

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH & ADULT SOCIAL CARE COUNCILLOR MUSTAFA DESAI

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

DATE: 25 March 2021

CHANGES TO SHIELDING

More people in Blackburn with Darwen are being advised to shield, following a change to the model the government uses to identify people who are at greater risk of complications from Coronavirus.

The change affects an estimated 1.7 million people in England. Around 5,200 BwD residents aged over 18 have been added to the Shielded Persons List.

These residents have received letters from the Department of Health & Social Care, advising them to stay at home until 31 March. They have also been prioritised for vaccination.

We have contacted all of those people added to the list with information about the Help Hub so we can help support them to stay at home and stay safe.

The shielding period for existing Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people has also been extended to 31 March.

COVID ENGAGEMENT

On the 13th January it was confirmed that Blackburn with Darwen was one of 60 local authorities to be awarded funding through the Covid Community Champions fund.

This funding will allow us to develop “Champions” who will support us to engage with communities most at risk from long-term impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic.

We’re already working to identify local organisations who can support us to deliver targeted engagement particularly with BAME residents and residents with disabilities, as a key part of our COVID-19 recovery plan. We’ll also be supporting the Strategic Youth Alliance to undertake more targeted outreach with young people. This work will help to deliver key public health messages and accurate health information, supporting people to identify myths and misinformation and adopt safer behaviours – and ultimately to save lives.

Our next step will be to identify individual Community Champions who can help us to communicate key messages within their family, neighbourhood and friendship groups. As well as being given key public health messaging, they’ll receive regular briefings and have the opportunity to raise questions and concerns with our DPH and other experts relevant to the issues we face as we move through the coming weeks and months.

Digital Initiatives with the Adult Learning Service

The Adult Learning team received money to support a Digital Buddies project which is a collaboration with the Lancashire Volunteer Partnership and Adult Learning. This aims to help people stay connected with family and friends and continue learning. The money is being used to supply a number of devices to help people get online, learn the basics, stay safe online and also attend Adult Learning courses. A collaboration with local business 6GInternet also supports those people without connectivity to access WiFi for 1 year.

The project also aims to help combat loneliness through regular phone calls from our digital volunteers. The digital buddies will help people use their device, troubleshoot any problems

they are having with their equipment and generally help build their confidence with the device, using the internet or social media.

The team has also been part of a project to provide and use technology to increase physical activity and support the wellbeing of local residents living in care homes, providing much needed social interaction and stimulus to a group of people who have been excluded from society for almost a year. The virtual craft sessions provide new, dementia friendly learning activities for residents to access and participate.

The aim of the craft activities was not only to provide some fun and entertainment to residents but also to help their long term memory through reminiscing, and practical activities to support their motor skills. Enjoying a singalong together helped to enhance the senses in the brain that remain with dementia sufferers the longest following a diagnosis of dementia.

TROUBLED FAMILIES PROGRAMME

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have confirmed funding for the Troubled Families Programme for 2021/22, this acknowledges the success of the programme to date, and the hard work of authorities, multi-agency partners as well as hundreds of thousands of families. MHCLG have commenced consultation processes to co-design and implement further improvements to the programme for any subsequent years. The Troubled Families programme supports the delivery of Early Help Family Support in Children's Services and Prevention & Neighbourhoods Services to support improved sustainable outcomes for local vulnerable families. For 2020/21 the Payment by Results element of the programme for 280 positive outcomes for families is on-track to be achieved despite Covid-19 challenges on service delivery.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE NEIGHBOURHOODS TEAMS

The Adult Social Care Neighbourhood teams continue to fulfil our statutory responsibilities under the Care Act. They work collaboratively with Partner agencies to meet the health and care needs of our most vulnerable residents. Where appropriate, digital solutions have supported virtual meetings and reduced face to face contacts in line with Covid restrictions, enabling necessary support and interventions to continue throughout the Pandemic. The needs and circumstances that residents experience have become more complex and subsequently the requirement to provide an immediate response has increased. For example, residents are experiencing increased needs linked to carer breakdown or a deterioration in their physical and mental well-being that requires immediate assessment and support. Our teams follow all government and organisational advice in respect of social distancing and PPE, enabling critical interventions to be carried out safely. Following the successful roll out of the vaccination programme residents now appear more willing to have professional input within their homes. Winter pressure monies have been utilised to increase social work capacity in the interim and recruitment activity has taken place throughout the winter period.

The Independent Living Service further supports people in their own homes via our Occupational Therapy, Moving and Handling and Sensory Impairment offer. Progressing the distribution of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) has been particularly challenging over the last 12 months as shielding and social distancing restrictions have made adaptations to individual's properties difficult to achieve. It is anticipated however that following operational developments such as the recent increase in Occupational Therapy capacity and the

relocation of the building surveyors into the team, the DFG programme will continue to progress successfully.

