

PEOPLE PORTFOLIOS

The 'People' portfolio consists of:

- Councillor Kathryn Benson - Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Aspirations and Community Assets
- Councillor Gillian Campbell - Cabinet Member for Inclusion, Youth and Transience
- Councillor Jo Farrell - Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health
- Councillor Jim Hobson - Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Schools

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>

Strategic Issues

Public Health Annual Report: the impact of COVID-19

2020 will undoubtedly be remembered as the year that COVID-19 emerged from a novel coronavirus with global consequences. Everybody has had their life impacted by COVID-19: both from the illness itself, with loved ones lost, serious illness, and long COVID, but also the impact on our working, family and social lives.

This year's Public Health Annual Report for Blackpool documents the immediate impact of COVID-19 on Blackpool, focusing on the wide-ranging response across the town and the vital work undertaken to support the community. It also describes the impact of COVID-19 on Blackpool, both in terms of the number of cases of disease, but also the level of mortality and how this compares with the country as a whole and our neighbours.

In the midst of this, there has been – and continues to be - an incredible local response to COVID-19, from the practical support for those people asked to shield or self-isolate, to the support provided for homeless and vulnerable people, and activities offered to children over the summer. Local voluntary sector organisations have been invaluable in working alongside public services. The tourism sector has pulled together to make Blackpool COVID secure. And those at the front line in our care homes, hospital, and schools, not to mention supermarket workers, cleaners, and thousands of others, have all contributed to getting us through this tragic time. I would wholeheartedly recommend everyone read this report, which can be found on the Council's JSNA website, as we take stock and look to the future challenges we will undoubtedly face in the coming years.

COVID-19: our continuing response

Work continues to make sure the gains from our vaccination programme are maintained, with our Vaccine Van reaching younger people and deprived communities to make it easier to get protected. We continue to deliver local contact tracing, provide infection control advice and guidance, monitor the

impact of the disease over the short, medium and long term, and work with our communities both directly and in partnership with our voluntary community and faith sector organisations.

The Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report: Coastal Areas

Professor Chris Whitty's Annual Report this year focuses on the health and wellbeing of people living in coastal areas, and the factors that can influence health outcomes. The Council worked with the Chief Medical Officer and his team to analyse the factors around health in Blackpool, and provided a case study focussing on the challenges around the private rented sector housing market.

The report's findings make for sobering reading, particularly amongst those in government who do not believe that coastal areas are so different to other places. In particular, that coastal areas have a higher burden of disease across a range of physical and mental health conditions even after accounting for our populations being older and more deprived. Life expectancy, healthy life expectancy and disability free life expectancy are all lower in coastal areas, and risk factors, including smoking, obesity, excess alcohol use, and substance misuse are higher. Employment rates are lower, and there are challenges to recruiting and retaining health and social care staff.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome the recommendations of the report, which call for a national strategy working across government to improve the health and wellbeing of coastal communities, action to address staff shortages, and improvements to the availability of data and research specifically focussed on seaside areas. I would also like to extend my personal thanks to Professor Whitty for helping us raise the profile of these issues at a time when much of the focus of the medical world has inevitably been elsewhere.

Corporate Issues

Adult Social Care staffing flexibility

Adult Social Care staff continue to show great flexibility in how they deliver services, with a number of staff now contracted to work over weekends to ensure the quick and safe discharge of patients. The Single Point of Discharge is now developing into the Transfer of Care Hub, which will bring together Local Authority and NHS staff as we work to ensure timely discharges and the prevention of unnecessary admissions. The restrictions on hospital and ward based activities, together with the lack of socially distant space in community health settings, mean we continue to accommodate more of these staff in Bickerstaffe House, together with using home based working arrangements. Some of the operational changes have moved what were normally health based assessment activities into community settings. Meanwhile, the backlog of some assessments for continuing health care are now being addressed, and we are on course to meet the national target for completing all the CHC assessments by the end of March together with our CCG colleagues.

Pressures in mental health services remain extremely high in both adult and older adult services, with significant increase in referrals, as well as regular delays in admission for people liable to be detained due a lack of available beds.

Domiciliary care providers have experienced multiple issues affecting resource levels simultaneously, including the "pingdemic", staff turnover, and significantly increased demand. This has had a knock-on effect on the waiting times to source packages of care, which in turn influences our ability to discharge people from hospital needing care, and support people in the community to prevent deterioration that

can lead to hospital admission. The Business Support Team has worked tirelessly with both contracted and non-contracted providers to ensure that all available staff time is being used to support people in their homes and the NHS in getting people back to their homes.

The overwhelming majority of staff in Adult Social Care have had the second of their vaccinations, with some awaiting medical advice on exemption due to long-term conditions. A very small number have refused vaccination, but we are able to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the restrictions on where they are able to work.

