

Waltham Forest Our Place

**A Shared Plan For
Connecting Communities
In Waltham Forest**



SUMMARY

Waltham Forest has a proud history as a strong and diverse community. Our borough has seen major changes in recent years: our population is larger and more affluent. However, against this rising tide, inequality is growing and some people are in danger of being left behind: the disaffected young boy on the edge of youth violence, the new arrival to the borough from abroad, the socially isolated older resident, the family struggling to raise their children in a context of poverty and poor housing conditions.

We want to create a borough that feels like home for every single person who lives here, because they feel included, supported and safe.

We want to improve life chances for everybody in Waltham Forest – especially the most vulnerable. The evidence from the UK and beyond is that this is not just about high quality public services, although of course they are key – but just as important, if not more so, is strength of connection to community: the extent to which people feel valued and the way that value is expressed in the relationships they have with those around them. It is these relationships that are often most successful in helping people back into work, improving mental health and wellbeing or supporting English language acquisition.

If social isolation or exclusion is the problem, whether due to poverty, discrimination, lack of confidence, language barriers, mobility issues – then social integration – through strong community connections – is the tonic. This is the new frontier for local government, especially in the context of continuing austerity: not as a provider of services but as a facilitator of local people, assets and resources, bringing people together to help themselves and each other.

We want to unlock the collective power of Waltham Forest's people to build an integrated, supportive and safe community where every resident and local organisation is empowered to lead change that makes Waltham Forest a better place to live.

That is what the Connecting Communities strategy is all about. Building on the strength of our Creating Futures Corporate Strategy and co-created with the community, this document sets out a radical new programme for:

a. Creating a movement through a new "Waltham Forest, Our Place" communications campaign which calls on everyone in our borough to act, engage and participate in growing a stronger and more sustainable community. Our successful bid to be London's very first Borough of Culture in 2019 has brought our community together with 1000 people stepping forward to help out as Legends of the Forest. We want to build on all this goodwill whether through formal volunteering, helping out a neighbour or by challenging hate crime and discrimination, making it as easy as possible for everyone to get involved.

b. Introducing new Community Networks for Leyton, Leytonstone, Chingford and Walthamstow.

This will be a new way of working for the borough: bringing voluntary and community groups, local leaders, local businesses and key public services such as children and family centres and libraries together to agree local priorities and share resources accordingly. We want to see these networks grow and we see them as key to making better use of existing resources such as local hubs and spaces, and a potential way to act in a more co-ordinated way to attract additional external investment.

c. Creating new opportunities to enable people to connect with and help each other. Focused on key priority groups such as new arrivals to the borough, black and ethnic minority women and young people, we will trial a number of innovative approaches for using peer-to-peer support to combat social exclusion, increase economic prosperity for all, and connect people from different backgrounds. Some of these will be tried and tested methods, such as the Safe Families programme which links peer mentors to families on the edge of social care, whilst others will be home grown, e.g. befriending for isolated older people.



This is an ambitious programme of action which has been given energy, focus and much needed resources through participation in the national Integrated Communities agenda.

We are proud to be among the five places in England involved in the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG's) Integration Areas Programme, and as the only Integration Area in London we want to share our experience of what works, as well as learning lessons from others.

We will work closely with our partners across the borough to measure our success and adjust our approach accordingly. Not only will we be looking to see more people getting involved in their local communities and a greater sense of belonging, we also want to ensure this approach translates into improved outcomes for residents, such as greater confidence speaking English, more people moving into and progressing in work, addressing gender inequality issues, and an increase and improved wellbeing.

Together, we can build a community of which we all feel proud and in which no one is left behind.

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I am pleased their programme requires everyone in the borough to act, to engage and participate in growing an integrated community. A programme in which all residents participate, take responsibility and feel at home.



Britain is a great place to live. We want everyone to take advantage of the opportunities this country offers while recognising and valuing their relationship with, and responsibility to, other groups and to our wider society.

