Southwark’s Community Issues and Needs: Future Trends and Discussion

Most VCS organisations in Southwark see the overall situation faced by the people they support getting ‘worse’ (56%) or ‘much worse’ (22%) over the next five years, with only a minority (16%) seeing things getting better.

What does the future look like?

- **A growing population.**
  Southwark is a growing borough and is forecast to have 50,000 more residents by 2030¹, leading to increased overcrowding. This will increase demand for council housing and add to the already long waiting list².

- **An ageing population.**
  By 2022, there will be 700,000 fewer people aged 16 to 49 in the UK - but 3.7 million more people aged between 50 and State Pension age. If the over 50s continue to leave the workforce in line with previous norms we would suffer serious labour and skills shortages, which simply could not be filled by immigration alone³. Pressure on end of life care in Lambeth and Southwark will increase, with a predicted growth in demand of 17% by 2030 and there will be a need for services to deal with increased comorbidities, including dementia, and fewer people with cancer⁴.

Local charities said:

“Local charities said: There will be more and more people living in denser and denser accommodations. Schools and parks and youth facilities are not being built to accommodate. Social care and services is labour intensive. Blue sky thinking is needed to make connections and solve intractable and entrenched problems”.

Local charities said:

“Our caseload has become increasingly complex which has led to pressure on staff and other participants.”

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² Investing in Council Housing.
⁴ Need for End of life care in Lambeth & Southwark, Dr Alison Furey Lambeth & Southwark Public Health Department.
• Reduced employment. Employment projections for London by sector and trend-based projections by borough show that Southwark has a downward trend. This makes sense both from economic projections and the fact that early unemployment has a significant negative effect on employment opportunities later in life; coupled with the fact that there are not enough jobs available in London for the number of people searching. The long-term unemployed have a higher risk of poor physical and mental health, and unemployment is associated with increased levels of unhealthy behaviours such as smoking and alcohol consumption and decreased physical exercise. And the health and social effects resulting from a long period of unemployment can be long-lasting. This situation is likely to become increasingly difficult for young people, men over 50 and those with lower education or skills.

• More cuts to funding. Leading to services being squeezed even more, particularly in the short-term, coupled with rising demand. The extent to which these cuts can be absorbed through efficiency drives or restructuring will lessen, and frontline services will be affected. At the same time demand for services is likely to grow as welfare reform makes life harder for vulnerable groups. This will result in fewer services, a move towards more targeted and conditional services, and an increase in service charges.

• Increasing ‘gentrification’ and poverty inequalities. Regeneration and gentrification seem set to roll out on an ever grander scale in Southwark, meaning less affordable housing. The new affordable rent tenure at between 60% and 80% market rents in London will require household incomes of £33,375 – £44,500 without claiming housing benefit.

The introduction of Universal Credit caps, in 2013, is likely to result in much of this type of housing being inaccessible even to London households that are able to claim benefits. While this may push some poorer people out of Southwark, this process will also widen the gap between the rich and poor, both in reality and in perceptual terms with a potential increase in prejudice and mistrust between ‘communities’. Social isolation is also likely to increase under these circumstances, as is the increasing loss of ‘community’. This will also lead to a worsening of child poverty, and increased levels of disadvantage amongst young people, whose economic prospects seem set to worsen as a result of this process and of changes to welfare benefits and public sector cuts. The Institute for Fiscal Studies predicts that child and working-age poverty will increase across the UK over the next decade. Homelessness and overcrowding are also likely to increase.

• Negative future impacts of child poverty. Child poverty has far-reaching consequences for individuals, including increased risk of physical and mental health issues, developmental and social problems both immediately and throughout their life-course. Negative modelling experienced in poor childhood situations is likely to replicate in later life leading to a vicious spiral of poorer life experiences.

• More welfare benefit changes. The government has already introduced £18 billion of welfare savings as part of its austerity programme over the last five years and has suggested there may be £10 billion more to come.

