# Kensington and Chelsea pays for seaside respite for elderly residents amid Notting Hill Carnival safety row



The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is again financing short seaside breaks for older residents who live on the Notting Hill Carnival route, a routinely repeated measure the council says is intended to shield vulnerable neighbours from the noise, crowds and disruption the festival brings. According to press reporting, a proposed three‑night outing to Eastbourne will cost roughly £25,600 in total — around £1,100 per head — and is arranged in partnership with the local Age UK branch; organisers say the sum covers coach travel, hotel accommodation, staffing and associated care and insurance.

The scheme is not new. The council and Age UK say they have run the respite trips since 2017, prioritising people aged 65 and over whose health or wellbeing can be affected by very large, noisy public events. Kensington and Chelsea’s own publicity describes the offer as part of a wider package of support around Carnival — including targeted information booklets, a helpline and additional street‑cleaning crews deployed on the bank holiday weekend. Age UK Kensington and Chelsea’s material similarly emphasises social programmes and practical help for older residents, and frames the outing as a wellbeing measure rather than a standalone luxury.

Council spokespeople have publicly defended the arrangement. Cllr Kim Taylor‑Smith, the authority’s lead member for culture, told a local outlet that Carnival is “a wonderful celebration enjoyed by so many people” but that “the sights, sounds and crowds are not for everyone”, adding that the trip “offers a bit of calm for some of our older residents who would prefer not to be at the heart of the action.” A statement on the borough’s website from the lead member for culture reiterated the priority given to applicants who meet strict eligibility criteria and pointed to the council’s broader services for residents affected by the event.

Public accounts of who takes part and how much it costs vary between years, which adds context to the headline figures. Local reporting cited a year in which 21 residents travelled at a cost of about £24,000, while the council’s own announcements have in other years referred to larger bookings — 42 places were noted on the borough’s website in a recent description of the scheme. The unit cost therefore shifts with cohort size and with the operational details of each outing, a point the council and charity partners make when defending the per‑person headline.

The respite scheme sits against the backdrop of renewed concern about safety and policing at Notting Hill Carnival. Operational police figures published after the festival’s most recent weekend recorded multiple serious incidents, including eight stabbings and several hundred arrests across the two days; the Metropolitan Police’s public update itemised charges ranging from possession of offensive weapons to assaults on emergency workers. Those figures have been cited by festival organisers and public officials in calls for extra resources to manage crowd safety.

Organisers of the carnival have themselves warned that the event’s future could be put at risk without additional funding to address crowd‑management and public‑safety shortfalls identified in an independent review. The carnival’s chair wrote to the Culture Secretary to request urgent support, saying extra money was “essential to safeguarding the future and public safety of this iconic event”; the Department for Culture, Media and Sport said it would consider the request. The letter and review have fuelled debate about how best to reconcile the festival’s cultural importance with the practical demands of policing and crowd control.

That cultural importance is not in dispute: Notting Hill Carnival began as a community celebration in 1966 and has grown into a major showcase of Caribbean music, masquerade and street culture. The festival’s organisers and many residents point to its origins in local community organising and to its continued role as an annual celebration of Black British culture and creativity — factors that complicate any simple cost‑benefit accounting about public support or council interventions.

Taken together, the council‑funded trips and the wider debate over safety funding underline competing responsibilities facing local authorities: to support vulnerable residents who are directly affected by large events, while also working with organisers and central government to ensure major public gatherings can continue safely and sustainably. The council and Age UK characterise the outings as a compassionate, targeted service for older people; critics will continue to scrutinise the use of public money and to press for transparent accounting of costs and outcomes as the conversation about Carnival’s future proceeds.