The government published the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper in March 2018. It set out our ambition to build strong integrated communities where people – whatever their background – live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

We know that the challenges to integration vary throughout the country. The government’s Integration Areas Programme focuses local and national resource on a common goal, to deliver integrated communities and to understand better and tackle the challenges specific to a place. Each area will take tailored actions to address the challenges specific to their place and capture the impacts of this work. This approach will help us to learn what works and how it could be applied in other places – ultimately helping us to improve integration in other areas.

I am delighted that London Borough Waltham Forest agreed to participate in this programme. The council and its local partners have shown they have a clear understanding of the challenges they face and the strengths on which they can build. I am pleased their programme requires everyone in the borough to act, to engage and participate in growing an integrated community. A programme in which all residents participate, take responsibility and feel at home.

I warmly welcome the publication of Waltham Forest’s Local Integration Strategy. This is the result of the consultation and engagement undertaken by the Local Integration Partnership last year.

We look forward to learning from the delivery of its ambitious plan for the communities of Waltham Forest, which sits at the heart of this strategy.

**Message from Lord Bourne
Minister for Faith**



When I made the journey from the West Midlands, where I grew up, to Leytonstone, more than a decade ago, I became one of the many new arrivals in Waltham Forest.

Our population has expanded rapidly – increasing by roughly 50,000 since 2002 – and is projected to continue to grow even more quickly, with a further 15,600 new residents expected over the next five years.

Waltham Forest has a proud history of welcoming people into our borough. I became part of a diverse, yet cohesive community when I made this corner of East London my home. But despite this strong foundation, we face a number of significant challenges that we must confront head on.

Inequality, youth violence and isolation all contribute to making people feel less welcome or unsafe. Child poverty, rising household debt, low pay and a lack of job security can harm the economic prospects of local people and the wider community. As a result, demand for the services local authorities provide has increased, while – throughout this era of austerity - budgets have reduced.

I am determined to boost the life chances for every resident of Waltham Forest, and we are adapting to this new reality by transforming the way we work. We want to maximise the skills and talents of our residents, not simply be a provider of services. We aim to act as an enabler, bringing people together to support one another, and to use the assets and resources we hold locally to build resilience and empower people to adapt to the challenges posed in the twenty-first century.

This will not be easy. The EU referendum of 2016 has exacerbated divisions in our society, and created uncertainty for many

[of our residents. But the principles set out in this strategy will be embedded in all of our work – whether it's our programme as the first London Borough of Culture, delivering on the recommendations of the Life Chances Commission I established last year, or the work of our Violence Reduction Partnership to tackle youth violence, we will work with our community to tackle the problems we face.

In launching this strategy we are setting out the first steps in our shared plan for connecting communities in Waltham Forest.

A radical programme to:

- Create a movement through a new communications campaign which calls on everyone in our borough to act, engage and participate
- Introduce new Community Networks for Leyton, Leytonstone, Chingford and Walthamstow
- Create new opportunities to enable people to connect with and help each other

Through this programme we aim to support at least 50,000 people to do positive things for their community. We want everyone who lives in this borough – new arrival or lifelong resident – to feel they have a stake in our community, that they feel included and supported. Together, we can tackle the challenges we face and build the connections that will ensure everyone feels at home in Waltham Forest.

Message from Cllr Clare Coghill
Leader of Waltham Forest Council



OUR BOROUGH

OUR BOROUGH

Waltham Forest has a growing population. There are around 275,500 people living in our borough having increased by approximately 40,000 people (17%) in the past decade (from 2007 to 2017). Over the next five years, we expect to welcome a further 15,600 residents – a 6% growth in our population. Growth to date has been largely driven by international migration although this has slowed since the EU referendum in 2016.

We are very diverse. Around two thirds (64%) of children and young people in Waltham Forest are from BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) groups compared to 50% in overall population. 78% of people in our borough say they can speak English well, which means that 22% have difficulty speaking English with about 6% of the borough's residents having said that they do not speak English well or at all.

