THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KINGSTON
UPON THAMES

Kingston Together

Our Community Engagement Framework
2025

KINGSTON TOGETHER · KINGSTON TOGETHER

GREENER KINGSTON · GREENER KINGSTON

SAFER KINGSTON · SAFER KINGSTON

FAIRER KINGSTON · FAIRER KINGSTON

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This framework outlines the council's approach to community engagement

The framework provides a code of practice for Kingston Council and our partners when engaging with our communities across the borough.

It sets out our commitment to continue to 'hardwire' effective engagement into decision-making so it is integral to how we work and make decisions in order to achieve better outcomes for Kingston's residents.

Our key priorities and areas for growth are:

Widening our reach

Increasing the number of people we engage with, while also being more targeted and strategic in how we engage.

Ensuring more inclusive engagement

Focusing on actively engaging under-represented groups, such as people with disabilities, young people, ethnically diverse and LGBTQIA+ communities to ensure all voices are heard and needs are considered in how our services are provided.

Strengthening evaluation and feedback

Improving how we close the feedback loop, making sure that residents understand how their input has contributed to decision-making.

Why is engagement important?

Communities are at the heart of everything we do.

Understanding the thoughts, feelings and experience of communities helps to shape our services.

By engaging regularly, communities can be given a voice at the earliest opportunity.

Through asking difficult questions we will get to really understand communities.

It is important to ensure we listen and speak to a diverse range of people.

People within communities may not always agree, but a first step is listening to each other and being transparent about how decisions are made.

We won't always be able to do what communities would like, so it's important to be accountable for what is done.

Well planned engagement means working together, limiting duplication and not overwhelming our residents and communities.

Have a phone number for people to use if they want to speak to someone about a particular project or activity.

SURBITON STATION

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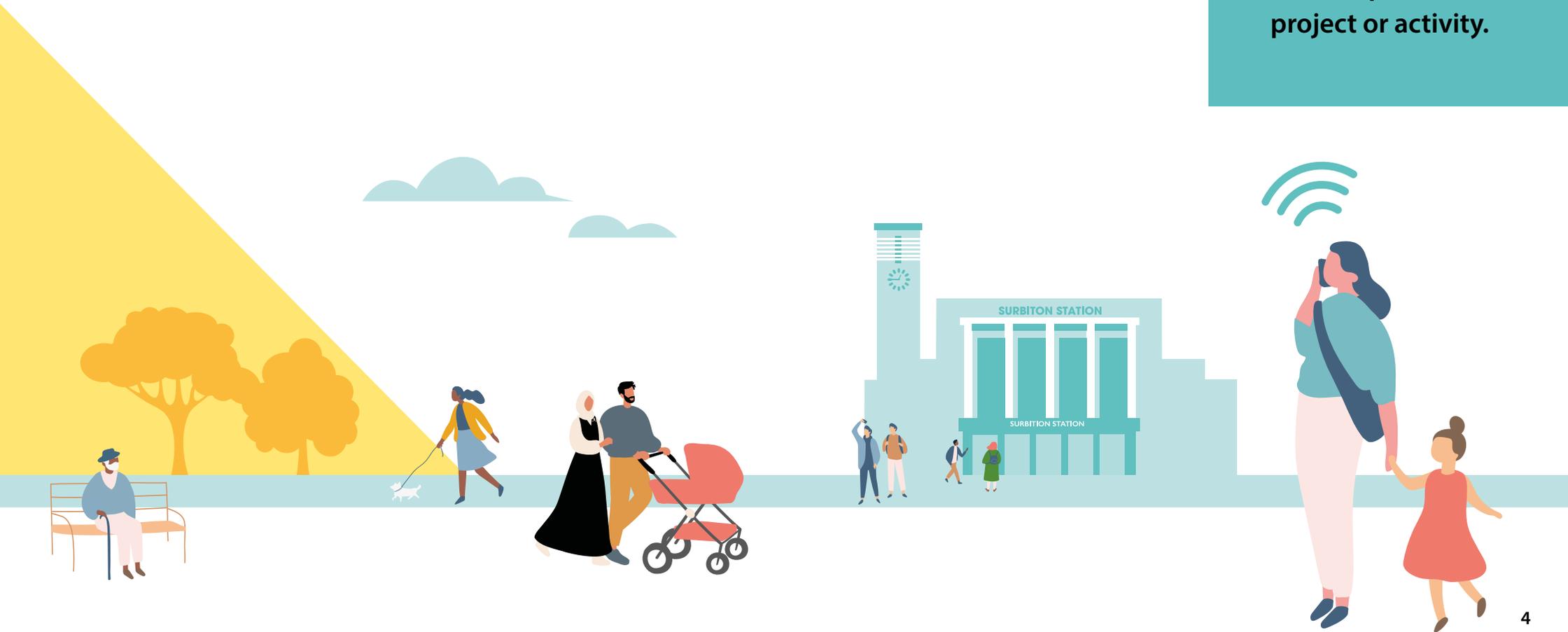
About Kingston and its communities

