



# TOWER HAMLETS PLAN COMMUNITY INSIGHTS RESEARCH



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## Report for the Tower Hamlets Partnership

Prepared by the Tower Hamlets Community Insights Team  
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## 1. Summary – key findings

During February and March 2018, community insights researchers carried out an engagement exercise with people living, studying and working in the borough. The focus was on the key themes identified in the Tower Hamlets Partnership’s plan and vision for the future. The engagement exercise we undertook builds on a substantial engagement programme previously undertaken across the borough by the Tower Hamlets Partnership to draw up the key themes for the plan.

People in Tower Hamlets have told the researchers their stories and given their thoughts across all four key themes of the Tower Hamlets Plan.

Overall, we found that:



- Local people were positive in their engagement, even if they knew little about the Tower Hamlets Plan beforehand, and most told us they liked living in Tower Hamlets.
- The majority of people were interested in and able to engage on all of the issues. All themes were considered to be important, but their top priority varied from one research setting/group to another. However, the first theme of stronger and safer communities generated the most interest and comment on the whole. We found concerns about perceived lack of facilities in the East and South of the borough, and housing as a big issue – lack of quality in existing stock and affordability of new stock – it affected all of the themes and people thought it should be a priority in its own right.
- People generally welcomed the diversity and opportunities they saw in the borough, and although some were cynical about anything changing, most were keen to see what will happen next through the mechanism of the Tower Hamlets Plan.

More specifically, with reference to the four themes, we found the following:

### **Strong, resilient and safe communities**

Community, and in particular community safety, was the topic which generated the most interest overall in the fieldwork, with more comments and strong opinions. There was a wide divergence of views, from those who felt quite safe, and those who didn’t at all. Surprisingly, older people were more likely to say they felt safe than younger people. Strategies to tackle crime and security centred mainly on practical steps like more policing and CCTV, but also more diversionary activities for young people, and more local inter-faith/ethnic activities at the local level. People generally felt there was a spirit of community at the local level, and that the borough, despite its diversity, was generally

cohesive, although some did feel there was a divide between Bangladeshi and non-Bangladeshi communities.

### **Better health and wellbeing**

People we spoke to felt this was an important topic, but did not always know how to answer questions about it. Many interpreted the topic as being about access to health services (with comments often very positive, as well the expected concerns about stretched NHS resources). For others, it was more about the local environment – with more green space and outside activities being important, and the current massive building works/developments seen as part of the problem. There were calls for a more imaginative approach to healthy eating and exercise, including community gyms, and, from all age groups and backgrounds, a view that there were too many unhealthy eateries in the borough. There were also concerns that more vulnerable sections of the community – older people, people with mental health needs, homeless people, etc. – were those most likely to be unhealthy and unable to take advantage of wellbeing opportunities. Housing again came into the equation.

### **Good jobs and employment**

This was a theme which generated a lot of interest in some sessions, less so in others. Where it was a priority theme, many people were keen to give their views on opportunities locally, and what might be done to improve them. Many felt that there were a lot of initiatives, but that they weren't necessarily very coordinated, and tended to be targeted at specific age-ranges and communities, so excluding others. More could be done by the big businesses in Canary Wharf to offer training and appropriate support to local people, but also within communities and schools to encourage entry into a wider range of professions. Flexibility of work placements (supporting those with childcare and transport needs for example) and apprenticeships would be welcomed. There was less comment on the experience of actually being in work in the borough, but it was felt that existing employees in the business district could play an important role in supporting those in the local community who were unemployed.

### **A better deal for young people: aspirations, education and skills**

People of all ages and backgrounds, and not just young people themselves, felt this was an important issue. Some felt that if this could be addressed successfully, other issues would start to be addressed too. There was a strong view that while there were generally good schools, the out-of-school provision was very lacking – with little or no dedicated, safe places for youth activities, and no activities for those who would end up being in groups on the streets. Again, housing, outdoor space, and lack of local job opportunities were issues raised. Some felt the schools could do more to broaden the horizons and aspirations of young people, and there was a need for educational and social support for those out of school, whether having recently left (18+) or being excluded from school, and so on.

The detail of people's comments against each of the key themes is set out in the main part of this report (Section 6, page 15). Where possible, direct quotations are used to convey the opinions and suggestions of participants in our findings. The research reached more than 750 people, and reflects the diverse views of those engaged. While extensive, then, they should not be considered

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representative of all Tower Hamlets residents, or of any particular group or community of interest. But they do represent what people said across a large number of sessions, including 27 specific events, in multiple and contrasting settings, at different times of day and on different days of the week, including weekends, during the five weeks of the project.

## 2. Introduction

This report presents the findings of community-based participatory research undertaken during February and March 2018 on the key themes of the draft Tower Hamlets Partnership's plan for the future of the borough. The research was carried out by six locally recruited community insights researchers (referred to during this report as CRs), all of whom are Tower Hamlets residents, and supported by two part-time project coordinators and the Tower Hamlets Council Public Health team. Prior to setting out on this project, the Community Insight Researchers received training in community research techniques and a particular approach named 'Participatory Appraisal'. This research project is the team's first undertaken together.



While community-based participatory research approaches have been previously undertaken in Tower Hamlets, the scale and pace of this research project is unprecedented. The research and this report should be understood as a collaborative learning endeavour. The CRs and the staff team share a

commitment to learning from experience together. To this end, we hope this report stimulates further reflection and learning, particularly in relation to some of the challenges and opportunities associated with community-based, participatory research.

This report has also been developed in collaboration with the CRs. Community-based participatory approaches were used. Central to these approaches is the notion that local people are experts on their own lives, and their involvement and expertise is fundamental to change. The methods used are interactive and help to overcome barriers to participation and encourage people to express their opinions, and develop solutions.

The report provides background to the project, outlines the research methodology used and presents the findings and analysis, organised thematically with reference to the four Tower Hamlets Plan's own themes. Finally, recommendations are set out, in particular with reference to feeding back on the findings to the community – a key tenet of community-based participatory research.

### 3. The research team



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Community Insights  
Researcher



**Ahad Khan**  
Community Insights  
Researcher



**Kaniz Rimu**  
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**Victoria Mensah-Akrofi**  
Community Insights  
Researcher



**Rosemary Lamport**  
Joint Project Coordinator



**Andrew Richardson**  
Joint Project Coordinator



**Radhika Puri**  
Programme Lead



## 4. The research brief

This research project was commissioned by the Strategy Policy and Performance Team at Tower Hamlets Council on behalf of the Tower Hamlets Partnership. It followed on from extensive engagement during 2017 to inform and draw up the draft Plan, and a Partnership Summit engagement event in January 2018 attended by approximately 200 stakeholders.

The brief was that the Community Insights Researchers should engage local residents further on the four themes/priorities already identified by the Tower Hamlets Partnership and focus, as far as possible, on solutions and how they could be delivered:

- Strong, resilient and safe communities
- Better health and wellbeing
- Good jobs and employment
- A better deal for young people: aspirations, education and skills.

The target was to reach one thousand people across the borough. This was to include:

- Specific communities and demographic groups identified in the Plan as target or under-represented groups, which has historically has included younger professionals, Somali people, older BME women, etc.
- Grass-roots groups and communities with which they already have good links.
- Some of the relevant larger community groups already identified by the corporate team.
- Other groups and communities identified as missing or requiring more in-depth study during the course of the engagement.



The community research activity was intended and designed to sit alongside more formal consultation with key stakeholder groups and an online survey. From a community-based participatory research perspective, our activity might be conceptualised as a ‘validation’ exercise aimed at confirming and further developing the Tower Hamlets Plan themes and actions with the local community.



## 5. The Research Process and Approach (Methodology)

### When the research was carried out

The research was undertaken between 24 February and 25 March 2018. The research timetable was constrained by delays in the recruitment and briefing of the Community Insights Researchers, and by local government pre-election period activity restrictions at the end of the period. It was also impacted by two unprecedented episodes of bad weather which led to cancelled events and restricted opportunities.

The research took place during the day, at evenings and weekends, to maximise the potential of reaching different communities and people who do not usually contribute their views to council engagement initiatives.

### Where the research took place

As well as targeting different communities and groups, the aim was to have a geographical spread around the borough. The settings for the different events varied from attending public events and community groups by invitation, public, private and community buildings and spaces. Most of these venues were indoors, due to time of year and the previously mentioned inclement weather.

