

HEALING AND RECONCILIATION



Annual Report 2021 on

SOUTHWARK

STANDS TOGETHER

Healing and Reconciliation: our summary annual report on how Southwark is Standing Together

Introduction

We have lived through one of the most extraordinary and painful times in recent history. Our borough, like the rest of the world, has experienced unprecedented challenges. However, although we have all experienced COVID-19, we have not experienced it equally. The disproportionate number of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people dying spoke loudly about the impact of the health inequalities they have been experiencing for years.

Then, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the horrific murder of George Floyd and the subsequent global protests brought into sharp focus the inequalities, racism and discrimination that still exist. In response, in June 2020 we set up Southwark Stands Together as our local call to unity, support and action. Southwark Stands Together is about how we take positive action as a Council to work with Southwark's communities and the Council's staff to tackle racism, injustice and inequality.

Southwark Stands Together is built on five pledges to:

- promote an open and transparent culture where employees who experience/see racism or discrimination are able to raise it and expect the issue to be dealt with swiftly and fairly
- listen to and amplify our diverse voices within our organizations on how we create an inclusive, fair and representative workplace at all levels
- work to address and prevent structural racial inequalities and structural racism within our organization, the organizations we partner with and within the service the service we deliver
- champion organizations that address racial injustice and organizations that promote equality and diversity
- ensure that people of all backgrounds can rise to the top of the organisation

One year on, the annual report sets out progress to date. Entitled *Healing and Reconciliation*, it describes the hurt and pain that many in our borough have felt and expressed to us over the last many months. It also describes the hope that all in our community share for a better, more just and equal future. This shorter summary shares the main detail set out in that much longer report.

Every journey begins with a first step and we hope that reflecting on our progress so far will give us the confidence to keep on walking to a better, fairer and more just future for all in our community.

Thank you

It is important; before we move in to the body of the report, to thank everyone who mobilised in the pandemic in amazing ways and for the support you gave and continue to give to Southwark Stands Together. You have provided expertise, insight, and lived experience to challenge and support us as we move forward together. Simply, thank you.

Section 1: listening and learning

Healing and Reconciliation: why Southwark is Standing Together

In March 2020, the UK government announced a lockdown and we could only leave home for essential supplies or caring responsibilities. In Southwark, like in many communities across the UK, we came together through the test of a national emergency, but we also asked '*Why is this happening?*'

Within two months of us entering a lockdown, another event captured worldwide attention – the appalling death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old father in Minneapolis, United States on the 25th May 2020. For the second time in months, our community, like the rest of the world, was challenged by the reality of inequality and its impact on our communities. The question now became '*What are we going to do?*'

Conversations about things that were not talked about such as racism, discrimination, and their impacts, were now brought out into the open. We started to work with our communities and our colleagues to share and hear about our experiences. We call these extended conversations 'listening exercises'.

Between June and August 2020 over 1,500 people participated including four open listening events, we held two outreach face-to-face engagement sessions, and 1,268 residents responded to an online survey, all working with us to develop solutions.

Our Council staff, 25% of whom live in Southwark, were also asked to speak about their experiences. The listening exercise revealed that over 70% of participants said that they had experienced racial discrimination in the last 12 months. Nearly half of people that responded to our survey from an ethnic minority felt that racial discrimination is a bigger problem in society now than 10 years ago.

The voice of the young has also been influencing how we are moving forward together. *Breaking the Glass Ceiling* is a new movement led by young people in collaboration with a core group of community representatives. This pilot project to be launched in Peckham Square, as part of the work on renewing and reinventing our open spaces and buildings, will engage with young people and those from marginalised groups. This in turn will help us to reach residents the Council often struggles to connect with. It will use the strength of community contacts and influence to better connect so that communities and groups can have meaningful and genuine contact and fruitful engagement as we plan for change across the borough.

