

## **Ageing Well Small Grants fund 2017/18 – Annual Report**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Evidence shows that social isolation and loneliness, although an issue across the life course, occur more frequently in older populations. Social isolation and loneliness have a negative impact on people's quality of life and physical and mental health and wellbeing. Older people living in Tower Hamlets are predicted to be the loneliest in all of England according to a model looking at risk factors for loneliness which quantifies the many factors that can increase the risk of loneliness in older age<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2 To address this issue, the council has for some years run a small grants programme aimed at supporting older people (50+) with organising group social, physical, artistic and educational events, activities and projects, in line with current evidence from Public Health England that group activities achieve the best outcomes.
- 1.3 **The Ageing Well Small Grants fund 2017/18 saw 40 groups awarded a Small Grant of between £400 and £600, totalling £20,815.**
- 1.4 As well as evidencing how the grant was used, these groups were also asked to provide details of how many people benefitted from the award and feedback on what difference receiving the grant has made. They were also provided with blank equality forms to be completed anonymously by individual users to give the Council a better understanding of who the beneficiaries are.
- 1.5 The data captured from these completed forms, as well as initial application forms, have enabled us to produce this report which presents:
  - How grants were used
  - Who the beneficiaries were
  - The geographic spread of grant recipients
  - The feedback received

### **2. How grants were used**

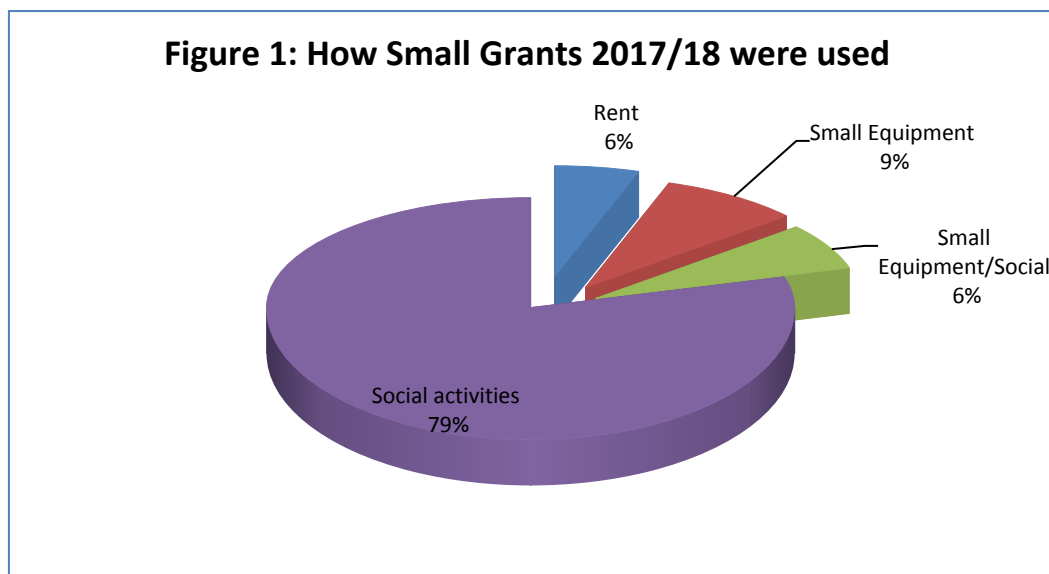
- 2.1 Awards fell into the following four broad categories:
  - Rent (including room hire)
  - Running costs (including utilities bills, insurance etc.)
  - Small equipment (e.g. bingo machines, sewing machines, craft materials)
  - Social Activities (e.g. parties, day trips, includes facilitator costs)

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<sup>1</sup> [Loneliness and Isolation in Older People – Factsheet \(JSNA\)](#)

## 2.2 Of the 40 grants awarded in 2017/18:

- Three were as a contribution towards rent
- Three were used solely to purchase small equipment or materials (including bingo and short mat bowls equipment)
- 32 were towards social activities (including celebrations for Christmas , Eid, Easter, St George’s Day and International Women’s Day and day trips to locations including Bournemouth, Broadstairs, Clacton, Herne Bay, Maidstone, Romford, Rye, Southend, Winchester, Worthing and a West End theatre)
- Two were used as a contribution towards rent/room hire and social activities
- None was used towards running costs



