

Pathways to Work Charter 2021



**Housing
Management**



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

Foreword

There has never been a more important time for the **Pathways to Work Charter** than now, post-Covid, staring into the prospect of another costly recession.

Costly in terms of livelihoods as well as lives. Unemployment in the United Kingdom has risen from 3.8 per cent to 4.8 per cent in the space of a year – and this is before we count the thousands of our residents on furlough.

In the borough, around 150 per cent more residents are claiming Universal Credit. It means that that what is intended to be a safety net is now the norm for an increasing number of residents.

The Government has so far committed £500bn towards Covid recovery and that figure is constantly rising. As the Government invests in economic renewal, we will continue to make the case that local government, in partnership with key partners like our housing associations, is very well placed to support the recovery process.

As social landlords, we are uniquely placed to understand the challenges our tenants are facing and support them in a way that moves far beyond our statutory responsibilities. Their general welfare, after all, is our primary concern.



We are convinced that working in partnership is the best way forward. We all have shared goals and similar experiences and we can all learn from each other to improve our support for our residents.

That is why the charter is so important. We are grateful to the thirteen housing associations who have signed up in the past and hope they will do so again.

Social housing is such a vital safety net for so many families in Kensington and Chelsea, but it can be so much more. With your help, we can turn it into a platform to help our tenants get jobs, progress through their careers and aspire towards home ownership.

Thank you for joining us on this journey — we look forward to working closely with you.

Cllr Kim Taylor-Smith
Deputy Leader, Grenfell,
Housing and Social Investment

Cllr Catherine Faulks
Lead Member for Employment and
Innovation

Context

In 2013, the Government began a ten-year programme of welfare reforms. These reforms continue to have a direct impact on residents who rely on state aid to fund their tenancies.

To date, reforms include:

- introduction of the ‘bedroom tax’ for under-occupied households living in council or social housing
- application of the lower benefit cap for most benefit claimants of working age
- replacement of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with Personal Independence Payments (PIP)
- the introduction and rollout of Universal Credit (UC) full service for new benefit claims

From November 2020, it is expected that claimants of legacy benefits will be invited to migrate to UC, with an estimated timetable for completion set at December 2024. Based on a survey of 39 organisations managing over half a million social and affordable local authority homes, ‘tenants on UC are considerably more likely to be in arrears and have higher arrears than those on Housing Benefit’.¹

This places additional financial pressure on tenants and their ability to manage financial shocks. It also impacts on rent accounts and comes at a considerable cost to landlords.

The milestone John Hills report (2007), *Ends and Means: The Future Role of Social Housing in England*,² advocated that providers of social housing were well placed to assist in tackling unemployment, and social and financial exclusion amongst residents.

In 2017, against a backdrop of welfare reform and the national focus on social housing following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the National Housing Federation reported that over a third, 39 per cent, of housing associations offered employment and skills support in addition to the core function of supplying homes with a further 28 per cent planning to do so in future.³

However, whilst the July 2018 report by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) highlights that many social housing providers present unique opportunities to provide employment and skills support to the hardest to reach individuals and communities, its research finds that ‘some housing associations do not feel supported to carry out this often unrecognised role.’⁴

1 Association of Retained Council Housing and National Federation of ALMOs, *Patching the Safety Net, Measuring the impact of Universal Credit on tenants and landlords – survey results 2019*, July 2019 (www.almos.org.uk/document?id=8394).

2 Hills, J., ESRC Research Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, *Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England*, (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/5568/1/Ends_and_Means_The_future_roles_of_social_housing_in_England_1.pdf).

3 National Housing Federation, *A Home, A Job, A Future*, Oct 17 (<http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/pub.housing.org.uk/A-Home-A-Job-A-Future.pdf>).

4 Page 16, Centre for Social Justice, Housing Commission, *Social Housing and Employment: Helping social housing be the springboard to a better life*, Interim report 1, Jul 2018 (www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CSJ6364-Social-Housing-and-Employment-Report-180706-WEB.pdf)

History of the Charter

The Royal Borough's Housing and Worklessness Project launched the Pathways to Work Charter in 2012 to facilitate partnerships and joint working between housing providers and community services in order to engage and help tenants throughout the borough progress towards and into work, and to mitigate the impact of welfare reform.

