reduced sickness absence,
- Increased productivity,
- The opportunity for employees to build positive workplace relationships and,
- As a result, increased employee engagement, satisfaction and retention.

Are there any decisions likely to be required of Executive Members in the future, in relation to this issue? No

Portfolio: RESOURCES		
Priority: Developing the organisation and improving employee well-being.		
Performance Measure: Information relating to RIDDOR		Good performance is: Lower
Target: Annual update to be lower than previous year.		Baseline:
Quarterly performance	Half year performance and RAG rating Q1 & Q2: 9 RIDDOR (RED)	Year-end performance and RAG rating Q3 & Q4: 4 RIDDOR Cumulative 2018/19: 13 RIDDOR (RED)

<p>What is the reason for the performance? In 2017/18 there were 8 RIDDORS. The 13 RIDDORS above were reportable due to either being a 7 day over injury or an injury which was classed as a 'specified injury' fracture/break.</p> <p>There has been focus on the above RIDDORS to establish how they occurred and how they may be prevented. A lot of proactive work has been undertaken to address causes.</p>
<p>What is the likely impact of continued performance? The impact of the performance continuing may result in a visit from the HSE or we may see further RIDDORS occurring if action is not taken.</p>
<p>What activities have been or are being put in place to address these issues? The health, safety & wellbeing team have undertaken a programme of training across the Council, and bespoke training has been arranged for the Emergency Duty team (EDT).</p> <p>Each of the RIDDORS has been or is currently being investigated and at the conclusion of each investigation recommendations and actions are being shared with management.</p> <p>There continues to be training taking place for service staff. The health, safety and wellbeing team will also communicate the importance of near miss reporting to avoid accidents in the future.</p> <p>All incidents of this nature are fully evaluated to ensure lessons are learnt.</p>
<p>Are there any decisions likely to be required of Executive Members in the future, in relation to this issue? The Executive Member for Resources is regularly briefed on the number of RIDDOR and the activities to manage RIDDOR are discussed at DMT meetings and at the Resources six monthly performance challenge meeting.</p>

Portfolio: Environment		
Priority: Reducing fly tipping, landfill waste and maximising recycling		
Performance Measure: Reduce the amount of waste going to landfill		Good performance is: Lower
Target: 7,700 tonnes		Baseline: 7,596 tonnes during 2016/17
Quarterly performance	<p>Half year performance and RAG rating</p> <p>Q1 & Q2:</p> <p>12,968 tonnes</p> <p>(RED)</p>	<p>Year-end performance and RAG rating</p> <p>Q3 & Q4:</p> <p>9,652 tonnes</p> <p>Cumulative 2018/19:</p> <p>22,620 tonnes</p> <p>(RED)</p>
<p>What is the reason for the performance? The amount of waste landfilled is a result of burgundy bin waste, fly tipped waste, bulky waste removals and waste going through the household waste recycling centres. The new treatment agreement with Suez, which started in April 2018, aimed to shred this material prior to</p>		

it being sent to energy from waste processing, thereby making it suitable for waste to energy and so divert away from landfill. Regrettably, the work on shredding the material initially and then finding suitable outlets was hampered by problems at the waste to energy facilities, with unexpected down time seeing tonnages landfilled instead of processed via energy from waste treatment. However, tonnage sent to energy from waste has increased over the year, meaning less has been sent to landfill.

Explanation against target - The year-end figure for waste sent to landfill is markedly higher than that of the historically developed target. The target was set when the Council had an agreement with Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority (GMWDA) for our waste to go to the energy from waste plant in Bolton, but that agreement ended in March 2018, due to the facility setting on fire and being unusable. As a result, a waste solution had to be sourced in line with procurement guidance, which sees the present arrangement and extension to an existing waste disposal contract the council has with Suez, to urgently allow for energy from waste to be a short term solution for some, but not all of the waste generated by the council.

Comparisons / trends - The trend this year cannot be compared to previous years, as the energy from waste solution is not available on the same terms as the GMWDA agreement

The policy of the council remains the same, in that landfill is to be avoided where possible, although the opportunity to provide a similar agreement to that with GMWDA is not possible, so a tendering exercise is due to commence to provide a landfill avoidance solution.

