

Draft Tower Hamlets Priority Needs

Introduction

This needs analysis provides an overview of borough's population, and evidence of need against the proposed themes for the council's funding programme for the voluntary and community sector. It includes evidence about inequalities where available.

The release of information from the 2021 Census is ongoing. Census information is included where available.

What is the local picture in terms of our population?

Population Growth

Tower Hamlets has the fastest growing population of any Local Authority Area across England and Wales. Between 2011 and 2021 the population in Tower Hamlets increased by 22% from 254,096¹ to 310,300².

Tower Hamlets is also the most densely populated borough in England with 15,695 residents per square kilometre compared to an average of 424 per square kilometre in England³.

Gender

In 2021, 50.2% of Tower Hamlets residents were male and 49.8% were female⁴. Tower Hamlets has the 4th highest proportion of males in England and Wales and was 1 of 11 local authority areas where males formed the majority of residents.

Age

The median age in the borough in 2021 was 30 years of age, making Tower Hamlets the youngest borough by median age in England and Wales⁵.

Ages of Tower Hamlets Residents: Census 2021

Age group	0 – 19 years	20 – 64 years	65+ years
Number of residents	72,600	220,300	17,300

¹ Office for National Statistics, Census 2011

² Office for National Statistics, Census 2021

³ Office for National Statistics, Census 2021

⁴ Office for National Statistics, Census 2021

⁵ Office for National Statistics, Census 2021

Percentage of residents	23.4%	71%	5.6%
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The number of residents in all age groups has grown since 2011. The greatest growth was seen in the working age population, with a 25% increase in the number of 20 – 64 year-olds.

In percentage terms, there has been a decline in the proportion of older people and Tower Hamlets is the only local authority area in the country to have less than 6% of the population aged 65+.

Ethnicity

Ethnic group that Tower Hamlets residents identify with: Census 2021

Ethnic group (main census categories)	Asian/Asian British	Black/Black British, Caribbean or African	Mixed or multiple	White	Other
Number of residents	137,856	22,693	15,409	122,266	12,082
Percentage of residents	44.4%	7.3%	5.0%	39.4%	3.9%

According to the 2021 Census, 61% of the borough's population belong to Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic groups, comprising mostly of Bangladeshi residents (35%). Tower Hamlets still has the largest Bangladeshi population in England as a whole. The other populous ethnic groups include White British (23%), White Other (16%), and Black African (5%).

Census 2021 data shows that not all people identifying Somali or Somalilander identified their ethnicity as Black and some identified their ethnicity as Somali with Black Caribbean background. As a combined group, anyone identifying their ethnicity as Somali or Somalilander comprised of 6180 residents (2% of all residents), which is the 8th highest proportion in England. Further analysis of this community will be undertaken with release of more data.

Religion and belief

Tower Hamlets has the highest percentage of Muslim residents in England and Wales (40%), compared with a national average of 7%. Over a quarter of the borough's population do not have a religion (27%), this is the same as London (27%). Around 22% of residents are of Christian faith, which is the lowest proportion in England and Wales⁶.

⁶ Office for National Statistics, Census 2021

Languages

The Census 2021 data shows that among residents aged 3 and over, 73% speak English as their main language. 21% do not have English as their main language, but speak English well or very well, and 6% of residents cannot speak English or speak English well. The proportion of residents reporting they cannot not speak English well or at all is the eighth highest in the country.

The most spoken languages in the borough other than English are Bengali (with Sylheti and Chatgaya) (11%), Italian (2.2%), Spanish (1.7%), French (1.2%) and Portuguese (1%)⁷.

This diversity is reflected in Tower Hamlets' schools, where 153 known languages are spoken by pupils. The top three main languages for pupils are Bengali (46%), English (37%) and Somali (3%), reflecting the 61% of students who identify as Bangladeshi/British Bangladeshi⁸.

What is the local picture in terms of needs?

