

From Strength to Strength

In March 2007 we launched the network at an event called Rumble in the Jungle. We showcased the fantastic contribution of the community, voluntary and faith sector. Parents, children and young people all got involved and picked our network mascot – the funky lizard.

Since then it has been all go!

Earlier in the year it was decided that we step back and see where we were up .

A proposal to review the integration of the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) and its effectiveness was agreed at TCYPS partnership on the 7th February 2008 – the report was called From Strength to Strength

Part of the proposal was to hold an independently facilitated development session with a diverse range of stakeholders giving their views as to how the integration work should be moved forward. The development day was held on the 24 April. Julie Dugdale, from the national hub –VCS Engage – provided the facilitation. Julie's challenge, brought from current national drivers linked into 'Building Brighter Futures' was to '**Think Big**'. Her observations of the day were that any further action planning should be **led across the partnership**.

Feedback from the development session

The session was well attended from a variety of stakeholders and demonstrated a really positive commitment to this agenda across Tameside. (A full list of attendees is attached).

From the group work undertaken on the day, it clear that the work that has been achieved so far has been successful. From session 1, each working group cited fantastic examples of community engagement and processes that could be built on in the future.

The current networking project at Tameside 3rd Sector Coalition has been making an impact on the following:

- Increasing representation of community, voluntary and faith service providers in integrated service delivery
- Increasing opportunities to training, advice and guidance, specifically around the common core of policies, processes, skills and knowledge
- Increased ability to recognise the contribution, present and future, of the community, faith and voluntary sector to a sustainable child and young people's plan.
- Regional and sub- regional partnerships to enhance and sustain the

Development session attendance list.

Participant	Role/ representing
1. Allison Gwynne	Lead Council Member for Children's Services
2. Aameena Ahmed	TMBC Children's Services Manager
3. Azzam Sheikh	T3SC – Diversity development worker – drugs and alcohol strategy(Supporting Community Representative)
4. Bev Connolly / Sheena Wooding	Children with Disabilities service
5. Chris Thean	Hattersley Neighbourhood Partnership - supporting community representative
6. Cheryl Eastwood	TMBC - Director – Services for Children and Young People
7. Gill Gibson	Tameside and Glossop P.C.T. - children's locality service co-ordinator
8. Hameed Khan	T3SC – Team Leader, Health And Social Care.
9. Ian Young – Voice Representative	Off the Record / Voice representative
10. Jason Price	Tameside Dad and co- facilitator for the strengthening families/ strengthening communities programme
11. Jean Davidson	Hattersley Community Representative
12. Julie Dugdale	VCS Engage/ G.O.N.W
13. Julie Lord	TMBC Area Coordinator – Mossley, Stalybridge and Dukinfield
14. Kathryn Schofield	TMBC Workforce Development Manager
15. Linda Sheridan	TMBC Children's Workforce Development Advisor
16. Mohamed Seedat	T3SC Community Networker - Facilitator of Faiths United
17. Natalie Doran	NCH - Looked After Children's Rights And Independent Visitor's Project Manager
18. Pat McKelvey	Commissioning and Service Development Manager – Tameside and Glossop PCT
19. Paul Wilcox	Assistant Director of Barnardos
20. Phil Wright	Community Fire Service
21. Rafik Iddin	Children's Social Care/Safeguarding

22. Ray Shepherd	Chair of the interfaith network – Faiths United
23. Ruth Craven	Manchester Alliance for Community Care
24. Sarah Petts	Homestart manager / Voice Representative
25. Shahida Ditta	Representing the Madrassas
26. Sheila Piazza	Head of Connexions
27. Steve Noble	Head of School Improvement
28. Sue Garnett	TMBC Area coordinator – Hyde, Hattersley and Longendale
29. Susan Lever	Susan Lever - Private Finance Initiative children's services
30. Terry Finn	Tameside Police
31. Tina Lavender	NCH Participation project manager
32. Tony Okotie	Director of Tameside Third Sector Coalition.
33. Tom Coffey	TMBC Head of Strategy and Commissioning – services for children and young people.
34. Tracy Wood	TMBC Area Coordinator - Ashton
35. Veronica Hyde	T3SC Community Networker – Every Child Matters Agenda.
36. Vicky Cuddy	TMBC – area manager Tameside children's centres
37. Victoria Clarke – Leece	Youth worker - St Peter's Youth
38. Zulf Ahmed	Learning Skills Council

Development day flip chart feedback

Round table discussion 1

What exists in present arrangements to engage, and ensure good communication, what has worked well to date?

