

# Understanding the impact of Covid-19 in Tower Hamlets - a summary

1. Mortality & physical health
2. Mental health
3. Social care
4. Deprivation & employment
5. Business
6. Community & voluntary sector
7. Homelessness & rough sleeping
8. Safeguarding adults & children
9. Domestic abuse
10. Crime & ASB
11. Substance misuse
12. Education & learning
13. Transport & air quality
14. Community cohesion & involvement
15. LBTH workforce

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# Methodology

1. Identified 15 issues felt to be most affected by Covid-19
2. Full impact assessment analyses the impact Covid has had on each issue:
  - Across the UK
  - In Tower Hamlets
  - On any groups in our communities
  - Headline results from resident survey
3. Predicted the potential impact of Covid on each issue in future:
  - Challenges
  - Opportunities...over next 12 months & longer-term



*“We are not all in the same boat.  
We are in the same storm”*



# Mortality, physical health, mental health, social care



- Significant number of Covid-19 deaths & infections
  - Reduced emergency hospital admissions a concern
  - Some NHS services paused, many remodelled
  - Problems getting essential supplies
  - Healthy lifestyles & wider determinants
- Mental health issues already high in LBTH
  - Impacts include stress, anxiety, loneliness, grief, PTSD
  - Impact on existing MH service users
  - Changing demand for MH support
- Adult social care demand increased but manageable
  - Cost pressures in the system
  - Big impact on care homes, service users, families & frontline staff
- More living in poorer health
  - Increase in health inequalities
  - 20-30% increase in demand in mental health services
  - Longer-term mental health impacts
  - Increased demand & cost pressures in social care
- BAU in health & care will start to resume
  - Capitalise on interest in staying healthy
  - Improve health through active travel
  - Opportunity to do more virtually/remotely
  - Raised profile for adult social care



Younger & older

BAME

Disability & LTC

Women & men

Pregnancy

Carers

Deprivation

Care homes

Front line staff



# Deprivation, unemployment, business & VCS



- Deprivation & unemployment had improved in LBTH pre-Covid, but still big challenges
- Economic ‘shock’ with Covid
- Business & organisational impact uneven, depends on sector. Hard hit areas include hospitality, retail, market traders.
- Furlough, lay offs & reductions in hours for many - impact somewhat cushioned for now
- LBTH possibly hit by economic shock harder than most
- Many business & VCS remodelled to accommodate social distancing, many worried about future

- Deprivation & financial problems worsen when temporary support measures phase out
- Ability to tackle poverty through employment lessens
- Increased demand & cost pressures in council
- Rich & poor gap widens
- Longer-term consequences of increased deprivation felt across the board

- ‘V’ shaped economic rebound
- Opportunity to recruit to ‘hard to fill’ roles
- Cost benefits if less need for work space
- Opportunity to do more with volunteers
- New alternatives to high streets



Younger adults

Women

Lower incomes

BAME

With employment barriers

In shadow economy

With food insecurity



# Homelessness, rough sleeping, safeguarding & domestic abuse



- Rough sleeping dropped in very short time period
- Enabled wraparound health & care to go in
- Protection from being newly homeless for now
  
- Abuse & neglect harder to identify
- Some in lockdown with abusers
- Initial dip in children's safeguarding referrals then picked up
- Key role of schools with both this & domestic abuse
- Changes with missing children, suspected online exploitation
- No significant change in adult safeguarding numbers
- Changes with Covid-related fraud, role of volunteers
  
- Domestic abuse levels already high in LBTH
- Indications of increase in DA across UK not seen in LBTH at first. Dip in referrals then picked up

- Finance pressure of sustaining positive impact on rough sleeping
- Increase in homelessness when eviction ban ends & economic downturn
- Longer wait on housing waiting list
- Some abuse & neglect still hidden, some resurgence in referrals as restrictions lift, including expected surge in children's safeguarding
- 20-30% increase in domestic abuse demand
- Increased demands & cost pressures
- Longer-term consequences for victims

