

## PEOPLE PORTFOLIOS

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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

### COVID-19 Update

As of 30<sup>th</sup> August, COVID-19 infections are falling as the current wave caused by the BA.5 variant passes. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) COVID-19 Infection Survey suggests COVID-19 prevalence in England had fallen to approximately 2% by mid-August, from a peak in the BA.5 wave of 6% in early July. Hospital admissions, bed occupancy and deaths relating to COVID-19 are also in decline.

At present there are no identified variants that are determined to be likely to produce the next wave, making the prediction of the timing and scale of the next COVID-19 wave difficult. A reasonable worst case scenario might be to consider that the previous pattern continues and to plan for a new wave in late October of similar intensity to the previous Omicron waves. Similarly, predicting the pattern of the flu season is complicated by COVID-19, with evidence from Australia suggesting this could occur 2-3 months early, equating to November in the UK, and be of a 'low to medium' severity. However, there is considerable uncertainty regarding the potential impact in the UK.

A comprehensive vaccination programme for COVID-19 and seasonal flu is planned by NHS England and will be supplemented by additional activity locally. This additional activity will include a Blackpool Council Occupational Health offer, led by the Corporate Health Manager Karen White's team, engagement and activity to increase vaccination across Blackpool Teaching Hospitals and Blackpool Council's vaccination bus making it as easy as possible to get your jab, targeting communities with low uptake and dedicated resources to support vaccinations of our most vulnerable population in care homes.

## **Youth Services**

Our ambition that every young person in Blackpool has access to youth provision within a 15 minute walk of their home has reached a key point, following a recent review of youth provision across the town with key third sector partners. This identified the need for a collaborative approach to maximise funding opportunities. As a result, the Council has agreed to invest in the creation of a small Youth Service team to take on a coordinating and support role, with a particular focus on workforce development, funding opportunities and youth engagement to help shape the type of provision available.

## **Exam results**

Congratulations to all of our students who have, despite such significant challenges over the past two years, received their results and are now making plans for the future. For those who didn't get the results they hoped for, support and services are available across the town to help and we have some great opportunities across further education, apprenticeships and employment ready and waiting for our young people.

In the absence of published examination results across the school years 2019-20 and 2020-21, it is important not to draw conclusions from unpublished data on outcomes that have been generated through Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) and Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) even though many children did very well and progressed onto further education or employment. This summer has seen the re-introduction of nationally assessed examinations, with grades delivered through the major examination boards and official grade boundaries applied for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic period.

Whilst children have received their examination results at GCSE equivalent and A-Level equivalent, a period of appeal and validation of school cohorts occurs between August and January where these results remain unpublished. Whilst it is therefore inappropriate to comment upon results for individual schools and results in aggregate across Blackpool, the outcomes do appear to show a positive, upward trajectory of performance for the town.

## **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) update**

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission inspected the local area SEND system in March 2022 and published their report in May. Whilst highlighting positive work across the town and some real strengths in the work with Children and Families with SEND the local area (which covers Health, the Local Authority and Education and primary partners) was found to be under-performing in four areas:

- The lack of specificity, ownership and accountability in the area's improvement strategy for SEND
- The duties around preparing children and young people for adulthood, such as ensuring continuity of health care, not being fulfilled

- The poor communication with parents and carers across the area
- The long waiting times for some therapies

We responded swiftly to this with a Statement of Action, submitted in advance of the required deadline. Since the inspection there has been considerable partnership activity to strengthen the delivery of SEND and a new Head of SEND, Charlotte Baron, has been appointed. Charlotte is an experienced SENDCO who brings with her a wealth of school experience. She will work closely with the Director and Assistant Directors of Children's Services, the Director of Adult Services / Director of Health and Care Integration and local NHS partners to deliver the written statement of action and to produce a revised and updated SEND strategy.

## Corporate Issues

### Adult Social Care - service overview

As the Adult Social Care team works through the pandemic recovery period, we continue to experience high levels of referrals for support. Alongside this sustained increase in demand we are seeing a shortage of staff within the care sector nationally and difficulties recruiting qualified social workers. The process of developing integrated ways of working with health will allow us to avoid duplication and tackle staff shortages across the whole system, including through shared working with health colleagues based within the Primary Care Networks. We are also looking at ways to develop working relationships with the wider multi-disciplinary teams and our community staff to improve the care and support offered.

