

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH & WELLBEING

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

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

Child Obesity Trailblazer

In June 2019 the Blackburn with Darwen led Pennine Lancashire Consortium of Local Authorities was announced as one of the five National Childhood Obesity Trailblazer sites. Work has commenced in earnest on the Healthy Place Healthy Future Plan which will address four key areas in a whole systems approach to tackling childhood obesity across Pennine Lancashire. The levers for change are:

1. Testing the limits of the planning system and adopt a complimentary planning approach across the six districts to regulate hot food takeaways and explore ways to encourage a healthier offer through personal permissions
2. Develop a network of informed and empowered Elected Members to advocate for healthy weight locally and influence Primary Care Neighbourhoods to ensure a whole system approach and develop an embedded Health and Wellbeing learning and development programme
3. Support existing A3 and A5 businesses to provide healthier, affordable food and recognise with a closely scrutinised award. Develop incentives for healthier food, including procurement, advertising, menu development, inter-borough mentoring/sharing good practice, masterclasses with a local celebrity chef and links to local producers
4. Support communities to drive the demand for healthier takeaway food through the development of the Great Big Junk Food Debate

This approach across Pennine Lancashire will develop closer working relationships with districts and enable the healthy weight agenda to be seen as a priority which is no longer just the responsibility of Lancashire County Council as the upper tier authority.

Significant achievements to date include the district authorities committing to signing their Healthy Weight Declarations with Pendle leading the way. The programme has gained significant political engagement with a steering board chaired by LCC's Health & Wellbeing Cabinet Member and Blackburn with Darwen's Executive Member for Growth and Development. The programme has established an international expert panel with members from across the world of academia and healthy weight advocacy to provide advice and inspiration and significantly strengthen programme delivery.

Breast Feeding Friendly

Recent studies have confirmed the benefits of breastfeeding as fewer infections, increased intelligence, probable protection against overweight and diabetes, reduced child deaths, and cancer prevention for mothers.

In December, both the Children's Centres and the Health Visiting Service achieved the prestigious Unicef Baby Friendly Initiative Gold Award 'Achieving Sustainability', which is the highest possible quality standards in breastfeeding practise. This double achievement is the culmination of many years of sustained effort and collaborative leadership to establish a breastfeeding friendly culture in the borough. Extensive training, audits, data monitoring, and innovative work to provide comprehensive support for breastfeeding mothers and their families, has resulted in increases in breast feeding rates in every ward, including the most deprived wards. Currently, over half (51%) of mothers continue to breastfeed their babies at 6-8 weeks, which is a significant improvement compared with only third (33%) in 2012/13.

The national assessor was particularly impressed by the integrated delivery and close partnerships between East Lancashire Hospital Trust Maternity services, Lancashire & South Cumbria Foundation Trust's Health Visiting service, Children's Centres, Public Health & Wellbeing Team, volunteers and parents. The borough's Children's Centres join only one other local area to achieve The Gold Award, and only a handful of Health Visiting services have been recognised across the country.

Life Expectancy Improvement

Life expectancy at birth is a useful summary measure of population health. For the first ten years of the new millenium life expectancy at birth for both men and women continued to increase steadily, both nationally and locally, at a rate of about 3 years per decade. However, since 2011 life expectancy has slowed nationally, and in Blackburn with Darwen, along with many other disadvantaged local authorities, has fallen in both men and women. While we have been at the forefront in raising the alarm and stimulating research into why life expectancy improvement has stalled in the UK, the underlying causes are still debated.

New data released in December shows that in Blackburn with Darwen life expectancy in men has, once again, reached an all-time high of 76.9 years, an improvement of just under two months in the last 5 years. For local women, despite the first increase for 5 years, to 80.3 years, life expectancy remains almost 1 year lower than previously.

Whatever the underlying cause of recent changes in local life expectancy, the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and Primary Care Neighbourhoods we have developed and implemented successfully in Blackburn with Darwen are laying solid foundations for further improvement, of holistic, person-centred, place-based care.

Library and Information Service

Cherry Tree Library - formerly Livesey Library

Its official, our community library is now known as Cherry Tree Library. The renaming initiative, instigated by the library volunteers earlier in the year is a bid to better promote the service in the Cherry Tree area. Local schoolchildren were invited to create a design that represented the library and nearby landmarks. The two winning designs have been used to create new exterior signage which both brightens the

building and clearly communicates its purpose. The November renaming event and logo design competition presentation was well attended by the local community, the design winners and runners up, library volunteers and the Knit and Natter Group who also contributed by creating a large textile wall hanging incorporating library themes, local features and bees, in recognition of the library's apiary development.

Darwen Library

Additional weekly digital support drop-ins will be offered from January 2020 onwards. Using the library's computer facilities, advisors from the Citizens Advice Service will be available to help people to get online or refresh their digital skills every Monday from 10am to 4pm. The sessions will have a focus on job seeking, managing benefit claims, accessing social housing and council services. These sessions will extend the library's existing digital support programme of basic IT tutored courses and drop-ins.

Venues

The third quarter is always the busiest time of year for Venues with a great deal of comedy, music and private events at both KGH and DLT. Comedy included Rhod Gilbert, James Acaster, Romesh Ranganathan, Jimmy Carr, Rob Becket, and Lancashire Hotpots, which all sold out months in advance. Frank Skinner and Ben Elton also sold very well. Sell out concerts from Primal Scream and SLF and good crowds for Adam Ant and Shed Seven added to a strong programme. Successful club nights hosted a visit from renowned Goldie and a very popular sell out for Manchester Night.

DLT's varied programme continues to attract good audiences with sell outs from Steve Harley The Cockney Rebel, Mike Peters and Andy Fairweather Low. Guy Masterson returned to Darwen Library Theatre with A Christmas Carol, two months shy of his performance 20 years ago in the theatre's opening season.

Both Pantomimes have shown good returns. At KGH Stageworks made every effort to impress with fantastic costumes and a script that included much more audience participation to engage the younger ones. School bookings were up on last year as were public seat sales. DLT staged Pinocchio, a non-typical pantomime title that was a harder sell this year but it will not return a loss and there will be a return to a traditional story in 2020.

King George's Hall staged Cinderella, Stageworks made every effort to impress with fantastic costumes and a script that included much more audience participation to engage the younger ones. School bookings were up on last year as were public seat sales. As a result the pantomime attracted over 20,000 attendances and achieved record breaking Gross Box Office takings, which for the first time ever, exceeded £200,000.

Celebrating Volunteers

The contributions made volunteers across the Leisure, Health and Wellbeing services were celebrated at the end of the year. The backdrop of Darwen's charismatic Carnegie Library provided the perfect setting for a celebratory event, attended by the Mayor for the 100+ volunteers who have enabled the Council to keep community libraries open, at a time when many are closing across the country. Library volunteers help deliver books to some of the most vulnerable citizens in the borough, assist with the delivery of children's activities, develop the Cotton Town website, provide research assistance to those interested in local and family history, organise and deliver events, raise funds and support tutors to deliver a range of basic IT courses and drop in sessions. The afternoon saw a special performance by the Library Larks, the community choir born out of a library based arts project.

re:refresh has 8 different volunteer roles to support people into active, healthier lifestyles. Their celebratory evening brought 60 volunteers together recognising the important part each person plays in the Council's nationally acclaimed health and wellbeing services and contribution to increasing levels of physical activity, especially for those people who need a little extra help.