| **Meeting Minutes** |
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| **Location:** | St Hilda’s East Community Centre |
| **Date:** | Monday 29th July |
| **Time:** | 6pm – 8pm**Attendees:** Alan Green (Chair), Leon Silver, Elspeth Paisley (note taker), Rich Poolman, Sher Ali Ullah, Shirin Jisha, Sholeh Magzub-Afnan, Elizabeth Marshall, Michelle Lindson, John Hayn, Andy Philpott, Alex Smith, Marie Larvin, Bryony Oxlade, Selma Piro, Eleanor Land **Apologies:** Jan McHarry, Jaber Khan, Dan Range |

## **Welcome – Alan Green, Chair**

Nothing from previous meeting to be brought forward from the last meeting.

Welcome to Rich from Met Police. First day in the job. Presented at last week’s ‘no place for hate’ forum

## **Hate Crime Analysis and Regular Reporting (standing item) – Rich Poolman, Met Police**

Rich Poolman reported the latest Tower Hamlets (TH) Met Police faith hate crime data:
Between 1st April-30th June: 206 reported *hate* crimes. 26 offences were flagged as *faith hate* crime. A map was circulated, with dots that show where hate crime had taken place across the borough.

The 26 faith hate crimes were identified as:

* 62% Muslim
* 15% Christian
* 8% Jewish
* 4% Hindu

One serious injury (knife crime)

Q: How do you identify it as faith hate? *Victim identifies it as such*

Some incidents of intimidating behavior, perceived as anti-Semitic by members of the public (e.g.: laughing or shouting).

Q to Jewish members present: Do you report verbal abuse? *No – don’t want to waste police time*

Met Police answer: *It’s important to report ALL cases of hate crime so that it’s recorded. It can be reported online or over the phone. Call 999 if it’s active (may be able to catch the perpetrator) or 101 if after the case*.

Q: How do these figures compare to previous quarters (q)? A: *30 last q, 26 q before.*

Comment from Alan: *We’re in the transition period. In the future the reporting will be more targeted.*

Q: is any of the info online? A: *Not at present, but from next meeting onwards we will have info to take away.*

## **Nature & Us – Michelle Lindson, Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, Community Development Coordinator**

Nature & Us (N&U) is based in Shandy Park, the former East London Cemetery (an old Victorian cemetery) in Mile End. Now a public park that protects nature and heritage. The project has started to do public outreach work in the past year, currently based on nature. Next year the project will move onto heritage.

Work in Swedenborg Gardens (near Shadwell), with the Swedenborg Project (currently until end of October) and Shandy Park (Mile End)

N&U events bring people together, connecting them with nature. N&U believe that loneliness isn’t just about interaction with others, but about how we connect with the surrounding environment.

Events include wild flower courses; walks through local green spaces and bat detector walks.

Shandy Park has emerged as a connecting place for people, particularly the Bengali community where lack of language skills is a very big issue. Don’t always know how the Bengali community feel about their green spaces etc. because it has been difficult to get demographic data. This is due to fears about how the collected information will be used. It’s easy to get the info from the white British population where those fears don’t exist.

Shadwell/Aldgate East Area – feels like a divided community. A lot of fear over how the green spaces are used. People tend to stay in their blocks. Men go to work, women typically fulfill a more traditional role in the home, looking after the children. Women tend to be a bit more disconnected from their community and green spaces. Many have only just arrived, and find it difficult to integrate.

Swedenborg Project has discovered lots of antisocial behaviours including class A drug use and prostitution. Families want to use the park, but are put off by the culture of the park.

N&U started a Swedenborg working group: ‘Swedenborg Partnership’ which works with other voluntary sector organisations, TH council, police and other statutory services. The partnership is talking about, and planning how to change the culture of the park. E.g. green planting, strategic movement of park benches, bins etc.

Focus is on using nature as a means to connect people with the area in which they live. Examples of people feeling more positive about their environment.

Other London boroughs are interested in emulating the approach taken by the project

Comments:

* Could connect with the Swedenborg Society
* Library in Birmingham also connected with the Swedenborg Society. Offers to connect Michelle.

