

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION  
COUNCILLOR MAUREEN BATESON**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR: JAYNE IVORY  
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***PEOPLE: A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL OUR RESIDENTS***

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

The number of cases open to Children's Social Care is 1,700, with the number of children subject to child protection plans at 245. The number of Children in our Care is 402, and numbers have been relatively stable over the last 12 months. In addition, over 760 children are being supported by Early Help services, which means that 6% of the 0 to 19 year old child population is being supported by the council's Children's Services or partner agencies. 43 children have been adopted since April 2018 and 17 children are currently placed in adoptive placements.

In November, the Executive Member Leadership Team were pleased to be involved in the first Children's Services Practice Week to review the quality of service provision.

**MAKE YOUR MARK CAMPAIGN**

The Make Your Mark Campaign is the biggest annual referendum for teenagers in the UK. It provides a unique opportunity for young people aged 11-18 the chance to decide what Members of Youth Parliament debate in the House of Commons. 13,424 Blackburn with Darwen young people voted on ten key issues and the top three issues of concern to local young people are: Protect the environment, Put an end to knife crime & Child Poverty.

**TAKEOVER CHALLENGE**

The Blackburn with Darwen Youth Forum organised and facilitated this year's Takeover Challenge at Ewood Park. The event brought together over 100 young people from across the borough to help raise awareness and knowledge around knife crime and serious violence. The event was a huge success with overwhelmingly positive feedback from young people on gaining a greater understanding around the law, how to stay safe and save lives.

**CHILDREN'S ADVICE AND DUTY SERVICE**

The Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) was launched on 5th November following a review in May of our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub 'front door'. One of the key objectives of CADS is to ensure that the right children are provided with an effective social work service, with manageable caseloads for social workers. Since the implementation of CADS the average number of children progressing for social work intervention has reduced on average by 35% (when compared to the same period last year).

## **CHRISTMAS EVENTS & PRESENT CONTRIBUTIONS**

This year there has been an exceptional amount of goodwill in terms of gift donations from the third sector, voluntary sector, staff and many businesses too numerous to mention. Thank you to all who have donated or volunteered to co-ordinate, and a special thanks to Youth Zone for providing hampers to families in need.

### **○ SECRET SANTA**

The Secret Santa charity provided almost 900 sacks of presents this year for children and young people who otherwise may not have received presents this Christmas. These were gifted to children known to services at Early Help, Child in Need and Child Protection. Each child and young person received a sack of age-appropriate presents such as toys, games, books and toiletries. Older young people were also given a voucher to spend at The Mall. Family Support Workers and Social Workers distributed the gifts to families they identified through their work.

### **○ CARE LEAVERS CHRISTMAS APPEAL**

Council staff also donated more than 40 boxes of presents to our Care Leavers (aged 18-21) for them to open on Christmas Day including sweets, chocolates, slippers, toiletries, perfume and pyjamas. Money and vouchers were also donated by members of staff, totalling £1,602 in donations.

### **○ 'CLUB POWER' CHRISTMAS PARTY (FORMERLY SEND FORUM)**

This year's celebration for the 'Children and Young People with SEND Forum' took place at Cherry Tree Cricket Club and was an opportunity to thank members for their invaluable contributions throughout the year. The children and young people have worked hard to identify a new name for the group, confirmed as 'Club Power', and create an exciting promotional video to help raise awareness and encourage new members to join.

At the party, the children participated in party games and dancing and were treated to a magic show before tucking into a buffet tea. The night culminated in a visit from Father Christmas himself and everyone received a gift. The most magical element of this celebration is the friendships that the group have forged, and how much they all look out for each other, encourage each other and simply enjoy being together.

### **○ CHRISTMAS EVENTS AT THE SEEDS**

Two young people who attend The SEEDS Adolescent Support Unit prepared a Christmas meal for members of their family, their social worker and other professionals involved in their lives. I was honoured to have been invited to attend by the young people would like to thank them for their generous hospitality and hard work.

Separately, many young people at the SEEDS planned a fabulous Christmas Party for their families and professionals to attend. It was a great commitment by the young people and was a huge success with a great turn out. The various stalls that were manned by the young people themselves proved very popular and Christmas spirit was in full flow.

