

Item No. 3.2	Classification: Open	Date: 22 November 2023	Meeting Name: Council Assembly
Report title:		Motion on the Theme: Giving our children and young people the best start in life	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Proper Constitutional Officer	

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The theme for this meeting is Giving our children and young people the best start in life.

The relevant cabinet member shall submit a motion on the theme. All other political groups on the council are allowed to submit one amendment to the motion. The cabinet member's motion and the amendments do not need to be seconded. The cabinet member will present the motion to the meeting, followed by the lead opposition spokesperson's response and moving of their amendment, if any. Following this, the subject matter of the theme will be open to debate. Amendment(s) from other opposition groups on the council can be moved during this part of the meeting.

Motion from Councillor Jasmine Ali, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Refugees

1. The opening statement of the council's delivery plan is "We will support children and young people to thrive".
2. We are delivering excellent schools:
 - a. Under this Southwark Labour administration, our council is delivering the best possible start in life for our children. The recent Ofsted report for our children's services was rated Good and reported that "Children are at the heart of practice in Southwark". With 97% of our schools rated good or outstanding, education in Southwark has never been stronger.
 - b. Today education outcomes for our children and young people are consistently above the national average with many of our schools among the best 10% state-funded schools in the country.
 - c. Children in our care are also achieving phenomenal results. This year the children in our care achieved straight A's, B's, ABC's, Distinctions and Merits, with one student achieving AAA* to meet (and then accept) their offer from St Hugh's College, Oxford University. Ten students successfully progressed on to their choice

of further education. As corporate parents, we couldn't be more proud of what children in our care have achieved.

3. We are delivering Free Healthy School Meals:
 - a. This year marks 10 years since Southwark Council began providing universal free school meals for all primary school children, improving health outcomes for children and reducing the prevalence of obesity.
 - b. Now we are providing Free Healthy Schools for our nursery settings and this autumn we are piloting Free Healthy School meals for secondary school children in need.
 - c. This extra support is a lifeline for families through austerity and now the cost of living crisis. Along with our Holiday Fun programme makes sure that children in need have activities through the school holidays.
 - d. During the pandemic Southwark Council worked with the Teaching Schools Alliance and local residents to raise £500k for laptops and tablets for any child who needs one.
4. We are committed to delivering support for 100% of children and young people with a mental health need, special education needs and or disabilities:
 - a. In 2020 Southwark council opened The Nest, our free mental health drop-in for children and young people. We invested £2 million into schools as part of our commitment to support 100% of children and young people with a diagnosable mental health need.
 - b. Southwark is home to 9,000 Children with Special Education Needs, 3,000 of those children are on Education Health and Care plans. We have special needs schools, and have launched a SEND strategy for faster assessments and more opportunities for children and young people with special needs and or disabilities.
5. We are delivering justice for our young people:
 - a. Our Youth Justice Team shows a consistently lower reoffending rate than the national average, and lower than London as a whole.
 - b. Our service rated Good and the lead inspector said "There's a genuine community spirit about Southwark Youth Justice Service. From the staff to local volunteers to the children themselves, there is support for the service's work and an ambition to succeed."
6. We are delivering healthy lives:
 - a. The council is committed to enabling children in Southwark to lead happy, healthy and full lives.

- b. We further note the refurbishment of play areas across the borough so that every child has access to a top quality place to play in their neighbourhood.

7. We are delivering a Youth New Deal:

- a. Our New Deal for Young People has invested over £1.6 million in positive activities for young people
- b. We have created 623 apprenticeships since May 2022, for people of all ages, and in particular our young people
- c. We are building on the learning from the pilot of the sure start for adolescents – we are working with young people, parents and youth providers to deliver the vision for early intervention across the borough. This will align with our family hub development
- d. We have launched an Information Hub with up-to-the-minute real time information on employment, education and training opportunities
- e. We are guaranteeing mental health support for young people in our borough with projects like, Southwark Space. Southwark Space has been able to do this in an innovative way by creating a platform where young people can express themselves and tell their stories and link them to charities like the Sickle Cell Society who offer mentoring to young people with this disease.

8. This council nevertheless believes:

- a. That after thirteen years of cuts and austerity from Conservative and Liberal Democrat governments, not all families are thriving.
 - i. Early years services are underfunded and our nurseries in the absence of adequate funding are being decimated. A recent Early Education and teaching unions found that more than half of all maintained nursery schools in England had an in-year deficit in 2021-22, and 28 per cent of them had a cumulative deficit, with only 41 per cent had been able to set a balanced budget for 2022-23.
 - ii. In September 2023, a report commissioned by Action for Children, Barnardo's, The Children's Society, National Children's Bureau and NSPCC, found that spending on early intervention for children has reduced from just over £3.7 billion in 2010-11, to just over £2 billion in 2021-22 - a fall of almost half (46%), while spending on late intervention services grew from around £6 billion to £8.8 billion, again an increase of almost half (46%)