Service delivery: More waste is sent to landfill as there are no fixed contracts in place for the material to go to an energy from waste facility at present.

What is the likely impact of continued performance? There is limited direct impact on residents. However, the impact on the portfolio is an increase in cost, as landfill is some £7 per tonne more expensive than energy from waste disposal.

The performance was higher at year-end than the historically developed target due to the reasons mentioned above.

What activities have been or are being put in place to address these issues?

The council is due to embark on a tendering exercise in Q1 2019/20 for energy from waste treatment up to 2026. This will provide an alternative from landfill and has been market tested with companies in October and November 2018.

A further strategy is being developed to align the Council's waste treatment to avoid landfill to be tendered as one package, with Lancashire County Council (LCC), whose landfill contract runs until 2025, so the tender for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council for up to 6 years will provide this solution. Additionally, there is a proposal to develop an energy from waste facility at Darwen, by Suez, that could provide a 20-year landfill avoidance solution.

The government has released a strategy in December 2018, stating their preference is for energy from waste for the future. This strategy also is intended to increase recycling rates.

Are there any decisions likely to be required of Executive Members in the future, in relation to this issue? The award of any tender for energy from waste will be an Exec Board decision.

There is a Waste Programme Board set up comprising of the Chief Executive, the Exec Member Resources, Exec Member Environment, the Director of Environment and Operations, plus the Head of Environment that is reviewing all waste related issues within the borough. There are also regular updates going to the Exec Member Environment on waste and recycling at SPT.

Discussion with Members will follow decisions determined by the Waste Programme Board, although suggestions for the introduction of a further recycling bin, to achieve the government's recent waste strategy aspirations that are at present out for national consultation has been discussed already and covered at a recent council Scrutiny meeting.

