State of the Borough Report

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion in Waltham Forest

June 2021

Foreword

"Confidence in our future can only exist if it is held in all our communities" – Waltham Forest's [Public Service Strategy](#)

People who live, work and study in Waltham Forest are all drawn here by the incredible diversity of cultures and communities. Over this profoundly tough year, we have become more aware than ever of the wonderful ways that neighbours in our borough come together to support each other and challenge injustice. Whilst we should pause to celebrate the strength of our diversity, we must also acknowledge that it has been a year that has shown yet again the traumatic and tragic impacts of racism and inequalities that persist in our society. We all have a duty to face up to and challenge this reality.

With the publication of this report, we want to start ambitious work to face the scale of the inequalities with renewed collective effort and creativity. As it was demonstrated fantastically in last year's Waltham Forest Citizens Assembly on hate incidences, when residents are actively involved and trusted to develop solutions to problems that affect us, we can make much more meaningful change.

The Council must take the lead, but we need to involve people experiencing inequality of all kinds in developing a new strategy that will guide us to tackle inequalities head on together. This is the first step of bringing the evidence to the forefront before focusing our collective will and resources on delivering greater change.

This year has been a stark reminder of the overwhelming challenges we face. The disproportionate impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on Black and South Asian communities, the murder of George Floyd and the global Black Lives Matter protests leave us in no doubt as to the scale of entrenched race inequality across the UK and globally. While some of these issues must be tackled from the top, at a national and even global level, we cannot wait for this and we have an essential role to play at the local level too.

We need to move beyond a groundswell of public outrage to respond as a community, in partnership with statutory organisations like the police and health organisations. To do this, we need to fully understand the challenge in all its complexity. It is difficult and daunting, but it is impossible to create change if we do not understand what we are up against. We want to face the scale of the inequalities in this report with renewed collective effort and creativity.

This Report is the first step towards our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy. Our EDI strategy for the borough will outline how we will utilise our power in decision-making to invest significant resources in tackling the endemic inequalities in Waltham Forest. Using this Report as an evidence base, an ambitious engagement approach will provide a platform for thousands of residents' voices to help us understand the full extent of inequalities in Waltham Forest. We will focus first on inequalities around 'Making a Living' and we will use the findings from this engagement to shape the EDI Strategy's recommendations and deliverable actions to implement change. This will be published towards the end of 2021.

These injustices are widespread, and we all have a responsibility to call out and challenge them. This is the refreshed commitment that the Council is making. We recognise the scale of the challenge, and that there will be tough conversations along the way, but we also know that we cannot do this

alone. We must look scrupulously at ourselves as a local authority and work with all the communities we serve, including those who are seldom heard. This starts with listening to each other and learning from the evidence to create a more equal Waltham Forest together.

Cllr Ahsan Khan Portfolio Lead Member for Community Safety and the Voluntary Sector

Cllr Vicky te Velde Cabinet Junior Member for Communities and Equalities

Introduction

"We need to start having difficult, honest, and respectful, conversations. We can't just pretend all is rosy or it can be solved overnight. The issues are real, our experiences are real. Anyone that tells you there isn't an issue, whether that be in Waltham Forest or elsewhere, is lying or naïve. We have an opportunity now, with Black Lives Matter, the community spirit that's come out of the pandemic and the diversity in Waltham Forest, to really lead the way and make the borough a beacon of inclusivity, that helps local people lead better lives."[1]

Purpose of this report

To inspire confidence in our future, we are determined to tackle inequalities head on. That is why, in the Council's new Public Service Strategy, we committed to producing a 'State of the Borough Report'. This Report evidences the structural inequalities faced by our communities and will act as the evidence base for our new EDI Strategy.

Ensuring all voices in the borough have the opportunity to be heard, we will bring people together through a creative and ambitious engagement approach, enabling residents to share life experiences of the barriers structural inequalities create. Initially focused on the making a living theme set out in this Report, the engagement process will be only the beginning of a longer-term participatory approach to tackle the systemic inequalities faced by people in Waltham Forest.

To tackle the structural inequalities in our borough, we must understand the experience of people who face discrimination and disadvantage in Waltham Forest. Structural discrimination occurs when institutional, historical, cultural, and communication practices within society disadvantage certain groups across many aspects of their lives. Some impacts are blatant and shocking, like the brutal murder of George Floyd or the disproportionate number of Black people dying in UK custody each year. Others are less visible but equally shocking, such as thousands of young people who experience period poverty in Waltham Forest missing lessons at school and the scale of impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on people with a disability, many of whom feel that they have been ignored by decision making authorities.

Building on strengths

The Council has a history of identifying and taking on challenges of inequality. The Life Chances work continues to shape the council's interventions and plays an important part in the evidence base of this report. However, the stark and disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on different people and communities is a critical reminder that we need to do more to reduce unequal life chances. This year there has been a high occurrence of Covid-19 among Black and South Asian communities, severe financial strains felt by families already living in areas with higher levels of deprivation and a disproportionate number of young people on furlough or unemployed.

This State of the Borough report is an essential step in developing a shared understanding of the unequal experiences that people have in Waltham Forest. Using this Report, we must work with and support partners and organisations throughout the Borough who all have a role to play so that we can together take effective action. One report cannot capture the full complexity of structural inequality. But this report is a vital step towards better understanding the challenges so we can better act to address them.

Structural inequalities

We often focus on individual aspects of discrimination, for example on sexism, racism, ableism or homophobia. But many people experience overlapping disadvantages because of who they are. The impacts of discrimination also vary among groups depending on their wider identities and backgrounds. We must find out which communities in Waltham Forest are affected by this and what we can do to change it. For example, we know that the fight for LGBTIQ+ rights has advanced, yet many people face dual discrimination such as trans, Black women who face particularly high threats of violence.

We also know that the unequal distribution of household and caring work between women and men has become more pronounced during the Covid-19 pandemic, with women's ability to balance paid work with caring responsibilities affected far more than men's. Women with a disability and Black women have been particularly hard hit by these trends, as they face additional barriers to equal participation in the jobs market alongside extra difficulties accessing childcare.

The evidence presented in this report will help to develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, produced together with our residents, through the initial theme of making a living. The scale of the pandemic's impacts evidenced within this Report have shown how important the making a living theme will be to acting on disadvantages faced by many residents of Waltham Forest.

Using the findings from this report as a starting point, we want to better understand residents' experiences and shape solutions together, with widespread engagement in the borough and the support of external experts. In the long term, we want to understand the scale and impact of structural inequality and discrimination and take the first important actions in making life chances more equal for everyone in Waltham Forest.

Next Steps - Evidence to Action:

1. The State of the Borough Report: First produced in spring 2021, the State of the Borough provides an evidence base and background understanding of the structural inequalities faced by residents in Waltham Forest. Data within the Report will be updated periodically.
2. Learning from all the communities of Waltham Forest: Over the summer, an organisation with equalities expertise and experience of community engagement will work directly with local communities to design and deliver solutions around the theme of making a living. This will involve building and enhancing community networks and creating different ways to contribute so that the full diversity of Waltham Forest's communities can be involved.
3. Priorities and Recommendations: Throughout the autumn, the learnings from the community engagement will be formed into a clear action plan with key priorities and recommendations, set out in the EDI Strategy. Action will be immediate, with resources set aside to reduce structural inequalities by acting upon the recommendations of the EDI Strategy.

The approach to developing the State of the Borough

There have been many national landmark studies looking at structural discrimination and disadvantage which have made clear recommendations for change. These include the Lammy Review on disparities in the British criminal justice system, the Marmot Review on the social determinants of health and the historic McPherson Review which followed the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 and focused on institutional racism in the Metropolitan Police. We have referenced their findings along with local data and the views and experiences of Waltham Forest's residents, social sector organisations, staff (who make up a significant proportion of people working in the borough) and councillors. Data is important for exposing trends, but we need to hear people's real stories to understand what is happening day-to-day and how the information shown in figures impacts on their lives.

The report is structured across five themes that focus on the impacts of inequality for people with protected characteristics at different points across a person's life:
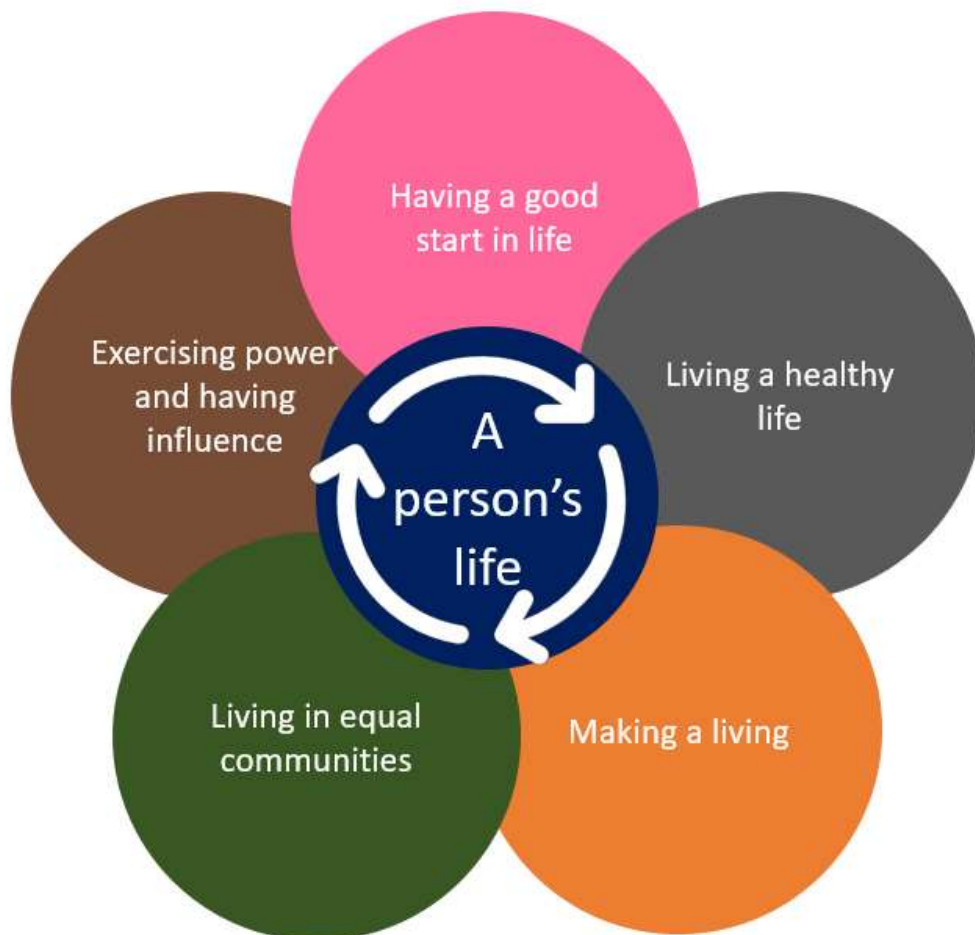
The analysis in this report seeks to improve our understanding of the experiences of people with protected characteristics in Waltham Forest but we know there will be gaps in our data analysis. Whilst much of the data is stark, there is further to go in understanding the root causes of these statistics.

As we next update this report we must look at both solutions and enhancing our understanding of the causes of these structural inequalities. For example, it is difficult to get good quality data on the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people, as there is limited collection of this data both nationally and locally. The data collection of certain groups, such as migrant residents, is particularly difficult due to the lack of consistent data available. People do not always feel safe to disclose parts of their identity that make them vulnerable to victimisation. The ways data is collected and presented can also obscure the true picture of inequalities.

There is much work to do. Using this report as a guide, we want to work closely with communities and organisations across Waltham Forest to carry out further research on the ground to strengthen our understanding of inequality and make sure we know what will make a real difference.

Protected Characteristics and Language

There are a number of characteristics of individuals that are protected under the 2010 Equality Act. These are known as 'protected characteristics' and it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of any of these characteristics.

These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Protected characteristics are often used to address inequalities by observing the differences in outcomes between people with and without (or with different experiences of) these characteristics, for example, between people with a disability and those without. This list is an important guiding framework for this report to ensure that as many experiences of inequalities are covered in the analysis.

There are experiences beyond this list which are vital to consider in the discussion of structural inequalities. For example, it is widely acknowledged that in the UK, social class is also a significant factor in the structural inequalities that people face in life. Social class interacts with other characteristics, shaping how people experience inequalities. Furthermore, the relationship between inequalities based on several different characteristics (generally known as intersectionality) is crucial to recognise and will be discussed in this report.

The intention of this report is to interrogate these nuanced experiences beyond the separate categories of protected characteristics as much as possible.