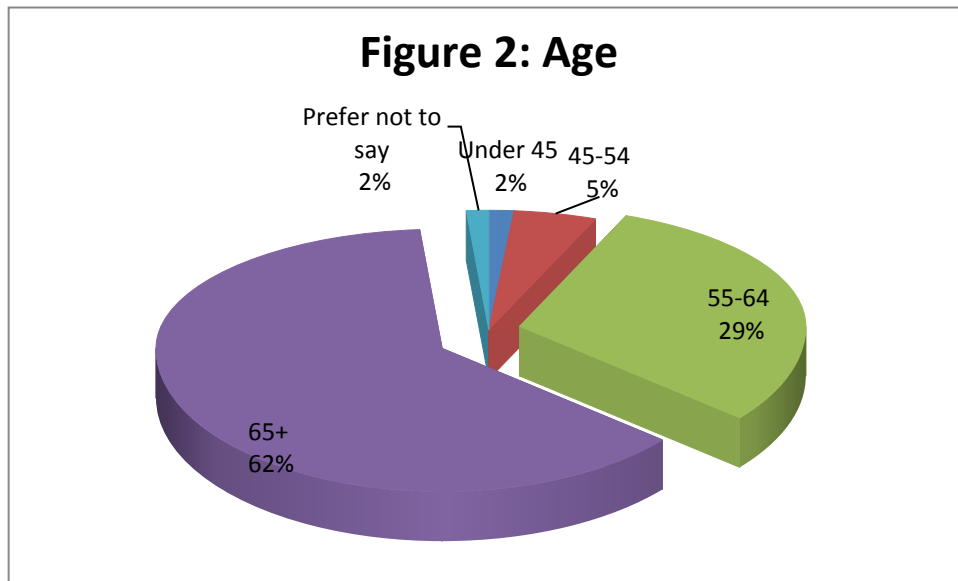
## 3. Who the beneficiaries were

3.1 Over 1,300 older Tower Hamlets residents benefited from the Small Grants 2017/18 fund. Based on 1,063 completed equality forms, the breakdown is as follows:

### Age

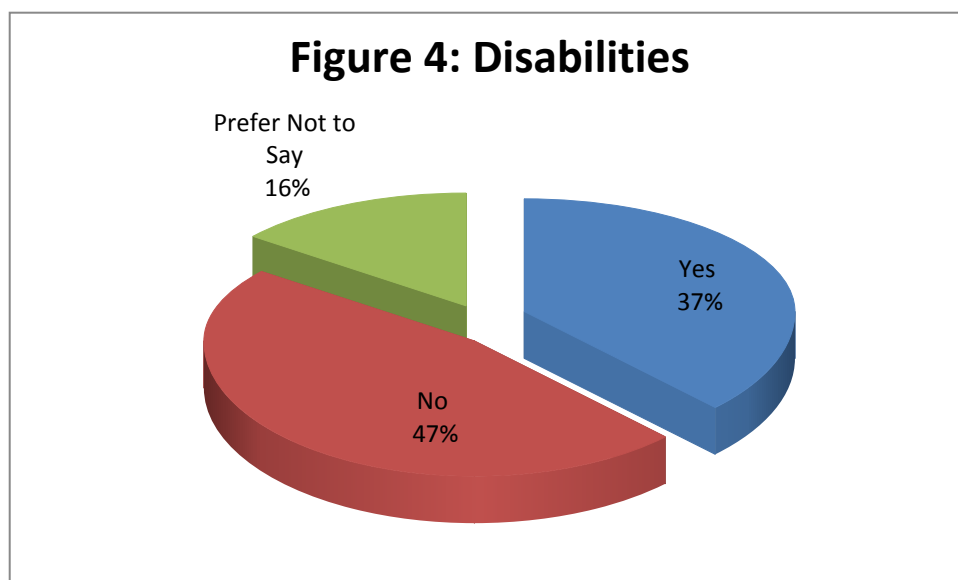
- 3.2 The overwhelming majority of beneficiaries were over 65 (62%), with 29% aged 55-64. This compares with 70% and 20% respectively in 2016/17 and illustrates that the fund reached a larger proportion of ‘younger older people’ in 2017/18.
- 3.3 At least 18 people under 50 also returned forms; no more than four younger people per group. Although the fund is for people aged 50+ it is recognised that these younger adults would have provided support and companionship to other older members of the group, contributing to a

reduction in loneliness and isolation. It could also be the case that these were informal carers.



