

TITLE OF REPORT: **Communities and Volunteering Service**

REPORT OF: **Sheena Ramsey, Chief Executive Officer**

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks to update Cabinet on the establishment of the Communities and Volunteering Service and to seek approval to move this service and its budget from Housing, Environmental and Health Communities to Public Health and Wellbeing.

Background

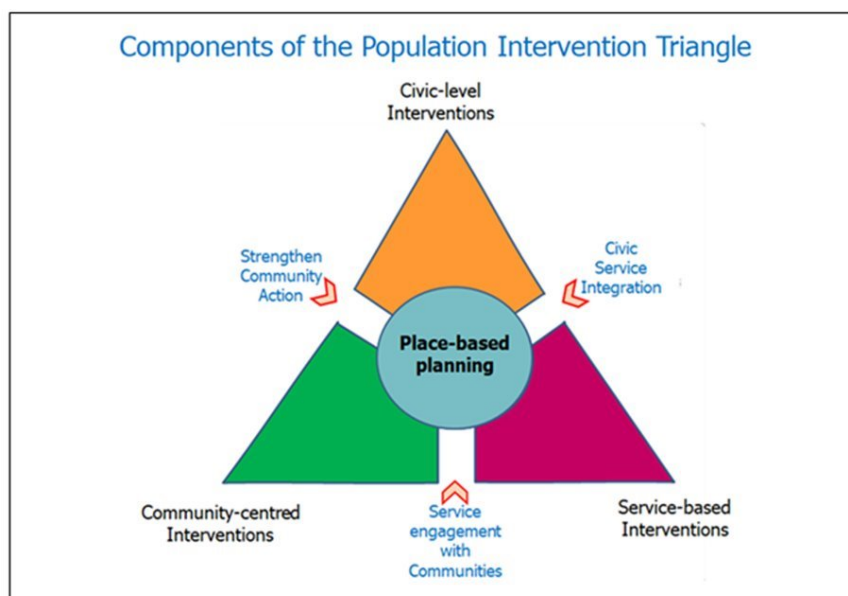
1. From 5 February 2024 as part of the reorganisation of the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) and the creation of the new Locality Service, Cabinet approved the transfer of those poverty related Borough wide activities that previously fell into NMT be placed with the Interim Director of Communities and Volunteering to create a new Communities and Volunteering Service. The budget for the service is £0.607m.

Communities and Volunteering Service

2. The work of the Communities and Volunteering service is focussed on the alleviation of poverty, inequality and disadvantage. The service supports the Council, its Elected Members, internal and external stakeholders by providing insight, research and expertise to aid the understanding of socio-economic disadvantage, its cause and effect, with a view to better understanding the lived experience of Gateshead residents, sharing good practice, influencing policy, process and ways of working to deliver upon the priorities set out in the Thrive policy framework and in support of the Council's aspirations for locality working.
3. The activities currently underway as part of the Communities and Volunteering work plan include:
 - I. **Holiday Activity Programme** – this provides activities and lunch for Gateshead children during the school holidays. The target group is children who are eligible for benefits related free school meals, although other children do attend.
 - II. **Food poverty and sustainability** – this includes the development and support of the VCSE Food Network, an informal partnership of VCSE agencies providing emergency food, food pantries, and fair share markets. More recently, food sustainability has been added, this is about reducing food waste, increasing redistribution of good quality food and the environmental impact of food production.
 - III. **Fuel poverty and Warm Space Network** – this includes the development, constant evolution, and delivery of the Gateshead Fuel Poverty Action Plan,

within which is the advancement and sustainability of the Warm Space Network, the continual provision of energy roadshows and promotion of the Green Doctor scheme to aid household energy efficiency.

- IV. **Volunteering** – this includes the implementation and sustainability of the Independent Volunteer Centre for Gateshead and supports the Council’s environmental and corporate volunteering.
 - V. **VCSE relationships** – this includes supporting commissioning colleagues and others, led by Dale Owens, Strategic Director for Integrated Adults and Social Care Services to develop and strengthen our strategic approach to the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and form commissioning intentions to aid their continual development and enhance our collective impact.
4. All of the work described above supports implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the place-based approach by strengthening the seams of the population intervention triangle below.