Southwark Stands Together began with a clear focus on eliminating racism, discrimination and inequality. Through these listening exercises it grew to become about how we – together with our communities – heal and reconcile, and how we set about becoming unashamedly anti-racist by making good on our pledges and asking others to join us to do the same. We describe some of what we found below.

The impact of hate crime

Hate crimes can have devastating consequences on individuals, families and communities. It can have mental, physical and health impacts and trauma that can last for decades. The 2019/20 figures show that there were 105,090 offences where one or more of the centrally monitored hate crime strands were considered a motivating factor. Racist hate crime also increased during 2020 with offences increasing following the Black Lives Matter protests and far-right groups' counter-protests after the death of George Floyd.

We worked with more than 600 individuals and groups to begin development of a local action plan to address hate crime. Key findings from those conversations include: the need to improve confidence in police response times and outcomes; the importance of working with

schools; and, the need to provide training to help everyone better understand the different barriers that individuals face.

In response, we continue to undertake significant partnership work, particularly with the police. Through this, more than 1,400 young people across more than 30 primary and secondary schools have been engaged through positive workshops promoting diversity, tolerance, and equalities, and the dangers of prejudice. We have also provided interactive Hate Crime awareness-raising workshops across 10 local primary schools, reaching 813 primary-age young people in total.

There is still much to do. We know hate crime is underreported and so raising awareness in our communities will be vital in the months ahead.

The impact of multiple disadvantage, health and socio-economic inequalities

To guide our work on Southwark Stands Together, we completed a Health Impact Assessment. Our research showed that people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities experience a number of challenges such as socio-economic deprivation, poor housing conditions, poorer health outcomes and barriers to accessing services. We also know from national research that Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities are most likely to have mental health impacts as a result of social isolation, trauma and wider social and economic inequality.

Health inequalities

Our research also showed that Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities were at higher risk of infection, severe illness, hospitalisation and death from COVID-19. 'Long COVID' or the number of people with ongoing symptoms that can last weeks or months after the infection has gone is also influenced by social and economic factors.

To address health inequalities, a new grassroots growing community initiative is underway, the Community Health Ambassadors, in partnership with Community Southwark and Healthwatch Southwark. Ambassadors help their family, friends and wider community make sense of the latest advice and information to help ensure we all stay safe. Over two thirds of these community leaders are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. The passion and commitment of the Health Ambassadors has led to their growth as influencers that are building community spirit while promoting health awareness.

We have also been having deeper conversations with our communities about health and wellbeing, which has given us a better understanding about the risks of COVID-19 to particular communities. To support this work, seven community and voluntary sector organisations have been awarded Community Health Grants, meaning work can be targeted at groups most in need or at risk.

Socio-economic inequalities

Between March 2020 and January 2021, the number of people claiming Universal Credit in the UK rose by 98%. The number of people claiming Universal Credit in London rose by 134% and in Southwark by 103%. We also know that Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, young people and people in low-income households experienced job, financial and household insecurity which led to increasing financial stress and negative impacts on mental health.

To address the impact of socio-economic disadvantage, Mummies Republic was set up, which is part of South London Bermondsey Mission. The Mission reaches hundreds of women a year

dependent on Universal Credit in low income, single parent families. It supports them through the stress and anxiety of food poverty, accessing mental health services, domestic abuse services and then to move on to safety. Mummies Republic helps signpost and access services and support during crisis. They support a caseload of around 30 consistent households with an average of 150 women and children who are experiencing long-term disadvantage. This work is about engaging and supporting the most vulnerable in our communities - and in doing so, they are creating a community.

Section 2: planning for change

Becoming unashamedly anti-racist

In September 2020, following the listening events, we developed the Southwark Stands Together five pledges (set out in the introduction to this summary report) which set out our plan to become an anti-racist organisation. The pledges are a powerful tool to drive change and ensure that, as a Council, we will address areas where we know we must improve. It also means saying sorry, admitting when we have things wrong, making things better and saying what actions we will take so that it does not happen again.

