

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH & WELLBEING

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTORS: DOMINIC HARRISON &
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PEOPLE: A good quality of life for all our residents

Public Health

Update on the Mental Wellbeing programme

The mental wellbeing programme has continued to progress and has gained real impetus during the covid pandemic, as the issues of isolation, anxiety, depression and bereavement have become more prominent during and another lockdown.

Recent developments in public health have included:

- The appointment of a public health development manager to support this work on a full time basis.
- The development of an Lancashire wide elected member 'mental health champion' group
- The Blackburn mental wellbeing group continues to meet bi-monthly, engaging our commissioned services and voluntary sector partners
- A task and finish group has been set up to run a campaign around the '5 Ways to wellbeing' for 5 weeks, in May as restrictions start to be eased.

Recent development in our mental wellbeing commissioned services have included:

- The Flourishing Minds project, provided by Lancashire Mind, continues to provide one to one wellbeing coaching, as well as off one sessions on the 5 ways to wellbeing, stress and sleep.
- The Men in Sheds programme, provided by Blackburn Rover community Trust, have recently restarted their support for older men – the project will be based at Ewood Park and they are working with Blackburn College to build raised bed for food growing.
- Time to Change, provided by Lancashire Mind, are currently looking at a legacy plan for the anti-stigma work they have been doing as the national Time to Change programme ends on the 31st of March. They worked with partners to promote 'Time to Talk Day' on the 6th of February.
- Re-align Futures, who provide mental health and suicide prevention training, are currently looking to restore face to face training opportunities for mental health first aid and a new 'Connect 5' training offer.
- Together all continues to be a popular online wellbeing offer, with on average 25 new registrations a month.

Leisure Services

Although facilities have remained closed with the most recent national lockdown, Leisure Services staff have been utilised across a wide range of council departments to support the local Covid response.

With the national roadmap now in place, Leisure Services will begin to operate outdoor and indoor facilities at timescales dictated by national and local guidance. Outdoor organised activities are due to commence 29th March with individual indoor leisure restarting from 12th

April 2021. School swimming will restart week commencing 15th March 2021. Customer engagement will increase in the coming weeks ahead of reopening phases to encourage people to return when appropriate.

Staff will begin returning to the service ahead of restarting to ensure robust planning and preparations can take place ahead of reopening. Significant experience of teams supporting Lateral Flow Testing across the borough will be valuable to provide additional safety measures as services restart.

Healthy Lifestyles & Wellbeing Service

The Wellbeing Service continues to be the point of contact for the public and partners to access health and wellbeing support locally as well as providing a critical link across the broader Leisure, Health and Wellbeing offer. As part of the Wellbeing Service, Health Trainers are supporting internal staff as well as residents to make lasting lifestyle changes, positively affecting physical and mental wellbeing. These teams also form the core of the local Contact Tracing management and capacity.

re:refresh delivery teams continue to deliver a broad range of live streaming and online support sessions and are now preparing to recommence outdoor based activities in line with the government road map dates. Witton Park Cycle Centre is planned on reopening week commencing 15th March and organised outdoor group activities such as wellbeing walks or parent and toddler sessions, planned to restart from 29th March 2021.

Blackburn with Darwen is a part of the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot, called Together an Active Future (TaAF) operating across Pennine Lancashire. TaAF want more people to be more active, improve mental wellbeing and help people live happier, healthier lives.

So far, there has been over £115,000 invested across four local organisations/partnerships to test and deliver targeted health and physical activity projects, helping to understand how we can improve the health and activity of residents for the long term.

Libraries

Census 21: A successful application for Census Support Centre funding has enabled the Borough's Library Service to be part of the national network of site based Advisors helping residents to access and complete the Census 2021.

From early March households were invited to complete the census questionnaire, which generates vital information and shapes important decisions and planning on local services. Although the emphasis is on digital completion, paper copies are available on request.

Library staff have received census training and are able to provide help as needed, from guiding someone through the form to completing it on their behalf. Despite lockdown restrictions being in place at the onset of the census period, face to face support and access to onsite IT facilities for independent use has been available from Blackburn Library, Darwen Library and Audley and Queens Park Neighbourhood Learning Centre via Advisors from the Adult Learning Team. Support is by appointment to ensure we operate safely and in line with Covid hygiene guidance. Telephone support is also available for those who are unable to visit. After Census Day on March 21st, an ONS Census Field Team will follow up with those households who have not completed their questionnaire, directing residents to the library service if supported is needed. The census collection period will end on 4th May.

Read, Talk, Share: The Library Service has secured £10k funding from The Reading Agency to use the proven power of reading to tackle loneliness and support mental health as part of Blackburn with Darwen's Covid 19 recovery. At a time when people are unable to meet up we

know that isolation is particularly damaging to wellbeing and for those without access to digital communications the impact can be far worse. The Reading Friends programme is designed to start conversations and connect those who are lonely and isolated by providing devices and the necessary digital support to enable people to take part in virtual Reading Friends groups. Library staff will work with a wide range of partners and community groups to ensure maximum reach and take-up across borough.

Learn English: Delivery of the project is well underway, supporting students to take part in virtual social mixing, make new friends and experience some of services and resources offered by the library. As Covid restrictions are eased the programme will move to site based activity.

Arts & Heritage

Whilst being closed to the public there has been lots of work supporting schools and education from Blackburn Museum and Turton Tower. This year instead of holding our normal science week in the Museum we have taken it virtual. With a series of sessions developed around the Museum collections, all designed to meet aspects of the school curriculum and to get children enthused about science including inventors, minibeasts, fossils and forces streamed from the galleries straight into classrooms and homes. The sessions reached over 1800 children from across the borough and wider Lancashire.

Whilst at Turton Tower they have been developing their youtube channel which now holds a series of films supporting the curriculum all about Tudor and Victorian life. The films have been a great success with over 600 views each in January 2021. The team are now looking to develop a series on Shakespeare and the grounds.