WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TO MAKE LONDON A FAIRER CITY?

AN OPEN SPACE EVENT

ON 10TH DECEMBER 2015

BY THE LONDON FAIRNESS COMMISSION

AT THE STOWE CENTRE

London Fairness Commission

age UK London

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INTRODUCTION

London is one of the world's greatest cities. It has become a byword for dynamism, diversity and creativity. All the signs are that London will continue to attract business, people and money from around the world. But a dark cloud of unfairness hangs over London's future.

Only half of London's residents currently believe they live in a fair city. Younger Londoners, the self-employed, disabled people and many ethnic minorities are more likely to think London is unfair. These groups make up a growing share of the city's population.

The London Fairness Commission was established to organise conversations across the capital in response to this situation, asking Londoners to consider:

- What is fairness?
- Is London fair?
- What should be done to make London a fairer city?

This is the first citywide debate on fairness since Charles Booth mapped levels of poverty and wealth in London over one hundred years ago. We are supported by Trust for London, Tudor Trust, City Bridge Trust and London Funders.

The London Fairness Commission wants to make the issues raised through this debate central to the coming Mayoral election. However, the Commission is not just about engaging politicians. We want an inclusive conversation with the widest possible range of Londoners from all walks of life, all parts of the city, and all sectors of the economy.

To this end we are organising a series of Open Space events with groups from across London, hearing the voice of civil society, older Londoners, ethnic minorities, and younger Londoners.

This report outlines the results of the fourth of these events with older Londoners, held in partnership with Age UK London and supported by the The Stowe Centre.

Thank you to all who took part, your ideas and enthusiasm for building a fairer city are invaluable to the work of the London Fairness Commission.

Lord Victor Adebowale
Chair of the London Fairness Commission

OPEN SPACE

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TO MAKE LONDON A FAIRER CITY?

Prompted by this question, the meeting used the Open Space process to create an agenda for the day. Topics were discussed in groups and ideas and recommendations noted. These notes appear in the following pages with our apologies for any errors in transcription!

At the end of the meeting delegates prioritised the different ideas and the numbers in brackets below reflect their votes. We have picked out the recommendations that received more than five votes and listed them below:

- Inter-generational housing issues. March of the over 60's to help the young with housing fairness. (8)
- It boils down to wealth and income. It would benefit everyone if the mayor can ensure wealth is shared around the community. Number of children in poverty and growth of food banks/children going hungry to school. Poor are getting poorer and rich are getting richer. Extremely richer – very fast. Wages are not rising and there is no increase in income for older people. (5)
- Access to FE for older people; older people have a lot to give but don't have a voice in community. There may be language barriers and older people are left behind with technology as everything is online. (4)
- Sudden but immediate need for care. New types of care homes on a pan London basis, flexibility to move in/out of care as needed. Exchange arrangements on inter/national basis. (4)
- The older person must be protected from being forced out of their family home when children leave home. Older people face eviction and older people will be on the street. (4)
- Home care, important to keep choice. (4)
- We need local hubs and spaces – free spaces. (4)

DIGITAL INCLUSION / EXCLUSION

- Public wifi? Infrastructure funded through GLA? (3)
- How can vulnerable people be protected from online crime etc? We need to show it is an issue. (3)
- Ensure an individual's level of digital knowledge is captured when coming into contact with statutory services to assist and capture aspirations. (2)
- Digital is not the only way to communicate with people. Research shows rise in online/digital is correlated to rise in anti-social behaviour. (2)
- Costs can be prohibitive (£25p/m).
- Virus/scans/security worries – need training to feel confident.
- A lot of services are only able to be done online. There is a feeling of this being imposed.
- Internet can be beneficial for those that speak other languages.
- Cyber bullying
- People, particularly older, want to be online. How do they take the first steps? Start with what the need/want to use and build on this.
- Volunteering and community participation; the use of only digital means London residences couldn't volunteer in their communities (such as the Olympics).
- Disabilities and other issues can make digital services inappropriate for some.
    - Discriminatory attitudes against those who don't use digital services.
    - People shouldn't be charged for performing other ways to contact people.
- People's preferences for communicating should be respected. Increase in digital means decrease in face to face – restricts 'active' life in communities for older people.

