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1 Community cohesion and social networks

1.1 Introduction

How people feel about the area in which they live and the people they live alongside has a major impact on their sense of wellbeing. This, in turn, can have important consequences for their physical and mental health. Understanding what determines how people feel about living in their local area is, therefore, key to improving health and reducing health inequalities.

Several different factors help us build an understanding of how local residents feel about living in Hackney and the City of London. These include general satisfaction with the area as a place to live, and how cohesive they perceive the local community to be, as well as their engagement and sense of connectedness to their neighbours and acquaintances.

Hackney and the City of London both house a very ethnically diverse, mobile and young population and the areas have undergone significant change in recent years. [1] East London and the City have been a focus of major economic growth and high levels of inward migration of people from other parts of London, the UK and the rest of the world. Such significant social and economic change can have a major impact on residents' sense of place and wellbeing.

This section looks at residents' views of living in Hackney and the City, and highlights how this can impact on their health and wellbeing. The commentary covers a number of common and interlinked themes (defined in Box 1) including community cohesion, social isolation, social exclusion and social networks or 'social capital'.

Box 1: Definitions used in this section [2] [3] [4]

Community cohesion - a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities in an area; the diversity of people's different backgrounds are appreciated and positively valued.

Social capital - networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society.

Social exclusion - lack of or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and an inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities available to the majority of people in a society.

Social isolation - inadequate quality and quantity of social relations with other people at the different levels where human interaction takes place (individual, group, community and the wider social environment).

1.2 Key facts about living in Hackney and the City of London

- The vast majority of residents in Hackney and the City are satisfied with their local area.
- Most residents agree that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.
- A significant minority of Hackney and City residents contribute to their local community through regular volunteering.
- A much higher proportion of Hackney than City residents report feeling that they belong in their local area (although the data compared are from different sources and cover different time periods).
- While, on average, levels of social deprivation are reducing, there is a sense that inequality within the area may be growing. In a recent survey of Hackney residents, almost half of those surveyed said they felt the borough had become more unequal over the past ten years. [5]

1.3 Health and wellbeing impacts

1.3.1 Sense of place

A strong sense of connection to a neighbourhood can create positive interaction between members of a community and encourage involvement in community networks. Evidence suggests that good social networks and community involvement have positive physical and mental health consequences. [6]

Studies have shown strong links between a positive sense of place and levels of physical activity; walking for both recreation and transport is positively associated with a sense of community. [7] Similarly, aspects of a locality that impact on residents' positive perceptions of the area also promote social connections and healthy lifestyles. For example, community gardens have been found to improve social capital, and have also been linked to improved physical fitness, stress relief and relaxation. [8]

1.3.2 Volunteering and community participation

An active and vibrant voluntary and community sector, and the contribution of volunteers to a local area, are valuable assets which help to promote cohesion and social connections. At an individual level, volunteering can boost self-esteem, confidence and employability, and has a positive impact on both mental and physical health. Specifically, engaging in volunteering can reduce depressive symptoms. Research shows that volunteering can result in feelings of being valued, improved social wellbeing, and having a more active lifestyle, especially in retirement. [9]

1.3.3 Social isolation and social capital

Social isolation is detrimental for an individual's physical and mental health. Social relationships affect mental and physical functioning, health behaviours and the risk of mortality. [6] A recent meta-analysis of nine longitudinal studies found that social isolation and loneliness are associated with 50% excess risk of coronary heart

disease. [10] Conversely, having strong social networks, socialising and building positive relationships have all been shown to be positive for people's wellbeing, and social networks are a key facet in developing people's resilience. [11]

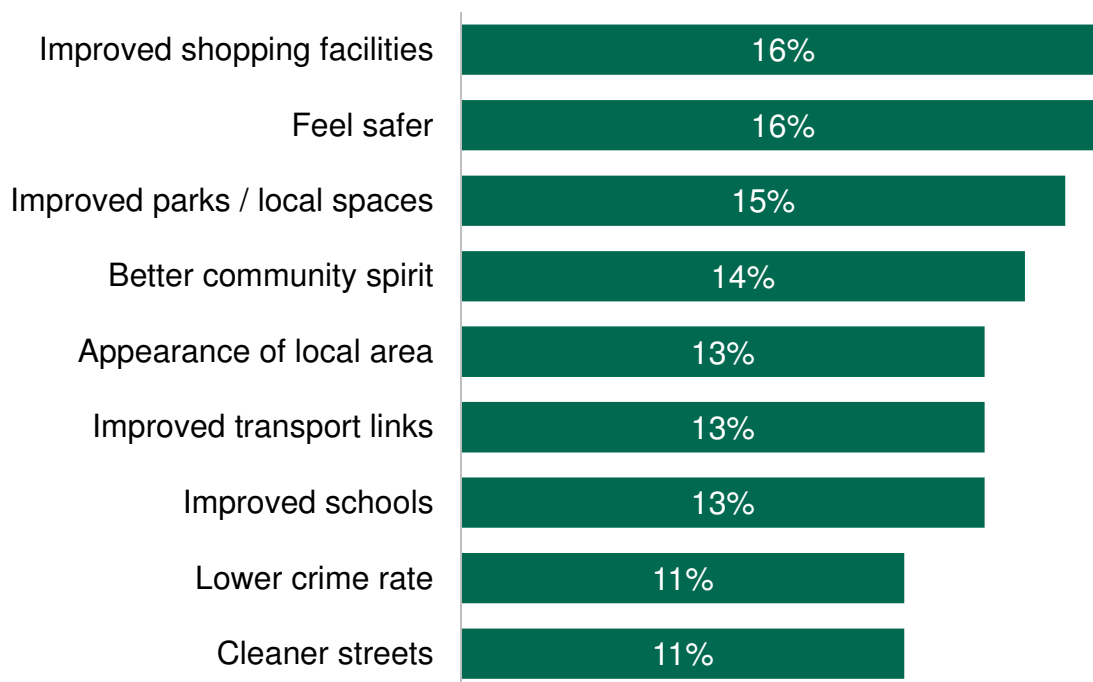
Social isolation is also an inequality issue; deprivation and disadvantage are linked to many of the life experiences that increase risk of social isolation, including poor maternal health, teenage pregnancy, unemployment and illness in later life. [12]

