

Making the borough fairer

Citizens' Panel event report

October 2023



Introduction

Background

Citizens' Panel members were invited to attend an in-person event on 'Making the borough fairer' on 9 October 2023. This was one of a series of engagements with residents, stakeholders and local communities designed to shape a new approach to fairness and equalities in the borough, and help develop some focussed objectives and a new action plan. A total of 52 Panel members attended the event.

Methodology and report

The event gave Panel members the opportunity to visit information market stalls before the event was opened by the Director of Grenfell Partnerships and Transformation. Also in attendance were the Lead Member for Communities and Community Safety, the Chief Executive of the Kensington and Chelsea Social Council and the Council's Chief Executive. Panel members were then invited to one of 11 discussion tables to address the following questions:

- What does becoming a fairer Kensington and Chelsea mean to you?
- What should the Council do to address equalities and fairness in the borough?
- What are the three things we should focus on first to make Kensington and Chelsea a fairer place?
- How can we work with our communities to make this happen?

Introduction

Methodology and report

Tables were then invited to feedback key points from their discussions to the room and given the opportunity to ask questions before the event was closed. This report summarises the key themes from the table discussions. This is one of a series of engagements around equality, diversity and inclusion in the borough.

Appendix

Notes were taken at each of the 11 discussion tables at the event. These have been written up and can be found in the appendix document available separately.

Equalities

Fifty-two members of the Citizens' Panel attended the event. The demographic breakdown of these attendees can be found in the section 'Who attended the event: demographic breakdown'. Due to the number of attendees being less than 100, the values given are the number of attendees rather than percentage.

Acknowledgements

The Council would like to thank the Panel members who attended the event for their time and feedback.



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KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

What does becoming a fairer Kensington and Chelsea mean to you?

- **Health inequalities** – Panel members felt it was important that efforts were made to close health inequalities. It was felt there needed to be early identification of and intervention in health issues as well as good planning and commissioning of services to support residents. The need for stronger links between the Council and the NHS for a more joined up approach was mentioned, as was the need for more support for people in need and for carers. Panel members felt that residents needed equal access to services with many mentioning the difficulty of getting a GP appointment. There were also calls for more support for mental health, elderly people and the more vulnerable people in the borough.
- **Community safety** – Panel members wanted all residents to feel safe no matter what part of the borough they lived in and spoke of the need for fairer policing. Concerns were raised about a lack of visible policing, lack of police stations in the borough, antisocial behaviour (e.g., large dogs, e-scooters, delivery drivers, pavement parking etc.) and a perception of young people not being treated fairly with high levels of stop and search. It was felt that there needed to be more diversity in police forces and that local teams needed to be a part of their community so that they could feel connected to the local area and make more of a difference.
- **Housing** – Panel members recognised there should be fair access to good, quality housing in the borough. Many felt that living conditions varied greatly and there was a need for more social housing, better maintenance of existing stock and a good quality repairs system for all, as well as measures to tackle homelessness. It was recognised that homes should be fit for purpose, this included appropriate housing for the elderly and accessible homes for disabled residents.

What does becoming a fairer Kensington and Chelsea mean to you?

- **Young people** – There was a general sense that there needed to be improved access to after school and holiday activities, work experience and job opportunities for all young people in the borough. It was felt that youth centres were not readily available for young people and after-school and holiday activities needed to be funded to make them more affordable and accessible.
- **Education** – Panel members felt that education was key to Kensington and Chelsea becoming a fairer borough, some viewing it as a route out of poverty. Panel members wanted to see equality of opportunity within the subjects studied at school (e.g., languages) with equitable class sizes and also fair access to after school activities (e.g., music, swimming). These opportunities needed to be more accessible, affordable and readily available. There were also calls for English as a second language (ESOL) evening classes fully funded for people who work during the day and better advertising of ESOL classes. Some also felt there needed to be more support for children in schools with learning difficulties and for parents whose children have been excluded.
- **Economic disparity** – It was felt that there was a general misconception that Kensington and Chelsea is a very rich borough when there are some real pockets of poverty in the borough. Panel members felt the Council needed to focus on the areas of most deprivation and should be getting more feedback from residents in these areas. The need to break down any perceived barriers between the north and the south of the borough was also mentioned. It was also felt there should be a focus on employability skills to tackle unemployment in certain parts of the borough.

