



Community Conversations

A community research report exploring the experiences of residents of North Hyde and North Cranford

July to September 2024

Research by Emily Ahmed, Friya Colaco, Megha Dahdrai, Zainab Hussain, Brooke Jones, Sharanjit Kaur, Juhi Kumra, Kapil Lund, Zobia Masood, Layba Nisar, James Rose, and Taz Virdee

Project funded by the London Borough of Hounslow
Project led by Taz Virdee, C-Change West London
Training and research led by Emily Ahmed



**London Borough
of Hounslow**

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Summary

In July 2024 the London Borough of Hounslow, Taz Virdee (C-Change West London), Emily Ahmed (independent community research specialist & trainer) and a team ten young people (trained as Youth Facilitators) co-produced a community research project to hear from residents in North Hyde and North Cranford, Hounslow. Hounslow Council identified key issues and questions to explore, which the youth facilitation team, in collaboration with Taz Virdee and Emily Ahmed, condensed into four main topics: jobs & money, learning & technology use, health & wellbeing, and safety & housing. We used participatory, action research and creative techniques to create a supportive, trauma-informed environment that aimed to value and include all participants. Activities were designed to let participants lead discussions on these topics and address the specific questions provided.

We facilitated six workshops in community settings. Each session lasted two hours. We spoke with 101 people. Participants ranged in age from 15 to 83 years old. The participants were from various ethnicities, with the majority being Pakistani and Indian.

Jobs and Money: Participants identified significant barriers to securing good work, such as high experience requirements, inflexible hours, and discrimination, alongside enablers like strong networks and local support groups. Recommendations included increasing work experience opportunities, simplifying job applications, and expanding access to flexible and remote roles to create a more inclusive job market.

Learning, Skills & Technology Use: There was broad agreement on the need for more accessible and affordable resources to improve digital literacy and community engagement. Key themes included enhancing cybersecurity awareness, improving communication, and increasing access to technology and educational resources.

Safety, Housing, and Where We Live: Concerns about safety, environmental issues, and infrastructure were prevalent, with calls for better street lighting, increased police presence, and improved waste management. We heard repeated concerns for the safety of women and girls. Residents advocated for enhanced community engagement, easier reporting of issues, and development of cultural initiatives like an arts gallery.

Health and Feeling Good: Focus areas included self-care, access to exercise, low-cost healthcare, and social spaces, with suggestions for community wellness through initiatives such as talking therapies and promoting social events.

This report will be presented at a community event in September 2024 and contribute to the London Borough of Hounslow Equality Opportunity Area Action Plan.

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About this project

Project Background

This project funded by The London Borough of Hounslow, aims to address unemployment and health challenges in North Hyde and North Cranford, Hounslow, through community-led workshops. We took a co-production approach that involved members of the community in co-designing the research, co-delivering workshops with residents, co-analysing the data and co-authoring the report.

We aimed to bring the voices of the community, their experiences and practical solutions for employment, education, and health challenges, and providing a platform for sharing lived experiences.

We conducted a series of workshops / research sessions targeting specific protected characteristics. The topic areas and targeted demographic groups were initially suggested by Hounslow council, with final decision making done in collaboration with the youth facilitators, local VCSE organisation C-Change and an independent community research specialist who provided advice, training and facilitation.

The outcomes will contribute to the Equality Opportunity Area Action Plan, with a detailed report highlighting residents' experiences and ideas for action.

Project objectives

Co-production: Facilitate the co-design and co-delivery of workshops with youth facilitators from the local community.

Empowerment: Empower residents to actively contribute to solutions for employment, education, and health challenges.

Solution Development: Facilitate residents in developing their own practical solutions to address identified issues.

Lived Experience Sharing: Create a safe and supportive space for residents to share personal experiences related to unemployment, long-term health conditions, and low socio-economic backgrounds.



North Hyde and North Cranford Area Overview

North Hyde and North Cranford have a Community Needs Index (CNI) score of 38.05, indicating lower community need compared to Hounslow's average. However, the area scores high in the Active and Engaged Community domain, reflecting limited third-sector activity. The community faces significant challenges, including high levels of child poverty, low household income, substantial unemployment, and overcrowded housing. Additionally, the area suffers from poor air quality due to its proximity to Heathrow Airport and the M4 motorway.

Key statistics:

- 102 residents (9.63% of the working-age population) claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP), a benefit for those with long-term disabilities or health issues, higher than the Hounslow average of 5.96%.
- 15.63% of children in reception are classified as obese, compared to the Hounslow average of 11.14%, while 24.39% of Year 6 children are classified as obese, slightly lower than the borough average of 25.51%.
- Health concerns are prevalent, with 12.35% of residents diagnosed with diabetes, 1.52% with cancer, 6.33% with depression, and 2.73% with coronary heart disease.
- The area lacks local GP practices, with the nearest being Cranford Medical.
- In terms of digital engagement, 0.00% of residents are classified as 'e-Withdrawn'. Average internet speed has improved to 145.1MB, with 8.9% of lines receiving under 10MB, and 87.6% receiving over 30MB.
- 32.63% of children aged 0-19 live in low-income families, compared to 16.97% across Hounslow.
- The average annual household income is £21,600, which is £9,199 lower than the Hounslow average.
- 60.08% of residents are economically active, with 25.96% of residents aged 16+ having no qualifications, higher than the borough average of 18.64%.

Despite these challenges, the community remains economically active, with a notable percentage of residents in part-time employment and self-employment.



C-Change West London Overview

Established in 2021 as the legacy to Heston West Big Local, C-Change West London is committed to enhancing the lives of residents through skills-based training, intergenerational volunteering, and wellbeing programmes. By collaborating with individuals, community groups, and partner organisations, C-Change West London empowers, inspires, and supports local people while developing initiatives that address their specific needs. The organisation is dedicated to creating and providing inclusive educational, wellbeing, and volunteering opportunities that are accessible to everyone within the community.

C-Change West London envisions a strong, vibrant, and resilient community where all individuals can thrive. The mission is to improve the skills, wellbeing, and life chances of those who are socially disadvantaged, creating opportunities that lead to lasting change.

Mission: To enhance skills, wellbeing, and life chances of the socially disadvantaged.

Key Values:

- **To Empower:** C-Change West London strives to equip individuals with the tools and confidence to lead and make positive changes in their lives and community.
- **To Act with Integrity:** The organisation maintains transparency, accountability, and honesty in all its efforts.
- **To Listen and Learn:** C-Change West London is committed to understanding the needs and aspirations of the community, continuously adapting to serve them better.
- **To Be Responsive:** The organisation remains agile and proactive, addressing emerging needs and challenges within the community.

C-Change West London's activities and events serve as catalysts for social inclusion, uniting diverse and intergenerational communities. The primary aim is to foster greater voluntary effort and stimulate civic engagement, creating an environment where all individuals feel valued, heard, and included.

For more information about C-Change West London, please visit: www.ccwl.org.uk.



The Team

Taz Virdee, Chief Executive Officer for C-Change West London

Taz Virdee is the Chief Executive Officer of C-Change West London, bringing over 15 years of experience across the non-profit, environmental, housing, and education sectors in Hounslow, Hillingdon, and Ealing. He has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to community improvement, supporting disadvantaged young people, residents, and community organisations. Taz's expertise includes event management, securing funding, project oversight, and volunteer coordination. Prior to his role as the Project Manager of Heston West Big Local, Taz played a pivotal role in training, developing, and promoting the wellbeing of young individuals at YMCA West London. He has held key roles at Berkeley Academy, Groundwork South, DASH, and other local organisations.



Currently, Taz serves as a governor at Cranford Community College and Berkeley Pre-School, and he actively contributes to advisory bodies such as the Heathrow Airport Local Community Forum and the NHS North West London Co-design Advisory Body. Taz is also a Lay Partner Member for the NHS Health Equity Board. He is also a Board Director for the Hillingdon Refugee Support Organisation and the Chiswick House and Gardens Trust. In addition, Taz is involved with Elevate Community Productions CIC, a social enterprise dedicated to increasing diversity in the creative industries.

Emily Ahmed, Independent Community Research Specialist & Trainer

Emily Ahmed designed and delivered the community research training programme and facilitated the co-production of the Community Conversation workshops described within this report.



Emily is a qualitative researcher and community engagement facilitator and trainer, specialising in creative and participatory approaches, patient and public involvement and the co-production of health and social care research. Having worked for over 25 years across the charity and voluntary sector, NHS, local authorities and academia in the UK and internationally, she brings extensive experience designing and delivering applied research within communities and service improvement. Passionate about applied research that tackles health inequities, Emily has particular interest and expertise in the creative arts, health and social care, maternity, women's health, children and families, disability, long-term health conditions, and innovative approaches to research and service improvement.

An independent community research and co-production facilitator & trainer, Emily also works as an associate consultant with the National Centre for Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), Stop Collaborate and Listen Agency (SCL) and the UCL Co-Production Collective. At University College of London and WEISS she leads the patient and public involvement for Operative Birth Research. As an associate with the Action Learning Centre, she trains action learning facilitators and facilitates action learning sets. Emily also works part-time with Newham Public Health as the Peer Researcher Programme Manager, leading on a community peer research project exploring experiences of Type 2 Diabetes within Newham, with a focus on health inequalities. A Graduate Teaching Assistant at Warwick Medical School, she facilitates Case Based Learning. She is also a member of the BSREC Ethics Committee at the University of Warwick and of the IREC Independent Research Ethics Committee. Currently in the final year of a Health Sciences PhD at Warwick University, her research explores the ways power is understood, experienced and shared (or not shared) and how systems and structures intersect with experiences of power within the co-production of UK health research.

To find out more get in contact on Linked In www.linkedin.com/in/emilyahmed/

Youth Facilitators

The youth facilitators, aged 18 to 27, are actively engaged in the North Hyde and North Cranford area, either through living, working, volunteering, or studying. The group predominantly consists of individuals from Indian and Pakistani British backgrounds, representing 95% of the team, and two White British youth facilitators. Two representatives from the LGBTQ+ community, and two team members with learning and physical disabilities, further contributing to the group's diversity. All were paid for taking part.

Juhi Kumra

Juhi Kumra, 22, has been a dedicated member of the Heston West Big Local programme since she was 14. Starting as a young volunteer, she has played a significant role in organising community activities, events, and workshops. Juhi has also worked on Summer Programmes with Big Local and Creative Spaces London. Currently, she is studying at Brunel University and co-leads C-Change West London's youth filmmaking and social action programme. Juhi is passionate about using creative media to inspire change and values the opportunity to facilitate sessions that empower her peers and community.

Megha Dahdrai

Megha Dahdrai, 23, began her journey with Heston West Big Local at 15, contributing to various community initiatives. She has been involved in Summer Programmes with Big Local and Creative Spaces London. Megha recently graduated with an English degree from Royal Holloway University and will pursue her master's at Queen Mary University in September 2024. She is passionate about literature and community service, and she appreciates the training and facilitation opportunities, which have allowed her to develop leadership skills while making a tangible impact on her community.

James Rose

James Rose, 20, has been actively involved with Heston West Big Local since he was 13. Over the years, he has supported numerous community activities and workshops. James has worked on C-Change West London's Summer Programme in Hillingdon and is currently serving as a Community Research Worker with the London Borough of Hounslow. He is currently studying politics and law at Roehampton University. James is deeply interested in social justice and governance and finds the opportunity to facilitate sessions both challenging and rewarding, as it allows him to contribute to meaningful community change.

Zobia Masood

Zobia Masood, 20, joined the Heston West Big Local programme at 14 and has been a committed volunteer ever since. She has supported various community activities and

workshops and has participated in Summer Programmes with Big Local. Zobia was also a key member of C-Change West London's "My London: Enabling Youth Social Action" programme with the Mayor of London. She is passionate about social action and empowering young people, and she values the chance to facilitate sessions that encourage others to share their experiences and develop solutions to community challenges.

Layba Nisar

Layba Nisar, 20, started volunteering with Heston West Big Local at the age of 13. She was one of the founding members of the Big Local youth filmmaking team and represented the programme as a youth board member. Layba has also been involved in Summer Programmes and C-Change West London's "My London: Enabling Youth Social Action" initiative. She is enthusiastic about creative expression and community leadership and is grateful for the training and facilitation opportunities, which have allowed her to grow as a leader and advocate for her community.

Zainab Hussain

Zainab Hussain, 18, joined Heston West Big Local in 2018 through her involvement with Heston Community School's outreach efforts. She has fundraised over £500 for charity in partnership with Big Local and has been a volunteer at the Summer Programme since 2022. Zainab has also contributed to various events in collaboration with Creative Spaces London. Her interests include community service and event planning, and she appreciates the facilitation opportunities, which have helped her enhance her organisational skills and make a positive impact in her community.

Friya Colaco

Friya Colaco, 19, has been involved with C-Change West London since 2022. She played a key role in delivering the multi-sports programme and later led the "Heston In The Loop" initiative in partnership with the London Borough of Hounslow. Friya has also contributed to the Summer Programme at Cranford Community College. Her interests include sports and community engagement, and she finds the facilitation opportunities particularly rewarding, as they enable her to connect with and inspire others in her community.

Sharanjit Kaur

Sharanjit Kaur, 20, has been a part of Heston West Big Local since she was 13. She was an early member of the Big Local youth filmmaking team and served as a youth representative on the board. Sharanjit has participated in Summer Programmes and was actively involved in C-Change West London's "My London: Enabling Youth Social Action" programme. She is

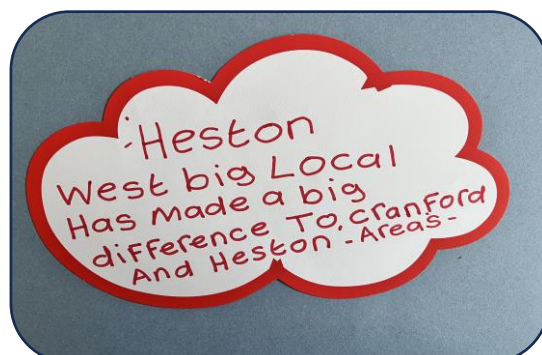
passionate about filmmaking and youth empowerment and values the opportunity to facilitate sessions that foster creativity and community-driven solutions.

Brooke Jones

Brooke Jones, 18, has been involved with Heston West Big Local since she was 9 years old. She has supported various community activities, events, and workshops, including the Big Local and Berkeley Academy's "Beat the Streets" initiative. Brooke was also a leading vocalist for the "One World" song in partnership with One World Strong. Her interests include music and community activism, and she is excited about the opportunity to facilitate sessions, which have allowed her to grow as a leader and contribute to her community's wellbeing.

Kapil Lund

Kapil Lund, 27, has been with Heston West Big Local since he was 19. He has actively supported community activities, events, and workshops, and has been an important member of the Big Local board. Kapil is a role model for people with learning difficulties and disabilities, known for his reliability, kindness, and dedication. He is passionate about community service and values the opportunity to facilitate sessions, which have enabled him to showcase his strengths and inspire others within the community.



Feedback on the project and workshops

The Youth Facilitators and participants said the community workshops created a safe space where people felt comfortable sharing their views and stories. They appreciated the opportunity to be involved and valued the welcoming, collaborative and supportive environment. The Youth Facilitators felt the experience deepened their commitment to community work, provided new skills, and reinforced their passion for making an impact.

"Being a part of this experience was incredible. It was lovely to see so many different people at each event and it was so interesting to use different information-gathering techniques that I'd never considered before. It definitely opened up my perspective on the topics that were in discussion." (Megha, Youth Facilitator)

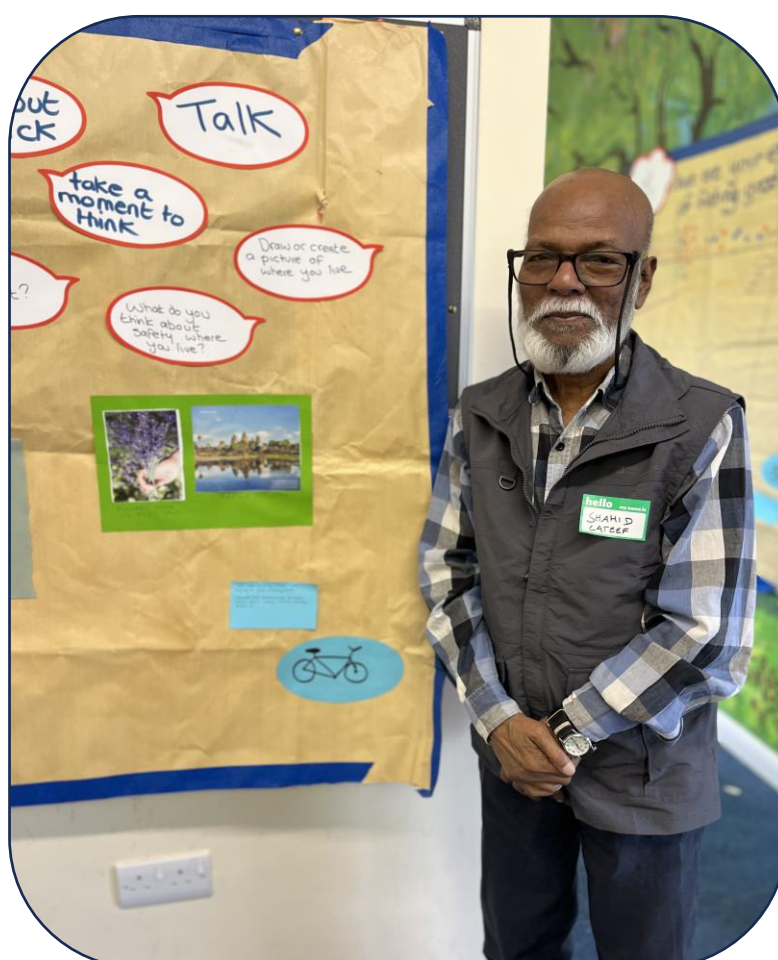
"Working on the community workshops project was a huge opportunity for myself. I enjoyed the staff, the participants and the activities. It felt amazing to know everyone's insight on our community and their ideas on how to improve it too. I feel my team and I did a fantastic job on carrying out these workshops as many participants felt their voice and ideas really being heard. The team I got to work with was amazing, we all worked really great together all with the help of a really good team leader, Emily. I believe this project will do a lot of good for our community and people will definitely be satisfied." (Zobia, Youth Facilitator)

"I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of such a diverse, eye-opening and cohesive project. It's always a privilege to be able to work so closely with the community, but what's so special about this project is giving people the space to just speak and share their very valued feelings and thoughts with us. Our team was absolutely fantastic, with Emily setting up the foundations of a place where people can communicate both safely and freely and the rest of the staff ensuring that they run the sessions with the same values of kindness, empathy and patience" (Juhi, Youth Facilitator)

"I believe that the workshops were structured and carried out in a very positive way, because of this we managed to cover everything that was needed through very engaging activities, where people felt comfortable sharing what they wanted to say" (Layba, Youth Facilitator)

“Being a part of this project was an incredible experience. Emily's support and encouragement created a warm environment for both our team and the focus groups. Leading a workshop allowed me to develop new skills, and it solidified my passion for pursuing a career in community work. I've been volunteering with Heston West Big Local since I was 13, and this project has only deepened my commitment to making a positive impact in our community.” (James, Youth Facilitator)

“My sincere appreciation for the wonderful meeting held for senior citizens at the Brabazon Community Centre. Your leadership and organisation made it a truly memorable and meaningful event. The young people were brilliant too and they are role models for our community and Emily was lovely and truly engaging. I made new friends today. The opportunity to meet with fellow senior citizens, share our feelings, experiences, and suggestions for improving our locality was invaluable. The warm and welcoming atmosphere you created allowed for open and heartfelt discussions, creating a sense of community and mutual support. I am particularly grateful for the platform you and the group provided for us to voice our ideas and concerns. Your commitment to addressing the needs and enhancing the wellbeing of our senior citizens is commendable.” (Participant, Session, People aged 55 years and over)



About this research

Methodology

Our methodology is informed by participatory, action research, coproduction, and creative research methods. Designed to foster a supportive and accessible environment for all participants, rooted in trauma-informed practices. Our approach integrates inclusive techniques and interactive methods designed to accommodate diverse learning styles and backgrounds. By cultivating a space that acknowledges and respects individual experiences, we strove to create an atmosphere where every participant feels valued and empowered to contribute authentically.