DEVELOPING MORE INDEPENDENT LIVING RESOURCES TO PREVENT SOCIAL ISOLATION

- Home care, important to keep choice. (4)
- Empowering people to access local groups / speak to councillors to assist with issues – having a voice in the community and power to influence. (2)
- Affordable housing in accessible locations, to ensure there is community around them; public transport, supermarkets, doctors surgeries etc. (1)
- 'Lonely but not alone' (1)
- Being part of a community and having company without living in a residential care home.
- Sheltered living with a warden (3 days p/w) with pull cords and own front door etc.
- Need to be in a location which has lots of accessible amenities.
- Different people have different ideals when it comes to housing; town, cities and infrastructure, nature and rural living.
- Communal activities
- Moving from large houses to smaller property sizes (downsizing) – not enough option; social housing not just affordable housing.
- Inflation of house prices - want to leave money for family/seen as an asset.
- Lack of options to downsize, particularly in an area where they currently live.
- Feeling part of a wider community.
- Freedom pass – helps older people feel more able to travel and go further.
- Differences from borough to borough e.g. access to different services. Citizens need to be empowered to create lobbying groups to make change.
- Age doesn't discriminate.
- How do you tackle apathy?

LESS FORTUNATE PEOPLE ARE SLEEPING ON THE SIDEWALKS OF THE CITY I.E. LEICESTER SQUARE AND TRAFALGAR SQUARE. THE STENCH IS APPALLING!

- There is a rise in homelessness and people in hostels, including newly arrived people. Why are they on the streets? There is a lack of accommodation. How can we get the mayor to respond to this? (4)

FACILITATE HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

- The older person must be protected from being forced out of their family home when children leave home. Older people face eviction and older people will be on the street. (4)
- There is a lack of one bedroom/studio accommodation to accommodate older people. (2)
- Be aware that older people are being excluded as they are homeless and living on friends' sofas. They are missed off electoral lists, council housing lists and other systems. (2)
- The older person need support in the following areas:
    - Stress and health
    - Financial: children may have been working and helping with the cost of rent.
    - Support: older people need to have help/support to discuss issues/change prior to this event.
- The pension age is rising to 66 years and there will be more older people in the community that will not qualify for the exemption of the bedroom tax.
- The mayor must imagine thousands of older people living on the streets of London and act now! Youngsters on the streets join gangs - what will older people do? We are in an age where anyone can be affected and forced to live on the streets. What will you do about this? We need affordable housing. The deposit for accommodation is too high. If you get evicted, this follows you.
- Housing in London is too high and unfair to the older people, who are ignored.
- The homeless older person is isolated in the community and is not visible.
- Can the mayor prevent this situation now?

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO MAKE PENSIONERS TO FEEL SAFE?

- Linking community centres to planning permission should be factored in when building new estates, in both public and private sector. (2)
- Concerns around going out regarding cyclists, traffic, mugging, pollution, people walking into pensioners when on their mobiles. (1)
- Increased isolation if there isn't an escort to take older people out. (1)
- Transport (1)
  - Crowded tubes and buses and rushing to get on and off transport which makes people fearful of falling which can result in people stopping going out.
  - Buses not stopping at the request stop.
  - Driver not always treating pensioners with respect.
  - Impaired sighted people expect the bus to stop.
  - Change of destination of the bus without much notice. This can confuse older people. Bus drivers should inform people and give replacement tickets.
  - Bus not lowered enough when getting on and off.
  - Fear of falling due to uneven pavement.
- More localised hubs to encourage pensioners to go out and mix with others, they may not be able to walk far.
- Square mile – safe for crime re burglary etc
- Lack of respect from young people.
- Recent reports in the press let people think pensioners have lots of money and that can cause some people to be burgled / mugged.
- No community centre
- Londoners are not neighbourly.
- Should be clean, green and safe. Public places can be hostile environments through air pollution, smoke, vandalised bus stops, for example.
- Should not be under fear or intimidation of being attacked.

WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF FAIR IN RELATION TO THE STARTING POINT OF THIS DEBATE WHEN SERVICES AND FUNDING FOR OLDER AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE BEEN CUT?

