

Report to :	STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING BOARD
Date :	24 November 2021
Report of:	Councillor Leanne Feeley – Executive Member for Lifelong Learning, Equalities, Culture and Heritage Sarah Threlfall – Director of Transformation
Subject :	TAMESIDE & GLOSSOP INEQUALITIES REFERENCE GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021
Report Summary :	Tameside & Glossop Inequalities Reference Group (IRG) was established in November 2020 and aims to reduce inequality in Tameside & Glossop by providing advisory recommendations on tackling key issues within the community. When established, the group's terms of reference committed to the publication of an annual update. This report discharges that obligation and provides an overview of the group's activities in the last 12 months.
Recommendations :	That Strategic Commissioning Board and Executive Cabinet be recommended to note the contents of the report, ensure the council and CCG work with partners to address the recommendations made in the two reports published to date and support future activity of the Inequalities Reference Group.
Links to Corporate Plan:	Achieving the objectives and priorities of the Corporate Plan is dependent on effective service delivery which meets the needs of local residents, including tackling inequality. The work of the Inequalities Reference Group makes an important contribution to that aim.
Policy Implications :	There are no direct policy implications as a result of this report but the activity summarised and associated reports do outline a number of challenging recommendations. Should they be taken forward they will have policy implications and will need to be subject of further reports from the relevant lead areas.
Financial Implications : (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	There are no direct financial implications arising from the content of this report. The activities of the Tameside & Glossop Inequalities Reference Group are funded from existing revenue budgets of the Council and CCG. Any recommendations for new activities or changes to existing activity will be subject to further specific reports where the financial implications will be assessed and considered.
Legal Implications : (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	The Group plays an important role in discharging the Council's and other bodies' statutory equality duty and to embed equality into all delivery.
Risk Management :	The approach and activity outlined in the report ensures that a range of partners across Tameside & Glossop work to address inequalities and thus meet their indirect obligations as part of the Equality Act 2010.
Access to Information :	The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Simon Brunet, Head of Policy and Performance.

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1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The Tameside & Glossop Inequalities Reference Group (IRG) aims to reduce inequality in Tameside & Glossop and help build back better and fairer from the Covid-19 pandemic. The group does this by providing a forum for the sharing of ideas and thoughts on carrying out responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

1.2 The IRG is chaired by Councillor Leanne Feeley in her role as Tameside Council Executive Member with lead responsibility for equalities. Membership of the group is drawn from (amongst others):

- Tameside Council elected members
- NHS Tameside & Glossop CCG (Governing Body members)
- Tameside & Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust
- Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCSFE) sector
- Tameside Independent Advisory Group

A complete list of organisations and groups represented on the IRG can be found in **Appendix 1**. Membership of the group has been mapped against protected characteristics to ensure that the majority of groups are represented on the IRG. This can be found in **Appendix 2**.

1.3 While the group is not a decision-making body, it is able to make recommendations and steer overarching action to address inequalities, providing constructive challenge in an advisory role to providers – that being all bodies that provide public services. Delivery, achievement and management of inequality objectives lies with relevant organisations and services.

2.0 ACTIVITIES IN 2020/21

2.1 The IRG meets on a quarterly basis. In 2020/21 the group has met virtually on:

- 25 November 2020
- 24 February 2021
- 26 May 2021
- 8 September 2021

2.2 During these meetings, IRG members have received presentations on a range of inequalities issues such as:

- Impact of Covid-19: feedback through engagement
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Tameside Poverty Truth Commission
- Census 2021
- Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission
- Various updates on the IRG work programme – including a presentation given by service users of People First Tameside

2.3 Members of the IRG also receive a monthly email that contains information and updates relevant to inequalities issues. Members are asked to disseminate this information where appropriate.

3.0 WORK PROGRAMME

3.1 The IRG have developed a work programme that is centred on a number of 'Areas of Focus'. These Areas of Focus were selected based upon feedback received from members of the public across a range of engagement activities that took place over the last year, and reflect the expertise that members of the group bring.

3.2 Work within each Area of Focus consists of involving the voices of people with lived experience of the issue, the use of data and evidence, and benchmarking against other areas. This work has taken the form of assurance updates, rapid pieces of research, and in-depth reviews.

3.3 Current areas of focus are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Current Areas of Focus within IRG work programme.

Area of focus	Lead(s)	Description
Barriers to accessing information	Rehana Begum (Diversity Matters North West)	Feedback from a range of engagement activity found that access to information for people without English as a first language was a large concern through the pandemic. Communications and services must be accessible for those with different language needs. Language barriers can be present in spoken and written language skills, so both must be being considered.
Community cohesion	Rev. Jo Farnworth (Tameside Independent Advisory Group)	Community cohesion is and will be important during and post Covid-19, particularly as the longer-term socio-economic impacts emerge. This area of focus links in closely with the work of the Tameside Independent Advisory Group.
Digital inclusion	Councillor Janet Cooper (TMBC)	It is widely understood that Covid-19 and the shift to digital services and communications has excluded those who do not have access to the internet or online services. Lack of access can be caused by economic factors, poor digital skills, or no availability of devices or connectivity. A focus must be placed on enabling people to gain access to services and information, through digital means or otherwise.
Voice of people with learning disabilities	Liz Wright (People First Tameside)	Insight gathered during the pandemic has indicated that the voices of people with learning disabilities have not been heard to the extent they should during the pandemic. More needs to be done to engage with this group in a meaningful way.
Young people	Aisling Bouketta (TMBC) / Gemma Whittaker (Infinity Initiatives) / Melissa Hopwood (TMBC)	Feedback throughout the pandemic has highlighted that young people want to participate more in discussions around the future beyond Covid-19. There needs to be a focus on what young people want and need post Covid-19.
Emotional Wellbeing – isolation / loneliness	Sobiya Ahmed, Tameside, Oldham & Glossop MIND	Covid-19 has led to large increases in reports of mental health and wellbeing issues, particularly around feelings of isolation and loneliness. People who have been instructed to shield have been particular exposed to worsening mental wellbeing.

