

Council Forum

Thursday, 1st October, 2020

6.00 pm

Virtual Meeting

[Join Here](#)

AGENDA

1. **Welcome and Apologies**
2. **Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain**
3. **Minutes Of The Previous Meeting**
Council Forum July 2020 3 - 6
4. **Declarations of Interest**
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FORM 7
5. **Mayoral Communications**
6. **Council Forum**
To consider any questions from members of the public received under Procedure Rule 12.
7. **Motions**
To consider Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.
8. **Updates from Other Committees**
Standards Committee 8
To receive an update from the Standards Committee (attached) and verbal updates from the Chairs of the PEOPLE, PLACE, Policy and Corporate Resources and Call-in Committees.
9. **Reports of Executive Members with Portfolios**
- 9.1 **Leader**
Leader 9 - 11

9.2	Public Health and Wellbeing	
	Public Health and Wellbeing	12 - 14
9.3	Adult Services and Prevention	
	Adult Services Prevention	15 - 18
9.4	Digital and Customer Services	
	Digital and Customer Services	19 - 21
9.5	Finance and Governance	
	Finance and Governance	22 - 24
9.6	Growth and Development	
	Growth and Development	25 - 28
9.7	Children, Young People and Education	
	CYPE	29 - 37
9.8	Environment	
	Final Environment Council Forum 1 October 20	38 - 40
10.	Questions from Members	
	To consider any questions received from Members under Procedure Rule 11.	

PART 2: ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

None.

Date Published: Wednesday, 23 September 2020
Denise Park, Chief Executive

COUNCIL FORUM Thursday, 16 July 2020

PRESENT – *The Mayor Councillor Iftakhar Hussain, Councillors Afzal, Akhtar, H, Akhtar P, Batan, Bateson, Brookfield, Browne, Casey, Connor, Daley, Davies, Desai, Fazal, Floyd, Gee, Gunn, Hardman, Harling, Hussain I, Hussain M, Hussain S, Jan- Virmani, Kay, Khan M, Khan Z, Khonat, Liddle, Mahmood, Marrow, McFall, McGurk, Oates, Patel, Rawat, Rigby C, Rigby J, Riley, Salton, Sidat, Shorrocks, Slater Jacq, Slater Ju, Slater N, Smith D, Smith J, Talbot, Taylor and Whittle.*

RESOLUTIONS

13 Welcome and Apologies

The Chief Executive read out the notice convening the meeting and the Mayor advised how the remote meeting would operate.

Apologies had been received from Councillor John Slater.

14 Minutes Of The Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held of the Annual Council meeting held on 4th June 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

15 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

16 Mayoral Communications

The Mayor updated the Council Forum on recent engagements he had attended, noting that they were all on-line events, and advised that he was looking forward to attending in person events when possible.

The Mayor also noted the difficulties of promoting his chosen charities in the current climate, but this was being looked into and he highlighted the great work being undertaken by the East Lancs Hospice.

17 Council Forum

One Question had been received from members of the public under Procedure Rule 12 as follows:

I would like to put the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mohammed Khan.

Given the experience of Leicester and the mayor's view that a city wide lockdown was not needed, will Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council undertake to make any lockdown to be targeted to specific areas and

specific venues or businesses rather than a borough wide approach.

Martin Kerry

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Mohammed Khan, provided a response, advising of the measures and restrictions that the Council had put in place, with the Borough designated as a Covid-19 Prevention Zone, and if reported cases did not decrease, it may be necessary to introduce further local measures aimed at specific problems and issues. The Leader finished by confirming that there were no plans to implement a Borough-wide Lockdown.

18 Motions

The Chief Executive reported that no Motions had been received under Procedure Rule 10.

19 Council response to Covid-19 Pandemic

A report was submitted which advised of the Council's initial emergency response to Covid-19 and the preparations for the next phase and transition to longer-term recovery.

The report outlined how some of the key services and functions had adapted to the pandemic.

The Leader outlined the key actions and initiatives introduced to respond to the pandemic, thanking the local community, Members and staff for their efforts in responding to pandemic.

Members thanked staff for going above and beyond in their response to the emergency and highlighted the new ways of working that had successfully assisted the Council's response.

RESOLVED – That Council note the content of this report.

20 Combined Authority

Members received an update on the current position on devolution, combined authorities and the progress to form a Lancashire Combined Authority.

Over recent months, Lancashire Leaders had positive discussions in relation to a Combined Authority. At their meeting on 10th June, Leaders agreed to explore a Combined Authority for Lancashire with an Elected Mayor, acknowledging that delivery of Local Government functions may need to be reviewed and simplified in the Combined Authority area as has been indicated by MHCLG.

A decision to establish a Lancashire Combined Authority would need consent of all of the local authorities covered by the area – in this case 15 councils.

Lancashire Leaders had agreed, in principle, to work with the Local Government Association, or other independent body, to undertake an options appraisal. If a business case was developed, a local consultation would be undertaken before submission and any final decision to join a Lancashire Combined Authority would be made by full Council.

The Government were keen to work with areas to develop Combined Authorities, ideally with elected Mayors, particularly as Council's re-start the economy.

The Government were due to publish their Devolution White Paper in Autumn and have said that this would set out further details on both combined authorities and local government re-organisation.

Based on the current local government arrangements, a Lancashire Combined Authority would have 15 Council Leaders and an Elected Mayor involved in decision making. This was much higher than the existing Combined Authorities which ranged in membership from 3 councils to 10 councils. Many decisions would also need unanimous agreement.

Feedback from civil servants suggested that this was too many and that the Government would be keen to see simplified local governance in areas such as Lancashire for the Combined Authority to be most effective. With 15 local authorities Lancashire had the largest number of councils in its area than anywhere else in the country.

Members were reminded that the Leader of the Council and Opposition Leader jointly wrote a letter to the Secretary of State in October 2019, requesting an invitation to develop a business case for a new Pennine Lancashire unitary authority. The letter indicated that the area could cover the existing council areas of Blackburn with Darwen, Rossendale, Hyndburn, Burnley and Pendle. This area had a population of over 480,000 residents comprising 32% of the geographical county of Lancashire's whole population. It would not be a merger of any councils. Pennine Lancashire would be a brand new unitary authority and the electorate would determine who represents them and their areas on the new Council, in line with the current election arrangements.

A new Pennine Lancashire unitary authority would be responsible for all council services such as children's services, schools, adult social care, libraries, museums, household waste recycling centres, bin collection, leisure facilities, roads, parks, environmental health.

RESOLVED – That the Council reconfirms its support for a Lancashire Combined Authority with a directly Elected Mayor.

21 Updates from Other Committees

An update from the Standards Committee was submitted, containing recommendations for adoption by the Full Council.

The recommendations related to adoption of a local guide relating to handling intimidation for Councillors, updated guidance for Councillors on Personal References, and adoption of an additional paragraph in the 'Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for Members'.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That Full Council adopt the local Guide (Appendix A) to supplement that produced by the LGA (including the Social Media Guidance), with both Guides to be available on the Council's website for easy access.
- 2) The updated Guidance for Councillors on Personal References (Appendix B) be adopted by the Full Council.
- 3) That the Council Forum adopt the additional paragraph in the 'Arrangements' as set out in the report.

22 Reports of Executive Members with Portfolios

The Leader and Executive Members presented their update reports to the Council Forum, providing verbal updates as appropriate.

In moving their reports and in discussions following, Members were unanimous in their thanks to staff for their fantastic response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED – That the reports of the Leader and Executive Members be noted, and thanks be passed to all staff for their response to the pandemic.

23 Questions from Members

No questions from Members had been received under Procedure Rule 11.

In his closing comments, thanking the Mayor for his running of the meeting, the Leader asked all to spread the message to the local community about the importance of pulling together to stop the rise of the virus in the Borough. The Leader also advised that the Prime Minister had called him the day before to discuss the Council's approach to the pandemic.

Signed at a meeting of the Council Forum
on Thursday, 1 October 2020
(being the ensuing meeting on the Council Forum) by

MAYOR

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

Members attending a Council, Committee, Board or other meeting with a personal interest in a matter on the Agenda must disclose the existence and nature of the interest and, if it is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or an Other Interest under paragraph 16.1 of the Code of Conduct, should leave the meeting during discussion and voting on the item.

Members declaring an interest(s) should complete this form and hand it to the Democratic Services Officer at the commencement of the meeting and declare such an interest at the appropriate point on the agenda.

MEETING: **COUNCIL FORUM**

DATE: **1ST OCTOBER 2020**

AGENDA ITEM NO.:

DESCRIPTION (BRIEF):

NATURE OF INTEREST:

DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY/OTHER (delete as appropriate)

SIGNED :

PRINT NAME:

(Paragraphs 8 to 17 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Council refer)

REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE.

Councillors Saima Afzal

PORTFOLIO COORDINATING

DIRECTOR: David Fairclough

This report updates the Council Forum on the work of the Standards Committee.

