SOUTH KILBURN TRUST

Community Conversations

Interim Report – Priorities for Change

South Kilburn Trust

July 2025

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Section 1: Introduction

South Kilburn is a diverse and evolving neighbourhood undergoing significant change. While regeneration has brought new investment and development to the area, many long-standing residents continue to face challenges related to housing, public services, safety, and inclusion. Given that the initial regeneration masterplan for South Kilburn was launched in 2004, and subsequently reviewed in 2017, there is a renewed need to ascertain how South Kilburn's social infrastructure could be developed to mirror the improvements to the built environment. Recognising that genuine progress must be informed by those who live and work in the community, the Community Conversations project was designed not only to hear from residents, but to centre their experiences, priorities, and aspirations in shaping the future of South Kilburn.

South Kilburn Trust (SKT) has sought to create an engagement process that was open, inclusive, and responsive—one that seeks input from across the community, including those who might not typically take part in formal consultations. The project has used a range of outreach methods, including face-to-face surveys, pop-up stalls, community meetings, online engagement, targeted focus groups as well as staffing a shop front that welcomes walk-in visits from residents. This approach has allowed broad and nuanced feedback, helping to uncover everyday concerns as well as bold ideas for local improvement.

Section one sets out the project's goals and outlines the methodology used in gathering residents' views.

1.1 Project Background & Goals

In September 2023, Brent Council commissioned the "Mapping of Social and Community Infrastructure in South Kilburn" (1) to determine a baseline evidence of need, establish key priorities, and to devise a strategy targeting the identified needs. Following the mapping, in March 2024 a Community Partners and Stakeholders Workshop (2) was held to assess and develop the findings. In the workshop, participants assessed the initial priorities derived from the mapping. The priorities that emerged from the workshop were as follows:

- Community assets and spaces,
- Young people,
- Health and wellbeing with a focus on vulnerable residents,
- Employment, education and training / poverty,
- Community voice,
- Governance, impact and legacy.

South Kilburn Community Partners and Stakeholder Workshop March 2024

Key Recommendations from the workshop:

- The emerging neighbourhood priorities establish a foundation that need to be developed and informed by wider resident engagement,
- Develop a governance structure that will facilitate and allow for a plan of action to be developed in partnership with residents and relevant stakeholders,
- Resourcing the governance structure and delivery of the plan.

South Kilburn Trust committed to develop these priorities by engaging with the community through its Community Conversations project. The aim of this listening exercise was to ensure residents directly had a say in endorsing the priorities identified through the recent mapping and subsequent workshop, as well as a chance to add anything that may have been missed and to identify community aspirations for the future.

1 Research and Mapping

Identified initial priority areas using census data for South Kilburn and findings from conversations held with key partners and stakeholders.

2 Partners and Stakeholder Workshop

South Kilburn partners and stakeholders were invited to feedback on initial priorities and form plan for collaborative action.

3 Community Conversations Report

Interim findings from door to door surveys shared, providing further detail on residents' priorities for change.

4 Community Plan

To be developed by the 'multiagency partnership led by elected residents' using the final community conversations report.

In the meantime, the South Kilburn Community Working Party (CWP) - a partnership group consisting of community groups, tenants and residents associations, local voluntary sector organisations and statutory partners - has been working to deliver on the initial priorities through the following Thematic Action Groups arising from the initial mapping of local priorities:

- Health and Wellbeing,
- Community Engagement,
- Children and Young People,
- Community Buildings,
- Public Space and Public Realm,
- Employment and Training, and
- Capacity Building.

In response to the recommendation for residents' views to be embedded in planning for South Kilburn, a multiagency partnership led by elected residents will be established to devise, adopt and deliver a Community Plan for South Kilburn.

The findings of the Community Conversations project outlined below form a robust evidence base that together with existing priorities will help to inform a Community Plan for South Kilburn rooted in residents' lived experience and aspirations. The Community Plan will help to inform and guide collaboration, action and investment in South Kilburn.

Key goals of the project include:

- **Identifying community priorities**: By gathering input from residents through multiple channels, the project aims to evidence the most pressing issues affecting people's day-to-day lives.
- **Building a shared vision for change**: SKT will work with residents, local partners, and community groups start to co-develop a vision for South Kilburn's future. This collective vision will serve as the foundation for any changes or developments that are planned or take place in South Kilburn.

- **Creating a resident-led Community Plan**: One of the primary outcomes of the project is a Community Plan built on the evidence derived from residents' views. Residents, in partnership with local partners, will outline practical steps that can be taken to address the identified needs and capitalise on opportunities for improvement.
- **Enhancing service delivery**: By understanding how existing services are experienced and where gaps lie, the project aims to inform future improvements. This includes exploring how local services can be adapted or expanded to better meet the needs of residents.
- **Fostering ongoing engagement**: Beyond the life of this initial consultation, the multiagency partnership led by elected residents will deliver lasting mechanisms for community input and involvement, so residents can stay active in shaping their neighbourhood.

1.2 Methodology

The Community Conversations mixed method research approach has led to over 1000 engagements with residents over the last year. To triangulate the research methodology and ensure a random cross-section of residents could participate, SKT created a nine-question survey to take to every household to ask about residents' experiences of living in the area. The final survey was created with input from a selection of local residents who took part in a survey workshop to feedback on its approach and structure.

While SKTs engagement throughout the last 12 months has included residents from all parts of South Kilburn, our door-knocking surveys, which have so far reached **roughly two thirds of the 3000 households in South Kilburn**, has focused on the below area highlighted in yellow. This area was selected as the first stage as it held the highest population density in South Kilburn, along with a variety of tenancy types. The blue shaded areas (c1000 homes) will be targeted in Summer/Autumn 2025.

Map of the South Kilburn area, with area surveyed highlighted in yellow and area yet to be surveyed in blue.

The survey was made available for residents to complete online, with additional translated versions created in Arabic, Somali, Tigrinya and Portuguese. Printed surveys were also distributed to local organisations to help with data collection, including OK Club, Equi-Vision, Asma Community Group, Divine Purpose, and Global Skills Centre.

A team of local volunteers was recruited to support the door knocking portion of the project, this was to ensure the continued inclusion of residents. Six residents formed this team, achieving around **50 hours of volunteering** in the community. Volunteers and SKT staff were trained on outreach methods, and general safety procedures by a local resident with experience in consultative community work in South Kilburn. For door-knocking, teams of two or more were sent to a select section of addresses, to conduct surveys and share information on the process in one to two-hour sessions.

Section two of this report provides an overview of the demographics of respondents, priorities for change, and outlines the findings in order of the Key Concerns, Broader Concerns, Additional Concerns, and Aspirations identified by residents in the surveys.