Existing arrangements

- ❖ Regular dialogue between VEE and interfaith network. (Leading to aspiration for faith rep.)
- ❖ Voice enables link between different partnerships and feedback to networks
- ❖ Representatives at key strategy groups for Tameside Strategic Partnership Representation at high level groups/ partnerships
- ❖ Being round the table
- ❖ Representatives meet before partnership and representatives feed into network and voice, newsletter and website
- ❖ Representation in/ on steering groups/ networks
- ❖ Teams (multi agency)
- ❖ Induction pack for voice representatives works well
- ❖ Voluntary Community Sector on executive group of CYP partnership to set agenda
- ❖ Tameside Community Union – Funky Lizard Network, Network
- ❖ Some communications work well -Email news/ data base etc Newsletters etc
- ❖ VEE's post Dedicated Voluntary Community Sector Post,
- ❖ Data base of community groups
- ❖ Contracts
- ❖ Consultation with Community Voluntary Faith sector around local issues. E.g. 'Partnership empowering network'
- ❖ Feed up information to decision makers and feed down a response

What works well?

- ❖ Strong network and belief in Voluntary Community sector locally
- ❖ Engagement with a good range of agencies
- ❖ Voluntary Community Sector well regulated and becoming more business like
- ❖ Supports empowerment
- ❖ Rising profile
- ❖ Work with Madrassa's e.g. safeguarding
- ❖ Shared understanding of roles and responsibilities
- ❖ Improved communication
- ❖ Better relationships/ understanding
- ❖ Breaking down cultural stereotypes
- ❖ Regeneration partnership (grass roots)
- ❖ Capacity (workforce development) building in voluntary sector (grow your own)
- ❖ Reps on groups have changed from tokenistic to having real impact and voice
- ❖ Policy agenda is key driver
- ❖ Numbers of people from Black Minority Ethnic communities 'trained' to fit smoke alarms, fire risk advice – (but no measurement of impact)
- ❖ Private providers are 'separate' in Tameside, not PVI but voluntary, community and faith sector
- ❖ Newsletter – T3SC,
- ❖ X2 VEE's role- translating policy, summarising information
- ❖ Hattersley – forums (6) meet regularly; reflect strategic partnership and community needs.
- ❖ Neighbourhood networking

Have there been any gaps/aspects where things haven't worked well

- ❖ Communication to be improved between voice reps on different networks
- ❖ Language difficult to understand
- ❖ Timescales – orgs working to different time scales – meeting structure may be difficult to engage with
- ❖ Faith sector representation missing from Tameside Community Union
- ❖ No interfaith representative on Children and Young People's strategic partnership
- ❖ Consultations can sometimes feel like tick box exercise leading to feelings that strategy imposed on the voluntary community faith sector – (But can put agenda items on meetings)
- ❖ Need more time to prepare for meetings – papers received too late
- ❖ Capital issues – commissioning processes very difficult to engage with – takes time-
- ❖ Roles/ responsibilities of representatives – communication back to sector
- ❖ Challenge of commissioning verses grants
- ❖ Capacity of individuals and organisations
- ❖ Some lack of capacity to work strategically
- ❖ Understanding of business environment
- ❖ There is not one decision making process and no clarity to how decisions are made
- ❖ Is any sector fully participating?
- ❖ Can they be involved in key decisions, meaningful?
- ❖ Choose right reps for the decisions that need making
- ❖ Are they getting out of the process what they want? How can we make this happen?
- ❖ Local issues are often more relevant, how can they feed in and go right to the top effectively?
- ❖ The process is more important to getting your voice heard than being at the top table seeing the final report
- ❖ Gap in being able to feed back to voluntary sector (i.e. work of Children Young People's Strategic Partnership)
- ❖ Under representation of voluntary sector
- ❖ Challenge of communicating to a diverse range of groups – i.e. appropriate language

Are there critical issues/ threats to ongoing engagement that need tackling?