Contact Michelle Lindson: michelle.lindson@fothcp.org

## **East London Cares – Alex Smith, The Cares Family (East London Cares)**

East London Cares connects young people who are recent arrivals in the area and don’t know how or where to connect with others in their community.

Alex’s story: Nine years ago he was a council candidate in North London because he felt it was a way to change the world. Canvassing in Holloway, Alex knocked on the door of an 84-year-old man who hadn’t been out of his house, or spoken to anyone other than the people who delivered his meals for three months.

Fred told Alex that when he had been physically able, he had always voted, so, making use of Fred’s wheelchair, Alex offered to take Fred to the polling station. On the way, Fred waved at friends and neighbours, and was obviously well known in his neighbourhood. On the way back Fred said he would like to get a haircut because (having not been able to take care of himself in this way) he felt he had lost his dignity.

The following day, having lost the vote, Alex returned to take Fred to the barbers and over the following weeks they became friends. Alex discovered that Fred had previously experienced a very rich life, but circumstances had caused him to become isolated. Working in an office, Alex was also isolated. Recognizing the universal nature of the story, Alex decided to set up ‘North London Cares’ which has since expanded to South London, Manchester, Liverpool, and most recently, East London.

Objectives:

1. Bring different generations together to combat loneliness and isolation
2. Amplify the voices that show why connectedness is important
3. Shift power structures so that they enable connection and community

## Programmes include:

### Social clubs e.g. dance parties, back to work business visits.

### Love your neighbour: younger and older people coming together, building relationships. Visiting or going out.

### Door-knocking on local estates, faith groups, go to those places and invite them to events

### Community fundraising

## Looking for referrals from other partners including statutory agencies.

## Suggestions made to East London Cares: Connect with a programme called ‘breathing spaces’ at the London Buddhist CentreTH Carers Centre

Contact Alex Smith: alex.smith@eastlondoncares.org.uk

## **Information Sharing – An opportunity to share updates, followed by refreshments**

**Compassionate London:** Aim is to make London the 1st compassionate city in the UK. [www.Charterforcompassion.org](http://www.Charterforcompassion.org)
25th Aug: Common Ground Street Party: bringing what happens ‘inside’ community spaces and groups out into the street. Common House organizing – details on their website: <https://www.commonhouse.org.uk/>

**Met Hate Crime:** Role is to engage with partners, build awareness of hate crime, getting to know people.

**Baha’i community**: are organising a big event on 28th Oct at the Osmani Centre, 58 Underwood Road E1. More details will be provided in due course.

**Zacchaeus Project:** Bethnal Green Methodist Church, Walter Newby Centre, Approach Road, E2. [www.zacchaeusproject.org.uk/welcome.htm](http://www.zacchaeusproject.org.uk/welcome.htm). Project focusses on carers of elderly. Recently received funding for advice and guidance specifically for older people to help fill the gaps caused by cuts in statutory services.

**Magic Me:** [magicme.co.uk/project-category/current-projects/](https://magicme.co.uk/project-category/current-projects/) Run creative intergenerational projects across TH. Primary schools project called Arts and Ages. Connecting young and older together. Looking for new partnerships especially with sheltered housing.

**Healthwatch Tower Hamlets:** [www.healthwatchtowerhamlets.co.uk/](https://www.healthwatchtowerhamlets.co.uk/) Lot of things going on with mental health projects, working with GLA.

Transition Movement: sustainable lifestyle. Looking at how to support people with transitional anxiety. Helping people to recycle, bringing people together. Doing for each other.

**TH Cemetery Park:** Summer fun day 16th August at Swedenborg Gardens, 11am-4pm in partnership with other community organisations. Open to others joining in to run other events.

**Bryony Oxlade, City of London Coroner’s Office:** Looking for participants in a loneliness research project: faith groups attitudes to autopsy – bryony.oxlade@cityoflondon.gov.uk

**Eleanor Land; TH CCG:** new to CCG and TH. Patient and public engagement. Commissioning currently heavily weighted towards statistics, wanting to put together a better patient engagement group. Integrated Care System across the borough. Interested in social prescribing in the borough. Eleanor.land@nhs.net

**Fair Trade:** good buy in from local councilors: getting ethical supply chain put into place in the council. Looking for better connections with other local faith groups, on fair trade and social justice projects.

