



Youth Board Meeting Report

Focus on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)



About Sutton Youth Board meetings

Sutton Youth Board Meetings take place four times every 12 months and are facilitated by Volunteer Centre Sutton and the Young Commissioners. The aim of the sessions is to explore and address challenges facing young people of Sutton. All young people in Sutton are welcome to attend these meetings.

If you would like to attend, or have young representatives who can attend in future, please email NatashaBlok@vcsutton.org.uk.

Attendees

- Young Commissioners
- External young people
- Fern Barber – Sutton Council
- Vanessa Naylor – Sutton Council
- Be Inspired - LGBTQ+ Project team
- Advocacy for All
- Cllr Jake Short - Local councillor

December 2024 – Meeting format:

The theme of this meeting was **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)**. The Young Commissioners began with an interactive icebreaker, followed by presentations from organisations sharing their work, with a Q&A allowing young people to ask questions and share views. An open mic slot gave additional organisations the chance to present and receive feedback. The Young Commissioners concluded with their Celebrating Sutton's Diversity Project. The meeting ended with some themed games and participants rotating through stations to share ideas on improving future Youth Boards.

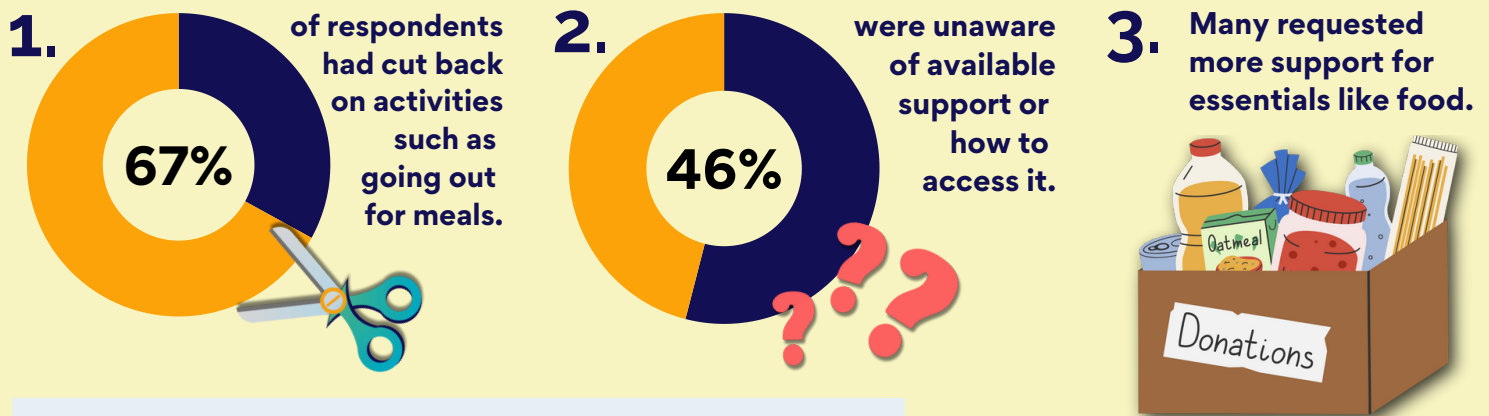


Cost of Living Update

Sutton Youth Cost of Living Crisis Survey Update: **Key Statistics**



Fern Barber from Sutton Council delivered a compelling update on the **impact of the Cost of Living Crisis (COLC) on young people** and their families, followed by an engaging Q&A session with Youth Board members. **In November 2023, at the Sutton Youth Summit, a survey was conducted with 100 young people** to better understand how the COLC was affecting them, as existing council data largely focused on adults. The survey revealed:



Sutton Council's Actions Since the Survey

In response to the survey results, the council implemented several targeted measures (see below) to provide practical support and raise awareness:

£1M

invested in **school meal vouchers** for holidays.



£60k

allocated to support **food banks**.



£36k

awarded through the **Community Fund** to support projects for young people.



£12k

provided to establish a **community uniform shop**.



- Held **meetings with Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)** from primary and secondary schools in Sutton to disseminate key information about accessing support.
- Delivered **outreach at community festivals and family hubs**, reaching over 1,300 people to **raise awareness** of available resources.



Including...

A neurodivergent youth drop-in at Unity Junction.



Youth Club in Wallington with free evening meal



Free girls football classes in Wallington



Cost of Living Update

Impact and Progress



These outcomes reflect significant improvements over the past year, showing how the council's efforts to tackle the Cost of Living Crisis are making a real difference in Sutton,

20% reduction in demand for food banks.

11% drop in the number of households experiencing cash shortfalls.

3% reduction in households living in relative poverty.



Fern highlighted the importance of building on this progress and urged young people to share their ideas and feedback to help shape further initiatives. The presentation provided a **clear demonstration of how youth voices are driving meaningful action in Sutton.**

Q&A

Q: Will there be a follow-up survey to track changes since last year?



A: Fern agreed this was a valuable suggestion and noted that such a survey could provide useful comparisons and insights.

Q: Why is the cost of living crisis worsening?



A: Factors such as the war in Ukraine, rising inflation, and the lasting effects of the pandemic have significantly contributed to the crisis.

Q: What are the council's plans moving forward?



A: The focus will be on targeting specific areas in need and continuing to spread awareness about the support available.



Key Organisations Supporting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Sutton



1 Update from Vanessa Naylor – Sutton Council

Vanessa Naylor from Sutton Council provided an update on her work to empower young people, ensuring their voices influence decision-making and that they are kept informed about the outcomes of those decisions. Her presentation covered a range of initiatives aimed at **engaging young people** and **improving the borough**:

Peer Review and Regeneration

Vanessa shared insights from a recent peer review, where external council representatives evaluated Sutton's strengths and areas for improvement. Discussions during the review highlighted key topics such as:

- The regeneration plans for the **St Nicholas Centre**, focusing on making the area more vibrant and accessible.
- Strategies to enhance the borough's appeal to young residents.

