

Communities of Interest Virtual Session Notes

Thursday 6 August 2020

11:00am-12:30pm

Attendees

- **Ali Spaul** – Forum Central
- **Ann Crossland** – Voluntary Action Leeds
- **Annette Morris** – Voluntary Action Leeds
- **Charis Green** – Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People
- **Daisy Morgan** – Forum Central
- **Damian Dawtry** – Feel Good Factor
- **Jeannette Morris-Boam** – Women's Lives Leeds
- **Owen Walker** – Leeds Autism AIM
- **Parveen Ayub** - Healthwatch
- **Pip Goff** – Forum Central
- **Sam Powell** – LCC
- **Simon Phillips** – Leeds Faiths Forum

Introductions/check ins

- **Charis (Deaf/Blind community)**: things seem to be quieter, good to 'catch our breath'; focused on how we start face-to-face engagement with the community again; planning for potential local lockdowns in the future and how we will need to adapt services in those scenarios
- **Damian (men's health)**: a bid has gone in jointly with Forum Central for a city-wide men's network and associated activities, sent to the Lottery this week
- **Jeanette (women's health)**: the Women Friendly Leeds Covid-19 survey was recently published; you can read the recommendations [here](#). In terms of employment, concerns are split into short term (around furlough scheme for example) and longer-term employment opportunities.
- **Simon (faith sector)**: Places of Worship are slowly opening and variety of different approaches depending on a range of factors have been taken, some have really good practice (Gurdwara, Chapeltown); the Faith Covenant LCC has been overseeing is being reinvigorated, various intersectionality are part of that
- **Owen (people with a learning disability and/or Autism)**: everyone is adjusting to changes in shielding and lockdown rules, ambiguity and change is difficult for Autistic community; unemployment is coming through a lot; trying to promote self-advocacy and planning tools to enable people to engage better with services, working with Engage Leeds to have Autism champions within their projects; people have been storing up issues, makes it difficult to work with them; ask to decision makers to look at those working with people with multiple needs and provide funds for training

Covid-19 updates/key issues (Pip)

Shielding

Shielding is now paused, so people can go out with care for example to work and shop. Infection rates are broadly down from where they were when shielding was introduced. Important to communicate the wealth of local support and information available from a range of organisations.

There's an expectation that the vast majority of children who were shielding will be taken off the list. Another key consideration is Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). Those who are shielding due to being extremely clinically vulnerable are no longer eligible for SSP, and workers have to rely on their employers to make workplaces safe for them.

There's a reassurance that Leeds is working well in partnership to put things in place, so hopefully we have the right mechanisms to make things safer for people. An equalities lens is being talked about across the system, with a strong focus on this in a recent NHS paper.

It's important to note that although shielding is paused, it may well be back in the next few months, and that will be national advice.

- **Charis:** not everyone is still accessing services, and many people are more limited in terms of the communication they're getting e.g. those without internet access. Keen to bring back face-to-face, to be able to give those people access to the information, although this has to be balanced with the anxiety many people feel about coming out again.
- **Owen:** feeling that agoraphobia will increase massively; people are scared as things seem chaotic; good to know shielding support services are still available locally; lots of people are unofficially shielding but still for valid reasons – those people need to know they can still access support if they can; introduction of masks has been difficult, people exempt have been experiencing hate crime, and people who should be wearing them but choose not to creates anxiety for Autistic people.

Sam posed a question to the group around shielding. The Government has put social distancing '[Please give me space](#)' cards on its website. What are people's thoughts on how useful these are?

- **Simon:** it's good that there are lots of types of exemption cards for people to download, but there can be issues around remembering to display/show them in the heat of the moment. Shops and public transport providers need to be aware that people will be using cards so there's awareness raising to be done, as well as the issue of shops not adhering to social distancing rules.

- **Annette:** a lot of anxiety around BME older people who have been shielding, and a real fear of 'coming back out' related to the disproportionate impact of Covid on BME communities. As a result, people are not going back to their services yet and staying online.
- **Ann:** Communication to parents whose children are being removed from the shielding list needs to be very clear and easy to understand. Many people are reluctant to send their children back to school.
 - **Annette:** even when messages come out in different languages, people are still finding it difficult to translate them effectively so people understand them; there needs to be a way of doing more face-to-face communication which is much more effective, especially when English isn't somebody's first language.
 - **Sam:** an email containing the latest Covid-19 key messages and resources has been circulated - this will be shared with the group to be shared and used widely. Working with BAME groups to help people understand the messages, as well as a number of other audiences – let Sam know if there needs to be something for certain communities. There also needs to be training available for those that are helping people understand information - Public Health are working to develop that. Resource will be coming to the third sector to support the work of this group.

Test & Trace

There's a lot happening in this area, and this network really gives us the opportunity to raise issues we hear across other parts of the system, for example the issue of trust from BAME communities when it comes to testing.

There's an action plan in place, with close monitoring of the situation - it comes down to the number of cases a day. Broadly in Leeds issues are arising around communities, and increased testing means knowing where cases are rising. Presently, there is a slight rise in cases in LS4 and LS8 - extra provision is going on in these areas, for example door knocking, conversations, linked in with the Better Together network, letters have been sent to households in these areas and key messages sent to councillors. As previously mentioned, it's important not only to provide people with information, but to help them feel well informed and confident to communicate the messages with the people they work with.

It's been flagged that more women are going for testing than men, so comms and messages focused at men are being developed – an example of the targeted thinking that is being done. Webinars around people and workplaces are being coordinated by NHS England.