**E1 Community Church** working with 3 other churches to form [E123 Mission House](http://www.e123missionhouse.org.uk/). The current aim is to bring a family over from Syria. Contact Marie.larvin@outlook.com

**Marion Morris - TH council**: THIFF Chair, Alan Green, reported that TH Council are keen to engage with faith communities to discover what they might be doing in the area of [substance misuse in TH](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/council_and_democracy/consultations/past_consultations/Substance_misuse_strategy.aspx). Please contact: marion.morris@towerhamlets.gov.uk

## **Tower Hamlets Friends and Neighbours – Elizabeth Marshall, Trustee**

Tower Hamlets Friends and Neighbours (THFN) is a secular organization which was founded in 1947 in Stepney. Aim is to help the socially isolated by befriending, activities and providing advocacy.

In response to strain on the system caused by aging population THFN now focus on befriending. This is delivered through paid staff befrienders because volunteers are generally at work during the day when the elderly need company. THFN do, however, work with 25 volunteers.

Often come across mental health issues, including dementia, although they are not trained to deal with these issues. THFN concentrate on helping the very elderly and those who are making the transition from work to retirement.

High percentage of those they work with suffer from depression.

Elizabeth is keen to discover how much money befriending services save the NHS and is looking for funding to commission research.

Challenges: Previously ran services such as trips out or reflexology. However, funds have run out and gaining further funding is proving challenging.

Plea to work and coordinate resources across voluntary sector organisations who have a synergy with THFN.

A problem with isolation particularly among the Bengali population has been identified – lack of language skills is a huge problem. There is a lack of internet access, particularly for the elderly Bengali population.

Calling for a more streamlined commissioning process.

Q: How many people do you help? *A: 200*

Suggestion; look at:

Timebank UK

Independent Age – UK wide – have many metrics on initiatives to combat loneliness and isolation.

Offer from London Cares to work in partnership. North and South London Cares have put out new data today. May be able to extrapolate data for TH

## **Geoff Ashcroft Community/E1 Community Church – Marie Larvin**

[Geoff Ashcroft Community](https://www.geoffashcroftcommunity.com/about) (GAC) is a small organisation based in St Mary’s Church Hall, Cable Street, Shadwell. It is a project of the E1 Community Church.

The project was named after Geoff Ashcroft, a local young man who took his own life after failing to find support for his mental and emotional distress. The disconnect between statutory services and community support was observed by a local vicar who was familiar with mental health issues from within her own family. She set up the Geoff Ashcroft Community to bridge the gap, recognizing the faith community had much to offer those with mental health issues.

The project is volunteer led, but funding is the challenge

The project offers structured activities on Thursdays, including chair exercises, mindfulness, Band for Life – and is connected with the 5 ways to wellbeing. Have included a sixth based on giving – recognizing the need for people to have the opportunity to give as well as receive. A spirit of gratitude is encouraged and skills such as baking and woodcarving are shared. A lot of people have a sense of a spiritual journey and spiritual journeying is a conversation that is encouraged.

Mental health is a common theme among participants. Trying to get away from the ‘done to’ mentality, towards a greater mutuality.

GAC has created a place of connection where participants have started to meet up with each other outside the formal activities.

There is an informal drop in on Tuesdays.

Phil Warburton is the leader of E1 Community Church and also leads the project.

Plea for volunteers

Q: Is the aim conversion? A: *People of any faith or none are welcome. Christian conversion is not the aim. Conversation about faith is encouraged and mediated, but not manipulated.*

 Contact Marie Larvin: marie.larvin@outlook.com

## **AOB**

None raised

**The next forum meeting is on Monday 23rd September and will focus on poverty in Tower Hamlets. Please visit** [www.faithintowerhamlets.org/](https://www.faithintowerhamlets.org/) **for further information**