We incorporated visual, tactile, and creative methods to foster inclusivity and engagement among participants. These approaches provide alternative avenues for communication and expression, ensuring that individuals with diverse learning styles and abilities can fully participate and contribute. Visual aids and images not only enhance comprehension but also cater to those who may have difficulty processing information solely through auditory means. Tactile elements, such as hands-on activities or objects to manipulate, offer a multisensory experience that accommodates various preferences and strengths. Creative methods stimulate imagination and critical thinking and offer opportunities for self-expression and reflection, creating a more enriching and empowering experience for all involved. By embracing these diverse modalities, we not only enhance accessibility but also foster a sense of belonging and connection within the community, ensuring that every voice is heard and valued.

Training and co-facilitation

A programme of training and supported facilitation was designed and delivered by Emily Ahmed, Community Research Specialist & Trainer.

The youth facilitation team were all recruited based on their connections with the local community and previous experience and engagement with C-Change. They have been involved in co-designing the workshops, participating in pre-workshop briefings, leading facilitation of activities, post-workshop debriefs, data analysis and co-authoring the report.

The team were trained over two days, this included an introduction to co-production, community research and facilitation skills. During the training they explored the suggested questions and topics from the council and were involved in refining these to ensure accessibility and relevance.

The youth facilitators were supported to take the lead on facilitating research activities within the sessions. They decided as a team which activity to lead on and so had the opportunity to choose and try-out each of the different activities and topics. At the end of each session, they recorded audio debriefs, transcribed activity notes and wrote summaries, that data has been used to create this report.

Target groups

The targeted demographic groups were suggested by Hounslow council

- Race and faith / non-faith
- Young people (16 – 25 years)
- People with disabilities
- 55 years and over
- Women
- Men
- LGBTQIA+

The participants were recruited by C-Change and the youth facilitators through leaflets and community engagement activities. We were aware that people have multiple parts to their identities and so would cross over many of these target groups, it was hoped that by targeting specific groups we would gain better insights into specific challenges, enablers and ideas for action. Participants were encouraged to attend the session they felt most relevant to them.

Whilst the design and content of the workshops remained consistent across all the sessions we tailored our approach to resonate with the distinct needs and perspectives of each target group. For example, children's activities were provided during the women's session. We had excellent turn out for all groups, except for the LGBTQIA+ session which was cancelled due to non-attendance. We had LGBTQIA+ people attend the other sessions, and reflected on reasons that may have impacted on attendance such as people may not feel safe or comfortable attending a targeted group.

Research questions

Hounslow Council highlighted a list of questions and issues they wanted to gain insight on. The youth facilitation team worked alongside Taz Virdee and Emily Ahmed to discuss and condense these down into four key topics areas, the activities were designed to enable participants to lead the direction of discussion on these topics, whilst also including the key questions as prompts.

- **Jobs & money**
What are people's experiences of finding good work? What do they feel are key barriers to doing so? What enables them to find good work? What ideas do they have for actions that the community and council can take to support this.
- **Learning, skills & technology use**
What education or skills do people want to develop? What are the barriers to learning something new? What digital skills would people like to develop? How do people access the internet? What ideas do they have for actions that the community and council can take to support the community access learning, skills and technology use.
- **Safety, housing & where you live**
What are people's experiences with regards to safety, housing and where they live? What ideas do they have that the community and council can do?
- **Health & feeling good**
What is important to people about health and feeling good? What ideas do they have for actions that the community and council can take to support health and wellbeing in Hounslow.

Methods

We chose to use qualitative research methods that would enable us to explore people's experiences, perceptions, and stories. Qualitative methods gather in-depth insights into people's experiences and behaviours, focusing on understanding meaning rather than using numbers. We chose to use interactive workshop activities and mini-interviews. These methods are ideal for exploring topics that require detailed, contextual understanding and for capturing participants' perspectives.

- Participatory workshops – using action research and co-creation tools
- Mini-interviews – short 5-minute audio recorded interviews during workshops

Workshops and interviews allow participants to share their personal experiences, stories, and emotions in their own words. This is crucial when exploring sensitive topics like barriers to employment, as it captures the lived realities of individuals in ways that quantitative methods cannot.

We wanted to use methods that are flexible and adaptive, enabling the youth facilitators to create structured conversations, but also allow participants to talk about what is important to them and delve deeper into issues as they arise.

Qualitative methods generate rich, detailed data that provide context to the issues being studied. This is essential for understanding the complexities of topics like discrimination, accessibility, and the impact of social support networks, which are deeply influenced by context and individual circumstances.

Workshops and mini-interviews can give participants a voice, allowing them to express their views and contribute to the research process. In some of the activities the participants were also involved in the initial coding and analysis of the data. This participatory approach ensures that the research captures the voices of those directly affected by the issues.

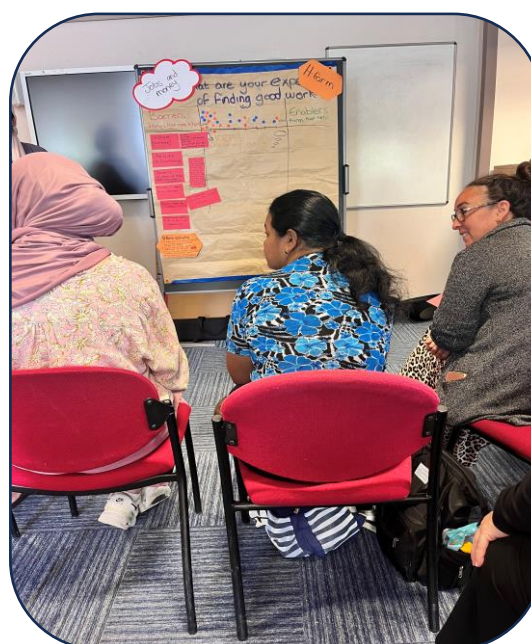
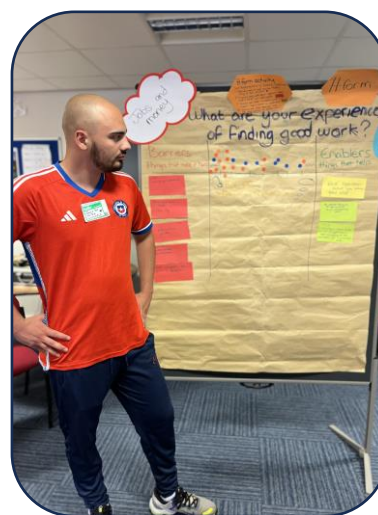
A key part of the training and facilitation focussed on group dynamics. In workshops, the group setting allows for interaction and discussion among participants, which can bring out different viewpoints and foster a deeper understanding of the collective issues. This dynamic can lead to the co-creation of ideas and solutions, which might be missed in more structured or individualistic research methods.

Qualitative methods can be tailored to the specific cultural and demographic characteristics of the participants, ensuring that the research is respectful and relevant to their experiences. This sensitivity is crucial when working with diverse groups, such as those from different racial, faith, and age backgrounds, as well as those with disabilities.

Research tools and activities

H-Form activity- Jobs & money

An H-Form is a participatory evaluation tool in which people brainstorm barriers, enablers and ideas. The group worked around a large sheet of paper on a board. The paper has a large 'H' drawn on it with the research question at the top "What are your experiences of finding good work?" and sections for people to work on "Barriers", "Enablers" and "Ideas". There is also a scale which participants are encouraged to place a sticker on to get them started about thinking about the topic. The participants then work as a group on each section, they are invited to write (or are supported to write) their comments and ideas on pieces of paper that were then placed on the H-Form. This enabled people to share experiences and write their own comments and to promote discussion amongst the group in a visual and structured way.

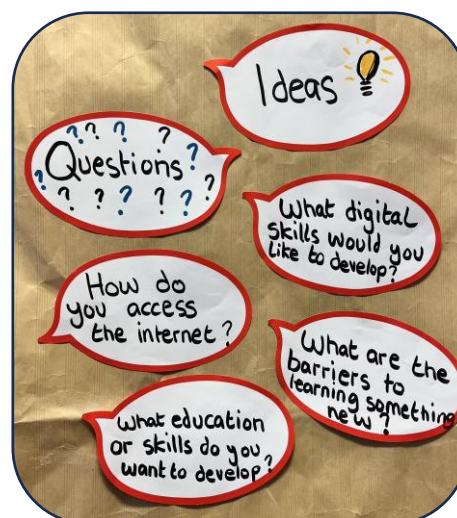


CUbe activity – learning, skills and technology use

To explore people’s experiences of learning, skills and technology use we used ‘The Coventry University CUbe’ a co-creation tool used to generate, share and store ideas. It is a 3D cube shaped box cover in paper, which works similarly to a flip chart, but enables more dynamic interactions. On each of the sides of the CUbe the facilitator had written the prompt questions, the CUbe was then passed around the group members to generate discussion, write/draw ideas and connections. The activity promotes interactive group work and encourages all participants to engage, write/draw and to pass the pen/CUbe.

On each side of the CUbe, we asked:

1. What education or skills do you want to develop?
2. What are the barriers to learning something new?
3. What digital skills would you like to develop?
4. How do you access the internet?
5. Questions
6. Ideas

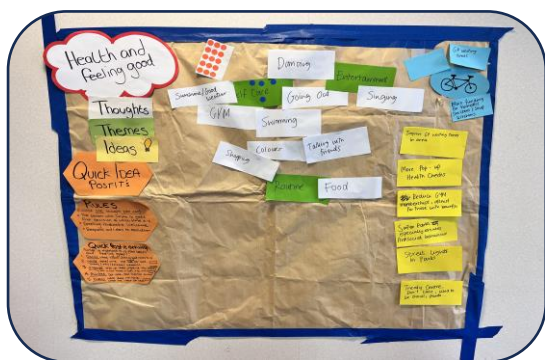


Quick Idea Post Its - Health & feeling good

To explore what is important to people about health and feeling good we used a Quick Idea Post It activity. The question is written clearly on the top of a large piece of paper on the board. The activity instruction cards were placed on the board and the facilitator explained the process to the group.

They began with a 5 minute discussion to begin exploring the topic. They then paused the conversation, and the participants quickly wrote any initial thoughts and words that came to mind on post its notes. The aim was to write as much as possible and brainstorm all thoughts. Anyone who preferred not to write was supported to speak and have someone scribe for them. The facilitator then asked the group to talk about what they had written and one by one stick the post it on the board. The group were encouraged to create and organise these into themes. Each new post was then placed on the board with the facilitator asking, 'is this a new theme or does it go with something we already have here?'

The group then used sticker dot voting to choose which theme/area was most important to them and starting with those with the most votes, they discussed ideas for actions that the community and council can take to support health and wellbeing in Hounslow. These ideas were then noted down by the participants and/or facilitators.

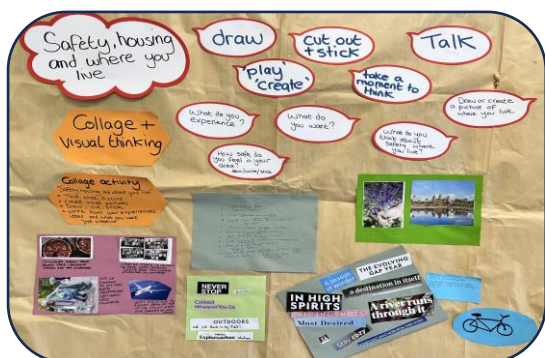


Visual collage - Safety, housing & where you live

As many of the other workshop activities involved a lot of discussion and some writing, we wanted to also include an activity which would take a different approach, focus on visual materials and enable a quieter space for people if needed. During the visual collage activity people were invited to think about the topic and asked to discuss and/or visually create something that communicated what they experience and what they want. Prompt questions included: *How safe do you feel in your area? What does your area need? How do you travel? What green spaces or recreation spaces and places do you live nearby?*

All topics – mini-interviews

Participants had the opportunity to record brief messages or discuss topics important to them in mini-interviews. There were no set questions, just an invitation to share their thoughts, experiences or ideas. At the start of the workshops everyone was told that they had the option of doing a mini-interview and they could ask at any time.



Workshop delivery

All sessions were delivered in person, we planned 7 workshops over 4 days.

The Community Research Specialist & Trainer, Emily Ahmed, and the Chief Executive Officer for C-Change, Taz Virdee, introduced the sessions and supported the youth facilitators to lead the activities. Emily and Taz were there to provide support and assistance to the youth facilitators. Emily also took photographs and conducted the mini-interviews. The youth facilitators lead the activities independently, receiving ongoing support and training to build their confidence in doing so.

There were at least five youth facilitators at every workshop, they each took an activity to lead, with one person being a support float to help where needed.

The workshops took place in Cranford Community College and Brabazon Community Centre. Community locations were chosen that were familiar to residents and easily accessible.

Each workshop targeted one of the demographic groups requested by Hounslow Council.

The sessions were all two hours. The initial 15 minutes included a general welcome to participants, an introduction to the project aims, and an explanation of what to expect. Participants were invited to choose which activities to take part in. We suggested people choose up to 3 out of the 4 activities, spending half an hour each. The last 15 minutes was a chance for people to give feedback and ask questions.

All participants were given a £20 gift voucher as a thank you for taking part.



Data collection

Activity Notes and Data

Throughout the sessions, participants were encouraged to express their thoughts by writing on cards during facilitated discussions. These cards allowed participants to jot down words, statements, and ideas freely. For those who preferred not to write, facilitators were available to assist by transcribing verbal contributions, ensuring all participants could engage comfortably. The varied communication methods used in the sessions ensured inclusivity. All written contributions were organized by session and topic, then manually transcribed and summarized by our team to preserve the integrity of the data.



Visual Expressions

During discussions on safety and housing, participants engaged in creating visual representations through collages and drawings. They explained the meanings behind these images either directly to facilitators or in mini-interviews. These creative outputs were photographed at the end of each session, alongside any additional session materials, to capture the visual data accurately.

Mini-Interviews

Mini interviews were audio recorded during the workshops and people stepped aside to a quiet part of the room to speak one-to-one. This allowed participants to share insights in a more personal and direct format.

Audio Debriefs

At the conclusion of each session, our facilitation team conducted an audio-recorded verbal debrief. This debrief occurred immediately after the session to capture facilitators' fresh impressions and detailed recollections of participant interactions. These debriefs are critical for reflecting on the workshop dynamics and gathering comprehensive insights. Each facilitator shared observations using session notes and materials as references, enhancing the coherence and depth of the data collected. The recordings from these debriefs were auto transcribed using transcription software to ensure accuracy and were reviewed and corrected for any discrepancies.

Photographic Documentation

Photographs were taken throughout the sessions to document the activities and capture the essence of participant engagement. Consent for photography was obtained from all participants, with those opting out identified by a small sticker on their name label.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify and report on themes within the data. Within this project we have drawn from a range of thematic analysis different methods to support the learning and training of the facilitators and to enable collaborative analysis where possible.

The 'learning, skills & technology' topic took a deductive thematic analysis approach in which specific questions were asked and the data was analysed with these in mind. The remaining topics used an inductive approach in which themes emerged from the data.

The 'jobs and money' thematic analysis was initially coded manually by the facilitators with the cards and notes being physically organised and placed on the floor, creating labels to describe and create themes.

The 'health and feeling good' data was collaboratively organised into themes with the session participants as part of the session activity.

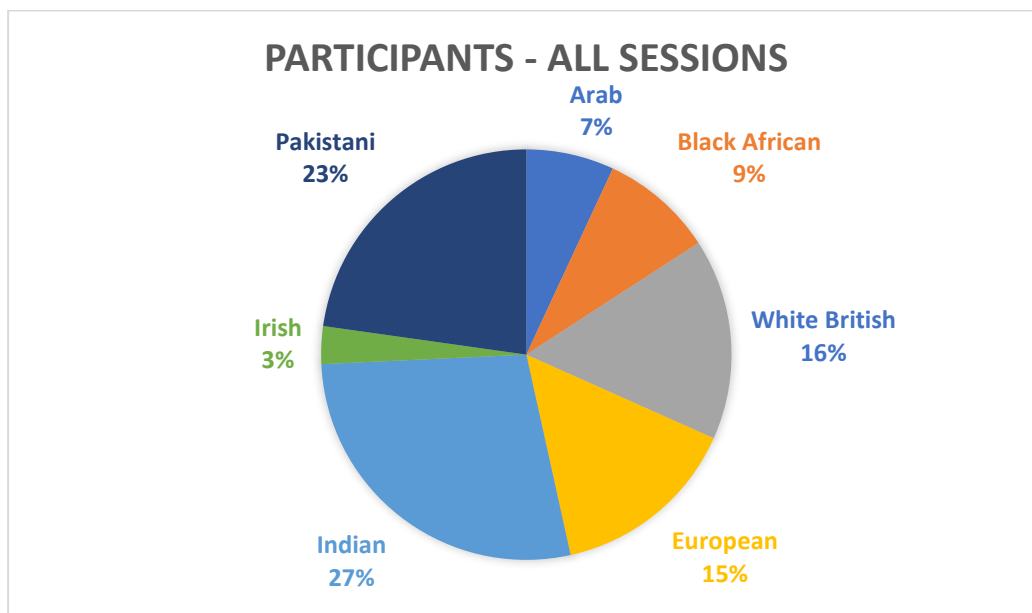
The 'safety, housing and where you live' themes were created through AI and manual thematic analysis using the transcribed audio data.