What does becoming a fairer Kensington and Chelsea mean to you?

- **Consultation/involvement** – Some Panel members felt that consultation and engagement was too focussed on certain parts of the borough and all wards needed to be involved. It was felt that more effort should be made to speak to residents rather than groups and that different communication methods and approaches should be used to involve as many residents as possible. It was also important for Panel members to see action as a result of consultation and to be told what had changed as a result.

What should the Council do to address equalities and fairness in the borough?

- **Children and young people** – Panel members wanted to see more support for parents for example, childcare, or employment/skills opportunities for parents. It was felt that there was a need for more youth services, especially for older teens, the reopening of youth clubs was seen as being beneficial to both young people and their parents. Panel members also felt there was a need for more outreach youth workers to engage with young people on the streets who don't go to youth clubs. It was felt there was a need to bring the same level of enrichment and opportunity into local state schools as in private schools to provide more of a level playing field.
- **Housing** - Panel members felt the Council should be ensuring the existing housing stock is maintained to a good standard and repairs were of a good quality. Generally, it was felt there was a need for more social housing in the borough and it was felt that planning policy was key to ensuring developers are committed to building affordable homes. It was also felt the Council needed to address homelessness in the borough (which some felt was on the rise) and tackle the number of empty properties in the areas.
- **Customer services** – Panel members wanted to see improved customer service from the Council with staff calling back when they say they will and resolving issues within an agreed timeframe. It was seen as important that all residents are treated equally and respectfully. Some felt that their concerns or complaints were not always taken seriously. Some felt that self-referrals need to be made easier as they found the Council's website difficult to navigate.

What should the Council do to address equalities and fairness in the borough?

- **Council staffing** – There were some mixed views on Council staffing with some wanting more diverse representation at senior levels and more Council staff living within the borough, whilst others wanted staff appointed on merit with their representativeness less important.
- **Transparency and communication** – Panel members felt that residents should have information/training on their rights/how the council works. They wanted to see a consistent approach and transparency around how policies are applied. It was also felt that it was important for the Council to communicate how they consider equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in decision-making. Some also felt the Council could learn from other Councils and organisations.
- **Decision-making** - Some Panel members felt that the Council needed to think of the wider impact of their decision-making on things such as health and not just immediate financial implications. It was felt the Council should also make better use of data to understand the borough's issues and identify priorities. It was felt there needed to be better targeting of resources to the most deprived areas of the borough. It was also felt there needed to be better engagement with residents in those areas so the Council can hear from those who face inequality.
- **Local organisations** - Panel members recognised that the Council still needed to re-build trust with residents, so it was important for the Council to work with local voluntary and community organisations and faith groups to help do this. It was felt these groups might have access to communities that the Council didn't. Panel members appreciated the outreach support from local community organisations, although some felt this was not as established in the south of the borough.

What are the three things we should focus on first to make Kensington and Chelsea a fairer place?

- **Community services** – Panel members would like to see more community organised and run spaces. There was also a desire for more Council services in community owned spaces on a regular/permanent basis – in spaces that are visited by residents anyway, where they feel more comfortable.
- **Education and young people** – Panel members felt there was a need for more support for young people in schools, especially for those with a language barrier, health issue or learning difficulty. Some also spoke of needing more support for young people who had been excluded. It was also felt there was a need for more affordable community facilities for children and young people.
- **Housing** – The need for fair rent and bills were mentioned as was the need to reduce homelessness and for the Council to provide good quality housing and repairs.
- **Health Mental health** – It was felt there should be more support for mental health, for those with addictions and for those diagnosed with autism and ADHD,. It was also felt there should a be a focus on improving nutrition with better school meals and support for parents to make healthy meal choices.
- **Employment** – More support for employability skills, especially amongst young people.
- **Community safety** – More visible policing and the re-opening of police stations in the borough.

