

Be Connected: Chatty Benches

Bringing people together through conversation

Chatty Bench signs have been installed in various locations across the borough in a bid to combat loneliness and isolation. For those who are feeling lonely, or needing to talk, Chatty Benches are a great way of encouraging people to connect with others.

The new pilot led by the [Community Neighbourhood Link Workers](#) is part of the Be Connected programme that aims to keep communities connected and encourages opportunities for meaningful conversations.

What are Chatty Benches?

Chatty Benches are a simple idea where existing or newly installed benches have a sign on them that shows by sitting on them, a person is happy to chat with whoever comes and sits next to them.

What do they look like?

Chatty Benches have the below A5 plaque - some benches have also been painted yellow to stand out from other community benches



Newham London

“
CHATTY BENCH
”

Sit here if you don't mind someone stopping for a chat or to say hello

NEWHAM IS CONNECTED
For more information about how Newham is tackling loneliness and to find support visit www.newham.gov.uk/CNLW or scan the QR code

Part of the Be Connected Programme
#NewhamConnected #LetsTalkLoneliness



What are the benefits of a Chatty Bench?

Researchers in the University's Department of Landscape and at the London-based think tank, found that sitting on community benches allows people to spend longer outside, which is both beneficial for mental health and allows people to connect with others in their communityⁱ. The researchers also found that access to public benches are beneficial for physical health, as they can provide resting places for those with limited mobility.

Where are they?

We are piloting benches in the below community locations, with the hope of adding more in the spring.

Location	Address and Contact Information	Opening Times
Kingsford Square	1 Kingsford Way, Beckton, E6 5JQ (located outside Beckton Globe Library)	24 hours
Central Park	High Street South East Ham, E6 6ET (Bench located near the Central Park Café) Visit Newham Council Parks for more information about the Park facilities	Dawn to dusk
Chargeable Lane	The Resource Centre, 200 Chargeable Lane Plaistow, E13 8DW Located in the garden grounds (open to all residents) Tel: 020 8430 2000 Webpage	Monday – Friday 9:00-17:00
Forest Gate Community Garden	136 Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, E7 9AR Tel: 07811 346722 Email: info@fgcommunitygarden.org Website	Friday's 10:00 – 17:00 Saturday 10:00 – 15:00 Sunday 10:00 – Midday

Location	Address and Contact Information	Opening Times
Forest Lane Park	Magpie Close Forest Lane, Forest Gate, E7 9DF Visit Newham Council Parks for more information about the Park facilities	Dawn to dusk
Memorial Recreation Ground	Memorial Avenue Stratford E13 0HQ Visit Newham Council Parks for more information about the Park facilities	Dawn to dusk
Plaistow Library Parklet	North Street (outside Plaistow Library) Plaistow, E13 9HN	24 hours
The Up Garden	1-5, Eric Close laundry yard Forest Gate, E7 0AY (Entrance is between 1-4 and 5-10 Eric Close). Website	Daily 9am to sunset or 6pm (whichever is earlier)

Why do we need them?

We know that a small moment of connection during someone's day can have a real impact in alleviating feelings of loneliness. We hope these benches will encourage residents to say hello and have a quick chat or conversation with someone who may be sitting on the bench. Even if it's just a comment on the weather. Speaking to someone can make a real difference

What do I talk about?

It may be that this is the first person that you or the person on the bench has spoken to in a while. For someone who is lonely or experiencing low mood this act of kindness can really support them in a positive way and bring our community together. Loneliness and isolation can sometimes be alleviated by simply talking.

We know that starting conversations can sometimes be hard, so we have put together a conversation menu that can provide inspiration for new topics to chat about.

Conversation menus are a great tool to help people get people talking and find some common ground and in what better way than a starter, a main course and a desert! They use light-hearted questions to build rapport and pass the time of day with people.

Try asking the below questions to spark conversation:

Starters

- What do you like about the local community?
- What do you have for breakfast?
- What's your favourite hobby?

Mains

- What is an interesting fact about you?
- Who would you invite to a dinner party (dead or alive)?
- What's your favourite tradition?

Dessert (Instead of a question you could offer a compliment)

- What was the last thing that made you laugh?
- What's your favourite childhood memory?
- If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you be?
- What was something courageous you've seen someone do?

Are They Safe?

The same community standards are expected of Chatty Benches as other benches across the borough. You can decide not to use them if you do not feel comfortable.

The Chatty Bench locations we have chosen are all in public spaces that have regular community movement. This is to increase the chance of making connections but also help people feel safe using them.

If you do find yourself in a situation where you feel uncomfortable we advise you to leave and if need be report the matter using the information below.

- Call 999 if it is an emergency (It is only an emergency if the crime is happening now or someone is hurt);
- Call 101 if it is not an emergency;
- You can report some crimes online via www.online.met.police.uk or [Report a Crime or Anti-Social Behaviour](#) via the Newham website;

- You can also contact us to update about you're experience and any concerns (contact details below).

Please see link for more information about [Community Safety in Newham](#)

How do we get more Chatty Benches?

If you would like to suggest a location for a new Chatty Bench please contact Donna Williams, Community Neighbourhood Link Worker via email Donna.Williams@newham.gov.uk or by phoning T: +44 (0) 203 373 6548; M: +44 (0) 7977 702 578 for more information.

Nobody needs to feel lonely.

#NewhamConnected #ChattyBench