

# SOUTHWARK'S ANTI-POVERTY STATEMENT

## Poverty in Southwark

Southwark has undergone massive change in recent years to become one of the most vibrant, exciting and culturally diverse areas of London. Yet severe inequalities between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' in different parts of the borough still exist. Unemployment is above the London average and five times that for Black and Ethnic Minority Communities. For those in work, incomes in Southwark are lower than the national average. In many ways income inequalities have got much sharper. This follows a trend that exists in the rest of London and beyond as wages for those at the top of the income ladder continue to grow. The reality of poverty is characterised by poor health, high crime and sub-standard housing. Underpinning our concerns is the persistent & self-perpetuating nature of poverty, particularly its impact on the future lifechances of children and enhanced vulnerability of groups such as the elderly. There is a growing consensus nationally about the need to tackle relative poverty for three main reasons are equally relevant to why we want to address poverty in Southwark:

- ❑ **Social Justice:** the mark of a civilised society is that increasing prosperity is used to the benefit of all citizens, and that everyone has an acceptable minimum standard of living
- ❑ **Economic Prosperity:** Poverty and disadvantage limit the economic potential of people who could contribute positively to society
- ❑ **Strengthening Social Cohesion.** Exclusion from the mainstream is socially divisive with potentially severe consequences for all local communities

## Our overall aim

“ To ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to share in increasing prosperity in the borough and that the quality of life for the most disadvantaged is improved “

## Our approach

While the main driver for addressing poverty is national economic policy, local authorities have a critical role to play and in many ways much of what we do as Council has a direct impact on tackling poverty on the ground. There are many groups, particularly in the voluntary and faith sector who are well placed to support the Council and other statutory agencies to deliver anti-poverty objectives. Our approach is about dealing with poverty on several different levels.

*We have a four -pronged approach;*

- ❑ Addressing poverty as part of our Community Strategy as one of our 5 corporate priorities
- ❑ Making sure that anti-poverty is built into the main planning process of the Council.
- ❑ A targeted anti-poverty programme to ensure that there is a sharp edge to wider work that has an anti-poverty dimension.
- ❑ Developing a robust response to poverty through our corporate equalities framework

## 1. Community Strategy 2003-2006

Southwark's Community strategy sets out the overall vision for Southwark. It effectively brings together in one place the commitments of a wide range of partners in the Borough. Anti-poverty is one of 5 objectives for the strategy. The approach taken is based on addressing the structural economic causes of poverty, tackling and alleviating its symptoms.

### ***The main actions agreed for tackling Anti-Poverty***

- ❑ Implementation of Employment Strategy to improve access to and take up of employment by local people
- ❑ Implement the Enterprise Strategy to improve the health of the local economy
- ❑ Implement the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy which focuses on the needs of the most disadvantaged communities in Southwark
- ❑ Delivery of major regeneration programmes including the Aylesbury Estate and the Elephant and Castle which balance physical, social and economic approaches to regeneration
- ❑ Improve the transport links borough-wide such as the extension of the East London Line and the Tram to make Southwark more accessible and foster local economic growth
- ❑ Improve the quality of both Council and private sector housing and increase the supply of affordable housing in the borough for both renting and home ownership
- ❑ Continue to build the Community Empowerment Network and implement the Compact agreed with the voluntary sector

### ***Key related priorities and strategies***

A number of other priorities within the community Strategy have a critical role in supporting Southwark's anti-poverty objectives. This is particularly the case with addressing social inequalities in education where the persistence of low educational achievement and its concentration among people from disadvantaged backgrounds are the result of a wide range of factors including home background, school intake and school quality. Of critical importance is joined up work around early childhood development which aims to build on the successful implementation of programmes such as the 5 Sure Start schemes in the borough.

- ❑ **Family Support Strategy and Children's Services Plan**; integrated programme to support the development of children.
- ❑ **Early Years Development Plan**: Increasing the number of three year olds who have access to good quality free early years education places.
- ❑ **Early years Development Plan**: Addressing low educational attainment in Southwark Schools as the single greatest hurdle to anti-poverty objectives.
- ❑ **Connexions Strategy**: Supporting young people through their teenage years by the introduction of personal advisors, improving facilities for young people and youth diversion
- ❑ **Supporting People Framework**: helping the most vulnerable in terms of housing related support.
- ❑ **Social Care plan** : Work to increase the number of those supported intensively to live at home with support from social services.
- ❑ **Health Local Plan**: Addressing health inequalities through tackling the causes of ill health, improving service provision, improving experience for patients and focusing on vulnerable groups.

