

## INTRODUCTION

In 2022 the East End Community Foundation (EECF) published its latest Vital Signs report. Vital Signs brings together data from sources including the Office for National Statistics and The Thriving Places Index, and feedback from the community. It analyses 10 social themes in the three East End boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham, comparing them to the rest of the UK. The full report can be accessed via our [website](#).

Vital Signs helps EECF to better understand the dynamics of these boroughs, which are amongst the most deprived in the country. It means we can target support where it is needed most, to create lasting change. Based on the 2022 report and additional stakeholder consultation EECF identified three themes where our funding could have greatest impact.

This update draws on new research and feedback received from 79 voluntary and community sector groups across the East End. It presents how EECF has responded to Vital Signs over the past two years and our plans for the next three years from 2025 to 2028.



### Young People

Supporting personal development through mental and physical well-being and opportunities to access good employment.



### Older People

Addressing loneliness and isolation and tackling poverty by increasing the uptake of benefits such as Pension Credit.



### Digital

Providing devices, connectivity and training for marginalised and low-income families.

## YOUNG PEOPLE

### WHAT OUR DATA REPORTED IN 2022



**2.5% of 16-17-year-olds** in the East End are **Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)**, higher than the London average of 1.8%.



**43% of young people** ranked 'life skills training including financial education' in their top three support opportunities that would be **most useful to them right now**.



**Youth unemployment across the East End stands at 7.9%**, higher than the UK's average of 5.7%.

### WHAT SUBSEQUENT DATA IS TELLING US:



East End boroughs have the **highest levels of child poverty in London**, with over 40% of children living in poverty.



**Over 1 in 4 (26%) of children in the City and East London experience food insecurity** compared to one in seven (14%) of children across London.



**1 in 5 children aged 8-25 years old had poor mental health**, exacerbated by COVID and cost of living.



**A lack of training, skills and work experience** is the most common barrier for young people to access work.

*"The ongoing fallout from the pandemic continues to have a negative impact on the young people's education and subsequently their employability"*

Community feedback

### HOW EECF HAS RESPONDED

We're working with a range of donors to support young people through recreational activities, youth clubs, holiday schemes and projects promoting engagement in education, training and employment, after school clubs.

Through our Life Chances Campaign, we're supporting the well-being and aspirations of young people. We're working strategically with groups to provide training, work placements and one-to-one support for young people develop key skills to access employment.

Through our YES Programme EECF is coordinating corporate training opportunities to deliver skills workshops, information sessions and careers events for young people accessing the employment initiatives we are funding to prepare them for the world of work.

We're also funding the voluntary sector to provide school holiday activities promoting mental and physical well-being and ensuring young people are safe and have access to a nutritious meal.

By convening youth groups, donors and corporate supporters, we're identifying what works for young people, how to address barriers to employment and implementing effective solutions that benefit both sectors.

## YOUNG PEOPLE

### INVESTMENT

£1.9m

has been invested to date since 2022

£1.8m

secured to date to be invested from 2025

### INVESTMENT OUTCOMES

543

young people supported into employment

916

gained a vocational qualification

5,000+

people supported with improved wellbeing

*"The support from EECF marked a turning point for Fight for Peace, allowing us to enhance our employability services by aligning them more closely with the needs and aspirations of the young people we serve. With EECF's multi-year support, we have been able to adopt a more strategic and effective approach in assisting young people on their paths to employment, further education, or entrepreneurship."*

Caroline Velasquez, Fight for Peace

*"I felt supported, heard and was given assistance and guidance with any career aid I needed. The staff are very polite, friendly, and made me feel more confident in public speaking and interview techniques."*

Young Person accessing employment support at Poplar Harca



### BEN'S STORY

Ben had struggled for a long time to find permanent and secure work when his Job Centre advisor suggested he speak to Circle Collective. He met Seyda, a job coach at Circle Collective who explained how she could support with training, work experience in their shop and in applying for roles. Circle provided Ben with a routine, helping him with timekeeping, communication, and attention, transferrable skills through his work experience, and confidence in applying for vacancies through workshops and one-to-one coaching. Ben struggled with his CV and covering letter and found the techniques and tips, as well as the mock interviews most useful. As a result, Ben was offered a role in customer service and is extremely excited about the new chapter in his life.