1 Consultation on a Draft Model Code of Conduct

The Committee received a report detailing the Local Government Association (LGA) has commitment to reviewing the current model member code of conduct, as recommended by the Committee on Standards in Public Life's report into Local Government Ethical Standards. The LGA had invited comment on the consultation draft. All Members of the Council had also been sent full details of the consultation by the Monitoring Officer so they could if they so wished comment directly individually to the consultation. The Committee agreed their collective response to the consultation questions, which was then submitted by the due deadline in August 2020.

2 Committee on Standards in Public Life - Local Government Ethical Standards.

The Committee on Standards in Public Life made a number of recommendations in their January 2019 report on local government ethical standards. In that report, they identified some best practice recommendations which represent a benchmark for ethical practice and which they expect any local authority should implement. The Committee noted that the Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal & Governance are reviewing the recommendations made and the Standards Committee at their next meeting will review any recommendations for change, acknowledging the consultation on the revised Model Code of Conduct referenced above.

Councillor Saima Afzal
Chair of Standards Committee

October 2020

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR MOHAMMED KHAN

Date: 1st October 2020

People: A good quality of life for all of our residents

Health and Wellbeing

On 2nd September, the Health and Wellbeing Board held its second meeting since the introduction of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams and enabled supportive and constructive dialogue with community partners.

The agenda was dominated by discussion of the Borough's response to the COVID-19 pandemic locally and plans for managing the next phase of the pandemic, including winter pressures.

Health and Care Integration

As virtual working continues to take place across the Health, Care and Community system, the East, North, West and Darwen Primary Care Neighbourhood Groups (PCNs) have resumed their monthly partnership meetings which has been most welcomed by all. To date, key items for discussion have included a recap and reflection of work over the COVID 19 period, an overview of the current health priorities utilising data and intelligence, the planned roll out for a flu and winter communication campaign and an update on the development of social prescribing.

Four Social Prescribing Link Workers (SPLWs) are now up and running in each Primary Care Neighbourhood. They are working alongside health colleagues in Primary Care and within Integrated Neighbourhood Teams. Their focus is on the wider determinants of health and supporting residents via a range of non-medical intervention, which focus on both physical and mental wellbeing. A Social Prescribing Alliance is in development to ensure relevant services, particularly in the Voluntary Sector, are joined up and adding value to the work of the new link workers. To ensure the success of the model, it is vital that there is vibrant community activity to sustain support in neighbourhoods. This work is ongoing.

Place: Community pride in a vibrant place to live and visit

Our Community, Our Future social integration programme

While their regular work remains paused and news of MHCLG funding for the programme is still awaited, the Council's Social Integration team continues to play an important role in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the roles they took on to support the work of the BwD Help Hub, members of the team have been supporting the Council's localised Test & Trace operation. Staff are contacting local residents whom the national Test & Trace system has failed to reach, and are seeing good rates of success. Members of the team have also joined the Council's community testing team. This gives them an opportunity to use their skills to speak to householders door-to-door about being tested for Coronavirus, and are helping to distribute around 10,000 home testing kits provided by the government.

The team has supported a research study into the impact of the pandemic on social integration being led by the University of Kent and the national cohesion network Belong. We have shared opportunities for local residents to take part in online surveys, focus groups via Zoom and one to one interviews with researchers. The findings of this research will help us to understand better, how COVID-19 has affected relations between different ethnic and religious communities in the borough and the extent to which these changes are likely to persist in the long term. Work continues on

Learning English Together website and a new ESOL teaching programme involving a range of local ESOL providers.

Community Volunteer Awards

I am sad to announce that the annual Community Volunteer Awards have now been cancelled for this year. The event was originally scheduled to take place at King George's Hall in July but due to the pandemic, this was moved to September. However, it has now been decided that it is not possible to hold the ceremony due to the ongoing situation.

The Community Volunteer awards is a wonderful event, showcasing the hardworking, dedicated and often selfless people that make our borough great. It brings together people of all ages from across Blackburn with Darwen, highlighting the best our borough has to offer. I am sure that the organisers, sponsors and nominees will come back bigger and better than ever when we are able to hold the event again.

Census 2021

A Census is undertaken every ten years and the next Census for England and Wales is scheduled for 21st March 2021. The Scottish Census has been moved to March 2022, but the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are still working towards a March 2021 Census for England and Wales. As you know, the Census provides us with a wealth of information and data, not available elsewhere, so it is important to achieve a good response to ensure we have the information and intelligence about our residents from which to plan services and make decisions. We have identified officers to undertake liaison roles working with ONS to support the process in our Borough.

The Census will mainly be done online and information on how to take part will be delivered to all our households. We also need to support those residents who struggle to get on-line to complete the census, and I am pleased to say our libraries and neighbourhood learning services have been awarded additional support to deliver this. The next stage of the project will be to work with the ONS Community Engagement Officer for our area, so that this person is linked in with community groups and organisations to engage our residents in the census process, to help them understand how their data will be used and the importance of taking part.

Council: Delivered by a strong and resilient Council

Lancashire local authority reorganisation

You will have seen in the local media that Lancashire County Council have made a proposal to central government to replace the 15 councils currently in Lancashire with three unitary authorities. This would bring big changes locally but I believe that this is the best thing for us as we look towards the future. I wrote to the government myself in October 2019 outlining a similar proposal. We look forward to hearing back from the government along with the publication of a Devolution and Recovery white paper this autumn.

COVID-19

As a Borough we have faced significant challenges I would like to thank all of our staff and partners who are working hard to support our residents and businesses during this very difficult time. This is a challenging time for all of us as we learn to live in this new era and respond to covid-19.

As a Borough with different restrictions in place across our community, it can be confusing and frustrating for our residents and businesses.

As ever we are constantly responding to the restrictions and guidance that the Government introduce and our social media channels and website are updated frequently with the latest information, despite the late and delayed announcements from the Government on a regular basis.

I will provide a further verbal update at the meeting.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH & WELLBEING

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTORS: DOMINIC HARRISON &
MARTIN EDEN
DATE: 1 October 2020

PEOPLE: A good quality of life for all our residents

Public Health - Mental Health & Suicide Prevention

World Suicide Prevention Day took place on 10th September. This year a BwD task & finish group was formed out of the BwD Mental Wellbeing COVID cell that meets every few weeks. Due to local restrictions, this year's campaign had to be predominately digital. The focus was to support Healthier Lancashire & South Cumbria campaigns as well as promoting local services and Public Health commissions. Content for the campaign included Phase 2 of the Lets Talk campaign, Zero Suicide Alliance Training, 40-second silence and the launch of the Orange Button Campaign. We also promoted our local commissioned services such as Together All, Kooth, Time to Change and Realign Futures as well as signposting services such as Samaritans, Papyrus and Every Mind Matters. Internally we promoted the Zero Suicide Alliance Training, Together all, Employee Assistance Programme and Employee support information.

Other activities on the day included, shops in the Mall putting up posters prompting WSPD and the support available, the HARRI bus parked up outside of the town hall and gave out information, Adult Learning ran a suicide awareness workshop, support services were displayed on the big digital screen in the town centre and teams from across the council recorded messages of hope that went out across our digital platforms. We also promoted the free to watch launch of the film "I made this for you" that was inspired by the loss of Billy Yates from Darwen to suicide a few years ago. The most popular post on facebook had a reach of over 9000 and the local press ran several articles in support of the campaign and the importance of Suicide Prevention across the borough, so although this year's campaign was restrictive we still managed to get the information out there for people.

Leisure Services

Leisure Services staff have been returning to the service as centres are reopening after supporting a broad range of council services in recent months.

Darwen Leisure Centre reopened on 1st September 2020 with Blackburn Sports and Leisure Centre and Witton Park Arena opening on 14th September 2020. Phased planning is key to the safe reopening of activities and this means a different approach is being taken for each facility. To ensure numbers are controlled phase one is available for direct debit and annual members only. The programming will be developed as we move forward. Customer engagement for all reopening plans is taking place via direct email messaging, letters where needed and across all social media.

Witton Park Arena will initially be used for targeted health and wellbeing programmes such as exercise referral, cardiac, stroke and COPD rehabilitation, weight

management, falls prevention, physical and learning disabilities, ante and post natal and a range of other sessions. The space inside the building is restrictive and only suitable to run very small sessions with social distancing in place.

Witton Park 3G pitches are back in use for pre-booked organisations and clubs, in line with covid-secure government requirements and adhering to Football Association guidance and the Sport England Return to Play framework.

Healthy Lifestyles & Wellbeing Service

The Wellbeing Service continues to be the point of contact for the public and partners to access any and all health and wellbeing support locally. Teams continue to deliver a broad range of live streaming and online support sessions to accompany restarting in-person delivery.

