

# A City for all Londoners: 4in10 London Child Poverty Network Response



## Introduction

The UK is one of the richest countries in the world, yet there are 3.6 million children growing up in severe and persistent poverty. The situation is even worse in London, where approximately 4 in 10 children live in poverty.

4in10 was created in response to this crisis of child poverty in London. The project is run by a small team of staff and volunteers who aim to tackle child poverty by:

- creating a network of over 100 like-minded voluntary and community organizations, Local Authorities and individuals from across London
- building the capacity of London organizations and individuals interested in tackling child poverty
- providing a forum for London organizations and community members to share best practice, skills, knowledge and expertise on child poverty
- campaigning on key issues that affect the capital's 600,000 children currently living in poverty.

We have been delighted to see the Mayor's explicit aim to 'address the underlying economic and social injustice that drives inequality and unfairness, and leaves too many Londoners struggling to get by.' We completely agree there is no excuse for child poverty in a city as prosperous as London.

This new strategy should focus on reducing the impact of poverty on children, and how to prevent it further impairing children's childhood and life-chances.

In response to the Mayor's consultation on A City for All Londoners, we hosted an event with our network member organizations exploring the proposals, and how the Mayor could create a city for all children, in particular supporting those with the lowest incomes. We also did some in-depth interviews with families living in poverty in Inner London. (See attached report: Inner City Pressure for more information about this research)

4in10 network helps to coordinate the London Child Poverty Alliance, and so we fully support the recommendations in their submission but in addition to that submission we are offering below our recommendations for how the Mayor might improve the lives of children living in poverty in the UK today based on the knowledge and expertise of these families and our members.

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## Background:

### Why child poverty matters to London

Economy: It is clear that high levels of economic prosperity in the capital do not automatically mean that that growth is shared among Londoners or translates into a decrease in poverty for families. In fact, between 2010 and 2014 London experienced the highest prosperity growth of all Local Enterprise Partnership areas, but the inclusivity of that growth grew the least of all areas.

London's poor growth inclusivity has both economic and social implications. If wages and social security for London's lower paid workers are frozen or diminishing in real terms while the cost of living continues to rise, many administrators, cleaners, housekeepers, events staff, construction workers, childcare workers, teaching assistants, and countless other workers may find that they and their families are unable to continue living in inner London.

These workers are crucial for London's current and future economic success, enabling financial, business and other lucrative sectors to operate and expand, but poor inclusive growth in the capital threatens their ability to remain in inner city boroughs.

Business lobby group London First has expressed concern that the shortage of affordable housing in London is threatening the capital's competitiveness, with a survey of their members finding that 75 per cent of responding employers were concerned about the future impact that rising housing costs will have on their ability to recruit and retain staff

British Chambers of Commerce recently published poll results demonstrating that some businesses struggle to retain talented staff due to the availability and cost of childcare faced by their employees.

Social integration: A report published last month by The Challenge demonstrated how poverty interplays with reduced social integration. Poorer respondents to their survey of neighbourhood behaviours were less likely to leave a key with a neighbour of a different ethnicity. Poorer respondents were more likely to 'never' or 'rarely' feel a sense of neighbourhood belonging than richer respondents. And its cyclical, The Challenge also notes there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that social segregation impedes life chances, inhibits social mobility, prolongs periods of unemployment and restricts economic growth.

### Why child poverty matters to children & families

Child Poverty matters for childhoods; to have the joy and experiences that are expected, or seen amongst peers eg: birthday parties, books, school trips, or to live without the sense of stigma or shame that poverty can bring, not being able to have friends to tea, having no space for privacy or living in houses with damp etc

And child poverty matters for child development; both because it enables the family to provide more of the things a child needs to develop healthily such as fresh fruit and veg or warm clothes, but also because it changes the environment the family exists in – The stress and anxiety caused by money worries has negative impacts on parents and makes it much harder to be patient / playful.