## 2. Targeted anti-poverty programme to ensure that there is a sharp edge to our anti-poverty work

Our anti-poverty programme has eight main objectives and have been developed in response to most pressing problems in Southwark and to plug gaps in Southwark's Community Strategy. It is based on adopting as mainstream services examples of good practice that have been implemented in different parts of the borough and has been designed to address poverty issues at key life stages. Our work is being taken forward via the [Forward@Southwark](#) Improvement programme. This is to ensure that it is based on the delivery of tangible outcomes, capable of making a difference. Although primarily about local delivery, the programme will also be used as way of influencing wider policy at both a national and local level. We will actively work with experts in the national anti-poverty field to help us do this.

### *The main objectives of Southwark's anti-poverty programme*

Group	Objective	Rationale
Children	Enabling parents to enter paid employment by developing a childcare co-ordination function via the Neighbourhood Renewal fund to raise awareness of the childcare dimension of the Working Tax Credit and by ensuring that affordable, high quality places are accessible to all children in the borough.	Key barrier preventing people, particularly lone parents getting work is the lack of accessible childcare
	Ensuring that nutritious food is accessible to pre-school children in the borough by mainstreaming best practice around healthy food such as breakfast clubs.	Demonstrable proof that good food has a major impact on childhood development but many go without
	Developing a refugee and asylum seeker component to the work of Southwark Childcare first to ensure that child development and support services are fully accessible and appropriate to the needs of children of Refugees and Asylum seekers.	Significant opportunities for plugging gaps in existing multi-agency services for the needs of children of asylum seekers and refugees.
Young People	Work with banking sector to introduce Financial Literacy Programme to support existing school based/youth service programmes.	Opportunities for financial literacy programme to address risk of future financial exclusion.
Working Adults	Providing integrated approach to provision of advice/support to address financial exclusion covering all benefits, tax credits and why people should enter the financial system.	Many people in Southwark who suffer financial hardship do not take advantage of benefits, which they are entitled to and which can help to alleviate poverty.
	Delivering a fair pay agreement of at least £6.30 per hour for all staff, and includes the introduction of fair pay clauses within external contracts.	'In-work' poverty is the critical issue for Southwark. Once in poorly paid work people tend to stay there.
Older people	Delivering an integrated programme for addressing social exclusion of older people who fall outside the criteria for statutory social care provision.	We must work with others to develop an integrated programme for all older people in Southwark.
Policy and support	Taking the anti-poverty debate outside Southwark by implementing a communications plan in order to maximise the opportunities for working with and learning from others in the anti-poverty field.	We want to actively influence national policy as well as learn from others about the best way for addressing problems of poverty
	Identifying future anti-poverty priorities through a research programme which draws from experts in the anti-poverty field.	We need to make sure that we understand the impact of our policies and services on addressing poverty as well as anticipate future priorities for action.

### **3. Making sure that anti-poverty is built into planning is built into the main planning process of the Council.**

Tackling anti-poverty is one of 5 corporate organisations for Southwark Council. We have developed a way of making sure that corporate priorities are reflected in key decisions made by the Council and this will affect the way Council budgets are allocated. All activities of the organisation will need to explicitly demonstrate how they anti-poverty priorities

### **4. Developing a robust response to poverty through our Corporate Equalities Framework**

The pattern of poverty in the borough as in urban areas is a tradition of middle income groups moving on and moving up to be replaced by lower income groups who gradually move up the income ladder. The risks of being excluded from this process are not evenly spread and some groups are disproportionately likely to get trapped in poverty. These include women, people with disabilities, people from Black and Ethnic Minority Communities and pensioners. Southwark is in the process of up a Corporate Equalities Plan for identifying the specific issues and priorities of different communities in Soutwark. We will ensure that we take into account the specific issues of particular groups within or global approach to tackling poverty in the borough.