168,200
residents

70,000
households

32%
of residents are Black, Asian or other ethnically diverse

9%
of 16-24 year olds identify as LGB+
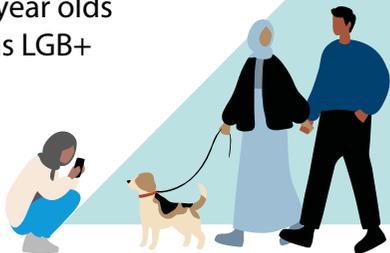
62%
of residents between 18-64 are in work

4%
are unemployed

17%
of residents do not speak English as their main language

13%
of Kingston residents have a disability

26%
of households are in the private rental sector

31%
residents are deprived in either education, employment, health or housing

27%
of householders living alone, 10.5% are over 66 years of age
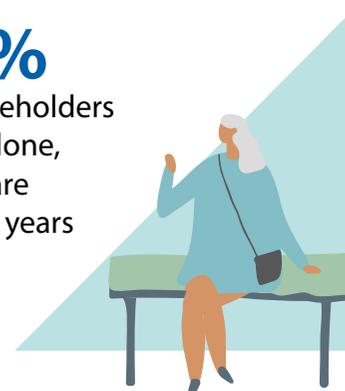
10,906
residents aged between 16-65 are on Universal Credit
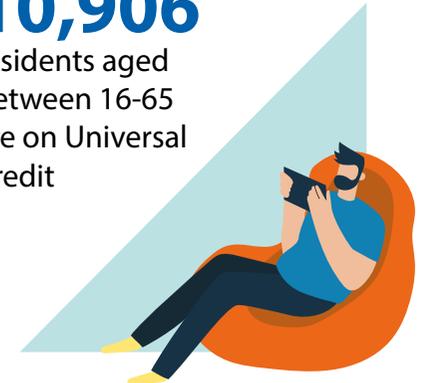
9%
of children under 18 are living in income deprivation

Collect equality monitoring data for each project so that we can understand who we are hearing from, enabling us to identify gaps and target engagement to obtain different perspectives.

Sources: ONS census 2021 and Kingston JSNA 2023

Consultation or engagement?

At Kingston Council

Consultation is used when there is a statutory requirement to consult our residents.

Statutory consultations are bound by legal requirements and can have strict rules surrounding how they should be conducted.

**Engagement** describes any activity that gives people with lived experience a voice and an opportunity to shape decision making and help make better public decisions.

Use the Kingston Let's Talk engagement portal for online engagement.
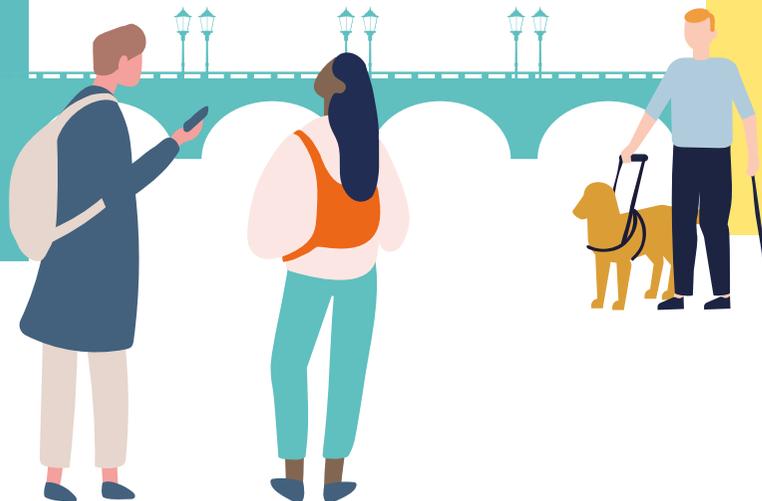
Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

With everything we do we need to consider the impact on our communities. To do that we carry out an EQIA. These are an effective tool to help understand potential impact and to plan mitigations that remove or limit barriers for our communities. Part of the EQIA process is to assess who may be impacted and identify groups we need to reach within our engagement.