The key locations for the main research sessions are shown in the map.



## **Who was interviewed**

As previously explained, the Tower Hamlets Plan has been built on extensive engagement within the borough across a wide range of communities and stakeholders. This final phase was to test and take forward elements of it with residents in particular, and where possible with those people whose voices are not normally heard. The CRs interviewed in public and community locations where they were able to obtain views of specific groups within the population: each research setting had a targeted demographic or geographical focus. Observer notes from the CRs included total numbers and an overview description of participants (general demographic data), as well as their home/work/study location. Thus, while the research does not seek to be a representative sample of the population, it does provide a unique snapshot from a range of communities which can reliably inform future iterations of the p

The demographic profile of respondents is set out in broad terms against each event in the appendix (see page 35). In total, the CRs spoke to 769 Tower Hamlets residents, workers and students.

For further information on the demographic make-up of the borough as a whole, please see:

[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Borough\\_statistics/Population/Mid\\_2016\\_Population\\_Estimates\\_for\\_Tower\\_Hamlets.pdf](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Borough_statistics/Population/Mid_2016_Population_Estimates_for_Tower_Hamlets.pdf)

As well as general resident engagement, sessions were held which enabled access to a wide range of sections of the local population, including:

- Mental health service users (Inspire Event)
- ‘Younger professionals’ (Poplar Union, community contacts, Canary Wharf Idea Store)
- Elderly and disabled people (Creative Support)
- Parents of school age children (Bethnal Green Museum, St Pauls with St Luke’s)
- The LGBT community (Old Ship)
- Older people (Prime Time, Geezers)
- Bengali Community (community contacts, Idea Stores)
- Young people and students (Queen Mary University, Idea Stores)
- Patients and health workers (Immunization event, St Paul’s Way medical centre)
- Women seeking employment (Workpath/Rich Mix employment event)

Confidentiality, anonymity and equality issues were stressed throughout, with the CRs utilising their community language skills and understanding of local issues to gain the confidence of respondents.

## **The research approach used**

The CRs used qualitative Participatory Appraisal (PA) techniques to start up a discussion, and then to focus down on to solutions and opportunities.

PA is a family of approaches and methods which are rooted in the concept that local people are best placed to research their own needs and develop more relevant community-based solutions. It uses a lot of visual methods, making it especially useful for participants who find other methods of participation intimidating or complicated. Participants become active subjects rather than objects of

research, through an interactive approach, and a respect for local perceptions and choices of both outcomes and involvement in the process. Individuals can give as much information as they feel comfortable with. More importantly, no one *has* to take part in the process - it is a question of choice and participants are actively involved in a voluntary basis. Further, by recruiting community researchers from local people, the divide and power relationship between researcher and researched is broken down.

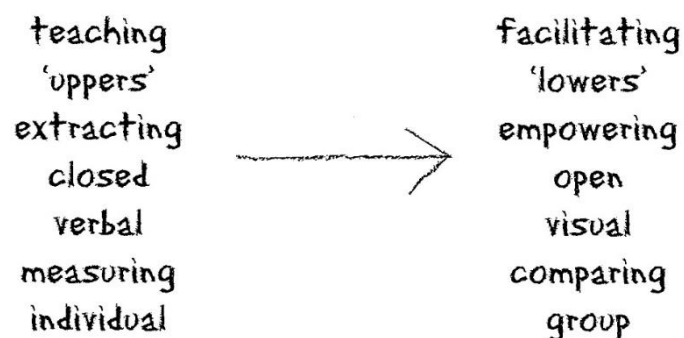
### **PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL EXPLAINED**

While quantitative research, like opinion polls and surveys, focuses on gathering numerical data and generalising it across the population, qualitative research aims to find out and probe people's opinions, perspectives and feelings. Conventional qualitative research methods include semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observation.

Community based participatory approaches, and Participatory Appraisal in particular, follow the qualitative tradition, harnessing elements from these other qualitative methods, while at the same time reflecting a paradigm shift from the research 'expert' to the 'community'. They have an origin in so-called 'developing countries', but are increasingly being used to facilitate co-production with local people in the UK and throughout the world.

The differences between PA and other research methods can be summarised as a series of 'big shifts':

#### **THE BIG SHIFTS**



A PA project can only be successful if all stakeholders - for example funders, service providers and other people or organisations with the resources and power to make things happen - are involved and support the process. They are needed in order to translate recommendations identified through the PA process into real changes on the ground, and to help communities identify actions which are possible to put into practice.

*Key features of Participatory Appraisal (courtesy of Shortwork.org.uk)*

PA has been extensively used by Public Health and others in Tower Hamlets for a number of years. It has become a tried-and-tested way of engaging local people on key issues.

This report too has shown how the philosophy and techniques can be applied.

To develop this beyond a single project, this cohort of researchers have been taken on as Tower Hamlets Council employees and are now working on a range of projects for the Council and its partners, developing their skills, extending the reach of community-based participatory approaches across the borough, and facilitating better quality engagement with the diverse communities of Tower Hamlets.

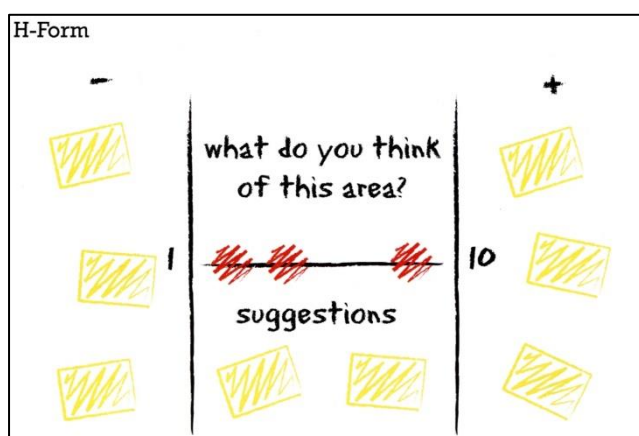
For more information: [communityinsightsnetwork@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:communityinsightsnetwork@towerhamlets.gov.uk).

### The research questions

All of the themes were covered by the research – see Section 6 (page 15) for the detail of which themes were covered at which specific event. Questions were structured to elicit the key issues which need to be addressed, and how this might be achieved, meeting the Partnership’s aspiration for solution-focused discussions.

In each setting, the themes discussed and the techniques used were adapted to suit the audience.

The CRs asked participants to prioritise themes and to rate the current situation in the borough for each theme discussed, as they saw it. The primary CR tool was an ‘H-form’ which invites comment on positive and negative forces before moving onto suggestions for improvement.



The H-form combines a number of PA methods in one session and so is a comprehensive community research tool, combining a number of different methods, and which can be used for gathering a lot of opinions and suggestions in one single session.

The H-form is so-called because it facilitates interaction using a very simple H-shaped format. An H-shape is drawn on a large sheet of paper with the topic for discussion at the

top. Participants first score the topic according to how positive they feel about it, using sticky dots along the horizontal line of the H. Using post-its they then identify what’s positive about the issue and place them on the right side of the H. Negative aspects of the issue are then placed on the left hand side. This can be done by the participant themselves, or by the facilitator, who then asks for the participant’s suggestions as to how the issues might be improved. These points are then placed on the bottom half of the H. The key points stand out clearly at the end of the process.

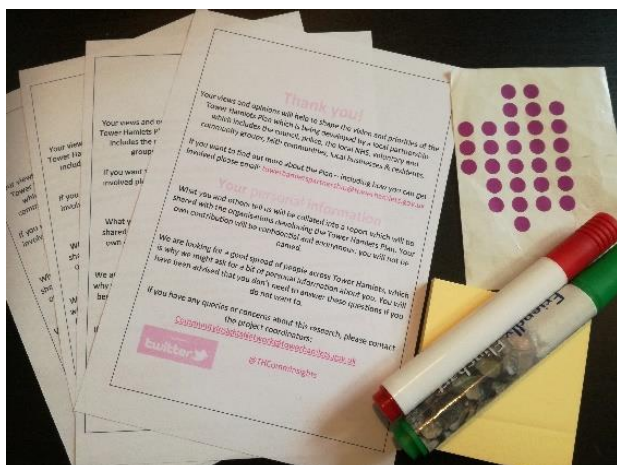
This tool helps people (individuals and/or groups) to record their own views and ideas in a non-threatening and open, yet structured way which fosters individual expression as well as common

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understanding and consensus. The sequence and clear framework that the H-form provides keeps discussion focused, specific, progressive and readily leads to action points. The structured format also helps to facilitate and record semi-structured interviews without introducing facilitator bias. It can be used with people of all ages, language and literacy levels.