INTERMEDIATE TIER/HOSPITAL DISCHARGE TEAMS

The Hospital Discharge, Reablement and Home First teams continue to fulfil our statutory responsibilities and are successfully meeting increasing demand for services, particularly for those being discharged from Hospital. The complexity of need of local people being referred into services has increased and the teams are now supporting residents who are experiencing a greater level of illness and frailty than was the case prior to Covid 19. This has led to more people requiring increased interventions from both health and social care services.

The continued collaboration with our system partners remains an important feature of all the work we do and is key to enabling safe decision making with and on behalf of the residents of our borough to ensure safe discharges from hospital. Home First principles continue to inform our practice and the Multi-Disciplinary triage within Intermediate Tier enables people to receive the right level of care whilst encouraging independence. The emerging developments that support the new Hospital Discharge Guidance (launched in September 2020 in response to Covid) will continue to shape discharge services going forward and our teams are central to ensuring the success of this work.

Mobilisation plans for the new Intermediate Care service at Albion Mill are progressing well. This innovative scheme is due to open next month and will see Health and Social Care working together seamlessly to make a real difference to the lives of local people. In addition to Intermediate Care services, Albion Mill will also provide Extra Care Housing and neighbourhood activities via the Community Hub.

SPECIALIST SERVICES

The Specialist Services Social Work Teams (Safeguarding, Learning Disability, Mental Health and Emergency Duty Team) continue to work persistently, flexibly and creatively, to ensure that our vulnerable residents are supported and safeguarded and that we fulfil our statutory duties.

Demand has increased for each of these teams and they have responded accordingly whilst also recognising that their own safety, wellbeing and resilience are important factors. Protection and support through appropriate use of PPE, access to a range of emotional health and wellbeing opportunities and strong leadership, continues to be in place for all of the teams.

The Learning Disability Team continues to work with providers to ensure that people with a Learning Disability/Autism are supported and protected. In addition, they are currently liaising with Providers and public health colleagues to ensure that residents with LD/Autism are prioritised appropriately in the vaccination roll out. The team continues to provide regular advice and support to families who have been struggling to care for their family members due to the Covid restrictions. The resumption of day care services alongside our respite support options have provided important support to both individuals and families.

The Community Mental Health Team continues to see 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 number of mental health act assessments and

people needing to be detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act legislation has also increased. Although very busy, the team has successfully managed these pressures and current capacity planning will support the management of increased demand going forward.

COUNTER EXTREMISM

The National Counter Extremism Programme is under review from the Home office as it is at the end of its 5 year strategy cycle, running from 2015-20. Feedback to date is a recommendation the programme widens its scope with a greater focus on wider crime and social harms that can lead to extremism, with a particular focus on hate crime. The counter extremism co-ordinator based in Blackburn with Darwen has been working with key stakeholders in advance of such feedback to increase the reporting of hate crime across all communities and to build trust and confidence in the process, in particular responses to concerns raised across public agencies. There have been 347 hate crimes and 115 hate incidents record in Blackburn with Darwen between February 2020 and the end of January 2021, this despite being under COVID restrictions.

We have also been working towards improving the advice, guidance support offered to victims of hate crime, to include restorative justice approaches. BwD is also working closely with partners on the development of improved intervention and prevention programmes to improve rehabilitation of offenders where hate was a factor.

Blackburn with Darwen, as is the case nationally, has seen an increase in online hate crime through social media. In response we are working with the local Football club, partners, community groups and charities to advance our programs, enforcement, intervention, prevention and as well as activity and promotion of Hate Crime awareness, to include key sporting events.

Away from Hate Crime, the Counter Extremism co-ordinator has also been working to establish resilience towards toxic and damaging misinformation and narratives. A number of webinars have been held with key stakeholders addressing anti-minority narratives and negative Covid Narratives, supporting objective and effective challenges to them.

STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING & FINANCE

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. Whilst good progress is being made with vaccinations across the care sector, care providers are continuing to implement latest guidance around Infection Prevention Control, visiting and so on. We continue to work with providers to monitor Covid outbreaks and incidences. The Daily welfare calls to providers have continued to complete the tracker and maintain up to date situation reports for the Care Sector and the dedicated Care Sector Response Group for all Covid 19 issues within the care sector continue to respond as needed, providing a situation report in line with the Council's Incident Management Reporting. The group are also co-ordinating and monitoring take up of vaccinations for care home staff and residents, and all staff across the wider Care Sector as the vaccination programme is rolled out.

The second round of the Infection Control Fund (IPC), the Rapid Testing Grant and the Workforce Capacity Grant have all been issued to providers in line with Government requirements and monthly returns in respect of the usage of these funds are being submitted to the DHSC.

In addition the Strategic Commissioning team are now engaging with our care providers to negotiate and agree the annual uplifts in provider fees for 2021/22 following delegated decision from Finance Council.