- **Hospital and Health Based Teams:** New ways of working introduced during the pandemic are now embedded in practice and national guidance. Across the estate of Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Trust, we have worked jointly with NHS colleagues to create a multi-disciplinary Transfer of Care Hub, which supports all patients identified as medically fit for discharge and in need of support to leave hospital. They triage patients who are ready to leave hospital and commission the appropriate pathway to an appropriate interim care arrangement, allowing for an assessment of medium and long term care needs outside of hospital. Shortages of availability of care in your own home due to recruitment challenges can mean some people having to go into short term residential care while they wait for a care package in their own home and, whilst not ideal, is preferable to staying in hospital beyond the period that you need acute care.
- **Adult Social Care Initial Contact Team (ICT) and North and South Teams:** Staff shortages in both ICT and North community teams have led to the use of agency staff to cover essential work. Changes to posts has allowed for the recruitment of unqualified staff to provide some extra capacity but they are unable to deliver complex case work and safeguarding cases which remain difficult to allocate. To help with capacity, the team is also exploring options for telephone review for those who are considered less vulnerable where this is safe and meaningful.

- **Adult Social Care:** Despite huge demand, the team continues to respond to urgent same day work as well as the more routine requests for Care Act Assessments and are moving to a more flexible approach to hybrid working from October.
- **Autism Team:** This team has grown substantially since being established in March 2019, with one Deputy Team Manager, five qualified Social Workers, one Case Assessor and four Support Workers. Due to the high level of referrals and staff vacancies, the service currently has a waiting list for assessment, which will be addressed once the posts are filled. The team is currently planning our second Autism event, to be held at the Winter Gardens on 1 November, which will include local employers from various sectors and are planning and implementing an Autism Strategy and Board.
- **Integrated Community Learning Disability Team:** This consists of staff employed by both Blackpool Council and Blackpool Teaching Hospitals and is currently dealing with a backlog of reviews caused by two Social Work job vacancies. We are now seeing Day Services attendance figures similar to pre-COVID attendance.

### **Number of children in public care continues to fall**

The number of children in public care has fallen consistently through the summer of 2022 and now stands at 575 as at the end of September. This is the lowest reported total since the summer of 2019 and reflects a lower number of children entering care, positive outcomes at the conclusion of court proceedings and more children leaving long term care or being adopted.

Demand for children's social care services has been steady throughout 2022 and the number of children with child protection plans is in line with expected levels when compared to similar local authority areas. Key outcomes for care experienced young people (care leavers) continue to strengthen and have now been in line with or above national average levels for the past 6 months.

Despite this improving picture challenges remain, in particular the number of children in care in residential homes and the stability of the homes of our children in care. Children's services will be focusing on this critical issue through the latter part of this year and into 2023.

Following the recent sequence of positive monitoring visits by Ofsted, the Council's Children's Services are likely to be subject to a full re-inspection by Ofsted in the autumn/winter of 2022.

### **Chef's Academy**

As Blackpool Catering Services Chef's Academy begins its second year of operation, demand for the alternative educational provision has grown significantly. A total of 18 young people are enrolled on the programme starting in September, from a range of Blackpool secondary schools, which will see them gain knowledge, skills and qualifications in the catering and

hospitality sector along with support to progress to further education or employment once finishing secondary school.

## **Transforming Services**

### **Community Stop Smoking Services**

A new Community Stop Smoking Services contract was awarded on 1 January 2021 and despite initial set up problems as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the service was fully established with a team in place and operational by June 2021. As COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, face to face clinics began across Blackpool which were well received. The service also offers home visits and telephone support for those unable to attend clinical sessions, i.e. people discharged from hospital, people more seriously affected by multiple co-morbidities and older people. The Community Stop Smoking Service achieved 289 quits in 2021-22, equating to 89% of the first-year target of 325 – this was despite the delays and complications of COVID-19.

The service customer satisfaction survey, Friends and Family, has shown a rating as either Excellent or Very Good and this may largely be due to the fact that there has been a real focus on development of the team - equipping them with the skills and competencies to better meet the needs of our residents. The service also had additional Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) products added to the formulary, matching those available in secondary care and improvements were made to the NRT direct-supply systems.

The Community Stop Smoking Service receive direct referrals from the NHS Targeted Lung Health Check Pilot Programme and 63% of their referrals have gone on to achieve the goal of having 4 weeks smoke-free. The community service also has targets to reach specific population groups with high rates of smoking. In line with this, they have taken steps to actively recruit smokers with mental health conditions and prioritise smokers with mental wellbeing conditions by developing closer links with Community Mental Health Teams, Supporting Minds and the harm reduction community. The service has also developed closer links with Renaissance and Horizon in Blackpool and are designing interventions to support our LGBTQ community where smoking rates are thought to be up to 50% higher than the general population.

