



## FAIRNESS, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN DECISION MAKING

# Establishing a good governance structure

Establishing a strong governance structure in Blackpool has created a dedicated forum for early child development, enabling collective leadership and decision-making throughout the decade of delivering the National Lottery Community Fund's A Better Start programme.

Blackpool Better Start is an integrated place-based approach which has harnessed the strengths of public services and local community assets to reduce the barriers families face, whilst empowering families and building capabilities for all children to thrive. Collective accountability was needed to ensure the vision and model of change was achieved.

### Building Systems in Blackpool

Good governance promotes fairness, transparency and accountability in decision making and is essential when building trust within a system to bring about change. Blackpool's youngest children were being let down by the system which should have been supporting them. To achieve the transformational change required, strong and robust governance was essential – not only to enhance efficiency and reduce risk, but also to enable the partnership to respond more effectively to external challenges

Systems are complex and varied, within Early Years this is increasingly complex with both adult and children's services coming together to provide support to parents and children. Enabling collective and accountable action and a shared purpose involves ensuring that governance structures, communication channels, and decision-making processes are aligned across both adult and children's services – creating the conditions for integrated, responsive, and effective support for families.

*Setting the collective vision for Blackpool Better Start enable all agencies to see how their own work could make a difference for families with young children.*

**Neil Jack, Chief Executive, Blackpool Council**

### Blackpool Model of Governance

In Blackpool, senior leaders, operational leads, and communities came together during the development phase of the Better Start programme to co-create a shared vision for babies and families. This vision has acted as a guiding star for the partnership – consistently anchoring the work and ensuring alignment across diverse efforts. A strategy without a vision is like a map without a destination; this shared vision has been a crucial foundation for governance. Through well-established governance mechanisms, the partnership also developed its model of change and strategic framework, agreeing on key approaches and non-negotiables that continue to shape delivery and decision-making. This collective ownership was embedded throughout the governance structure, enabling transparent and reflective conversations that could be monitored and adapted over the decade of delivery.

*It led us to realise what a critical contribution Better Start could make to our wider ambitions for regeneration and renewal of Blackpool. When we invest in early childhood, we are investing in the future of our town.*

**Neil Jack, Chief Executive, Blackpool Council**

## Governance Structure:

The governance structure in Blackpool has consistently retained four core boards. Around these, subgroups and linked boards have evolved in response to changing priorities and partnership structures – merging or adapting where necessary to avoid duplication and make the most effective use of workforce capacity.

### Executive Board

The central decision-making body overseeing all funding decisions. It includes senior leaders such as Chief Executives, Directors of Children's Services, Health Commissioners and Providers, and Community Services.

Subgroups and task-and-finish groups have included:

- Workforce Transformation
- Research and Data
- Expert Advisory Group

### Finance Board

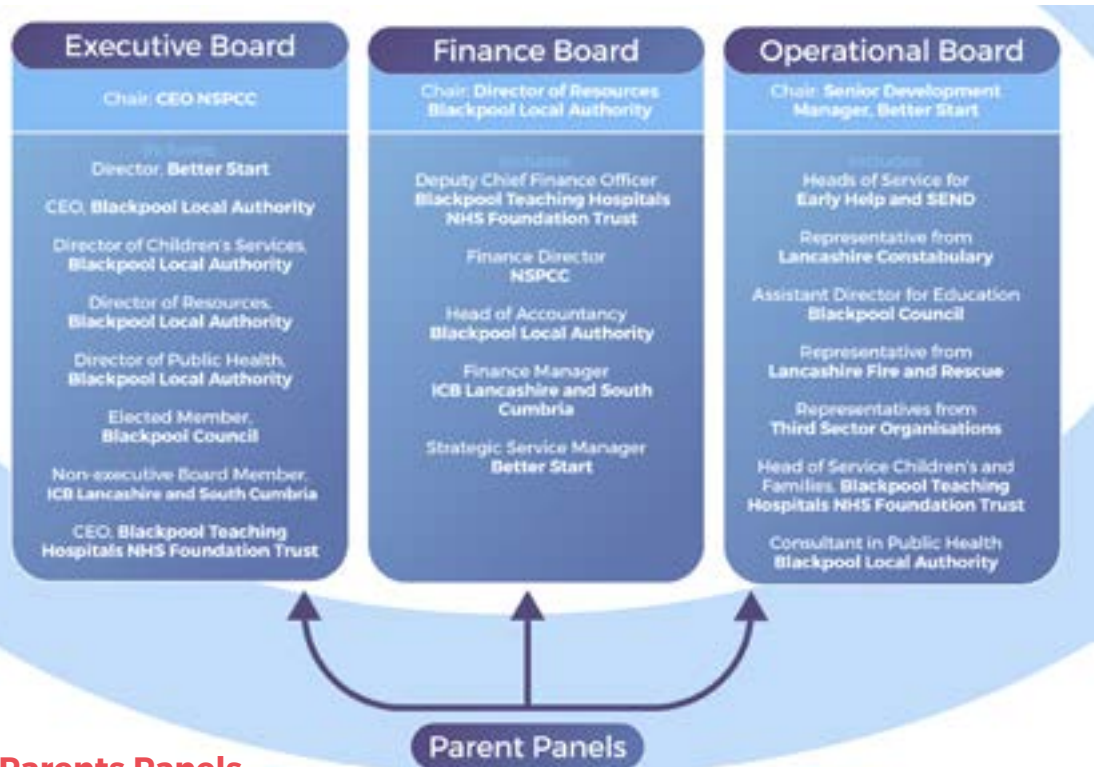
Chaired by the Director of Resources for the Local Authority, this board reviews all financial and procurement decisions.

A Sustainability Subgroup was introduced in the final years of the National Lottery Community Fund (grant to support decisions on embedding, scaling, or securing future funding for long-term interventions with proven impact.

### Operational Board

Led by the Better Start Senior Development Manager, this board drives operational delivery across new and existing services. It monitors service reach, impact, and quality.

The Pregnancy and Early Childhood Partnership Board acts as a key subgroup, supporting multi-agency collaboration around community needs and establishing additional task-and-finish groups or linking into existing structures as needed.



### Parents Panels

Embedded within each Family Hub, these panels underpin decision-making by reviewing new proposals and contributing to decisions on scaling, sustaining, or ending services. They ensure that lived experience remains central to governance and strategic direction.

In Blackpool, governance operates as a unifying structure for all early years' investment – ensuring that no funding stream is considered in isolation. Whether local, national, or philanthropic, any initiative that impacts babies, children, or families is brought through the governance system. This collective approach enables strategic alignment, avoids duplication, and ensures that decisions are made in the round, with full visibility of how different resources and programmes interact. It reflects a shared commitment to maximising impact through coordinated, transparent, and accountable leadership