



# NEWHAM CITIZENS LISTENING REPORT & MANIFESTO 2022

# FOREWORD



## **Jerry During & Joanna Boldeau Co-Chairs, Newham Citizens**

The Newham Citizens Manifesto Asks represent real solutions, created by real people in Newham.

Whether we are secondary school pupils; cleaners; faith leaders wanting a better life for our congregations: in our organisations and collectively, we have listened to one other, reflected on our own experiences, and developed solutions to the challenges we face together. In the process, our members have become leaders, taking action for a better, fairer community.

Newham Citizens brings together a diverse range of individuals and organisations, and many of our members hail from communities that are often under-represented in political participation. Through increasing co-production with our membership and Newham Council, we have an opportunity to grow local residents' involvement in decision-making and put people at the heart of democracy in Newham.

In doing so, we are taking the next steps on a journey of increasing co-production in Newham.

At our previous Assembly, in 2018, we made asks to the two leading candidates for Mayor. Both the conservative and the labour candidate. The candidate who won Rokhsana Fiaz OBE made a series of agreements at the Newham Citizens Public Assembly. We are delighted that in 2022, we can say that many of those agreements have been honoured.

In particular, those agreements included Newham Council becoming an accredited Living Wage employer. Their leadership was an encouragement to the 31+ other local employers who have accredited since 2018. Our organising on the Living Wage has meant around £14 million going back into the pockets of Newham's lowest paid workers over the last 5 years.

Our Manifesto in 2022 aims to build on this success, by encouraging more Newham employers to become Living Wage accredited.

As well as low pay, housing is another huge source of pressure for Newham residents. As our listening vividly shows, there is simply not enough affordable, quality housing that meets people's needs in our borough. Homelessness has soared, and young people are acutely affected.

We are delighted to be working in partnership with Newham Council to find a site for a new 'Social Housing Learning and Support Centre' (SHLSC). This project will provide young people with affordable housing while also preparing them for employment and independent living.

We have also entered discussions with the Council around community-led housing in the form of a 'Community Land Trust' (CLT) in Custom House. CLTs offer housing that is affordable to the local community long-term, as well as the amenities needed for community life.

We encourage those who make decisions in all sectors to listen to, and work closely with, communities. Our aspiration is to co-produce solutions to local challenges with not just Newham Council, but with employers, the NHS and TFL.

By encouraging a 'culturally competent' NHS service and peer-led support for people who face long wait times for mental health care, we want to ensure that people facing mental health challenges feel seen and heard within the NHS and their own communities.

Working with TFL represents an opportunity to keep our young people safer in Newham. We ask TFL to allow students to board the bus if they are in school uniform, even if they do not have their Zip card, for example. This will reduce the number of young people who have to walk home alone.

We were struck by the generosity with which people participated in our listening work. We were often discussing very difficult experiences: homelessness, mental health crisis, struggling to survive on less than the Living Wage. People persevere, and see their pain as part of a bigger picture that they want to change.

Our experiences are fuel to inspire and to change things for the better. We're so excited for the journey ahead.

**Joanna Boldeau & Jerry During**  
**Co-Chairs, Newham Citizens**



Newham Citizens members, St Antony's Catholic Primary School



Young Newham Citizens members, Nov 2021

# INTRODUCTION

Newham Citizens (Part of TELCO) are a local alliance who are part of Citizens UK and use Community Organising to develop local leaders, strengthen local organisations and find solutions to the challenges that our communities face.

Through the method of Community Organising we enable communities to develop their voice, build power and achieve change on the issues that matter to them. The method has a pragmatic, inclusive approach to influencing people who hold power in the political, private or public spheres.

The work of Citizens UK has led to some of the biggest campaign impacts in the UK, including the [Living Wage](#) which has

now put £1.3 billion back into the pockets of the country's lowest paid workers. This campaign began right here in Newham and east London in 2001, through local communities coming together, listening and organising for change.

We work with 23 civil society institutions in Newham, including local schools, community groups and charities, and religious organisations. We currently organise to make change around four Campaign Areas: Housing, Living Wage, Youth Safety and Health Inequalities.

If you are interested in being part of this powerful alliance of institutions contact: [alastair.rooms@citizensuk.org](mailto:alastair.rooms@citizensuk.org).





## Why Listening?

In Community Organising we believe that those closest to pain should be closest to power, and we encourage those who make decisions to listen to, and work closely with, communities.

Through our member institutions, in Sept 2021 - Jan 2022 we listened to the voices and experiences of people in Newham in relation to the four Campaign Areas. Local citizens are experts by experience in their local communities and the issues that affect their lives, and the solutions they have suggested form the basis of our Manifesto.