Wellbeing Service managers are leading the Council's integrated contact tracing service, supported by Health Trainers, neighbourhood teams and HR colleagues. This approach has connected residents to important wraparound services offered through the Wellbeing Service and Help Hub.

Venues

The new ticketing system and BwD Venues website went live at the end of September. These will improve the profile KGH & DLT and make the booking process easier for customers.

The programming team is working hard with agents and promoters to reschedule events into 2021 and book new events into the 2021 calendar too. Unfortunately, like so many other shows and events this year's pantomimes won't be taking place but plans are already in hand for 2021.

As part of a national campaign #SaveOurTheatres supported by The Theatres Trust both KGH and DLT have launched crowdfunding campaigns to support the return of artists even with vastly reduced audiences due to social distancing restrictions. Early progress is positive with DLT securing 35% of its £3,000 target in the first week.

Libraries

Summer Reading Challenge: With so much national uncertainty at the start of lockdown as to when libraries would be able to reopen, the Summer Reading Challenge was launched this year in a digital format. The challenge ran online from early June until the end of September 2020. Changes to eBooks online registration allowed children to carry on reading and enjoying books at a time when temporary opening hours, social distancing and maximum limits in buildings made physical access to library resources much more challenging for everyone.

Summer activities programme – On-line and physical activities were offered as libraries began to reopen in July. Sessions included Zoolab's virtual animal handling, 'Crazy Crew' on our library Facebook page and professional storyteller John Kirk sent us videos of his unforgettable lockdown performances of 'Princess Rapunzel' and

'Anansi'. Blackburn Library and Darwen Library also offered craft kits to take away and make from home.

Children's Literature Festival - Originally due to be held 'live' in April, the 2020 Blackburn Children's Literature Festival took place virtually this year on 17th to 19th September inclusive. The Thursday and Friday sessions were streamed live from Blackburn Library in to the Borough's primary schools via Microsoft Teams, and although children weren't able to participate 'in person', the digital element has enabled some schools who wouldn't otherwise have been able to take part to get on board, resulting in a higher than usual 'attendance'. The Saturday event enabled families to view the range of performances, including storytelling, author chats, poetry, rap and illustrator sessions by tuning in to the Children's Literature Festival Facebook page.

Arts & Heritage

Kick down the Barriers - Over the past 12 months artists and writers have been working in and with communities to redefine the stories about them and represent those communities as they see themselves. This include Saima Hussain who lives and works in Audley and paints street scenes of the area, Karen Mathieson a photographer who has studied and pictured the communities, in particular in lockdown of Ewood and Mill Hill where she lives as well as internationally renowned photographer Craig Easton who has worked with communities at Bank Top. It also includes a series of self-portraits from school children as well as a people's gallery featuring objects that local people would put in their own museum. This project was funded by Arts Council England and takes over the whole of Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery from 30th September until the end of November.

COUNCILLOR MUSTAFA DESAI

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING DIRECTOR:
SAYYED OSMAN (ADULT SOCIAL CARE & PREVENTION)**

DATE: 1 October 2020

ADULT SOCIAL CARE NEIGHBOURHOODS TEAMS

Despite ongoing restrictions, the Adult Social Care neighbourhood teams have continued to fulfil our statutory responsibilities. This has involved significant planning and changes to the way the teams operate. Teams continue to work remotely where possible, however owing to the relational nature of social work, safe visits within the community have resumed.

The application and allocations process for Albion Mill Extra Care apartments has been initiated in preparation for the building completion. This process will mirror the allocations process for Extra Care facilities across the borough and residents are now able to submit enquiries and applications for consideration.

Primary Care Neighbourhood (PCN) meetings resumed in August and each neighbourhood is currently mapping their specific priorities and activities for the forthcoming months. Similarly, our Integrated Neighbourhood teams (INTs) have continued to meet virtually throughout the pandemic to ensure that joined up care and support is available to our residents.

Occupational Therapy activity within the community and people’s own homes has increased following government and corporate advice in respect of social distancing and PPE. This has facilitated the resumption of the Disabled Facilities Grant program as surveying and building work has resumed. This approach remains tentative as some area restrictions remain and the building team prioritise work that has been pending since before the restrictions were in place.

LOCAL AUTHORITY LEADING MULTI-AGENCY APPROACH TO COVID RESTRICTIONS

From August, following the stricter local Covid arrangements for Blackburn with Darwen being required, the Community Safety Team has begun coordinating daily meetings with the police, Council Public Protection & Environmental Health (PP&EH) team and Young People’s Services (YPS) to review complaints received in relation to lockdown rules not being followed. The team use the agreed 4 E Strategy (Educate, Engage, Encourage & Enforce). In the first three weeks, the daily meetings have reviewed 115 complaints – 21 complaints required no further action as no breaches of the lockdown rules had taken place; in 74 complaints, the resident or business received advice on the guidance to educate, encourage and engage them; and for 21 complaints, enforcement action was undertaken. Enforcement action has resulted in 16 Fixed Penalty Notices, 3 business closures, 13 Community Protection Warnings, 2 arrests and 6 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) with a requirement to follow lockdown rules. As part of the education, engagement and encouragement strands of the strategy, two ‘Stay Safe’ events have been held covering the eight wards in stricter lockdown – these events involve the police, YPS & Community Safety Team being out in the community reminding groups of young people of the rules and encouraging them to disperse. These events have engaged over 300 individuals over two events. Using data on COVID rates and intelligence from the YPS’ daily-detached youth work offer, areas of the eight wards are identified for this targeted initiative.

REVISED SAFEGUARDING ADULTS PROCESS

Following feedback it was felt that a review of the current Safeguarding processes was required to ensure that it was much more streamlined and robust.

The documentation used previously on Mosaic (the Adult Social Care recording system) was complicated. As a result, the Safeguarding Adults team have worked closely with Mosaic business system teams to devise a much more streamlined process. The wider aim being that all professionals who access Mosaic can be confident in inputting any safeguarding concerns. Agencies and individuals who send in concerns also have more confidence in the system.

The process is much more service-user led. Alongside more robust safety planning documents that allow all the views of service users, families and professionals to be captured, there are also clearly defined opportunities to review the safety plans throughout the process.

Training sessions have been facilitated for staff across the department with supporting documentation (including process maps). This is alongside the Safeguarding Adults Team being a point of contact for any support or queries from any member of staff within the council or any external individual or organisation.

HOSPITAL DISCHARGE PATHWAYS AND PROVIDER SERVICES

The Hospital Discharge and Intermediate Tier teams continue to fulfil their statutory responsibilities and successfully meet increasing demand, particularly from the Hospital. We continue to work with system partners to ensure we help lead decision making with and on behalf residents of our borough to ensure safe discharges from hospital, based on the Covid 19 Guidance.

On the 1st of September 2020, the new Hospital Discharge Guidance was launched and we are currently responding to this within the Adults Department, across our Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) and Integrated Care System (ICS), working collaboratively to ensure consistency and a clear set of principles across health and social care. This is part of our winter planning processes and includes consideration of how we will operate across our teams to ensure that we meet increased demands over the coming months.

Day Services and Respite support for families and carers who are keyworkers has continued throughout the pandemic. This includes emergency day support and respite care to prevent carer breakdown at home. In addition, Shared Lives matching continued where it was possible to conduct meetings virtually and support was offered to shared lives carers to ensure placements remained stable.

With respect to the Day Services that were stepped down during the Pandemic, a piece of work has now been completed to guide and enable the safe resumption of services. This includes both the specialist support provided by the Council and the wider support provided through our commissioned partners at Age UK and Derwent Hall. The resumption of services will take place in a phased manner, in recognition of ongoing restrictions and developing National Guidance. This will begin on the 21st September 2020.

HELP HUB

Our Prevention and Neighbourhood Teams are continuing to support residents through the Help Hub particularly around mental health and wellbeing, debt, employment support and digital exclusion. This is very much a partnership approach. A recent example is where we are working with the voluntary sector and joining up resources to work with digitally excluded people ensuring they have access to appropriate devices and skills support.

COVID 19 has exacerbated loneliness amongst young and older people and over 60 people are currently supported on a weekly basis through the LVP Volunteering programme. There is an expectation that when the Furlough scheme ends unemployment will rise significantly. The Hub has clear mapped pathways of support for people to support them back to work.

COMMUNITY TESTING

Prevention and Neighbourhood Teams working alongside Leisure staff have used their local knowledge and engagement skills to pilot Community Testing with self-swab kits in BwD priority wards. Engagement with the community has been very positive and the teams were able to offer wider support where required. However, the model is very resource intensive relative to outcomes delivered particularly looking the rate of tests returned. Following evaluation of the pilot work, and as Leisure colleagues were returned to their substantive posts, it was agreed that a more targeted approach to Community Testing was required. Details of a new model are currently being worked up.