To understand whether your project requires **Consultation or Engagement** please contact the Engagement Team: **engagement@kingston.gov.uk**

Who do we engage with?

We want to engage with everyone who lives in, works in, studies in or visits our borough. They can be be considered as different communities.

PLACE

Defined by a location.

e.g. as an area, a street, an estate, a ward, a pub or community centre.
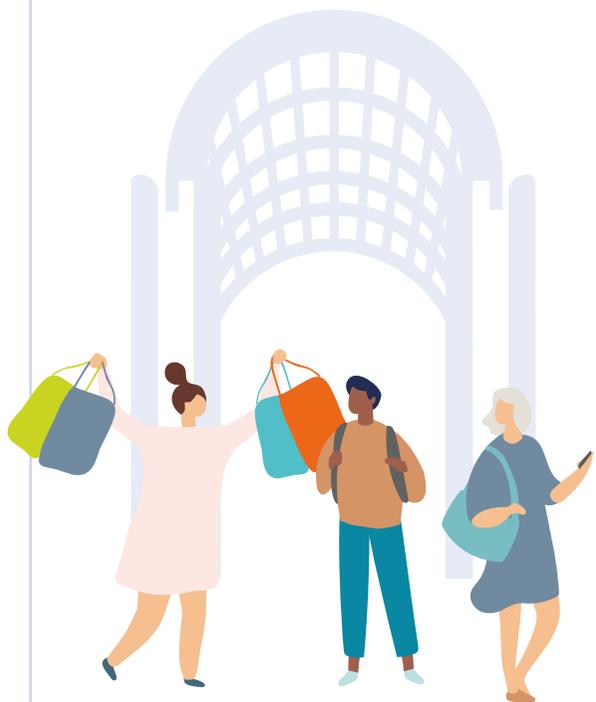
INTEREST

Have a shared interest or experience.

e.g. tenants and resident groups, Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE), businesses.
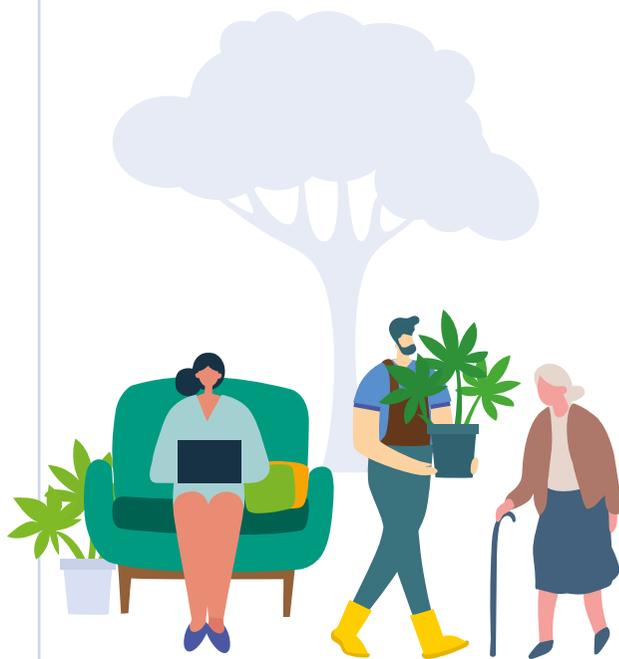
IDENTITY

People who share a particular experience, interest or stake in an issue, or characteristics.

e.g. young people, older people, disabled people, ethnically diverse groups, or LGBTQIA+ people or other common bonds such as students.

How can we engage?

Kingston Council is ambitious to not only inform and consult with communities but to go further and collaborate with residents to empower and decide. Where possible, we seek to enable participation from residents and communities early on in shaping policy, changing services and delivering projects.

We can engage with communities in a variety of ways. Some methods are better suited to specific requirements and different phases of a project, depending on if the intention is to provide information, involve in conversation or an activity, or work together to design and deliver services.

These different methods are outlined in the following steps.

Develop new partnerships, networks and relationships where needed to help us reach all communities.

These steps show us how to create more meaningful and impactful resident participation in the decision-making processes.