In advance of the Newham Mayoral Election in May 2022, we will present our Manifesto to the candidates for Mayor of Newham. We invite the future Mayor, local public sector leaders (TFL, NHS)

and businesses, to work together with us to make change for the better in Newham.

As noted by the Newham Democracy and Civic Participation Commission in their [Final Report](#)<sup>1</sup>, increasing co-production between the Council and the local community represents an opportunity to increase local residents' involvement in decision-making, and to put people at the heart of democracy in the borough.

Our Report reflects strong relationships built by Newham Citizens across diverse groups in the borough, including with communities that are often under-represented in political participation and decision-making. Through Listening and Community Organising, we aim to go some way towards redressing this balance of power and strengthening local democracy.

# OUR TRACK RECORD

At Newham Citizens we have a proud legacy of working alongside local leaders to make change in our communities. We are a strictly non-partisan alliance and work with candidates who win elected office.

In April 2018, we hosted an 'Election Accountability Assembly' with the two leading candidates for Mayor of Newham at that year's election. Both the Labour and Conservative candidates attended, and the candidate who would go on to become Mayor, Rokhsana Fiaz OBE, made the following agreements (see top right) with our membership - all of which have been honoured.

We wish to recognise and celebrate the commitment and hard work of Newham Council and everyone involved in making these agreements a reality.

A huge amount besides has been achieved in the past four years, through our membership's tireless organising and the following changes (see bottom right) that have been implemented by the Council.



Current Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz addresses Newham Citizens Asks Workshop, University of East London, Dec 2021

The following of our 2018 Assembly agreements made with the winning Labour Candidate Rokhsana Fiaz OBE have been honoured:

- **Newham Council to become an accredited Living Wage employer.**
- **Newham Council to visit a Community Land Trust (CLT) in St Clements, Bow, and to explore creating a CLT in Newham.**
- **To work together to include Community Land Trusts as a viable model of housing in Newham.**
- **To convene a Living Wage breakfast during Living Wage Week in November 2018.**

## Further successes in 2018-2022

- £12 million invested in the Real Living Wage by Newham Council, as they accredited as a Living Wage employer and raised the wages of 700 care workers.
- The Royal Docks Roundtable and the Living Wage Week Launch held, with Mayor Fiaz in attendance at both.
- Mayor Fiaz visited the CLT at St Clements, Bow, and the Council have worked with Newham Citizens, E16 CLT and PEACH to explore building the Newham's first CLT.

### **London-wide wins in 2018-2022**

- Tate & Lyle and London City Airport accredited as Living Wage Employers and raised the wages of their staff. When our organising work started in 2018, there were 9 Living Wage employers in Newham. There are now 40+ employers, and 11,000 people have moved onto the Real Living Wage as a result - meaning that about £14 million has gone back into the pockets of low paid workers.
- Over £1 million has been invested by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, in community-led training for police officers.
- An overhaul by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime of community monitoring structures, to ensure that London's diverse communities are better represented. This will bring a diverse set of communities into the process to hold the Metropolitan Police to account.

During the same four-year period 2018-2022, Newham Citizens leaders also celebrated being involved with campaign wins (see left) in London.



Young Newham Citizens members, Nov 2021

# PROCESS

Between September 2021 and January 2022, Newham Citizens engaged adults and young people in 22 schools, faith communities and charities to find out how the Campaign Areas of Housing, Living Wage & Low Pay, Youth Safety and Health Inequalities affected them and what could be done. This formed the basis of our listening campaign in member institutions in Newham.

The findings of the campaign have been used to produce this Listening Report, and as a basis for the Newham Citizens Manifesto or 'Asks'.

**In advance of the Newham Mayoral Election in May 2022, we present our Manifesto to the candidates for Mayor of Newham, local public sector leaders (TFL, NHS) and businesses, and invite them to work with us in making change for the better in Newham.**

Each member organisation undertook listening within their own organisations, around one of the four Campaign Areas. This took the form of discussion or focus groups, the results of which were fed back into an online Listening Survey.

Further focus groups and one-to-one interviews were also conducted by Newham Citizens, in person and online, in order to capture our community's experiences in more depth.

At an Asks Workshop at the University of East London in December 2021 attended by over 100 people, our members presented their evidence and stories, and discussed their proposed solutions to the issues raised therein. These

solutions form the basis of our Manifesto 'Asks'. These Asks are designed to be 'worthwhile' – ie. they will have a significant impact on improving an issue – and 'winnable' – ie. achievable.

