



TOWER HAMLETS

Tackling Poverty

Impact of Covid-19 on families, and what is being done to support them



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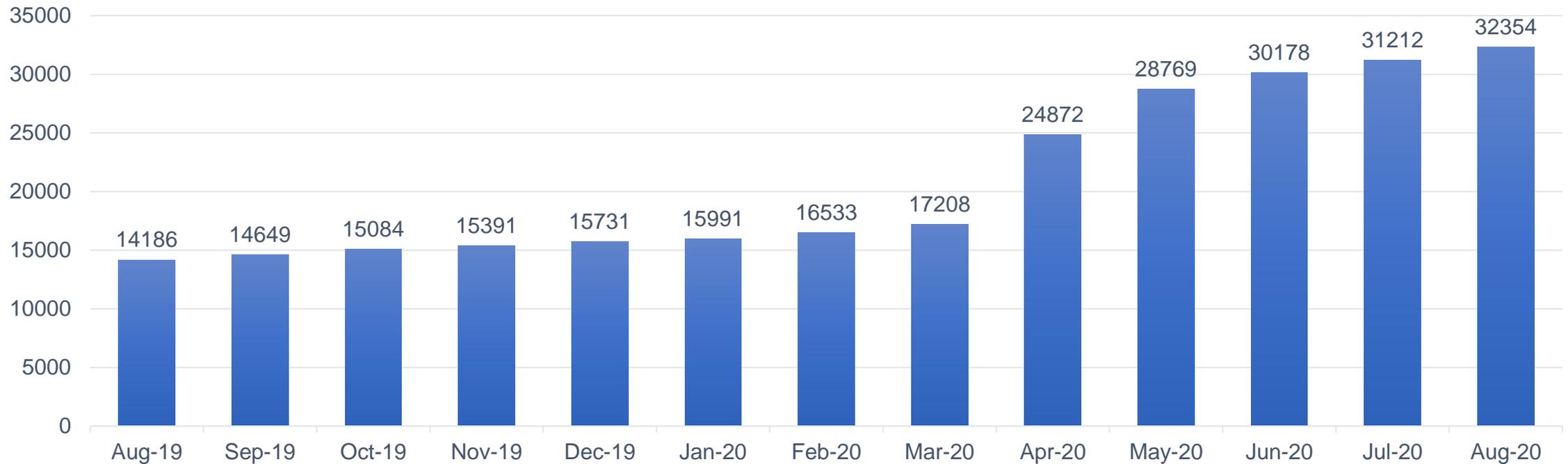
Looking at the data



1. Universal Credit



Number of households claiming Universal Credit in Tower Hamlets



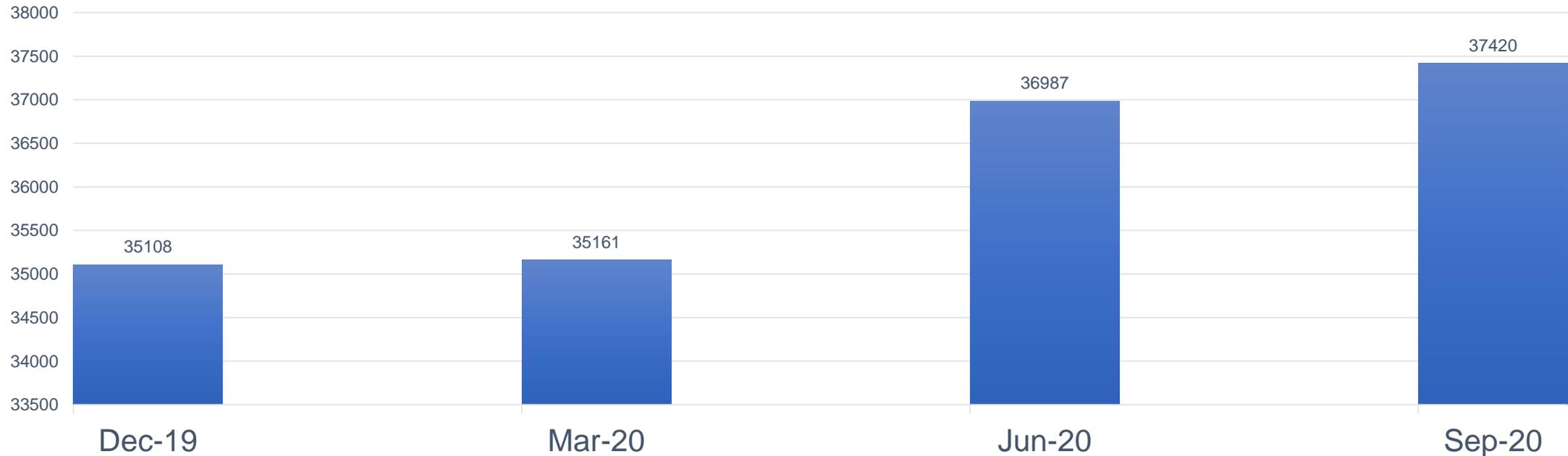
Source: DWP Sept 2020



2. Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction



Number of households claiming Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction in Tower Hamlets