Throughout this report are photos of the H-form being used by the community insights researchers. The findings detailed in Section 6 have been analysed and presented around this format.



All participants were offered a 'thank you' slip (example below) which explained how their comments and views would be used to inform the Tower Hamlets Plan, and given contact details for further information.

### How the data was analysed

To ensure consistency, the same tools were used across all groups. Methodological triangulation therefore is through using the same questions with different groups of people in the community, rather than using a wide variety of methods. Although, as indicated earlier in this report, the key H-form tool was adapted to the specific circumstances of each session.

Summary sheets were completed by the community insights researchers for all events. This report is based on those summary sheets.

The CRs have been a key part of the data analysis process. A training workshop for the CRs was held in early April 2018 to identify methods for analysis and reporting. A range of PA tools were explored. Thematic analysis based on the H-form concept was the agreed approach taken to analyse the data and frame this report.

## Validation



To be valid, the research process needs to include verification stages and opportunities for feedback. This is research carried out *with* the community (in the form of community researchers) and not something that is done *to* the community. So the involvement of local people should be continued throughout all stages of the participatory appraisal approach. Therefore checking out and triangulating information elicited throughout the research process is a key feature of this kind of work.

In this time-limited research project, the CRs – selected for their knowledge of and skills in talking to their own communities – were able to contribute directly to this process. As the research project developed, they reflected on the views, ideas and suggestions they had heard, and their own reaction to them individually and as a group in team meetings; as well using the earlier feedback to provide prompts for discussion in later interactions with other individuals and groups.

We hope that the CRs will be given the opportunity to present the findings back to their own communities; this will close the circle of participation and validate the whole process. The CRs are particularly keen to do so once this report has been published, to ensure authenticity of their work.



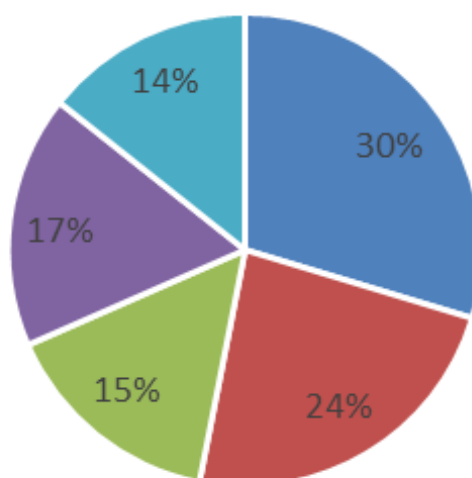
## 6. The findings

This section sets out the findings from the research. It includes the numbers and details of views recorded for each theme. Following on from this, the findings are set out in a table, which gives a narrative summary, details of where the research took place, the headline issues, more detailed findings based on direct quotes, suggestions from respondents, and finally community researcher reflections and analysis.

### Views recorded for each of the themes

	Views recorded
1: Strong, resilient and safe communities	263
2: Better health and wellbeing	208
3. Good jobs and employment	136
4: A better deal for young people: aspirations, education and skills	153
5. Data recording issue**	127
Total views recorded	887

### Views recorded

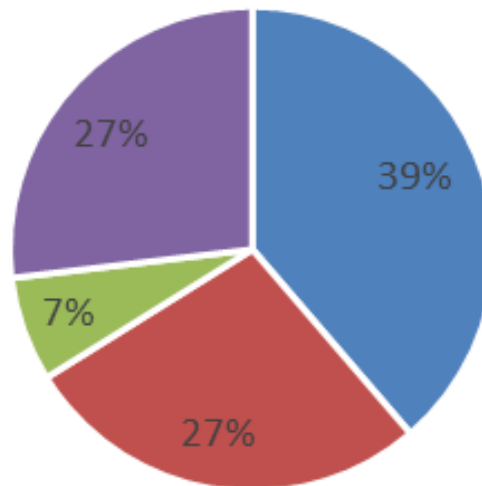


- 1: Strong, resilient and safe communities
- 2: Better health and wellbeing
- 3. Good jobs and employment
- 4: A better deal for young people: aspirations, education and skills.
- 5. Data recording issue\*\*

*\*\*There are 127 views recorded in the data set where it is not clear if total number of people recorded for the session includes multiple views from the same person across the 4 themes. This issue arose when all themes were discussed in a single session – rather than the session being focused on a single theme, and recorded accordingly.*

Most sessions were focused on a single theme. However, when asked “Which of the themes is your priority?” for which a total of 186 views recorded, the following responses were given:

## Which of the themes is your priority?



- 1: Strong, resilient and safe communities
- 2: Better health and wellbeing
- 3: Good jobs and employment
- 4: A better deal for young people: aspirations, education and skills.

## Theme 1: Strong, resilient & safe communities

Where did we go?	
Bromley By Bow Centre Chrisp Street market/Idea Store Whitechapel Idea Store Island House community centre, Isle of Dogs Poplar Union Mulberry & Bigland Centre, Shadwell Canary Wharf Idea Store St Paul's with St Luke's Primary School, Mile End Workpath, Poplar	Prime Time older people's session, Whitechapel Bow Idea Store The Geezers, Bow Queen Mary University, Mile End Asda, Crossharbour Old Ship (LGBT Pub), Limehouse St Paul's Medical Centre, Mile End/Poplar Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood

What were the headlines?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ People's own close neighbourhoods often feel safe, but not so much the wider area which surrounds them</li> <li>▪ Participants see a lot of young people just "hanging around" and feel that something is needed to steer them away from the streets.</li> <li>▪ There are concerns regarding acid attacks, drug dealing and in the Somali community, knife crime seemed a particular concern.</li> <li>▪ From the people we spoke to, younger people have more concerns about safety than older people – who are more concerned about loss of community.</li> <li>▪ People told us that there is so much happening in Tower Hamlets, but they don't always hear about it: a lot of people told us they miss the frequent Council newspaper.</li> <li>▪ People value Idea Stores – especially younger people who consider them safe places.</li> <li>▪ Loss of community relates to many issues, including perceived uncontrolled development, and the divide between the Bangladeshi community and other groups.</li> <li>▪ A lot of people have concerns about housing in relation to this theme; the lack of affordable housing in particular and the impact of that on local people, growing families and communities.</li> </ul>

In their own words...	
+	-
<p>"The population is generally kind and open minded. People listen to each other. There is a strong identity in TH of being a Londoner in the East End." (Chrisp Street Idea Store)</p> <p>"Idea Stores are great! I feel very happy, safe and relaxed in my local Idea Store." (Chrisp Street Idea Store)</p> <p>"Poplar HARCA events are very good. For example, the Jive event was great." (Chrisp Street Idea Store)</p> <p>"There are sufficient secondary schools, a</p>	<p>"Young people are involved in dealing drugs because they make more money in a week from this than they would be getting a job".</p> <p>"I work in a theatre in central London and get back to Tower Hamlets very late. As a woman, I don't feel safe because I see people smoking drugs and loitering around on my street. I haven't noticed cameras around." (Chrisp St Idea Store).</p> <p>"I feel safe in my community because everyone grew up together. But I don't feel safe in certain areas of Tower Hamlets. There needs to</p>