As a Council, we have also introduced two new values as part of our refreshed Borough Plan which are: always work to make Southwark more equal and just; and, to stand against all forms of discrimination and racism. Our values define who we are as a Council, and how we will work to serve the residents and communities of Southwark.

Through the pledges and our now enhanced set of values, we are committing to become the change we want to see. Practically, this means steps like opening up career paths for those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues; identifying and removing discriminatory practices and encouraging a culture of positive action; and, embracing plans and policies that drive us to become an anti-racist organisation by upskilling and developing our workforce on equality, diversity and inclusion among other key steps.

Some highlights of our progress so far

Together with our community we are getting on with implementing our pledges. One highlight has been the work of the Southwark Youth Independent Advisory Group (YIAG), a community-led group of young people aged from 14 to 19 years old (up to 25 with a disability). They have a unique partnership with, and provide independent advice to, the Police Service and the Council on issues that affect young people across crime, policing and community safety issues. They have held a number of events, which included a stop and search/young person event where 52 young people attended and a Black Lives Matter event with 110 young people in attendance.

Another highlight is the work in Peckham Square, where we have developed a set of themed podcast sessions *Peckham Square Stories* which are about working with representative community figures to capture emotive spatial memories through conversations about Peckham Square, which local people can connect with.

Remodelling how we engage with our communities

In the weeks following the death of George Floyd, which saw worldwide protests, we knew that the listening events needed to involve humility, and a kindness and sensitivity. The people that were involved in the listening events revealed clear concerns over the 'traditional' types of engagement and conversations the Council was having with its communities. We heard that

they really wanted to have deeper, honest conversations about the things that really mattered to them. A strong focus on lived experience was needed.

We must start from a strength-based approach to address change. This means working together with our communities to develop a shared vision and measurement of what success looks like. We want to achieve a better understanding of people's needs, which will help us to make better, more informed decisions. This will in turn lead to better services, reduced discrimination and a reduction of inequalities. We hope it will also help to build trust and confidence in ourselves as officers, the Council and our engagement processes.

Going forward we will develop a five-phase approach to engagement:

1. Exploring the current situation. This includes what we know from all the data, evidence and lived experience.
2. Review what we have understood and consider whether we have the suggestions and ideas to contribute towards solutions, and what the areas we need to think about are.
3. Solution exploration, a deliberative stage based on facilitated discussion with stakeholders in the community and Council to understand what good would look like and how best to achieve that.
4. Continued collaboration to further inform action planning.
5. Evaluation and review, involves evidencing early success and embedding a long term sustained approach to engagement.

The language we use and how we communicate

Alongside building trust and confidence in an engagement process, we must also build it through our personal relationships with our community. The language we use can make or break a relationship and reveal or conceal issues.

There is a phrase now commonly used by both our community and council officers – 'council speak'. In short, it refers to a 'language' that many members of the community simply do not understand. It is a language full of unusual words and phrases that are difficult to understand, which does not help us to stand together. As one community member described, our language should be the very opposite of process driven and should be 'heartical' – a Rastafari phrase meaning wholehearted.

When people that are in a distressing situation or those experiencing multiple disadvantage experience 'council speak' or perceptions of a council culture that suggests "us and them" they display low levels of trust and confidence in us as an organisation. We recognise that we must, as officers, communicate with compassion to help relieve trauma and distress, breaking down siloed working internally to work as one Council and pool our efforts to eradicate racism, discrimination and inequality.

We also know that people that were and are digitally excluded would have faced greater hardships during the pandemic from not being able to access information about a new deadly virus, instructions on how to stay safe on the governments website and not been able to communicate with friends and family.

We will be working to ensure that we have a vision of a digital Southwark where people can access digital services, and who are supported by council officers so that we can better connect and collaborate together where nobody is left offline. This will include digital skills guides, work with libraries and our Digital Champions Scheme, which will recruit local people to support people in their communities who are digitally excluded.

