

# 20 Questions about Waltham Forest

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Health, wellbeing and the COVID-19 pandemic



Annual Public Health Report | **2020**

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To find out more about the work of the Waltham Forest Public Health team, please visit the [Council's website](#)

There is more also information available on the health and wellbeing of the Waltham Forest population at the [Waltham Forest Joint Strategic Needs Assessment website](#)

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Ordnance Survey 0100024328

# Foreword

I am pleased to present my annual report for 2020. This report poses and answers 20 key questions about health and wellbeing in Waltham Forest. It explores the link between what residents experience in their daily lives, and how their health develops. It examines how the way we live, work, travel and play affects our wellbeing. As the Director of Public Health, I am an independent advocate for the health and wellbeing of the population, and the broad nature of this report is intended to map the state of public health in the local community, and raise key issues.

Current priorities for the Waltham Forest Health and Wellbeing Board are alcohol and drugs, better mental health for all, and healthy living for all. We have been working in partnership across the system to offer prevention and early intervention support for substance misuse, mental health issues and long-term conditions including obesity. Since early this year, the key priority for the system as a whole has been preventing and monitoring the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), and responding to its wide-ranging and devastating effects. The COVID-19 impact and response is a consistent theme throughout this document, addressed in every answer to the 20 questions asked.

The trajectory of the pandemic is still unknown, but it is clear that the health of our residents will continue to be impacted, directly or indirectly, in coming months. COVID-19 has posed a threat to the population in every area of health and wellbeing. Some of the key concerns raised include the disparity in infection and death rates across the population, which has thrown existing inequalities into sharp relief; the knock-on effect on health services which have struggled to serve the population and which face backlogs and resulting complex presentations; the ongoing risk of outbreaks particularly in settings and amongst vulnerable groups; and the wider impact which the restrictions put in place to manage the outbreak have had on residents' mental and physical wellbeing.

The immediate priorities for public health in response to the pandemic will be to continue to work with partners on the Test and Protect programme; to support schools, care homes, other settings and community groups with infection control and disease prevention; to explore and understand the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in our local community; and to support our health and social care service partners, particularly in the delivery of wide-ranging health protection through screening and immunisation services.

The outbreak of COVID-19, however, has not eclipsed the other challenges to health in the borough. In many cases it has exacerbated them. Reducing stigma and improving access to mental health support is an existing local priority which has been made all the more urgent by COVID-19, both through the fear and distress the disease itself has caused and the impact of restrictions on daily life. Taking steps to address the obesogenic environment and its effects, too, is now more important than ever.

I hope this report will be helpful for our strategic partners across health, care and wider services. It will provide the information they need to commission and provide services which meet the health needs of our population holistically. I hope this report will provide a foundation upon which we build the whole-system recovery from COVID-19. Finally, this report is an opportunity to share our knowledge with our residents as, crucially, the information is theirs.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe McDonnell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Joe McDonnell**

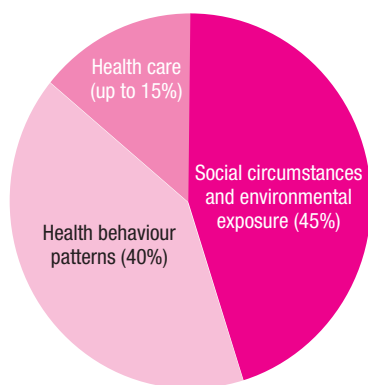
Director of Public Health

# Introduction

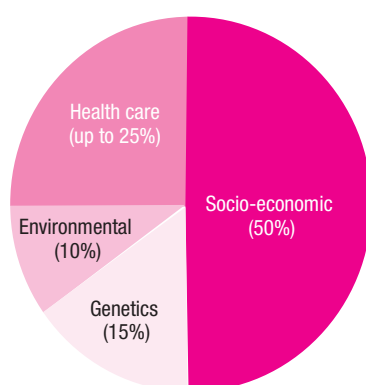
## What influences our health?

When individuals think about what makes them healthy, often the first thing that comes to mind is the quality of and access to healthcare and health services. Whilst these factors do play a role, a person's opportunity for health is mostly influenced by factors outside of the health and care system. There are different estimates of the relative contributions of different factors to health, but all of them demonstrate that healthcare is less important than the conditions in which we live.

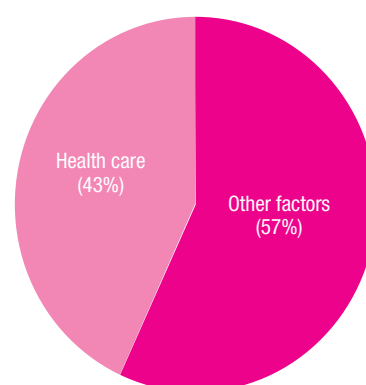
Mc Giniss et al (2002)



Canadian Institute of Advanced Research (2012)



Bunker et al (1995)



Source: The Kings Fund<sup>i</sup>

The circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, often called socio-economic factors or the social determinants of health, have the strongest influence on health and wellbeing.

### What makes us healthy?

Friends, family and community



Money and resources



Housing



Good work



Transport



Our surroundings



Education and skills



Food we eat



This is reflected in what has been seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. The work that the health service has done to treat and care for patients with COVID-19 has been incredible, but the factors that contribute to outcomes from COVID-19 are also linked to wider factors. The pandemic has affected people differently, and these discrepancies have been influenced by factors like age, sex, ethnicity, job, income, where somebody lives and their pre-existing conditions.

Not all people in England have the same opportunity to be healthy, and this is also the case in Waltham Forest. There are inequalities all around which centre on socio-economic status and opportunity. Many of these inequalities intersect and compound to create complex systems which negatively impact health. Health inequalities trap people in cycles of disadvantage and lead to population-level differences in the prevalence of health problems, years lived in good health, and ultimately life expectancy. The factors which cause these differences are largely preventable and can be tracked back to the social determinants of health. This report aims to shine a light on these inequalities in health and wellbeing and how they have been exacerbated, in some instances, by COVID-19.

Source: The Health Foundation<sup>ii</sup>

# Q1

## Who are our Waltham Forest residents?

Waltham Forest is a young and diverse London borough, with an average age 6 years younger than the national average, and with 68% of the population from minority ethnic backgrounds. The borough is also relatively deprived, ranking 82nd out of England's 317 local authorities. This deprivation and the demographics of the borough bring their own specific challenges to public health.

In 2019, Waltham Forest had a population of 276,983.<sup>iii</sup> It is a relatively young London borough, with a higher proportion of young children (24%) and working-age residents (65%) when compared to the UK as a whole (21% and 61% respectively). The average age of the borough is 34.9 years, lower than the regional and national averages of 35.3 in London and 41.1 in the UK.

Overall, Waltham Forest has slightly more males (50.4%) than females (49.6%) in the population; however, women start to outnumber men from age 50 onward due to differences in life expectancy. By age 90, the ratio is 2:1 in favour of women.

Waltham Forest is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in London. Around two thirds of residents are from a minority ethnic background (other than White British/Irish), compared to 58% in London as a whole.<sup>iv</sup> Approximately 21% of residents are Asian/Asian British, 18% are Other White and 17% Black/Black British. Waltham Forest has a large Pakistani community representing around 11% of the population. The population aged over 65 in Waltham Forest is predominantly White British/Irish, which compares to around a third of working-age residents and less than a quarter of children and young people aged under 18. The younger the population, the more ethnically diverse it is.

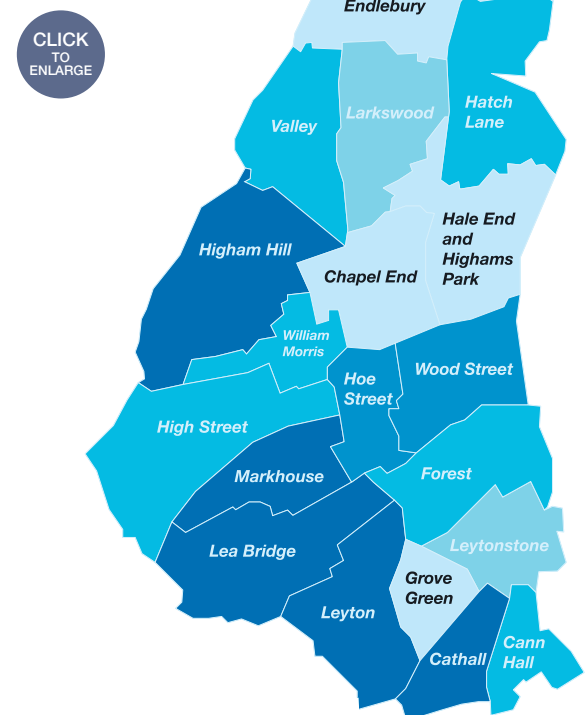
Waltham Forest is a relatively deprived borough,<sup>v</sup> ranking 82<sup>nd</sup> most deprived out of 317 local authorities in England in 2019. This is a relative improvement since 2015, when it was 35<sup>th</sup> most deprived. The borough is the 12th most deprived London borough.<sup>vi</sup> The extent of deprivation is variable across the

borough but particularly high in the south and west areas, and lower in the north of the borough. More deprived populations are disproportionately affected by poor health and wellbeing, and delivery of services needs to be equitable to attempt to address this imbalance.

### Deprivation in Waltham Forest by ward

#### Ranking of London wards

- 10-20% most deprived
- 20-30% most deprived
- 30-40% most deprived
- 40-50% most deprived
- 50% least deprived

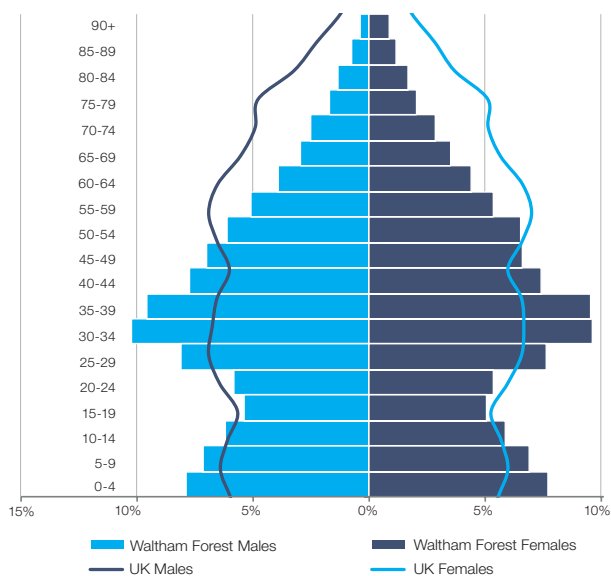


Data source: GLA calculations from Indices of Deprivation 2019, MHCLG Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database rights 2020. Ordnance Survey 0100024328

Waltham Forest has a relatively young population, with a higher proportion of those aged 25-49 and a lower proportion of older adults when compared with national averages. The age structure of Waltham Forest brings particular challenges, especially when considering the demographic differences between age groups. Older residents are more likely to be White British, while younger residents are more likely to be from other ethnicities, meaning that health messages may need to be tailored to meet demographic differences.

Language can also be a barrier to accessing public health messaging. Waltham Forest has a higher than average proportion of residents not able to speak English well, which is an important consideration for planning and delivering interventions. As at the last census in 2011, 26% of residents do not speak English as a first language in the borough, while 6% are not able to speak English well. In 2011, the five most common languages in the borough besides English were Urdu, Polish, Romanian, Turkish and Lithuanian.<sup>vii</sup>

### Population pyramid for Waltham Forest, mid-2018

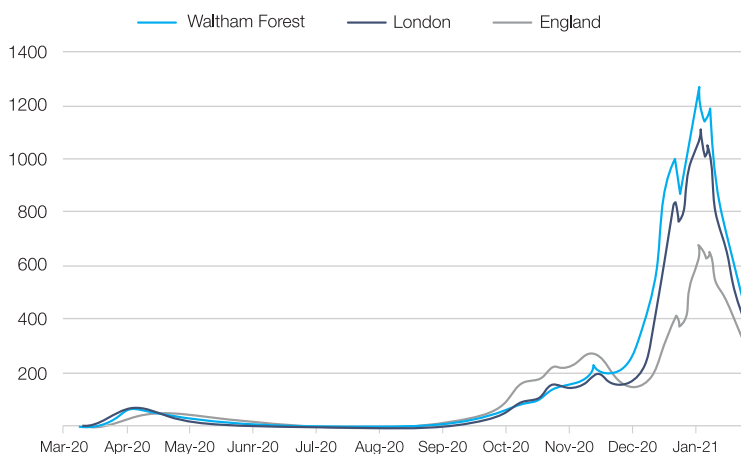


Source: Office for National Statistics - Population estimates for the UK, mid-2019

### The impact of COVID-19

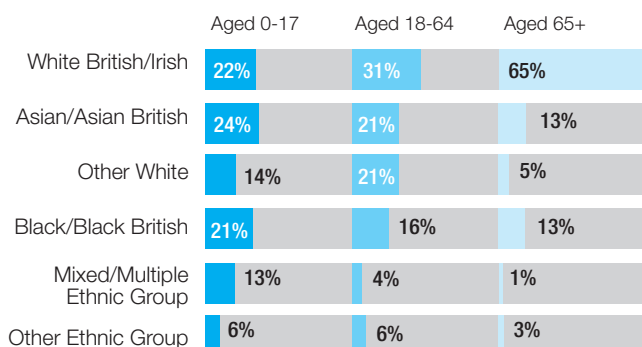
The impact of COVID-19 on Waltham Forest residents has been broadly similar to the effect seen in London as whole, with similar rates of infections and mortality. The second wave started with lower infection rates compared to England average, but cases started to increase rapidly from mid-December reaching levels nearly twice as high as the national average by early January until falling back to similar levels as a result of third national lockdown since the start of the pandemic.

### 7-day rate of confirmed COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in Waltham Forest compared to London and England, 1 March 2020 – 27 January 2021



Source: Public Health England (<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>), data accessed 17/11/2020

### Ethnicity by age in Waltham Forest, 2016



Source: GLA Ethnic Group Population Projections (2016-based housing-led)

Overall, a total of 23,128 Waltham Forest residents have tested positive for COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic (8,350 per 100,000 population) as at 31 January 2021. This is higher than in London (7,318 per 100,000 population) and England as a whole so far (5,966 per 100,000 population).

# Q2

## How is the population changing?

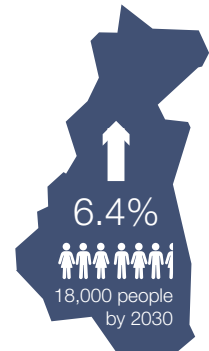
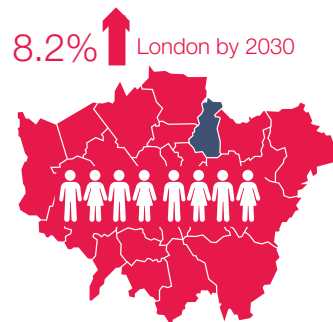
As Waltham Forest’s population is ageing and becoming ethnically more diverse, keeping the local population in good health will be vital in helping residents age well and crucial to minimising the impact on services.

Population projections are based on a complex set of assumptions about changes in fertility, mortality and migration in the population. The UK’s departure from the EU combined with the sudden onset of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19 puts further significant uncertainty on population projections. The full impact of these extraordinary events on the components of population change (births, deaths, international and domestic migration) will become clearer as more data becomes available.

Waltham Forest uses the population projections produced by the Greater London Authority (GLA) Demography Unit.<sup>viii</sup> The housing-led variant projection, which reconciles future population growth with available housing supply trajectory, is recommended for most purposes.<sup>ix</sup>

Since the EU referendum in June 2016, Waltham Forest population growth has slowed down to the level seen before the EU expansion in 2004. Going forward, one may expect a more modest rate of population growth than in the past decade. Waltham Forest’s population is expected to increase by around 18,000 people (6.4%) by 2030.<sup>x</sup> This is a slightly lower rate of growth than is projected for London on average over the same period (8.2%).

