



**Oldham**  
Council

## Report to Health Scrutiny Committee

# Thriving Communities Programme Update

### Portfolio Holder:

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### Purpose of the Report

To update members of the Health Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the Thriving Communities Programme and to set out the next steps for the programme in the context of the recent evaluation of the programme, and the Council's wider transformation programme.

### Recommendations

Scrutiny are invited to note the progress with delivery of the Thriving Communities Programme, consider the findings of the evaluation, and the proposal to develop of an early intervention and prevention framework.

## 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

The initial funding three year funding period of the programme ended in March 2022, however funding has been agreed with the CCG, alongside reserves from the initial programme budget, to continue some elements of the programme into 22-23.

### 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 additional link workers across the five PCNs, in addition the Elemental system is live connecting the primary care system EMIS to social prescribing and enabling direct referrals from other services and reporting from GPs.

The initial 3 year contract period ended in March 2022, however the funding secured from the CCG has enabled a +1 extension if the existing service for 22-23. In addition, it has been agreed as part of the Children's Early Help strategy that the service be expanded to support children during this year, with funding for an additional 2.5FTE dedicated link workers provided by the CCG.

Some key data are shown below, which represent the period between the start of contract in June 2019 and May 2022 unless stated otherwise.

- Referral rates have increase significantly since the last update to O&S. There have been 3,720 referrals into Social Prescribing (this includes 127 during the pilot period during 2018 & 2019), in total with an average of 185 per month during the last 12 months.
- 26% of referrals have come from primary care, with 19% from social care, 12% from TOG Mind and 13% are self-referred, the remainder coming from other services such as housing providers and community organisations. Around 1/3 of referrals are for people living in Central PCN/district, with each of the others making up 1/6 of referrals.

- Mental health and wellbeing issues are the most common reasons for referral, followed by social isolation and loneliness and housing.
- The service connects people into more than 80 different voluntary and community organisations or services.

During the last year work has continued to embed the service and strengthen links into the wider system, for example:

- The Social Prescribing Manager and link workers have continued to be actively engaging to help shape and develop both the Place Based Integration work around each of the five Districts, but also the PCN population health approaches development.
- The service have been supporting colleagues in Adult Social Care to embed Strength Based Approaches in Adult Social Care interventions and have co-lead a task and finish group to develop tools for frontline Social Workers to enable them to deliver strength based conversations during their initial engagement with people. The tools are based upon the SBA tools we developed for link-workers to support their strength-based conversations.
- Action Together have invested in some consultancy capacity to develop our Community Activities Directory. The improvements include better search engine capacity, improved accessibility features and a slicker user experience.

2.2 The five **Social Action Fund** projects are three years into delivery of VCFSE led projects tackling loneliness and social isolation. Some of the projects have completed their work, a number have extended the timeframe of their projects utilizing funding not spent during the lockdown period.

- i. BAME consortium – BAME Connect programme of activities e.g. Yoga & Connect, Cook & Connect plus a befriending offer. This project will continue until December 2022 and is actively seeking further external funding to continue the programme.
- ii. Wellbeing leisure (OCL) – community based physical activity, working with community partners to deliver exercise opportunities and train volunteers. This project will continue until March 2023.
- iii. Oldham Play Action Group – intergeneration activities and cooking – virtual activity programmes e.g. families in pre-xmas ‘bake off’ challenge. The SAF funded activity has completed in June 2022, however the organisation is actively seeking external funding to continue the approach developed through SAF.
- iv. Groundwork consortium – focusing on food and growing. Project completed September 2021.
- v. Street Angels – the organisation continues to grow and develop, during 2022 remaining SAF funding is supporting the transition to a new base and work to develop a new operating model in light of changing needs within the town centre nighttime economy.

2.2. **Evaluation** - In December 2019 Commissioning Partnership Board agreed to commission an independent evaluation partner to evaluate the impact of these three elements of the programme, as well as the overall programme, with a view to that evaluation informing decisions about the continuation and development this work.

Although the commissioning of the evaluation was delayed due to Covid19 pressures and budget uncertainty Human Engine were subsequently commissioned as an independent evaluation partner to undertake this work and began working on the programme evaluation since January 2021. The final full evaluation report has now been published alongside an executive summary (Appendix 1 & 2), the findings are summarized below.

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The final evaluation report sets out in full the findings in relation to each of the three delivery elements; Social Prescribing, Social Action Fund and Fast Grants, as well as the programme as whole. A core aim of the evaluation approach was to ensure it would reflect the range of outcomes anticipated for residents engaging with the programme, as well as the wider system benefits. The intention being that it would represent a shared view of the impact across partners and as such inform decision making around the continuation and development of the Thriving Communities approach. Reflecting this intention both qualitative and quantitative evaluation is presented, with a particular emphasis on wide ranging stakeholder engagement across the system, and at all levels, alongside a review of evidence from other similar approaches nationally. Initial return on investment modelling for Social Prescribing is presented based on social care deflections as one key area for prevention, providing a model which could be built upon with the addition of wider outcome data over time.

