

CABINET SECRETARY (RESILIENT COMMUNITIES) – COUNCILLOR GRAHAM CAIN

The Resilient Communities area covers my portfolio and those of:

- Councillor Kathryn Benson (Schools and Learning)
- Councillor Amy Cross (Adult Services and Health), and
- Councillor Maria Kirkland (Third Sector Engagement and Leisure Services).

The full details of the portfolio areas can be found on the Council's website at <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/Your-councillors/Executive-members.aspx>

Corporate Issues

Improvements in Educational Inclusion

I am pleased to report to Members that the numbers of young people attending our pupil referral unit (PRU) are down from a high of 313 in June 2017 to 306 in June 2018. Furthermore, we began the 2018/ 2019 academic year with 208 pupils, in comparison to 244 pupils in 2016 and 238 pupils in 2017. The PRU cohort has changed as it is now recognised as a social, emotional and health care hospital school cohort, special educational needs cohort and pupil referral cohort. There has been a reduction in full-time pupils and an increase in dual registration, which facilitates shared responsibility with schools for outcomes and promotes reintegration.

The numbers of fixed term exclusions reduced in 2017/ 2018 by 20, whilst the number of permanent exclusions increased by two. There are promising signs of improvement early in this academic year with only two permanent exclusions to date against a previous year figure of 20 in the same period last year. Opportunity area funding is being used to provide home to school support and these 'reach' project workers target our hardest to reach young people who are on the edge of exclusion.

Woodlands School Improvements

I am delighted to report on the completion of significant investments we have made at Woodlands School. The Council was able to allocate a large sum of money to undertake the refurbishment of Woodlands School following the demolition of Woodlands pool and the transfer of the post 16 students to the newly refurbished Westbury Sixth Form Centre. The Local Education Partnership delivered the scheme, with work commencing on site in May 2017. The overarching vision was to make the school more accessible to all with wider corridors, better circulation and improved connections across year groups. The construction took 18 months on a phased build with the school continuing in occupation. All classrooms now have external play space and there has been the construction of a new access road from Wilkinson

Avenue to enable a more cohesive transport solution. Pupils and staff celebrated the terrific improvements with a re-opening ceremony on 8 November with Councillor Kathryn Benson, Mrs Diane Booth, Director of Children's Services and Mr and Mrs Eric Wright in attendance.

Strategic Issues

Progress on Managing Demand Pressures in Children's Social Care

I am pleased to report that in terms of data trends, 2017/ 2018 contained very strong evidence of positive change for Blackpool. Numbers of contacts, referrals, Section 47 child protection enquiries and early help assessments have each fallen by at least a fifth on the previous year. With open cases down 12% and child protection plans reduced by almost a quarter, it is clear that planned, coordinated action has been successfully undertaken to respond to demand differently in the Borough. In a context where the outlier status of the Council had intensified in recent years, this significant shift for 2017/ 2018 brings Blackpool into a more comparable level of activity, albeit often higher than all other North West local authorities.

We continue to demonstrate clearer and more appropriate application of thresholds for intervention. Work continues in relation to safely reducing the numbers of looked after children, which has seen a rise of only 2% at year-end, which is well below the regional increase. We currently have 551 children in our care.

We continue to work with partners via the Improvement Board to monitor the effectiveness of plans to manage demand and through the Board, challenging targets remain in place to bring Blackpool more in line with the national, regional and statistical neighbour picture. In addition, the Improvement Board is moving its focus onto measuring impact and outcomes that improve the lives of our children young people and their families.

Challenging the Provision of Mental Health Services in Blackpool

Members will recall that the issue of mental health provision in Blackpool figured heavily at our last full Council. I can report that the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee considered an item regarding the Lancashire Care Foundation Trust (LCFT) Improvement Plan at its meeting on 10 October 2018. During the item, the Committee received testimonies from a wide range of people and raised a number of serious concerns relating to current mental health service provision in Blackpool, the Care Quality Commission inspection carried out on the Trust and the plans set in place to address inspection findings. The Committee agreed to establish a special meeting to be held on 24 January 2019 to consider a full response to the concerns raised and the Chairman has been liaising with the Chief Executive of LCFT in order to ensure a suitably detailed response and attendance at that meeting.

The state of mental health services was also discussed at the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board on 10 October. The Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board has committed to holding a high-level multi-agency Mental Health Summit in the New Year to look at how we can address the significant issues in mental health support and provision.