In their own words...	
+	-
<p>variety of primary schools and some are outstanding!"</p> <p>"Communities are strong and when push comes to shove we get together when incidents happen in the borough. Need more of this". (Workpath)</p> <p>"I feel safe as there has been no major events incidents relating to safety in my area" (Whitechapel Idea Store)</p> <p>"It feels safer for the Bengali and Somali community In Canary Wharf because there is more security" (Canary Wharf Idea Store).</p> <p>"Weapon sweeps work well" (Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood).</p> <p>"There is good community spirit and police presence, albeit only in afternoon and morning". (Island House Community Centre, Isle of Dogs).</p> <p>"Tower Hamlets is much safer than Newham and I'm very relaxed here, and I'm not clutching my bag all the time!" (Canary Wharf Idea Store).</p> <p>"Very good support from neighbours /I love living in TH – because of my neighbours – people understand each other." (Canary Wharf Idea Store).</p>	<p>be more policing. More police on the streets like back in the day." (Old Ship, LGBT Pub, Limehouse).</p> <p>"It seems hard to get in touch with the Bengali community if you are not part of it." (Chrisp St Idea Store).</p> <p>"I am worried about drugs, drug dealers and alcohol in the E1 and E1 areas" (Whitechapel Idea Store)</p> <p>"Youth loitering in the streets makes me feel unsafe" (Whitechapel Idea Store)</p> <p>"New housing developments are using up all open space. There is a lack of safe informal spaces for children to run and play, let off steam. This has a negative impact on social cohesion." (Chrisp St Idea Store).</p> <p>"I used to live in Tower Hamlets. Found it to be a very segregated community and don't see how the council will bring people together. This needs to be a borough that works for EVERYONE. Stop focusing on race &amp; religion and focus on humanity" (Old Ship, LGBT Pub, Limehouse).</p> <p>"All kids in Tower Hamlets see gang violence" (Chrisp St Idea Store).</p> <p>"There is a lack of funds for youth organisations. Social and youth organisations are closing down."</p> <p>"There is incorrect housing provision – it seems housing caters more to young professionals but it doesn't account for future need and growing families." (Chrisp St Idea Store).</p> <p>"Around the borough a lot of construction sites are popping up which are very dangerous" (Workpath)</p> <p>"New crossing on A12 being proposed is very dangerous because of high speed and will</p>

<b>In their own words...</b>	
+	-
	<p>increase pollution” (Canary Wharf Idea Store).</p> <p>“Rubbish is really a problem, bins not emptied regularly – encourages more mess and not good for the community/Rats because of the underground bins makes more work for Pest Control” (Canary Wharf Idea Store).</p>

<b>Their suggestions and solutions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have a more visible police presence (Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood / Whitechapel Idea Store / Old Ship, LGBT Pub, Limehouse / Canary Wharf Idea Store).</li> <li>▪ Address reckless driving – including both speeding cars and bicycles on pavements (Whitechapel Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Better surveillance of speeding in Manchester Road (Island House Community Centre, Isle of Dogs).</li> <li>▪ Support people to use WhatsApp groups to communicate community safety issues (Positive East).</li> <li>▪ Clampdown on aggressive begging (Canary Wharf Idea Store).</li> <li>▪ Facilitate joint cultural events – Muslim, Christian and other communities together. The council / community groups should host more interfaith, intercultural music and cultural events to bring different people together. (Chrip St Idea Store).</li> <li>▪ “The Council should organise more cultural exchange gatherings. Support the sharing of languages, culture, history – also to include white working class East End history and culture” (Chrip Street Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Hold more street parties – shut off roads and bring people together. (Chrip Street Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Community leaders – mosque, priest, councillor, need to take the lead on community safety (Canary Wharf Idea Store).</li> <li>▪ Have more affordable housing and tax empty properties more (Creative Support).</li> <li>▪ Engage in greater community dialogue with the Somali community in Tower Hamlets: A Somali community leader has offered to facilitate this (Whitechapel Idea Store).</li> <li>▪ More youth centres for young people to reduce crime (Chrip St Idea Store).</li> <li>▪ Coordination and publicity of events and activities across the Borough is key, and can use existing organisations and resources.</li> <li>▪ Improved street lighting and CCTV in crime hot spots across the Borough (Island House Community Centre, Isle of Dogs).</li> <li>▪ There should be more after school activities, more clubs and more affordable events/activities in the summer (Whitechapel Idea Store).</li> <li>▪ “The big parks such as Mile End, Victoria part mud chute need more lights and officers around them” (Workpath)</li> <li>▪ Fine people for littering (Whitechapel Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Empty bins more frequently (Whitechapel Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Create a larger community garden in Poplar (Chrip St Idea Store).</li> </ul>

### Community Researchers' analysis and reflections

- There is a general assumption that it is unsafe, even though it may not necessarily be unsafe, it 'feels unsafe.' (CR reflections, Feb 2018).
- "People who have lived in Tower Hamlets all their lives do feel safe in their own communities, because they grew up with the people in their communities. For people who have moved to Tower Hamlets, they do not feel safe because they do not know the people in their communities. Not feeling safe also seems to be because of a lack of police presence and CCTV. Plus, people are noticing the increase in groups of youth hanging around their communities and this adds to them not feeling safe." (CR Reflections, April 2018)
- "Housing seems to be an issue that affects all 4 priorities, and that it feels like the unspoken 5th priority. People are seeing the massive building projects that are going on and it seems to feel like the houses are not for Tower Hamlets residents. Also, it does feel like Tower Hamlets is split into two communities, the Bangladeshi community and everyone else. And a lot of people who are not Bangladeshi feel that the council caters more to the Bangladeshi culture and religion." (CR reflections, April 2018)
- "There were mixed views [regarding this theme] with some participants feeling safe in their own area, with others not, particularly in the Bethnal Green, Shadwell and Whitechapel areas. There were a small number of residents who said that the recent acid attacks and speeding cars made them feel unsafe." (CR reflections, May 2018)





## Theme 2: Better health & wellbeing

Where did we go?	
Bromley By Bow Centre Chrisp Street market/Idea Store Whitechapel Idea Store Art group, Isle of Dogs Positive East, Stepney Poplar Union Watney Market Idea Store Bow Idea Store	The Geezers, Bow Queen Mary University , Mile End Old Ship (LGBT Pub), Limehouse Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood Mulberry Place Town Hall Parents immunization session, Shadwell Canary Wharf Idea Store Prime Time, Whitechapel

What were the headlines?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Many people want to prioritise tackling obesity – for example, ‘school sports day’ type events in parks, cheaper or free gyms, and find ways of encouraging setting up of cheap and healthy eateries.</li> <li>▪ There is a view that ‘gym on prescription’ and other free health and wellbeing services and initiatives should be publicised more.</li> <li>▪ People talk about some excellent health services, but there are the expected concerns about ‘too many people’ trying to access them, and pressure on resources.</li> <li>▪ Many people raise the issue of waiting times to see GPs being too long.</li> <li>▪ People feel that public spaces could be better used for community benefit – but too many are being swallowed up by development.</li> <li>▪ Classes at Idea Stores, such as Tai Chi, ballet, etc. are valued and are felt to have a positive impact on people’s health and wellbeing. Walking groups organised by GP surgeries, outdoor gyms and ‘walking buses’ are also valued.</li> <li>▪ Smaller scale mental health services, in particular peer support projects, are valued.</li> <li>▪ Swimming pools and gyms are felt to be too expensive.</li> <li>▪ Many people have expressed there are not enough gyms that provide ‘women only’ sessions, especially for swimming.</li> <li>▪ Lack of affordable and suitable housing is a big concern, affecting the health and wellbeing of many respondents and their families.</li> <li>▪ There are concerns about too many unhealthy food shops e.g. fried chicken shops and about their proximity to schools.</li> <li>▪ There are concerns about high prevalence rates of diabetes among the Bangladeshi community.</li> <li>▪ There are concerns about the over 50s and the elderly being marginalised. Some older people have seen the Borough change a lot and they feel left behind and uncared for.</li> <li>▪ There are concerns about the restructuring of sexual health services resulting in fewer services and more pressure on other services.</li> <li>▪ There are concerns about increased homelessness.</li> <li>▪ Many people don’t fully understand the terms ‘health’ and ‘well-being’ and are unsure how to answer questions about them.</li> </ul>