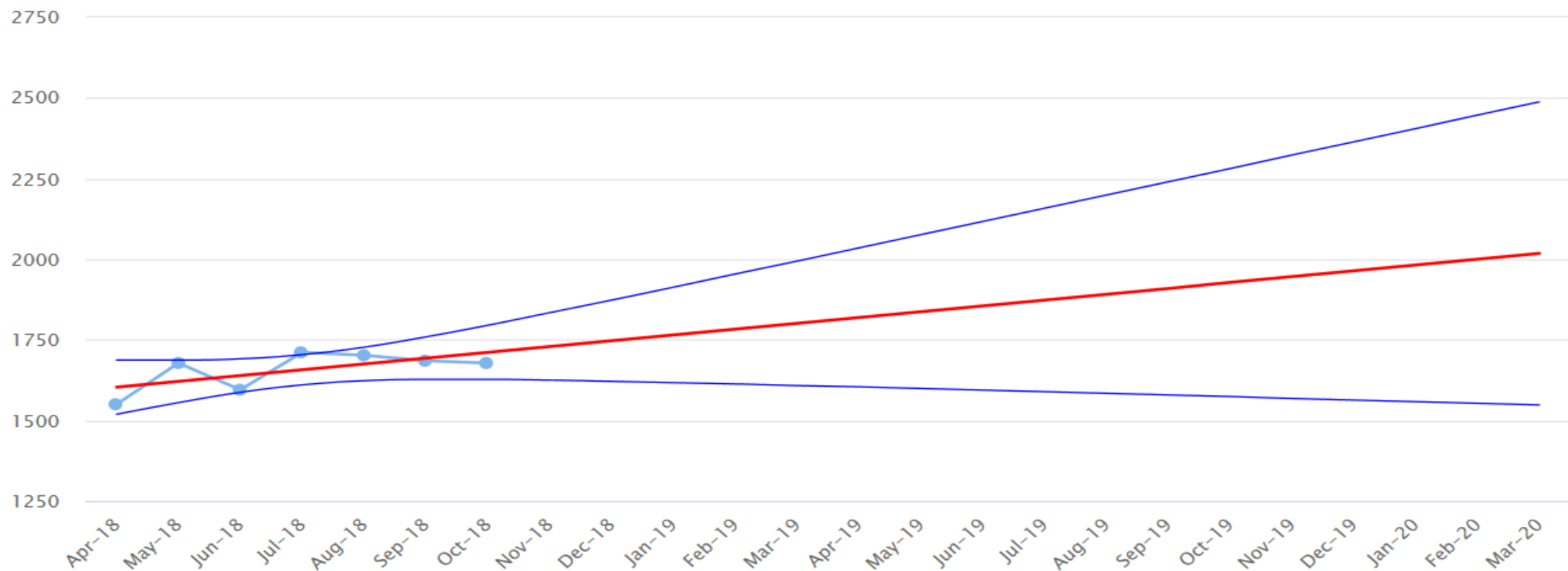
Portfolio: Neighbourhoods and Prevention		
Priority: Improving the Quality of Housing		
Performance Measure: Reduction in number of privately run HMO bed spaces		Good performance is: Higher
Target: 20 HMO bed spaces		Baseline: N/A
Quarterly performance	Half year performance and RAG rating Q1 & Q2: 5 HMO bed spaces (AMBER)	Year-end performance and RAG rating Q3 & Q4: 1 HMO bed space Cumulative 2018/19: 6 HMO bed spaces (RED)
<p>What is the reason for the performance? This performance measure assesses the number of unfit bed spaces which have been removed from privately run HMO's. generally speaking, Housing Standards Team can take action where it finds that an HMO is overcrowded, or where a room is found not be comply with legislation.</p> <p>Complaints relating to overcrowding or unfit premises are always acted on, and there has been no change in policy for dealing with these complaints. However, as HMO's are relatively regularly inspected, it is unusual now to identify rooms which are unfit or too small for occupancy during inspection visits (although it does occasionally happen). Therefore, the Team is increasingly reliant on receiving complaints from residents or intelligence from partners to direct it to check on a property. There has been no change to relationships with partner organisations, which are still strong, but information regarding unfit accommodation or overcrowded premises has slowed down in year.</p>		
<p>What is the likely impact of continued performance? The Housing Standards Team always acts on information relating to unfit accommodation and overcrowded properties, so there has been no reduction in service provision. It is simply the case that instances of overcrowding and unfit accommodation reported to the Team have reduced this year; where information has been supplied; it has been investigated but not led to offences being identified.</p>		
<p>What activities have been or are being put in place to address these issues? There have been no material changes to lines of communication between the Team and its partners in relation to the reporting of potentially hazardous accommodation, and there has been no change to the ways complainants can get in touch.</p>		

There is no realistic prospect of being able to self-generate leads on overcrowded properties other than ensuring that lines of communication are in place.

Are there any decisions likely to be required of Executive Members in the future, in relation to this issue? The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Prevention Services is regularly briefed and the activities to manage the number of privately run HMO bed spaces are discussed at DMT meetings and the six monthly year-end People performance challenge meeting.

Portfolio: Neighbourhoods & Prevention		
Priority: Maintaining Low Crime Levels		
Performance Measure: Total crime figures		Good performance is: Same or lower
Target: Within 10% of baseline year.		Baseline: 14,338 crimes recorded.
Quarterly performance	Half year performance and RAG rating	Year-end performance and RAG rating
<i>* Revised figure</i>	10,290*	20,580
	+43%	+43%
	(RED)	(RED)
<p>What is the reason for the performance? Explanation of the performance measure – The Performance measure is the total number of crimes reported to the constabulary by residents, businesses and or visitors to the borough. This is an indicative figure at this stage as we are awaiting a fix for the MADE (Multi Agency Data Exchange) system. The figures above are based on trend analysis to November as detailed on the below chart.</p> <p>Explanation against target – The target is set at within plus or minus 5% of the 2017-18 baseline year; essentially our aim is to keep crime rates stable. While there have been significant improvements in crime rates over the last 10 years, particularly in the period 2006-2013, maintaining those reductions set against a backdrop of austerity has been the focus, given the difficulty in making further gains with much reduced resources.</p> <p>Comparisons / trends compared to previous quarters, previous years – The below chart gives an overview of crime trends over the last 3 years. While individual crime categories can be affected by changes in recording practice which can and do occur, the overall number of crimes being reported is lesser affected, hence a good overall indicator of the actual levels of crime we can supplement with feedback from residents via local and national crime survey data.</p> <p>What the chart shows is an increasing volume of crimes being reported to the police at an increasing rate from an average of circa 800 crimes a month to over 1000; the rate of increase has moderated over the full year but has not improved. It is also worthy of note that both Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Road Safety are the predominant issues at the majority of community meetings, town centre and business engagement events and ward solutions meetings reflecting the impact on residents and businesses.</p>		