1.4 Number of people affected locally

1.4.1 Resident satisfaction with the local area

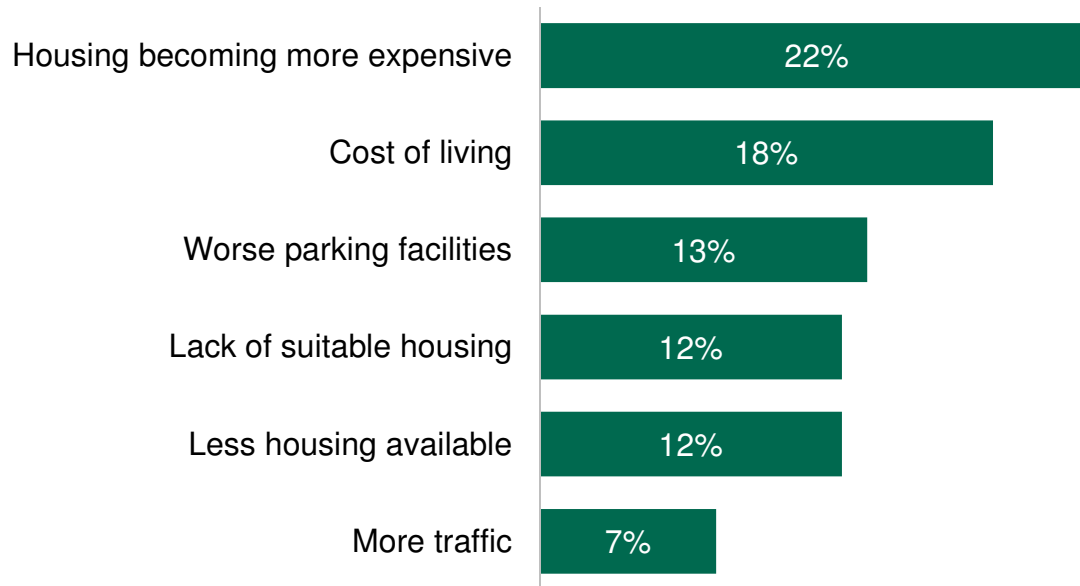
According to a 2015 survey, resident satisfaction with Hackney as a place to live is very high, at 88%. [5] However, there is some variation in views held, with residents who moved into the area within the last five years reporting higher satisfaction than those who moved in over 10 years ago (94% and 86%, respectively). The same research shows that residents are optimistic about many aspects of quality of life in the local area and feel that many services and amenities in Hackney are changing for the better (see Figure 1). There are, however, aspects of the local area that residents feel have got worse over recent years, mainly the cost of living and housing options (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Aspects of the local area that Hackney residents feel have improved over the last 5 years (2015)



Source: Hackney residents survey, Ipsos MORI
Note: Confidence intervals not provided

Figure 2: Aspects of the local area that Hackney residents feel have got worse over the last five years (2015)

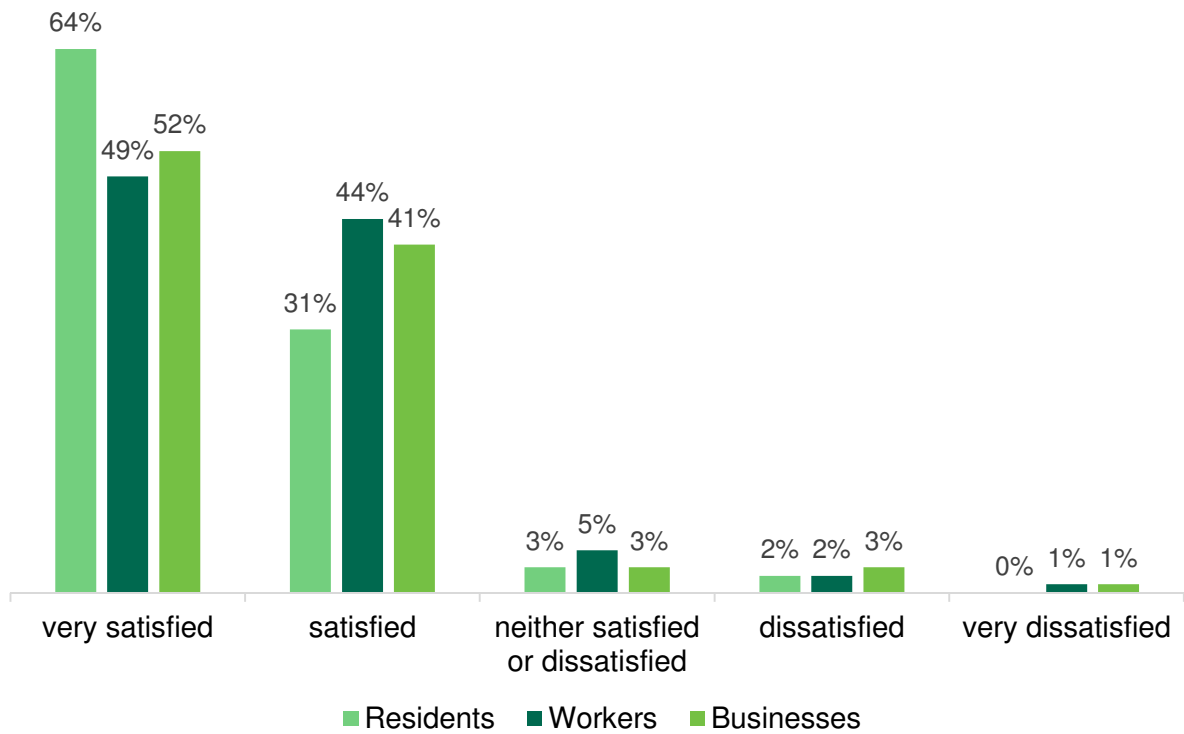


Source: Hackney residents survey, Ipsos MORI

Note: Confidence intervals not provided

Results from a 2013 survey of City residents, workers, businesses and senior executives also show very high satisfaction with the local area - over nine in 10 respondents were satisfied with the local area as a place to live, work or run a business overall. [13] Residents were most likely to be 'very satisfied' (see Figure 3), but workers and business representatives were also very positive about aspects of working in the City (especially the location and ease of access). Areas for improvement commonly highlighted by City workers and businesses were traffic congestion and cost. City residents are most satisfied with the transport, shopping facilities and cleanliness in the area (see Figure 4).