Language

Language and terminology are very important to how well we can describe and understand inequalities. A person's experience of the effects of inequalities can be hard to speak about, as well as to hear. As such, it is extremely important that issues are addressed in clear terms, whilst also ensuring everyone feels included, respected and well represented.

This report references a significant number of external data sources which use a number of ways to categorise groups in different ways. Wherever possible, we have used specific data that clearly identifies the cultural backgrounds of people it is referring to. However, some of the data groups people with terminology such as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and Ethnic Minority not UK born. Although the term Black Asian and Minority Ethnic is a simplification of the diverse life experiences of our residents, and is in itself an example of the inequalities faced, the lack of available data on specific groups has, in some circumstances, made it necessary to use the term in this report.

With the understanding that no language can accurately reflect the cultural diversity of this out-dated categorisation, this has been agreed as the most suitable language to use, based on resident feedback, conversations with our internal Race Equality Network and feedback from an independent review conducted by equalities consultants.

Our Borough

In Waltham Forest, culturally diverse people are the majority, consisting of around 53% of the borough's population. In some cases, data sources do not provide adequate and necessary detail of individual's ethnicities. We acknowledge that this data and language is imperfect and does not reflect the cultural diversity and unique experiences of all ethnicities.

Waltham Forest is an outer London Borough in the North East corner of the city, home to a growing population of approximately 277,000 people. A relatively young borough, Waltham Forest is extremely diverse, with over half of residents from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups. Data is limited on other groups with protected characteristics, such as the LGBTIQ+ community, but for more information see the Appendix on pages 66-67 for a glossary of terminology related to protected characteristics, alongside the associated population profile in Waltham Forest.

Executive Summary

Many of the inequalities insights presented in this report are stark and sobering. It may seem overwhelming to face these realities, but the purpose of this report is to face the evidence head on, with the intention of provoking deeper conversations and inspiring action. This is a national issue and will require big shifts in national policy, but communities in Waltham Forest have been trailblazers before and we must use this evidence to build on previous work and act with greater determination. This is just the first step in the Council's goal of developing a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which will reflect the everyday experiences of Waltham Forest residents.

Having a good start in life

"My experience of school is that it doesn't prepare you very well for real life. I never could really understand how learning about Henry VIII would help me get a job. It meant that I switched off from school and got attracted to other things, which is what led me to get involved in gangs and crime."

As a child in Waltham Forest, achievements in school, feeling included at school and the capacity to maintain a healthy lifestyle all differ drastically depending on the place, family and community into which we are born.

Inequality headlines:

- In 2018/19, Waltham Forest had a higher number of fixed term school exclusions than the London average, in which young Black and Asian pupils were overrepresented[2]. Overall, Black pupils were almost three times as likely as White pupils to be excluded.
- In Waltham Forest, 28% of children receiving free school meals are of African or Caribbean descent, while only 17% of the Borough population is from this background.
- The exam results achievement gap between boys and girls has widened in recent years, with boys falling behind. The gender gap of pupils who achieved a standard GCSE pass in 2017-18 and 2018-19 has doubled (in favour of girls) from 6% to 12% in Waltham Forest, whereas in London the average gap between the two genders remained stable at 6% (in favour of girls) across that time.

Making a living

> *"You learn to put a 'white voice' on, so you can fit in. I've changed my name on applications, so I sound less foreign. I know it is why I wasn't getting interviews."*

From education to finding a job, from earning a reasonable wage to drawing a pension, there are some in Waltham Forest who face persistent and often insurmountable inequalities that affects the capacity to make a decent living.

Inequality headlines:
- The gap in the employment rate between White residents and residents from a Pakistani or Bangladeshi background is 34.5%.
- In London in 2019, 2.9% of all workers were in zero-hours contracts. However, this is the case for three times as many (8.8%) 16-24-year-old workers.
- In 2020, the median hourly wage for men in Waltham Forest was 28% higher than women's on average in comparison to 15% in London[3].
- By the time a woman is aged 65 to 69, her average pension wealth is £35,700, roughly a fifth of that of a man her age[4].

Living a Healthy Life

> *"The pandemic has affected some people worse than others. People from minority backgrounds know people talk about how the pandemic has helped create community, but the reality is that it's hit the poorest people hardest, and this can only increase inequality."*[5]

The likelihood of living well in comfortable homes, achieving good physical and mental wellbeing, plus the very length of our life itself is unfairly affected by identity and background, and where someone lives. Over just a few miles, there is a significant impact on life chances.

Inequality headlines:
- A female baby born between 2013 and 2017 is predicted to live 6.8 years longer in the ward of Endlebury than her equivalent in Lea Bridge.
- In Waltham Forest in 2016-2018 the rate of suicide for men was more than three times higher than for women (same as the national average).
- Of those sleeping rough in Waltham Forest, the majority (80%) were men.
- In London, only 3% of overcrowded households are occupied by White British people[6].
- The ethnic groups with the lowest health-related quality of life for people aged 65+ in Waltham Forest are known to be Gypsy and Irish traveller, Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities[7].

Living in equal communities

"I have asked my son if he knows his rights if he was stopped and searched by the police. I shouldn't be having that conversation with him, he's not a criminal. But we need to know. Because he's a target. And we shouldn't see colour."[8]

Across the borough, certain groups are far more likely to unfairly face punishment, be victims of crime or harassment, or feel isolated from the rest of the community simply because of who they are.

Inequality headlines:

- The rates of Stop and Search in Waltham Forest in the last year per 100,000 people were 82.3 for Black people, 59 for Asian people and 33.7 for White people.
- Across Waltham Forest, Black young people are around twice as likely to have a caution or conviction than White young people.
- Waltham Forest has the fourth highest rate of Islamophobic incidents across the London boroughs.
- 75% of domestic violence victims are women. Alongside this, more than half of the young people within the Youth Offending Service have either witnessed domestic abuse or been victim to it.
- Around 7% of Waltham Forest's population do not currently have access to the Internet. The proportion is higher in some groups:
  - 36% of the elderly
  - 23% of individuals with chronic health conditions or disabilities
  - 16% of individuals on low incomes

Exercising power and having influence

"The people that make decisions don't necessarily really understand disability. I've seen this on many levels. This reflects the disadvantages that disabled people have and it is a vicious circle because it also leads to poor decisions, lack of opportunities, barriers and discrimination."

The unequal distribution of power influences every area of life and means that decisions are made without fair representation and that the opportunities to progress available to some groups are significantly inhibited.

This acts as a vicious cycle in that there is a lack of representation of certain groups in powerful positions which reinforces the lack of representation in decision making and leads to unfair advantage for some over others in Waltham Forest and beyond.

Inequality headlines:

- In Waltham Forest Council, 59.6% of Chief Officers are White. 63.2% of Chief Officers are men.
- Evidence from the Council's Resident Insight Survey indicates that residents who have a disability are significantly less likely than non-disabled residents to agree that the Council takes account of residents' views when making decisions.

Having a good start in life

For many in Waltham Forest, education has been a route to progress in life and unlock opportunities. However, in an unequal society, there are still significant disparities in achievements and experiences at school, and life chances are too often pre-determined from a very young age, due to the place, family or community into which we are born.

- Black pupils are almost 3x as likely as White pupils to be excluded from school in Waltham Forest.
- 40% of young people in the Youth Offending Service in 2018/19 have experienced school exclusion.
- Black children are more likely to be obese than White or Asian children when starting school.[9]
- Children on free school meals are less likely to achieve highest grades. 51 is the average score and 40 is the score for children on free school meals (attainment 8 score for girls in Waltham Forest).
- The gender gap in GCSE pass rates is wider in Waltham Forest than the rest of London. The rate is 12% in Waltham Forest and 6% in London.
- 2500 girls in Waltham Forest are affected by period poverty.

A resident, reflecting on lived inequality and discrimination, spoke of the impact her experiences had on deciding names for her children. She shared the dilemma of choosing a name that was "up and coming" or an African name. At this pivotal moment, the excitement of picking possible names and celebrating her child's cultural identity was blighted by the worry of needing to protect them from racism. She reluctantly opted for an English-sounding name, something she subsequently learned was common among Black and Asian parents at her son's prep school.

This experience is not uncommon in London, and in Waltham Forest. Accounts such as this provide a very clear picture of the depth of structural inequalities felt in Waltham Forest. Here, even before birth, a mother is aware of the risks to her child's life chances because of prejudice and discrimination.

Childhood is a critical time at which inequalities can have the most profoundly negative impact, but also the time when interventions can be the most effective. Health and education in early years are crucial in determining life chances and there are still significant disparities between different demographic groups.

Experiences and achievements in school differ drastically

School experiences are vital in influencing the development of a sense of self, critical thinking skills and key life skills, such as literacy and numeracy. Inequalities at this stage in life set a precedent for inequalities later in life and have a domino effect.

- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds have lower school attainment scores in Waltham Forest, as is the case in the rest of London and England.[10]
- Pupils from Black and Mixed Ethnic groups in Waltham Forest make comparatively less academic progress than young people of other ethnicities from the same social class between, between key stages 2 and 4.
- The gender gap of pupils who achieved a standard GCSE pass in 2017-18 and 2018-19 has doubled (in favour of girls) from 6% to 12% in Waltham Forest, whereas in London the average gap between the two genders remained stable at 6% (in favour of girls) across that time.
- In 2018/19, Waltham Forest had a higher number of fixed term school exclusions than the London average, in which young people from Black and Asian groups were overrepresented. Overall, Black pupils were almost three times more likely than White pupils to be excluded.
- At the national level, exclusion rates are also higher among pupils eligible for free school meals and among pupils with special educational needs.

Some children enter the education system having faced more social and material disadvantages than others. Education has the potential to reduce the gap between them and other pupils, but schools and teachers are fighting a huge battle against factors they cannot influence, such as family circumstances, the overall national context, or the lack of funding or resources.

School spending per pupil in England fell by 9% in real terms between 2009-10 and 2019-20. This represents the largest cut in over 40 years[11]. In wealthier areas, parents' donations are bridging the funding gap or for some private tuition can be an option, but schools and pupils in deprived areas are losing out.[12]

Schools in deprived areas or attended by poorer children face more challenges. For example, schools with more affluent children in the UK have 12% of teachers with more than ten years of experience, while the poorest have just 7%. Pupils in schools serving areas of higher deprivation are much more likely to have teachers without an academic degree in a relevant subject.[13]

Despite these national factors, schools in the borough have improved steadily in the last decade.

GCSE achievement rate

Waltham Forest   London   England

Disadvantaged pupils | All other pupils

(y-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80)

Disadvantaged pupils: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019

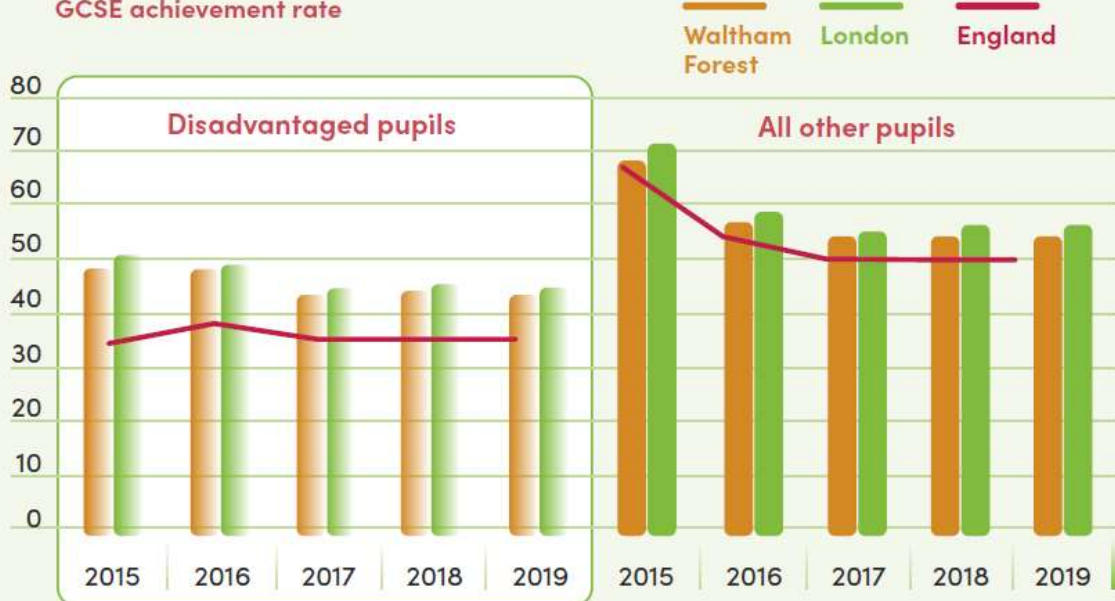All other pupils: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019

Fig: GCSE and equivalent entries and achievements of pupils at the end of key stage 4 by disadvantaged pupils and their peers for Waltham Forest with a comparison to local and regional trends

Girls have on average a higher attainment 8 score (measuring students' average grades across 8 subjects) than the national average, at 50.6 per pupil against 49.6 in England.[14] The average attainment 8 score per pupil on free school meals in Waltham Forest is 40, against 35 in England.[15] A disproportionate number of young boys from Black and Asian groups are not achieving their full potential in Waltham Forest. Despite the ethnic disparities in school attainment, there are some positive trends in Waltham Forest for pupils from lower income backgrounds and young girls, compared to nationally.