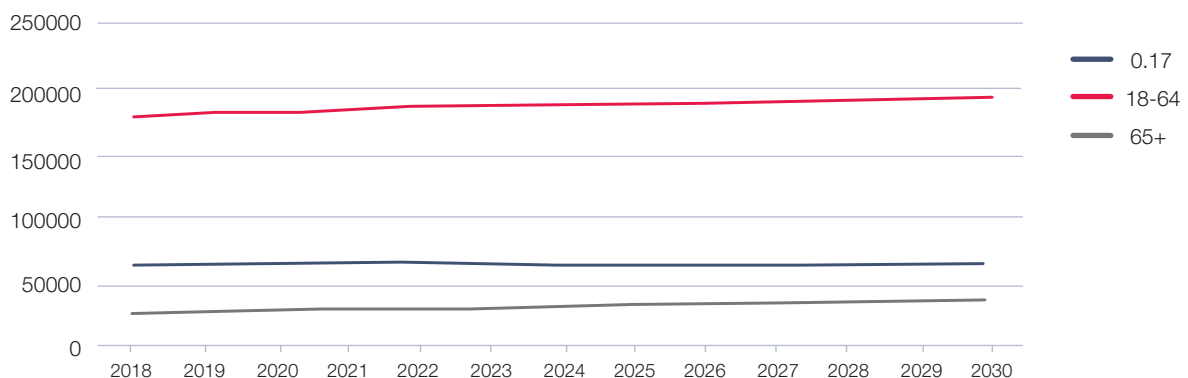
Population ageing is one of the most sizable and important demographic changes in terms of the impact



on health and care systems and society more widely. Maintaining the health of the population will be key in shifting the balance from challenge to opportunity by ensuring residents are able to live healthy lives for as long as possible.<sup>xi</sup> Over the next decade, the number of people aged 65 and over in the borough is expected to increase at a significantly faster rate than other age groups. The over 65 population is projected to increase by 26% from 30,500 to 38,500, while the working-age population is projected to increase by 5%, and the overall number of children aged 0-17 is expected to change only marginally (0.3%) by 2030.

The overall age profile of the borough, however, remains relatively young compared to London and England as a whole, as the proportion of the population aged 65 years and over in the borough (relative to all residents) is projected to increase from 11% to 13% by 2030, compared to 15% in London and 22% in England.<sup>xii</sup>

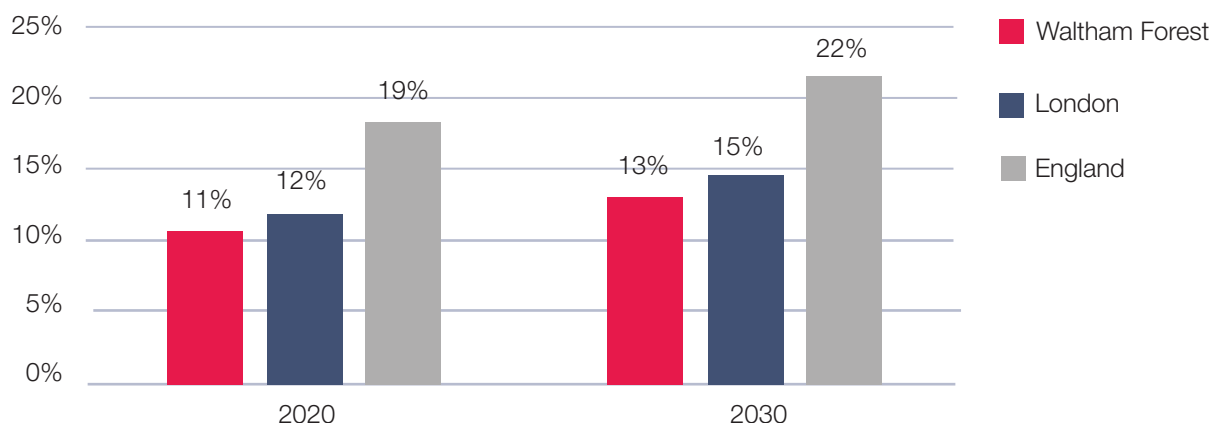
### Population by age, Waltham Forest



Source: Greater London Authority 2018-based housing-led population projections

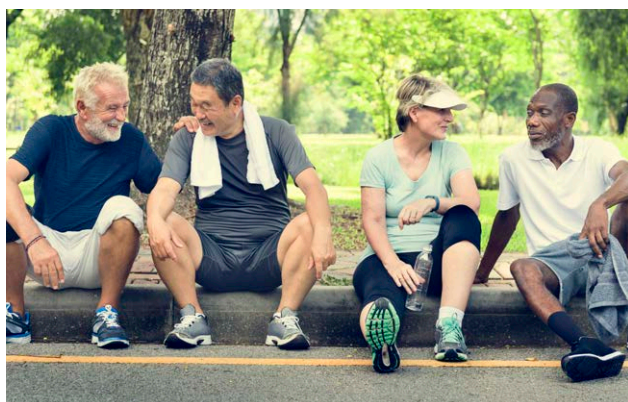


## Proportion of population aged 65 years and over



Source: Office for National Statistics

Waltham Forest's population is also becoming ethnically more diverse year on year. By 2030, approximately 72% of the population is projected to be from a minority ethnic background compared to 68% in 2016. The population aged 65 and older is also becoming more diverse with 51% projected to be from a minority ethnic background by 2030, an increase from 35% in 2016.<sup>xiii</sup>



A shift towards people living longer and healthier lives means residents can continue to work for longer and contribute to society, for example through volunteering and caring for family members. A higher number of older people, however, might lead to increased demand for health and social care services, and public spending on pensions.

## The impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 outbreak is likely to impact population change directly through increased deaths and indirectly through changes to migration patterns, birth rate and deaths from other causes.

Population estimates for 2019, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), indicate that the UK population grew at the slowest rate seen in 15 years due a lower number of births, alongside an increase in emigration (people leaving the UK) and a fall in international immigration into the UK.<sup>xiv</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic is also expected to have a significant impact on all components of population change due to increased number of deaths and changes in both domestic and international migration as well as secondary impacts on births and non-COVID deaths, though the extent of this impact is still uncertain.

So far, a total of 437 people have died of COVID-19 in Waltham Forest (Source: Office for National Statistics, deaths registered up to 15 January 2021). The rate of deaths in Waltham Forest (158 per 100,000) is slightly higher than the London average (147 per 100,000) and on par with England average (157 per 100,000).

In the short term, at least, international migration is likely to drop significantly due to global travel restrictions. Domestic migration flows are also likely to decrease if people are unable to move homes due to loss of income and uncertainty in the housing market. Waltham Forest, similar to London as a whole, generally loses people due to high rates of domestic outmigration, as more people leave London than arrive from other areas of the UK, particularly families with young children. During the 2010 recession, London saw a significant drop in outmigration, something which could happen again. However, the full scale of the impact of COVID-19 on population change is very difficult to predict as it depends on the duration of the pandemic, the depth of the resulting economic recession, and the speed of the recovery.

# Q3

## How long do our residents live and what do they die from?

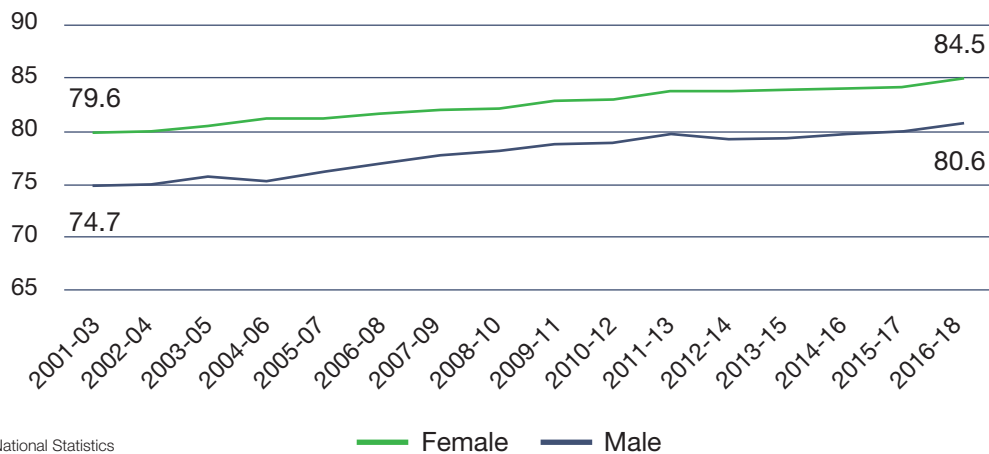
Residents in Waltham Forest are living longer than ever before, but cancer, heart disease, dementia, and, in Spring 2020, COVID-19, are the leading causes of death in the borough.

The average life expectancy in Waltham Forest is 84.5 years for females and 80.6 for males.<sup>xv</sup> This is on a par with the London average (84.6 for females and 80.7 for males) and significantly higher than the UK average (82.9 for females and 79.3 for males). Whilst increasing life expectancy in the UK has stalled since 2011,<sup>xvi</sup> life expectancy in Waltham Forest has continued to increase faster than the London and national averages. The gap between female and male life expectancy in

the borough has also reduced from 4.9 years in 2001-03 to 3.9 years in 2016-18. A male born today could expect to live for 5.9 years more than a male born 15 years ago. For females the figure is 4.9 years.

Normally around 1,400 people die in the borough every year (1,378 in 2017 and 1,419 in 2018).<sup>xvii</sup> The onset of COVID-19 will have a major impact on mortality and life expectancy as the world is still struggling to cope with the novel virus.

Life expectancy at birth by sex, Waltham Forest, 2001-2018

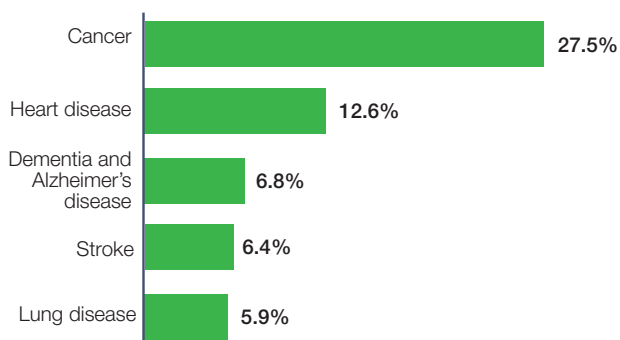


Source: Office for National Statistics

The leading cause of deaths for both males and females in Waltham Forest is cancer, accounting for around 28% of all registered deaths.<sup>xviii</sup> The most common cancer that men die from is lung cancer and for women it is breast cancer.

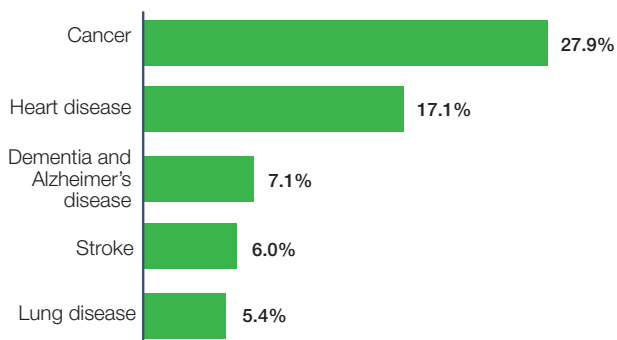


### Leading causes of death (as a % of all deaths within that sex) in Waltham Forest, 2018 - Male



Source: Office for National Statistics

### Leading causes of death (as a % of all deaths within that sex) in Waltham Forest, 2018 - Female



Source: Office for National Statistics

Preventable mortality (death considered avoidable) from cancer before the age of 75 is comparatively low for men in Waltham Forest: 67.8 per 100,000 people, compared to 76.2 in London and 82 in England.<sup>xix</sup> For women, this is 72.2 in Waltham Forest, which is similar to the England figure of 71.1, but higher than the London average (62.7). These cancers are considered preventable at a population level if detected and treated early enough.

The second most common cause of death for women is dementia<sup>1</sup> including Alzheimer's disease (17% of deaths) and for men, heart disease (13% of deaths).<sup>xx</sup> Whilst cancers remain the leading cause of death in the borough, the number of deaths from dementia is expected to increase as people live longer and the survival rates of other illnesses are improving. This will impact upon both the quality of life of residents and their families, and the health and social care sector.

Premature mortality (mortality rate for deaths under age 75) in Waltham Forest is similar to London and England averages for both males and females.<sup>xxi</sup> The rate at which men die prematurely under 75, however, is significantly higher than that for women in Waltham Forest (392 per 100,000 compared to 250 per 100,000 population in 2016-18).

The premature mortality rate from cardiovascular diseases (CVD),<sup>2</sup> including coronary heart disease, is significantly worse in Waltham Forest (85.5 per 100,000 population) compared to London (70.5 per 100,000) and national benchmark (71.7 per 100,000). The rates of premature deaths from cancer and liver disease, however, are lower than in England as a whole.

### The impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 became a prominent cause of death in the borough in the first wave of the pandemic and have also caused excess deaths in the second wave. By February 2021, over 2.2 million people are known to have died of COVID-19 globally, including around over 106,000 deaths in the United Kingdom. Only United States, Brazil, Mexico and India have had a higher number of deaths than the UK.<sup>xxii</sup>

In terms of the number of deaths from COVID-19 per population, the UK is currently ranking 4th highest in the world with 163 deaths per 100,000 population after San Marino, Belgium and Slovenia. Differences in mortality rates can be caused by demographics (mortality tends to be higher in older populations), healthcare system (mortality may rise as hospitals become overwhelmed and have fewer resources), testing rates and other factors.<sup>xxiii</sup>

As of 15 January 2021, a total of 437 people in Waltham Forest have died of COVID-19. In the first 12 weeks of the year, Waltham Forest had fewer deaths than the average for past five years. As a result of the pandemic, there was a surge in deaths due to deaths involving COVID-19 during April and May and again in the second wave from November 2020.<sup>3</sup>

The overall mortality rate from deaths involving COVID-19 in Waltham Forest is 158 per 100,000 population, slightly higher than the London average (147 per 100,000) and similar to the England average (157 per 100,000).<sup>xxiv</sup>

1 Dementia is a group of related symptoms associated with declining brain function which is more common in older people.

2 Cardiovascular diseases are a group of conditions which affect the heart and blood vessels

3 Excess deaths are deaths from all causes in addition to the number which would be expected in a given time period, based on existing data

# Q4

## What health conditions are our adults living with?

Long-term conditions like cardiovascular disease and diabetes are prevalent in Waltham Forest, but are estimated to be under-diagnosed, though there has been an encouraging uptake of the NHS Health Checks offer.

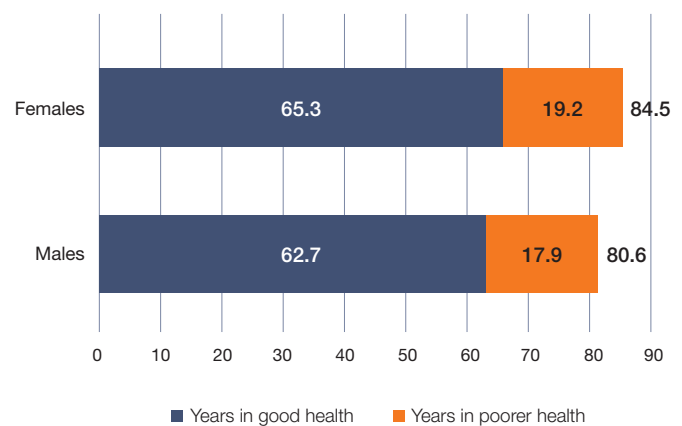
Improvements in health care mean people are now living longer. However, as people grow older, they are increasingly likely to develop one or more long-term conditions (LTCs). With healthy life expectancy for a male being 62.7 and 65.3 for females in Waltham Forest (compared to 64.2 and 64.4 respectively in London, and 63.4 and 63.9 in England),<sup>xv</sup> the later years of life are likely to be in declining health.<sup>4</sup>

LTCs are more prevalent in older people, but can develop at any age. Sometimes people are born with one or more LTCs or they may develop them later in life for a number of inter-related reasons, including genetics and the environment. Many LTCs, however, are affected by lifestyle factors like smoking, excess alcohol consumption and obesity.