This Listening Report brings together the results of all of the above. It also draws on a Living Wage and Low Pay Listening Survey by London Citizens, which recorded the results of listening in Citizens UK member organisations across London; and on the Newham Youth Safety Action Team's Listening Report 2021/2<sup>2</sup> which reached over 1,000 young people.

Over 1,500 people from Newham have engaged in the process of sharing their stories and in creating this Manifesto.

Our listening findings are multifaceted, both in terms of the range of institutions and walks of life that they cover, and the experiences that they reflect. While some statistical data has been included, we have prioritized the voices and stories from within our community.

**On 3 February 2022** we will hold a Delegates Assembly, where we will ratify our campaign areas and formally agree the Asks which we have as an organisation.

**On 26 April 2022** we will host a Newham Citizens Accountability Assembly, where we will propose our Manifesto Asks to the two leading candidates for Mayor of Newham.

**Please mark these events in your diary!**

# OUR MANIFESTO

## HOUSING

1. We ask Newham Council: Will you commit to having a senior staff member with the delivery of a Community Land Trust in their job description and allocated time for the project?
2. We ask Newham Council: Will you continue to work with Money A+E to provide a suitable site for the Social Housing Learning and Support Centre?
3. We ask Newham Council: Will you hire 'Lived Experience' Consultants (paid at least London Living Wage) to help shape Housing services, so that those with lived experience of the challenges of the housing system in Newham can ensure that services work for residents?

## LIVING WAGE

1. Newham Council: Will you commit to creating a 'Lender Agency Vendor Accord' for the Royal Docks? This would ensure that companies on Newham Council land and companies coming into Royal Docks, their contractors and subcontractors, will pay the Living Wage.
2. We ask Jeremy Rees, Excel London CEO: Will you commit the Excel Centre to becoming a Living Wage employer, and to pay a Living Wage to all workers within one year of accrediting?
3. We ask Newham employers: Will you commit to meeting with our colleagues at the Living Wage Foundation, and learning more about accreditation as a Living Wage employer?

# YOUTH SAFETY

1. We ask TFL: Will you work with our Youth Safety Action Team to improve the transport system in Newham, to ensure thousands of children across the borough can get home more quickly in the after-school period?

2. We ask TFL: Will you introduce a protocol in Newham, to allow students who forget their Zip cards to still travel if they are in school uniform or have their college card, so they can get home at this crucial time?

**Our Commitment:** Newham Citizens' Youth Safety Action Team will run workshops, led by young people and delivered across the Newham Citizens membership, that will support young people to use Newham Council's 'journey map'.

The workshops will explore the gendered nature of safety, and support young people to know how to prevent danger and what to do if they see or find themselves in a dangerous situation.

# HEALTH INEQUALITIES

1. NHS Commissioners: Will the NHS work with voluntary sector organisations (VSO's) and the local community towards a wholly culturally competent service where people are offered care and support which encompasses their identity, needs and aspirations. Starting with Maternity (Maternal Mental Health) Care, before replicating this across the NHS in east London?

2. NHS and Local Authority Commissioners: Will you commit resourcing VSO's to support new peer support groups, with a particular focus around supporting those from under-represented communities with their mental health?

3. People are left alone and are at risk of going into crisis because of the long waiting lists for mental health support when they can access peer support services while they wait. East London Foundation Trust: Will you commit to working with us to ensure people are signposted to peer support, through a 'virtual waiting room' while they wait for mental health services?

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: LISTENING

## Housing

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Action on housing without a doubt presents a huge opportunity to improve quality of life in Newham. The central theme emerging from our Listening has been affordability, and we note the gulf between private rents and average pay in Newham. Raising the income of those on low pay, through paying a real Living Wage, could make a real difference.

The lack of affordable options is keeping residents effectively trapped in housing that they described as being in a poor state of repair, unsanitary, overcrowded, far from their place work or unsuitable for a host of other reasons. This is weighing heavily on family life and children, who may without space to play.

We learned from our listening that providing the rent deposits and guarantors necessary to move home is placing a further barrier on those who want to move. Not only are deposits high, but our members described fierce competition for tenancies and a process that is marred by racism, ableism and discrimination against tenants who claim housing benefit.

There is also a growing awareness that these pressures are weighing particularly heavily on young people, as they are just starting out in life.

Co-production and the concept of 'Housing Plus' were popular in our focus

group, especially in the latter's potential benefits for young people. Housing Plus involves developments that answer needs beyond just housing, such as training for employment and life skills support.

## Living Wage

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The issue of low pay is having a huge impact on the lives of Londoners. The most common theme of our listening was family. We heard that people are forced to work two or three jobs just to make ends meet, and the result is that they are spending little time with their children.

We heard that children's wellbeing is affected by seeing their parents less often, and by having less access to quality food.

