

Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Neighbourhood Policing

An assembly implemented by Waltham Forest Council and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), where residents can share their views on policing issues, and develop recommendations to improve trust and confidence.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Evaluated locally
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Community engagement Diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) Leadership, development and learning
Organisation	Metropolitan Police Service
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Region	London
Partners	Police Community safety partnership Local authority Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	November 2023
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Children and young people Communities General public Race/ethnicity Victims Workforce

Aim

The aim of the Citizens' Assembly is to:

- build trust between local communities and the police
- provide residents, especially young people, with a voice to influence local policing
- develop practical, community-led recommendations for safer neighbourhoods
- foster collaboration between council, police, local partners and communities

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the Citizens' Assembly are to:

- increase trust and confidence in local policing
- enhance inclusive, visible and responsive neighbourhood policing
- improve engagement with young people and underrepresented communities
- enhance accountability and transparency in policing
- improve youth services and safer spaces for young people

Description

Crime and violence are consistently reported as a main concern for Waltham Forest residents. In 2023, the Casey Review, highlighted systemic failings in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), including institutional discrimination and a lack of community voice. In response, in 2024 Waltham Forest Council and the MPS North East Basic Command Unit (BCU) launched the Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Neighbourhood Policing. The assembly aimed to build trust and co-create solutions by involving residents directly in shaping policing priorities.

Planning

The assembly was co-designed and co-delivered by Involve (a public participation charity), with participant recruitment managed by the charity, Sortition Foundation. An independent advisory board consisting of community leaders, senior council leader and the MPS provided oversight to ensure an inclusive planning process. Pre-assembly engagement with over 1,300 residents, consisted of borough-wide surveys, focus groups and interviews. The purpose of the pre-assembly engagement was to look at safety and policing, peer-to-peer youth engagement, and consulting with voluntary and faith organisations. Pre-assembly engagement activities were promoted through council communications channels, local services and voluntary community organisations working with target groups.

Design and implementation

The assembly ran over three weekends (five days total) during February and March 2024. The assembly was attended by 45 residents, who broadly reflected the borough's diversity and discussed the questions: 'How can the police build trust with all communities and make Waltham Forest feel safer?'

The assembly followed three stages:

- one: learning about the problem by reviewing key information and evidence from expert speakers as well as people with lived experience
- two: deliberating with other members to generate ideas and draft recommendations
- three: deciding on final recommendations by reviewing and voting on them

During the assembly, the participants drafted a vision statement and recommendations which included:

- recruitment
- training
- accountability
- victim support
- youth engagement
- partnerships
- communication
- visibility

These informed a joint Action Plan published in July 2025, developed collaboratively by Waltham Forest Council and the MPS through workshops and community consultation.

Funding

The initiative was funded by Waltham Forest Council, with support from the MPS. The costs covered the design, development and facilitation of the input by commissioned partners Neighbourly Lab and Involve, venue hire, catering, accessibility adjustments and wellbeing support.

Oversight

The delivery of the Citizens' Assembly was overseen by the independent advisory board. The board provided advice and oversight to ensure the process, evidence and materials were accurate, balanced and unbiased.

The delivery of the action plan is overseen by Waltham Forest Community Safety Partnership. The progress is monitored through regular reviews, with residents engaged via panels, webinars, and other communication and digital channels.

Evaluation

The Waltham Forest Citizens' Assembly on the Future of Neighbourhood Policing [final report](#) was published in July 2024.

The report sets out:

- the background to the assembly
- who was involved, including assembly members, other community members, subject matter experts and everyone else who made the assembly possible
- assembly members' reflections on the process
- recommendations
- what will happen next

The recommendations will be used to improve neighbourhood policing in Waltham Forest. They tell the council and the police what the residents' priorities are, and the likelihood of the changes being made.

Overall impact

Feedback from 45 residents was captured through surveys conducted after each assembly and at the end of the process. The key findings included:

- high levels of satisfaction – the assembly provided a rating of 4.7 out of 5 for inclusivity, diversity, and facilitation
- personal growth – the residents reported an increase in confidence, sense of belonging, and willingness to engage in community activities
- learning and perspective – the residents gained an in-depth understanding of policing challenges, systemic issues, and diverse community experiences
- changing attitudes – the majority of the residents reflected on having different views and appreciating the complexity of trust-building between police and communities
- community connection – there was a strong emphasis on meeting new people, hearing different perspectives, and feeling part of a collective effort for change
- empowerment – the residents felt their voices mattered and that change is possible at a local level

The assembly has strengthened partnership working between the council, police, and voluntary sector organisations, fostering a more collaborative approach to community safety. The residents are starting to see an increased visibility in of neighbourhood policing, supported by improved communication channels.

The embedded actions from the assembly will take time to implement, however these changes reflect a positive step toward building trust and creating more inclusive opportunities for communities to influence MPS practices.

Learning

- It is important to start preparations at least six months in advance to allow enough time for recruitment, design, partner alignment and content development.
- It is essential to define a tight, focused assembly question that all partners genuinely agree on from the outset.
- Build inclusion into design early, with translated materials, interpreters, plain-English content and accessible visuals.
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and decision making with delivery partners through a single shared document.
- Reduce the cognitive load by offering fewer, clearer speaker sessions and time for reflection and small group discussion.
- Invest in relationships and secure early commitment from key stakeholders such as police and VCS) with explicit expectations and governance agreements.
- Prioritise participant wellbeing through good pacing, breaks, trauma informed practice and accessible venues.

- Build in time for relevant professionals to review and respond to draft recommendations, ensuring they can meaningfully assess feasibility, offer constructive challenge, and align internally before final decisions are made.
- Maintain transparent communication before, during and after each weekend, including publishing slides and updates.
- Assess whether a full citizens' assembly is genuinely the right format; if not, choose a lighter deliberative method such as a facilitated resident panel or workshops.

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