

## WEST STRATEGIC NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

26 January 2023

Commenced: 6.30pm

Terminated: 7.30pm

**Present:** Councillors Quinn (Chair), L Boyle, Cooney, Gwynne, A Holland, B Holland, Jones, Martin, Mills, Naylor, Reid, Ricci, M Smith, T Smith, Ward and Warrington

**In Attendance:** Alison Stathers-Tracey Director of Children's Services  
James Mallion Assistant Director of Population Health

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillors Newton and Ryan

### 20. MINUTES

#### RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting of the West Strategic Neighbourhood Forum held on 10 November 2022 were approved as a correct record.

### 21. CORPORATE PARENTING

Alison Stathers-Tracey, Director of Children's Services, presented before Members in respect of the Council's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent.

It was explained that being a Corporate Parent was the collective responsibility of the whole council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for children in care and care leavers. A child in the care of the Council looked to the Council to be the best parent it could be. Every member and employee of the Council had the statutory responsibility to act for that child in the same way that a good parent would act for their own child. As Corporate Parents, there was a need to understand information and data relating to children and young people and provide challenge in those areas where better outcomes needed to be achieved.

Statistics in relation to Children in Care in Tameside were highlighted as follows:

- There were a total of 656 Children in Care to Tameside (53% male and 46% female).
- Foster Care was the largest placement resource for children in care (63%). There was continuous work to recruit and retain Tameside Foster Carers to keep young people linked to their community.
- 68 children were placed in residential children's homes, the number had reduced as work was ongoing to ensure that children had the right to family life.
- 90% of children had been subjected to a review health assessment.
- 60% of children in care had had a dental check.
- There were 517 Care Leavers.
- Positively, contact was maintained with 97% of 19 – 21 year olds, relationships were key in ensuring young people felt supported and knew who to go to when they needed extra support too.
- 95% of Care Leavers in Tameside were deemed to be in suitable accommodation.
- Education, Employment and Training (EET) rates were an area of concern with 51% for 19-21 year olds and 50% 17-18 year olds. Work to develop a clear EET strategy across the council to increase access to work placements and apprenticeships, was ongoing.

Members were advised that the Children and Social Work Act 2017 set out seven corporate parenting principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to Cared for Children and Care Leavers, as follows:

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being of children and young people;
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Members were further advised that the Corporate Parenting Board had responsibility to ensure that the Council fulfilled its Corporate Parenting duties in partnership with other statutory and partner agencies. The Board ensured that the strategic Corporate Parenting objectives were delivered and that the Pledges and the Care Leaver Local Offer was adhered to.

The presentation concluded that corporate parenting was a whole council and partner endeavour and not the sole responsibility of Children's Social Care. It required services across the whole council; health, schools and partner agencies to achieve the best outcomes for Cared for Children and Care Leavers. The role of Corporate Parent was not a passive one. Tameside's Corporate Parents worked closely with their partners to ensure that the needs of children were clearly identified and met at every level. This should encompass the strategic planning, commissioning and integrated delivery of services.

Members commented on a very interesting presentation and expressed concerns with regard to the Education, Employment and Training statistics and the need to consider how the situation could be improved. The Director concurred and explained that work was ongoing to address this issue with better access to colleges/job fairs/drop-in sessions. She added that work was paying off and there had been some improvement in this area recently. Members further sought a breakdown of the figures in order to better understand the situation and where there may be particular areas for development. The Director agreed to investigate and feedback information to Members. She also commented on the excellent work being done in schools in Tameside, where there was a real willingness to work collaboratively.

Members also commented on the importance of the inclusion of 'the Role of the Corporate Parent' in Member Development sessions.

The Chair thanked the Ms Stathers-Tracey for a very interesting and informative presentation and it was:

## **RESOVLED**

**That the content of the presentation be noted.**

## **22. DOMESTIC ABUSE AND WHITE RIBBON ACCREDITATION**

The Chair welcomed James Mallion, Assistant Director, Population Health, who delivered a presentation in respect of Domestic Abuse and the White Ribbon Accreditation.

