

Islington Local Wellbeing Networks End of Year 2 Report



Our Vision

We are a collaborative network which shares resources to amplify the voice of residents and unlock their power to respond to community needs through collective action.

Our Missions

- 1. Children and young people feeling safe in their community:** Having a sense of safety in the community sets the foundation for Children and young people to take active roles in leading change throughout the Borough.
- 2. Taking action against inequality and the harm it causes:** By working with and empowering residents to address the issues they identify as being important to them.
- 3. Residents feeling safe in the community:** knowing their voices are important builds confidence and empowers residents to contribute to resolving community issues.
- 4. Health and wellbeing** are essential to individual and community resilience and thriving.
- 5. The environment:** Residents bringing to life local public spaces as they actively make Islington's neighbourhoods the greenest and most sustainable they can be.

Voluntary**Action**Islington



Supporting long-term sustainable change

This end of year 2 report summarises the Local Wellbeing Networks (“LWNs”) achievements over the period September 2022-September 2023. It serves as a critical tool for assessing progress, making informed decisions, and setting goals for the upcoming year.

Table of Contents:

- 1) Introduction – Page 2
- 2) Delivery Model for the ‘Local Wellbeing Networks’ – Page 3
- 3) How the Local Wellbeing Networks work to address community concerns – Page 4
 - a) Community Building
 - b) Collective impact
 - c) Shared Measurement Systems
 - d) Mutually Reinforcing Activities
 - e) Continuous Communication
- 4) Year in Review – Page 6
- 5) Community Engagements – Page 7
 - a) 22 February 2023 - Local Wellbeing Networks Event
 - b) May 2023 - Local Wellbeing Networks Priorities
 - c) June 2023 – Local Wellbeing Networks Vision/Vivid Vision
 - d) 20 July 2023 - Local Wellbeing Networks Summer Event
 - e) Local Wellbeing Network Joint Meeting 7 September 2023 – i) The structure of future Local Wellbeing Network meetings ii) Launch of the Local Wellbeing Networks Website iii) The Process for Local Wellbeing Networks Listening and Social Action Campaigns
- 6) The Process for Local Wellbeing Networks Listening and Social Action Campaigns – Page 13
 - a) Why Listening Is Important
 - b) The Local Wellbeing Networks Framework for organising effective Listening and Social Action Campaigns
 - c) Social Action and the Participatory Appraisal Approach
 - d) The Local Wellbeing Networks “13 Steps to Organising a Listening and Social Action Campaign”
 - e) When will the Listening and Social Action Campaign start?
 - f) Considerations
- 7) The year ahead future goals and objectives – Page 18
- 8) Measuring Success – Page 19
 - a) Ways to measure impact
 - b) Cost benefit
- 9) Sustainability and areas for development – Page 21

1. Introduction

As part of Islington Council’s ‘Fairer Together’ initiative (See [A strategy for early intervention and prevention in Islington](#), Voluntary Action Islington and Octopus Community Networks came together to establish Local Wellbeing Networks throughout the borough.

The LWNs were born out of:

- A) The council’s ambition to increase collaboration between services and
- B) To provide a platform for community voice.

See [Fairer Together Local Wellbeing Networks](#), [Islington Together for a More Equal Future](#) and, [Islington Together 2030](#),

Islington Council have also launched the Islington Promise, which outlines what residents can expect from the council and what it will ask in return, to work together for a more equal borough. There will be an opportunity for the community to share their promise or what they can do to help create a more equal Islington on [Let's Talk Islington](#), the Council's new consultation and engagement site.

The Networks consist of statutory service providers, charities, community groups and residents, all of whom have committed to taking a more active role in their local community by sharing best practice, exploring emerging trends, discussing concerns and, sharing ideas on how best to support residents work together to achieve positive social change by collaborating on initiatives and programs that address the social, emotional, and physical well-being of individuals and communities (see Page 17 of [Islington Together 2030 Plan](#)).

Due to the nature of the Fairer Together partnership rooting in local connectivity, the Local Wellbeing Networks have the potential to play a critical role in the overall success of the initiative. Building skills (Community Change-Makers), strengthening relationships (locality-based meetings) and connecting with the community (Community Organisers).

Islington is a vibrant and diverse borough with a good supply of local jobs, access to the wider London economy, a rich cultural heritage, and some of the highest property prices in the country. However, many Islington families are living in poverty.

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019, ranked Islington as the 53rd most deprived local authority area in England (out of 317 local authorities) and 6th most deprived local authority in London. It has the 10th highest level of income deprivation affecting children, and 4th highest in England for income deprivation affecting older people. Please also see [State of Equalities annual report 2022 \(islington.gov.uk\)](#).

The complete IMD dataset and summary reports can be [found on the Government's website](#).

Three Local Wellbeing Networks have been established in the borough (North, Central and South) meeting bi-monthly (the meetings are hosted by a rotating Network member). The **Council's new Strategic Plan recognises the critical value of this work** and seeks to put communities at the heart of its ambition for a more equal future for Islington. In order to transform outcomes for some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised communities, the Council recognises the need for a different relationship. One that involves working alongside, learning from and understanding the communities they serve and putting them in the driving seat in terms of delivering change.

The Council wants residents to know that their voice matters and that they are able to influence change. It is committed to align investment to local priorities, enabling bottom up change from those who know best and supporting residents and VCFS groups to lead change through effective community investment.