SOCIAL PRESCRIBING LINK WORKERS

Four Social Prescribing Link Workers (SPLWs) are now up and running in each Primary Care Neighbourhood. They are working alongside health colleagues in Primary Care and within Integrated Neighbourhood Teams. Their focus is on social needs impacting on health rather than acute medical conditions. The aim is to reduce pressure on GP's and improve outcomes for people. Target groups are:

- people impacted significantly by COVID 19
- long term conditions
- people who are currently "not coping" – suffering from low level anxiety, social isolation and who have low levels of self-management skills.

A Social Prescribing Alliance is in development to ensure relevant services particularly in the Voluntary Sector are joined up and adding value to the SPLW work. To ensure success of the model it is vital that there is vibrant community activity to sustain support naturally in neighbourhoods.. This is particularly challenging during COVID but an "alliance" approach will help to ensure support where it is needed.

ADULT LEARNER AWARDS

This was the first time the event has been held virtually, so it was pleasing to see that the majority of the winners were able to attend. Learners received their actual award through the post. Their stories are motivating and inspirational, you can watch the video here:

<https://www.bwdlearning.org/awards2020>

There were 12 awards given across all curriculum areas, 11 for individuals, and one for a group of learners with learning disabilities and/or difficulties. All of the learners have demonstrated great resilience, commitment and dedication to their learning and continuing to progress and improve their lives. Many of them have maintained contact during recent difficult times by accessing online support or using the resources available to them on the BwD Adult Learning website. Sayyed Osman described the event as 'exhilarating' and commented on the positive impact that the adult learning team has on the lives and wellbeing of their learners. "The whole team should be very proud of the difference they make to local people and communities. We are continuing to adapt to a new way of engagement and delivering services."

The Autumn term course brochure contains a blended approach to learning, including face to face sessions which will be delivered in our own learning centres and other Covid-secure centres as appropriate. There are also a number of courses which have been adapted to be delivered online, through MS Teams. The course programme can be found online here:

<https://view.publitas.com/p222-11429/al-courses-programme-september-december-2020/page/1>

STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING

We continue to work closely with the Regulated Care, Domiciliary Care and supported living sector to support them throughout the pandemic. This includes payment of additional funding in respect of Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), additional staffing requirements, building costs and under occupancy. In addition, the Infection Control Fund Grant allocated by Government has been fully pass-ported to our care providers in line with the grant conditions.

Daily welfare calls to providers have continued to complete the tracker and maintain up to date situation reports for the Care Sector. Calls are not currently taking place at the weekend as the support need for providers is in place, however the situation is continually reviewed and weekend calls will be stepped up as needed. The welfare calls continue to provide information, guidance and support to our providers and closely monitor any outbreaks, incidences, capacity, PPE and staffing requirements. We continue to support providers to source PPE and have maintained a supply to support any increase in future demand.

There continues to be a focus on ensuring the Care sector remains supported and viable.

The council has worked closely with Pennine Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group and the NHS Acute Trust to ensure that we have a well co-ordinated testing process and routine testing across our care homes is available.

WINTER PLANNING AND INFECTION CONTROL FUND

Each year we start winter planning early to try and ensure we can be resilient through the months of November through to March. Given the added risk and pressures of COVID we have been working closely with NHS Partners in Pennine Lancashire and across Lancashire and South Cumbria to take a 'system' approach. A key aim is to save lives given that we see an increase in the risk to the most frail and vulnerable resulting in excess deaths.

The Government has announced an extra £2.7bn for the NHS to bolster resilience over winter.

A new adult social care winter plan has also been announced to support care homes through winter including free PPE and £546 million Infection Control Fund.

The aim of the adult social care winter plan will be to curb infections in Care Homes.

Our plans are well advanced. We will be approaching the work as an integrated care partnership with PL CCG, Primary Care, East Lancashire NHS Health Trust, NHS Providers and LSC ICS.

The announcements are welcome and will add much needed support to our resilience. We would have liked Government to go step further and confirm how it intends to support Local Authority Social Care functions to meet the growing demand and requirements to work alongside the NHS during winter. We hope that this will be a further announcement in the near future.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR DIGITAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

1 October 2020

COUNCILLOR QUESIR MAHMOOD

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICER: PAUL FLEMING

People: A good quality of life for all our residents

Customer services

The Contact Centre has continued to be busy throughout the summer period, a time when we are usually quiet and allows staff to take their annual leave entitlement. Overall, we have seen a 70% increase in contact, across all channels, to date this year, compared to the same period in 2019. In particular, we have seen an increase in demand for online Chat Services – in 2019, we handled 5,000 chats, this has increased to 12,000 chats up to the end of August 2020. We have also seen increased volumes in the majority of our high demand services.

Resilience & Emergency Planning Service

The Council has been in response and transition to the Covid-19 crisis since March 2020 and is working with its Lancashire and regional partners to deliver an effective response for its Community and employees; this is achieved through working with the Core Team that supports the Chief Executive and Directors.

Whilst BwD has been in this response mode we have also responded to other incidents including flash floods and mill fires.

We have also completely reviewed the Corporate Business Continuity plan to ensure its validity, which will assist Blackburn with Darwen Borough council to prepare for a second wave of Covid19.

We will be working with schools later in this new academic year in resilience planning through the 7 School Improvement Groups.

Quarter 1 report – Duty Officer Statistics

Info received	19
Warning total	152
Total:	171
Strategic Officer Activations	2
Duty Officer Activations	26

Digital Customer Portal (DCP)

Newly designed online forms continue to be delivered through the DCP platform. Recent additions include Applications for a Traffic Improvement and Application for Free School Meals. The work on these digital forms also included a redesign of associated web pages. This is the holistic approach that the team are taking when designing new digital services to ensure that services are easy to find and use to enhance the customer experience. Since its inception in April, the customer portal has received 45,000 service requests and has over 20,000 registered users.

As part of our aim to include customers in the redesign of services, we have asked our Customer Panel, of which over 920 are now signed up to, to provide their feedback on waste services, COVID related services that were designed through the DCP and what citizens think of the COVID web pages. This insight will be used to further develop services and starts the formation of long-term relationships with citizens in service design.

The DCP team continues to support the COVID effort and recently designed the 'Financial Support for those Self-Isolating' digital form. In light of recent government announcements, the team will be undertaking more iterative work on this form and a similar one to support grants to businesses affected by the pandemic.

Waste services will be the next major piece of work that this project will take on and the team are currently finalising the review on the most suitable solution

Digital Integration of Health and Social Care

Work has now restarted around digital support for discharge from hospital to Social Care and around digitally integrating NHS and Social Care records. The project has been fully rescoped by NHS Digital, exploring how additional information, valuable to the discharge process, is shared in real time. Further work to integrate Council and NHS systems is due to start in November

Support to Test and Trace

The digital team have continued to provide support to the Council's Covid response. The Business Change team have helped develop the full end to end process for the local test and trace arrangements, alongside the establishment of the Community Testing service. BwD were the second in the country, after Leicester, to pilot local contact tracing and have since assisted more than a dozen authorities in setting up their own contact tracing services. The team showcased the new service nationally on a Local Government Association webinar to an audience of 280 people.

Business intelligence

The Digital Team have continued to work across the organisation to improve Business Intelligence with recent focus being on iterative improvements to the evolving need of COVID data through our dashboard reporting. This enables senior officers access to critical COVID data on a 24/7 basis.

Support for remote working and digital transformation

With large groups of staff still required to work from home the team have continued to test new tools to support remote working. Different software has been tested to help improve connection speeds and these have successfully alleviated the majority of issues staff faced with the sudden transition to home working in the Spring.

The Digital Team have continued rolling out the Microsoft Teams product to all areas of the Council. Due to the pandemic Microsoft are releasing regular enhancements, which the team are working through and then actively pushing to the business. The use of the Teams product is increasing and currently the Council undertakes an average of 400 online meetings per day using this software.

The team have continued to blog about their work [here](#), working openly in accordance with our commitment to the Local Digital Declaration, which the Council signed up to in February 2019.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE 1st October 2020

COUNCILLOR VICKY McGURK

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICERS: LOUISE MATTINSON

People: A good quality of life for all our residents

Council Tax

Following the initial 3 month deferral of payments in the first quarter of the year, the last 2 months has seen the continuation of reminder notices being issued. In addition, the Council Tax team have been proactively contacting customers who are showing as being in arrears, with all interactions both promoting payment and looking to identify financial difficulty. In September, a full review of all single person discounts has commenced, with a view to reducing potential fraud and error in respect of the 21,150 single person discounts currently awarded within the borough.

Benefits

Incoming work is still stable although as stated previously we are monitoring on a weekly basis as we anticipate another increase in the near future.

From the 2nd September 2020 the Benefits Team is responsible for administering the new Financial support scheme for those customers who are self-isolating. This is a pilot scheme which includes Blackburn with Darwen, Pendle and Oldham.

