| **Meeting Minutes** |
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| **Location:** | Mulberry & Bigland Green Centre, 15 Richard Street, Shadwell, E1 2JP |
| **Date:** | Monday 3 June 2019 |
| **Time:** | 6pm – 8pm**Attendees:** Alan Green, Leon Silver, Daniel Range, Jenny Hadgraft, Nathan Singleton, Mike Hamer, Ryan Lynch, Sher Ali Ullah, Christine Hall, Neville Reid, Sebastian Wray, Michelle Lindson, Rachel Vincent, Sigrid Werner, Jagomohan S Bhakar, Gemma Stokes, Tosin Aking and Rachel Mahon. **Apologies:** Jan McHarry, Jaber Khan.  |

## **Welcome – Alan Green, Chair**

Rev Green noted that Met police had not arranged a replacement for Ingrid Cruickshank so the standing item of hate crime would not take place. He invited the attendees to raise any issues or concerns so that he could relay them.

Rev Green mentioned his own concern at a recent finding of a poster in Bethnal Green depicting Notre Dame on fire, with the wording ‘burn down your local church’. Upon reporting it he discovered that the police are aware of the posters but hadn’t passed this information on – it turned out to have been produced by a local tattooist for publicity who had not intended it to be put anywhere public. Rev Green said that there was a degree of disagreement between him and the police about the importance of the incident – in his opinion hate crime is about the effect caused as much as the intentionality. The image of a church burning should be taken just as seriously as that of a mosque or synagogue.

 The incident has now been referred to the Hate Incident Panel. He noted that there was a failure of communication on the part of the police – even No Place for Hate had not been informed, there are various systems in place that are meant to ensure that these situations are communicated. Rev Green commented that he will try to ensure Ingrid’s successor will be in attendance for the next forum meeting.

## **Nathan Singleton, CEO of LifeLine Projects**

**Key Points**

LifeLine Projects is a charity based in Barking and Dagenham but working across London providing mentoring to young people on the edge of exclusion from school, serious youth violence and mental health concerns. LifeLine Projects started twenty years ago.

Michael: Michael was referred to LifeLine as he was facing challenges at school; they were concerned that he would not manage to complete his education. Along with others, he was taken on a residential trip to Wales where he stayed at an isolated campsite that had no electricity or services. The next step was to take him further afield, along with a group of other young people on the edge of exclusion. He was an entertaining and natural leader so LifeLine put him on their ambassador training programme, but unfortunately the funding was cut short. Michael then moved to a difficult estate and got in with a dangerous gang, losing contact with the project – he started leading people in the wrong way and is now in prison.

LifeLine programmes are about early intervention – they try to get in early to stop people joining gangs. This is likened to a snowball effect; at the core there is a small group of highly committed individuals that recruit others. Once people are in gangs, intervening to get them out is expensive. LifeLine aims to stop the recruitment of new gang members by going into schools and working with young people at risk. For LifeLine, mentoring means building a trusting relationship with a positive adult. LifeLine mentoring is always face to face, week to week and one to one.

LifeLine has an approach called VIP – and the mentors tell people that they can be victors – not victims and that they need to see the choices they have. The next is to offer them a choice – positive activities for them to do, to minimise the attraction of charismatic people like Michael. It’s important for the person to make friends outside of their estate. The activities are targeted between 3.30 – 6.00; the ‘missing hours’ where parents are still at work and children hang about with their friends – a lot of stabbings and thefts happen during this time of day.

The activities have to be sustainable. For example, LifeLine was once involved in hugely funded summer scheme, but when it finished crime jumped and showed that just providing activities is not enough. Young people need to have a purpose and leaders should be developed in a positive way. This is powered by belief – there is still belief that Michael can turn his life around.

Becca was a young person with behavioural issues at school and her dad was in prison for murder. She joined ambassador programme and is now in full time work.

Luke was at risk of exclusion and has AHD, OCD and ODD. He went on a trip to Wales, where staff focused on encouragement and reflection, including finding out what was happening behind the rage. He is still in touch with the project today.

Eloj is still in touch with Lifeline eleven years on and is currently working after recovering from a psychotic episode. He is a success story and a testament that funded short term programmes do not work – long term contact and passion does.

Stephen was nominated for a U Turn award and his mentor support ended. the change was not sustained – short term programme equals short term success. His change was not sustained and he ended up killing someone. Proof again that support needs to be long term.

Lifeline are always on the lookout for people to volunteer.