2. Delivery Model for the 'Local Wellbeing Networks'

Based on the Social Change Agency [Network Building Canvas](#) which is a practical guide for setting up a successful peer network or getting an existing one to flourish.

Each Local Wellbeing Network will be taken through the same Network Building Canvas experience. Each Network is, and should be allowed, to develop at their own pace.



Network Building Canvas steps:

- Connect.
- Co-deliver.
- Facilitate Community Voice.
- Shaping vision and priorities by the people who live and work in the community.
- Building on local knowledge, strengths and experience.
- Intentional cross-sector collaboration.
- Communities drive their own solutions with local leadership at the centre, and
- Learning by doing.

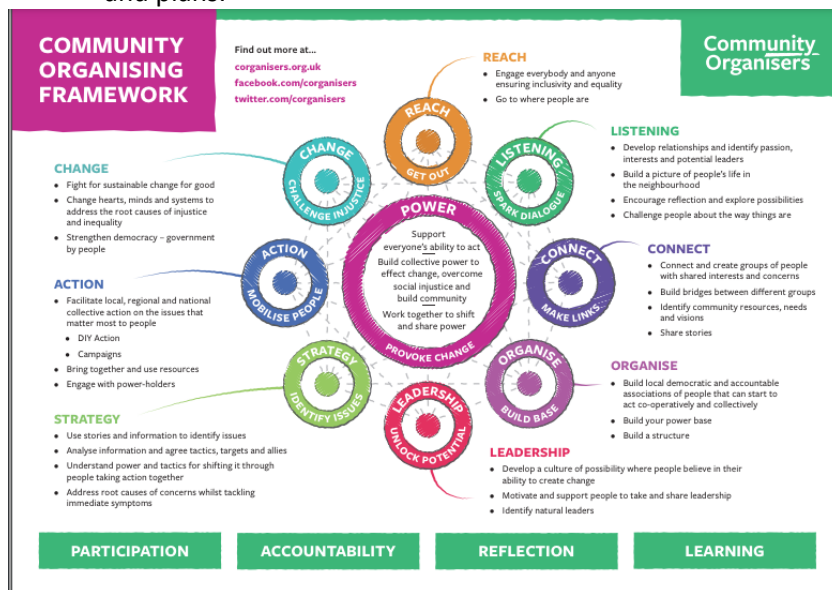
Learning exchanges across the three locality areas will be facilitated through **Action Learning Sets**.

3. How the Local Wellbeing Networks work to address community concerns

Community Building

The LWNs aim to make a difference to outcomes for residents by:

- Harnessing the power of local residents and communities to find solutions to local issues. The Local Wellbeing Networks will ensure residents views are used to inform their strategies and plans.



The Local Wellbeing Networks will:

- Through collaboration provide effective support to local residents.
- Where appropriate change ways of working to improve and strengthen support to residents.
- Ensure that Local Wellbeing Networks strategies are informed by evidence.

Collective impact

The collective impact approach to solving societal problems is based on the idea that no organisation acting alone can solve complex issues. Alongside the Social Change Agency Network Building Framework we are adapting the five conditions of collective success first set out in the [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#) (See below for our revised four conditions). At the heart of the Local

Wellbeing Networks model is engagement with, and the involvement of local residents whose needs and voices will help guide the work.

This requires the commitment to reach all residents, including those who do not engage with services and support, whose voices are seldom heard. We are creating a community wide movement empowered to support local residents. Working closely with residents is critical to achieving long term and sustainable change. This means building residents wellbeing, confidence, knowledge, and skills. The Local Wellbeing Networks are recruiting and training local residents and others from the community as Community Organisers to be our “Community Change Makers”.

The Local Wellbeing Networks are the backbone support organisation that will provide the capacity and skills to allow diverse stakeholders to collaborate.

The Local Wellbeing Networks help local stakeholders use and share data to better understand local needs and to create common strategies. The Local Wellbeing Networks work with partners to improve the quality, use, and sharing of data and the development of shared measurement systems. This will inform a “test, learn and refine” approach, allowing the Local Wellbeing Networks to evaluate what works and what does not work, and help create a long-term legacy of effective, data-informed practice. The Local Wellbeing Networks will build on knowledge and good practice from other initiatives and programmes, including [Let's Talk Islington](#)

The Revised Four Conditions of Collective Success

Common Agenda

Collective impact requires all participants to have a shared vision for change, one that includes a common understanding of the problem(s) and a joint approach to solving it/them through agreed actions.

Shared Measurement Systems

Developing a shared measurement system is essential to collective impact. Agreement on a common agenda is illusory without agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported. Collecting data and measuring the results consistently on a short list of indicators at the community level and across all participating organisations not only ensures that all efforts remain aligned, it also enables the participants to hold each other accountable and learn from each other.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Collective impact initiatives depend on a diverse group of stakeholders working together, not by requiring that all participants do the same thing, but by encouraging each participant to undertake the specific set of activities at which it excels in a way that supports and is coordinated with the actions of others. Each stakeholders efforts must fit into an overarching plan if their combined efforts are to succeed. The multiple causes of social problems, and the components of their solutions, are interdependent. They cannot be addressed by uncoordinated actions among isolated organisations.

Continuous Communication

Developing trust is a monumental challenge. Participants need time to build up enough experience with each other to recognise and appreciate the common motivation behind their different efforts. They need time to see that their own interests will be treated fairly, and that decisions will be made on the basis of objective evidence and the best possible solution to the problem, not to favour the priorities of one organisation over another. Even the process of creating a common vocabulary takes time, and it is an essential prerequisite to developing shared measurement systems.