Figure 3: Satisfaction among City residents, workers and businesses satisfaction with the local area (2013)



Source: City of London Corporation polling
 Note: Confidence intervals not provided

Figure 4: City residents' satisfaction with various aspects of the local area (2013)



Source: City of London Corporation polling
 Note: Confidence intervals not provided

1.4.2 Community cohesion

In a 2008 survey (the latest available data), almost all City residents (92%) believed that local people from different backgrounds get on well together. [14] The same has been found in Hackney over recent years, with the most recent data showing that 90% of respondents to a 2015 survey agreed that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. [5] However, the extent to which residents actually mix socially is much lower (70%). Encouragingly, there does not appear to be a significant difference in views on this between people from different ethnic backgrounds or among people whose first language is not English.

The recent 'Hackney a Place for Everyone' (HAPFE) consultation and engagement programme uncovered a perception among some local residents that newcomers to the borough are less interested or engaged in the community than longstanding residents, and that there is a growing social segregation within the borough. [15]

1.4.3 Sense of place

Four in five Hackney residents (84%) say they feel as though they belong to their neighbourhood and three quarters (76%) say that they have close bonds with others locally. [5] However, insight gathered through the wider HAPFE consultation suggests that some residents feel excluded from the new cafés and shops that are opening in the borough, and concerns have been raised about other local amenities serving specific communities being closed down. [15] As part of this consultation, residents also cited concerns over social segregation in local businesses, and segregation between places for more wealthy residents and places for poorer residents, as well as concerns about a lack of affordable places to socialise.

The proportion of City of London residents who feel a sense of belonging to their local area was significantly lower in a 2008 survey than reported for Hackney above, at 59%. [14] These data are taken from a different source and an earlier time period than the reported Hackney data so are not directly comparable.

1.4.4 Community participation and volunteering

One quarter (24%) of City of London residents were found to participate in regular volunteering in the 2008 survey described previously. [14]

In Hackney, approximately one in five residents (22%) volunteer on a regular basis and most of those who do not volunteer (75%) said they had considered doing so. [5] The most common reason given for not being involved in volunteering is not having enough time; this is largely due to work commitments or responsibilities at home. Other barriers reported include perceptions about the value of volunteering, limited awareness of opportunities, and practical constraints such as lack of support or training.

1.4.5 Social isolation

Most Hackney residents (82%) in a recent survey stated that they do *not* feel isolated in their local area. However, one in 10 residents report feeling isolated and one quarter (27%) say that they know fewer people in the local area now than they once did. [5]

Social isolation among residents, especially the older generation, is a key priority for the City of London. Although the actual prevalence of isolation in City residents is unknown, qualitative research into experiences of isolation has been carried out with residents between 48 and 86 years of age, in which feelings of isolation have been recorded, as a result of loss of employment, retirement, death of a partner, disability, and living alone. [16]

1.5 Inequalities

Unless otherwise stated, all data presented in this section are from the 2015 Hackney residents' survey. [5]

Data on inequalities for this topic for City of London residents are not available.

1.5.1 Age

Local survey data suggests that older residents are more satisfied living in Hackney than younger residents. Just under half (48%) of survey respondents aged over 55 stated that they are 'very satisfied' with the local area, compared to an average of 38% across all age groups.

1.5.2 Ethnicity and religion

This same survey also showed that Hackney residents from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are less likely to be satisfied with the local area (83%) compared with the average for all residents (90%). However, Black residents are more likely to agree that the local area has improved over the past five years (52% compared to 46% of all residents).

In other local insight work, a focus group of young Black men revealed examples of establishments in the borough where they believed people from their community were not welcome. [15]

Experiences of isolation also vary between ethnic groups in Hackney – 16% of Asian survey respondents report feeling socially isolated, compared to 8% of White residents. Another report, using data from the same 2015 survey, identified one in five Muslim residents feeling isolated. [15]

Residents from Black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds in Hackney are more likely to feel as though they are excluded from new job opportunities in the local area than other groups.

1.5.3 Disability

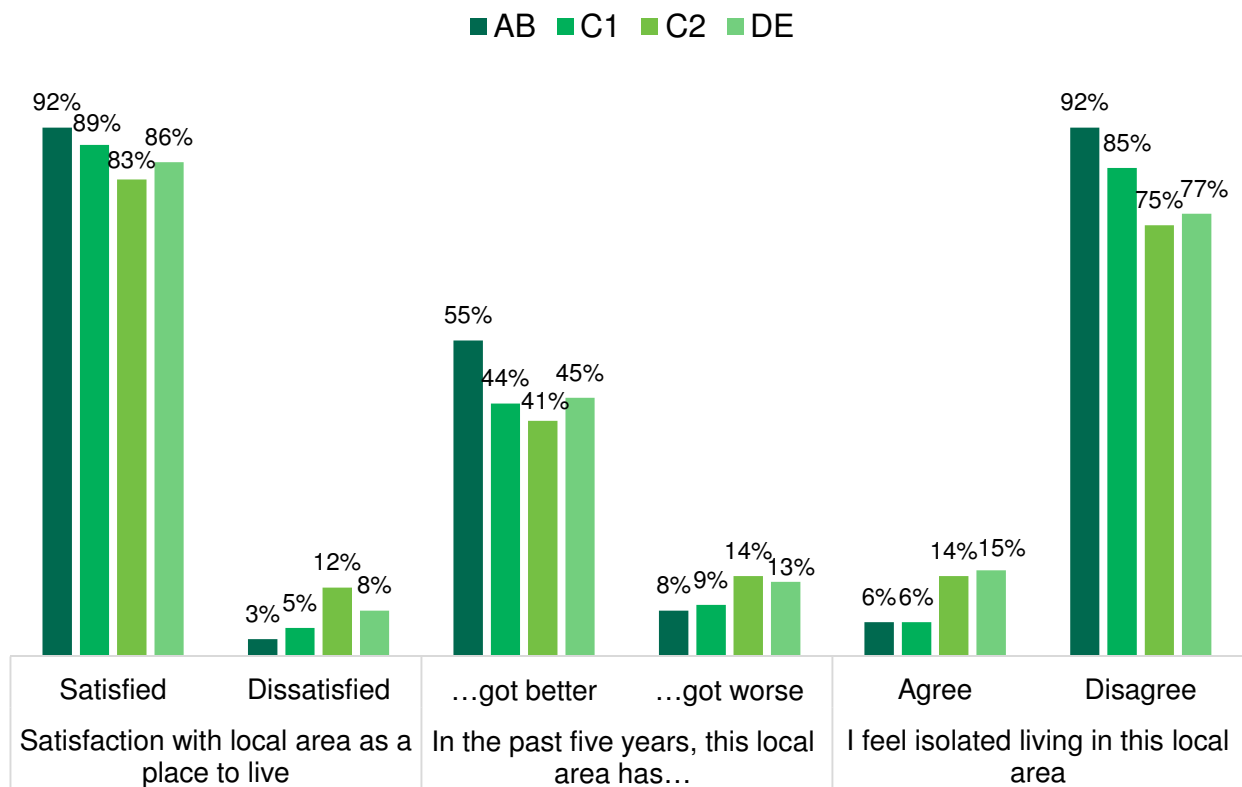
Disabled residents in Hackney were more likely to express dissatisfaction with the local area in the 2015 survey than residents as a whole (12% compared to 6% of all respondents) and they are also more likely to perceive that the area has not improved over the past five years (22% of disabled residents, compared to 14% of non-disabled residents).

