STREETS APART: Growing up on the margins in Elmbridge
Summary of findings and response
“Many high need families privately rent amongst more affluent neighbours where the relative divide becomes clearer.”

Elmbridge Families Keyworker

“Living on the council estate makes you feel segregated from the rest of the community.”

16 year old male
For most children and young people Elmbridge is a great place to grow up.

There are numerous leisure and recreational facilities, low levels of youth crime and high numbers of young people participating in education training and employment.

In addition, high levels of employment, a buoyant economy, school attainment and good health of residents, combined with leafy suburbs and easy accessibility to London are among the reasons why Elmbridge has been classified as the best place to live in the UK* in recent years.

Our vision is to ensure that the opportunities afforded to the majority of children and young people in Elmbridge can be accessed and enjoyed by all.

Commissioned by Surrey County Council and Walton Charity, and supported by Elmbridge Borough Council, Streets Apart is the start of ongoing work to find innovative approaches to support vulnerable young people and their families in Elmbridge. Streets Apart looks specifically at the impact of social exclusion and wider inequalities on young people in Elmbridge and considers what we can do differently to improve the situation of the most vulnerable people.

Through partnership we want to create an overarching strategy which joins together organisations from the public, private and voluntary and faiths sector, to align resources to provide timely, quality support for vulnerable young people and families in Elmbridge. In this way we will develop effective services, which make the best use of finite resource and deliver the best outcomes for families in Elmbridge.

Elmbridge at a glance

Children in poverty

In Surrey 10% of families are living in poverty

The national average is 20.1%

In Elmbridge there are 2610 children and young people living in poverty.

There are areas within wards which have above average percentages of families living in poverty.

- One area in Walton North: 31.9%
- One area in Walton Ambleside: 27.3%
- One area in Hersham North: 26.1%
- One area in Cobham Fairmile: 26.6%

Children with mental health difficulties

7.15% of children in Surrey have mental health difficulties

- Walton North: 10.1%
- Molesey North: 9.8%

Domestic abuse

Elmbridge ranks as the third highest borough for domestic abuse reports in Surrey.

1549 reports of domestic abuse in 2013 in Elmbridge.

(Please note: The total is likely to be higher with an estimated 1 in 35 incidents actually reported.)
House prices

The ratio of house prices to income in Elmbridge is almost double the national average.

- **22.5x** average salary
  - Elmbridge
- **14.4x** average salary
  - Surrey
- **11.3x** average salary
  - Nationally

People

The population of Elmbridge is **130,900**

- In Elmbridge **20.6%** people are under 15 years
- The national average is **17.6%**

Disability

**55%** of families with a child with disability are living in poverty or on the margins of poverty

Life expectancy

- **Cobham Fairmile** 90.6 years
- **Weybridge North** 78.7 years
- **Nationally** 82.6 years

There is almost 12 years between the different wards.
Research indicates that economic deprivation overlaps strongly with poor mental health and other disabilities. We also know that a common response of poor children, particularly in affluent areas, is to withdraw which leads to social isolation and exclusion.

Emily is 16.
She has been in a relationship for over 18 months with a boyfriend who is two years older and has experienced domestic abuse. Her relationship with her mum is strained and several incidents at home have led to arrests for criminal damage. This volatility places Emily at risk of homelessness. To escape her problems Emily uses Class A drugs; she enjoys the feeling of losing control.

Emily’s family circumstances, abusive relationships, poor self esteem and drug use contribute to her isolation from the community.

Emily is working with the Youth Support Service to address the range of problems she faces.

Damien is 17.
He had always struggled at school because of speech and language difficulties and his behaviour deteriorated as he fell further behind his classmates. He dropped out of school when he was 15 and he did not want to leave the house much. As a result, his health declined.

Damien came to the attention of services when he was hospitalised after taking an overdose of his mother’s painkillers with a bottle of whisky. Damien is now being treated for depression and is being helped to reintegrate with other young people by a youth worker with whom he is now building a trusting relationship.

Elmbridge has 4 food banks.
The Walton food bank saw an increase from 208 food parcels in 2012 to 416 in 2013. This is an increase of over 100%.
Jenny is a parent.
She lives in rented accommodation in a private road in an affluent area of Elmbridge. Jenny and her family do not feel that they have good relationships with their neighbours. They feel that they are frequently blamed for any noise disturbances in the local area. Both Jenny and her husband work long hours to make ends meet but still have mounting debts and are reliant on tax credits to make up their income. Rent arrears mean the family are at risk of being made homeless and they have at times needed to use the food bank.

The cost of living and their financial position exacerbates their feelings of social isolation and they experience tensions at home when the teenage children want the same clothes, games and leisure activities as their school friends enjoy. The Citizens Advice Bureau and the housing department are working with the family to avoid them becoming homeless.

DOMESTIC ABUSE has a damaging impact on children’s development.
It is the primary cause of children being placed on child protection plans.

Chris is 14.
Chris has seen his mother assaulted by his stepfather. He has spent much of his childhood afraid. He chooses to stay out of the house as much as he can. Chris has been picked up by the police on several occasions as they are concerned that he is with older young people and becoming involved in anti-social behaviour.

Chris has been excluded from school as he was found in possession of cannabis.

Chris is working with a youth worker from the Eikon charity and his mother is being supported around the domestic abuse.

16-17 year olds were referred to the homelessness prevention service in Elmbridge in 2013.
How we will respond

Based on the findings of this research, we will respond in three main ways:

- **by supporting practical initiatives** that can make a difference to people’s lives today
- **by partnering with others** to help prevent problems and achieve long term change
- **by influencing wider change** where it is beneficial to vulnerable families.

We will work together in partnership to:

- **align strategic priorities** for young people across Surrey County Council, Elmbridge Borough Council and the voluntary, community and faiths sector and jointly commission services
- **align budgets** around agreed priorities with a single pool of grant funding and private giving overseen by a partnership forum
- **access the untapped wealth** (skills, time and money) in Elmbridge to support vulnerable families and young people
- **engage businesses** to support the local community and offer access to employment for local young people
- **ensure early help services are available** for young people and families to prevent issues from becoming acute
- **review and develop sustainable housing** solutions for young people
- **tackle child poverty**, domestic abuse and health inequalities
- **align the priorities** emerging from the Streets Apart initiative with the related public service transformation work.

To see a copy of the full report go to **www.waltoncharity.org.uk**

If you would like any further information please contact:

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