4. Year in Review

The past year has been marked by significant progress in our pursuit of the vision. Here are the key highlights:

Date	Event Detail
W/b 6 June 2022:	LWNs meetings across all three localities, one per locality (N=28, C=11, S=12).
W/b 4 July 2022:	LWNs meetings across all three localities, one per locality (N=26, C=34, S=19).
W/b 12 September 2022	LWNs meetings across all three localities, one per locality (N=31, C=25, S=18).
14 September 2022	Community Organising - Workshop #5
6 October 2022	Fairer Together collaborative programme working group.
W/B 17 October 2022	LWNs meetings across all three localities, one per locality (N=14, C=10, S=11).
W/B 21 November 2023	LWNs meetings across all three localities, one per locality (N=12, C=12, S=12).
22 February 2023	Local Wellbeing Networks joint event bringing together all three networks at the Highbury Roundhouse. 40 organisations and local residents attended.
March 2023 to date	Islington's representative at the Greater London Authority - Community Resilience/Building Resilience Together Training Workshops.
20 March 2023 onward	Attending Local Leadership Meetings as and when they take place.
18 April 2023	Attending Fairer Together Leadership Teams Workshop.
19 April 2023	In conjunction with Marys YC First Aid training provided to six small community groups.
W/b 24 April 2023	LWNs meetings across all three localities, one per locality (N=10, C=6, S=8).
W/b 22 May 2023	LWNs meetings across all three localities, one per locality (N=24, C=17, S=17).
W/b 19 June 2023	LWNs meetings across all three localities, one per locality (N=16, C=11, S=15).
5 July	Online Community Organiser Training – 10 people trained.
13 July	In person Community Organiser Training – 12 People trained.

20 July 2023	Local Wellbeing Networks Summer Event held at Highbury Roundhouse – Launch of Listening and Social Action Campaign. 60+ organisations and local residents attended. Details of keynote speakers and Community Change makers who spoke at the event are below.
22 August 2023	In person Community Organiser Training – 16 people trained.
7 September 2023	Local Wellbeing Networks Review Meeting – All three LWNs meeting to share progress and learning. 60+ attendees (including local residents).
Ongoing	Forging close working relationships with the Friends of Andover Estate, Brighter Lives Health Exchange Practitioners Forum, Help on Your Doorstep, Islington Faiths Forum, Islington Green Group, Borough Resilience Forum, Healthwatch Islington, Public Health Islington

5. Community Engagement

22 February 2023 - Local Wellbeing Networks Event

The event focused on:

1. Reflecting on Year 1 of the Local Wellbeing Networks.
2. Celebrate the work of our amazing Change Makers/Community Organisers.
3. Devise the Year 2 programme - Including a plan for implementing Listening Campaigns across the networks for user groups/residents.

May 2023 - Local Wellbeing Networks Priorities

North Locality

1. Listening and Social Action Campaign: To listen to and engage the community and gauge its needs.
2. Promoting the Octopus Community Networking tool as a way of gathering information on which organisations are in the borough.
3. The group are keen to explore how we can support each other as organisations e.g. resources and assets.

Central Locality

1. Listening and Social Action Campaign to listen to and engage the community and gauge its needs.
2. Holding a LWN event in June to highlight the work of the Networks and promote their priorities.

South Locality

1. Listening and Social Action Campaign to listen to and engage the community and gauge its needs.
2. Identifying and mapping green spaces in the locality which are accessible to the public and spaces which have the potential to become green spaces the public can have access to.

June 2023 – Local Wellbeing Networks Vision

Our Vision

“We are a collaborative network which shares resources to amplify the voice of residents and unlock their power to respond to community needs through collective action”.

Vivid Vision

In the year 2025, our Local Wellbeing Networks stand as thriving hubs of holistic health, community connection and empowerment, and personal growth. As you step into any Local Wellbeing Network event you are immediately welcomed into a community which is diverse, respectful, collaborative and, sustainable. The tone is immediately set for the transformative experiences that lie ahead.

CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Our Local Wellbeing Networks foster genuine connections. As you engage with members, you will feel the sincere passion and enthusiasm of individuals who are dedicated to sharing resources, information, and best practice to support the empowerment of our communities.

IMPACTFUL EDUCATION

Our Networks are knowledge hubs featuring regular workshops, and talks. We are committed to empowering our communities with the tools and insights needed to make informed decisions about their own health and wellbeing.

LISTENING AND SOCIAL ACTION CAMPAIGN

Through our Listening Campaigns the Local Wellbeing Networks are gaining a better understanding of the perspectives, concerns, needs, and opinions of our communities. Which then informs our decision-making, communication strategies and, actions. The narratives obtained from the Listening Campaigns inform the development of Local Action Groups based on residents being supported to create their own solutions to address local issues. Our Social Action Campaigns are coordinated efforts aimed at promoting specific social and political causes, raising awareness about issues and, encouraging individuals to take specific actions to create positive change within their community or society as a whole. The effectiveness of our Social Action Campaigns can be measured by increased public awareness, policy changes, behaviour modifications, and shifts in public perception related to the targeted issues.