Tackling the Cost-Of-Living Crisis

This section summarises available evidence on poverty and deprivation. It is important to note that much of the national data predates the current cost-of-living crisis.

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) provide insight into levels of deprivation in neighbourhoods in Tower Hamlets relative to other parts of England. By 2019, only 1.4% of the borough was in the 10% most deprived areas in England, down from 40% in 2010.

The Indices also provide insight into the differences between different wards and neighbourhoods. As *Figure 1* shows, deprivation is much higher in the North of Tower Hamlets in comparison to the South. Canary Wharf, Island Gardens, Blackwall and Cubitt Town and St Katherine's & Wapping (areas where many of the major investment banks are located), are less deprived.

Figure 1: Index of Multiple Deprivation by LBTH ward

⁷ Office for National Statistics, Census 2021

⁸ Summer 2022 School Census

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD2019)

A methodology to measure deprivation at a localised geographic level. A higher value means less deprivation.

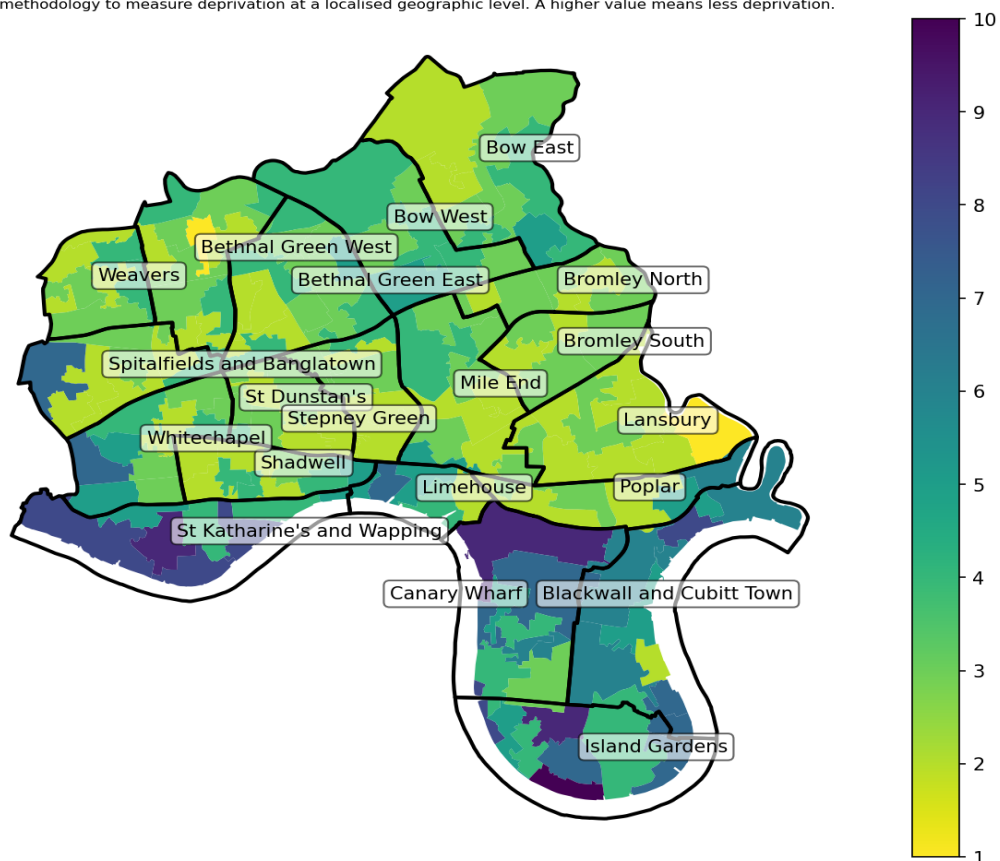


Figure 1: Indices of Multiple deprivation (IMD2019), ONS 2019

Some residents of the borough are disproportionately at risk of poverty:

- Tower Hamlets has high levels of child poverty. 25% of children lived in relative low-income families in March 2020, the joint highest figure in London and within the highest fifth of areas nationally. Once housing costs are taken into account, levels of child poverty in Tower Hamlets are amongst the highest in the country.
- Pensioner poverty is also a key challenge in the borough. Although the number of older people is small, 44% of our older people live in income deprived households, which is higher than in England and more than double the average⁹.
- Although it is not possible to break-down borough-level poverty, at a London-wide level, Londoners from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, disabled Londoners or families with a disabled member, lone parents with children, and workless families have a higher than average risk of being in poverty.¹⁰

⁹ Index Multiple Deprivation 2019

¹⁰ Trust for London, London Poverty Profile 2022

- There are other groups of residents who face specific risks in relation to poverty, for example, residents with no recourse to public funds.

The Low-Income Family Tracker is a tool used by the council to support its cost-of-living interventions. It combines local authority data with modelling to identify households who may need additional support. The tracker does not cover all households, but it does provide a reasonably current picture of the current pressures facing low-income households. As of end 2022 the tracker indicates that as a percentage of low-income households in the borough:

- 39% are living in relative poverty, with higher poverty levels in some areas such as Poplar (43%), and amongst low-income couples with children (55%), and non-working lone parents (68%)¹¹
- A quarter (25%) are currently in council tax arrears,
- 82% are in water poverty (water costs account for 3% or more of their disposable income),
- 47% are in fuel poverty (fuel expenditure would bring income below poverty line)
- 16% are in food poverty (their minimum acceptable food expenditure is higher than their income after priority costs)¹².

The Survey of Londoners commissioned by the Mayor of London is an important source of sub-regional data, although gathered at the end of 2021 before the cost-of-living crisis began. Of residents in the 'City and East London' area (Tower Hamlets, Newham, Barking and Dagenham, and City of London)¹³:

- 25% were living in low or very low food security, the highest level in London
- 26% of parents reported low or very low food security among their children, the highest level in London
- 18% reported they could not keep their home warm enough in winter, the second highest level in London
- 22% were unaware of a list of financial hardship support organisations including local welfare schemes, food banks, and other local advice services
- 14% were unaware of specific forms of financial hardship support including council tax support, council local welfare and crisis support, universal credit, housing benefit and other discretionary payments

¹¹ Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT), October 2022

¹² Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT), October 2022

¹³ Greater London Authority (GLA), Survey of Londoners 2021-22

Accelerate Education

This section summarises available evidence about educational outcomes for children and young people in Tower Hamlets

Amongst the youngest children, the proportion of early years pupils achieving a good level of development in Tower Hamlets (61%) is less than the London (68%) and England (65%) averages. Girls (68%) are significantly more likely than boys (54%) to achieve a good level of development. Children from White backgrounds (64%) are more likely than children from Non-White backgrounds (60%) to achieve a good level of development.¹⁴

By the end of primary school, pupils in Tower Hamlets schools achieve in line with their peers: 64% meet the expected standard in English, Writing and Maths, close to the London average (64%) and above the England average (59%).

By age 16, pupils in Tower Hamlets schools achieve less well than their London peers but better than their national peers. The proportion of pupils in Tower Hamlets achieving a strong pass (grades 9 - 5) in English and Maths (54%) is less than London (57%) and higher than England (50%). Tower Hamlets pupils achieving standard pass (grades 9-4) in English and Maths (71%) is less than London (74%) and higher than England (69%).¹⁵

At all stages, girls have higher attainment levels than boys. Pupils with special-educational needs (SEN) have significantly lower attainment levels in the borough than pupils with no SEN. Children and young people whose first language is not English have higher attainment than pupils whose first language is English at all stages. Pupils eligible for means-tested free school meals have lower attainment levels than pupils not eligible for free school meals: however, the gap is one of the lowest in the country¹⁶. White Boys have the lowest attainment levels in the borough.