For those that qualify, a payment of £13 per day for the period of isolation, per person, will be made available to eligible individuals. This funding amount is set and funded by the Government.

Business Rates

Administration of the Government's Business Rate Grant Scheme for eligible businesses in the borough has been a significant piece of work for the team. In total, 3711 grants have been paid, totalling £40,800,000. The Grant application window has now closed but there are a small number of grants awaiting processing and these will be done by the end of September.

All businesses entitled to the Expanded Retail Business Rate Relief have also received their new bill for the financial year 2020/21.

In line with the Council Tax team, Business Rates have also recommenced recovery action and issued several hundred reminder notices.

Registrars

Death documentation continues to be received electronically and the registration continues to take place over the telephone. Following registration, with the exception of the death certificate, all relevant documents are electronically sent to the informant and funeral authority.

To limit face to face contact birth registrations now follow a two stage process – parents are contacted by telephone to give the required information to the Registrar, and then the parent(s) are required to attend the Registrar's Office to check and sign the register page.

All Notices of marriage/ civil partnership are being taken through face to face appointments in the Northgate Suite – due to the current high volume of requests, appointments can only be made for ceremonies taking place within the next three months.

Marriage / civil partnership ceremonies are now taking place in the Northgate Suite and in Covid-19 secure approved premises within the borough – the maximum number of attendees is 30, which includes the registration officials, the couple, photographers etc, and guests. All attendees, apart from the couple, must wear a face covering to reduce risk and, following government guidance, the content of all ceremonies is kept to the legally required minimum.

Citizenship ceremonies are now being conducted virtually via Microsoft teams, unless the attendee is unable to access the system when a one to one face to face ceremony will take place.

Copy certificates are still only being issued to the public in an emergency or exceptional circumstances, with customers being directed to the General Register Office (GRO) for any requests. To avoid additional costs charged by the GRO to the authority, the service now issues certificates internally.

The service continues to receive a high volume of requests for ceremony cancellations, re-arrangements and new bookings.

Council: Delivered by a strong and resilient council

Financial Services

External audit are continuing their annual review of the 2019/20 statutory accounts. The timescale for completion of the audit is the end of October; no issues have been reported to date. MHCLG have now extended the deadline for publication of final, audited accounts for all local authority bodies to 30th November 2020, due to the COVID 19 crisis.

The team have now submitted the Sales, Fees and Charges Income Loss claim form to government to try and recoup some of the significant income losses that the Council has suffered as a result of the COVID crisis.

Audit & Assurance

The Audit & Assurance team have continued to deliver against the 2020/21 Annual Audit Plan. A Progress Report will be presented to the next Audit & Governance Committee, to be held in November. This will provide Members with a progress update on the plan, including details of the outcomes from internal audit reviews completed to the end of September, and a commentary on the counter fraud work undertaken during the period. This has included work to support staff in other teams in their administration of the Small Business, Retail, Leisure and Hospitality, and Discretionary Grant Funds.

The Committee will also receive a Risk Management Report setting out the risk management activity undertaken in the period, along with a summary update of the corporate risks at the end of September.

Contracts & Procurement

The Contracts and Procurement team have continued managing the logistical and distribution arrangements for the Council's supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), ensuring Council services, care providers and local schools have the PPE that they need.

In addition the team have also worked with colleagues across the Council to source the necessary equipment for buildings to re-open in a Covid secure way.

The team have also been progressing a number of other 'business as usual' procurements, including various contracts for works on schools, resurfacing of carriageways, highways materials and home to school transport.

HR, Legal & Governance

As set out elsewhere on this agenda the HR, Legal & Governance Team have been supporting the response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. This has included important activity in support of Health and Wellbeing of Employees and Schools, risk assessments of buildings, updating advice and guidance for employees, operational and strategic support to the Lancashire Resilience Forum (LRF) and ensuring the Council's legal obligations in support of Statutory Services continue to be met and facilitating effective and continued local democracy.

Legal Services

In particular the team has provided legal advice and support during the summer to the Public Health and Public Protection teams in relation to enforcement related to Covid-19, to try and ensure that residents can have confidence and feel safe living and working in Blackburn with Darwen during these difficult times.

Governance Services

A restructure of these services to deliver a revised and improved delivery model whilst also delivering budget savings required as part of the 2020/21 budget savings programme has been delivered over the summer and revised services commenced on 1st October 2020.

Services to Schools

The HR service continues to grow its services to schools, with 5 more schools purchasing services for the first time from September and with an increase of 15 schools purchasing HR consultancy services. We also now provide services for our first Academy school.

Sickness Absence

HR staff have been working with Assistant Executive Members to review our approach to managing sickness absence. An action plan is being put together to address a number of key recommendations to continue to proactively address the causes of sickness absence and assure its effective management.

2020 Pay Award

A pay award of 2.75% has been agreed and the new pay rates have been paid in September salaries. This includes all Council employees i.e. Green Book, Soulbury, Chief Officers and Chief Executive.

Apprentices

We have had another successful round of apprentice recruitment with 20 apprentices across a range of roles starting in September 2020.

Training & Development

The HR service has continued to develop a range of on-line training to support employees whilst working remotely. Face to face training has been able to start again from 28th September, 2020 where essential qualification training such as first aid training is being prioritised.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

COUNCILLOR PHIL RILEY

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN KELLY
DATE: 1 OCTOBER 2020**

This report provides a brief update on progress with key development priorities in this reporting period.

PLACE, PRIORITY 4: CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

South East Blackburn Growth Deal Major Transport Scheme

Construction works are well underway in relation to the final Local Growth Fund 3 scheme at South East Blackburn following the restart on site in July. Widening of Haslingden Road is advancing on the section between Lions Drive and Shadsworth Road with works so far focussing on utility diversions and excavations which will enable the construction of the widened carriageway. Hospital Barn buildings at Old Bank Lane have been demolished to enable the construction of the new Royal Blackburn Hospital roundabout entrance, with the original boundary stone wall to be removed. The line of the new link road between Roman Road and Guide is now visible, with drainage and swale construction works progressing well.

The project will improve congestion, improve air quality and pedestrian facilities, and enable further development of employment and housing opportunities in the South East Blackburn area.

Northgate / Sudell Cross / Whalley Range Connectivity Scheme

This £2.9M NPIF supported transport project has recently completed and provides improved links and access from Northgate to through traffic at Sudell Cross, and improved access to King George's Hall and the new Reel cinema development. In addition, direct access has been provided from Barbara Castle Way onto Tontine Street to provide easier access to local businesses and King George's Hall. Pedestrian facilities between the Town Centre and the Whalley Range area have also been significantly improved. The scheme will help to address congestion in the area and improve pedestrian and vehicle movement and access to significant new development sites and leisure and retail facilities.

Local Bus Services

New bus services are set to start on 5 October 2020 in Blackburn with Darwen, funded by the Department for Transport's Supported Bus Service Fund. A new peak time workers bus to Whitebirk Industrial Estate will begin, operated by Blackburn Private Hire. The direct link from Darwen to Royal Blackburn Hospital and Blackburn is being restored and will serve Chapels, Lower Darwen, Guide, North Road and Audley Range, operated by Moving People. Improved and more frequent services for the Darwen and Rural area will also be introduced by the Council and Travel Assist, with the local bus network once again extending to Eccleshill and Waterside. The Council is

working with operators and suppliers to introduce contactless card payments on these improved services, to go-live later in 2020.

PLACE, PRIORITY 5: SAFE AND CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Highways Update

Surface dressing schemes completed: Hamilton Street / Belmont Road / Broadhead Road / Tockholes Road.

Resurfacing schemes, tender let to Tarmac with completion in October 2020: Higher Eanam / Brandy House Brow / Aqueduct Road / Borough Road, Darwen / Preston New Road / Livesey Branch Road.

PLACE PRIORITY 6: Strong, Growing Economy to Enable Social Mobility

Darwen Town Deal

The Darwen Town Deal Board, supported by the Council and a team of specialists, is working hard to prepare and submit the Darwen Town Investment Plan (TIP) to Government by 31 January 2021. Detailed analysis, engagement and project development is underway with the aim of securing up to £25M in Towns Fund investment for Darwen. However, in advance of submission, Government recently announced that £750,000 in acceleration funding will be provided to the Board. Three projects have been identified for early support, including restoration of the iconic Darwen Tower and expansion plans for AFC Darwen and the J4 Skate Park. The Board is also funding a feasibility study to assess the potential to establish a high performance cricket academy in the grounds of Darwen Vale High School.

Blackburn and Darwen Town Centres

Blackburn and Darwen town centres have worked hard in recent months to re-open, in line with national and local COVID restrictions. Footfall has increased since the early phase of the pandemic but levels are still c.50% below pre-COVID benchmarks. The marketing for both town centres will aim to reassure and attract shoppers, workers and visitors with a launch this Autumn. Marketing will focus on our COVID secure strengths and practices, as well as developing loyalty through competitions and promoting local shopping.