- Ambition to end rough sleeping achievable
- Support to rough sleepers improves health outcomes
- If lockdown a trigger/way of hiding abuse, this will ease as restrictions lift



Children

Older people

Men & women

Pregnancy

Disability or LTC

Lower incomes

SEND

White & BAME



# Crime, ASB, substance misuse



- Crime in UK reduced overall - including burglary & assault
- ASB reports in UK increased, likely driven by lockdown
- LBTH in line with national trends
- Crime & ASB a top resident concern pre-Covid
- New financial fraud patterns
  
- Pre-Covid, high crack & opiate use in LBTH
- Drugs market has changed
- Reports of opiate shortages & price rises
- Much higher numbers of people referred for treatment
- Impact on alcohol use is mixed

- ‘Rebound’ in crime as lockdown eases
- Types of crime evolve & adapt to circumstances
- Increased rivalry between drug gangs
- Switch to harmful opiate substitutes
- When lockdown goes, reversal in positive trends & more overdoses if oversupply, low cost & high purity

- Crime levels stay lower than average whilst restrictions in place
- Long-term changes to how people live will impact crime levels & types
- Residents feel more empowered
- Capitalise on increasing treatment referral rates to reduce substance misuse



Young  
people

Older  
people

Deprivation

BAME

The best of London  
in one borough



# Education & learning



- Home learning whilst schools closed
- Concerns about quality & consistency
- Key exams & assessments cancelled
- Grades determined by replacement process
- Pre-Covid, LBTH had good attainment levels- particularly positive given deprivation levels
- All but 4 local schools rated good or outstanding
- Impact of social inequalities on home learning
- Free school meals now restricted to eligible families
- Schools starting to reopen seen as contentious by some

- Children not school ready for September 2020
- Overall negative impact on learning & attainment from prolonged home learning in 2020
- LBTH children harder hit by this if social inequalities exacerbated
- Broader wellbeing impacts arising from children not being in school
- Financial strain on universities from drop in international student applications
- Key challenges for schools going forward: safeguarding, mental health & loss of learning

- Some family relationships strengthened
- Growing familiarity with technology for education
- Potential for innovate ways of working



Boys

White, Mixed Heritage,  
Black Caribbean

Lower  
incomes

Teenagers

Ineligible  
for FSM

Larger  
families

Families with English  
as 2<sup>nd</sup> language

SEND



# Transport, air quality, community involvement & cohesion



- Car & public transport usage dropped in March
- Car use in UK & London since crept back up
- Minority of LBTH residents are car owners
- Public transport discouraged & TfL now facing financial problems
  
- More walking & cycling space being created in London
- Cycling down in LBTH, likely due to less commuting
- Evidence of interest in more cycling
  
- Air quality poor in LBTH pre-Covid
- Air pollution dropped in UK & LBTH in tandem with drop in car use
  
- Rise in volunteering & Mutual Aid groups
- Some tensions re: neighbours & social distancing
- But general sense of coming together

- Rebound in car use
- Subsequent decline in air quality
- TfL fares increase if bailed out
- Climate change pushed down agenda
- Fewer volunteers as more return to work

- ‘Green recovery’
- Meet the aims of the LBTH Transport Strategy
- Capitalise on opportunities to increase levels of walking & cycling
- Improve air quality
- Positive health impacts arising from this
- Tackle climate change
- Galvanise & act on ‘community spirit’
- Mutual Aid groups outlast pandemic
- Volunteers remain higher than pre-Covid





# Council workforce



- Staff absence levels higher than average
- But services coped well with the pandemic
- Services remodelling away from face-to-face provision unless essential
- More working from home
- ‘New’ pandemic-related services
- More formal & informal redeployment within council
- Experience of staff likely to be highly variable (‘same storm, different boat’)
- LBTH staff survey positive about feeling connected to team & doing meaningful work