There are persistent inequalities for some however, and at the national level, evidence suggests that young people with disabilities achieve substantially lower GCSE grades. Further exploration is needed on this locally to understand the issue further.

Impacts of COVID-19

During the first national lockdown which started in March 2020, school closures exacerbated existing inequalities as parents were required to support remote schooling. This has exposed a significant educational divide due to widespread reports of many families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and/or from Black British and migrant groups lacking sufficient and appropriate technology. Nationally, White British people were the most likely to report that they did not experience childcare or home-schooling impacts (1 in 5) compared with 1 in 20 Pakistani respondents and 1 in 10 Bangladeshi and Indian respondents. Conversely, over half of Chinese, Indian and Black African ethnic groups reported struggling with more than two issues in relation to balancing work, childcare, home-schooling and shopping.[16]

The worst educational outcomes are often among excluded children, and Black young people are considerably more likely to face fixed term exclusion than White pupils. This has a knock-on effect as exclusion is an indicator for being at higher risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator of crime. In Waltham Forest, 40% of the young people in the Youth Offending Service in 2018/19 had experienced school exclusion. School exclusion increases the likelihood of young people becoming NEET (not in education, employment, or training).

School curriculums and environments matter as much as achievement for many people

The way that young people see themselves reflected in the curriculum and conditions in which they learn have an impact on educational attainment and life chances. A young man from Waltham Forest explained the following, showing the impact the relevance of the curriculum had on him, and highlighting the need to take into account the needs of all children:

> *"My experience of school is that it doesn't prepare you very well for real life. I never could really understand how learning about Henry VIII would help me get a job. It meant that I switched off from school and got attracted to other things, which is what led me to get involved in gangs and crime. So they need to find ways to make school more interesting and relevant for all types of children, not just the clever ones or the ones from good families and supportive backgrounds. They need to help all children to have opportunities and avoid trouble."[17]*

Teachers, lessons and the general school environment play a fundamental role in shaping world views, as explained by this resident, who underlines the need to challenge prejudice:

> *"I enjoyed my time at school. I've got lots of friends from different backgrounds from my school days. And I had lots of opportunities to get involved in different things. My only view is that they could do more in school to challenge stereotypes and prejudice. That's got to start early and the best place is in school."*[18]

There is a shared concern that schools around the country need to do more to embed equality, diversity and cultural awareness training in education and in schools. This applies in Waltham Forest to some extent too, even if most of the focus group participants spoke of their positive experiences of being schooled in the Borough. They shed a positive light on the diversity of other pupils and the quality of education, but there are more pervasive social norms that dictate school environments and can have a significant impact on the way that young people experience schooling. For young people who have periods, the issue of period poverty can be isolating and result in absence from lessons. In Waltham Forest, around 2,500 pupils are affected by period poverty and are at risk of missing school due to not being able to afford adequate menstrual products such as sanitary towels or tampons. This experience of poverty is further compounded by the shame and stigma that still surrounds periods, which means that often affected young people feel unable to ask for help from teachers or friends and this leads to missing out on education. From January 2020, the UK government launched a free period products scheme for all schools in England, Scotland and Wales; however, there are national reports that initial uptake of the scheme from schools has been low, and this is likely to have been affected by school closures due to the pandemic. Further investigation is required to understand uptake in Waltham Forest.

In the UK, until 2003 it was illegal to have discussions about same-sex relationships in schools and this has had a lasting legacy. LGBTIQ+ inclusive compulsory sex and relationships education was only introduced nationally from September 2020. This has contributed towards ongoing structural barriers for LGBTIQ+ young people, as well as stigma from their peers or adults. This sentiment was illustrated by a resident who identifies as LGBTIQ+, reflecting "the only way you'll get cohesion is to educate people and change attitudes."[19]

The importance of visibility and diversity in school environments includes staffing, management teams and boards of governors. A resident spoke of how this issue influenced her choice of secondary schools for her daughter. She was so discouraged by one school that she actively challenged them on the absence of people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds in leadership roles.
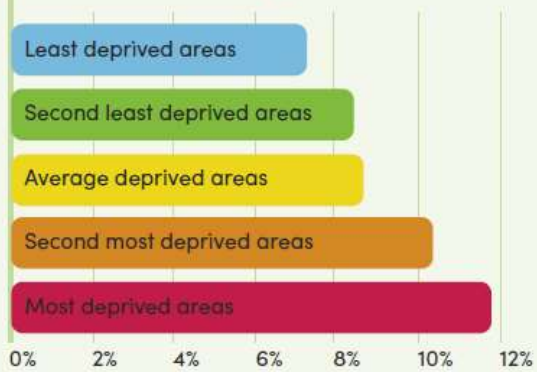
Life chances diverge dramatically at a young age due to health and environmental factors

The conditions in which a child is brought up can also significantly affect life outcomes. Despite relative proximity to each other, some young people in Waltham Forest are more likely to live healthier lives than others due to different living conditions and environments. The likelihood of becoming obese or growing up in poor housing conditions are all exacerbated by intersecting inequalities around social class and protected characteristics, which impact on life chances.

Obesity prevalence in Waltham Forest is higher among children who live in more deprived areas.
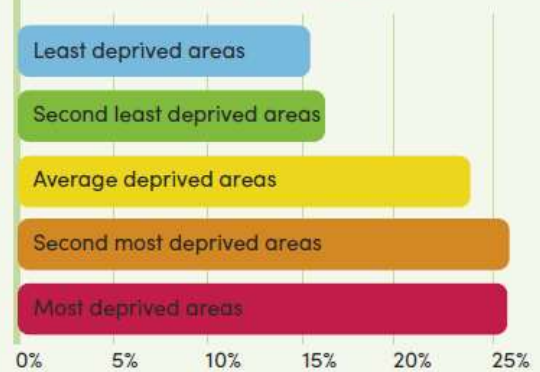
Reception

Prevalence of obesity (2015/16-19/20) by deprivation areas in Waltham Forest

Waltham Forest average: **10.1**%

Least deprived areas	
Second least deprived areas	
Average deprived areas	
Second most deprived areas	
Most deprived areas	

0% 2% 4% 6% 8% 10% 12%

Year 6

Prevalence of obesity (2015/16-19/20) by deprivation areas in Waltham Forest

Waltham Forest average: **24.5**%

Least deprived areas	
Second least deprived areas	
Average deprived areas	
Second most deprived areas	
Most deprived areas	

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25%

Impacts of COVID-19

National research from the Sutton Trust has shone a light on the ways that the pandemic has made existing attainment gaps between low and high-income families worse. One of the main reasons for this is the drastically different home-schooling environments that have been necessary as a result of school closures.

As well as the challenges of homes and families not having access to online learning, children from lower income families are more likely to be living in overcrowded homes where they are less likely to have adequate space to work, and during the winter months may be learning in a cold house as their parents struggle to afford heating.

There are stark differences in support from parents in the home too, with lower income families struggling more. This divide is visible in the experiences of teachers, with 65% of state school (typically higher levels of low-income families) teachers reporting a lack of parental support for learning compared with 25% of private school (typically higher levels of high-income families) teachers.

Nationally, and in Waltham Forest, children from Black, African and Caribbean backgrounds are the most likely to be overweight at reception-age. In Year 6, children from an Asian background are also more likely to be overweight than their White British counterparts.[20] There is a complex relationship between deprivation, obesity and ethnicity[21], and national studies show that school-aged children from Asian and Black ethnic groups are more likely to live in conditions associated with increased risk of obesity, such as low levels of physical activity, excessive screen time or unhealthy diets.[22]

As well as obesity, food insecurity can have a significant impact on the early development of young people.

When a child's diet and nutrition are restricted, it can have serious health and developmental consequences, including mental health issues, behavioural issues, and an effect on educational attainment.[23] Food insecurity is mostly experienced by children from low-income families, but there are ethnic disparities within this. In Waltham Forest, 28% of children receiving free school meals are from Black ethnic backgrounds, while only 17% of the Borough population is from this background. Only 14% of children on free school meals are White British and Irish pupils while this group represents 30% of Waltham Forest population.

Further information required

In Waltham Forest there is evidence of inequalities at different stages of childhood and that some children are more at risk than others. Inequalities are affecting outcomes for children and young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and living in more deprived areas, children with disabilities and children of African or Caribbean descent are also suffering material struggles and discrimination.

The levels of inequality of some children and young people are not well understood and there remain areas of childhood experience that are not widely reported on. In Waltham Forest, as elsewhere, the perspectives of LGBTIQ+ children and young people are rarely available and data on a range of issues, such as education experiences and discrimination, is not recorded. Local information on the needs and experiences of children with a disability, young people and their families is also underdeveloped. Although evidence is gathered, the spectrum of disabled experience is broad and more nuanced insight is needed.

Definition

Food insecurity is a limited access to food due to lack of money or other resources. It goes from mild food insecurity, where an individual is worrying about their ability to obtain food, to severe food insecurity, where they are experiencing hunger. When they are experiencing moderate food insecurity, people will compromise quality and variety of food, and reduce quantities or skip meals.

Impacts of COVID-19

The pandemic has added an additional strain on the food security of many families, as schools were only open for key workers' and a tightly defined group of 'vulnerable' children. Families on free school meals received vouchers through a central government scheme, but it was shown in May that at the national level, 31% of children entitled to free school meals were not getting any substitute. Single parent homes and those with disabled children particularly suffered.[24]

Making a living

From education to finding a job, from earning a reasonable wage to drawing a pension, there are some in Waltham Forest who face persistent and often insurmountable inequalities that limits their ability to make a decent living.

- It is almost twice as likely that a White person in the borough is employed compared to someone from a Pakistani or Bangladeshi background.
- In 2020, men in Waltham Forest earned 28% more per hour than women. In London, on average, men earn 15% more per hour than women.
- In London in 2019, the proportion of workers on zero hour contracts was three times higher among young people (16-24) compared to the overall working population.[25]
- In Waltham Forest, children on free school meals are less likely to progress to higher education.
  - 45% of children on free school meals progress to higher education.
  - 55% of children not on free school meals progress to higher education.
- The unemployment rate for residents who are in an ethnic minority and not UK born is 4x higher than White, UK born residents (17% for ethnic minority, not UK born and 4% for White, UK born).
- Only 4% of adults in receipt of secondary mental health services are employed in the borough.

When reflecting on finding work, a resident who identified as Black summarised his experience as being "already three steps behind in the queue from the start". Articulating his experience of significant discrimination, he explained that "you're facing an invisible barrier in trying to get to that first line of interviews".

Work occupies a central part in people's lives. For most people, the period that they spend in employment spans 40 to 50 years. For some residents, finding a job and advancing in their career is made more difficult for reasons such as sexism, racism, disability-based or class-based discrimination. The impacts of such barriers are profound; from preventing people from being able to financially support themselves and their families, to affecting their health and even their sense of self and purpose.

It is important to acknowledge that not everyone will be able to work. In some cases, this will be due to individual choice, but in others, there are significant structural inequalities in this experience too, such as such as the level of unpaid work done by women, or the experience of the benefits system for people with a disability.

