

## Report to OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

# Thriving Communities Programme Update

### **Portfolio Holder:**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To update members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board on the progress of the Thriving Communities Programme and to set out the next steps for the programme in the context of the Council's wider transformation programme.

### **Recommendations**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board are asked to note the progress made with delivery of the Thriving Communities programme to date. The board are asked note the proposal to bring the programme together with the wider Communities strand of the Council's transformation programme.

## Thriving Communities Programme Update

### 1 Background

- 1.1 **Thriving Communities Programme** – In 2018 £2.69m was agreed to fund the Thriving Communities programme from the Greater Manchester Transformation Fund as part of the GM Health and Social Care transformation fund to support devolution. The aim was to accelerate the Thriving Communities element of the Oldham Model and deliver the common objectives of our health and social care integration

The programme was a 3-year programme which focused on;

- building upon our strengths and supporting groups in the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector
- supporting people earlier in the care pathway
- driving the shift to increasing earlier intervention and prevention

### 2 Highlights and key updates

- 2.1 The **Social Prescribing Network** is in operation across the whole of Oldham bridging the gap between medical care and the community, by having link workers in each Primary Care Network (PCN) that work with primary care (and other care forms such as acute, mental health, social care etc.) and connect people into community support and activities. Primary Care Direct Enhanced Services (DES) funding has enabled the service to recruit an additional 6 FTE link workers across the five PCNs, in addition the Elemental system is now live connecting the primary care system EMIS to social prescribing and enabling direct referrals and reporting from GPs.

Referrals continue to increase month on month. Some key data are shown below, which represent the period between the start of contract in June 2019 – September 2020 unless stated otherwise.

- There have been 822 referrals into Social Prescribing (this includes 127 during the pilot period during 2018 & 2019)
- 25% of referrals have come from social care, with 19% self-referral, 18% from community sources and 16% from primary care
- Of those with a known primary long-term health condition 41% have depression or other mental health diagnosis, and for more than 50% mental health & wellbeing, or loneliness &/ social isolation is the main reason for referral, followed by 14% for housing related issues
- The service has made over 700 connections into more than 80 different voluntary and community organisations or services

Covid19 has brought cases of increased complexity and inevitably makes the model of interaction more challenging and similarly means community development is focused on supporting groups to deliver virtually or operate safely dependent upon restrictions.

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The Social Prescribing Innovation Partnership recently won the 2020 European Innovation In Politics Award Community category and was a finalist for an LGC Award.

2.2 The five **Social Action Fund** projects are almost two years into delivery of three-year VCFSE led projects tackling loneliness and social isolation. The projects have had to adapt their models during the pandemic and are increasingly delivering virtual and resource pack based activities, as well as supporting the humanitarian aid response for Oldham.

- i. BAME consortium – BAME Connect programme of activities e.g. Yoga & Connect, Cook & Connect plus a befriending offer
- ii. Wellbeing leisure – community based physical activity, working with community partners to deliver exercise opportunities and train volunteers, 350 attendances in last quarter
- iii. Oldham Play Action Group – intergeneration activities and cooking – virtual activity programmes e.g. families in pre-xmas ‘bake off’ challenge
- iv. Groundwork consortium – focusing on food and growing
- v. Street Angels - twice weekly drop-in for food and clothing (outside), providing 394 hot meals to takeaway in the last quarter

2.3 **Fast Grants** – 133 Fast Grants were awarded during 2019/20, a total of £60,200 worth of microgrants to voluntary and community organisations. This has supported a whole range of activities from sports, arts and crafts and gardening to mental health support groups and singing groups. During 2020/21 the decision was taken to invest the £60,000 Fast Grants allocation into the Covid19 Response Fund administered by Action Together, including the core Thriving Communities outcomes for which Fast Grants were awarded within the response fund criteria. To date 52 awards have been made to a total of £42,629.

2.4 **Evaluation** – The provider Human Engine has now been appointed to undertake the Thriving Communities evaluation according to the scope agreed at Commissioning Partnership Board in October 2019. This will include evaluating the three core programme elements described above to understand the impact in terms of outcomes delivered as well as fiscal, social and economic impact. Human Engine have begun initial baseline data gathering and will begin stakeholder engagement in the next couple of weeks. Evaluation will be undertaken in parallel with the final year of the programme. An initial baseline report will be provided in April 2021, with findings and gap analysis from this informing detailed evaluation going forward. Further interim reports are due August and December 2021, with a final report in March 2022.