Insight work with local disabled people has shown that they feel that the growing array of new businesses in Hackney cater for a younger, 'trendy' generation and have not taken accessibility into consideration (e.g. a lack of ramps, lifts or appropriate signage). Disabled residents, as with BAME residents also reported that they feel unable to access new and emerging job opportunities in the borough. [15]

1.5.4 Socio-economic disadvantage

According to the 2015 survey, more affluent residents of Hackney are more likely to be satisfied with the local area as a place to live than those in lower social grades (see Figure 5). Similarly, residents from a higher social grade are more likely to think that the area has improved over the past five years than those in a lower social grade. Feelings of social isolation are also more common among less affluent members of the local community.

Figure 5: Satisfaction with the local area by social grade (2015)



Source: Hackney residents survey, Ipsos MORI

Notes: Confidence intervals not provided. Social grade definitions: *AB* - Higher and intermediate managerial, administrative, professional occupations; *C1* - Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative, professional occupations; *C2* - Skilled manual occupations; *DE* - Semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, unemployed and lowest grade occupations.

1.5.5 Migrant groups

Community insight from Hackney Migrant Centre suggests that migrants in the borough disproportionately experience social isolation and exclusion, partly as a result of cuts to welfare and other services such as legal aid. [17] Migrant women have also expressed difficulties understanding the school system, and how to access services or to apply for benefits.

This community insight report also describes residents from migrant backgrounds feeling unwelcome and unsupported locally. However, the latest Hackney residents' survey found that newcomers to the area in general have a slightly more positive view on social cohesion in Hackney than more established residents. [5]

Insight from a focus group led by Hackney Council suggests that migrant communities are concerned about the loss of informal support networks in the community, such as care for older people and childcare. [15]

1.5.6 Sexual orientation

Qualitative research in the City of London has found high levels of social isolation among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) on the Barbican estate. The

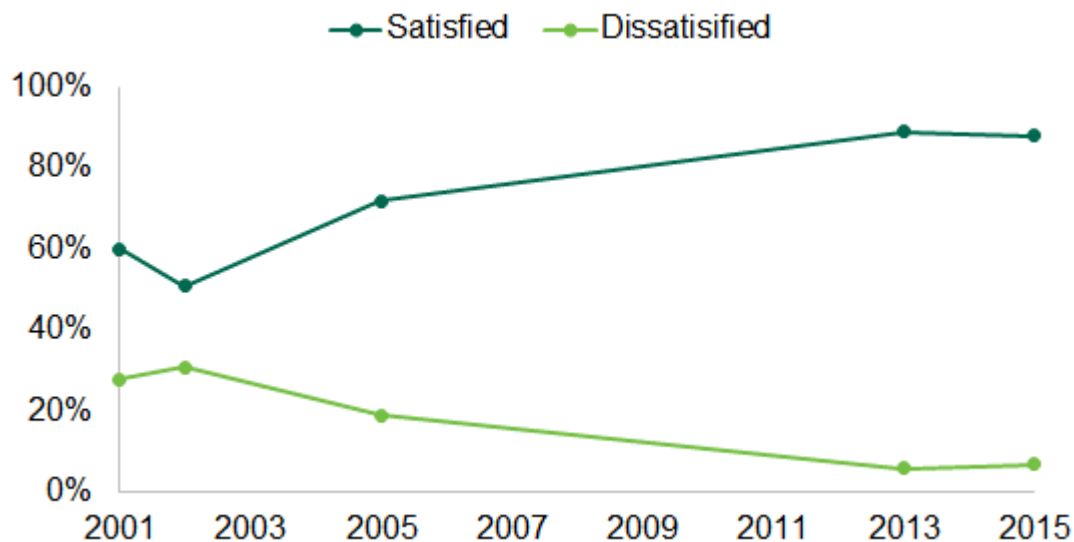
LGBT community here have minimal involvement with community groups and activities and little or no contact with befriending or good neighbour schemes. [16]

1.6 Comparisons with other areas and over time

1.6.1 Resident satisfaction with the local area

Figure 6 shows the proportion of Hackney residents who are satisfied or dissatisfied with their local area according to local survey data, and how this has changed between 2001 and 2015. The figure shows that, since 2002, resident satisfaction with the local area has steadily increased (and resident dissatisfaction decreased). In more recent years, these trends have levelled off somewhat, with very similar levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction observed in 2015 compared with 2013.

