

H A R I N G E Y

Fairness Commission

What We've Heard

A summary of Fairness Commission Table discussions at the
drop-in session at Coombes Croft Library

13th February 2019

Coombes Croft Library, Tottenham, Haringey

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On 13th February 2019 the Fairness Commission held a drop-in session at Coombes Croft Library. The drop-in session was advertised to Northumberland Park Hostel residents and to Coombes Croft Library users. Officers attended and held informal discussions with attendees about issues of fairness and equality.

The main points were raised by participants were:

- Lack of employment opportunities
- Lack of transparency and clarity in communications with the Council around Housing
- Impact of uncertainty around Housing on children
- Poor quality of temporary accommodation and social housing
- Deprivation and poverty
- Unequal distribution of services and funds
- Lack of community cohesion and concerns about community safety
- Difficulty in finding out what's going on in the Borough

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

LACK OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A few residents felt there were a lack of decent employment opportunities in Haringey. They were also of the opinion that if the High Road West project went ahead, it would mean a huge number of job losses.

Additionally, one participant was concerned that some employers are being particularly unfair to EU citizens by paying their workers below the minimum wage. He said he knew of a Latvian national, resident in Haringey, working full time in a factory and only taking home £65 a week out of the £200+ that should have gone to him because his manager was being exploitative and taking a cut of his wages.

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LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND CLARITY IN COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL AROUND HOUSING

Two residents from the Love Lane estate spoke of their frustrations in dealing with the Council when trying to understand the terms of their housing situation. They felt that residents generally need to be better informed about matters relating to housing. Another resident also said he didn't think there were sufficient communication channels with the Council and explained how difficult it was for him to get hold of someone from the Housing team to discuss his situation.

The Love Lane residents said they knew people who were housed in the private sector when they thought it was temporary accommodation.

'It's not fair if people don't always know what's going on or being done to them.'

'We're being treated like numbers. We just want to know what will happen to us.'

Love Lane Resident

Some concerns were highlighted about how people on the housing register are moved into accommodation, with some residents suggesting that they felt the Council was 'moving the goalposts' and housing people by discretion.

'Last year, Haringey housing 350 people in Band B, so why not us? You could tweak the housing policy for us on Love Lane.'

Love Lane Resident

Transparency around the High Road West scheme was also highlighted as a concern, with residents feeling that people aren't aware that the new homes being built wouldn't be for them. They felt that inaccurate information was being spread about High Road West by the developers and by the Regeneration team.

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Love Lane residents said they had heard that some tenants on Love Lane and Broadwater Farm had asked to be moved outside of London but had been refused, even though this is something that the Housing team had said they could facilitate. Love Lane residents also told us that they knew people who had been told by the Council that there were no homes available for them in Haringey or London, despite there being empty flats in the Love Lane estate.

'Why aren't people being homed in the empty flats? It's really worrying because I can't help but think of Grenfell, and then I worry that the flat will be torched.'

Love Lane Resident

IMPACT OF UNCERTAINTY AROUND HOUSING ON CHILDREN

Love Lane residents also said they were concerned about the impact that the uncertainty in their housing situation was having on their children.

'I've had to use solicitors twice, kids shouldn't have to live through that. That's all the kids hear about is housing, instead of going to the park.'

Love Lane Resident

POOR QUALITY OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION AND SOCIAL HOUSING

Love Lane residents complained about the unsafe conditions of their housing, and one of them felt it was particularly unfair that she had been put on a demolition site with a new-born baby. They also said that it was particularly difficult for elderly residents to get maintenance to fix things.

'There's urine and poo on the stairs and in the life, and it's awful when you're wit your children. The lifts are unsafe, they're not level with the floor.'

Love Lane Resident

Another resident who lived in social housing on Philip Lane said she'd had no hot water in the home for months and the lack of double glazing has resulted in illnesses and a negative effect on her arthritis.

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DEPRIVATION AND POVERTY

One resident felt very strongly that deprivation and poverty were a major concern in Haringey. She said she had noticed a lot more rough sleepers, especially on Green Lanes.

'I have a feeling that poor people aren't helped. Everybody should get attention and to see what they need.'

Coombes Croft Library User

Another resident was concerned that poverty is having a particularly negative effect on migrants and minority ethnic groups. She felt it was important to celebrate the fact that Haringey is a real mix of people and cultures but was worried that some groups in particular were struggling more than others.

'Everybody is living in Haringey, and we don't provide for everyone'

Haringey Resident

One resident from Northumberland Park Hostel told us about how he was facing eviction. He fell into arrears at the hostel because of changes to his housing benefit, which meant they was overpaid. He was then asked to pay back the overpayment of £2,000 or face eviction. The resident was particularly concerned about the lack of information given by the Government about the changes in housing benefit and felt that the Council could do more to help people to understand this.

'The Council are in a position of power, so they should use it to do good for their residents.'

Northumberland Park Hostel Resident

There was also concern about the introduction of Universal Credit and the effect it could have on children and families as claimants have to wait 5-6 weeks for the first payment.

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UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICES AND FUNDS

One elderly Haringey resident from St Ann's ward felt that services and funds weren't appropriately distributed across the borough. She said she really enjoyed coming to Tai Chi classes at Coombes Croft Library but was disappointed that things like that weren't offered equally in other places in the borough.

'Haringey does things in one part, not in the other. These people down here in Tottenham get it, we others don't. There's nothing for me in St Ann's ward. And Crouch End has poor people too, everywhere has poor people.'

Haringey Resident

She also said that she thought there needed to be more activities for older people across the borough.

LACK OF COMMUNITY COHESION AND CONCERNS ABOUT COMMUNITY SAFETY

One Haringey resident was concerned about community cohesion.

'People don't talk to each other. You can't force them, you just have to hope they get interested in what's going on.'

Haringey Resident

Another resident was worried about community safety.

'It is unsafe in Tottenham when it gets dark, due to knife and gun crime.'

Haringey Resident

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DIFFICULTY IN FINDING OUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BOROUGH

One resident told us that she found it difficult to find out what was going on in the Borough.

'There has to be a better way to find out about cross-borough events.'

Coombes Croft Library User

Another resident and frequent volunteer said lots of people didn't know about the kinds of services that the organisations that he volunteered for were offering. He felt that the VCS sector offered so much but it was difficult for one organisation to signpost to another because they often didn't know about each other.

'People need to be able to access information about the free dental and medical treatments that are on offer in different ways.'

Haringey Resident and Volunteer

Thank you to all those who came and contributed to the Fairness Commission's informal discussions at this drop-in session. 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).