



'UNLOCKING YOUR POTENTIAL'

SKILLS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
IN NORTH KENSINGTON



BY SARAH SMOURED



WHAT I SET OUT TO DO

I developed a research plan, including a discussion guide, and obtained consent from participants. I interviewed 4 key informants, such as Westway Trust and Nova, and 4 members of the North Kensington community, all above 18 years old.

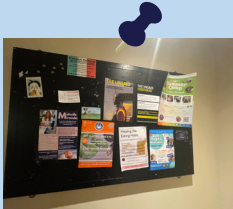
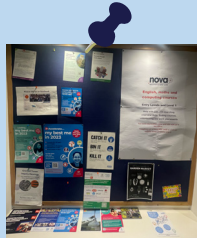
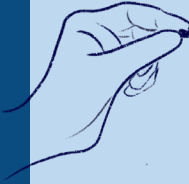


WHAT I ENDED UP DOING

I followed the research plan, conducting a walking ethnography initially, where I had walked through different neighbourhoods in North Kensington to identify how and where skills and learning opportunities were being advertised. I then had identified key stakeholders who were often directly involved in organising these learning opportunities and had contacted them with regards to meeting for an interview.

As well as stakeholders, I had also approached members of the community to identify what they knew of the skills and learning opportunities, whether they attended these, what their opinions were, etc...

Interviews were held in a comfortable space, transcribed, and coded for key themes which were later used for further analysis.



MAIN FINDINGS AND EVIDENCE

1. Significance of Skills and Learning:

I discovered that skills and learning opportunities are crucial for a good life in North Kensington, mentioned by interviewees for child development and aiding the elderly.

2. Barriers to Accessibility:

I had found that all participants interviewed from the community were unaware of available opportunities, indicating a need for improved advertising and accessibility. Participant C (anonymous) mentioned they even had to travel to East London for the desired artistic sessions due to lack of local awareness.

3. Financial Barriers:

Finance and the cost of living crisis emerged as a key barrier mentioned by multiple interviewees. Some residents mentioned that they prioritized bills over learning, however they had acknowledged that certain skills could alleviate the financial challenges they were facing.

4. Wealth Disparity: Rich vs Poor

Interviewees highlighted wealth disparity in North Kensington. Skills and learning opportunities could bridge this gap, with a suggestion for money management courses to empower the community financially and break the vicious cycle many were facing. The disparity in wealth also highlights the difference in opportunities - a belief that those with financial means would have better access to education and basic necessities.

5. *Community Communication*

Communication between centres and stakeholders:

A key issue I had uncovered was that multiple centres often had the same opportunities available, but the turnout had suggested it to have not been as successful as it could have been. E.g. one centre would have a digital class with (say) 3 participants, and across the road, another centre would have the same class with another amount of participants. This could be argued to be a waste of local funding, and could be avoided if the centres communicated with each other and coordinated skills and learning opportunities together. The turnout rate would most likely increase, and the funding could be allocated to another opportunity that the community would benefit from.

The evidence for these findings comes from interviews conducted with key informants and community members, supported by transcriptions and thematic coding.

FINANCIAL BARRIERS

‘Two separate worlds’ - financial barrier between poor and rich

‘Language barriers automatically block job searches - vicious cycle.’ - language classes would have a positive impact on the good life if people could communicate for basic needs

‘People who grow up can often work at the youth they attended when younger(positive cycle) ‘giving back to the community’

Wants to see more home grown entrepreneurial ideas introduced by more people in the area

Wants local talents to be put to use

‘Tech is often daunting to use’ - (not easy to access opportunities if only available online)

- Participant F





**SIGNIFICANCE OF SKILLS AND
LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**



*Homing problems prevent
people from focusing on skills
and learning opportunities*

*'Youth need more opportunities
and activities to prevent gang
crimes'*

- Participant I



BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBILITY



'It would be nice to see more boot camps, more workshops for IT programme.'

