

CLC: A Hub for the Grange Park Community

1. Why the Need to Change

Blackpool City Learning Centre (CLC) is a technology, training and resource centre located on Bathurst Avenue, Grange Park. The building incorporates two wings that include a number of IT facilities, education facilities, meeting rooms, AV studio, library and café. The centre was one of 30 such learning centres developed nationally. The majority of these centres have now changed use or those on school sites have been transferred to the school as additional accommodation.

(a) Part of the Overall Improvement Plans for Grange Park

The current shops on Grange Park are in buildings that are no longer fit for purpose for a modern housing estate. There are plans in place to convert one wing of the CLC to provide three retail shop units. These units will provide alternative accommodation for retailers currently based in a parade of shops on another part of the estate including One Stop and a local pharmacy. It is proposed that one of the retail units will be used to provide a community shop thereby ensuring that local people have access to affordable food and other commodities.

The other wing of the building will be developed into a Community Hub. The hub will work with the Children's Centre, Boundary School and two health centres to provide facilities for service delivery, volunteers and the community.

In addition to this development there are high level plans in place to make further improvements and changes to the neighbourhood.

(b) To allow more public organisations and community groups to deliver the services that the people on Grange Park want

Usually we concentrate on what's not good about an area to plan for how we can support the community to maximise its own health and wellbeing 'The Deficits Model'. The local deficits are as follows:-

- There are 7378 people living in the Park ward with approximately 6000 people living on the Grange Park estate itself. The local area has a relatively young population with 21.4 % of people aged under-16 years compared with 18.9% nationally;
- Around one in four adults living in the local community are classified as obese (25.7%) and this is in line with levels in Blackpool (25.8%) and England (24.1%) However only 1 in 5 (19.4%) local people aged 16 or over are likely to be eating the government recommended nutritional intake of five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day compared with comparisons for Blackpool (22.6%) and England (28.7%);
- General health levels in the area are not good with 11.6% of local residents describe their health as bad or very bad and this is significantly worse than for Blackpool (9.5%) and England (5.5%). Around 26.8% of local people are living with a limiting long term illness or disability compared with Blackpool (25.6%) and England (17.6%);
- Loneliness has been reported as an issue, with more local pensioners were recorded as living alone (38.4%) compared with people of pensionable age living in Blackpool (35.4%) and England (31.5%);

- In 2015/16 there were 881 recorded crimes in the Park ward, a rate of 119 per 1000 population. This is the 5th highest rate across all wards in Blackpool and is in line with the average for Blackpool but over twice the rate for Lancashire as a whole;
- In 2015/16 over 200 adults aged 16-64 years were claiming out of work benefit in the Park ward. This is the 6th highest ranking ward in Blackpool, representing 4.5% of the working age population, and is significantly higher than comparisons for Blackpool and England;
- The proportion of adults with no qualifications living in Park is approximately 33.7%. This is significantly higher than comparisons for Blackpool (31.3%) and England (22.5%). Only 15% of local people have a level 4 qualification (e.g. degree or professional qualification). This is similar to the Blackpool average but significantly lower than the national average of 27%.

An Assets Model would suggest that Grange Park has significant amounts of green and open space, with generally good quality affordable housing and a wide range of accessible public services. It stands amongst Blackpool wards as an area of low transience with plenty of community spirit.

In 2014, nineteen local people from Grange Park were recruited to participate in a Citizens Jury to explore local issues around alcohol and identify a series of priorities for action. The subsequent report Talking Drink: Taking Action - The Blackpool Alcohol Inquiry sets out the following recommendations for action:

- A centre for all ages to be built to accommodate facilities for the community including: café, gym, courses, day trips, help finding work, drop in centre
- More promotion of support services in public areas
- Support for families should be made more widely available e.g. counselling, advice and support
- Get more of the community to get together to discuss what everyone would like

These needs and local views have been used to inform the redevelopment of the CLC.

2. How will the Community Hub Operate

The community hub will be available 7 days a week including evenings.

A Development Group has been established to plan for the future and coordinate activities between the Community Hub, the Children's centre, Boundary school and it is hoped that this will in the future include the new integrated primary care and community services based at Newton Drive.

The redeveloped CLC will be a true community hub. The building will be available for use by public services, voluntary and community groups. It will also be available for families if they wish to hold family celebrations in the building. There will be an agreement for the use of the centre such as keeping it clean, keeping it secure etc.

Over time a community steering group and then a management board will be created.

3. What will be Available from the Community Hub

The current CLC sits within an area of plain grass and non-descript planting. This will be replaced with the Lottery funded Community Farm, run by Groundwork, which will wrap around the building.

The farm will **not** include animals but rather be a Community Garden Centre with outdoor activities, growing vegetables, cooking lessons, making things, woodwork, and activities going on all year round. There will also be volunteering and apprenticeships on the farm. Groundwork will have a team of green fingered and friendly staff based at the centre.

Blackpool Community Farm



GROUNDWORK

Blackpool Community Farm



The current cafe and separate library will come together in one exciting open space, with a great view of the farm. It will offer the community access to computers, the internet, books, information and hobby classes - a warm place to meet and socialise. The cafe is already very good value but we are hoping to be able to provide low cost breakfasts in the future.

There will be a range of adult and family classes depending on what the community want to see. For example people may want DIY classes and furniture restoration, or confidence building courses or how to look after your diabetes. We may be able to get clubs like Slimming World to run from the hub.

A number of public and voluntary services will be based at the centre including the police, and family workers, The Housing team from Blackpool Coastal Housing (BCH) will run housing clinics from the centre.

We are hoping to make the hub a centre that promotes mental health and to have access to counsellors and therapists. There will be an area of the centre for workers to hot desk and coordinate their activities. We are working with the churches and others to find social opportunities for those who are lonely or have little social contact.

A whole range of groups will be based at the centre including cubs/scouts, morris dancers, other dance companies. Lots of arts dance, film and drama companies want to use the building for training and for performances and we may even have a resident artist.

The community shop is still at the planning stage. It will sell the farm produce, possibly restored furniture and white goods. It may also be a pick up point for the food bank. If people on Grange Park have a business it may be an opportunity for a 'pop-up' shop e.g. to sell products such as jewellery.

There are still rooms to rent for training or meetings or parties, with catering provided by the cafe. The churches are interested in holding services and Sunday schools.

4. Building Work

The company undertaking the building work has been appointed (Keepmoat) and work will start in July. It will be a phased build with the shops being completed first. The businesses will then fit out the inside of the shops with Keepmoat starting work on the community hub wing. Keepmoat have agreed to pay for the internal fit out for the Community Shop.

5. Naming of the Centre and its Official Opening

When the CLC together with the community farm becomes a hub for the delivery of a range of services we will need to change its name from the City Learning Centre. Discussions are ongoing to decide how this will happen; it may be a competition for the community to decide. A plan of engagement with the community is currently being developed by community artists, with experience in recreating community space from public buildings.

The outline plan for the centre is as follows:



Whilst it is anticipated the building will be ready for use late December/Early January, it's planned to officially open the centre at **Easter 2018** with a weekend of family celebrations.