# YOUNG PEOPLE AND MENTAL HEALTH



In education, young people with poor mental health miss 1 in 13 days of school, compared to 1 in 50 for healthier classmates.



Children who experience poor mental health are three times more likely not to pass five GCSEs compared to their healthier peers.



In Tower Hamlets 68% of primary school children say they “feel happy about life at the moment”, and over half say they don’t have anyone to talk to when they are worried.



At secondary age, only 40% of children said they were happy about life now.



14% of primary school children in Newham are identified as having emotional difficulties, and this rises to over 20% of children when reaching secondary school.



In employment, 40% of 18-24 year-olds with mental health problems were in a low-paid job, compared to 35% of their healthier peers.

*“The effects of the pandemic are still being felt but there are now added pressures from the cost of living. Mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression and eating disorders have increased and the resources to support young people are increasingly stretched.”*  
Community feedback



## The key issues impacting young people’s mental health are:

- Poverty and cost of living
- Pressures to perform at school, college or university
- Impact of social media including online bullying
- Body image, eating disorders and being a healthy weight
- Impact of COVID and lockdown

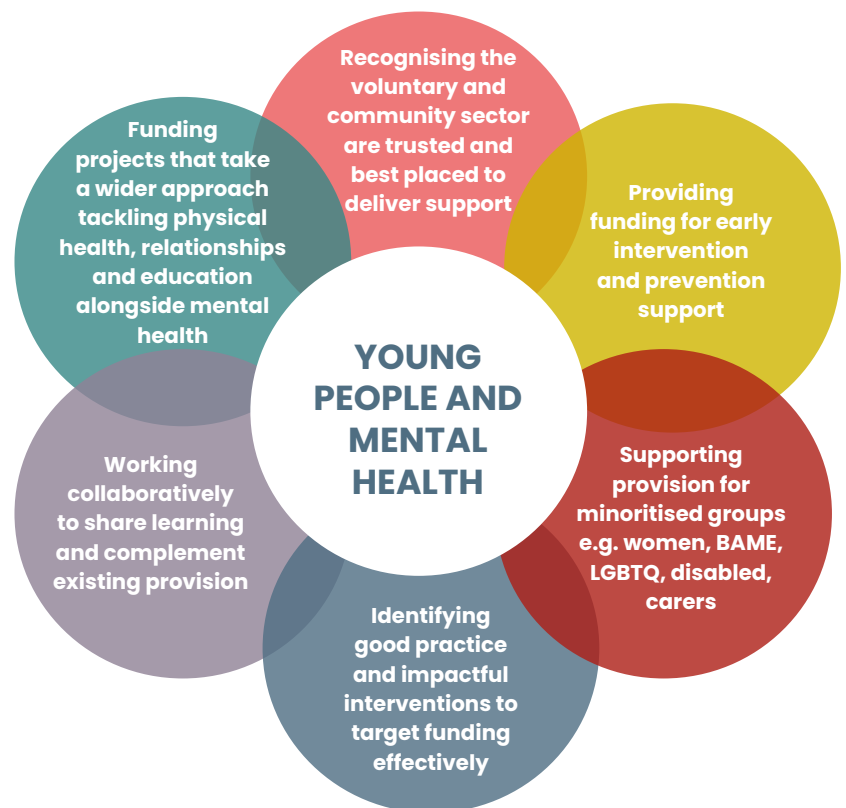
# YOUNG PEOPLE AND MENTAL HEALTH

## POVERTY AND MENTAL HEALTH

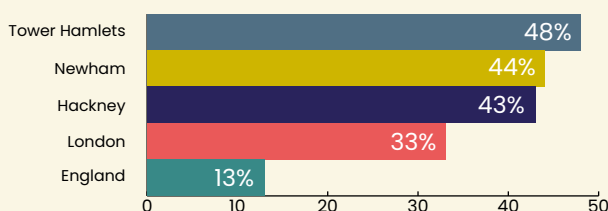
There is a direct correlation between children and young people living in poverty and those experiencing higher rates of poor mental health. Parents are more likely to present with stress and guilt at not being able to provide everything for their family and will have less time to spend with their children due to working multiple jobs, long hours, experiencing mental or physical exhaustion. Children may not be able to afford clothes or a school uniform, will miss out on extracurricular activities due to lack of finances, and may self-exclude from activities knowing the financial pressure it puts on parents. Many children will be isolated feeling they can talk to no-one about this.