Section 2: Findings & Analysis

2.1   Demographics

In this first half of data collection, 1880 doors were knocked. 177 responses were gathered at these doorsteps, with 24 additional answers provided online (23 in English and 1 in Tigrinya) amounting to **a total of 201 responses**. As such, **the response rate from this half was 10.6%**. Of those that opened their doors when knocked, approximately **40% chose to complete the survey.**
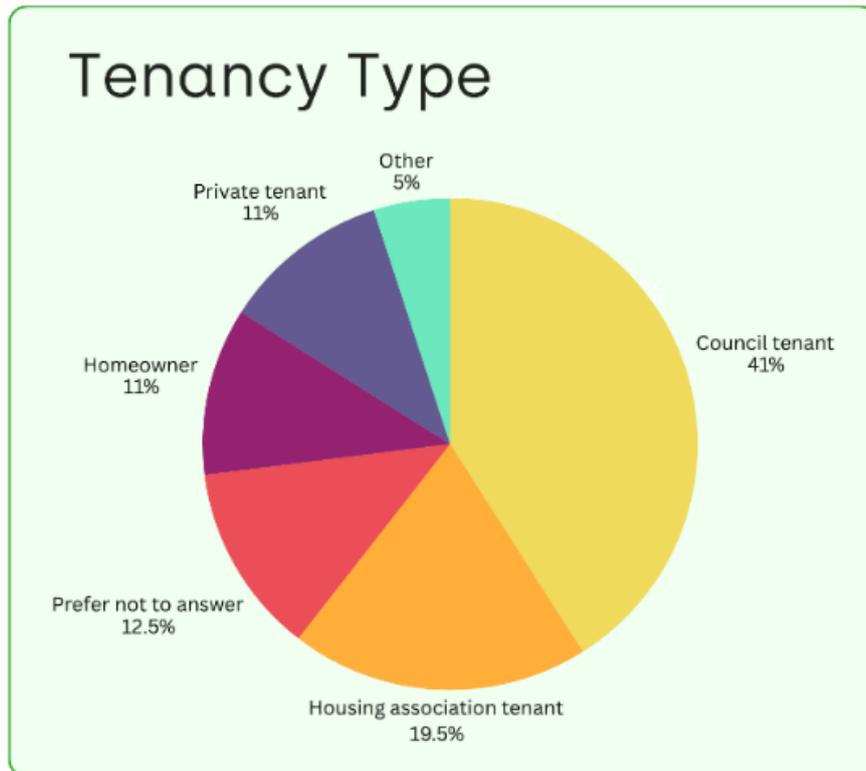
Residents were not requested to share their demographic information to take part in the survey, but an average of 87.4% voluntarily did so.
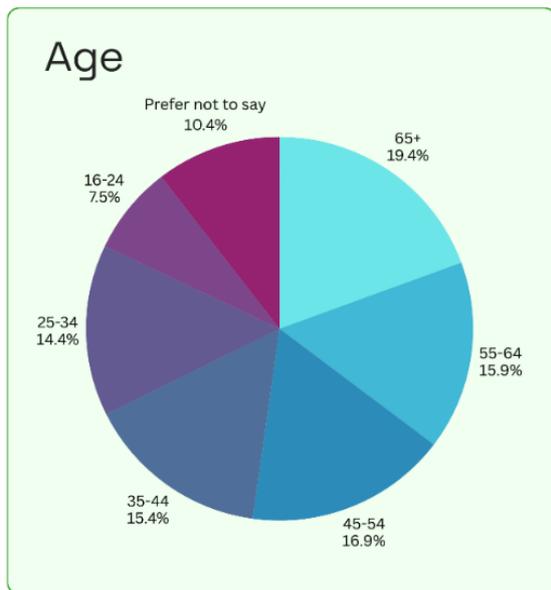

While the age ranges of respondents were evenly distributed, respondents were **largely from either a Black or White ethnic background** (35.2% and 35.7% respectively). The responses from minoritised communities aligns with the findings from the "Mapping of Social & Community Infrastructure and Collating Evidence of Need in South Kilburn" (2024), where Black and White groups in the South Kilburn area were 36.5% and 30.5% respectively. This applied also to other ethnic minorities in the area, aside from Asian groups who comprised 5% of survey respondents compared to 14% in the area according to the 2024 report.
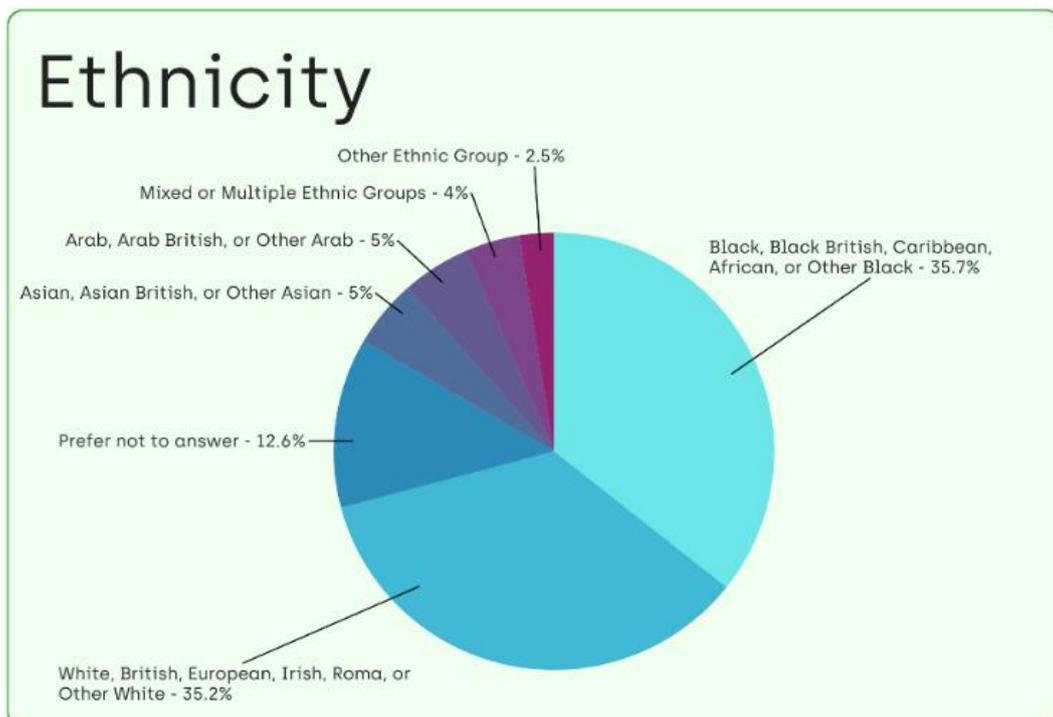
Respondents were **majority council tenants** (41%), with the **second largest** group being **housing association tenants** (19.5%). This is broadly representative of tenancy type distribution in the South Kilburn area, where 62.3% are in social rented accommodation.

