

Sustaining Vibrant Communities in London

Summit 2015

Summary of Summit

The Community Summit was organised by the Paddington Development Trust in the context of a worsening situation in many poorer communities in London. The aim of the Summit was firstly to examine some of the key issues facing local communities and to explore what could be done about them. Secondly, to clarify how the community sector should start to define shared aims and goals and how we can develop ownership of the way forward across all sectors.

Background papers were collected and think pieces, fact sheets and papers written. These are available on <https://londoncommunities.wordpress.com/downloads/> and show how, far from being encouraged to develop a 'Big Society', the voluntary and community sector is under increased pressure, yet with declining resources. Prevention, which can save money, is being abandoned. Low income residents are being forced out of London, with money going into housing benefit rather than bricks and mortar. Two out of every five young people in London are not in employment. Despite rapid job creation, the proportion of total employment for apprenticeships was lower in London than elsewhere in England. The poorer communities are now characterised by a high population turnover and fragmentation of services.

The response to these issues was discussed by the keynote speakers and panels. This resulted in a set of 'asks' or campaigning issues including:

- Asking funders and Job Centre Plus to reward small steps towards employment, including volunteering, and to break up contracts so that the community can be involved in the design of programmes, rather than just their delivery.
- Asking employers to follow through on their commitments and their corporate social responsibility policies and build new relationships with local communities.
- Asking head teachers to re-create the extended school ethos.
- Asking Health and Well-Being Boards to create a number of health and well-being centres where services could be brought together.
- Asking the academic sector to help monitor the effects of displacement and research how resilient communities can be built in areas of high population churn.
- Asking local authorities to set firm targets for social housing on each site and stick to these targets.
- Asking all the Mayoral candidates to commit to revert to the previous definition of 'affordable' housing, defined as a third of net household income.

While the Summit identified many issues where policy change at national, London wide and Borough level was necessary to support resilient communities, it also focussed on what actions the sector itself could take to build sustainable communities.

The importance of developing a community voice which can speak and be heard was an underlying issue throughout the Summit. Everyone agreed that we need a shared vision (based on shared values), and a shared agenda which can be articulated across London in order to re-energise communities' belief in their ability to address current problems.

To assist in this, a Forum could be created by establishing anchor organisations in each area. These could be larger enabling organisations or partnerships involving several community organisations that share goals and values. Such anchor organisations could help develop the community's ability and capacity to engage in local, regional and national decision-making. Community organisations could also play a role by encouraging and creating structures that countered the fragmentation of services and helped people to take more control of their lives.

An example of how this could work was raised by the Youth panel. There is currently a lack of co-ordinated pathways for young people. New ways of defining how a young person may develop should be put together. This requires agencies, such as Health and Well-being Boards, and the community sector to share a view about desirable outcomes, to have better data and to develop new hubs where different services work together. The community organisations could help develop pilots, involving young people in the design and decision making of this approach, and could engage with employers, sponsors and role models to widen perspectives and opportunities. Once a pilot is successful the lessons could be spread to the next area.

Local anchor organisations could help enable other solutions. For example, they could:

- help to bring down rental costs by setting up ethical lettings agencies as community enterprises.
- help through training local champions to address local needs.
- Encourage new co-operative structures of freelance workers, or peer support parental groups at schools.

One way of taking forward some of these issues was widely thought to be a high level Commission on Resilient Communities which could clarify the 'asks' of the mayoral candidates next year. Anchor organisations themselves need to consider the campaigns and actions suggested by the panels and consider further how they could take them forward and the type of Forum that is required. Those at the Summit were also interested in exploring the Islington Giving (which brings together foundations, funders and the private sector to raise funds) and seeing if it could be replicated in West London.

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Report of event on 18 June 2015

The Community Summit was organised by the Paddington Development Trust and attended by some 70 representatives from community organisations and the public, private and voluntary sectors across London. The Summit has a website where background papers can be downloaded <https://londoncommunities.wordpress.com/downloads/>

Drew Stevenson, the Chair of PDT, thanked people for attending and explained that the purpose of the conference was to provide time and space for partners across the community to look at four specific topics in the Panel sessions and then to address three questions:

1. What is the role of the voluntary and community sector in a time of huge public sector cuts - yet growing demand?
2. How do we go about defining shared aims and goals and developing ownership of these across the public, private and voluntary and community sectors?
3. What kind of funding arrangements do we need to sustain communities in the current context?

SESSION ONE: KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Karen Buck, the local MP, was the first keynote speaker and set the context for the Summit. She praised the work of organisations like PDT and Paddington Arts (who hosted the Summit) and the lasting legacy they had created. Although projects were now under threat, the work on children's centres and partnership work on employment had shown that preventive action, led by the community, worked.