The value of lived experience, data and research to guide change

We collect and use information and data in many different ways such as to develop a better understanding of our communities and their needs. One of the most challenging areas when working to tackle inequality is having the right data and information to make the best decisions. On a day-to-day basis Council officers are having many interactions with people living and working in our borough but often not collecting information such as lived experience or equality monitoring information.

Moving forward, the data and information collected locally across the work of Southwark Stands Together can be shared with our community and voluntary sector partners where appropriate. We are committed to sharing data sets around the work we have completed especially in the following areas:

- *Incorporating the inequalities agenda into public health: case study* focussed on the identification of health inequalities, understanding need and their impact on residents.
- *Equality and Inequality Consciousness across the five phases of community engagement* focussed on our Public Sector Equalities Duty considerations during the community process.
- *Disproportionality within Southwark's Youth justice system* will use key data sets to aim to understand cycles of disadvantage from school exclusion, stop and search and first time interactions within the youth justice system and to the wider criminal justice system.

It is vital that we hear about the lived experience of our Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. This is important so we can better understand their needs, plan our services and develop our strategies so that our communities can grow and prosper in our borough. Lived experience is also about the celebration of overcoming uniquely presented challenges both individually and across the organisation.

Section 3: delivering the change

It Takes a Village: a new way of thinking, operating and being

The expression 'it takes a village' is an African proverb, which means it takes a village or a community to raise a child. As we progressed through the Southwark Stands Together programme over many months, community members and staff referred to this expression repeatedly. It Takes a Village has now evolved into a new Council approach to multiple disadvantage.

It Takes a Village builds on 18 months of collaboration with stakeholders and individuals across Southwark. Since February 2021, we have consulted with over 30 groups and organisations, and 160 individuals in understanding the problems in accessing effective support for people facing multiple disadvantages. It places individual residents and social connection at the core of its work.

Bridges Outcomes Partnership (a not-for-profit social enterprise that works with government and community organisations) is supporting us to develop a model that uses a strength-based approach in the commissioning of services with a strong focus on improving the lives of people experiencing multiple disadvantage. We also worked with a co-researcher who used storytelling as a tool from Synergy Collaborative Centre who are studying ethnic inequalities in severe mental distress.

Through It Takes a Village we have begun developing a 'passport' approach to fast-track individuals facing multiple disadvantage into health and social treatment, support and housing, and offers informal advice and case consultation to get the best, most creative responses for people facing the most challenging problems.

A local Women's Network has developed a collaborative across Council, voluntary, community sector, grassroots and individuals, bringing together women across all sectors and organisations, to learn from and befriend each other, and to share cultures and experiences.

The next phase of this work across services and with community groups and individuals is to work to *de-formalise the language of services* and to share skills, practices and techniques that are both service-led and individual and community-led. We piloted a first workshop in early May with managers from Southwark Council's mental health team. This has laid the foundations for how we can do more to work with our communities and staff to improve our understanding of the lived experience of service users.

Healing through remembrance and celebration

We heal as a community through remembering the past and honouring the lives that have been lost. On 25th May this year, we remembered the death of George Floyd and others that lost their lives as a result of racism, discrimination and hate. We provided our community with an early update on our work and involved key community and sector leaders in a series of conversations where they were able to reflect on their impact and involvement in the Southwark Stands Together programme.

We will focus more on what matters – our lives and our stories as our legacy. This will include the use of storytelling and oral history to hear and listen to the voices of the people living in our borough. A key part of this celebration will be the new Black Cultural Centre in Southwark. Our communities will be invited to work with us in the shaping an in-depth consultation on how we can celebrate the contribution of the Black community to Southwark. By the end of the year, we will have a detailed proposal for Councillors to consider, based on what the community has told us.