And child poverty matters for life chances. Children growing up in poverty are more likely to fall ill, less likely to achieve at school, and more likely to die early.

Life expectancy differences within London: While in absolute terms health outcomes have improved, substantial inequalities remain, both within and between areas of London. Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster men in the most deprived quarter of areas can expect to live 8 years less than a man in the least deprived quarter.

## Part 1 Accommodating Growth

*“If I don’t finish work on time, or if there’s a train delay, I can’t pick up my son on time. My son finishes at 3.15 and he’s picked up by so many people.”* – Inner London single mum

We welcome the Mayor’s commitment to a strategic approach to the planning and development of the social and physical infrastructure the city will need in the future. And are pleased to see an emphasis on quality early years, childcare and school places.

Access to affordable childcare is crucial in enabling parents to work – but there are not enough childcare places, particularly flexible ones for families of shiftworkers and childcare costs in the capital have soared, partly as a result of high premises costs of nurseries and childminders.

We should acknowledge that London’s recruitment crisis in teaching that is due to housing costs will threaten our ability to provide all the school places that will be required. So it was proposed that key workers such as teachers could get a transport discount card such as the police do to alleviate some of the high costs of living they face if they take a job in London.

Other practical steps the Mayor can take included:

- Use GLA Funds to pump-prime childcare provision in London to ensure a sufficient supply of childcare places so that parents can access the government free childcare offer, particularly the two-year old offer by the time the 30 hours free childcare offer is introduced in 2017
- Explore the use of GLA and TfL assets (such space above stations and spare land) as spaces for childcare • Guarantee that new schools built on GLA or TfL land will include nursery provision
- Fund children’s centres to become inclusive and enhanced children’s centres in order to tackle the huge shortage of childcare for children with SEND
- Set up a Mayor-backed scheme to promote and recognise innovation family-friendly employment by businesses (This could form part of the new business compact that is being considered by the Mayor’s office now)
- Provide small loans and start-up advice for childminders across the city to increase the numbers of childminders working atypical hours
- Fund a training scheme for early years settings staff in the capital to improve quality
- Ensure that the GLA, Transport for London and London Councils implement family-friendly employment arrangements, including childcare deposit loans, for all their employees and ensure subcontractors do the same using the Social Value Act

- Create a Pan-London Universal Childcare Trust to maximise central government subsidies and leverage monies from London businesses and funders to assess childcare sufficiency and strategically address structural issues in London's childcare market

Influencing the Mayor should do:

- Use the Mayoral profile and influence to drive childcare expansion and innovation as a key priority on London's agenda
- Work with employers, parents and local and regional partners to design childcare solutions, including before- and after-school provision, holiday childcare, and childcare places for disabled children
- Raise at all levels with central government the higher cost of childcare provision in London and push for fair funding for the free childcare offers which accurately reflects market costs in the capital

## Part 2 Housing

*"I would try to work more hours, I've tried to ask people for maybe a better job, better pay, because sometimes you do more hours but the pay it's not really enough. The problem is the rent and the rent is very high."* – Inner London single mum

The consultation places an appropriate level of priority on housing as an issue for the Mayor to tackle and we welcome this focus.

The lack of genuinely affordable homes in London is a key driver of child poverty, and it has a sizable part to play in the stigma and shame that child poverty places on children; and the insecurity and number of moves they may have to face. Given this, new developments whether for rent / buy, as well as existing housing stock has to be planned for use in a way that supports and enhances family life.

