

# REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, PREVENTION & WELLBEING

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
CHIEF OFFICERS: Director of Public  
Health

Thursday, 28 July 2022

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

### **Public Health**

#### ***Oral Health Improvement Strategy launch event***

The oral health improvement strategy launch event took place at Ewood Park on 16<sup>th</sup> May. It was attended by a variety of stakeholders and partners as well as children who had won the oral health poster competition, their parents and teachers. Several high profile partners from dental health attended and provided positive feedback.

Community organisations presented their oral health improvement work alongside our new oral health improvement service provider, AP Smilecare. An actor read a newly commissioned children's book 'Max's Not So Sweet Dream' and Rover (the Blackburn Rovers FC mascot) presented electric toothbrushes as prizes to the winning children.

#### ***Sexual Health Services – 1 Year On***

A session was held in June, marking one year of the newly commissioned sexual health service, provided by Brook. Covid recovery and introduction of new hybrid (digital and in person) delivery models was considered to be working really well;

- A dedicated website in BwD which was accessed by over 10,500 users in the past year. 98% of users had their browser language set as English.
- 2,917 STI home kits were ordered last year. 70.6% were returned, with 96% of results provided within 48 hours, and 269 identified as requiring treatment.
- The use of our digital offer (SH:24) has steadily grown, with an average of 795 people per month provided with contraception and STI screening /treatment.
- The online provision have saved around 8 face to face clinical hours per week, which now be used for in-person appointments for high risk/vulnerable clients.

#### ***Mental Health***

The Public Health team received Better Mental Health Grant funding in July 2021 from the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID). As part of this, the local authority was required to join the Prevention Concordat scheme as a signatory authority. The Concordat is a 12 month action plan, outlining effective interventions to promote mental wellbeing and the primary prevention of mental illness. It was signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board in April and OHID are intending to use our application as an example of best practice for other areas.

#### ***Lancaster University 'Beyond Imagination Life Survey'***

Public Health have been working in partnership with Lancaster University's design-led on their 'Beyond Imagination Life Survey'. The survey, across the Blackburn with Darwen and Lancaster City Council areas, tells us about residents views on health and wellbeing; wealth and opportunity; sustainability, transport and travel; digital accessibility and housing. Key findings include that residents of BwD feel a strong sense of belonging to their area, rating it as a place where neighbours look out for each other and different backgrounds get on together. Reports presenting the headline results and case studies are publicly available [here](#).

### ***Covid Responsiveness***

We are continuing to return to business as usual, whilst still supporting staff and residents to live safely with Covid. Covid-19 is still with us and we are starting to see an increase in cases and a rise in hospitalisations. We are monitoring this and encouraging people to remember the basics like hand washing, good ventilation, vaccination and staying at home when unwell. This will help us keep transmission low and protect the most vulnerable. Some guidance remains for certain settings such as care homes and hospitals and we are offering support to more vulnerable settings such as Houses of Multiple Occupation. We are undertaking proactive work to encourage wider infection prevention control measures as this will help support the reduction in the spread of other infectious illness such as flu. This will be even more important as we move into the Autumn when respiratory illness becomes more prevalent.

We recently held a Covid-19 response de-brief session with chief officers which will result in a series of recommendations. This exercise will enable the Council to be better prepared for future events of this kind. We will be holding further sessions with officers, partners and elected members. The Covid-19 Public Inquiry has now been formally established and will examine and report on preparations and response to the pandemic up to 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Many sectors including local government will be asked to contribute to the Inquiry and we look forward to supporting this important piece of work.

### ***Health and Wellbeing Board***

The Health and Wellbeing Board met on 21<sup>st</sup> June and welcomed Cllr Damian Talbot as its new Chair, following the retirement of Cllr Mohammed Khan. The Board received items relating to the Better Care Fund, Child Death Overview Panel, Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Climate and Health and Mental Health and Wellbeing Inequalities Framework, as well as an annual update from the Children's Partnership Board.

On 21<sup>st</sup> July the Board held a development session to discuss and commit to shared action to address the Cost of Living Crisis, and its impacts on the health and wellbeing of our communities.