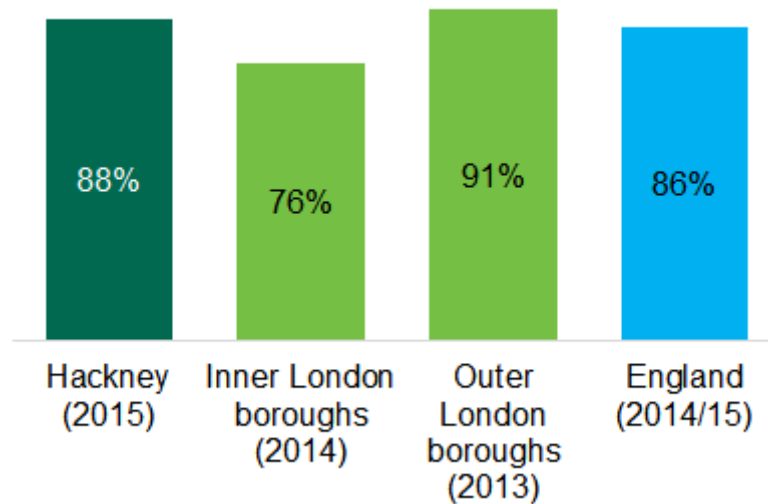
Figure 5: Proportion of Hackney residents who are satisfied or dissatisfied with their local area as a place to live over time (2001-2015)



Source: Hackney residents' survey, Ipsos MORI
Note: Confidence intervals not provided

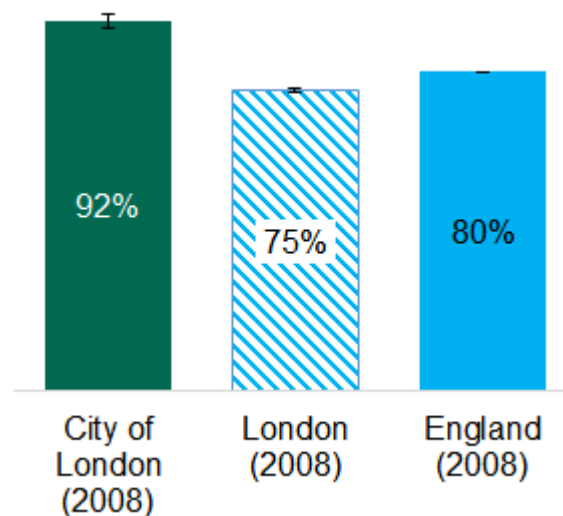
Reported satisfaction with the local area as a place to live is higher in the Hackney and the City than the average for England and (inner) London, as shown in Figure 6 and Figure 7. Please note that the data presented for Hackney and for the City in these charts are from different sources and cover different time periods.

Figure 6: Proportion of Hackney residents who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live compared to inner London, outer London and England



Source: Hackney data from Hackney residents' survey, Ipsos MORI. Inner London and outer London data provided by Ipsos MORI. England data from Community Life Survey (2014/15), Cabinet Office. Note: All survey methods comparable. Confidence intervals not provided.

Figure 7: Proportion of City residents who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live compared to London and England



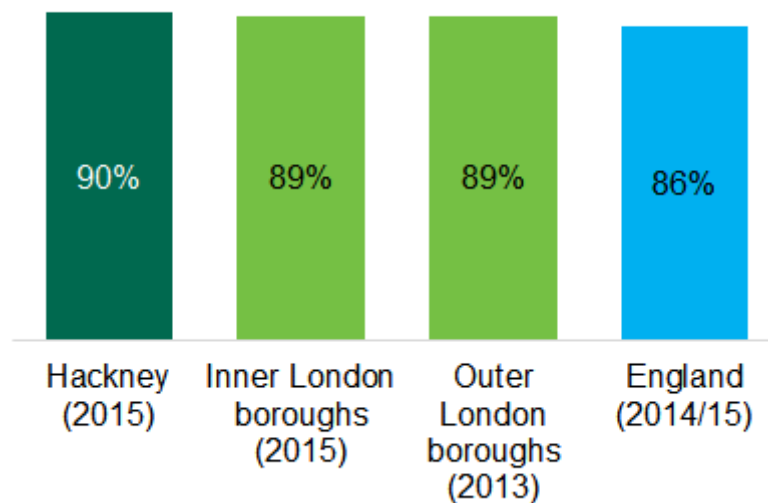
Source: Place Survey 2008, Department for Communities and Local Government. Note: City value statistically significantly higher than London and England.

1.6.2 Community cohesion

City residents are more likely to agree that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds tend to get on well together, compared with residents polled across England (Figure 9). In Hackney, perceptions are similar to London and England (Figure 8).

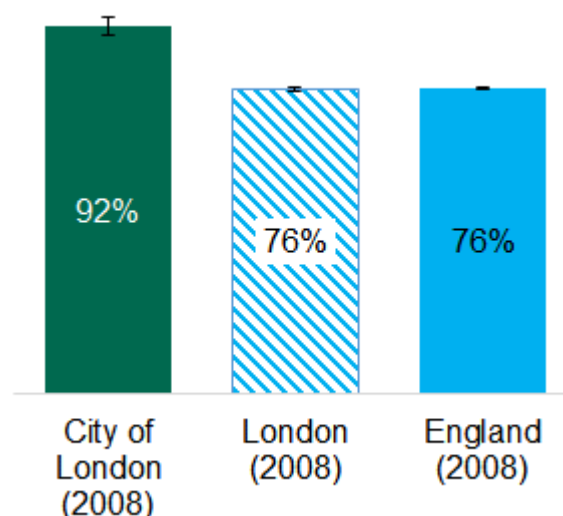
In Hackney, there have been improvements over time in residents' views on community cohesion. In 2015, 90% of Hackney residents agreed that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together; this was 83% in 2005. Certain areas of Hackney have shown particularly high increases in feelings of cohesion - resident views in the Homerton neighbourhood area (which covers the five wards of Hackney Central, Homerton, Kings Park, Wick and Victoria) have changed from being perceived as the least cohesive in 2005 to the most cohesive in 2013.

