



Newham London

# **A Strong Community:** Building Resilience in Newham

Stakeholder Consultation  
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## A Strong Community: Building Resilience in Newham



The London Borough of Newham has a clear vision: to make our borough a major business location, where people choose to live work and stay. To achieve that we want to radically change the way we work with residents and our partners. If the Council and our partners work together with a shared vision then we will make a real difference. This consultation document lays out our ideas so far on how we should think about the challenges facing our borough differently and develop new ways to respond to them. Now we'd like to hear from local stakeholders to work together on a new approach.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Wales". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sir Robin Wales  
Mayor of Newham

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# A Strong Community: Building Resilience in Newham

## What is the issue?

The services that local authorities provide are often talked about - how frequently the bins are collected or how we care for elderly residents - but no one is asking what local government is actually for. Elsewhere in Europe and beyond local government is recognised as the place where decisions about issues such as schools, health and policing are made, but here this question goes unasked.

Newham is facing some particularly tough circumstances. As well as high levels of worklessness, we are behind the rest of London in a number of critical areas. From children's development on entering school right through to life expectancy, our residents often achieve poorer outcomes than people from richer areas. We believe the fact that such stubborn and wide-ranging inequalities persist today is a disgrace and a sign that public policy over many years has failed to achieve.

At the same time we think there is too much dependency in Newham. Too many people fall helpless and reliant on the state or on the Council for advice and support. In many cases this help could be provided by a friend, relative or a neighbour. In some cases, the person could have helped themselves. But too often people lack the confidence, the connections or the capacity to do so. This means they come to rely on the state – letting someone else determine what happens in their lives rather than taking personal control.

We've still managed to achieve a lot we can be proud of in Newham through the hard work of our staff, partners and community. But now it's time to change and improve what we do. For too long our services have treated the symptoms without addressing the underlying problems.

They have not helped residents to take control of their lives and improve their own situation. Some services have even sustained and encouraged dependence.

The London Borough of Newham has been working to develop our answer to these issues and to look again at how we can together achieve our vision of making Newham a major business location where people choose to live, work and stay. Our approach must always be based on the values that guide us, like fairness, reciprocity and trust. Fairness means giving all residents quality services and equal access to opportunities available locally. It also means that residents should not expect something for nothing. Just as we support those who need support, we as a community expect those who can contribute to do so. Through doing this we can build community and build trust.

In this consultation we will share our ideas on a new approach for local government and our community, and how we think real changes can be made to the lives of our residents. We want a more ambitious vision for Newham, something beyond making cuts and efficiencies. But to succeed we'll have to work together with our partners, with local businesses, other parts of the public sector, the voluntary sector and of course with our residents. Over £1 billion is spent in this borough every year. We all have a responsibility to ensure we get the best out of the borough, and we all have a part to play in making improvements.

## Our vision for Newham

**'To become a major business location where people choose to live, work and stay'.**

We're proud of the work we've done together with our partners to make Newham a major business location. And it's really paying off, with Westfield opening up in just a few months and the opportunities created by hosting the Olympic Games next year.

But we've seen in projects like Canary Wharf that physical changes don't always change the lives of local people. So we also want to look at the social and personal assets that our community needs as well.

People choosing to live, work and stay here means ensuring they've got the skills, experience and support to make real choices about their lives. We're concerned that some people in Newham and places like it have lost that capacity and that this is at least partly due to the culture of dependency created by the welfare state. Large swathes of our population have been de-skilled and isolated from the networks of peer support and expertise that can help them overcome poverty. The welfare state has played a part by doing things for people but not asking for anything in

return, by focusing on need not ability or potential, and by failing to make communities and context a part of welfare policy.

We believe this issue is best described as a lack of resilience. People do not have the skills, resources or relationships they need to overcome adversity, deal with the challenges they face and thrive in our borough. We believe that it is a lack of resilience and its key components that keeps our residents poor.

## What is Resilience?

For us resilience is about more than an ability to bounce back from a single damaging event. It is about possessing a set of skills and having access to the resources that allow us to negotiate the challenges we all experience. And it's also about the skills that allow people to overcome the more difficult circumstances many of Newham's residents experience.

