| **Meeting Minutes** |
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| **Location:** | Fern Street Family Centre |
| **Date:** | Monday 20 January 2020 |
| **Time:** | 6pm – 8pm  **Attendees:** Rev Alan Green (chair), Leon Silver, Sufia Alam, Daniel Range, Jenny Hadgraft, Diana Roome, Eleanor Land, Faarhena Nifa, Mamadou Mane, Mijanul Islam, Rashid Ahmed, Ruman Ahmed, Shirin Jisha, Yamin Rahman, Chris Murray, Kazi Rahman, Naseema Begum, Michelle Lindson, Abdulhed Manus, Benedicta Dikeocha, S Hoque  **Apologies:** Jan McHarry, Sigrid Werner |

## **Welcome – Alan Green, Chair**

No outstanding actions from previous meeting

## **Hate Crime Analysis and Regular Reporting (standing item) – PC Shihab Miah, Met Police**

* Hate crime reporting covering time period of 1 October 2019 – 31 December 2019. 218 hate crimes in total
* Much of the crimes reported took place on west side of borough e.g. Whitechapel, Spitalfields area. Possible reasons for this: marketplace, hospital, nightlife
* Global issues can also impact hate crime figures e.g. Donald Trump retweeting Britain First for example.
* Many suspects are male and IC1 (white)
* Most crimes happen between 10pm – 12am.
* 78% racial, 19% homophobic, 9% faith/religion – some of these do overlap.
* Majority of victims are IC4 (Asian), most common age range is 21-30 years old.
* Crimes are usually classed under racial harassment or public order offence.

PC Miah highlighted the importance of people reporting hate crimes, be it verbal abuse, graffiti and so on, as if the crime is not reported then Met Police do not know about it. All crimes should be reported via 999 or 101.

Comment from attendee: many people don’t report such crimes as they are used to it.

PC Miah reinforced the fact that all hate crimes should be reported and cited the recent example of a hate crime aimed at some Muslim schoolgirls. The man involved was traced via his use of public transport and arrested.

Rev Alan Green highlighted that in the past it was not possible to compare sets of figures on hate crimes but that things have improved over the last year as the level of data is better. Although the level of sanction detections is quite low, things are improving. The work of No Place for Hate is also very good, but everyone shares responsibility for ensuring that Met Police are acting on all reports.

## **Tower Hamlets Council – Kate Smith, Head of Healthy Lives**

Kate is in the process of preparing guidance to schools in the Borough to assist in the delivery of the Government’s new proposals for the teaching of Relationship and Sex Education at both Primary and Secondary level.

* New proposed relationship and sex education (RSE) curriculum
* Why is it important? Safeguarding, changes to body, healthy relationships, mental health and wellbeing, online safety.
* Last statutory SRE guidance was published in 2000, much has changed since then, e.g. social media usage and mobile phone internet accessibility.
* For primary schools: Relationship Education - Families and People Who Care for Me, Caring Relationships, Respectful Relationships, Online Relationships & Being Safe. Health Education - Mental Wellbeing, Internet and Safety Harms, Physical Health and Fitness, Healthy Eating, Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco, Health and Prevention, Basic First Aid & Changing Adolescent Body
* For secondary schools: Relationship and Sex Education – Families, Respectful Relationships, Including Friendships, Online and Media, Being Safe & Intimate and Sexual Relationships, Including Sexual Health. Health education - Mental Wellbeing, Internet Safety and Harms, Physical Health and Fitness, Healthy Eating, Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco, Health and Prevention, Basic First Aid and Changing Adolescent Body.
* Changes to the body: Teaching about puberty is statutory, some girls start their periods and are scared because they do not know what is happening. Healthy relationships cover friendships and, at secondary level, abusive relationships.
* Big challenges: healthy eating and mental health.
* Important for children to know basic first aid and how to call for help in an emergency.
* Important for children to be educated about drugs – year 7 is a key time for children experimenting.
* Support for schools: Council works closely with other partners, e.g. school governors, headteachers.
* The aim is to find a working compromise that everyone is happy with – they do not wish to upset or offend any parents.
* A lot of concern noted about education on body parts – NSPCC has a campaign called ‘[The Pants Campaign’](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/underwear-rule/), - a good way to educate children.
* Respecting and valuing families: Focus is that all different families are respected and valued.

Questions

##### Q: A parent raised concern about the guidance. As a Muslim, they were concerned that the guidance infringes upon their parental responsibility to educate their child on these matters. They felt that school should educate academically but leave other things to parents

A: Kate responded that it is an important point but that some children are not as fortunate to have parents that will talk to then about RSE matters. The Department of Education has a duty to care for all children, so primary schools have a legal requirement to teach about process such as puberty.

Q: An attendee raised the subject of age appropriateness – whether it is right that children in years three and four should know about puberty at their age.

A: Kate confirmed that teaching about puberty happens in year four, as some girls so start their periods at this age. They hope that by starting to educate about it at this age will benefit girls that start their periods at a younger age.

An attendee commented that it is the decision of the parents to educate on puberty and that their rights should be respected, that schools should consult with parents and that the Muslim community opposes these teachings.

Kate responded that the Government published its guidance in November and that Tower Hamlets bases their guidance from this, but it is not finalised yet.