Thirteen housing providers signed up to the Charter, and the Gateway referral model was launched to improve the way we work with housing providers in the borough, and to help them to better coordinate their support for residents by:

- Buying into each other's training and employment services and the services already available in the borough
- Contacting their residents and ensuring that they receive information, advice and guidance to direct them into training and employment
- Helping to prepare residents to respond to the welfare reform changes coming their way
- Developing improved joint working practices among housing providers and local agencies to ensure support is targeted where it is needed most, and that it is adding value to the wider landscape of help available to residents within the borough to find work

Our partnership work with our housing providers from 2013 delivered fantastic and long-lasting results.

The Project was recognised as a best practice model by the London School of Economics. It engaged thousands of residents, supporting them with work, training and welfare benefits issues.

It created two jointly funded IT hubs within the community, coordinated exclusive recruitment screenings for residents, and delivered joint employment and training roadshows on estates and community centres every year.

In 2016, the Housing and Worklessness Project was the point of contact for over 600 residents across tenures that were impacted by the benefit cap. Owing to the success of exempting residents from the cap, further resources were allocated, and the Project grew from a one-woman band to a team of six.

Since then, the Project has expanded further and is now known for delivering the Council's Housing and Employment Service, a high-demand, quality provision supporting residents with work, training, welfare benefits and income maximisation.

The Pathways to Work Charter aligns with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's Council Plan, Economy Strategy, and Housing Strategy for the period 2019 to 2023.

It also aligns with the Mayor of London's priorities under the City for All Londoners framework⁵ and the Skills and Adult Education Strategy for London 2018 to 2028, primarily, to "empower all Londoners to access the education and skills to participate in society and to progress into education and work".⁶

This priority runs parallel to previous commitments at local and sub-regional levels to bring greater coherence, consistency and coordination to the way employment services are provided to Londoners by a variety of agencies including Jobcentre Plus, social landlords, GPs, colleges and the voluntary sector.

This Charter outlines the commitment we seek from social housing providers.

With support from the Housing and Employment Service, social housing providers will raise awareness amongst their residents of the support available to help them to prepare for and secure employment, and to provide a more coherent service to residents in the borough.

⁵ Mayor of London, *City for All Londoners*, Oct 2016.

⁶ Page 8, Mayor of London, *Skills for Londoners: A Skills and Adult Education Strategy for London*, June 2018 (www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sfl_strategy_final_june_20186.pdf).

Pathways to Work Charter

This charter is an outline agreement between the providers of social housing within Kensington and Chelsea and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Objective

To tackle unemployment in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea by ensuring that all residents who live in social housing can access the same degree of help to progress towards or into employment, and deal with financial difficulties they may face.

This is to be achieved by:

- the development of a closer working relationship between organisations that provide housing, employability services and advice services in the Royal Borough
- improving information sharing
- providing training to front line housing staff
- co-ordinating initiatives and monitoring referrals to establish and share best practice and successes.

Social housing providers are expected to deliver this support to a jointly agreed level with the Council, which the Charter will make open and transparent, embedding this work within the wider performance monitoring process the Council conducts with housing providers.

Targeting Support

Support will be targeted towards:

- residents living in social housing who are of working age but not in employment, education or training
- residents who are in employment on a low income and in receipt of housing benefit or Universal Credit, and
- any residents experiencing financial difficulty.

Principles and Practicalities

The **Housing and Employment Service** will:

- Assist housing providers to clarify the link between residents' unemployment, employability, financial difficulties, risk of homelessness and their business.
- Support housing providers to appreciate the barriers to resident employment and the support and guidance available.
- Ensure that employability services are promoted and made available to all residents of social housing.
- Provide the necessary tools required to support housing providers and their staff to tackle unemployment and ensure all residents are informed of the support available to them, including:
 - training front line housing staff to discuss employability support with tenants
 - developing an easy to use referral system between selected local agencies to provide a 'gateway' for residents to access other support services
 - providing information on local employment initiatives
 - help and expertise to co-ordinate partnerships and joint employment initiatives
 - identifying and providing access to funding opportunities, employment opportunities, employer links and work placements
 - web pages providing an online resource on employment and skills provision accessible to residents in the Royal Borough and housing providers.
- Co-ordinate partnerships and joint employment initiatives between providers of social housing and local agencies delivering employability support.
- Help housing providers to offer work experience, volunteering and job opportunities for residents.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the Pathways to Work Charter and record outcomes of its implementation, share best practice and promote successes.

What is expected of signatories of the Charter?

By signing the Pathways to Work Charter, housing providers are registering their commitment to work with the Council and local agencies to tackle unemployment and build financial resilience within the Royal Borough.

It is expected that housing providers who sign up to the Silver or Gold level will also be making a commitment to meet the components of the preceding level.

