

PEOPLE PORTFOLIOS

The 'People' portfolio consists of:

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

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

Update on seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccination

Blackpool currently has two autumn vaccination programmes covering seasonal influenza and the COVID-19 booster campaign. This is in addition to the so-called "evergreen" offer for unvaccinated or partially-vaccinated residents, which is available through a partnership with Fylde Coast Medical Services (FCMS) and local pharmacies and offered via a vaccine bus and static unit at the Blackpool Model Village. The aim is to offer vaccination to all eligible residents, and to equal or achieve a better uptake than the 2020/21 season. NHS England's ambition is also to increase uptake in 2 and 3 year olds and reduce vaccine inequalities.

Uptake of flu vaccination programme tends to be highest in October, falling off towards Christmas. Most vaccines are given through GP practices, with significant contributions through pharmacies and the school based immunisation services. Together, these services delivered over 18 thousand vaccines given last year, a number which was matched this year by the end of October.

Lowest number of Looked After Children since March 2019

At the end of November 2022, there were 568 children in care in Blackpool, a decrease of 100 children since May 2020 (-15%). This is due to a much lower number of children entering care, combined with more children leaving care permanently through adoption, returning to parents and being cared for within their wider family under special guardianship orders.

The number of children in care in Blackpool is now around 10% higher than the group of other local authorities most similar to the town, which represents significant progress towards getting the best outcome for this group. Plans are in place to continue to safely reduce the number of children in care over the coming year.

Our 5 Promises to Our Children

Following the results of Our Children's Annual Survey which focused on 'The Pledge', and through discussions with Justuz, Our Children in Care Council, it was agreed that our pledge needed a revamp. The young people told us it needed to be brighter, more colourful, to focus more on building relationships and to be more creative in how we support them to see the people who are important to them. To do this, a Co-Production Group was created from Justuz members, the Participation Service and our Communication Team. This group met over several months to look at the new content requested and to create a new brighter, colourful and fresh design.

The children and young people decided to re-name "The Pledge" to "The 5 Promises", telling us that "everyone understands what a promise is and it isn't something that should be broken unlike a pledge". They created new sections such as Your Relationships to focus us on how we support them to see their families and building trusting relationships, and Your Health so that we involve them more in decisions made about their health and create more fun opportunities to keep them fit and healthy.

These now make up The 5 Promises along with Care and Respect, Your Education and Your Future. A special version for younger children in the form of a short story book featuring Benny the Blackpool Bear explains how we will promise to care about them so they feel safe and loved, spend time together, be happy and healthy, help them to learn and have fun and support them to grow up to be whatever they want to be in the future.

All of the Promises have a member champion from the Corporate Parenting Panel, which will put in place arrangements to monitor them alongside delivery plans for each of the 5 themes as part of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. This will also be delivered and monitored by officers within Children's Social Care as well as partners so there will be alignment of governance structures, reporting and monitoring arrangements. The annual survey will also be used to check with "Our Children and Young People" to see how we doing in keep our promises to them.

On Tuesday 18 October 2022, The Mayor of Blackpool hosted the signing of The 5 Promises in the Council Chamber, Blackpool Town Hall. The ceremony was attended by members of Justuz, members of The Corporate Parenting Panel and Children's Social Care staff. Justuz presented the new 5 Promises asking for us all, as their Corporate Parents, to commit to making these promises to all children and young people in our care. The 5 Promises will now be shared across all of Children Social Care, wider council employee's and all partner agencies to promote and support the delivery to Our children and Young People.

Delivery of the National Autism Strategy – learning at our community conference

Whilst our Adult Social Care Autism Team grows from strength to strength, currently supporting 74 autistic people with social care and the development of practical daily living skills, resilience, and confidence, there are at least half as many again who are waiting for our support and still more currently not known to us.

As part of Blackpool's delivery of the National Autism Strategy, we are also focusing on wider areas of life that impact on autistic people in the town, incorporating education, awareness and information, employment, getting around the town, retail and leisure facilities. On 1 November 2022, we hosted a community conference focusing on employment, employability and simple adjustments that can make working life better for autistic people at the new Winter Gardens Conference Centre. We were privileged to hear first-hand testimony about what helps and hinders autistic people in employment, and inspiring descriptions of the positive difference autistic people in the workplace can and do make if we create a productive work environment that allows everyone's skills and talents to shine.

A new Financial Inclusion Strategy for difficult times

Executive has recently approved a refreshed Financial Inclusion Strategy following consultation surveys and events across the town with residents, third sector, volunteer groups and other stakeholders. The five year strategy (2022-2027) contains a number of action points across four priority areas:

- Access to Financial Support, Products and Services
- Communication, Collaboration and Coordination
- Digital Skills and Inclusion
- Financial Skills and Capabilities.

