

CABINET MEMBER FOR LEVELLING UP: PEOPLE - COUNCILLOR JO FARRELL

Portfolio areas of responsibility:

- Public health and health protection
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Harm reduction
- Domestic abuse
- Leisure services including leisure management, Active Blackpool, Community Sport, PE and schools' sports and outdoor pursuits
- Libraries
- Housing options and homelessness
- Decent Homes
- Housing related support and sustaining private sector tenancies
- Catering
- Equality and diversity
- Adult Learning
- Getting People into Work including Positive Steps and Business Growth Prosperity
- Relationship with Department for Work and Pensions and Job Centre Plus
- Social Value
- Welfare benefits and Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Introduction

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

Theme 1 - Blackpool Together – Welcoming Warm Spaces – Winter 2023 programme

Over 70 representatives from the voluntary sector attended a recent Blackpool Together winter planning event. Our “Welcoming Warm Places” winter programme has launched and over 25 locations will be offering support across Blackpool over the winter. Welcoming warm places are at the bases of many community groups, libraries and a range of local churches, halls and community cafes.

Welcoming warm places are free, safe and supportive spaces that residents can visit.

They offer somewhere to:

- look after physical and mental health
- get access to support, advice and often have free Wi-Fi
- enjoy the company of others

- stay for a while in a warm and comfortable space
- usually obtain something to eat and a hot drink

A publicity and awareness campaign will be launched which will include social media and leaflet drops. The outreach campaign will also continue with attendance at town centre and other key locations.

Grant funding has been made available with support from HM Governments DWP Household Support Fund and Blackpool Council Public Health. Community Groups are able to make applications for projects.

Funding awards for Welcoming Spaces since April 2023 total approximately £360,000 and are estimated to reach over 4,000 households. Funding is also available for projects that support residents with issues relating to cost of living and health and wellbeing.

Details of all warm spaces can be found on www.fyidirectory.co.uk and a freephone telephone support line is also available on 0808 175 3379 for those that might have difficulty accessing the internet or finding it hard to find the support they need.

Theme 2 - Street Safety and Domestic Abuse

Respect for women and the freedom of everyone when walking around our town should feel from the tyranny of harassment from others for any reason, concerns us all. People should feel safe travelling to and from work and education; using public transport and enjoying all the excellent entertainment, day and night, that the town has to offer. Delivering this feeling of safety across our town is a key part of ensuring we really “level up” for the people of Blackpool. Officers supporting my portfolio have worked hard to attract national funding in to Blackpool and ensure it is routed into making our streets safer, working in partnership across the public, private and third sector to develop a culture of respectful behaviours and early intervention in harassment and negative, harmful relationships. Early intervention and awareness raising is essential. We have introduced Green Dot – a proven, safe and effective intervention approach across a range of sectors and are working hard to see it roll out even wider.

Our **#itstopshere** campaigns have been effective in engaging young people, businesses and activists in exploring how we can “design out” spaces and behaviours that make people feel less safe – and we are seeing impact. But still, too often, our streets do not feel as welcoming and safe for all as they should do.

Sadly, although we hope to see the impact of education and interventions to improve outcomes in the long term, we continue to see high levels of Domestic Abuse in Blackpool and continue in our efforts, across the partnership, to address it.

Use of Civil Tools and Powers

The Community Safety Team frequently utilises its Powers under the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014 to prevent and intervene where Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) has taken place.

Recently, the team has piloted the use of Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) and Community Protection Notices (CPNs) in cases of Domestic Abuse where other interventions have proven ineffective, or are not available to victims. The issue of these notices are proving to be particularly useful in the instances where a perpetrator's behaviour has not reached the threshold for arrest and preventative restrictive conditions are not in place. Victims and families have reported very positive outcomes, with the warnings, which are usually applied as part of a suite of protective and preventative interventions available to the team, keeping victims safe from further harm. At this time, we believe Blackpool is the only authority using its powers in this way.

Supporting Change

Prevention and early intervention to support change is a key part of the Strategy to address the wide ranging harms of Domestic Abuse. Alongside support for victims there are programmes that aim to transform the behaviour of perpetrators of Domestic Abuse. A recent addition to the programmes available is the Drive Project, led by Lancashire Constabulary. The Drive Project is a collaborative approach to tackling domestic abuse, by bringing together police officers, support agencies, caseworks and directly with those presenting abusive, challenging and violent behaviour. The Drive Project provides a case manager who acts as a single point of contact for perpetrators. The project is supportive of the perpetrator's capacity to change, whilst never losing sight of the victim and their thoughts, feelings and wellbeing.

Supporting victims to stay in their own home

A key ask of the coproduced strategy that has commenced delivery was a reduction in the pressure on victims of domestic Abuse to "flee" their home to feel safe. Instead, wherever possible, the focus on helping them to maintain the stability of their home will be strengthened, by making it a safe and secure environment free of fear. Safe Accommodation funding has been used to support innovative work to make a person's own home, often their family home, safer and more secure. In particular, but not in isolation, the use of video doorbells to maintain safety, alongside specialist outreach support and risk management has given victims a greater sense of control and safety. It has also supported effective interventions from the judicial system by strengthening the evidence base when sadly, bail conditions are breached. Over 300 video doorbells have now been fitted across the town to support victims and prevent future harm.

White Ribbon

I am pleased to see so many of my fellow councillors expressing their support through the wearing of their white ribbon. Blackpool Council is an accredited member of White Ribbon.org and as such, support is given not only during the 16 Days of Action, but throughout the year. Council employees are encouraged to become White Ribbon Champions and Ambassadors and we have a great partnership with key stakeholders across the town.

A few highlights of the visibility of the campaign in Blackpool this year will include –

- The White Ribbon Tableau placed prominently on the promenade
- Blackpool FC will warm up wearing their White Ribbon Shirts and display visual cues relating to White Ribbon, including a notice on the match day screen and in their match program and will be encouraging people to join the ambassadors programme.
- We will have both a White Ribbon and a Green Dot Stall at the Houndshell Shopping Centre on the 24th November to coincide with the opening of the new Department Store and Black Friday

There is an extensive programme to raise awareness of the impact of Domestic Abuse and how to safely support the reduction of harm throughout the 16 Days of Action and I doubt anyone will miss at least one form of the engaging messaging which will be town wide.

General questions / comments

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