5. This proposal to move these services into Public Health and Wellbeing will allow the Interim Service Director of Volunteering and Communities to be supported with the resources and expertise within Public Health and Wellbeing and will allow the Council to broaden the activities and the impact of the Communities and Volunteering Service by taking on the priorities described in paragraph 7 below.
6. Adding to the work described in paragraph three above, and subject to the approval of Cabinet, the Communities and Volunteering Service will focus on:
 - A. Collaborating with Public Health and Wellbeing, Childrens Services and Education and others, to develop an anti-poverty strategy for Gateshead.
 - B. Lead the work set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy to ensure a health standard of living for all, in accordance with international law on economic and social rights.

- C. Increase oversight, understanding and accessibility of information, guidance, and self-help resources to better support our residents and frontline staff to get the right help, at the right time, and in the right way.
- D. Continue to collaborate with the locality team and support the development and implementation of the locality plans.

As the team integrates and embeds within Public Health and Wellbeing the work described above will evolve and adjust to reflect public health priorities.

7. Cabinet are asked to approve:

- (i) the proposal to transfer of the Communities and Volunteering Service from Housing, Environmental and Healthy Communities into Public Health and Wellbeing;
- (ii) an administrative virement of £0.607m, moving the budget for these services from Housing, Environmental and Healthy Communities to Public Health and Wellbeing;.
- (iii) the re-naming of the service, as Community, Health and Wellbeing.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (i) Approves the proposed move of the Communities and Volunteering Service from Housing, Environmental and Health Communities to Public Health and Wellbeing.
- (ii) Approves the change of name for the service to Community, Health and Wellbeing.
- (iii) Approve an administrative budget virement of £0.607m.
- (iv) Notes the areas of work progressed to date, and the proposed priorities moving forward.

for the following reason(s)

- (i) To refocus our efforts around poverty, inequality and socio-economic disadvantage and support the Council to deliver its commitment to ensure a healthy standard of living for all, in accordance with international law on economic and social rights.
- (ii) To support the Director of Public Health as the responsibilities of this role broaden.

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Contributors:

Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities
Public Health and Wellbeing
Adult Social Care
Childrens Services
Finance

Policy Context

This proposal will support the Council to deliver the Thrive Policy Framework and the objectives set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Background

From 5 February as part of the reorganisation of the Neighbourhood Management Team (NMT) and the creation of the new Locality Service, Cabinet approved the transfer of those poverty related Borough wide activities that previously fell into NMT be placed with the Interim Director of Communities and Volunteering creating a new service to deliver key areas of work around the alleviation of poverty, known as the Communities and Volunteering Service.

This new service continues to support the alleviation of poverty, inequality and disadvantage which includes but is not limited to the provision and co-ordination of emergency food and the DfE Holiday Activity & Food Programme, tackling fuel poverty, developing the Warm Space Network and good quality volunteering opportunities for Gateshead residents as well as being a single point of contact for the Gateshead VCSE.

The service also supports the Council, its Elected Members, internal and external stakeholders by providing insight, research and expertise to aid the understanding of socio-economic disadvantage, its cause and effect, with a view to better understanding the lived experience of Gateshead residents, sharing good practice, influencing policy, process and ways of working to deliver upon the priorities set out in the Thrive policy framework and in support of the Council's aspirations for locality working.

Consultation

1. The Cabinet Members for Public Health and Wellbeing, Communities and Volunteering, the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Deputy Leader have been consulted on this report and are supportive of the recommendations.

Alternative Options

2. The Communities and Volunteering Service remains with Housing, Environment and Healthy Communities.

Implications of Recommended Options

3. **Resources** – The Strategic Director of Public Health confirms there are no negative resource implications.

Financial Implications – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that there are no additional financial implications arising directly from this report.

4. **Risk Management Implications** – There are no risk management implications.

5. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The proposal will support and enable our commitment to diversity and inclusion allowing us to better deliver on key priorities around poverty, inequality, and socio-economic disadvantage.
6. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – None.
7. **Health Implications** – The proposals will have positive benefits around health and social inequalities, by allowing us to better share expertise, resource, and capacity to deliver our key priorities around poverty, inequality and socio-economic disadvantage.
8. **Sustainability Implications** – There Communities and Volunteering Service oversees a key piece of work around food waste and sustainability. Joining with Public Health and Wellbeing will bring additional impetus, expertise, and resource to this work.
9. **Human Rights Implications** – The proposals have no impacts on human rights.
10. **Area and Ward Implications** – The proposals will potentially benefit all wards.