INSPIRING TRANSFORMATION

Every individual who walks into a Local Wellbeing Network gathering is on a unique journey. Our Local Wellbeing Networks are places where transformations happen daily, leading to lives lived to their fullest potential.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

As stewards of our local

environment, we are committed to sustainable practices. From energy-efficient infrastructure to eco-friendly practices. We are doing our part to care for our planet as we care for ourselves.

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

We have cultivated strong partnerships with the Local Authority, VCFS (Voluntary, Community and, Faith Sector), local healthcare providers, youth providers, schools, and businesses to create a united front in promoting community wellbeing. Together, we are forging a culture of health and wellbeing consciousness that ripples across the community.

With a vibrant energy that radiates throughout the spaces we occupy and a collective commitment to wellbeing, our Local Wellbeing Networks are a testament to the power of vision, community, and personal growth.

20 July 2023 - Local Wellbeing Networks Summer Event

Keynote speakers at the July Summer event

Nadeem Murtuja – Interim Corporate Director, Community Engagement and Wellbeing

Nadeem's career that spans more than 25 years in directorship roles cutting across local government, NHS and in the charity sector.

Leading and delivering a range of projects including Grenfell, Mid-Suffolks' Cost of Living Plan, Mental Health, response to the MacPherson report.

Esther Foreman - Chief Executive officer – Social Change Agency

Esther has spent over 20 years working in the not for profit, social enterprise and business sectors, running award-winning campaigns, supporting enterprise and building teams. She founded the Social Change Agency in 2013.

NICK GARDHAM - Chief Executive Officer – Community Organisers and Director of the European Community Organisers Network

Nick works as an advisor to various Government Departments and national community sector bodies on citizen participation and community organising and serves on a number of committees in an advisory capacity supporting the development of community policy and programmes.

Community Change Makers speaking at the July Summer event



Patrick Penny-Annang is 33 and is an Engagement & Communications Manager who has previously spoken at Housing conferences and panels across the UK & Ireland on Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Mental Health.

He spoke to his experience volunteering in Islington and his appreciation for VAI whilst setting out his takeaways from the Community Organising training and how he has used the training so far.

“I lived in Barnsbury Estate for most of my life and still live close to the Estate. I am proud to be born and raised in Barnsbury and love to see the

community prosper. In the last year, I moved into a manager role and want to avoid mistakes made in the past and focus on empowering the community to solve their community issues. In addition, help me to achieve a personal goal to encourage the discussion of mental health in men, especially within the black community”.



Anna Nije works mainly with the African and Caribbean diaspora in North London, offering families, youth and children the opportunity to engage in creative activities that celebrate African culture, craft and creativity. She is passionate about helping and connecting her community and fostering a sense of belonging. She introduced her organisation “Go Africa Community Hub CIC (GACH)” and it’s purpose in the Islington Community, before talking about her Community Change Maker experience and how this helped empower GACH.

“I feel that I need the necessary skills to be a better leader and for community engagement development. I am quite shy about meeting new people because of my experience but passionate about supporting the community I serve and work with. However, in order to really serve them better and advocate for their equal opportunities, I need the right skills and feel that

this platform is the perfect timing”.

“I want to use the example of community centres and how they are accessible to all, and how they provide opportunities for people to access a variety of opportunities. I use the example of Hilldrop Community Centre which is on my road. This weekend there is a theatre performance – Midsummer Night’s dream, offering people who would not normally be able to go to the theatre an opportunity to enjoy something different in their community. Also, there is a food project, after-school project, and activities for disabled people, and for those from different communities. Within this context, what I am fearful of or concerned about is that these valuable and valued organisations are underfunded and the local grants funds are not sufficient. This is coupled with the fact that securing funding is becoming more competitive.

“In Islington, we do lots of things together, there’s lots of networks and partnerships and community organisations and groups. We have community centres, not all boroughs have these – these are places where I can go once or twice a week. I feel happy coming to the community centre. I also would like to say that it’s nice living in a place where the streets are clean. What concerns me, is that all the public toilets are closed – you can go in a pub, but then you are asked to buy a pint. I also don’t understand why so much money is being spent on making cycle routes. I think that this has results in a problem about accessibility, shared space, more congestion.”



Rona Topaz volunteers as a choir leader at Brickworks Community Centre. She is mobility impaired herself volunteering for a user-led charity supporting deaf and disabled people and their carers.

She spoke eloquently about her Community Organising training. Focusing on how she has made use of the techniques and methodology. She highlighted the difference between organising for and organising with the community. She finished by mentioning a recent success story with a project she was involved in earlier this year.

“I currently live and work in the borough and I see a lot of negativity, when in fact Islington Council are one of the most forward thinking and progressive of all London boroughs, constantly seeking methods of improving people’s lives, going against the grain of central government. As an activist by profession, I would like to help facilitate community change for the better”.

“We need to acknowledge that residents exist! We should be proud of what we do here in Islington, but still more has to be done in recognition of the fact that often people who live here, from all walks of life, are part of the solution.”

“I am concerned about the potential loss of the grass-roots focus of political parties.”



“What makes me happy is that we can see that barriers are being broken, equality is visible, and events such as the one today, is about everyone coming together regardless of demographics, diversity and we are seen as one.”

“I’m concerned about how events such as theme might be just occasional and a place where their prejudices are forgotten for a while, but after the event, do you go back to your/our bias. So, we have

to ask ... how do we build upon what we see? We need more regular events such as this to make this kind of environment and the work we do together in these spaces, the norm."