Paddington had always been an area of arrival but it was now becoming an area of forced departure with only 30% owner occupation, a declining stock of social rented housing and increased insecurity in the private rented sector. There were now smaller pockets of more intense deprivation. Young people had seen the sharpest decline in services and this particularly affected the young Muslim Arab population of Paddington - who also faced the most discrimination.

We were moving from a rights-based state to a discretionary state. The state was also withdrawing, putting more and more pressure on the voluntary and community sector as their resources also diminished.

Karen said she did not have all the answers to these issues, but they must involve the following:

1. We need to tailor our demands on the public sector to reflect the way the state is responding to these issues. She saw opportunities in the work of Health and Well-being Boards.
2. We need to make the case that early intervention is not just about more free childcare or the limited troubled-families programme, but support throughout the life cycle.
3. We need to show that invest-to-save brings real returns and should be fully implemented rather than acknowledged through token gestures. For example, capital investment in social housing would save housing benefit costs.
4. We need to get the destructive impact of hyper-mobility on the agenda. It is impossible to demonstrate the impact of community support if the people in the community are continually being forced out and replaced.
5. We have to build on existing services- in particular schools remain the trusted hubs of community.
6. We need to work across boundaries and follow the example of multi-agency working in services such as Advice Plus.
7. We need to get better flows of information and learning between agencies.
8. We mustn't forget that politicians are also part of network working.

Neale Coleman, adviser since 2000 to the Mayor of London on the Olympic and Paralympic legacy for London and adviser on regeneration and social development in Tottenham, was the second keynote speaker. Neale, speaking in a personal capacity, concentrated on housing policy which he saw as the biggest public policy failure in the last 50 years. He saw the current policy proposals as making the situation worse. The Housing Minister (see Financial Times, 11 June) has argued for mass redevelopment of council housing estates. But this will only work if there is extra money for social housing, the community are involved and lead on the redevelopment proposals, and the redevelopment improves the quality of housing for existing residents. These conditions do not exist in many regeneration proposals which is why there is protest in Barnet and on the Aylesbury estate in Southwark. In Earls Court, council houses are going to be demolished for luxury flats, the community has no say, no right to a ballot and those who had bought their homes will only get limited compensation through compulsory purchase.

But even more serious is the proposal to force councils to sell off their more expensive, better quality property to fund the right-to-buy for housing association tenants. This is a campaigning issue as we cannot afford to lose good quality social housing on this scale. He thought that the policy has echoes of Shirley Porter's attempt to remove social tenants from Westminster.

The Localism Act was not strong enough. It does not facilitate the community ownership of assets, it merely enables communities to get entangled in bureaucracy.

Neale reflected on past action in the 60s and 70s to set up community owned housing- in particular Walerton & Elgin Community Homes (WECH), a successful resident-controlled housing association in Westminster. But he recognised that while community ownership was vital, on its own it was not enough. There had also to be money to maintain and improve the stock.

He called for the spirit of the 1960s to be re-created and to prevent the wholesale destruction of social housing in London. But we needed practical, achievable solutions.

Danny Kruger (CEO of Only Connect and West London Zone and Board member of White City Enterprise) was the final keynote speaker. Danny argued that public funding on prevention, for programmes such as early years and youth services, is drying up. This will happen however much the community campaign. He therefore suggested that the community itself needed to step in and make relationships stronger. It is important to focus on the positive and on the creativity of young people.

Only Connect works with prisoners, ex-offenders and people at risk of offending and helps them in building positive relationships that can support an active life in the community. White City Enterprise builds relationships with employers in White City encouraging them to create local job opportunities. The West London Zone is focussed along the Harrow Road. The project is developing shared goals and aspirations among the community groups in this area and shared measures of success. This should enable an individual to be supported through a partnership of community organisations (itself supported through the Zone), rather than a fragmented system.

Danny suggested that these relationships were crucial when state funding was being withdrawn and building these relationships was a positive response.

In the discussion following these keynote speeches the following points were made:-

1. Generation Rent suggested that many people are now locked into poor housing and one tenant had said it was like being in an open prison. We needed to widen discussion of welfare to address the myths and encourage communities to buy out housing associations so they had control over their own lives
2. A school teacher picked up on Karen Buck's point about hyper-mobility and said how difficult it was to assess success when 55% of the pupils in the final year of primary school had not been there at the beginning. Schools needed to broaden their agenda to engage with the community and Ofsted should look at the final destination of pupils with long-term tracking
3. Islington Giving run by Cripplegate (which brings together foundations, funders and the private sector to raise funds for programmes co-designed with community groups) provides a good model for future working.

