



Connecting with boys and young men at the margins of services in North Kensington

A short study

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Content

Contents	1
Introduction	2
Consultation process	3
London Level	4
Borough Level	5
Local Level	6
Survey Findings	7
Overview	7
Postcodes:	7
Ages:	7
Sexuality:	7
Disability profile:	7
Ethnicity:	8
Are you a father?:	8
Question 1: If you have been feeling low in the last two months, where have you been able to find support?	9
Question 2: What usually stops you from looking for support?	10
Questions 3: The thing I like most about North Kensington is ...	10
Question 4: The thing I do not like about North Kensington is ..?	11
Question 5: In the past two months, the thing that has caused me the most stress is ..?	12
Question 6: What community groups do you relate to?	13
Question 7: Where will you living in five years time?	13
Question 8 In the past year, how have you contributed to your local community?	14
Question 9: What could your local community do to help you achieve your goals?	14
Recommendations	15
Recommendation 1:	15
Recommendation 2:	15
Recommendation 3:	15
Recommendation 4:	15

Introduction

In late April 2018, Working With Men was commissioned to engage with a small but targeted group of young men, aged 16 to 25, to find out more about their perceptions of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), particularly with a focus on community recovery since the Grenfell fire disaster. 30 young men completed a survey constructed and delivered by Working With Men (WWM) between May 22nd to July 5th 2018. This was in the backdrop of a perceived growing culture of “angry young men” and a number of incidents locally. Additionally, the tragic events of Grenfell Tower left a legacy of boys and young men that often appeared to be suffering from trauma with indicators such as bed wetting in some teenagers and total withdrawal in other cases.

The objective of this survey was to gain insights into the views of life in North Kensington from those on the margins of the community including: where they seek support both formally and informally; their views on seeking help from public services; whether the public system can do things differently to provide support in a more accessible and appropriate way and what that would look like; their current aspirations and motivations; what the community, through public and voluntary services, can do to support them; as well as what ways they are hindered by public services and businesses. The picture gained was one of young people engaged with their local communities but faced with a variety of challenges. Previous consultation led by WWM in the summer of 2017 with voluntary and community organisations, statutory services and local residents, involving more than 80 people including front line professionals and those describing themselves as community activists, conveyed a similar image. Young people not in education, employment and training were shown to be arguably more susceptible to being affected by the fire disaster and more vulnerable to negative influences and to becoming involved in potential ‘spill overs’ such as civil disturbances.

The wider policy context for this work is that of the Health and Justice and Specialised Commissioning Children and Young People’s Mental Health Services Transformation Work Stream which

holds the aim of improving the commissioning of services for young people in contact with the criminal justice system presenting with complex needs that make them particularly vulnerable, and Future in Mind that outlined the need to transform Children and Young People’s (CYP) mental health services. While it is recognised that not all the participants in the survey experience either poor mental health or are involved in the criminal justice system, some are or were and engaging the core audience of young people to hear their voices and experiences is key to the co-creation of effective services in health and wellbeing.

This report will look at the findings of the survey in light of what is known about young people’s lives in London, in the RBKC and at the ward level of RBKC. Data referred to in the report has been gathered from the highest quality sources including Public Health England, the Metropolitan Police and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Recommendations are produced to support strategic thinking about where and how best finite resources can be allocated to create the largest impact in the health and wellbeing of young people in the RBKC.

Working With Men (WWM) is a multi-award winning specialist charity supporting positive male activity, engagement and involvement. It is the first organisation of its kind on such a scale in the UK. WWM has expertise in the challenges and solutions in working with boys and men who are socially or economically disadvantaged, marginalised or isolated.

Interventions delivered by WWM focus on the transitional times in life such as starting school, getting a job or becoming a parent; these are the times when men and boys are most likely to encounter challenges and therefore most likely to engage or seek help. The aim of WWM’s work is to significantly reduce the number of boys and men, particularly from socially excluded or disadvantaged backgrounds, who are unable to achieve their full potential to become productive and active members of society. WWM does this using a range of evidence based programmes and tools that explore issues related to masculinity and improve resilience, attainment, self efficacy and mental health.