"Islington has a wide range of foodbanks, food cooperatives, and financial support for families/households to get food in an emergency, however, this is not sustainable in the long term. It is good that Islington has these facilities available, but we need to look more carefully and take action to tackle the root cause."

Local Wellbeing Network Joint Meeting 7 September 2023

Each Locality discussing and agreeing the first steps in their Listening and Social Action campaign.

North Local Wellbeing Network

Option 1

- To do a social listening project based on Andover Estate.
- This would involve liaising with the community centre and other organisations that play an active role providing support within the estate to identify residents who might be 'key influencers' that we could recruit to implement the campaign. Organisations - e.g. Andover Community Centre, Residents Tenants Association, Go Africa, might know of residents who we could approach.
- To put together questions to ask a group of residents what issues they experience/rank the issues by importance, and their desire to be involved in setting up an initiative to make changes happen, e.g. Anti-social behaviour.
- To liaise with key influencers to recruit residents to do a door-knocking campaign.
- To support key influencers to set up a meeting with relevant stakeholders to help with e.g. anti-social behaviour and to promote the meeting.
- To build on the group to enable it to overcome other issues / set up community projects within the estate.



Option 2

To promote services and activities available within the local area, either by setting up a stall somewhere like Archway market or to have another information stall at other community events organised by e.g. the council, that are already taking place.

Central Local Wellbeing Network

- Conversation centred around a desire to better understand what residents identify as 'issues' that negatively impact their wellbeing.
- Wide ranging discussion that touched on BIG issues including knife crime and poverty. The latter being exemplified through people's inability to purchase toilet paper!
- The geographical areas covered by participants were the north-central part of the borough – Holloway and New River.
- Three of the organisations represented connect

directly with local residents via their hubs: Holloway Neighbourhood Group, Bright Futures and Elizabeth House.

- There is a desire to find an engaging issue that connects us all as humans.

South Local Wellbeing Network

- Discussion among attendees centred around clarifying purpose and aims for the meetings going forward.
- The importance of having opportunities to meet and network with a view to increasing collaborative working across local organisations and sharing resources for the benefit of residents.
- ‘Listen to each other’, ‘Share knowledge/insights’, ‘Build on the good’ ‘Avoid overlaps’ ‘Identify barriers/gaps’.
- Utilising the Finsbury library and Peel Centre as a point of contact/info for organisations to coordinate integrated responses to local need.
- Considering existing initiatives in engaging residents - Help on your doorstep – ‘Door knocking’ regularly visiting estates with representatives from Islington services (with the addition of street properties to be added to this).
- ‘Cost of living’ events, local celebratory events/festivals – to maximise reach and visibility.
- Greater links between statutory services – particularly health, GP practices and Mental health team – Healthwatch has partnerships with both.
- Organisations represented and interested in more opportunities for co-production and asset building supported through extended networking time at meetings.

The structure of future Local Wellbeing Network meetings

Having monthly meetings may not be the best use of resources. Therefore going forward:

- The Local Wellbeing Network meetings will no longer All fall within the same week of the month. There will be one per week, spread over three weeks.
- The meetings will be convened bi-monthly.
- The Local Wellbeing Network meetings will be themed – With a panel/presentations
- Subgroups will be set up which will provide updates on accomplishments at each bi-monthly Local Wellbeing Network meeting.
- Half yearly review events will be held – Providing the opportunity for all three networks to come together and share learning, accomplishments etc.
- Community Organisers will be encouraged and supported to co-chair Local Wellbeing Network meetings.

Launch of the Local Wellbeing Networks Website

localwellbeingnetworks.org

6. The Process for Local Wellbeing Networks Listening and Social Action Campaigns

LISTEN – CONNECT – ORGANISE - EMPOWER

Why Listening Is Important

We listen for three things:

- What do people really care about?

- What do people want to do about it?
- And are they someone who is prepared to take the lead?

Listening is one of the fundamental components of the Community Organising Framework. It is not consultation, but it does give us valuable insight into our community. Through listening we find out about what is really going on beneath the surface. We hear powerful stories of people’s lives. We find out what people love about where they live and what they are angry about. We uncover real problems that need addressing and explore the possibilities for change. We find leaders and we challenge people.

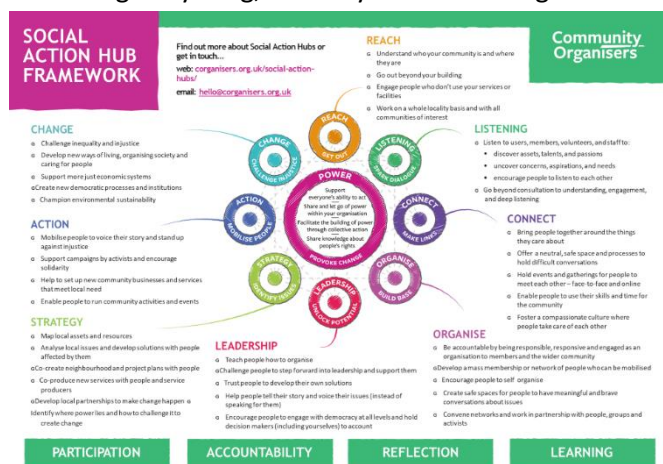
Connecting

As we listen we start to connect people together. We want people to start to listen to each other and so we create opportunities for that to happen. We invite people to meet up in small groups to talk about the things that matter to them. We ask them to tell their stories.

