

Brighter Futures: A Foundation for Change Strategic Needs Assessment

Foreword

Our ambitions for the children and young people of Newham are vast; in Newham, we are committed to ensuring our youth can access all essential life building blocks in order to thrive and reach their full potential. However, we are also well aware of the challenges that present against wellbeing and safety in our borough.

We know that children and young people who experience adversity in childhood, such as abuse, neglect, domestic abuse, poverty or parental substance misuse may be more vulnerable to harm and exploitation. This report also clearly defines the contexts in which threats such as these may appear outside of the home; sadly, our youth may also face these in everyday life through exploitation via organised criminal groups, trafficking, online abuse and the influences of extremism that lead to radicalisation.

Here, the work of Crest Advisory in developing the strategic needs assessment provides a comprehensive review against the vulnerabilities of our Newham children and young people, as well as a spotlight against the potential drivers of youth exploitation and criminality.

While there has been a reduced number of child deaths in the past 3 years there have been increases in deaths due to causes such as exploitation and trauma. Newham suffered three tragic youth homicides in 2021. These losses have affected and impacted people right across the partnership and our thoughts and condolences are with the families, friends and wider community of those impacted by these recent events.

Almost all of these deaths occurred in the ethnically diverse Black male community; that's why our Children Over-Represented pathfinder project is geared towards enhancing the holistic support packages available to Black, Asian and other overrepresented children (aged 7-25) dealing with trauma experienced from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) due to the pandemic and works towards preventing them getting involved in the justice system in years to come as either victims or perpetrators. Newer interventions such as our Mentoring for Success offer (a Youth Safety Board funded programme), counselling, traineeships, career guidance and engagement in the digital economy all work towards providing access to several benefits for children, young people and their families.

Our Towards a Better Newham Covid-19 Recovery Strategy (which sets out how we will respond to the economic impact of Covid-19 to build back better) makes us the first borough in London to use livelihood, well-being and happiness as a prime measure of economic success, placing the health and wellbeing of residents' and race equality as central to the Council's aspirations of inclusive growth, quality jobs and fairness.

What is clear from the report we're sharing today is that youth safety remains a concern for our young people. That's why, our work across the partnership has ensured that we have listened to all views and captured solutions to improve police and community relations/visibility with our young people and worked together to tackle crime in our midst.

Close working with our voluntary sector and charitable colleagues will support amplified messaging across school and community settings to educate children and young people about making sound choices, the consequences of knife crime and what to do in an emergency via workshops and teachable moments.

This insightful CREST report (developed through months of focused coproduction and stakeholder engagement) blends the latest evidence and best practice to set out solid recommendations to ensure best impact against outcomes. The recommendations in this report will work towards ensuring better data, greater integration and focus on adolescent risk/need, as well as further strengthened communication and engagement.

As a local councillor, parent and lifelong Newham resident I am genuinely proud to be the Cabinet Lead for Brighter futures, because what we are all doing is making a brighter future for our children today, tomorrow and for their futures ahead.

But of course we still have a long way to go. My ambition is that Newham should be the best place to grow up as a young person, and I hope that via our many new initiatives such as appointing a dedicated Children and Young People's Commissioner (Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney), Youth Empowerment Service (YES) investment of up to 40 new youth workers, flagship Youth Zone in Stratford focusing on arts and culture, 500k available over the next 5-6 years to support young people from disadvantaged families with education & training, and our *Kickstart* Government-funded apprenticeships scheme (which creates job placements for young people on Universal Credit or at risk of long-term unemployment), we will turn a new page.

Putting children first means we are relentless in making sure they are at the forefront of our thinking, discussions and decisions. Step-by-step we will continue to take the necessary action towards ensuring everyone in our borough feels more supported and safer to deliver against our mantra that, "Youth safety is everybody's business".

In closing, I wish to thank all our staff, partnerships and supports for their contributions, commitment and continued work to make Newham the best place for children and young people.



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Cabinet Lead for Brighter Futures