Waltham Forest is a young borough, and most young people are able to access a good quality education: all of our secondaries, and 95% of our primaries are judged good and above by Ofsted. However, despite this some groups are still underachieving, and youth violence affects too many young people, and is of growing concern.

Although we are still a relatively deprived borough, we are seeing the effects of gentrification. Waltham Forest was ranked as 35th most deprived out of the 326 local authorities in England in 2015 – compared to 10th in 2010. However, a third (36%) of children in our borough were estimated to be living in poverty after housing costs are accounted for.

Likewise, although employment is at its highest since records began in 2004, and significant numbers of new businesses are being registered in the borough, we've

seen an increase in work poverty (28% of our residents are in low paid jobs). And although the number of residents who are economically inactive (not in employment nor looking for work) is at its all-time lowest (34,600): 44% of working age women of ethnic minority background are economically inactive compared to 18% of white females in the borough.

So we face some significant social challenges in the context of continuing austerity. Austerity has led councils to consider new and creative solutions to support residents with increasing pressures being placed on core services.

This is the context in which we need to strengthen connections within our community so that our residents can turn to each other for support. This is how we will fight social exclusion in the coming years.

There are real positives on which to build: in our December 2018 Resident Insight Survey, 80% said they are proud to live in Waltham Forest and 85% felt they strongly belong to the borough and to their immediate neighbourhood. Waltham Forest is not a residentially segregated borough: most people live in diverse neighbourhoods, where they are likely to meet people from different cultures and backgrounds.

However, despite the richness of the diversity of our borough, we are still very narrow in our social connections. In the same survey, 69% of local people told us that that more than half of their friends are of the same ethnic group, 63% said their friends have a similar level of education and 50% have similar incomes. In addition, our review of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in 2015 found that our VCS is small compared to neighbouring boroughs and the sector is struggling to develop and grow in a changed financial climate.

Our challenge is to use the strength and diversity of our community to ensure that no one is left behind.

Residents in Waltham

Our population will increase by 15,600 in the next five years.

We are a young borough

Nearly a quarter of the borough's population is children and young people aged under 18.

76%

Our People

Ethnically-diverse

Waltham Forest is one of the most ethnically-diverse areas in London. More than two thirds of residents are from a minority ethnic background

Residents in Waltham

Waltham Forest is a multi-faith community, reflecting the diverse population of our borough.

- Don't have a religion
- Did not answer the question
- Identify as Christian
- Identify as Muslim
- Follow other religions

1 Office for National Statistics Mid-2017 population estimates
 2 GLA 2017-based population projections (central trend)
 3 2011 Census, ONS
 4 Source: End Child Poverty campaign
 5 ONS Annual Population Survey (Jul 2017-Jun 2018)

OUR APPROACH

A new way of working together



In line with the Council's ambitious strategic framework, we have taken a values-based approach to developing the Connecting Communities programme.

A broad approach to “social integration” – something for everyone

This is an agenda which embraces everyone in our community. The onus is not on particular communities to “integrate” but on everyone to get more involved in their community and make new connections. The core of **Connecting Communities** is, therefore, about:

- a. **social cohesion** – more people feel they belong to their community and engage with and trust those around them, including those from different social and ethnic background
- b. **social capital** – so that more citizens contribute and can call on local resources to address shared challenges including supporting communities and individuals to take an approach that builds on the strengths of the area and of our local residents
- c. **shared responsibility** – helping people to feel empowered to act to improve their local community

We have adopted the MHCLG definition of integration:



Integrated communities are where people, whatever their background, live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities.



A movement not a project

This programme requires us to think differently about the way we work. The old territory for local government is as a provider of services, developing interventions, processes and pathways and measuring outcomes accordingly. This sort of “top-down” approach won’t work for Connecting Communities. We need to be much more collaborative in the way we work, relying not on interventions but on social connections and relationships as the catalyst for change. In a climate of austerity, this is the only way to have impact at population level: creating a movement that people buy into because it chimes with their values and allowing them to run with it and make it their own.

