

EAST STRATEGIC NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

21 June 2023

Commenced: 6.30 pm

Terminated: 8.00 pm

Present: Councillors Pearce (Chair), Beardmore, Dickinson, Feeley, Jackson, Lane, N Sharif, T Sharif, Sweeton, Taylor and Wills

In Attendance:

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| Julian Jackson | Director, Place |
| Alison Stathers-Tracey | Director, Children's Services |
| Emma Varnam | Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods |
| Jane Darrington | Head of Service, Adolescent Services |
| Mathew Morris-Jones | SHiFT Lead Guide |
| Lynda Clifford | Fostering Service Manager |

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Billington

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the East Strategic Neighbourhood Forum meeting held on 22 March 2023 were approved as a correct record.

2 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Members discussed potential items for future meetings of the Forum and all were keen that more information that was neighbourhood specific was brought to be considered and discussed. Regular attendance from the fire service and police was encouraged, as was the participation of young people to ensure that all generations were adequately represented.

To increase community engagement, Members hoped that the meetings would return to in-person and rotate around venues in the East Neighbourhood, including Dukinfield town hall, Stalybridge Civic Hall and George Lawton Hall in Mossley.

3 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

The Forum received a presentation from the Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods in relation to the Household Support Fund.

Members were informed that that in rounds 1 to 3, funding had primarily been used to support families with children eligible for free school meals during the holiday periods. Vouchers were provided, via the schools, to all eligible families ahead of each holiday period in the form of supermarket vouchers. Following the guidance set by the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), it was reported that an application based scheme had also been available for low income households to support with basic costs such as food, energy, utilities and related essentials.

Tameside Council had distributed the Household Support Fund since October 2021, with funding provided in four 'rounds' to all local authorities. The Assistant Director provided an overview of each 'round' and reported that funding for a 12 month period had been confirmed, which allowed for longer term planning and support.

It was explained that funding would be used to support the most vulnerable families in Tameside, as follows;

- Seventy percent would be provided via schools to families eligible for free school meals.
- Twenty seven percent allocated to an application based scheme for residents not directly in receipt of Cost of Living Payments, accessed via Navigators which ensured that residents were supported to access the funding most relevant to them and wider support to build longer term financial resilience.
- Three percent allocated for staffing required to administer the fund.

Those families with school age children would receive their voucher via schools directly. Older families (aged 65+) who were in receipt of Council Tax Support would be contacted directly and organisations such as Age UK, the Action Together community network and the Carers Team would further help to raise awareness of the support available. Outreach drop in sessions would also be planned in community venues and information would be provided via existing channels such as social media, Welfare Rights, Citizens Advice Bureau, customer services, libraries and Helping Hands events. It was explained that funding would be rolled out in four tranches throughout the year to spread the support, especially during the winter period.

Members were provided with contact details for the Household Support Fund team and were advised that residents would be able to book appointments by phone, online or in person with customer service navigators to discuss the support needed and help with accessing funding relevant to their situation.

A discussion ensued regarding community venues and the Assistant Director advised that she was happy to taken any suggestions from Members. It would be most efficient to have a number of appointments in one place.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

4 FOSTERING

The Fostering Service Manager attended the meeting to deliver a presentation on Tameside Council's Fostering Service.

Fostering was the support and care for a child when they could not live at home, that provided a stable and caring environment. It assisted with contact with birth parents and other connected persons; getting a child to school; attendance at meetings – reviews and education; and to undertake training to develop fostering skills.

Members were informed that anyone could foster whether they were married, co-habiting, single, straight or gay and there was no upper age limit. All ethnic and religious backgrounds were welcome and the only requirement was a spare bedroom in the home, that did not have to be owned, and people who ideally lived locally in order to transport children to school.

A number of support options were in place for foster carers and included:

- Fostering social workers and support workers.
- Social workers for fostered children.
- Foster carer support groups.
- Foster Care Association.
- Buddy scheme.
- Training programme.

- Therapeutic services.
- Foster care allowances and fees.

The Council required foster carers for a whole range of children that covered sibling groups, older children, teenagers, children with complex needs, children from a range of ethnic backgrounds and children who needed fostering on a long term basis.

