

Story: Ward Action Groups in Hammersmith and Fulham

Hammersmith & Fulham Council (H&F) is committed to doing things with residents, not to them, so as to deliver cohesive communities, forming social bonds and reducing social isolation. The broader aim is to create a participatory culture in the borough, which facilitates social action.

As part of this, H&F has had ten resident-led commissions since 2015, including an Air Quality Commission, a Rough Sleeping Commission, an Older People's Commission and a Disabled People's Commission. The latter led to the council implementing a human rights approach to its policy and service development, using the UN Convention as the framework for change.

More recent approaches in H&F have led to the creation of 'Ward Action Groups', in late 2018. Led by local councillors, these follow an asset-based community development approach. Residents identify key issues that the groups wish to tackle, champion or consolidate, and seek to do so using the natural assets and talents in their neighbourhoods.

The Ward Action Groups aim to be flexible in their approach, and to emphasise the importance of action rather than words. Each one is different, reflecting distinctions between populations in the different wards. As a result, it is hoped that the groups will be able to advocate and fulfill the diverse needs and ambitions of local people.

The first meetings of the three prototype Ward Action Groups have already taken place. Learning is key to the initiative, and prototyping allows H&F to question the assumptions behind ideas, and to test them out. This allows the council to develop testing and improve ideas at an early stage in specific locales – before time, money and effort is spent on large roll-out programmes.

This learning approach is an essential part of renewing civic life in the borough, and in the ongoing relationship building with communities. Over the next year, it is hoped that the Ward Action Group model will allow more responsive approaches, which test innovations in practice, and allow a steady stream of new ideas to emerge from the community.

Contents

Foreword

Introduction

Which hat are you wearing?

Context

Section 1:
The Basics

Section 2.1:
Trust and democracy

Section 2.2:
Trust in the community

Section 2.3:
Trust in the system