2.5 **Covid19 Response** – The Thriving Communities programme team have also been supporting Covid19 response. Since October 2020 this has specifically included the implementation and management of doorstep engagement teams and the development and implementation of the MHCLG Community Champions Programme. It is anticipated that a combination of Thriving Communities Programme funding and Covid19 emergency funding will enable the programme staffing to be extended for up to 12 months to March 2022.

### 3 **Thriving Communities Sustainability & Next Steps**

3.1 Thriving Communities funding from the GM Transformation Fund is non-recurrent meaning the Social Prescribing Network is funded until March 2022, the Social Action Fund projects until the end of three years (completing between June ‘21 and September ‘22) and there is no further funding for Fast Grants beyond this financial year (March 2021). The evaluation findings will be key in making the case for further investment in social prescribing and community activity.

3.2 The Social Prescribing Innovation partnership was commissioned on a contract is a 3+1+1+1 ending in March 2025, and the initial 3 years ending in March 2022 so sources of funding are

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being explored to extend beyond that initial period. This includes the extent to which primary care DES funding can be utilised to support the model in the longer-term.

- 3.3 Key to the sustainability and embedding of social prescribing is a varied and active community offer across the borough which people can be linked into. Investment in capacity within the VCFSE sector remains an ongoing challenge particularly in light of the additional financial challenges created for the sector by the Covid19 pandemic. A concept document has been developed for a single strategic VCFSE investment framework for Oldham. The concept proposes that bringing together existing and new investment pots into a single vehicle or 'One Oldham Fund; would enable us to maximise the impact against key outcomes, create a focal point for external investments from funders, the public or businesses, and create efficiencies in the administration and monitoring of our collective investment. The approach would also have the benefits of visibility and accessibility for the sector and for grassroots insight to inform priorities. There is strategic support the concept proposed for a single strategic VCFSE investment framework within Team Oldham. Further work is required to achieve buy-in from wider partners and the commitment of starter funds, to scope the legal and financial practicalities, to implement the model and embed within business as usual.
- 3.4 Work has also been done through Thriving Communities to explore the other levers to increase investment in the sector. This includes embedding monetary and resource contributions to the VCFSE in the new Social Value Framework within the Social Value Portal, establishing a cross partner Funding Opportunities group to develop a more coordinated and strategic approach to attracting funding to the sector. We have also brought in a small grant from the LGA to support the Community Centre Network in developing an investable proposition for shared infrastructure and improving their readiness for Community Asset Transfer. Initial work has also been done to work with VCFSE leaders and public sector commissioners to identify areas for action around improving collaborative working through the commissioning process, and a network has been established for VCFSE CCG providers.

#### **4 Linkages with wider Transformation Programme**

- 4.1 Key to the sustainability of Thriving Communities will be embedding within wider service transformation as part of the transformation programme, in particular place-based working. Social Prescribing works on the five place-based footprints and has been working closely alongside the place-based hubs as part of the Covid19 response, and now also to transition to the place-based working model. Future development work is focused on aligning social prescribing more closely and embedding the strengths-based approaches workforce development programme within CHASC.
- 4.2 Ongoing investment in VCFSE capacity would have benefits more widely than the Social Prescribing network, a single investment vehicle can align to key priorities such as poverty and community wealth building, as well as place-based working. The new model of place-based working positions the capacity of key community anchors and grassroots organisations at the centre of service delivery and proposed place-based engagement and co-production structures. Our investment and place-based community development approaches need to be effectively aligned to maximise the benefits of both approaches.
- 4.3 Given this interconnectivity it is proposed that the strategic governance for the Thriving Communities programme activity and its development into sustainability is brought under the Communities Board as part of the transformation programme. It is proposed that the current Thriving Communities Programme Board is brought together with the Place-based Core Group, given there is significant overlap of membership and agenda, to take responsibility for delivery and implementation of both Thriving Communities and Place-based working in a sustainable and joined up way.

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5 **Key Issues for Overview and Scrutiny to Discuss**

5.1 Overview and Scrutiny are invited to note the progress with delivery of the Thriving Communities Programme and discuss the proposals for the development on the next phase and new proposed governance structure.

6 **Key Questions for Overview and Scrutiny to Consider**

6.1 None

7 **Links to Corporate Outcomes**

7.1 The content of this report has a direct link to the Thriving Communities element of the Oldham Plan.

8 **Additional Supporting Information**

8.1 None

9 **Consultation**

9.1 Ongoing consultation on the development of the programme has taken place through the Thriving Communities Programme Board. The proposals in this report have been developed in consultation with the Head of Reform.

10 **Appendices**

10.1 None