In their own words...	
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<p>“Tower Hamlets has good markets selling fresh produce” (Whitechapel IS)</p> <p>“There are plenty of great parks in the Borough” (Whitechapel IS)</p> <p>“The New Royal London Hospital has more facilities than its older counterpart” (Whitechapel IS)</p> <p>“If it wasn’t for Positive East, I don’t know where I’d be”. (Positive East, Stepney Green)</p> <p>“Oxford House Centre provides lots of good groups and activities for all ages – including older people” (Prime Time, Whitechapel)</p> <p>“There are allotments around the borough which allows residents to grow their own fruits and vegetables therefore learning about healthy eating” (Watney Market IS)</p> <p>“Having a walk-in option at my surgery, with no appointment needed, is a very good idea” (Geezers)</p> <p>“Pharmacies can give good health advice more quickly – they are an under-utilised resource.” (Geezers)</p> <p>“The bicycle paths in Tower Hamlets are great, especially on Whitechapel Road” (Old Ship, LGBT Pub, Limehouse).</p> <p>“The Borough has great public spaces, music and arts venues. They need to be protected – don’t let them close down!” (Old Ship, LGBT Pub, Limehouse).</p> <p>“St Paul’s Way medical centre provides a walking group that is very effective” (St Pauls Way Medical Centre)</p> <p>“There are some good services for chronic diseases, such as Fit for Life Scheme and some good support groups” (The Forge, E14)</p> <p>“Things are improving for older people. There are some good programs and services – for example healthy living groups ‘fit for life’ and</p>	<p>“There are too many unhealthy food shops e.g. fried chicken shops” (Whitechapel IS)</p> <p>“There is too much pollution in the Borough and too much litter in the streets – especially in Whitechapel and Brick Lane. (Whitechapel IS)</p> <p>“Let’s have more trees and less cars!” (BBBC)</p> <p>“Where is the support if people self-test for HIV? This reflects the agenda of shifting responsibility to the individual.” (Positive East, Stepney Green)</p> <p>“African migrant communities don’t understand and engage with preventative health, they only go to services when they are sick – there is a need to change perceptions” (Positive East, Stepney Green)</p> <p>“There are a lot of pollution is certain parts of the borough such as Commercial Road, leading into the city which isn’t good as it is next to the hospital. This makes asthma worse.” (Watney Market IS)</p> <p>“Many GP surgeries have a very long waiting time, some up to 2 weeks before they can see someone which is not very good” (Watney Market IS)</p> <p>“There is nothing much for pensioners in Bow – clubs have closed” (Bow IS)</p> <p>“It’s so hard to see my GP. I can never get an appointment – I phone at 8am and am in a queue – it’s very frustrating”. (Geezers)</p> <p>“Improve planning regulations – there are too many coffee shops! We also want to see a non-Halal (traditional English) butchers.” (Geezers)</p> <p>“There are no affordable gyms, only expensive ones, especially in the East of the borough”. (Canary Wharf IS)</p> <p>“Housebound and vulnerable people, those without families and who may rely on social care professionals, miss out on certain activities and health programs” (Prime Time, Whitechapel).</p>

In their own words...	
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<p>activities for over 50s at the leisure centre” (Prime Time, Whitechapel)</p>	<p>“Carers have to wait for appointments with GPs even though the cared-for doesn’t – more awareness among GPs of the needs of carers is needed.” (Canary Wharf IS)</p> <p>“There are too many coffee shops, chicken shops and ice-cream parlours.” (Old Ship, LGBT Pub, Limehouse).</p> <p>“Social enterprises need bigger pots of money – not itty-bitty projects.” (Museum of Childhood)</p>

Their suggestions and solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make gyms / leisure centres more affordable for local people. Provide discounts for students, disabled people and the elderly. (Canary Wharf IS)</li> <li>▪ Fine people for littering and empty street bins more frequently. (Whitechapel IS)</li> <li>▪ Protect and expand outdoor play areas for children. (Chrisp Street Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ “Fund ‘Ability Bow’. It’s a unique disability gym. It should be funded and expanded” (Chrisp St Idea Store).</li> <li>▪ There are many good health services, but better signposting is needed. (Positive East, Stepney Green)</li> <li>▪ Make sure homeless and refugee groups are involved in the JSNA. (Positive East, Stepney Green)</li> <li>▪ Set up gym initiatives for elderly people (Whitechapel Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Introduce more smoking restrictions (Whitechapel Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Offer complimentary therapies to bring people into services – they really need them – and it’s a good form of outreach. (Positive East, Stepney Green)</li> <li>▪ Community Health volunteers in sub-Saharan Africa get the information out to communities – learn from them and consider what could be done here? (Positive East, Stepney Green)</li> <li>▪ Provide a helpline for Muslim women/girls about sex, sexual relationships, STI’s, to prevent STI’s, educate about safe sex and abusive relationships. (Chrisp Street Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Promote allotment opportunities available in the Borough more.</li> <li>▪ Have an information campaign to educate people from abroad about not going to A&amp;E for minor ailments. (The Geezers)</li> <li>▪ Expand walk-in options at all surgeries across the Borough. (The Geezers)</li> <li>▪ Support the establishment of more walking groups across the Borough (The Geezers)</li> <li>▪ Remove VAT on sport/cycling (Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood)</li> <li>▪ Restrict the distance of a chicken shop from a school, when it comes to building / buying businesses of this kind, make the process of setting up fast food shops more difficult</li> <li>▪ Organise community sports days throughout the year within the borough, especially during half-term.</li> <li>▪ Run a campaign to target fly tipping. (Old Ship, LBG T Pub, Limehouse)</li> </ul>

### **Their suggestions and solutions**

- Use planning laws to prevent more coffee shops. There are too many and they are expensive. (Geezers)
- Provide free “gym and swim” sessions – at gyms/leisure centres at weekends. (Old Ship, LBGT Pub, Limehouse)
- The council should negotiate / subsidise concessionary gym access for local people and people with disabilities. They need to make an arrangement with private operators in the Borough.
- Provide more exercise classes at work (Tower Hamlets Council) (Mulberry Place Town Hall)
- Provide bicycle parking spaces outside council estate buildings (Mulberry Place Town Hall)
- Provide more open spaces for staff e.g. open the balconies up at Mulberry Place (Mulberry Place Town Hall)
- Develop measures to address bicycle safety – prevention of collision with pedestrians.
- We need more options for free counselling and free clinics exclusively for individuals with mental health problems
- Build on and extend great local initiatives, such as the work of Bromley-by-Bow Centre, with more health champions and trainers and information (using social and digital as well as conventional media)
- There needs to be more helplines for people that can call in when they see a homeless person and that can rapidly take them to a warm place. Especially at night and winter when they could freeze to death. These helplines also need to be publicised so everyone knows what to do when they see a homeless person.
- The Borough’s School resources (facilities) could be better used by sports organisations at low cost after hours /weekends. (Bethnal Green, Museum of Childhood)
- Dedicate more resources to tackle social isolation, especially for non-English speakers and vulnerable women. (St Pauls Way Medical Centre)

### **Community Researchers’ analysis and reflections**

“People do not really understand the term health and well-being, or mental health. People's cultures affect how people interact with GP services and people’s understanding of certain health conditions is filtered through their culture and religion.” (CR reflection, April 2018)

“It seems that local people over 50 and the elderly feel that they are only able to access chronic disease support services through health professionals. The opportunity to self-refer coupled with more awareness and health promotion might be a good idea.” (CR reflections, March 2018)

“What people told us was very interesting. Sometimes it was hard to hear. They shared some difficult and painful experiences” (CR reflection, April 2018)

“I found that some groups needed to have more awareness of what could be more available for them. It also seems a pity that the health trainer services and programs have been stopped, and that those who fitted the criteria in getting good promotion of health activities were unable to access beneficial knowledge and awareness”. (CR reflections, April 2018).

“Residents felt green spaces were unequally distributed across the borough, and some people also reported too much traffic on Commercial Road, E1” (CR reflection, May 2018)

### Theme 3: Good jobs and employment

Where did we go?	
Brady Centre, Whitechapel Chrisp Street market/Idea Store Rich Mix, Shoreditch Positive East, Stepney Canary Wharf Idea Store Island House, Isle of Dogs	Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood Poplar Union Mulberry Place Town Hall Queen Mary University , Mile End Old Ship (LGBT Pub), Limehouse Chrisp Street Idea Store

What were the headlines?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There is more work that can be done to address the mismatch of local jobs and salaries and local people’s skills and ability to secure them: More mentoring, better coordination of opportunities and employment support, and volunteering by employees from large employers to help local people develop their skills.</li> <li>▪ People suggest a need for a more positive intervention by Canary Wharf Group and big businesses there to develop schemes for local people, e.g. Offering interviews for those meeting essential criteria, more paid placements, better quality apprenticeships.</li> <li>▪ People frequently talk about the many opportunities available in Tower Hamlets and praise local employment services.</li> <li>▪ Job seekers sometimes feel there is often a mis-match between the jobs on offer and the jobs that are wanted. They feel there is a need for better coordination of opportunities and support between organisations, who feel like they are in competition for funding and clients.</li> <li>▪ Lack of affordable childcare and non-parent friendly employers are barriers to employment, particularly for women.</li> <li>▪ Competitiveness of the job market is a barrier for many women, they lack confidence and some (of all ages) in the Bangladeshi community have never ever worked.</li> <li>▪ Some parents are conservative in terms of career options for their children, and don’t consider sectors like construction which pay well and are booming (particularly Muslim communities).</li> <li>▪ There is a perception that if you have skills you need to go outside of TH to get a good job.</li> <li>▪ Business rates and rents are barriers to new small businesses.</li> <li>▪ Many people want the council to do more to support apprenticeships for local people.</li> <li>▪ Some people feel there is a need for dedicated support for some groups, in particular disabled people, people with mental health conditions and older people.</li> </ul>

