

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

Covid Update - Beating Back Omicron

The Public Health Team is continuing to make all efforts to support the national campaign against the Omicron variant, with support around contact tracing, vaccinations and community testing all making a real difference. The Single Point of Contact (SPOC) is a dedicated email and telephone number staffed on a rotation basis by the Public Health Administration Team, ensuring that anyone can contact the Public Health Team on anything to do with COVID-19 to get definitive answers and guidance. In addition, the Public Health Duty Desk operated by a mix of Public Health and agency staff with support from the Specialist Health Protection Nurses, liaises with schools, care homes and businesses to ensure a co-ordinated approach. The team meets daily with the contact tracing team leaders and Council colleagues from early years, schools, public protection and adult social care to discuss incidents and outbreaks. The Health Protection Consultant chairs the meetings and any Multi-Agency Outbreak meetings needed; he is also available for specialist advice and guidance on outbreak management.

The Contact Tracing Team consists of 3 Team Leaders and 17 staff from across Public Health and other council departments, and provides a seven-day service to ensure tracing is undertaken quickly and effectively. With extraordinary numbers of infections over Christmas, the National Team also dealt with some of our local cases for a temporary period. The main

focus of the team is on contacting those who have indicated they need support to isolate, as well as contacting all cases on Day 2 or 3 of their isolation period to see if any further support is needed which could include support on using online services or counselling.

20,000 People Catch the Vaccine Bus

One of the main ways in which we are supporting vaccine take-up is by reaching out to communities with relatively low take-up and the main way we are doing this is via the Vaccine Bus. As at mid-January 20,000 vaccinations have been delivered from the mobile vaccine service, showing its value in getting the maximum protection possible for everyone in our communities. We provide a non-judgemental place for people to ask questions, learn more about the vaccine and have their fears and anxieties allayed, get support on needle phobias, or just those who need the flexibility to turn up to a location without having to book. The bus also now serves 12-15 year olds.

This is supported by engagement work aimed at increasing vaccination and booster uptake. Housing Officers from Blackpool's main housing providers are talking with all tenants about issues around vaccination and offering support where needed.

Increased Community Testing – Still an Important Defence

As ever, we are grateful to our local businesses and visitor attractions for taking steps to slow local transmission of COVID-19. Helped by pro-active provision of lateral flow tests by our staff, most businesses have increased their testing regimes in light of the uptick in COVID cases. All locations with a positive test are contacted by the Public Protection team to check their processes, ensure regular testing is taking place, and to encourage them to do so if necessary. Our Community Testing Hub at the Hounds Hill remains open and popular for vaccinations and picking up Lateral Flow testing kits for individual or community use, although we continue to experience issues with the regular supply of testing kits to meet demand.

Remembering COVID Basics – Hands, Face, Space

We are continuing to reinforce to businesses the importance of staff and customers wearing face coverings where appropriate, with supplies of facemasks available for businesses at our Community Testing Hub in Hounds Hill. This is backed up with a continuing communications campaign operating across a variety of channels.

Corporate Issues

Children's Improvement Journey

In January 2022 OFSTED visited Children's Social Care to review the "front door" of the service, where all new referrals for help and support to strengthen families and safeguard the welfare of children in Blackpool are received. The focussed visit looked at the way that Social Care professionals, the Police, Health, Education and other key agencies work together to respond to concerns and requests for support and draw together information so that work with families is prompt and effective in addressing worries and risk.

The full written feedback from the visit will be published on 15 February by OFSTED and areas of learning will help to shape our continued improvement plans. In the verbal feedback at the end of the visit inspectors said that they continued to see improvement in Blackpool and told the partnership that they saw good evidence of sound and timely decision making to keep children safe. They noted particular strength in the support available from Early Help to work with families and to achieve change and sound, evidence based decision making when more structured interventions were required. They could see that the newly launched Early Help Strategy was designed to further strengthen partnership work and anticipate this having further positive impact in the future.

During their two day intensive visit to Blackpool they spoke with a number of staff, observed meetings, reviewed case files and oversaw the work of a variety of teams in Social Care and noted key areas of progress since their last visit. The team was pleased that they saw improvement in one of our most pressing and important challenges and an area of national concern, that of the recruitment, retention and professional development of social workers. They saw evidence of much greater stability in the workforce, increased staff morale and a real evident focus from leaders on our people. We were also pleased that inspectors commented on the visible embedding of the coproduced model of practice for children's services, "Blackpool Families Rock" across the partnership of professionals working in the front door.