More on how Southwark is Standing Together

Our journey of change has just begun and we have already demonstrated progress on a number of key borough plan commitments to the community on how we will stand together with residents and community to deliver a fairer, more just future for all. Key highlights in the last year and actions to come include:

- We refreshed the borough plan with two new values to always work to make Southwark more equal and just; and to stand against all forms of discrimination and racism.
- We recorded and evaluated the cumulative impact of our whole budget changes across each of the protected characteristics.
- We put in place an advisory panel of Councillors to produce the cumulative budget equalities impact report; the learning from this will inform the way we will report in future years.
- We have developed a new equalities framework entitled *A Fairer, More Equal Southwark* putting equalities at the heart of everything we do. The Framework is based on the Council's commitments to the Public Sector Equality Duty (including the Socio-Economic Duty) and Equality Act 2010. It builds on the Local Government Association's Equality Framework for Local Government. A supporting action plan will ensure our

work across the Council is targeting effort where improvement is most needed to tackle inequalities within and between communities (paper elsewhere on the agenda).

- We have supported our local businesses by awarding £16.2m through discretionary grant schemes. Of those that declared their ethnic background, almost 48% identified as minority ethnic businesses.
- We have developed a Health Ambassadors programme, a partnership between Community Southwark and Healthwatch Southwark, with community leaders building community spirit and promoting health awareness. Over two thirds of our community leaders are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- We will learn from the pandemic to strengthen the involvement of health and care partners in how we design, commission and deliver services, to better understand how these contribute to inequalities facing Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and develop solutions with health partners and engage with our communities.
- We have increased the number of Black, Asian and ethnic minority colleagues at the senior management level from 22% to 26% since 1 April 2020 despite the challenges of the pandemic.
- We are reviewing our recruitment practices and have stopped using the term 'BAME' in our workforce.
- We are on track to deliver 100 internships to local people in the Council, with 82% identifying as Black, Asian and minority ethnic.
- We will launch a new programme of training, peer learning and support later in 2021 to help the boards of the borough's arts organisations become increasingly diverse. We expect that by the end of March 2022, some 15 new board members will be in position and will have a say over how Southwark arts organisations are run.
- We will launch a new creative research, development and showcasing support scheme for Black and culturally diverse artists, which will be launched later in 2021. This will make sure that artists who receive funding to make work also have opportunities to showcase their work in art gallery exhibitions, theatre stages, or be featured in festivals.
- We have developed a new programme of funding for artists to launch later this year. It will offer funding to artists from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities that could be used to buy materials, hire rehearsal space or to pay themselves and other artists they collaborate with for their time developing new products.
- We will be consulting on a Black Cultural Centre in the second half of 2021 to celebrate the contribution of the Black community to Southwark. The Council's Cabinet will receive proposals for the Black Cultural Centre by the end of the year.
- We are enhancing scrutiny of police stop and search arrangements through Police Encounter Panels, a new engagement approach by the Metropolitan Police piloted in Southwark. The panel will be co-chaired by the Borough Commander and a Community Leader with membership including young people, meaning those with lived experience inform changes and improve future experiences of stop and search.
- We have delivered cultural awareness training through voluntary sector providers to new and existing police recruits starting work in Southwark.
- We have established a Youth Independent Advisory Group (YIAG) with over 25 members (aged 14 and above), some of whom have experience of the criminal justice system and / or have been victims of crime. The YIAG have held events with Metropolitan Police Officers to tackle issues such as 'stop and search' and the effect it has on young people across Southwark and London.
- We have begun work to engage with the community to open up access to community spaces to a wider range of organisations and to ensure more assets are community-led. We are also working with experts in the field of consultation and partners in

Community Southwark to develop proposals with the community to explore, design and test ideas and solutions for future delivery.

- We have commissioned an external Black-led organisation, Equinox, to carry out the review and appointed a project board to oversee the work. The review findings will be completed by autumn 2021.

You can find out more about how we are working to tackle racism, discrimination and inequality by visiting:

[Engagement and Consultations - Southwark stands together](#)

If you would like to get involved, please email SST@southwark.gov.uk.