In their own words...	
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“I absolutely love TH and its good you are not closing Libraries (like Brixton). The Idea Centre has a wonderful business atmosphere.” (Canary Wharf Idea Store)	“If it’s not simple, it’s a barrier to applying – there are lots of employment services and you have to register with all of them”. (Employment event, Brady Centre)
“Spotlight is a great service – good place to make friends, accessible venue”. (Chrisp St	“There is a need for better communication between all employment related agencies –

In their own words...	
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<p>Market Idea Store)</p> <p>“There are lots of activities and classes on offer in the borough” (Chrisp St Market Idea Store)</p> <p>“Workpath is a good service – it helped my Mum to get a job”. (Chrisp St Market Idea Store)</p> <p>“Good potential spaces for entrepreneurs” (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)</p> <p>“There are highly salaried positions in, for example, construction” (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)</p> <p>“There are good opportunities for graduates, and support through likes of ELBA” (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)</p> <p>“Sport career initiatives are available and supported in the borough”. (Mulberry Place Town Hall)</p> <p>“There are a wide range of jobs in Tower Hamlets which cater for a range of academic backgrounds (e.g. A-Levels and above)”. (Mulberry Place Town Hall)</p> <p>“Employment and networking support available from housing associations, advice centres and community organisations on the Isle of Dogs is good”. (Island House, Isle of Dogs)</p>	<p>statutory and non-statutory – join up the initiatives”.</p> <p>(Employment event, Brady Centre)</p> <p>“It is hard to get work experience” (Chrisp St Market Idea Store)</p> <p>“More accessible jobs are needed for people with disabilities” (Chrisp St Market Idea Store)</p> <p>“You can find a lot of jobs in London, but that doesn’t mean they are good”. (QMUL)</p> <p>“There are not enough well paid jobs outside of banking and finance” (Canary Wharf Idea Store)</p> <p>“Language classes are being cut”. (Mulberry Place Town Hall)</p> <p>“There are lots of job opportunities for people with little or no previous employment and skills, but no support for professionals who have become unemployed” (CR network)</p> <p>“A lot of high paid jobs in Tower Hamlets are for people who don’t live in Tower Hamlets. E.g. Canary Wharf” (CR network)</p> <p>“People whose first language is not English have less opportunities”. (Island House, Isle of Dogs)</p>

Their suggestions and solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide volunteering and placement opportunities with local firms – not just in IT. (Employment event, Brady Centre)</li> <li>▪ More supported employment is needed – pre and post work – capacity building – and linking with employers (Employment event, Brady Centre)</li> <li>▪ Better training in IT – not just the basics – but more intensive 121 so that people can get the higher level jobs available. (Employment event, Brady Centre)</li> <li>▪ Develop ‘wellness’ within corporations: older more established businesses could learn from the newer ones. The Council could lead the way as a ‘flagship employer’ on mental health issues. (Employment event, Brady Centre)</li> <li>▪ Job search skills should be taught at school. (Chrisp St Market Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Hold a volunteer and employment fair in Poplar. (Chrisp St Market Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Provide longer work experience opportunities – not just 1 week. (Chrisp St Market Idea Store)</li> </ul>



### Their suggestions and solutions

- Provide more community based entrepreneurial opportunities. (Island House, Isle of Dogs)
- Provide dedicated support for ‘working Mum’s to gain and maintain employment. (Island House, Isle of Dogs)
- Support those ‘less able’ to do apprenticeships, and develop / nurture them, to reach required skills. (Rich Mix, Shoreditch).
- Finding new ways to get women to take the first step – will bring more women out into the job market. Mentoring for women – not just to get a job, but when they have secured it to support them while they are working. (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)
- Promotional work in schools about the non-traditional jobs and where the shortages are/demand is (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)
- Open up empty places e.g. shops to fledgling businesses (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)
- Get ambassadors out to women’s groups locally – will have a snowball effect – can someone come up with a list of these groups – would be very helpful for advisors (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)
- Intensive free ESOL at entry level /related to job opportunities (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)
- Confidence training for women job seekers (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)
- Dedicated over 50s employment support (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)
- Community based events – a big networking session (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)
- Nurture volunteering with big employers and pay people expenses (e.g. transport, childcare) on such placements (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)
- Provide more in-work health benefits e.g. exercise classes, to keep people healthy and happy in the job (Rich Mix, Shoreditch)
- “Need to do something specific for local people – Canary Wharf Group could propose a scheme to make local people a protected category – like disabled people - could be guaranteed an interview if meet the criteria – it only takes one big employer to sign up to snowball.” (Canary Wharf Idea Store)
- Variable business rates and rents should be possible, depending on the sector (Canary Wharf Idea Store)
- Employers could work with TH Partnership to get people to train for the right sectors, e.g. IT (Canary Wharf Idea Store)
- Support local social enterprises by making commissioning processes shorter and easier and prioritise social enterprises in contracts – there are too many small contracts for non-profits. (Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood).
- Offer more childcare services and financial support for younger parents to support them into employment. (Mulberry Place Town Hall).
- “Tower Hamlets needs proper accredited courses for residents that isn’t only hair & beauty, construction and health & social care” (CR network)

**Community Researchers' analysis and reflections**

- "Working for Tower Hamlets council, my observation is that jobs in the £26K and upwards are filled by people who do not live in Tower Hamlets. So they do not have any interest in the community because they do not live in the borough." (CR Reflections, April 2018)
- "Employment provisions in Tower Hamlets are aimed at people with low skills and little experience. Tower Hamlets has a lot of residents who are professionals and have higher education qualifications, but it is sad that they have to find jobs outside the borough to suit their needs." (CR Reflections, April 2018)
- "Most residents said that there was insufficient support for finding employment and that more English classes were necessary which have been reduced. Residents did agree that Canary Wharf was on the other hand, a major attraction for jobs, even though this was not an area which they were supported in finding work". (CR Reflections, May 2018)



#### Theme 4: A better deal for young people: Aspiration, education and skills

Where did we go?	
Bromley By Bow Centre Whitechapel Idea Store Poplar Union Canary Wharf Idea Store Cultural event, St Paul's with St Luke's Primary School, Mile End	Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood Queen Mary University , Mile End Chrisp Street market/Idea Store Positive East, Stepney Bow Idea Store Asda, Crossharbour LGBT event, Old Ship, Limehouse

What were the headlines?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Many people say that there is a lack of youth clubs and activities for young people.</li> <li>▪ These are felt to be important to prevent young people from getting involved in gangs and drug dealing.</li> <li>▪ There are concerns that cuts are affecting services and opportunities for young people.</li> <li>▪ People do not seem know about the new youth hubs.</li> <li>▪ Some people think that schools had a positive role to play in encouraging and inspiring young people to go into a wider range of occupations (e.g. in industries which are not traditional, and where there are skills shortages).</li> <li>▪ There is a need for post-18 support and initiatives for those with low skills (e.g. apprenticeships which provide mentoring and skills development to reach the required level).</li> <li>▪ Some people raise concerns about needing to provide more dedicated support to young people with special needs. This includes targeted employment support.</li> <li>▪ Some also feel that there are limited opportunities for those young people outside the main school system, e.g. PRUs.</li> </ul>

In their own words...	
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<p>“There are good schools, primary and secondary – some are outstanding.” (Cultural event, St Paul's with St Luke's Primary School, Mile End)</p> <p>“The Idea Store is a safe place for me to be with my friends after school. I do my homework here, have a hot chocolate with my friends” (Chrisp St Idea Store).</p> <p>“There are lots of activities, e.g. sports, youth groups, Poplar Harca apprenticeships” (Cultural event, St Paul's with St Luke's Primary School, Mile End)</p> <p>“This is a good priority. If you focus on</p>	<p>“There have been cut backs of youth centres and a lot of them are closing down” (Whitechapel IS).</p> <p>“There should be things for all age groups and not only focused on under 21s” (Whitechapel IS)</p> <p>“Schools need to have more after school clubs to allow young children to develop further” (Whitechapel IS)</p> <p>“The younger generation need to be educated about gangs and crime and how to stay safe and how to steer away from it all” (Whitechapel IS)</p> <p>“There are a lot of opportunities like the Idea Store, but young people don't know about it. That is based on their social background – in</p>