Schools/Universities

Issues flagged as part of this group around return to schools have been raised in the Test and Trace working group, and the need to get a clear message out as soon as possible has been emphasised.

There's a sense that people are uncertain and information has not been put out in a clear way. Currently schools will reopen in September and children and young people are expected to attend, unless given specific medical advice. Agreed it would be helpful to have a city-wide message on this to reassure people. A lot of work is being done around testing and how bubbles are going to be managed.

If people have specific examples of concerns from parents around returning to school, please share these with us as it will help Public Health to get the messaging right.

The return of University students in September will have a big impact on the city. Although a lot of learning will be done online, 70-80,000 students are expected to arrive. A lot of planning is being done, including the addition of a walk-to test centre at Leeds University, and Leeds Student Medical Practice who liaise with other GPs in the area with high student numbers.

PPE

We have also been working to get information out about free/at-cost PPE that is available to third sector organisations. Leeds City Council has PPE available to buy at cost price – the prices change often so can't be published, but please contact Forum Central if you would like more information. We're also looking into organisations that are producing masks, and will continue to inform you of availability.

Digital Inclusion

A report published recently by Healthwatch raising issues around health inequalities and how we can work together to address them. There have been some concerns raised around links to particular organisations and this network. We will be adding in language to make this connection more explicit, and are committed to keeping a health inequalities lens around digital inclusion. There have been some wins, but there's a lot still to be done.

- **Jeannette** – noted disappointment from the women's hub/community that there are only three mentions of women. No mention as to how women could be digitally included – is there an opportunity to revisit this and add a section on gender?
 - Pip – happy to raise this issue and make sure it's fed in. It's very much an ongoing piece of work and there's always more to learn and more to do. Whilst we take onboard concerns, it's great that we've been able to do this work as a city at such speed. It has put

digital exclusion on the map and got lots of people talking – it was one of the very first issues raised by this group.

- It also shines a light on people who won't ever be digitally included for a range of reasons. Work has been done by many organisations including Time to Shine (Shine Magazine), Touchstone, and Mindwell (paper-based mental health resources).
- **Annette** – important to note that this group enabled us to tap directly into what was happening in our communities and raise issues at a point of crisis. Responding so quickly helped to build trust within communities, e.g. around the issues of food and period poverty, so there have been some real positives.
- **Pip** - issues raised here do get fed in to decision makers – we have an opportunity to raise things and make sure we're making a difference and that things happen as a result. Having a group of people helps build confidence and distil issues, giving them stronger weight, and ultimately amplifying the least heard voices and most marginalised communities.
 - Annette: On the back of Black Lives Matter, it's crucial that we change the narrative around minorities – even if something is only experienced by one person, it's still important. We need to see things in a different way - if we had a society that was fair and equal, we wouldn't need to do this work.

Action plan (Ali)

We've been having conversations around developing an action plan and Terms of Reference for the Communities of Interest network, and want to get your input to support that. There's an appetite from the health & care system for this kind of function, so we're interested in hearing about what it means to you, and what will keep you engaged in this forum and in sharing feedback.

Thoughts on intersectionality are also helpful– this group has provided opportunities for people to support each other and fight each other's corners where they might not have been able to/know how to before.

- **Parveen** – great opportunity to hear what's going on in the City while very busy with own focus; opportunity to share own work; hear the voices of other CoI that might not otherwise have the opportunity to thus influence own knowledge.
- **Sam** - great flow of information in multiple directions in a timely manner; at a time of a lot of information and change it helps to focus on what's important; building a greater understanding and relationships in order to stand up for one and others' intersectionality.
- **Owen** - building an understanding of the overlap of services; understanding and accessing partnerships to identify and support minorities within own service; really accessible means to obtain

information without having to read long reports; messages received from within the group/forum are really important.

- **Charis** - Personally been really important as started in role in March so whole position has been about Covid – great opportunity to get connected and learn from others; reduced sense of isolation during lockdown/home working; fed into other conversations and wider working groups as a result of conversations in this group; tone of conversation is great, feel like you can dip in and dip out, makes people feel more comfortable in sharing and doesn't matter if you miss a meeting.
- **Simon** - representatives are well connected and represent a wide scope (e.g. various constituencies); opportunity to develop own ideas and work by connecting with expert colleagues, e.g. working with LGBTQ people of faith and men and boys of Faith.
- **Annette** - provided connection during a difficult time; supported understanding of other challenges faced across the city (outside own experience/remit); developed relationships and built on how we could support solutions together, a catalyst for development (e.g. BLM); group allows the narrative around minority to change as it provides a platform where an individual's voice is as important as 100 people; great platform to learn and share from one and other as well as dismantling structures together.

How can be develop/improve in the future?

Practically

- Maintain meeting on Zoom, enables more people to access them (e.g. with those with limited capacity to travel).
- Maintain the tone of the meeting – i.e. flexibility to dip in and dip out of sessions without pressure.
- Potentially reduce the number of meetings (not fortnightly)?
- Attach agenda to email rather than Google docs.
- Continued rotation of chair – shared leadership of group.

Objectives

- Open up more widely to obtain increased representation and share important information more widely.
- Continued sharing and learning, building on intersectionality. For example creating themed weeks with a more detailed focused on one community/challenge, Digital Exclusion Report exploration and deep dives into CoI shared by their representatives.
- Direct line to decision makers for continued swift action.