This approach builds on concepts such as capabilities, empowerment and much of the research on social mobility. However, in contrast to much of the current government rhetoric on poverty and social mobility it seeks to recognise



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the importance of external factors in shaping our lives. Our personal skills, experiences and upbringing are essential to our resilience but these are intertwined with the resilience of the communities we live in and the economic circumstances we face. On the flip side, this approach also recognises the importance of character and personal responsibility.

## Why resilience?

Talking about resilience enables us to build on concepts such as capabilities and empowerment as well as to consider the importance of the environment people live in. The term comes from work in academia which emphasises certain skills and resources in improving life chances. The core components of resilience underpin much of the recent debate amongst think tanks and politicians about social mobility. We believe understanding resilience is made up of three strands – personal, community and economic. This enables us to get to the heart of the issues that will really make a difference in our residents' lives.

The three key elements of resilience are personal, community and economic or financial. It is these three elements that interact and reinforce each other to give people better life chances. Throughout this document we have included some case studies about the kinds of work we are already doing to build resilience. We want personal, community and economic resilience to inform all our future work and we'd like to hear ideas from stakeholders on how together we can make this happen.

## Personal resilience

Personal resilience refers to an individual's qualities or abilities that enable them to deal with adversity and access resources and support to succeed. There are a broad range of qualities that make someone better able to navigate relationships, the education system and finding and succeeding at work. Research points to the importance in particular of self-awareness, social awareness, self management, problem solving, a positive outlook, goals and aspirations, assertiveness, relationship skills and responsible decision making.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>See for example , A Multidimensional model of resilience, Resilience Research Centre [http://www.resilienceproject.org/#What\\_is\\_Resilience](http://www.resilienceproject.org/#What_is_Resilience)

<sup>2</sup>A sense of personal agency is a group of characteristics based on believing you have control over your own life. People with a strong sense of agency are able to control their behaviours, are more likely to believe their efforts will be successful and tend to be more active in seeking information and knowledge.

<sup>3</sup>Leon Feinstein, Institute of Education, referenced in Whatever it Takes, Paul Tough.

<sup>4</sup>J Heckman, Investing in disadvantaged young children is an economically efficient policy" presented to the Forum on Building the Economic Case for Investment in Preschool. New York 2006.

There is a raft of evidence about the importance of these skills and their relationship to life chances. For example Leon Feinstein at the Institute of Education has concluded that dedication and concentration at age 10 has a bigger impact on earnings at 30 than ability in maths. He also found that a sense of personal agency<sup>2</sup> is more important to life chances than reading skills.<sup>3</sup>

Possession of skills like a sense of agency, dedication and concentration has a cumulative effect, they enable us to learn and adapt – as Heckman argues “Skill begets skill; motivation begets motivation. Early failure begets early failure.”<sup>4</sup> Yet our current system results in only 45% of Newham’s children being judged to be at a reasonable standard of behaviour and understanding.<sup>5</sup>

But these qualities do not emerge from nowhere or through personal effort alone. They are developed in the early years and the evidence is clear that elements such as parenting and whether you grow up in poverty have a significant impact on the development of these qualities.<sup>6</sup> That is why personal resilience cannot be dealt with in isolation from community and economic resilience.

Whilst the early years are highly influential it is never too late and a great deal can be done with adults and young people to better equip them with the personal resources

for success. The way in which we interact with residents, the example our staff set them and the type of support we give can build resilience or, equally, can create further dependence.

Alongside these personality traits it is clear that good health and mental well-being are essential to an individual’s resilience and, as Katherine Weare at the University of Southampton has shown, there is a strong connection between mental well-being and educational attainment.<sup>7</sup> It is clear that without good physical health people are limited in their abilities to participate and take advantage of opportunities. Here, again, there is an important relationship between the personal and the communal. Good relationships, a sense of belonging and community participation are all linked to good health. Unemployment is the greatest risk factor for poor health and yet is often related to the local and national economy.

That is why, despite our emphasis on the importance of personal qualities we do not believe that the solution to ingrained poverty is just about making individuals more capable. Whilst more successful individuals possess these personal skills, most are also cushioned and enriched by belonging to a resilient community and enjoying economic and financial resilience.



<sup>5</sup>Marmot Review, Health Inequalities, A Challenge to Local Authorities.

<sup>6</sup>See for example F. Field, 'Foundation Years', Cabinet Office 2010.

