

## **COUNCIL ASSEMBLY**

**WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2012**

**Including themed debate on opportunities for young people**

### **SOME COMMUNITY VIEWS**

#### **Resident 1**

We already have a lot of youth clubs but I think the quality and content of what they offer could be improved, such as more training courses. Could youth clubs offer something equivalent to GCSEs?

We also need to get better at promoting volunteering opportunities for young people aged 16 years and over. And a greater variety of sporting options, like boxing, martial arts and kayaking. More and more young people are interested in sports like these.

#### **Resident 2**

I'd like to see more conferences for young people on raising their aspirations. I know of a person whose life was changed for the better with support of this kind, and he became a successful businessman.

I'm willing to try and be a good role model myself among the people I live with. I want to do good to help young people do well at school. I volunteered in the summer holidays in Bermondsey.

#### **Resident 3**

I took part in some activities at Millwall Football Club, and I wouldn't mind benefitting from more of what they do in terms of things like football coaching. We need to do more of this work with and through primary schools across Southwark.

#### **Resident 4**

I think there should be more youth clubs in Southwark as lots of young people go to them. I also think the laying on of courses like First Aid would improve opportunities for young people. Nowadays it's all about getting courses and experience under your belt.

#### **Resident 5**

My school provides two to three weeks' work experience opportunities at the moment, but I think school work experience should be longer, like 3 to 4 weeks. 16 to 17 year olds believe there's a lack of job opportunities, or no jobs going at all, so they get involved in other stuff like selling drugs. With prices going up everywhere they need money, so they start stealing.

I'm willing to play my part. I can help teach people to play football. I can also give out newsletters to people in the community who can't get to the shops - a bit like what paper round people do.

#### **Resident 6**

We need more youth clubs with more things for young people to do, like football and dance classes. Local businesses should provide more work experience opportunities.

What about giving young people a National Insurance card at an earlier age, like 14 or 15? I think this will help give them more work experience opportunities, and improve their employment prospects from an earlier age.

#### **Resident 7**

Young people want more and better stuff to do. They also need more positive role models.

If you're black, you tend not to be seen positively or taken seriously because of the way you dress. You're accused of 'not being dressed for the occasion'. But many of us feel forced to dress as we do because we don't have the financial means to dress in the way employers want.

### **Resident 8**

I'd like to see more 'gangs workshops', delivered by some young people and maybe ex-gang members. It's been well proved how that kind of stuff helps to turn around the lives of our young people.

### **Resident 9**

The council should provide more employment and work experience opportunities for teenagers. I'm 25 now and I've never had any paid work experience, because with every application I make they're asking for my previous work experience, and I don't have any.

What about establishing something like an employment support scheme for young people?

### **Resident 10**

There's not enough youth support workers. I think volunteer youth workers should be encouraged, and I wouldn't mind doing something like this myself.

I also think we should involve ex-offenders more, to help prevent young people committing crimes, and to get vulnerable young people to open up and tell us what would really help them, so that we as a community can provide better support where it's really needed.

Ex-offenders can be very effective at getting across the message that crime is not an option, and that it never pays. They're the best people to send home the message that 'if you commit the crime, you do the time'.

### **Resident 11**

Any work to improve opportunities for young people in Southwark and to motivate them should be aimed at where most young people go.

Youth workers should play a bigger role in young people's lives.

## **Resident 12**

Apprenticeships and youth training schemes are very good for improving the employment prospects of young people. A lot of them feel discouraged from going to university because of the high costs involved. Clearer messages about options other than going to university should be spelt out.

Employers should be more understanding of the culture and faith of a prospective employee. Consciously or not, they effectively discriminate on the grounds of people's religious beliefs. For example, many Muslim boys can't shave their beards and Muslim girls can't remove their head covering because of their religion.

I also believe that the media could do a lot more to stop the glamourising and idolising of gang life. The harsh reality is not at all glamorous or attractive. Some young people can't separate the real from the fake in their own minds.

## **Resident 13**

More life skills training opportunities should be laid on because not enough of them seem to be laid on at the moment.

We also need a lot more work experience opportunities for 12 to 16 year olds, exposing them to the real-life work environment. That way they get to understand what the world of work is really like.

## **Resident 14**

We have many opportunities for young people in Southwark, and the council is doing a good job at organising events and activities for young people, as well as providing youth clubs. But they're not always so good at promoting what's there. As a result, lots of young people never hear anything about what's going on, so we don't attend or take part.

Southwark Council employs a lot of people in so many areas of work, but are we recruiting enough young people into these roles? Youth unemployment is at such a critical level right now that we need to prioritise the young when we're recruiting.