### Disabilities

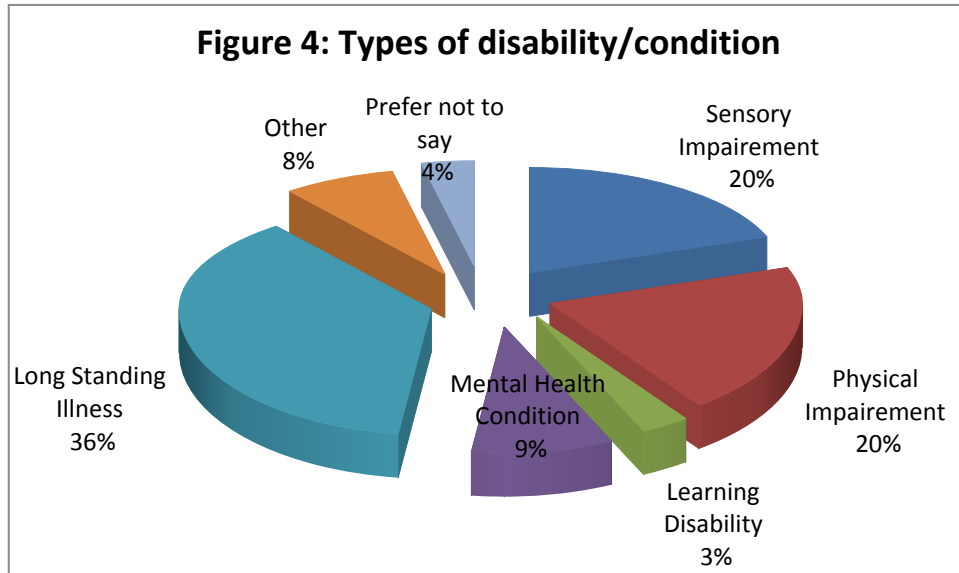
- 3.4 399 beneficiaries identified as having a disability (37%, compared to 42% in 2016/17). 384 beneficiaries said that they were not disabled (47%) although some of these did state that they had a long standing illness (see 3.5). It is known that in Tower Hamlets many residents develop long term conditions and disability at an earlier age by their mid-50s<sup>2</sup> and that poor health, immobility, cognitive impairment and sensory impairment were all found to be significantly associated with loneliness<sup>3</sup>.



<sup>2</sup> [Older People in Tower Hamlets – JSNA 2016](#)

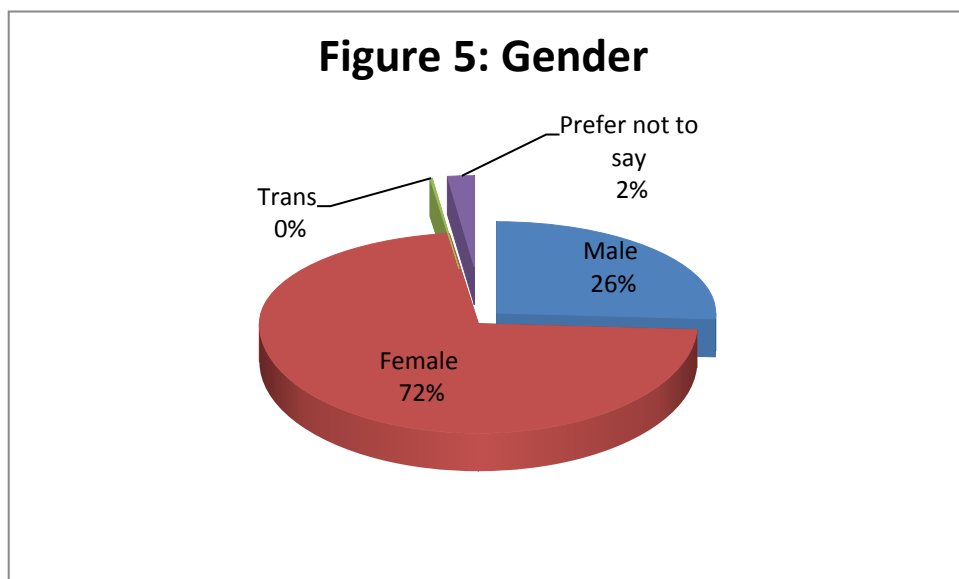
<sup>3</sup> [Loneliness and Isolation in Older People – JSNA 2016](#)