During the transcription process, the textual data was summarised by the facilitators in which they commented on emerging themes. Transcriptions and key themes were also summarised manually and using AI. AI is increasingly being used in qualitative research for initial coding, to create descriptive themes and highlight emerging patterns as an effective way to identify themes and details that may be overlooked in manual analysis and so providing deeper insight (Turobov, Coyle, & Harding, 2024). We transcribed data using Otter.ai and used Chat GPT to generate and organise data into themes and identify patterns. All analysis was then manually checked and summarised.



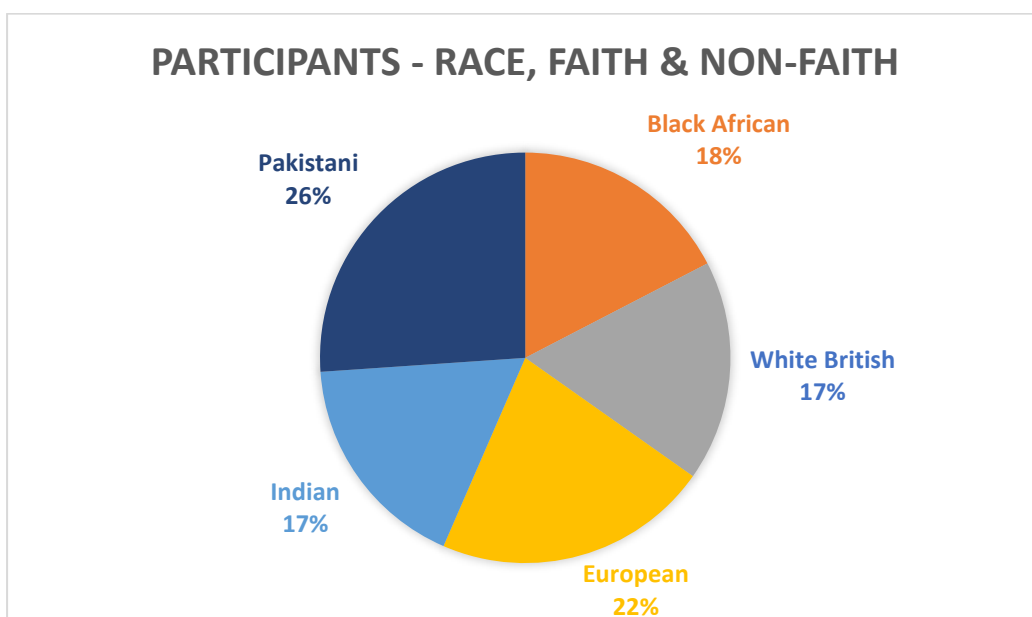
Data monitoring

All participants were asked to give consent to take part and fill in an anonymous equalities monitoring form. The form was designed by Hounslow Council and the data was collected, managed and held by C-Change. 101 people attended the workshops, they ranged in ages from 15 to 83 years old. The charts below show the ethnicity of participants.



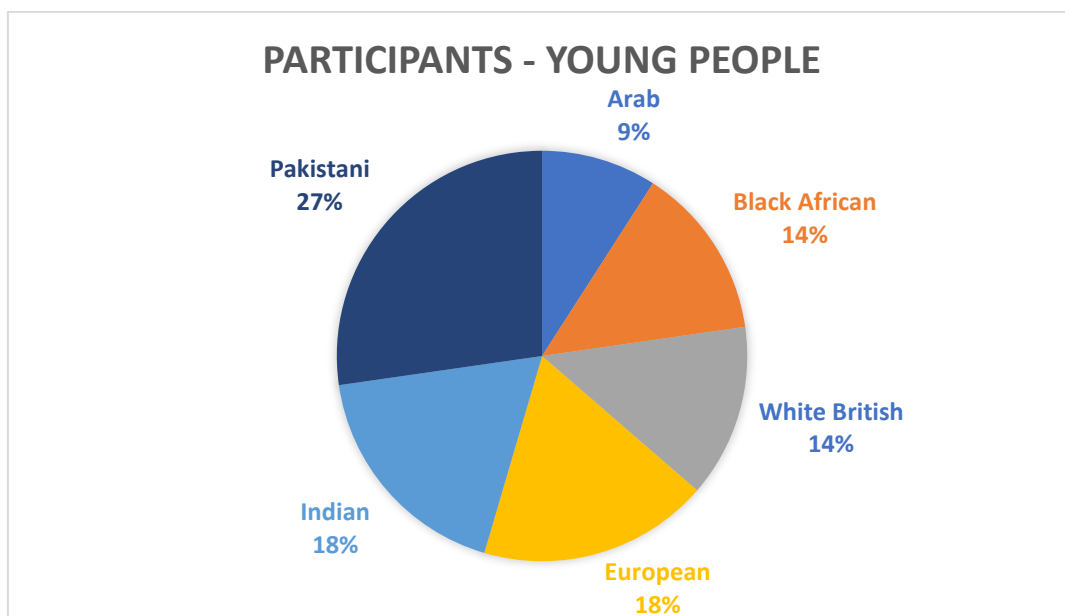
Race, Religion, Faith and Non-Faith:

23 people attended, ages ranging from 25 to 73 years old.



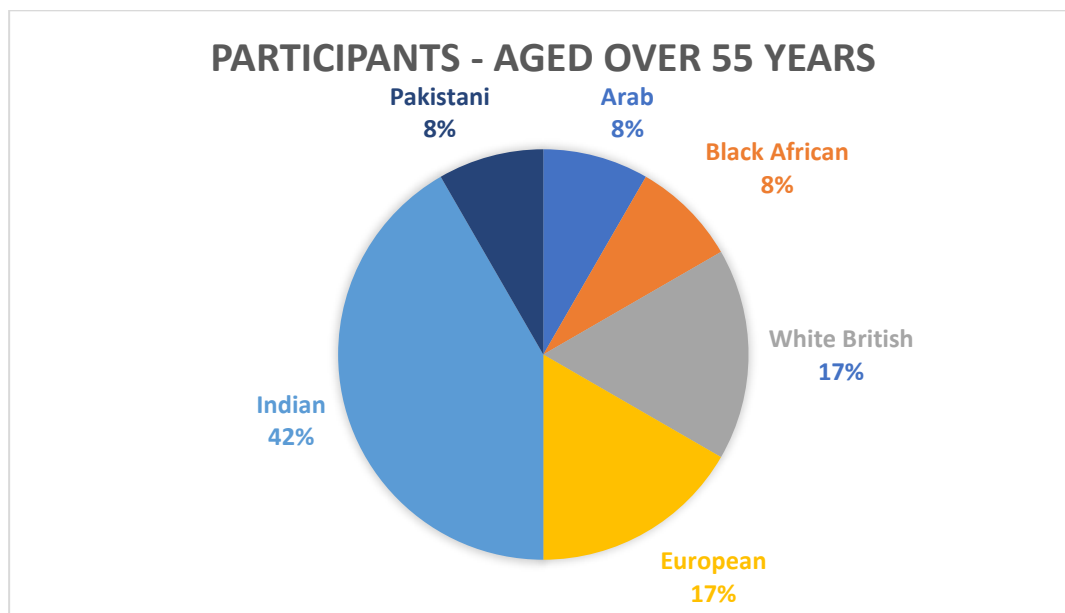
Young People:

22 people attended, ages ranging from 15 to 24 years old.



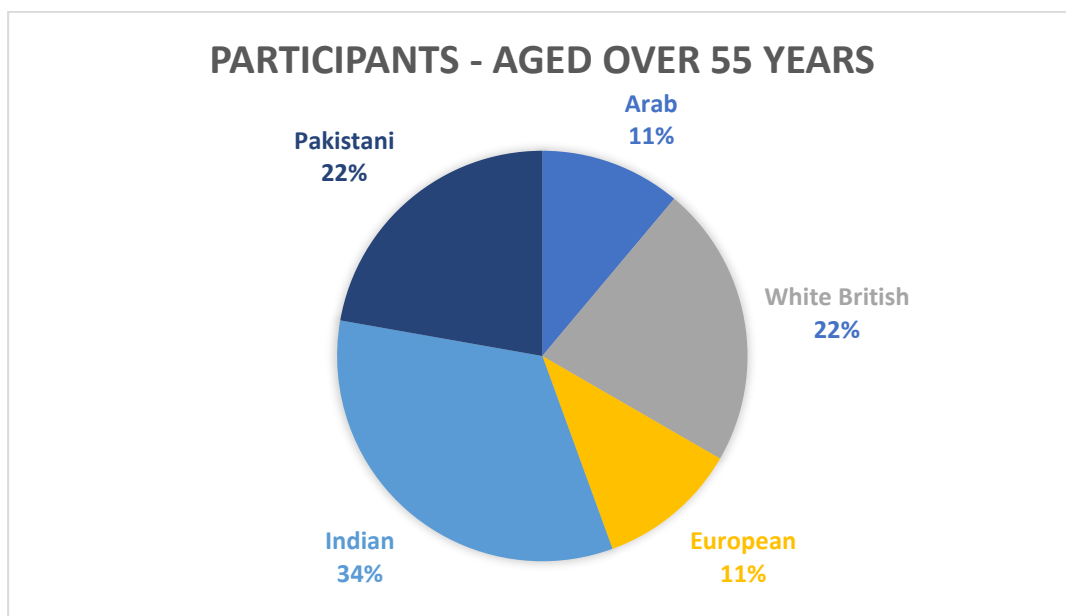
People aged over 55 years:

12 people attended, ages ranging from 56 to 78 years old.



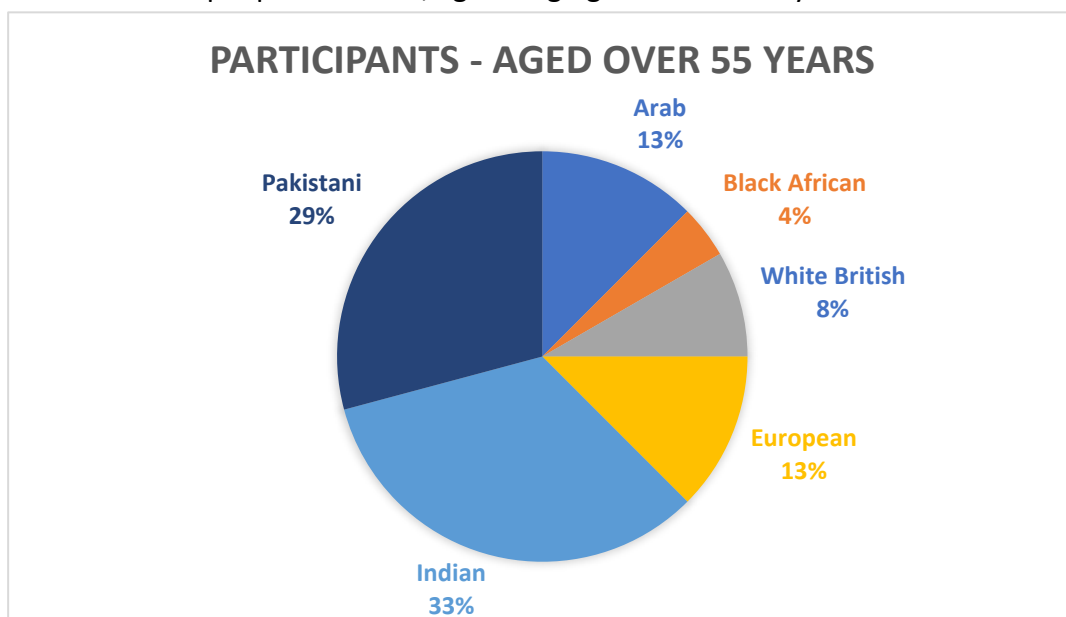
People with disabilities:

9 people attended (including 2 carers), ages ranging from 26 to 58 years old.



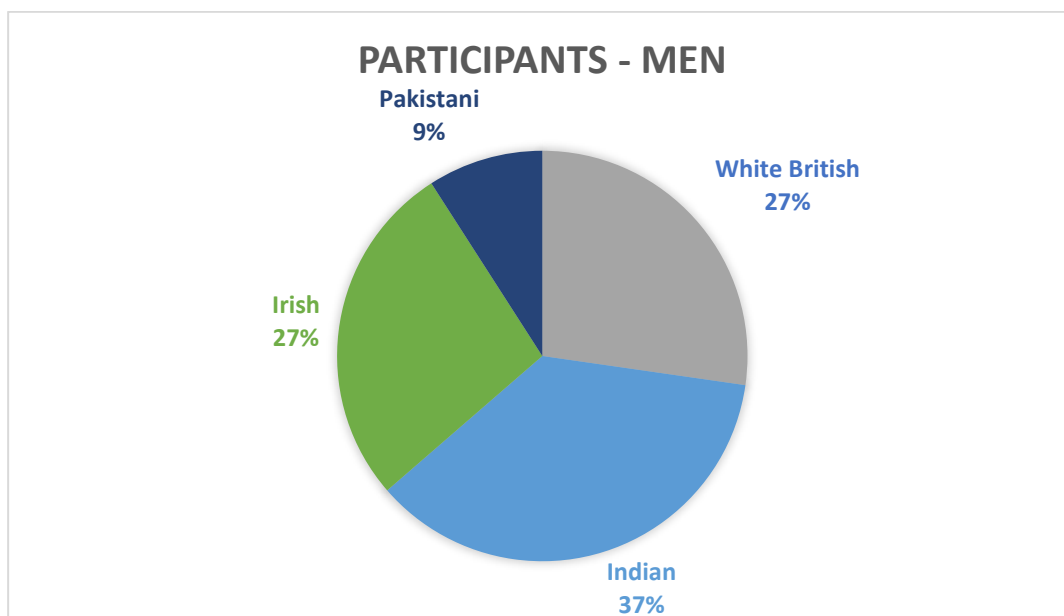
Women:

24 people attended, ages ranging from 20 to 75 years old.



Men:

11 people attended, ages ranging from 27 to 83 years old.



Jobs and Money



The 'Jobs and Money' topic explored people experiences of finding good work, whilst also enabling a space for people to discuss wider concerns around jobs and money and to think of ideas for what they feel would help the community in Hounslow.

Overall, the groups highlighted various barriers and enablers to securing good work across different demographics. Key challenges included high experience requirements, inflexible work hours, discrimination, and accessibility issues. Participants emphasised the need for inclusive training programs, better recognition of foreign qualifications, and more supportive work environments, particularly for those with disabilities or caregiving responsibilities. Enablers such as strong networks, local support groups, and practical skills development were valued. Actionable suggestions included increasing work experience opportunities, simplifying job applications, and expanding access to flexible and remote job roles. Addressing these concerns would help create a more inclusive and supportive job market for all.

Jobs and Money - Session summaries

Race and Faith – Jobs and Money

During the "Race, Faith, and Non-Faith" session, participants discussed various challenges in securing good work. A significant barrier identified was the high experience requirements for entry-level jobs, which recent graduates often cannot meet. Parents also faced difficulties due to the lack of flexible work hours, making it hard to balance job responsibilities with family life. Additionally, many participants were concerned about the

shift towards passive training methods, which they felt were less effective than hands-on, engaging approaches. Older individuals, in particular, highlighted language and terminology barriers, as they struggled to adapt to evolving professional jargon. There was also a notable concern about the inclusivity of job roles for people with disabilities, with many feeling that current work environments are not accommodating enough. The accessibility of necessary resources, such as specialised books or computer access, was another significant issue, with many finding these resources too expensive or unavailable, hindering their ability to advance in their careers. Some resources were found to be prohibitively expensive, making it harder for individuals to pursue certain careers (e.g. web design).

When discussing enablers to find 'good work', the group felt that networking and strong references were seen as crucial. Community groups like C-Change and local networking opportunities were particularly valued for facilitating these connections. Skills development classes, especially those improving communication and practical skills, were seen as beneficial, and participants wanted more of these types of opportunities to be offered locally. The group mentioned the challenge of job opportunities and applications all being online and talked about wanting more face-to-face interactions during the job application process as they felt that allowed for stronger first impressions.

The group came up with lots of actionable suggestions, including the need for more apprenticeships and work experience opportunities, especially for young people, and the importance of creating more inclusive and accessible resources and training programs to support all job seekers

One of the women talked about the need for references "her daughter was volunteering with ___ [a national charity working in Hounslow] and she'd volunteer for six months, but they have a blanket 'no reference' policy. So after she'd been volunteering for six months they wouldn't give her a reference, she was like, well, what's the point of all this? and what about the work that I've done while I've been volunteering? So she was obviously shocked. ... that that shouldn't be the case. And perhaps if there's charities that are working within the borough, the council should say, if our young people or if our community members are volunteering, you need to give them a reference. " (Facilitator summary, session 1, race faith and non-faith)

"A woman, she mentioned that when she first came into this country, she knew how to read and write English, but her communication levels weren't the best. And she went to this English-speaking class... for six months. And

she said that that really helped her communication skills” (Facilitator summary, session 1, race faith and non-faith)

“When it came to enablers for jobs and money. A lot of people said [it’s about having] references... or knowing people like Taz, for example, you know, who has all of these connections... coming to events, the these local groups the hold... and upskilling classes” (Facilitator summary, session 1, race faith and non-faith)

Young people - Jobs and Money

The following summary includes insights gathered within session with young people and during the training session with the young facilitators. In both these sessions they focused on young people's experiences of finding good work, participants identified several significant barriers. A major issue was the demand for prior experience, which many young people found difficult to meet, especially those just starting their careers. Specific qualifications were often required, posing challenges for those still in education or lacking the exact credentials. Additionally, many participants struggled with not knowing where to look for jobs and expressed frustration over the lack of available positions. Moreover, they felt that jobs available to young people frequently lack clear paths for career progression or opportunities to feel stimulated and engaged, leaving many feeling unfulfilled and stagnant.

Ageism and discrimination were also concerns, with young people feeling overlooked in favour of older candidates. For those with hidden disabilities, the lack of employer support and understanding led to feelings of demoralization. Some participants without a British passport described the lengthy process of proving the right to work as a significant obstacle, often resulting in rejection after an exhausting process.

On the positive side, work fairs held in educational institutions and job creation schemes, were seen as valuable enablers. Supportive, open-minded employers willing to provide training and consider young applicants played a crucial role in helping young people secure work. Networking opportunities, particularly through community groups like C-Change and initiatives such as HWBL (Help with Building Lives) were highly valued, as they provided young people with experience through volunteering and connections. Local charities and other community organisations were recognized as crucial resources for gaining experience and building careers. Networking and securing strong references were also seen as vital for accessing better job opportunities. The support of family and friends, along with relevant qualifications and communication skills, were mentioned as important factors in fostering a positive mindset and navigating the job market.

The young people we spoke with gave several suggestions for action, including increasing work experience opportunities, both in schools and generally, to help young people gain necessary experience without committing to long-term jobs. Participants also called for more support for young people with hidden disabilities and proposed the reintroduction of one-stop shops to provide personalised career advice. Additionally, there was a strong emphasis on creating more inclusive and accessible job opportunities and expanding community support through groups like C-Change, ensuring they receive adequate funding to continue their valuable work.