Supporting the NHS to manage hospital bed capacity

The Homecare service has adapted to the requirements of the Discharge to Assess model, which seeks to help people safely out of hospital and into their home or another community setting. Changes include engagement with staff around different working patterns to meet high demand and key times, supporting the seven day discharge model, investment in Trusted Assessor roles to ensure the right equipment is installed in people's homes, and co-ordinating discharges with professionals from other disciplines. We are also involved in the development of the '7 day 8am-8pm 2 hour response' initiative, responding to people living in the community who require clinical support and on-going care support as an alternative to hospital admission.

We continue to be involved in the Intermediate Care Review being led by the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System, ensuring that a place based approach to provision for Blackpool and Fylde Coast is central to any final recommendations. Thus ensuring that Blackpool's current level of provision is maintained and/or enhanced.

Our Provider Support and Resilience Team continues to work closely with Care, Nursing Home and Homecare providers through the coordination of Personal Protective Equipment orders and the deployment of Emergency Workforce, ensuring that they can continue to respond to demand across the system and hospital discharges.

Releasing staff from isolation

One of the biggest challenges has been a lack of staff due to the requirement to self-isolate. To address this, the Public Health and Adult Social Care teams collaborated in the development of a Risk Assessment process which allows managers to consider releasing staff from isolation for work where it has been identified as critical to the welfare of service users. Given the complexities, we sought input from a number of different stakeholders, including providers of care services. So far, the Risk Assessment process has had limited use, but has made a significant positive impact on the safe care of service users who needed continuous care by their specialist care and support staff.

The vaccination challenge: working with our care homes

Mandatory vaccination for care home staff has been a particular challenge given the difficulty of recruiting staff in this sector, and the risk of staff deciding to leave. Public Health colleagues continue to work hard to support providers with difficult conversations with staff, making sure that the social care workforce within care/nursing homes receives the correct information to inform their decision-making. Positively, vaccination rates in care homes and domiciliary care remain significantly above national rates, following a concerted and sustained effort by external providers, NHS colleagues and our internal teams in Provider Services, Public Health, and the Quality Monitoring Team. As at 2 September 2021, 96.5% of residents and 93.6% of staff in care homes had received both doses of the vaccine, with 97.1% and 98%

respectively having had a first dose. Turnover in both residents and staff can affect the rates if, for example, unvaccinated people join the home. Vaccination will be mandatory for staff and anyone entering a care home for work reasons from November 2021, and employers are working through with their staff how to ensure that these requirements are implemented.

Adolescent Service: Youth Justice Inspection

I am very pleased to report to Members that our Children's Services department is continuing on its improvement journey with a rating of "good" following the inspection of the Youth Justice Service in May-June. This is a fantastic turnaround for a service that was deemed "inadequate" in 2018, particularly as some aspects of the service are now rated as "outstanding", and the inspection team noted that the service has a "solid foundation" to maintain the status of "good". The Chief Inspector of Probation Justin Russell particularly noted that the service is "now well organised, [and] has effective scrutiny and clear direction".

The inspection focussed on three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court work (such as community sentences). The inspectors acknowledged the "remarkable" improvements made since the last inspection, and praised the commitment of the "engaged and highly motivated" staff group, comments which I can only echo. Particular areas of improvement include an effective Board, well-skilled and hard-working staff with high morale and detailed knowledge of the children they are supporting, "exemplary" joint working around out-of-court disposals, and good working relationships being established with the children and their families. In addition, the service has reaffirmed partnerships with the police, and secured better access for children to mental health services. The inspection team also noted that there is clear planning for each child, proper analysis of their risk of harm, and a focus on getting children into education or vocational training.

Turning around performance like this is never easy, and our town will be all the better for it. Our thanks go to the team who all pulled together to make it possible.

Children's Social Care Performance

Demand levels for children's social care services still reflect the impacts of COVID. A surge in demand for services during July mirrors a pattern established after the last national lockdown in April and May. Fortunately, August has been considerably quieter, reflecting holidays in non-statutory services and schools, although we predict increases in the early part of September when schools and other services return to full operation, slowing down by late September/early October.

There has been an increase in the number of children subject to child protection enquiries (+7%) compared with the rate at the end of June, with a 20% rise in the number of initial child protection conferences in the last 3 months, and a 23% rise in number of new child protection plans in the same period. Most of the families becoming subject to child protection plans have previously been involved with children's social care, with just under a third of the families having been subject to a child protection plan before, and a fifth having been subject to a plan that ended in the past two years.

