

## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH & WELLBEING**

**COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTORS: DOMINIC HARRISON &  
MARTIN EDEN  
DATE: July 2020**

### **PEOPLE: A good quality of life for all our residents**

#### **Leisure, Health and Wellbeing**

Closing the front doors has not meant that services have closed. Teams have worked creatively with customers to ensure residents and staff have access to the health and wellbeing services that they continue to value.

Healthy Lifestyles & Wellbeing Service – With the pausing of 100+ weekly activity sessions the immediate response from the Wellbeing Service and re:fresh teams was to shift to a new way of working and to offer support and guidance in new ways. A new comprehensive website and You Tube channel were created specifically targeting people who are inactive, and with health conditions. Digital solutions have enabled 1-1 telephone assessments, live on-line classes and on-going support to help keep people safe, healthy and well. The clinical team have successfully supported those shielding or self-isolating to stay active with digital recordings of heart rate and blood pressure sent through a secure App. Low tech ‘window appointments’, complying with social distancing have maintained contact for those not wanting to ‘go digital’.

Venues – With doors to theatres closed, artists quickly moved to online platforms for their performances. The KGH team created ‘Lockdown Live’ - a 20 minute Sunday evening online showcase sharing what performers were doing during lockdown; local stories and performances by local students, and bands mixed with national and international names who have had to postpone their gigs at KGH. These free sessions have received thousands of views and are helping to maintain relationships with artists and audiences.

Libraries – The service has seen uptake for digital e-reader content increase by over 70% since March. Investment into additional titles and available downloads has been made to meet demand. For those in isolation or living alone the Home Delivery service has remained an invaluable connection. Over 470 doorstep book deliveries have been made. For younger library users the online story-times have been really popular as have the wellbeing sessions and online reading group.

The new Call and Collect Service provides a new way to access books and helps all ages to keep reading.

We reopened in Blackburn on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July, with positive feedback. Thanks to all of the staff for their work in preparing for this and in ensuring a smooth reopening, albeit with some restrictions to services. Darwen reopened and welcomed people back in on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July.

Arts Services - Local organisations and artists have been successful in gaining emergency funding from the Arts Council to support them in continuing work throughout the lockdown period. The Bureau Centre for the Arts, Festival of Light and Prism Gallery & Studios have all received funding in this period. This has allowed them to carry on delivering programmes of work such as a virtual Place of Welcome, zoom drumming and circus skills classes and for the 10 artists based in Prism studios to create new works in response to the lockdown period. This work will be shown in the gallery in the Autumn

Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery - has secured funding for the Kick down the Barriers programme of work; working with local artists, photographers and writers will create a new archive and collection recording the borough through lockdown. The project includes a photographer who has captured key workers and families on their doorsteps in Ewood, a written record of Eid and Ramadan and street paintings of Audley Range. This work will form part of an exhibition opening in September and then be part of the permanent collections of the Museum.

The Museum reopens on 15<sup>th</sup> July with a new booking system in place. This will give visitors a couple of weeks to see the exhibition which opened just before lockdown and has been featured through blogs throughout the past 3 months gaining huge followings.

**Creative Connections** is Blackburn with Darwen's local cultural education partnership and brings together schools, youth providers and cultural organisations; it has been chosen to distribute **Lets create – creative boxes** to children and young people in our borough. The group have chosen to focus these giveaways which will include art materials and mental health and digital resources to support those moving from primary to secondary school this summer.

Leisure Services – staff continue to be deployed across the council to support a broad range of departments and services as part of the local Covid-19 response.

As announcements are awaited for a re-opening date management and staff are preparing leisure centres in line with covid-secure guidance. Engagement with customers via direct email messaging and social media has increased focusing on providing information on how services are likely to operate when doors open and key behaviours customers will need to adopt.