Consultation process

The introduction clarified the target audience for the survey and the objective of it. The data from the survey is to be incorporated into a wider project designed by the RBKC Council's Public Health team.

The survey was structured on the principles of clarity, brevity, and insight driven questions. It was developed through three iterations before being rolled out. The content was verified through a network of professionals, across strategic and practitioner levels and a two week test period with young people to ensure the questions and the structure were easy to understand and would generate deep insights. Where possible, data structures from large, national sources - such as the NHS equality and diversity structure - were used. This strategy was chosen to avoid trying to reinvent this structure and to make data captured comparable with other sources.

The period covered in this report is May 2nd to July 5th 2018. The survey was administered by members of staff at WWM and by young people who live locally on a peer to peer basis using electronic tablets with young people they were working with or knew in the community. The young people were instructed to complete the survey on their own, without the aid or assistance of the staff members. Exceptions were made where identified learning needs hindered the young person's ability to complete it on their own.

London Level

A number of the issues unearthed during the consultation at a local level, exist at a London-wide level. While this is unsurprising, it goes some way to explaining the sense of marginalisation reported later in this report under the section on findings from the survey.

According to data from Savills Estate Agents, London is the most expensive city to live and work in, and this is especially true for young people trying to make their way with the lack of affordable housing pricing more and more people out of the communities in which their parents grew up. Community displacement has a strong correlation to a sense of disenfranchisement (Jarrah and Moony, 2006) and while the respondents to the survey do not reflect the forcibly displaced communities referred to in “Displaced and Disenfranchised: Internally Displaced Persons and Elections in the OSCE Region”, what they reflect demonstrate a strong sense of marginalisation from their community. At an acute level, and according to a report from the London Assembly, there are thirteen times more hidden homeless people (for example people who are sleeping on other people’s sofas, in cars or on public transport) in London than those sleeping rough - as many as 12,500 each night. A specific challenge faced by hidden homeless people is they are often ineligible for homelessness support, and only one in five aged 16-24 seek help from the council.

With reference to overarching health needs, the Healthy London Partnership cites, “A quarter of the population (2,116,223) in London are children or young people. They have higher levels of mortality and serious illness, poorer mental health, variability in outcomes

from common diseases such as asthma, and significant public health issues such as obesity”. A report delivered by Public Health England highlighted the prevalence of poor mental health, more than 110,000 children in London, or around one in 10, suffer with significant mental ill health.

The rate of young people (16 to 24) not in education, training or employment in 2017 fluctuated over the financial year but the average was 98,750 in London which compares with an average of 74,719 across the rest of England or a rate 24% higher than the rest of the country.

In recent months, the rise in violent crime across London has received a mass of media attention. And for good reason. Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show a 22% increase in the number of recorded knife crimes, an increase of 11% of recorded firearms offences and a 9% rise in homicides. While these figures report recorded incidents, the street-level experience may be more acute still where it is estimated a number of incidents go unreported. This is widely reflected in the statements from the survey.

The above figures do not relate solely to young people, however the increase in violent crime creates a tense environment for the Metropolitan Police and does not support building positive relations with young people in the capital. A third of all people proceeded against by police were under 25 and 86% of the people proceeded against among the youth cohort were male. As with the impact of violent crime at a street level, young people’s relationships with Police Officers might reflect this challenging environment.

1. Savills 2016, ‘Where are the world’s most expensive cities to live and work?’, UK
2. <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/london-assembly/london-assembly-publications/hidden-homelessness-london>, London City Hall, Hidden homelessness in London, Published June 20th, 2018, accessed 02/17/2018
3. <https://www.healthy london.org/our-work/children-young-people/>, Healthy London, Children and Young People, accessed 02/07/2018
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-report-looks-at-the-mental-health-of-children-in-london>, GOV.UK, New report looks at the mental health of children in London, accessed 02/07/2018
5. Labour Force Survey, ONS, accessed 02/07/2018
6. Youth Offending LCPF Co-Commissioning Workshop July 2017, accessed 02/07/2018

Borough Level

The London profile depicted above presents a picture where young people are experiencing challenges in housing, employment, specific health issues and violent crime.