While the level of out of work benefit claims has fallen in the capital in the last five years, almost 90 per cent of households with one or two children affected by the benefit Cap live in London. When the cap is lowered to £23,000, an additional 20,000 households in London will be capped.

Local charities said: “Demographics will change (people with more disposable income will move in) which will isolate existing (poorer) residents further, the nature of local shops will change, rents will increase and it may be more difficult to find services relevant to their needs.”

7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
Universal Credit (UC) is progressive and is judged by experts as likely to reduce poverty overall, however when considered alongside the rest of the tax and benefit reforms, poverty is expected to increase significantly more across the UK in 2015–16 (and beyond) than it would were the reforms not implemented. For example, the government predicted that 36,000 households in Greater London would have their benefits reduced by the household benefit cap in 2013/14, which limited the total amount a workless household can receive in benefits.

The welfare changes are likely to particularly impact low income households, especially workless and low-paid households, households with children, lone parents (more than 90% of whom are women, possibly also women in couples), larger families, minority ethnic households, and disabled people who are reassessed and considered ineligible for the Personal Independence Payment.

Estimates suggested that between 82,000 and 133,000 London households will be unable to afford their homes following the reforms, with only 36% of London’s housing affordable to those receiving Housing Benefit by 2016 (compared to 75 per cent before the reforms). This would particularly affect families with children and private tenants.

The effect of the welfare reforms was a particular worry for Southwark VCS. The effect of many of these reforms and changes is to make Southwark even more unaffordable for poorer households. London becomes increasingly unaffordable and unequal at an even greater rate than previously.

Universal Credit will replace all existing benefits and tax credits in an attempt to simplify the benefits system. Universal Credit will be introduced in October 2013 for new claimants, with existing claimants moving over between April 2014 and October 2017, thus a significant number are likely to remain on the existing system during the period with which this report is concerned (56). The complexity of the existing benefit and tax credit system is likely to have contributed to the low take-up of benefits, particularly among some groups, therefore the Universal Credit may increase benefit take-up.

Conditionality measures in the 2011 Welfare Reform Bill, to be implemented from January 2012. — Lone parent conditionality: Lone parents with a child aged 5 or over moved from Income Support (IS) to Job Seeker’s Allowance (JSA)/Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) – previously this was the case for lone parents with a child aged 7 or over. — Claimant commitment: A claimant commitment introduced for those on JSA, ESA and IS, which clearly sets out a claimant’s responsibilities in return for benefit payments. Claimants must accept these before they are paid. — Sanction reform: JSA, ESA and IS sanctions have been reformed in an effort to encourage compliance more effectively. There is no consistent set of sanctions. — Hardship payments: Hardship payments made to a JSA or UC claimant will now be recoverable and time-limited.

Local charities said: “We are very concerned about the introduction of UC [Universal Credit: with regards to disabled people].”

Worsening health and wellbeing. Evidence from previous economic downturns suggests that across the population in London there will be short term and long term health effects including worse infectious disease outcomes such as tuberculosis and HIV, and an increase in mental health problems, including depression and possibly lower levels of wellbeing. Evidence from past recessions also suggests that inequalities in health according to socioeconomic group, level of education and geographical area are likely to widen following the economic crisis.

Worsening mental health issues. With the increasing pressures of all the changes and worsening situations described, it is inevitable that mental health will decline for many people in Southwark. Research suggests that there may be more suicides and attempted suicides, alongside the possibility of increased levels of homicides and domestic violence. Combined with cuts (under-funding), changes to benefits and increasing lack of provision of good, long-term mental health services, this is a ticking time bomb. Preventative measures now would lessen the future impact.

Increased immigration. Immigration levels are set to continue to increase at least in the short term. This will likely lead to increased tensions in and between communities in Southwark and a potential further fracturing of ‘the community’ into segregate communities.

Local charities said: “The difference between affluent and deprived areas is becoming more prominent in Southwark, with areas on or near the river and in the south becoming increasingly unaffordable whilst the areas in the middle of the borough are becoming more deprived.”