Figure 8: Proportion of residents who agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together – Hackney comparison



Source: Hackney data from Hackney residents' survey, Ipsos MORI. Inner London and outer London data provided by Ipsos MORI. England data from Community Life Survey (2014/15), Cabinet Office. Note: All survey methods comparable. Confidence intervals not provided.

Figure 9: Proportion of residents who agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together – City comparison (2008)



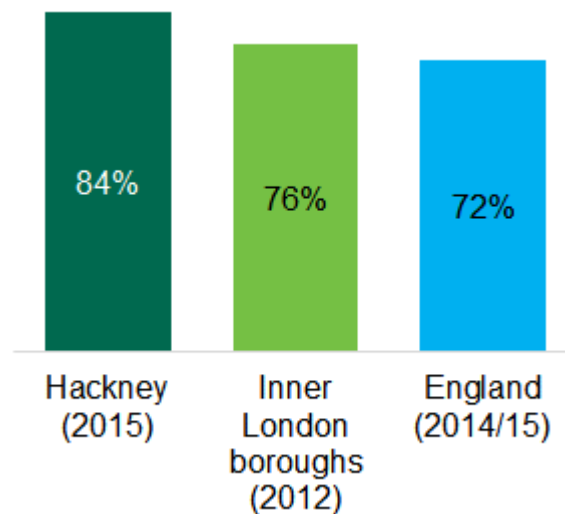
Source: Place Survey, Department for Communities and Local Government.

1.6.3 Sense of place

Hackney residents have a greater sense of belonging to their local area than residents of inner London boroughs as a whole, and England overall (Figure 10). City of London residents have a higher sense of belonging than residents of London as a whole, but similar to the average for England (Figure 11)

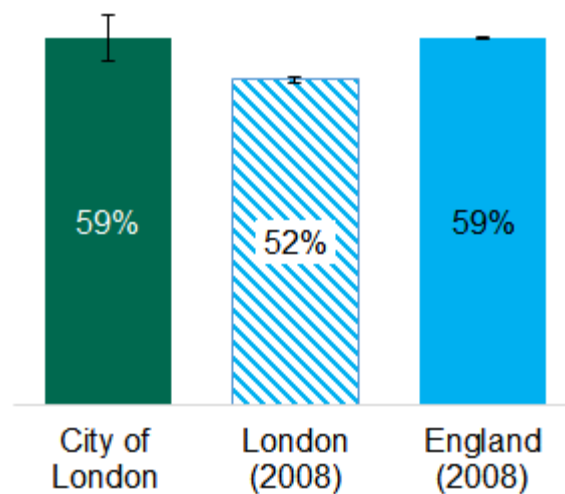
Again, please note the different sources and time periods covered by the data for Hackney and for the City of London in Figure 10 and Figure 11 below.

Figure 10: Proportion of residents who feel they belong to their immediate neighbourhood – Hackney comparison



Source: Hackney data from Hackney residents' survey, Ipsos MORI. Inner London data provided by Ipsos MORI. England data from Community Life Survey (2014/15), Cabinet Office.
Note: All survey methods comparable. Confidence intervals not provided.

Figure 11: Proportion of residents who feel they belong to their immediate neighbourhood – City (2008)



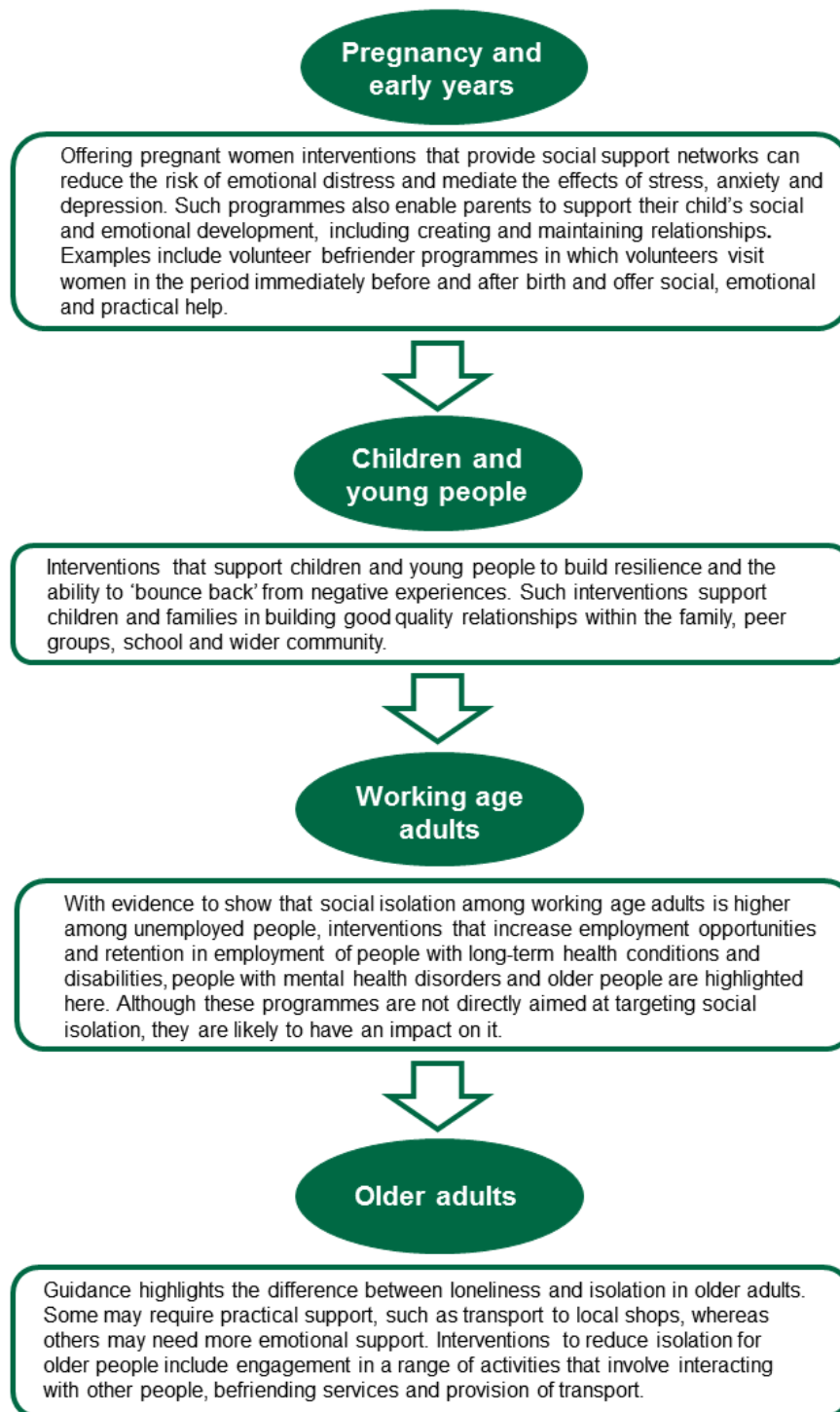
Source: Place Survey, Department for Communities and Local Government.