NHS colleagues have also commenced a review of mental health services provided by Lancashire Care Foundation Trust and have commissioned colleagues from Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust to lead the review with additional input from senior clinicians independent of both organisations. The review is to hold a series of events for people that use mental health services and the people who care for them to share their experiences and ideas along with involving staff from NHS, local authorities, Police, voluntary, community and charity organisations. These events are scheduled to take place across November and a Review is expected shortly afterwards.

Policy Issues

Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

Some of Blackpool's greatest opportunities relate to our 'Green and Blue' assets, such as our wonderful parks and fantastic beaches. As we look forward to a period of sustained transformation of the built environment of our town with so many exciting projects in delivery, I am pleased that we are considering our 'Green and Blue' Infrastructure, setting appropriate vision and ambition in relation to its development and contribution. There are huge economic, social and environmental benefits to a greener and bluer Blackpool, whether that is developments and initiatives related to parks, housing developments, town centre, increasing tree canopy, beaches, wetlands, business development areas etc. I hope all Members will take the opportunity in helping to shape the vision and strategy as we move forward.

Transforming Services

HeadStart Update

I am pleased that the 'Resilience Revolution' continues to build momentum. A planned review of all areas of the programme has taken place and development of the first HeadStart Annual Report was completed and presented by a group of our young people to the Scrutiny Committee. The report outlines the key activity and outcomes over the past 12 months.

Building on connections with our stakeholders has been a key focus for HeadStart this year. We have brought new partners around the table to improve accountability; share learning; focus on sustainability; avoid duplication of effort; maximise investment and provide constructive challenge. It has been extremely gratifying to see some green shoots of systems change. In education, all year two schools undertook the Academic Resilience Approach (ARA). Through multi-level audits, schools have reflected on what has worked well and what could be enhanced further regarding their whole schools resilience work. The bespoke training, audits, student and staff resilient committees and Innovation Fund have all been well received.

In the community, the Resilience Therapy (RT) approach has been embedded across Children's Services and beyond. Training has been delivered to a wide range of partners, focused on empowering practitioners to think about how and where they can utilise RT within their practice. RT works alongside the Risk Sensible model to embed a balanced approach. This will

support practitioners to manage risk, increase protective factors and build resilience to achieve the best outcomes for young people and families. Co-production with young people continues to be a strength of the programme. Young people describe feeling fully involved in decision making at all levels, in addition to co-developing, co-delivering and co-evaluating the programme activity.

BetterStart Latest

The Centre for Early Child Development has been working closely with Harvard University to develop our innovative Community Connector approach and I am delighted to inform Members that Blackpool has just been recognised as a Harvard Frontier of Innovation Site. Blackpool is the only town in the UK to achieve this status and only one of two towns in Europe. This means that Harvard will be working closely with the Centre over the next 12 months to identify and share our learning.

I am particularly pleased to confirm details of significant investments we are making into play zones and equipment via BetterStart resource. In addition to the £70,000 investment in a new early years play zone already completed at George Bancroft Park, Revoe Park is two-thirds of the way through a further £300,000 investment. Claremont Park is about to 'break ground' on their £248,000 re-development of the existing play zone, incorporating more early years play equipment. Funds have also been allocated to Mereside (£135,000), @theGrange (£60,000) Counce Street Play Area (£100,000) and a £50,000 investment will further enhance the play area at Queen Parks new housing development. Children's Centres have also shared in this Parks and Open Spaces Programme with a planned investment of £250,000 across all Centres; Mereside, Grange, Baines, KinCraig and Thames are all the proud owners of a newly enhanced outdoor space with TAB and Westminster currently in consultation and St Cuthbert's in the process of identifying their consultation launch date.

The Early Years Parks Ranger Service continues to offer a full programme of forest school and outdoor activities open to all families visiting the parks and work along Redeeming Our Communities (ROC) Volunteers to enhance open spaces and Clean Up Blackpool (CLUB) on environmental and gardening initiatives.

Alcohol Exposed Pregnancy is the first public health messaging campaign by BetterStart. The campaign, launched 3 November 2018, focuses on how drinking in pregnancy is not just the responsibility of the mum-to-be, but is the collective responsibility of partners, friends and family. It clarifies the often-confused message that no amount of alcohol is safe in pregnancy. The campaign will be displayed on buses, billboards, and social media over a 12-month period and the campaign will be independently evaluated.