What are the three things we should focus on first to make Kensington and Chelsea a fairer place?

- **Equalities** - It was felt that the Council, through conversations with residents and communities, should have a clear definition of what equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is within the context of Equalities act, thereby, setting a standard which can be measured against. This should be embedded across all services.
- **Communication** – Panel members felt that the Council should communicate more effectively and be clear about where Council accountability lies.
- **Service commissioning** – It was suggested that there should be more joined up commissioning of residents' services with external partners such as the NHS. It was felt staff needed to be well trained and resident focussed, treating all residents with respect.
- **Cost of living** – It was felt that there should be fairer allocation of support services, repairs and cost of living support for residents and further investment in the more deprived areas
- **Access to services** – It was felt there needed to be fairer access to services (e.g., gyms, community facilities etc) and universal access to services for young people and older people.
- **High Streets** – Some wanted to see improvements to the way the high streets in the borough look.

How can we work with our communities to make this happen?

- **Customer services** – Panel members wanted better customer services with staff taking ownership of their issues and feeding back to them in a timely way. They wanted staff to be open and honest with residents and to treat them all with respect.
- **Community events and spaces** – Panel members wanted to see more sessions like the Panel event so that residents were able to express themselves. They wanted to see more community centres opened up and regular communication from the Council. They also wanted to see more community events for people to experience each other's cultures and to bring different people together.
- **Community services** – Some felt there was a need for localised services on the estates where people live. Council staff need to get out into the community more to enable more community led initiatives. It was felt that there should be more co-design of services between the Council and residents, especially for young people.
- **Employment and skills** – It was felt the Council should work more with the local community to develop community employment internships. There should generally be more support for residents in skills and employment and more life-based skills (e.g, budgeting and household financial management) training offered.
- **Communication** – It was felt that generally residents are not aware of Council service and there should be more awareness raising in the community. There was a general sense of a need for more communication and transparency from the Council.

How can we work with our communities to make this happen?

- **Listen To Residents** – Panel members spoke of the need for the Council to re-build trust with residents and listen to their concerns. It was felt there was a need for the Council to better understand who lives in the borough, to understand their lived experiences and to connect more with the community. It was felt there should be more meetings to engage with residents across the borough. It was also felt that residents were well equipped to come up with solutions themselves and the Council should do more to enable this. Panel members wanted the Council to find new and different ways to engage with residents to find out how their life could be fairer and easier. There was a desire for the Council to work with rather than for residents.

Who attended the event?: Demographic breakdown

Sex demographics – Citizens Panel Event	(n=49)
Female	37
Male	12

Age demographics – Citizens Panel Event	(n=49)
25-34	5 (mostly female)
35-59	22 (mostly female)
60 and over	22 (mostly female)

Who attended the event?: Demographic breakdown

Ethnicity demographics – Citizens Panel Event	(n=49)
White	30
Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic	16
Prefer not to say/No answer	3

Disability demographics – Citizens Panel Event	(n=49)
Yes (limited a little/lot)	6
No	42
Prefer not to say/ no answer	1

Who attended the event?: Demographic breakdown

Housing demographics – Citizens Panel Event		(n=49)
Private Housing (n=23)	Own your own home	20
	Waiting on court bailiff eviction (from private rental)	0
	Rent from a private landlord	3
Social Housing (n=24)	Rent from Housing Association	14
	Rent from Council	10
	Council leaseholder	0
	Other	2

Who attended the event?: Demographic breakdown

Ward demographics – Citizens Panel Event	(n=49)
Abingdon	4
Brompton and Hans Town	2
Campden	3
Chelsea Riverside	5
Colville	2
Courtfield	1
Dalgarno	3
Earl's Court	2
Golborne	3
Holland	6
Norland	3
Notting Dale	5
Pembridge	3
Queen's gate	2
Redcliffe	0
Royal Hospital	0
St. Helen's	0
Stanley	5