22. Ibid. 23. Figure taken from: Trajectory, the futures partnership: Trends and Foresight Report 6 Community Cohesion Prepared for Big Lottery Fund April 2015.
1. Discussion – A Tale of Two Southwarks

Many of the issues and needs highlighted in this report are not unique to Southwark, which shares many characteristics with neighbouring Inner London and London boroughs, but some issues are more Southwark-shaped.

Southwark has partly been shaped by a changing London. Studies have shown that over the last decade to fifteen years, the characteristics of Inner London have undergone ‘a form of socio-economic osmosis’, with the differences between the two zones becoming less defined. This includes the fact that poverty rates in Inner East London boroughs (including Southwark) have fallen overall, while rates in many outer London boroughs have risen. This is partly due to many inner London boroughs seeing a growth in the share of those working in higher professional occupations (while Outer West London boroughs have seen this share decrease). While these changes may affect the average poverty results for the borough, they do not change the reality for many, since the effect is largely due to migration.

Local charities said:

“The Brexit debate has led to negative rhetoric and climate for migrants. Many of our beneficiaries are EU citizens who will be affected by changes to access to welfare and so will face even more poverty.”

In 2013 Boris Johnson identified some of London’s major health challenges as: childhood obesity, mental ill health and health inequalities, all of which are seen in Southwark. Yet while this may mean that London-wide initiatives and policies might help to alleviate these problems, they still need to be tackled at street level as well.

Southwark is also influenced by what is happening in the wider social and economic structure of Britain. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) has commented that: Increasingly England is characterised by differences at the regional, local and neighbourhood level. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing and increasingly the economies of our towns and cities are characterised by stark and unsustainable differences in income and spending power. This has led to some commentators, quite rightly, highlighting that we now have ‘twin track’ cities.

Neither is the picture static. Factors such as the national and global economy, cyclical and political factors mean that factors seldom stay constant. For example, five years ago this report would have highlighted that Southwark had an issue with childhood immunisation levels which were significantly worse than London or national averages; but by 2014/15 these levels were all significantly better than regional averages and around the England average.

Or similarly, in 2010, the percentage of 16-18 year olds Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs) was significantly worse than London or national averages (8.4% vs 6% nationally) but dropped to 4.4% in 2011; back up in 2012 (7.7%); and down again in 2014 (2% against a national average of 4.7%). Or teenage pregnancy rates, which have more than halved over the period, from 69.3 per 1,000 in 2007 (provisional) to 20.6 per 1,000 in 2013, following a huge reduction nationwide from 40.2 to 24.3 per 1,000, leaving Southwark still significantly behind national averages (although improving from being near the worst in England in 2007-09).

Over the period [2001-2011], London’s geography of wealth and poverty changed dramatically. The old assumption that inner London boroughs are poorer than outer London boroughs became an exception in just over ten years. Wealthier, higher-skilled residents have moved into inner East London while poorer, lower-skilled people have moved to the more affordable parts of outer London. However, alongside this unprecedented increase in higher-skilled residents, the proportion of children and old people in inner East London who live in poverty is still the highest in the country. The number of private renters has risen in all parts of London, back to its mid-1970s level as a share of tenure.

Inside Out, 2015


26. No Child Left Behind, 2016


28. Child Health Profile, PHE.
But some issues in Southwark have remained at poor levels over the last five years, indicating that measures are not or have not yet made a difference:

- First time entrants to the youth justice system has remained high compared to regional and national averages.
- The rate of family homelessness has increased (from 4.2 per 1,000 in 2007/08 to 5.8 in 1,000 in 2014/15), while the national average has remained fairly static (1.9 to 1.8).
- Obesity in 4–5 year olds has remained high over the period (13.4% in 2010/11 and 12.9% in 2014/15 against a national average of 9.4% and 9.1%).
- Obesity in 10–11 year olds has increased over the period faster than the national average (26.3% in 2010/11 and 27.6% in 2014/15 against the national average of 19% and 19.1%). Southwark has consistently had the worst rate of obesity in England at this age.
- Hospital admissions for asthma (under 19) have risen alongside national averages (from 240.4 per 100,000 in 2011/12 to 278.1 per 100,000 in 2014/15 alongside national averages of 193.9 in 2011/12 and 216.1 in 2014/15).