SESSION 2: THEMED PANELS

The four panels were tasked to identify the four key issues in their policy area and then from this to clarify four 'asks' of other organisations or sectors and four actions that the community sector itself could take to contribute to a solution to the problems identified. A series of fact sheets were produced as background to the panels and are available as a download on <https://londoncommunities.wordpress.com/downloads/>

PANEL 1: JOBS AND ECONOMY

1. The panel criticised the structure of funding for programmes in this sector which excludes communities. The funding is output focussed and does not recognise steps towards employment being undertaken by an individual or the contribution to the community of those who struggle to work full time. It does not address the complexity of the barriers to work. Contracts are too large and result in top down programmes which cannot accommodate local needs.

To respond to this problem, funders and Job Centre Plus should be asked to reward small steps taken by individuals towards employment and to break up contracts so that the community can be involved in the design of programmes. Community organisations need to work together to develop a co-ordinated community voice so that communities are involved in the design- not just the delivery- of employment programmes and are able to develop strategies that are responsive to community needs.

2. Fragmentation was seen as a key issue. The fragmentation of work opportunities was forcing people into freelancing, self-employment, zero hours contracts and low pay. Volunteering was also fragmented and not sufficiently valued. The community response to disadvantage in the labour market and local enterprise was also fragmented.

The demand in this area was directed at Trade Unions. It was felt that they should broaden their scope to work alongside communities, engaging with freelancers, the self-employed and insecure employees. Community organisations could also play a role by encouraging and creating structures that countered this fragmentation and helped people to take more control of their lives. We heard about the ALTGEN initiative which was encouraging freelancers to set up co-operatives. Another suggestion was to establish co-operatives of parents at schools who could support each other in developing steps into employment. Closer relationships between community organisations were also necessary to co-ordinate aims, goals and solutions.

3. Many employers are disengaged from local communities and offer limited local opportunities particularly to local young disadvantaged residents. This is despite the

fact that the employers benefit indirectly from state funding (tax credits, housing benefits) which enable employees to survive on the low pay they are often offered.

Our expectation of employers is for them to follow through on their commitments (including Section 106 agreements to provide planning benefits) and their corporate social responsibility policies and build new ethically based relationships with local communities. Local communities could reinforce progress by establishing community accreditation for good practice and maybe even naming and shaming those who make no community contribution.

4. The final issue raised by this panel was the difficulty created by population turnover which made it complicated to show that our community engagement work had an impact.

The panel wanted councils to do more monitoring and to make employers more accountable. But we felt the community itself could also address this issue by working together to carry out long term research to provide evidence of our effectiveness.

PANEL 2: YOUNG PEOPLE

1. The first issue identified was the lack of co-ordinated pathways for young people. There need to be new ways of defining how a young person may develop. This requires agencies and the community sector to have a shared framework for desired outcomes and better data sharing.

While institutions could be asked to develop this shared approach, the panel felt the best way forward was for the voluntary and community sector to establish a joint charter setting out shared outcomes and good practice on information sharing and how we would work together. This could then be presented to other sectors who could be asked to join in partnerships to deliver the charter.

2. The panel felt that many young people lacked emotional well-being and lived isolated lives.

The 'ask' here was for more learning outside the classroom with a focus on building emotional intelligence and resilience. The learning should be focussed on life skills, health and relationships. The community organisations could help develop pilots, involving young people in the design and decision-making for this approach, and could engage with employers and role models to widen perspectives and opportunities. Once a pilot is successful the lessons could be spread to the next area.

3. Linked to the second issue was the problem that schools see their role as narrowly defined, only delivering Ofsted recognised outputs.

The request here was focussed on head teachers and involved the re-creation of the extended school ethos. The community could assist by engaging with the Head's Forum to address the barriers to developing extended schools and helping to provide evidence of the benefits from the pilot approach discussed above

4. The final issue was the lack of community infrastructure to support this new approach.

There are opportunities through Health and Well-Being Boards to create a number of health and well-being centres where services could be brought together. Community organisations should engage sponsors and supporters of such centres, developing service hubs for young people and concentrating on one exemplary centre which, if successful, could then be replicated in other areas.

PANEL 3: HOUSING

1. The key issue identified was that current planning powers did not give local government or communities control over land or the delivery of social housing.

To address this issue, it was crucial that London Boroughs or the Mayor could acquire land at existing use value. This was not going to happen without a community campaign. The first stage was for communities to get involved in neighbourhood planning and develop alongside neighbourhood plans (which are restricted both in that they can only supplement the statutory local plan and contain no powers to enforce delivery) the notion of a community action plan. This would set out how the community would like to deliver the neighbourhood plan.