- iii. 8.3 At the same, the government Early Intervention Grant fell from £2.8 billion to £1.1 billion, a 60% fall in funding that was specifically provided to prevent children and young people and families falling into crisis before they get help and support.
 - b. There is therefore a vital need to invest in early intervention and prevention.
 - i. We are continuing to see high levels of complex need in Southwark and increasing demand for support to give our children and young people a good start in life.
 - ii. There has been a 100% increase in the number of children with the most complex special educational needs and disabilities – up from 1,421 in 2015 to 2,956 in 2023.
 - iii. Children and young people in the borough are more likely to face poverty and deprivation than the older age groups in Southwark.
 - iv. The Children’s Commissioner for England’s childhood vulnerability index, consistently ranks Southwark in the highest 10% for key areas of concern for children’s wellbeing in the home:
 - Some 5% of children in Southwark live in households where an adult has an alcohol or drug dependency
 - Some 8% of children in Southwark live in households where an adult experienced domestic abuse in the last year
 - Some 18% of children live in households where an adult has severe mental ill-health symptoms
 - A massive 23% of children live in households where an adult has one of the above risks; in total 4,360 (7%) of children live in households where an adult has two or more of the above risks; and 1% of children live in households where an adult has all three of the above risks.
9. Council assembly calls on the cabinet to support children and young people to thrive, and therefore to prioritise:
 - a. Closing the gap in life chances for our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families.

- b. Increasing identification of special educational needs and disabilities in the early years, and intervening earlier to support families with children with SEND.
- c. Making sure all children are school-ready at age 5
- d. Work with our health and early years system to deliver the start for life programme
- e. Developing the multi-agency offer and support to parents of children and adolescents to reduce the incidence of issues such as serious youth violence, exploitation, and the rate of teenagers entering care
- f. Ensuring the best start for life for all children by ensuring more parenting support for new parents, more access to support around perinatal mental health concerns, and increasing the breastfeeding rates.
- g. Empowering local communities themselves to develop and drive the local offer of services through our Family Hubs.

10. This council resolves to:

- a. Inspired by the London Challenge, set up a Southwark Challenge to close the gap in outcomes for our children and young people. This will be representative of schools, early year's settings, social care, housing, youth services, the voluntary sector, health, children's mental health and youth justice.
- b. Realise the massive opportunity for our partnership services and communities to work more closely together to intervene earlier and improve outcomes for our children and families and realise the benefits and opportunities to reinvest those benefits in earlier support.
- c. Bring our residents, community and partners together for an Early Help/Supporting Families Summit to design together, in a people powered way, the future state of our support system.
- d. To build on the missions developed through the Southwark 2030 consultation and engagement exercise to develop a single borough vision and missions for the present and futures of our children and young people.
- e. Work within the council and with partners to marshal our social value, power and influence to advocate and create every possible opportunity for our most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, those with special educational needs and disabilities, our children in care, and those facing the starkest inequalities in our society.

- f. Work to transform our whole borough supporting families system away from siloed services in single centralised spaces into integrated neighbourhood delivery arrangements through our Family Hubs.
- g. Work with our partners to take the opportunity to integrate and pool resources and assets to incrementally move from a place of investing in crisis to investing in prevention.
- h. Close the gap in life chances for our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families.
- i. Increase identification of special educational needs and disabilities in the early years, and intervening earlier to support families with children with SEND and make Southwark an exemplar in child and family centred SEND services.
- j. Make sure all children are school ready at age 5.
- k. Expand our offer of Free Healthy School Meals programme to secondary schools for pupils in families affected by the Universal Credit threshold.
- l. Develop the multi-agency offer and support to parents of children with adolescents –to reduce the incidence of issues such as serious youth violence, exploitation, and the rate of teenagers entering care.
- m. Ensure the best start for life for all children –by ensuring more parenting support for new parents, more access to support around perinatal mental health concerns, and increasing the breastfeeding rates.
- n. Empower local communities through people power, to develop and drive the local offer of services through our Family Hubs.
- o. Support the election of a government that will:
 - i. Make it a mission to break down the barriers to opportunity FOR every child, at every stage, and shatter the class ceiling.
 - ii. Create a modern childcare system with breakfast clubs in every primary school to give children the best start.
 - iii. Make sure there is a world class teacher in every classroom, recruiting 6,500 new staff, paid for by ending tax breaks for private schools.
 - iv. Introduce a broader curriculum, developing creativity, digital and speaking skills that ensure young people leave school ready for work and ready for life.
 - v. Expand apprenticeships and skills training to spread opportunity for all.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Cabinet members Motion	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Constitutional Team Constitutional.Team@southwark.gov.uk

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Chidilim Agada, Head of Constitutional Services
Report Author	Virginia Wynn-Jones, Principal Constitutional Officer
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