3.5 Of those who identified as having a disability, 6% stated that they had a long standing illness or long term condition. 20% reported having a sensory impairment, 20% had a physical disability or impairment and 9% identified as having a mental health condition. Many identified as having more than one type of disability/condition.



### Gender

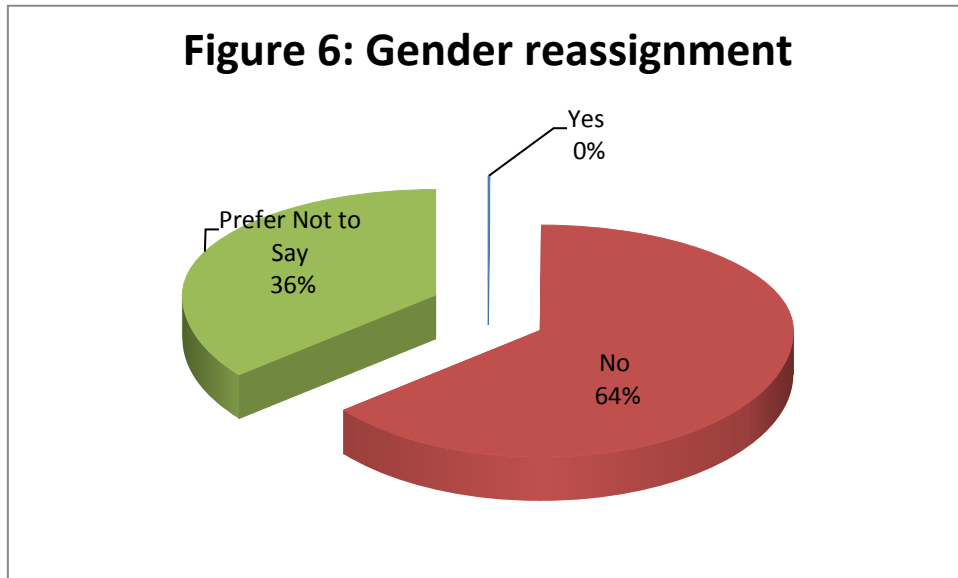
3.6 Significantly more women (72%) than men (26%) benefitted from the award of a Small Grant in 2017/18, compared to 80% and 18% respectively in 2016/17. The gender split in Tower Hamlets (all ages) is 52.2% male and 47.8% female. However, a greater number of females aged 65+ are predicted to live alone (3,972) than males (1,976)<sup>4</sup>.



<sup>4</sup> [Older People in Tower Hamlets – JSNA 2016](#)