Inform

Providing information about projects and what's happening, with details of where to get more details.

e.g. Email, posters/flyers.

Consult

Collecting feedback on options, solutions, alternatives and potential decisions.

e.g. Closed question surveys Drop in exhibitions.

Involve

Engaging directly and considering communities' needs and aspirations as early as possible.

e.g. Focus groups, Community Networks.

Collaborate

Partnering with communities in policy development and decision making.

e.g. Steering Groups, Citizens' Panels.

Empower, decide and co-produce

Empowering communities to make decisions about plans, policies and the best way to deliver services.

e.g. Co-production, Citizens' Assemblies.

Provide a phone number and email address for enquiries or to request materials in more accessible formats.

OUR FRAMEWORK

Key principles and actions of making community engagement successful

These eight principles and actions hold the values and standards for participation and engagement with Kingston's communities and ensure a consistent level of excellence across all of our activity, achieving our overall objectives of:

• Widening our reach
• More inclusive engagement
• Strengthening evaluation and feedback

Widening our reach

Strengthening evaluation and feedback

More inclusive engagement

Be strategic

Be responsive

Be open to learning

Be honest

Be fair

OUR FRAMEWORK

Be clear

Be secure

Be accessible

Be secure

- Only collect personal data as is required and in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

- Do not share personal data without permission.

Be fair

- Complete an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) where required, and evidence how communities have been reached, communicated with, and fed back to.

- Use a range of communication channels appropriate for the target audience.

- Go into the community and have conversations in places where people usually meet

- Support anyone with an interest to be able to get involved in activities and decision making.

Be open to learning

- Learn from each other and share insights within the Council and with partners, ensuring continuous and effective engagement.

- Provide training for staff to help them understand the importance and benefits of engagement and how it supports both their work and that of partner organisations.

- Learn from each engagement activity by reviewing, documenting, and sharing the insights gathered.

Be strategic

- Refer to previous engagement activities within the past 12 months, and where the project allows, join up engagement efforts to maximise resources and minimise engagement fatigue.

- Stay up-to-date on best practices and seek additional training when needed.

- Ensure all project team members are aware of every engagement activity through an up-to-date plan.

- Maintain a log of all engagement activities to keep track of progress.

Be responsive

- Every channel used should be well supported, clear and easy to use.
- Embrace new tools and techniques to improve how you connect with people.
- Provide feedback to respondents so people know what has happened as a result of their views.
- Document engagement outcomes through committee reports, strategies, and updates to participants.
- Assess engagement effectiveness to ensure we're reaching the right audiences and adjust accordingly.

Be honest

- Clearly explain what's being proposed and how much influence people can have.
- If a decision has already been made, be upfront about it.

Be clear

- Make the purpose of engagement and supporting information easy to understand.
- Use Plain English in all communications and provide 'Easy Read' documents (with simple language and visuals) where needed.
- Be transparent about how and when feedback will be used, including in committee reports.

Be accessible

- Plan and allocate sufficient time for meaningful engagement to ensure everyone can fully participate in all activities.
- Provide accessible venues, multiple formats, and varied feedback methods.
- Ensure the engagement and communications plan addresses access requirements for individuals with protected characteristics.
- Use a variety of communication methods and channels to reach all communities.
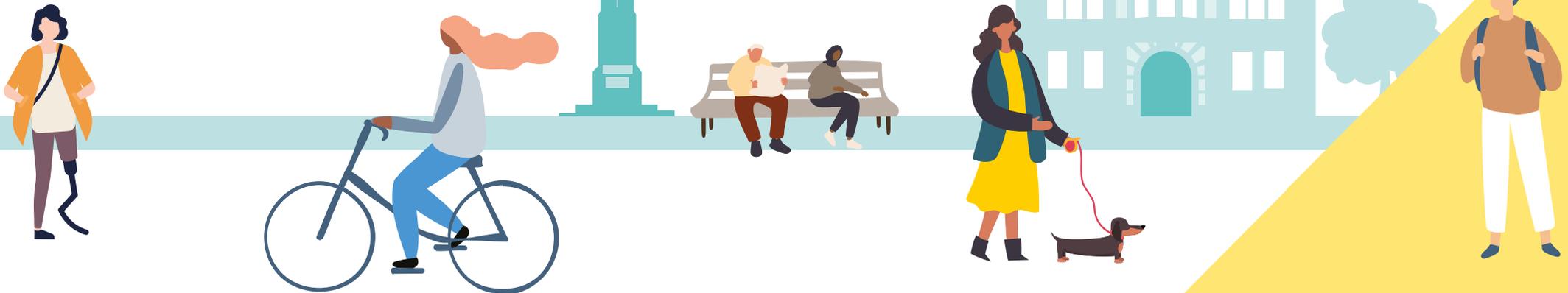
Involving residents