At a borough level, there are similarities. The Health Profile 2017 shows that significantly more children under the age of 16 are growing up in low income families (19.4%, than the London average (18.8%). More broadly than just young people, the employment rate in the borough is significantly lower than across London (64.5% of those aged 16 to 64 are employed as opposed to 73.8%) which tallies with the percentage of young people growing up in low income families. Against these figures, according to the Land Registry the average sale price for property in the borough in May 2017 was £1.5M, an amount inaccessible to most. Respondents noted housing as an issue in the survey.

The level of inequality across the borough is greater than the level of inequality when compared with other boroughs. The report "Justice4Grenfell" provides figures to exemplify just how divided the borough is. The gap in life expectancy across the borough is 20 years, from 94 for a man living near Harrods (large department store) to 72 for a man living near Grenfell (Tower). Child poverty, referenced above, ranges from 6% in the least deprived areas

to 58% in the most deprived. Income in the World's End Estate averages at £15 000, while on the King's Road, the average is £110 000.

Crime rates in the borough are a worrying phenomenon. From the Health Profile 2017 for Kensington and Chelsea, violent crime rates (22.1 incidents/1 000 population) was significantly higher than the England average (20.0/1 000). Between May 2017 and April 2018 the three most frequently recorded crimes were Anti-social Behaviour (2029), violent crime (1763) and vehicle crime (1608). During that period, violent crime peaked in August (231) an increase of 70 incidents than the next highest recorded month. From the responses below, the impact of this is expressed by young people.

There are a number of strengths to be noted. Young people in RBKC, when compared to young people across the capital, are less likely to smoke (2.3% compared to 4.9%), less likely to be obese (18.9% compared to 23.6%), are more likely to achieve academically (65% 5A*-C at GCSE compared to 61.3% across London) and less likely to conceive under the age of 18 (11.3/1,000 compared to 17.1/1,000). Each area of strength offers an opportunity to discuss wider health issues with young people from a strengths-based approach with a view to understanding how strengths in one area could be mapped to other areas

7. Families in receipt of out of work benefits or tax credits where the median reported income is <60% of the median income
8. <https://justice4grenfell.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/364307729-After-Grenfell.pdf> accessed 04/07/2018
9. <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/1/gid/8000073/pat/6/par/E12000007/ati/102/are/E09000020> accessed 03/07/2018

Local Level

The vast majority of respondents were in the postcode areas W10 and W11. This section will examine data from these postcodes to understand some of the challenges faced at a local level.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) shows many areas in the W11 postcode as being in the three most deprived deciles by lower super output scores. Similar findings become apparent when breaking out against income deprivation and child wellbeing. By contrast, a few short miles to postcodes in SW10 and SW3 rank as some of the least deprived areas of the UK.

Further breakout data deepen the picture of pocketed deprivation. The English Areas of Deprivation map show the area of North Kensington, particularly in the W11 and W10 postcode, scoring highly in terms of deprivation relating to employment (2nd decile deprivation), barriers to housing and services (1st decile), crime (1st decile) and income (1st decile).