- The proportion of children living in poverty has steadily declined over the period (from 32.3% in 2009 to 27.6% in 2014/15) but so have national averages (21.9% in 2009 to 18.6% in 2014/15), meaning that Southwark remains significantly below London and national averages.
- Some statistics hide the reality. As previously noted, in 2014, the highest growth in Gross Domestic Household Income per head in NUTS3 local areas was in Lewisham and Southwark at 5.3%, however the average belies the reality which is that large numbers of higher-skilled earners moving into the area, attracted by the redevelopments, etc, push the average up while leaving other workers languishing at the bottom of the wage scale.

Community and Opportunity

- Underlying, and being reinforced by, many of the issues Southwark is currently facing (and will face in future) are some common themes which cluster around issues of community and opportunity:
  - Community: Social isolation is increasing alongside a loss of community (the loss of familiar places, people and family) decreasing a sense of belonging. Research has shown those most likely to feel a high sense of life satisfaction are those who feel they belong to their neighbourhood. Southwark has, for centuries, been a vibrantly diverse community, with immigrants from a large variety of countries settling here and forming communities within communities. The current programme of regeneration and gentrification, alongside other changes, may result in a greater homogenisation of Southwark’s population, pockmarked with ghettos of difference rather than an integrated whole. Just 14% of those taking part in the 2011 London riots felt that they were ‘part of British society’.
  - Opportunity: People living in Southwark experience different levels of life opportunities which are largely governed by the issues outlined in this report. Opportunities vary according to which of the ‘two cities’ of Southwark you live in. These differences are exacerbated mainly by increasing levels of poverty and inequality. Poverty – literal poverty and poverty of opportunities and choices – clearly plays an important mediating role in many of the issues faced by Southwark residents. 86% of young people interviewed after the 2011 London riots posited poverty as the chief cause of their unrest, while 70% cited inequality. And at its extreme poverty kills: People in the lowest socio-economic class are ten times more likely to commit suicide. Inequality may act on a more psychological level. The ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ have become more polarised and more extreme, particularly in London, and particularly in Southwark where increasing ‘gentrification’ and poverty inequalities widens the gaps both in reality and in perceptual terms. This can increase misperceptions and mistrust between communities.

The picture presented here, along with the projected future trends, threatens to undermine some of Southwark’s distinctive and positive qualities, with its rich history of diversity and vibrant communities, driving difference underground, and creating a hidden Southwark where those with poorer life opportunities struggle to survive.

Welfare reforms, in particular those affecting housing, have hit families in London hard. Changes to Local Housing Allowance, combined with the ‘Bedroom Tax’ and Benefit Cap have been particularly difficult for families due to the shortage of reasonably priced and sized housing in London.

No Child Left Behind

“Social isolation is as potent a cause of early death as smoking 15 cigarettes a day; loneliness, research suggests, is twice as deadly as obesity. Dementia, high blood pressure, alcoholism and accidents – all these, like depression, paranoia, anxiety and suicide, become more prevalent when connections are cut. We cannot cope alone”.

George Monbiot

29. Source of figures: Child Health Profiles for the last five years, PHE.
32. Ibid.
33. file:///C:/Users/Cat/Downloads/LandS_PH_factsheet_suicide_v5.3.pdf
35. 35. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/14/age-of-loneliness-killing-us
A loss of community in 21st century Britain appears to be widespread. A report prepared for Big Lottery Fund in April 2015 talked about a decline in communities in Southwark. This is central to our wellbeing, since research has shown that those most likely to feel a high sense of life satisfaction are those that feel they belong to their neighbourhood.