4.0 OUTPUTS

4.1 The IRG has produced a range of outputs in its first year, including good progress in each of the Areas of Focus. A report is in development for all Areas of Focus, detailing the background to the topic, the insight gathered from people with lived experience of the issue,

and a series of recommendations and challenges for organisations to take action on. Two reports have been published and are briefly summarised below:

4.2 **Community Cohesion report:**

The report begins by providing an overview of the concept of community cohesion in the UK, before detailing its development within Tameside. Insight and evidence of community cohesion issues – at a national, regional, and local scale – are explored. Current projects and work programmes that promote community cohesion in Tameside are then detailed, before best practice approaches to community cohesion in other local authority areas are issued.

The report provides a basis for the development of a community cohesion strategy in Tameside, and outlines the need to gather more lived experience of community cohesion issues in the area. The full set of recommendations made in the report are:

- Commit to developing a 5 year Community Cohesion strategy
- Develop a set of local community cohesion indicators
- Ensure that insight and engagement work is conducted on an ongoing basis
- Establish and commit to a 'Charter of Belonging'
- Identify full scope of community cohesion work done by the VCSE sector
- Invest in and continue to develop the pioneering model of Independent Advisory Group (IAG) in Tameside
- Ensure that all groups, committees and networks that are led by the range of public sector partner organisations in Tameside are representative
- Use appropriate and consistent language when describing different groups.

The full report can be viewed [here](#) and at **Appendix 3**.

4.3 **Digital Inclusion report:**

The report begins by exploring the scale of digital exclusion in the UK, and the factors that drive it. This is complemented by the inclusion of insight from people with lived experience, gathered through a range of engagement activities. An overview of the work currently being undertaken to tackle the issue in Tameside & Glossop is then provided, before the report examines the approaches taken in other local authorities.

The report provides a basis for the implementation of a shared place-based Digital Inclusion strategy for the borough. The full set of recommendations made in the report are:

- Identify a Strategic Lead for Digital Exclusion in Tameside & Glossop and establish a digital exclusion working group
- Develop a place-based strategy and action plan to tackle digital exclusion
- Develop an investment plan
- Build a strong evidence base

The full report can be viewed [here](#) and at **Appendix 4**.

4.4 Progress has been made on the other Areas of Focus, including:

- *Barriers to Accessing Information:* members from Diversity Matters North West (DMNW) have devised a survey that is being conducted with members of ethnic minority communities. The survey asks about the barriers these communities find when trying to access information, and what would help them to do so. Findings from this survey are being used to develop a set of recommendations that will tackle the barriers to accessing information.
- *Voices of People with Learning Disabilities:* members of People First Tameside have carried out research into the impact of Covid-19 on people with learning disabilities. Research has taken the form of surveys and interviews, all driven by members who have learning disabilities themselves. These members gave a presentation to the IRG to

update on the findings from the research. These findings are being fed into a report and a set of recommendations.

- *Young People*: young people who are members of the Children in Care Council and Tameside Youth Council are leading on the gathering of lived experience, which will complement evidence gathered from previous engagement activities. A Youth Summit is also being arranged, which will see young people share their experiences with decision makers and challenge them to make positive changes.
- *Emotional Wellbeing – Isolation and Loneliness*: evidence and insight from engagement activities that have taken place since the pandemic began have been reviewed to form an overview of isolation and loneliness in Tameside & Glossop. The overview will form the core of a report that will set out a range of recommendations to tackle isolation and loneliness in the area.

APPENDIX 1

Appendix 1: list of organisations and groups invited to be part of the IRG.

Action Together
AGE UK
The Anthony Seddon Fund
Children in Care Council
Diversity Matters North West
Greater Manchester Poverty Action / Tameside Poverty Truth Commission
Infinity Initiatives
LGBT Foundation
NHS Tameside & Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group
People First Tameside
Tameside & Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust
Tameside & Glossop Maternity Voices Partnership
Tameside Council
Tameside Independent Advisory Group
Tameside Youth Council
Tameside, Oldham and Glossop MIND
The Bureau (Glossop)

APPENDIX 2

Appendix 2: list of organisations invited to attend the IRG mapped against the most relevant protected characteristics they work with.

	Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics									Locally adopted protected characteristics				
	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual Orientation	Carers	Military veterans	Breastfeeding	Mental health	Low or no income
Action Together														
AGE UK	✓													
The Anthony Seddon Fund												✓		
Children in Care Council	✓													
Diversity Matters North West						✓	✓							
Greater Manchester Poverty Action / Tameside Poverty Truth Commission														✓
Infinity Initiatives														✓
LGBT Foundation			✓						✓					
NHS Tameside & Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group		✓										✓		
People First Tameside		✓												
Tameside & Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust														
Tameside & Glossop Maternity Voices Partnership					✓							✓		
Tameside Council		✓								✓	✓			
Tameside Independent Advisory Group														
Tameside Youth Council	✓													
Tameside, Oldham and Glossop MIND												✓		
The Bureau (Glossop)	✓									✓				