A phone conversation was conducted, on the 10th of July, with the lead peer researcher who lives in North Kensington tasked with gathering the data to find out more about the process and the participants. Generally, the practitioner engaged people between 11am and 2pm and then from 7pm to 10pm around the flyover at Ladbroke Grove and around

that area. They knew some of the people they approached but not all and where they did not know the people would ask “could I speak with you for a moment” to introduce themselves. Some participants questioned the purpose of the survey, wanting to know why they needed to give the first part of their postcode and what was going to happen with data, in the sense of how this was going to help them personally. The practitioner responded to say that broadly where people engaged with it, but the authorities did nothing with the information, at least the young people could not be blamed for staying silent. One participant had recently been released from prison while two others had completed community orders for offences. One person had a child but felt they were still stereotyped because of their “look”; young, black male who wears hooded tops. One person had spent a significant amount of time transitioning through various hostels while two others were currently “sofa-surfing”. Half of the participants were well-spoken. The practitioner would provide examples to support understanding of questions.

Beyond these reference points, the data becomes too granular to support building a wider picture. At this point, it is best to move to the survey responses to hear the thoughts opinions of individuals.

10. https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/pdf/Demographics_childdeprivation.pdf accessed 04/07/2018

11. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2007) combines a number of indicators chosen to cover range of economic, social and physical issues into a single deprivation score for each small area in England called lower super output areas (LSOAs)

12. <https://jamestrimble.github.io/imdmaps/eimd2015/> accessed 04/07/2018

Survey Findings

Overview

- There were 30 respondents. Not all questions were answered by all the respondents.
- The survey completion rate was 97%, taking an average of 5 minutes to complete

Postcodes:

W10	72%	21
W11	24%	7
SW5	4%	1
Answered		29
Skipped		1

Ages:

Under 18	28%	8
18-24	52%	15
25+	20%	6
Answered		29
Skipped		1

Sexuality:

Hetrosexual (Straight)	100%	29
Gay	0%	0
Bisexual	0%	0
Prefer not to say	0%	0
Other (pleae specify)	0%	0
Answered		29
Skipped		1

Disability profile:

No	93%	28
Yes	7%	2
Answered		30
Skipped		0

Ethnicity:

White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	0%	0
White - Irish	0%	0
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0%	0
Other White background	0%	0
White and Black Caribbean	7%	2
White and Black African	0%	0
White and Asian	0%	0
Other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background	10%	3
Asian / Asian British	7%	2
Indian	0%	0
Pakistani	0%	0
Bangladeshi	0%	0
Chinese	0%	0
Other Asian background	0%	0
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	28%	8
African	14%	4
Caribbean	17%	5
Other Black / African / Caribbean background	0%	0
North African	14%	4
Arab	3%	1
Any Other Ethnic Group	0%	0
Answered		29
Skipped		1

Are you a father?:

No	14%	4
Yes	86%	25
Answered		29
Skipped		1

Question 1:

If you have been feeling low in the last two months, where have you been able to find support?

College/University	0%	0
GP/Doctor (Primary Care)	0%	0
Charity/Community support	0%	0
Youth Club	8%	2
Parent	11%	3
Carer	0%	0
Online (search engines)	0%	0
Specific websites	0%	3
Friends and/or Peers	35%	2
Social Media	0%	0
Nowhere	27%	0
Other (please tell us)	19%	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Ventoring Project worker • I don't have problem, my problems get sorted through violence. • Drugs- Class B • Family- Brothers 		
Answered		26
Skipped		4

The above figures stress the importance of peers and family as support networks in the North Kensington area. It is, therefore, important to ensure those networks have an understanding of how to offer support and where to seek onward support in the event they cannot support the individual further. It is of concern that four (18%) respondents stated they did not go anywhere, potentially leaving them in need of support but not in receipt of it.

Question 2:

What usually stops you from looking for support?

I don't know where to go	10%	2
I don't have the time	24%	5
I can't afford to get there	0%	0
I don't think people can support me	38%	8
Other (please tell us)	29%	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sure • I don't care • Nothing x 3 • I don't need support 		
Answered		21
Skipped		9

"I don't know where to go" and "I don't have time" are fairly technical responses in that, with changes in publicising support people would know where to go and might understand out-of-hours support is available for certain presentations. However, "I don't think people can support me" (38% of responses), is a response that indicates "beliefs" which to correct, might take more work on convincing people there are support networks available that want to and are capable of supporting.