### 📌 Reference Map:

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15003641/Elderly-Notting-Hill-residents-bussed-seaside-taxpayer-funded-25-000-seaside-trip-avoid-Carnival.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/newsroom/residents-enjoy-seaside-break-during-notting-hill-carnival-0), [[4]](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/kensingtonandchelsea/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/newsroom/residents-enjoy-seaside-break-during-notting-hill-carnival-0), [[4]](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/kensingtonandchelsea/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15003641/Elderly-Notting-Hill-residents-bussed-seaside-taxpayer-funded-25-000-seaside-trip-avoid-Carnival.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/newsroom/residents-enjoy-seaside-break-during-notting-hill-carnival-0)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15003641/Elderly-Notting-Hill-residents-bussed-seaside-taxpayer-funded-25-000-seaside-trip-avoid-Carnival.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/newsroom/residents-enjoy-seaside-break-during-notting-hill-carnival-0), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9wj19yvqgro)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://news.met.police.uk/news/notting-hill-carnival-update-on-incidents-and-arrests-487332), [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9wj19yvqgro)
* Paragraph 6 – [[6]](https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/cq8zxk083qko), [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15003641/Elderly-Notting-Hill-residents-bussed-seaside-taxpayer-funded-25-000-seaside-trip-avoid-Carnival.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 7 – [[7]](https://nhcarnival.org/experience/history)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15003641/Elderly-Notting-Hill-residents-bussed-seaside-taxpayer-funded-25-000-seaside-trip-avoid-Carnival.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/newsroom/residents-enjoy-seaside-break-during-notting-hill-carnival-0), [[4]](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/kensingtonandchelsea/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15003641/Elderly-Notting-Hill-residents-bussed-seaside-taxpayer-funded-25-000-seaside-trip-avoid-Carnival.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/newsroom/residents-enjoy-seaside-break-during-notting-hill-carnival-0> - The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea describes an annual scheme, run with Age UK, offering older residents living on the Notting Hill Carnival route a free three‑night seaside break in Eastbourne. Travelling by coach on Saturday 26 August and returning on Tuesday 29 August, 42 places were booked. Priority is given to those meeting strict eligibility criteria, including being over 65 and having health affected by noise or crowds. The page quotes Emma Will, Lead Member for Culture, emphasising support for residents who prefer respite, and notes the council provides services such as booklets, a helpline and cleaning support.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9wj19yvqgro> - The BBC Local Democracy report states that more than twenty Kensington and Chelsea residents were offered a council‑funded seaside break to avoid Notting Hill Carnival. The scheme, run in partnership with Age UK since 2017, targets people over 65 who live on the carnival route and whose health may be affected by noise and crowds. The authority said the 2024 outing cost about £24,000, roughly £1,100 per person, covering travel, accommodation and staffing; the previous year’s scheme cost £31,000 for 42 participants. The article also notes the carnival runs over the August bank holiday and attracts about two million visitors.
4. <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/kensingtonandchelsea/> - Age UK Kensington and Chelsea’s site describes its local services and activities for older people, emphasising support during community events such as Notting Hill Carnival. It highlights social programmes, advice services and outings that aim to reduce isolation and promote wellbeing, and notes collaboration with the council on carnival‑related activities. The page promotes recent carnival events organised by the charity, volunteer opportunities and contact details for information and assistance. It underlines that Age UK K&C offers information and advice to over‑55s, arranges trips and social groups, and provides practical support such as hospital discharge assistance and transport for vulnerable residents.
5. <https://news.met.police.uk/news/notting-hill-carnival-update-on-incidents-and-arrests-487332> - The Metropolitan Police news release provides a breakdown of incidents and arrests at the Notting Hill Carnival, reporting figures for the 2024 weekend. It confirms eight stabbings across the two days and a total of 349 arrests (102 on Sunday, 247 on Monday), detailing offences such as possession of offensive weapons, assaults on emergency workers and drug offences. The statement records 61 incidents of officers being assaulted and lists counts by offence category. The release is an operational update to inform the public about policing activity, arrests and crimes dealt with during the annual street festival held in west London.
6. <https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/cq8zxk083qko> - A BBC report says Notting Hill Carnival organisers warned the festival’s future could be in doubt without urgent government funding. Chair Ian Comfort wrote to Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy, citing an independent review that identified critical public safety concerns and requesting money essential to safeguarding the event. The piece notes the carnival attracts about two million visitors over the August bank holiday and that the review, paid for by local bodies, flagged crowd‑management risks. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport said it would respond in due course, while police had previously warned of the potential for a mass casualty.
7. <https://nhcarnival.org/experience/history> - The official Notting Hill Carnival history page outlines the festival’s origins and development, noting an outdoor street event in 1966 organised by Rhaune Laslett that brought Caribbean music and steelpan to west London. It explains how Trinidadian musician Russell Henderson and his band helped establish the street procession, and how the carnival evolved into a major annual celebration of Caribbean culture with masquerade bands, sound systems and diverse music. The page traces growth through the 1970s, the introduction of organised costume bands and steelbands, and emphasises the carnival’s community roots and continued role as a multi‑cultural event in Notting Hill.