The qualitative evaluation demonstrates the programme's influence on the increased recognition of the value of VCFSE by public services, as well as identifying the continued challenges to integration of those services both on the ground and as part of a wider strategy for prevention across the borough.

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis of Social Prescribing demonstrates the value of the Innovation Partnership as a commissioning model to enable a new approach to be co-designed and adapt to changing demand and need. The evaluation demonstrates the increasing demand and increasing complexity over the life of the service, and a shift in the needs of people accessing the service throughout the pandemic. Although loneliness and social isolation remains the most common reason to access to service, in most cases people are not healthcare 'frequent flyers' as was anticipated at programme initiation, but many have long-term health conditions and/or are at risk of escalation into costly social care, housing and welfare services if not supported. The evaluation demonstrates robust improvements in people's wellbeing following intervention based on ONS4 scores, alongside deflections from social care and healthcare (for those who were frequent attenders prior to intervention).

The evaluation also demonstrates the value of investment, through the Social Action Fund and Fast Grants, in the VCFSE ecosystem which is needed to support effective social prescribing. There are demonstrable benefits for project participants, as well as skills and capacity building within the sector. There is also significant learning provided about how the Council can improve and develop our approach to grant giving and investment to better support these aims.

The evaluation makes eight recommendations:

#### *Recommendations for Oldham System*

1. Create a cross-system working group to co-design and co-produce prevention model for the borough
2. Consider a single grant funding pot to pool resources for community-led initiatives and community capacity building. This will ease funding applications for organisations and create a sustained funding stream
3. Continue to progress data sharing arrangements to enable health, care and support organisations to better provide targeted services

#### *Recommendations for Oldham Council*

4. Consider funding options and models for the future of Social Prescribing and VCFSE grants from March 2022

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5. Design a refreshed set of objectives, outcomes and measures for Social Prescribing that align to the funding model chosen and monitor through contract management as service becomes business-as-usual. The objectives should also be refreshed for the borough's context post-pandemic given the impact this had on the programme
  6. Undertake a Thriving Communities Index data refresh to support evidence based and targeted commissioning and decision making

#### *Recommendations for Oldham VCFSE*

7. Invest in online engagement and computer literacy of your service users. Feedback from surveys has shown this is an area service users wish to maintain but not all have the capability to access
8. Continue to undertake mid-project evaluation collecting quantitative wellbeing statistics of service users to evidence improvements

- 2.3 **Doorstep Engagement** – The Thriving Communities programme team have also been supporting the door to door engagement work originally initiated as part of the Covid19 response, providing programme management and business support. This work has continued into 22-23, and work is now ongoing to put forward a proposed approach to continuing this activity as business as usual within new district working arrangements.

### 3 **Next Steps**

- 3.1 Thriving Communities programme funded activity, as described above, is currently supported until the end of March 2023. As is recognised in the evaluation recommendations set out above, there is a need to consider the future of this activity in light of wider system priorities, in particular around early intervention and prevention, place-based integration and population health management approaches within the new ICS.
- 3.2 Oldham does not currently have an early intervention and prevention strategy. Whilst there are many programmes, interventions and services, including social prescribing, focused care and early help, undertaking effective work to improve health and wellbeing and reduce demand on health and care services, there is overlap between and a lack of coordination across these approaches. The extension of Social Prescribing for 22-23 has provided an opportunity to undertake a full review of existing early intervention and prevention offers and develop a framework and investment plan for the future. Scoping of this review is currently underway, and a cross system working group will be established to take it forward, sitting under the newly established Reform Board. The scope of this review will include consideration of investment into the VCFSE sector. The One Oldham Fund, established during 2021 utilising Covid19 funds, has built on learning from Thriving Communities to establish a framework for investment in key community anchors, however this funding is also due to end March 2023.

### 5 **Key Issues for Health Scrutiny to Discuss**

- 5.1 Health Scrutiny are invited to note the progress with delivery of the Thriving Communities Programme, consider the findings of the evaluation, and the proposal to develop of an early intervention and prevention framework.

### 6 **Key Questions for Health Scrutiny to Consider**

- 6.1 None

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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 Management Board, and the ongoing developments described above will report to the Reform Board.

10 **Appendices**

10.1 Appendices 1 & 2 – Thriving Communities Evaluation Full Report and Executive Summary

Appendix 1 is presented under separate cover as a supplement to the agenda

Appendix 2 is attached to the report