- ❖ Training in common processes hasn't been inclusive
- ❖ Sustainability of consistency of staff and customers and overheads
- ❖ Sustainability of funding. Sustainability.
- ❖ Engagement of children and young people and the V.C.S and in strategy and service developments
- ❖ Impact – ability and capacity to demonstrate this
- ❖ Enhanced CRB checks / no clear guidance for voluntary sector
- ❖ Commissioning for voluntary sector – difficult to be on a level playing field
- ❖ In all of these questions – 'WHO ARE WE?'
- ❖ Commissioning
- ❖ Common processes – understanding to implementation
- ❖ Communication – representatives roles
- ❖ How do we capture stories of impact?
- ❖ Only having one of Vee – should mirror area- coordination arrangements

Are there any opportunities you are aware of in Tameside, which the voluntary community and faith sector should be engaged in?

- ❖ Workforce development / training – wider representation
- ❖ Governance arrangements –Inclusive- Impact/ outcomes-What difference are we making? Everyone - Risk taking
- ❖ To work regionally and nationally with V.C.S. projects
- ❖ Listen = Action
- ❖ Consultation must see fast results to the communities across Tameside – what's affecting their lives and work on it
- ❖ Unique – they are often community based. They can have a different label – we work with communities and are need responsive. Have access and reach.
- ❖ Local people /volunteers have a unique viewpoint of communities – go up.
- ❖ Commissioning?

Sum up your vision for 3 years time regarding the engagement of the voluntary, community, faith sector in Tameside's children's trust and partnership

- ❖ A more exclusive partnership - devolved governance
- ❖ Taxi driver/ child minder
- ❖ Less meetings – more actions together! Let's do what has been working well
- ❖ Moving from 'them' and 'us' to 'we'
- ❖ Developed a mechanism/ process that ensures sustainability across and within the sector
- ❖ Culture having a better understanding of needs (limitations) diversity and quality of representation
- ❖ Being able to measure the impact of Voluntary Community Faith Sector contribution (being clear of expectations of beginning)
- ❖ Children and Young People's involvement in scrutiny
- ❖ Work is sustainable – long term forward planning
- ❖ Great involvement and influence in the decision making process ---measuring the impact.

Round table discussion 2 – turning visions into action

How can we ensure that the community, voluntary, faith sector is fully participating in the decision making process?

- ❖ Need to simplify process
- ❖ Get info in sufficient time to give an informed contribution
- ❖ Pre meeting briefing for all partnerships.
- ❖ Improve consistency
 - Boards / trust
 - Being at the table
 - Top down process
 - Opportunity to challenge decisions
 - Consider chairing – V.C.F Sector
 - Power! – difficulties in inclusion
- ❖ Culture – having a better understanding of needs – be aware of wider representation right people
- ❖ Awareness of language and acronyms – balance of common language.
- ❖ Overcoming power imbalance. More creative and flexible in approach including times etc – recognition for contribution
- ❖ Decision making process; who really makes the decision?

- ❖ Recognise the various capacities of orgs to participate – e.g. skills, back-filing
- ❖ Understand the nature and needs of those participants
- ❖ Consult early in the decision making process

How can we work together more effectively to engage the wider community in achieving good outcomes for families, children and young people?

