

Report to:	HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD
Date:	18 November 2021
Executive Member:	Councillor Leanne Feeley – Executive Member for Lifelong Learning, Equalities, Culture and Heritage (and Chair of the Tameside & Glossop Inequalities Reference Group)
Reporting Officer:	Sarah Threlfall – Director of Transformation
Subject:	TAMESIDE & GLOSSOP INEQUALITIES REFERENCE GROUP – THEMATIC REPORTS
Report Summary:	<p>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.</p> <p>Two of the initial work streams have concluded and produced advisory reports, which are the subject of this report to the Health and Wellbeing Board.</p>
Recommendations:	The Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to note the contents of the report, help partners work together 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 of Policy and Performance.



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1. 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**.

- 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. 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

3. 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. 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 The full report is attached at **Appendix 2**.

4.5 *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.

4.6 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

4.7 The full report is attached at **Appendix 3**.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 As set out at the front of the report.

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)