1.7 Evidence and good practice

1.7.1 National guidance

Public Health England (PHE) and the University College (UCL) London Institute of Health Equity have produced guidance on reducing social isolation across the life course, as summarised in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Reducing social isolation over the life course [18]



The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has also produced guidance on preventing social isolation in older people specifically, the main recommendations of which are summarised in Box 2.

Box 2: NICE guidance on preventing social isolation in older people: summary recommendations [19]

- Voluntary and community sector providers should consider collaborating with local authorities to develop new ways to help people to remain active and engaged in their communities, including when people are in care homes.
- Commissioners should consider contracting with voluntary and community sector enterprises and services to help older people with social care needs and multiple long-term conditions to remain active in their home and engaged in their community, including when people are in care homes.
- Health and social care practitioners should give people advice and information about social activities and opportunities that can help them maintain their social contacts, and build new contacts if they wish to.
- Health and social care practitioners should support older people with social care needs and multiple long-term conditions to maintain links with their friends, family and community, and identify if people are lonely or isolated.

The Local Government Association (LGA) produced guidance in 2002 and 2004 for local authorities to assess how they are performing against various themes of community cohesion, and to take action to promote a cohesive local area. [20] [2] The guidance suggested carrying out a baseline assessment of how well local policies and programmes promote community cohesion (see Box 3 for assessment checklist) and recommends strategies for neighbourhood renewal to cover the following areas: regeneration, sports and cultural services, education, housing and planning, employment and economy, and community safety and policing. In developing these strategies, it is important to engage effectively with local councillors, residents and the voluntary and community sector – including faith communities, children and young people, asylum seekers and refugees or Traveller communities.

More recently the LGA has provided a number of documents to support councils to combat extremism and encourage victims of crime to come forward and report matters to the police in building community cohesion.¹ Councils play a pivotal role in such challenges.

¹ http://www.local.gov.uk/community-safety/-/journal_content/56/10180/7878729

Box 3: Checklist for local authorities to assess community cohesion [2]

- Are we clear about the regeneration needs and aspirations of all sections of our community?
- Do we really listen to people who truly represent all sections of our community?
- Do youth activities help to build understanding and tolerance between different groups?
- Do we have effective mechanisms to listen to young people? Do we respond to those views?
- Do school pupils develop a tolerance and respect for the different cultures that make up the UK?
- Do some groups achieve much lower levels of educational attainment than others?
- What impact does the housing situation have on community cohesion? Do people get real choices about where they live?
- Are particular sections of the community disadvantaged in the labour market? What can be done to address these differences?
- Is racist crime or other hate crime a feature of the local area? What is being done to address it?
- Is there evidence of religious discrimination?
- Are local authorities, the police and other partners sensitive to the needs of different community groups?

1.7.1 Local resident insight

Recent resident insight work as part of the HAPFE consultation and engagement programme in Hackney suggests that overall there is a strong desire to build bridges between newer and more longstanding residents, in order to maintain high levels of community cohesion and encourage community spirit. [15]

When asked “what we could all do differently”, the most common responses centred on having more community events where different people can meet their neighbours and people from different backgrounds can mix. Specific suggestions included street parties, ‘jumble trails’² and community festivals, and also continuing to deliver events such as Hackney carnival and Hackney half marathon. A focus group of young people involved in this research suggested a different way to build community cohesion in the borough; through maintaining parks and open spaces for everyone, so that mixing could take place in a more natural way.

1.8 Services and support available locally

There are a number of local services in both Hackney and the City of London that can support the needs of disadvantaged residents who may be experiencing social isolation, feeling excluded from the community, or lacking the local networks and connections that they would like to have. Examples of some of these services are provided below.

²A ‘jumble trail’ is like a car boot sale but on residential streets; it involves communities co-ordinating to set up stalls outside their houses to sell bric-a-brac, toys, vintage clothes, cakes etc.: www.jumbletrail.com

1.8.1 Addressing social isolation

Hackney Council funds Targeted Preventative Services (TPS), a scheme to support vulnerable adults in Hackney to prevent or delay the need for intensive health or social care support. TPS is made up of two elements: a volunteering and befriending service plus floating support to help residents with specific housing-related needs.

The Community Library Service in Hackney provides free book delivery and facilitates a telephone reading group for people who are at risk of social isolation - including carers, people with mobility problems and residents of sheltered housing, nursing homes and homeless hostels. Reading groups are also available in Hackney libraries for a range of different groups, young and old, including specific groups for people whose first language is not English and those who are unemployed.

Various services in Hackney Council aim to alleviate social isolation during pregnancy and early years, for example the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP). This is a preventative programme that aims to reduce health inequalities by working with first-time parents under the age of 20. A number of Children's Centres also run support groups for parents who may not access universal services, including young mums groups and culturally specific groups (e.g. Turkish, Orthodox Jewish and Muslim parent groups).

In addition, Hackney Council for Voluntary Services (HCVS) manages Connect Hackney, a project led by older people, for older people. Connect Hackney ensures that older people in the borough, who are at increased risk of experiencing social isolation, get the opportunity to make connections and socialise with other residents. The scheme has won a five-year funding package of £5.8m from the Big Lottery Fund's Ageing Better programme, which aims to prevent and reduce social isolation among older people. The project offers participants a chance to meet new people, socialise, and try out various wellbeing activities - including meditation and massage, hen-keeping and digital media training.³

A wide range of activities are available in the City of London that provide opportunities for social interaction and guard against social isolation and loneliness. These include activities with a wide ranging appeal (such as the reading, interest and skills based groups available through the City's libraries) as well as activities targeted at specific demographic groups or geographical areas. For example, the City offers a befriending service, delivered by Age UK East London, which links volunteers with City residents dealing with social isolation, either as a result of older age, dementia or low-level mental health issues.