<sup>7</sup>K. Weare and G. Gray, What Works in Developing Children’s Emotional and Social Competence and Wellbeing?, The Health Education Unit, Research and Graduate School of Education, University of Southampton.

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### Personal Resilience case study: Workplace

Our flagship employment programme Workplace focuses on helping residents to gain the personal resilience skills they need to find sustainable work. Residents receive one-on-one time with a personal advisor trained to identify needs like confidence-building, social skills, motivation, as well as practical skills and qualification needs. Our aim is to get people into work but also to help them reach a point where they will be able to manage their careers and employment prospects themselves.

At a cost of £5 million a year, the programme has got 6,000 residents into work since 2007 and will get 5,000 more into work this year alone.

### Personal Resilience case study: Every Child a Musician (ECaM)

Every Year 5 pupil in Newham is given free instrument tuition and a musical instrument. Widening access to music and breaking down barriers to participation has the potential to make a real difference to personal resilience, building confidence, motivation and demonstrating the rewards of dedication. The Newham model builds on best practice from the 'El Sistema' approach that has developed an evidence base for success over the 35 years it has run in Venezuela, where children from the poorest backgrounds have been given free tuition. This has resulted in reductions in crime and improvements in behaviour, confidence and motivation for participants.

Over 90% of children in Year 5 are now learning a musical instrument and 59 local people are teaching the lessons. ECaM is the biggest offer of free musical tuition in the country.



## Community resilience

The communities we live in and the relationships and networks we are part of are all important features of resilience. To succeed most people need close, emotionally supportive relationships but also exposure and links to a wider group of people with different knowledge, talents and resources at their disposal. We know people copy behaviour that they commonly see, so a resilient community is a well networked one, but also one where there are positive social norms and challenges to destructive behaviour. Personal and community resilience are intertwined because support networks are stronger when made up of resilient individuals, and forming meaningful relationships takes confidence and other personal capabilities.

Most residents in Newham have emotionally supportive networks already. These might be friends and family or community or faith groups. They know people they can turn to in challenging times for help, advice and guidance. However for other residents these relationships do not exist, and research suggests that these are key for overcoming adversity and for general well-being. We want to create structures and support networks that can help

residents build the relationships they need.

Broad networks of weaker ties (contacts with people we don't know as well) can help residents to access a range of advice, skills, knowledge and connections. So for example in resilient communities people are more likely to know someone who can give them advice about how to apply to university, how to do some DIY or how to influence local decision making. In particular, it is more likely that employment opportunities will arise from weak ties than strong ones.<sup>8</sup> The more people and the broader the range of people we interact with, the more resources and potential support we have at our disposal.

In an area as diverse as Newham that means ensuring good community cohesion. 86% of our residents say this is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well<sup>9</sup> but really broad networks need more than tolerance – they require genuine interaction.

Essential to building a resilient community is understanding the power of networks in spreading positive behaviours, knowledge and social norms and challenging destructive ones. Behavioural science is offering new insights into the impact of the behaviours we see around us. We mimic what we see others do and in this way our



<sup>8</sup>Granovetter M, The Strength of Weak Ties, 1973, American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 78, Issue 6, p1360- 80, and Granovetter, M, The Strength of the Weak Ties Revisited, 1983, Sociological Theory, Vol. 1, p201-33.

<sup>9</sup>Newham Liveability survey, 2010.

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social networks influence our ideas, emotions, health, relationships and so on.<sup>10</sup> This means we need to be proactive in promoting positive behaviours, recognising that destructive behaviours such as anti-social behaviour, obesity and truancy can be spread this way too.

Having a broad and diverse set of networks and relationships is good for individual well-being and life chances but is also good for the community as a whole. A community with vibrant and diverse networks is better able to respond to local challenges that the state cannot, or should not, be involved in. So for example residents are perfectly capable of organising the school run or helping out an elderly neighbour with the shopping, and it's better the council does not get involved. These relationships are the scaffolding around which genuine community action can be built and the beginnings of giving communities the resources to be more involved in meeting local need without having to turn to the council. We have further to go here, only half of our residents borrow things or exchange favours with their neighbours and only 10% have given unpaid help in the last 12 months.<sup>11</sup>

### Community Resilience case study: Shared Lives

For many people the most beneficial support or care they can receive is from a member of the community, not a large organisation. The Shared Lives scheme matches the care-user with a member of the community who has experience in care and welcomes the care-user into their home. Instead of seeing lots of different carers it gives residents the chance to build up a meaningful and consistent relationship. An example might be a resident who is looking after a disabled relative who can be paid to provide respite care to another person with a similar disability. The care-user gets to stay in a family environment, receive personalised care and a chance to socialise. The care provider has an opportunity to use their skills to increase their income.

