

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH & WELLBEING

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
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LIBRARIES

National Libraries Week and **Get On Line Week**, were both held in October and provided an ideal platform to run group activities for all ages, and step up our digital learning offers, which included a 'Tablet Loan and Learn', programme from Blackburn Library, with plans to roll out from Darwen Library in the New Year.

Community Libraries - thanks to the commitment and enthusiasm of our volunteers, opening hours have increased at Cherry Tree, Mill Hill and Roman Road Libraries. Whilst we aren't quite back to pre-pandemic openings the volunteers have successfully reintroduced a range of weekly activities, including storytimes, Knit and Natter, Brew Time Socials and library staff are supporting with the delivery of reminiscence sessions, creative craft and IT Connect and Learn events.

Library Patron

Christina Gabbitas, award-winning children's author, creator of Blackburn Children's Literature Festival and founder of the Children's Literature Festival Charity, kindly accepted the role of Patron of Blackburn with Darwen Children and Young People's Library Service, at a celebratory event attended by Councillor Derek Hardman, Mayor of Blackburn with Darwen. Christina is already working with library staff to organise the next literature festival, which will take place during Libraries Week in October.

Cherry Tree Library Apiary

Our busy bees were blissfully unaffected by the challenges of the pandemic. Honey harvested from the busy bees 'flew' off the shelves when it went on sale in the library in November, raising £400 to support development of the volunteer run community project.

VENUES

The last quarter of 2021 saw audiences return to KGH and DLT with sell-out shows. The year ended with a very successful production of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Boosted by strong marketing and a household name and Strictly Come Dancing star, Katya Jones as the wicked queen, it was KGH's highest grossing pantomime - a fantastic achievement. Building on the momentum this year's pantomime Jack and the Beanstalk is already on sale with many repeat bookings already being taken.

HEALTH & WELLBEING SERVICES

The BwD Wellbeing Service continues to get busier, supporting communities as part of the pandemic recovery. 3995 contacts were received in the first half of this 2021 – with a third of those contacts coming in from the rest of Pennine Lancashire as part of the role teams in Blackburn with Darwen play in coordinating delivery across East Lancashire (called the Active Lifestyles Hub). Numbers of referrals to the Wellbeing Service are starting to increase, 440

received from April to September, with 63% of those from GP/NHS Health Professionals. Health Trainers have resumed seeing people face to face in covid secure settings, but have retained a blended approach and continue to offer Walk & Talk and Virtual/Phone appointments also.

Together an Active Future

Pennine Lancashire was chosen by Sport England as 1 of 12 grassroots projects to work with on bold new approaches to build healthier, more active communities across England. The Local Delivery Pilot in Pennine Lancashire is called Together an Active Future or 'TaAF' and has been allocated £10m in funding to deliver this ground-breaking programme. Funding continues to be confirmed for work across Blackburn with Darwen; here are two recent success stories.

- **180 project** – adopting a true 'place based' approach and taking physical activity to a prison community. To address health inequalities, there is an urgent need to address prisoner physical and mental health. A 'Cross fit' training and learning programme is the vehicle being used to get men active and stay active when they are released, with the intention of breaking the cycle of addiction, crime and prison.
- **Lancashire Wildlife Trust Greenhouse Project** – continues to successfully grow, develop and provide physically engaging activities for BwD residents from diverse backgrounds, abilities and cultures. Referrals into the service remain high. There are currently 8 weekly sessions taking place supported by local volunteers. A strong collaboration is being built alongside local partners making the greenhouses accessible to all. Current activities include; gardening and DIY activities, Workshops, upcycling furniture, table tennis and creating an exercise bike generator.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Youth Wellbeing Champions

Blackburn with Darwen now has eleven young people as 'Wellbeing Champions' offering peer support, mentoring in emotional health, and signposting to wellbeing resources and services. The peer mentor project was initiated, co-designed and delivered by our Youth Forum, Young People's Services (YPS), Public Health and Re-Align Futures in response to ongoing reports of the negative impact the pandemic restrictions were having on young people's mental health. Public Health successfully secured national funding from the Better Mental Health grant last summer to recruit, train and supervise school based youth Wellbeing Champions in our secondary schools. The Wellbeing Champions are now well supported by their school senior leadership and pastoral teams, from the participating schools of Blackburn Central, Our Lady and St John, and Tauheedul Girls, with ongoing wrap around support from ReAlign Futures to ensure they thrive in their new roles.

Our amazing fully qualified Wellbeing Champions are equipped with bespoke designed lanyards and pin badges to ensure they are recognised by their peers and staff, who are now active and enjoying their new roles.

A Plan for Safer Roads in Blackburn with Darwen

November saw a range of consultation and engagement activity to develop the borough Safer Roads action plan. On 16th November the Public Health team facilitated a consultation event with BwD's Safer Roads Operational Group to develop the borough's Safer Roads action plan. This is BwD's first Safer Roads strategy, aims to promote safer and healthier streets and roads and is being led by the Council's Community Safety, Public Health and Highways teams. It will focus on community engagement and education and include actions to promote safe driver behaviour, improve air quality and promote active travel while making best use of the enforcement and engineering resources available. Road Safety Week also saw a series of assemblies and engagement activities facilitated by Social Sense 4 secondary schools in the borough. The findings from these events will help to inform and develop a local Safer Roads campaign with our young people. The final multi agency Safer Roads strategy and action plan, which is due to be presented to the Executive Board in February.