## ○ **CAROL CONCERTS**

During the festive period, Blackburn Cathedral hosted two carol concerts which helped to raise £420.94 for local charity Nightsafe, which supports homeless people aged 16-24. Over the two nights, around 300 pupils from 13 schools across the borough took part in the services, which were well attended by both parents and members of the public.

## **BREAST FEEDING FRIENDLY GOLD AWARD**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> December, the Borough's Children Centre Network was awarded the Breast Feeding Friendly Gold Award. This award recognises that services have properly embedded the BFI (Breast Feeding Initiative) standards and that they have the leadership, culture and systems in place to maintain this over the long term, meaning that future generations of babies, their mothers and families will continue to experience Baby Friendly standards of care.

Blackburn with Darwen Children Centres are one of just two of Children Centre networks in the country to achieve this award in their own right. Colleagues in the 0-19 Public Health Nursing service (Health Visiting provision, commissioned by Public Health) also achieved the Gold Award.

## **EARLY YEARS PEER REVIEW**

Children's Services have asked the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a review of the borough's Early Years strategy and provision. A peer challenge or review is an interactive exercise managed by the LGA with a team of colleagues from other local authorities and organisations who work in a similar field in their own organisations. The peer team will provide challenge and share learning. Reviews are designed to help councils and their partners reflect on the services they provide and improve the outcomes for children and families.

Our review will take place between the 28<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020. To prepare for the review we have worked with the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) and partners to identify key lines of enquiry for the Peer Review team to focus on. These are now in draft and will be finalised in discussion with the LGA Review Manager. A wide range of colleagues, partners and agencies will be engaged in the review, which will look at provision from pre-birth to entry into school.

## **OFSTED INSPECTIONS UPDATE: CHILDREN'S CENTRES & SCHOOLS**

In September 2019, a new inspection framework was implemented for Early Years Settings and three Children Centre Nurseries have been inspected under this new framework. Livesey Children's Centre and Darwen Children's Centre maintained their previous 'good' judgement, whilst the provision at Audley and Queen Park's Children's Centre was judged to be 'outstanding' in all areas with inspectors noting that staff at the centre are "highly skilled in promptly identifying any gaps in children's learning and development".

In our schools, Meadowhead Junior, Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School and Holy Trinity CE all improved and were judged to be 'good'. St James CE, Cedars and Shadsworth Junior also performed well and maintained a 'good'.

Whilst Our Lady & St John RC was judged to require further improvement, inspectors noted that leaders are making a positive difference at the school and are helping “pupils achieve better than they have in the past”. Eden School also maintained their ‘requires improvement’ rating with inspectors praising the stability and consistency that the headteacher and staff have brought to the school, which has improved attendance rates.

## **TEAM AROUND THE SCHOOL/SETTING**

A robust early help offer is a key element of any Councils demand management strategy and this is reflected in the increasing number of CAFs (our Early Help assessment and planning process) being used to support children and their families. Schools hold the largest percentage of CAFs with Early Years’ providers growing the number that they lead on.

To support partners to improve the quality and impact of their CAFs, we implemented a ‘Team Around the School/Setting’ pilot in July 2019 with five primary schools and four early years settings to test out a different approach. This includes strengthening assessments, allocation of family support workers, out of school positive group activities and identification of resources and support for families. The pilot has reduced the number of referrals into children’s social care and has provided an understanding of the wealth of services available and will be reviewed.

## **CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENT**

Organised by Virtual School, the Children in Our Care ‘Celebration of Achievement Award Ceremony’ took place on the 14th November at Ewood Park. Children and young people in care and care leavers were nominated for awards by their carers, schools and Children’s Services staff in the categories of; academic achievement and progress, attendance, behaviour, sport, music/the arts and making a positive contribution. In addition there were a number of special awards for those who have particularly excelled in these areas.

The special guest for the evening and presenting the awards was local comedian Tez Ilyas, and there was a visit from Blackburn Rovers mascot ‘Rover the Dog.’ At the end of the evening we were entertained by some special performances from some of our children and young people. As well as receiving a certificate and gift voucher, children and young people were also provided with tickets to attend a Blackburn Rovers match.