

EAST STRATEGIC NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

25 January 2023

Commenced: 6:35pm

Terminated: 7:50pm

Present: Councillors Pearce (Chair), J Homer (Vice-Chair), Billington, Dickinson, Feeley, Gosling, Lane, Patrick, T Sharif, Sweeton, Taylor and Wills

In Attendance: Susan Harris Head of Service, Cared for Children
Lisa Morris Strategic Domestic Abuse Manager

Apologies for Absence: Councillors S Homer, Jackson and N Sharif

11 MINUTES

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting of the East Strategic Neighbourhood Forum held on 9 November 2022 were approved as a correct record.

12 CORPORATE PARENTING

The Forum received a presentation from the Head of Service, Cared for Children 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 to ensure the best possible care and safeguarding was provided 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 his or her 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 656 Children in Care to Tameside (53 per cent male and 46 per cent female).
- Foster care was the largest placement resource for children in care (63 per cent). There was continuous work to recruit and retain Tameside Foster Carers to keep young people linked to their community.
- Sixty-eight 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.
- Ninety per cent of children had been subjected to a review health assessment.
- Sixty per cent of children in care had received a dental check.
- There were 517 care leavers.
- Positively, contact was maintained with 97 per cent 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.
- Ninety-five per cent 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 per cent for 19-21 year olds and 50 per cent for 17-18 year olds. Work to develop a clear EET strategy across the Council was ongoing, to increase access to work placements and apprenticeships.

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. These were outlined 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 entire Council including health, schools and partner agencies to achieve the best outcomes for cared for children and care leavers. The role of a 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 encompassed the strategic planning, commissioning and integrated delivery of services.

Members welcomed the development of a strategy to address issues in relation to Education, Employment and Training. The Head of Service explained that work was ongoing to address this issue with better access to colleges, job fairs and drop-in sessions. It was also highlighted that bi-monthly Boards were themed to ensure a particular focus on key areas, including EET and health. Children and young people often attended these Board meetings to express their views and opinions.

The Chair thanked the Head of Service for a very interesting and informative presentation.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

13 DOMESTIC ABUSE & WHITE RIBBON ACCREDITATION

The Strategic Domestic Abuse Manager delivered a presentation in respect of domestic abuse and the White Ribbon Accreditation. The role of Strategic Domestic Abuse Manager had existed for two years with the aim of reducing incidences of domestic violence in the borough and raising awareness of the support available.

An outline of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was provided, which introduced a new definition of Domestic Abuse as follows:

- Behaviour of person A towards person B is domestic abuse if –
 - A & B were each aged 16 or over and were “personally connected” to each other **and**
 - The behaviour was abusive.
- Behaviour was abusive if it consisted of any of the following:
 - Physical or sexual abuse;
 - Violent or threatening behaviour;
 - Controlling or coercive behaviour;
 - Economic abuse; and
 - Psychological, emotional or other abuse.
- Children as victims of domestic abuse:

- Any reference in this Act to a victim of domestic abuse included a reference to a child who –
- (a) saw or heard, or experienced the effect of, the abuse, **and**
- (b) was related to A or B.

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

Greater Manchester had developed a Gender-Based Violence Strategy and a link to this was provided for Members, officers and residents.

Two high profile cases of femicide in the UK in 2021 were highlighted. It was stated that the 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.

In relation to the White Ribbon Accreditation, Members were advised that this 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 informed 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; and
- Holding perpetrators accountable.

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

Contact details for the Bridges helpline were provided and Members would be asked to attend domestic abuse awareness training.

Members queried the use of the word 'femicide' in relation to the deaths of women and girls and asked that 'murder' was the description used going forward so as not to diminish violence against women and girls. Clarity was also sought in relation to the vetting process for male Ambassadors for the White Ribbon Accreditation to ensure that women were safe. The Strategic Domestic Abuse

Manager explained that the vetting process was rigorous and asked pertinent questions of applicants but highlighted that no process could ever be 100 per cent certain.

A discussion ensued regarding benchmarking Tameside's data for domestic abuse incidences against other local authorities. The reporting officer explained that the prevalence in Tameside was high compared to similar local authority areas. Members also requested a breakdown of the data for the East wards be provided.

RESOLVED

- i. That the content of the presentation be noted.**
- ii. That a breakdown of domestic violence data for the East Neighbourhood be provided to Members.**

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the next meeting of the East Strategic Neighbourhood Forum is scheduled to take place on 22 March 2023, be noted.

CHAIR