Providing clear leadership

Waltham Forest Council has a clear role to play in providing leadership, shared across all departments and with public and voluntary sector partners and businesses in Waltham Forest, to tackle integration issues in the borough. We will challenge and support a wide range of services to consider how they can support this agenda by changing the way they deliver mainstream services, through considering our policies using an integration lens as part of our equalities and diversity considerations, and by influencing thinking about how the physical development and regeneration of our borough can have a positive effect on creating connected communities in the future. We are already working closely with a range of partners on our Connecting Communities Board, including representatives from Peabody Housing, Job Centre Plus, Norlington School, Waltham Forest College, the Metropolitan Police and Lloyd Park Children’s Charity.

Co-production – working alongside the community

We want to lead the way in thinking about how to build strong, integrated and active communities to tackle social exclusion. Although we, as a Council, have a critical role to play in providing clear and positive leadership and resources for this agenda, ultimately the community needs to own this agenda. We have therefore developed this Connecting Communities programme in partnership with the community, through:

- Discussions at public events such as the Waltham Forest Mela, Waltham Forest Garden Party, Housing Residents Day, the Leyton Orient Over 50’s and the Waltham Forest Faith Communities Forum event
- Engagement in public spaces such as libraries and Children and Family Centres
- Workshops with young people including young people with special educational needs, ESOL learners, Conversation Club members and refugee support workers
- Interviews with people attending the Citizenship Ceremonies
- Focus groups and events with local VCS groups such as Good Gym and Solace Women’s Aid
- A partnership-led Programme Board to oversee progress

Testing and learning

We don’t expect to get everything right first time. Critical to our approach will be trying things out, reflecting, learning and adapting where necessary. As one of MHCLG’s Integration Areas, we will be part of a national evaluation and learning programme which will help us to distil our learning about what works in enabling social integration and contribute to a growing national evidence base.

WIDER CONTEXT

Our Connecting Communities Strategy and approach is supported by, and supportive of, a number of other complementary Council programmes which are supporting and engaging our residents:

Creating Futures is the Council’s corporate strategy for improving life chances and developing a new relationship with our community. Key to this is creating strong and sustainable communities where people are enabled to support themselves and each other.

Our Think Family Strategy transforms the way the Council and other public services are delivered with greater emphasis on evidence-based intervention, which helps to connect people with sources of support in their local community. It will deliver new mechanisms for engaging with the community, including a new capacity-building programme for local people and organisations to build an integrated, supportive and active community in Waltham Forest.

Life Chances is our plan for improving life chances for young people, which focuses on four priority areas for action: ensuring every child gets the best start in life; providing a good quality education for every child; supporting young people to be resilient, confident and healthy; and giving young people the opportunities to flourish. The plan outlines a broad range of interventions across these areas, and pledges a new way of working with partners, parents and young people in particular – to co-design and deliver these.

Think Work is the counterpart to our Think Family Strategy, and is all about boosting good jobs and skills locally, with a focus on three key sectors: construction, health and social care, and culture. The Think Work Strategy will include work to boost take-up of apprenticeships in the borough, create a living wage zone with businesses, tackle unemployment and in-work poverty, and create good jobs for everyone in the borough.

London Borough of Culture 2019 will provide 12 months of flagship cultural initiatives and programming that will transform the way residents and the rest of London perceives Waltham Forest. Its legacy will enrich the borough for years to come, putting culture at heart of an ongoing approach to reduce inequalities and open up opportunities for all residents from every background.



OUR PLAN

The key elements of our programme



Inspired by and seeking to embed for the long term the success of our Borough of Culture year, we have designed a programme of three parts

1. Creating the movement

We know that amazing work is already happening in Waltham Forest, thanks to individuals and groups who are working hard to make it a better place to live. Through our new “Waltham Forest, Our Place” communications campaign, we want to celebrate and build on this positive activity and make it as easy as possible for everyone to get involved.