Additional suggestions included creating more 24-hour businesses to offer job opportunities for those with irregular schedules, providing greater support for CV and cover letter writing, and organizing more career workshops and job fairs. Simplifying job applications and providing 24-hour library access for remote workers, who may lack adequate space at home, were also proposed as ways to make the job-seeking process more accessible.

“It would be really good if Hounslow council could work towards advertising jobs that would be suited towards people with hidden disabilities and consider their needs. Also, for ethnic minorities, because a lot of workspaces and jobs might be typically recognized as ones that aren't welcoming towards minorities... There should be more of a push towards that and encouraging people more and to genuinely advertise this” (Participant interview, session 2, young people)

“Could the council have jobs fairs... for young people... with job opportunities and social media pages where they could share?...For young people, it's really hard, especially for someone like me, coming out after just having done my GCSEs to find a job and not knowing where to look. So something like that, where it's just all in one place, or even a social media, TikTok and Instagram.” (Participant interview, session 2, young people)

“As someone with a hidden disability myself, going into a job, I have to think, is this going to be suitable for me? But if a job comes out and says this is suitable for someone with additional needs, then it'd be much easier to be more confident.” (Participant interview, session 2, young people)

“One thing the council should do more of is a One Stop Shops... that's something that used to happen a long time ago ... One Stop Shops are basically like a job fair, but instead of a lot of people and just talking to

them for a little bit, this is one-on-one. They ask you about yourself and get to know you and then they recommend things if you don't have a career in mind... Or then you tell them what you like and then they'll show you what opportunities are available in that sector. Because a lot of people don't want to work in things that aren't relating to the path they want to go down... It's essentially a drop-in... so you can walk in ... they have enough staff members to accommodate to that.” (Facilitator summary, session 2, young people)

“A lot of jobs if you don't have a British passport, then it's like a really long process of proving your rights, that you have a right to work... You have to give all these details before you even know if you get accepted, I'd understand if you get accepted, then fair enough you have to share those details. But going through that long process, just to get rejected, it's really upsetting...Really demoralizing” (Facilitator summary, session 2, young people)

“One of enablers was about Taz. A lot of people wrote ‘Taz’, and I think that's really important because community groups in general, they share so many opportunities... Like C-Change in general... it's important that the council give them funding so that these kinds of things can grow and carry on.... because a lot of people said lack of experience [is a barrier], but then if you volunteer that's giving you experience. And that's how I got experience, because I came here for fun, but turns out I was getting experience at the same time. So I think that's a really good initiative.” (Facilitator summary, session 2, young people)

People aged 55 years and over - Jobs and Money

During the session focused on individuals aged 55 years and over, participants identified several barriers to finding good work. A major concern was the lack of opportunities specifically tailored to the elderly within the community. Many participants felt that there is an unrealistic expectation for older adults to manage long hours and physically demanding tasks. Additionally, accessibility issues, such as lack of transportation, the absence of lifts and of a need to use modern technology, were significant challenges. Language barriers, particularly with evolving terminology further complicated the job-seeking process for older adults.

Despite these barriers, several enablers were identified. Volunteering was seen as a valuable way for older adults to stay engaged and connected to their communities. Having strong personal and professional connections and networking, was another key advantage. The experience that older adults bring to the workplace was also highlighted as a critical asset. Participants emphasised the importance of one-on-one career assessments, mentoring, and practical assistance with CV and cover letters. Job fairs and opportunities for personal growth were also seen as beneficial.

Several actionable ideas were proposed to improve the job-seeking experience for older adults. These included simplifying job applications and making job advertisements clearer and easier to understand, potentially using larger fonts. The use of video or audio applications was suggested to make the application process more accessible. Additionally, there was a call for greater understanding and flexibility regarding sick leave, recognising the unique health needs of older workers.

By addressing these challenges and implementing the suggested actions, the session participants believe that the job-seeking experience for older adults can be significantly improved

People with disabilities - Jobs and Money

During the session focused on the experiences of people with disabilities in finding good work, several key barriers were identified. Discrimination in the workplace was a significant concern, with many participants feeling excluded from job fairs and employment opportunities. The lack of accessibility in job applications was another major issue, as applications are often lengthy, not user-friendly, and not adapted for neurodivergent individuals. Inadequate adjustments for people with disabilities and poor support systems for those returning to work after sick leave further hindered people's ability to secure employment. The fear of losing benefits if they take up a job was also a significant deterrent, as regaining these benefits can be difficult if the job doesn't work out. Bullying in work settings and unmanageable rotating shift patterns were other challenges that negatively impacted their mental health and ability to maintain employment.

Despite these barriers, participants identified several enablers that could help them secure and maintain employment. Workshops and volunteering groups were highlighted as valuable resources for gaining skills and experience. Sharing experiences with others in similar situations provided both emotional support and practical insights. Networking and having relevant job skills were also seen as crucial for finding job opportunities. Additionally, access to free lessons in technology was recognised as an important factor in improving their employability.

To address these challenges, participants suggested several actionable ideas. These included offering in-person application forms with support, increasing local job opportunities to reduce travel challenge and providing one-to-one job mentoring. The introduction of video and audio applications was also proposed to allow individuals to showcase their personality and capabilities more effectively, providing a more inclusive and supportive path to employment for people with disabilities.

“There are jobs where you literally are just catering to people. But for some reason you have to have your maths GCSE pass grade and English pass grade for jobs like that, which doesn't make any sense. So [we need to] have more available jobs for people that don't have qualifications”
(Facilitator summary, session 4, people with disabilities)

One barrier is the “accessibility of applications. How do I know this? Because I heard it, but also I suffer it myself... You need to write for hours these massive paragraphs, and you just don't want to do it because it's too painful to look at... Or applications are not neuro-divergent, friendly. You have very small prints. It should be bold. It should be on yellow. It should have Speak Out buttons. But it doesn't have that. It's just a blank sheet, just black and white.” (Facilitator summary, session 4, people with disabilities)

“Another barrier that they had when it came to applying for jobs was, if they apply for jobs, they lose their benefits, and if they don't like their job and they want to get on benefits, lets say something happen, or they lose their job, it's really hard to get back on benefits, and sometimes you can't get the same benefit they had before. So you might get lower or you might have to be on a waiting list for a long time.” (Facilitator summary, session 4, people with disabilities)

Women - Jobs and Money

During the session with women discussing their experiences of finding good work, several barriers were highlighted. Many of the women discussed facing significant challenges due to the lack of recognition for foreign qualifications, preventing them from securing jobs in their fields of expertise. Workplace discrimination was also a major issue, with people describing employers who assumed that women would soon become pregnant and thus overlooking

them for promotions or other opportunities. Returning to work after maternity leave was also difficult. A woman spoke about her experience of losing her job to a temporary replacement as her maternity leave was extended by a few months due to the ill health of her baby, this led to feelings of worthlessness and depression. Overall, there was a strong sense of being unsupported both at work and after childbirth, with many women feeling abandoned after leaving the hospital. Inflexible work hours that did not accommodate school schedules, a lack of after-school clubs and language barriers for non-native speakers further limited their employment opportunities. The insufficiency of benefits like Universal Credit was also a concern, as it left some mothers in debt.

However, women recognized the valuable skills they developed through parenting, such as time management, adaptability, and multitasking, and believed these should be acknowledged in the workplace.

Several ideas for action were proposed, including offering work experience and paid internships for mothers, creating a centralised resource and guidance for validating foreign qualifications, increasing the availability of flexible job roles, expanding access to affordable childcare, and providing support groups and free training. Additionally, creating more work-from-home opportunities would allow mothers to balance work and family responsibilities more effectively.

“There was a lady who's a radiologist and she can't work because she can't speak English to the required standard” (Facilitator summary, session 5, women)

“a lot of the [women] do have qualifications, one was a doctor, one had a law qualification, and but in their own countries, when they came here, they said that they can't get jobs because their qualification is not recognised. So automatically, they just can't apply, or they don't know what to do with that.” (Facilitator summary, session 5, women)

“some of the [women] said that they had a very good job, but when they got married, the people at workplace will come up and say, Oh, so you're married, so you must be looking to get pregnant. How about we stop a promotion? How about you don't do this? Or how about you don't do that? And if they do take a maternity leave, it's very hard for them to come back to work.” (Facilitator summary, session 5, women)

“One of the mums were saying that when she got maternity leave, she extended it two, three months extra, because her baby had some problems.... but they didn't take her back. So she just lost her job, and then she felt, you know, she was like because of the depression that she got into after, you know, delivering a baby, started feeling like she's not worthy of anything because there's nothing else to do, and someone took her job that she was working for months and months” (Facilitator summary, session 5, women)

“There isn't any flexible jobs for them. So it's either 5am to 2pm or 2pm to 10pm... either you can't drop your kids of.. and a lot of state schools don't have after school clubs” (Facilitator summary, session 5, women)

“she said that she gets Universal Credit, but it's not enough. She gets benefits for three of her kids, and even after that, she's still in debt by £400 or £500 pounds” (Facilitator summary, session 5, women)

“I would start off by saying that Hounslow is actually an amazing Council. There is so much support that is available, but my only gripe that I would say, is that the awareness isn't there. There's no communication, and I only got to hear about all the services within the council through a community group that I went ... and they opened up a lot of services for me, but without that, I wouldn't have known, and now I'm an active member of the community, and I work for a CIC as well within Hounslow.” (Interview, session 5, women)

“The kind of journey that a lot of us women go through, the journey from me leaving work, going on maternity leave, and then wanting to go back into work. The support wasn't there. I didn't know who I could turn to. And I just happened to hear about Work Hounslow, they were amazing... they really supported me. I mean, I was able to find a job during that process” (Interview, session 5, women)

Men - Jobs and Money

During the session focussed on men, we explored their experiences of finding good work, several key issues were brought to light. Family responsibilities and financial burdens, such as mortgages, were significant barriers that made it difficult for many men to focus on their work or job search. Additionally, the high cost of local gym memberships was noted as a

barrier to maintaining physical and mental well-being, which are essential for sustaining employment.

Despite these challenges, several enablers were identified. Participants emphasised the importance of having the energy to work and a strong support system, both of which are crucial for pursuing and maintaining employment. Financial stability, including stable income and the availability of overtime work, was also recognised as a key factor in securing good work.

The group proposed several ideas to address these challenges. They suggested increasing the availability of affordable gym facilities in the community, promoting job opportunities through leafleting and word-of-mouth, and increasing housing benefits to alleviate financial strain. Additionally, they recommended offering online workshops to develop job-related skills, encouraging employers to teach the specific skills they require, and introducing lessons on household budgeting and self-employment in schools to better prepare young people for the workforce.

One participant, who had recently been relocated from another borough, shared his deep concerns about housing instability. After being moved by the council, he found it challenging to secure stable housing due to landlords' reluctance to accept tenants on housing benefits. This situation left him fearful of eviction and anxious about the difficulties in regaining benefits if he lost them. He also highlighted the struggle to access benefits, particularly for older individuals who are not comfortable with online processes. He expressed a strong need for the availability of paper forms to make the process more accessible.

“He said that he took him a long time to get the benefits done. Every time he tried, they said, go online. And he was like, I am really old. I only have a phone. And he said that he would really like the council to have print out versions of these benefit forms so he can just go and take that” (Facilitator summary, session 6, men)

“He finds it hard to get places because landlords don't want people who have housing benefits. They want the money straight from your pocket and not from the councils. And he said that it's hard because he can't work... If he was to lose that benefit, he can't get it again. ... He hears a lot about when people are just kicked out of the house. That was one thing that he was scared about.” (Facilitator summary, session 6, men)

Ideas for improving people's experience of finding good work and on topic of money

Ideas from all groups:

Work Experience and Training:

- **Increase Apprenticeships and Work Experience Opportunities:** More programs and opportunities, especially targeted at young people, people with disabilities, women, and those re-entering the workforce after maternity leave.
- **Work Experience and Paid Internships:** Specifically for all ages, for example young people and also adults looking to gain relevant UK experience.
- **Career Workshops and Job Fairs:** Organise more events to connect job seekers with potential employers.
- **Employers to Teach Required Skills:** Encourage employers to take responsibility for training employees in the skills they need and offering opportunities for retraining through refresher courses.

Inclusive and Accessible Employment:

- **Inclusive Training Programs:** Develop engaging and inclusive in-work training programs, particularly for young people, older people and people with disabilities.
- **Support for people with disabilities and hidden disabilities:** Create more disability-confident workplaces and providing adequate support.
- **Flexible Job Roles:** Increase availability of part-time and flexible jobs, especially those that fit around school hours for mothers.
- **Inclusive Employment Practices:** Help employers become more inclusive in hiring and workplace practices.

Job Application Process:

- **Simplify Job Applications:** Encourage employers to make applications easier to navigate and more accessible, particularly for older individuals, people with disabilities, and those new to the job market.
- **Face-to-Face, Video and Audio Application Opportunities:** Encourage and support businesses to introduce alternative application formats alongside traditional methods to accommodate different needs and abilities. For example, face-to-face, video and audio application options
- **In-Person Application Form Support:** Providing support for people to fill in application forms to assist in completion, especially for those uncomfortable with digital applications.

Support Services:

- **One-Stop Shops for Career Advice:** Reintroduce one-stop shops, where people can receive drop-in, face-to-face personalised career advice, support writing CV and cover letters, and be directed to relevant training and job opportunities and personal support in overcoming barriers to applying.
- **24-Hour Libraries/Workspaces for Remote Workers:** For those working remotely, the idea of having 24-hour libraries or free workspaces available in the area was suggested, as not everyone has adequate space to work from home.

- **Well-being Support:** Offer well-being programs such as self-confidence workshops.
- **One-to-One Job Mentoring:** Offer personalised mentoring for people with disabilities and others needing additional support in navigating the job market.
- **Support Groups and Free Training:** Provide support groups and free courses, such as first aid, could help people build confidence and skills.
- **Training and Guidance for International Qualifications:** Create a centralised online resource and support where people can learn how to validate and use foreign qualifications in the UK.
- **Community Support Expansion:** Ensure adequate funding for community groups that provide valuable support.

Childcare and Family Support:

- **Improved Childcare:** Expand affordable or free childcare, including before and after school clubs, to help parents manage work and childcare responsibilities.

Housing and Financial Support:

- **Increase Housing Benefits:** Address and influence change nationally on the financial burden of high rents and mortgages by increasing housing benefits.
- **Promote Jobs Through Leafleting and Word of Mouth:** Improving job awareness through traditional, community-based methods.

Education and Schools:

- **Teach Household Budgeting and Self-Employment in Schools:** Preparing young people with practical financial skills and promoting self-employment as a viable career option.
- **Workshops in creative industries:** Provide workshops in creative, partner with business, schools and the council. For example, marketing campaign and design workshops for students to create promotional materials for local council events.

Demographic-Specific Ideas:

- **Women:** Suggestions focused on improving access to flexible jobs, validating international qualifications, expanding childcare, and providing work-from-home opportunities.
- **People with Disabilities:** Emphasis on creating accessible job opportunities, offering personalised support, and ensuring inclusive practices in the workplace.
- **Young People:** Recommendations included increasing work experience opportunities, creating 24-hour businesses.
- **Older People (55+):** Highlighted the need for accessible job advertisements, simplifying applications, and promoting awareness of health needs.

Cross-Session Themes:

- **Work Experience:** A consistent theme across all sessions, emphasising the importance of practical, hands-on opportunities to gain relevant experience.
- **Simplified and Accessible Job Applications:** The need for easier, more inclusive application processes was a recurring concern.
- **Inclusive Employment Practices:** Many groups highlighted the importance of making workplaces more inclusive and supportive of diverse needs.
- **Support for Training and Development:** Across sessions, there was a call for better access to training, career development resources, and mentoring.

Case Studies

Enhancing Opportunities for Young People Through Practical Experience and Creative Industry Engagement

In an interview with two young people, they highlighted a need for providing practical work experience opportunities tailored to the skills that potential employers seek. They emphasised that many young people graduate from school without the necessary experience, leaving them unprepared for the workforce. To address this gap, they proposed that schools should play a more active role in offering work placements and incorporating career education into morning assemblies. This approach would help students understand the life skills they need and guide them towards relevant career opportunities.

One interviewee particularly stressed the importance of exposing students to various career paths early on, even if their aspirations seem ambitious. By identifying the required life skills and providing corresponding work placements, young people would be better equipped to pursue their desired careers. The interviewee suggested that schools could collaborate with local councils to facilitate these opportunities, ensuring that every student leaves school with a clear sense of direction and practical experience.

The second interviewee, coming from a creative background, pointed out what they saw as a decline in creative education within schools, particularly in fields like film and photography. They proposed that workshops focused on creative industries should be offered to supplement this educational gap. These workshops could partner with schools and local councils to not only foster creative skills but also to involve young people in real-world projects, such as designing marketing campaigns for community events. This dual approach would not only enhance students' engagement with the creative industries but also strengthen their sense of community involvement.

Both interviewees believe that by integrating these initiatives into the education system, young people would be better prepared for the challenges of the workforce, while also fostering a stronger connection to their communities

“I believe that providing work experience opportunities for young people would be very beneficial. A lot of young people, they graduate from GCSEs, and they don't have any work experience, because they didn't know they needed to work experience... Even if it might be something far-fetched, like being an astronaut, they can identify what life skills they will need, and then say, ‘if this is what you want to do, this is where we can offer you work placement, which will help boost your career’. And I'm sure young people would be excited to take the opportunity.” (Interview with young person)

“It would be good to see some more workshops based on creative industries in the area ...One way would be having kids creating marketing campaigns for little things going on in the area, small council events... you'd run a workshop a couple of weeks before the event, [and enable the] kids to draw up some designs for posters for the area... it's a double edge thing then because you're getting kids more involved in the arts and you're creating a deeper sense of community.” (Interview with young person)

Challenges and Support Needs for Young Adults with Learning Disabilities in Employment

During an interview, a parent shared her concerns about the challenges faced by young adults with learning disabilities in securing employment. She highlighted the significant barriers her son and others like him encounter when trying to enter the workforce. Despite being able and willing to work, these young adults often struggle due to a lack of appropriate support and understanding from employers and job services.

One of the primary barriers identified was the insufficient support provided to young adults with learning disabilities when they start a job. The interviewee felt that many adults with learning disabilities often need a little help initially, such as having a support person for a few hours each day during their first few weeks of employment. This support would allow them to settle into their roles comfortably, after which they could continue independently.

Another significant issue discussed was the fear that gaining employment could lead to the loss of benefits. She expressed frustration with the way councils communicate with individuals with disabilities, often using threatening language about the potential loss of benefits if they start working. She questioned how benefits, which are typically means-tested, could be removed without considering the specific needs and circumstances of individuals with disabilities.

She also shared her experience of attending job fairs and interacting with job services, where instead of receiving personalised assistance, job seekers were merely directed to websites. She recounted how her son, who has experience in gardening and other tasks, was not asked about his skills or interests. Instead, he was left to navigate the job search process on his own, despite being capable of performing certain jobs if given the chance and appropriate guidance.