Youth Engagement Initiatives

Vanessa expressed her commitment to re-establishing school councils across Sutton and ensuring that all schools have representation on the Youth Board.



Vanessa shared several ideas in development to enhance youth engagement:

1.

Online Platform:

The creation of a digital space where young people can anonymously share concerns, seek advice, and connect with support services. This initiative is currently under review.

2.

Anonymous Surveys:

Increasing the use of anonymous surveys to gather honest feedback and reach a broader audience.

3.

Young Commissioner's agreed this is a good idea!



PSHE Lessons:

Introducing dedicated lessons in schools to educate students about the importance of youth voice and how they can get involved in decision-making.



Key Organisations Supporting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Sutton

2 Be Inspired – Zachary Williams & Wayne LGBTQ+ Support and Activities



Representatives from **Be Inspired**, an organisation working across South London, shared their impactful initiatives with a strong focus on their **Under-18 LGBTQ+ group**, the first of its kind in Sutton. This ground-breaking group offers young people a safe, supportive, and inclusive space to connect, access resources, and feel empowered.

Operating from **The Quad in Carshalton** for the past three to four months, the group has been instrumental in creating opportunities for **young people aged 14-25** to engage with local services and participate in diverse activities.

Key highlights of their work include:

- **Sutton's First U18 LGBTQ+ Group:** Provides a **vital safe space** for younger LGBTQ+ individuals to express themselves, access support, and connect with peers.
- **Safe Spaces and Support:** Offers talking therapies, professional guidance, and a secure environment to explore identity.
- **Sports and Mental Health:** Activities like **girls-only boxing, jiu-jitsu, and yoga** promote well-being, with a focus on the positive impact of sports on mental health.
- **Mental Health Education:** Plans include talks on **anxiety management, panic attack prevention**, and other support strategies.
- **Raising Awareness:** Actively working to **promote their services** to ensure more young people can benefit from them.

Q: What makes the U18 LGBTQ+ group so important for Sutton?



A: It's the first group of its kind in the area, addressing a vital need for younger LGBTQ+ people to have a safe space to express themselves and connect with peers and resources tailored to their experiences.

Q: How does Be Inspired plan to expand its reach to young people?



A: They aim to increase awareness through schools, community hubs, and online platforms to ensure more young people are aware of the services available.



Key Organisations Supporting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Sutton

3 Advocacy for All – Juan Sanchez & Richard



Juan and Richard representing Advocacy for All, shared insights into the organisation's work supporting young vulnerable people in Sutton including those with learning disabilities and autism spectrum conditions to have bigger voices & better lives. They create spaces for individuals to connect, share experiences, and support one another in a relaxed, inclusive environment.

The group **meets monthly at a local church from 5.30-7.30pm**, with each session focusing on a different topic, offering participants the chance to discuss issues, learn from each other, and explore solutions together. In addition to the regular meetings, Advocacy for All **organises monthly outings**, such as trips to the cinema, bowling, or local pubs, encouraging fun and camaraderie among members.

Key details about the programme include:

- **Age Group:** Open to individuals aged 12-25, with a separate adult group for those aged 25+.
- **Speak Out Sutton:** Members over 25 can transition to this group, which offers similar support and community opportunities for older participants.
- **Core Focus:** Building friendships, sharing concerns, and offering mutual help in a safe, welcoming space.

4 Update on Sutton Town Centre – Councillor Jake Short



Councillor Jake Short provided insights into the Council's ongoing work in Sutton's town centre, highlighting their commitment to making the area more accessible and vibrant for young people. **Key points included:**

01 Engaging Young People: The Council is seeking ideas from young people to make the town centre more accessible and appealing.

02 Revitalisation Strategy: Civic offices will relocate to St Nicholas Centre, retail shops will remain, and efforts will attract popular brands to boost the area's vibrancy.

03 Sustainability Goals: Plans include converting the library and civic offices into housing to address the housing crisis and increase footfall.

04 Community Infrastructure: The Council will consult schools and healthcare providers to ensure resources meet the needs of a growing population.

05 Youth Resources: A Youth Board member suggested more activities for younger children, which the Council is exploring.



Key Organisations Supporting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Sutton

Young Commissioners – Celebrating Sutton's Diversity



The Young Commissioners presented their project, **Celebrating Sutton's Diversity**, which they designed to **promote inclusivity and challenge inequality within the borough**. The project encourages everyone to listen with an open mind, embrace new ideas, and actively support inclusivity in the community and includes a bespoke logo and booklet they created. This was followed by a 'true or false' game based on facts from the booklet to add a fun element to the meeting.



The session ended with an open feedback activity.

True or False...
Sutton has UK's first ever trans crossing?
TRUE!

'A pocket guide to... Celebrating Sutton's Diversity' designed and written by the Young Commissioners.

Feedback session:



Attendees rotated between stations to share ideas on shaping future Youth Boards.



They completed post it notes for each different question to contribute their views.



These ideas will play a crucial role in guiding the board's direction in the coming years!

Meeting Output:

Conclusion and Upcoming Events to get involved in:

This Youth Board meeting provided a dynamic platform for young people to engage with key local initiatives, promoting meaningful discussions and collaboration. The interactive format encouraged valuable contributions from all participants. Future sessions will be shaped by feedback from the session, and we look forward to seeing further updates and progress at the next meeting.

JOIN NOW

We currently have a few **spaces available** for new Young Commissioners, offering an opportunity to expand our representation of young people in Sutton. Find out more at vcsutton.org.uk/young-commissioners.