### Long-term conditions

The prevalence of CVD and a range of cancers is affected by lifestyle factors such as smoking and consuming excess alcohol (as discussed in chapter 11). Overweight and obesity, which are products of our obesogenic environment (as discussed in chapter 12), are also connected to these conditions, and to an increase in diabetes. Some of the most common recorded conditions in the borough include high blood pressure, diabetes and asthma. The prevalence of both diabetes and chronic kidney disease is higher in Waltham Forest than the London average.<sup>5</sup> The prevalence of coronary heart disease, heart failure, stroke and obesity in Waltham Forest is similar to the London average. Waltham Forest has higher rates of dementia prevalence amongst residents aged 65+ than in England, and lower rates than London, but neither difference is statistically significant.<sup>xvi</sup> As of September 2017, 4.4% of people aged 65+ in Waltham Forest had dementia.

Life expectancy at birth, Waltham Forest, 2016-18



Source: Office for National Statistics

There is evidence to suggest that many LTCs may be going undiagnosed. The estimated prevalence of some of the most common diseases is higher than the number of people actually diagnosed in Waltham Forest. This raises concerns about the health and wellbeing of residents with untreated illness, particularly considering the inequalities which exist in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy. For example, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)<sup>6</sup> has a ratio of recorded to expected cases of 0.42, meaning that for every 100 people who could be expected to have the condition, only 42 are recorded as having it. The ratios are similar for heart disease (0.40) and high blood pressure (0.41). Dementia has the highest ratio, meaning the recorded prevalence is more similar to what would be expected, and stroke has the lowest ratio, meaning there may be many people who have had a stroke or “mini stroke” who are not known to primary care.

4 Healthy life expectancy at birth is an estimate of the number of years in which babies born at a specific point in time will live in good health. The shorter the estimate of healthy life expectancy compared to life expectancy, the longer it is estimated that the cohort will live with a poorer health-related quality of life.

5 Chronic kidney disease is a condition where the kidneys stop working as well as they should.

6 Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is a group of lung conditions which cause breathing difficulties

## Common long-term conditions in Waltham Forest, and the number and prevalence of diagnosed and estimated undiagnosed cases

Condition	Number of people with diagnosis in Waltham Forest (2018/19) <sup>7</sup>	Waltham Forest Prevalence	Estimated Prevalence	Recorded: Expected Ratio
High blood pressure (hypertension)	34,660	11.03%	27.20%	0.41
Diabetes	17,106	6.92%	10.20%	0.68
Asthma	15,187	4.83%	N/A	N/A
Chronic kidney disease (CKD)	8,725	3.58%	6.10%	0.59
Coronary heart disease (CHD)	5,928	1.89%	4.70%	0.40
Stroke	2,967	0.94%	3.23%	0.29
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)	2,936	0.93%	2.20%	0.42
Heart failure	1,698	0.54%	0.90%	0.60
Dementia	1,429	0.45%	0.63%	0.72

Source: QOF 18/19; PHE

The NHS Health Check Programme for adults aged 40-74 without an existing long-term condition can assist in prevention, early intervention, diagnosis and treatment of LTCs. The programme monitors key health conditions and calculates an individual's QRisk, the risk of CVD, and identifies lifestyle changes and medications to reduce risk or slow its rate of increase. The number of health checks offered during 2019/20 was 13,063, an increase of 33% on the previous year, whilst 7,146 health checks were completed, 12% more than in 2018/19.

### Multiple long-term conditions

Multimorbidity (having multiple LTCs) is associated with reduced quality of life and life expectancy, as well as increased complexity in the coordination and delivery of care.<sup>xxvii</sup> Multimorbidity is more common in older adults so is likely to increase as the population ages. The Health Foundation has estimated that 24% of people in England has at least two conditions.<sup>xxviii</sup> This would equate to around 66,500 people in Waltham Forest.

Several of the common LTCs in Waltham Forest, for example diabetes, are associated with other conditions. Diabetes is a serious health condition triggered by higher than normal glucose (blood sugar) levels which in turn is caused by a lack of insulin (type 1), or impaired insulin levels (type 2). These include CVD, increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke, eye disease, kidney damage and lower limb problems, particularly affecting the feet, which may lead to amputation if left untreated.

<sup>7</sup> Patients captured on Primary Care QOF (Quality and Outcomes Framework, a voluntary reward and incentive programme) list in 2018/19, namely patients with a diagnosed long-term condition who are registered to a Waltham Forest GP

### The impact of COVID-19

The pandemic is likely to impact people with LTCs directly, as they may be at increased risk, and indirectly, due to interruption of care. The virus may also cause or exacerbate LTCs.

In addition to the immediate effects of contracting COVID-19, there is evidence of some people experiencing ongoing symptoms for weeks and sometimes months.<sup>xxix</sup> Some people with COVID-19 may experience subsequent deterioration of pre-existing LTCs or even development of new conditions like lung disease.<sup>xxx</sup>

Furthermore, having an LTC increases a person's risk from COVID-19. People with CVD are affected as the virus enters through the respiratory tract and causes inflammation in the lungs, reducing their efficiency. Blood pressure and oxygen levels fall, placing strain on the heart, which can lead to heart attack. There is also emerging evidence that the risk of severe complications from COVID-19 is higher in people with diabetes, particularly in those individuals with poorly controlled diabetes.<sup>xxxi</sup> Mortality from COVID-19 is higher in older age groups who in turn are more likely than younger age groups to have one or more LTCs. These LTCs lead to a higher risk of contracting the disease, more severe symptoms when infected, poor outcomes and ultimately premature mortality.

One of the significant legacies of the current COVID-19 situation is people with LTCs whose condition may have worsened as they have been self-isolating and avoiding accessing health services. This cohort of residents is likely to experience poorer health because of missed treatment or late presentation, and this in turn will impact the health service which is already faced with extensive backlogs.

# Q5

## What are the areas of health inequality in Waltham Forest?

Residents of Waltham Forest are likely to have different health outcomes based on factors like their sex, disability status, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, and where they live.

Health inequalities are differences in health and wellbeing which can be attributed to social factors like where someone lives or their community group, and which can therefore be considered unfair.<sup>xxxii</sup> Indeed, some segments of the population in Waltham Forest live with higher deprivation and risk of ill-health, and some residents have a shorter life expectancy than their neighbour.

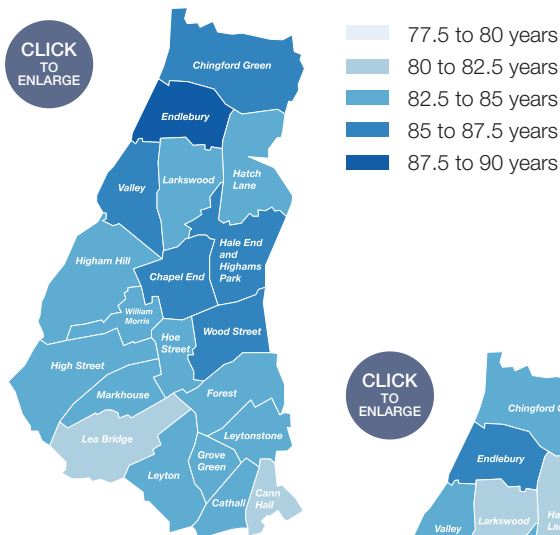
A female baby born between 2013 and 2017 is predicted to live 6.8 years longer in Endlebury ward than her equivalent in Lea Bridge.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Where somebody lives, and associated factors like demography, access to education and health services, impacts their health.

### Life Expectancy at Birth in 2013-2017, by Sex and Ward Area.

	Highest Life Expectancy		Lowest Life Expectancy	
	Age	Ward	Age	Ward
Male	83.2	Endlebury	76.9	Lea Bridge
Female	87.9	Endlebury	81.1	Lea Bridge

Source: Public Health England analysis of Office for National Statistics death registration data and mid-year population estimates

### Life expectancy at birth, Female



### Life expectancy at birth, Male



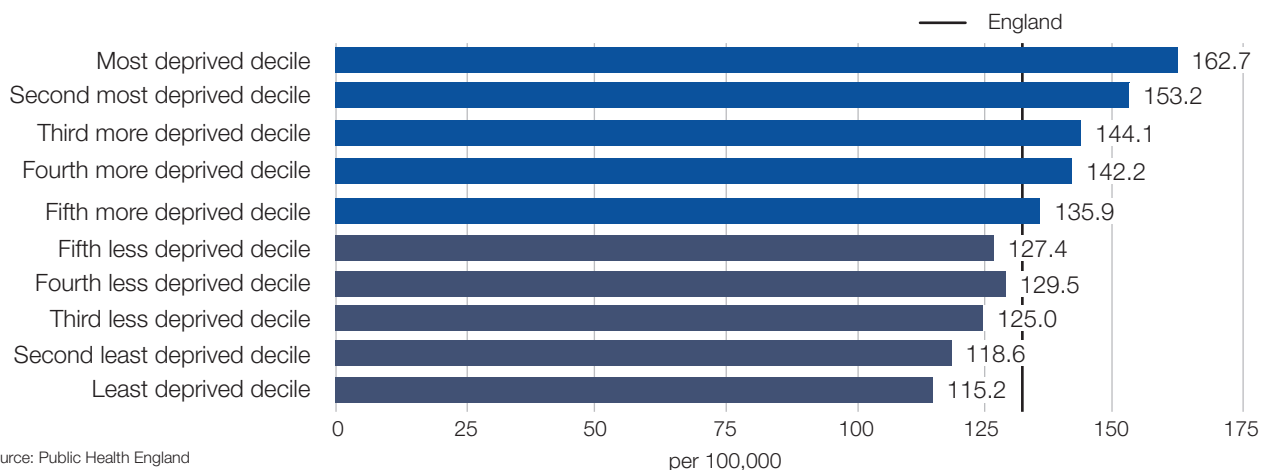
Life expectancy data by ethnic group is not available, as ethnicity is not recorded at death registration. This has recently been widely acknowledged as a national systemic failure.<sup>xxxiv</sup> There are, however, inequities between ethnic groups in many facets of residents' health, including mental wellbeing (read more in chapter 6) and obesity (chapter 10). Furthermore, 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.<sup>xxxv</sup>

In 2019, Waltham Forest was ranked the 82<sup>nd</sup> most deprived out of all 317 local authorities.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The rate of mortality from long-term conditions like cancer and cardiovascular diseases increases in line with deprivation.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Waltham Forest is a patchwork of relative deprivation and abundance. Some parts of the borough are in the most deprived 10% of areas nationally, whilst others are in the top 20% least deprived. Residents facing higher deprivation also face increased risk of early mortality.

Many other factors have been shown to affect life chances, health outcomes and experiences of healthcare at a national level.<sup>xxxviii</sup> For example, people who experience homelessness, asylum seekers,

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## Under 75 Mortality Rate from Cancer in Waltham Forest by County and Upper Authority Deprivation Deciles, 2016-2018.



people with a disability and people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) all experience health inequalities, and this is likely to be reflected in Waltham Forest.

### The impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected groups including men, older people, people living in more deprived areas and people from minority ethnic backgrounds, and exacerbated existing inequalities.

The impact of COVID-19 has not been felt equally by all. Geographic variation is clear at a regional level, with many areas across the country facing higher rates of infection and resulting local restrictions. In England, the mortality rate from COVID-19 in the most deprived 10% of areas is more than double the rate in the least deprived 10% when taking age into account (in July 2020, 3.1 per 100,000 people in the most deprived decile and 1.4 in the least).<sup>xxxix</sup> While the all-cause mortality rate increases in line with deprivation, the disparity is greater in deaths related to COVID-19. Waltham Forest's varied level of deprivation is likely to be mirrored by variation in COVID-19-related mortality.

The largest disparity in COVID-19 diagnoses and deaths was found to be by age. In England, among those already diagnosed with COVID-19, people who were 80+ were 70 times more likely to die than those under 40.<sup>xi</sup> COVID-19-related mortality also increases with age in Waltham Forest. In Waltham Forest, there was a lower proportion of deaths in those aged 75+, and a higher proportion in those in younger age groups than seen nationally.<sup>xii</sup> These differences are likely to be attributable to the borough's age profile, which is proportionally younger than the general population of England and Wales, though Waltham Forest's higher age and sex standardised mortality rate means that there have been more deaths than would be expected given the borough's age profile.

Men are more likely to die from COVID-19. The COVID-19 mortality rate is almost twice as high for males compared to females. In Waltham Forest, the age-standardised mortality rate between January-November 2020 for males was 320 per 100,000 compared to 163 per 100,000 for females. In total, 59% of the 384 COVID-19 deaths in the borough have been males.<sup>xiii</sup>

Ethnic minority populations are also suffering disproportionately. After factoring in age, men and women from almost all ethnic minority groups in England and Wales are at greater risk than White people of dying from COVID-19.<sup>xiii</sup> Compared to White males, Black males are 4.2 times more likely to die from COVID-19, and males of Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnicity are 3.6 times more likely. Contributing factors may include prevalence of underlying conditions, social and health behaviours,<sup>xiv</sup> and may be a product of historic and systemic racism.<sup>xiv</sup> After accounting for factors including socio-economic status and health or disability the gap narrows, but people of Black, Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnicity are still more likely to die than White people. Some of the remaining discrepancy may reflect the disproportionate number of people from minority ethnic backgrounds in key-worker roles.

Clinical vulnerability to COVID-19 is not yet fully understood, but health status and particular conditions are key factors. Furthermore, people with a disability have been disproportionately impacted by the outbreak in terms of their wellbeing. During the pandemic, disabled people reported poorer mental health and more loneliness than non-disabled people.<sup>xvi</sup>

A knowledge of local health inequalities is key to understanding the health of Waltham Forest's residents, and allows the Council to focus interventions on particular groups or geographies where they will have most impact, and ultimately support a healthier, more equal borough. Health inequalities will be more relevant than ever in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Q6

## What are the mental health issues affecting our residents?

Mental health issues like depression and anxiety are estimated to be relatively common in Waltham Forest and are likely to become more so as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mental wellbeing involves both feeling good and functioning well, and having one's basic living needs met.<sup>xlvii</sup> Mental health problems can affect people from all walks of life, at any age. Nationally 1 in 4 adults experiences at least one diagnosable mental health problem in any given year.<sup>xlviii</sup> Mental health is affected by a broad range of determinants including gender, age, ethnicity, family, poor physical health, and social and environmental determinants such as deprivation, housing, employment, drugs and alcohol, and crime. Mental health problems are common, often start early,<sup>xlix</sup> and represent the largest single cause of disability in the UK.<sup>l</sup> It is estimated poor mental health carries an economic and social cost of £105 billion a year in England.<sup>li</sup>

### Mental wellbeing in Waltham Forest

Londoners have poor mental wellbeing compared to other regions across the country, with the UK's highest levels of anxiety. In 2018/19, Waltham Forest saw a drop in life satisfaction (to 7.46 from 7.73 out of 10) and worthwhile ratings (7.81 from 7.89 out of 10) compared to the previous year, while the happiness and anxiety scores have remained stable.<sup>lii</sup>

Estimates of personal wellbeing in Waltham Forest in 2018/19 include:<sup>liii</sup>

- 78%  report high **life satisfaction** ('good' or 'very good')
- 81%  feel that the things done in life are **worthwhile**
- 72%  report their **happiness** ratings as 'good' or 'very good'
- 59%  rate their **anxiety levels** as 'good' or 'very good'
- 18%  rate their **anxiety levels** as 'poor'

Self-reported life satisfaction is lower in Mixed/Multiple and Black, African, Caribbean and Black British ethnic groups in Waltham Forest than in White groups.<sup>liv</sup>

In Waltham Forest it is estimated 22.5% of people aged 16 and over have common mental disorders, which is significantly higher than the rate in England (16.9%). It is the fifth highest proportion in London and equivalent to 48,207 people.<sup>lv</sup> There are 18,000 people in Waltham Forest with diagnosed depression (2018/19).<sup>lvi</sup> In the GP patient survey in 2018/19, 9% of respondents in Waltham Forest described themselves as having long-term mental health problems.<sup>lvii</sup> In the same survey in 2016/17, 12.6% of respondents aged 18+ in Waltham Forest reported having depression or anxiety, which is lower than the rate of 13.7% in England. There were 62 deaths in Waltham Forest recorded as suicides in 2016-2018, equating to rates of around 8.9 per 100,000. The male suicide rate is more than three times higher than for women.<sup>lviii</sup>

### Inequality and stigma

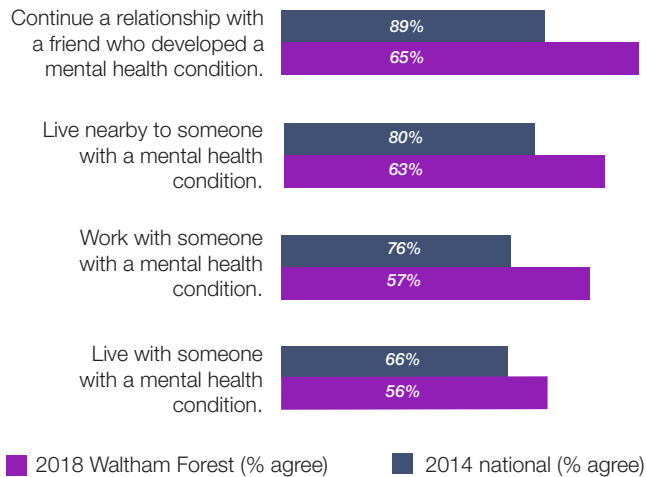
There are also inequalities in mental health between other groups. Nationally, Black people are more likely to experience psychotic disorders and are more likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act than White counterparts.<sup>lix</sup> Responses to the National LGBT Survey also suggest a disproportionate need for mental health services amongst the LGBT population.<sup>lx</sup> Poor mental health is also more common in people experiencing homelessness.<sup>lxi</sup> These national discrepancies are likely to be mirrored locally.