The Financial Inclusion Strategy will be key to marshalling resources which support residents to become more financially resilient, particularly relevant given the current cost of living crisis. Following approval, subgroups will be established to start collaborative working between organisations across the town to assist us in delivering the action plan shortly, whilst a follow-up to our September Cost of Living event will be held on 7 December 2022 to facilitate joint working on the issues hitting people in Blackpool the hardest.

Better Start Conference Tackling Poverty opened by Dame Andrea Leadsom

In October 2022, Blackpool Better Start held their 8th Annual conference: "Tackling Poverty, Changing Childhoods". The event, chaired by the Chief Executive of the NSPCC Peter Wanless, brought together experts within the field of Early Child Development to discuss how at a local and national level workforces can respond to the pressures on families living in poverty and mitigate the impact it is having on early child development.

A total of 821 delegates registered to attend the virtual conference from across the UK, representing 50 local authorities, 16 NHS trusts and 22 academic establishments. The key note presentation from Carey Oppenheim, the former chief executive of the Early Intervention Foundation, set the theme for the day and shared findings from the Nuffield Foundations reports into The Changing Face of Early Childhood in Britain. Presentations were also delivered from The Children's Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel De Souza and Dame Andrea Leadsom who shared their findings from the Family Review and Start For Life initiative respectively.

The conference showcased a film produced by Blackpool parents which highlighted the impact of poverty on families and provided recommendations to the workforce on how to support and talk about poverty with families. This was supported with a session from the Frameworks UK institute about how to talk about poverty in a way to reduce the stigma attached to it.

Corporate Issues

Occupational Health vaccination clinics

Blackpool Council's in-house Occupation Health campaign commenced on 30th September, with daily vaccination clinics held until 21 October 2022 across 22 locations, making it easier for front-facing staff to benefit. As at the end of October, 996 had been vaccinated, including 306 from schools and 134 from other organisations, putting us well on track to surpass last year's total of 1015.

Investing in knowledge: £5 million for our Health Determinants Research Collaboration

Blackpool Council has been awarded £5 million over 5 years from the National Institute for Health Research to establish a Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) in Blackpool. The successful bid was co-developed with Lancaster University, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals and Empowerment Charity. Ten local authorities have been selected to establish HDRCs in 2022, with Blackpool being the only successful local authority in the North West.

The aim of the HDRC is for Blackpool Council, in collaboration with our local communities and partner organisations, to become a sustainably "research active" local authority. This means that we will use information on "what works" to inform what we do, and undertake co-produced research in line with local and organisational priorities which address the wider determinants of poor health that conspire to produce stark health inequalities in Blackpool. In the initial years of our HDRC, we will use the priorities of the Place-Based Partnership to shape our work – Housing; The first 1001 days of life; Education, employment and skills; and Mental Health, with Healthy Lifestyles being a golden thread throughout.

Transforming Services

The Falls Pick Up service – reducing pressures on the Ambulance Service

There has been a considerable amount of media focus about how the NHS will respond to the anticipated difficult winter period. One of the key areas of focus nationally is around falls, whether this be people in their own homes or in care homes. It is typical for most falls that an ambulance is called for assistance. In Blackpool, the Council's Vitaline Service which delivers the technology enabled care provision for Blackpool, has been successfully delivering a Falls Pick Up service to Vitaline clients for over 10 years.

The service has recently been working with North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) so that calls for uninjured fallers are automatically shared with Vitaline for a "Falls Pick Up" visit, which is typically quicker than an ambulance. NWAS has trained Vitaline staff to undertake an assessment for injury and following a successful fall pick up, staff can call off the request for the ambulance. This ultimately prevents an ambulance visit and often a conveyance to hospital.

Building on this success, the Council's Vitaline Service has now expanded the Falls Pick Up service for care homes, where the care home also telephones Vitaline following the call to 999 with the service being delivered by whichever service arrives on site first. In one instance this reduced a potential six hour wait time for an ambulance to just 30 minutes and within 45 minutes from the time of the call to Vitaline, the resident was up off the floor and back in their bed, settled, happy and safe. The ambulance crew were then able to prioritise resources to other emergencies.