Tenancy Type

- Other 5%
- Private tenant 11%
- Homeowner 11%
- Prefer not to answer 12.5%
- Council tenant 41%
- Housing association tenant 19.5%

Respondents were also **a slight majority female** (46.7%) over male (38.3%).

Gender

38.3% Male

46.7% Female

14.9% Prefer not to say
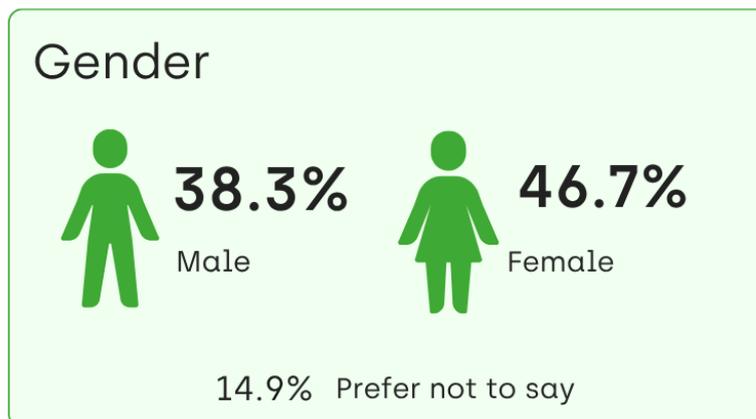
When asked if English was their first language, the majority (65.8%) responded 'yes'.

Of the 34.1% that responded 'no', they were invited to share their first language, which received a range of responses reflecting the diversity of South Kilburn.

The majority of these respondents' first languages was Arabic (22.4%), with the next languages being Somali (12%), Spanish (6.9%) and Portuguese (5.2%).

A word cloud of non-English first languages shared in the survey

2.2   **Overall Priorities for Change**

Residents were first asked to describe the main issue they had been dealing with in the last 12 months. This question was open-ended, allowing respondents to freely share their thoughts in their own words.

44.7% of respondents described some kind of **crime and safety** issue, while **40.7%** described an issue related to **housing**. Other issues described in this first question included subjects corresponding to the priority areas outlined below, with the main themes arising from each priority area expanded on further in this report.

In the second question, residents were asked to rank their top three priority areas out of nine, which were:

- Housing;
- Crime and safety;
- Health and wellbeing;
- Services for young people;
- Outdoor spaces;
- Jobs and training;
- Local organisations and community groups;
- Connecting with the local community;
- Information on activities and services.
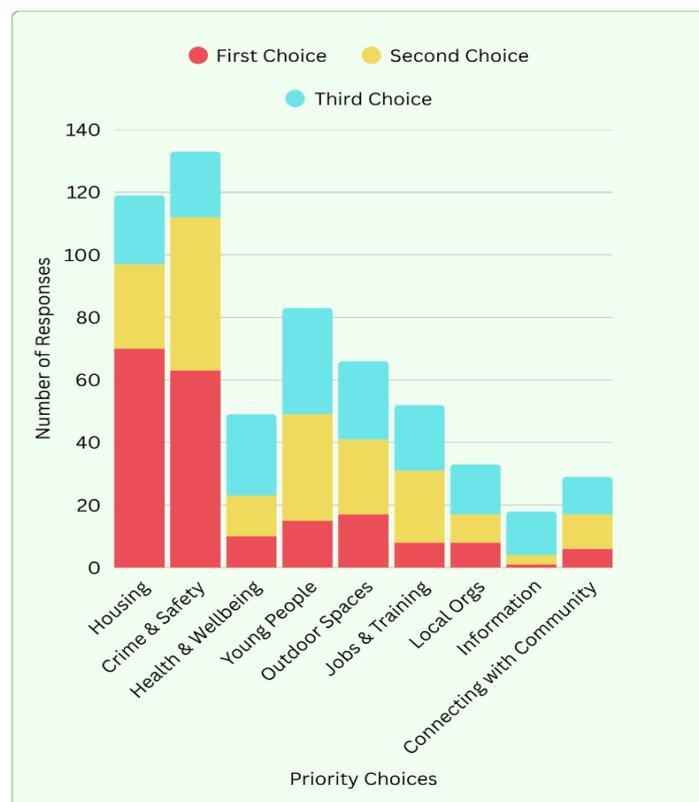
Crime and housing were the top priority areas of _key concern_, supporting the findings of the first question. **Services for young people and outdoor spaces** were the next most selected areas, suggesting that these are _broader concerns_ of the community.
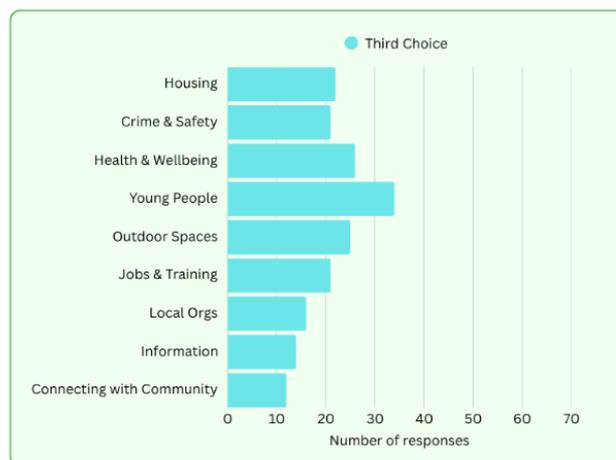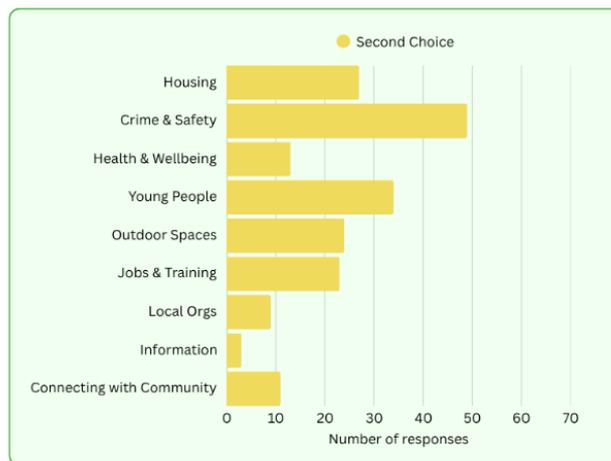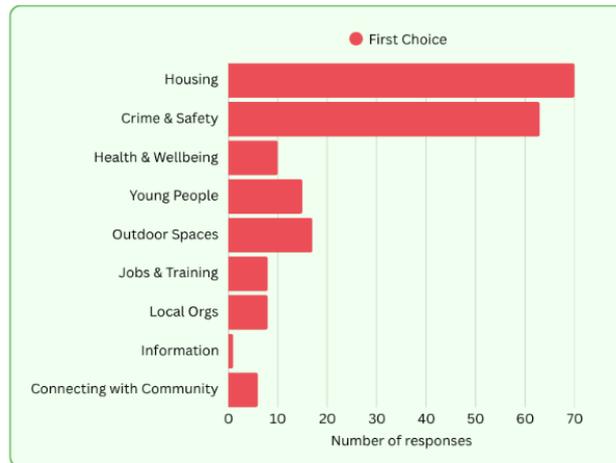
Additional concerns mentioned in this report include health and wellbeing, training and jobs, support for local organisations, information on events and activities and connecting with the local community.[1]