'Five Ways to Wellbeing' Mental Health Campaign

I am pleased to report to Council that we have commenced a new mental health campaign centred upon the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'. Members may be interested to know that the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' are a set of five key messages that summarise the evidence of what works to improve mental wellbeing. Delivering a 'five ways' campaign is one of the outputs of our

Public Mental Health Action Plan (2016/ 2019). The Council's Public Health Team has developed a set of visuals to support the overall campaign using the acronym VOCAL:

- Voice. Talk to your friends. Spend time with your family. Good relationships build better mental health.
- Observe. Live in the moment and focus on the now by using your senses to really see, hear and feel what is around you.
- Connect. Giving your time and energy to someone else can help giving you a new sense of purpose.
- Active. Getting active releases a hormone that reduces stress, anxiety and tension. It helps to clear the mind too.
- Learn. Learning something new can make you more confident. It is also a great way of connecting with other people.

The campaign is targeted at all adults in Blackpool, but the material was designed to appeal to men and middle-aged people who can be at risk of poor mental health, but would not necessarily get help. The campaign was launched with a press event on 10 October, World Mental Health Day and is now being rolled-out through a number of channels, e.g. social media, posters in buses and trams and information distributed through libraries.

Working with Partners

National Advocacy Awards

It is my great pleasure to inform Members that Michael Flynn, Blackpool Advocacy Hub Volunteer and Co-Chairman of Blackpool Learning Disability Partnership Board, was the winner in the 'Best Supporter' category at the National Advocacy Awards in Birmingham recently. We are all incredibly proud of Michael and his achievements and I am pleased that the award also highlighted the amazing work that is going on here in Blackpool!

Michael is a key member of the Learning Disability peer support group and has also championed the Safety in Town initiative. We are hoping to launch the initiative in Blackpool over the next few months with the help of local businesses, where adults with Learning Disabilities who feel uncertain or unsafe when they are out in town can easily identify places of safety in local shops and businesses where support can be called in when needed. Michael is very humble in his achievements, but is yet another shining example of how adults with Learning Disabilities in Blackpool are not simply recipients of services, but are shaping and influencing policies and procedures and taking a lead in supporting others and in giving something back to their community.

Foster Carers Awards

The Council was delighted to host the foster carer annual awards event on 3 October 2018, with the Mayor and Mayoress and our Chief Executive in attendance. There were three categories of awards presented on the day included training awards, long service awards for

those foster carers who have been caring for our children for over 15 years and an exceptional service award. Our inspirational and committed foster carers care for our most vulnerable children and young people 365 days a year 24 hours a day. Without these carers, our children would not be able to experience a stable home environment where they receive the care and support to meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

Health and Social Care Career Academy Update

The Fylde Coast Health and Social Care Career Academy is now fully operational within its new base on the Ground Floor of Bickerstaffe House (entrance off Weaver Walk) offering a full range of courses from pre-entry to Level 5 for Health and Social Care related learning, development, and apprenticeships. I would like to share a few highlights from the first few weeks of operation with Members:

- NHS sector based academy = 21 learners completed the course and 18 were successful at their interview and offered health care assistant positions at Blackpool Victoria Hospital.
- Five people obtained a job in the Care with confidence, two continued with their studies and progressed to level 2 Health and Social Care.
- 20 learners on the Talent4Care programme (completed on 9 November). Seven have been successful at interview so far, with interviewing continuing. Five have taken up voluntary positions to gain more experience.
- Two Job fairs providing opportunities for people to learn about the sector.

The full detail of what is on offer so far from the Health and Social Care Career Academy is available at <https://www.hscacademy.org.uk/>

Stanley Park Golf Course Latest

I was disappointed to hear on 2 October 2018 that Mack Trading (International) Limited, the operators of Stanley Park Golf Course, was going into creditors voluntary liquidation. As Members may recall it was agreed to market test the course in 2009 because of a reduction in patronage and financial pressure at that time, with the belief the private sector might be best placed to establish a sustainable future for the course. In 2010, Mack Trading were appointed, with Blackpool Park Golf Club part of the selection panel.

The Council has agreed to take back temporary control of the asset and maintenance of the course. However, there are a number of operators/ organisations interested in operating the course. It has therefore been agreed that the Council's Growth and Prosperity team will carry out a consultation exercise with interested parties to establish whether a sustainable solution can be found.