Often goes to east London to find opportunity'

- Participant C

DIGITAL INCLUSION

people feel left out of the community as they cannot use tech. Some members of the community may wish to access an opportunity, however they are unable to if technology is needed (online classes)

‘But I think we are really wanting to try and take advantage of things like mass texting software’

‘I guess establishing yourself as a prime referral partner for spaces that have access to a lot of the community; so for example, places like GPs, Citizens Advice Bureau, the job centre.’

‘So sometimes it can feel like we’re all kind of shouting really loudly to have our voices heard. But we’re all doing that and our voices aren’t very loud. And then we’re getting a few people in each one of our rooms instead of 50 people in one room’

‘I think the real impact might show kind of in a couple of years when, you know, if people have attended a course, or gone to something for a year or two, and then seeing the effect that has then had on their lives subsequently. So whether they’ve gone on to find employment, or whether it’s had a big impact on their mental and physical well being the kind of longer term factors that we can see maybe, yeah, a few years down the line.’

- Participant H

‘I’d like to apply for funding to, you know, increase the digital inclusion around learners, we also offer, but that’s limited, that’s why I want to try and, you know, expand on this, we do offer learners the cam, there are our beginners courses in a partnership with Age UK.’

- Participant A

A GOOD LIFE

This example shows how learning opportunities can not only be educational, but can help a person to feel confident and happier (a good life)

‘Lots of arts activities have a huge price tag attached. And it can seem like a luxury for a lot of people to engage in.’

*‘we know that like expression and art has a massive impact on self esteem and confidence and feeling connected to others.’
... ‘As well as just improving skills and development, it can also just boost emotional health and well being’
‘Freedom of self expression’*

‘that has also led to people moving on to feeling more confident to go to interviews because they’ve spent six weeks doing poetry and now they are more connected to their voice and their opinion and other people listening to them’

‘And so like really powerful things are happening.’

Women who are struggling at home are given a voice with (local organisation) sessions. - a way to escape harsh realities of home life and enjoy activities with other women

‘There are skills that employers are looking for - creativity, problem solving, teamwork, communication skills... these are things that help you in your relationships & friendships’





FINANCIAL BARRIERS IN ACCESSING EDUCATION



'I feel there's a gap between the poor and the rich Yeah, it's either you have it or you don't'

'People will tell you about places in the school, but you don't hear anything. Hence, I've said that my daughter is going to a private tutor, I would have to pay for my daughter's education for her to get ahead.'

- Participant E

THE GOOD LIFE IN NORTH KENSINGTON BRINGS TOGETHER A TEAM OF RESIDENTS TO EXPLORE WHAT A 'GOOD LIFE' MEANS FOR PEOPLE IN NORTH KENSINGTON, LONDON, AND WHAT SOME OF THE BARRIERS ARE TO ACHIEVING IT. IN 2023, SEVEN LOCAL RESIDENTS BECAME 'CITIZEN SOCIAL SCIENTISTS' AND CARRIED OUT THEIR OWN RESEARCH PROJECTS, INVESTIGATING ISSUES WHICH MATTER TO THEM AND THEIR COMMUNITIES.

THEY HAVE BEEN TRAINED AND SUPPORTED BY UCL'S CITIZEN SCIENCE ACADEMY, BASED AT THE INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL PROSPERITY, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER AND THE WESTWAY TRUST. THEY HAVE SINCE BEEN AWARDED THE CITIZEN SCIENCE CERTIFICATE BY THE UCL OFFICE FOR OPEN SCIENCE AND ARE NOW WORKING WITH LOCAL ORGANISATIONS TO HELP ENSURE CITIZEN VOICES ARE PART OF DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES.

THE GOOD LIFE NORTH KENSINGTON IS PART OF A LARGER PROJECT ON RETHINKING NEIGHBOURHOOD CHANGE AND URBAN FUTURES IN THE AFTERMATH OF HOUSING TRAGEDIES. THE PROJECT IS LED BY DR CONSTANCE SMITH (UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER) AS PART OF A UKRI FUTURE LEADERS FELLOWSHIP. FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE WWW.HIGHRISELANDSCAPES.ORG



The University of Manchester



Institute for
Global Prosperity



Citizen Science
Academy

For more zines by our citizen scientists, please visit -
www.prosperity-global.org/citizen-science-academy