Despite the prevalence of mental health conditions, mental ill-health is still highly stigmatised. Nationally, almost 90% of mental health service users report that stigma and discrimination has had a negative impact on their lives. It is crucial to tackle the stigma so that people get the help they need at the earliest possible stage to prevent problems from worsening. Results from a residents' survey in Waltham Forest show a higher proportion of stigmatising attitudes locally compared to national level.<sup>lxii</sup>



## Responses from a residents' survey on mental health stigma compared to national estimates, Waltham Forest and England, 2014 and 2018.

### In future I would be willing to...



Source: National survey

## Child mental wellbeing

Childhood mental illness and trauma puts children at risk of poor mental health and ongoing challenges in adulthood. In England, 12.8% of 5–19 year olds have at least one mental disorder and the prevalence is increasing.<sup>8</sup> <sup>bxiii</sup> In 2017/18 there were approximately 5,362 5-17 year olds with mental disorders in Waltham Forest.<sup>9</sup> <sup>bxiv</sup> The prevalence of emotional, conduct and hyperkinetic disorders in Waltham Forest is similar to that in London and England. In a 2018 survey of 1,300 young people in Waltham Forest, 28% of respondents chose 'emotional health' as something they were worried about which was hard to talk about (this was the third most cited concern after 'career' and 'safety', alongside 'money issues').<sup>bxv</sup>

## The impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has already had a negative impact on mental health which is likely to continue amidst ongoing uncertainty and the continuing effects of the pandemic.

Early studies of the psychological impact of COVID-19 show effects of the pandemic are pervasive and likely to affect mental health now and in the aftermath.<sup>bxvi</sup> Restrictions on daily life and fears of infection are likely to have increased anxiety, stress and depression for

individuals and their families. The prolonged disruption of normal support structures and other factors like job loss exacerbate the impact. Amidst an atmosphere of worry, even the return to normal routines like work, school and travel can cause further anxiety, particularly as unemployment increases and the end of supportive measures like the job retention scheme approaches. Other studies suggest that disease outbreaks can lead to significant psychiatric morbidities including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms.<sup>bxvii</sup> Bereavement as a result of the pandemic will also impact the population's mental health.

In a recent survey of Waltham Forest residents about their experiences between March and early July, 75% of respondents reported feeling more anxious or depressed than usual, and 58% felt more lonely than usual.<sup>bxviii</sup> Of respondents with children, 52% reported that their child or children's mental health had deteriorated.

## The local response

Many pre-existing support mechanisms will continue to help residents manage their mental health. Clinical mental health services provided by NHS organisations, including Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), are available for residents with ongoing needs. There has recently been additional investment in CAMHS by the NHS to support this vital service. Adults can also access information through the Five Ways to Wellbeing campaign, and support via online and telephone mental health support services including Good Thinking and Samaritans. A local Time to Change hub, which works with over 100 local champions to tackle mental health discrimination, has been established. Furthermore, the Council has launched a Mental Health Charter to help schools create healthy environments, and young people can also access Kooth, an online emotional wellbeing service. There is also training provided for frontline staff and youth champions on mental health.

Waltham Forest has a local strategy which sets out how, together with local partners, the Council can support residents to improve their mental wellbeing. In view of the concerns around the impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic on population mental health and wellbeing, there is need to strengthen local mental health services to meet the increased demand.

8 Disorders here were identified using ICD-10 standard diagnostic criteria, and to be classified as such required symptoms to cause significant distress to the child or impair their functioning.

9 Mental disorders here is defined as including emotional disorders, behavioural disorders, hyperactivity disorders, and autism spectrum, eating and other less common disorders.

# Q7

## What are the health issues affecting our children and young people?

Health in childhood is a strong predictor of health in adulthood, and while Waltham Forest has low rates of infant mortality and good rates of breastfeeding, slightly older children have worse than average rates of dental decay and asthma.

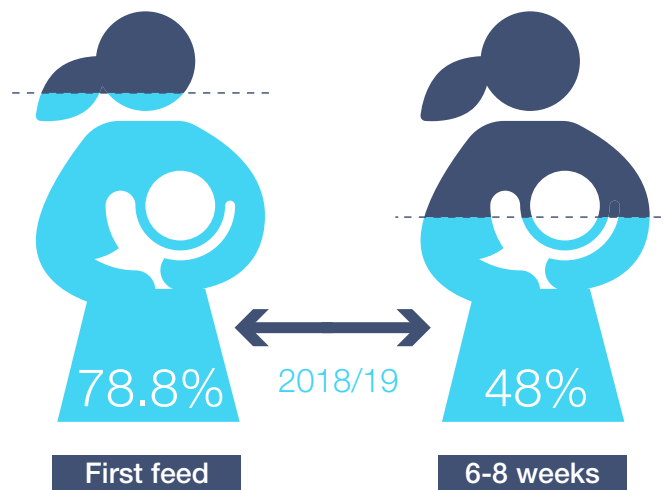
Giving all children the best start in life is crucial to ensuring their health and wellbeing in childhood, and future happiness, health and resilience as adults. The pre-conception period, pregnancy and the early years are all fundamental opportunities to shape future health and wellbeing outcomes. Supporting older children and young people to be actively engaged in their own health and wellbeing is also essential to them becoming healthy adults.

There are approximately 4,500 babies born to Waltham Forest families each year, and the local birth rate is higher than in London and England.<sup>lxix</sup> The 0-19 population is currently estimated to be 71,485 (26% of the total population).

Current infant and child mortality rates are thankfully very low, however they remain important indicators of health care quality, as well as the influence of social, economic and environmental factors. Infant mortality, which captures deaths before a child's first birthday, is at a rate of 3.1 per 1,000 in Waltham Forest, equivalent to approximately 22 deaths in under 1s per year (2016-2018). This is similar to national and London averages but has been rising since 2014-16, following a sustained decline.<sup>lxx</sup> Child mortality (in 1-17 year-olds) for the same period (2016-18) in Waltham Forest is 11.1 per 100,000, equivalent to 20 deaths over the two years. This is similar to London and England and is falling, in line with national figures.<sup>lxxi</sup>

Low birth weight, which increases the risk of childhood mortality and poor health and developmental problems in later life, has fallen from above the London average in 2014 (3.97% born unexpectedly <2.5kg) to similar at 2.78% in 2018. This is equivalent to 114 babies.<sup>lxxii</sup> Breast milk provides the ideal nutrition for infants in the first stages of life, building their immune system and providing the best protection from infections, as well as providing a range of benefits to mothers and babies in later life.

In 2018/19, **78.8%** of babies received breastmilk as their first feed (similar to London and better than England),<sup>lxxiii</sup> but it is estimated that by 6-8 weeks only **48%** are exclusively breastfeeding.<sup>lxxiv</sup>



This decline reflects the very real challenges of breastfeeding (and exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 months) and highlights the need for a culture that promotes and encourages breastfeeding as well as equitable access to support.

One of the most common reasons for hospital admissions in children is dental decay. From 2016/17–2018/19, 325 children aged 0-5 years in Waltham Forest were admitted to hospital for dental extractions, a rate of 410.7 per 100,000.<sup>lxxv</sup> Oral health survey data shows that child oral health in Waltham Forest has improved in recent years, but in 2018/19 still 26.2% of five year olds had dental decay.<sup>lxxvi</sup>

In older children, asthma and accidents are both key causes of harm and ill health. Waltham Forest has the highest rate of hospital admissions for asthma in both under 9 year olds and under 19 year olds in London.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> For under 9 year olds, it is 5<sup>th</sup> highest in England (461.6 per 100,000 (2018/19)).<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Local partners are working together to better understand this data and develop a partnership response to asthma. Rates of children killed or seriously injured in traffic accidents are similar to the London average for most age groups apart from age 6-10 where they are almost double the London average (2016-18).<sup>lxxxix</sup> Waltham Forest has higher than London, but lower than England, average rates of hospital admissions for accidental & deliberate injuries to children aged 0-14yrs.<sup>lxxx</sup>

Social factors like a child's experience of school and events in the community impact their health and wellbeing. Read more about the relationship between development, education, life chances and health in chapter 14. In adolescence, young people are sometimes exposed to risky behaviours which may negatively impact their health, like using drugs and alcohol, smoking, and having unprotected sex. In 2016/17–2018/19, 65 young people aged 15-24 were admitted to hospital in Waltham Forest due to substance misuse.<sup>lxxxii</sup> Read more about risky behaviours in chapter 11. Adolescence also tends to be a risky age for exposure to and potential involvement in violent behaviour. Nationally, 16-24 year olds are more likely to be victims of violence than older age groups (read more on violence and safety in chapter 15).<sup>lxxxiii</sup> The mental wellbeing of children is also covered in chapter 6.

## The local response

Waltham Forest offers the Healthy Child Programme to improve outcomes for children and families, and reduce inequalities. The Healthy Child Programme 0-19 is a universal programme delivered by health visiting and school nursing teams to lay the foundations of a healthy life for every child. The programme focuses on defined high impact areas which include breastfeeding, minor illnesses and accidents, healthy lifestyles, and supporting additional wellbeing needs in the areas identified above.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> In Waltham Forest, the Children and Family Centre (CFC) model for 0-5s brings together a number of partner organisations to ensure that children and families have access to support and services. This service promotes health, wellbeing and child development, ensuring that they are ready for school by 5.



Lloyd Park Children's Charity



## The impact of COVID-19

The most significant impact of COVID-19 on children and young people has been felt as a result of the restrictions, rather than the virus itself, in lack of access to services and healthcare. The vast majority of children with COVID-19 infection are asymptomatic or exhibit mild symptoms.

Digital solutions have proliferated during the pandemic. The health visiting and school nursing service have maintained essential services despite contributing a third of their workforce to other areas of the NHS to support the COVID-19 response. Other CFC partners have rapidly innovated and expanded their virtual services with more developments planned in the recovery period. The needs of families unable to access virtual services due to economic, technical or language barriers must be carefully considered whilst building on this rapid progress.



The direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic have been disproportionately felt by families on low incomes and from minority ethnic backgrounds. Locally the use of baby banks has increased, indicating that more families are facing economic hardship. UNICEF anticipates that changes to free school meal provision, reductions in voluntary sector capacity and economic uncertainty will increase food insecurity for children.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Physical activity amongst children and young people has also been compromised as organised sports were cancelled.

Reports are also emerging of children with other illnesses being brought to hospital much later than they would normally have been. While child safeguarding referrals fell during lockdown measures, they are now increasing rapidly as extended family and support services are able to reach children in vulnerable or unsafe homes. The impact of COVID-19 on children's emotional wellbeing is not yet known, most will have missed the educational and developmental opportunities of schooling, some will have unmet health needs and have experienced bereavement, and a few will have gone hungry or experienced trauma during this time.

# Q8

## How successfully do screenings and vaccines protect the health of our residents?

Waltham Forest protects the health of residents in a number of ways, including by collaborating with partners to offer a range of screening programmes and vaccinations across the life course, and improving uptake of these services is a significant local priority.

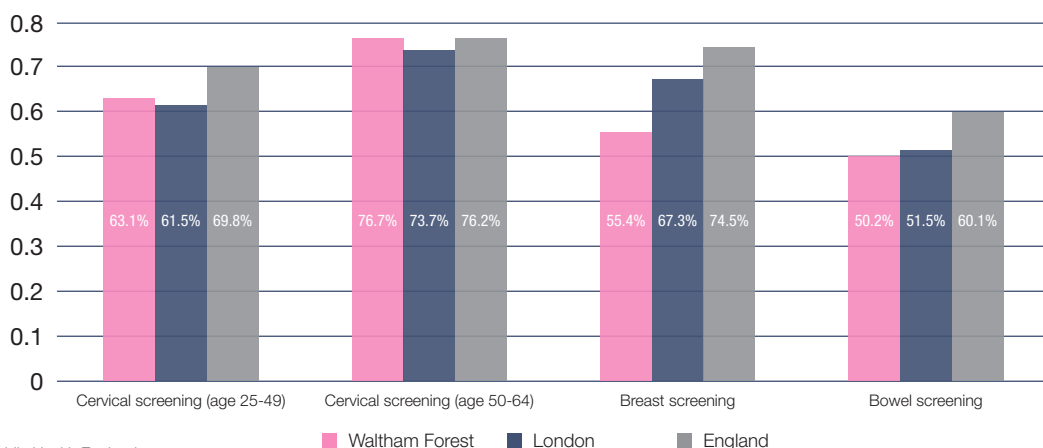
The commissioning and delivery of screening and immunisation programmes involves many partners working together across the system. NHS England are primarily responsible for commissioning routine screening and immunisation programmes across the country. In Waltham Forest, the programmes are delivered to the public through general practice, school aged vaccination teams, pharmacies, maternity services and some outreach services. The Council is responsible for monitoring and promoting uptake of the programmes, and seeking assurance that delivery mechanisms are robust.

### Cancer Screening

There are three national population screening programmes for cancers, which screen for breast, bowel and cervical cancer. These programmes aim to screen healthy people who are at higher risk of disease (e.g. due to their age), and offer treatment, advice or support, with the overall objective of reducing deaths from these cancers. In Waltham Forest:<sup>lxv</sup>

- for cervical screening, uptake of screening is above the London average and similar to the England average for older women (50-64 years), and above the London average but below the England average for younger women (25-49 years)
- for breast and bowel cancer screening, uptake in Waltham Forest is lower than both the London and England averages

**Uptake of Cervical, Bowel and Breast Screening by Waltham Forest residents, compared to London and England, 2019.**



Source: Public Health England

### Immunisation Programmes

National immunisation programmes aim to reduce illness and deaths due to infectious diseases. There are a range of routine immunisations offered, including vaccinations for babies and young children against twelve different infectious diseases, three further vaccinations

for teenagers, vaccinations for older people for pneumococcal disease (which can cause pneumonia) and shingles, and the annual flu vaccination programme for targeted groups.<sup>lxvii</sup> Uptake of immunisations are lower in London than for England on average, and this remains a challenging area across London.<sup>lxviii</sup>

## Uptake of several key vaccinations in Waltham Forest, compared to London and England, 2018/19.

Vaccine	Population	Uptake		
		Waltham Forest	London	England
Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and haemophilus influenzae type b (Dtap / IPV / Hib)	Age 1	85.6%	87.4%	92.1%
Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) – one dose	Age 5	90.6%	90.4%	94.5%
Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) – two doses	Age 5	72.7%	76.3%	86.4%
Flu	Age 65+	66.5%	65.4%	72.0%
Flu	At risk individuals <sup>10</sup>	40%	44.4%	48%

Source: Public Health England

### The local response

Partners have taken a range of recent actions to improve screening and immunisation uptake in Waltham Forest, which are overseen by the Waltham Forest Health Protection Forum. Examples include:

- providing regular catch up immunisation clinics across the borough where children and young people who have missed routine immunisations can easily access vaccinations
- developing and implementing an immunisations action plan, including public communications to raise awareness of vaccinations, exploring data quality issues, and sharing information and best practice to support GP practices delivering vaccinations
- introducing extended access to cervical screening appointments in GP practices to include evening and weekend appointments
- several cancer screening improvement projects have taken place across North East London including a telephone reminder service for people not responding to screening invitations and research to inform targeted awareness raising of cancer screening programmes
- an action plan to support NHS England with plans to achieve high uptake of flu vaccination in the borough during 2020/21, recognising the additional challenges that Covid-19 may present to delivering this ambition

### The impact of COVID-19

Flu vaccination in particular will be more crucial than ever during the pandemic, but uptake of vaccinations and screening is at risk due to the outbreak.

