

Baraka Community Association. Youth Consultation 2018



During Summer 2018, Baraka Community Association held two consultations with young people from West London, aged 11-19, to gauge their views and give them an opportunity to express their needs and ideas.

Summary of Main Findings

- There is a **need for more access to sport and exercise**. This is more urgent for young women, who face more barriers to participation and who expressed a need for stress relief through sport;
- **Academic success** is the number one priority of the young people;
- The young people are very ambitious, but seek **guidance** with the world of work, career options, university and other areas of adult life;
- The young people reported a **reliance on Baraka**, educationally and socially.

Background

Most of the children who participated in the consultations live within easy walking distance of Baraka's office, in the north of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Although the median income in the borough is £140,000, in North Kensington many live in poverty. For example, in Henry Dickens Court in the Norland Ward of North Kensington, 58% of children are in poverty. This is in contrast with Queens Gate ward, in the south of the borough, where 2.8% of children are in poverty.

The average price of a home in Kensington and Chelsea is £1.5 million, and the average price of a flat in North Kensington is over £700,000. In Golborne ward, where Baraka is situated, 68% of children live in overcrowded homes. Access to the private housing market is out of reach for many families and there is a chronic shortage of social housing.

Low educational attainment runs parallel with poverty. Kensington and Chelsea's average GCSE A*-C attainment is 72%. But in North Kensington, this percentage drops as low as 30%.ⁱ

Baraka Community Association

Baraka offers a wide range of opportunities and activities for young people. This includes sports, travel and cultural experiences. Baraka's main service is to offer supplementary schooling to enable young people to excel educationally and buck the local trend outlined above.

Structure

The consultations were divided into a male and a female session as we have found that this approach produces more openness.

The consultations were structured with questions covering a range of areas of life including education, community, money, family, future plans and career aspirations. However, space was given for the young people to freely express their feelings, thoughts and opinions.

The sessions were planned and delivered by Baraka's Community Development Officer and Children's Participation Worker.

Introduction

The 14 young people were given an outline of Baraka's aims in holding the consultations:

1. To hear from young people what they think, want and need;
2. To overcome the lack of information on what young people in West London think, which will help inform Baraka's decisions on what services should be offered;
3. To contribute to our evidence base which we sometimes refer to in funding applications or when discussing our work with partners.

Findings

Services Used, locally and across London

The young men all reported that they attend al-Manaar mosque in North Kensington as often as possible. They said that using the mosque is "crucial" and has "long-term benefits". They said that they attend the mosque's talks on politics and the Middle East as well as for prayers.

The boys also use Baraka ("Baraka is my youth club"), Making Communities Work and Grow ("a good community space"), the Linford Christie Outdoor Sports Centre and the Jubilee Leisure Centre.

One of the girls said she uses Holland Park school's 'After 3pm' sports clubs, but others reported that there is an issue with a lack of segregation which puts Muslim girls off participating. This was also reported to be the case with swimming – “there's a lack of female lifeguards at Kensington Leisure Centre so we can't do a girls swimming class like we used to”.

Like the young males, the female group were all regular Baraka service users, saying “We're reliant on Baraka”. They attend English, maths, homework club, holiday residential trips to Hindleap Warren and visits to museums.

One young woman said she does a weekly session at Special Yoga in Kensal Rise and another said she uses the Headspace app to practice breathing techniques to help her stay calm.

“Baraka is my youth club”

North Kensington

The young people reported positive feelings and experiences in North Kensington, praising it as “diverse” and “a good community”.

Reflecting on the Grenfell Tower tragedy of June 2017, the young people displayed a philosophical approach: “It can be any day that you go, so live your life”.

This was mixed with negative thoughts about the local council expressed by some: “They'll get what they deserve for ignoring people's cries for help”, “I see the council in a more negative way”.

And more positive reflections on the response of the local community during and after the fire: “there was no playing about, people helped each other”.

Priorities in Life

Securing the best possible academic results was the main priority for the young people, especially the GCSE and 'A' Level students.

The older children were also focused on their longer-term futures: “Short-term I want to get good grades. Long-term I want to have a good career, one that I actually enjoy. I want to look forward to going to work”.

Some young people articulated their need for balance in their lives: “To focus on studies and sports so I'm not so stressed”.

Stress reduction was identified as a priority by all the females consulted. Avoiding being wrongly accused of being involved in crime was also viewed as important “I want to stay away from crime, keep busy and stay safe”.