This is not just a Southwark phenomenon, but it has a specific Southwark feel to it, as the particular conditions in Southwark combine to make the ‘perfect storm’. It is the old adage that it is not how much or little you have, but how much that is relative to others which makes us satisfied or dissatisfied. Recent research has revealed inequality in Britain to be at 40-year high. The ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ have become more polarised and more extreme, particularly in London.

The fact that Southwark is ‘two cities’, with huge inequalities, with a number of different communities thrown together with a sorry lack of integration, makes it a melting pot of frustrations and anxieties. Many (though not all) of the issues and needs outlined in this report have their roots in or are exacerbated by the ‘two Southwarks’. These conditions have been themselves exacerbated by the economic downturn and ensuing austerity measures which have trimmed back the edges of the support network for citizens and left them more exposed to these elements; and a regeneration programme which is literally building walls between richer and poorer.

There are issues of power and control – or, more accurately, a loss of a sense of power and control – by residents, and little hope of things getting better in future, which sometimes leads to disengagement and apathy, and sometimes leads to anger and blaming.

The decline in community cohesion correlates with another trend we have observed over the course of the downturn – a shift in personal ethics and wider outlook. Generally, people are less global or altruistic in their perspective. They are more likely to support causes that are local or which directly affect them – for some, their specific ethical concerns have changed. This narrowing in outlook may explain the rise in prejudice, the rise in anti-immigration sentiment, and at its most extreme, the direct impacts, such as hate crime.

Community Cohesion, Trajectory

Cultural considerations are utterly absent from the housing debate, which is a serious oversight: these impacts should be factored into decisions alongside cost and other factors.

Demos: Changing Places

Local charities said:
“The problem is apathy, residents won’t even go to events on neighbouring estates, attendance at local Tenant Resident Association (TRA) meetings is low.”

Local charities said:
“[The problem is] Central government policies and lack of local champions on health and affordable housing issues”.

Local charities said:
“[The problem is the] Increase of people from abroad and demand on all services which are under resourced.”

One of the most striking features of cities is that they are often very spatially divided between rich and poor. This is not new, but this is the point. The very persistence of these patterns through time suggests that successive waves of economic growth have not done enough to help lift some neighbourhoods out of poverty. Or, to put it another way, growth has not been sufficiently inclusive.

JRF: Disconnected Neighbourhoods, 2016

Local charities said:
“[The problem is the] Increase of people from abroad and demand on all services which are under resourced.”

Some observers see a link between our individualistic society and the possible increase in common mental health disorders in the last 50 years, and research shows that mental health problems occur more frequently in unequal societies that leave behind more vulnerable people. By squandering ‘social capital’ in the individualistic pursuit of greater wealth, or treating social networks as incidental, are we neglecting a part of life that makes us happy and keeps us healthy for longer?

The Lonely Society?
Why invest in the voluntary and community sector?

The voluntary and community sector plays a number of key roles in supporting stronger local communities. It has been proven to be exceptionally good at spending its money locally\(^4^0\), and encouraging more embedded and inclusive economic growth\(^4^1\). The VCS has an economic delivery track record that outperforms other sectors\(^4^2\); it contributes to business success through place-shaping activity which enriches the lives of workers\(^4^3\), while its ability to mobilise social power and build self-reliant communities is second to none. The VCS is known for excelling in areas of poor economic activity, having the ability to draw down valuable additional investment into those areas, garnering and grow community assets, to support the co-design and coproduction of services, to change social norms, and to build self-help, wellbeing and community-resilient models of organisation\(^4^4\).

Local charities said:

"The faith groups are insular and do not support outside of their congregation. Fact".

Local charities said:

"Tension is rising between the communities as some sections of the community are being blamed for the deprivation".

2. Appendix 1: Additional Findings

Online survey of Community Southwark members

The online survey was sent to 847 VCS organisations. Just over one third of these (301, 35.5%) opened the email invitation despite three reminders being sent. 94 organisations took part in the survey (11% of the original sample; 31% of the organisations which opened the email).