## HOW EECF WILL RESPOND

EECF and its partners are best placed to support the mental health of children and young people. From 2025 we will increase funding to our young people's strand to fund more projects and better support young people's mental health and wellbeing through the following:



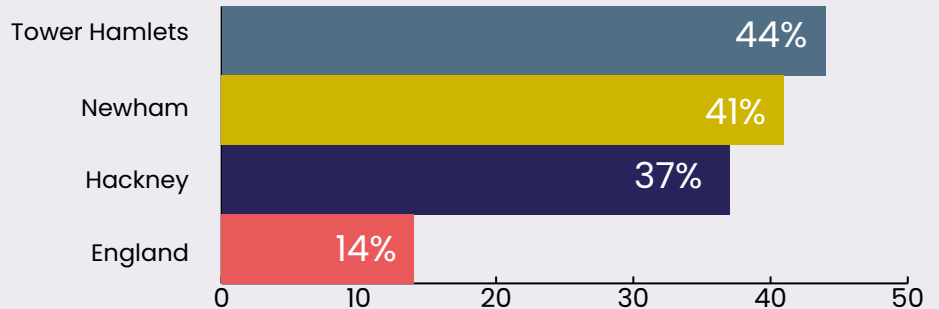
## Children living in poverty in 2022



## OLDER PEOPLE

### WHAT OUR DATA REPORTED IN 2022

Tower Hamlets 44% of older people live in income deprived households, 41% in Hackney and 37% in Newham. This compares to the national average of 14%.



### WHAT SUBSEQUENT DATA IS TELLING US:



**Over 2 million pensioners** across the UK **live below the poverty line.**



**Over 13,000 East End residents** are **entitled to Pension Credit** but **are not claiming it.**



In 2024 **£55 million in pension credits will go unclaimed** across East End boroughs.

### CASE STUDY

Mrs G was referred to Neighbours in Poplar by her GP. She is 81 years old, diagnosed with Parkinsons and financially struggling since the passing of her husband. Mrs G explained that since her husband passed away, her income had plummeted so much she found herself existing from day to day rather than living because of lack of funds, and as a result was anxious and taking anti-depressants. A support worker at Neighbours in Poplar undertook a review of Mrs G's personal finances looking at her income and expenditure and identified that she was entitled to both Pension Credits to subsidise her pension, and Attendance Allowance, for daily help and support. The worker then supported Mrs G in making the applications online. Mrs G was awarded benefit of £101.75 per month, increasing her annual income by £1,200 per year. As a result, she is no longer on medication for depression, is sleeping well and no longer worried how she is going to pay her bills. Mrs G is also socialising with friends and attending social clubs.



*"As an organisation we see increasing numbers of older people struggling to manage on the money they have and there is little support to help them access additional benefits to which they may be entitled. The problems of loneliness and isolation are also continuing to increase."*

Community feedback

# OLDER PEOPLE

## HOW EECF HAS RESPONDED

We have invested in a range of projects supporting older people from luncheon clubs addressing isolation, fitness classes improving wellbeing, to support in using IT and getting online. Tackling Pensioner Poverty has been a focus of our Life Chances Campaign to ensure our older residents are accessing the benefits they're entitled to. To address this, we've:

- Worked with Island Advice Centre to deliver benefits advice training to 16 key frontline organisations in Tower Hamlets so they can work directly with older people to secure the benefits they are entitled to.
- Provided funding to established grassroots groups who are already supporting older people, such as Neighbours in Poplar and Aishah Help, to access training and use these new skills to develop and implement advice services.
- Convened stakeholders from the advice sector, older people's community groups and local authorities to collaborate by sharing good practice and combining intel and resources to reach older people.