The males tended to see their priorities in the longer-term and all want the chance to raise their own families. One said: “My priority is doing well in life – my own house, a wife, children, moving out of home”.

Wants and Needs Identified

1. Sport and Exercise

All the young participants attending the consultation stated that they want and need access to sport and exercise opportunities for stress relief, to keep healthy, for enjoyment or as a way of spending time together socially.

“Sport is the priority – we need to let off steam”; “We want easier access to keeping fit”; “We just want things we can do as a group of friends”.

The female group stressed their cultural needs, namely for female-only classes. They were open-minded about the exercise they would like to engage in, including: Female-only boxing, circuit training, gym, swimming.

The male group also mentioned wanting to use a local gym if cheap membership was available, as well as quad biking, go-carting and paintballing.

“We want easier access to keeping fit”

2. Academic

The young people reported needing more physical space in which they can do their academic work. One boy said: “We need a place to go to work and use the computers, then leave”

And one of the girls said: “You need your own space as well to clear your mind. I need a quiet place to be alone, I can’t get this at home all the time”.

Most of the young people live in overcrowded accommodation.

In terms of digital space, the groups showed less interest, but would welcome an IT suite and text books on an app.

3. Life Skills / Careers

Both the male and female groups were keen to get more guidance for the transition into adulthood. The males stressed their need to identify employment opportunities, apprenticeships and volunteering. Across both groups volunteering, was seen as a way for the young people to further themselves.

The female group stated that they are interested in hearing from motivational speakers. They brainstormed and suggested: “An athlete or a doctor or a writer, someone who will inspire the kids”; “A

talk from a teacher”; “Older people with life experience” and workshops on adult life: “How to pay the rent” and “How to live alone”.

There was consensus in the consultation that the young people would like to know their rights and the law when it comes to crime, especially in the eventuality of a false accusation.

Other things that were identified as necessary/desirable were:

- A youth club
- First aid training (“but in a positive way, not to help knife crime victims”)
- Art/Painting classes
- Drama classes
- A personal statement workshop for Year 12 and 13 students
- “I’d like to talk to homeless people and find out their story”
- Information sessions on alternative career options, such as journalism and forensic investigation
- The female group identified The Emotional Health and Wellbeing session held at Baraka over the summer - “mental health is a taboo subject in the Somali community” - and said they would like to continue the sessions as a regular thing.

“You need your own space...to clear your mind”

4. Travel

All the young people attending the consultations were enthusiastic about travel and had suggestions to make.

The young people explained that travel with their families is not often possible: “funds is the issue”.

They want “to see stuff you don’t normally see, communicate with people you wouldn’t normally meet,” “go to different places every year” and “see more greenery”.

They would also like “a Baraka youth bus that is ready all the time”.

Some of the young women referred to Baraka’s trip to Sweden in 2012. One said: “I want another Sweden trip”. They also expressed the wish to visit other countries, including the USA; Spain (“their education system is interesting”); Italy (“The art, architecture, buildings”) and Holland.

Some of the young men agreed that “football trips to stadiums, like in Liverpool and Manchester” would be interesting.

Several the young people had heard about a place in Wales where Somalia has been recreated and you can visit to sample traditional Somali life and expressed an interest in visiting.

5. The Future

The young people displayed some anxiety about their futures and the challenges of living in London: “It’s kind of scary, people can go to rock bottom, living on the street”

Regarding money, all of the young people saw it as something that requires a lot of maturity: “A lot of it is helping your family. You want to give it to them when you have it”; “You have to be very careful”; “First I will meet my responsibilities. Second, I’ll give some to my Mum and Dad. Third I’d use it for travel. I wouldn’t spend it on clothes”.

They showed awareness of the difficulties of the property market: “property prices are a joke”, “you have to move out of London to buy anywhere”.

The young people who participated in the consultation were:

Yahya Ali, Hamsa Abdullahi, Hamsah Shidan, Ibrahim Abdullahi, Ibtisam Muhamud, Maryama Nur, Samira Mohamed, Samira Tahlil, Sharifa Nur, Muna Nur, Faisa Nur, Fatima Mohamed, Yasin Mohamed, Abdulshukur Dulae

¹ All statistics in this section are from *After Grenfell. Housing and Inequality in Kensington and Chelsea: “The most unequal borough in Britain”* by Emma Dent Coad, 2017