COVID-19 may lead to reduced uptake of routine vaccinations due to both reluctance to attend a healthcare facility while maintaining social distancing and reduced availability of appointments resulting from increased demands on healthcare providers'

capacity. Routine childhood vaccination programmes have continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, however national evidence suggests that the number of measles, mumps and rubella vaccinations delivered dropped in the weeks following the introduction of social distancing measures.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> This leaves immunisations rates significantly below the level needed for herd immunity, leaving children potentially vulnerable to other infectious diseases. Practices are ensuring that children who missed their vaccination during the early stages of lockdown are caught up and those who are due their vaccinations currently are being offered appointments.

School aged immunisation programmes were particularly impacted by closures, but have recovery plans in place to ensure that immunisations will be offered to all those who could not be vaccinated due to school closures.

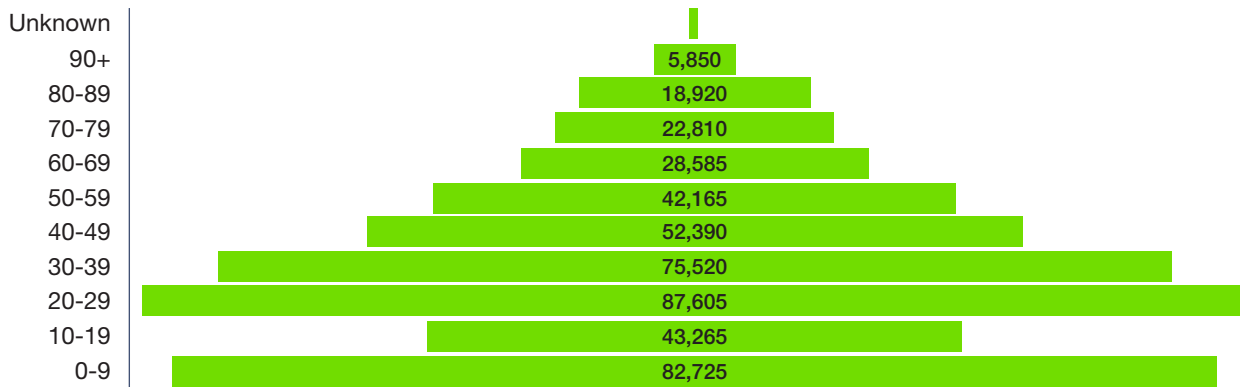
The national flu immunisation programme will be a particularly high priority this year, to prevent ill health and minimise the impact on health and care systems already under strain due to COVID-19.<sup>lxxxix</sup> Those who are most vulnerable to flu are also those most vulnerable to COVID-19, and thus the flu vaccine is even more important than usual for these groups. Eligibility for the flu vaccine in 2020 has been extended to include people who are the main carers of an older or disabled person, household contacts of those on the COVID-19 shielding list, and children aged 2 to 11. It is anticipated that concerns around COVID-19 will lead to increased demand for the flu vaccine.

COVID-19 may also have resulted in interruptions to cancer screening programmes, for example, pauses in screening invitations being sent out. Going forward, partners will need to work together to identify ways to maintain high levels of screening and immunisations uptake during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including considering provision for those who may be due for screening or immunisations appointments during the pandemic.

<sup>10</sup> See the revised Green Book chapter 19 on "Influenza" published December 2017 and updated annually for at-risk group definitions: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/influenza-the-green-book-chapter-19>



## Accident and Emergency attendance by age group (%) at Barts Health NHS Trust, compared to London and England, 2018-2019.



### Community Health Services

Community health provision includes a wide range of services including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, district nursing, health visiting and school nursing. Some of these, like district nursing, centre on treatment and management of illness. Others, like health visiting, primarily aim to promote good health and keep people well. In Waltham Forest, these services are primarily provided by North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT).

### Access

The NHS is often considered a truly equitable system because its services are free at the point of use. There are, however, groups of people who experience inequity of access to health services. In response to the National LGBT survey in 2018, 38% of trans respondents accessing general healthcare services reported having a negative experience relating to their gender identity.<sup>xcix</sup> Many other groups also experience inequity of access, including people with a disability who are more likely to have unmet need due to transportation problems and cost of prescription medication, among other factors;<sup>c</sup> and people experiencing homelessness, of whom rough sleepers are least likely to be able to register with a GP successfully.<sup>ci</sup>

People seeking asylum also face barriers due to charging for care,<sup>cii</sup> confusion around eligibility and not seeking care due to fear of detention and deportation.<sup>ciii</sup> People who are overweight or obese may experience weight stigma (read more in chapter 10) which has been shown to impact the quality of care and create obstacles to care and treatment.<sup>civ</sup> These issues are likely to be reflected locally in Waltham Forest.

### The local response

Work is underway to improve residents' experiences of local health services. The NHS in North East London have developed a Primary Care Strategy which describes its aims to improve the delivery of Primary Care by focusing on three distinct areas: quality and efficiency, new models of working, and the Primary Care workforce.<sup>cv</sup> More broadly, health service delivery is moving towards a model of integrated care, in which health partners such as GPs, hospitals, the Council and other providers will work more closely together. Integrated services will collaborate to make individual patients and local communities the central points around which health services adapt and deliver, and will make the system easier to navigate.<sup>cvi</sup> The Integrated Care Strategy is explored further in chapter 20.

### The impact of COVID-19

Delays in care delivery caused by COVID-19 are likely to have knock-on effects on late presentation and diagnosis of other conditions.

The COVID-19 outbreak put extreme pressure on local health services. GP practices have continued to provide appointments, mainly by phone, but in person if necessary and with appropriate social distancing and safety measures in place. Much elective (non-emergency) care could not be provided safely and has been delayed, which is likely to have had a knock-on effect on waiting lists. This in turn is likely to lead to increased demand and potentially to negative health effects for those whose care was delayed. Furthermore, attendance at and admissions from A&E departments dropped during this period, causing concern about potential medical emergencies left untreated and leading to subsequent morbidity or mortality.<sup>cvi</sup> The continued requirement of time-consuming practices like social distancing and the use of PPE is likely to compound issues of delay and demand.

# Q10

## How do people's diets and level of activity impact on health?

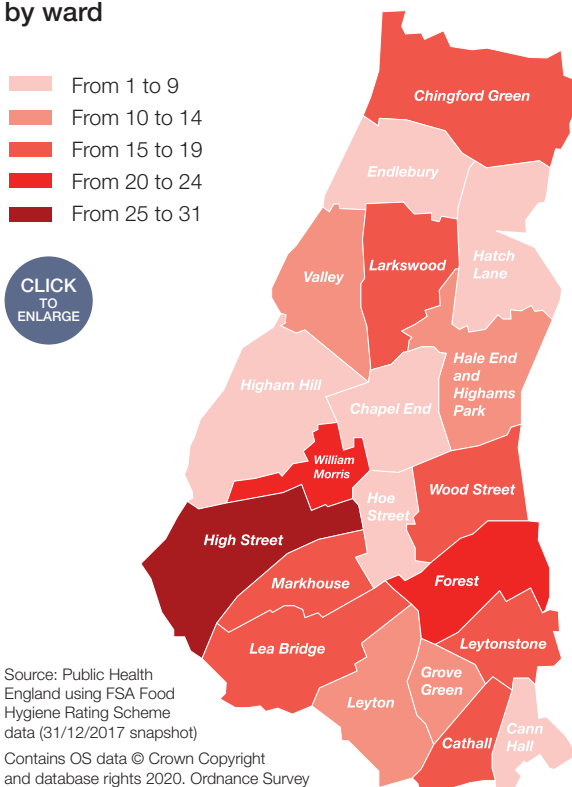
Health behaviours are actions or habits, like diet and exercise, which affect a person's health either positively or negatively. Childhood obesity is high in Waltham Forest and may be linked to poor nutrition and the low uptake of physical activity locally, and consequently is likely to have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Diet

Nutrition and diet affect how you feel, look, think and act. Poor nutrition is associated with poor health outcomes like being overweight or obese, dental decay, diabetes and some cancers. Diet is influenced by many factors, but key drivers include income, deprivation, and the everyday environments in which residents live, work, play and travel. Evidence on food purchasing shows there is easier access to a wider variety of highly palatable, energy dense food than ever before.<sup>cxviii</sup>

As of 2017, there were 278 fast food outlets in Waltham Forest (which equates to 101.4 per 100,000 residents) and Waltham Forest ranks 10<sup>th</sup> out of London boroughs for both number and density.<sup>cxix</sup> Around half of adults meet the national guideline to eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day.<sup>cx</sup>

### Number of fast food outlets in Waltham Forest by ward



### Physical Activity

Becoming more active is good for one's mental and physical health and reduces the risk of developing a number of health conditions. According to a report by Public Health England, 34% of men and 42% of women are not active enough for good health.<sup>cxxi</sup> Men are more likely to report being active at the recommended level than women. People tend to get less active with age, especially in older years, and people with disabilities or long-term conditions are twice as likely not to be active enough for good health. It is estimated that:<sup>cxvii</sup>

- 69.7% of the borough's adult residents are achieving PHE's recommended 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week, which is lower than both the London and England average
- 20.5% of Waltham Forest residents are physically inactive, meaning that they achieve less than 30 minutes per week of moderate exercise, which is significantly higher than London and England averages

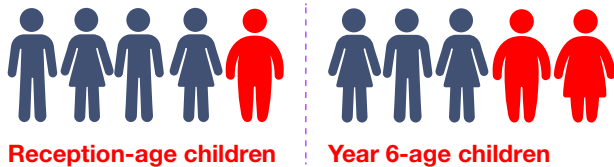


### Obesity

Obesity is a product of complex social and environmental systems often described as the obesogenic environment. In an obesogenic environment, the design of places, transport, food systems and other factors promotes obesity. Read more about the obesogenic environment in chapter 12.



Around **1 in 5 reception-age children** and **2 in 5 year 6-age children** in Waltham Forest are overweight or obese.



The rate of excess weight is similar to national levels in reception but higher than in England for year 6 children.<sup>cxiii</sup> Prevalence of excess weight is similar for boys and girls in Reception but higher for boys in Year 6 and Black children have the highest prevalence of excess weight in both Reception and Year 6.<sup>cxiv</sup> As of 2018, 52.9% of adults (18+) in Waltham Forest are overweight or obese (which is lower than 55.9% for London and 62.3% for England).<sup>cxv</sup> Amongst adults too, Black ethnic groups have the highest prevalence of excess weight.

Widespread misunderstanding about the causes of obesity contributes to weight stigma, through which obesity is associated with negative stereotypes. Weight stigma causes shame and actually contributes to the problem through knock-on effects such as stress and disturbed eating patterns, reluctance to be physically active, and problems accessing health services.<sup>cxvi</sup>

## The local response

Waltham Forest adopts a whole systems approach to healthy weight, which recognises that the causes of and solutions to tackling obesity exist in the everyday environments in which residents live, work, play and travel. This approach addresses both people and place, thus ensuring that obesity is everybody's business in Waltham Forest. The people-focused actions include supporting new mothers to breastfeed and maintain a healthy lifestyle during and after pregnancy, weighing and measuring primary school children and feeding back to parents, and providing behaviour change campaigns around sugar and fruit and vegetable consumption. The place-focused actions include delivering improved cycling and walking infrastructure through the Enjoy Waltham Forest programme to increase active travel levels, restricting the number of new hot food takeaways opening (particularly around schools) and offering food-growing opportunities within estates and allotments across the borough.

## The impact of COVID-19

The effects of COVID-19 on residents' lifestyles were mixed, but emerging evidence highlighting a link between obesity and poor outcomes from the virus reinforces the importance of addressing the obesogenic environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the population's lifestyles, affecting their eating habits and physical activity in positive and negative ways. For some, food can reduce loneliness and is comforting during times of stress. There is some evidence of an increase in snacking during lockdown.<sup>cxvii</sup> Food security, namely access and affordability, has been an issue disproportionately affecting those with limited economic means. The Food Foundation conducted online surveys on 24-29 April with over 2000 households with children in the UK, and found that 5.1million people in households with children in the UK have experienced food insecurity since lockdown. There is not yet sufficient evidence to determine whether the changes observed will last beyond the pandemic.

There has been a massive disruption in the physical activity levels of adults and children in England. The lockdown created opportunities for people to exercise in new ways like online exercise sessions, but it also furthered inequalities. Older people and people on low incomes, living in urban areas or living alone are finding it harder to be active during the outbreak. In response to a survey of Waltham Forest residents about their experiences between March and early July, 35% of respondents reported doing more exercise than usual, and 45% reported doing less.<sup>cxviii</sup> It is unclear how these behavioural changes will progress during the ongoing pandemic. Any restrictions in place during colder months, however, may make outdoor exercise less accessible.

Obesity has been linked to poor health outcomes including increased rate of COVID-19-related mortality.<sup>cxix</sup> Emerging evidence suggests that excess weight is associated with increased risks of contracting COVID-19, experiencing it more severely and dying as a result.<sup>11 cxx</sup> Even when factors like socio-economic background are taken into account, these risks increase in line with increasing excess weight. This has amplified the need for maintaining a healthy diet and being physically active to achieve healthy weight. The government has recognised this pressing need and produced a new obesity strategy which includes policies such as a watershed for adverts promoting foods high in salt, sugar and fat, and mandatory calorie displays on menus.<sup>cxxi</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For adults, excess weight is a Body Mass Index higher than or equal to 25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>

# Q11

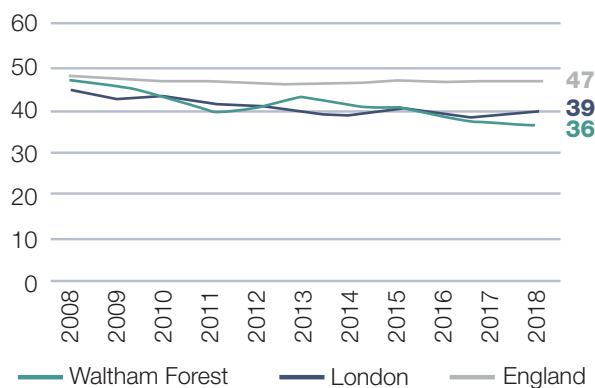
## What are the risky behaviours that impact on health?

Smoking, substance misuse and risky sexual behaviours all negatively impact residents' health, and while Waltham Forest is not a particular outlier in any of these areas, there is still unmet need in the borough which commissioned specialist services seek to address. The pandemic has had varying effects on all these behaviours and residents' access to supportive services.

There are many lifestyle and environmental factors that can impact on health. Three 'high risk' behaviours explored in this chapter are substance misuse, smoking and risky sexual behaviour. These are differentiated from other behaviours such as inactivity and dietary choices in that there is no 'safe level' for practising these three behaviours,<sup>cxvii</sup> and there is also significant interaction between the three. The more of these behaviours someone has, the higher the cumulative risk.

