

**CABINET MEMBER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ASPIRATION – COUNCILLOR KATH BENSON**

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Portfolio areas of responsibility:

- Schools under LA control, community schools
- Children with Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- LEA support to academies and voluntary aided schools
- School place planning, organisation and buildings
- Education diversity and support units/service e.g. Pupil Referral Units
- Youth Services
- Youth Employment and Education

**Introduction**

The cabinet member will present the report to Council and report on any key issues.

**Theme 1 – The Platform**

As mentioned in the Levelling Up - Place report the Platform supports young people aged 16-24 into work or education. The capital work to set up the centre was funded by the Council through the Towns Fund. With high youth unemployment in the town this work is critical for our local residents.

Since opening and to the end of July we have helped 787 young people with 220 of those entering training and 221 getting a job. We are now working with 164 young people to help them with a similar outcome. Work continues to re-engage with customers who have previously disengaged from the service with customers being offered an outreach appointment before they leave on the system. All customers that have left were invited to the Career Event on the 18 August.

Activities in July:

A workshop with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) took place at The Platform. There were discussions around how things are working and how the two organisations can work better together moving forward. Agreements include:

- Increasing the number of DWP staff within The Platform.
- The Platform completing outreach sessions at the Job Centre Plus (JCP).
- Introducing The Platform scheme and colours to the youth area of the JCP.
- Exploring the layout of The Platform to better utilise the space.

- A dedicated work coach at the JCP for the Initial Evidence Interview.
- Possibility of the Initial Evidence Interview taking place at The Platform.
- Dedicated inboxes created for communication between the organisations.

The Latest Princes Trust Explore course has begun its delivery from The Platform, along with the continued delivery of the Skills Construction Traineeship in construction.

The Princes Trust Team 86 delivered by Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, attended The Platform where we supported them with mock interviews.

Infusion Research created a new online feedback form for The Platform and this was rolled out in July. This has been created to provide improved feedback and to be more accessible to customers.

The Youth Hub Coordinator met with Merlin to discuss and help shape their offer for young people, including the offer for Care Leavers. Merlin have agreed to create and ring-fence three jobs for Care Leavers, and all Care Leavers that apply for a job will receive two free attraction tickets and a guaranteed interview. A specific point of contact in both organisations has been agreed to help with communicating applications and gathering evidence.

Activities in August:

The Platform team ran a Careers Event on 18 August 2023. Over 15 different organisations attended, offering education training and employment. All previous customers and all the young people on Blackpool Council's NEET tracking list were invited to the event.

The Princes Trust Get Into NHS interviews were conducted from The Platform on 30 August.

In all 40 events were held during August including training courses, drop ins, meet the employer sessions, Job Search/CV writing, further education information sessions and more.

Further events information is available online.

## **Theme 2 – Youth Provision**

The Youth Investment Fund has granted just under £1.7m to help improve youth facilities in Blackpool. The money has been awarded to create a new, larger, purpose built youth club on the site of the existing Blackpool Boys and Girls youth club in Talbot and Brunswick. The expansion of the building will allow for more youth work activities, youth provision and opportunities for young people from the local area with the completion date expected to be autumn 2024.

As part of the Youth Provision Partnership, Blackpool Council and Blackpool Boys and Girls Club Centre submitted a joint application to the Youth Investment Fund for the redevelopment and expansion of the Talbot and Brunswick Youth Centre on Gorton Street, Blackpool.

The new Blackpool Boys and Girls Club Centre will be a much-needed addition to the Talbot and Brunswick community. It will provide young people with a safe and supportive space to learn, grow, and develop their talents.

The redeveloped and redesigned youth centre will offer a range of youth work activities and opportunities, and the new centre will include a games room, space for sports, a kitchen area, and the opportunity to develop an e-Sports area.

Blackpool Council set up the Youth Provision Partnership, made up of key agencies from across the youth sector and those who work with young people and residents. It was set up following research carried out in 2022 by the National Youth Agency, in partnership with Youth Focus North West and the result is an ambitious plan to grow youth provision for children and young people all across Blackpool with an investment of £225k from Blackpool Council.

The investment has already started with the appointment of a Youth Services Manager, with the aim of improving the quality and consistency of youth provision across the town, through a collaborative and coordinated approach to developing, prioritising and co-producing provision for and with young people. A Grants Funding Manager will seek to identify, apply and secure funding to support the partnership delivering in the third sector, in conjunction with a dedicated Training and Quality Manager to support workforce development. The team will be completed with a Youth Engagement Officer leading on involving and engaging young people across Blackpool, taking a co-production approach to developing and shaping youth provision.

### **General questions / comments**

Councillors will have the opportunity to raise questions / comments on any matter in the Cabinet Member's portfolio.