Q: How well trained are the people that mentor the children – do they need to be psychologists?

A: Psychologists are very expensive! We found that many only need to know they have someone that cares about them. All they want is an adult that cares about them and their future, so we recruit youth workers that have that heart. We do refer onto other services if need be, but to have someone that listens and cares about them changes their trajectory. The perfect situation is that that support doesn’t stop – it continues.

Q: Why don’t people train young people to go out and work before they go down a ‘bad road’?

A: Often people don’t understand why they are not doing well – it may be a life issue rather than educational, for example their dad is an alcoholic and their mum is dying of cancer – once schools are aware of family problems they can help.

Q Where does the passion come from for you?

A: When I was 15 I should have left my youth group but I stayed on, eventually helping out with the group. A few years later a family friend from Sierra Leone visited – he followed me around for a week– which I thought was weird at first, but then I felt privileged that he was genuinely interested in my life. I want to share that with others.

## **Information Sharing**

Jenny Hadgraft, FaithAction: FaithAction will be launching their report Right Up Your Street in conjunction with the APPG Faith and Society on faith and loneliness in July – coincidentally THIFF is also looking at loneliness and that will be the topic for the next forum meeting in July.

Rachel Mahon, St Mary & Michael School: St Giles Trust came into school to educate kids age 5 and 6 about crime – early intervention.

Rachel Vincent: Lots of people are scared about the rise in knife crime, for example people say that Tower Hamlets has a bad reputation.

Sher Ali Ullah, TH Healthwatch: Mental health and wellbeing is linked to crime and domestic violence and other big issues like poverty and leaving the criminal justice system, other health problems – Healthwatch is working with the CCG to try to tackle them.

Neville Reid, Lighthouse Baptist Church: A lot of the Street Pastors’ focus is on late night activity – were not meeting as many people these days who need as much caring late at night – it seems to be generation sensible! Last year they thought about knife crime but could not do the ‘missing hours’ after school, as many of their volunteers are at work but they are open to other suggestions for Street Pastors. Street Pastors do not push Christian teaching but to provide a Christian ear.

Daniel Range, Coventry University: Highlighted THIFF’s upcoming mental health and wellbeing event on 13 June at St John on Bethnal Green.

Sebastian Wray, documentary film maker: In terms of the media – things are represented in the wrong way at the moment e.g. programmes like Ganglands on Channel 5 where the shock content does not help the issue at all. We need to represent good things happening and approach things more constructively like Nathan’s presentation. We need to address the way that the media is dealing with the problems.

Sigrid Werner: There needs to be a wider discussion about media, for example the Jeremy Kyle drama at the moment. Lots of media and documentaries add tension into stories when there is none. St George’s German Lutheran Church is holding two events: The Life of James Cook – an expert talk on Thursday 20 June and then on 23 July there is a talk on local street names and their origins. Arrival for both at 6 for 6.30. The church is on Allie Street on the corner of Leman Street.

Michelle Lindson, Nature and Us: The project is running many events in their core areas of Shandy Park and Swedenborg Gardens such as evening nature walks, storytelling and summer tree walks. Anyone that is interested can contact Michelle at michelle.lindson@fothcp.org.

## **Ryan Lynch: Good Shepherd Mission**

**Key Points:**

Ryan is a church leader who has personal experiences of knife crime, by carrying a knife in the 90s and also being injured by one.

He feels that knife crime is not new and that people shouldn’t respond to moral panics but respond to people. The problem is local, national and global.

Quotes from key community stakeholders:

**LBTH senior manager:**

“The system of LBTH funding is too short term for the needs of complex & vulnerable families.”

**Bethnal Green senior ranked police officer:**

“Once we’ve arrested someone for carrying a knife it’s too late, the crime has already been committed.

We’re not able to intervene earlier enough. Arresting the same person time and again becomes a revolving door”.

**Surgeon at A & E trauma unit at the London Hospital:**

“When a knife crime victim is on my operating table, it’s too late. Stop sending these people to me.”

**PRU senior manager:**

“By the time a student needs to be referred something traumatic has already gone wrong in their lives.”

**Mayor John Biggs**

“If we get to the children at an early age, a lot of later life problems would be prevented.”

Early intervention and long term support are crucial and the faith community has a large part to play – many local churches have been established for a long time. Good Shepherd Mission’s approach to intervention is to get into families of preschool children and track them over their lives – Ryan has people that have grown up and now bring their own families. They have a long term approach – their projects run for decades, for example their youth work been ongoing for 35 years. This approach answers the questions that the key community stakeholder’s partners are asking; the key is a generational approach that is socially holistic, taking into account family structure, social groups and networks.