2. The use of the term 'affordable', defined by the Mayor as 80% of market value, had no relationship to any real meaning of affordable housing.

The 'ask' would be of all the Mayoral candidates to commit to revert to the previous use of 'affordable' defined as a third of net household income. Community organisations should be calling for this commitment from all the political parties and mayoral candidates.

3. The reduction in the benefit cap from £26,000 to £23,000 and the cap on the local housing allowance do not recognise rising rental costs in London.

Government should be asked to raise the cap and the local housing allowance in London to reflect market conditions. The local housing allowance is meant to cover the rental cost of the bottom 30% of houses in the market but no longer does this in London. Community groups can help shift attitudes by launching a mass awareness campaign and showing who gets benefits and that they cannot be described as scroungers. This could mirror the poster campaign showing different people saying 'I am an immigrant' and then clarifying their contribution to society. Many people, for

example, do not realise that a couple caring for an adult child with severe disabilities will be hit by the benefit cap.

4. Land values in London are too high and the intensification of development is driving them up even higher.

These land values will only be reduced if local authorities set firm targets for social housing on each site and stick to these targets, rather than giving way to developers' demands. Local communities could help to bring down rental costs by setting up ethical lettings agencies as community enterprises. Such letting agencies could also help deliver greater tenancy security.

PANEL 4: **RESILIENT COMMUNITIES**

1. The panel identified the need to change the narrative about local communities in poorer areas. They were consistently defined negatively as deprived, problem areas, marginal etc.

We would ask all sectors to engage in cross-sector action to change their narrative. The community sector can underpin this work countering negative responses around TINA (There Is No Alternative) and promoting actively a positive message TARA (There are real alternatives- pronounced in an uplifting way -Tah Rah!).

2. People need to feel they can influence decision-making so that they are encouraged to get involved in their local community.

The panel felt that public health was an issue where influence could be brought to bear and Health and Well-being boards could help by focussing more on mental health and involving those with mental health issues. Community organisations could help through training local champions to address local needs. The training and voluntary contribution to the community should provide the champion with a step into work.

3. Local communities often feel they lack the power to shape the wider environment.

This should be addressed by establishing anchor organisations in each area. These could be larger enabling organisations or partnerships involving several community organisations that share goals and values and are able to speak with one voice. Such anchor organisations could help develop the community's ability and capacity to engage in local, regional and national decision-making. They could also put forward demands - particularly in relation to the private sector.

4. The final issue, as also raised by other panels, was dealing with the mobility and turnover in a local community. Relationship building is particularly difficult in areas of high population change.

The community sector needs to develop its understanding of the issue and its complexity and to spread learning in this area. The ‘ask’ here is directed to the academic sector which could help research the scale of the issue, monitor the effects of displacement and research how resilient communities can be built in areas of high mobility.

FINAL SESSION: CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND CROSS CUTTING ‘ASKS’ AND ACTIONS

1. The importance of developing a community voice which can be heard was an underlying issue throughout the Summit. More thought was required on how we develop a basic set of values that is shared and allows the community to speak with one voice and be involved in the design of services which are then responsive to different community needs. We need a shared vision, and a shared agenda which can be articulated across London in order to re-energise communities’ belief in their ability to address current problems. The creation of a Forum through which communities can speak was seen as an essential first step.
2. Linked to this was the role of anchor organisations. All the panels had identified the importance of such organisations and actions they could take to provide solutions. Ownership of community assets was seen as important to the sustainability of anchor organisations.
3. All the panels raised demands and campaigning issues which required active citizens. The need for new awareness campaigns was highlighted.
4. The difficulty of campaigning and advocating while at the same time trying to use diminishing resources to the best of our ability was emphasised. We had to be careful we did not turn the response to the issues raised at this Summit into a narrow bid for more resources for the voluntary and community sector. That would probably be fruitless and would not necessarily address the issues faced by communities themselves.
5. The importance of sharing and developing data and research emerged as a cross cutting issue through each panel.
6. Similarly, problems with population turnover and displacement impacted on all policy areas.
7. Several panels raised the importance of addressing mental health and engaging with Health and Well-being boards.
8. The private sector was seen as central to any solution and the community sector needed to engage more pro-actively with it. Given the reduction in public funding, it

is particularly important to develop active corporate social responsibility strategies.

9. There was a basic contradiction between low pay policies and rising house prices; housing security was essential for sustainable communities.

One way of taking forward some of these issues was a high level Commission on Resilient Communities which could clarify the 'asks' of the mayoral candidates next year. This suggestion was positively received. Anchor organisations themselves, need to consider the 'asks' and actions suggested by the panels and consider further how they should take them forward and the type of Forum that can be built to enable the community to speak with one voice and be heard.