



# The Fairness Commission Report

## June 2018

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### **Dedication**

The Fairness Commission work and its report is dedicated to Cllr Adrian Davey who was a strong campaigner and advocate for equalities in Sutton and as Chair of the LBS Equality and Diversity Forum he was keen to ensure all communities have access to opportunities to ensure they could be active, valued and celebrated members of the community

### **Executive Summary**

The Sutton Fairness Commission (which started in 2017), after much deliberation, agreed that the focus of its work would be investigating what a child born today would need to have in place when it is 13 – in 2030 – to enable that child as a young person to have the best conditions for a positive future.

The Commission recognised from the secondary data already in existence that there are a number of drivers that impact on the future of young people, and as part of its conversations

it explored these drivers. These included life experiences that impact on children and young people:

- living with domestic abuse;
- living with parents/carers with mental health issues;
- living with parents/carers with drug or alcohol issues;
- family status;
- employment status of parents/carers;
- living in poverty;
- the levels of social capital they enjoy.

The Fairness Commission also recognised that there are a range of indicators that can predict the life chances of children and young people including:

- The mental health of children and young people;
- Schools readiness;
- Identity;
- Educational experiences and attainment.

The Commission hosted conversations with a diverse range of children and young people in Sutton and engaged with a range of stakeholders who work with, support or have experience of issues affecting the life chances of young people.

What the young people told us unfortunately, was not new. The Commissioners were already aware that:



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The Fairness Commission has therefore chosen to use its platform to recommend a collaborative leadership approach, with the voices of children and young people at the centre, to maximise the systemic opportunities that will support positive futures for children and young people in Sutton.

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<sup>1</sup> Outputs from the Children and Young People's Event, Sutton 2018

## Introduction

This is the report of the Sutton Fairness Commission on the future of Children and Young people in Sutton. The Commission was established in February 2017 and from that time until March 2018 it has been holding conversations with children and young people, with local voluntary and community organisations and statutory organisations who support children and young people and with other stakeholders who share a common vision of a positive future for children and young people.

This report provides sections on:

1. The engagement and consultation that informed this report;
2. The key findings from the conversations;
3. The recommendations for action;

## 1. Engagement and Consultation

The Fairness Commission developed an extensive engagement plan to inform its work with emphasis on ensuring that the voices of children and young people who not usually heard are given centre stage.

The engagement team therefore engaged with the following groups of children and young people:

- The Time Out Youth Project
- Young Carers
- Looked After Young People
- Young People in Alternative Education
- Young People with Learning Disabilities
- Young Offenders
- The Young Commissioners
- Young People and Mental Health
- A Diverse Group of Young People (through a young people's event)
- Young People attending Saturday School Provision

This was supplemented by engaging with those agencies, organisations and individuals who have a stake in the future of Sutton's children and young people:

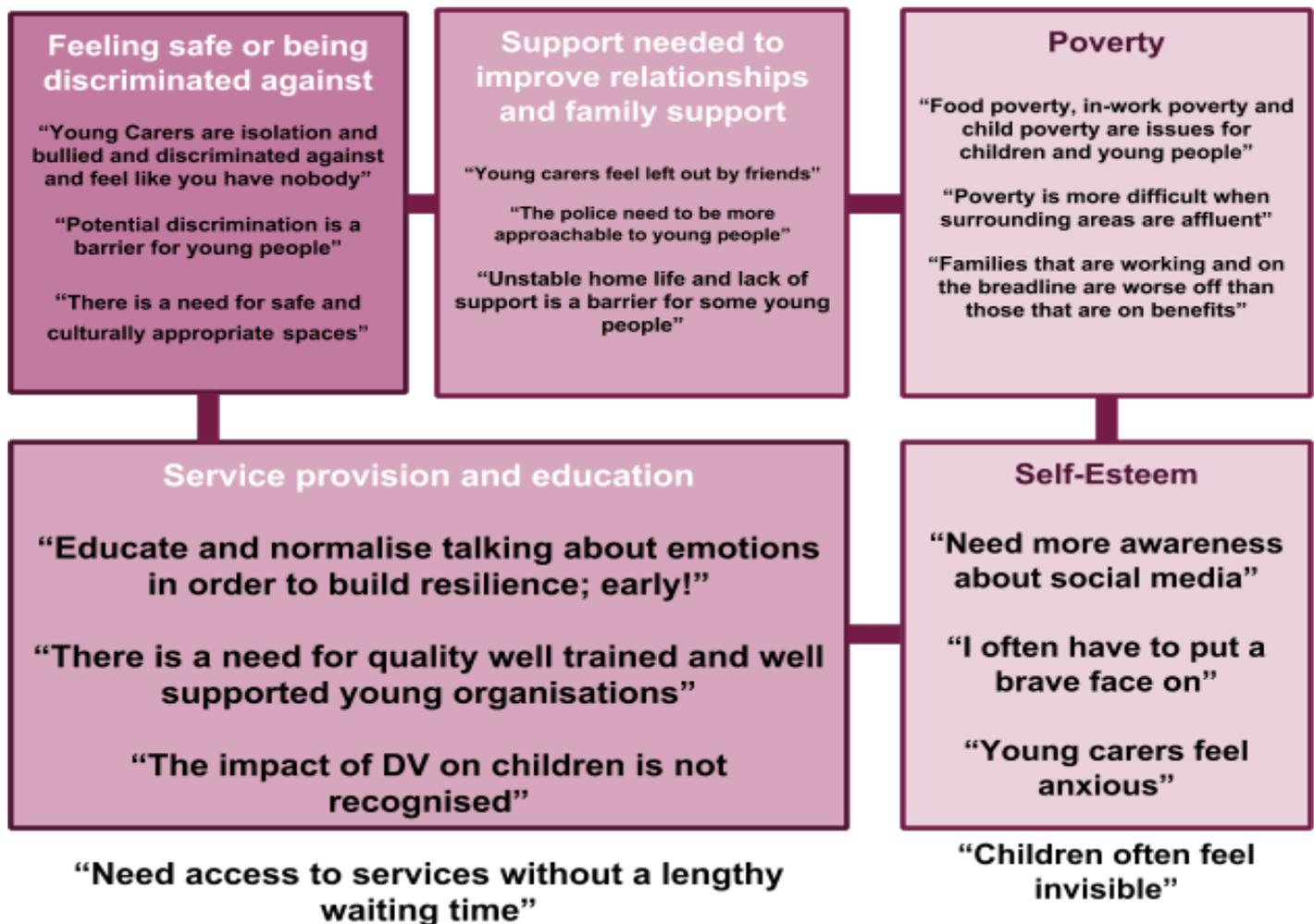
- The Fairness Commission Conference, December 2017
- The Thrive LDN Mental Health and Young People Workshop
- Homestart Parents Group
- BME Forum
- CYP & Families Forum
- Children's Centre
- Home Education Group