The total number of children subject to child protection plans remains steady, as the rise in children becoming subject to plans corresponds with the number ceasing to be subject to plans. Other shifts in the performance pattern include:

- A slow-down in the number of children leaving Blackpool's care over the past 3 months, leaving the number of children in care in Blackpool at slightly fewer than 600;
- Increases of younger children entering care, although these remain at low levels overall and the rate for those aged 10 and older remains at the lowest level for at least a decade;
- A reduction in the number of children in residential homes, although the cost of the remaining placements are preventing this translating into financial savings;
- A 15% increase in the number of children and families supported by the council's early help services since the end of June;
- An increase in the proportion of frontline social work posts filled by agency workers to 23% of staff, with the teams completing the longer term work with children and families having 30% agency workers, although positively this has led to a fall in the average number of cases open to each worker.

Schools Update and GCSE results

Schools have been at the forefront of the response to Covid, particularly due to the demands placed upon them by the test and trace initiatives. In the first year of the pandemic, levels of attendance in Blackpool schools were at, or above regional and national averages, although this changed with rising infection rates in spring 2021. So far, the return to school in September 2021 has been positive, with school leaders hoping to achieve a sense of normality due to the ending of arrangements for pupil "bubbles", and the move from school-based track and trace to national track and trace for contacts of positive school cases.

For the second consecutive summer, the usual national examination process was abandoned. Instead, schools used teacher-assessed grades to provide an end of course numerical result (GCSE), a grade (A-Level), or the equivalent in BTEC and other qualifications to ensure that pupils were properly rewarded for their hard work and able to progress onto the next stage of their education or employment. The results will not be published in league tables but will be made available in aggregate at a later stage.

The Blackpool Education Improvement Board has overseen the development of the town-wide 2020-30 education strategy and its associated inclusion and literacy strategies. Meanwhile, we are working on strategies for those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Literacy strategy

We will launch the new Blackpool Literacy Strategy this month. Developed in partnership, it focuses on the idea that everyone reading 30 minutes a day would significantly improve literacy. This is underpinned to improve levels of literacy in Blackpool by creating new opportunities to embrace reading, speaking and listening. An integral part of the strategy involves improving the digital literacy of children and adults in Blackpool. A literacy steering group has been established to guide the development of an operational plan with support from the charity Right to Succeed.

A new strategy for Early Help

The Children and Families Strategic Partnership has approved a new Early Help Strategy. The strategy sets out the importance of Early Help in supporting children and their families, documents our aim to respond much earlier as problems emerge, and describes our approach to this way of working. It also

establishes the principle that all services and practitioners are responsible for undertaking early help work, including leading multi-agency early help assessments and plans. Partners will be asked to pledge their commitment to the approach at an event in the near future, to ensure that practitioners working with families get the support they need for effective delivery.

Work is already underway to create a stronger offer of family support based on the participation of all services and organisations. The existing Families In Need family support resource will be reorganised to create to a locality or neighbourhood offer across our three areas of:

- A family support team to work at “universal plus”/level 2
- A family support team to work at intensive support/level 3
- A parenting team, offering group-based and one-to-one parenting support across levels of need
- An “Early Help Link Worker” – who will work with all Lead Professionals to support them in their early help work.

The teams will be based in the Family Hubs, supporting the growth of support for a wider range for families from those three sites. This locality approach will support us working with those services working with the same children and families in their own communities.

Over 650 households resettled into longer term accommodation

We remain extremely proud of the efforts our staff have made to house people during the coronavirus outbreak. 850 households have now being provided with emergency accommodation as a response to the pandemic, over 650 of which have been resettled into longer term accommodation, either in supported housing, their own tenancy or with family. This represents a real step forward for hundreds of people, providing them with greater security and stability.

Although temporary accommodation figures remain higher than pre-pandemic levels, they have now stabilised. 65 households are in temporary accommodation, which is a reduction from 193 at the summer 2020 peak, and down from 115 at the winter 2021 peak.

Delivering the National Holiday Hunger Programme

Blackpool Catering Service has provided 20,000 free meals and snacks across eighteen sites operating holiday activities for young people over the summer holidays, as part of the Holiday Hunger provision. This included a link up with Active Blackpool, which has been delivering sport and physical activity sessions to children and young people throughout the summer holidays. Weekly activity sessions have taken place at Kingscote Park, Anchorholme Park, Solaris Park, Cavendish Road, Crossland Road Park and Highfield Road Park, with sports offered including football, golf, athletics, tennis and hockey. Alongside the activities, the participants all received a packed lunch providing a food boost to top up their energy levels midway through the session.

Transforming Services

Quality advice for young jobseekers coming soon

We are setting up a dedicated “One Place Base” so that young jobseekers aged 16-24 can get guidance

and support to start out in a career. Subject to Towns Fund and Community Renewal Fund bids, we will set up a hub that brings together a dedicated advisory team, DWP Work Coaches, local employment and skills providers, and employers to connect young people with opportunities for work and learning. We will ensure the approach addresses young people's wellbeing, confidence and skill levels to help them actively pursue work or pathways into learning to improve their job prospects.