69% of respondents felt that the provided list of nine areas sufficiently covered priorities for change. Suggestions for other areas to be included in the list, or should be considered more explicitly within existing priority areas, were:

- Improving quality of service delivery (i.e., council, housing officers)
- More community centres/buildings
- More parking
- Better services for those with special educational needs
- Better accessibility for those with physical disabilities
- More affordable housing
- More commercial/leisure options (i.e., shops, pubs)
- Organisations supporting community rights, i.e., Community Law Centre/Citizens Advice Bureau

2.3   Key Concerns

A.   Crime & Safety

Crime and safety emerged as one of the main priority areas for change from respondents, with nearly one in two respondents (**45%**) citing it as a top concern. This correlates with the data on feelings of safety in South Kilburn, with **63%** saying they did feel safe, **17%** saying they did not, and 20% saying they were not sure.

Of those that shared their experiences dealing with or witnessing these issues, several themes emerged from their responses. While recognising the overlapping and mutually reinforcing nature of many crimes, the main crimes of concern referenced were:

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- Squatting
- Drug dealing/using
- Burglary and petty theft
- Violent crime

56% of respondents who cited crime as a main concern identified the crime as being primarily linked to building management issues, such as the breaking of doors/gates, unauthorised entry and loitering in buildings, and breaking into bin stores. Housing association tenants were more likely to link crime to building safety than council tenants.

Respondents also identified several other areas of concern linked to their experiences with crime. These included issues around **a lack of engagement with young people and young peoples services**, widespread **rough sleeping** and lack of support for the homeless, **lack of support** for addiction and

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[1] Various statistical tests were run to analyse these data points. Chi Square tests ensured the statistical significance of the respondents' picks for first priority, with a p-value of less than 0.05. Using confidence intervals (adjusted for a smaller population size of about 4,000), there is **95% confidence** that between **21.8% and 33.9% of the South Kilburn population** would pick **crime as their top priority**. Additionally, there is **95% confidence** that between **26.7% and 39%** of the South Kilburn population would select **housing as the top priority**. These confidence intervals will be reanalysed in the future with the second half of the data to create a narrower range of projection.

mental health, **environmental neglect** (lack of cleanliness or pride of place), **infrastructural neglect** (decanted sites awaiting demolition that encourage criminal activity), and a **loss of community cohesion**.

Other residents also expressed uncertainty about who to talk to about lower-level crime/ASB, where police or housing providers don't intervene, and where they recognised that factors of homelessness, addiction, and mental health issues needed attention.

> *"They [housing providers] should put cameras, even fake ones…police take no action, they just send you an online link as they say it isn't an emergency"*

There is a **statistically significant difference** in selecting crime as a top priority between different age groups. The **youngest age bracket** (16-24) was **more likely to report feeling safe** in the area. Older age brackets, **especially 55-64**, were **more likely to report feeling unsafe**. Recognising that perceptions of safety are highly subjective and influenced by demographics and other factors, there is an intent to hold focus groups with young people on safety in the coming months.

B. Housing

Housing was also a key priority area for change particularly for council and housing association tenants. Of those who shared experiences dealing with housing issues, the following themes emerged from their experiences:

- **Safety**: as detailed above, there was a prominent fear about break-ins, squatters, open access points, and the presence of individuals perceived as threatening in residents' accounts of housing concerns. Where action is taken, some residents noted that squatters either move on to the neighbouring building or return later.

- **Poor building maintenance and repairs**: respondents often reported slow, inadequate, or absent responses to repairs, ranging from leaks and mould to broken lifts, communal doors, and heating.

- **Cleanliness and waste management**: including rubbish accumulation, fly-tipping, unhygienic communal areas, and lack of regular bin collections or cleaning. Often as a byproduct of squatting in bin stores, residents report that they have felt unsafe to use designated waste areas and so are forced to leave waste outside the building or use other buildings' bin stores. Others reported that when codes are changed, they are locked out from the stores indicating a lack of communication between housing providers and residents. Recognition of an interconnection between waste and crime is demonstrated in one resident's statement:

> *"Bin stores are being opened up by squatters and there's a rise in drug addicts and homeless people who are not receiving care in [the] community... shelters, and mental health services, are no longer available"*

- **Cost concerns.** Many residents noted a rise in living costs (service charge and rent) disproportionate to the standard of service provision.

- **Lack of responsiveness or support from housing providers**: residents reported a palpable frustration with housing providers, especially around responsiveness, transparency, and failure to act on pressing issues. One resident for example reported that:

> *"The ceiling hasn't been replaced in over three years, causing mice and pigeon infestations which are damaging the inside of the house. I've reported it but nobody came. I don't even know who my housing officer is"*

Though less prominent, other notable themes concerned neighbourly complaints/disputes, overcrowding, and dissatisfaction with vacant homes not being used as an interim housing solution for those in need, whose vacancy only contributes to squatting.

2.4   Broader Concerns

C. Services for young people

The need for improved services for young people typically arose in relation to preventing crime. There was a perceived **lack of youth centres or activities** that could engage children and young people, and concern that this might be contributing to crime in the area, especially violent crime. Given the wider area's ongoing issue with gang violence and related crime, there remains pressing needs to further investigate the relationships between the prospects of young people in the area and demonstrated concerns about crime.

