

### TOLERANCE AND MUTUAL RESPECT - KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

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Notting Hill welcomes the discussion document as an opportunity to contribute to the discussions around community cohesion and local level accountability. In particular, we welcome the evolving role of elected members as community leaders and the recent government white paper reinforces this commitment with training and recruitment programmes.

The discussion document offers a description of general life in Kensington and Chelsea and we would like to see this observation explored further. Demographics throughout London are rapidly changing and RSL partners are key to developing an accurate picture of the demographics of Kensington. Our observation as landlords is that the borough is quite segregated with much of the higher deprivation being located in the North. This has a significant impact on the way in which need is identified and resources are allocated, and implicitly community relations are more heightened in these areas.

Groups will come together for mutual support and common social interest but where these groups are also disproportionately represented as disadvantaged then we believe that the local authority has a duty to understand the causes and seek solutions for the disparity.

***We recommend that RBKC invest more resources into investigating who are the most excluded groups in the borough and develop programmes of activities with its Housing, voluntary and community sector partners to address these needs.***

The issue of parallel lives in this context needs further thought and we believe has a significant financial impact. We also question the notion of “choice” that is implied in opting into city life – perhaps this could be investigated further to determine in more detail the profile of Kensington residents and their perception of local services in partnership with RSL partners.

At Notting Hill we are currently undertaking a number of projects that will build a clear and realistic profile of the diversity of our residents.

#### **Language and Disability Database**

Over the last year Notting Hill has implemented a major project to update and enhance our capacity for recording resident's language and disability needs. We have established a new database feeding our customer contact systems. Whilst we continue to work to make this fully comprehensive it is already allowing us to tailor our services directly to meeting our customers' needs.

The range of information collected comprised:

- Spoken language
- Written language/literacy
- Ethnicity (updating our already largely comprehensive records)
- Nationality/community
- Religion
- Disability
- Format requirements
- How these factors affected customers' communication needs and how they wanted us to take them into account in our service delivery

Our language and disability database is a growing internal information source that provides our staff with detailed information about the diversity of our customers that will allow us to tailor our services. Detailed knowledge of the ethnic and community composition of our residents will enable us to provide local advice and information interpreters and other culturally appropriate services.

Our database is also used for research into service barriers – correlating the feedback on the use of our services with potential disadvantage for those with language and disability needs.

***We recommend that RSLs could also be involved in facilitating feedback forums and satisfaction exercise via their existing resident involvement networks.***

## **SEPARATE LIVES**

K&Cs' approach to "separate lives" is interesting and this is a hotly debated issue for DCLG and the Commission for Racial Equality – The government's white paper - strong and prosperous communities describes community cohesion as "*recognising the impact of change and responding to it. This is a fundamental part of the place shaping agenda and puts local authorities and partners at the heart of community building.*"

***It is our belief at Notting Hill that parallel lives where there are underlying currents of deprivation or disadvantage do lead to segregated communities, provide fertile ground for tension and resentments between communities and fundamentally undermine the principles of cohesion.***

With this in mind the government is promoting the building of cohesive communities that are mixed in composition but have an element of crossover understanding and tolerance. This is a role for the local authority and its partners to consider carefully and a clear consideration for the boroughs housing policy and development plans.

The role of community leaders (including elected members) is fundamental in building infrastructures that can respond to change. Notting Hill had direct experience of this during the 7/7 disturbances. The considerable amount of community development activity that had taken place in the Dalgarno area via the SRB programme meant that when the 7/7 bombers were arrested at the Peabody Estate, community leaders, enablers and local service providers were able to use the existing community networks and communication structures to respond quickly to the emerging uncertainties and fears.

Within days of the arrest the local Dalgarno Community centre were able to host a Dalgarno United event bringing together the local community, police, RSLs and to discuss what had happened and this was followed up with community based information sessions at the community centre.

The Dalgarno Neighbourhood Trust and the Dalgarno Neighbourhood Management Alliance represent models for good practice in building long-term partnerships and fostering joint working arrangements, youth and community safety partnerships. The Neighbourhood Trust in particular is piloting with Notting Hill an approach to community asset ownership that could support their long-term development and future sustainability. Both projects are also ideal vehicles for the development of Neighbourhood Charters that reflect the needs and aspiration of citizens, local advocates and service providers.

***We think this is a good illustration of the benefits of robust networks and partnerships that communicate well and a model of good practice in community development that can be replicated across the borough.***

## **SUPPORTING LOCAL INITIATIVES; AN ACTIVE COUNCIL**

Whilst we welcome the Councils commitment to support and develop a wider sense of shared values we think that it could go further in recognising its responsibilities as a place shaper, discharging its place shaping responsibilities through the development of partnerships and joint visions and commissioning agencies and others to develop and deliver solutions rather than delivering services directly itself.

Registered social landlords have a vital role to play in working with local authorities to discharge their duties. Our presence in the borough is significant and our direct contacts with residents and detailed understanding of resident's profiles and needs are vital information in the decision around services that are required and where to focus resources. Our involvement on the development and delivery of LAA's is vital to ensure we get it right in determining the local strategic priorities and delivering services

***To ensure that this is an effective partnership we recommend that voluntary and community funds should be distributed in a way that ensures voluntary sector delivery is aligned with and contributes to the delivery of authorities RBKC's strategic objectives.***

The Government white paper also makes specific reference to the importance of strategic commissioning and the success of this approach requires a thorough understanding of what local people need and want and the range of providers and potential providers who might be engaged in delivery. The Government will be issuing statutory guidance on key commissioning principles, community participation and competition soon that will influence the councils approach to this issue.

The White paper also reinforces LSP's as the overarching strategic partnership for the borough it is therefore important that the partnership fully reflects the key service providers in the borough is reflective of the diversity of the borough. The CRE will be issuing the first stage of its research into the performance of LSP's in relation to race relations and this research may reveal some useful guidance for the borough.

### **IN SUMMARY:**

- We welcome the evolving role of local authorities and the role of elected members as community leaders
- The segregated nature of the borough lends its self to social disharmony and therefore there is need for the borough to understand the diversity of its residents and allocate resource strategically with the voluntary and community sector as partners to address the issues.
- The notion of choice needs some consideration – and its relation to high quality effectively allocated resources needs further debate
- Housing Associations are essential partners in reaching out to communities and residents and in this context their representation at the LSP level is vital
- Models of good practice exist at Dalgarno in relation to neighbourhood management joint service delivery and community based service delivery these are examples that can influence strategic practice throughout the area.
- RBKC should consider commissioning V&C services a in line with its current strategic objectives