

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY MEETING)

WEDNESDAY 14 JULY 2021

RESPONSES TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1. QUESTION FROM IMAN ALTAY TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION

What is the Labour administration doing to support young people's mental health, particularly around exam stress for next year's GCSE group?

RESPONSE

Young people have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, with those from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds most severely affected. The impact of the successive lockdowns, school closures, U-turn on exam assessments, and the failure to provide consistent guidance from central government have only exacerbated the uncertainty for young people. We call on government to give parity of esteem between physical and mental health and increase children and young people's access to NHS mental health services.

This Labour administration has put young people's mental health services at the forefront, which is demonstrated by our commitment to support 100% of children and young people with mental health needs. The council accelerated the opening of Southwark's free mental health service, the Nest, online in April 2020 and opened the doors in August 2020. Since launching, the Nest has supported almost 300 young people to access vital support. It is also expanding from teenagers to younger children in the coming year.

Outreach work in secondary schools

We have invested £2 million into schools to build knowledge, expertise, capacity and resilience:

- Signposting information to schools to signpost children, young people and families to local services incl. The Nest, Kooth, etc
- Development of new local directory of services
- Service development of The Nest
- As part of Thrive London, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) we have trained 317 MH First Aiders across 90 schools, with more coming on board.

- Signposting to local and national services

Engaging with Department for Education programme Wellbeing for Education:

- 51 delegates across 34 schools already participated in training offer
- Bfb Labs “Lumi Nova anxiety game” – 16 schools completed initial training

Wider continuing professional development and training programme for schools

- Delivered including “trauma-informed/sensitive practice”, Philosophy 4 Children, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), staff wellbeing, etc
- Launch of new local resilience programme from September 21
- Contributed to new school policy for “Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health”, part of Healthy Schools Partnership
- Development of multi-media resources to share common themes and best practice.

Youth New Deal

As part of the Council’s Youth New Deal, to ensure no young person is left behind after the pandemic, the council is investing additional £400K. This commitment will support:

- The expansion of The Nest mental health services to schools
- The creation of a Youth Parliament
- Carry out the recommendations of the Youth Review.

In light of growing mental health pressures due to Covid, and the increased demand across the borough for mental health services, the council has committed £200,000 to expanding the free mental health drop in service (The Nest) to Southwark schools.

In December 2020, Cabinet approved the Strategic Review of Youth Services report, seeking to ‘ensure that the voices of young people are at the heart of future decision-making’.

The creation of the Youth Parliament made up of young people who live in and are representative of the diversity of the borough, will have oversight of how the money is spent on young people in the borough.

2. QUESTION FROM MALOMA KADZEYA TO THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION

What is the council going to do to open up more employment opportunities for young people?

RESPONSE

Youth Opportunities Campaign

In response to the impact of the pandemic on unemployment among under 25s, the council's Economic Renewal Plan has support for young people as a key priority. As part of this, the Youth Opportunities Campaign has been set up to direct young residents to the wealth of local provision that can help them in their journey to work, training, learning or volunteering.

Strongly aligned to the Youth New Deal, the campaign consists of signposting webpages, and a regular e-newsletter publicising opportunities to a growing list of over 1700 subscribers.

As the pandemic eases and businesses are in a position to think about future recruitment, the campaign will continue to explore ways to ensure our young people are considered for emerging opportunities.

Jobs

The pandemic has had a profound impact on the labour market, and on the council's ability to support residents into work and progress in work. Since March 2020, Universal Credit claimants in Southwark have risen from a little over 8,000 to over 21,000.

Local and regional evidence is showing that younger and older people, and Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents have been disproportionately affected. Despite severe restrictions placed on services like Southwark Works, we have still managed to support 1,005 residents into employment across all council programmes since the onset of the pandemic.

The most significant contributor to delivering employment support is Southwark Works, which has in place a network of specialist providers who provide tailored employment support to Southwark residents. Southwark Works has a significant focus on support for vulnerable young people including care leavers.

Apprenticeships

The aim of the apprenticeship programme is to increase the creation and uptake of good quality apprenticeships, particularly amongst young people. Since 2014, the council has supported the creation of 3,685 apprenticeships. This has been achieved through:

- engaging with local businesses to create apprenticeship opportunities
- stimulating uptake amongst residents of all ages and
- the council's internal apprenticeship scheme.

Prior to the pandemic, the Council Plan included a commitment to supporting the creation of 2,500 apprenticeships between 2018 and 2022. Although the pandemic has shifted the council's focus towards rebuilding and recovering the economy, apprenticeship creation remains at the heart of this and we continue to track apprenticeship and internship outcomes.

Internships

The Council Plan 2018-22 included a commitment to *make sure that 500 young people from low income backgrounds get paid internships with London's best employers*. In July 2019, Cabinet approved an internship programme which would be delivered via three main schemes:

- Within the Council
- Through schools
- Graduates.

As part of the Youth New Deal we will continue to promote quality internships and work alongside our commissioned providers to promote the merits of paid internships to employers in the borough, particularly for those from less advantaged backgrounds, and lead by example through our own internal scheme.

The internship programme has included the following key achievements:

- 33 council internships created
- 160 paid internships created / supported (total)
- 120 virtual internships / online programmes.

In relation to our work with 16/17 years olds not in education, employment or training, we are committed to the following:

- To continue to track education destinations of young people age 16-18 in order to be able to encourage them to remain in education to improve employment opportunities.
- To continue to refer young people presenting as not in education, employment or training to good quality providers (e.g. Southwark College).
- The post-16 service frequently updates the post-16 brochure with information about education, employment and training opportunities for young people up between 16 and 18 (years 12-13 at school).
- The Post-16 service has been linking with other council departments at every opportunity to develop a cohesive package of support for this cohort as they move into adulthood.