## INVESTMENT

£900k+

has been invested to date since 2022

£600k+

secured to date to be invested from 2025

## INVESTMENT OUTCOMES

4,000+

isolated older people engaged in social activities

300+

people supported to access additional benefits

£740k

in additional benefits secured for older people



*"The support from EECF Life Chances has enabled us to up-skill local service providers that are working with elderly service users. We are delivering training and supporting community organisations to help elderly people with benefit checks and applications for disability benefits. There have already been some fantastic achievements in helping pensioners claim their entitlement to benefits, our aim is that the project will have a long-term effect in enabling community workers to support older clients with improving their finances and lives."*

Jo Ellis, Island Advice Centre

## DIGITAL

## WHAT OUR DATA REPORTED IN 2022



Over 50,000 homes in Tower Hamlets **do not have digital access**, and 11% of students in Newham do not have access to a home computer or laptop.



78% of people stated that the **pandemic had escalated the need for digital skills** and 80% agree that using technology has been a vital support to them.

## WHAT SUBSEQUENT DATA IS TELLING US:



Newham has a widening educational attainment gap. Of the **62,000 school students** in the borough aged 5-18, approximately **8% do not have access to a home computer** and 4% don't have access to the internet.



**5% of Londoners identify as digitally excluded**, particularly those in rented property and parents, single parents and those not in work.



While over half of the population identify digital capability as crucial in saving money, **23% have found the cost of digital connectivity difficult to maintain.**

## HOW EECF HAS RESPONDED

EECF has continued to build upon and scale up the innovative partnership with Letta Trust, Poplar Harca and Tower Hamlets Council. We have worked with schools in Tower Hamlets to identify and reach families experiencing digital inequality, and address this through the distribution of:

- a new Chromebook or similar device
- a year's free quality broadband connection
- a seven-step training programme for families

Qualitative feedback has identified the impact as:

- Improved grades and educational attainment for the young people receiving digital packages
- Improved IT skills for children and their families
- Increased access to online services including GPs, benefits agencies, local authorities
- Increased use of the internet by families to manage long-term health conditions, support learning including ESOL and seek employment opportunities.

In working collaboratively and demonstrating impact we've been able to maximise resources and leverage additional support such as free internet connections and donations of new devices. The project has been successfully implemented in Tower Hamlets and we are now working to roll-out the project to Newham in late 2024 and aim to increase our reach across the City and Hackney in the near future.

*"The lack of internet access and IT equipment can significantly impact residents limiting their ability to participate fully in today's digital society. Without online connectivity, individuals may face challenges in accessing essential services, education, and employment opportunities."*

Community feedback



## DIGITAL

### INVESTMENT

**£270k**

invested to date since 2022

**£300k**

secured to date to be invested from 2025

### INVESTMENT OUTCOMES

**670**

families received a digital package of a laptop, device and training

**27**

schools engaged to reach low-income families

*"It's been a total game-changer. Parents were so used to tapping away on their mobile phones, but now they realise how vital it is for their kids to have access to the internet and a laptop for studying. They've picked up basic IT skills in a flash and feel empowered to lend a hand with homework. Seeing the impact firsthand has been nothing short of amazing."*

**Motiur Rahman, Home-School Liaison Worker, Stewart Headlam Primary School**



### CASE STUDY

Monowara's daughter attends Columbia Primary School. Monowara and her daughter received a free laptop, broadband and training through the Connecting Communities project. During lockdown she didn't have a device which resulted in her struggling with schoolwork and not being able to socialise or connect with friends negatively impacted her mental health. As a result of the digital support the family received, her grades have improved significantly and Monowara now no longer worries about her daughter's education. Monowara's daughter is using the laptop to socialise with friends online, and mother and daughter are using it to play games, watch videos, surf the internet for local family events to attend and to bag some great online shopping deals.

*"The training provided will help me understand how to use critical features like parental locks and will boost my children's IT skills. One-year's free internet is a welcome bonus which will allow me to go through the year without the financial burden and save more for my children's future."*

**Recipient of a Connecting Communities Digital Package**

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