

## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULT SERVICES AND PREVENTION COUNCILLOR MUSTAFA DESAI**

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

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### **ADULT SOCIAL CARE NEIGHBOURHOODS TEAMS**

Embracing change and flexibility, the Adult Social Care neighbourhood teams have continued to fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Teams continue to work remotely where possible; however, in utilising PPE and undertaking dynamic risk assessments have been able to undertake face-to-face assessment and support visits within the community. Court of Protection cases have increased which demonstrates the complexity of people's needs; undoubtedly, compounded by the current situation.

The application and allocations process for Albion Mill, Extra Care apartments continues in preparation for the building completion. The allocations panel meets every two weeks to discuss and approve applications. The inclusivity of the scheme is looking a popular alternative to traditional models of care for local people.

Primary Care Neighbourhood (PCN) meetings resumed in August, but have recently stepped down to allow colleagues to focus on projects such as Covid testing and vaccination; and to allow colleagues to respond to increasing demand within their service areas. Our Integrated Neighbourhood teams (INTs) continue to meet virtually to ensure that joined up care and support is available, which is further enhanced by newly commissioned, 'Social prescribers'.

The Independent Living Service has continued to support people in their own homes and communities via our Occupational Therapy activity, moving and handling and sensory impairment offer. The Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) program resumed following the first lockdown and work is currently be progressed through the buildings team. In December, internal stakeholders were briefed regarding DFG activity within the current financial year.

Overall the Adult Social Care Neighbourhood Teams, continue to meet our statutory responsibilities despite the demand and complexity of cases. Team members have been thanked for their resilience, tenacity and commitment in providing a service despite personal and organisational challenges.

### **COVID RESPONSE WORK**

Help Hub – since it was set up in March there have been over 4000 calls to the Help Hub and 284 people requiring support from September to December. The main reasons for calls are concerns about wellbeing, inability to buy food or essential supplies, loneliness or issues with bills, debt and benefits. Of those who ring 41% identify as clinically extremely vulnerable, 64% are isolating, 39% live alone and 34% have children. Calls are triaged and either successfully supported directly by Community Connectors or by the large network of partners in the Borough who are part of the wider Hub network.

Other Covid response work undertaken by the Prevention, Neighbourhoods and Learning teams includes telephone befriending, local Case Tracing and Community Testing. Community Testing supports symptomatic people who are unable to get to a test site. Referrals come mainly from schools and include families with children with additional needs,

people without smart phones or those who are unable to understand the on-line registration process. The team deliver and support families to complete the tests in their own homes.

## **COVID ENGAGEMENT**

The Social Integration team began a campaign of engagement in December and distributed over 5000 postcards outlining key Covid Christmas safety messages. 1609 people were directly engaged with and 286 of them agreed to share 10 postcards with their family and friends. Young People's Services and Public Protections teams also distributed the postcards. Key findings from the engagement were:

- people want to be sensible but struggled to understand changing rules
- concerns about mental wellbeing, particularly for those who are already vulnerable
- difficulties for those without digital access
- concerns about relaxation of rules over Christmas
- hope around the vaccine
- the difficulties of home schooling
- concerns that volunteers and small groups can't operate as support for people

An example of the engagement was in a pre-entry ESOL class where three learners said they were intending to gather 3 households over Christmas. One of these gatherings would have resulted in 18 people meeting in a small terraced property – including 5 individuals who would be considered “vulnerable”. The engagement officer talked to participants about the risks involved with so little opportunity to distance. All agreed it was high risk and that they should reconsider.

## **COMMUNITY CENTRES – SUPPORT FOOD AND POVERTY**

Volunteer-managed Community Centres have secured funding from the Covid-19 Winter grant and National Lottery to provide food help across Blackburn with Darwen. 'Food & Essential Bags' are available for vulnerable families and elderly people in the local community, there are also breakfast bags available for children during Christmas school holidays. Volunteers are keen to make sure there is support available to anyone who is struggling at this very difficult time and be comforted to know there is help available locally via Accrington Rd, Greenfields, Ivy St, Little Harwood, Mill Hill and Darwen Valley Community Centres. People who need help can contact the Blackburn with Darwen Help Hub on 01254 588111 who will be put in-touch with their local community centre.

## **MORE POSITIVE TOGETHER PROGRAMME**

More Positive Together (MPT) is a Lancashire wide project that aims to help residents of some of the County's most deprived areas improve their skills and employment prospects. The project funded by European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) brings together over 20 partners including housing associations, local authorities and voluntary sector organisations to provide practical help and mentoring support to support the journey into work for those furthest from the labour market.