In their own words...	
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<p>supporting youth – all the other issues / priorities for Tower Hamlets will be addressed”. (Old Ship, LGBT Pub, Limehouse).</p> <p>“The youth clubs that we have in the Borough are good for youngsters” (ASDA, Isle of Dogs)</p>	<p>households where parents don’t have time to know about opportunities, their children will not know either” (Poplar Union)</p> <p>“There is a view that young people in TH are disadvantaged from the beginning – that it’s a poor borough” (Cultural event, St Paul’s with St Luke’s Primary School, Mile End)</p> <p>“I don’t feel safe in the parks – there are too many drugs, too many bullies” (Asda, Isle of Dogs).</p> <p>“London is difficult, but it is the only place for 16+ year olds. There are lots of service jobs but there is also a lot of serious exploitation. My 20 years old friend was paid only 5 pounds an hour”. (QMUL)</p>

Their suggestions and solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide more free or affordable after school and holiday activities, more youth and social clubs. Youth centres provide safe spaces for young people. (Whitechapel, Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Provide more leisure opportunities for young people e.g. community swimming. (Old Ship, LGBT Pub, Limehouse)</li> <li>▪ Increase resourcing for sport clubs. (Bow Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Facilitate joint youth + community walks on estates to improve relationships and build community cohesion. (Bow Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ Support the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. (Bethnal Green, Museum of Childhood)</li> <li>▪ Bring back national service or two extra years of education. (Asda, Crossharbour)</li> <li>▪ “We need more events for home schooled children, not in the holidays, because we still want our holidays” (Chrip Street market/Idea Store)</li> <li>▪ There is a need for more diversity in nurseries and more inclusive youth centres. This will improve community cohesion and opportunities for young people. (Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood)</li> <li>▪ Raise awareness of employment exploitations among students (QMUL)</li> <li>▪ “Need to encourage more local students to go to university by having more visits at universities such as QMUL and University of East London” (QMUL)</li> <li>▪ “Invest in apprenticeships – and pay decent salaries!” (Asda, Crossharbour)</li> <li>▪ “Provide libraries which are suitable for kids on the island. The library in Canary Wharf is too business-orientated”. (Asda, Crossharbour).</li> <li>▪ Provide more in-Borough cultural exchange opportunities (Asda, Crossharbour)</li> <li>▪ "I see you have a better deal for young people, what about a better deal for older people?" (Chrip street IS)</li> </ul>

### Community Researchers' analysis and reflections

- “Adults have given their views on what they feel about a better deal for young people, but a dedicated piece of work needs to be done around asking young people specifically their views on what they feel is a better deal for them. And why they think so many of them go into gangs and deal/use drugs. Plus, what would need to happen in terms of provisions, services and opportunities for them.” (CR Reflections, April 2018)
- “Some participants reported the reduction of youth facilities, such as youth centres, was problematic for young people in the borough. A few of the residents recommended that more motivational speaking should be done in schools to motivate young people, many of whom face various types of deprivation”. (CR Reflections, May 2018)



## 7. Community researcher learning and recommendations

This final section sets out the research team’s own observations, conclusions and recommendations.

Throughout the five weeks of the research, the team met to review and plan the next stages. The team also met to discuss how the data would be analysed and reported. With the facilitation of an external trainer, they completed their own H-form on their experience of the project. This is set out below.

<b>Summary of the Community Researcher views, using their own words</b>	
<b>What went well...</b>	<b>What didn't go so well ...</b>
<p>The people we spoke to (on the whole) were very willing to contribute. We went to a lot of places and it was interesting and fun to find out how people in different parts of the borough viewed the different themes. We enjoyed speaking to people who have strong views on their borough, and liked spotting patterns of people’s views.</p> <p>At all venues visited, people were inquisitive and generally willing to share their views; most places were very welcoming [to us as CRs]. Evenings and weekends gave us good reach around the borough. We went to events/venues we would not normally have access to, getting to see more parts of our borough. We got to find out more about what is going on in the community.</p> <p>Working with professionals and Public Health in a supportive and comfortable learning environment. Communication, especially our WhatsApp Group. We learnt new ways of working. Team morale was very good – everyone supported each other and pitched in. The [researcher] packs were really good and meant we were always ready to go and gather information. It was good to be able to review the findings each week with the team, sharing and learning from each other.</p> <p>We gained good skills in expressing thoughts and ideas, increased our knowledge of the local area, good listening, patience and sympathy with people, and used our existing range of skills – from languages to writing up</p>	<p>Many bad weather disruptions, unable to do outside work, cancelled events etc.</p> <p>Some people had a lot of grievances and took the opportunity to complain to us about the Council. Sometimes we faced another type of question – why were we not doing something about housing?</p> <p>Some venues didn't work so well – too few people, and there were two big events which had a poor turn out.</p> <p>Sometimes we had to physically tout for people which could feel awkward and on occasions we spoke to people who had limited views on the topics/Tower Hamlets.</p> <p>It was good to use one PA tool to become confident with, but that could also be restrictive, as we are all only confident in one PA tool rather than in a range of them. Sometimes adapting it worked better than others.</p> <p>The emphasis on number of views, and perhaps unrealistic expectations from commissioners in the timeframe. There wasn't enough time to do the research fully, and it felt rushed. We did not have enough time to get views from everyone, including people with physical and learning disabilities, more young people, etc.</p> <p>More support from partners like Tower Hamlets Together was needed around setting up opportunities to meet residents, and non-</p>

<p>Participants liked the creative format and tools used, and deciding to use one PA tool allowed the team to become confident using it - the flexibility of the H-form allowed us to adapt it when we didn't have the space to put up flip chart paper (we used clipboards).</p> <p>Experience of the research was very good – it was challenging, informative and we were always learning new skills.</p>	<p>response from some organisations was disappointing.</p> <p>We had some logistical headaches with phones, timesheets etc. and there was a delay after we were recruited and trained before starting the research.</p>
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**Suggestions and solutions**

- There was so much to cover – a narrower focus of work would have enabled us to go into the issues in more depth.
- Establishing specific questions and parameters for the research – and capturing the demographics more effectively.
- More learning about the different PA research tools and more information about how to use them.
- More time for learning and reflection.
- Do it in the summer when people in the community are out and about.
- Bridge the gap with commissioners – maybe a 'what is PA session' – use our experience as case study – share the learning.
- More researchers to increase the coverage of communities and localities.

## The research team's recommendations for next steps and further work



1. Present the findings to the Tower Hamlets Partnership and incorporate them into the final Tower Hamlets Plan.
2. Feedback from the Partnership on the impact of the CR findings.
3. Ensure a mechanism for feedback by the CRs to the community, which will help to further validate the process – ‘have we got it right?’, ‘did we miss anything out?’, ‘is there more you want to say about this?’.
4. Further research on specific issues with specific communities; where consent has been given, photos/audio may be taken of participants to bring the data to life.
5. For the CRs themselves, develop their capacity through increasing numbers, extending project timescales, accreditation for the skills developed, exposure to and the opportunity to work on more specific research topics in the borough.
6. Acknowledge that there is learning for all of those involved: commissioners and the research team in particular, but also the statutory partners and community groups.