Smoking is one of the biggest risk factors contributing to very high levels of premature morbidity and mortality in Blackpool. These incidences of disease are seen mostly in our more deprived areas and the service places great emphasis on targeting smokers in routine and manual occupations and those with co-morbidities and/or long-term conditions. Manual workers and workplaces across Blackpool have been approached to see if they would like the support of Community Stop Smoking Services for their workplace and a positive example of this has been engagement with Blackpool Transport. In 2022/23 the service will focus on supporting social landlords and their tenants. Bespoke training packages Smoking and Mental Health, Having Difficult Conversations, Dual Use Smoking and Cannabis and Harm Reduction are designed to equip the team with the necessary skillset to tackle smoking-related inequalities in Blackpool.

Finally, a significant connection has been made between the Community Stop Smoking Service and the new Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust Inpatient Smoke-free Service, ensuring that robust pathways are in place for patients who start their quit attempt in hospital to receive timely support and continuation of treatment when they are discharged in the community.

## **Working with Partners**

### **Blackpool Council Care and Support – Provider Services (All Age)**

The summer months have been a particularly busy period as we continue our recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic whilst also developing our services in response to both local and national drivers across health and social care as well as the development of an ‘all age’ offer of services to the residents of Blackpool. These include:

- **Virtual Wards:** The Council’s Vitaline Service is working with Blackpool Teaching Hospital and Fylde Coast Medical Services in the development of a remote monitoring function supporting individuals who have a respiratory condition living at home. This helps to identify early deterioration in someone’s respiratory condition, ensuring that they receive a timely clinical response which prevents an admission to hospital or presentation at Accident and Emergency.
- **Rapid First Approach:** The council’s Vitaline Service has worked with Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Community Services and Rapid Response to develop a new approach to people who have fallen at home, using the clinician on duty to reduce the use of emergency or GP services. Since June 2022 this has avoided 7 admissions to hospital and improved customer care. Data and a Case Study has been shared with Integrated Care System partners and a similar model is being developed across Lancashire as a result of the positive impact we have had in Blackpool.
- **Friend for Life/Independent Visitor** - Building on the positive work achieved by Headstart, the Friend for Life and Independent Visitor schemes have transferred to the Council’s Shared Lives and Volunteers Service. The integration of these services will further enhance the support offered to some of our most vulnerable residents, including ‘our children with cared for experience’. Work is underway with the Children’s service to understand how we can use a Shared Lives model to support some of our young people aged 16 and over as part of their preparation for adulthood and/or move on plans following a Fostering placement.
- **Moving with Dignity – Single Handed Care FIRST Approach** - As part of the overall ‘dignity in care’ ethos, we will be embarking on a journey with health and social care partners that challenges us to think about how we care for people in different ways. We will be creating a dedicated training suite at the Health and Social Care Career Academy supported by Blackpool and Fylde College. This training suite will be available to health and social care providers as a resource to use to train their staff in different moving and

handling techniques that can be safely done by one person. This will be a transformation change across health and social care, ensuring people receive care in hospital and at home in the least intrusive manner and empowering people to take a level of control around their care based on their needs.

- **Social Care Workforce** - We have adopted a very different approach to our recruitment in recent months. In part this is due to the challenges the health and social care sector are experiencing but also to help support more people into employment, no matter what their experience or availability of time to work. We have worked in partnership with the Job Centre in developing a Guaranteed Interview Scheme which is targeted towards individuals who are in receipt of work related welfare benefits and available for work. In addition, we have delivered 'make social care count' sessions where individuals come along, hear about what jobs are available, meet with managers from services and then we try and match them to the different roles available. There has been some measured success from adopting these new approaches and interest has been high with eventual appointments being made to more than six candidates from a pool of fifteen. Further sessions are planned going forwards and links with the Health and Social Care Career Academy, Job Centre and Blackpool Football Club are creating new opportunities to support recruitment into the sector into the future.

### **Stanley Park Athletics Track Investment**

Work to replace the athletics track and make throwing cage modifications at Stanley Park athletics arena have started. The £325,000 investment will ensure the facilities can continue to host regional athletics events and will be complete ready for the next athletics season. The project has been developed in partnership with Blackpool Fylde and Wyre Athletics Club, England Athletics and Blackpool Council, with a mixture of external funding and council budget being used to fund the project.