The playing field for finding work is not level

When people face barriers to finding work, there are significant consequences on their lives and the communities to which they belong. It deprives people of a decent income, of the opportunity to fulfil their potential and to make social connections. Being unemployed, particularly long-term, contributes significantly to poor health.[26]

Inequalities Headlines

- In London in 2019, 54.3% of disabled people were in employment.[27]
- Only 4% of adults in receipt of secondary mental health services are employed in the Borough.
- It is almost twice as likely that a white person in the borough is employed compared to someone from a Pakistani or Bangladeshi background. (Employment rate is 79% employment for White, 44.5% for Pakistani or Bangladeshi) The gap in the employment rate between White residents and residents from a Pakistani or Bangladeshi background is 34.5 percentage points, higher than the 21.5 London average.[28]
- The female employment rate is significantly below the male employment rate.[29] In Waltham Forest, the gap between the two is 11 percentage points, in line with the London average, but higher than the national average of 8.1.[30]
- In London in 2019, the disability pay gap was at 16.6%, having increased by 2.4% in the last 5 years.[31]

There are stark disparities in the unemployment rates between different ethnic groups. In 2019, the unemployment rate of White, UK-born residents of Waltham Forest was 3.7%. It was more than four times higher (16.7%) for residents who are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and not UK born.[32]

The consequences of unemployment vary for individuals. People from groups who are the most likely to be unemployed (people with a disability and/or people from a Black background) talked specifically about the various levels of discrimination they have faced in the process of applying for work:

> *"I've experienced racism at the recruitment stage and once I got a job. I've changed my name on applications and it's led to me getting interviews, although I still didn't get the job. I've had interviews where the questions have been blatantly racist."[33]*
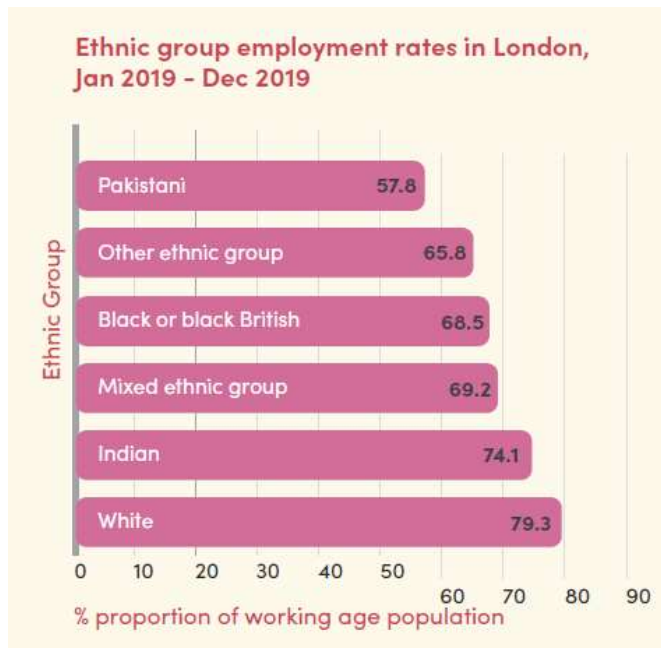
Impacts of Covid-19

In December 2020, 10.2% of Waltham Forest residents were receiving unemployment benefits, more than three times more than in February. The borough had the 4th highest increase in unemployment claimant count among London Boroughs, compared to a year before. Young people aged 25-29 years old have experienced the highest levels of job losses locally, and it's likely those who were already experiencing issues due to inequalities have been even more affected, as mentioned by this resident:

> *"I think it's difficult enough normally to find a job, not even a good one, just a job, when you're young and Black and don't have any networks or connections that can help you get a job. I've just decided to sit this out now and get back into it in a few months when there are more jobs."[34]*

While local data is scarce, in Centre for London polling showed that during the first lockdown in May 2020, almost half of disabled Londoners were unable to make ends meet, compared to just under a third of all Londoners.

In Waltham Forest, women and people from a Pakistani or Bangladeshi background, are more likely to be economically inactive meaning they are not in work and not looking for work.[35] However, this is in line with London employment rates by ethnicity in London:

Ethnic group employment rates in London, Jan 2019 – Dec 2019

Ethnic Group	% proportion of working age population
Pakistani	57.8
Other ethnic group	65.8
Black or black British	68.5
Mixed ethnic group	69.2
Indian	74.1
White	79.3

For women, the main reason for economic inactivity is due to the disproportionate amount of time spent caring for family members, doing unpaid work in the home, and carrying the emotional labour of the family. At the national level, women carry out an average of 60% more unpaid work than men, including unpaid care and domestic work.[36] More information is needed to understand this in Waltham Forest.

This is further compounded for women from Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds, for whom there is a disproportionate likelihood of being economically inactive. Research commissioned by the Council[37] into the barriers into employment for economically inactive women found that structural inequality was a key driver which can be observed in many ways. For example, older Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are often interested in working but have little or no employment experience and for others, overseas qualifications are often not accepted. There is also evidence that Muslim women wearing the hijab are less likely to be successful at interview and women from some communities are more likely to face discriminatory questions about marriage and children.

Definition

A person is considered economically inactive if they are not doing paid work. This is different from being unemployed, as to be considered unemployed you must be searching for or have the desire to be doing paid work. Typically, people who are economically inactive may be caring for children or elderly relatives, or studying full time.

Impacts of COVID-19

Research showed that the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences had a greater impact on women and their work than men. They have carried out additional unpaid work, especially home schooling. Women spent more than twice as much time as men on their children's home schooling during the lockdown. Women with primary school-aged children were considerably more likely to have given up working than fathers with children of the same age.[38]

Once in the workplace, some people face further discrimination

Beyond the recruitment process, many people face unfair treatment from colleagues and customers in the workplace because of their identity or background.

There can be significant challenges for LGBTIQ+ people in the workplace. While there has been progress in recent years and there are legal protections, it still happens that individuals are not in a safe environment where their decisions around coming out are respected, and they do not feel pressure either way. There are still instances of people facing homophobia or transphobia at work, based on perceived or actual LGBTIQ+ status, which prevent them from fulfilling their potential in the workplace.

Local data is scarce, but research from the Centre for London in July 2020 found that 40% of trans people who reported abusive behaviour at work found that it did not subsequently stop.

A significant proportion of women still face sexual harassment, belittling behaviour and other forms of gender based discrimination. A landmark study in 2016 conducted by the Trade Unions Congress in partnership with the Everyday Sexism Project found that more than half (52%) of women, and nearly two-thirds (63%) of women aged 18-24 years old, said they have experienced sexual harassment at work. The study found that in the vast majority of cases, the perpetrator was male and many women reported that it was someone who had direct authority over them, which illustrates the structural nature of this inequality that women face. More investigation is required to understand the situation for women working in, and who live in, Waltham Forest.

Being disabled or experiencing mental health problems also makes it difficult to be employed in the Borough. This is something that can be made worse by other inequalities, as explained by this resident:

> *"I'm Asian and disabled. It's become a fact of life to experience discrimination in all aspects of my life, and no more so than employment. Despite my qualifications and skills, I find it difficult to get a job."[39]*

Income inequalities become worse over time

Despite significant shifts in the working patterns of men and women over the last decade, there are substantial income gaps, known as the gender pay gap. This is something that accumulates throughout a person's lifetime. The gender pay gap is extremely visible after retirement in pensions because of deeply entrenched gender norms around men typically being the primary earner in a family and women taking time out of the labour market for maternity leave and care work. This is more pronounced in the experiences of women with lower levels of qualifications and Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, who are typically more likely to experience discrimination in accessing work and in the workplace. The power that comes with higher income means that too often, women are unable to enjoy equal opportunities in life as others.

Occupation has an impact on income, as does working pattern. In Waltham Forest, White ethnic groups occupy a significantly greater number of high-skilled jobs, and there is also a gender division that favours men. While men are working evenly between different industries, 44% of women occupy roles in the public administration, education and health sectors, which are industries with lower average earnings.[40]

Recent studies show that the biggest single reason for the gender pay gap are changes in women's working patterns as a direct or indirect consequence of motherhood. The gender pay gap widens dramatically after women have children but this could be reduced if men and women were able to share childcare more equally.

Young people are more likely to be in unstable work. This generally includes low pay, uncertain hours and work patterns, a lack of job security, and fewer opportunities for training or progression. In many cases, workers do not have employment rights or access to sick pay.

Unequal access to education leads to unequal employment opportunities

Appropriate skills and training opportunities support a person to get a job and progress in their career. This is something that starts at school, but in later life it can include access to apprenticeships, university courses, lifelong learning through adult education or training in the workplace. For many, this is made difficult by factors such as language barriers, financial constraints, or lack of guidance and support.[41] These barriers can stunt a person's professional development and block opportunities for them to progress in ways that are meaningful to them, for example, by gaining qualifications or being promoted.

In Waltham Forest, pupils who come from lower income families are much less likely to progress to higher education than their peers from more affluent families. In the borough, pupils receiving free school meals are less likely to progress to higher education.

Nationally, there is a considerable gap between independent and state schools for progression to higher education. In Waltham Forest in 2019, about three quarters of pupils attended state- funded schools and it is likely that many of the borough's young people are not, for a variety of reasons, progressing into further and higher education.

Definition

- The gender pay gap is the percentage difference between average hourly earning for men and women.
- The ethnicity pay gap is the percentage difference between the average pay for all staff who do not identify as White British and White staff.
- The gender and ethnicity pay gaps are not the same thing as unequal pay, and are affected by a variety of factors.

Data on progression to higher education by ethnic groups is not available at the local level. It is likely that Waltham Forest follows the national trend that shows White pupils as the least likely to progress to Higher Education by age 19. Male White British Free School Meal pupils are the least likely of all groups to progress to Higher Education by age 19.

Access to university is not just a matter of having the right grades. Some young people simply cannot imagine themselves attending a university. This can stem from the way they have been treated at school by peers and teachers, with overt discrimination or unconscious bias playing a role, or the lack of role models, for example, in social classes where others have not usually progressed to university. This can be compounded by a lack of guidance and support. This issue was captured in the following account from a member of Council staff:

> "At the age of 15 I was told by a teacher that I was not 'A' level material. Due to a lack of confidence and not believing that as a black girl I could become a solicitor, which was my dream, I accepted that teacher's evaluation of me.[42]"

Later in life there is unequal access to training for career development. In Waltham Forest, out of 3,048 learners enrolled in Adults learning services in 2019/2020, 8 in 10 were women Two-third of learners were from an ethnic minority background.

Financial barriers prevent accessing training as an adult, particularly for those on a low income, when there are fewer student loans and resources available.

Further information required

The evidence illustrates the potential for discrimination and inequality within the field of employment and highlights the range of disadvantage experienced by some people in Waltham Forest. Women, ethnic minority and disabled groups, and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, often face multiple disadvantages affecting employment prospects.

There are some notable gaps in understanding local conditions and experiences. These include the progression through education and training by ethnic groups at the local level. The characteristics of users of adult education services and the journey to employment as a result across protected characteristics is still unknown. More work is needed to understand the experiences of people in work, alongside greater monitoring and sharing of information on protected characteristics of local employees to show trends in employment.

Living a healthy life

The likelihood of living well in comfortable homes, achieving good physical and mental wellbeing, plus the very length of our life itself is unfairly affected by identity and background, and where someone lives. Over just a few miles, there is a significant impact on life chances.

- A female baby born between 2013 and 2017 is predicted to live 6.8 years longer in the ward of Endlebury than her equivalent in Lea Bridge.
- Women in London have a longer life expectancy than men and can expect to live a greater proportion of their life in good health.
- In London, people of a White or Mixed ethnicity, people with a disability and people who are LGBTIQ+, are more likely to smoke and to drink heavily.[43]
- 80% of those sleeping rough in Waltham Forest were men. 77% of this population was between 26 and 55 years old.
- In Waltham Forest (and nationally), the rate of suicide for men is more than 3 times higher than for women.[44]
- Single mothers represent 1/3 of households threatened by homelessness.[45]

Ill-health has an influence on all aspects of one's life, as described by this resident: *"My health affects everything in my life. Unless you're in my situation it is quite difficult to understand. I've always felt I've received good care, but it doesn't stop you feeling like you're marginalised, that you have difficulties to overcome each day. It's harder for me to get around, I face barriers in employment, it affects my finances, it affects my relationships. I don't really have any friends. My physical situation has led to me having mental health problems. It's a vicious circle."[46]*

When it comes to health and wellbeing, there is evidence that shows differences in how long some residents can expect to live in good health. This varies across the borough - between different postcodes and even from one street to the next. Health inequalities are often a result of differences in people's homes, education and childhood experiences, their environments, their jobs and employment prospects, their access to good public services and their habits. Across Waltham Forest particular groups are more likely to experience health inequalities and face a higher risk of poor health due to their background, upbringing or financial circumstance.

Inequality headlines

- Women in Waltham Forest have a longer healthy life expectancy at birth than men. They can expect 65.3 years of life in good health, above the England and London averages. It goes down to 62.7 years for men, below the England and London averages.[47]
- The ethnic groups with the lowest health related quality of life for people aged 65+ in Waltham Forest are known to be Gypsy and Irish traveller, Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities.[48]
- Black Caribbean and Black African adults are more likely to use mental health services and be detained by psychiatric hospitals[49].
- In London, only 3% of overcrowded households are occupied by White British people. Households with lower income are more likely to be overcrowded[50].