Blackburn with Darwen, Total crimes



Has policy, delivery changed - Policy has developed in many areas; the work around early action, vulnerable adults and transforming lives being examples. We have also continued to develop the work we do with neighbouring authorities, driving collaborative service delivery, inward investment and developing economies of scale opportunities wherever possible to mitigate the impact of austerity. That said the challenge posed has been a significant one with its impact, in reducing resources, having continued year upon year; the effect of which multiplies when you take account of the number of agencies involved in the prevention, intervention and enforcement of Crime and Disorder all of whom have been affected to varying degrees. As a partnership, we have also had to take decisions around prioritising what is most important, with a move toward maintaining and or enhancing protecting vulnerable people from serious harm, particularly young people, at the cost of work streams targeting volume crime offenders committing lower level offences which are impacting on overall crime levels.

Explanation of service delivery - Service Delivery is outlined in the area Community Safety Plan detailed on the Council's webpage. The partnerships priorities are supplemented by a delivery plan against each which can be circulated on request.

What is the likely impact of continued performance? The impact higher crime rates have on communities is well documented. High or increasing crime levels can be catalysts to community tensions and business disinvestment and decline. This can include; increased desire to move or higher actual mobility of residents;

weaker attachments of residents to, and satisfaction with, their neighbourhood, lower local involvement; and lower house values and inward investment. Empirical research confirms this.

In terms of the impact on the council – overall demand for services will go up, particularly those services that protect vulnerable people and places and the restriction in what preventative programmes can be introduced as we respond to escalation and crisis management. It will have an impact on inward investment for both business and housing as noted with the desirability of living or working in an area tied to perceived and or actual crime rates.

The target is likely to be missed next year given the rate of increase has reduced but not the volume of offences. Current trajectory would suggest a similar crime level to this year in 2019-20 i.e. remaining around the 20,000 crimes per annum.

What activities have been or are being put in place to address these issues? Further work is being developed to target violent crime offences, particularly those that are most vulnerable, suffering the greatest levels of harm and or repeat victimisation. There is also targeted work around both Blackburn and Darwen town centres as we continue to work with local businesses. Resourcing any activity sustainably is the biggest challenge we are working on with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Blackburn BID and other partners to resource to risk and invest in sustainable interventions collectively.

Are there any decisions likely to be required of Executive Members in the future, in relation to this issue? A range of proposals likely to impact on crime rates will be put before members as part of the 2019-22 Community Safety Strategy. Given crime is principally the symptom of wider social issues, the majority of reductions in service will have impact, the cumulative effect of which will be a negative one.

Portfolio: Adult Social Care		
Priority: Managing demand and budget pressures through prevention, early intervention and self-help.		
Performance Measure: Permanent admissions to residential and nursing care homes for older people (65 and over), per 100,000 population		Good performance is: Lower
Target: Lower than 2017/18 (910 per 100,000 population)		Baseline: (2016/17): 838.9 per 100,000 pop 65+
Quarterly performance	Half year performance and RAG rating 460.3 per 100,000 pop 65+ (GREEN)	Year-end performance and RAG rating 930 per 100,000 pop 65+ (Cumulative figure) (RED)
What is the reason for the performance? The high use of residential care reflects both the complexity of need of our older adult population plus the ongoing limitations in housing stock. In quarters 1 & 2 there were 118 admissions, followed by 80 admissions in quarters 3 & 4. Therefore, with 198 admissions in the full year and a population of 21,291 for people aged 65+, gives 930 admissions per 100,000 population.		
What is the likely impact of continued performance? Continuing to address housing stock will help enable residents with more complex needs and multiple conditions to be supported within a range of settings.		

