

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

COUNCILLOR MAUREEN BATESON

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
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DATE: 18th July 2019

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

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.

The number of Children in our Care is 409, which is a historically high figure and points to increasing prevalence of unacceptable levels of risk to children and young people within families in local communities. The number of children subject to child protection plans remains relatively high at 265, and the total number of children and young people open to Children's Social Care remains high at 1,827. In addition, over 790 children are being supported by Early Help services, which means that nearly 7% of the 0 to 19 year old child population is being supported by the council's Children's Services or partner agencies. 32 children have been adopted since April 2018 and 10 children are currently placed in adoptive placements.

YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE SCOOPS TWO AWARDS

The team at Blackburn with Darwen's Youth Justice Service (YJS) has been honoured with a national award to recognise its work with young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Representatives from YJS and Education attended the Association of YOT Managers Annual General Meeting in Rugby where they were awarded the SEND Quality Mark which measures the Local Area partnership against 10 key statements. The award demonstrates widespread effective practice with evidence of better outcomes for young people. The moderator remarked that *"It is a significant achievement, and richly deserved. Your submission was comprehensive and evidenced based – one of the strongest yet!"*.

Following on from this success, the *Young People's Group Award for Volunteers* (Community Awards 2019) was awarded to 'Referral Order Panel Members'. Panel members are trained volunteers from the local community who work with young people who have been made subject to a Referral Order at Court. Their role is to provide an element of community involvement and participation to the sentence the young person has received and agree a contract of interventions with them. Many of the volunteers are long standing members of the YJS and this award is well deserved recognition of their commitment to the service, and the young people, families and victims they support.

APPLE TREES CHILDREN'S HOME JUDGED 'OUTSTANDING'

Apple Trees short break service for young people with learning difficulties, physical disabilities and complex health needs received a full Ofsted inspection earlier this year. The home retained their 'outstanding' judgement with the report praising the work of staff to enable children get the most out of their stay. The report states that *"The staff encourage each child to participate as much as possible in every aspect of their daily living activities, in order to maximise their opportunities to communicate and learn new skills. The focus on encouraging children to achieve, no matter how small the task, greatly enhances their confidence, self-esteem and individual development. As a result, children make sustained progress and thoroughly enjoy their stays."*

CLEANING PRODUCT INJURIES CAMPAIGN

Livesey Children's Centre was at the centre of a Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents campaign in May to raise awareness of the risks of household cleaning products. Families were able to access a range of professionals, including health visitors and children centre staff and all the families who attended were provided with information packs to take home. As part of the wider campaign, a magnetic notepad featuring key safety advice was handed out to over 9,500 families across the borough by Public Health Nurses, Health Visitors, children's centres and parent and toddler groups.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

From the 29th of September 2019 the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) arrangements will cease to exist and in their place will be implemented the new 'Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements for Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire'. In the LSCB arrangements the Council was the main agency responsible for setting up the LSCB with other partners responsible for contributing to its work and budget. In the new arrangements, the Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and police force for the area have equal responsibilities to set up the safeguarding arrangements and all other partners have wider responsibilities towards contributing to the work.

There are some changes to the statutory functions of the new Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements, though the partnership remains focused on strategic improvement, oversight and assurance of local safeguarding activity.

As required by the Children and Social Work Act (2017) the new arrangements have been published and the full document setting out the role of the new Safeguarding Children Partnership and the new Child Death Review Arrangements can be accessed at www.lscb.org.uk.

CHILDREN CENTRES LUNCHBOX SCHEME & ACTIVITIES

The network of children centres will once again be working in partnership with Kat Zaman from Wesley Hall and the volunteers who support the church, to provide free lunches for children up to the age of 16 over the summer holiday. The scheme will run from 29th July to 23rd August and parents will be able to purchase meals from all the community cafés in the children centres.

All children centre activities during August will be delivered around the lunches to enable families to access a fun activity and then eat together. Council staff and Wesley Hall volunteers will work together to provide access to family sessions and informal learning opportunities, school readiness play and learn sessions and physical play activities delivered by the Refresh team.

BABY FRIENDLY INITIATIVE SUCCESS

Following inspection by independent UNICEF UK assessors in March, the hard work and dedication of staff and supporters at Blackburn with Darwen Children's Centres and Lancashire Care Foundation NHS Trust's (LCFT) Health Visiting service has been rewarded by having their UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative status renewed.

To commemorate our area's latest 'baby friendly' achievement, mums, babies, health visitors, infant feeding staff and volunteers came together to celebrate at a special event at

Livesey Children's Centre to coincide with 'Celebrate Breastfeeding Week' in June. Breastfeeding in Blackburn with Darwen and East Lancashire has made great strides in recent years. In 1991, 27% of mothers initiated breastfeeding and the current figure is 77%.

PRIVATE FOSTERING WEEK

As part of Private Fostering Week in July, the Fostering Service worked with partners to raise awareness of when Private Fostering referrals need to be made. Private Fostering is an informal arrangement where a child lives with somebody else other than their parents or immediate family. Knowing where children and young people are living enables the Fostering service to ensure that their needs are being met and that they are being cared for in a safe and secure environment. Families can also receive help to access benefits and finances that they may be entitled to when they are looking after someone else's child.

FOSTER CARE FORTNIGHT ACTIVITY

To mark Foster Care Fortnight in May a short film 'Charlie, our little hero' featured on the big screens at Lark Hill and outside the Town Hall. Drop in events were hosted plus leaflet drops for the Fernhurst and Beardwood estates to specifically target houses that offered more space and room for fostering. Fostering enquires across the North West have been down compared with last year, but Blackburn with Darwen saw a slight increase, even with Ramadan falling in the same month. Activity continues with Google AdWords and Facebook targeting, and the service is exploring an exciting new opportunity to target adverts to specific mobile devices and locations.

LOCAL AREA SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES (SEND) INSPECTION

Week commencing 17th June, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) jointly carried out a week long inspection of how well the Blackburn with Darwen local area effectively carries out and meets its duties in relation to children and young people with Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND).

The local area includes the Local Authority, Blackburn with Darwen's Clinical Commissioning Groups, Public Health, NHS England for specialist services, early year's settings, schools and further education providers. Unlike other Ofsted inspections, the SEND inspection is not graded, however the inspection report, which is expected by the end of July will detail areas of strength and areas for improvement.

SCHOOL INSPECTIONS

Our Lady and St John Catholic College received their Ofsted monitoring visit in April 2019, having previously been judged requires improvement in May 2017. The inspector noted that *"since the previous inspection, senior and middle leaders have become more established in their roles. This has enabled them to develop a clearer understanding of the effectiveness of various aspects of their work. In turn, this has helped them to take actions that are leading to demonstrable improvement, particularly in relation to pupils' behaviour and attendance."*

St Antony's RC Primary School had their full Ofsted inspection in April, and were judged good in all areas having previously received a requires improvement judgement. The inspector remarked *"Safeguarding pupils is at the heart of everything that the school does. The support given to vulnerable families is second to none."*