Housing providers agree to work with the Housing and Employment Service, receive support to carry out their commitment to help residents to move along the path to employment and to a more prosperous and resilient financial future.

What are the benefits of the Charter?

- ✓ By working together, housing providers and local employability service providers can significantly improve the lives of residents. Social housing landlords can provide information and access to employability services through their usual methods of engagement with tenants, prospective tenants and their families.
- ✓ Providers of social housing, the Council and Jobcentre Plus hold information on residents that, with the new data sharing legislation implemented, can be shared to enable targeted assistance to residents in areas of greatest need.
- ✓ By working in partnership to help residents along the path to employment and providing access to advice for those facing financial difficulties, housing providers will benefit from the increased sustainability of their tenancies.
- ✓ Evidence indicates that sustainable communities experience lower rent arrears, better use of staff resources, less antisocial behaviour and low-level repairs. Sustainable communities become more desirable communities in which to live.
- ✓ To support the achievement of the objectives listed above, the Housing and Employment Service will help co-ordinate the provision of training, education and support to staff from both sectors. It will encourage partners to consider joint funding applications and assist in this process. And, it will help social housing providers to offer services in collaboration with each other, with agencies across the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and potentially beyond.

Levels of Commitment

We recognise that within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and nationally, there are housing providers with diverse financial capabilities and business priorities. So that all housing providers can be active and valued partners with the Housing and Employment Service, different commitment levels have been created within the Charter. Housing providers choose a level they feel comfortable committing to but remain open to the possibility of increased commitment.

Level One – Bronze

Housing providers will:

- » Agree to publicise the Council’s Jobs and Training Guide and raise awareness of local employment and training services among Royal Borough residents.
- » Agree to refer residents to local employment, training and advice services, and work with the Housing and Employment Service which will provide support around this process.
- » Agree to include information on employment and training services (such as the Council’s Jobs and Training Guide) in every new tenancy pack for residents in the Royal Borough.
- » Work with the Council’s Housing and Employment Service to utilise resident statistical data (in compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation and data sharing legislation) to target engagement and support for residents who may benefit from employment and skills interventions, and advice services to tackle financial difficulties.
- » Encourage a supportive approach from their staff to residents experiencing financial difficulties and housing-related problems as a result of the impact of Universal Credit and other welfare reforms, and attempts to access employment, education or training.
- » Nominate an appropriate member of staff to be a ‘Pathways to Work Champion’ to work closely with the Housing and Employment Service in accordance with the Council’s monitoring process and analysis of the impact of the Pathways to Work Charter.
- » Promote successes within the organisation, among residents, partners, and the Council, to raise awareness of the opportunities and benefits of the scheme.
- » Work with the Housing and Employment Service to undertake an annual impact assessment for evaluation purposes.

Level Two – Silver

Housing providers will:

- » Agree to help residents engage with local agencies that provide employment and training advice, money management guidance and integrated support for those experiencing financial hardship.
- » Allow local agencies and other housing providers access to facilities such as community space, to enable the provision of local and accessible services, including training, information, advice and guidance for residents, and promote this provision accordingly.
- » Agree to offer work placements and volunteering opportunities to residents to develop their employment experience and skills.
- » Share best practice approaches to tackle unemployment and to drive financial resilience with other organisations.

Level Three – Gold

Housing providers will:

- » Work closely with, and support, the work of local agencies offering employability services. When working with residents who are mutual customers, carry out joint visits/meetings, share information on individual residents in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and data protection legislation
- » Apply a joined-up strategy to allow residents the best possible opportunity to enter employment, education and/or training, and to access advice services including money management and debt support.
- » Tackle the issue of unemployment and its causes in a proactive manner and develop a strategy around how the day to day business of the organisation can affect the employability options of its tenants.
- » Commission employment and skills initiatives in partnership with other housing providers and local agencies based on need, avoiding duplication of services and filling gaps in provision.
- » Create apprenticeship and job opportunities accessible to residents who live in social housing within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.
- » Commit to employing or allocating a dedicated Training and Employment officer to ensure the implementation of the above strategy.