When people start to connect in this way they begin to come up with their own ideas for change. We then start to link up the groups and to bring them together, breaking down barriers and building bridges. We help people to have good conversations in which everyone has a chance to speak, to tell their stories and to put forward their ideas. We can’t agree on everything. So, we look for what we can agree on and what we can work on together to create change for good.

Organise

To really make change takes persistence and our people power. If enough people come together we can change anything, but they need to be organised and to work together well.



The belief in democracy is a belief in sharing power and that means working together in ways that are democratic and cooperative. By listening to our residents and reaching out and connecting with people we will grow enough people power to make a change. This is called **‘building a base’**. When the base is strong it can really push for change through the power of numbers. They can get things done themselves that need doing.

Empower

At the root of community organising is a deep understanding of power. The Local Wellbeing Networks work to empower residents. Power in this case is defined as “the ability to act”. Community organising provides the means for individuals and communities who feel powerless to collectively act. By learning what it means to be powerful and to act in solidarity with each other is the way that change happens. This is democracy in action.

The Local Wellbeing Networks Framework for organising effective Listening and Social Action Campaigns

What is a Listening Campaign?

A listening campaign is a focused effort to embed the community organising approach in identifying concerns and priorities in a specific place, organisation or, community of interest. It is accomplished through facilitated 1:1 listening conversations or small group meetings.

These meetings last for up to an hour. They are face-to-face, online or, by telephone conversations in which people share their own stories with the facilitator. They help those involved to better understand perspectives and experiences and gain a shared picture of life in the community. This approach can pick up on new trends as well as being invaluable as a crisis and issues management tool.

Define objectives

What are we really trying to do? And who are we really trying to reach? The depth to which this can be defined will set up the campaign with an appropriate degree of specificity. Knowing who and what are being listened for. Once the answers to these questions have been agreed, focused intelligence can be gathered and productive insights developed going forward.

Consistency

One of the biggest values of the intelligence that comes from social listening is that it is always on. You can continuously listen and, in turn, optimise your efforts. Listening for a moment in time, or for a campaign, gives you a singular snapshot, but it's only that. A conversation that is happening at a point in time. Our listening will be set up to constantly feeds into the campaign.

Multiple methods can be used to do this including:

- Searching specific keywords on social media to see how the public is referencing them
- Analysing data through email enquiries
- Using Google Trends for data on trends
- Conducting study groups

The Local Wellbeing Networks Listening and Social Action Campaigns will also closely follow the Participatory Appraisal approach. This approach prioritises the views and attitudes of local people, as experts in their own community.

What is a Social Action Campaign?

A vital aspect of continuing to engage and listen to underrepresented community groups and residents is finding out the issues they experience and how they are impacted by these experiences. We do this by listening carefully to ascertain what matters most to them and their role as authors of the solutions to these issues.

By 31 July 2024 we will listen to 500 people from underrepresented communities in Islington, developing our Local Wellbeing Networks and [Local Action Groups](#) across the borough. We will reach out and listen to those who are on the margins and underrepresented in decision making to develop a shared mandate(s) which we can collectively organise around.

The listening campaign will surface the stories and lived experience of underrepresented communities. Helping to identify common themes and wider issues that are concerning people. It will highlight issues for action or change on a local/hyper local level.

These stories will be used to inform the development of Local Action Groups and the Local Wellbeing Networks. Local Action Groups will advance the collective solidarity that people need to feel, to be able to act together in effecting change and engage with those in positions of power. Thereby,

ensuring the voices of those seldom heard can influence the policies and processes that affect their lives.

Social Action and the Participatory Appraisal Approach

The Participatory Approach is a methodology and set of techniques used in various fields, including community development, social research, and environmental planning. It is designed to engage community members and stakeholders in a collaborative and inclusive process to gather information, assess needs, and make decisions. The primary goal of participatory appraisal is to empower individuals and communities by giving them a voice in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Here are some key aspects and techniques associated with participatory appraisal:

1. **Community Involvement:** Participatory appraisal emphasises the active involvement of community members and stakeholders throughout the process. It values local knowledge and perspectives, recognising that those who live in a particular community often have the most insight into its challenges and opportunities.
2. **Qualitative Data Gathering:** It relies heavily, though not exclusively, on qualitative research methods, such as interviews, and focus group discussions. These methods help gather rich and context-specific information. See [Share Success Stories](#)
3. **Data Analysis:** The data collected through participatory appraisal is typically analysed collaboratively with the community or stakeholders involved. This can lead to a shared understanding of issues and potential solutions.
4. **Empowerment:** By involving community members in decision-making and problem-solving processes, participatory appraisal aims to empower them to take control of their own development and make informed choices.
5. **Action Planning:** Participatory appraisal identifies community needs and priorities. This information is then used to develop Local Action Groups and the Local Wellbeing Networks Action Plans, projects, or policies that address these issues in a way that is relevant to the community.

The approach/model we are developing is:

- Designed to enable local people to identify solutions to issues facing the community.
- It provides a mechanism for residents/the community to establish positive relationships with key service providers.
- It allows residents/the community to remain actively involved in the planning, delivery and monitoring of these solutions. See [VSO Facilitator Guide to Participatory Approaches](#)

The Local Wellbeing Networks "13 Steps to Organising a Listening and Social Action Campaign"

Step 1 – Build a listening team and identify your community.

Step 2 – Create a List of questions to gather information.

Step 3 – Choose Engagement Methods.

Step 4 – Consider Safety.

Step 5 – Practice with "Warm' Contacts".