- Of those sleeping rough in Waltham Forest, the majority (80%) were men. 77% of this population was between 26 and 55 years old.[51]
- People who identify as LGBTIQ+ experience higher rates of poor mental health, including depression, anxiety and self-harm.
- 14.2% of households in Waltham Forest experience fuel poverty, where average energy costs push them below the poverty line. Single parent, households with one or more disabled adults and households of a South Asian background are the most likely to be fuel poor.

Life expectancy at birth – Females

Life expectancy at birth – Males

UK   London   Waltham Forest
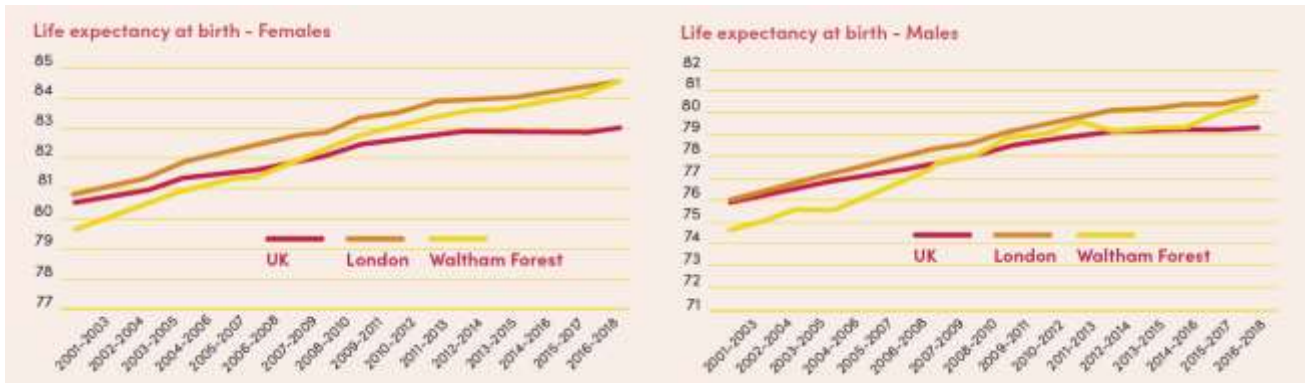
Some residents live longer than others

Inequality in life expectancy is often used to show health inequalities. There are high levels of socio-economic inequality evident in life expectancy outcomes and this is an issue in Waltham Forest as people in more deprived areas face worse health outcomes. There are also differences between groups, with some more likely to live in ill health and have a shorter life expectancy.

Inequalities do not just lead to people dying from preventable causes, they also affect people's quality of life. People belonging to different groups are unnecessarily living with ill-health for years, or even decades.

Life expectancy in Waltham Forest stands at 84.5 years for females and 80.6 years for males, rising at a faster rate than the rest of London or the UK. The gap between female and male life expectancy in the borough has been reduced, but is still present, at 3.9 years[52].

The rate at which men die prematurely under 75 is significantly higher than women in Waltham Forest; between 2016 and 2018 this was 392 per 100,000 population for men compared to 250 per 100,000 population for women[53].

Life expectancy data is not available by ethnic group because ethnicity is not recorded at death registration. However, some population groups have significantly shorter life expectancy than the general population. For example, homeless males and females live 31 years and 38 years fewer years than males and females on average. People with learning disabilities also have shorter lives than the average.

There are some behaviours that lead to poor health

Certain habits can have a major impact on health. Smoking, poor diet, physical inactivity and high alcohol consumption are four of the main behavioural risks to people's health today. Behavioural risks to health are more common in some parts of the population than in others. The likelihood of engaging in healthy or unhealthy behaviours is affected by different social influences such as stigma, discrimination and deprivation, which affect certain groups more than others.

Definition

'Men who have sex with men' is a recognised public health term. It is used to avoid conflating the risk of communicable diseases with a particular identity and focus on the behaviour, as not all gay or bisexual men will be sexually active and there are straight identifying men who may have sex with another man at some point. However, in this case, a large proportion of men who have sex with men will identify as part of the LGBTIQ+ community and so it is relevant in this report to describe inequalities in this way.

There are differences in many behavioural risk factors between population groups and evidence shows that some people's circumstances make it harder for them to move away from unhealthy behaviours.

Identity can be a determining factor in the likelihood of experiencing poor mental health

There is evidence showing that inequalities in various types of mental ill-health exist across a range of protected characteristics, including sexual orientation, sex and ethnicity. Inequalities put many people at a disadvantage in achieving good mental health and wellbeing and can have an impact on whether mental illness is recognised, reported and diagnosed.

Certain groups are at higher risk of mental health problems. People who identify as LGBTIQ+, for example, experience higher rates of poor mental health, including depression, anxiety and self-harm, than those who do not identify as LGBTIQ+[54]. There is, however, little local data on this subject. Women are more likely than men to report common mental health disorders,[55] with the gap widening among young people, but again, the local profile is unclear.

There are also recorded differences in mental ill-health by ethnicity, including rates of detention under the Mental Health Act, where nationally the Black or Black British group were more than four times more likely to be detained than the White group,[56] linked in part to higher rates of serious mental illness, however these figures only explain differences in detention rates. Increased perceived risk of violence rooted in racism, increased police contact and an absence of or mistrust of general practitioners are all factors that have been shown as contributing to detentions under the Mental Health Act.[57]

Impacts of COVID-19

People with a disability have been disproportionately impacted by the outbreak in terms of their wellbeing. During the first lockdown of the pandemic, a Waltham Forest residents survey showed that people living with a limiting long-term illness were significantly more likely to report a negative impact on their mental and physical health, their diet, relationships with others in their household and how connected they feel to their community. One resident explained that:

> *"The pandemic has affected some people worse than others. People from minority backgrounds, people with health issues, older people, and poorer people. I know people talk about how the pandemic has helped create community, but the reality is that it's hit the poorest people hardest, and this can only increase inequality."[58]*

Deprivation and low income have direct links with poor health outcomes

Poverty and health are closely linked.[59] Living on a low income is associated with greater risk of poor physical and mental health. Living on a low income restricts people's ability to afford a basic healthy standard of living including decent quality, affordable housing, nutritious food, and fuel for heating.

The risk of poverty is greater in London and London has above-average levels of deprivation.[60] Waltham Forest is among the most deprived boroughs in London. Groups at higher risk of living in deprived areas include young, disabled and Black and South Asian people.[61]

Certain household types in London are at greater risk of living in cold homes, including lone parent households, low-income households, Asian households, and those with a disability or long-term illness[62].

Fuel poverty has consequences on people's health and lives, from the inability to feel comfortable at home, to illnesses caused by cold, such as circulatory diseases, respiratory problems and mental ill-health, and in extreme cases, death.[63] In 2018, 14.2% of households in Waltham Forest were experiencing fuel poverty;[64] however, this does not reveal factors that make it more likely for households to be in fuel poverty or which groups are more at risk locally.
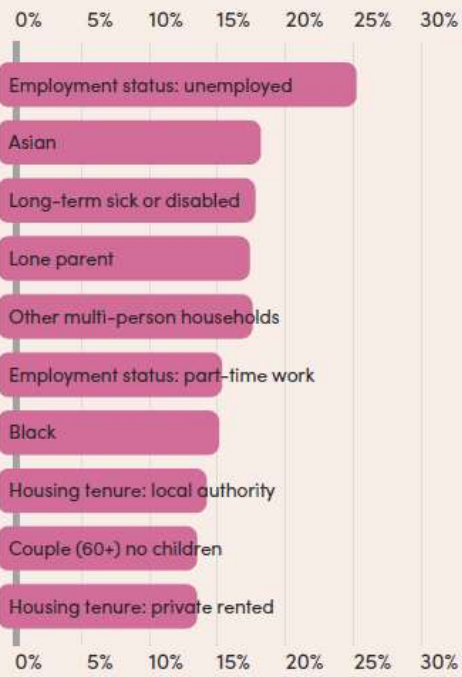
There is growing evidence of both food insecurity and 'hygiene poverty', where parents are unable to afford healthy foods and essential cleaning items.

Definition

A household is said to be in fuel poverty if:

- They have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level), and
- Were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

Percentage of different groups experiencing fuel poverty

	0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%

- Employment status: unemployed
- Asian
- Long-term sick or disabled
- Lone parent
- Other multi-person households
- Employment status: part-time work
- Black
- Housing tenure: local authority
- Couple (60+) no children
- Housing tenure: private rented

	0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%

Source: Fuel poverty in London: Research and policy report;
CAG Consultants working with CSE, ACE and SE2, 2017

Stark disparities in quality of living conditions dictate health inequalities

Housing has an influence on health inequalities in Waltham Forest. There are inequalities in accessing good quality, affordable housing that meets people's needs and protects their physical and mental health. Socially excluded groups have been shown to experience higher rates of physical and mental ill-health than the general population. As well as increasing the risk of health conditions, this also influences life expectancy.

The lack of affordable homes contributes to overcrowding, which is linked to risks for both mental and physical health[65]. In London, overcrowding is more common in Bangladeshi, Black African and Pakistani households in particular. National data also shows that overcrowding is much more prevalent among Bangladeshi, Black African and Pakistani groups[66] and among lower-income households.[67]

Poor air quality has also been shown to have significant health impacts.[68] Those living in more deprived areas are exposed to higher levels of air pollution and across London people from Black backgrounds are slightly more likely to be exposed to high levels of air pollution.[69]

Across London, the availability of green space is lower in more deprived areas with a higher proportion of Bangladeshi, Black African and Pakistani residents,[70] as is the case in Waltham Forest. Access to and use of green space can improve health outcomes, including maintaining or enhancing well-being.[71]

There is evidence showing that many groups face distinctive challenges around housing, including Londoners with a disability, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, Gypsy and Irish Traveller people and older people.

In London, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic households are more likely to experience homelessness. Across London, young LGBTIQ+ people face the risk of becoming homeless, the impact of homelessness, and transitions into secure housing;[72] however, little is known about the risks to this group in Waltham Forest.

The support needs of individuals seen rough sleeping in Waltham Forest shows a large majority have health issues. A majority was White, and most were men. This could be because women experiencing homelessness are usually less visible on the streets than men, for various reasons. They tend to rely more on informal arrangements with friends and family than men. When they have dependent children, there is legislation which should protect them from becoming street homeless.[73]

Definition

A household is overcrowded if it has fewer bedrooms than it needs to avoid undesirable sharing, based on the age, sex and relationship of household members.[74]

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the depth of structural health inequalities

COVID-19 has highlighted some of the health inequalities that persist in society. It has become increasingly clear that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on many who already face discrimination. The impact of the virus has been particularly harmful for people living in areas of high deprivation, for people from Black and South Asian communities, on older people, men, and those with a disability.[75]

In Waltham Forest, the percentage of COVID-19 related deaths of those born in the UK is lower than their proportion of the total population, whilst the percentage of deaths from people born in Asia, Africa and the Americas is higher than their proportion of the borough population.

There is frustration amongst Waltham Forest residents that the complex factors influencing the relationship and impact of COVID-19 on Black, South Asian and migrant groups are not widely acknowledged, understood or discussed. A resident summarised this:

> *"In the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community, there are more people in healthcare and frontline jobs, lower- paying jobs, poverty generally, and multi-occupational households, yet the notion of people in our community getting vaccines first has been abandoned."[76]*

Further information required

There are substantial variations in health and wellbeing outcomes in Waltham Forest as a result of inequalities and discrimination. Health inequalities occur and are experienced by people who share specific characteristics, such as sex, ethnicity or disability, and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Where someone lives and the level of deprivation an area experiences has been highlighted as a contributing factor, as has social exclusion, such as people experiencing homelessness.

Inequalities in access to and experience of health services in Waltham Forest are not well known. This includes the availability of services, the particular barriers faced by certain groups to getting the services they need, such as real or anticipated discrimination, and the experiences of different groups within the services they use, including the quality of care and how they are treated. There is still much work to do to understand physical health inequalities in Waltham Forest, but more pressing is the need to understand the prevalence of mental ill-health across a range of protected characteristics, specifically sexuality and ethnicity. It is widely acknowledged that evidence for these groups is patchy and inconsistent. Research is still needed to understand the differences in the prevalence of mental illness, rates of illness, rates of recognition and reporting and diagnosis.