## 8. Appendix: Details of the Research Activity

Session Number	Date	Location/event	Respondent profile and numbers attending (taken from CR observer sheets)	
1	Sat pm/eve 24.2.18	Bromley By Bow Centre – festival and exhibition	Mixed participants – range of ages, including school age child, young couples, middle aged and elderly, mix of genders, ethnic backgrounds and home location, not just E3 (e.g. carer from outside the borough).	38
2	Mon pm 5.3.18	Brady centre café, Whitechapel	Mixed audience of service users and professionals. They came from all parts of the borough, with none predominant. All of those we spoke to were of working age, mostly 25-40. 50:50 male female split Split evenly between South Asian, black or mixed race, and white participants. A number disclosure themselves as mental health service users. One was physically disabled.	23
3	Mon pm 5.3.18	Inspire event, Brady Centre		
4	Tue am and pm 6.3.18	Chrip Street market/Idea Store (2 sessions)	The majority of participants were female, the majority in the 25-60 age range. There were a few under 18s and over 60s. Ethnicity was primarily Bangladeshi, but also black and white groups were represented. Many mothers with pushchairs.	51
5	Wed am 7.3.18	Whitechapel Idea Store	Residents and workers in Tower Hamlets. Majority of participants were Bangladeshi, with some white and black participants.	31
6	Wed eve 7.3.18	Art Group, Isle of Dogs	All E14 residents. Group mixed in age and ethnicity.	7
7	Thur am and pm 8.3.18	Women and employment Workpath event, Rich Mix, Shoreditch	Respondents generally fell into two groups, equally spread: Job seekers/those working with job seekers 20 out of 22 people we spoke to were female. They were a mix of working ages (from 20s to 50s), and an even spread of ethnicities – white, black, Asian. There were more Bangladeshi women in the job seeking group than in the worker group	22
8	Fri am 9.3.18	Island House community centre, Isle of Dogs	Mostly from the Island/Isle of Dogs Age range 30-80, mostly 30-50. Mixed ethnicities.	20
9	Fri pm 9.3.18	Whitechapel Idea Store	There were a mixture of different ethnic backgrounds that we spoke to Bengali, Somalian, white, black African and other There was roughly same amount of male to female	18

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Session Number	Date	Location/event	Respondent profile and numbers attending (taken from CR observer sheets)	
			Majority of the people were from the Whitechapel/Shadwell area	
10	Fri pm 9.3.18	Creative Support, Sue Starkey House, Stepney	Only 5 residents (15 expected) and 2 workers participated. All 7 residents older, male and white, all living at the Stepney location One with learning disabilities, others physically disabled Both workers young and female, one Asian living in borough, one white British student in borough	7
11	Sat am and pm 10.3.18	Positive East festival, Stepney	Mixed audience of service users and professionals. Many people were from outside TH; we screen out those with no direct link with TH. All of those we spoke to were of working age, mostly 25-40. A majority were Black and female.	15
12	Sat am ad pm 10.3.18	Poplar Union event	31 out of the people spoke to where White, with only 5 people from BME background Most of the participants were from in the 18 – 50 age range, with only 4 people over 50 years old. There were no participants under 18 years old, but 2 were mothers with children under the age of 2yrs old. There was an equal mix of men and women	36
13	Wed am 14.3.18	Mulberry & Bigland Centre cultural event, Shadwell	Apart from one white lady, most of the participants were Asian 30 participants were in the 30 – 50 year old age range and 5 were in the 18 – 30 years age range  Because it was an international women's event, the participants were all female.	25
14	Wed pm 14.3.18	Watney Market Idea Store	Mostly female Bangladeshi: 6 White: Somali:2 (+ others) Majority of the participants were over the age of 30 3 were mothers with children under the age of 5	21
15	Thur am 15.3.18	Parents immunization session, Shadwell	Both the participants were Registered Nurses, both working within Tower Hamlets, but living outside the borough.	2
16	Fri am and pm 16.3.18	Canary Wharf Idea Store	Mix of ages, ethnicities (white, Somali, South Asian/Bengali and Chinese), working status etc., from teenagers still at school, young	28

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Session Number	Date	Location/event	Respondent profile and numbers attending (taken from CR observer sheets)	
			professionals, working in the area, parents with young children, one carer, middle aged and older people looking for work or retired.	
17	Fri pm 16.3.18	Cultural event, St Paul's with St Luke's Primary School, Mile End	Participants observed included: 4 x 30s white female, 2 x 20s/30s white male, 1 x young female mixed race, 1 x 30s male mixed race 6 x 20s/30s Bengali female, 1 x 40s white male 1 x 40s black male, 1 x 40s white professional female 1 x 40s Asian female, 1 x 50+ black female Other respondents' characteristics not recorded due to time pressures and limited CR numbers	33
18	Sat am and pm 17.3.18	Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood	Noted participants: Male 13 Female 20 Age: <18: 3, 18 – 25: 15, 25-40: 15. No over 50s. Ethnicity: Black: 4, White: 18, Asian: 8 Many parents with children. Lot of people from outside the Borough.	33
19	Mon am 19.3.18	Prime Time older people's session, Whitechapel	Older people: mixed gender and ethnicity – some from outside the borough	6
20	Tues am 20.3.18	Bow Idea Store	Majority white 65+ women, some of which were out of borough. We spoke to some younger professionals	17
21	Tues pm 20.3.18	Geezers (Bow)	Male 17, 60+ 17 Black: 1, White: 16	17
22	Weds am 21.3.18	Mulberry Place Town Hall	Spoke to both residents and workers in Tower Hamlets. Majority of council workers were out of borough. Majority female, of working age, mixed ethnicities	27
23	Thur am and pm 22.3.18	Queen Mary University, Mile End (2 sessions)	45 participants were in the 18 – 25 age range, with 5 participants in the 25 – 50 age range 31 participants were white, 25 were Asian and 4 were African/Caribbean 32 participants were female and 18 were male	50
			Majority 19 – 24A very rich mix of ethnicities	35
24	Fri am and pm 23.3.18	St Paul's Medical Centre, Mile End/Poplar	Spoke to both residents and workers in Tower Hamlets. Majority female, mostly Bangladeshi, also white and Black groups Mix of under and over 30s Largely from Mile End, but also Poplar, Bromley and Bow	44

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Session Number	Date	Location/event	Respondent profile and numbers attending (taken from CR observer sheets)	
25	Sat am and pm 24.3.18	Asda, Crossharbour	Under 18s – 3, 18-30 – 3, 30-40 – 5, 40-50 – 4, 50-60 – 6, 60+ - 6 White British & European (2 Bulgarian) 10 Black 5 Bangladeshi 7 Other Asian 3 Real mix of ages and ethnicities. Largely working class locals but also some young professionals	31
26	Sat late pm 24.3.18	LGBT event, Old Ship, Limehouse (two parallel sessions)	There was an even mixture of male and females Most of the participants were between the 18 – 50 yrs. age range, with only 2 people over 50 All the participants were white.	30
27	Sun am and pm 25.3.18	Chrip Street Idea Store	Even mix of males and females All participants were between the 18 – 50 yrs. age range Participants were mostly from a white or Asian background, and we only spoke with one African and one Chinese person.	25
Informal community views gathering by CRs within their own communities				
28	1 <sup>st</sup> week March	People who work but don't live in the area (LL)	All were in the 15 – 40 years old age range Mix of ethnicity – White, African & Caribbean Apart from 1 participant, 10 lived outside Tower Hamlets Apart from the unemployed participant, everyone earned over £30k One professional was unemployed professional and a Tower Hamlets resident.	11
29	1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> wk March	Staff at Workpath (TB)	Workers: 10 out of 15 were Bengali 3 male were white 2 people were black African 9 Women. 6 men All over the age of 25 Everyone was a working professional	15
30	1 <sup>st</sup> week March	Local residents and workers (AM)	Spoke to both residents and workers in Tower Hamlets. Female = 5, Male = 3, Asian Bangladeshi = 7, Asian Indian = 1 18 – 30 = 6, 30+ = 2	8
31	2 <sup>nd</sup> week March	Local residents (VA)	Over 50 E14 resident	1
32	2 <sup>nd</sup> , and 4 <sup>th</sup> weeks	Workpath clients	18 female. 12 male 2/3 white British 5 Bengali 3 Somali	30

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Session Number	Date	Location/event	Respondent profile and numbers attending (taken from CR observer sheets)	
			2 other All over the age of 40 12 people were from poplar area. 10 people from Stepney/Shadwell. The rest: unknown	
33	3 <sup>rd</sup> week March	Friends, family and colleagues in Poplar (KR)	Bangladeshi adults in Poplar	12
Total number of respondents				769

*Note: Community research methods do not easily lend themselves to obtaining detailed demographic information. For example, quick fire questions from passers-by at public event may gain some useful views, but asking for demographic questions on the back of this can be intrusive and time-consuming, and also difficult to attribute to individual comments. The research tools were adapted to different settings, and with different groups, and to address different themes, and the views expressed arose in the context of specific groups, venues, times of day, and interests and priorities of those interviewed. A statistical comparison of outputs across events was not therefore possible.*

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