Finally, the Commissioners themselves have informed the conclusions and recommendations contained within this report.

## 2. The key findings from the conversations

In analysing and understanding the key findings, the Fairness Commission was struck by how little new information on the needs and experiences of children and young people had emerged. (See separate report for outcomes of the consultations and conversations)

The children and young people told the commission that their lives were impacted on by a **range of factors** and these findings were supported during the engagement of stakeholders.



Overwhelmingly, young people told us that they often don't feel listened to:

- "A need to be listened to" - Young Carer
- "A need for better communication between services and young people" - Young Carer
- "Talk to young people with an open mind and outside of the box!" – Young Commissioners
- Allow younger people to have a greater voice in our community - Young Commissioners
- "Need to equip young people with the skills to be champions in their community" - Thrive
- "Lack of youth participation and leadership" - CYPF
- "A need to ensure that children are genuinely at the centre" - CYPF

The Fairness Commission therefore posed the question:

**"If there is knowledge about the needs of children and young people and the same issues are repeated over and over, then is the issue one of not collectively responding with appropriate, timely or relevant interventions?"**

The Fairness Commission reflected that although there are pockets of good practice and energetic engagement with children and young people, there appears to be, **a systematic and collective failure** to understanding and providing a coordinated response to the needs of children and young people. This means that the potential impact of the good work that is taking place might not be being maximised.

The following two case studies provide examples of the need for more collaborative leadership and approach in responding to issues presented by young people:

## Case study 1 – A lack of Collaborative Leadership

Jimmy (not his real name) came to attention as a sibling of an Excluded Pupil during a Child in Need review when he was in Year 6. He was being taken by his sister who was being exploited to meet gang members. His sister was removed from the family home and placed in care due to sexual exploitation. Jimmy was left in the family home. He became more and more out of parental control.

Jimmy transferred to secondary school but he was excluded from secondary school in the first term of Year 7 (his first year there). He attended the Pupil Referral Unit who assessed his Special Educational Needs but got to the point of Permanent Exclusion from The Pupil Referral Unit within 6 months of his Permanent Exclusion from Secondary School.

Jimmy was increasingly becoming violent and assaulted Staff. Despite escalation and increasing evidence of his exploitation by gangs and neglect, he was left to drift and placed by the Local Authority in tuition awaiting a placement in a Special School. He was going missing and getting involved in crime. The Local Authority eventually placed him in care. His needs were now so great he has ended up in secure accommodation costing £6k a week.

There were missed opportunities to jointly plan, share resource, and to look at all children in a household. Agencies operated very much in their silos, with no joined up thinking or reviews

A collaborative leadership approach around the needs of this young person – involving better communication, shared resources and planning might have led to appropriate earlier interventions and a de-escalation of the situation leading to better outcomes for Jimmy.