Metropole Site

The Metropole Hotel site in Blackpool continues to be commissioned by the Home Office to support Asylum Seeking families. We have seen fantastic support from our local community to offer help to these vulnerable families for the short period they are accommodated in Blackpool while more appropriate dispersal accommodation is found for them. Donations of clothing, toys and books for children and winter coats have been very gratefully received by residents and we

are extremely thankful to the Salvation Army and third sector network for all that they have done to coordinate this response.

Whilst it remains our view that the use of hotel accommodation for this purpose is wholly inappropriate and should be brought to a close as soon as possible, we are working with the Home Office, SERCO and public sector partners to ensure that the immediate needs of the families at the hotel are being met and to facilitate links to the welcome support from third sector organisations. In particular we have been working with the site to support residents eligible for Covid vaccinations to access them promptly so that any risk of serious illness and the need for acute care is vastly reduced.

Adult Social Care

Recruitment and Retention Fund

Our social care workforce, supporting people in their own homes and in residential and nursing homes across Blackpool have been at the forefront of our battle to protect our most vulnerable population from COVID over the last two years. They have worked tirelessly under rapidly changing guidance and under incredible pressure to support people to maintain their independence and dignity and we are incredibly proud of them and grateful to them. We have been working hard with our providers across Blackpool to make sure that the money made available to us from the government for recruitment and retention in Social Care is used well to support the workforce. We know that our good providers and their carers work in one of the most difficult and challenging areas of work because it is their vocation, they want to make a positive difference to the lives of the people they support, and every day, they do. Making sure the recruitment and retention fund gets in to the hands of providers quickly so that it can be used flexibly by providers to deliver the kind of bespoke support they know their workforce needs and will benefit from has been our priority and as we progress in to planning for the coming financial year we have been able to work with providers to fund improvements to terms and conditions for staff. We continue to lobby nationally for greater recognition and support for carers, both paid and unpaid – they are an invaluable network enabling vulnerable people to live well.

Respite for Adults with a Learning Disability

The Coopers Way respite services for adults with a learning disability and complex needs has been a much loved and valued service for years in Blackpool, supporting individuals and their carers to access regular support with a home away from home. The need for this service has

grown and we forecast that with young people with additional needs moving through into adulthood it will continue to do so in the next five years.

We are really pleased to announce that after three years of development work, co-design with adults who use the Coopers Way service and their carers and with our partners in health we are due to double our respite capacity for carers with the opening of a new site which our partnership have chosen to call "Coopers@Ambleside". This brand new bespoke development has been designed using the very best evidence to create an environment that is both stimulating and restful in equal measures and enables the delivery of personal care support in the least restrictive and most dignified way, and we are excited to welcome our first families in to the service in the coming weeks for their break with us. This is a significant ongoing investment in the delivery of support for adults with a learning disability, neuro diversity and complex health needs and demonstrated the commitment that the Local Authority has to ensuring that our partnership working delivers better outcomes for families in Blackpool.

Transforming Services

Libraries: Bringing Blackpool Stories to Life

Our libraries continue to be a mainstay of our local communities, and are starting to return to some of their usual programme of activities. Layton and Central Libraries recently took part in a national BookTrust pilot scheme called BookTrust Storytime, with songs, rhymes, stories and resources for the families to take home. Baby Bounce and Rhyme sessions have been launched at all libraries except for Library@TheGrange and Anchorsholme libraries, which are due to start shortly. Four libraries held Christmas Rhyme Times, where children received a book as a Christmas gift, and one attendee commented that: "Being able to come to sessions from such a young age has definitely made an impact...and books are one of his go-to things now".

One of our tasks is to give children their own books and 300 children received a book as part of the celebrations around Layton's Christmas lights switch on. Virtual assemblies were held from Layton Library with children from Devonshire and Layton Primary schools and work is ongoing with the Palatine Library team and Hawes Side and Baines Primary Schools. All children received a free book of their choice aligned to library memberships.

Upcoming projects for the library service includes StoryTrails, a unique immersive storytelling experience where untold stories of Blackpool's past are brought to life through the magic of the 3D internet. A further project involves working with Lancashire County Council and Blackburn with Darwen library service on a pan-Lancashire project called Lancashire Stories,

commissioning twelve local writers, including Blackpool's Nathan Parker and Antonia Stack, to share and publish new short stories written about Lancashire. The project is ACE-funded and will include a Lancashire-wide programme of engagement activity, launching on Lancashire Day.