The majority of organisations deal with ‘young people’ (N=55), followed by ‘Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic & Refugee Groups’ (N=48) and ‘people living in poverty (N=48). Other beneficiaries included tenants and residents and students\(^4^5\).

51 respondents answered this question. Nearly three-quarters (72%) work across Southwark. Other areas included Bankside, Lambeth, Lewisham and Merton.

Local charities said:

"Our council is doing its best to support the most vulnerable, but the government appears not to care about our sort of community."

Local charities said:

"Tension is rising between the communities as some sections of the community are being blamed for the deprivation".

Figure 67: Level of attachment to their local area\(^3^9\)

Figure 68: Please tell us which types of beneficiary you serve...

(Tick as many as apply)

Figure 69: Please tell us which area(s) in Southwark you serve...

(Tick as many as apply)

\(^3^9\) Trajectory Global Foresight, IN Trajectory: The Futures Partnership: Trends and Foresight Report 6 Community Cohesion Prepared for Big Lottery Fund April 2015.

\(^4^0\) Thriving Places: Developing the voluntary and community sector’s role in local economies and the life of local places. 2014. Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) and Voluntary Sector North West (VSNW).


\(^4^3\) Thriving Places: Developing the voluntary and community sector’s role in local economies and the life of local places. 2014. Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) and Voluntary Sector North West (VSNW).

\(^4^4\) It should be noted that the subject matter of the survey probably attracted certain organisations to fill it in, however responses are broadly in line with findings from the focus groups and interviews carried out.
Given unlimited resources and time, the representatives of Southwark VCS consulted as part of this research felt that they would most like to improve:

1. **Housing** – access to more affordable/social housing
2. **Crime** – street crime, gangs and domestic crime
3. **Community** – spaces, cohesion, support, pride

**Local charities said:**

“Create a well-supported citizens’ support system on planning and regeneration matters”.

“Give them control/certainty over their neighbourhood”.

“I would engage in education, employability and business start-up to give those who are desperate to be part of the solutions to be so without further prejudice”.

“Fund more programmes for young people and teenagers to help keep them out of trouble, get trained and into work”.

“Genuinely affordable housing – this would change the lives of almost everyone we work with, regardless of which programme they participate in”.

“Have vibrant community hubs in every neighbourhood and resources to enable people to access those hubs”.

“Our council is doing its best to support the most vulnerable, but the government appears not to care about our sort of community”.

“Enable older people and others to celebrate and participate to the best of their abilities, to take part in regular dance and music activities that reflect their heritage, skills and abilities and make them happy”.

**Figure 70:** If you had unlimited resources and time, what is the single thing you would do to improve the lives of the people you support and people living in Southwark?

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**Happy Valley versus The Squeezed Middle in Southwark**

**HAPPY VALLEY**

- **Grange** - low life expectancy, worst access to public open spaces, more children in unemployed households, more unauthorised pupil absences, worst for GCSE attainment
- **Riverside** - high life expectancy, more unauthorised pupil absences, worst for GCSE attainment, low crime rate, low unemployment, low incapacity benefit rates
- **South Bermondsey** - more children in unemployed households, more unauthorised pupil absences, high crime rate, high unemployment, high obesity rates
- **Rotherhithe** - best access to public open spaces, worst public transport, more children in unemployed households, high crime rate, high obesity rates
- **Surrey Docks** - worst public transport, more unauthorised pupil absences, low unemployment, low incapacity benefit rates

**THE SQUEEZED MIDDLE**

- **Livesey** - high life expectancy, worst access to public open spaces, more children in unemployed households, high unemployment, high incapacity benefit rates, high obesity rates
- **Peckham** - low life expectancy, best access to public open spaces, more children in unemployed households, high unemployment, high obesity rates
- **Nunhead** - low life expectancy, high unemployment, high incapacity benefit rates