Q: An attendee referred to incidents in Birmingham and stated that sexual relations is a sacred concept for Muslims and that parents want reassurance that this will not be undermined.

A: Kate replied that in primary schools they are only taught about different families, and that all these different families are valued and accepted.

An attendee agreed that different families should be valued, but that they did not want their child to be confused and that it distinctly challenged the morality that they are teaching their child.

An attendee cited a story about a prince that searched for a princess but instead married another Prince and adopted a child. They said that they felt powerless as a parent and unable to navigate such discussions with their child.

Another attendee said that they had submitted a letter to a headteacher that got 80 signatures – that the teaching encroaches on their Muslim values and that they feel boundaries are being over stepped. They added that it seems as though two protected characteristics are going ‘head to head’ – that one is trumping over the other.

Another attendee said that teaching staff had suggested that if parents do not like it then they should remove their child from the school – they felt as if it was being likened to being told to ‘get out of our country’ even though they were born here and this is their country. They reiterated the point that the guidance needs to be clear – that there are boundaries that teachers cannot cross over.

Another attendee spoke of her daughter being told by a teacher that people could change their bodies and that she was upset be cause she ‘didn’t want to turn into a boy’ – the parent did not know what to say to comfort the child.

Kate said that all these points were extremely valuable but she couldn’t comment on any specific individuals/situations, but that the Council had to work with the guidelines and that they need to work on compromise but it may not feel perfect to everyone. Kate indicated that she is very happy to attend any meetings (see contact details below).

Q - Attendee raised the importance of training teachers – if there are grey areas then it will cause lots of problems.

A – Kate agreed that training is important and there is training booked in and asked that parents encourage their schools to sign their staff up for this. The training is voluntary so parents should contact the head teacher about this. Training can be done centrally or at individual schools.

Q – A parent asked if it was possible for parents to see the template/resources?

A – Kate said that governors sign off the policies and the local authority recommends the resources that are used, which will be age appropriate, that it follows legalities and that the resource is affordable for schools.

Kate.Smith@towerhamlets.gov.uk

## **Community Security Trust**

* CST provides security for all including over 800 Jewish buildings and 1000 events. They have 3000 trained volunteers, 3 full time staff. Funded by community – they do not charge anyone for their advice.
* Advised many different faiths on their security.
* Inundated for requests since the Christchurch and Sri Lanka attacks
* They expect to deliver 100 talks in the next 12 months. Predominately to Muslim places of worship but many others.
* They visit both big and small organisations and it takes 1 -2 hours to impart their knowledge.
* Content covers everything that a place of worship needs to know about organising security and protecting their communities – e.g. event security, legal responsibilities etc. – they leave people with an action plan. The Law
* When people feedback about the training, they generally rate their awareness as going to ‘very highly increased’ from ‘average’.
* CST believe that people have the right to live their normal lives without the fear of hate and places of worship have a responsibility to ensure that their communities are safe. The free training can help enable this – nothing is expected in return for the services.

If you are interested, please contact: [Enquiries@safe.cst.org.uk](mailto:Enquiries@safe.cst.org.uk).

## **Information Sharing – An opportunity to share updates**

Leon Silver: Holocaust Memorial Day – now at Sandys Row Synagogue at 3.30 on January 25, following ceiling collapse at Nelson Street. He has received lots of offers to help and he is very thankful for this, particularly to his THIFF colleagues, Alison Denning from TH Council and the President of Sandys Row. The event will be a reflection on humanity and feature inter faith speakers, poetry, music and be followed by refreshments. Leon was very pleased that others offered venues too, showing how united the faiths of Tower Hamlets are. Leon will await inspections of the ceiling damage and decision from Federation before taking anyone up on kind offers for fundraising.

Shirin Jisha : Tower Hamlets Bahá’ís have a lot of events happening, please click [here](file:///C:\Users\jennyhadgraft.LIFELINENETWORK\Desktop\Shirin%201.pdf) for info about Community Building and [here](file:///C:\Users\jennyhadgraft.LIFELINENETWORK\Desktop\Shirin%202.pdf) for other upcoming events.

Sufia Alam: opportunity for working women to attend RSE meeting on 6th February at 5:30pm and a session on 11 February for Bengali speaking community, both at Maryam Centre. Sufia pointed out that there is lots of concern and tension within the community about RSE and is worried that it may result in people withdrawing their children from school. There will be a Women’s Day in March.

Michelle Lindson: Friend of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park are running a project that is connecting communities with nature –Finding Your Feet, 10-week program, ten free walks around the borough – if the cemetery walk is an issue then please contact Michelle to talk it over! Some of the trips include a fully funded DLR trip with a free coffee stop included. People will get to look at nature, historical and faith landmarks etc. as they go along. Takes place on Fridays – from 7 Feb to 14 April.

Please get in touch with Michelle at michelle.lindson@fothcp.org

Benedicta Dikeocha: The Council has projects running about various issues such as violence against women girls, domestic abuse and hate crime – any individuals experiencing this, there is a service for them to get help.

For more information, contact Benedicta.Dikeocha@towerhamlets.gov.uk

**The next forum meeting is on Monday 23 March 2020 at St Paul’s Way Centre and will focus on unemployment in Tower Hamlets. Please visit** [www.faithintowerhamlets.org/](https://www.faithintowerhamlets.org/) **for further information**