

Council partners listening to the community



GOOD NEWS STORY: The Home Secretary Jacqui Smith meets Tameside Council chiefs, MP Andrew Gwynne, partners and residents during her visit the area.

Home secretary's praise for borough

PROUD partners fundamental to revamping their community showed off the fruits of their labour to Home Secretary Jacqui Smith recently.

The minister visited Tameside after being invited to do so by MP Andrew Gwynne to see the success of the Denton South Partnership.

Haughton Green has undergone a transformation that has led to reductions in crime and anti social behaviour.

Mrs Smith said: "People have been telling me it has been achieved by the borough council being prepared to work with other partners.

"They have focused on local people's needs - there are things here that I can learn. I'm really impressed."

She said the secret was listening to the community.

After chatting with regulars at the Haughton Green Centre, she said: "Improving these sorts of facilities is a really good example of how you can turn people's lives around."

Denton MP Andrew Gwynne said: "We have got a very good news story in how partnership working delivers on the ground.

"The Home Secretary was very keen to see communities like Haughton Green where a big

Reducing number of crimes

Figures for Denton South (2004/05 compared to 2006/07):

- An 18.7 per cent reduction in BCS Crime (140 fewer victims)
- A 29.3 per cent reduction in Acquisitive Crimes (82 fewer victims)
- A 7.8 per cent reduction in damage offences (22 fewer victims)
- A 19.1 per cent reduction in violent crime (36 fewer victims)

Source: iBase / GMAC Data Hub

From a survey carried out by Irwell Valley (the local Registered Social Landlord in Denton South), Tameside Council was able to measure satisfaction and feelings of safety:

- 87 per cent of Denton South residents were satisfied (very or fairly) with their area (national average - 78 per cent)
- 95 per cent of Denton South residents felt safe in their neighbourhood (62 per cent very safe, 33 per cent fairly safe)

Source: Irwell Valley Haughton Green Residents Survey, December 2006

noticeable difference has been made.

"She thought it was great, that there was a real buzz about the place and said 'if only we could bottle what we have done here'."

Mrs Smith met residents, patrollers, police and councillors - all vital to driving forward improvements.

Residents decided where more than £350,000 would be spent to improve the area when they were consulted in 2002.

The investment resulted in better lighting, more CCTV and re-landscaping the area.

Largely unused, the Haughton Green Centre was revitalised and now welcomes more than 500 visitors a month.

Improvements to the Tatton Road shops, library and the park have reduced anti social behaviour and turned a black spot for burnt out cars and fly-tipping into a green space now used by the entire community.



Turning Jamie's life around was as easy as ABC

TRANSFORMED tearaway Jaime Stopford welcomed the Home Secretary to Tameside to show her how youngsters can turn their lives around with a little help.

Home Secretary Jacqui Smith was visiting the North West to see police at work combating gangs and gun crime in South Manchester.

In stark contrast, the trip also brought her to Tameside to see a strong community striving to protect young and old alike.

During a tour of Haughton Green the minister met Two Trees Sports College pupil Jaime Stopford - a teenager who narrowly avoided an ASBO and has put his life back on track.

The 15-year-old signed an ABC (acceptable behaviour contract), one step away from an ASBO, almost a year ago and has made vast improvements since.

Mrs Smith said: "The interesting thing about Jaime is, the ABC helped him to face up to what he has done and he told me 'I feel proud'."

REPORTS BY BRIDGET AHERNE

"He has turned his life around and he deserves congratulating.

"This is a Labour government programme that is a success.

"We need to do more to support parents."

Jaime was asked to sign the ABC in February when he was arrested for smashing a window.

"There was nothing to do in the area," said Jaime.

"I was with all my mates and they were egging me on to do it."

Jaime's mum Alex Knowles was disappointed with her son but up to that point felt there was little she could do as at home he was well behaved.

Alex said: "I was upset because I had PC (Ian) Rowley coming to the door.

"Jaime was harassing people and I had to live there."

Change came when mother and son went to meet the council's ASBO officer.

"I was quite glad when he got the ABC," said Alex.

"I don't think he realised the severity of it until it was drummed into him by the ASBO officer.

"We could've lost our home through it." Jaime said: "She frightened me!"

In the months since, Jaime has turned his back on what was fast becoming criminal behaviour and found things to do with his time.



Home Secretary Jacqui Smith meets Alex and Jaime.

He added: "I'm not doing what I used to and my life is getting better." Jaime has become involved in doing groundwork for the community as part of the New Charter reward scheme Dreamscheme.