Step 6 – Do It!

Step 7 – Record Responses.

Step 8 – Collect contact details.

Step 9 – Collaborative data analysis.

Step 10 – Issue Prioritisation – E.g. how will the community be mobilised around the issues?

Step 11 – Action Planning – See * below.

Step 12 – Keep Listening and keep analysing .

Step 13 – Reporting and dissemination.

*Action planning

- Agree who will do what by when.
- Think “How will the community be mobilised around the issue(s).
- What resources will be needed?
- When and where will the Local Action Group next meet for updates on the Action Plan?
- At each meeting of the Local Action Group a person is nominated to write up the notes and circulate them to the group.

When will the Listening and Social Action Campaign start?

From July 2023 experienced Community Organisers, local leaders, and volunteers all of whom have the requisite skills to listen successfully within their community will be upskilled in listening skills, data protection and safeguarding. Once the participants feel confident in the listening process they will reach out and connect to those communities whose voices are seldom heard. Organisation will then take place around the issues that emerge. Empowering people to continue working on these issues at a local/hyper local level.

Considerations

The Local Wellbeing Networks Listening and Social Action Campaigns have the potential to shake up local democracy in Islington through the development of Local Action Groups which can harness the creative energy and talent of Islington to create a collective decision-making space that people will actually enjoy being part of.

The whole idea of the Community Organisers programme is to enable a shift away from dependency on old politics with service providers towards one where residents, people who live in communities, have agency to act because they are organised effectively, and so are able to engage in the democratic process effectively. The Local Wellbeing Networks and Local Action Groups are mechanisms through which this shift can take place.

The Local Action Groups are intended to be a space where people from the local community will come together to provide a forum to scrutinise local service providers. Perhaps eventually making decisions on the allocation of grant funding for the local area.

The development of the Local Action Groups will be steered by a core team of Community Organisers and Community Change Makers, who are involved in the recruiting and training of local people. They will encourage residents to take part in the [Introduction to Community Organising](#) one day training course which will provide them with the initial skills needed to become Community Organisers.

Important decisions affecting their community, their children, their schools, the services they use and their quality of life generally shouldn't just be left to be made by officials who have a limited view of what it's like to actually live their lives.



7. The year ahead future goals and objectives

Whilst some of the below builds on the foundational achievements already accomplished, more specific outcomes have been identified by incorporating the lessons learned and success of the previous twelve months of operation, whilst also including structural synergies within Fairer Together and Islington's 2030 Plan:

- Bi-monthly Local Wellbeing Network meetings to improve knowledge and understanding of the range of local services available to residents, encouraging more signposting, cross referrals and partnership working within the VCFS and cross sector.
- Foster equity in representation within the Local Wellbeing Networks by facilitating the participation of small and grassroots groups/organisations that are closely connected to the communities that they serve and are less heard throughout the system. This will align with the development of the VCFS Equalities Alliance – providing a platform into the Fairer Together Partnership.
- Focus on the engagement of other organisations that are more closely connected to the communities that they serve, by aligning the work they do with the development of the Local Wellbeing Networks.
- Further development of the Local Wellbeing Networks website hosting community development resources, training and development opportunities and information about local listening and social action campaigns and how to get involved.
- Funding opportunities – sharing information on small grants available to residents/small community organisations and, larger grants for VCFS.

- Community organising training for local residents, staff and volunteers who want to set up, or join existing listening and social action campaigns which highlight and address local issues. Voluntary Action Islington will provide ongoing 1:1 and group support opportunities.
- Octopus Community Network will, as a Community Organisers [Affiliated Training Provider](#), support the programme by designing and delivering an on-going programme of Community Organiser training that is focused on the engagement of residents.
- Capacity building support for hyperlocal and lived experience groups.
- A vehicle for community research and community development initiatives that can be grant funded or commissioned by statutory partners.
- Network building training for local residents, staff and volunteers who want to take a more leadership role through the Change Makers programme.
- Work more closely with the Islington Borough Resilience Forum – providing VCFS staff, volunteers and local residents with community resilience and emergency planning exercises. knowledge and resources to help themselves and their communities in an emergency.
- Work more closely with place-based infrastructure developed by Islington Council such as the Local Leadership Teams and the Access Hubs.
- Ongoing synergy and information sharing between local authority and VCFS initiatives (Let's Talk Islington, Coproduction Strategy Group, Tackling Inequality Taskforce, Fairer Together Engagement Group, Young Islington Network, Social Prescribing Link Workers etc.)
- Facilitate briefings and workshops where local data, insight and research can be shared between the VCFS and Islington Council, Public Health, and other key partners, such as the London Metropolitan University, which can also act as a catalyst for more joint working.
- Build Network connections by engaging the Local Wellbeing Networks in the Octopus Network Connections Map.
- Develop outcomes, evaluation and monitoring plans for each of the three Localities
- Regular Impact Reports detailing number and type of attendees at events, engaged organisations/residents, community organisers/change-makers and tangible actions/outcomes and local intelligence.
- Half yearly review meetings between North, Central and South Local Wellbeing Networks to identify learning, patterns, trends, differences etc.
- Senior representatives from Voluntary Action Islington and Octopus Community Network will continue to advocate the development of the Local Wellbeing Networks at a strategic level, will continue to work with key stakeholders on 'joining the dots' and exploring how the Networks can be developed as a trusted local partner for commissioners and funders. Further, will collaborate on exploring and taking forward project proposals to local, pan-London and national funders to ensure the Local Wellbeing Networks have the resources to be developed to their full potential, and have the best chance of being sustainable.