The Council joined the MPT partnership in 2020 and commenced delivery in July 2020. The project has established an excellent referral pathway with a number of partners including the DWP. With the challenges of Covid-19, support to clients is provided using digital methods and where necessary providing face-to-face learning opportunities in partnership with the BwD Adult Learning Team. Demand for support has been high in part due to people being made redundant as a result of Covid 19. The project has started successfully and

many participants have achieved excellent progress despite the challenges and constraints. The face-to-face learning is a turning point for most people and the key to unlocking their potential after many years of unemployment, helping to achieve training and employment outcomes.

## **ROUGH SLEEPER PODS**

As part of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) there is a duty on Local Authorities to provide emergency accommodation to rough sleepers in order to get them off the streets during the winter months. The current global pandemic has meant that the Council, like many others throughout the country, has had to re-think how it normally offers its communal emergency winter homeless accommodation.

Ten self-contained pods will be used for individuals as well as two kitchen/diner pods and a pod for security and support staff. The pods will be housed adjacent to Shadsworth leisure centre, offering a safe space for the most vulnerable rough sleepers. They are insulated, have a bed, toilet, shower, light and a secure door.

The risks to a person rough sleeping during winter are extremely high. Unfortunately and it's not an easy thing to communicate, but a small number of people sleeping rough choose to do so. This is due to a number of different factors and can include complex mental health issues, past traumatic experiences, drug or alcohol issues and sometimes a devastating concoction of all these factors. A small number sadly continue to refuse help.

We can't force people to take refuge, but we never give up on people and have staff working on the streets through our outreach teams. They provide the opportunity of help at any time – we don't want anyone to be sleeping rough in Blackburn with Darwen.

It is hoped that these units will help people take their first step out of homelessness and engage with the support services they need. The pods complement other winter provision that is being provided by Bodum Court (former Shadsworth House) and the Salvation Army.

All SWEP provision will be available until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

## **SPECIALIST SERVICES**

The Specialist Services Social Work Teams (Safeguarding, Learning Disability, Mental Health and Emergency Duty Team) have all worked persistently and creatively, throughout the pandemic to ensure that our most vulnerable service users are supported and safeguarded.

Demand has increased for each of these teams, however, they have risen to the challenge and responded admirably whilst also recognising that their own safety and wellbeing is an important factor.

The Safeguarding Team have worked with a considerable number of care homes in order to safeguard their residents and staff and ensure that they are operating in a way which reduces the risk of Covid as much as possible.

The Learning Disability Team have worked with providers of Learning Disability Services to offer support and guidance with regard to legislation and PPE. They have also provided regular advice and support to families who have been struggling to care for their family members without respite or day care, due to the Covid restrictions.

The Community Mental Health Team have seen a significant rise in referrals into the service due to the negative impact that the Covid situation has had on local people, some of whom, have never been known to mental health services before. For many people, the restrictions have exacerbated issues regarding isolation and vulnerability and affected their mental health and emotional wellbeing. The Team have responded accordingly and have implemented creative ways of working in order to maintain regular contact with service users and provide support and intervention when required.

The Emergency Duty Team operate out of hours and cover all aspects of statutory social work – children's, adults and mental health. As you would expect, demand on their service has increased during the pandemic due to individuals feeling isolated and vulnerable, and families struggling to cope. An increase in the use of casual staff at weekends has assisted the team in coping with the multi-dimensional pressures. The Team have also worked closely with colleagues from our social care teams to ensure that care homes are supported when there has been risk of a care home breakdown due to high numbers of staff unable to work as they have tested Covid+.

## **STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING**

We continue to work closely with the Regulated Care, Domiciliary Care and supported living sector to support them throughout the pandemic and to ensure the Care sector remains supported and viable. The second round of the Infection Control Fund (IPC) has been issued to providers in line with Government requirements and monthly returns in respect of the usage of the fund are being submitted to the DHSC.

Daily welfare calls to providers have continued to complete the tracker and maintain up to date situation reports for the Care Sector. Calls continue to take place Monday to Friday, not weekends as the support needed 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. In addition we have now established a dedicated Care Sector Response Group for all Covid 19 issues within the care sector. The group meet daily and respond to incidents and outbreaks, providing a situation report and response across all care settings. The group are also co-ordinating and monitoring take up of vaccinations for care home staff and residents as the vaccination programme is rolled out.

We continue to work 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. In addition we have also worked with colleagues within the Health and Social Care system to establish designated settings for discharge of Covid positive patients from hospital.