- It boils down to wealth and income. It would benefit everyone if the mayor can ensure wealth is shared around the community. Number of children in poverty and growth of food banks/children going hungry to school. Poor are getting poorer and rich are getting richer. Extremely richer – very fast. Wages are not rising and there is no increase in income for older people. (5)

- Access to FE for older people; older people have a lot to give but don't have a voice in community. There may be language barriers and older people are left behind with technology as everything is online. (4)

- Student classes have been cut in FE colleges – why is this? There is an assumption that older people have enough money to pay higher fees because they worked all their lives. (1)

- We need a 'positive industrial policy'; job creation is needed. The Living wage is not enough to live on in London. London used to be a big industrial city, now you are either a city flyer on high earnings or poorly paid on £6.50 p/h. (1)

- Can the mayor do more e.g. housing and leisure centres?

- Fairness: older people have lived all their life in London, grown up and worked here and it is not fair they are disadvantaged now with all the cuts in social services. People who have just come to London are reaping all the benefit now.

- We face these challenges and the community needs to be united in the issues we are facing by putting our views together. The media is misleading and technology (internet) can be very dangerous.

- What is affordable rent?

HOW DO WE FACILITATE PEOPLE TO HELP PEOPLE; GETTING PEOPLE TOGETHER, OLDER PEOPLE SUPPORTING OLDER PEOPLE?

- We need local hubs and spaces – free spaces. (4)
- Isolation, we don't know our neighbours. People do have choices, however, there is a loss of befriending services which allow people the chance to go out and be social. This has been affected by government cuts. (1)
- People like helping one another, we are herd animals – there is enough kindness. Why we are less connected? Have we lost community or has it changed? (1)
- Estates – we all knew each other, there is a lack or order, or shared expectations, values and culture. (1)
- Clearing houses, notice boards for communications. These things don't need money. There is a feeling of powerlessness with regard to neighbours and government etc. The cuts to services are taking out preventative action which results in reactive action.
- Finding the right people to advocate for these needs and connecting those in need with those who help.
- Poverty – diversity – working 24/7 including at home subletting.

FACILITATING DOWNSIZING IN LINE WITH DECLINE

- Inter-generational housing issues. March of the over 60's to help the young with housing fairness. (8)
- Sudden but immediate need for care. New types of care homes on a pan London basis, flexibility to move in/out of care as needed. Exchange arrangements on inter/national basis. (4)
- Improving social network. Facilities in the local communities being linked to other facilities across London. (1)
- How many are upsizing (to live with family, downsizing (to live in a more suitable location and property) and co-housing and shared ownership, rental and sharing facilities? (1)

AFFORDABLE AND SOCIAL HOUSING

- Shortage of housing can be avoided to building upwards; building should be more development comprising of residential and commercial.
- Planning within new development must be enforced by the mayor and enshrined by law.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

What is the definition of fairness? This has opened up a lot of discussion points. Looking at the comments and recommendations at the end show the same themes are being echoed.

The question of what is affordable, what constitutes affordability? It is still a question that needs to be asked.

London is the most unequal city in England, and Europe in terms of income and wealth. There is a lot of work that can and should be done by the mayor.

Let's get on with it and move forward for London.

London is a wonderful place, we should be proud or what we are achieving in our time in history. There is more to be done. We need to create a vision of and for the community.

One of the greatest threats to everyone is the serious air pollution in this city. We have to address this. Air pollution is killing thousands of people and shortening older peoples' lives. The mayor can do a lot about this.

These issues are intergenerational issues. We need to tackle them as such.

Do we need to put up with the budget cuts? The answer is no!

From the people here today we can see there is a lot of good will, want and need to make London a fairer and more equal city to live in, for everyone.

Loneliness, heating, eating, polluted air, illness. These are all concerns for older people and cause premature death.

Today has stirred in me a mixture of sadness and confusion. The solution is to move to Manchester!

I'm still reflecting on a lot of the issues discussed today, but the main concern seems to be housing.

Safety is one of the fears of older people; getting on and off public transport for example. We need to re-educate people to be more considerate and understanding of these issues.

These conversations need to continue over the next 4 years 10 years and beyond.