The scheme is in its early stages but already has 20 approved carers and support carers. The scheme costs £75,000 to run and carers are paid £200 - £350 a week for their work as well as rent and a contribution towards food and bills from the care-user.



<sup>10</sup>Nicholas Christakis, a lecture to the RSA [www.thersa.org/events/audio-and-past-events/2010/connected-the-amazing-power-of-social-networks-and-how-they-shape-our-lives](http://www.thersa.org/events/audio-and-past-events/2010/connected-the-amazing-power-of-social-networks-and-how-they-shape-our-lives).

<sup>11</sup>Newham Liveability Survey, 2010.

## Community Resilience case study: Befrienders

We are building up a team of enablement volunteers who act as escorts for elderly or disabled residents. The befrienders help these residents to get out and about in the borough – perhaps to do their shopping or to attend a social event. The idea is that the volunteer is enabling the resident to be independent and to build up those social networks that are important not only to getting help and support but to a sense of belonging in the community.

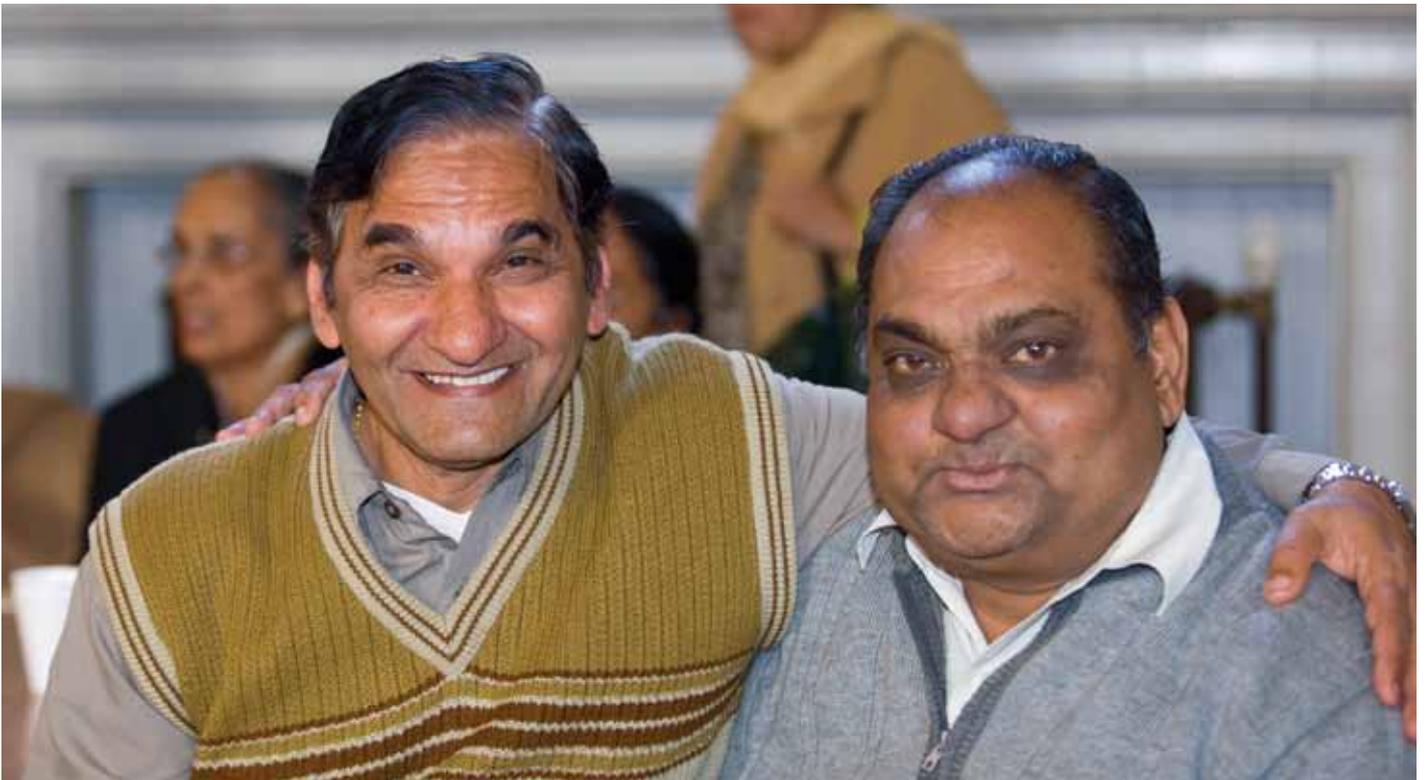
The befriender scheme is just one of many new volunteer posts being developed to ensure volunteers get valuable training and skills and that the care-user's resilience is also being built. Even in the early stages of the programme there are already 60 volunteers working in enablement type roles.

