

# REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ADULTS SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH

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PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
CHIEF OFFICERS: Strategic Director  
of Adults and Health  
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## Build happier, healthier and safer communities

### Social Work Teams

Over the past twelve months, the Integrated Neighbourhood Social Work teams have continued to complete statutory assessments and interventions for adults with care and support needs across the Borough. The teams work closely with partners both within and outside of the Council, including Health colleagues across community and acute services, local care providers and the Voluntary sector. The teams focus on managing risk and promoting the best outcomes for residents within a strength-based approach to assessment and care planning. This is in line with the vision set out in the departmental Target Operating Model: supporting people to lead the lives they want to live, in a place they call home.

The Social Work teams have continued to evolve and improve over the past year and have engaged in development work across several areas of provision. Advanced Practitioner Social Work roles have been introduced across a number of teams, to increase the leadership capacity and the resilience of our services, as well as providing opportunities for staff progression and professional development.

The teams have supported the development of a new approach to conducting statutory Safeguarding work across the Directorate which will result in Safeguarding investigations being undertaken within Neighbourhood Teams as well as within our dedicated Safeguarding Team. The Local Safeguarding Adults Board continues to oversee the strategic safeguarding function across the whole partnership and assure practice and learning. The Board is now supported by a Place based Blackburn with Darwen Business Unit, rather than a Lancashire wide Business Unit which was previously the case.

The Learning Disability Team recently attended a transition event at Newfield School to share information regarding transitions and provide an opportunity for young people and their families to ask questions as they prepare for the transition to adulthood.

The Mental Health Team are currently involved in supporting the wider Mental Health transformation programmes alongside the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Lancashire and South Cumbria Foundation Trust (LSCFT). Enhanced multi-disciplinary teams will be in place from February 2024, enabling collaborative working and ensuring that those with the most complex mental health needs are supported through a holistic offer from Health, Social Care, and the Voluntary sector. The BwD Place Based Partnership Board is supporting the oversight of the mental health transformation work to help ensure best outcomes for the residents of the Borough.

Further developments have taken place with respect to Palliative and End of Life Care. Coordinated by the ICB, this work brings together Social Work, District Nursing, the Hospice, Primary Care, Marie Curie, the Acute Trust, Healthwatch and local faith leaders. The aim is to improve and ensure best quality within this essential aspect of treatment, care, and support, provided at a time when our residents are at their most vulnerable and when good quality, person-centred approaches to care often have the greatest impact.

The social work teams have also been active participants in the directorate-wide work to take stock of our services in readiness for CQC inspection, as we prepare to demonstrate the value and quality of our services within this new regulatory framework.

## **Intermediate Tier**

The Reablement, Home First and Hospital Social Work Teams are operating to full capacity throughout the winter period. The teams are working closely with our partners in Health to respond to hospital discharges in a timely manner and prevent people staying in hospital for longer than is necessary. The intermediate Care Service based at Albion Mill continues to provide a residential rehabilitation service to people who need additional support before they return home from hospital. This service is currently undergoing transformation to a single provider model, at which time, full bed capacity will be operationalised. The intermediate tier services are central to the winter planning requirements described later within this report.

## **Integrated Neighbourhood Arrangements**

A review of our integrated neighbourhood working arrangements in Blackburn with Darwen took place as planned during Quarter 3. The aim of the review was to:

- Assess ambitions for integrated neighbourhood working.
- Identify and agree what works well with regards to current service delivery and what could be improved.
- Define and agree support requirements for next steps.

Over 150 health, care and community neighbourhood practitioners engaged in the neighbourhood review process via an online survey, one to one interviews, direct observation and stakeholder focus groups with colleagues from the Local Government Association (LGA).

A Next Steps to Evolving our Neighbourhoods event took place on 17th November where colleagues from the LGA presented back key findings from the review. A wide range of integrated care representatives from Primary and Secondary Care, NHS Community Health Services, Social Care and key members from the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector attended. We received some great feedback on our current ways of working and the strength of our integrated working was acknowledged by the LGA, but as ever, we recognise there is lots more we can do to make care and support for our residents even better. Facilitated breakout sessions were held on the day for delegates to start shaping the next steps with a view to Refocusing, Refreshing, Reconnecting and Re-energising our neighbourhoods. Feedback from the event and themed actions will be shared with stakeholders for initial feedback and refinement. Following this, a co-produced action plan will be developed with system partners which will enable us to build on the existing strengths of our integrated working arrangements.

## **Employment, Skills and Support Hub**

Adult Learning and Employment support teams are forging a new partnership approach across Blackburn with Darwen to support residents and businesses and to tackle economic inactivity. The Employment, Skills and Support Hub will take a lead in bringing together organisations and providers from across the Borough which provide employability and employment support services.

The Hub will provide a single point of contact for local people to access the most appropriate support for them. Further aims include the development of an Employer arm, bringing employers together to discuss and identify barriers to recruitment to specific roles. The Hub will support collaborative programmes which help to ensure potential applicants have the relevant skills, behaviours, and qualifications to apply for sector specific job roles. Upcoming plans include establishing a base within the education and skills campus which will be located in Blackburn town centre and be central to the implementation of the Lancashire-wide Local Skills Improvement Plan and Blackburn with Darwen's Employment and Skills Strategy. A hard launch of the Employment, Skills and Support Hub will take place in March 2024.

## **Commissioning, Finance and Performance**

A review of the integrated commissioning, finance and performance functions within Adults & Health has progressed and the initial phase of the team restructure has concluded with appointments to Head of Service roles within the integrated team. The Head of Finance, Performance and Business Support and the Head of Commissioning (People services) will commence in role in early January and will take forward the next stages of the review.

The development of our strategic commissioning plans is well underway with programmes of work being undertaken for carers services, ageing well and specialist services, all of which are aligned to corporate priorities and the department's business plan objectives. The Council continues to work closely with the ICB and wider partners within Blackburn with Darwen to ensure alignment of the plans across Health and Social care.

Provider forums have taken place during September and October and are now scheduled throughout the year to build on our engagement with the care market and embed our quality improvement work across care provision within the Borough. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group have also concluded their review of our care homes and any recommendations for improvement have been progressed by the Commissioning and Quality team. Work is now underway with the sector to consult on proposed provider fees for 24/25 in line with the Council's budget process.

Winter plans across Health and Social Care are in place and are focussed on ensuring that we are as prepared as possible to meet the likely challenges of winter. Utilising the Discharge Grant, Winter Plans are developed and agreed collaboratively to add resilience across all aspects of the Health and Care system. As in the last few years, we have utilised the grant to build capacity into some of the critical short term intervention services, including crisis/domiciliary care and respite/short term care. This capacity is intended to support both hospital discharge and admission avoidance and aligns to existing pathways.

Our Performance team continue to lead on progress with our CQC (Care Quality Commission) Assurance preparations. CQC commenced formal assessment of local authorities in September 2023 and have so far completed their inspections of the 5 pilot sites and have issued indicative ratings for each of these authorities. A further 3 South of England authorities have recently been announced. We are embedding the learning from pilot sites within our preparation activity as we continue to collate evidence and make improvements against our own self-assessment. With respect to staff and Partner engagement – sessions are scheduled for early in the new year.

Finally, we have a Directorate Business Planning Day arranged for Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January at which we will evaluate the implementation of our objectives from the 23/24 plan and refresh and renew our priority actions for the year ahead.