### **Resident 15**

Young people claim that it's gang culture that's holding them back, but I think it's their own mindset that's the problem. They make decisions to get involved with gangs. I accept that peer pressure and bad childhoods are factors, but it's the right support they need to make the right life choices.

### **Resident 16**

Even just giving out more volunteering opportunities or anything that would help young people to earn some money by doing something enjoyable - like being a youth worker. That would be a big help.

It's very discouraging for young people when they spend so much time and energy looking for jobs and keep getting turned down. That's when they're most tempted to give up and choose to go down an employment route that's illegal.

### **Resident 17**

There's a real lack of collaboration and co-operation between the different places that advertise jobs. Dividing up employment support and job advertising so that there's a single point of contact for each would be good for 16 to 24 year olds.

I took some young people to see a film about the riots last year. Afterwards they said, 'What chance do we have knowing our identity is linked to such stereotypical views of young people?'

There should be more youth advocacy in Southwark, and more consistent co-ordination of time and money.

### **Resident 18**

There's a lot of fear out there and I want to see more community meetings where young people have a voice, and they get to tell their own side of the story.

## **Resident 19**

We need a clear and continued commitment to supporting our young people. They have a lot of things on their minds right now, including trouble with gangs. Some of them are very angry and many are afraid of being harmed.

I'd like to see better channels of communication with young people in the community, and a lot more career fairs.

## **Resident 20**

Young people need help to find jobs, and education opportunities to keep us busy. The more time we have on our hands, the easier it is to get into trouble.

I think apprenticeships are a great idea as they're a proven path into employment.

A lot of young people in Southwark are worried about getting into the wrong kind of company, but when you're not in education, training, or employment, it's very hard to avoid.

## **Resident 21**

Young people need job opportunities most of all. But to succeed we need the right skills for the areas of work we're interested in.

I think our generation of young people needs more confidence and greater ambition. Too many of us are focused on getting jobs in retail but we should also be doing more to improve our communities as well as our own lives.

Young people have many things on their minds these days and each one is different. Some are struggling with drugs or involved in violence. Others have problems at home, or they're just trying to get a job or proper training.

I'm willing to play my part and volunteer, especially if it's for the good of my local community.

## **Resident 22**

I just wish employers would at least give us an interview! When you meet someone in person it's always better than on paper. Even if we don't succeed at least we gain the experience of being interviewed.

## **Resident 23**

We need opportunities that impact on young lives in the long term rather than going for short term fixes.

I don't agree that certain opportunities should only be available to young people not in employment, education, or training. We need to broaden the field so that it's open to all.

In my experience, work experience is crucial. If you don't have that you're far less likely to get a job. We also need help to become more self-confident and better at selling ourselves in job interviews. But that doesn't mean we need workshops where a successful person gives a boring presentation on all they've achieved.

We need practical help where we get the chance to do it for ourselves, and learn by doing. It would also be good to hold more events where young people can come along and speak to employers and do job interviews on the day.

Most young people I speak to are very worried about financial problems. They're becoming more independent and want to have their own money. That includes young people who are still in the education system. A greater variety of part-time jobs could help them massively.

## **Resident 24**

To most improve young people's lives they need more sponsors - people they can rely on to talk with, and who make them feel like they're someone.

Young people often don't feel very valued in the home. They need mentors to meet with them and give them ideas.

I work in a school, and some of the children don't even want to go home at the end of the day. But if you can't turn to your parents, who can you rely on?

### **Resident 25**

In terms of better employment opportunities for young people, we need to be more enterprising and help them to set up their own businesses. That would give them a great sense of satisfaction and fulfilment.

### **Resident 26**

One thing that would improve the lives of young people would be a clear access route forward. So many of them don't know where to turn or which direction to go.

What also troubles young people is getting caught up with the need to have the latest trendy gadget, like iPhones, and keeping up with the Joneses. It's a mug's game!

### **Resident 27**

What would improve opportunities for young people is an increase in jobs, or opportunities to further our education and realise our ambitions for the future. I'm in that situation right now myself. I'm finally going to gain some experience through Southwark Works.

We need to have our voice heard, so that people in positions of influence know the struggles we're going through. I have a story to tell, and my story needs to become part of your story too.

### **Resident 28**

Young people need to be aware of where they can go and do things, like jobs or volunteering opportunities. Just things to get your hands on, to keep busy I guess.

### **Resident 29**

I've only lived here for a short time and I find it very different to where I've come from.

I'm studying here and I think that families need to support young people more. My Mum and Dad always supported me, and told me to achieve my dreams.