## Economic and Financial Resilience

This is about being able to find a rewarding job, to withstand financial shocks and the resources to make genuine choices about your life. It enables people to move beyond the day to day struggle of survival and the 'poverty premium' the poor pay for everyday necessities like food and power and further develop these personal and community experiences that build resilience more broadly.

For our residents to be economically resilient they need the skills that will make them attractive to employers. Our own research shows that softer skills such as interpersonal skills, self-discipline and motivation are top of local employers list<sup>12</sup> alongside good standards of English - so it's clear that the personal resilience agenda is key. But in addition, people need access to opportunities to develop those skills and to gain the practical knowledge that employers are looking for.

Even more fundamental than employable residents, economic resilience requires a local economy with good quality jobs. Bringing more jobs to the borough is essential, that's why we're working hard to encourage investment in Newham. Employment is key to economic resilience but it is clear that having a job is not enough to overcome



<sup>12</sup>Understanding Worklessness in Newham, 2010.

<sup>13</sup>Nomis 2008.

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poverty, as evidenced by the increasing proportion of the income of low to middle income households that comes from tax credits and benefits. Economic resilience requires good work: a job that pays, is secure and gives people the work satisfaction that is essential to well-being and good health.

In order to withstand fluctuations in the economy it is also important to have a mix of sectors operating in an area and to avoid dependence on a single industry. It was reliance on the Docks in Newham, coal mining in the Valleys, or steel in Sheffield that meant whole communities were devastated by the loss of the local industry. In Newham the public sector is by far the largest employer – leaving our community vulnerable to the current cuts in public spending.

Alongside sustainable and secure employment people need access to mainstream banking services.<sup>15</sup> Save the Children has estimated that low income families pay a poverty premium of around an extra £1300 per year for basic goods and services. In addition economic resilience requires access to credit at reasonable rates, avoiding

dependence on exploitative doorstep lenders and loan sharks. Residents need to be financially literate in order to avoid pitfalls and plan for their future and the future of their families.



<sup>14</sup>Nomis, October 2009-September 2010.

<sup>15</sup>Save the Children, The UK Poverty Rip-Off, 2011.

### **Economic Resilience case study: Customer Service**

The way we interact with residents could make a big difference to their levels of resilience. The interaction should be the start of a journey that changes the resident's life. We'll encourage the same skills that residents need for non-council contacts and life in general (self help, independence, use of technology etc). When a resident comes to us asking for advice on benefits, instead of simply signposting the benefits they're eligible for we'll be getting to the heart of their financial situation and referring them to employment services. We'll provide intensive face to face intervention when required. Instead of operating a system where residents come into a service centre and pay their bill in cash, we'll operate a cashless system and help residents to open a bank account, pay online or use other alternative payment methods.

We'll be investing about £25 million in our new customer access programme to make sure every interaction makes a difference to residents' lives.

### **Economic Resilience case study: The Skills Place**

In partnership with Westfield we will be opening The Skills Place- Newham. The Skills Place is a retail and hospitality academy that will offer residents training in new skills or improvement on their current skills. The training is directly linked in to jobs at the new Westfield centre which will be the biggest shopping centre of its kind in Europe. This is an outstanding example of how working in partnership with companies that are stakeholders in the borough can produce economic resilience – not just for the Newham economy but for Newham residents who can benefit from the regeneration of their area.

Our aim is that residents have the skills and training needed to access the hundreds of jobs coming to Westfield and the wider Stratford area.