8. Measuring Success



Success for the Local Wellbeing Networks will be measured by assessing the improvement in working with communities where there is distrust between residents and those are perceived as being in positions of power, and between stakeholders. Initial measures of progress will include levels of resident engagement and increased resident wellbeing as well as changes in attitudes and perceptions in the wider community. We are as interested in making improvements in the way people work (system change) as we are seeking to make a long term and sustainable differences for residents.

We will develop a framework which will provide local communities with practices and tools to work together, that are easy to navigate, cost-effective, and supported by the Local Wellbeing Networks. Putting residents at the heart of the Local Wellbeing Networks (building their knowledge, skills, and confidence to support themselves and each other) is key to sustainability. We aim to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of preventative support provided by the Community Change Makers, compared to the significant costs of late intervention.

The Local Wellbeing Networks are committed to:

- The development of outcomes, evaluation and monitoring plans for each of the three Localities. This will include how to turn data into actionable insight to help improve outcomes.
- Effective resident led evaluation to avoid the pitfalls of tokenism.
- Working toward achieving equitable and anti-racist evaluation.
- Putting a monetary value on the impact of the work within the community Insights by for example making more of the data in early intervention work.
- Capturing the outcomes in community work and highlighting the limitations of formal evaluation.
- Using storytelling to measure impact - [Share Success Stories](#)
- Website hits.

Ways to measure impact

The Local Wellbeing Networks are currently exploring the use of:

Wellbeing Ranking

Wellbeing ranking refers to the process of evaluating and comparing the overall well-being or quality of life of individuals, communities, regions, or countries based on various indicators and criteria.

Wellbeing rankings typically consider a wide range of factors that contribute to a persons or a communities overall quality of life, such as:

1. **Economic Factors:** This includes income levels, employment rates, and access to economic opportunities.
2. **Healthcare:** Measures related to healthcare include access to healthcare services, life expectancy, and overall health outcomes.
3. **Education:** Educational factors consider access to quality education, literacy rates, and educational attainment.
4. **Environmental Quality:** Environmental factors may include air and water quality, access to green spaces, and environmental sustainability.
5. **Social and Community Well-Being:** This can include factors like social support systems, community engagement, and social cohesion.
6. **Safety and Security:** Measures of safety include crime rates, personal safety, and access to a secure living environment.
7. **Happiness and Life Satisfaction:** Subjective well-being indicators, such as happiness surveys and life satisfaction assessments, are increasingly considered in well-being rankings.
8. **Access to Basic Needs:** Access to basic needs like food, clean water, and housing are fundamental to well-being.
9. **Inequality and Equity:** Well-being rankings may also take into account income inequality and disparities in access to resources and opportunities.
10. **Cultural and Recreational Opportunities:** Access to cultural and recreational activities can contribute to a higher quality of life.

NHS:

[5 steps to mental wellbeing - NHS](#)

1. Connect with other people.
2. Be physically active.
3. Learn new skills.
4. Give to others.
5. Pay attention to the current moment – Mindfulness.

Also see: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/9007/tools-for-measuring-changes-in-mental-health.pdf>

Cost benefit:

- The Local Wellbeing Networks prevent residents from immediately accessing statutory services by facilitating community role in first response and local solutions.
- Social Action Groups do not have to meet organisations priorities/KPIs. They can stay focussed on the changes they want to see in their communities.
- Social Action Groups challenge fallacy of there being an “Homogenous resident voice”. They cause consideration to be taken of those who are not in the room and, raise questions like “How do we hear their voices”?
- Social Action Groups help individuals/communities with readiness for change so that they can eventually engage with the support they want.

9. Sustainability and areas for development

We have achieved a lot with one person working a 35 hours a week. To realise our ambition for 2023/24 the capacity of the role needs to be increased

There are a number of items which will need further development/support:

- Metrics for success – How do we measure success. This will dictate how to plan to deliver success.
- Developing Programme capacity i.e. who we have on board to support the expansion of the work already started e.g. Minute Taker, Research Assistant, Event Photographer/Videographer, Welcoming and Attendance Co-Ordinator etc.
- Having financial capacity for the Community Development Manager to be trained to deliver Community Organiser training and Action Learning Sets.
- Delivering a high profile summer event.
- Working with The Borough Resilience Forum to develop community resilience e.g. paper/live drills, The Local Wellbeing Networks being informing and being actively involved in Borough Resilience plans.
- Having/supporting a resident onto the Voluntary Action Islington Board of Trustees.
- Clearly defining the Local Wellbeing Networks relationship with the Locality Leadership Teams, and the wider Fairer Together initiative.
- Develop a strategy to engage young people in the work of the Local Wellbeing Networks.
- Develop a strategy document to develop partnerships with local businesses.



Investment in the Local Wellbeing Networks will provide a catalyst to unlock innovation and local power.

Islington Council are committed to aligning investment to local priorities, enabling bottom up change from those who know best and supporting residents and VCFS groups to lead change through effective community investment.

Cliff Joseph

Community Development Manager – Local Wellbeing Networks

[Voluntary Action Islington](https://www.voluntaryactionislington.org.uk)

200a Pentonville Road, London N1 9JP

M: 07354 460 061

E: cliff.joseph@vai.org.uk

W: www.vai.org.uk

Dated 6 November 2023