Question 3:

The thing I like most about North Kensington is ...

Parks, sports and leisure services	19%	5
Job opportunities	4%	1
Transport	4%	1
Housing and accommodation	4%	1
Health care (GPs, Pharmacies, Hospitals, etc.)	7%	2
Nothing	42%	11
Other (please tell us)	19%	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area. • The community • The people • Very cultural and diverse • Diversity 		
Answered		21
Skipped		9

While the highest response rate was for "nothing" (36%), positives were noted about the community and its diversity, indicating this is a strength that can be built upon.

Question 4:

The thing I do not like about North Kensington is ..?

Parks, sports and leisure services	4%	1
Job opportunities	16%	4
Transport	4%	1
Housing and accommodation	28%	7
Health care (GPs, Pharmacies, Hospitals, etc.)	8%	2
Other (please tell us)	40%	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not Sure • Police • All the above • I don't care • Everything- for example, council don't help us. • Nothing • Police- racial discrimination • The area changing • The council - RBKC • A lot of crime 		
Answered		25
Skipped		5

It is my understanding from these responses that there is a feeling of marginalisation, whether it be through tense relationships with the police, reactions to the changing makeup of an area or a dissociation from housing and accommodation the respondents have portrayed a disenfranchisement calling for a concerted effort to repair those relations.

Question 5:

In the past two months, the thing that has caused me the most stress is ..?

Not being able to find work I enjoy and pays well enough	15%	1
Not being able to buy a property	0%	4
My physical health	4%	1
My mental health	15%	7
Not feeling connected to my community	4%	2
Feeling uncertain about my future	38%	10
Other (please tell us)	27%	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School • People • Housing • Death. I might die in a minute • Nothing, I'm not looking for a job- I sell drugs. • I don't feel stress • RBKC 		
Answered		26
Skipped		4

The respondents make clear statements regarding their future, whether it be through a direct statement such as “Feeling uncertain about my future” (28%), about work (18%) or housing (5%). This sense of uncertainty about one’s future chimes with what is known about the potential outcomes for young men from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds across the UK. Boys were over three times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion and almost three times more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion than girls, according to figures from the Department of Education published in “Permanent and Fixed Term Exclusions in England: 2015/16”. For Black Caribbean pupils the figure was they are three times more likely to be permanently excluded than the school population as a whole. In addition from statistics produced by the “Ministry of Justice: Youth Justice annual Statistics 2016/2017” show those of BAME background make up 18% of the population aged 10 to 17 but 28% of all arrests, while those of white background make up 82% of the population of England and Wales but 72% of all arrests.

Question 6:

What community groups do you relate to?

Religious (church, mosque, synagogue, temple, etc.)	11%	3
Sporting and leisure (football, rock climbing, art, photography, etc.)	8%	2
Educational or learning (college, university, adult learning, languages, meetup groups, etc.)	27%	7
Communities based on a place (park user group, neighbourhood watch, etc.)	35%	9
Other (please tell us)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• None x 2• All the above• Grove, and the blocks		
Answered		26
Skipped		4

These findings indicate that educational settings could be leveraged to build effective communication pathways with some young people, but certainly should not overlook other community gathering spots.

Question 7:

Where will you living in five years time?

In North Kensington	38%	10
Not in North Kensington, but still in London	46%	12
Not in London, but still in the UK	8%	2
Not in the UK, but still in Europe	0%	0
Not in Europe	0%	0
Don't know	0%	5
Answered		26
Skipped		4

Given previous responses indicating a sense of disenfranchisement, the fact that 45% of the responses gathered indicated that these young people will still be living in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea indicates there is a need to make the effort to improve the relationship these young people have with the borough as they transition into adults in the borough who will be more empowered to make a difference.

Question 8:

In the past year, how have you contributed to your local community?