While this survey was designed for residents aged 16 or older for safeguarding purposes, there was a significant interest in finding ways to capture the input of younger residents. To maximise youth engagement, the Children and Young People's Thematic Action Group developed the Youth Voice Project; surveys were tailored and distributed to several partner organisations working with young people, designed to be done between trusted mentors and youth participants. These organisations included Asma Community Group, London Basketball Association, Global Skills Centre, and Divine Purpose. To date, we have collected 100 responses via our partners, and data collected by these organisations will be analysed at a future stage to share a more in-depth look into this priority area.

D. Outdoor spaces

Outdoor spaces was another priority area important to respondents. 14% of respondents felt outdoor spaces did not need to be improved, while **83% felt that outdoor spaces should be improved**. When asked what improvements residents would like to see to outdoor spaces, top suggestions, in order of frequency, were:

- New or more facilities (50%)

- Maintenance (cleanliness) (20%)

- Maintenance (repairs) (16%)

- Addressing misuse of parks (use by adults, drinking, smoking, intimidating dogs, groups of rough sleepers)

- Addressing crime, improving safety (ASB, vandalism, drugs. Suggestions include warden patrols, security cameras).

- More parking (4.5%)

"Green spaces are significantly under-planted. When it looks like a space is being cared for, people take care of it more. It makes a world of difference"

15% of respondents felt that there needed to be *more* green space in South Kilburn generally.

Respondents were also asked if there were any areas that they didn't like or avoided. The main areas listed were:
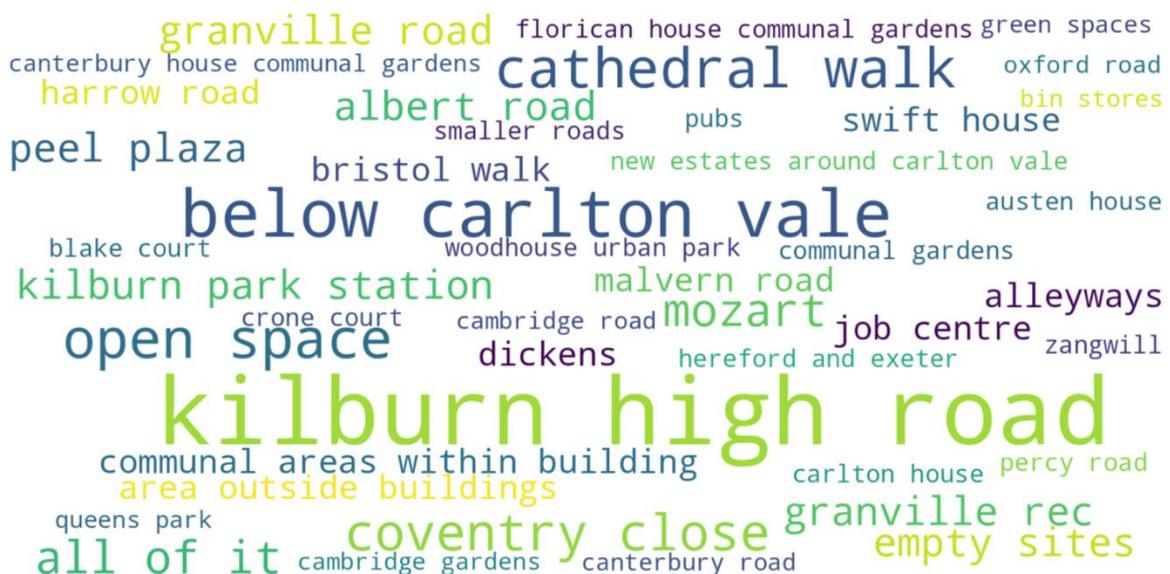
Word cloud of areas respondents say they didn't like or avoided

2.5 Additional Concerns

      E. Health & Wellbeing

Health and wellbeing emerged as an additional concern for respondents. When asked how local health and wellbeing services could be made more accessible, **34% responded** with either a **positive sentiment** towards local services or did not otherwise have any suggestions for how they could be improved. Positive sentiments were largely pertaining to the proximity of GP surgeries in the area.

From residents who responded with areas they felt could be improved, various barriers or concerns emerged according to the different levels of the health and wellbeing ecosystem. Regarding medical services, responses can be categorised into primary care, secondary care, and community health as follows:

1. **Primary care**:
   - **General practice**:
     - Lack of appointment availability, both in quantity and during suitable hours for those in work.
     - Online services and virtual appointments as a barrier. Residents identified a notable difficulty in getting face to face appointments and posing a barrier to those with lower digital skills.
     - High turnaround of staff/staff shortages, causing a lack of continuity of care and familiarity.
     - Quality of advice or action. Some residents felt that advice and support provided was poor, did not resolve issue at hand, or that support tended to be more reactive i.e., action only taken once concern became more severe.
     - Poor responsiveness, including communicating test results or appointment changes promptly.
   - **NHS dental services**: several residents reported that there were not enough public dentists in the area.
   - **Pharmacies**: it was noted that pharmacies in the area are not open on weekends.

2. **Secondary care**:
   - **Mental health**:
     - Lack of mental health services for young people outside the CAMHS age range (18-25).
     - Lack of incentives for young people to access mental health services.
   - **Planned elective care** (i.e., in hospital): most references to secondary care services cited that they were frequently referred far out of the area, and that referral times were exceedingly long.
   - **Emergency care**: multiple respondents mentioned long waiting times for ambulance services.

3. **Community health**:
   - More proactive checks on vulnerable residents. Suggestion that there could be a **community health workers, nurses or navigators** to develop relationships with community and conduct home visits.

- Request for **improved health and advocacy services** for families, those with disabilities, and the elderly.

Respondents also highlighted concerns for non-medical wellbeing services such as gyms and sports and leisure centres. Multiple residents cited costs as being a main barrier to access. Others also reported issues with accessibility (especially with outdoor gym equipment) and a lack of local sports and leisure facilities.

"Health and wellbeing services should be more visible, with more activities. They should have health champions from the community doing health events on the estate. A way to make it celebratory, where champions are representative of community"

F. Jobs & Training

South Kilburn's **7.8% unemployment rate** sits higher than the current national average of 4.6% (ONS 2025)(4). While the Community Conversations Survey did not include in depth questions around employment needs, SKT conducted a focus group of seven South Kilburn residents in June 2025, with participants from varied professional and personal backgrounds, and at a range of stages in their professional careers. All participants were actively seeking jobs, with length of time searching for employment ranging from one month to 18 months.

