

A Fairer Place – Cost of Living Summit

9 May 2024

Background

Kensington and Chelsea is home to some of the most deprived households in the country, as well as some of the most affluent. The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) clearly shows this polarisation, which is particularly acute in relation to household income. Household incomes in deprived areas are significantly lower than the borough average and residents in these areas are also more likely to have poorer health outcomes and shorter life expectancies. More recent data from the 2021 Census suggests that this polarisation is increasing, there is evidence that income inequality has been compounded by the cost-of-living crisis, which has had a much bigger effect on households on lower incomes. In 2022, the poorest 20% of households in London faced inflation rates 1.8 times higher than the richest 10% of households as a result of the disproportionate impact of increases in food and energy costs (Source: Trust for London).

We know from existing data that in Kensington and Chelsea there remains a 19 year life gap between the richest and poorest parts of the borough, 3 in 10 residents live with long term conditions and the unemployment rate is at 5.3% compared to 4.7% London average. The child poverty rate for Kensington and Chelsea is 23.4% with Golborne sitting at the top of the scale for highest child poverty levels at 29.4%. Children eligible for free school meals has continued to increase reaching to over a third of all children in the borough (33%)*.

Findings from Summit

The Cost of Living Summit was hosted by Kensington & Chelsea Social Council (KCSC) on 9 May 2024 and was attended by 70 people across the voluntary and community sector, statutory sector, NHS and independent housing sector.

Attendees were presented with data and insight from experts within their fields presenting a picture of where the borough stands in relation to poverty and inequality. Followed by a set of workshops covering themes on poverty in later life, foodbanks, children and families and deepening poverty in the borough, throughout the workshops actions to take forward as a commitment were recorded.

Actions from workshops

More than just food – why people visit food banks

Delivered by Nina Parmer, Food Aid Manager, Sufra

The workshop set out to explore the work delivered in Sufra and how they are using a more holistic approach to support residents that access foodbanks and how this can be replicated.

- Keep the sector up to date on who in the borough is doing the lobbying to improve lives for residents and what is happening as a result
- There should be general provision of advice and support within foodbank ensuring a private room for personal conversations
- Find/and or develop research as evidence for providing cash vs providing food - [APPG report can be found here providing the evidence](#)
- Support organisations to move on from providing food but retain role in supporting vulnerable residents
- Bring organisations together to keep the conversations going and agree actions

Early years and childhood

Delivered by Natasha Bishop; Head of Early Help and Social Work; RBKC

The workshop set out to explore in more detail the Early Help Strategy and how it addresses cost of living and poverty, the Family and Children's wider offer working with grassroots organisations, multi-agency partnership working via the Family Hubs and examples of how the council is using LIFT data to target the poorest families for help.

Actions for newly arrived children and young people

- Better connection to the Home Office so that charities know what support is available for newly arrivals children and young people and to be able to advocate for what is needed. Are there agencies that are already trying to do this and so better to join forces with existing structures.
- When working with newly arrived children and young people, locally we can:
 - Build connections in a social spaces
 - Work harder to identify mentors who have been through the experience of migrating and share their experiences of how they navigated the issues around legal support, education, culture etc.
 - Identifying communal/kitchen spaces for people to feel welcome/supported/share culture
 - Deliver training within social services on signposting to available support this is more pertinent for young people 18 years and older/

Actions for school exclusions

- Explore how parents could volunteer with schools to gain a better understanding of how the school system works.
- Natasha to speak with the Volunteer Centre to see how the volunteers with experience can be involved and strengthen the family hub network.
- A need to acknowledge that some young people do not want to go to youth clubs so need a different approach in trying to engage these young people
- Young K&C to support safeguarding training
- Chair to share ClementJames funded support information
- Natasha to share information on personal disability budgets for SEN/ASD/wider support needs and the opportunities they bring for inclusion
- Improve the sharing of information on accessible youth clubs /activities in the borough that e.g disabled young people etc. Is this something K&C Youth Foundation could do?

Prosperity in Later Life Workshop

Delivered by – Independent Age

The workshop explored with participants what they are witnessing in relation to poverty and older people. Organisations shared their insights for which Independent Age are planning to prepare a policy briefing to use as a lobbying tool for the next Government.

Actions

- VCOs could be trained to support older people to complete online benefit forms for older people
- VCOs take a more proactive approach to promote services and information for older people in hard copy rather
- Larger, mainstream organisations should collaborate more with diverse organisations and community groups to provide a more personalised faith and culture approach
- Independent Age is going to compile a report for the new government with all the feedback to facilitate change.

The Deepening Divide

Delivered by Victoria Steward Todd, Director, K&C Foundation and Michael Ashe, CEO, The Volunteer Centre, Kensington and Chelsea.

- Continue to support vital services and transfer funds direct to households most affected
- Need to apply radical pressure
- Find out how the National Energy Association can have more visibility so that organisations can refer directly as well as any funding available to support organisations
- Need to ask philanthropists to ask for increased contributions

The primary actions agreed to take forward from the plenary session were:

- Assess the amount required to meet minimum income standards for Kensington and Chelsea and use as a basis for working collaboratively across the sectors to measures that tackle poverty and inequality.
- Gain a better understanding of the impact of poverty on older people in the borough due to the growing area of concern that more and more older people do not own their own home and are in private rented accommodation. There is a lack of data locally or case studies to draw on therefore it will be important to work with the RBKC and local voluntary sector agencies that can support this work.
- Advocate the approach taken by RBKC's Early Help Strategy i.e targeted approaches to tackling poverty running through the strategy be adopted across Council departments . There could be a role for the SAFE Group in raising the need for other RBKC departments to build poverty-reduction into their strategies.
- The cost of living working group to pull together a clear case on how we can help connect the impact of inequality on rich households with RBKC decision-makers to help them make the rational case for raising taxes on the rich via 2nd homes and spending it on the impoverished.
- For the VCS to collaborate more with advice and other support services including council/NHS employment and skills strategies
- Hold the statutory sector to account on the delivery of the employment and skills borough wide strategy and what is being done to improve employment and skills opportunities within the borough.
- To seek opportunities to take part in research that trialled providing money instead of food parcels and to explore the ability to lobby the local authority in favour of increasing incomes of the most vulnerable.