- ❖ Use Tameside radio – for 2 way communications - Phone in
- ❖ Consultation with Voluntary Community Faith Sector to identify local needs communities understanding the framework/process we are working with
- ❖ Offering training and e - support to V.C.F. sector
- ❖ Secondments and job swaps
- ❖ Releasing/ giving volunteers skills and knowledge – will empower
- ❖ Build on the trust and credibility of volunteers/ people at a local level e.g. sure start workers; football managers;
- ❖ Pathways to greater involvement.
- ❖ Consultation- Meaningful
- ❖ Relationship building Common goals – explicit
- ❖ Chairing partnership meetings
- ❖ Respect recognition – values shared good practice/ collaborative problem solving
- ❖ Flexibility
- ❖ Business planning – funding collectively
- ❖ Cost effective –less over consultation
- ❖ Make better use of resource i.e. parent governors
- ❖ Feed back good practice to each other
- ❖ Network events within different areas of Tameside
- ❖ The wider community need to know who we are and what we do
- ❖ Invest more into the development – another VEE?

How can we make sure that the unique contribution of the voluntary, community, faith sector is recognised and celebrated?

- ❖ Reward/ acknowledge contributions: e.g. student volunteer project workers
- ❖ Big organisations can be inflexible in finance systems
- ❖ Senior managers present awards – thank you
- ❖ Publicise – make use of press office
- ❖ Celebrate and show case voluntary / community / faith sector work
- ❖ Recognise formally the volunteers (Local Heroes) – may sustain the work
- ❖ Celebrating pilots that have worked - put into various newsletters and possibly develop multi-media production
- ❖ Make it part of core business – capturing
- ❖ Learning from / celebrating success of outcome
- ❖ Reporting – Performance Indicators data sets
- ❖ Validation – support – inclusive
- ❖ Stop tick boxing
- ❖ Relevance – briefing – voice
- ❖ Recognition – user friendly documents – feedback is robust – meaningful resulting in action
- ❖ Developing understanding – AUDIT, newsletter, accredited training (perhaps a VEE for each of the 4 areas?)

How can we ensure that this work is sustainable?

- ❖ Performance management
- ❖ Again data sets
- ❖ Commissioning
- ❖ Moving within area of personnel rather than losing there.
- ❖ Funding for the role available from different sources
- ❖ Commitment long term budgeting local and national
- ❖ Succession plan forward planning and contingency – feedback mechanisms are robust – future generation school councils and youth councils – education schools in wider community activities
- ❖ Monitoring outcomes and good practice
- ❖ respect for funding opportunities
- ❖ Expand on concrete examples for sustainability
- ❖ Long term plan
- ❖ Clear commissioning strategy
- ❖ Longer term plans e.g. children's plan 10yrs – posts same duration?
- ❖ Three years Service Level Agreements
- ❖ Groups able to source/bid for funding – skills/ knowledge
- ❖ Sustain through commissioning -the sector has opportunities to demonstrate added value and unique style
- ❖ Open and visible funding and support to access external streams
- ❖ Clear support to /commitment with statutory sectors commissioning to ensure a level playing field.
- ❖ Clear support to put in strong tenders

How can this work be monitored effectively?

- ❖ Clear support to put in strong tenders
- ❖ Different organisations using different performance management system.
- ❖ Be clear about expectations.
- ❖ Meaningful and manageable.
- ❖ Involve both those providing the service and those commissioning the service.
- ❖ Monitored through – stakeholder surveys
- ❖ Self-assessments·
 - ❖ Measuring and auditing providing benchmark of participation – regular reviewing
- ❖ Increase activity and access
- ❖ Scrutiny involvement of Children and Young People – school councils
- ❖ Collective representation by all
- ❖ Minimize number of targets to enable measuring of key targets, which can become lost – database?
- ❖ Look at diversity and quality
- ❖ Steering group/ co-ordinated group – a focus group
- ❖ Somebody to lead on action plan – it needs more work – follow it up!
- ❖ Challenge concern – lots of ideas but who leads, monitors?
- ❖ Where can resources come from?
- ❖ What will we invest in?
- ❖ Evaluate – measure the impact
- ❖ Support groups to collate data (relevant)/ monitor