### Substance Misuse

**Alcohol-related mortality rate (per 100,000) in Waltham Forest compared to London and England, 2008-2018.**



Source: Public Health England

There are many health risks associated with alcohol consumption, including liver disease, stroke, high blood pressure, various cancers and poor mental health. Other drug use also has significant health implications including heart attacks, poor cognitive functioning, risk of overdose, and psychosis.

Alcohol and drug use in Waltham Forest is lower than in other parts of the country and London but there is significant unmet need among alcohol and drug

users. Around 83.7% of dependent drinkers locally are not accessing support or treatment, which is slightly higher than the London average of 82.3%.<sup>cxviii</sup> Around 66.7% of opiate and/or crack users locally are not in treatment, which is slightly higher than the London average of 64%.<sup>cxix</sup> Waltham Forest's priority actions to address substance misuse include continuous joint working with GPs, embedding an effective dual diagnosis pathway and implementing an alcohol-specific engagement plan to reduce unmet need.

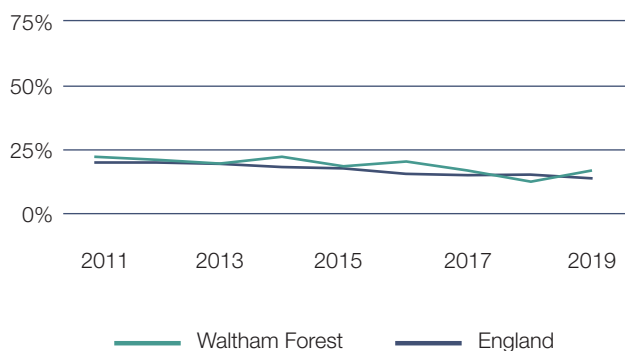
There are a number of potential implications from COVID-19 on drug and alcohol use locally. In response to a survey of Waltham Forest residents about their experiences between March and early July, a third of respondents who drink alcohol reported drinking more than usual.<sup>cxv</sup> There is initial evidence that more people have been accessing treatment for opiate dependence during lockdown.<sup>cxvi</sup> This is likely to be due to interruptions to usual supply routes, leading people to access the service primarily for opioid substitution therapy. This poses a risk in terms of potential overdose and other harms, but also a potential opportunity as there is a cohort accessing treatment services who were previously not doing so. There are concerns that increased anxiety and other mental health difficulties caused or worsened by COVID-19 (combined with the impact of extended periods at home and lack of normal routine) may result in an increase in higher-risk drinking and use of alcohol (or drugs) as a coping mechanism.

### Smoking

Smoking is the biggest single preventable cause of ill health and mortality. It is a risk factor for a range of cancers, predominantly lung cancer. Seventy percent of all lung cancer is caused by smoking.<sup>cxvii</sup> Other conditions include cardiovascular and respiratory

diseases. Whilst adult (18+) smoking prevalence has been reducing, there was a slight increase in 2019 and there are still at least 33,865 smokers in the borough, a rate of 16.2%.<sup>cxxxviii</sup> Smoking status is an area of inequality. There are higher rates of smoking amongst adults in routine and manual occupations, and those with mental health conditions.<sup>cxxxix</sup> Smoking led to 677 deaths in Waltham Forest during 2018, which whilst slightly higher than the London average, is lower than the England average. Stopping smoking is the only way for smokers to reduce their risk and the improvements in health start within days of quitting. Waltham Forest has invested in a smoking cessation service, with targeted approaches to pregnant women, people with mental health conditions and people with long-term conditions.

**Smoking prevalence (%) in adults (18+) in Waltham Forest and England, 2011-2019.**



Source: Public Health England

There is an important link between COVID-19 and smoking. Smokers are at increased risk of contracting COVID-19 and when they do, they are at a heightened risk of severe complications. Smoking impairs the respiratory immune response such that a smoker is more susceptible to infection and to worse outcomes.<sup>cxxx</sup>

There is mixed evidence about the impact of COVID-19 on smoking rates. In response to a recent survey in Waltham Forest, 62% of respondents who are smokers reported smoking more than usual between March and early July.<sup>cxxxi</sup> A national survey indicated that COVID-19 is significantly increasing smokers' motivation to quit and to stay quit. Two percent of ex-smokers say that they have quit completely recently due to COVID-19 (around 300,000 people).<sup>cxxxii</sup> This may indicate an opportunity to encourage new referrals of people who are thinking of quitting. However, 14% nationally have said that COVID-19 makes them less likely to quit.

## Risky Sexual Behaviour

Safe sex is an important part of good sexual wellbeing and reduces the risk of acquiring and transmitting sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Safe sex practices include consistent condom use, regular STI testing, and utilising appropriate services which provide added partner notification. Individuals and groups who experience poverty, social exclusion and have difficulty accessing sexual health services (asylum seekers, refugees, and sex workers, for example) are disproportionately affected by sexual health problems.<sup>cxxxiii</sup>

Chlamydia is the most common STI in the UK, with rates particularly high among young people. In Waltham Forest, the chlamydia diagnostic rate in 2018 was 610 per 100,000 people attending sexual health services. This is lower than the London average (686), but much higher than the England average (384). The rate has steadily increased from 2012 (456) to 2018 (610) which indicates a need for more chlamydia awareness and promotion of safe-sex methods, and improved accessibility to screening, early detection and treatment to prevent onwards transmission.<sup>cxxxiv</sup> Chlamydia is often asymptomatic with 70-80% of adults with chlamydia unaware they have the infection,<sup>cxxxv</sup> which presents a barrier to increased detection. Potential consequences of untreated chlamydia for young women include pelvic inflammatory disease,<sup>12</sup> difficulty getting pregnant, increased risk of ectopic pregnancies, and chronic pelvic pain<sup>cxxxvi</sup>, which can also lead to mental health problems.

Waltham Forest's sexual health strategic approach includes a focus on education, prevention and treatment interventions targeted towards young people around STIs and contraception, and the reduction of onward transmission.

There has been reduced demand on some sexual health services during the COVID-19 lockdown, likely due to restricted opportunities to mix with sexual partners. However, individuals have continued to access remote services where there are ongoing needs, for example for contraception and STI/HIV treatment and testing. There is little evidence on the impact that easing lockdown and social distancing measures could have on sexual health, although it is possible that there could be an increase in STIs related to increased socialising opportunities, and reduced accessibility to some sexual health services due to the pandemic and re-organisation of health-care staff. Nationally there could be increased unintended pregnancies, and abortion/repeat abortions due to a decline in use of short- and long-acting contraception.<sup>cxxxvii</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Pelvic inflammatory disease is an infection of the upper genital tract in females, including of the womb, fallopian tubes and ovaries

# Q12

## How does the physical environment affect our residents' health?

Much of Waltham Forest's infrastructure, like its green space and cycle lanes, promote good health, but other factors including overcrowded housing negatively affect residents' health.

The physical environment in which we live, work, play and travel is a key determinant of a population's health and wellbeing, impacting on a wide range of health outcomes, most notably mental health, overweight and obesity, and perceptions and experience of crime and violence. There are many aspects of the

physical environment that can impact both positively and negatively on health. Influencing and improving the physical environment is an area of work that has significant potential for improving and protecting the health of the local population.

**Some of the key factors in the physical environment which impact on health in Waltham Forest include:**

- **Road system and transport network.**

These determine how people travel around the borough which impacts on physical activity levels, air quality and access to key services and social / employment opportunities. The percentage of adults walking for travel at least three days per week between 2016 and 2018 in Waltham Forest was around 37%. This is similar to the London average but better than nationally.<sup>cxxxviii</sup>

- **Green space.** Easy access to high quality green spaces can improve both mental and physical health through increasing physical activity levels, improving air quality, bringing people into contact with nature and social contact with other people. Between February 2015 and March 2016, the utilisation of outdoor space for exercise and/or health reasons in Waltham Forest was approximately 14.3%. This is one of the lowest in London.<sup>cxl</sup>

- **Housing quality and affordability.**

Health issues such as mental wellbeing, falls and other accidents, respiratory and infectious diseases, educational attainment, social isolation and economic wellbeing are all impacted by the design, quality and affordability of houses in the borough. In Waltham Forest, around 15.6% of households are considered to be overcrowded.<sup>cxxxix</sup>

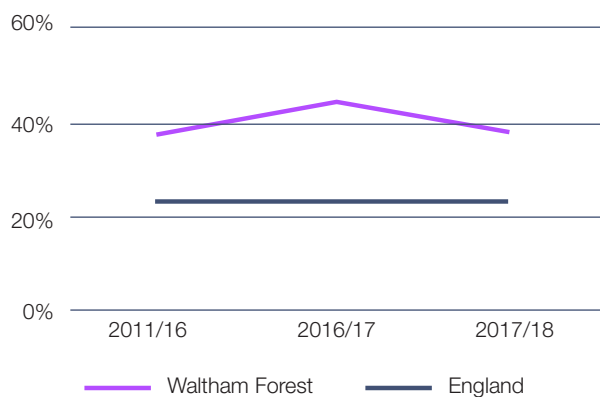
- **Other infrastructure that facilitates a healthy lifestyle.** This includes children's play equipment, outdoor gyms, sports and leisure facilities and food growing spaces. In Waltham Forest access to food growing opportunities is good, with 27 Council-managed allotment sites, seven non-Council-managed leased sites and four privately owned allotment sites.<sup>cxli</sup> Most of the parks in the borough

One of the most prominent impacts on health is the obesogenic environment which encourages unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles. Examples of an obesogenic environment include those where unhealthy food is easily and cheaply available from hot food takeaways and other outlets, where

motorised transport options are more easily accessed and more attractive than active forms, and where work takes place in offices and other settings in which sedentary activities are the norm with little option to maintain high physical activity levels.

The number of adults in Waltham Forest walking at least three days per week for active travel has been consistently higher than the national figures in recent years. Waltham Forest, however, has a high density of fast food outlets (read more in chapter 10).

### Percentage of adults walking for travel at least three days per week in Waltham Forest and England, 2015-2018.



Source: Public Health England

### The impact of COVID-19

While the pandemic may have increased use of outdoor space in the short term, the negative effects of overcrowded housing compound the risk from the virus, and the long-term effect of a likely increase in car use will be damaging to health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted how people are able and willing to interact with their physical environment and may cause long-term changes in this respect. This represents both an opportunity and a threat to public health and work should be targeted to maximising positive, and minimising negative, impacts.

In terms of transport, COVID-19 has impacted on both the quantity of journeys made and mode chosen. In the short term, the amount of travel on all modes clearly dropped substantially, which is likely to have reduced air pollution. The potential long-term impacts are less clear. Residents have been discouraged from using public transport and encouraged to use active transport modes (walking and cycling) or personal car use. In reality, even if the majority of displaced public transport users switch to cycling and walking, only a relatively small increase in car use would increase air pollution and congest roads, decreasing gains made from programmes of work such as Enjoy Waltham Forest in recent years.

Action has already been taken to prevent new fast food establishments opening within 400m of a school, youth club or park,<sup>cxlii</sup> but the Council's work to address the obesogenic environment is ongoing.



Use of outdoor spaces has been impacted by the pandemic. In the short term, use of green spaces and parks is recognised to have increased substantially when residents were using their allotted one hour exercise allowance, and allotments are well positioned to maintain healthy levels of usage and patronage, now and in the future. Paid-for leisure facilities are likely to come under pressure, with social distancing difficult to achieve in queues and changing rooms, meaning the numbers of people using the facilities may have to be limited, and when participating in sports and exercise activities.

### The local response

Waltham Forest Council is promoting the use of Health Impact Assessments to maximise positive health impacts and minimise negative ones of new developments. The Enjoy Waltham Forest team continue working to improve the uptake of active travel within the borough by developing cycle lanes, pedestrianising selected areas and promoting the programme in the media and at schools and community events. Protecting allotment sites within the borough not only allows the borough's residents to grow their own food but has the potential to improve physical and mental wellbeing by being in the natural environment.

# Q13

## How does work affect our residents' health?

Waltham Forest has average rates of employment, but inequitable access to good work which promotes health, and COVID-19 has changed the landscape both for those working at home and those in key-worker roles.

Employment is a protective factor for health when it is 'good work', defined as a safe and secure job combined with supportive management, mental stimulation and a good work/life balance, therefore contributing to an overall sense of wellbeing and purpose.<sup>cxliii</sup> Conversely, if work is bad and working conditions are inadequate, this can negatively impact mental and physical health, thereby increasing the opportunity for sickness absence from work.<sup>cxliiv</sup> 'Bad work' can often be worse for health than the health risks posed by unemployment.<sup>cxliv</sup> Supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of employees and employers is vital to maintaining a fit and productive workforce.<sup>cxlvi</sup>

In Waltham Forest, the percentage of those aged between 16 and 64 in employment is similar to the London and England averages,<sup>cxlvii</sup> and between April 2019 and March 2020 an estimated 73.7% of 16 to 64-year olds were in either full or part-time employment in Waltham Forest.<sup>cxlviii</sup> However, of working age individuals, 29.4% of those who were economically inactive in the borough in 2019/20 were on long-term sickness absence, one of the highest levels in London.<sup>cxlix</sup>



73.7%

of **16 to 64** year olds are in full or part time employment in Waltham Forest (2019/20)<sup>cxlvi</sup>



16.7%

of employees in Waltham Forest work in the wholesale and retail trade (2018)

The job design index, 'the content and organisation of one's work tasks, activities, relationships, and responsibilities',<sup>cl</sup> provides a benchmark for defining 'good work'. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Good Work Index Report for 2020, generally those in higher, managerial professions appear to report better outcomes than those in more routine occupations.<sup>cli</sup>

As of 2018, the largest workforce industry area in Waltham Forest was wholesale and retail trade, comprising 16.7% of the total number of employees in the area.<sup>clii</sup> The CIPD Good Work Index Report suggests that retail is considered to have one of the lowest job design index scores of all professions recorded.<sup>cliii</sup> In other words, it appears that Waltham Forest's largest sector of employment is also the least adequate relative to 'good work' standards. However, the report also suggests that small employers generally appear to be more satisfied with their jobs,<sup>cliv</sup> and as most businesses in the borough, 94.1%, are micro in size (ranging between 0-9 employees)<sup>clv</sup> this is a more positive feature of employment in the borough.

It is important to note however, that inequality still persists in access to good employment. Women, for example, are consistently shown to be at a greater risk of lower pay than men across all sectors.<sup>clvi</sup>

The gap in the employment rate between those in contact with secondary mental health services and the overall employment rate has gradually increased between 2011/12 and 2018/19. The gap has widened across England but particularly in Waltham Forest, which currently has the largest gap in London at 74.7 percentage points for 2018/19.<sup>clvii</sup> In Waltham Forest, only 4% of adults in receipt of secondary mental health services are employed.<sup>clviii</sup> It is difficult to know whether work has been a contributing factor to poor mental health of residents in the borough, but employment issues are indubitably a consequence. This too may demonstrate that there is more to be done in improving the opportunity for good work in the borough and improving the ability for people who have entered secondary mental health services to maintain work.

## The local response

To set a positive example of an employer upholding 'good work' values, Waltham Forest Council is currently applying for the London Healthy Workplace Award. This has already been achieved by three organisations within the borough and Waltham Forest is continuing to promote this to local businesses. This encourages organisations to recognise the importance of health and wellbeing within the workplace and to demonstrate that they fulfil a range of criteria. In addition, Waltham Forest is encouraging businesses to sign up to pay the London Living Wage to reflect the cost of living and working in London.



## The impact of COVID-19

The pandemic has resulted in an economic recession and unstable job market which, combined with workplace-related anxiety or unsafe home environments, are negatively impacting people's wellbeing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on work and health. Financial concerns have been one of the most profound repercussions, particularly for furloughed workers, where job security in the longer term has been unclear. Of those recently surveyed by CIPD, 39% overall felt that their finances had been negatively impacted by the pandemic, but for those who were furloughed, this concern was far greater at 57%.<sup>clix</sup>

It is thought that at its peak, almost half of the working population were working from home in the UK (44%).<sup>clx</sup> The long-term impact of working from home for such an extended period is not yet fully known. However, in a recent survey conducted by the ONS, 19.3% of respondents reported that they found home working 'difficult' with 11.3% reporting that they were having to work around childcare and 6% reporting working longer hours with reduced breaks.<sup>clxi</sup> It was also found that 1 in 10 respondents were concerned about their health and safety at work,<sup>clxii</sup> possibly as a result of poor workspaces at home or the negative impact of reduced social contact and routine upon their mental health.