The current use of residential care is high compared to the regional and national average.

What activities have been or are being put in place to address these issues? BwD Adult Social Care continues to provide Reablement in reach, dedicated social work support, assistive technology and access to therapy services to maximise the opportunity for service users to return home. This is provided either following a period of short term care or to avoid admission altogether. Nursing care for people with dementia continues to be an area of increasing demand. Extra care schemes are in place for people with both frailty and dementia needs, with a new scheme being commissioned for 2020 which will further drive a reduction in admissions into long term placements. There is continual monitoring of all admissions to ensure that this is the optimum pathway given the level of need and risk the person experiences. This includes an analysis of those service users who have not been in receipt of community services prior to a residential placement. Without these interventions we anticipate the risk of a higher admission rate.

Are there any decisions likely to be required of Executive Members in the future, in relation to this issue? None.

Portfolio: Health & Adult Social Care		
Priority: Help residents to live longer and healthier lives.		
Performance Measure: Reduce differences in life expectancy between BwD and the national average year on year.		Good performance is: Lower
Target: 7% reduction in local life expectancy gap on the 2008-10 baseline		Baseline: Baseline year 2008-10
Quarterly performance	Half year performance and RAG rating New annual data will be released in Q3. (AMBER)	Year-end performance and RAG rating 4.5% males -22.4% females (RED)
<p>What is the reason for the performance? Blackburn with Darwen has had falling life expectancy in the last two years. The Public Health team were the first to raise this issue nationally in 2015, with extensive coverage in the Health Service Journal and Local Government Chronicle. The possibility they raised of a national trend was then dismissed by the Department of Health.</p> <p>The Public Health team then went on to publish national research in 2017 with colleagues at the University of Cambridge and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine which examined the national trend and explored possible causes and remedies. This showed the majority of excess deaths (on previous years) were in older people over 70.</p> <p>Over the last two years, about 20% of Local Authorities have seen a reduction in life expectancy for either males or females or both – these are mostly in post-industrial northern towns, seaside towns and some wealthier highly rural areas.</p>		
<p>What is the likely impact of continued performance? As a result of this trend ONS have revised downwards their long term estimates for UK life expectancy, the Department of Health and NHS England have now accepted there is a major problem and commissioned further national research through Public Health England – building on BwDs original research. BwD Director of Public Health has been invited onto the National Mortality Surveillance Group.</p>		

Locally we examined further the causes of the decline in old age mortality. We found that:

- Most of the 'excess deaths' are in those over 70 years
- There are no new diseases causing this decline – it is mostly older people dying of the same diseases slightly earlier than in previous years.
- We think this is because of increased vulnerability in this population group exacerbated by increasing difficulties across the health and social care system to meet 'surge demand' due to reduced resources.

What activities have been or are being put in place to address these issues? Our plan to deal with this is focussed on the 4 Primary Care Neighbourhoods, working with the voluntary and faith sector with more data-informed planning to assist meeting the needs of frail elderly. This is part of our health and social care transformation programme across Pennine Lancashire.

Are there any decisions likely to be required of Executive Members in the future, in relation to this issue? No. The Executive Member for Health & Adult Social Care is regularly briefed on life expectancy and the activities put in place to address any issues. Life expectancy is also discussed at DMT meetings and at the People six monthly performance challenge meetings.

Portfolio: Children, Young People & Education

Priority: Intervene early at the right time to avoid costly intervention wherever possible, including supporting those children with additional needs.

Performance Measure: Number of commissioned residential placements for Looked After Children as a total of all Looked After Children placements.

Good performance is: Within a target range

Target: 15-25

Baseline: 15 (Oct 15)

Quarterly performance

Half year performance and rating

**27
(RED)**

Year-end performance and rating

**29
(RED)**

What is the reason for the performance? Of the 29 commissioned residential placements, 5 are for severely autistic children for whom there is no possible internal provision and one is a very costly secure placement. However, a piece of work as regards the costings of the placements versus considering creating in-house provision is to be scoped out. The remaining children and young people in residential placements have such levels of risk present in their lives that intensive residential support is the only appropriate option, often distant from the Borough.