Details of the 'Fostering Unfiltered' campaign was highlighted to Members and it was explained that working alongside the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) the campaign had been formulated to recruit foster carers across the entire city region. Created over 18 months and containing a significant amount of evidence-based work, the campaign sought to understand what motivated people to foster and how people expected to be contacted about fostering. The advertising featured images of real foster carers and the children that had taken part were children of staff in local authorities who worked with fostering families. A new website for the campaign had also been launched.

Information relating to Staying Put and Supported Lodging was also provided to the Forum. It was explained that Staying Put allowed care leavers to live with their foster carers once they reached the age of 18. Supported lodgings were in place for those young people aged 16 to 21 years old who were not ready or did not wish to live independently just yet.

It was highlighted that Tameside Council was now a 'Foster Friendly Employer' and individuals who became foster carers would receive paid leave to attend related training courses. The borough had also increased the foster carer allowance and this equated to a 12 percent uplift in line with the rising cost of living.

Ongoing fostering support and the type of carers required were also discussed. Further details could be found at fosteringenquiries@tameside.gov.uk. Members were encouraged to signpost any individuals interested in fostering to the Service so that further information and support could be provided.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

5 SHIFT

The Chair welcomed the SHiFT Lead Guide, who attended the Forum to deliver a presentation on SHiFT where every Practice was focused on enabling creative and impactful change with children and young people to break destructive cycles of harmful behaviour.

An introduction to the Adolescent Safeguarding Framework was provided, which had been developed as part of the Greater Manchester Children and Young People's Plan. The Framework had been created and adopted by the 10 Greater Manchester authorities and set out principles and guidance for working with young people. The Framework was not prescriptive and was designed to provide a shared foundation for the development of local systems and practice. The Framework provided some detail and examples around six practice principles and three strategic enablers that underpinned good practice with young people at risk of extra-familial harm.

The strategic ambitions were outlined and two projects that had taken place nationally were highlighted. In relation to Tameside, Members were told that the Practice commenced in February 2023 and was based in the Youth Justice Service. An extensive scoping exercise took place with 116 considerations that went through a triage process and Tameside SHiFT was currently working with 27 children and young people who were supported by four Guides. There was emerging evidence of relationships being built and trust established. It was emphasised that establishing relationships was the cornerstone of SHiFT work and would develop as one of the key foundations

of the SHiFT programme in order for young people to be able to move to a place of safety and strength.

A progress update was provided in relation to the cohort as follows:

- Fourteen children were currently engaged and enjoying regular face-to-face interaction with regular communication via text message. All the professional networks had been contacted and the Guides were beginning to become embedded within this network.
- Six children were tentatively engaging at present. These children required a more measured and staggered approach, whereby the initial steps were communicating through text message, visiting the home and ensuring the Guides were conducting themselves in a different manner befitting of the SHiFT model.
- Two children had recently swapped Guides as one Guide was working with cousins who were experiencing family issues and had become estranged, which would have caused issues when working with both.
- Five were currently not wishing to engage, but steps of engagement were underway. For example, Guides remained in contact with the professional network, were sending letters and offering support through messaging. Due to the co-location with the Youth Justice Service, Guides were able to ensure they were up to date with any pending matters for some of the cohort and therefore could bide time in offering the support.

Members were provided with the contact details of the Tameside SHiFT team.

A discussion ensued and the importance of partnership work and sharing knowledge was highlighted. In response to questions, it was confirmed that the age range of the five young people who were the hardest to engage with was 13-16 years old, were currently out of education; and the service would be tailored to their needs.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

6 CADDY LINERS IMPLEMENTATION

The Panel received a presentation from the Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods in respect of caddy liners.

Currently, the Council supplied free on request compostable caddy liners to encourage residents to compost their food waste and add it to their brown bin. It was however reported that food recycling caddy liners would no longer be provided free of charge from 1 July 2023.

The collection of food waste was now a well-established practice across households in Tameside. The provision of caddy liners was not necessary to enable residents to recycle their food waste and did not align with the Council's environmental aspirations of achieving net zero services, reducing consumption and procuring sustainably.

Members were informed that the preferred approach was to recycle food waste directly into the caddy and then into the brown bin, reducing unnecessary resources in the waste stream as well as the detrimental carbon footprint of producing liners.

The Council stood to save approximately £170k per annum because of the changes and Members believed that if residents wished to purchase caddy liners, they could do so inexpensively elsewhere.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the next meeting of the Forum would take place on 11 October 2023.

CHAIR