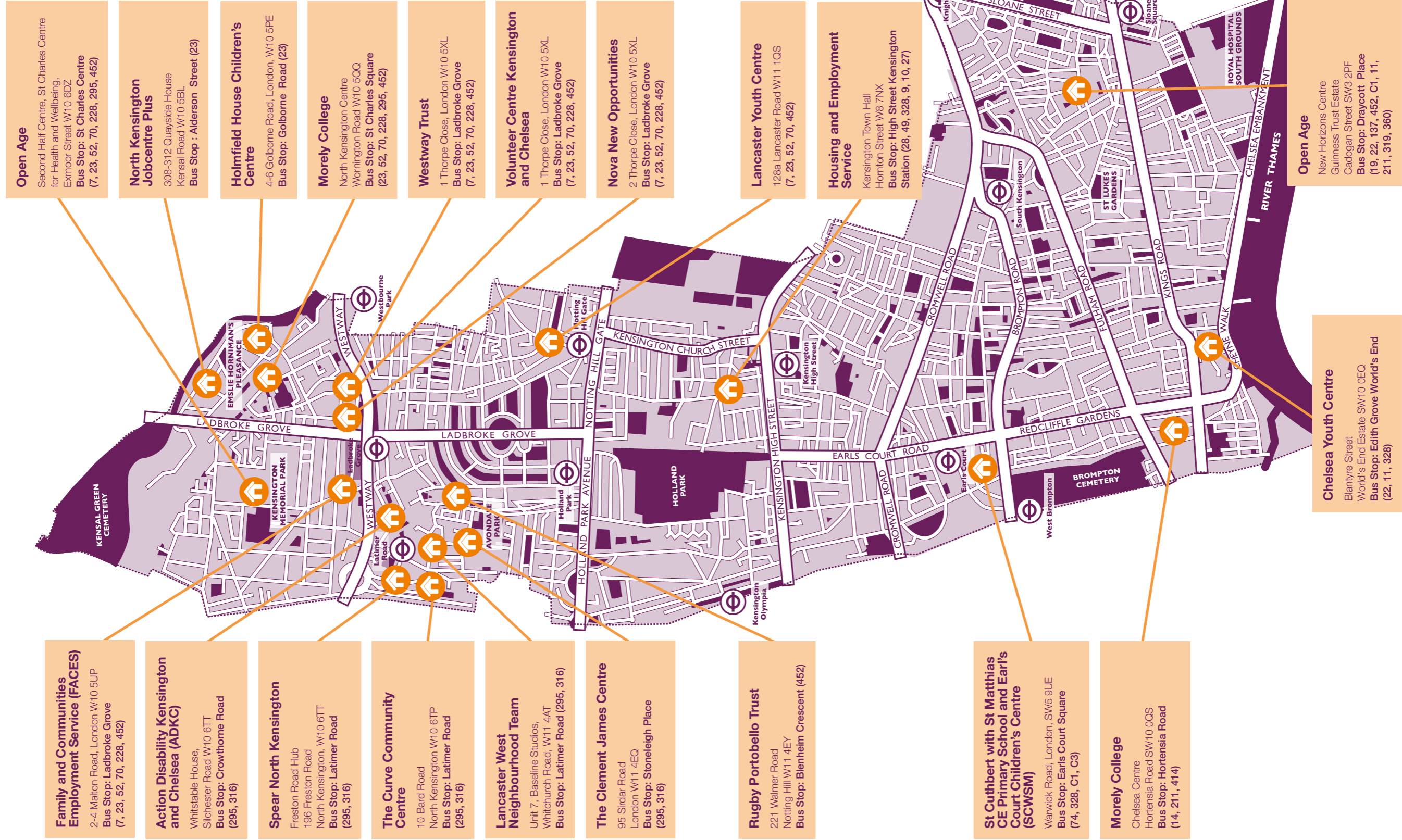
Local Agencies

The Council's Jobs and Training Guide provides a list of agencies that deliver services relating to employability support, including information, advice and guidance, to residents of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Jobcentre Plus and other agencies in the borough (including those in the Jobs and Training Guide) provide services to tackle unemployment and are partners involved in the Council's work and in delivering the objectives of the Pathways to Work Charter.



Local Agencies map



Roles and Responsibilities

Action	Responsibility of
Identify funding streams/ opportunities	Housing and Employment Service
Identify potential residents for referral	Housing Providers, Housing and Employment Service
Support residents along path to employment	Local Agencies, Housing Providers
Produce referral process and/or documentation with accompanying training	Housing and Employment Service
Monitor and report on the success of the Pathways to Work Charter for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and partners	Housing and Employment Service, and Housing Providers
Share employability opportunities across housing providers and local agencies	Housing and Employment Service

Pathways to Work Charter Sign-off

I accept this Charter and the responsibilities outlined in this booklet:

Signature:	
Print name:	
Job title	
Organisation:	
Date:	
Commitment level sign up:	