### **Community Safety**

#### ***CCTV Hub Upgrades:***

The CCTV control room has undergone a significant upgrade with a new command and control system now operational enabling highways CCTV integration and gives a range of future options around building security, traffic and pollution management going forward. It also making significant improvements to the management of crime and ASB incidents and since coming on line in May has recorded 1600 incidents with live images streamed to the police control room in real time and uploads of evidence done so directly onto the police investigation system, co-ordinated through a dedicated control room police officer.

On the back of this, Blackburn with Darwen's CCTV hub has been nominated for a Problem Solving in Policing award. Feedback from the constabulary has been very positive with the following comment in the award nomination:

Richard Perkins, Regional Director, NICE Public Safety also stated “ *The hub... has significantly improved operational efficiency, and the continued collaborative working and Partnership with Lancashire Constabulary are setting the standard for how the NICE Investigate solution can best be used for improvements in policing performance.*”

## **Housing Needs, Ayslum and Homelessness**

### ***Winter Provision and Response to Rough Sleeping***

The council's emergency winter response to homelessness had another successful year, with 12 people supported through the temporary housing pods with wrap around support operated directly by the council. All have been successfully housed in follow on accommodation. Aside from the council's own additional provision 32 people were supported into wider commissioned placements as an alternative to sleeping rough.

The council is nearly doubling its 'housing first' offer from 18 to 30 properties which have bespoke intensive support to help with the causes of repeat homelessness, funded by additional grants secured by the team from central government.

Challenges remain however, as individuals with complex needs continue to be attracted to hostels and exempt accommodation in the borough. In the first quarter of 2022, circa 70 were evicted, a number going on to rough sleep for at least one night. The council's outreach team supported by Changing Future's is in daily contact with all, making offers of accommodation and support. Some are refusing but we will persist, others we have been able to re-house and support quickly. The continued influx of individuals from outside Blackburn with Darwen is maintaining significant pressure on the services available to address the underlying causes. On average we have had 12 people sleeping rough at any one time during the first quarter of 2022, a continual cause for concern.

### ***Homes 4 Ukraine***

Over 340 residents have made their homes available for Ukrainian Evacuee's through the governments Home's for Ukraine Scheme. To date 29 have arrived of the 56 that have so far successfully made it through the visa application process, and have been matched with a family. The council is providing support for the sponsors and the Ukrainian nationals' safe arrival and integration into our communities. Many have been able to find work and or education and training programmes already, alongside attending sporting and other events and activities with the wider business community extremely supportive. Further details of the support being made available through the council will be presented to executive board in July.

## **Neighbourhoods Wellbeing and Prevention**

### ***Social Prescribing***

The Social Prescribing offer continues to gain momentum with referrals from GP's and clinicians continuing to grow with support from Primary Care Networks (PCN's). In 2021/22, 599 residents were supported in a strength based way to address issues that were impacting on their health, with 64% outcomes achieved. The top issues for referrals were poor mental health, social isolation, unemployment and housing with this trend continuing in 2022/23. Other developments include establishing a Social Prescribing Chronic Pain partnership group to provide an advanced and innovative wrap around offer. This has been clinician led with the aim of helping local people live alongside their pain whilst living a meaningful life.

### ***Volunteers thanked at celebration event***

Over 2,000 volunteers support the delivery of Council services through Lancashire Volunteer Partnership (LVP) this includes new volunteers who came forward as part of the response to Covid, in particular providing telephone befriending for vulnerable people. On 7th June, over 100 people attended a celebration event to thank volunteers who dedicate their lives to their communities. The Mayor, Suleman Khonat, was joined Cllr Phil Riley and Denise Park to take the opportunity to give personal thanks to all the volunteers. Feedback from attendees was extremely positive with volunteers keen to have future events involving more volunteers.

### ***Help Hub and Household Support Fund***

The Help Hub is a front door mechanism, first established as part of the Covid response, and is now being used to offer early help and intervention as part of the cost of living crisis; managing all resident requests for the Household Support Fund. Since April 2022 over 1000 Household Support Fund applications have been processed. Fuel support and food are the biggest areas of demand and many applicants who receive support in these areas are referred for further support with finances, debt and benefit advice and also support for wellbeing and employment, to help build resilience and avoid residents needing to rely on continued support. Community Connectors take a person centred, strength based and trauma informed approach and are able to offer support across a broad range of issues, regardless if residents are eligible for the Household Support or not.