This key element of the programme is to create a movement for change through the communications campaign which calls on everyone in our borough to act, engage and participate in growing a stronger and more sustainable community. This might be through formal volunteering, helping out a neighbour or by challenging hate crime and discrimination. The campaign will be driven by resident voices and a range of activities, such as exploring themes of food, which will help connect our people and provide places to share skills, knowledge and opportunities.

2. Introducing new Community Networks

We will introduce new Community Networks

bringing voluntary and community groups, local leaders, businesses and key public services such as children and family centres and libraries together. In the first instance there will be four networks based loosely around our four town centres: Walthamstow, Leyton, Chingford, Leytonstone but with flexibility where it might be better to work at even more local level (e.g. South Chingford).

Each network will have its own full-time facilitator, focused on helping to connect people and resources and support collective decision-making. The key task for the networks will be to develop shared local priorities and work out how to mobilise local assets and resources in support of these. Networks will have a role in determining how Connecting Communities resources will be allocated and overseeing effective delivery. For example, the Leyton Network might decide that it wants to focus on Serious Youth Violence and work out how local people and services might work together to address this, e.g. the local children and family centre might run some workshops for local parents, a local youth organisation might run a programme in some local schools, some local residents might step forward to take part in a local mentoring scheme, etc.

In time, we see these networks as key to bringing new funding into the borough – through national funding bodies such as the National Lottery Community Fund – as well as making better use of existing resources such as local hubs and spaces. This includes key public building such as Children and Family Centres, Schools, Libraries and Adult Learning Centres as well as local assets such as shops, parks and markets.

3. Creating new opportunities to enable people to connect

The third element of the Connecting Communities programme is our “menu of innovations” new approaches that look to tackle some of the key barriers to social integration. In developing this menu, we looked at learning from the UK and abroad about what works to build social integration through social cohesion, social capital and shared responsibility. So all of our innovations, even though they are targeted at different issues, have a common thread: using peer-to-peer support to overcome social exclusion and connect people from different backgrounds.

Case Study: Hornbeam’s Food Rescue Project



Every Monday and Tuesday, volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds, ages, life-experiences, and support needs come together to share surplus food. This is an opportunity to form meaningful friendships in a mutual and positive environment. Mondays centre around the Peoples’ Kitchen, a pay-what-you-can communal feast, where volunteers cook with styles inspired by Turkish, Pakistani, and Brazilian heritage amongst many others. Other activities involve free and donation-based food stalls from which people take surplus food, saving money while helping to waste less food as a society. Many beneficiaries of the stalls are now involved in the project, volunteering in the kitchen, running stalls, or collecting donated food by bike, all helping to build a more resilient, well-connected community. Their network of over 30 volunteers rescues approximately 200kg of food for around 120 different beneficiaries each week.

www.hornbeam.org.uk

The Hornbeam’s Food Rescue Project redirects quality surplus food away from landfill and into people’s mouths. In doing so, it provides space and time for the community to connect over food.

A NEW ESOL OFFER

What do we know?

We recognise that a lack of English proficiency within the borough is just one factor that can inhibit a resident's ability to integrate effectively, but it remains a significant one: access to employment, local provision, the ability to engage with neighbours and local democracy, all hinge on an individual's capacity to communicate effectively.

The picture in the borough is also quite stark: we have more than 14,000 residents who do not speak English well or at all. This reflects a significant level of unmet demand with current providers in the borough reaching substantially lower numbers than this every year.

Another issue is of perception: once residents feel their English is good enough to function in everyday life and/or the workplace, the cost/benefit of continued learning is perceived as being too high. When residents do return to English language training, their English has often deteriorated. We believe, therefore, that developing more informal learning opportunities will help to maintain and improve language skills between formal learning interventions

What are we going to do?

We want to build on the existing high standard of training available in the borough, developing our overall understanding and co-ordination of this provision, and provide everyone with the opportunity to learn English in a way that suits them.