I volunteer (sports club, religious organisation, school, etc.)	25%	6
I do my bit for the cleanliness of the area (don't litter, recycle, etc.)	13%	3
I participate in community events (festivals, arts, political, etc.)	8%	2
I look out for my neighbours (ask how they are, support with childcare, help people with shopping, etc.)	25%	6
Other (please tell us)	29%	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing x 3 • Selling drugs to the community • Fuck everything - they don't like us. • Look out for my friends • Workshops 		
Answered		26
Skipped		4

The responses evidence an engaged and active group of young people. It could be suggested that this level of activation could be further leveraged to both make further contributions and to provide a model of behaviour and engagement for other young people to follow through possible behaviour change models such as champions, accountability and competition.

Question 9:

What could your local community do to help you achieve your goals?

Tell me how I can participate in community events (planning, organisation, delivery, etc.)	11%	3
Organise events that bring people around different themes (employment opportunities, housing, neighbourhood safety, etc.)	35%	9
Increase publicity of community events (online, advertisements, etc.)	15%	4
Tell me how I can put on community events (where to find funding, support in developing events, etc.)	0%	0
Make me aware of my rights to housing, health, education, etc.	23%	6
Other (please tell us)	15%	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't Know • Help with housing • All the above • Unite with the people 		
Answered		26
Skipped		4

The insights gathered here work with the perception of engaged young people to indicate how this group could be activated further to make positive contributions to their communities and the borough. Creating an incentive that would support young people (for example, a personal reference to support job applications) might encourage still more young people to become engaged. Together with the above statement about educational settings being potentially positive environments for engaging young people, the skeleton of a possibly successful engagement campaign begins to develop.

Recommendations

This report has provided insights into the views of a small group of young people aged 16 to 25 in the RBKC, how those views relate to the local context, their borough context and their London context. The views captured paint a picture of challenges in housing, employment, uncertainties about the future and, particularly, mental health often brought on by the stress levels associated with these challenges.

But, in spite of these challenges, there is also a view of young people who are engaged in their local communities through volunteering and looking out for their neighbours. There is an indication that a number of the respondents intend to continue living in the borough over the next five years, suggesting a need to engage with this cohort to support the development of services and the borough to meet their identified needs.

The following recommendations must be framed with the recognition that the sample size for data collection was very small.

Recommendation 1:

Conduct additional research, consultation and analysis with those boys and young men not currently using local services.

The survey sample (n = 30) is too small to draw wider conclusions from and the purpose of this report was to give these boys and young men a voice in the light of recent events, highlight the fact that they are still least likely to come forward or to seek help or support. It also sheds light on attitudes and opinions in the context of supplementary wider views; London, Borough and postcode levels. In order to clarify the picture further. A more robust research piece would likely engage a group of young people, trained in research methodology, to conduct further surveys, interviews and focus groups. It is probable that in conducting peer-led research, the findings would provide further insights as perceived barriers of age and levels of responsibility could be reduced.

Further research could include a deeper dive into the statistics and literature to gather further evidence to support and challenge anecdotal level data.

Recommendation 2:

Connect with those who are already engaged to develop improved dialogue with a view to understanding how they feel they can increase the differences they are already making.

The respondents provided a mixed view of their perceptions of RBKC stating that at the same time as experiencing significant challenges causing them to feel disenfranchised, others were stating they saw themselves as active citizens. Taking a strengths-based approach, empowering this group to become still more active and recruit others, could produce results for young people and the borough.

Recommendation 3:

Go to where the young people are.

The survey has highlighted the spaces where young people already feel a connection. Through combining the first two recommendations (further research and empowering those already engaged) it might be possible to find out which young people are engaging, where, how they could be empowered further and the potential benefits these activities could hold for young people across the borough.

Recommendation 4:

Continue reaching out to those who are deemed hard to reach.

It is an unfortunate reality for a number of respondents that marginalisation and disenfranchisement are their normal experiences. They must not be pushed further to the margin by disengaging from them. Doing so and ignoring their needs could entrench their position and their feeling. This in itself has implications for them but also the wider community.