The inability to leave home for work also presents challenges such as for those whose home life is inadequate or dangerous. Cases of domestic violence, for instance, have risen (read more in chapter 15), with one of the largest domestic abuse charities reporting a 700% increase in calls in one day.<sup>clxiii</sup> This presents additional healthcare challenges.

Concerns about contracting COVID-19 in the workplace are significant in the UK, with 47% of workers expressing anxiety about this in a survey in April.<sup>clxiv</sup> Frontline public-facing workers however are most at risk of contracting COVID-19 at work, and Waltham Forest has a particularly high number of residents affected by this in some way. In the UK, 46% of frontline workers said that COVID-19 was affecting their work, with 3 in 10 citing health and safety at work as the main concern with the difficulty to keep up to social distancing guidelines and limited PPE available.<sup>clxv</sup> Trends show that frontline workers, including health and social care employees, are at a significantly greater risk of death from COVID-19. The rates show that for males, there were 23.4 deaths per 100,000 and 9.6 deaths per 100,000 for females.<sup>clxvi</sup> Workers from minority ethnic backgrounds are disproportionately affected.<sup>clxvii</sup>

# Q14

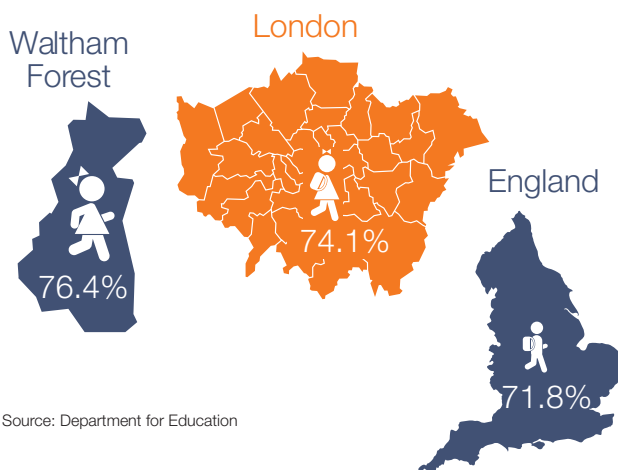
## How do life chances, development and education affect health?

Waltham Forest has a high rate of school-readiness, supported by high achievement of the Healthy Early Years London awards and continued with local successes in the Healthy Schools London awards programme, all of which promote good health.

Getting a good start in life, building emotional resilience and getting maximum benefit from education are the most important markers for good health and wellbeing throughout life. Early years and educational settings are vital in laying the foundations for lifelong health and wellbeing and for enabling children to become ready for life.

Waltham Forest is home to a wealth of high-quality educational facilities for its children and young people. Of the 44 maintained schools in the borough, 43 have been rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.<sup>clxxviii</sup> Data for 2018/19 shows Waltham Forest school readiness is improving and is better than the England average with 76.4% of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (end of Reception year), at age 5 (compared to 74.1% in London and 71.8% in England).<sup>clxxix</sup>

### Proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (2018/19)



Source: Department for Education

At Key Stage 2, 70% of pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2018, placing Waltham Forest 5 percentage points above national average.<sup>clxxx</sup> The borough was 23<sup>rd</sup> out of 152 local authorities for this measure.

There are, however, inequalities between young people in their experiences of school. Black young people and those of Mixed ethnicity in Waltham Forest make comparatively less academic progress than young people of other ethnicities, compared to other children with similar starting points, between key stages 2 and 4.<sup>clxxxi</sup> Furthermore, rates of temporary exclusion in Waltham Forest are highest amongst Black children.<sup>clxxxii</sup>

Attitudes, beliefs and behaviours learned during childhood continue into adulthood, so establishing healthy habits during these formative years is a key public health priority. Pupils with better health and wellbeing are likely to achieve greater academic success and have effective social and emotional competencies which are also associated with greater health, wellbeing and achievement. The culture, ethos and environment of a school also influences the health and wellbeing of pupils and their readiness to learn, and there is a positive association between academic attainment and physical activity levels of pupils.<sup>clxxxiii</sup>

### The local response

#### Healthy Early Years London Award

The Mayor's new Healthy Early Years London (HEYL) award programme is a key component of 'Better Health for Londoners', London's Health Inequalities Strategy, and aims to set a new industry standard and tackle health inequalities across the city at the earliest opportunity in a child's life. HEYL awards recognise nurseries and childminders across London which can prove they are providing a healthy setting for their children, staff and parents. So far, Waltham Forest has 44 settings registered, 31 settings have achieved the First Steps award, 7 have achieved bronze awards and 1 has achieved a silver award.



## Healthy Schools London Programme

The Healthy Schools London programme builds on the HEYL award programme by recognising schools which take a whole school approach to improving the health and wellbeing of pupils. In Waltham Forest, 68 schools are registered, 39 have a Bronze award, 21 a Silver and 10 a Gold award.

### Newport Primary School – Healthy Schools Gold Award



In completing their Gold Award, Newport Primary:

- increased the number of packed lunches with fruits and vegetables from **9%** to **82%**
- increased the number of packed lunches including the 4 main food groups from **24%** to **78%**
- eliminated foods high in salt/fat/sugar
- involved the least active pupils in 2 Physical Activity clubs
- received a visit from Deputy Mayor Joanne McCartney

## Life Chances

In 2017, the Council established the Life Chances Commission to support residents to thrive.<sup>clxxxiv</sup> The Council delivered a week of activities for young people in Autumn 2019. 'Opportunities to Flourish Week' involved a careers fair, higher education support, a financial awareness course and a variety of workshops including sexual health drop-ins. The Council also established the Big Youth Conversation (BYC), a regular engagement of young people to capture their thoughts and experiences. In the 2019 BYC, young people reported that the three things they need most in order to reach their goals are careers advice, financial advice, and opportunities for work experiences, traineeships and jobs.<sup>clxxxv</sup>

## The impact of COVID-19

Disruptions to schools, early years settings, young people's services and youth organisations will have a long-term effect on child wellbeing and development.

The COVID-19 outbreak will have a deep and long-lasting impact across the early years and education sector. Closures of early years and education settings and delays to exams created an unsettling time for children and families. The outbreak has affected vulnerable children and young people the most. The full extent of the impact that COVID-19 will have on children and young people's development and education is not yet known. However, some risks are already known.<sup>clxxxvi</sup> Children living in poverty are always more likely to fall behind over the summer break, and the extended closures of schools is likely to have disadvantaged these children disproportionately. Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) were entitled to attend school during the COVID-19 response, but families were encouraged not to take up the offer unless the child's needs could not be met at home.

Young carers are likely to continue to be faced with increased responsibilities and anxiety about their parent or sibling. They may also be cut off from support networks which can provide respite.

Some of the effects of school closures include missed education; lack of socialisation with peers; the consequence to children of early years settings closing, including on children's development and the childcare market; the widening disparity between groups in access to home-learning, access to nutritious food and stimulation over the long break; and the fallout of grades and qualifications allocated over the summer. These effects are likely to have an ongoing impact on children's health and wellbeing.

Children's education may continue to be disrupted as cases and outbreaks of COVID-19 locally may require children and staff to self-isolate for short periods of time. However, schools are well prepared to deliver remote teaching in these circumstances. Waltham Forest is also delivering the Department for Education 'Wellbeing for Education Return' programme which will provide training to school staff to respond to the additional pressures some children and young people may be feeling as a direct result of the pandemic and anxiety related to the return to school.

Other impacts to consider beyond the school environment include the capacity of children's services to support vulnerable children and young people and the effect of closures, social distancing and economic disruption on the many third sector organisations supporting young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health.

# Q15

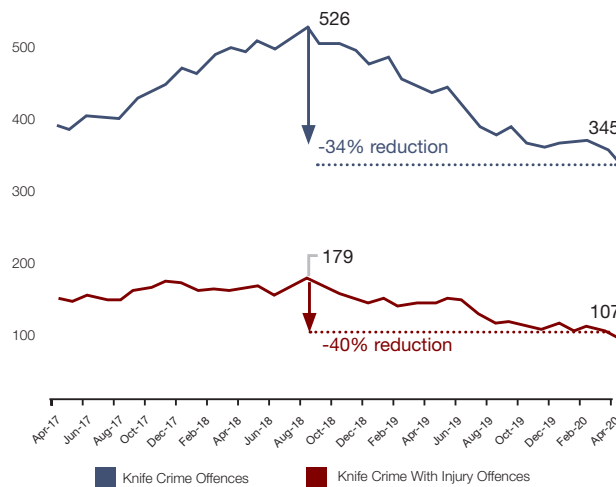
## How safe is it in Waltham Forest?

Recorded crime in Waltham Forest remains low however public perception of crime is one of the highest in London.

Serious violence has increased across the UK over recent years. Homicides, including murder, manslaughter, infanticide, and corporate manslaughter,<sup>cbxxvii</sup> have increased by over a third in the last five years; knife offences have risen by over 70%; and the number of under-18s admitted to hospital with knife injuries rose by a third between 2013/14 and 2017/18.<sup>cbxxviii</sup> A similar pattern has been seen in London. Rates of knife crime offences have increased from a low of 1.1 per 1,000, to 1.6 per 1,000 over the last year and the overall rate of serious violence has increased by around 25% since 2013/14.<sup>cbxxix</sup>

Earlier this year the Home Affairs Committee identified the following as possible reasons: cuts to youth services, cuts to police budgets, exclusions from schools and failure of agencies to safeguard and collaborate.<sup>cbxxx</sup> However, in Waltham Forest, there has been a significant reduction in knife crime offences since the peak in 2018. Despite this, Waltham Forest's residents remain worried about gun and knife crime and are more worried than most other London boroughs.

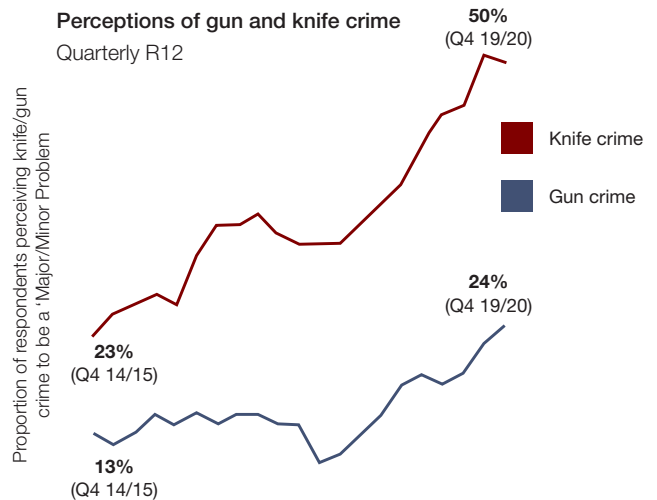
**Knife Crime Offences in Waltham Forest, 12 month rolling offending rate, 2016-2020.**



Source: Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime

Violence not only has an immediate impact on the physical health of those involved but can have far-reaching, long-term consequences, including on others. Young people involved in gangs are at increased risk of mental health and substance misuse issues.<sup>cbxxxi</sup> Violence in the home and community can also contribute to childhood trauma and some incidents are examples of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). There is substantial evidence from gang members, that experiencing multiple types of trauma, such as witnessing violence (including domestic violence), neglect and poverty, increases the

**Perceptions of gun and knife crime – Proportion of respondents identifying knife / gun crime to be a problem in Waltham Forest', 2014-2020.**



Source: Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime

risk of several negative health outcomes.<sup>cbxxxii</sup> These include substance misuse, involvement in violence and a range of mental health issues including anxiety, self-harm, PTSD and suicidal ideation or attempts.

Crime is the number one concern for the borough's residents, which is why Waltham Forest Council established the Violence Reduction Partnership in April 2019. This brings together the Metropolitan Police, health and education services, and the community and voluntary sector, to provide a Public Health Approach to reduce violence.

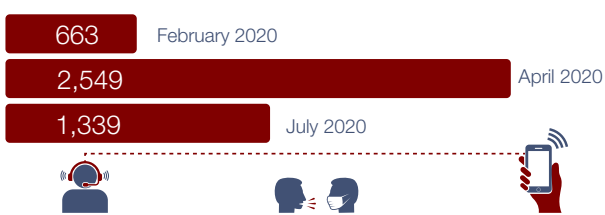
Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) continues to be a key public health and community safety concern. In Waltham Forest in 2019 there were 2,814 domestic abuse offences.<sup>clxxxiii</sup> The Council works closely with partners across the borough to prevent and address VAWG with a range of projects and workstreams. In 2017-2020 Waltham Forest led a school-based prevention programme. This project aimed to improve the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of young people, staff, parents and the community in relation to abusive relationships and to embed practice across the whole school through policy development and the Healthy Schools Framework (read more about Healthy Schools in question 14). As part of the legacy, teachers now have access to a suite of resources so they can implement the approach in their schools. Waltham Forest also works with providers to offer the IRIS project, a nationally recognised intervention aimed at improving GPs' ability to identify and respond to domestic violence.

## The impact of COVID-19

Whilst during lockdown much crime decreased locally, domestic violence increased, and rates of offences like hate crime and Anti-Social Behaviour are now on the rise again.

During the lockdown, total criminal damage, theft from a person, theft of cars and items in cars, and burglary reduced. This was mainly due to lockdown measures and the lack of free movement. However, these crimes have all slowly increased since lockdown eased. Theft from shops increased during lockdown, potentially a symptom of the financial difficulties COVID-19 has created. The number of calls made for Anti-Social Behaviour increased significantly (663 in February, 2,549 in April and 1,339 in July), in part due to residents not abiding by lockdown rules. Common assault and non-Domestic Abuse Violence With Injury were at their lowest since January 2017 (81 offences), but are also again on the rise.<sup>clxxxiv</sup> Racial hate crime was also at its lowest since January 2019 (19 offences), but is again increasing (53 offences in July).<sup>clxxxv</sup>

### Calls reporting Anti-Social Behaviour in Waltham Forest, Feb – Jul 2020



Whilst most crime reduced during lockdown, domestic violence increased. In the week leading up to the lockdown announcement (week commencing Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March), there was an increase in calls to the Waltham Forest Domestic Violence advice line of 48%. Since the lockdown, police have recorded 1,130 Domestic Violence incidences in Waltham Forest and there have been 439 referrals to Solace (an advice and support service). Refuge placements (particularly those inside London) have become more difficult to find. Waltham Forest Victims Support reported an increase in hospital referrals at the start of lockdown, but they are now back to pre-lockdown levels. Local and national organisations supporting perpetrators also reported increased activity.

## The local response

In order to ensure that residents remain safe during COVID-19 and beyond, the Council have adopted a tiered response according to risk, which means high-risk perpetrators remain under strict supervision; high-risk victims are offered support remotely by specialists and face to face by social workers (where appropriate); individuals at medium levels of risk are also being supported by specialists and Early Help Delivery (for under 18s);<sup>13</sup> daily risk management in the collaborative Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is used to ensure prompt safeguarding; risk management panels have moved to a virtual setting; mentoring is still running where safe to do so; Streetbase (a youth-led patrolling team) and Spark2Life (a charity aiming to eradicate crime and gang culture) are still engaged in limited outreach and Ask Me Ambassadors (trained community supporters) are still active virtually.

Since the pandemic, domestic abuse incidence data has been monitored on a daily basis, as are cases and service provision; drop-in surgeries continue whilst adhering to social distancing measures; there is regular communication about domestic abuse services through posters in supermarkets, flyers in food parcels, social media and a resident video.

In preparation for recovery post-COVID-19, Waltham Forest will be working closely with key collaborators in the Violence Reduction Partnership to prevent young people from becoming involved in violence, through a strong focus on reducing inequalities and improving mental wellbeing. The Violence Reduction Partnership will also be focusing on tackling violence, ending racial disparity, improving public perceptions of violence, and visibly demonstrating leadership.