Impacts of COVID-19

Employees in specific industries were more at risk of contracting the illness. Nationally, healthcare workers were particularly at risk of infection, but also individuals working in other people-facing occupations such as retail, hospitality, transport and security. Among workers in occupations that are more likely to be in frequent contact with people and exposed to disease, 3 in 4 are women and 1 in 5 are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups[77]. More specifically, people of African descent are particularly likely to be working outside of their home (41%).[78] Black groups are particularly likely to be classed as key workers (34%, against 23% for White people), with the highest percentage among people of African descent (37%).

Living in equal communities

Across our borough, certain groups are treated unfairly by our justice system, are more likely to be victims of crime or harassment, and face barriers to engaging with opportunities within their community simply because of who they are.

- Per 100,000, The rates of Stop and Search in Waltham Forest in the last year were:
  - 82 Black people
  - 60 Asian people
  - 34 White people
- Out of 32 London boroughs, Waltham Forest has the fourth highest rate of Islamophobic incidents.
- 36% of the elderly, 23% of those with chronic health conditions or disabilities, 16% on low incomes and 7% of the general population have no access to the internet in Waltham Forest.
- More than 2/5 of LGBTIQ+ Londoners have experienced physical or verbal violence, or threats of such violence in the last 12 months.
- Waltham Forest residents with a disability are less likely to feel a sense of neighbourhood belonging.
- In London, social isolation is more prevalent among men, people in less skilled occupations and disabled people.

An individual's sense of belonging is related to how we fit in our communities. Where people live is an integral part of our identities. People want to see their identities reflected in those places, and voices heard as a part of the local community, as outlined by a resident:

> *"Everyone says Chingford is a white area. But it isn't. I live here! And so do many other people from diverse backgrounds. The problem is that people from these backgrounds are getting ignored."[79]*

The challenges caused by inequalities are different between and within areas and local neighbourhoods. The inequalities experienced by people in Waltham Forest affect local places and the way that people are expected to live their lives in them. Differential treatment of, and outcomes for, Black individuals in the Criminal Justice System persists, and inequalities are experienced in accessing local services.

Social inclusion and belonging matters to residents

Loneliness, social isolation and inequality is making it more difficult for some to build positive relationships. Research has found that the groups of Londoners most at risk of social isolation include those who are not working full-time and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

Although the majority of Waltham Forest residents agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, there are those that do not feel the same, or have indicated they are unsure. For instance, 18% of residents who responded to the Winter 2019 Residents survey felt that people did not get on well in their local area. The following reflection discusses this issue:

"Some places in the borough feel like they are only for certain people or communities. Walthamstow Village is almost entirely White because Black people and People of Colour for the most part do not have access to the kinds of jobs and salaries that make it possible to buy a house in the Village. I personally feel uncomfortable in the area."[80]

Inequality headlines

- In Waltham Forest, the Winter 2019 residents survey showed that older people, people with a disability and economically inactive residents are more likely to feel isolated.
- National trends show that disabled adults are nearly four times more likely to often or always feel lonely, compared to non-disabled adults.
- In percentage terms, the biggest growth in hate crime incidents in London has been seen among people with a disability.
- In Waltham Forest, the majority of hate crimes are racial hate crimes, followed by homophobic hate crime, and faith-based hate crime.
- Across Waltham Forest, Black young people are around twice as likely to have a caution or conviction than White young people.
- 75% of victims of domestic violence are women.
- In four of the last five quarters (up to Q1 2020/2021), 100% of young people sentenced to custody in Waltham Forest Youth Offending Service were from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

Some residents spoke about the issue of gentrification, and the negative effect that it has on community cohesion.

There is also a personal effect of gentrification and the rising house prices that are associated with it for people from lower income backgrounds. A resident explains that the lack of affordable housing means that they feel pushed out of the borough and not able to enjoy the sense of community that their parents did:

"Gentrification is forcing people out of the borough, who can't afford to rent or buy here. This tends to be people from poorer backgrounds, including ethnic minorities. I notice a tension in the area between the young white professionals and local people, especially the younger local ethnic minorities. They don't understand or trust each other. You get the feeling that the professionals can't wait for them to leave the borough and the young ethnic minorities resent the professionals."[81]

In Waltham Forest, the Winter 2019 residents survey showed that almost 1 in 10 residents with a disability in their household felt isolated, three times higher than residents without a disability. Only 1 in 5 residents aged 65+ had as much social contact as they wanted, against half of people aged 16 to 29 years old. Economically active residents were more likely to have adequate or ideal levels of social contacts, with 84% reporting so, falling to 71% of economically inactive residents.

The difficulties faced and challenges in feeling part of their community or a sense of belonging are captured here:

"Unless you've experienced it, you don't realise how hard it can be. I have a disability and I'm also a carer. It means I can't work, which affects my finances. I don't really go out or have many friends. When I was younger it affected my school life. It is hard to go anywhere that's much further than the local area. Your life is very small. It's a disadvantage. I want to say it's 'hidden' because I feel hidden because my life is so small. But it shouldn't be hidden, it should be obvious and society should be more supportive to people like me."[82]

Residents with a disability and older residents face barriers in getting around, where the physical environment is not accessible, or transport is a problem. This is often due to street design and clutter, a lack of dedicated parking, and not enough accessible and specialised public toilets. Currently 65% of Londoners with a disability consider the condition of pavements to be a barrier to walking, and 43% report that obstacles on pavements prevent them walking more.[83] This contributes to risks of social isolation.

Some people are more likely to be the target of crime because of who they are

There are inequalities in the risk of being a victim of crime. In some cases, these are down to the type of crime, such as hate crime directed at specific groups, targeted because of their race, disability, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity. Sexual and domestic offence victims are predominantly female, with national data showing 75% of victims of domestic violence are women. Victims with insecure immigration status can be less likely to report domestic violence, because of the police practice of sharing victims' immigration information with the Home Office. There are other risks, related to wider inequalities, such as population groups that are more likely to live in deprived areas characterised by higher rates of crime.

Hate crime has risen over recent years and there has been a gradual increase in police recorded domestic abuse-related offences.

There are threats of violence or harassment for LGBTIQ+ people in London. There were 85 reported homophobic hate incidents in Waltham Forest and Newham in 2020 but it is likely that more cases went unreported. Survey data shows that in 2020, almost three quarters of LGBTIQ+ Londoners were likely to say they avoid holding hands with a partner for fear of a negative reaction and for many this fear is grounded in experience, as 41% said they have experienced verbal or physical violence, or threats of such violence in the past year. It is likely that experiences differ significantly by gender expression, ethnicity, disability and other characteristics, but there is limited local data on this.

Reported hate crimes in Waltham Forest and Newham 2020

- Racial
- Homophobic
- Faith Hate
- Islamophobic
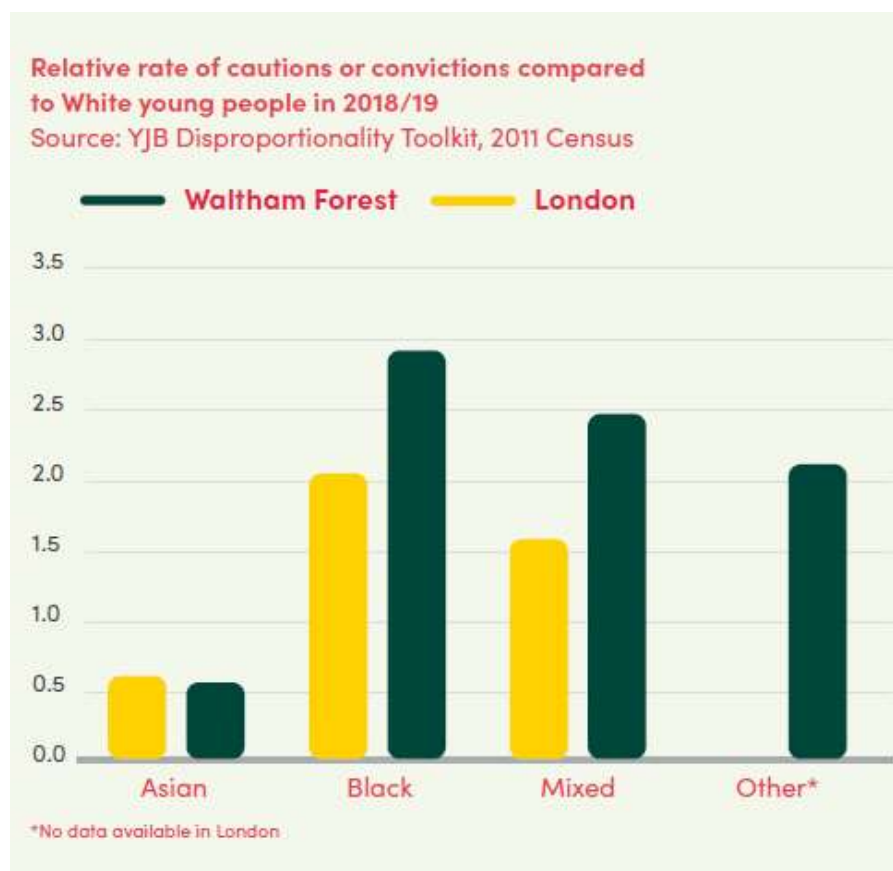- Trans
- Disability
- Anti-Semitic

42 10 7 6 55 85 486
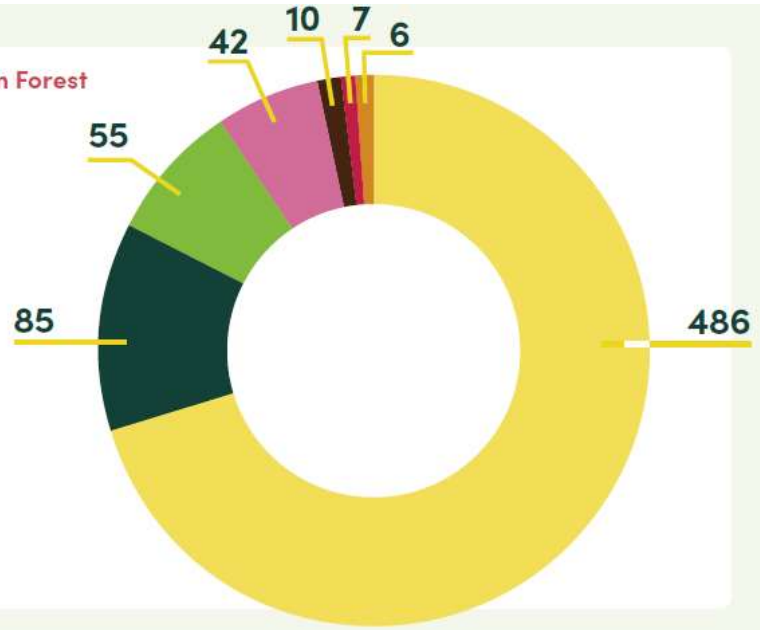
Young Black people face significant disparities in the justice system

Those who are charged, tried and punished in the criminal justice system are disproportionately likely to come from Black and Mixed Ethnic communities. This is the case in both the youth and adult systems. The situation is a source of anger and mistrust, damaging confidence in the criminal justice system and the police.

While there's a relative parity between the number of grave offences committed between

White British and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young people, 100% of the young people sentenced to custody were from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic in four of the last five quarters in Waltham Forest.

Policing can affect how people view the criminal justice system. Policing tactics, particularly the disproportionate use of Stop and Search, damage trust in the police and criminal justice system, especially among people from a Black background. In Waltham Forest, this is an issue that parents are all too aware of. A parent expressed their anger and sadness at having to explain to their son that the police could endanger him, she was worried about police violence and had explained to him the need to act a certain way around the police. Another parent taught her son "his rights if he is stopped and searched by police". She expressed upset and a sense of injustice that she should "have to be having these types of conversation with him".

Relative rate of cautions or convictions compared to White young people in 2018/19
Source: YJB Disproportionality Toolkit, 2011 Census

*No data available in London

Some people remain digitally excluded

The level of access to the internet and digital devices, and digital skills, varies across different groups. London has a higher proportion of people using the Internet than the UK average and usage and frequency of Internet access is on the rise, but within these there are inequalities in access.

- Around 7% of Waltham Forest's population do not currently have access to the Internet. The proportion is higher in some groups:
  - 36% of older people
  - 23% of individuals with chronic health conditions or disabilities
  - 16% of individuals on low incomes.

Whilst it is acknowledged that some will be significantly disadvantaged by the digital divide, understanding the scale of digital inequalities in Waltham Forest across different groups, as well as dimensions such as socio-economic inequalities, requires more sustained research.