Focus group participants shared experiences across the employment landscape, practical and systemic challenges, and proposed suggestions for service improvement. Key themes that emerged
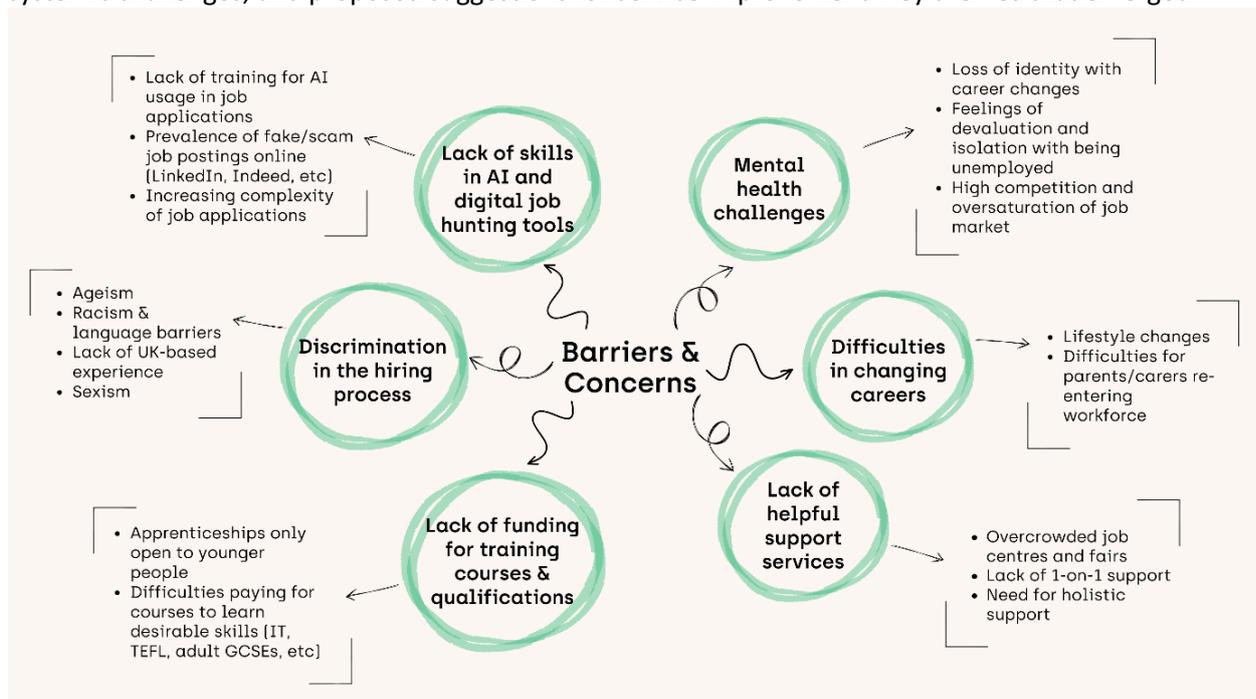
Employment: barriers and concerns shared by focus group participants, June 2025

included the **increasing complexity of digital job applications, lack of accessible training resources, mental health impacts,** and the **persistent presence of discrimination.** See Appendix for focus group findings.

2.6 Aspirations

As well as asking for main concerns and priorities for change, the survey asked residents about their aspirations for local events and activities, improvements to outdoor spaces and recommendations for making health and wellbeing services more accessible. The employment focus group worked with residents to understand how local employment services could better meet their needs.

G. Local Events & Activities

In the Community Conversations survey, respondents were asked to share ideas for events and activities they would like to see happening (or see more of) in the area. Themes in their suggestions included **events improving community cohesion** (i.e. festivals, gatherings, food events, fun fairs, and markets), **sports and exercise** events, **activation of outdoor spaces** (i.e. farmer's markets, festivals, fetes, greening activities, and park runs), **civic activities** (i.e. community forums, skips, litter picks, and charity fundraisers), **educational events** (i.e. family events, financial and welfare advice, and cultural awareness and historical discussions), **creative events** (i.e. screenings, performances, and exhibitions), **service-specific events** (i.e. housing, regeneration, and welfare services), and **entrepreneurial events** (i.e. local job/business fairs, networking, and self-employment courses).

Where suggested activities pertained to specific age groups, popular suggestions per group included:

Adults
- Parenting courses
- Women's/mother's clubs
- Financial wellbeing courses
- Physical wellbeing
- Adult education

Elderly
- Social events
- Day trips
- Activities to combat isolation
- Events to improve access to services

Young People
- Free and low-cost sports and exercise
- Education
- Youth club spaces and services

Marginalised Groups
- More activities for disabled people
- Improved accessibility at events
- LGBTQ+ events

Place-based Community
- Street parties
- Regular tenant meetings
- Ways to get to know neighbours

Cultural Groups
- Heritage and cultural festivities, i.e. Eid, Diwali, Afro-Caribbean festivals, etc

Families
- Activities suitable for families with babies
- Plays and face painting
- Day trips
- Organised free play at playgrounds

Multiple barriers were identified to accessing or initiating new activities and events. These included **age barriers** (that there weren't activities available for ages 16-24), **high costs and lack of funding**, and a **lack of information** about existing events. Additionally, respondents highlighted the **poor timing** of existing events, especially for teenagers, where activities were being run too close to the end of school hours or not on weekends, prohibiting them from attending. They also highlighted the **lack of available community spaces**, both indoor and outdoor.

H. Health and Wellbeing

General suggestions for improvements in this area included **increasing and improving information sharing and outreach.**

Other suggestions included **creating more local health centres** (for secondary care or for testing facilities), with residents with disabilities reporting having to often take private taxis to appointments. Respondents also suggested **increasing the diversity of healthcare and wellbeing staff** and creating **resident pricing for wellbeing facilities** (such as gyms and sports centres). Some also suggested a connection between outdoor spaces and wellbeing, highlighting a connection between improved public and outdoor spaces and improving wellbeing.

I. Improvements to Outdoor Spaces

In the surveys, 83% of respondents had suggestions for improvements to outdoor spaces. Including more facilities, maintenance and repairs. Spatial improvements, in order of frequency mentioned by residents were:

1 New/more playground equipment	2 More/improved seating	3 More/improved greening
4 More/improved lighting	5 More bins	6 More commercial spaces
7 New/more outdoor exercise equipment and sport areas	8 Improved paving	9 Improved road layouts
10 Designated dog areas	11 New/more water fountains	12 Other topics

Resident suggestions for how to improve existing green spaces

J. Suggestions for improvements to employment services:

The Employment and Training focus group highlighted a strong consensus around the need for employment support services to invest in long-term, holistic initiatives that build community

connections and provide sustained, and personalised, guidance. Participants suggested a range of initiatives including local mentors, professional skill building workshops, networking opportunities, and industry-specific focus groups to help share resources and open doors to new roles. There was a clear call for practical support such as tailored interview practice, CV workshops, trial periods for jobs, apprenticeships open to all ages, and buddy systems for job searches to help people gain experience and build confidence. Many also valued in-person events where job seekers can connect with each other, share tips, and learn from one another.