From this interview several ideas emerged to improve the employment prospects for young adults with learning disabilities. These include advocating for more supported employment opportunities where initial support is provided until the individual feels comfortable, questioning the automatic removal of benefits for those gaining employment, and urging councils and job centres to offer more personalised assistance. This could involve helping

individuals complete job applications and find roles that match their skills and interests, rather than simply referring them to generic websites. Addressing these issues, young adults with learning disabilities could have a better chance of finding meaningful employment.

Empowering Women in Hounslow Through Communication and Community Engagement

During an interview in the women's session, we heard about experiences of a woman from Hounslow who has been navigating the challenges of community involvement and re-entering the workforce after maternity leave. She shared her journey from being relatively disconnected to becoming an active member of the community and a vocal advocate for women's empowerment.

The interviewee began by highlighting a significant issue: the lack of awareness about the support services offered by Hounslow Council. She emphasised the great work that she feels the council do in providing support, but she felt that the communication and outreach efforts need to be improved. It was only through her involvement with a local community group that she discovered the range of services available. This gap in communication is especially problematic for women who she felt were often labelled as "hard to reach." She pointed out that these women are not necessarily difficult to engage but are simply not receiving the necessary information to access the help they need.

One of the most challenging aspects of her experience was the transition from maternity leave back into the workforce. She described how difficult it was to find support during this critical period. Despite her determination to return to work, she encountered numerous obstacles, including a lack of clear information about available resources. Although she eventually found assistance through Work Hounslow, she believes that more needs to be done to promote these services. A centralised platform where women can easily access job opportunities and support would have made a significant difference in her journey.

She was keen that council employees and departments should participate more in informal community settings where they could genuinely listen to residents' concerns. She felt that previously the council has taken a top-down approach, which can lead to a disconnect between their efforts and the actual needs of the community. She was keen that the council be more present in community sessions—not as leaders, but as participants. By simply listening to the voices of the residents, the council could gain a deeper understanding of the real challenges faced by people in the area.

To address these issues, she proposed several solutions. She suggested that the council organise informal listening sessions where representatives can engage with community members without leading the discussions. This would allow the council to better understand the grassroots challenges and develop more targeted and effective solutions. Furthermore,

she advocated for enhanced community outreach and networking. By supporting local organisations in their outreach efforts and facilitating networking sessions, the council could help build stronger connections within the community, ensuring that information about available services reaches those who need it most. One idea proposed was the creation of a centralised hub that could serve as a comprehensive resource for job vacancies, training opportunities, and support services.

Through her story, she underscored the importance of empowerment, communication, and active listening in creating a supportive environment for women in Hounslow.

“We are looked at as hard to reach parts of the community. But actually, I think it needs to be a two-way thing. I don't really get to see the council. I only get to see them now through my role, and I think they should take an active approach in being in these kinds of sessions where it's really informal and they get to hear about what it is that we want... but the council are present to listen, not to lead, not to speak necessarily, but just to hear. Just to come as a participant....to just listen. I think that's what a lot of the issues that we have are here, that the council are not listening.”

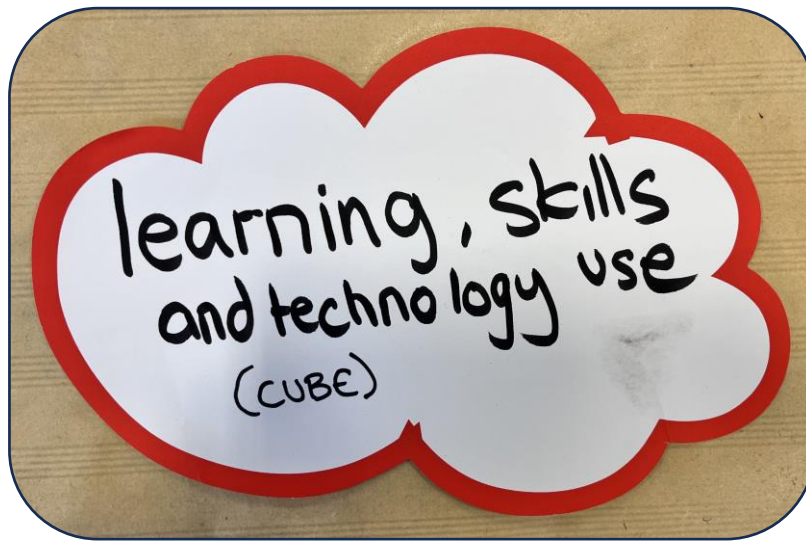
(Interview, session 5, women)

“Having a space where we as women, as mums, when we want to go back into the workplace or we're looking for a job, and I guess this could be for anybody, that we have one space where all of the organisations within Hounslow have a space that they can upload their vacancies... it could be on the council website. So that everybody, like C-change, any [organisations can share] vacancies they have, any volunteer work, would go on that space where any local opportunity, so any local organisations or businesses can promote work opportunities”. (Interview, session 5,

women)



Learning, skills & technology use



The 'learning, skills & technology use' topic focused on a set of questions that Hounslow Council were keen to ask, whilst also allowing space for the group to raise their own questions and share ideas.

1. What education or skills do you want to develop?
2. What are the barriers to learning something new?
3. What digital skills would you like to develop?
4. How do you access the internet?
5. Questions
6. Ideas

Overall, there was a clear consensus across different groups on the need for more accessible, affordable, and well-communicated resources to enhance digital literacy and community engagement. While each group has unique needs and suggestions, the overarching themes of cybersecurity awareness, better communication, local support, and increased access to technology and education resources resonated universally.

Session summaries – learning skills and technology use

Race, Faith and Non-faith – learning skills and technology use

In the community session on Race, Faith, and Non-Faith, older adults expressed a strong desire to develop basic digital skills such as smartphone and laptop usage, particularly downloading apps and navigating online banking. A major concern was the ability to identify and avoid online scams, which have become prevalent. Additionally, participants sought support with online job applications and using digital platforms for services like public transport.

They felt that educational courses have become increasingly expensive, creating a barrier, especially for those unemployed or on Universal Credit. Lack of access to necessary digital devices and reliable internet at home, along with insufficient public resources like library computers, further hindered learning.

Participants proposed several solutions, including affordable or free digital skills courses with refundable deposits to ensure commitment. They also suggested increasing the availability of digital devices in public spaces and employing both digital and traditional communication methods to reach a broader audience.

The session highlighted the potential for intergenerational learning, where older adults could share traditional skills, such as cooking and sewing, while younger people could assist them with digital literacy. This approach would foster community solidarity and enhance skill sets across generations, making digital engagement more accessible to everyone.

I'd like "user friendly classes on online banking that give confidence and information... classes on how to download and handouts to share with simple maybe visual instructions. The apps on smartphone...I've tried my best as much as I can. I've got my boys to help me out. But I would rather be more independent rather than going to them all the time. ...Because this day and age everybody use they use a phone for everything I've got, I've got my banking, I've got everything on my phone... My mother [how has dementia] lives with me I have to handle her online banking."
(Participant interview, session 1, faith & non-faith)

Young people – learning skills and technology use

In the session with young people the group discussed wanting to develop advanced digital and practical skills that align with their aspirations and real-life experiences such as coding, investing, managing personal finances, starting businesses, and using AI for tasks like content creation. They discussed a lack of life skills (not typically covered in traditional curricula) and asked practical workshops and courses that cover interview techniques, verbal and digital presentation skills, formal dress codes for professional settings that would support their personal and professional growth.

A major barrier highlighted was the prohibitive cost of tailored courses that cater to these specific needs, compounded by the lack of engaging and up-to-date course material in existing free programs. Where course are available they felt the marketing and communication opportunities did not always reach them, They questioned how councils and

educational institutions could better advertise and tailor their offerings to meet the diverse needs of young people.

The group wanted dynamic and interactive learning experiences. They suggested that the council should develop and promote courses that align with young people's interests—such as financial literacy and entrepreneurship. This could involve direct engagement in schools and universities and the use of social media platforms that resonate with a younger audience.

The need for practical, real-world application of skills was emphasised with a call for more interactive learning modules that could include face-to-face sessions to build verbal presentation and interview skills. Such initiatives would ensure that educational content is not only engaging but also practically applicable, helping young individuals transition from educational settings into the workforce.

“We want to learn things like how to code, how to invest, how to prepare to buy a house, or how to start a business... when [we] do start earning, how should [we] spend it? What is a savings account? What's interest on savings accounts?” (Facilitator summary, session 2, young people)

“We'd benefit from tutorials on how to do things, like pay taxes, for people that have immigrant parents, we have to do it for them and we have no idea what to do.” (Facilitator summary, session 2, young people)

“Everyone bangs on about teamworking, leadership and communication... and then when you go to university it is more like presentation skills, interview skills, dressing up formally, and how to use AI safely... no one teaches you these kinds of things” (Facilitator summary, session 2, young people)

“I'm quite into languages myself. And I think that Hounslow has quite a diverse area. And there's a lot of different cultures and different people and different backgrounds and different ethnic minorities, that could really like give people an insight, into not just languages but also cultures... A lot of people, they have like a second language, third language, fourth language, and they could potentially teach others” (Participant interview, session 2, young people)

People aged 55 years and over – learning skills and technology use

In the session focusing on individuals aged 55 and over, discussed a need to bridge the gap between their current skills and rapid changes in digital technology. The focus was on developing basic digital skills, with many participants keen to learn how to use computers, access the internet, to create an online CV, have greater awareness of cyber security and to avoid online, letter and phone scams. Fear of scams presented a major barrier to accessing information, using digital platforms and using online technology. Fast changes and modernisation of technology and complex interfaces exacerbated people's reluctance and difficulty in engaging with digital tools and many wanted courses and support in being able to learn how to use technology safely.

Beyond digital literacy, there was also a significant interest in learning and sharing practical skills such as cooking, gardening, and arts and crafts. Participants expressed a desire to not only learn these skills but also to teach them, indicating a need for instructional courses.

Physical barriers played a significant role in stopping people accessing learning and in using technology. A lack of local transport services limited people's ability to access community resources and civic buildings, which was described as turning simple tasks into day-long endeavours. Whilst there was a lot of appreciation for libraries and community services, the group also mentioned increasingly restrictive policies in public facilities such as libraries, which now require forms and registrations to use the internet, adding additional layers of complexity for those already struggling with technology.

The group suggested regular cybersecurity education could help them identify and avoid scams. They discussed many ways that the council could improve access to learning and technology as well as community support initiatives. Examples included weekly help sessions at community centres where volunteers could assist with technology and other queries. They also recommended that businesses participate in technology recycling programs, donating refurbished computers to those in need, thus enhancing digital access for older people in Hounslow.

“People talked about being “scared of spam... they weren't sure what was real or scam. They wanted a tutorial video online or class on cyber security how to differentiate between real letters or real phone calls and real messages.” (Facilitator summary, session 3, 55 years and over)

“Another barrier was online CV and job applications. People that aren't really good computers are struggling to make CV online. And of course, most job applications are online now. They don't do it where you can just

*go ahead and hand in your CV. So people are struggling with that.”
(Facilitator summary, session 3, 55 years and over)*

*“With libraries internet access, before, you could just go in and use the
computer, now you have to sign up, and you have to fill out all these
forms. And you're not just allowed to go in and use it.” (Facilitator
summary, session 3, 55 years and over)*

*“Technology is getting more modernized. They're struggling to use it, and
there's no one to tell them how to use it.” (Facilitator summary, session 3,
55 years and over)*

*“People that know something, they want to be able to teach it, but they
don't know how to do it, so [we need] a teaching course” (Facilitator
summary, session 3, 55 years and over)*

People with disabilities – learning skills and technology use

The session with people with disabilities, included people with lived experience of disability and carers/family members. Participants wanted enhanced educational and employment opportunities that meet the varied needs of people with disabilities. One concern was the lack of continued education for adults with developmental and learning disabilities, who may age out of traditional support systems at 25 years old. Participants argued that chronological age shouldn't determine access to education, especially for those who have experienced increased barriers to education.

The discussion also highlighted the necessity for practical digital skills development, such as Microsoft Office programmes which are often needed for work and personal use. Participants spoke about several barriers to employment, such as service industry jobs that demand qualifications, like GCSEs, which the participants did not feel are relevant to the actual job requirements.

Physical accessibility to community centres and libraries, was identified as a major barrier. These essential resources often remain inaccessible to those with mobility challenges, limiting their ability to benefit from public internet access and other educational opportunities provided in these community hubs.

Further, there was significant concern over the lack of adequate support in mainstream schools for children with developmental and learning disabilities, compelling some parents

to choose specialised schooling reluctantly. This points to a broader need for inclusive education practices that accommodate all learners.

Participants proposed several actionable solutions, including policy changes to extend educational services beyond age limits for those with developmental and learning disabilities, enhancing local facilities to make them more accessible, and creating job opportunities that are inclusive of all educational backgrounds. They also suggested improving communication skills and public speaking courses to help boost confidence among people with disabilities.

“There's not enough support when it comes to children with autism, when it comes to secondary schools, and they don't give enough support. [One of the mothers said] that's why she's having to put her child in an special school. She didn't want to, but it came to the point where, in this area, there wasn't enough options for her” (Facilitator summary, session 4, people with disabilities)

“Courses on English communication.., a lot of the English courses that they offer are about learning the language, but not necessarily communicating in English. [People asked for courses] like public speaking, so increasing confidence.” (Facilitator summary, session 4, people with disabilities)

“There is a need for more inclusive education, particularly for students with special educational needs, and the importance of catering to different learning styles” (Facilitator summary, session 4, people with disabilities)

Women’s session – learning skills and technology use

In the session with women, they discussed their experiences with learning and technology, several key themes emerged around their desires and obstacles in acquiring new skills. The participants expressed a significant interest in developing practical digital skills, such as enforcing parental controls on devices to protect their children online, detecting online scams, and enhancing general computer literacy. Beyond digital capabilities, there was a strong call for foundational skills that boost employability and personal growth, including basic employment skills, confidence in mathematics, and effective communication in English.

However, these aspirations are hindered by several barriers. Childcare emerged as a prominent obstacle, with many women finding it difficult to attend courses due to parenting responsibilities. Additionally, inadequate communication about available learning opportunities and limited access to personal computing resources further restrict their ability to engage in educational activities. Language barriers also pose a significant challenge, especially for non-native English speakers who struggle to access courses that meet their needs.

To address these issues, the women proposed the creation of more active adult learning centres that could serve as hubs for collaboration between various educational and employment services. They emphasised the importance of incorporating childcare services within these centres to enable mothers to participate fully. Furthermore, there was a strong advocacy for community-based learning initiatives that leverage local talents and resources, providing more relevant and accessible educational opportunities.

The session highlighted a need for targeted council actions to improve communication about and access to educational programs. This includes enhancing childcare support during courses and tailoring educational offerings to better meet the unique needs of women. By implementing these changes, the council can help ensure that educational and digital resources are more inclusively designed, supporting women in their pursuit of personal and professional development.

“Some don't speak English as their first language, and that's a barrier to them learning and accessing these courses” (Facilitator summary, session 5, women)

“A lot of the woman, I spoke to about their access to internet said that a large proportion used phones. Laptops were largely from libraries, and they borrowed them out. And that there was a more of a swing towards hiring laptops rather than private owned laptops” (Facilitator summary, session 5, women)

*“I heard from some women that, because of having a child, it's very challenging to fit in going to do a new course. So that was a challenge for them, the time and routine, when, when can I go to the course?”
(Facilitator summary, session 5, women)*

Men's session – learning skills and technology use

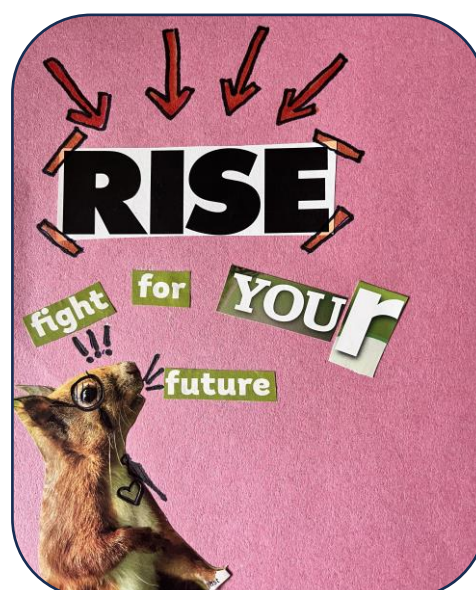
During the men's session the participants highlighted a strong desire to enhance their digital literacy and engage more effectively with the digital world. The group expressed interest in developing a broad range of digital skills, including coding, basic computer use, graphic design, developing apps and creating digital content for platforms like YouTube. They were also interested in practical educational courses that could support personal and professional projects. This includes tech workshops for all ages, courses on setting up businesses, understanding mortgages, managing personal finances, learning about consumer rights online and non-tech skills like cooking.

The session revealed significant barriers to learning. Accessibility issues were a concern, particularly for people with dyslexia who need specific aids like yellow paper and bold lettering. Participants discussed challenges in accessing learning and council services, explaining how automated systems which had replaced human contact in customer service, created a barrier for those needing more personalised guidance. Financial constraints were another barrier, with many men stating that the high cost of courses prevented them from pursuing further education. The group advocated for more flexible learning opportunities that could accommodate their diverse needs, including shorter and more adaptable course structures to alleviate anxiety associated with longer-term commitments.

They expressed a need for community-based learning opportunities that provide hands-on experience and foster a supportive learning environment. They called for practical, actionable solutions from local councils and community organisations. These included developing tailored digital skills programs that are both accessible and directly applicable to real-world scenarios. They also suggested the introduction of free Wi-Fi in public spaces like high streets to improve internet access for everyone.

“What are the barriers to learning something? One person said accessibility. He's a visual learner, so he expressed a lot of frustration that there wasn't accessibility like yellow paper and bold lettering. (Facilitator summary, session 6, men)

“They feel like there's ageism and that they lack the skills to really compete in the current modern workplace” (Facilitator summary, session 6, men)



Ideas for improving access to learning, skills, and technology use

Ideas from all groups:

1. Enhanced Access and Support for Learning:

- **Facilitation and Train-the-Trainer Courses:** Intergenerational community members could be empowered to teach and share their skills in various areas like technology, cooking, and languages.
- **Community Help Sessions:** Regular volunteer-led sessions to assist with queries and skill development.
- **Use of Community Centres:** Utilize local spaces for delivering courses and providing access to technology.
- **Leverage Community Resources:** Encourage the use of local talents to provide educational opportunities.