We will:

- Establish a 'Single Point of Contact' for English language learning will map current ESOL provision, help raise awareness of different learning opportunities and provide advice on accessing learning opportunities.
- Set up a peer-to-peer language buddy programme - a FAN network (Friends and Neighbours) of informal learning opportunities which will help residents build confidence to continue learning.
- Support ESOL learners to progress into Higher Education (HE), with the support of students who are already in HE provision.

What do we hope to achieve?

- Increased capacity in English enables residents to access employment and training opportunities
- Increased capacity in English enables residents to increase their engagement in community life and widen their social networks
- ESOL services increase their reach and support greater numbers of residents

Case Study: Learning English



These courses have changed my life 100%. I have so much more confidence when I talk to people. I don't have to worry now when I talk to teachers, neighbours or my doctor. These courses have given me a purpose in life. Before I found reasons not to go out, but now I look forward to coming to my classes every day and I feel optimistic about the future.



We know that the classroom isn't the best starting point for everyone, and we are exploring how else we can support people to start learning English and build their confidence to continue learning.

Rudina is from Kosovo. She came to the UK with her husband and her 4 year old daughter as a refugee in August 1999. The family lived in West London and moved to Waltham Forest in 2002. She had had a second daughter by then, and in 2008 her son was born. At that time Rudina concentrated on bringing up her family, but she had some health problems and life was difficult because there was no extended family around for support. Rudina really felt she was struggling but through her GP services she was referred to Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service where she began ESOL classes.

www.lbwfadullearning.co.uk

SUPPORTING PEOPLE INTO WORK

What do we know?

Despite the significant improvement in our employment rate there is still a need to test innovative new ways of supporting those groups who have not benefited from the evolving employment environment.

The three initiatives proposed have at their heart an evolution of the standard approaches to meet the challenges of the ‘future of work’. Specifically these challenges include:

- The need for better support and advice for all residents to support their transitions at every point of their working life and beyond
- The growth of insecure employment opportunities that exacerbate the experience of in-work poverty (a particular problem for women in our economy)
- Lack of career progression opportunities because of the prevalence of low skill, low wage, gig economy roles

What are we going to do?

We are piloting approaches that respond to the specific challenges of our rapidly growing economy and to build an evidence base of what works best.

We will:

- help residents to access support for career development through one to one support and group workshops in community spaces and work settings
- train people to become Change Navigators who will provide mentoring and guidance that builds skills and confidence to enable residents to deal with life changes
- create a joint team between Job Centre Plus and the Council to engage with businesses and organisations who employ residents
- involve residents, businesses and organisations in co-creation and evaluation of all project activities

What do we hope to achieve?

- Employers who have engaged in the programme and shared information that will help to better support the target group
- A narrowing of the gap between the employment rates between residents of different backgrounds
- Career progression leading to higher wages



A NEW OFFER FOR NEW ARRIVALS TO THE BOROUGH

What do we know?

There has been significant population churn in our borough over in recent years. This is partly about regeneration of our borough and the impact of welfare reform. But we have also seen continued migration into our borough from other countries (although this has dropped significantly since the EU referendum).

We believe a clear package of information and support to new arrivals will help not only in encouraging social connections but also in increasing English language proficiency where new arrivals may be limited in their English language skills. This will help create a sense of belonging, and help them engage successfully with other programmes, particularly those that are employment-led.

What are we going to do?

We want to help remove barriers that new arrivals may face to feeling part of their new area, accessing learning and employment opportunities and getting to know their local community.

So we are:

- Developing a ‘welcome pack’ for new arrivals to the borough
- Creating a “Meals and Food” model across the borough to take place between new and existing residents which will be delivered by existing local providers of food and meal related activities
- Connecting New Arrivals with the Friends and Neighbours Network (FAN) that will help them integrate through informal learning and social opportunities

What do we hope to achieve?