Tower Hamlets also has a relatively high proportion of pupils with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Pupils who need extra help with their learning beyond what schools can provide are issued with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHC Plan). In 2022, 5% of pupils in Tower Hamlets schools had an EHC Plan (or its predecessor, a statement of special educational needs) – the fourth highest rate in London¹⁷.

The Tower Hamlets Pupil Attitude Survey in 2022 asked school pupils about their future plans. It found that around one third of primary and secondary pupils say they will either not attend university/higher education or are unsure. 9% of primary pupils say they will not attend university or higher education (this is higher than in 2017- 5%), while 27%

¹⁴ Department for Education, Early years foundation stage profile results 2021/22

¹⁵ Department for Education, Key stage 4 performance 2021/22

¹⁶ Education Policy Institute, Education in England: Annual Report 2020

¹⁷ Department for Education, Special educational needs in England 2021/22

are unsure. 6% of secondary pupils say they will not attend university or higher education (this is higher than in 2017- 4%), while 23% are unsure. Boys (10%) are more likely than girls (6%) for all pupils to say they will not attend university or higher education. White pupils (20%) are more than double the average for all pupils (8%) to say they will not attend university in the future¹⁸.

The proportion of working aged population (16-64) year olds in Tower Hamlets, with a National Vocational Qualification is less than in London across all levels. 83% of the working aged population have an NVQ 1 and above qualification, compared to 87% regionally. 77% have an NVQ 2 and above qualification, compared to 82% regionally. 65% have an NVQ 3 and above qualification, compared to 71% regionally. 52% of the working aged population have an NVQ 4 and above qualification, compared to 59% regionally¹⁹.

Culture, Business, Jobs and Skills

This section summarises the available evidence on residents' access to jobs, training and apprenticeships, and opportunities for residents to participate in sporting and cultural activities.

Tower Hamlets has a large and diverse economy, with 1.32 jobs for every working adult in the borough²⁰. However, 86% of jobs in the borough are filled by non-residents. Residents are more likely to work in the distribution, hotels and restaurant sector, public administration, education, and health sectors²¹.

Most Tower Hamlets-based businesses are micro-enterprises (89%) although these have decreased 5% since 2019, probably as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. While since 2019, small-enterprises have grown, and medium and large enterprises have also grown slightly, however, they all jointly only account for 11% of all businesses based in the borough²².

74% of Tower Hamlets' working aged population (aged 16-64 years) are economically active, which is below the average for London (76%) and Great Britain (76%). Of those who are economically active, 71.4% are in employment and 5.2% are unemployed but would like to work, which is higher than the unemployment rates in London (4.7%) and Great Britain (3.8%). Over a quarter (26%) of the working aged population are economically inactive and therefore are either in full time education, caring for family, too sick to work, retired, or do not wish to work²³.

There are considerable disparities in employment rates:

¹⁸ Tower Hamlets Pupil Attitude Survey 2022

¹⁹ ONS, Annual Population Survey 2021

²⁰ ONS, Annual Population Survey (2021-22)

²¹ ONS, Annual Population Survey 2016-19 (3-year average)

²² ONS, Inter Departmental Business Register, 2022.

²³ ONS, Annual Population Survey (2021-22)

- 59% of working age women in Tower Hamlets are employed, a much lower level than men (82%), and than women in London (72%) and Great Britain (72%).²⁴ In addition to this, the ethnic employment (White vs Black, Asian & Multi-Ethnic) gap amongst women is twice as wide in the borough (36%) compared to London (15%).²⁵
- The ethnic (White vs Black, Asian & Multi-Ethnic) gap in employment rate in Tower Hamlets (27%) is twice as wide as the ethnic gap in employment rate in London (12.5%).
- 86% of residents with a higher-level qualification are in employment compared to just 30% of those with no qualifications. Less than half (42%) of all disabled people aged 16-64 years were in employment, compared with nearly three quarters (72%) of the non-disabled population.²⁶

The borough initially saw a sharp rise in the number of people out of work as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, however, the number of people claiming out of work benefit for being unemployed (out of work, able to work and actively seeking work) has been consistently higher than London and Great Britain. As at October 2022, 5.1% of the working aged population were claiming universal credit, which is higher than London (4.7%) and Great Britain (3.6%)²⁷.