The hub will be located on Cookson Street in a ground floor unit at Bickerstaffe House, and will initially run for a minimum of 2 years, supporting around 700 young people. It will be a unique, modern and welcoming space, where young people can influence service delivery; and partners can collaborate and pilot ideas, refining service provision to inform future investment. Again, depending on resources, we hope to use a "caseworker" model of individualised support for young people referred directly from DWP Work Coaches and partner agencies. DWP Work Coaches will identify young people from their cohort who could benefit from more personalised interventions, and refer them to a caseworker in the new Youth Hub for up to 6 months support. The service could include a commissioning pot to be used for local organisations to develop innovative responses to youth unemployment.

The Kickstart team, which offers paid six months work placements, will work from the Youth Hub to ensure the uptake of remaining work placements to start before the end of December this year. We currently have 100 young people who have already accessed work placements through our Gateway (91 private sector, 9 Council) with another 15 currently going through our internal recruitment process. We aim to achieve at least 200 placements overall in this timescale.

Blackpool Catering Services – improving nutrition, health skills and employment

Blackpool Catering Services has created a new Catering Academy to improve skills and educate young people across the town. The Catering Academy aims to bridge the gap between High Schools and further education, providing an alternative pathway to education and employment. By working with Children and Adult Services to link into the School Improvement Priority Plan, the service aims to improve attendance whilst building upon effective transition. We believe this project has the potential to be truly industry leading, while having a sustainable approach to improving the aspirations of our local community.

Our Catering Services Scoop Team of the Year!

Blackpool Council's Catering Services team has been named Team of the Year in the Public Sector Catering Awards 2021. The team, headed up by Catering Services Manager Derek Wright, were recognised for their response to the pandemic ensuring that our most vulnerable residents were supported.

Just 48 hours after an initial meeting on 19 March 2020 the Food Distribution Centre at Stanley Park Sports Centre was operational thanks to fantastic partnership working between leisure and catering services. Blackpool's Catering Service ensured free school meals were offered to every school by working with local suppliers to secure stock at a very challenging time, with over 3,000 parcels equating to 15,000 meals going into schools in the first week alone.

During the pandemic the commitment of the team was second to none, with the distribution centre distributing meals to the most vulnerable in the community; 35,178 free school meal parcels, 175,890 free school meals, 3,076 family food parcels, 258,384 meals, and 5,111 adult parcels 107,331 meals.

This national award is fantastic and deserved recognition of the hard work and dedication of the team over the previous 18 months. Congratulations!

Leisure Services – securing funding to improve health

The Leisure Services team will use three recent awards of funding to improve the health of our residents. £347k of Capability Funding from the Department of Transport will be used to set up a number of walking and cycling initiatives, working with National partners Living Streets and Cycling UK. The Active Travel team will work with local schools, businesses and community groups to promote active travel. The development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) is also part of the funding application.

Active Blackpool will use £87k of public health funding to deliver the 12 week Tier 2 weight management referral programme aimed at adults who are overweight. The return of the programme has been welcomed by GP's, practice nurses and dieticians, and will be delivered by Active Blackpool's qualified team of instructors.

Working with Partners

Changing Futures Programme

There are an estimated 363,000 adults experiencing multiple disadvantage across England - including a combination of homelessness, substance misuse, mental health issues, domestic abuse, and contact with the criminal justice system. Many of these people have been caught in this situation for years, experiencing entrenched disadvantage, trauma and ill-health. They come into repeated contact with our police, criminal justice, and emergency response services without receiving the support they need to help them break the cycle – generating significant costs to the public purse without seeing improved life outcomes.

The Changing Futures programme aims to change this. Working in partnership in local areas and across government, it will test innovative approaches and seek to drive lasting change across the whole system to provide better outcomes for adults experiencing multiple disadvantage. The Fylde Coast has been awarded £1¼ million over 3 years, to be invested in frontline services so they can effectively engage with people facing the greatest barriers to accessing the care they need.

Blackpool Council will be the lead organisation for the Fylde Coast working in partnership with Wyre and Fylde Councils, the NHS and other partner public and voluntary sector organisations such as the Probation Service. The programme will work alongside ADDER, which aims to disrupt the availability of drugs in Blackpool whilst supporting people into treatment including meaningful activities, the new NHS homeless mental health service, and the rough sleeper initiative.

Youth Review

Blackpool Council has been working closely with the town's third sector youth organisations to commission a review services provided for young people across Blackpool. The work is being carried out by the National Youth Agency (NYA). They will review current provision, identify gaps across the town, undertake consultation with young people and other key stakeholders, and look at best practice from elsewhere. The review will result in an aspirational development plan being produced that will identify priorities and provide a platform for the development of future funding bids aimed at enhancing youth provision in Blackpool.