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Poverty And Inequality in Southwark

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Module: Community Care and Development

Code: BMHP2062

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Date: 15/12/2023

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Introduction

According Verbes (2022), the population of Southwark is about 307,000 (2021 census). In 2025, Southwark is projected to have a population of 335,020, and by 2030, the population is projected to have increased to 342,903. Situated on the southern bank of the River Thames, Southwark is a highly populated, multicultural, and vibrant area made up of a variety of communities, ranging from the leafy Dulwich area to the bustling Peckham, Camberwell, and the rapidly developing Rotherhithe peninsula. Southwark like the UK is a diverse borough. In Southwark, the majority of people (51.4%) identified themselves as White (compared to 54.2%) in 2021, while the majority (25.1%) identified themselves as Black (compared to 26.9%) in 2021. The proportion of people (9.9%) who identified themselves as Asian (compared to 9.4%) in 2011 and (9.4) in 2021. In Southwark, the proportion of Christians in the population in 2021 was 43.3%, a decrease from the previous year's 52.5%, while the proportion of Muslims in the population was 9.6%, an increase from the previous decade's 8.5%. Hindu 1.1%, Buddhist 1.0%, and the rest are below 1.0%. The average male salary is £57,791 and £48,106 for female employees. (Office of National Statistics, 2023)

Poverty is when you can't afford to heat your house, pay rent, or buy the things you need for your kids. It's when you wake up every day with insecurity, uncertainty, and impossible financial decisions. It means you're at risk of being excluded and even discriminated against due to your financial situation. The stress that poverty brings can lead to issues that prevent people from playing their full role in society. (JRF, n.d.). The concept of inequality, which is people not having rights and opportunities, is at the core of social justice theories. Poverty and inequality are global problems/issues. Even though the United Kingdom is considered one of the wealthiest countries in the world, we still have challenges when it comes to poverty and inequality. That is why the community has identified Poverty and Inequality as the main community development plan they should address because of its importance to the health and well-being of its people. (UN, 2015).

A community is a collective of individuals who inhabit the same geographical area and share a common interest or cultural heritage. It may be defined as a geographical area, such as a neighbourhood or a city, or it may be defined by shared attributes, such as a hobby or affiliation with an organization. (Quora, 2011). Community development, or participation, is the process of engaging and leading community members in the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of community activities or initiatives that are beneficial to them and the community. (The Social Work Graduate, 2021)

Child Poverty, Unemployment, Homelessness, and Digital exclusion are the focus of this community development plan, and the report aims to identify poverty and inequality in Southwark and to outline possible actions to make life better for the community.

Community Development Plan

Firstly, Child poverty is defined by the United Kingdom Government as a situation in which a child lives in a household whose income is less than sixty per cent of the national average. This poverty can manifest itself in a variety of ways. For example, if parents are unable to provide for their children, this is a sign of poverty. Other indicators of poverty include a lack of adequate heating or electricity, the need to sacrifice food, and living in insecure accommodation due to a lack of sufficient rent payments. This type of poverty can affect every aspect of a child's life. In the UK, a kid can get enough food, clothes, and school, but they're still poor because their parents don't have the money to put them in a warm house, give them a computer so they can do their homework, or take them on school trips with their friends. (Isabella and Hanna, 2023). Child poverty in Southwark is alarming because it has the 6th

highest rate of poverty among local authorities in the United Kingdom. A recent study has revealed that a significant proportion of children in Southwark remain in poverty, with a rate of 43.1%. Furthermore, the rate of child poverty in Southwark is estimated to be 20 per cent, after taking into account rent and related expenses. (London News, 2021)

Therefore, the Community has identified why kids live in poverty and the actions that need to be taken to address the problem: The need for a comprehensive reform of the social security system has been identified, particularly as regards universal credit reforms and the removal of the two-child age limit for certain benefits. The five-week delay in the initial payment of universal credit has been attributed to an increase in food bank usage and an increase in the number of children in poverty. While new claimants may be eligible for an advance loan, this must be repaid, resulting in payments being spread out over thirteen weeks instead of twelve, thus further exacerbating the debt burden of families. This initiative seeks to provide employment opportunities for individuals belonging to minority ethnic groups, such as Black, Asian, and disabled people, as well as families with disabled children, at a salary that is at least equal to or higher than the London Living Wage. Free school meals should be introduced to all schools in the borough as hunger is a major factor in the health of children, as it can lead to a deficiency of vitamins, nutrients, and proteins, which can weaken their immune system and increase the risk of illness and injury. It can also have a detrimental effect on their mental wellbeing. (Southwark Council, 2022).

