

H A R I N G E Y

Fairness Commission

What We've Heard

A summary of Fairness Commission discussions at
Community Cook Up on 21st February 2019

Northumberland Park, Haringey

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The two Co-Chairs, a number of Commissioners of the Fairness Commission, and three Council Officers attended the Community Cook Up at the Eric Allin Community Centre on 21st February 2019. Attendees gave evidence about their experiences of fairness and inequality.

The main points raised by participants were:

- Spaces and activities for children and young people
- Employment and training
- Housing
- Support for community organisations, groups and venues
- Community safety
- Community integration, cohesion and migration
- Transport and parking
- Engagement with public services

More information about each of these areas, and other issues that were raised, is below.

SPACES AND ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A few attendees raised concerns about the lack of support for young people. Safe spaces, activities and mental health provision were all highlighted as issues that needed to be addressed.

‘Where’s the mental health provision for young people? We can help them. The ones that end up in prison, they come out after into a society which hasn’t changed – so they need an incentive to change, and we have to provide that for them.’

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EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

A number of participants had concerns about the types of employment opportunities available to them through the job centre. They also felt that there weren't enough opportunities available to learn new skills so that other sectors of work could be made available to them. There were calls for CONEL to come to Community Cook Up to deliver training.

'I've been unemployed for 10 months now. The only thing in this area is retail and that's not what I want to do, it's making me stay unemployed. You need to bring more skills into the area, not just retail. I spent 10 years working on the railway, and all the Job Centre have for me is a retail job.'

HOUSING

Housing was a big issue for many participants in this group. It was felt that a lack of affordable housing was making life harder for everyone. We heard about one person who had lived for 41 years in his private accommodation residence but was now facing eviction. Two other people living in social housing and one person living in assisted housing also reported being threatened with eviction.

'Why do private tenants have no rights? There should be a London-wide initiative to register bad landlords.'

'I've lived in Haringey longer than in any other area, but by tomorrow, I have to sign something to move me out of the Borough. They said, if you don't look for something outside of Haringey, we'll take you off the register.'

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SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS

Volunteers at Community Cook Up emphasised the difficulties they had in keeping the project funded. There was a sense that Community Cook Up is living 'hand to mouth'. One person was displeased that the Council was getting new people to set up new projects rather than working with the people and projects that already exist. She suggested that better funding was needed for schemes that have been proven to work in the community.

'Why is the Council bringing new people in and getting them to set up new projects rather than working with what already exists? Northumberland Park is unique, you can't just parachute people in and expect to get results, there's a lot of cynicism here, things come and go and there's a lack of trust. Established projects that aren't necessarily professional, they should be considered more seriously and supported – it's not just a 'soup kitchen', it's a stepping stone.'

Other concerns raised were that Tottenham Hotspur should do more to support the local community, and that there access to affordable meeting venues was an issue.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

A few participants had concerns about their and others' safety in the community. The rise in the number of betting shops in Tottenham was seen as a contributing factor to crime in the area.

'I can't go out after 4 or 5 o'clock when it's dark. There's been a spate of robberies, breaking windows. It's worse than the riots we had, that was a one-off thing, but these crimes happen every day.'

One resident was particularly concerned about antisocial behaviour on Broadwater Farm and the potential threat to people who lived on the estate.

'There should be more security. It's not very good. The door needs to be secure. And there's a lot of antisocial behaviour. Put your fist down on safety. There's lots of vulnerable people who live around here.'

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COMMUNITY COHESION, INTEGRATION AND MIGRATION

It was clear that some of the attendees at Community Cook Up were particularly worried about the uncertainty they were facing around their rights in the UK, particularly those from the EU or the Windrush Generation. They were worried about the impacts that the government's 'hostile environment' policy and Brexit could have on their lives.

'I've been here for more than 20 years, I have no benefits, no permanent address. What will happen to me after Brexit? I do have entitlement but I'm not getting anything, all my paperwork is gone, got burned in a fire.'

'We've seen cases where everything spirals out of control – they lose their housing or get evicted, lose documentation, effectively become a stateless person, no job, no bank account, no GP, they need services from the Council to help them get their lives back.'

'The Windrush Generation, some of them have been here since they were two years old, so who has this proof? A lot of people are stateless and setting up a register sounds suspicious – what safeguards do you have in place for this register? The 'hostile environment' puts everyone in the same boat – as illegal immigrants. It's having an effect on people, children, grandchildren.'

TRANSPORT AND PARKING

One person identified issues caused by the expansion of Tottenham Hotspur that were having an impact on parking:

'When Spurs come back to their stadium, there's going to be 60,000 people coming in and out of here, making it very difficult for people to park. There's underground garages around here not being used.'

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ENGAGEMENT WITH PUBLIC SERVICES

Community Cook Up told us that their volunteers were assisting guests with their problems in relation to accessing housing, benefits, health, dental care services, etc. However, while the Community Cook Up volunteers had built up good, trusting relations with the guests, there was also frustration that they were directing the latter elsewhere and that it would be more productive if the various service organisations could send representatives directly to Community Cook Up.

‘Have the services brought here, people get fed up with being sent everywhere.’

‘They [guests] need professionals to be here on site to assist with all their problems, but sympathetic professionals.’

‘You make a phone call, the job centre is automated, it’s frustrating, someone needs to come and make the system smoother and treat people like individuals, otherwise people get brushed off by the system and lost.’

Thank you to all those who came and contributed to the Fairness Commission’s discussions at Community Cook Up. If you came along and contributed but feel your views aren’t reflected here, please contact us either by email or telephone (fairness@Haringey.gov.uk / 020 8489 1606).