But at school the teachers were always telling me, 'You're never going to be able to make it there, you're never going to be able to do it'. I told them to \*\*\*\* off, cause you can achieve what you want at the end of the day.

Schools need to tell kids to go for their dreams, and not discourage them all the time. It's unfair, but if children have an upbringing where their parents don't care, then they won't have that proper motivation.

### **Resident 30**

People don't want to do training; they get enough money to just float about and do nothing. They don't get enough, but if it's enough to get you a bit of puff or to do this or do that, you'd rather float about and make money illegally, because you don't need to make money the right way.

The people I meet who are doing that often come from a background where they've been assisted to do that. It's a no win situation. There needs to be more outreach at schools where they need to instil the need for further education early on.

I'm not from a rough background. My parents instilled in me the need for education and gave me the idea of needing to get a job, and now I've come back to study as a mature student. If you want to change young people's outlooks, you have to get into problem families and sort them out.

### **Resident 31**

The young ones need some sort of entertainment - anything to keep them out of trouble. They're bored and they have nothing to do and they make trouble. They have problems.

### **Resident 32**

We need more exciting training opportunities or places where young people can do internships, such as in social enterprise.

I work for the Salvation Army and I see quite a few young people, and this is what they seem to need.

### **Resident 33**

The young need more work, but there are very few jobs around. So they get up to all sorts of things, and that's the problem. If they were in work they'd be ok. They got no money so they get into trouble.

### **Resident 34**

Providing job opportunities for young people is the main thing. My advice for parents is that they should look after their kids. There are a lot of private companies that could give young people more jobs.

### **Resident 35**

More attention at home is needed. So many young people get to their teenage years and they're left to run a bit wild. The parents think they're savvier than they actually are, but you've still got to keep your eye on them. Ask them what they're doing, where they're going - that sort of thing. They don't like it, but that's life.

As for jobs, it's a whole different generation from when I was leaving school. They like being on the net a lot. The days of old when they were all happy to get a job in Poundland have gone. They've all got stars in their eyes now. They haven't got a realistic view of themselves or the work market.

### **Resident 36**

We badly need more opportunities for apprenticeships and the criteria to enrol on one should be looser in terms of GCSE grades.

We should also link volunteering programmes to full or part time employment.

There are just not enough opportunities for young people to do positive things. Not enough youth and sports provision. Young people feel stereotyped even more so since the riots.

### **Resident 37**

More needs to be invested in young people such as employment and training opportunities. I really appreciated the help of Southwark Connexions. You need more services like that to help young people.

Young people need more support. The Education Maintenance Allowance or EMA was a good thing in that it really helped to support a lot of young people.

### **Resident 38**

Negative perception and opinions from older people on young people need to change.

We need more apprenticeship schemes and training opportunities that offer continual support, be it if you go onto further training, education, employment, or you drop out.

The peer pressure to be in gangs is very great.

### **Resident 39**

Young people need more work opportunities if they want to get ahead in life.

We need to have more job fairs where they reach into communities where people badly need to find jobs.

Then there's the negative perception of young people. That's still very strong and it hinders our life chances and career prospects.

Work permits for overseas students, who have to support themselves until they return. And experience they gain here is carried back abroad.

### **Resident 40**

Access to part-time jobs would improve our lives because having enough money and education is on our minds all the time.

Young people have to incur a high cost of travel if they have to go to college outside the borough.

As young people we think that volunteering would help, but we're studying full-time at 6th form college now, and doing extra studies on top.

### **Resident 41**

A greater variety of social activities would improve young people's lives the most. When you're at a tender age, you tend to go off the rails.

To improve our employment prospects we need more apprenticeships, especially for young people who have left school without academic training. They need to acquire experience.

Young people like my nephew keep talking about the lack of opportunity. He couldn't finish his GCSE's but now he's about 21, he has discovered what he really would like to do if he had the chance.

### **Resident 42**

The economy is in crisis at a macro level all around the world and these issues need to be resolved first. Things are so bad that some people need to do two or three jobs just to make ends meet.

Young people need more support from the family and with education.

### **Resident 43**

Young people concern themselves a lot with technology, and it preoccupies them too much. I think they talk about the same things that I used to talk about a few years ago - boyfriends, music, celebrities, but with a different approach, a more technological approach.

They haven't got enough contact with the things of the physical world – the great outdoors.

#### **Resident 44**

We need to provide our young people with a better education. We should also incentivise businesses to employ more young people through tax breaks, and by providing investment grade space at cheap rents to businesses.

#### **Resident 45**

I think it would be excellent if young people in Southwark had the opportunity for satisfying, useful and properly paid employment matched with their existing skills and with prospects of making progress according to their potential.

