



# Wellbeing Measure: Community Engagement Sessions

February 2022



## Methodology and Sample

### Sample:

- Vulnerable and disadvantaged young people
- People aged 7-70 receiving Caribbean food but mainly the older generation
- Iraqi Londoners
- Individuals who attend food banks and that experience poverty
- Gypsy and Traveller communities in London
- Bangladeshi Londoners
- Individuals in need of signposting to support services
- Hong Kong Londoners
- Individuals in need of reaching health and wellbeing goals
- Somali Londoners
- Black women from low income backgrounds



# Key findings

## Offers of support, social connections, and access to public services were valued by Londoners

When asked what had gone well for the people they work with and/or their communities, participants reflected on:

- **Offers of support:** accessing necessary support was identified by participants, particularly in relation to individuals who had not previously engaged with support offers but were in need.
- **Building relationships:** building social connections with people in their local area helped create a shared sense of belonging.
- **Funding support organisations:** receiving funding was highlighted as something that had helped organisations support those most at need in their local area and provide necessary support.
- **Covid-19 vaccinations:** vaccine take-up amongst ethnic minority communities and also amongst migrants who do not have prerequisite documentation. Emphasis was placed on the importance of pop-up vaccine sites.

*“Building connections and relationships with key individuals and organisations across the community”*

*“We work with women from black backgrounds, many living in low income households. Many are now getting involved in local community activities.”*

*“ESEA migrants can access vaccines without prerequisite documentation”*

# Inequality and poverty were by far the biggest challenges discussed

Poverty (inc. food poverty) was a significant challenge that created barriers to a 'basic' quality of life. The experience and impact of inequality was also discussed as a major barrier to quality of life.

Other challenges that were affecting quality of life for Londoners included:

- **Poor quality housing:** overcrowding, mould, cladding, insufficient size/space, crime, inappropriate housing offers e.g. lack of site provision for London Gypsies and Travellers impacting cultural heritage and way of life
- **Access to food:** food poverty was brought up as a major challenge for Londoners.
- **Safety and crime:** experiences of crime were challenges their community/people they worked with had faced and in some cases this was interlinked with poor quality housing.
- **Unequal access to opportunities:** there is a disparity across London in the provision of opportunities.
- **Discrimination and prejudice:** experiences of discrimination and prejudice based on race and socio-economic status had impacted Londoners quality of life.
- **Illiteracy and language barriers:** this was identified as inhibiting people's ability to access key services such as GP's.
- **Support:** capacity issues and poor funding was inhibiting organisations ability to support those in need

There was recognition that those who previously felt secure in housing, such as homeowners, were now experiencing challenges in regard to cladding and unsellable housing

*“If people are experiencing food poverty, they are more than likely experiencing poverty and other barriers/challenges to a good quality of life”*

*“...services are stretched and do not have the capacity and/or funding to support individuals”*

## Future hopes and concerns are centred on support, equal opportunities and improved local authority communication

- **Support** – improved signposting to advice and support services. It is also hoped that the process to acquire funding for organisations is improved.
- **Equal opportunities** – barriers to accessing recruitment opportunities, specifically at public facing organisations such as the local authority. There is hope that recruitment processes will be modernised.
- **Local authority communication and services** - improved methods of communication to reach all people from all communities. Better partnership between LA's and community organisations was discussed.
- **Immigration system** – better support for those who first enter the UK, especially from places where they experienced mental distress and have been separated from their families.
- **Community engagement** – participants hoped that there would be stronger collaboration between individuals and organisations in the future.
- **Poverty** – an increase in poverty was noted as a future concern alongside rising unemployment rates
- **Housing** – access to sufficient and good quality housing was noted as a concern for people
- **Crime** – Increases in crime was a concern for participants, with specific mention being made to women and girls

*“NHS mental health services are difficult to access, especially for people newly arrived in the UK and are on repeat medication prescriptions.”*

*“Poverty increase.  
Unemployment rising”*

*“Government to bring in more equal opportunities for all citizens”*

## The diversity of high streets was valued, especially the presence of ethnically diverse food shops

Access to public spaces and services were also valued by participants and developments that brought improvements to the area.

- **High streets** – abundance of fast food restaurants and betting/loan shops were linked with lack of spaces to build social relationships and poor opportunities.
- **Spaces to connect** – local areas could benefit from well funded youth centres and/or affordable spaces for people to connect and create a sense of belonging in their local area.
- **Crime and safety** – was highlighted as something that could be improved. Domestic violence, gang's and other safety concerns impact individuals' opportunities, aspirations, wellbeing and movement within the local area.
- **Diversity** - diversity lowered feelings of isolation in the local area. Awareness of the struggles of ethnic minority communities was also valued.
- **Environment** – realistic adaptation of environmentally friendly lifestyles was something the local area could benefit from.

*“Many ethnic community shops and groceries that allow people to be in touch with their cultural background”*

*“Community halls available to rent/access at a low rate”*

*“Safety in quiet areas at night e.g. parks”*

## The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of community driven support and access to services

Participants reflected on the support provided by community organisations during the pandemic to those marginalised/disenfranchised, with specific mention to food delivery services.

There was also great appreciation of improved access to health services due to online services and pop-up vaccination centres. However, there was recognition that the move to online service provision further disenfranchised some Londoners.

Participants also reflected on some of the challenges experienced during the pandemic. These included:

- The exacerbation of poverty and inequality amongst those already disadvantaged in society
- Access to health services by newly arrived individuals, especially attempting to receive a vaccine
- Increase in hate crimes and racism, specifically towards ESEA communities
- Rise in mental health issues, especially amongst children and young people

*“Community groups providing support”*

*“Higher prevalence of people wearing masks”*

*“Stigma around the Asian population for spreading Covid, it’s used as an excuse for discrimination”*



# Having basic needs met were key factors contributing to good quality of life

Londoners reflected on the factors that are important in determining an individual's quality of life, these included:

- **Quality of housing** – having enough space for all individuals within the household
- **Poverty** – access to food, financial support, organisations that offer necessary services and the ability to afford basic/key items
- **Relationships** – the quality of relationships
- **Education** – educational opportunities and sufficient provision of services in all areas across London
- **Access to health services** - equal access to services. Ability to book a doctor's appointment and access mental health support, long waiting times for appointments, reduced stigma around mental health and seeing a therapist
- **Acceptance by government** – this was mentioned in relation to migrants, and newly arrived individuals and their ability to access key services and opportunities such as employment and education.

Overall, there was consensus that basic needs cannot be met if inequality exists and so must be addressed for individuals to have at least a 'basic' quality of life.

*“Access to housing with enough personal space for each individual in a household”*

*“Basic needs of you and your community being met”*

*“Equal access to health services, housing, employment, local services”*

# Overall, the engagement sessions identified a number of key factors to be considered when creating a Wellbeing Measure for London

- **Health and wellbeing** – mental health support; waiting lists for therapists; mental health stigma
- **Finances** – cost of living; access to financial support, job opportunities
- **Crime** – domestic violence; gang violence; knife crime; hate crime
- **Housing** – quality of housing; affordability; housing offers
- **Transport** – cost of public transport; safety
- **Environment** – adaptation of environmentally friendly lifestyles
- **Local area** – diversity of high streets; spaces to connect; opportunities; affordable services
- **Public services** – health care waiting times, access to services; improved LA communication and engagement
- **Social** – social networks; sense of belonging; spaces to connect
- **Support** – access to financial support; signposting; funding for organisations
- **Access to basic essentials**: access to food, financial support, suitable housing
- **Equality**: discrimination; prejudice; equal opportunities; equal access to services