We are focusing on strengthening the relationship between the council and the community and want to involve residents in the design of local services and the things that affect our communities most. To view open engagement projects visit **www.kingstonletstalk.co.uk**

Residents can join our Kingston Let's Talk Residents' Panel and share their views and experiences to help improve our services and continue to make Kingston a great place to live, work or study. If you are a resident and complete the registration form below we will invite you to take part in research including focus groups and polls **www.kingstonletstalk.co.uk/engagement/kingston-panel** Panelists must live within the Royal Borough of Kingston area and be aged 18 or above.

Use a range of communications channels to engage residents and communities including social media, newsletters, local meetings, noticeboards, posters and drop-in events.
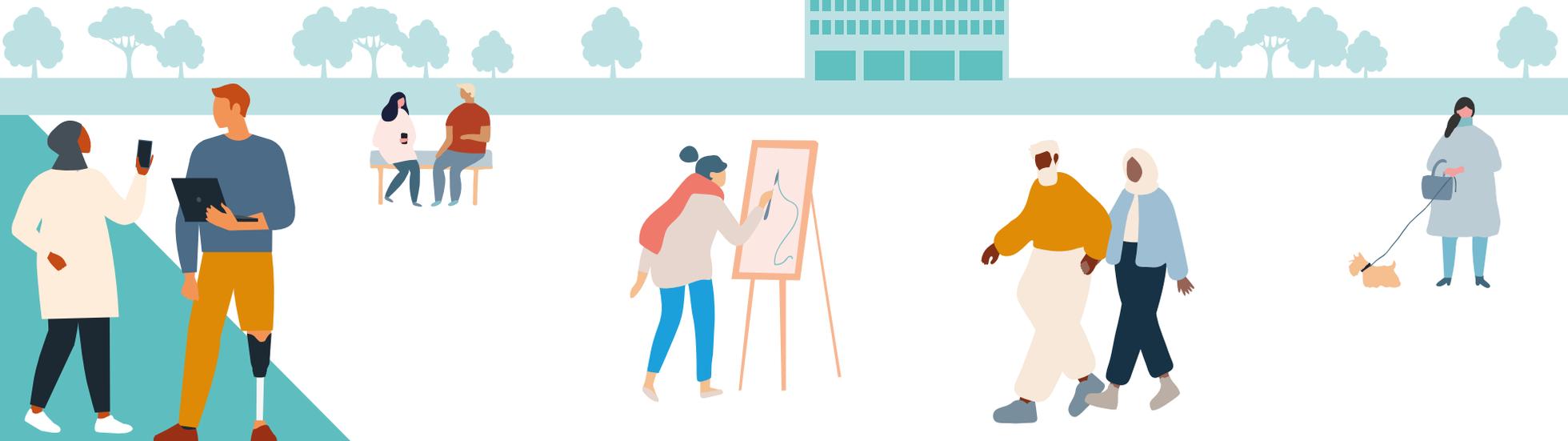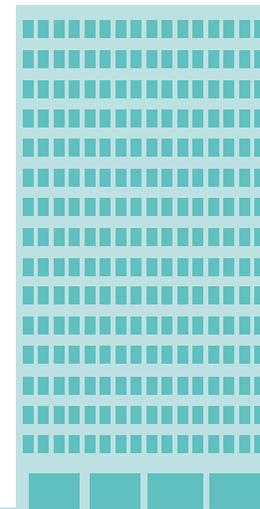
Keep up to date

Kingston Council Engagement Portal **kingstonletstalk.co.uk**

www. kingston.gov.uk

RBKingstonCouncil   kingston_council

Your Kingston   Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

Useful Documents

Communications and Engagement Strategy
www.kingston.gov.uk/communications

The Council Plan
www.kingston.gov.uk/policies-statements/council-plan

Accessibility

If you have any questions or need this document in large print, paper copies or in other languages please contact us on our helpline on **020 8547 5000** or at the email the Participation and Engagement Team **engagement@kingston.gov.uk**