However the next case study provides an example of how collaborative leadership and taking a systemic approach can lead to positive and sustainable change for young people

## Case study 2 – The outcomes with Collaborative Leadership

Gemma (not her real name) has Learning needs, they were assessed and supported. However Gemma was then sexually assaulted by a relative. She became very angry and volatile, she refused help and support. She was hurt in many ways and showed it through her violent and aggressive behaviour.

Gemma was referred for a placement at The Pupil Referral Unit as her school felt that they had not got the services and support she needed. Gemma was allocated a place and started attending.

Gemma gradually built relationships and began to trust, her learning needs were met and she found support through creative subjects. She built a significant relationship with a male member of staff who supported her in her learning and achievement.

Gemma also accessed support from health and voluntary agencies to process her feelings around her assault. Police, Social Care, voluntary sector, health and the PRU all worked together to support her through the court case. She threw her energies into her Art and attained a top grade GCSE which has taken her to college.

All through her challenges agencies worked together and they were creative and encouraged to pool resource and share information across all sectors. An Early Help process and Team Around The Child meetings were held and a joint action plan developed and implemented. The messages from strategic leaders was to pool and share resource to support. This has led to savings and a young woman taking her place in the community as a productive healthy person.

### 3. The Recommendations for Action

The Fairness Commission will use its platform to recommend a new approach to supporting a positive future for children and young people - Collaborative Leadership within the context of the Sutton Plan, with the voices of children and young people at the centre.

The principles of the Sutton Plan are consistent with the vision of change for children and young people that the Fairness Commission wishes to promote:

#### **One – think Sutton first**

We will prioritise the needs of Sutton and its communities, rather than any single organisation, throughout our work as a partnership. Residents, patients and service users will be at the heart of all of our discussions and decisions. We will listen to your issues and priorities and do our utmost to understand what is happening in your lives – and how you'd like us to respond. Residents will be asked to help drive forward the change needed in their streets and across the borough.

#### **Two – work across sectors**

We will build and sustain partnerships across all of the borough's sectors. We will value the distinct contributions made by all of the bodies and organisations signed up to The Sutton Plan, and we will support each other as we work towards achieving our shared vision and objectives.

#### **Three – get involved early**

We will tackle the causes of problems, not merely react to their symptoms. We will look beyond traditional services for ways to tackle the root causes of social problems and disaffection.

#### **Four – build stronger, self-sufficient communities**

We will help communities work together, and in partnership with other local organisations, to build and maintain strong social networks and opportunities for individuals and organisations to work together.

#### **Five – provide coordinated, seamless services**

We will improve the way we work together behind the scenes to reduce the number of times people have to contact public services. Put simply, we will do what works best, regardless of who does it. In particular, we will work to enable as much health and care support as possible to take place at home and in the community.

The Sutton Plan has identified children and young people as a priority and the Fairness Commission wants to support the implementation of that vision:

***“Providing coherent, cross-partner support for young families at risk of disadvantage – collaborating on a new approach to early intervention that brings together midwives,***

***health workers, children's centres, social workers and the voluntary sector with the aim of creating a more rational, single point service"***

However, the Fairness Commission recognises that for this to happen requires a new approach – that of Collaborative Leadership and that this would be best achieved through the Sutton Plan partnership.

Collaborative Leadership, starts from the premise that:

***"...if you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information, they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the organization or community.<sup>2</sup>"***

The time is right to develop this approach in Sutton because:

- The experiences of young people are serious and complex and require attention from a number of individuals, groups and organisations;
- The voices of children and young people need to be at the centre of any response;
- There are a number of diverse stakeholders and stakeholders with varied interests;
- Other agency by agency solutions haven't worked;
- The issue affects a whole community;
- Inclusiveness and empowerment are key goals from the beginning.

The Fairness Commission therefore offers a process driven set of recommendations designed to hold the collaborative leadership for the future of young people to account:

1. That all decisions that impact on children and young people – now or in the future are taken within the context of: **'NO DECISION ABOUT ME, WITHOUT ME' The Kings Fund**
2. That the recommendations and solutions defined by the Fairness Commission are located within the Sutton Plan partnership context and framework;
3. That cross-partnership conversations with: children and young people; public sector e.g. housing, health, council, [police, fire etc.] and the voluntary and community sector leaders take place; to
4. Agree the key areas for action and where change needs to be evident over the next 3 years (using the 'You Said – We Did' evidence generated during the work of the Fairness Commission) and locate these actions within the relevant Sutton wide or organisational partnerships or strategies; and to
5. Define a series of quick wins in each of those areas; that

6. Are subject to scrutiny and review at an annual partnership conference; leading to
7. An annual audit to ensure that children and young people's voice and engagement are included in all Sutton wide and agency by agency strategies and plans; that
8. This is a key area of work for the Fairness Commission as it reviews it terms of reference and takes on a future role to embed equality and diversity in Sutton

Finally the Commission would like to share the findings of its work at all relevant partnership boards and committees and to embed the role of a body like The Fairness Commission into the fabric of Sutton

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