

WHY COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

We believe that no-one in Poplar should be disadvantaged because of where they live. Our residents have lower incomes, less employment and worse health than most other parts of London and this situation has not changed since Charles Booth first mapped poverty in London in the 1890s.

We recognise that low rents through social and affordable housing are vital to reducing poverty, but we also understand that many of our residents live in poverty despite low housing costs. We also understand that the nature of needs-based lettings, and the growing pressure on social housing, means that a significant proportion of our residents will require support in order for them to live healthy and prosperous lives.

Although London's economy has been generally successful over the past twenty years, not everyone has benefited and the incidence of poverty has not fallen. Income poverty rates for children, working age adults and pensioners are higher in London than elsewhere in the UK – and often highest in Poplar. Poverty is particularly concentrated in households with dependent children and among Black, Asian and ethnic minority and disabled Poplar residents.

As a result, London is an increasingly polarised city. On the one hand, it has seen a major growth in earnings, with significant rises both in the number of those earning high salaries, and in the amount they earn. However, this leaves those on low incomes or without employment increasingly far behind.

We understand that poverty costs us all – the lost life chances for our residents, lost taxes and additional benefit payments, the drain on public services such as the NHS and Police to address the issues that poverty creates, and the depressing fact that young people growing up in poverty are more likely to experience poverty themselves.

The services that CaN provides are about changing poverty in Poplar for the next hundred years. So that poverty no longer stops our residents from achieving their potential and that we end the generational cycle of poverty in Poplar for good.

HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THIS?

We recognise that there are many reasons why inequality and poverty in Poplar have remained stubbornly high for hundreds of years. But our greatest asset is the people who live in Poplar – that’s why our work can only be achieved with the support and active involvement of the residents and communities of Poplar. Whatever we do has to put our residents at the heart of change. It doesn’t mean that others can’t help – we need experts, activists, people with different experiences, people who care and who want to be involved – but they have to work alongside residents and local communities if we are going to make positive and sustainable changes.

We want our staff to do the right thing – because of our shared values and common ethos - to look beyond the presenting problem and get beyond thinking ‘that’s not my job.’ We work in ways that give our staff the opportunity to develop new services, to push boundaries and even have fun (occasionally!)

We also believe that positive and sustainable change for Poplar is not going to be quick or easy. Not so far anyway! Spotlight took five years of planning, fundraising, negotiation and problem solving, including 1,600 individual consultations with young people. The Bartlett Park Waterside Centre has taken nearly 17 years of hard work to get to a successful conclusion. We have to invest in long term plans to deliver our goals.

We understand the frustration of many of our residents that Poplar has often been a forgotten corner of Tower Hamlets and has not been given the priority or investment it deserves. We have high standards for everything that we do – we don’t want the residents and communities of Poplar to feel second best in terms of their services or their assets.

We are aware that disadvantage rarely occurs in isolation. Many of our residents face three or more issues at a time in areas such as education, health, employment, income, social support, housing. Services that should help often struggle to address multiple problems because they are set up to deal with only one. This fragmented approach ignores the way different issues connect with, and exacerbate, each other and it quickly loses sight of the person or family who is facing them. We believe in providing a broad range of services that residents can move between and our focus is on the person as much as the issue.

EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

We believe that increased employment is a key priority for Poplar. GPs tell us that the best way of improving the physical and mental health of many of their patients is to find fulfilling, paid work for them. Whatever our opinions of welfare reform, we also know that working is a way of stopping the application of the benefits cap. The income received is likely to support the local economy which in turn will support more local businesses and more local employment. Our employment and training programme is one of the most successful in Tower Hamlets, however we also understand that its success is related to the network of complementary services delivered by the CaN team that build the confidence, social skills and well-being of our residents.

VOLUNTEERING

We think that volunteering is an essential element of a thriving and successful community. Those who volunteer to help others also help themselves, and their wider community, through creating strong social bonds that protect us all. We develop and run services in a way that involves volunteers in all aspects of our work and our aim is to build the most successful volunteering community in London.

PARTNERSHIPS

We want to support pioneering staff members, individuals and organisations to grow the ideas, relationships and evidence that will transform Poplar and we believe that the best solutions to Poplar's needs will come through partnership. Every neighbourhood centre, youth programme or training course is delivered through a wide range of partners – sometimes social enterprises, private businesses, small informal associations or large London wide or national bodies. We seek to build partnerships based on knowledge, experience and expertise rather than size, sector or status. Whilst we will use service level agreements and other mechanisms to define partnership working, partnership for us is about shared values, a common ethos and a commitment to deliver great services.

COMMUNITY COHESION WORK

We feel that a connected community is one that can resist the pressures of extremist and violent ideologies and find other ways to resolve grievances and injustices within our society. We work to bring all sections of the community together through public events, celebrations, inter-generational services, strong links with faith groups and tailored youth and community programmes. We value and celebrate diversity and believe that bringing different perspectives together through our services builds more robust, tolerant and successful communities.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

We believe that social infrastructure has a major role to play in supporting Poplar's housing growth, making residential areas more attractive and maintaining sustainable neighbourhoods and communities. We will work to create and support high quality social infrastructure alongside new development opportunities in East London enhancing health, childcare, play, education and employment opportunities for Poplar residents.

YOUTH WORK

We want to inspire young people and deliver a stronger future for them. Spotlight aims to be the leading creative youth destination in London, providing outstanding opportunities for discovery, growth and inspiration. It's not only about young people, our community centres provide space to learn, create, socialise, get healthy and find help when our residents need it.

The list of how we intend to achieve our goal of ending poverty in Poplar can be boiled down to three key themes:

Connect

- Residents and communities at the heart
- Staff providing holistic services
- Volunteering
- Partnerships to create better solutions to address poverty and disadvantage
- Community cohesion

Thrive

- Services that address multiple issues. Deprivation is not a single issue.
- Employment
- Health and wellbeing
- Key skills
- Youth provision
- Community centres

Renew

- Long term strategies focusing on place and opportunity
- High standards – never second best
- Social infrastructure