Overall, participants felt that employment support should be an ongoing, joined-up process that helps people navigate options they may not yet know exist, while fostering a sense of community and shared experience to boost mental and physical health.

Section 3: Conclusion & Next Steps

3.1   Next Steps

While the interim results of this first stage of the Community Conversations project have been deeply insightful, SKT remains committed to continuing this research and providing residents of South Kilburn the opportunity to be heard in a range of ways. The next stage of this project, therefore, will be to survey the remaining 1000 or so homes not yet knocked, while continuing to make the survey accessible to those who might wish to complete it online, do it with a trusted local leader, or in their first language. While crime and housing have consistently remained top priorities from respondents so far, further analysis will need to be undertaken on the impact of the other highlighted priority areas. Additionally, analysis of the crossover between the priority areas will be key. Responses highlighted the overlapping and intersectional nature of priority areas, for example the relationship between crime and housing or crime and services for young people.

Next steps include:

- Focus Groups - Will continue to be held with residents to gain a deeper understanding of their concerns and aspirations.
- Youth Voice Project – SKT will further analyse the data collected from youth providers in South Kilburn, joint workshops will take place to give a detailed insight into the lives and prospects of young people in the area and to involve them in the process of planning for the future of South Kilburn.
- Multi-Agency Partnership led by Elected Residents – A group of interim selected residents will use the evidence gathered from the Community Conversations project to build a Community Plan for South Kilburn. This in turn may result in the formation of new Thematic Action Groups based on the emergent priorities (e.g. Crime and Housing).
- Community Forums – sharing these results with residents, keeping them updated on the process, and inviting feedback and involvement in the Community Plan for South Kilburn.

3.2   Conclusion

The findings from the Community Conversations survey have strengthened the existing evidence base from the mapping, collation of evidence of need, one to one conversations and workshops with key local partners and stakeholders. It has identified that the key concerns for residents are crime and safety and housing. Broader concerns include services for children and young people and outdoor spaces. Residents highlighted the following additional concerns: employment, health and wellbeing, and community cohesion. Residents repeatedly demonstrated the importance of all these areas, expressing hesitancy to select just one or two top choices.

As well as voicing their concerns, residents shared a range of aspirations addressing these concerns including improved lighting and better playground equipment for outdoor spaces, community cohesion events that focused on education, wellbeing and creative activities, and employment services that took a holistic approach to getting residents into work.

SKT and partners recognise **the importance of the ongoing and collaborative nature of this project**. Even when all c3000 doors in South Kilburn have been knocked, it is essential the conversation and the listening continue to shape the South Kilburn Community Plan. South Kilburn residents have

made explicit the need for stakeholders and partner organisations - including SKT - **to continue involving residents in the processes and decision-making that concerns their lives and the future of the community**. It is critical that partners, organisations, funders, and beyond support the community-led efforts underway in South Kilburn to coordinate resident voice and a shared vision for South Kilburn.   By harnessing community power and enabling residents to shape local services we can build a bright future for South Kilburn, one that is informed by and serves the best interests of those who live here.

About South Kilburn Trust

South Kilburn Trust (SKT) is a community-based Development Trust committed to improving the lives and opportunities of residents in the South Kilburn area. Through a neighbourhood management and radical place leadership approach we collaborate with partners and residents to ensure collective service improvement in line with community needs. We enable the community to speak with a clear and strong voice to enhance access to essential services, resources, and opportunities.

We operate with a strong belief that community-driven change yields the most sustainable and equitable outcomes. By supporting residents to take an active role in shaping the future of their neighbourhood, we strive to build a more inclusive and connected community with better outcomes for all.

SKT serves as a local hub where South Kilburn residents can access support, share concerns, and get involved in their community. SKT facilitates a range of programmes and initiatives, including partnerships with local organisations, a resident governance board, careers advice and support, affordable workspace, community space and cultural and event space, as well as this ongoing Community Conversations project.

These efforts are rooted in a shared vision of making South Kilburn a better, more liveable place for all residents.

Works Cited

1. "Mapping of Social & Community Infrastructure And Collating Evidence of Need in South Kilburn" (April 2024). Community and Economic Regeneration Consultants LTD. https://www.southkilburntrust.org/_files/ugd/62ef45_35360165c6284403bc9cd4fcfeb104d2.pdf.

2. "South Kilburn Regeneration Strategy Community Partners and Stakeholders Workshop" (March 2024). Community and Economic Regeneration Consultants LTD. https://www.southkilburntrust.org/priorities-actions

3. "The South Kilburn Masterplan" & "Supplementary Planning Document" (2016). Brent Council. https://www.brent.gov.uk/business/regeneration/growth-areas/south-kilburn-regeneration/the-south-kilburn-masterplan#Southkilburnspd

4. "Labour market overview, UK" (June 2025). Office for National Statistics (ONS) https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/june2025

Appendix

Employment and Training Focus Group Findings

Unemployment rates within South Kilburn (image 4) differ across the area. However, the area's **7.8% unemployment rate** sits higher than the current national average of 4.6% (ONS 2025). Recognising the multifaceted challenges to seeking and maintaining employment in the current labour market, a focus group of seven local residents was conducted in June 2025, with participants
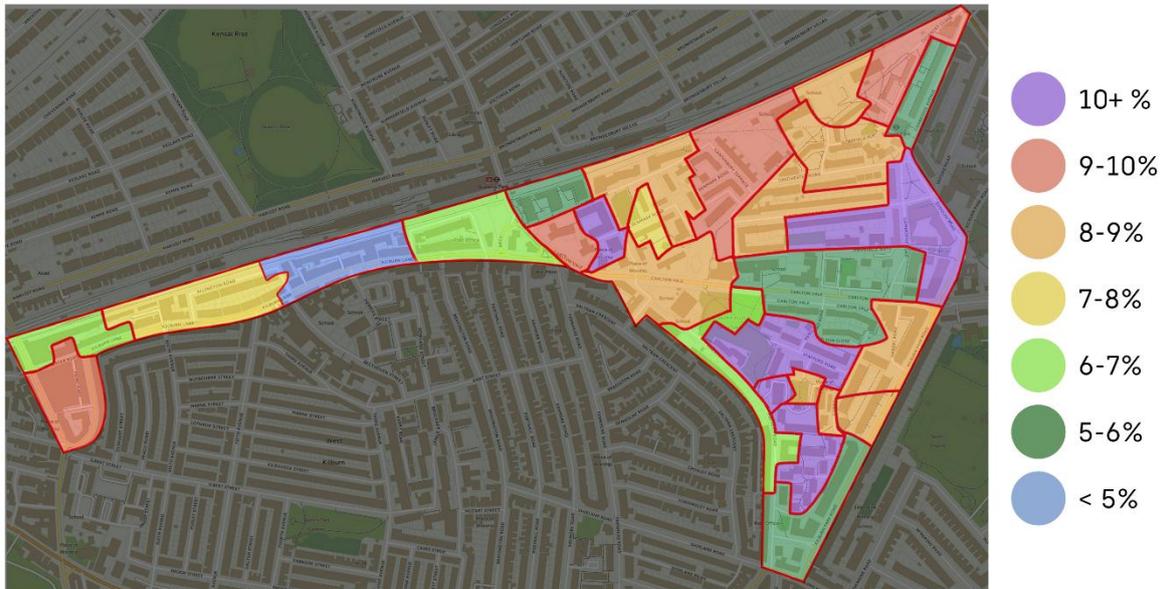