Blakey Moor / Northgate

Work has started on the internal strip-out at Blakey Moor Terrace to facilitate and finalise the detailed design on the redevelopment scheme. Subject to funding approvals, construction work is expected to begin on the terrace in the New Year for 12 months. Work to restore 14 & 20 Lord Street West (Prism Gallery and Studios) is scheduled to start in October/November for 10 weeks and phase 2 internal works to 35 Northgate (former Ribblesdale Hotel) will go out to tender this month. The project team are now working on plans to improve the front and side elevation of King George's Hall, including a new lighting scheme, more appropriate signage and remodelling the DDA entrance to enhance the building's curb appeal and accessibility.

Growth Programme

The Growth Programme for 2020/21, taking into consideration the impacts of the COVID pandemic and focusing on recovery, was approved at Executive Board on 10 September.

Housing Developments

Further to the Growth Programme, the following major housing projects involving Council land are progressing through the planning stages:

- A housing developer has been selected to purchase the Council land at Ellison Fold Way in Darwen and take forward a detailed planning application for residential development in late 2020. This will include the adjacent privately-owned land and deliver a combined total of around 320 new family dwellings.
- A public consultation is underway, until 5 October 2020, regarding a draft Masterplan for the Holden Fold Development Site (former Darwen Moorland High School Site). The site could deliver up to 430 new homes and associated infrastructure, including highway improvements and a contribution towards extending a local primary school.
- Countryside Homes and Together Housing are preparing to submit a planning application to build around 390 new homes around Fishmoor Drive. The application will incorporate two sites on Fishmoor Drive and one on Roman Road and infrastructure works on Fishmoor Drive.
- An outline planning application is currently being assessed for up to 165 new homes at Whalley Old Road, a partially Council owned site.

Other developments of Council land, at a more advanced stage, include the Griffin Redevelopment site, where Seddon Homes will shortly commence first phase delivery of 56 new homes. Two sites in Mill Hill are currently under construction by Great Places at Shorrocks Lane (former Laneside Care Home) and Bowen Street. Places for People are making good progress at their development in Alaska Street - the final clearance site in Infirmary Waterside.

Commercial Developments

Good progress is continuing to be made at the Milking Lane development site, which the Council is bringing forward as part of a Joint Venture Company – Barnfield Blackburn Ltd. Construction of the new link road through the site with associated flood prevention infrastructure began in August, and is to be completed in 2021.

At Wainwright Way, the new Home Bargains store is due to open this month. Disposal of the remaining plots is to be agreed later this year.

Encouragingly, enquiries are continuing to be received regarding the Council's development plots at Carl Fogarty Way. So far, one plot is under offer (for small business units), one plot is open for bids to be received in October, and another plot will be made available later this month. The final two plots will be made available in early 2021.

The new Blackburn cinema is in the final stages of build, with Barnfield Construction due to complete at the end of this month. This will enable Reel to start their internal fit-out in October and open by Christmas.

New Local Plan

Works to prepare a new Local Plan for the Borough are continuing. Public consultation on a draft Plan was due to take place from September, however this has been postponed until January 2021 due to the impacts of COVID-19. Further adjustments to the Local Plan timetable may be required in light of the Government's recent White Paper which set out radical changes to the national planning system.

One Public Estate (OPE)

Government announced the next OPE funding round (OPE 8) on 9 September with £30M of new competitive funding to support initiatives making better use of public land and buildings (£10m) and local authority housing developments via the Land Release Fund (£20m). The scale of funding available is relatively modest, but the Council will work with other Lancashire authorities to consider and prepare a joint submission to Government by the deadline of 12 November.

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION
COUNCILLOR JULIE GUNN**
**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: JAYNE IVORY
DATE: September 2020**

PEOPLE: A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL OUR RESIDENTS

Children's Social Care

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN CARE & CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE INFORMATION

Our current figures as regards Children's Social Care statistics are as follows:

Child in Need	357
Child Protection	237
Children in our Care	399

KEY PRIORITIES

Our priorities over the past six months and since the onset of the pandemic has been 'Business as Usual' but this has been undertaken in different ways.

- There has remained a clear focus on our statutory services and our duty to assessment and plan for all children subject to child in need plans, child protection plans and in our role as corporate parents. Social work staff and our support service staff have maintained direct face to face visits for those families most at risk. There were some early issues as regards obtaining the correct PPE, but systems were in place by the end of April 2020 to ensure our staff had the correct equipment and that PHE guidelines were followed. Other alternative forms of contact with children and families have been used to stay in touch and to form relationships and make assessments. Virtual visits, garden visits, face time and the use of social media has been used responsibly to work as effectively as possible with families.
- There have been strong links with our schools and settings during lockdown and the relaxing of lockdown. Using the same risk assessment tool to determine an offer to our most vulnerable children and families has been a good example of children's social care and education colleagues working together.
- Work has been undertaken to develop our Quality Assurance Framework through thematic audit activity and routine audit activity. This is key to aiding our level of understanding of both outstanding good practice and practice which requires improvement. We all look forward to our third practice week in November 2020 which will have a focus on the Local Authority as Corporate Parents.
- Work has begun to update our Self Evaluation Framework across all parts of children's services. This exercise is cathartic in terms of it highlighting the journey travelled within children's social care and helps us to prepare for the sharing of the journey we are on with Ofsted.

What our data tells us

The Children's Advice and Duty Service 6 month review held in June 2020 highlights a job well done. There has been a downward trend in the number of referrals with 469 less open referrals compared to 12 months ago. Our front door service is deemed to be a success story and can be held as an example of good practice. The impact of Covid-19 did see a drop in referrals at point of lockdown, but by mid-May contacts into children's social care and new referrals were back to pre-covid levels. A strong message was sent out to the public that our service was very much accessible and open if anyone had concerns about the welfare of a child. This proved to be effective.

The timeliness of our assessments has increased to 89% within timescales. The average over 2019/20 was 61%. Our social work staff have continued to prioritise their assessments of vulnerable children and our compliance levels have increased despite the impact of Covid.

Our looked after children figure has remained steady at around 400 over the past few months and the demand for external commissioned placements has not seen any increase. This has ensured that budgetary demands have not increased and this is despite the impact of Covid. However, during the autumn as children become more visible there may be a different picture to paint in the months ahead.

There has been a great deal of scrutiny and the driving of plans to ensure right across our service that the right children have the right level of intervention for the right length of time. This work has been supported by the implementation of CADS; by the strong early help offer; by the strong edge of care and adolescent offer; and by our staff ensuring cases are closed promptly or stepped down to the right type of plan to safeguard that child and family.

ADOLESCENT SERVICES

The Adolescent Services delivered two Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) programmes over the summer holidays. These programmes were funded by the DfE and coordinated via Spring North. The programmes offer activities and meals to participants for 4 hours a day, 4 days a week for 4 weeks in August:

- **SEND HAF Programme**

This programme delivered activities and meals to children and young people identified as SEND. The YPS SEND team worked closely with the disability team to identify families deemed most at risk and who would benefit most from the programme. Eight young people were allocated places every day and this programme was delivered over 6 days including trips on Saturdays so delivered above and beyond the HAF remit.

Each YP was allocated a 1-1 worker daily who would deliver a range of activities and personal care. The programme was carefully planned to ensure resources and spaces were covid secure.

Feedback from parents/young people/elected members and the DfE was fantastic.

- **TYS HAF Programme**

This programme was offered to the full Targeted Youth Support cohort - approx. 150 children and young people. This cohort are referred in for casework support and are often from the boroughs most vulnerable families with often complex challenges including those on the cusp of care. Given the Covid situation most HAF providers delivered the vast majority of their programmes digitally (providing links to online activities). Given the nature of the children and young people we support, our HAF programme was planned to enable as many children and young people to attend physically and planning around transport, activities and resources had to be meticulous. the service delivered a wide range of activities including

bushcraft/watersports/drama/music and the feedback from young people and families has been overwhelming.

- **SEEDS HAF Programme**

The SEEDS HAF programme primarily focused work with children on the cusp of care, providing positive activities and new experiences throughout the summer holidays. Although staff and young people were unable to prepare meals due to Covid restrictions, the team provided families with a box of food ingredients and a recipe every day to support young person and their family to prepare and cook together at home. The programme was a great success with positive feedback from all involved.

Young People Services - Detached Youth Work Programme

YPS has continued to deliver detached youth work throughout the Covid period and from early June BYZ and BRCT have joined the service to offer a comprehensive 7-day offer with up to 3 teams out some days.

The detached teams focus on areas of high Covid incidence and reported ASB to pass on key public health messages as well as supporting young people with guidance and signposting in what has been a very challenging period for our school/college aged cohort.