- New arrivals quickly feel part of their new community
- Communities are hospitable and welcoming to new arrivals

A STRONGER APPROACH TO SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

What do we know?

Young people will build a future for Waltham Forest as a connected borough where people from different communities are integrated, share a common identity and values, and are supportive of each other. We also need to ensure that young people understand the role they can play in society, and to make the most of those opportunities.

As recommended by the Waltham Forest Life Chances Commission, we will develop and roll out an Opportunity Bank for young people: a bank of career advice, resources and employment, training and educational opportunities such as mentoring and volunteering.



The Life Chances Youth Participation Lead, a 19 year old local resident, is working with the Life Chances Youth Taskforce, Council teams and external service designers to bring the Opportunity Bank to life.

What are we going to do?

We will also develop:

- Opportunities for our local Community Networks to engage the community to address local priorities for young people such as serious youth violence
- A programme with secondary schools that supports school pupils to take personal and collective responsibility for their own futures and as agents of change in their communities, and to develop stronger connections between school and parents, and between parents of different backgrounds
- A programme that engages primary school children in sports with the aim of building meaningful social mixing amongst children and families
- A stronger partnership with the National Citizen Service (NCS) programme in the borough to significantly boost participation from across communities and to develop the impact recent NCS graduates have in the borough

What do we hope to achieve?

- Young people have diverse social networks inside and outside of school
- Young people are equipped with the information and resources they need to access opportunities
- Young people are active in their communities

A NEW PROGRAMME TO ADDRESS GENDER INEQUALITY

What do we know?

Our local data shows that there are significant gaps in employment outcomes for women from some communities in Waltham Forest, and more women than men do not speak English well or at all.

We recognise that we have some, but incomplete, knowledge, about the reasons why women from some communities are especially likely to be economically inactive. We are also interested in decisions about childcare, where that is often a barrier to learning English and gaining employment, and we want to ensure all communities are aware of and take up free childcare places, which is not always the case in the borough.



What are we going to do?

We want to support women to gain greater control over their participation in business, labour market and social life, and understand how childcare options can be supportive of these choices. We will be conducting research, working with women in the borough to develop a better understanding of the challenges they face and the kind of support they believe could make a difference. This research will be used to inform the development of a programme to support women in Waltham Forest, and to enable them to support each other.

What do we hope to achieve?

- A greater understanding about the factors affecting BAME women's choices about work
- Women, especially from BAME communities, participating fully in community life and feel able to make positive choices about engaging in training and employment opportunities

FAMILY TO FAMILY SUPPORT

What do we know?

Many families with high levels of need in the borough get support from their own networks of family, friends and neighbours, not public services. But not all families, and particularly new arrivals to the borough, have these networks, and parents often need, but lack, support. When families don't get support from within civil society they can become isolated and vulnerable, and are at risk of not integrating within the Waltham Forest community, or becoming disconnected where previously they were better integrated.

What are we going to do?

Develop a more structured approach to promoting peer-to-peer support for vulnerable families in our families in our borough and support for parents. This will help to promote better and more sustainable outcomes for families and provides new opportunities to make natural and productive connections between families from different social and ethnic groups. There are families in Waltham Forest that get family-to-family support but only from within their own communities, which does not always aid integration. Our approach will reach across communities.

What do we hope to achieve?

- Families across our diverse communities support each other and get involved in projects that help other local families in need
- Families facing challenges are supported to develop greater resilience
- A prevention of escalation of need thus reducing the numbers of those requiring statutory social care



ENABLE GREATER OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE TO BE PART OF THE PLACE THEY LIVE

What do we know?

Older people in our community are at risk of social isolation and loneliness. This can lead to over-reliance on traditional models of care and support for older people; these often lead to poor outcomes and are not cost effective. Given the ageing population, we need to find new, more effective solutions as part of a wider community-led health and social care system.

What are we going to do?

We will pilot a new befriending partnership, harnessing work already going on with a number of providers who deliver befriending work. We will address issues of isolation, integration and intergenerational disconnection, also creating a wider community / positive social network across age and social divides.