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## Summary: The resilience approach

Building resilience means the Council will be changing the way it works:

- Don't manage people's crises, prevent them. Shifting towards a preventative approach where we identify problem behaviours early and nip them in the bud.
  - Residents solve the problem, not the Council. We need to help residents solve problems themselves, either independently or with the help of their friends, family, neighbours or local volunteer groups.
  - Real partnerships with the private sector, so that we can properly understand their requirement and give residents the skills and support they need.
  - The Council is a springboard for residents' success. The Council has a role in building capabilities and capacity, in market-shaping and in setting certain parameters, but outside of that we should let people make decisions about what is best for themselves, their family and their community freely. For vulnerable residents our support will always be needed, for others we need to stop doing things for them and give them responsibility and control over their own lives.
- Embed responsibility and reciprocity in the relationship between state and citizen. More services should be conditional with rewards and incentives going to those who help themselves and others whilst those who do not should not have an automatic right to the full range of support.
  - Build links between residents. This can be through employment, through encouraging volunteering and community activity or through events and sports.
  - Use existing networks. Using existing connections (friendship groups, family groups, workplaces, neighbourhood groups, and community groups) can be an effective and efficient way of spreading information, getting people involved and influencing behaviours. We should not ignore and try to bypass existing connections and instead use them for the benefit of the community.



## How you can respond

### Consultation questions

To help shape the way we use resilience in our work going forward, as well as how we go about using resilience as a theme for partnership working, we would welcome views on the ideas contained in this consultation document.

The following questions highlight some of the issues we would like responses to but you are welcome to give us more general comments, and to answer as many or few questions as you find appropriate.

Responses should be emailed by Friday 3rd June to: [resilienceconsultation@newham.gov.uk](mailto:resilienceconsultation@newham.gov.uk) or sent to: Resilience Consultation, London Borough of Newham, Newham Dockside, 1000 Dockside Road, London E16 2QU.<sup>16</sup>

### General

1. Is building resilience the right priority for Newham?
2. Is there any research evidence to suggest that programmes which aim to build resilience do not succeed?
3. How should we measure whether we are succeeding in building resilience?
4. Which features of resilience do you think are most lacking in Newham, and how might they be strengthened?
5. Does your organisation help build resilience, and if so, in what ways?
6. How can the Council work better with your organisation to build resilience?
7. What do you think would be the most effective way of joining-up work on resilience across the borough?
8. How should community groups play a role in building resilience?
9. What are best practice examples of projects or programmes that have successfully built resilience?
10. What are best practice examples of how partnership working can build resilience?
11. How can we best explain to residents what resilience means?

### Personal resilience

12. Are the characteristics contributing to personal resilience detailed in this consultation document the right ones? (see page 3)
13. Are there additional characteristics that should be included?
14. How can personal resilience be developed?
15. Are there specific examples of work that happens in Newham, or elsewhere, that help to build personal resilience?

### Community resilience

16. Are the features of a resilient community described in this consultation the right ones? (See page 5)
17. Are there additional features of a resilient community?
18. How can community resilience be strengthened?
19. Are there specific examples of work that happens in Newham, or elsewhere, that help to build community resilience?
20. How can the Council work with the third and voluntary sectors to build resilient communities?

### Economic and financial resilience

21. Are the features of economic and financial resilience described in the document the right ones? (See page 6)
22. Are there additional requirements for financial and economic resilience?
23. What barriers do local residents face in finding work and/or advancing their careers?
24. To what extent are people in Newham financially vulnerable, and why?
25. What is holding back business growth in Newham, and what can be done about it?

<sup>16</sup>Please note that the London Borough of Newham would like responses to the consultation to be honest and frank. As far as possible the Council will treat the responses confidentially and wishes to encourage a free and frank exchange of opinion and views to enable us to deliberate on these proposals. However the Council is subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Any information which comes into the possession of the London Borough of Newham will be subject to disclosure under the provisions of that Act, unless an exemption applies. It is the Council's responsibility to make a decision regarding whether information is disclosable or not. In making that decision, the Council will take account of the nature of the information, exemptions provided for in the Act, and the public interest. If the information is disclosable, the Council has no discretion to prevent its disclosure. Responses to this consultation are invited on this basis. If you reply to this consultation in a personal capacity, any personal details you supply will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will not be used for any purpose other than that for which they were collected.