Looked at over the past 18 months we have seen a significant recent growth in our use of residential placements, it needs to be noted that the proportion of children and young people in our care that are placed in residential provision is 9% which is beneath the national average of 12%.

The target range for performance possibly needs reconsidering in the light of a more nationally typical proportion of young people in residential provision. Using the national and regional average as a range, one would expect Blackburn with Darwen to have between 35 and 45 children and young people in residential provision. Including those in in-house residential provision, we currently have 37 children and young people in children's homes or residential schools. Therefore, this pressure reflects the norm in terms of the proportion in residential care.

The wider context around commissioned placements in the region is that there is insufficient capacity to meet the need for residential placements. It is anticipated that the authority can work towards dealing with those children who need to achieve early permanency outside of their immediate family at an early stage in order to support a decrease in some of our more complex children in adolescence – as a long term strategy.

However, at the present time there has been a rising demand and in more children with greater vulnerability and a higher complexity of need. It is the latter group of children and young people that are the key drivers for this rise in the number of children in external residential placements.

What is the likely impact of continued performance? Careful management of placements through weekly commissioning panel meetings to consider each individual young person is leading to prompt and effective care planning to avoid drift and delay.

The current average weekly cost of each commissioned residential placements is £3,622 which amounts to a total average cost of £105,038 per week, and the annualised cost would be £5.5m.

An analysis of the children within the commissioned placements indicates a mix of complex needs; foster care breakdowns in adolescence; an inability of in-house provision being able to meet need due to both limited numbers of beds and considering viable matching; the care plans determining a need for residential provision with a view to the young person moving on to a family setting or supported lodgings. The LA also currently has two young people in welfare secure accommodation at a cost of £6,250 as an average cost per week.

Our child looked after total population is currently 408 with 29 in commissioned residential placements – this amounts to 7.1% of our children looked after population.

The above is very much a national picture where there is a shortage of both foster care provision and residential provision which limits our choices of placements and matching and placement stability have to be given a high level of consideration. Therefore, investing in our in-house foster care provision is a high priority and prevention of placement breakdowns is also a high priority. Use of our adolescent support unit and our Revive service to divert young people on the edge of care from becoming looked after is an area which the LA values and is committed to maintaining and strengthening.

What activities have been or are being put in place to address these issues? Very tight monitoring of external residential placements is in place and this will continue - a weekly panel to discuss any placement changes, chaired by a Head of Service, with a quarterly review of all children in commissioned placements - chaired by the Director of Children's Services. Where required, children are also considered at our complex needs panel for joint funding as appropriate to include both education and health accountability, with work ongoing with the CCG to ensure effective joint commissioning arrangements are in place. One of our strategic commitments is in place to ensure prompt and robust care planning within PLO and care proceedings in order to achieve early legal permanency for those children who are able to remain within their families or, indeed be adopted. A dedicated permanence team has been created to undertake family and friends' assessments to support in achieving this. The adolescent support unit is able to provide support to foster carers and to those children at home, but on the edge of care. Intervention from this service is well-received and has a positive impact on maintaining home placements and foster placements. The Revive team also supports in this area.

A legal gateway panel is to be set up consisting of senior managers and legal representatives to ensure that decisions to initiate care proceedings are shared and common thresholds are agreed and maintained. A shared strategy around ensuring the right children enter care will be developed to ensure that our intervention is proportionate and that the impact of becoming looked after serves to safeguard and plan for each young person according to their assessed need.

Children and young people are placed in commissioned residential placements where there are no appropriate alternatives and where it is clearly the only means of meeting that child or young person's needs or managing the acute risks in that young person's life.

Are there any decisions likely to be required of Executive Members in the future, in relation to this issue? The Executive Member for Children's Services is regularly briefed on the number of commissioned placements. The activities to manage the issue, as outlined above, is discussed at Senior Policy Team meetings via quarterly performance reporting and budget monitoring items.