What do we hope to achieve?

- Existing befriending networks are developed and supported to extend
- New befriending networks are established
- Befriending volunteers have more opportunities to meet others from different backgrounds.



A more connected borough with meaningful connections across ages can build mutual understanding, improve wellbeing and challenge stereotypes.

Case Study: Magic Me

Magic Me is an arts charity that brings generations together to build a stronger, safer community.

'Cocktails in Care Homes' at George Mason Lodge in Leytonstone connects volunteers, usually in their 20s and 30s, with care home residents for monthly evening cocktail parties. Parties are themed with plenty of creative ways to interact as well as have a good old chat, providing a fun space for young and old, of all backgrounds, to meet and have fun.

www.magicme.co.uk

MAKING IT HAPPEN

What comes next?



We are already mobilising our programme and local networks met late in 2018 and will continue to develop throughout 2019 and 2020, supported by our local full-time facilitators who will be in place by April 2019.

We will be launching our campaign in the spring to build our coalition of support for the programme, and we expect to get our innovations up and running over spring and early summer in 2019, significantly improving our reach into communities and using a range of partners to deliver the work with us and local people.

Our Connecting Communities programme will be located within a newly created Communities Directorate at Waltham Forest Council from spring 2019, enhancing our capacity to work with local communities, and giving a clear strategic direction to our work. We expect to develop a clear ask of local partners and stimulate further activity (either community or partner led) that is supportive of our aims and aspirations, and sustainable beyond the life of a funded programme. We hope that by the summer there are high and diverse levels of engagement in our campaign and our networks are continuing to grow in numbers and influence.

Our Connecting Communities Board will continue to provide oversight of the programme including reviewing key milestones three, six and nine months into the programme. We want to ensure that regular reviews of the programme are particularly focused on learning that is effectively shared across services, partners and communities. The innovations supported by MHCLG funds, supplemented with innovations backed by other funders, will generate learning to change the way the Council and its public sector partners go about their work and enable us to tackle integration issues more effectively. We will publish an annual report in the autumn setting out the progress we have made in 12 months and the learning from our work so far.

Key phases of delivery



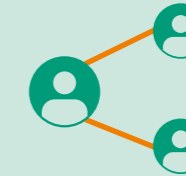


50,000 strong – Get involved!

Through Connecting Communities and our “Waltham Forest, Our Place” communications campaign, we want to support at least 50,000 people to do positive things for their community. There will be many different ways to get involved so you can choose something that works for you:



reach out to someone new through our “Waltham Forest, Our Place” campaign”



join our new Community Networks to build links with other people and groups in your area



sign up, show your support and share stories on social media using #WFOurPlace



access small pots of funding to help your community through our new Community Bank

Get involved by emailing ConnectingCommunities@walthamforest.gov.uk

#WFOurPlace

www.walthamforest.gov.uk/connectingcommunities



The need for our communities to find ways to live together work together and enjoy together has never been more vital. From successful business entrepreneurs and families making ends meet too isolated groups and young men and women finding their place in the world, we all have an individual and collective responsibility to build a community we can be proud, where all feel welcome, supported and able to succeed.

Juan Hernandez
Headteacher
Norlington School



Evaluation and learning

As a national pilot Integration Area we expect to be sharing that learning with other authorities, within London, across England and internationally, and we have already been sharing our thinking with other countries. As part of this approach, an independent organisation will evaluate some of the common themes across the five places that are part of the Integration Area programme. This will provide a comprehensive evaluation of the strategy and its impact in Waltham Forest, and also inform and add to the national evidence based on what works to achieve integration.

A post-programme survey will also be undertaken once the first wave of the programme concludes, and the results compared with the local area baseline survey recently conducted to measure current attitudes and behaviours. The results will hopefully provide objective data to measure the progress made on our integration journey.



◀ Community Network meeting held in February 2019