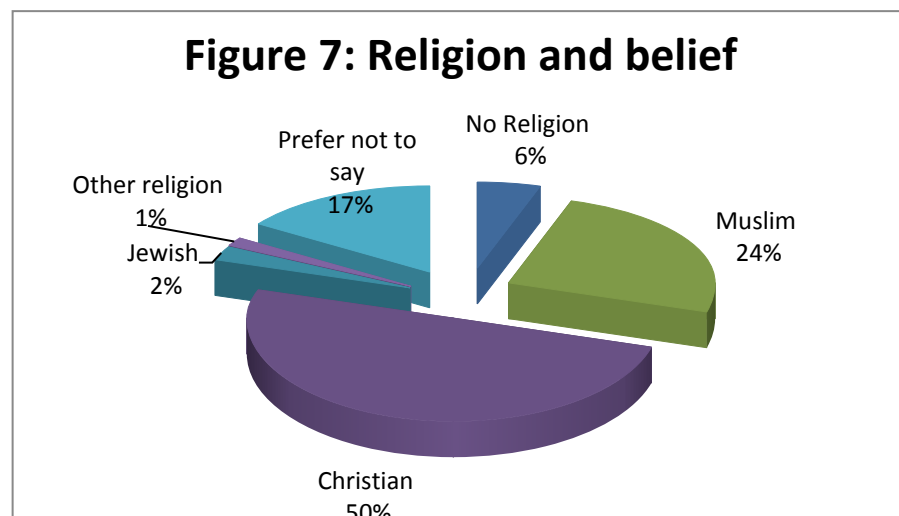
## Gender Reassignment

- 3.7 One beneficiary identified as having this protected characteristic. The question around gender reassignment was rephrased in 2017/18 to avoid confusion which may have contributed to a higher than expected figure of 40 identifying as having gender reassignment in 2016/17.



## Religion and belief

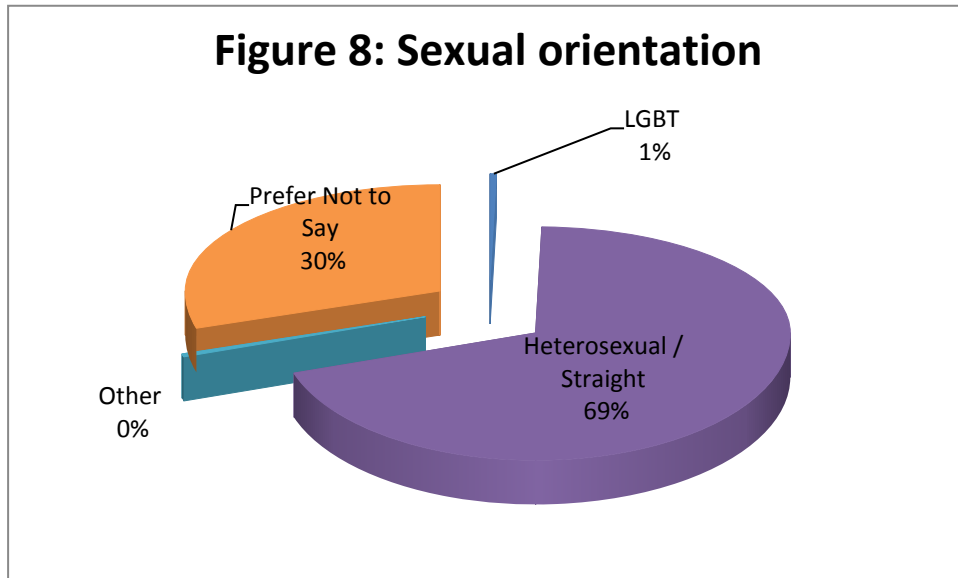
- 3.8 Half of beneficiaries identified as being Christian, with Islam being the second largest represented faith on 24% (52% and 30% respectively in 2016/17). At the time of the 2011 Census, 38 per cent of residents (all ages) said they were Muslim and 30 per cent Christian<sup>5</sup>, although this is likely to be a different picture for older people based on what we know about ethnicity (see 3.10).



<sup>5</sup> [Census 2011 – Religion in Tower Hamlets](#)