2. Technology Access and Literacy:

- **Technology Donation, Recycling and Loan Programs:** Partnerships with companies to provide refurbished computers and other tech devices and to fix and/or support people to use devices they own. Loaning devices to those that can't afford them.
- **Basic digital skills: Courses on** how to use phone apps, how to confidently access the internet, online banking, online shopping
- **Advanced Digital Skills:** Microsoft package, Photoshop, using AI, graphic design, programming, social media, creating You Tube channel, app development
- **Online Safety Training:** how to avoid scams (online, letter and phone scams), parental controls and child internet safety, online consumer rights, how to read the terms and conditions
- **Public WIFI Access:** Providing free WIFI in public spaces like high streets was a common idea to help increase internet access.
- **24-Hour Libraries and Computer Hubs:** Round-the-clock access to educational resources and facilities

3. Practical Skill Development:

- **Creative and Wellbeing Courses:** Music, art, sewing, cooking, exercise, yoga, gardening, swimming, football, first aid
- **Professional Development Courses:** improving confidence in communication and public speaking, personal budgeting, finance management and taxes, mortgages, investment and savings, creating a CV, (check youth session), business development and entrepreneurship,
- **Life Skills and Next Steps Advice:** Including how to convert international degrees and qualifications for UK standards, and guidance post-education.

4. Inclusive Learning and Education Strategies:

- **Support for Special Needs:** Increased support and opportunities in schools for students with disabilities, advocating for more inclusive education approaches.
- **Educational Continuity for Adults with Disabilities:** Extending learning opportunities beyond traditional age limits.

5. Flexibility and Accessibility:

- **Flexible Learning Options:** Shorter, more flexible courses to accommodate various schedules and learning styles. Options for both online and in person courses
- **Language Accessibility:** Ensuring information and courses are accessible to people regardless of English language proficiency
- **Physical Accessibility Improvements:** Ensuring that all learning centres are accessible to people with disabilities.

6. Communication and Outreach:

- **Improved Communication Strategies:** Enhancing the visibility of programs through effective communication channels, including digital and traditional media.
- **Information Hubs:** Centralised platforms where all community information can be accessed easily.

Demographic-Specific Ideas

- **Women:**
 - **Childcare Support:** Flexible childcare solutions during educational sessions and workshops that facilitate learning for both parents and children together.
- **Men:**
 - **Community-Based Learning Opportunities:** Hands-on workshops that also provide social interactions and peer support.
- **People with Disabilities:**
 - **Job Opportunities:** Working with businesses to create inclusive job openings that don't require stringent qualifications.
 - **Supportive Educational Environments:** Advocating for more supportive measures in mainstream education and post-25 education
- **Older Adults (Age 55 and over):**
 - **Accessible Educational Programs:** Courses focused on both digital literacy and practical skills suited to older adults' interests.
 - **Local Transport Services:** Enhancing transportation to ensure access to essential services.
- **Young People:**
 - **Affordable Courses:** Offering digital skills courses with potential discounts or refundable deposits to ensure attendance.
 - **Interactive Learning Opportunities:** Implementing engaging, practical learning modules for skills like interview and verbal presentation skills, business start-up strategies.
 - **Mentoring and Coaching:** to support young people in their learning and career development.

Safety, Housing and Where You Live



The 'Safety and Housing' topic explored people's experiences with regards to safety, housing and where they live? Facilitated through open conversations in small groups in which people were encouraged to share ideas verbally or visually using creative collage making. We enabled participants to lead the conversations based on what was important to them. Occasionally asking prompt questions such as: *How safe do you feel in your area? What does your area need? How do you travel? What green spaces or recreation spaces and places do you live nearby?*

The activity focussed on 'Safety, Housing and Where We Live' revealed many shared concerns across the demographic groups about safety, environmental issues, and infrastructure. Residents across all the groups reported high crime rates and inadequate street lighting, advocating for increased CCTV and police presence. Specific concerns about safety for women and girls were repeatedly raised. Environmental issues such as poor waste management, noise pollution, and overgrown areas were also highlighted, with calls for improved street cleaning and more community hubs. Young people and older residents expressed worries about safety, suggesting initiatives like safe spots and better housing maintenance. There was a call for improved communication with the council, enhanced community engagement and easier reporting of issues. There was also a request for increasing the arts in Hounslow and the development of a professional arts gallery.

Session summaries – Safety, housing and where you live

Race, Faith and Non-faith – Safety, housing and where you live

In the Race, Faith and Non-Faith groups, participants expressed pride in the area's diversity and a strong sense of unity, despite facing notable challenges. Many residents feel unsafe

due to high crime rates, including drug-related incidents, stabbings, and robberies. They have called for increased surveillance through CCTV cameras and a greater police presence, asking for easier interaction and quicker responses from the council to their safety concerns.

Environmental issues were also a major concern. Residents reported problems with insufficient street lighting, noise pollution, traffic, and poor waste management. Broken glass and litter were highlighted as issues affecting safety and the impact on how this made the areas look. They also asked for more regular grass cutting, as overgrown areas contributed to this problem and impacted on their health, with a few residents mentioning hay fever.

The need for improved community infrastructure was also emphasised. Residents proposed developing larger community hubs to foster greater engagement and connection. Addressing language barriers through community-run ESOL (English as a Second Language) classes was seen as a crucial step to enhance inclusivity and participation and something that the community could run themselves if support and funding was available.

Many participants expressed frustration with the digital divide, feeling excluded by the increasing reliance on online systems and QR codes for accessing services. They advocated for alternative methods to ensure all community members can engage with available resources.

To address these concerns, residents suggested a range of actions, including enhanced safety measures, better environmental management, and improved community infrastructure. They also proposed forming a community action group to effectively communicate with the council and advocate for the necessary changes.

“They love how diverse the area is, and they think that they can do things to make changes, but they just don't have the funding for the kind of bigger power that the council has.... an interesting solution that they also came up with was ESOL classes, but with the community running them, because they feel like one thing dividing the community is a language barrier. So that stops people from coming to community events that if they knew the language, and they felt comfortable speaking in it, people would come to more community gatherings.” (Facilitator debrief, session 1, Race, faith and non-faith)

Young people – Safety, housing and where you live

In the session with young people, a range of pressing issues related to safety and community infrastructure were discussed. A significant concern was the perceived lack of safety, particularly for young women who reported feeling scared by men in their area. They described unsettling experiences, comments being made toward them, being approached by strangers or even chased. This impacted on them in public, outside and even inside school, making them feel vulnerable. Safety around schools was a major concern, with young women expressing fear of men both in public spaces and even from male authority figures such as teachers.

The young people suggested innovative solutions to address these concerns. One idea was to create “safe spots” and outreach vans that could provide a secure space for young people to retreat to if they feel threatened, offering a safe place to talk, access support from mental health professionals, or simply wait until it’s safe to leave. In addition to they considered encouraging shops/facilities to stay open later and posting signs welcoming youth inside for a moment if they need to step away from an unsafe situation. These could be provided in specific hotspots where support is most needed. They also felt that increased street lighting and police presence would support this. However, many spoke of distrust in the police, feeling that officers were more intimidating than supportive, which deterred them from seeking help.

Participants also highlighted significant issues with public transport, describing it as dirty and unsafe. They asked if it would be possible to have dedicated school buses to protect young people who feel vulnerable on public transport.

Environmental issues were a key topic. The young participants were critical of gentrification, noting that while areas may appear attractive on the surface, they often hide underlying problems like poor cleanliness and maintenance. They expressed a strong concern for pollution and called for initiatives such as solar panels to improve the environment.

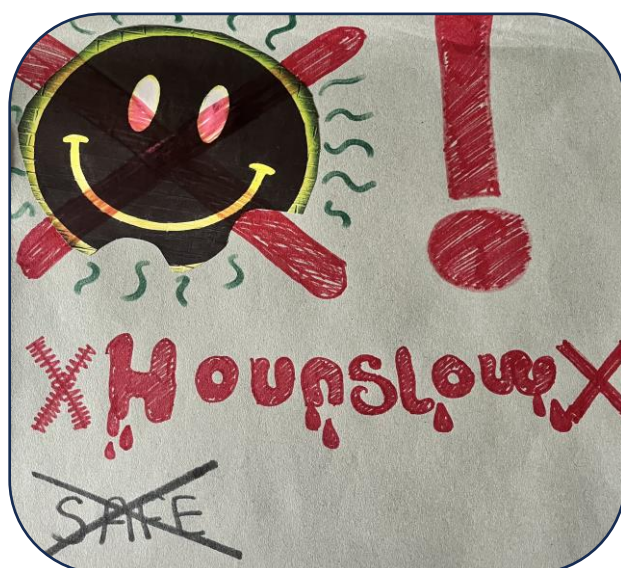
There were suggestions about increasing recreational facilities. Many of the young people felt there were insufficient local activities and amenities were often too expensive, leading them to seek entertainment outside their area. They suggested enhancing local infrastructure with more community centres, promoting extended hours for local shops, updates parks and better street lighting to ensure they have safe and engaging places to spend their time.

Drug use and vaping were also raised as problems. They described the ease of buying vapes when underage and known shops that would even sell to primary school aged children. There were calls for stricter regulations on the sale of vaping products and higher prices to curb their accessibility.

“I think there should be more street lighting in the streets, because I feel quite unsafe at night, and in the evening going around places... especially in areas where there's higher rates of crime” (Participant interview, session 2, young people)

“They were talking about how it's very easy to access and how places like corner shops... are okay with primary school children vaping ... they just want to make money out of it. So to have some consequences for those people... stricter rules about the selling ... [and] the price of vapes... if that was to go up, that will stop people. Because me personally [I think it] is a horrible addiction. And I really want to stop but, you know, your mind just thinks you cant. I know that if the price went up ... 100% I would never touch it again... if that is something that's within the council's control, I think that would also stop the issues.” (Facilitator debrief, session 2, Young People)

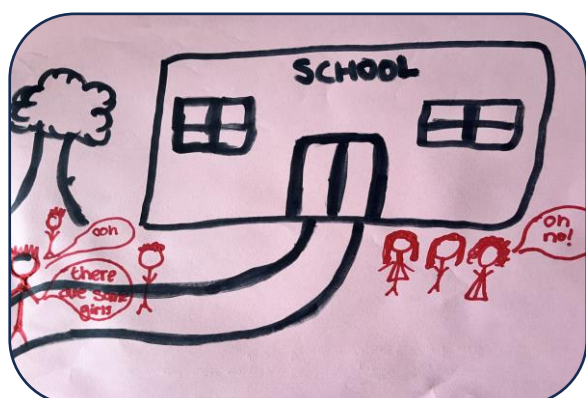
“Young people that are focused on the gym, and their health and their body, their lifestyle athletes. They don't want to do drugs or anything because they have somewhere to direct their energy. And they think of their body as a temple. They think that if schools talked more about body health and focus more on gym or boxing or anywhere else to direct their energy then there'd be less of a drug problem”. (Facilitator debrief, session 2, Young People)



“Generally, I think Hounslow is doing a bit better to cater to the needs of young women walking around in Hounslow and the issue of feeling safe... [but] there's still teenage boys or middle aged men kind of leering and you don't always feel safe... and in the evening, not all shops are open. [I think] having somewhere people can go, if they just don't feel safe. I think that's a good idea.” (Participant interview, session 2, young people)

*“I was talking to a lot of girls.. young women...they said that ‘Men really scare me’... And they feel like there are men around schools, bothering younger women, even though they're adults. That was the big one that kept coming up....that there's men around outside of the school and the teachers inside, both, they feel like teachers themselves have been taking videos of them, this is an ongoing issue where they feel like male teachers have that kind of power where they can do whatever they want... And they feel like there's they don't feel like they can go to authority for safety...”
(Facilitator debrief, session 2, Young People)*

*“A lot of them mentioned about not feeling safe out and particularly girls, saying that the men scare them, they actually wrote men scare them ... saying that they were coming out after school ... people calling them to come into our vehicles... one person mentioned that they were chased, which was very, very unsettling, but a really good idea came from young girl about how about we create safe spots, so they know where to go. And a bit like the outreach events that the council has, you know, in terms of health outreach, but having safe outreach vans, where you can come in, have a drink, someone safe to talk to, who's maybe a mental health practitioner, or someone that they can signpost or have a chat... to stay safe for a bit. And hopefully, when the danger is gone, they can go out.”
(Facilitator debrief, session 2, Young People)*



People aged 55 years and over – Safety, housing and where you live

In the session people aged 55 and over, a variety of concerns about housing and safety emerged. Participants expressed frustration with overcrowded housing, as many older residents find themselves living with grown children who cannot afford their own homes. People were also keen to have increased maintenance services in flats to address issues like plumbing and heating, particularly for residents who might struggle to manage these problems themselves and who may find it hard to know how and who to contact in the council for support. Safety and security in flats were major concerns. Many participants reported problems with package theft, as deliveries are often left in insecure locations and deliveries cannot be made to flats. Noise pollution from people engaging in activities such as drinking and drug use at night was another significant issue, affecting the peace and feelings of safety, exacerbated by poorly lit areas.

Community engagement and social isolation were highlighted. Some older residents feel isolated and anxious about social interactions, partly due to negative experiences with neighbours and feelings of a lack of community cohesion. The restriction on Freedom Pass use before 9 am was discussed as a barrier for those needing to travel early for appointments, caring activities and leisure.

There was repeated concern raised about conditions created by poorly managed e-scooters and bikes. The danger this creates on roads and pavements, especially to those with reduced mobility or sight. This was a concern mentioned across a few sessions with participants wanting allocated areas for the bikes and scooters to be parked in.

Infrastructure issues were also noted. Overflowing bins and inadequate street cleaning were seen contribute to a sense of neglect, the impact of cleaner streets and flowers or planted areas were highly valued. There were repeated calls for improvements in public amenities, including better-equipped bus stops with seating and shelter, which is especially important for those with mobility or health issues.

“One person said that housing should be more affordable for young people and couples because her own house is too crowded, because she was expecting her children to move out by a certain age, and they can't afford to .. she wasn't anticipating that there would be this much of a crisis, and young people don't have anywhere to go, so they're stuck with their parents.” (Facilitator debrief, session 3, People aged 55 years and over)

People with disabilities – Safety, housing and where you live

During the session with people with disabilities, several key themes emerged from the discussions about ‘housing and safety and where you live’. Members of the group spoke about increased anxiety due to what they see as a surge in knife crime and shootings in their areas over the past three years. Enhanced visibility of security cameras was suggested as a measure to help residents feel safer. They also called for a more visible police presence and quicker response times. They also voiced frustration with the current police reporting system, where cases often seem to close with minimal follow-up. Following similar requests from the session with people aged over 55 years year, this group also asked that reporting and contact with council services be simplified and more accessible. They asked that feedback mechanisms be more straightforward and easier to use, such as checkboxes, and preferred having both online and physical options to avoid what they saw as difficult registration and contact processes.

They also mentioned concern about community and police interactions. They felt that their concerns were often dismissed or inadequately addressed, leading to a sense of being unheard. To tackle this, they proposed the creation of a separate hotline for reporting violence, which would resolve what they felt was confusion between police and council responsibilities. Additionally, participants highlighted the negative impact of external disturbances, like loud arguments or drinking, on their well-being. They suggested initiatives to manage these disturbances and provide support for people affected by such issues.

The discussion also uncovered the broader implications of housing neglect. Poor housing conditions and slow or a lack of response to issues contributed to rising frustration. They wanted prompt action to resolve housing problems, improved feedback systems, increased safety measures, better communication and response strategies, and a more compassionate approach to housing and community relations.

“They would like the police to be more visible and have a quicker response time. And they often feel that sometimes when you report things to the police, it just kind of gets you get a crime reference number, and then that's it. It's kind of the end of the story. They'd like it if they were a little bit more involved checking up on people... That's all they want, really, is for someone to say, ‘Okay, I understand where you're coming from. I'm going to do something about this’... feeling heard is really important (Facilitator debrief, session 4, people with disabilities)

“Every now and then, you get asked about feedback from your what's like in your area... You want to know what they're actually going to do about it,

instead of just, 'oh, I'm collecting all of this information'. And then you never hear anything of it" (Facilitator debrief, session 4, people with disabilities)

"One individual said that they get anxiety from hearing lots of people that are drinking, that are having arguments outside because they don't understand what's happening and what's going on. They feel stressed out, even if they're inside and they can hear it outside, it brings them a great deal of sadness or worry" (Facilitator debrief, session 4, people with disabilities)

Women's session – Safety, housing and where you live

In the session on community safety and housing issues, women from the area shared their concerns and proposed solution. One of the primary themes was the need for increased engagement and approachability from the local council. Participants expressed frustration with what they perceived as lack of responsiveness and presence from council representatives, emphasising the importance of feeling heard and supported. They were encouraged by the prospect of an upcoming event where council members would be present, hoping this would improve direct communication and accountability

A significant concern highlighted was the state of cleanliness in the community. Participants reported issues with overflowing bins and general littering, particularly around bus stops, which they felt negatively impacted both physical and mental health. The overflowing bins were seen as a tripping hazard and a source of distress, prompting a request for additional bins in these high-traffic areas and potentially small bins on buses to address waste disposal issues more effectively.

Anti-social behaviour was another major topic of discussion. Participants shared troubling incidents involving drug use, inappropriate advances toward young girls, and aggressive interactions with children playing in communal areas. One particularly distressing story involved a mother's daughter being approached by a man on the street inappropriately. This led to broader concerns about the safety of communal spaces for children, with reports of neighbours using offensive language and racial slurs to stop children from playing. The lack of safe spaces for youth, including parks, was a significant concern, highlighting the need for better management and protection of play areas.

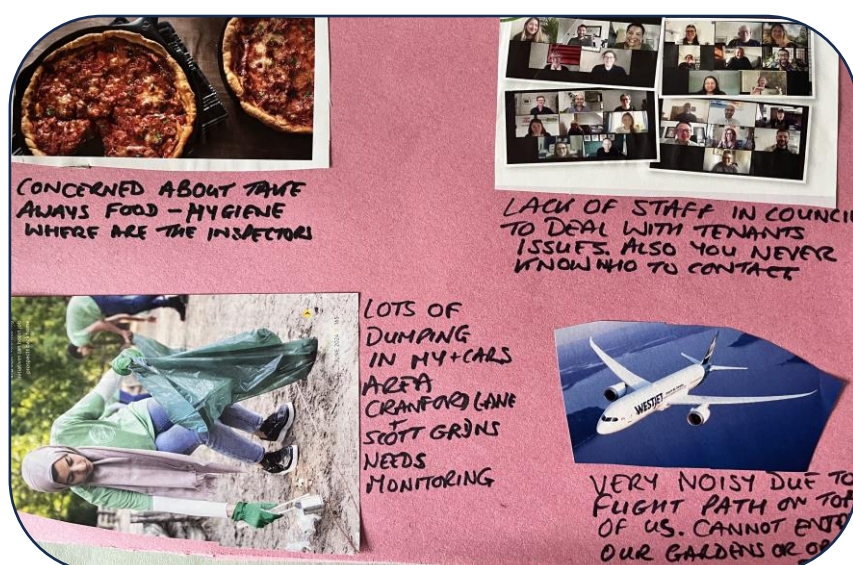
There was a strong call for reestablishing youth clubs or other activities to provide positive outlets for teenagers and reduce anti-social behaviour. Participants felt that providing structured activities for young people could help mitigate some of the issues related to loitering and substance abuse.