There is also provision for parents of young children in the City, such as Outdoor Explorers (a six-week course designed to build confidence when taking children outside and on public transport) and Nanny Stay and Play (which aims to provide nannies with a support network and tackle loneliness). Outreach and Early Help services also link parents into appropriate services and support.

³ <http://connecthackney.org.uk/index.php>

An even greater variety of activities are available to those able to travel outside of the City's boundaries and a Small Grant Scheme is available to residents who want to set up a new social group.

1.8.2 Volunteering opportunities

Following the successful push to increase volunteering around the London 2012 Olympic Games, Team Hackney⁴ partners have continued to promote opportunities and to celebrate the active contribution that volunteering makes to the local community and civic life. For example, the Hackney Volunteer Centre promotes volunteering as a route into work for people who are unemployed, and the Homerton Helpers programme contributes to community life at Homerton Hospital.

Volunteering services for the City of London are run by Tower Hamlets Volunteer Centre (THVC). THVC recruits volunteers for a wide variety of non-profit organisations and groups, providing free information, training and advice on all aspects of volunteering. Volunteers are able to claim Spice Time Credits, which are a way of thanking those who give their time to their local community (see Box 4).

Box 4: Case study – Spice Time Credits in the City of London⁵

- Time Credits is a scheme delivering informal volunteering on the City of London's housing estates, increasing the number of people involved in the community, sustaining that involvement over time and bringing about a range of transformative health and wellbeing outcomes for volunteers.
- Volunteers are able to claim Spice Time Credits, which are a way of thanking those who give their time to their local community. Time Credits can then be spent in places such as Lord's Cricket Ground, St Paul's Cathedral and the Tower of London.
- Current and prospective volunteers are able to search for opportunities via an online portal and anyone who faces barriers to volunteering is offered a face-to-face appointment to guide them through the process.
- A 2015 evaluation of the programme found that 60% of volunteers said their level of social contact had increased as a result of Time Credits, 32% said they felt less socially isolated and 13% had started a new community group. The recent Volunteering Review found that the volunteers being recruited are reasonably representative of the City's residential communities.

1.8.3 Community grants programmes in Hackney

Hackney Council continues to invest in the voluntary and community sector through a grants programme, with £2.5m allocated in 2015/16. This programme funds a range of projects for residents, such as youth activity schemes, health advice, employment support advice and improving safety in the borough.

The Healthier Hackney Fund is another community grants programme launched by the Public Health team in Hackney Council in 2014. The fund supports local

⁴ Team Hackney is Hackney's local strategic partnership. It is dedicated to improving the quality of life for everyone in the borough by bringing together key partners in the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.

⁵ <http://www.justaddspice.org/>

community and voluntary organisations to run innovative projects to tackle some of the most engrained health issues in the borough. In the first year of the fund, one of the priority health issues covered by the grants was mental health, which included the impact of social isolation on mental wellbeing. An organisation named Duckie was funded to deliver a project focusing specifically on reducing social isolation in older people (see Box 5). One of the priority issues for the 2016/17 Healthier Hackney Fund is community resilience. Projects funded under this grants theme will be reporting on progress and outcomes in summer 2017.

Box 5: Case study – Duckie (Healthier Hackney Fund project)

- The charity organisation ‘Duckie’ ran a project called Posh Club in Hackney in 2015/2016, funded by the Healthier Hackney Fund. Posh Club was aimed at adults aged over 60, and organised activities to help build social connections, reduce social isolation and prevent the onset of mental ill health. Posh Club involved a series of weekly social clubs, with entertainment provided.
- Posh Club engaged 445 older people over the course of the one year project.
- The project delivered positive outcomes for participants. Over 90% of guests made new friends and a further 54% had gone on to continue these friendships outside of Posh Club - showing that the group had empowered people to take a proactive approach to maintaining their social connections themselves. Participants also reported marked improvements in their understanding of how keeping socially activity can prevent a decline in mental and physical health.
- Alongside the positive impact on participants, Posh Club also increased opportunities for volunteering in the borough, supporting 41 volunteers over the course of the programme.

1.9 Challenges and opportunities

One of the biggest challenges for Hackney over the coming years will be in maintaining levels of social cohesion in the borough. With recent surveys showing that residents feel that the local area is becoming more unequal, and as the borough continues to change and the cost of living to rise, supporting all residents to continue to feel part of their local community is a priority. Hackney Council and the feedback from the recent HAPFE consultation, are primary inputs into the development of a new Community Strategy for the borough. Work is currently underway to test the key themes around community cohesion that have emerged from the consultation including the need to bring people together and ensure Hackney is an open borough where no sections of society are left behind. Following this work, a new vision and priorities for the borough will be developed for the next 10 years. Residents, businesses, organisations and people working in the borough will have a chance to comment on the development of the new Community Strategy 2018-28 in the spring of 2017.

Hackney’s current Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2018, outlines six priorities, one of which is ‘*promoting mixed communities in well-designed neighbourhoods, where people can access high quality, affordable housing.*’ [21] Similarly, the City Together Strategy aims to work with the community to create and maintain ‘*a vibrant and culturally rich City.*’ [22]

Residents, business owners and workers in the City of London have also highlighted concerns over the cost of living in the City, and maintaining satisfaction with the local area in this context will be a challenge.

Regular surveys of residents (and, in the City, of workers and businesses) offer a valuable source of intelligence to monitor how people feel about their local area and how their perceptions are changing over time. Continuing to collect and respond to the views of local people is an important ongoing opportunity for planners and service providers.

As the population ages, it will be increasingly important in future to provide targeted support to enable people to remain independent and connected to their local communities to reduce the risk of social isolation. With clear evidence of the positive impacts of volunteering on mental and physical health, all residents should continue to be supported to take up local volunteering opportunities.

1.10 References

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