Our members spoke of the sheer challenge and sometimes the impossibility of covering all bills – food, utilities, transport and rent – as the cost of living rises. Others expressed the desire to be able to save money at the end of the month, to give their children a better life.

Our listening shows that the challenges people face are compounded by precarious work and unpredictable shift patterns. They spoke of the stress of being unable to make plans, antisocial hours, and long commutes.

We were uplifted by stories of what moving onto a Living Wage had meant for employees, and the multiple benefits of accreditation for employers.

People reported increased wellbeing; having access to better food, more spacious housing, and less stress and worry about being able to pay the bills.

But perhaps most strikingly: more time with their families. The difference made in children's lives has been huge.

It is clear that for employers, paying the real Living Wage makes clear business sense. We heard that staff were more motivated and performed better at work. Our interviewees spoke of reduced sickness levels and the ability to build up trust between employer and employee.

Our survey suggests that there are significant opportunities for the cleaning and hospitality industries to improve employee engagement through offering a real Living Wage and more stable working patterns.

## **Youth Safety**

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The listening found that among our young people, there is a widespread fear of knife crime, harassment and 'unpredictable people', when on the streets and routes home from school.

These experiences are heightened in winter, and students described the problem being exacerbated by a lack of street lighting. Others spoke of having to wait a long time for buses, or of not knowing when their next bus would be coming, thus increasing the time spent

outside and feeling unsafe.

Improving the local transport system so that young people can get home quicker would make a huge impact.

At present students are not permitted entry to the bus if they have misplaced their Zip Oyster card. We believe it is essential that we work with TFL to change protocols, so that being in a Newham school uniform is sufficient to be allowed to board the bus.

The listening drew out many stories from students who had been witness to antisocial behaviour on buses, such as verbal abuse, fighting and theft. Although this is perpetrated by a minority of passengers, the result is young people feeling vulnerable on their way to and from school.

For the female students, media reports of violence and sexual assault against women and girls had a direct influence on their own experience when moving through public spaces.

They spoke of a sense of uncertainty about what could happen and men's intentions in public. Others described of what they saw as an intersection of sexism and racism in attitudes to violence against women and girls.

Our young people have committed to lead workshops that will support young people to use Newham Council's 'journey map'. The workshops will also explore the gendered nature of safety, and support young people to know how to prevent danger and what to do if they see or find themselves in a dangerous situation.

## Health Inequalities

Time and again during our listening we heard about a need for stronger listening skills within the NHS. The most effective care had been that where people had felt truly 'heard', coupled with a more holistic view of the person and their treatment. These experiences were hugely valued.

However all too often we heard that people had felt 'treated like a number' by busy practitioners, and that care had not helped them as a result.

Our evidence suggests that people from racialized communities are receiving poorer outcomes in mental health care due to structural racism. Individuals may encounter stigma and services that do not accommodate for their voices and needs to be fully heard.

Several of our members described being treated differently because of their immigration status. They felt they had not been taken seriously by NHS staff once they had disclosed their immigration status.

It is clear that these experiences of not feeling fully seen and heard had added to existing mental health challenges.

We are encouraging the adoption of a 'culturally competent' model that could be adopted first in Maternity Services, and then replicated across the NHS in east London.

For many of our members, mental health support and treatment from community-led, lived experience organisations is proving highly effective. Shared experience, we heard, results in empathy and understanding any specific cultural barriers around mental health that may exist.

Expanding these peer support networks is all the more crucial in the face of waiting times for NHS mental health care that can be up to 2 years long. During this time we also want to ensure that people are signposted to the peer support available, so that recovery can begin sooner.



Community Organising training with Newham Muslim Forum and Sisters Forum

## Notes

\*Name has been changed.

Citizens UK works with civil society institutions in Newham and across the UK, including schools, community groups and charities, and religious organisations.

If you are interested in being part of this powerful alliance of institutions contact: [alistair.rooms@citizensuk.org](mailto:alistair.rooms@citizensuk.org).

[www.citizensuk.org](http://www.citizensuk.org)  
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## Notes

\*Name has been changed.

Citizens UK works with civil society institutions in Newham and across the UK, including schools, community groups and charities, and religious organisations.

We are a strictly non-partisan organisation having worked with politicians across all parties. We will seek to work with incumbent politicians in order to achieve change and will invite the two leading candidates to our Accountability Assembly. These events are what is referred to by the Electoral Commission as 'non-selective hustings'.

This means that the event isn't viewed as supporting a candidates or candidates or prejudicing the electoral prospects of other candidates. Each candidate will be given equal time on the night and be asked to commit to the agenda of the local alliance.

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