Local Artists in the Frame at the Grundy Art Gallery

Internationally recognised artist, Chila Kumari Singh Burman visited Blackpool prior to Christmas for a 'meet the artist event' at Grundy Art Gallery and a VIP tour of Blackpool's cultural gems. Her work, 'Blackpool Light of My Life' has been lighting up the façade of Grundy Art Gallery throughout winter to the delight of visitors from Blackpool and beyond. Work from the exhibition is now being acquired into our collection.

The Gallery's winter 2022 programme includes four separate exhibitions from over 70 artists, all linked by a commitment to showcase art made close to home. Our Annual Schools show presents work by local schoolchildren that has been made into a new digital art work by a professional artist, Nicholas Delap, whilst a solo exhibition of work by Patti Mayor (1872-1962) is on display to mark the 150th anniversary of the artists' birth. A joint exhibition by artists with and without a learning disability will present new works made over the last 12 months as part of the Arts Council funded project, the pARTnership, and finally the annual Open 2022 exhibition is showcasing work by Blackpool and Fylde Coast artists.

Live Longer Better – a New Active Lives Service Pilot

In December Active Blackpool, in partnership with Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS), Glenroyd Medical Centre and North Shore Surgery, launched the Live Longer Better pilot at Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre. Forming part of the existing Exercise Referral programme, this pilot aims to increase social activities and improve health for over 55s who live in the Bispham area. There are a number of activities available including the Feel Good Factory, Swimming, Indoor Bowls, and social activities such as film club, book club and chess club to help reduce social isolation and loneliness.

Measure Your Leisure - Swimtag at Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre

Swimtag allows swimmers to get detailed performance analysis on their progress, with users able to track statistics including the distance swum, different strokes and calories burned, as well as undertaking challenges and sharing your stats with friends. Having successfully

introduced Swimtag to Palatine Leisure Centre some years ago, the data gathered was key to achieving external funding to extend the offer to Moor Park. The aim is to encourage more people in Blackpool to get into the pool and track their activity levels and performance via simple technology. Active Blackpool are setting up beginner sessions as part of Get Out Get Active and Sport England's We Are Undefeatable campaign to encourage all ages and abilities to return to the pool and improve their overall health and wellbeing.

Working with Partners

A Kick Start for Swimming Teacher Academy success

Working in partnership with Swim England, Active Blackpool has set up a Swimming Teacher Academy to support local people to gain the qualifications and experience needed to become a qualified swimming teacher. Working with the Kick Start programme, which provides funding for employers to create 6-month work placements, the Swimming Teacher Academy provides participants with the opportunity to complete their Level 1 and Level 2 swim teacher qualification. At the end of the training participants have the opportunity to move into permanent employment regularly teaching children and adults how to swim.

The programme has generated some real success stories. Hayden, who started with the Swimming Teacher Academy in September 2021, said: "I had been unemployed for 18 months which was also causing a real struggle for my mental health. With support from Universal Credit I began to look at different career options, I had always wanted to get into teaching and saw the kick start funded post with Active Blackpool as a swimming teacher, and thought it would be a great stepping stone into teaching. I was successful in my application and started working for Blackpool Council 25 hours a week. During my employment I attained my swimming teacher level 1 and 2 qualifications with fantastic support from my colleagues and manager. I have enjoyed my new role so much that I no longer want to pursue teaching in a school setting. I have also secured further contracted employment at the end of my Kickstarter programme which I am delighted with".

Our People – Our Communities

We have some fantastic and dedicated people working with the Council and we are incredibly proud of everyone who works in and alongside our communities supporting our residents. An example of this valued workforce was celebrated in January when we celebrated the long

service of Lesley Owen who has been a School Crossing Patrol Attendant for 40 years, all of which she has served at Norbreck Primary School. Karen McCarter, Headteacher at Norbreck said "It's wonderful news and an amazing achievement that Lesley has worked for 40 years keeping the children in Blackpool schools safe as they cross roads to and from school every day. It has taken courage and dedication to stand out in all weathers always with a cheerful smile. We are all in awe of her dedication and service. What a lady!"

Lesley is a very positive and happy person who is clearly dedicated to the children of Norbreck School who she sees across the road safely in all weathers. She is now crossing over the children and grandchildren of people that she helped to cross the road in the early days. She is a fantastic asset to the team and is dearly loved by all of the students and their families at Norbreck School. We add our voice to those of all the children and parents who safely cross with her every day – "Thank-you Lesley!"