Some people feel that cultural activities and events are not for them

Not everyone has the same opportunities to attend cultural events, to participate in arts and culture or to access arts and culture. In Waltham Forest, the London Borough of Culture year in 2019 gave more opportunities to engage with culture. The diverse programme attracted over 500,000 visits to more than 1,000 events and activities. 67% of attendees at the headline events were local residents.[84]

Inequalities in cultural participation in Waltham Forest are experienced across different groups.

- In the Autumn 2019 residents survey, 65% of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents reported that they had not attended any cultural events during Waltham Forest's year as London Borough of Culture (44% for White residents).
- In the same survey, 7 out of 10 residents with a disability said they had not attended an arts or cultural event in the last 12 months (compared to only 5 out of 10 residents without a disability).

Nationally, in 2019/2020, 76% of adults had engaged with the arts at least once in the last 12 months.[85] The relationship between culture, specifically cultural value, and inequality is comparatively under-researched. Attending cultural events has been found to positively impact on feelings of belonging and social isolation, and perception of a place and community as fair.

Further information required

Across Waltham Forest, certain groups face barriers and inequalities, as well as forms of prejudice and discrimination. This includes groups who are less likely to participate and engage with opportunities within their communities, do not feel like they belong, and are more likely to feel isolated, because of who they are. There are disparities in the criminal justice system, with Black and Mixed individuals subject to unfair treatment and outcomes. There are particular identities and social groups that experience hate crime, marginalisation and disproportionate rates of victimisation.

There is local evidence indicating that there are residents who do not feel people get on well in Waltham Forest. Some residents disagree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together and indicate difficulties faced and challenges in feeling part of their community or a sense of belonging. More work is needed to understand if there are groups more affected by this and the reasons why this is the case in Waltham Forest. The problems of digital inequalities and differences in participation in cultural and other community activities in Waltham Forest across different groups and how this negatively impacts people are not yet well understood.

Exercising power and having influence

The unequal distribution of power influences every area of life and means that decisions are made without fair representation and that the opportunities to progress available to some groups are significantly inhibited for others.

- 43% of residents with a disability said they disagreed that the Council takes account of residents' views when making decisions compared to 21% of residents without a disability.
- 33% of Councillors in Waltham Forest are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, compared to a national average of 7%.
- In Waltham Forest Council, 59.6% of Chief Officers are White. 63.2% of Chief Officers are men.

The concept of power is vital in understanding inequalities. Power dynamics underpin all the dimensions of inequalities that have been explored in this report, but it is also valuable to look at power in isolation as it is so fundamental. There are different types of power: decision-making power, non- decision-making power and ideological power.[86] Most of the time, it is difficult to detect the power dynamics that surround every aspect of life. As captured by a resident, experiencing life without power can manifest as a feeling of being "forgotten, almost invisible, like you're living on the margins of society and the local community".

For the purposes of this report, inequalities in power will be understood and explored as follows:

Power and representation in institutions

This is decision-making power and can be observed in the way that people and institutions dictate visible actions and policies that govern society. This is demonstrated in ways such as demographic representation in government and at senior levels in large institutions and businesses.

Influence and voice in Waltham Forest

This is non-decision-making power and can be observed in the way that people in positions of authority are able to set and influence the agenda within a given decision making process. This is demonstrated in ways such as the volume of third sector forums in influencing policy direction and public debate and the disparities in how amplified different voices are within this.

Trust, time and aspiration

This is ideological power and can be observed in the way that social norms dictate the subordination of different demographic groups, even when against their own interests. This is the most challenging facet of power to analyse but can be demonstrated in ways such as women's exclusion from the labour market which ultimately disadvantages women but is shaped by individual choices such as raising a family.
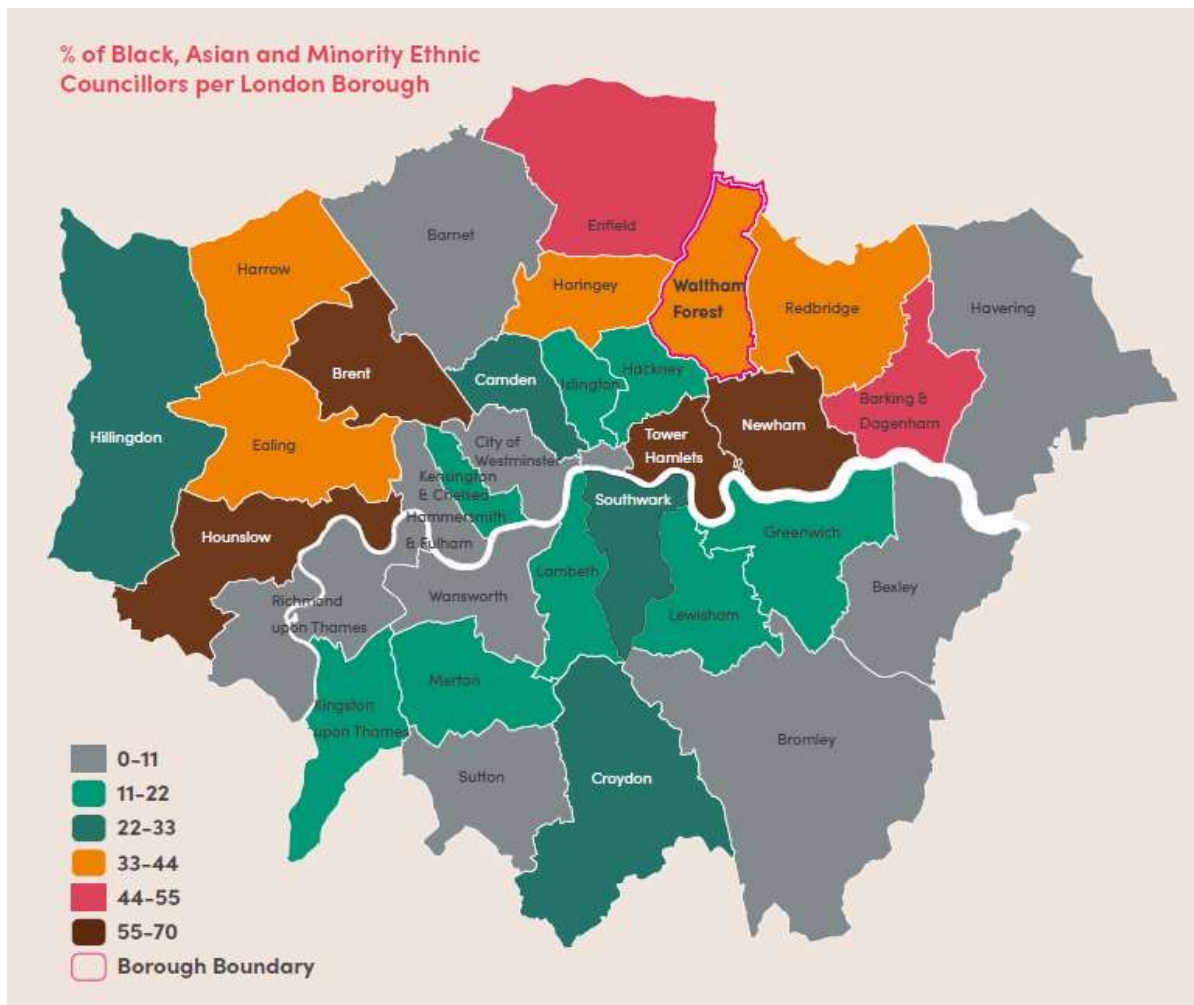
Inequality headlines

- Over a third of Councillors in Waltham Forest are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, compared to a national average of 7%.

- Evidence from Council's Resident Insight Survey indicates that residents who have a disability are significantly less likely than non-disabled residents to agree that the Council takes account of residents' views when making decisions.

- In Waltham Forest Council, 59.6% of Chief Officers are White. 63.2% of Chief Officers are men.

There is unequal power and representation within institutions

Registering to vote, then turning out on a polling day, is one of the biggest ways that individual citizens can exercise power in decision making. There are however significant barriers to this and while there is no local data on the demographics of participation, national research shows that certain groups, such as people from Black and Mixed Ethnic backgrounds, unskilled workers and the long-term unemployed, are less likely to be on the electoral register, to vote, or be active in political parties.[87] Data on turnout by ethnic group is patchy, but the Runnymede Trust says self-reported turnout in 2017 ranged from 74% to 91% for people of South Asian descent, 51% to 85% for people of Black African and Caribbean descent, and 82% to 83% for White British voter.[88]

Once candidates are elected, the relative representation of communities matters and can further perpetuate an imbalance of power in decision making. Politicians are responsible for making decisions about how and where money is spent and who is granted access to services and opportunities which has profound consequences on lives. In England, figures show that councillors, candidates and MPs are disproportionately White, although the picture in Waltham Forest is more positive. There is little data to evaluate the representativeness of those in positions of powers based on other protected characteristics, such as LGBTIQ+ identity or disability.

% of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Councillors per London Borough

Legend:
- 0–11
- 11–22
- 22–33
- 33–44
- 44–55
- 55–70
- Borough Boundary

Aside from politicians, for some in Waltham Forest, there is a sense of a lack of representation in public bodies and positions of authority, which also has implications for decision-making, as residents explain:

> *"How many of the Council's leadership team are from backgrounds like mine? Not just in Waltham Forest, but everywhere, positions of authority are dominated by White, mainly middle-aged men. This shows the lack of opportunities that exist. And it is self-perpetuating. It means that decisions are made without really understanding the issues or the people, which increases the disadvantage".[89]*

Some groups have more influence and louder voices in Waltham Forest

There are inequalities within the ways people and communities can influence the direction of decision making outside of the direct political process. Nationally, young people consistently report lower levels of knowledge about politics than other age groups. As well as being less likely to vote, they are less likely to participate in wider political activities. Waltham Forest, through its Young Advisors scheme, have an active group of young people aged between 15 and 25 who work with community leaders to influence decision making and input into the design of services. Whilst this is an important initiative, a Young Advisor raises the important questions of representation locally:

"I was always shocked that I was walking into a room full of White, older people. You felt a little like you were the token non-White person in the room … I found it strange that in such a diverse borough the people making decisions had such different backgrounds to the residents".[90]

There is also evidence to suggest that people with a disability experience significant barriers to participation in civic and political life. There is much more to understand about these barriers, but evidence from Council research indicates that residents who have a disability are significantly less likely to feel their voices are represented in local democracy. In the Resident Insight Survey in March 2020, 43% of residents with a disability said they disagreed that the Council 'takes account of residents' views when making decisions', as compared to 21% of non-disabled residents, and this was largely consistent from the previous survey wave. There is a need for more investigation about the root of this disparity, but a resident suggests that:

"The people that make decisions don't necessarily really understand disability. I've seen this on many levels. It exists with those that work directly with disabled people, such as schools or social care providers. These are the people you'd expect to understand, but they don't always. And you also sometimes see it in decisions to do with everyday things like transport, parking or public spaces or just bigger more strategic things … This is because there's a lack of diversity, including disability, amongst people at the top, making decisions in all walks of life. This reflects the disadvantages that disabled people have and it is a vicious circle because it also leads to poor decisions, lack of opportunities, barriers and discrimination".[91]

The Council has begun to pilot new ways of facilitating access to decision making for a wider section of the community, and there are lessons to be taken from this. In February and March 2020, the Council held the UK's first Citizens Assembly on hate incidents. This process used random sampling techniques to bring together a cross-section of residents who reflected the diversity of Waltham Forest's communities, many of whom ordinarily would not have been involved in such a high profile decision making process. While this was a step to ensuring greater demographic diversity in the physical decision making space, the need to address barriers to inclusion for people with disabilities was highlighted by participants. The process involved listening to presentations of evidence and deliberating in groups, and much more is needed to ensure that people with language barriers, people with sight or hearing loss and neurodiverse people are all included and able to input. It was also highlighted that the selection process which started with a letter of invitation sent to houses would not be suitable for homeless people or for people whose first language is not English.

Power affects the trust, time and aspiration that different groups enjoy

As well as having access to influence decision making, there are significant differences in the way that different people relate to powerful people and institutions. In a resident survey in May 2020, trust in the Council across various demographic groups was broadly equal. Slightly more women trust the Council a great deal or a fair amount (74%) than men (67%). However, residents with disabilities were significantly less likely to have strong trust in the Council than non-disabled residents. This is linked to the trend that disabled residents are less likely to agree that the Council takes their views into account, but there is a subtle difference in that this is an indication of feeling valued and cared for by the Council rather than listened to. This is an ideological power issue as this reveals how some disabled people may see themselves as undervalued by people in power.