Participants from our network noted that

- there is no clarity on the definition of affordability
- there was a lack of recognition of the importance of secure tenancies for children.
- there is too much empty housing in the city which has been bought as an investment asset rather than a home
- London Living Rent is calculated on gross income rather than net income, so is not really a third of average incomes

It was felt that these were things that the Mayor's strategy should pick up. In addition, the following ideas were suggested to help with housing demand:

- The Mayor should ensure that a proportion of each bit of TfL land reserved for housing development includes social housing
- The Mayor should use his planning powers to increase land class designation for community or mixed use, which will encourage and help community land trusts to buy and develop land

- The Mayor, local authorities and charitable funders should pool resources to invest in a London-wide scheme to expand box unit temporary accommodation such as at 'The Place' in Ladywell, Lewisham

## Part 3 Economy

*"Sometimes I'm thinking of writing a letter to Downing Street. I can't afford so many things, why? Because I'm working! But you know I think I'd be even more depressed, you know, if I wasn't working. All I want is for the system to be equal, or at least appreciate those who are working. We don't want to be on benefit. If they want people to work and to get jobs they should support them."* – Inner London single mum

Participants at our event raised the issues for working families in low incomes; and suggested that improvements need to be made to the London Living Wage. As it assumes that families live in social housing, but as an increasing number of families are now living in the private rented sector where rents are much higher.

There was concern that childcare was unaffordable for both providers and for families as discussed above in Part One.

It was also noted that disabled people are disproportionately likely to face poverty, and the strategy should consider a London approach to disability, employment and tackle low pay.

- Economic Fairness team should have a remit to look at family-friendly working, and the impact of disability.
- Promote incentives to employers who pay the London Living Wage, for example through business rate discounts; could the GLA play a role in modeling the viability of this for Local Authorities.
- Nurseries and schools opening up their spaces for communities to use around/ outside nursery / school space
- Pool existing funding around from local funding, with companies and charitable foundations paying into the pot, for universal free childcare in London

## Part 4 Environment, Transport and public space

*"He needed £7 to go on a trip, I didn't have it, but if school is going on a trip I want him to go. So I took seven buses instead of the train to work. It took me three and a half hours. I had to pick up my son from a friend at 9.30pm, just to save up £7."* – Inner London single mum

*"Sometimes I'm struggling to pay the bills, sometimes not. I have to pay travelfare for myself, to take the kids to schools and to go to work, and then the kids sometimes want books or something. I can't always give them, but I want them to have."* – Inner London Dad

There was a recognition amongst participants at our event that transport hubs and ease of travel have a significant impact on perceptions of how accessible central London is to communities and

therefore how relevant the opportunities within in are. And therefore there was a desire for future investment in transport to tackle less connected places.

A strongly supported idea at the event was the suggestions that a Part-time travel card could be created to enable people to move further out and have more reasonable travel costs to fit with a more flexible / family friendly working practices.

We would also echo the calls from the London Child Poverty Alliance for the following improvements for a healthier city:

- Continue to support both Oyster and contactless payment card methods and ensure fare structures remain equal
- Introduce city-wide exclusion zones for new fast food outlets within 400 metres of a school as part of the London Plan
- Introduce Cleaner Walking Routes to School Work with boroughs to develop healthy and safe routes for walking and cycling to school; Establish clean air zones near London's schools

## Part 5 City for all Londoners

*"My son wants to do football, now he wants to do karate, I can't cover that. Summer holidays are too much. Lovely days, but spending too much."* – Inner London Dad

*"She gets free school dinners so that all helps a lot. We didn't go on holiday over the summer, couldn't afford it, and for food mum's or the club at the church was the backup."* – Inner London Mum

Access to healthy food was something that came up a lot for the parents we spoke to in our research and so we would recommend that the Mayor take action to ensure:

- The GLA and local authorities should expand universal free school meals, breakfast / supper clubs, and access to healthy food for all children
- The GLA, local authorities, the voluntary sector and business community should expand childcare and youth club schemes which provide childcare and include food for children, particularly focusing on holiday and after- and before-school provision

Participants at our event also discussed the importance of safeguarding the young people of London and not seeing them as the problem.

- The Mayor could help on safeguarding issues by exploring approaches to engage young people on attitudes to sexual violence
- Take best practice from other cities in improving social integration and inclusive growth
- The Mayor, VCS and local authorities could would together to play an education role to tackle sexual violence – addressing consent, formal and informal relationships, campaigns, and a regional

ENDS.