Participants also criticised the types of businesses opening in the area, such as unhealthy food, off-licenses and betting shops. They felt these establishments contributed to a decline in the safety and appeal of their local high streets, which they felt were once pleasant areas for shopping and dining but now seemed dominated by businesses associated with excessive drinking and gambling.

Parking issues were a recurring problem, with one participant detailing the exorbitant cost of accessing parking spaces near her home. The scarcity of parking and the high cost associated with it were seen as unfair and inconvenient, adding to the frustration of residents who struggled to find adequate parking. For both drivers and users of public transport there was also frustration and anxiety caused by road closures and transport disruptions, especially when that leads to bus stops being closed. They felt this often has a impact on parents with young children, elderly people, and those with limited mobility, there was a suggestion that the council should provide clear and transparent communication about their work, either doing the work or not closing the roads.

In terms of community safety, participants called for increased education on health, anti-social behaviour, and available reporting mechanisms. They suggested more community patrols, ideally with officers in plain clothes to blend in with the community while maintaining safety. Additionally, there was a request for improved lighting on public footpaths to enhance visibility and safety during darker months. They also noted issues with noise pollution from loud vehicles, which caused anxiety and disturbed the peace of residents.

There was also some discussion on the lack of local amenities, especially for those with mobility issues. Participants stressed the importance of having accessible local shops to reduce reliance on public transport for basic needs.



“A lot of people don't know how to report issues. They don't know where or how to report suspicious behaviours or individuals... they don't want to call 999 just to tell the police, because that's quite difficult, and then doesn't really get chased up... also [if] it's not that severe of a situation in their minds where they just want to report a suspicious person that they see every day, but they don't know who to call.. [they'd like] information, especially in places like flats where they have notice boards and things like communal hubs... a hotline... so that they can speak to somebody, let them know about what they've seen” (Facilitator debrief, session 5, women)

“There was a conversation about schools and people loitering, especially men outside of schools, making obviously underage girls feel unsafe...not only do they want that to stop directly outside of the school... also on the streets going to her home, or the streets directly surrounding the school, there are shops like barber shops that have men in them at all times, and those men are making comments as these girls are coming home from school, or she said that they're waiting for them, and when it gets to summertime and they're wearing skirts and they are there walking past, they don't feel safe. So not only making sure that the school premises is safe, but the surrounding areas especially are safe” (Facilitator debrief, session 5, women)

“They also mentioned that public footpaths, a lot of them, don't have sufficient lighting for when it's wintertime and it's 4pm it gets dark. They don't feel comfortable going down there because they can't see. And their children, using public footpaths means that they can't feel at ease knowing that it's dark and they don't feel safe. So that's something that was causing a lot of anxiety” (Facilitator debrief, session 5, women).

Men's session – Safety, housing and where you live

During the session with men several key themes emerged regarding safety, wellbeing, and community life. For many of these men, walking is their primary form of exercise, making it crucial for their local environment to be clean and visually appealing. They expressed that a well-maintained area contributes to their sense of relaxation and safety during their walks.

The participants described their area as increasingly unsafe, with significant concerns about violence, drug dealing, alcohol abuse, and knife crime. They felt that Hounslow had deteriorated over the years, becoming less appealing compared to nearby areas such as Richmond and Twickenham, which are perceived as safer and more attractive due to their cleaner environments and better recreational facilities. They noted that people now leave Hounslow for leisure activities, which reflects the decline in the local area's appeal.

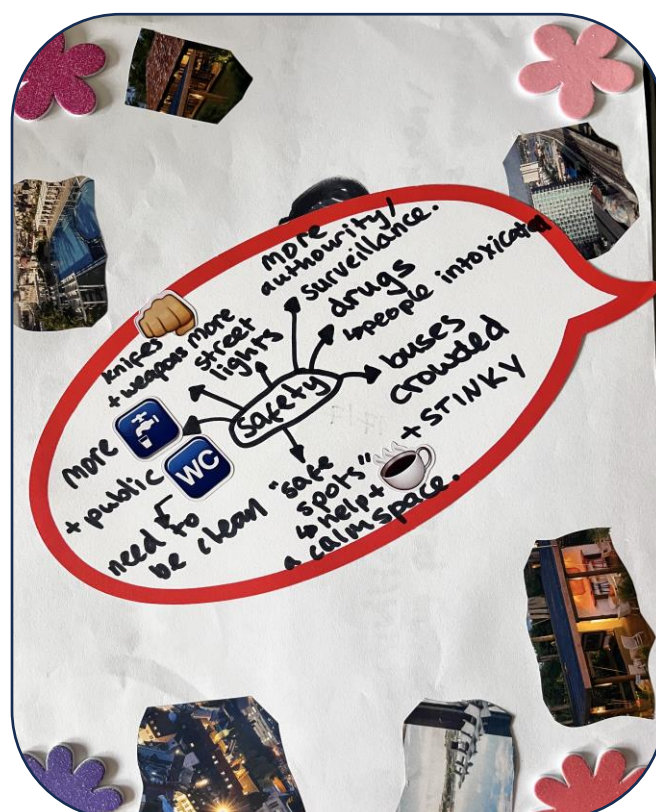
Despite these concerns, the group held a positive view of their immediate community. They spoke warmly of their neighbours, particularly highlighting the support they received, such as a neighbour who helps with meals and companionship. The diversity of the area was also appreciated, though participants pointed out issues with social integration between different cultural groups, which sometimes led to tension and hate crimes. They advocated for increased community engagement through educational events, cultural exchanges, and opportunities to socialise, such as community days and coffee mornings, to foster understanding and reduce segregation.

Participants also mentioned a desire for more community spaces where people can gather and converse, as they felt modern social norms—such as people using headphones and being less communicative—have reduced the sense of community. They suggested that markets and car boot sales create good opportunities for social interaction.

Regarding safety, they called for regular street cleaning, which would not only improve the area's appearance but also provide employment opportunities. They specifically identified a problematic path near Brabazon Community Centre as an area in dire need of maintenance due to overgrown vegetation and hazardous conditions. One participant highlighted concern about knife crime and suggested that the consequences for carrying a knife should be more severe. He also recommended stronger police presence to address safety concerns before they escalate into crimes, as well as having a dedicated support system for non-criminal safety concerns, such as uneasy encounters with groups or persistent panhandling. The group also expressed support for self-defence classes for young people and early intervention programmes to prevent recidivism in youth crime.

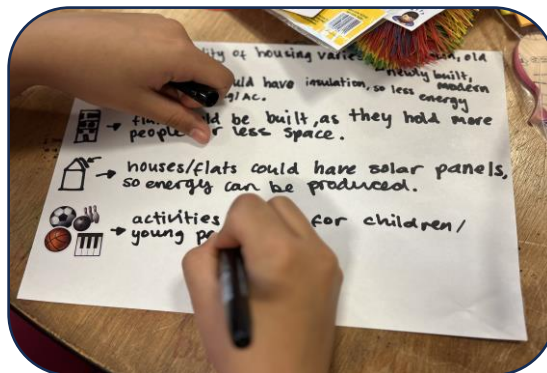
“A lot of the men that we had were older men, they said that one of the primary forms of exercise that they have is walking. So it's very important for the streets to be clean and visually appealing, for them to be able to feel relaxed and just going on a walk, because that's kind of all they can really do in terms of movement... when asked about how they felt about their area, it was often described as a dangerous... in order to tackle that, people said that they feel as though crime needs to be cracked down on with regular patrolling of the area as one of the things that that, they said that would make them feel better.” (Facilitator debrief, session 6, men).

“They said that they think that their neighbours are lovely, and a lot of them are older. One of them recently lost his partner, and he feels like their neighbour makes them food and checks up on him. They love the fact that this is a very diverse environment, and there's lots of cultures around ... when I asked if they want anything else in the area and what they do in their free time... the group of men said that they just want to sit together and talk” (Facilitator debrief, session 6, men).



“They said things like coffee mornings or lunch times, like the one that is taking place at Cranford Community College, is really helpful and builds that sense of trust in other people. If you constantly see somebody week after week, you feel more likely that you're going to approach them and have a conversation with them, which he feels would largely benefit his community where he lives (Facilitator debrief, session 6, men).

“One individual was talking about knife crime... He said that it's the reason that he doesn't go out past a certain point in the night.... He requests a stronger police presence for when people feel unsafe, [in a way] that is different from when a crime is actually happening... like a separate department, or somebody you could talk to when, for example, there's a group of people at the end of the street, and you have to cross that street, but you don't know what to do, and you don't want to call the police, because there's not a crime taking place, you just feel a bit uneasy” (Facilitator debrief, session 6, men).



Ideas for Improving Housing, Safety and Where You Live

Ideas from all groups:

Community safety

- Increase Security Infrastructure:
 - Increase CCTV cameras in high-crime areas.
 - Improve and increase street lighting in unsafe areas and public footpaths
 - Increase police patrols and establish a community liaison for safety concerns.
 - Increase police visibility and response times.
- Develop Support Systems:
 - Create safe spots with outreach vans, including mental health practitioners.
 - Develop a separate hotline for reporting violence and antisocial behaviour.
 - Establish a support system for non-criminal safety concerns and provide guidance on handling uneasy situations.
 - Develop police training programmes to support an increase in approachability and trust with community
 - Improve follow-up on crime reports and feedback. Develop a system for regular updates and tangible actions.
 - Encourage shops to open later and post signs welcoming youth/people inside for a moment if they need to step away from an unsafe situation.

Environmental and Public Space Improvements

- Enhance Cleanliness and Maintenance:
 - Increase frequency of street cleaning, waste collection and grass cutting
 - Add more public bins near bus stops and on local buses.
 - Enhance public footpaths and planting with plants and flowers
 - Develop and maintain recreational spaces and community hubs
- Support environmental initiatives such as solar panels and other green technologies to address pollution and promote environmental responsibility
- Monitor and manage the opening of off-licenses and betting shops

Community Engagement and Infrastructure

- Strengthen Community and Social Interaction:
 - Organise community days, cultural exchange events, and coffee mornings.
 - Develop more social spaces for interaction and build connections.
 - Address isolation through community initiatives.
 - Organise community-led ESOL classes and other educational programs.
 - Set up a dedicated visual arts gallery to promote local artists

Housing and Accessibility

- Improve Housing Conditions:
 - Advocate for affordable housing and address overcrowding.
 - Implement regular inspections and maintenance for housing.
- Enhance Accessibility:
 - Develop alternative methods for accessing information and services.
 - Provide support for residents who struggle with online systems.

Transport

- Introduce dedicated school buses and clean public transport.
- Upgrade public infrastructure such as bus stops with seating and shelter.
- Provide updates on traffic disruption and changes to bus routes
- Explore ideas for parking management strategies to alleviate residential parking issues
- Create parking Zones for Lime bikes
- Provide training and raise awareness about safe use of electric bikes and scooters (for all ages)

Demographic-Specific Ideas

Race and Faith

- Community Liaison and Safety:
 - Establish a community liaison to address safety concerns, reflecting the need for improved safety and communication.

Young People

- Youth Initiatives:
 - Create safe spots designed around youth needs, including outreach vans and mental health support.
 - Promote health and fitness programmes to provide constructive outlets.
 - Develop more community centres and recreational spaces tailored to young people's interests.
- Regulate vaping:
 - Enforce stricter regulations on vaping products
 - Work with local businesses to ensure compliance with age restrictions.

People Aged 55 and Over

- Focused Housing and Community Support:
 - Advocate for affordable housing and regular maintenance for older residents.
 - Develop initiatives to reduce isolation and enhance social interaction
 - Provide extended hours for Freedom Pass use and improve public infrastructure for comfort and accessibility.

People with Disabilities

- Accessibility and Safety Measures:
 - Improve feedback mechanisms with council and police, with accessible options for reporting issues.
 - Address poor housing conditions with empathy and prompt action.
 - Develop a dedicated hotline for reporting violence to ensure effective responses.

Women

- Safety and Community Facilities:
 - Increase community patrols with officers in plain clothes
 - Develop initiatives to promote safer streets for women and girls eg: Promote awareness of young people and women's rights to safety. Signs and campaign to communicate information about sexual harassment and what is unacceptable or illegal behaviour (directed toward perpetrators and victims).
 - Develop youth facilities and re-establish youth clubs

Men

- Community Engagement and Environmental Improvement:
 - Organise community days and cultural exchange events to promote integration.
 - Increase frequency of street cleaning and maintain local environments.



Case Studies

The impact of planting flowers and beautiful spaces

During the session with residents aged 55 years and over, one participant shared a heartfelt perspective on the role of flowers and greenery in their community. Their reflections offer a insight as to how these elements contribute to both emotional wellbeing and a sense of safety.

The participant spoke fondly of flowers, describing them as symbols of beauty and love that bring immense joy and comfort. For them, the sight of flowers is not merely pleasing but deeply meaningful, evoking feelings of warmth and happiness. They emphasised their desire for more greenery in the community. They were keen for the council to create environments enriched with flowers and trees, which they believe would transform public spaces into more inviting and pleasant areas. They linked the presence of greenery with increased feelings of safety and suggested that a well-maintained environment filled with flowers contributes to a sense of peace and security. To them, the beauty and cleanliness of green spaces not only improve visual appeal but also foster a safer and more serene living environment. They advocated for more investment in green spaces, believing that such improvements would greatly benefit the community, enhancing overall wellbeing and creating a more supportive and secure environment for everyone.

“Flowers are a sign of love and beauty. Flowers makes us feel good... and it's a sign of very beautiful love with friends and family and children and everyone... and it makes everyone very safe... and green it is kind of peace”
(Interviewee, Session with people aged 55 years and over)



Establishing a dedicated arts gallery

In an interview with two residents, they discussed the need to create a dedicated arts gallery in Hounslow, which they feel is a vibrant yet underserved borough. They envisioned a professional space that would serve not only as a venue for showcasing art but also as an educational and cultural hub for the community. Providing emerging and established artists with a platform to exhibit their work and offering exposure and support for local talent, which is currently lacking compared to other areas with well-established galleries.

Mali, a professional artist with a rich history of exhibitions and contributions to South Asian art, has been deeply involved in the art world throughout his life, including a recent feature in a Tate publication and solo shows. Concerned about the future of art in Hounslow, Mali believes that local artists, especially those from future generations, lack sufficient opportunities to showcase their work and gain recognition. He argued that without a proper gallery, the visibility of local artists is severely limited, placing them at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in other boroughs. Mali highlighted that the current options for displaying art—such as libraries and community centres—do not adequately support the professional aspirations of artist and limits their abilities to be nominated for arts prizes.

Vidya, a fellow advocate for the arts, echoed Mali's sentiments. She described the difficulties they face in securing appropriate exhibition spaces within Hounslow. Artists often encounter barriers like high costs and complex administrative procedures when attempting to exhibit their work, and this only exacerbates the challenges of gaining wider recognition. Vidya noted the added frustration of navigating through layers of contacts and red tape to find suitable venues, which can be especially daunting for emerging artists and those without extensive networks.

"[Hounslow] should have some proper gallery, not to ask them [artists] to exhibit in libraries or town or community centre. Professional. That makes difference... [If you're an] artist, it helps gain recognition and prizes. Unless you have a proper gallery exposure, you'll never get a Turner prize."
(Interview with Mali)

"If we have a space [where] you encourage the local artists, where they can come and display their work that encourages them.... you don't have to be big university student or a member of royal arts to be displayed. You can be a new, emerging artist without any background..." (Interview with Vidya)



Health and Feeling Good



The 'Health and Feeling Good' explored what is important to people about health and feeling good and any ideas they the community have for actions that the community and council can take to support health and wellbeing in Hounslow.

Key areas of focus included self-care, access to exercise, low-cost healthcare, and open spaces for socializing. Groups also discussed the importance of community wellbeing enhancement through council initiatives such as staff training, talking therapies, and promoting self-care and socialising via events and activities.

Session summaries – Health and Feeling Good

Race, Faith and Non-faith – Health and Feeling Good

In the 'Race, Faith and Non-Faith session' participants discussed what makes them feel good, they organised this into several key themes. Happiness emerged as the most significant, with socialising and knowledge also rated highly. People shared a wide range of things that made them feel good or happy, including family time, food, and activities like beach outings and walking. Music, cooking, and yoga were frequently mentioned as sources of happiness, along with creative pursuits like gardening, decorating, and singing. Many valued accomplishment and engagement in their lives, finding contentment in reaching their goals and spending time with loved ones. Confidence and contentment were also important, with activities like swimming, Pilates, and gym workouts contributing to a sense of well-being.

They also highlighted the importance of health and creativity. They expressed concern that schools lack the funding for creative clubs such as arts and drama, resulting in diminished

opportunities for young people to engage in creative activities. This lack of creative engagement affects youth clubs and summer camps, leaving many students disconnected from creative outlets. Older participants indicated a desire for more social outings but noted the absence of clear options or affordable transport. There were also concerns about the high cost of living and leisure activities in Hounslow, with suggestions for more affordable sports facilities and open-air cinema events. Additionally, there was a call for greater emphasis on teaching children about road safety, particularly with the rise of e-scooters and bicycles.

“Health and being creative was the most important thing for them. But they felt that schools don't have funding to run creative clubs, no arts, no drama... have creative clubs running throughout the year, and not just in one place so people can get to know each other.” (Facilitator debrief, Race, Faith and Non Faith Session)

“Socializing. They wanted more activities out there, like the open cinema was something that they really wanted to see because it is intergenerational... People said cinemas are very expensive... So, they thought the council could do something in Brabazon Park, just play a movie, and people would come and sit down and eat with their own food... Because it's not the food that they crave. It is that socializing with other people.” (Facilitator debrief, Session 1, Race, Faith and Non Faith Session)

Young people – Health and Feeling Good

In the session with young people, the primary themes of what makes them feel good were health, self-care, and hobbies. Participants emphasised the importance of ‘me time’ and engaging in activities that promote both physical and mental well-being. They mentioned a variety of activities that contribute to their sense of satisfaction, including playing football, sports, tennis, and going to the gym. Exercise and creative activities were frequently highlighted, with specific mentions of dancing, boxing, and walking. Socialising, whether through music events or spending time with friends, also played a significant role in their well-being. Additionally, some participants noted the benefits of eating well, deleting social media, and gaming.

The gym was consistently highlighted as a major factor for feeling good, not only for physical fitness but also for personal time and reflection. The young people we spoke to advocated for more women's-only gyms that cater to cultural preferences and promote women's health. Outdoor gyms were also mentioned, with concerns about maintenance and the need for more advanced equipment (based on strength building and weight loss). They also wanted increased funding for personal training (PT) classes and called for social sports clubs at community centres to make exercise more accessible, along with incentives for purchasing healthier foods. Participants recommended free gym memberships and swimming lessons for low-income individuals, along with free community activities tailored to different age groups.

