

# A Strong Community: Building Resilience in Newham

## Responses to the policy consultation

This paper summarises the responses to Newham's recent policy consultation on building resilience. The consultation was sent out to around 350 stakeholders including the private sector, third and voluntary sector and statutory bodies. There were 25 questions in the consultation, but respondents were also encouraged to give general comments and offer examples of work that build resilience.

Twenty five responses were received and the content of these responses is summarised below. The responses were on the whole supportive of the new resilience approach. Everyone that responded thought building resilience is a good idea and will help to improve the lives of our residents. Respondents were pleased that the Council is taking an open and transparent approach to developing its ideas and programme of work. There was, however, consensus that it will take time and effort to create a genuinely joined-up approach. Respondents in particular highlighted challenges for the council in organisational culture and the importance of emphasising the strengths of our community. Many of the respondents also highlighted the need to involve residents in a collaborative approach and to ensure residents understand that resilience is not about cutting services but improving lives. Finally, many of the responses offered examples of best practice work that is currently taking place in the borough and those we can examine in further detail. These range from time-banking to community hubs and community-based projects.

### Our Response

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We are grateful for the support and high quality of responses we received. We will consider many of the

examples and suggestions made as we take this work forward and develop our approach.

In particular, we do not underestimate the challenge we face in changing our organisation and thinking differently about working with our community. Our goal is that the resilience approach will be embedded across the council and that every member and officer will have a role in its successful implementation. In recognition of this we have begun a process of staff engagement to be led by senior managers. This will be as much about new mindsets and understanding of roles, as structures and formal working arrangements. This "culture" change for the council is clearly one of the biggest challenges we face in transforming the borough.

We agree with respondents that there are many strengths within our community. We recognise and value the talents, efforts and contribution that the vast majority of our residents make. An important part of delivering resilience is to build on these existing talents and help people utilise them for their own benefit and for the benefit of the community. Alongside tackling dependence, our aim is to offer more to all residents to ensure they have the tools that will improve their life chances. That goal will be at the heart of our approach going forward.

We recognise the importance of partnership, both with the private sector and the voluntary sector. We already have some very strong working relationships with our local partners, which we hope to develop. Working with our local partners will be vital if we are to build the resilience of our community and transform the life chances of our residents.

Our next steps are outlined at the end of this document.

## Summary of responses

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### **Is building resilience the right priority for Newham?**

The vast majority of respondents who answered this question said yes. It was generally accepted to be a difficult aim to achieve but the right one. Responses also emphasised the existing strengths of our community and the drive, energy and talents of our population. It is important this agenda supports those people as well as tackling issues of dependence

### **Is there any research evidence that programmes which aim to build resilience do not succeed?**

The vast majority of respondents did not know of any research that suggests programmes that aim to build resilience do not succeed. However, it was highlighted that there is a lack of research in this area.

### **How should we measure whether we are succeeding in building resilience?**

The majority of respondents said it is difficult to measure resilience because it encompasses many different factors. There were some suggestions of research that has tried to measure the impact of interventions of social and personal outcomes.

### **Which features of resilience do you think are most lacking in Newham, and how might they be strengthened?**

Responses to this question covered both features that are lacking organisationally and in the infrastructure as well as features of resilience our residents are lacking. There was a slight emphasis on early years development and engaging marginalised groups.

### **How can the Council work better with your organisation to build resilience?**

On the whole respondents were positive about creating better working relationships with the Council. Some responses pointed to joint-working arrangements that already exist and that the Council could join. There was

a general sense that the Council needs to recognise and value the work of the voluntary sector.

### **What do you think would be the most effective way of joining-up work on resilience across the borough?**

Many of the responses to this question focused on creating shared ways of working, from shared visions to shared budgets and outcomes. Many respondents also suggested having a standard measure of resilience to ensure all organisations are working to the same outcomes.

### **How should community groups play a role in building resilience?**

Many respondents to this question highlighted the unique connections community groups have to members of the community. Collaborative approaches were suggested, as well as using community groups to access residents rather than using them directly as representatives.

### **How can we best explain to residents what resilience means?**

The majority of respondents said the explanation to residents had to be done in simple and transparent ways. There was an emphasis in some responses on asking residents what they think resilience looks like. Some responses also highlighted the importance of separating communications of resilience from the financial situation and cuts.

### **Are the characteristics detailed in this consultation documents contributing to personal resilience the right ones?**

The vast majority of respondents agreed with the description of personal resilience. The emphasis was on softer skills and personal well-being that goes with personal resilience.

### **Are there additional characteristics that should be included?**

There were a number of useful additions to the description of personal resilience. Many of the

suggestions come from psychological theories of well-being and include features such as having hope and aspirations for the future and feeling valued. Some respondents commented on the importance of family relationships for resilience and suggested that this should have greater recognition in LB Newham's policy statements.

#### **How can personal resilience be developed?**

Generally there was again an emphasis on attitudes and outlook being more important than skills and even resources. There was also an emphasis on preventative work and work in the early years.

#### **Are the features of a resilient community described in this consultation the right ones?**

Generally respondents thought it was a sound description of community resilience. Many of the third and voluntary sector respondents highlighted this as a particularly important strand to build.

#### **Are there additional features of a resilient community?**

Many respondents highlighted engagement in the life of the community as an important feature, including being involved in community groups and volunteering and having a commitment to the local area.

#### **How can community resilience be strengthened?**

There were many suggestions for how community resilience can be strengthened. Some respondents emphasised the transience of the population as a particular problem in building community resilience. Using the knowledge and existing networks of residents was also highlighted.

#### **How can the Council work with the third and voluntary sectors to build resilient communities?**

On the whole respondents thought it a good idea to use the networks and on the ground experience these sectors have. It was generally accepted that some of the groups in these sectors work in informal ways.

#### **Are the features of economic and financial resilience described in the document the right ones?**

The vast majority of respondents agreed with the description of economic and financial resilience. There was a suggestion that further emphasis should be placed on the corporate social responsibility of businesses operating in the area.

#### **Are there additional requirements for financial and economic resilience?**

There were no specific responses to this question.

#### **How can we build financial and economic resilience?**

The majority of respondents agreed that good relationships with the private sector were key to building financial and economic resilience. The point was again made that getting residents ready for work involves adapting attitudes and outlook as well as skills and qualifications.

#### **What barriers do local residents face in finding work and/or advancing their careers?**

There was again an emphasis on soft skills, but also the need for entry-level or unskilled work to get people started. Some respondents mentioned that the growth of high level industries nationally, like finance, has excluded our residents from the labour market.

#### **To what extent are people in Newham financially vulnerable, and why?**

There was an overall sense that people in Newham were too often unemployed or in low-paid work which makes them financially vulnerable.

#### **What is holding back business growth in Newham, and what can be done about it?**

Responses to this question were relatively positive; there are opportunities and attractions in Newham that can be built upon.

## Next Steps

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This is the beginning of a journey for the London Borough of Newham and we will continue to share our ideas and engage with local partners as we progress. In the immediate future we are planning:

- > **A programme of staff engagement led by Senior Managers to raise awareness and build understanding of our new approach. This will include workshop sessions to develop proposals for delivering resilience.**
- > **The formation of a Resilience Delivery Project board to oversee implementation.**
- > **Ongoing meetings with partners and stakeholders to share insights and examples of best practice with the aim of identifying how we can work together to deliver resilience and have shared outcomes and measure of resilience.**

We hope you will remain engaged as we continue this important programme of work.

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