Mr Mallion began by making reference to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which introduced a new definition of Domestic Abuse as follows:

- Behaviour of person A towards person B is domestic abuse if –
- A & B are each aged 16 or over and are "personally connected" to each other **and**
  - The behaviour is abusive
- Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse
- Children as victims of domestic abuse:
  - Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse includes a reference to a child who –
  - (a) sees or hears, or experiences the effect of, the abuse, **and**
  - (b) is related to A or B.

It was explained that domestic abuse was a gender based issue; ONS data (2020) identified that 82% of victims were female compared to 18% of males. 92% of those using harmful behaviours were male.

Greater Manchester Gender Based Violence Strategy was detailed as follows:

“The ambition...is to challenge the attitudes and social conditions that sustain or excuse gender-based violence and deliver whole system improvements in responses to those affected by it. These will fundamentally change the story of Greater Manchester over the next ten years, in terms of what it delivers with regard to safety for women and girls, gender equality, challenging misogyny - the contempt that follows from ingrained sexism - and holding perpetrators of gender-based violence - the majority of whom are men and boys – to account”.

Two high profile cases of femicide in the UK in 2021 were highlighted and it was stated that focus continued to be on women to keep themselves safe which ignored the responsibility of those using harmful behaviours and the wider societal gender imbalances which perpetuated a culture of misogyny. There were also more recent news items in respect of another serving Metropolitan Police Officer admitting to dozens of rapes and sexual offences against 12 women.

Members were advised that White Ribbon Accreditation was a nationally recognised programme for organisations who were committed to improving their workplace culture, progress gender equality and ending violence against women and girls. The accreditation was divided into four key areas, which supported the organisation to assess capabilities and current practice, enabling the identification of appropriate actions:

- Strategic Leadership;
- Engaging Men and Boys;
- Changing Culture; and
- Raising Awareness.

White Ribbon Ambassadors and Champions were key to the delivery of the White Ribbon Action plan. Ambassadors were men within the organisation who acted as formal representatives of White Ribbon. They were positive role models who took a stand against male violence against women and girls and encouraged other men and boys to do the same. Champions could be both males and females, but tended to be primarily females who supported the White Ribbon work and the ambassadors within their organisation.

Members were advised that the Domestic Abuse Strategy aimed to address domestic abuse across seven key priority areas as follows:

- Making domestic abuse everybody’s business
- Creating safe spaces for disclosure
- Meeting the needs of victims through local services
- Helping victim-survivors stay safe in their homes
- Better outcomes for children impacted by domestic abuse
- Identifying problem behaviours early
- Holding perpetrators accountable

Key to the delivery of the ambitions was a collective commitment to achieving them. Local offer was available to anyone affected by domestic abuse irrelevant of gender, age, sexuality, religion or disability.

Contact details of the Bridges helpline were provided as follows:

Bridges – 24hr help and advice for all

Tel: 0800 328 0967

[Email: bridges@jigsawhomes.org.uk](mailto:bridges@jigsawhomes.org.uk)

The prevalence of domestic abuse incidents was discussed and Members made reference to the spike in incidents during the pandemic. The Assistant Director explained that it was difficult to determine what led to that, but contributing factors could be general stress with added pressure on mental health and wellbeing, potentially exacerbating dynamics in households.

Members also highlighted the issues in the Metropolitan Police and referenced a survey carried out by the Met. asking women if they felt comfortable approaching a police officer for help, with a massive majority saying that they did not feel comfortable. The Assistant Director confirmed that this was part of the local conversation in the Domestic Abuse steering Group with system wide partners, including the Police, which met regularly and it was a number one priority for the Police.

The Chair thanked Mr Mallion for a very thought-provoking presentation and it was:

**RESOLVED**

**That the content of the presentation be noted.**

**23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED**

**That the next meeting of the West Strategic Neighbourhood Forum is scheduled to take place on 23 March 2023, be noted.**

**CHAIR**