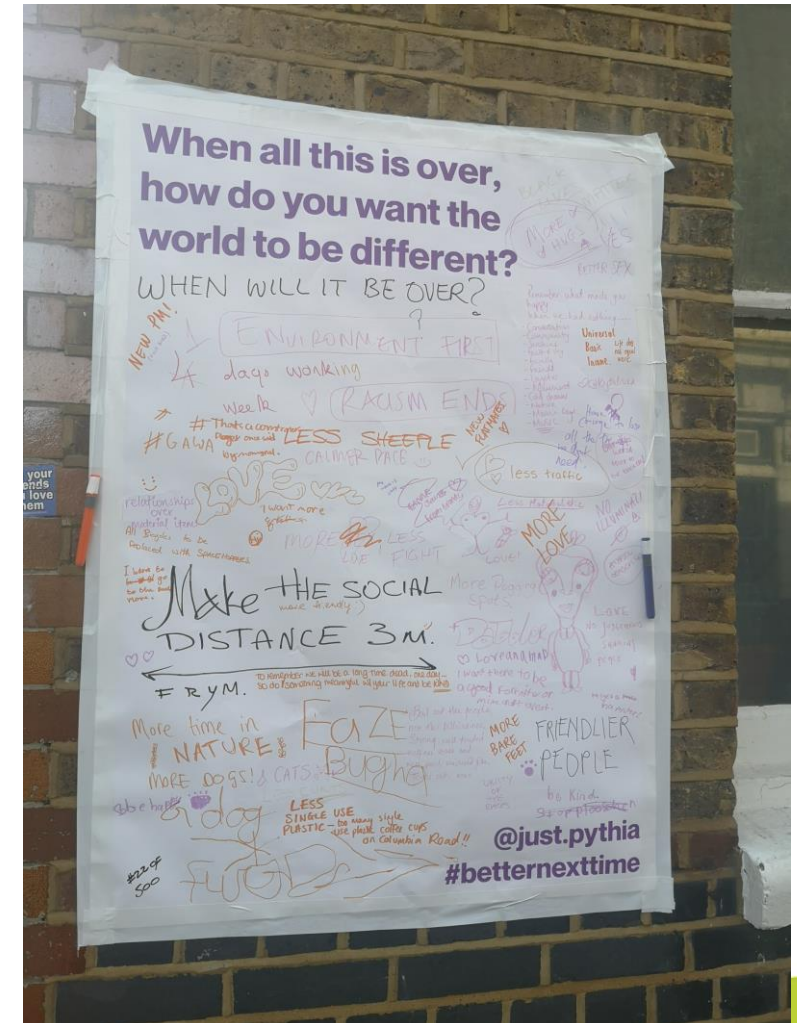
- More staff absence if future peaks
- Pandemic response impacts BAU & fluctuates as restrictions are eased or re-imposed
- Health & safety issues to address as more work from home
- Some staff need support to recover from pandemic

- Build on sense of team & common purpose
- Opportunity to recruit to ‘hard to fill’ roles
- Longer term changes to how people work
- This & technology could reduce financial pressures



# Cross-Cutting Themes

- **Inequality**. Socio-economic, older people, young people, BAME communities, women, people with disabilities.
- The importance of staff & resident **interaction**.
- How to address the far-reaching impacts of an **economic downturn**.
- How to address **emerging issues** and consequent rise in demand for support, including for: mental health, social care, homelessness, unemployment, domestic abuse, issues & services related to increased levels of poverty.
- How to **hold onto gains**: crime, substance misuse treatment, rough sleeping, air quality
- How to **grasp opportunities**: familiarity with technology, community mobilisation & cohesion, healthy lifestyles, 'green recovery'



# Context & interdependencies



Part of the 'Dealing with the Impact' recovery workstream

## Interdependencies

- Covid-19 Equalities Impact Assessment (read-across)
- Covid-19 Resident Survey Results (read-across)
- 2020 Strategic Plan
- Finance report

Governance structure defined to address the impact in the medium & long-term