Image 4: Unemployment rates in South Kilburn, according to 2021 census data

from varied professional and personal backgrounds, and at a range of stages in their professional careers. All participants were actively seeking jobs, with length of time searching for employment ranging from one month to 18 months.

Focus group participants shared experiences across the employment landscape, practical and systemic challenges, and proposed suggestions for service improvement. Key themes that emerged included the **increasing complexity of digital job applications, lack of accessible training resources, mental health impacts,** and the **persistent presence of discrimination.**

5. Employment landscape:

Job search

There was consensus among participants that the **employment landscape had significantly changed in recent years, most notably due to the embeddedness of AI technologies** in the job search process. With participants generally using online platforms to apply for jobs, they recognised that applications are largely being filtered by AI which has introduced different and often unclear criteria in their review. This has had the dual effect of making the job application process feel increasingly impersonal, along with new costs attached to the job search process with participants seeking out paid AI services to review their applications. Along with exceedingly long job requirements included in job

advertisements, participants reported that the opaque review processes have also made it harder to evidence transferrable skills or motivations in the limited space of an application.

Participants mostly used online platforms in their job search, however reported that it could be difficult to find legitimate and appropriate vacancies. Aside from high saturation of applicants, participants reported that many jobs advertisements on websites such as LinkedIn, Indeed, Adzuna and CV library, were scams intended to mine data or already closed.

Participants felt that they could benefit from training in spotting inauthentic postings and a community subscription or access to AI CV scanners.

Participants also discussed alternative platforms for searching for jobs they had sought, for example, job fairs. While participants valued the opportunity to meet the employer, they reported they can be very busy at times, and it can be difficult to have more in-depth conversations with employers. Participants also reported that they are often then referred to the employer's online platform in any case and so it is difficult to develop contacts.

Job offer stage

Participants reported experiences of job offers being retracted without explanation. Participants could have benefit from information or support on how to appeal decisions or seek feedback.

6. Practical and systemic barriers

Training and qualifications

The focus group also highlighted a range of practical and systemic barriers related to training and qualifications that make it difficult for individuals to upskill and transition into different roles. Many participants felt that learning resources are often too expensive and are mainly designed for people who are already in employment, which makes entry-level opportunities feel out of reach for those trying to get back into work. Programmes such as Generation UK and skills bootcamps were mentioned, but participants noted that more accessible and affordable options are needed. Several people spoke about the feelings of "rustiness" that can set in after even short or medium-term periods of unemployment, which impacts their confidence and ability to sell themselves to employers. They felt that more support in developing self-reflection skills and rebuilding self-esteem would help counter the sense of devaluation that comes with being unemployed. Funding for training and qualifications was seen as vital, with participants expressing a strong desire for free courses in areas like TEFL, IT skills, data science, and adult GCSEs - especially for those who have not completed these qualifications before or whose existing qualifications are not recognised in the UK.

Physical and mental health impacts

Participants also discussed the significant physical and mental health consequences they experienced during periods of unemployment and career change. Many described career transitions as deeply isolating, with mental health challenges arising from the loss of identity tied to their previous roles and the difficulty of knowing how to direct their energies or time. There was a clear recognition that

employment impacts wider lifestyle factors, often bringing new stresses that can affect mental wellbeing. Some participants expressed frustration at the lack of affordable or accessible health and sports facilities and limited awareness of other concessionary options. Suggestions for support cited Good Work Camden as a positive example, who hold resilience workshops and mentoring that extends throughout the entire job search rather than being one-off or short-term interventions. Participants also felt that better communication and information sharing about affordable wellbeing activities would help them stay connected to their communities and maintain their mental and physical health during challenging times.

7. Discrimination:

The focus group revealed a high prevalence of experiences of discrimination among participants, occurring both during the job search process and within the workplace itself. Ageism was raised, particularly when attempting to change careers or return to work after a period of caring responsibilities. Discrimination was also highlighted, with participants explaining that without personal contacts in certain industries, overcoming biases can be very difficult, as employers can privilege UK-based experience and fail to recognise transferrable skills. Racism, and prejudices against English as a second language, was also mentioned, alongside sexism and inappropriate "banter" in male-dominated workplaces. Some participants reported feeling discriminated against even before submitting applications. There was a clear desire for more support to help individuals feel better equipped to address discrimination at various stages of the job search and in employment. Suggestions also included sharing forums that list companies or training opportunities across industries that are committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion.

8. Suggestions for improvements to employment services:

The focus group highlighted a strong consensus around the need for employment support services to move away from one-off or fragmented interventions and instead invest in long-term, holistic programmes that build community connections and provide sustained, and personalised, guidance. Participants highlighted for example how the job centre was often their only consistent point of contact, however the support they provided was often slow and generic. Participants suggested that local employed people could act as mentors, offering professional workshops, networking opportunities, and industry-specific groups to help share resources and open doors to new roles. There was a clear call for practical support such as industry-specific interview practice, CV workshops, and greater awareness of how existing skills can transfer to alternative careers. Ideas like trial periods for jobs, apprenticeships open to all ages, and buddy systems for job searches were put forward to help people gain experience and build confidence. Many also valued in-person events where job seekers can connect with each other, share tips, and learn from each other. They emphasised the need for workshops on using AI and effective job searching.

Overall, participants felt that employment support should be an ongoing, joined-up process that helps people navigate options they may not yet know exist, while fostering a sense of community and shared experience to boost mental and physical health.