I'm disgusted by the insinuation by government that young people (or indeed people of any age) are at fault when there are no suitable jobs for them. I am sickened by the idea that they should work for free for low-rent commercial exploiters.

I'm not sure what I expect Southwark Council to do about it all. It could offer "work placements" but one of the main things about "work" is the "pay" and the sense that you are valued and paid properly for your efforts.

#### **Resident 46**

Young people in Southwark need more jobs, education opportunities, places of leisure, and a voice in the community. The young need to be part of the decision-making process.

Many young people want to become famous, successful in business, or to succeed in their education in order to find a great job which they like to do. Young people are also worried about the future prosperity.

#### **Resident 47**

I would like to see more jobs for young people so that they are able to gain experience through work.

There are not enough jobs and most jobs require experience which certainly most young people do not have. In addition it is vital that you create jobs designed for young people and their needs.

The level of youth crime and the level of jobs opportunities for young people are disproportionate.

I do not need to pledge anything to Southwark as a young person, as Southwark has done nothing for us.

### **Resident 48**

The one thing that will improve opportunities for young people is having more employment. A lot of young people are unemployed and I can relate to this, but a lot can be achieved if we can move more young people into work.

### **Resident 49**

It would be great to create more apprenticeships and training programmes that will lead young people into permanent work because that's what young people are striving for at the moment.

It would be good to create more jobs that don't require years of experience. One of the reasons why young people are struggling these days is because when they apply for a job the first thing the employer wants is experience. But how can they have experience when they never had a job beforehand? It's really difficult to find work and gain experience in this current climate.

### **Resident 50**

The thing that will most improve opportunities for young people is to create more apprenticeship programmes as well as workshops to prevent crime and violence.

The thing that is most troubling young people is unemployment and the only thing on their mind is how to find a job.

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**Some young people (and their parents or carers) face unique challenges. This is a selection of comments gathered by the council's Children's Services Department.**

## **Young offenders**

I've been supported by the council's Youth Offending Team (YOT). My YOT worker sat me down and we discussed what happened and why I did the crime. Since then I've come to the YOT to communicate and discuss things with my worker. We have good communication and I think things have gone well.

I have a better relationship with my family and school. I feel calmer, can make better choices, and I'm not getting into trouble.

I've got into college and started a business course, and I love it. I'm going to start doing my appointments with a connexions worker to help me with my CV and to help me find a job.

I had to stop committing crimes. I've learnt that there's no point in doing what I've done, as it's not worth getting into trouble for. I've had a better relationship with my Mum since coming to YOT.

It's made me understand the affect offending can have on your life.

## **Care leavers**

The negatives about being in care are probably the stigma around it. People seem to think they know you and judge you just because you've been in care, but everyone has a different life experience and a different reason for being in care.

I had experience of both foster homes and children's homes and personally I think the foster homes were better. I don't think children's homes were good; too many kids with different problems and life experiences. Then you mix with them and you get into s\*\*\* yourself or see things that you wouldn't have seen if you weren't exposed to it. Being in a foster home was better, it was more stable, secure, and more like family.

The first foster carer I had was good, I'm still in touch with her now and she's a big part of my life.

My relationship with my foster carer is great. That's my Mum. She's never treated me as a foster child; she's always treated me as one of her own. She worked hard to build a bond with me even though for the first two years I was quite hostile with her.

She was open and understanding; she never tried to take my Mum's place and worked hard to keep her spirit alive. She made the house very welcoming, put pictures of my Mum around the house and stuff. She was just an all round good person.

### **Privately fostered**

I feel loved, very happy, and it's my home.

Where I'm living is safe and I like it.

I love it because it's cool.

She's brilliant and I love her. She's my new Mum. Well, that's what I call her now.

### **Parent and carer comments on educational psychology services**

The educational psychologist (EP) valued my views and she seemed knowledgeable about my child's difficulties.

The EP picked up all of my concerns and summed my child up in a morning. I felt understood and supported.

The EP was very adept at making my son feel comfortable and able to discuss his feelings.

I genuinely believe that we received excellent input. She was open to our concerns and the report we received was concise and accurate.

### **Children's Centre users**

This centre has really helped me and my child to believe in ourselves and have more confidence to reach out to others.

It helped me get out of the house with the children and improved my mood. It also improved my confidence as a Mum.

There's always a warm welcome here and a different activity for the children. The facilities are first class and a lot of thought goes into the activities.

When my son sees strangers he stops crying. Now he can even shake hands with some strangers and wave and say goodbye.

The Centre was very supportive of me on the death of my child. They helped me to start life again.

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