Youth Justice Service (YJS)

In response, with colleagues from Community Safety, Police and Young People's Services, the Youth Justice Service adapted the 'Stay Safe' approach of delivering outreach work. Through the localised data for infection rates, as well as utilising local knowledge and intelligence, allowed the team to focus resources on hotspots to deliver public health information to young people and disperse groups. The events take place on weekends from the afternoon through to late evenings, when gatherings are most likely to be take place. They have predominantly been held in the wards where restrictions are in force or infection rates are increasing. With Police involvement this has also meant being able to respond to live intelligence received, where appropriate.

To date over three hundred young people and young adults have been spoken to through two events. They have been well received and are regarded amongst those involved as an effective means of directly tackling the issue. Further events are planned over forthcoming weekends and the YJS will continue to contribute staff to the events.

Engage

The Engage team are now offering all the children they work with face-to-face contact in recognition of the positive impact this has in building and maintaining relationships, to help support and keep them safe. Alongside this, the creative new ways of working learned through Covid also continue to be implemented, with staff also engaging children through technology and activities such as football, bike rides and walks. The children have responded really well to the support offered and we continue to see positive outcomes achieved.

The positive outcomes have been evidenced within a recent audit of a number of cases within the Engage team. All of the cases audited highlighted effective multi-agency working with key partners from health, education, police and children's services across the borough. The impact of effective multiagency working was demonstrated in the children staying they felt safe, able to share information, knew everyone's role and had wider and deeper understanding of exploitation.

The relationship based practice that is utilised across all of adolescent services is key in securing and supporting positive changes and more importantly to sustain these changes for the most vulnerable children and young people of the borough.

PERMANENCE SERVICES

Children and young people in our care, care leavers and children with disabilities have been RAG rated throughout the pandemic. This has helped to prioritise children and families who needed continued face to face contact and enhanced support throughout the last six months. The RAG rating has also helped us to monitor changes in levels of vulnerability. It is clear that children and young people and their carers managed better than could have been anticipated in the first three months but by the July some were feeling the strain and a number of placements became fragile or disrupted. Placement stability was however good in Q1, Q2 data is awaited.

There was greater demand for placements in August which came from a combination of disrupted placements (5) and new entrants to care (9 including 3 newborns). There has also been a pressure on placements caused by delays in care proceedings and in progressing children's care plans. However, we have managed to maintain a very low use of costly agency residential placements and the current number of commissioned placements is lower than it has been for some time. In house residential has operated at full capacity throughout.

Foster carer and adopter recruitment has continued largely using digital methods to advertise. The response to the foster carer campaign was good in Q1 with 12 registrations of interest and 9 assessments starting. Unfortunately 4 of these have since withdrawn and chosen to foster for independent fostering agencies. The response to the adopter campaign has also been steady and Adoption Now are optimistic that the target of 100 adopters for the year will be reached.

It was clear that by the beginning of September the majority of looked after children and care leavers were relieved to be returning to school and college. Whilst school can be a difficult environment for some, most children wanted to get back to their normal routine, to see friends and resume their leisure interests and activities. It also helped some children from July to resume face to face contact with their birth family albeit socially distanced and outside.

Foster carer feedback currently is that the resumption of restrictions because of the spike in infections is a challenge, particularly for adolescents in care.

The majority of children with disabilities have also returned to school and those who usually enjoy short breaks at Appletrees are in the process of being reintroduced where it is safe to do so. Agencies providing commissioned packages of care for children with disabilities are now operating at usual capacity. A very small number of children with serious health conditions are still shielding at home on the advice of health professionals.

EDUCATION

Education Department - Lockdown to a full return to school – A brief overview. Information correct as of 15th September 2020.

Schools and Settings in BwD have remained open during the full lockdown period for children who are vulnerable and children of key workers. Schools and settings also risk assessed those children and young people that schools identified as vulnerable and supported access to education during lockdown.

Safeguarding our children and young people

From the moment Lockdown was announced for schools on Wednesday 18th March – the LA produced a safeguarding and attendance document for all – this has been updated throughout lockdown and in line with government guidance.

We know that a protective factor for our most vulnerable children and young people is school; therefore, we requested all schools and settings hold a vulnerable child register to be discussed on a weekly basis with the safeguarding team in school.

We also asked all schools to RAG rate vulnerable learners into three groups: Red, Amber and Green.

Red: Most risk of harm or neglect and fewest protective factors – For example those children on a CP plan, CIOC living at home, young carers.

Amber: A moderate risk of harm, but with some protective factors – For example those children on a CIN plan or an EHCP

Green: Some concerns escalating or unmet needs; or have been red or amber and need monitoring.

We requested that if a child on the vulnerable register was not attending school and parents have requested they stay at home this **MUST** be discussed with the child's social worker and if CIOC child, the virtual headteacher. For children and young people with an EHCP our SEND team was also available for discussion.

Following advice from the DfE we expected schools and settings along with other agencies supporting the child i.e. social worker, health, SEND and Virtual school to have risk assessed each vulnerable child including those with an EHCP to access whether needs can be met safely at home.

The LA requested additional safeguarding procedures be put in place and to be completed for children and young people on the vulnerable register who do not attend school – this included:

- Those children rated **RED** i.e. subject to CP / CIOC with a care order at home / Young carers to have a **daily** call – speak to both family and child if possible. Log the call in your usual way

Any concerns should be shared in the normal process with the child's social worker or key worker.

If as part of the risk assessment with social care – there is an agreement the number of calls is reduced, this must be logged on the risk assessment.

It is important a weekly conversation take place with child's social worker.

- Those children rated **AMBER** i.e. subject to CIN / EHCP to have a **twice-weekly** call – speak to family and child if possible. Log the call in your usual way.

Any concerns to be shared in the normal process with child's social worker or key worker.

If as part of the risk assessment with social care – there is an agreement the number of calls is reduced, this must be logged on the risk assessment.

It is important a weekly conversation take place with social workers.

- Those children rated **GREEN** i.e. subject to a vulnerability you have identified possibly on a CAF or other plan - speak **weekly** to family and child if possible. Log the call in your usual way.

Any concerns should be shared in the normal process via the lead professional or CADs.

The LA also requested all pupils have a weekly message of where to access support if needed and requested this should be done through your whole school systems i.e. text or email. We also requested this should be made available on the school website.

Along with the daily attendance return to the DfE, we also requested schools to send a weekly monitoring report to the LA of our most vulnerable learners.

LA monitoring and support to schools and settings

- Each school was placed in Locality based hubs to provide wrap around safeguarding support.
- Each hub had an LA lead to provide support as needed. This support was available for all schools within the hub.
- Support was provided throughout from our Virtual school for CIOC children and young people

Each Locality based hub had an:

- IRO providing immediate safeguarding advice, the IRO also contacted the schools DSL each week to discuss any key concerns that have arisen
- Family support worker providing support to families as an early intervention if needed.
- Link Educational Psychologist providing 1:1 support or advice to staff – this support was virtual.
- New directions support for yr. 11 and 13 learners.
- Link SEND support team to offer advice to school or families of SEND students if needed. Weekly check in with SENDCo
- Inclusion support officer to provide support to those families schools are struggling to engage.
- School Nurse to provide health support
- A CAMHs trailblazer team member provided emotional health support to the hub
- Each hub / partnered schools or stand-alone schools had a whole school safeguarding call with the LA lead to discuss staff resilience, monitoring of vulnerable learners, along with any further support needed during COVID 19 and partial closure.
- Safeguarding checklist completed by schools and reviewed with LA lead – **Academy trusts may have had their own checklist – the LA was happy for this to be used rather than duplicate work.**

The LA produced a weekly dashboard shared with all schools and setting via the head teacher's bulletin showing attendance using the DfE data and the vulnerable return data from schools.

The Vulnerable learner's dashboard showed the:

Number of school returns

Percentage of children and young people identified as vulnerable (including those with an EHCP)

Percentage of children identified as vulnerable under each category

Percentage of vulnerable young people who have a RA and of those the percentage agreed with social worker and parents.

Percentage of vulnerable learners who's RA deems they attend school

Percentage of these vulnerable learners who attend school.

Percentage of call made in line with LA guidance regarding the RAG rating of children and young people.

These Dashboards are also shared with RSC office and more recently discussed with OFSTED in a fortnightly meeting.

Planning for school opening

BwD has been planning the extended opening of schools from 22nd April 2020 via our school improvement strategy board (SSIG) – this board included lead headteachers from each school improvement group (7 in total), Secondary headteachers, post 16 leads, teaching schools, Health colleagues, mental health trailblazer colleagues, RSC colleagues, Education leads within the LA and wider children's services support staff. The SSIG met every week with the focus on extension of school wider opening, vulnerable learners and

the way ahead. The SSIG was enhanced by the development of sub groups which are detailed below and to provide a specific focus on supporting a consistent response to emerging and dynamic government guidance.