In addition, in Southwark, people aged 16 and over had an unemployment rate of 4.6% in March 2023, which was the same as the previous year. Around 51,000 people aged 16-64 were considered to be 'economically inactive', which was up from 48,100 in 2022. The objective of this initiative is to reduce the barriers to employment for disadvantaged groups in Southwark, to facilitate the entry of new workers into the labour market, to ensure that employment is sustainable, to build the skills of the workforce in Southwark, and to reduce the risk of long-term unemployment among Southwark residents. The community, however, seeks to provide individuals with the necessary resources to engage in meaningful work, particularly those who are currently unemployed and at risk of long-term joblessness and financial instability. (Office of National Statistics, 2023).

The implementation of apprenticeships, traineeships, paid internships, and work experience programmes should be stepped up to ensure that young people are provided with the highest quality of service. Make sure young people and adults don't get stuck in the job market; teach them basic skills; and spread the word about lifelong learning opportunities. Ensure that mainstream and specialist assistance is utilised by as many difficult-to-reach individuals as possible, and that the borough continues to attract the highest possible financial resources to this end. (Southwark Council, 2023)

According to Herbie (2023), Southwark has one of the highest rates of homelessness in the UK, with over a quarter of the population living without a place to call home. A new report from Shelter has revealed that 2,784 children are living in temporary accommodation in the borough, which is the eighth worst in London. On average, 10 people were found sleeping rough on any given night in Southwark in 2022. To Make housing more affordable, we should reduce the cost of living as a proportion of income. The Rough Sleeping Prevention (RSP) Trailblazer funding will be utilized to further advance progress in addressing rough sleeping in Southwark. Our mission is to ensure that our services remain available to the most disadvantaged households and to provide support to those most in need, such as those who are victims of domestic abuse. We are committed to building the capacity of households and communities to withstand crises, such as homelessness before they arise. To this end, we will discontinue the use of short-term, bed-and-breakfast-style accommodations with shared amenities for

homeless families. (Southwark Council, 2019). In response to the difficult local housing market, we will collaborate and provide guidance and assistance to both households and landlords to create suitable private rented sector offerings for all client populations. We will collaborate closely with support agencies and local services to provide solutions that will enable households to maintain tenancy and their homes sustainably. (Southwark Council, 2018)

Finally, the prevalence of digital exclusion in Southwark is exacerbating the already existing disparities in socio-economic status. That is why to fight inequality and poverty, it is pivotal for the community to be digitally inclusive. Digital inclusion can essentially benefit the community by significantly increasing access to employment opportunities as most companies post their vacancies online. They can apply for the benefits they are eligible for, particularly Universal Credit. This is because it requires an internet-based account, and it is much easier to report hate crimes and discrimination if you are digitally connected and getting access to GPs, counsellors, and mental health support services.



(Carnegie UK, 2021)

The use of social media can also be utilized to encourage community members to take part and contribute to community development efforts. Social media can be utilized to carry out community evaluations, which are critical for the planning and implementation of community development initiatives. Building community trust and connection is important by making sure everyone feels like they belong, have their own unique identity and are part of the same community. Because of this, they can use a blog, podcast, or video on social media to share their findings, ideas, and recommendations. Social media can also be used to connect, share, and encourage other groups or networks that are interested in the same or similar topics or objectives.

Legislation and Policies

The **Equality Act 2010** provides for the protection of individuals from discrimination and outlines the various forms of treatment that are not permissible and prohibited.

The Working Together to **Safeguard Children 2018** initiative encompasses all the organizations that work together and interact with children to ensure their safety and well-being. (Department of Education, 2022).

Child poverty is a form of poverty that affects children and young people. The **Child Poverty Act 2010** was adopted by the UK Parliament to set targets for the reduction of child poverty and make other provisions relating to child poverty. (Gov. UK, 2010)

The **2017 Homelessness Reduction Act** substantially altered England's homelessness regulations by obliging local authorities to take early action to reduce the prevalence of homelessness in their local areas. Additionally, it stipulates that housing authorities must provide services to all those experiencing homelessness. (Gov. UK, 2018)

Conclusion

In the United Kingdom, despite its status as a developed nation, poverty and inequality are commonplace and must be addressed for society to progress. These disparities can be attributed to a variety of causes and can only be understood from a long-term perspective. Therefore, it is essential for government departments, municipalities, and the public at large to collaborate to combat poverty and inequality.

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