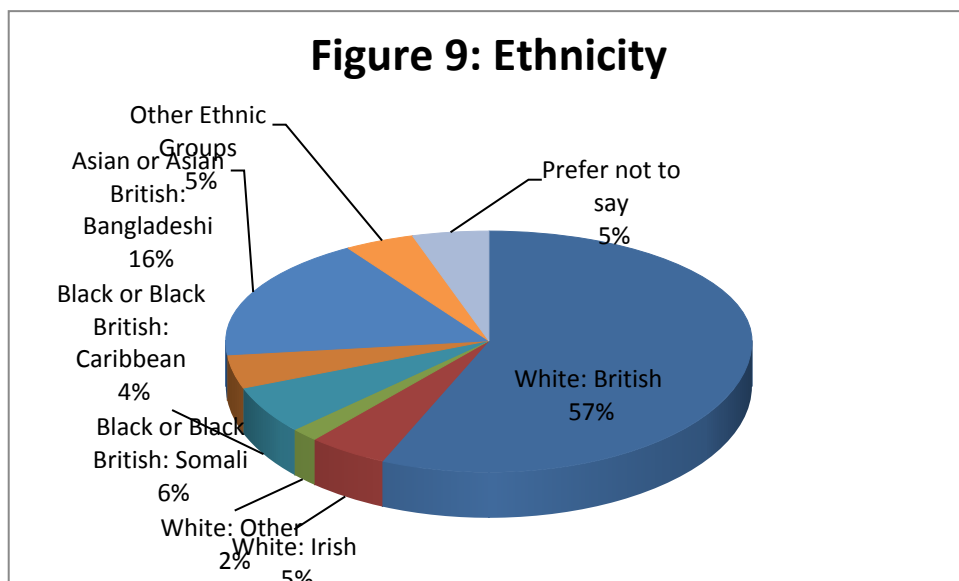
## Sexual Orientation

- 3.9 69% of beneficiaries identified as being heterosexual/straight, whilst those identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual was in single figures. Limited data is available for this protected characteristic in Tower Hamlets as it was not a specific category in the last census.



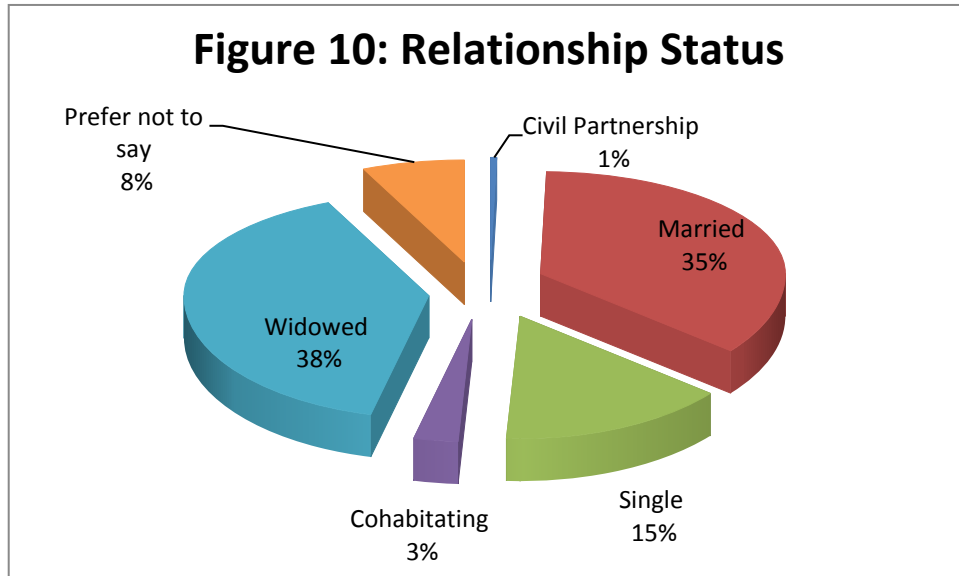
## Ethnicity

- 3.10 Over half of beneficiaries were white: British (57%, an increase on 48% in 2016/17), with 16% identifying as Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi (the same as in 2016/17). The next largest groups were Black or Black British: Somali (6%), White: Irish (5%) and Black Caribbean (4%). In Tower Hamlets, nearly two thirds of those aged 65+ are white and 25.3% Asian or Asian British.