The group noted that eating well and the link between mental and physical health are crucial for overall well-being. They emphasised that mental health issues often manifest physically and that addressing these early is essential. Connecting with others who share common interests was seen as an effective way to reduce stress and build relationships. Mental health emerged as a critical area needing attention, with suggestions for early intervention and social support groups to assist those in need, rather than solely relying on medication. They proposed holistic treatments for mental health and anxiety, and affordable healthy food options. Additionally, they suggested free music lessons for low-income families and creating more exercise and social group classes. Additionally, participants highlighted the long wait times and high costs for mental health therapy and suggested alternative support through charities or the council to alleviate pressure on the NHS. Overall, there was a push for diverse, accessible, and affordable health and well-being resources, with an emphasis on supporting mental health through both traditional and alternative approaches.

“A lot of people can't afford services that they wish they could go for, for example, the gym, or ... healthy food supplements. If we can make memberships, maybe free for [people who] can't afford it, or who are in low income on Universal Credit, that would be a really good option”
(Facilitator debrief, Session 2, Young People)

“ I have I have suffered for two, three years from anxiety, social anxiety... it really controls me. Every time I leave the house... I just don't know how to control it. And there was an article I was reading about holistic options for medicines... that would really benefit some people who've tried other medicines, and it hasn't worked for them. I've tried CBT I've tried, antidepressants, but sometimes you need something more than that”
(Facilitator debrief, Session 2, Young People)

“Most people what they had said when it came to the gym was it was you... go there for physical health, ‘I go there to feel good’. Because if I look good, then I feel confident as well” (Facilitator debrief, Session 2, Young People)

One person said “that gym isn't just for my physical health, it's the only time in the day that I get to be alone, he said that he comes to school... then he goes home, and he shares a room with his other brother. So he never gets alone time. And the gym is the only time in his day that he gets to be alone. And he gets to reflect on how his day has been or he gets to plan his day out tomorrow...that's the only time that he gets to be alone with his thoughts” (Facilitator debrief, Session 2, Young People)

People aged 55 years and over – Health and Feeling Good

In the session with people aged over 55 years, key themes included food, socialising, environment, and health. Participants expressed that clean air, and a clean environment contribute significantly to their sense of well-being. Participants expressed a strong sense of civic responsibility, with many finding fulfilment in activities like recycling, litter picking, and helping others in their community. The impact of a clean and pleasant environment was highlighted, with participants noting that having flowers, clean air, and a well-maintained community significantly enhances their well-being.

Participants wanted more opportunities to socialise, including local events and community days where they could gather, celebrate festivals, and connect with others. They valued social connections and felt that community involvement, such as walking and cycling classes, cooking classes and group trips for older people is important for maintaining a sense of worth and health post-retirement. Activities such as blood donation, recycling and local volunteering were seen as valuable for personal satisfaction and contributing positively to both local and national communities. The group suggested creating Community Hero Awards to recognise individuals who contribute positively to their neighbourhoods and organising more volunteering and environmental activities to support civic pride and personal satisfaction.

As described in other sessions, the residents wanted council staff and systems to feel more approachable and be more responsive. The group also talked about frustration with the healthcare system, with many participants giving examples of inefficiencies and a lack of communication. They called for more face-to-face consultations with healthcare providers and clearer information about health services and their outcomes, especially for those who struggle with technology.

People talked about wanting the council to have “more health inspectors because people want to get takeout food but it's not good. Some places do not meet the hygiene standards. So they go to the neighbouring boroughs to actually buy food”. (Facilitator debrief, Session 3, People Aged 55 years and over)

“I am a blood donor, every time I donate blood, it makes me feel happy... having an impact on the future... having an impact on the environment makes me feel happy” (Participant, Session 3, People Aged 55 years and over)

“It makes me feel good to pick up rubbish and keep the area clean and recycling it helps me feel like I'm doing my part” (Participant, Session 3, People Aged 55 years and over)

“One [person] gave an example around how he basically was really burned out at his job when he was 50 and felt really worthless. But then since then, he's been trying to do things, volunteering, being involved in different ways, and that makes him feel really good and worthwhile. [He said] ‘ I don't do it for an altruistic reason. It's not just for everybody else ... I do it because I feel good to help other people” (Facilitator debrief, Session 3, People Aged 55 years and over)

“They said they would like the council to put funding into activities where people can come together and celebrate their own festivals in the park or have community days where people can just come to the park and have tea and get to know each other... specific designated days so people know when to be there.” (Facilitator debrief, Session 3, People Aged 55 years and over)

People with disabilities – Health and Feeling Good

In the session with people with disabilities, the discussions revealed a strong focus on self-care and entertainment, reflecting the participants' desires to enhance their well-being through meaningful social and recreational activities. Self-care was highlighted as a central theme, with a particular emphasis on tailored social events. Participants expressed a need for more targeted socialising opportunities, such as gatherings for specific age groups—like 20- to 30-year-olds—where they can engage in activities such as pottery, gardening or

painting, that allow people to connect over shared interests with participants valuing opportunities to stay engaged and entertained through various activities.

A major concern was poor transport and long waiting lists for essential support services. For instance, an individual who had recently moved borough, from Ealing to Hounslow, faced significant delays in receiving necessary items such as wheelchairs and support services. They reported that despite being on waiting lists for months, there was little progress due to staff shortages and inadequate resources at local clinics.

The group suggested ideas such as building skills sessions for unemployed individuals to keep them engaged and provide a sense of purpose. Additionally, they recommended increasing the number of social events and networking opportunities, such as meet-ups for to help combat loneliness and foster a sense of community. Increased funding for social activities and better networking could help people with disabilities feel more connected and supported in their community.

“Introducing more socialising events...meaning a lot of people similar ages like for example 20s Meet and Greet when people can come together and do activities like pottery painting or gardening... funding for more events and making more networks... [so] people can go out and socialize because people do feel very lonely.” (Participant, Session 4, People with disabilities)

Women’s session – Health and Feeling Good

In the session with women, several key themes emerged, highlighting their priorities and needs. The discussions prominently centred around entertainment, women's health and self-care, routine, and active opportunities.

Women expressed a strong interest in self-care and maintaining their well-being, reflecting on how activities that contribute to their health are crucial. They highlighted various ways they find joy and relaxation, such as attending concerts, enjoying music, participating in quizzes, and going to the cinema. Being outdoors also plays a significant role in their lives, with activities like dancing, cycling, and regular visits to the gym being particularly valued. They felt that reducing gym memberships, especially for those on benefits, would support this and setting up women’s cycling lessons or the formation of a cycling group to encourage more active lifestyles.

Social interactions, including meeting up with family and friends, shopping, and engaging in conversations with friends, were seen as essential for their mental and emotional well-being. What was described as the simple pleasures of sunshine, positivity, and having time for oneself were noted as important contributors to their happiness. They were keen to

have more educational and leisure community trips was to provide opportunities for engagement and learning, enhancing both social connections and personal growth. The need for improved safety in parks and estates was highlighted, with suggestions to tackle antisocial behaviour and install brighter streetlights (as raised in many previous groups on the theme of 'safety'). One idea included setting up an intercultural women's forum in Hounslow, fostering greater community engagement and support.

Participants expressed a desire to see reduced GP waiting times and more frequent pop-up health check-ups. They also suggested that communication about available services and activities should extend beyond digital platforms, incorporating door-to-door outreach, posters in schools and GP centres, and direct personal engagement to ensure broader accessibility. Generally increasing awareness through notice boards around Heston were suggested to make health and leisure activities more accessible.

A particularly important issue raised was the need for improved support in maternity care. One woman shared her painful experience of losing her baby and the inadequate support she received. She described the trauma of having to return to daily responsibilities while still grieving and bleeding, with insufficient counselling or support from the NHS. This highlighted a critical need for enhanced counselling programs—including one-to-one support and groups specifically for those experiencing maternity or baby loss. The group suggested that such support could be offered in various settings, including at home, in community centres, or hospitals, to accommodate different needs and ensure comfort during challenging times.

“Communication through all platforms and not just social media and online. So, things like door knocking and posters at school signposting what courses are available by email, at GP centres, through door knocking schools and being able to speak to someone at what's available “and not just robot websites”. (Participant, Session 5, Women)

“There was a woman that was sharing one of her stories... she had lost her baby during her pregnancy, and she said that there just was not enough support at all.... after she lost her baby, she had to, go pick her kids up, and whilst she was bleeding, so it was a lot of traumas for her, and she did not get enough support or counselling. There was nothing the NHS was providing for her. So, she said that there should definitely be an improvement on counselling and one to one support and mother groups. The counselling... it could be at home, for some people, the home is a safe space, so it might be better for like a mother to get that help at home, but

if the home isn't a safe space, then possibly at a community centre”
(Facilitator debrief, Session 5, Women)

Men's session – Health and Feeling Good

In the session with men discussing health and feeling good, several key themes emerged, focusing on spiritual and self-care, as well as physical and mental health. These themes were closely tied to their everyday activities and experiences. Spiritual care and self-care were emphasised as crucial aspects of their well-being. Men spoke about the importance of engaging in activities that nurture their spiritual and personal growth, such as attending church services, participating in artistic and creative pursuits. They also highlighted the significance of maintaining a balance between physical and mental health, suggesting that activities like walking, swimming, and cycling play a vital role in their overall wellness.

The discussions revealed a strong desire for community and social engagement. The men we spoke to expressed enthusiasm for cinema, community events, and meeting up with friends. They valued opportunities to connect with others through shared interests and activities, including art, education on healthy eating, and enjoying good food. The importance of strong community bonds and cultural engagement was also noted, with a preference for activities that bring people together across different backgrounds.

There was a lot of interest in community day trips, such as visits to the beach, and increased community events in local parks. The group suggested organising more clubs and activities that cater to diverse interests and enhancing opportunities such as talking groups and lessons on exercise and fitness. To address these needs, several recommendations were proposed. The council could invest in funding for social events that foster interaction and reduce loneliness, such as community clean-ups and blood donation camps.

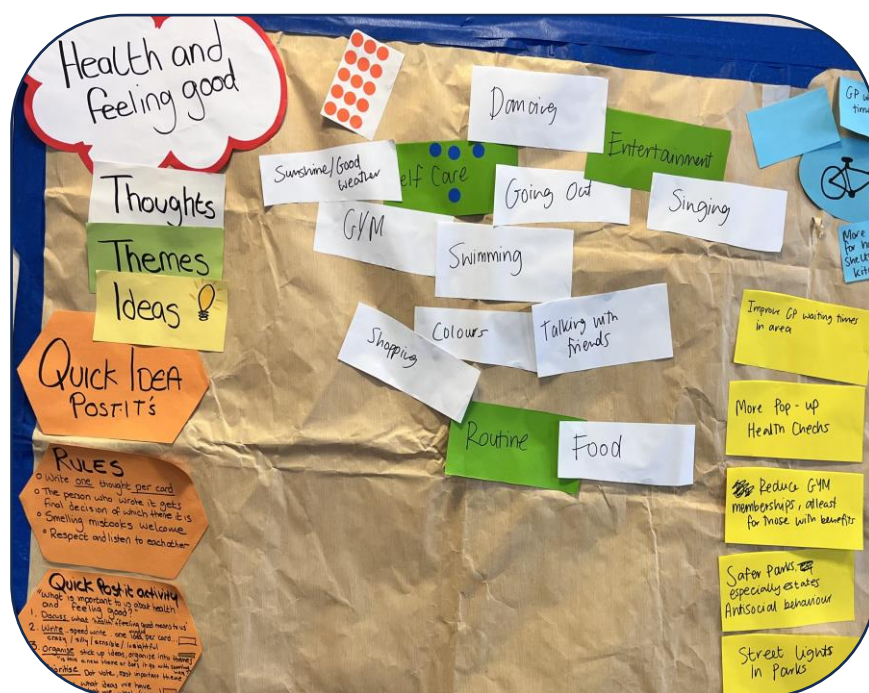
They also asked for improved training and staff development to better support mental health needs, including talking therapies. Promoting self-care and socializing through workshops, hobby classes, and support groups could further enhance community wellness.

Improving accessibility and healthcare is another priority. They highlighted the need for better transportation options for people with disabilities, reduced waiting times for healthcare services, and more drop-in mental health services. They also emphasised the importance of keeping homeless shelters and soup kitchens well-funded and ensuring council houses are well-maintained.

“They said they don't feel comfortable and confident trying to access information [on the NHS website]. [They said] No one ever uses the NHS website... they would like an informal self-referral service where you can have education on both healthy eating and do physical activity, not high intensity physical activity, but for group walks and stuff like that”
(Facilitator debrief, Session 6, Men)

“About physical health, someone [asked] that the council could do, a discount to convert or exchange, a normal bike to electric bike because he loves the cycle, but because he's a bit older, he can't, it's a lot of physical labour to use his normal bike and an electric bike is too expensive for him, [he'd like] a service to help with that.” (Facilitator debrief, Session 6, Men)

“And then for mental health... put in more drop in places so before you reach that point... when your mental health gets too bad for someone to help you, [create] more drop in places. Because waiting times for the NHS, specifically, mental health is so long and [if there were] drop in places where you can just go by and have a have a chat with someone, vent your feelings, that would reduce NHS and A&E waiting times” (Facilitator debrief, Session 6, Men)



Ideas for Improving Health and Feeling Good

Ideas from all groups:

Health and Wellness

- **Physical Health:** There is a strong emphasis on improving access to affordable exercise options, including gyms and swimming sessions. This includes low-cost or free membership options, women-only gyms, and additional sports facilities.
- **Mental Health:** Many sessions highlighted the need for early intervention in mental health, including holistic and non-traditional treatments, support through charities or the council to reduce NHS pressure, and mental health resources tailored to diverse needs.
- **Healthy Eating:** Ideas include promoting healthier eating by making nutritious foods more affordable and improving hygiene standards in food establishments.

Community and Social Engagement

- **Social Activities:** The need for more social events and community activities was a recurring theme. This includes organising group trips, community days, outdoor cinema events, and social sports clubs. There is a call for increased funding for schools and community centres to support creative activities for all ages.
- **Accessibility:** Improving accessibility to services and events for all residents, including those with disabilities and the elderly, was mentioned. This includes better transportation options, enhanced communication methods, and more inclusive community events.
- **Community Champion Award:** Recognition for individuals contributing positively to their communities.

Environment and Cleanliness

- **Cleaner Streets and Parks:** A recurring suggestion across sessions was to enhance cleanliness in public spaces, including more frequent cleaning, additional bins, and maintaining cleaner parks.
- **Greener Spaces:** Ideas to increase greenery, such as planting flowers and promoting clean air initiatives, were noted.

Safety and health care systems

- **Safety Improvements:** Enhancing safety through measures like brighter streetlights, safer parks, and improved road safety education for children.

- **Infrastructure Enhancements:** Suggestions include improving healthcare access, making council services more approachable
- **Educational Programmes on Road Safety:** Targeting safe practices and enabling people e-bikes and e-scooters.

Demographic-Specific Ideas

Race Faith and Non-Faith

- **Specialist Trauma Service:** A specific need for a trauma service for complex cases, especially within diverse communities and refugees.

People Aged 55 and Over

- **Enhanced Face-to-Face Healthcare:** A focus on improving face-to-face healthcare consultations for those with limited IT access.

People with Disabilities

- **Skills Sessions for Unemployed:** Specific need for skills-building activities for unemployed individuals with disabilities.

Women

- **Support for Maternity and Baby Loss Trauma:** Targeted counselling programmes for maternity and baby loss trauma, with options for in-home or community-based sessions.
- **Women's Cycling Lessons:** Specific request for cycling lessons tailored for women.

Men

- **Funding for social events:** that facilitate social interaction and reduce loneliness among residents.

Case studies:

The importance of services being approachable, responsive and human

A woman shared her experience with housing and council services, in which she expressed frustration and distress with the council's communication and the continued use of deceased husband's name on documents, despite her repeated requests to stop. The traumatic impact of constant reminders of her deceased partner through letters and bills highlighted the importance of greater empathy from council staff and systems. She emphasised the need for acknowledgment and addressing the impact of these types of experiences to provide better support and services for those affected.

She asked that there the housing department update their systems so that notifying them once of a death, along with providing proof of death, is sufficient to remove the deceased person's name from all future letters and documents. She suggested the council consider directly contacting people who have previously notified the department of a death to confirm removal of names from records has been completed correctly.

"I'm a lease holder...my husband died ... I have sent a death certificate, although it wasn't in this country, it was another country. But the fact is, you've got a death certificate. It tells you everything. Why are you constantly year in, year out, year in, year out, putting that name ... when that person is dead ... letters are coming ... reminder letters... which causes you stress. You can you see that name again and again... every year, when they do the council tax, when they do the service charge, or they're going to do improvements... The name is constantly appearing. I'm constantly sending emails to say, please take his name off. It's upsetting. It's depressing... it's like a lack of humanity within it"



The need for increased maternity support for birth trauma and baby loss

The group discussed the emotional impact of baby loss on women from diverse cultural backgrounds, in which they felt that cultural factors influence coping mechanisms and that more support services are needed. They spoke about the need for flexible counselling services in various settings, including homes, communities, and hospitals. They also emphasised the importance of creating a safe space for women to share experiences and receive support from others who have gone through similar situations. In an interview with a woman who shared her experiences she spoke of the importance of cultural sensitivity in addressing baby loss, particularly for women from diverse backgrounds who may face unique challenges and stigmas.

“Different cultures go through this kind of thing in different ways. So, for example Asian cultures, it's hidden... Their parents might not know about it. Maybe partner is really upset that, you know, angry that the baby's not alive... there's a lot of pressure so in terms of cultures, and sometimes people just go away, and they suffer in silence.... they should have interpreters and people to talk to them [from] their cultures ... you can't just assume a woman's going to be okay, whether she's Indian, Black, Chinese, you don't know what's going on... there needs to be aftercare to make sure that that woman's okay afterward... promoting and having increased support, therapy services for women that might have experienced baby loss... we talked about it either being in their home, community or hospital... For some women, they might want it in the home, but for other women, they might not feel safe, or able to speak. So actually, having the excuse to go to hospital is an easier reason to be there... having services that are flexible to meet the needs of people, and that can provide not necessarily just a one off session, but maybe a series of a few counselling sessions and a safe space around other women that have been through the same thing, because to just go off and get on with your life is quite difficult... even if it's just a place to just breathe and stop, a safe space where you're just around people that have gone through the same thing as you” (Interview with participant, Session 5, Women)

Next steps

A clear message from participants throughout this project was the importance of being heard and responded to by the council and local organisations. This report will be presented at a community event in September 2024 and will contribute to the London Borough of Hounslow Equality Opportunity Area Action Plan. All participants who have taken part in this project will receive a copy of this report and be updated on any actions and changes that are taken in response to the experiences and ideas documented through this research.

If you'd like to find out more about this project, please contact Taz Virdee or Emily Ahmed.

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**London Borough
of Hounslow**

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