The proportion of 16- and 17-year-olds in Tower Hamlets who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), including those whose post-school activity is unknown is 3%, which is in line with the London average (3%), and less than the average in England (4.7%)²⁸.

The 2021 Annual Resident Survey found that one in four residents reported having volunteered at least once over the previous 12 months: 12% had volunteered outside the borough, and 17% had volunteered in Tower Hamlets. revealed that some of the most used services in the borough include parks and open spaces (81%), recycling services (73%), libraries or IDEA stores (54%), and leisure and sports facilities (51%). While some of the least used services include children social care services (10%), adult social care services (11%), disabled people services (14%), Education services for adults (11%), nurse (17%), secondary (23%) and primary (28%) children and young people; and housing benefit services (33%). Of these services, the most highly rated by residents were the education services, libraries or IDEA stores, parks and open spaces, and recycling services.

Children and young people in the borough are participating significantly less in positive activities compared to 2017, according to the 2022 Pupil Attitude Survey.

- Only 14% of both primary and secondary pupils had been to an Idea Store or public library in the four weeks prior to the survey, only 39% of primary and 41%

²⁴ ONS, Annual Population Survey (2021-22)

²⁵ Borough Profile 2020

²⁶ ONS, Annual Population Survey 2016-19 (3-year average)

²⁷ ONS, Inter Departmental Business Register, 2022.

²⁸ DfE, Participation in education, training and employment 2021/22

of secondary pupils had read a book, and only 22% of both primary and secondary pupils had participated in a sports club or class outside of school.

- Only 8% of primary and 13% of secondary pupils had been to a youth centre or club to take part in organised activities, and even less had participated in a music group or lesson (5% primary, 3% secondary) outside of school.
- Primary pupils are almost twice as likely than secondary pupils to participate in art, craft, dance, drama, and film/video- making groups outside of school (22% primary, 12% secondary).

Invest in public services

This section provides a brief overview of evidence on residents' health and wellbeing.

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation Health domain indicates that Tower Hamlets was the 98th most deprived local authority area in England (out of 317) in 2019, having been the 56th most deprived in 2015.

Findings from the 2021 Annual Resident Survey indicate that 74% of residents perceived themselves to be in good health, almost a quarter (24%) felt lonely often or always, and 63% were physically active for over 2.5 hours a week.

Overall, life expectancy in 2018 to 2020 was higher for women (83.3 years) than for men (79.9 years), a trend that is common across London²⁹. However, healthy-life expectancy at birth for females in Tower Hamlets is 57.8 years, lower than that for males (65.3 years), and the average for females in London (65 years) and England (63.9 years). Female healthy life expectancy has been consistently low in the borough and is now the lowest among all London boroughs³⁰.

Babies in Tower Hamlets were more likely to be born with a low birth weight (4%) than in London (3%) or England (3%)³¹. 45% of Tower Hamlets' children in Year 6 are overweight or obese, a higher level than London (41%) and England (38%)³².

In 2017, 23% of 16+ year olds in Tower Hamlets were estimated to have a common mental health disorder, well above the England average of 17%³³. The prevalence of depression in the borough has steadily risen every year since 2012/13, as it did across London and England as a whole. Latest 2021/22 data shows that 9% of adults in Tower Hamlets aged 18+ are recorded as having depression, similar to the average for London (9%) and below the average for England (13%)³⁴. In 2020, dementia prevalence among

²⁹ Trust for London, London's Poverty profile 2022: [Life expectancy by London borough](#)

³⁰ Office for National Statistics, Health state life expectancies UK, 2018-2020

³¹ Public health England, Public Health Profiles, 2020

³² Public health England, National Child Measurement Programme, England, 2021/22

³³ Public health England, Public Health Profiles, 2017

³⁴ Public health England, Public Health Profiles, 2021/22

over 65s in Tower Hamlets was 4.93%, higher than the average for London (4.17%) and England (3.97%)³⁵.