Lack of representation also has consequences for aspirations of communities and enforces the inequalities by acting as a barrier for underrepresented communities to reach positions of power. Take, for example, the following statement from a resident, expressing the need for "more diversity in senior roles of businesses" and institutions, because "seeing yourself up there" can empower younger generations, and so opportunities "trickle-down the pyramid". Another resident expands on this idea further:

> *"People only employ people like them and it means that there are not many positive role models for people from minority backgrounds to learn from and aspire to become."[92]*

> *"I face discrimination every day. Sometimes because I'm Asian, but mainly because of my disability. Some of it is direct or explicit. Some of it is accidental or implied or just because people don't think. I used to work, but faced too much discrimination, so now I just work in my parent's shop. I've grown used to it. I shouldn't accept it but sometimes it is easier to just let it all wash over you."[93]*

It is difficult to provide clear evidence for this effect on a local level, but it is clear from national research that lack of representation is both a symptom and a driver of structural inequalities and stunts the aspirations of many people which leads to patterns such as the gender and ethnicity pay gaps. While many women choose to spend their time on unpaid care work (for example by raising children or caring for elderly parents), or are forced to do so due to factors such as the high cost of childcare, this leads to significant inequalities for women in the form of financial hardship or disproportionate reliance on social housing. It is a complex issue and there are also cultural factors at play, which is apparent in the employment gap between women from Asian ethnic groups and White women in the borough. While many women may choose to be economically inactive by being involved in a great deal of unpaid labour in the home, this does not detract from the disproportionate level of power than men have overall, which negatively impacts on decisions that affect women's lives. Therefore, the gender and ethnicity pay gaps need further critical investigation and deeper thought.

Trust is likely to be a significant factor in the uptake of the COVID-19 vaccination. National evidence shows that there are significant ethnic disparities in the likelihood of getting vaccinated, with Black people who are over 80 half as likely to than their White counterparts, despite significant greater risk of death from the virus.[94] Uptake of the vaccine was also less likely for people from deprived areas and those with severe mental health conditions and learning disabilities. More research is needed into the drivers, but evidence from previous studies suggest that low confidence in the

vaccine and distrust in communications, often stemming from long-standing experiences of discrimination and inequality, have played a role.

In London, a poll held in November 2020 showed that that 62% of Londoners would be likely to get the Pfizer vaccine compared to 25% who would not.[95] However, there were significant differences in the uptake of vaccines by ethnicity. Over three quarters of White Londoners said they were likely to take the vaccines (76%) compared to only 52% of Asian Londoners, 33% mixed/other Londoners and 32% of Black Londoners. The main reason given by Londoners who were unlikely to take the Pfizer vaccine (the one available at the time of the poll) was *"I don't trust this vaccine specifically."*

In Waltham Forest, an online residents survey held in November and December 2020 showed that a quarter of residents surveyed were unwilling or undecided whether to have the Covid-19 vaccination when one becomes available to them. The overriding reason for this reluctance was safety concerns. The willingness to be vaccinated varied extensively between groups, mirroring national trends. Black and South Asian residents, women, young people and residents from a lower socio-economic status were more likely to be unwilling or undecided.

More precisely, a quarter of those under 35s surveyed were unwilling to get the vaccine, as opposed to only 5% of residents aged 75 and over. Almost half of residents from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds were unwilling or undecided, against only 8% of White residents. Black residents were the most likely to be unwilling or undecided.

Further information required

Certain individuals and groups in Waltham Forest have greater influence over political decision-making and benefit from unequal outcomes through those decisions. Confidence in systems of power is not shared by all in Waltham Forest and there is a growing sense of distrust among certain groups. Not everyone has the same chances and opportunities and inequalities can stunt ambitions.

There are differences in leadership roles across sectors in Waltham Forest, based on ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality. However, there is little local evidence that illustrates the proportion of representation at senior levels, or the experiences of individuals. This includes how representative those in positions of power such as Councillors and MPs are, based on other protected characteristics such as sexuality or disability. There is evidence gathered nationally that shows differences in political engagement and knowledge of politics; however, there is little detailed information available to show differences in Waltham Forest, particularly around age, ethnicity, and disability. There is considerably less evidence regarding the voting patterns of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic voters than exists with regard to the rest of the electorate. At a time when trust in institutions is said to be worsening, particularly among those already discriminated against, it is essential that in Waltham Forest, more is done to understand why and when certain groups are less trusting of key local and national intuitions and messages.

Acting on and improving evidence

The State of the Borough

The evidence in this report shows how deeply inequalities affect people in Waltham Forest. The insights presented in this report are stark and sobering. However, we must understand the scale and nature of the problem, specifically here in Waltham Forest, to be able to fix it. This report seeks to present the evidence as frankly as possible, to enable deeper conversations that are supported by data.

We also know one report cannot capture the full complexity of the inequalities that people face in Waltham Forest. For example, this report highlights the ways that the disadvantage someone faces is worsened by the combination of their identities and experiences. The narrow way that data was collected in the past means our starting point is traditional categorisations such as disability, gender, race and sexual orientation even though we know this does not do justice to the complexity and human experiences that sit behind them. For example, we know that there are additional factors, such as social class and migratory status, that are a significant factor in the inequalities people face in life. In this report we have started to understand how different aspects of inequality combine to affect lives of residents. We now need to work closely with communities across Waltham Forest to continue to build a fuller understanding of the daily realities many residents face and support us to take specific action.

Next Steps

Continual engagement and evidence improvement

1. Evidence on making a living theme explored
2. Communities and experts come together to explore inequalities
3. Priorities co-created
4. Solutions developed and actions implemented
5. Update the State of the Borough evidence base
6. Identify next theme for engagement

This is just the first step in the Council's goal of developing a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which will form the basis for how the Council will work with others to reduce and ultimately eradicate inequalities within Waltham Forest. The Council will utilise power in local decision making and lobbying capacity at regional levels to make a difference. We must continue to build trust with partners such as schools, faith leaders and community groups to join resources and make meaningful change. The key to success will be in the way that we work together. The Council is committing to investing significant resources in going further than ever before in tackling structural inequalities, but it will not be effective if we do not work side by side with communities and partners.

The evidence shows that there is lots of work to do. Good intentions can only take us so far and now is the time for action. We have selected one particular area to focus our resources and actions on first: making a living.

Making a living is not just about employment rates or traditional measures such as pay gaps between groups with protected characteristics. We need to unpick the full experiences of residents making a living, getting to the heart of barriers people face in financially supporting themselves and their families. This goes beyond individual job applications to structural issues such as the impact of the lack of diversity in senior positions in institutions. As the diagram on the next page shows, making a living can sit at the heart of the 5 themes discussed throughout this report. The diagram shows just some of the questions we will begin to answer together, and we expect further questions to be raised by residents and community groups as we develop our priorities and take action.

Over the coming months, the Council will work with partners to engage communities with the evidence around the inequalities facing the Borough, in this focus area around making a living. The Council will listen and take time to learn before designing priorities together. We want to work with the full diversity of Waltham Forest's communities to develop and refine these solutions. Local communities will be at the heart of this work from start to finish. From this programme of engagement a strategy will follow that incorporates actions that are specific, achievable, and measurable so that we can collectively track progress and challenge ourselves.

We will refine this approach and repeat it on our other focus areas. We will ensure there are continuous opportunities for involvement in work throughout 2021 and beyond. We know that these problems will not be fixed overnight, but if we commit our collective will and resources, we will get there sooner. Every one of us has a role to play in making this change a reality. Given the stark inequalities this report has outlined in institutional power and political participation, it is absolutely critical that the diversity of Waltham Forest's people and communities are reflected in the insight gathered and in decision making structures. It is essential that voices of the most disadvantaged groups are represented and heard.

Together, we must listen, learn and act.

If you want to get involved in this work in any capacity, we'd love to hear from you.

Please get in touch with: connectingcommunities@walthamforest.gov.uk and a member of the team will add you to the mailing list and follow up with you.

Appendix

Protected characteristics in Waltham Forest

Age

Language and terminology in this report:

•   Young people to generally refer to people under the age of 25 (unless otherwise specified).
•   Older people to generally refer to people over the age of 65 (unless otherwise specified).

About our population of approximately 277,000 people:

Waltham Forest is a relatively young borough, with an average age of just over 35, compared to an England average of 40.

Disability

Language and terminology in this report:

• People with a disability and people without a disability when referring to the impact of living with a long-term health condition or disability.
• There are specific types of disability we refer to, such neurodivergent to describe people who have differences in the way they learn or think due to conditions such as Autism.

About our population of approximately 277,000 people:

The last census in 2011 showed that in Waltham Forest, 17,884 residents had a long-term health problem or disability that was limiting their day-to-day activities a lot. A further 19,744 people in the borough had their daily activities limited a little because of an illness or disability.[96]

Race

Language and terminology in this report:

• We refer to specific ethnic groups where relevant data is available.
• Where data is quoted from other sources, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic may be used to refer to people who do not identify as White British. Other categorisations have been included where necessary to accurately reflect how the data has been collected.
• In some instances, we have referred to an 'Ethnic Minority not UK born' group, as the data for this section is provided by the GLA and is categorised in this way.
• Black' has been used in this report where a lack of evidence is available to identify whether people identify as 'Black British', 'Black African', 'Black Caribbean', or in another way. Equally, 'Asian' has been used in this report where a lack of evidence is available to identify whether people identify as 'Asian British', 'South Asian', 'South-East Asian', 'East Asian', or in another way.

About our population of approximately 277,000 people:

Waltham Forest is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in London – the majority (53%) of residents come from a non-White British Ethnic group. Romania, Hungary and Pakistan are the most common places of birth for residents not born in the UK. After English, Romanian, Urdu and Polish are the languages most spoken in the borough.

Religion or belief

Language and terminology in this report:

- Islamophobia to refer to discrimination against Muslim people.

About our population of approximately 277,000 people:

According to the most recent data, Christianity is the main religion in the borough, with 48% of residents identifying as Christian in 2011. The second most common religion in the borough is Islam, with 22% of residents identifying as Muslim. Waltham Forest has a much larger Muslim community compared to the London average of 12%. 5% of residents state they followed other religions and 18% say they don't have a religion.

Sex / marriage and civil partnership / pregnancy and maternity

Language and terminology in this report:

- The protected characteristics 'marriage and civil partnership' and 'pregnancy and maternity' are less prominent issues in exploring structural inequalities and so for the purposes of this report, are better understood by looking at inequalities between people of different genders. For example, there is evidence to suggest that women are discriminated against in finding work due to assumptions about family commitments.

About our population of approximately 277,000 people:

It is estimated that there are 139,484 males and 137,499 females living in Waltham Forest, as of mid-2019.[97]

Sexual orientation / gender reassignment

Language and terminology in this report:

- These protected characteristics are typically understood as part of the umbrella term LGBTIQ+, which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer.
- Although the Equality Act 2020 refers to 'gender reassignment', we will use trans to refer to the broader spectrum of gender identities that includes those who wish to medically transition as well as people who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth, but do not wish to undergo surgery.

About our population of approximately 277,000 people:

Significant amounts of demographic data on the borough mentioned above are sourced from the census, a survey of all the people and households in England and Wales that happens every 10 years. The most recent census was in 2011, with the next due in 2021. Each census adds new categories and the 2021 census will be the first to ask people to state their sexual orientation and gender identity. While this is positive progress, it means that until then, the understanding of these identities in Waltham Forest is poor. The Office for National Statistics suggests approximately 2% of the population identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual but does not yet have reliable data on the number of trans people.[98]

Other characteristics

Social Class

Language and terminology in this report:

While not protected in law, it is widely acknowledged that structural inequalities can also be observed within the British class system. It is challenging to capture class differences within a single indicator, and so this report uses:

- Low-income backgrounds to refer to people who are living with low household income.
- Disadvantaged backgrounds to refer to people who have relative material or social disadvantage in accessing opportunities, such as those who are eligible for free school meals, children receiving alternative provision in education or looked after children and care leavers.

About our population of approximately 277,000 people:

Waltham Forest is the 82nd most deprived local authority in England (out of 343) and specific wards are even more deprived. The five most deprived wards in Waltham Forest are Higham Hill, Leyton, Lea Bridge, Cathall and Markhouse. The least deprived are Chingford Green, Grove Green and Endlebury.[99] Waltham Forest residents currently have a median household income of £35,000, in the middle to lower end of average incomes for London boroughs. The median income within the borough varies significantly; the wealthiest ward has a median household income more than 50% higher than the least wealthy ward.

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