These sub groups group has included:

Early years

KS1 – 2 transition

Yr 6 – 7 transition

Post 16.

The Education team have since the beginning of lockdown engaged fully with lead headteachers of our school improvement groups, trust leaders, dioceses and unions. There was and continues to be a twice weekly headteachers bulletin distributed to all colleagues named above along with Chairs of governors.

On the 15th June 2020, the following advice was issued to schools within BwD:

We are now in a position to advise schools and settings to prepare for the extended opening to identified year groups from Monday 22nd June.

It is important the return is discussed with your governing bodies and in line with the risk assessments completed.

If schools and settings can accommodate all identified year groups – we anticipate this happening over the course of the week- dependent on numbers and safety precautions following your school risk assessment.

The Local Authority ensured a Risk Assessment was written and implemented. We had Risk assessments written for all LA maintained schools (including VA and VA schools to adopt. The LA agreed these Risk Assessments for all LA maintained schools (including VA and VC). It was the responsibility of academies and multi academy trusts to sign these off as the employer.

Supporting schools to become COVID safe

Wider school opening June 2020

As indicated earlier – the LA have worked closely with all schools and settings regarding the safe extended opening of schools and settings.

The LA developed a Risk assessment for all maintained schools to adopt – this was also adopted by a number of stand-alone academies and trusts within the borough. The RA was also agreed by diocese and unions. Each Maintained school and stand-alone academy was offered a walk about by the H&S team at the LA to ensure the school was ready for the wider extension of opening.

The LA provided clear feedback if needed to schools who adopted the LA RA and once completed provided reassurance the RA was in line for a positive opening.

The HR department has also shared an individual staff RA for schools to complete for colleagues who are identified as vulnerable. HR support has been available for all schools and settings if needed.

The above was completed with a final check of H&S completed on Friday 5th June – all schools and settings were identified as being ready to open on Monday 8th June.

Our H&S and HR team have been available to answer FAQ from schools during our SSIG. A full FAQ document was available to all schools and settings.

One of our Academy trusts – STAR - approached the LA to support in writing a re-opening of schools document for all schools and settings. BwD agreed to this and continue to work with STAR to update the guidance.

Our Complex needs special school and LA maintained Early years settings have received PPE equipment in line with PHE advice for administering intimate care – once this guidance was shared. This was been given free of charge from the LA.

Each LA maintained school (including VA and VC schools and settings) have received an amount of full PPE equipment to use in conjunction with PHE advice for use of PPE. This was given to schools free of charge – we envisage the PPE lasting until at least October half term. The PPE equipment given included: hand sanitiser, gloves, aprons, masks and goggles.

Each stand-alone academy and trust was given the option for the LA to procure PPE equipment on behalf of the setting or trust. Some stand-alone academies and trusts took advantage of this from the LA.

Full school opening September 2020

In line with government guidance a reviewed people and school risk assessment was shared with Maintained schools and settings (including VA and VC) to be adopted for September 2020 full school opening. These Risk Assessments were agreed with the LA as previously during the summer break. Academies who also buy into the Health and Safety SLA had Risk Assessments agreed by the LA.

Education response team

In order to support schools in managing possible and confirmed COVID cases the LA has adopted and adapted the PH North West Resource booklet. This is kept under constant review following regular updates. The booklet gives schools confidence using a step by step guide on managing cases and outbreak management.

To compliment this the LA has created an Education response team to support schools and settings. The team consist of colleagues from BwD public health team, governor services, schools risk assessment co-ordinator, health and safety and HR colleagues. This team work with schools on a day to day basis – supporting the process of procedures to follow if there is a confirmed case. This service has also been opened up to Madrassah's within BwD. The team hold daily information of 'bubbles' that have to close due to confirmed cases in schools and settings. This information is shared within the children's services and education team to ensure safeguarding is the highest priority.

Data as of 15th September

All schools and settings within BwD have opened to all children and young people following the summer break.

To date (as of 15th Sept) since the beginning of term:

16 schools have had to close bubbles. One post 16 provider and one early years setting.

30 bubbles have closed including the post 16 provider and early years without including these settings the number of bubbles would be 27 for schools only

There is a mixture of whole year groups, classes and limited contact (where the setting is able to identify contacts). Bubble sizes are dependent on the individual school and can range from a whole school year group at high school to half or individual classes. At primary the size is generally a class size.

The main issues/challenges for schools at the moment are:

Schools are the new frontline for discussing symptoms of COVID and managing parent's anxieties.

The system at all points has seen great strain eg schools have based on new guidance being issued have had to wait for health protection advice to close bubbles – this has been alleviated with the introduction of schools and LA's collaboratively making these decisions.

As mentioned previously BwD have introduced a response team to support school enquiries and deal with issues raised.

Schools have begun to use the limited number of test packs sent at the end of Aug – we have a system in place in BwD to monitor this.

Attendance to date shows on average BwD has a slightly higher attendance than the national level. The attendance of children and young people with a social worker and those children and young people with an EHCP is slightly above national average. This is a positive start to the school year and reflects the commitment our schools and Services have in making sure our children's education remains our top priority here in BwD.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

COUNCILLOR JIM SMITH

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN
DATE: 01 OCTOBER 2020**

PUBLIC PROTECTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Public Protection has continued to devote much of its time to Covid-19 business support and enforcement. Whereas much of the covid-19 enforcement work done in the first months of the pandemic involved many officers visiting shops and advising and encouraging them to comply with covid-secure guidance (over 1700 covid-secure inspection visits were carried by PP staff in the period April to September 2020), the focus is changing as the Borough continues to experience high infection rates.

Officers are increasingly carrying out more intelligence-led enforcement operations where premises are ignoring advice. PPS has been taking a graduated approach to enforcement, with 19 written warnings issued throughout the pandemic period and 7 prohibition notices served on premises which should have been closed but weren't.

In August, officers used new coronavirus legislation powers to close down a banqueting venue and a bar which were continuing to flout social distancing guidelines. The legislation requires each closure decision to be reviewed every 7 days, and both premises provided adequate assurances at the 7 day review point to be able to open with strict conditions.

A barber's shop which was not heeding social distancing requirements was also closed down. Following the closure, adequate assurances were received and it was allowed to open with conditions at the 7 day review. On 11th September 2020 a bar in Blackburn town centre became the fourth and latest premises to be closed down using these powers. All four premises continue to be monitored.

In addition to enforcing covid-secure rules, Environmental Health officers are supporting the successful local track and trace initiative by visiting persons who have not been contactable by telephone.

WASTE AND RECYCLING

Since the last Council Forum update, the staff transferring into the Council from Biffa, to undertake the collection of recyclables, have been inducted and commenced operations with new vehicles.

On 3rd August, the Council commenced the separate collection of paper and cardboard in blue bins and glass/plastic bottles, tins/cans and tubs/trays

meeting recyclable codes 1,2 and 5, in the grey bin. This significant change was conducted under difficult circumstances, with the Covid pandemic affecting lead times for the delivery of bins and new blue sacks, however, the Environment team managed to ensure all deliveries were completed in advance of the start of the service. Prior to the start, all households received three separate notifications about the bin and the changes of recycling in the borough, with additional advertising on various Council social media platforms.

Throughout August, if the grey recycling bin contained paper and card, the households were provided with a bin hanger advising them that the paper and card could no longer be placed in the grey bin and must be placed in the blue bin. The bin hanger also advised that this was the last time the grey bin was to be emptied if contaminated by paper and card, as from September, the restrictions on materials was being employed.

This was necessary so that the Council could benefit from the savings from the blue and grey bin material processing, as the contract with Suez for the processing of the recyclates, is based on quality material, with no contamination in both the blue and the grey bin. The processing plants will not accept any contaminated loads of recycling, as the industry marketplace has moved significantly over the last 2 years. Any rejected loads will cost the Council additional money to dispose of.

In addition to the numerous messages already provided to households across the borough about what can/cannot be recycled, the Council is also producing a number of short videos to help provide valuable, visual information on recycling materials that can/cannot go in each bin. These videos will be available to send via WhatsApp and also stored on YouTube and should be available later in September.

The Environment team has also seen the Council's website for recycling updated with the latest information www.recyclebwd.org

In an effort to tackle any confusion, the Environment team has introduced a separate email address for contaminated bins contaminatedbins@blackburn.gov.uk where residents can send their photos of any contaminated bins and staff will assist them with looking at the photos and providing feedback on materials that should not have been placed in the respective recycling bins.

Waste Enforcement

The Environment team has been in a position to take forward a number of cases to the courts, with the assistance of the Council's Legal team, where, since the Courts have resumed sitting, successful prosecutions have taken place, with some 15 cases considered in the last 2 months.

Additionally, the Council's Environment team has seized and also crushed 2 vehicles that were identified as being used in illegal waste activities. This

action was undertaken in an effort to make flytipping have consequences for the perpetrators of this illegal activity.