The highest wellbeing concern for residents is anxiety. The proportion of adults in Tower Hamlets reporting low levels of life satisfaction (3%), feeling things they do in life are not worthwhile (2%), and high levels of anxiety (18%) are less than in London and England. While 9% of adults in the borough reported low levels of happiness, similar to London (9%) and less than England (8%)³⁶.

In 2020, 6,744 of older people in Tower Hamlets lived alone, which is projected to steadily rise in line with the projected increase in the older population³⁷.

Empower communities and fight crime

This section summarises available data on crime and anti-social behaviour in the borough.

Findings from the 2021 Annual Resident Survey indicates that people from different backgrounds generally get on well together (79%), with 76% of residents having friends from a different ethnicity.

Crime and anti-social behaviour are consistently identified as a priority challenge by residents in the council's Annual Resident Survey. In the 2021 survey, 6% of residents reported that they do not feel safe during the day, while 26% do not feel safe at night. 31% of residents do not feel public services and police are successfully dealing with safety issues in the borough.

In 2021/22 Tower Hamlets recorded 34,416 total offences (all crime), ranking 3rd highest volume in London. The Pandemic had a significant impact on some types of crime and there is now an upward trend to previous crime levels.

Latest 2021-22 service data indicates that although the levels have fallen from the previous year, the main community safety and cohesion issues in the borough are still in relation to ASB and drugs. ASB reports to the Police (17,151) ranked highest in London, and while this had decreased compared to the previous year the figure is still on trend with previous years, and Tower Hamlets has ranked highest volume in this measure in London since 2019/20. ASB reports to the council was 3,602, a 17% decrease from the previous year. It should be noted that the previous year ASB reports had increased significantly due to lockdown restrictions.

Drug supply and markets in Tower Hamlets are a driver of knife crime and ASB. Tower Hamlets as the highest prevalence in London of Class A drug users (3,244 users). In 2021-22 there were 548 drugs complaints to the council (a 44% decrease from the previous year), and 280 drugs complaints to Tower Hamlets Homes (a 7% decrease

³⁵ Borough Profile 2020

³⁶ Office for National Statistics, Annual personal well-being estimates, 2021/22

³⁷ Projecting Older People Population Information System

from the previous year), while drug trafficking offences (306, a 105% increase) more than doubled from the previous year.

In 2021/22, the borough had 525 knife crime offences, ranking 7th highest in London. Whilst this is an increase of 9.4% compared to 2020/21 (owing to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on street crime), there has been an overall downwards trend in this measure since 2018/19. Approximately 50% of knife crime with injury (excluding domestic abuse) suspects and victims are males under the age of 25. This is a comparable picture across London.

There are 21 Organized Crime Groups with a connection to Central East Basic Command Policing Unit (Hackney & Tower Hamlets).

In 2021-22, there was an increase in ex-offenders engaged with education, training or employment (19% increase) and an increase in ex-offenders engaged with SMS (3% increase). This has contributed to a significant decrease in proportion of IOM adult re-offending rates (29% decrease).

In 2021/22, the borough had 4,390 domestic abuse incidents, ranking 2nd in London. This is an increase of 8% from the previous year and reflects a rising trend in this measure since 2018/19. Throughout the Pandemic London saw increased reports and risks of domestic abuse.

Strong links exist between poverty or deprived neighborhoods' substance misuse and violence levels, something that may be exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.

In 2021/22, Tower Hamlets had 1,277 hate crime offences reported, ranking 2nd in London. This is an 8% increase from the previous year. and this reflects a rising trend in this measure since 2018/19. Racist Hate Crime accounted for 64% of all Hate Crime offences in 2021/22.