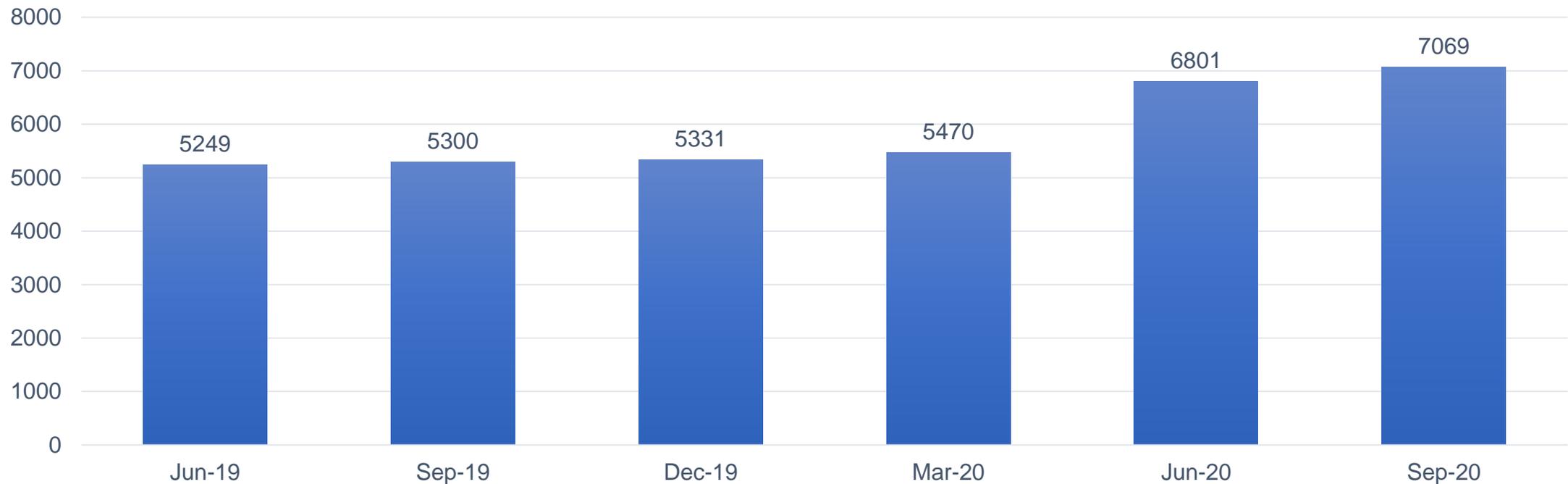
Source: LIFT Dashboard, Sept 2020



3. Households out of work (with children)



Number of households with children, claiming Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction, who are out of work



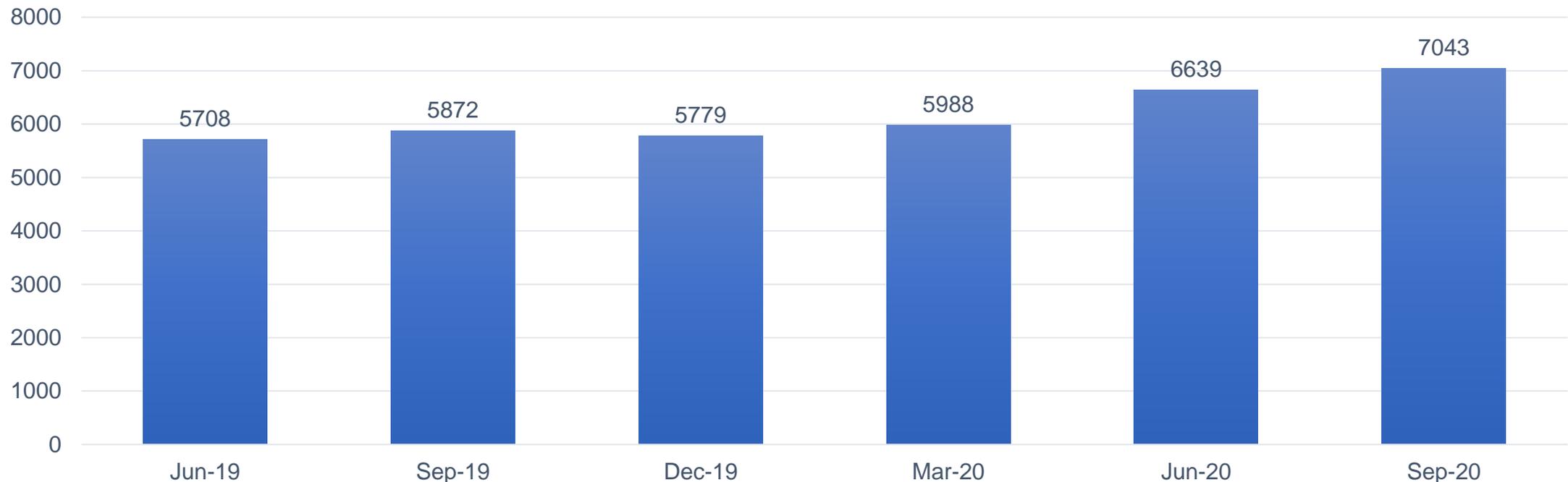
Source: LIFT dashboard (Sept 20)