More generally, the Vitaline service has been enhanced further by working with Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Community Services and the Rapid Response Team. This team is a multi-disciplinary team of clinical specialists based in the community who can provide clinical support to patients in their own homes and in care homes, providing a live triage intervention between 8am-8pm 7 days a week, where our clinical colleagues can make risk based decisions about how best to care for the person and whether a hospital admission or GP is required. The enhanced service has been in place since June 2022 and so far over 40 admissions to hospital have been avoided as a result of Vitaline and Rapid Response working in partnership, with this model now being developed in Morecambe and across other areas of Lancashire and South Cumbria.

Social Care Technology

The Council's Vitaline Service embarked on their 'digital switch' programme pre-COVID in anticipation of the current analogue telephone lines being made obsolete by 2025. Following considerable capital investment, Vitaline are installing new digital Smart Hubs in people's homes in readiness for August 2023, when the switchover will begin.

This 'digital switch' also creates an opportunity to better deliver technology enabled care remotely, including monitoring in people's own homes and additional health and wellbeing support via digital applications. The Vitaline Service has been working with the Health and Social Care Career Academy and Blackpool and Fylde College to develop a 'technology space' inside the Health and Social Care Career Academy at the Council's Bickerstaffe offices, featuring drop-in sessions with Telecare/Telehealth lead for Social Workers and Care Providers so they can be shown the equipment available and what it can do for people.

With increasing demand for social care, using technology can enhance or replace some elements of care to help us better target resources where they are needed most. The aspiration is to care for people with a blend of physical and digital care into the future, taking advantage of new technologies to better care and support our most vulnerable residents.

Working with Partners

Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre (ARC)

The ARC, which has 33 health and social care beds to support prevention of admission to hospital and timely hospital discharges, has experienced significant change during the last few years in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing acuity of people's needs. The Council, in partnership with Blackpool Teaching Hospitals, has delivered an integrated health and social care model of care at ARC for many years now. This was initially with a focus of rehabilitation and residential re-ablement. However, over recent years there has been a shift towards more complex care and people requiring a period of time to recuperate following a discharge from hospital, filling a gap left by the closure of some community hospitals. As a result, the ARC has increased its general staffing cohort to ensure adequate staffing is available to meet higher care needs.

A Clinical Lead Nurse role to support the nurses delivering the clinical care of the people accessing ARC has strengthened our care delivery. Furthermore, working with colleagues at the Adelaide Street GP Practice and our Integrated Care Board (CCG) Commissioners, we successfully developed a daily visiting GP Service, enabling the ARC team to better care for people with very complex medical conditions on site at ARC without needing to be referred or conveyed to hospital.

Hospital and Health Based Teams

The Transfer of Care Hub, a multi-disciplinary team of health and social care staff that oversee hospital discharges seven days a week for those people requiring a service on discharge is now well established and still developing. Further Adult Social Care staff recruitment has now ensured that a full complement of staff is in place to support the service.

This team is proving effective in managing the journey from the acute and peripheral hospitals and support on average 100 people a week to determine the best place of discharge and then source and arrange this. Ward staff still discharge more physically able patients directly; but due to concerns about how some of these people managed post discharge, we have incorporated a support work role into this team to follow up on people sent home via this route. This has picked up and supported a number of people who were failing to manage and avoided potential readmissions to hospital.

Former hospital social work staff are now based within the community and provide a discharge support service, assessing everyone discharged within the first three days to check the discharge plan is robust and was correct, arrange alternatives if not appropriate and also assess and plan with people for how best to meet their medium to longer term on going care needs.

Utilising Resilience and Surge funding we are providing additional hours on a 6 month temporary basis into our Raid Response team to ascertain the social care demand if the service moves ahead with the national requirement for a seven day 8:00am – 8:00pm service. Funding does not currently allow us to do this full time or permanently, but we hope to gather evidence over the 6 months of staffing and funding requirements going forward.

We continue to have social care staff operating out of the six main Primary Care teams and are also involved in some of the wider system discussions about the introduction of integration following the Fuller Report recommendations.

For all of our teams in Social Work and in Care Services, the changes in acuity and complexity of the people we support, the earlier journey out of the acute NHS system into the community, and the national workforce shortages are adding complexity, volume and time to the work our teams do. We remain creative and collaborative in responding to the demands for our services; however, the impacts are significant. We have seen a doubling in the last year of 'minor changes' work, for example. This is indicative of people coming into our care whilst still not recovered or stabilised, and adds significant overhead in terms of multiple visits and assessments, changes to care plans, and administration of our systems.

We are also delivering thousands more hours of domiciliary care services, and providers are struggling to keep up with the additional demand, which means we have to find temporary solutions in the interim. As we head into winter, these pressures are building further in all areas, but we remain in daily planning, oversight and delivery contact with our NHS partners at all levels of the system.