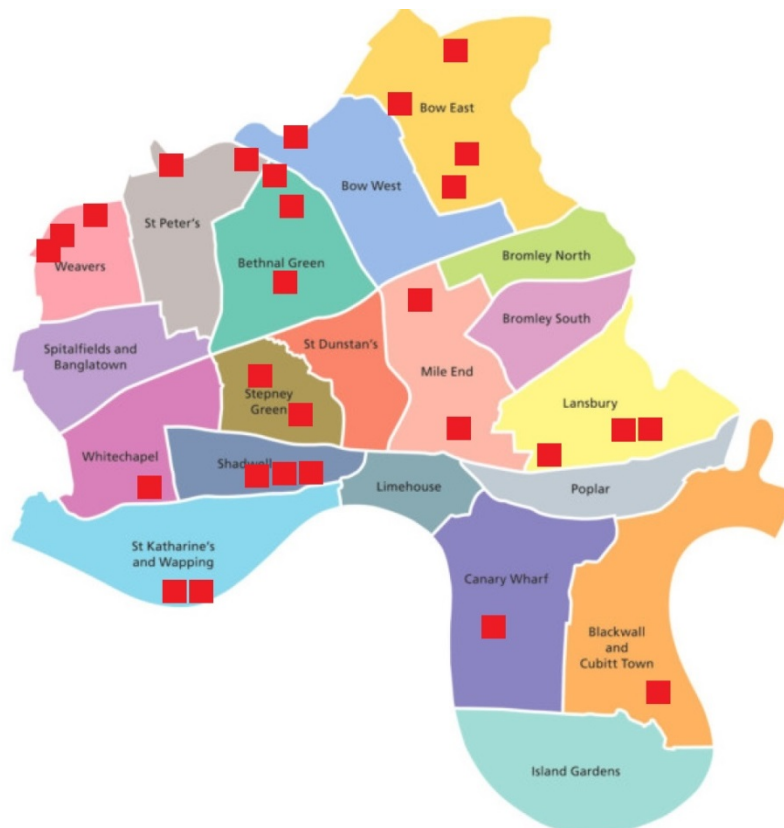
## Relationship Status

3.11 Just over half (53%) of beneficiaries reported being either widowed (38%) or single (15%) with 35% being married. Limited data is available for this protected characteristic in Tower Hamlets.



## 4. Geographic Spread

4.1 The figure below shows the approximate location of small grants recipients, based on their delivery address.



## **5. Feedback received**

- 5.1 Organisations awarded a grant in 2017/18 were asked to provide some qualitative feedback to help us understand whether the fund was achieving its objective to contribute towards a reduction in social isolation for older people. A selection of the comments received is shown on the following page. It is clear that the grant awards are valued and, by funding or enabling social activities, go some way to providing support and opportunities for social interaction.
  
- 5.2 The majority of groups awarded an Ageing Well Small Grant in 2017/18 rely on volunteers to keep them operating. Often these are older people themselves. Groups such as these make a huge difference to the lives of older people and provide a lifeline within local communities. The equalities data illustrates that a large and diverse group of older people across the borough have been supported by these groups and provided with social opportunities that help develop friendships and contribute to reduction in loneliness and isolation.



*It made a great difference as most attendees rely on this small club as they can't get out a lot; this is their only outlet (grant used to fund a leaving party)*

*This grant enables us to run a short mat bowls club which provides a social experience (grant used to purchase bowls equipment)*

*...the grant has helped us replace ageing (bowls) equipment*

*The grant has made a great difference... the local community coming together... which prevents older people from being isolated and lonely (grant used to purchase equipment to run movie nights)*

*This grant enables our group of local men to meet and get involved in local and national events... we like to have speakers in to talk on a variety of topics (grant used to fund coach trips)*

*...helped increase community cohesion and improved physical and mental health and wellbeing for elderly and vulnerable women residents from Bethnal Green (grant used to fund exercise sessions)*

*This grant has enabled us to give members a free Christmas three-course meal... Our members enjoy coming to the club as the atmosphere is friendly... most members live alone*

*Residents were able to understand and see first-hand the changes that have happened in the area. They were able to find out how to access free services... they enjoyed a day away from their homes (grant used to fund guided walks and boat trips in QE2 Park)*

*For the majority this was their first 'out of the house' social gathering of the year. ...an opportunity for everyone to meet and socialise (grant used to fund a party)*

*This grant made a huge difference... helping them to form new friendships therefore reducing loneliness/isolation. Older residents are also becoming involved with activities for young children (grant used to*

*This grant gave the pensioners something very special, that wouldn't be afforded usually (grant used to fund a fish & chips supper for 50)*

*This award has meant that older people from different backgrounds have had opportunity to socialise together... not only with old friends they don't often see but new friends. A lot of the people are often lonely and isolated; this award allowed them to link up with others and reduce the loneliness they often feel (grant used to fund parties)*

*The grant has enabled the group to enhance knowledge and learn new skills... but it is the 'good relationships and companionship' felt by all to be key, the support network that has evolved from the project (grant used to fund tutored craft sessions)*

*With this grant we have explored areas we have never explored before! Our group has always been strong but this task has seen our negotiation and research skills grow (grant used to fund an arts project and exhibition)*