4. Relative poverty (with children)



Number of households with children, claiming Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction, who are living in relative poverty



Source: LIFT dashboard (Sept 20)



5. Arrears – those on HB & CTR



No. of households which are on HB or CTR, and are facing council tax arrears:

| June 2020 | September 2020 |
|-----------|----------------|
| 5,419 | 10,758 |

Average level of council tax arrears:

| June 2020 | September 2020 |
|-----------|----------------|
| £69 | £120 |

Average level of rent arrears:

| June 2020 | September 2020 |
|-----------|----------------|
| £52 | £104 |



What we're doing



6. Christmas



- Over Christmas, every child eligible and claiming Free School Meals will receive a £25 voucher through their school, for either Tesco or Asda.
- Schools have also been asked to identify those not eligible for FSM but who they are concerned about.
- Vouchers will be provided to 18,600 children.
- This is funded through the DWP Covid Winter Grant.



7. February Half Term



- Funding will also be made available to support this cohort during February half term, although it has not yet been decided whether this will be vouchers or food.
- A meeting has been scheduled in the New Year with Head Teachers from some local schools to discuss what the best approach is for Half Term. This will give time to explore whether vouchers were effective or whether another approach is more suitable.



8. Holiday Activities and Food



- The DfE's Holiday Activities and Food programme, for which Tower Hamlets was a pilot area in 2020, has now been funded across all Local Authorities.
- This means that six weeks of holiday activities will be provided, which the DfE expect to be four in summer, one at Easter and one at Christmas.
- We had 34,506 attendances during summer 2020, and we expect to work with VCS organisations and schools to provide an increased number of places at Easter and for summer 2021.
- Funding allocations for 2021 will be determined by the numbers of FSM-eligible children in the borough, and the programme aims to provide a place for all FSM-eligible children who want one.
- Provision must be 4 hours a day, 4 days per week, and must include physical activity, nutritional education, and at least one meal.



9. VCS Hub



- Since the first lockdown we have been running the VCS food hub, which brings in food items from organisations such as FareShare and The Felix Project, plus other donations, and arranges regular deliveries to VCS organisations in the borough which support families with food.
- We are currently supporting 30 local organisations, including multiple schools and food banks.
- For the week ending 27/11, 7.8 tonnes of food was delivered out to local organisations.



10. Resident Support Scheme



- The Resident Support Scheme provides crisis grants to residents in need of immediate help.
- The key priority groups include families with young children and households with a pregnant person.
- For the duration of the pandemic, the criteria have been relaxed to allow residents to apply for support multiple times in a 12 month period, allowing multiple claims for food and gas/electric.
- The budget has currently been increased from £600k to £950k with additional to come from the covid winter grant



11. Self-isolation payments



- For individuals who have been asked to self-isolate by Test and Trace, some are eligible for a £500 payment. They must:
 - Have been asked to isolate by Test and Trace
 - Be employed or self-employed
 - Be unable to work from home and be in a position where they'd lose income by not working
 - Be currently in receipt of certain benefits
- As of 7th December £237,000 had been paid to 474 households
- The restrictive criteria means this grant cannot be given to households of children who are self isolating



12. Outreach staff



- Our Resident Support Officers have continued to support residents with Universal Credit claims, alongside a broad range of other support. They can be contacted at lbthresidentsupport@towerhamlets.gov.uk
- Meanwhile, we have recently recruited Financial Support Officers to interrogate data and proactively identify households in need of Discretionary Housing Payments and other support. They can be contacted at lbthfinancialsupport@towerhamlets.gov.uk
- These services have continued to operate via the phone during the pandemic.
- The team has also managed requests for food and financial support for those who are self-isolating