Traumatic childhood experiences often lead to problems such as drugs and gangs. People need real life practical support and they need help to move people from A to B – people are stuck, for example in in gangs or poor education. Having practical resources to move forward is so important. Ryan once met a young man who was selling drugs, but needed real life practical support to help him stop – he was worried about who would support his mum. Communities need to care about what people care about.

**New to 2019: Local Church partnerships with Key community stakeholders**

**Family Hub**

Every Life –Salvation Army - Rapid Response Team

After school outreach project aimed at primary aged children and families based on the Chicksand Estate.

**Boxed Up Crime**

Diversionary anti-gang crime project. However, there are only two churches involved in this at the moment. The aim is to go into Pupil Referral Units and work with the children that no one else wants to work with.

**Cook School**

The GSM- Raines School – Rochester Court

Intergenerational project aimed at students identified as SEN and vulnerable to grooming plus senior citizens vulnerable to social isolation.

**Tower Hamlets Integrated Offender Management**

Referrals from LBTH-Probation-Met Police to the GSM for individuals on licence in the community. Ryan and his team helped someone with their travel expenses to their probation officer – without help they could not have made the journey – the man is now working and therefore saving thousands of pounds of tax payers money.

Ryan concluded that knife crime needs to tackled early on – to get into families and support them - the mums, dads, brothers and sisters; and to convince the young person that we care. He is determined to use the church resources to tackle and come alongside the whole community.

There was insufficient time for questions and answers, however Rachel Vincent commented that she often helps people in need on her estate by taking them to drug intervention programmes and doing things such as washing clothes and taking them to barbers. One young man has now got an education and a job – thanks to long term support.

## **DCI Mike Hamer, Met Police**

**Key Points**

The recent amalgamation of Tower Hamlets and Hackney has led to good practice being shared.

Some media coverage of events is factual but a lot is sensational, for example it was reported that the amount of people killed in London exceeded that of New York, however by the end of the year this was far from the truth. Like in the 90s, funding has been injected to tackle knife crime – but with new challenges such as the county lines gangs exploiting young people all around the country.

Residents see knife crime as significant issue – the Mayor has started a knife crime task force, but the problem also needs a holistic approach and mental health issues play a big part. Knife crime in Tower Hamlets mirrors that of London, it has risen 25% in the last three years and is the worst borough for knife crime injury victims under 25. These figures peaked a year ago with 142 stab victims under 25 in 2018.

Young people feel there is stigma attached to talking to the police. The MET understand that it is important to know what young people are thinking.

The Met has a partnership knife crime action plan, which aims to target law breakers, keep weapons off the street, protect and educate young people, support victims and build trust between communities and professionals. The plan will involve partners, for example people can help by getting involved with community weapons sweeps – the community can help a lot with this. Other activities include trading standards test which involve using police cadets to test if shops are illegally selling knives, outreach programmes, operation Sceptre.

The Royal London Hospital is part of a project that uses crime reduction nurses for stab victims who support them in the community as well as in hospital.

There are knife and gang programmes at most secondary schools.

The sharing and development of good practice, namely Tower Hamlets exploitation team and Hackney’s integrated gang team.

Total knife crime is down by 16% but people believe it is higher – maybe due to media. However, the police are not complacent as just last week a young man was stabbed to death. Often the motivation for the crime is trivial, but the police acknowledge the link between drugs and knives. If motivation is known, then the response is better.

Faith communities can help by reducing fear of knife crime – to get the reality check across.

Sometimes there is a wall of silence – people think it is acceptable not to speak to police about serious crime.

Young people need to know they have choices in life.

Events help – The police are happy to take training activities into the community rather than bringing people out of the community.

## **AOB**

Rev Green informed the group of a request from Bryony Oxlade of City of London’s Coroner Office. She is undertaking a dissertation to support her professional development as a Coroner’s Officer and is focusing on ‘Faith and cultural attitudes towards autopsy’. Bryony feels that Tower Hamlets is an ideal place to carry out her research due to the diverse religious community. She would like to carry out semi structured interviews with members of the faith community.

Please email Bryony at bryony.oxlade@cityoflondon.gov.uk if you are willing to help with her research – if you would prefer not to be interviewed then a questionnaire can be provided.

**The next forum meeting is on Monday 29th July and will focus on loneliness.**