



THIFF meeting minutes, Tuesday 17th January 2017

Present: Alan Green, St John on Bethnal Green; Jan McHarry, London Buddhist Centre; Iqbal Raakin, LBTH; Joe Lacey-Holland, LBTH; John Moffatt, Jesuit Centre; John Hayes, Methodist Church; Bethan Lant, Praxis; Ram Chandra Saha, Vivekananda Human Centre; Shams Muhammad, Ebrahim College; Lee Hawkins, Metropolitan Police; Chris Lovitt, Public Health; Gulam Hussain, LBTH; Nathaniel Roos, Fieldgate Street Synagogue; Leon Silver, ELCS; Christine Hall, St John on Bethnal Green; Sonya Sier, Baha'is of Tower Hamlets; Ifthahar Ahmed, FRF; Dani Anderson, THCVS.

Apologies were received from: Sotez Chowdhury, Peter McGeary, Fiona Stewart-Darling, Sigrid Werner.

Minutes of previous meeting were accepted as accurate.

New Residents and Refugees Forum (Praxis)

Bethan Lant gave a presentation on Praxis' work with refugees and migrants, and the more recently established New Residents and Refugees Forum (NRRF). Praxis works to support clients with housing and destitution, trafficking and family support, and supporting people with no recourse to public funds is a core area of their work. People granted the right to remain in the UK often have no access to benefits/housing support. Cuts to legal aid have also had an effect on Praxis' capacity to support people – have to be registered and qualified to provide support, and clients often can't afford a private lawyer. Home Office fees have increased; it now costs around £800 to pursue an application.

Bethan explained that the services – both at Praxis and generally across London – are always over capacity, and always looking to build partnerships with others to provide support more in line with demand. Praxis runs a weekly drop-in that is always heavily oversubscribed.

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS)

Joe Lacey-Holland gave a presentation on the progress of SVPRS so far, after work began in 2016.

The UK-wide target is to have 19,000 families resettled across the UK by 2020. The scheme is voluntary for LAs to take up, and Tower Hamlets have volunteered to initially take 3-5 families. 8 London boroughs have volunteered to be part of the scheme. Joe noted that the scheme is underfunded, particularly in London, and it's vital that community support for those resettled sits along professional support (e.g. specialist mental health support). Examples of community support could include volunteering to accompany people to events/places of worship, supporting with conversational English etc.

A key question from THIFF was how can the forum support this process – the forum will be important for support across the 'integration' section of the plan (pg. 7 of presentation). This will include working with organisations such as Praxis, and the forum will likely be able to help identify other organisations/groups that can provide community support. Another area that would be helpful is support identifying landlords in TH that rent at Local Housing Allowance rates.



LBTH are looking for a specialist organisation to provide an Integration Support Service to individuals coming to Tower Hamlets as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. For the full details of the contract please go to: <https://procontract.due-north.com/Advert?advertId=523c33ba-41d7-e611-80da-005056b64545>

Public Health – Health & Wellbeing Board Strategy consultation

Chris Lovitt attended in place of Somen Banerjee (Director of Public Health at LBTH), and gave an update on the consultation process for the Health & Wellbeing Board Strategy, which ran until 23rd December 2016.

The proposed strategy has 5 priorities: Communities Driving Change, Creating a Healthier Place, Employment and Health, Children's Weight and Nutrition, and Developing an Integrated System. Chris noted that in terms of what THIFF can do to support the strategy, which he expects will be adopted by the Mayor this Spring, the area that would likely be most relevant is Communities Driving Change. This focuses on shifting the dynamic away from one where the statutory sector provides services to communities, to one where communities are empowered to take control of their own health. It was pointed out that it would be helpful to undertake an exercise in mapping what services are already being provided by the faith sector.

Hate Crime

Lee Hawkins (Hate Crime Liaison Officer) provided some statistics on hate crime reporting over the last 12 months and the last quarter. He noted that although figures have increased from their equivalent period 12 months ago, the amount by which it has increased is less than the last quarter. He expects that the figures continue to increase due to more people coming forward and reporting.

Lee will be meeting with a colleague from the analytics team at the Met, who will be able to support with providing more detailed analysis of the reporting figures in terms of, for example, areas where reports take place, age range of people reporting. This should be in place by the beginning of next quarter.

The Met has released a new app to support people with self-reporting – designed for hate crime and domestic violence reporting but can be used to report anything – called Self Evident, which is now available to download.

Information share

Iqbal: The Cohesion strategy is being developed at the moment, working with the Cohesion Working Group and others. They are looking to begin the strategy in April.

Dani: Faith calendars are available – those who requested copies via email should receive them shortly in the post. More copies are available via THCVS and the electronic version is available on the THIFF website: <https://www.faithintowerhamlets.org/faith-calendar/>



Shams: New National Zakat Foundation centre is opening in the former site of the Fieldgate Street Synagogue in Whitechapel. It will be used as a formal centre for alms-giving

Lee: LGBT Forum Steering Group has included a section on faith and religion on the next agenda, but is still looking for a speaker/someone to attend from the faith sector. Lee asked that if anyone knows anyone who might be interested to get in touch: Lee.Hawkins@met.pnn.police.uk

Shaf: LBTH are exploring their resources for future community cohesion work, working with THCVS on a workshop on the Building a Stronger Britain Together Fund on 26th January:
<https://www.thcvs.org.uk/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=178>

Leon: the Tower Hamlets Interfaith Holocaust Memorial service will be on 29th January, 3pm at the Nelson Street Synagogue. They are still seeking a Muslim representative

Alan: Working on the co-production strategy for Anti-Social Behaviour – it would be useful to know what's already being done in this area in Tower Hamlets, and what people feel is needed for the new strategy. Let Alan know: alan.green@virgin.net