<sup>13</sup> The Early Help Service is a collaborative service working with a child's family and other professionals to intervene early in a child's life to support families and ensure that children have the best start in life

# Q16

## What is the impact of poverty on health?

Poverty is a serious issue in Waltham Forest which directly impacts the health of residents and has knock-on effects on their access to nutritious food and warm homes.

Poverty is the lack of financial resource which people require to meet their needs.<sup>cbxxxvi</sup> There are many ways to estimate poverty levels. The Social Metrics Commission (SMC) accounts for material resources beyond income and includes those often excluded by other poverty measures such as those sleeping rough. The SMC estimates that over a fifth (22%) of the UK population are living in poverty,<sup>cbxxxvii</sup> and in London 28% of people live in poverty, taking housing costs into account.<sup>cbxxxviii</sup> This would equate to approximately 77,600 people living in poverty in Waltham Forest.

The government also specifically measures income deprivation. Waltham Forest is the 13<sup>th</sup> most income deprived of the 32 London boroughs and 72<sup>nd</sup> of all 317 local authorities in England.<sup>cbxxxix</sup> For overall deprivation, Waltham Forest ranks as the 12<sup>th</sup> most deprived London borough (based on 2019 data, compared to 7<sup>th</sup> most deprived in 2015).

Poverty is linked to people dying earlier and having long-term diseases like diabetes, heart disease or cancer, as well as engaging in health risking behaviours like smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and drug-taking.<sup>cx</sup> Poverty also profoundly impacts child health and development by negatively impacting their social development, educational attainment and, ultimately, ability to thrive as they grow older.<sup>cxci</sup> Poverty also stops some residents from being able to pay for fuel and food.

### Food Poverty

End Hunger UK estimate that 8% of adults in Britain have gone a whole day without eating due to a lack of money.<sup>cxcii</sup> This would equate to approximately 16,818 adults in Waltham Forest. Eat or Heat, a local foodbank provider in Waltham Forest, has seen a consistent rise in first referrals to the service every year since 2016.<sup>cxci</sup> There were 891 first referrals in 2019 compared to 528 in 2016. The three most common reasons cited for referral to Eat or Heat in 2019 were benefit delay, low income and unemployment. Food poverty is a contributor to diet-related ill health and is

linked to diabetes, cancer, CVD, and both obesity and malnutrition.<sup>cxci</sup> Food poverty is a clear example of a health inequality.

### Number of first referrals to Eat or Heat foodbank in Waltham Forest, 2016 – 2019.



### Fuel Poverty

Waltham Forest has the third highest proportion of households living with fuel poverty in London: 14.2%.<sup>cxcv</sup> The Government considers a household to be fuel poor 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 poverty line.'<sup>14</sup> <sup>cxcvii</sup> Cold homes can exacerbate health conditions including CVD, respiratory and circulatory illnesses and mental health problems, and under some circumstances this can be fatal. In the winter of 2017/18, Waltham Forest had a similar proportion of excess winter deaths to London and England, however there is significant fluctuation year-on-year and in 2016/17 the proportion in Waltham Forest was much higher than regionally and nationally.<sup>cxcvii</sup>

### The impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has worsened financial inequalities, driving many into instability and poverty and disproportionately causing ill-health and death in more deprived areas.

In the UK, Universal Credit claims increased after the COVID-19 lockdown was announced in March. Many people were either furloughed or were unable to sustain employment. On 27 March, there was a

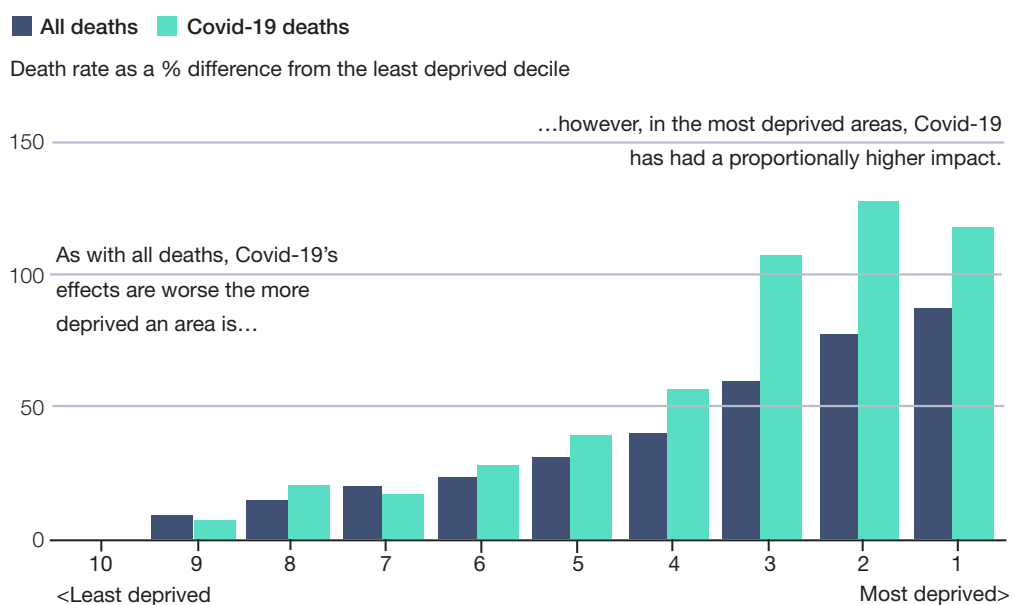
14 The poverty line here is defined as an equivalised disposable income of less than 60% of the national median.

peak in household claims and since 16 March the Department of Work and Pensions has received around 2.5 million individual claims which is far higher than the expected number.<sup>cxviii</sup>

The ability to pay rent or a mortgage for those on or below the poverty line has also worsened. Additionally, for households already in temporary accommodation, in which Waltham Forest is worse than average in

London at 21.47 per 1000,<sup>15 cxix</sup> the added complexity of lockdown measures combined with additional financial strain means some households may remain in unstable accommodation for longer. Deaths from COVID-19 have been disproportionately higher in more deprived areas, perhaps reflective of the social, economic, health and disability status of people in deprivation who appear to be more susceptible to COVID-19.

**Age-standardised mortality rates, all deaths and deaths involving COVID-19 by deprivation decile, England: deaths occurring between 1 March and 17 April 2020.**



Source: Office for National Statistics

Food poverty in the UK has also increased. In May, the Trussell Trust, an organisation supporting food banks in the UK, reported an increase of 81% in demand for emergency food which included a 122% rise in parcels for children.<sup>cc</sup> In a recent survey of Waltham Forest residents, 13% of respondents reported experiencing problems with food running out and not having the money to buy more during lockdown.<sup>cci</sup> Despite the easing of lockdown measures, it is likely that long-term food poverty will become more prevalent. COVID-19 is likely to continue to widen inequalities and result in those worst effected struggling to access nutritious food and enough fuel to heat their homes.<sup>ccii</sup> In turn, rates of poverty-related illness and death may increase in the long term.

**The local response**

Waltham Forest has committed to a range of actions to address food and fuel poverty. Waltham Forest's 2019 Food Poverty Action Plan sets objectives including

increasing breastfeeding rates, increasing provision of nutritious food to children to tackle holiday hunger, improving the food landscape and access to healthy options, and utilising children's centres to address food poverty.<sup>cciii</sup>

Since the pandemic, there has been a huge community response supporting residents' access to food (read more in chapter 19). Future responses to food poverty and food insecurity will build on these successes and the Council's strengthened relationships with food banks and other community organisations.

Waltham Forest's draft 2020–2025 Fuel Poverty Strategy commits to a series of local actions to address the issue including providing fuel poverty surgeries and sessions for residents on maximising income, engaging private-sector landlords, providing energy-saving advice to social housing residents, and identifying and working with residents living in homes with low energy-efficiency ratings.<sup>cciv</sup>

15 Temporary accommodation is the housing which local authorities are legally bound to provide to people who are homeless. This can include nightly accommodation, the private rented sector or bed and breakfasts.

# Q17

## How does climate and the environment affect people's health?

Air pollution and the effects of climate change are damaging to residents' health and are being addressed in Waltham Forest with interventions such as the promotion of active travel and improvements to local housing.

The global scientific consensus is that climate change is an unequivocal reality, and that the net effect of human activity since 1750 has been that of warming the planet.<sup>ccv</sup> Temperatures in the UK have been increasing by around 0.25°C per decade since the 1960s, and rainfall has decreased in summer and increased in winter.

### Climate change

In line with many other Local Authorities, Waltham Forest has declared a climate change emergency.<sup>ccvi</sup> It is clear that a number of current and future issues related to climate change could have a profound effect on health. Most of these impacts are negative, although some potential positive impacts have also been identified. Unsurprisingly the negative impacts significantly outweigh the positive impacts.

Climate change is expected to cause a number of changes that will impact on public health. Heatwaves are likely to become more frequent in the future in the UK.<sup>ccvii</sup> At present, the health burden due to low temperature exceeds that of high temperature. This is particularly the case in Waltham Forest where rates of excess winter deaths are higher than London and national averages.<sup>ccviii</sup> However, heat-related mortality is projected to increase steeply in the UK throughout the 21st century, from around a 70% increase in the 2020s to around 550% in the 2080s.<sup>ccix</sup> Certain population groups are more vulnerable to extreme heat and cold, including older adults and people with learning disabilities who may be less able to change their behaviours.<sup>ccx</sup> Future health burdens are therefore likely to be amplified by an ageing population, which will be seen locally in Waltham Forest.

Extreme weather events like floods and droughts resulting from climate change will also inevitably impact health, particularly mental health through disruption to critical supplies and also physical health through increased accidents. Effects of climate change in the indoor environment should not be overlooked, as the

population of the UK typically spends 90% of their time indoors and likely more during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>ccxi</sup> Climate change may exacerbate health risks associated with building overheating, indoor air pollution, flood damage and water and biological contamination of buildings.<sup>ccxii</sup> Hospitals, health centres and care homes may be adversely affected by high temperatures during heatwaves.

### Air pollution

Air quality is also an important aspect of the environment that has a significant impact on population health, especially in London where particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and other key pollutants are concentrated in higher levels compared to other areas.

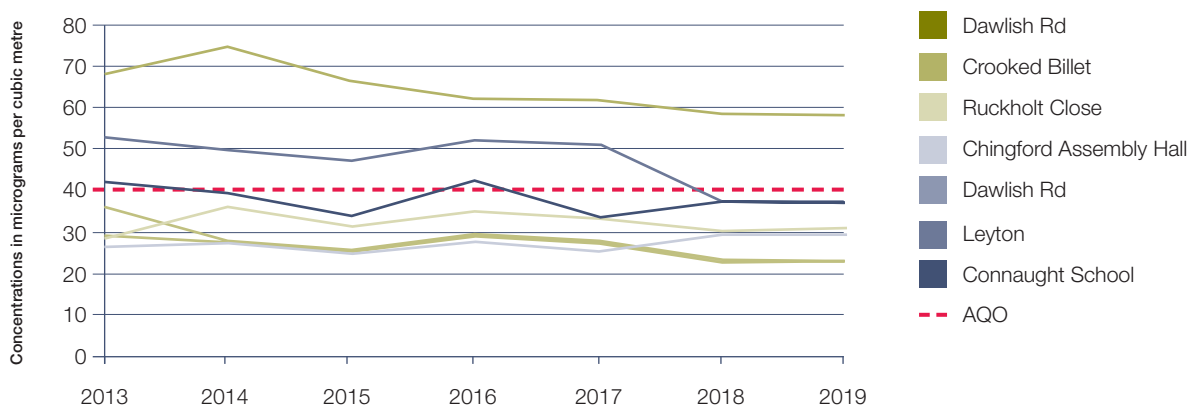
Air pollution is now the leading environmental risk linked to premature death and is responsible for substantial amount of morbidity.



It is estimated that 129 deaths in Waltham Forest in 2008 could be attributed to exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> alone.<sup>ccxiii</sup> Waltham Forest is meeting all the national air quality strategy objectives other than for the gas NO<sub>2</sub> in a few hotspots. The borough is also meeting the current objectives for PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> but as this pollutant is damaging to health at any level this remains a matter of concern.

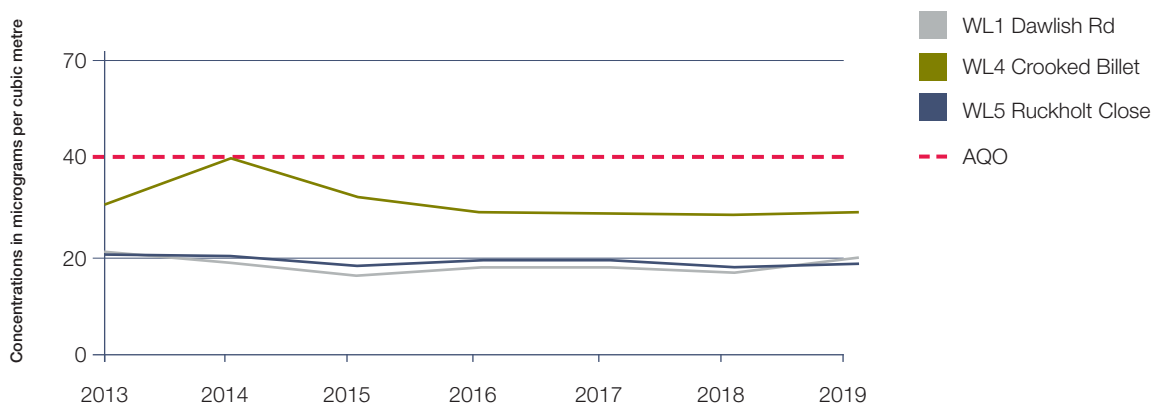
Trends in nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter concentration across monitoring locations in Waltham Forest show that air quality has gradually improved, though these improvements have recently plateaued. The NO<sub>2</sub> concentration at one of the locations, however, still exceeds the annual mean average Air Quality Objective (AQO) of 40µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

## Nitrogen dioxide concentrations at monitoring locations in Waltham Forest, 2013-2019.



Source: Waltham Forest Annual Air Quality Status Report 2019.

## Particulate matter concentrations at monitoring sites in Waltham Forest, 2013-2019.



Source: Waltham Forest Annual Air Quality Status Report 2019.

## The local response

In 2019 a Climate Emergency Commission was established in Waltham Forest in response to pressure nationally and locally and the declaration of a climate emergency at a Full Council meeting. This has involved receiving input from experts from across the energy, waste and environmental sectors who bring their knowledge and expertise to help the Council in the next phase of tackling the climate emergency.

The commission has reviewed and recommended actions under six areas: transport; homes; businesses; biodiversity, adaptation and resilience; waste and the circular economy; and behaviour change.<sup>ccxiv</sup> These actions will look to build on the existing work the Council is doing that will have a positive impact on climate change including promotion of active transport modes particularly over private car use, improving the housing stock in terms of insulation and efficiency, and supporting businesses to reduce their carbon footprint through zero emission deliveries and other schemes.

## The impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 is likely to have a negative impact on air pollution and use of single-use plastics, and has distracted from the ongoing climate emergency.

The long-term impact of COVID-19 on behaviours related to climate change is difficult to predict. There is already suggestion that the new social distancing measures will provide a good opportunity to increase active travel levels, although there is a converse risk that car use may also increase as a form of transport.<sup>ccxv</sup> Single-use plastic items used for PPE and other medical equipment is likely to increase over coming months and years. The main risk from COVID-19 to climate change could simply be that focus on this crucial issue is lost right at the time when it is needed most and when it has started to gain traction.

# Q18

## How do community connections affect people's health?

Community connection is a protective factor for residents' mental and physical health, and is a particular issue locally for older people and those with a long-term condition or disability.

There is a plethora of evidence that highlights community connection as a key factor for improving mental wellbeing in a population. Research conducted by the New Economics Foundation showed that 'connecting' was one of 5 important actions that people can take to positively influence their wellbeing and protect from mental health problems.<sup>ccxvi</sup> Sir Michael Marmot demonstrated in his review that people with stronger social networks are healthier and happier.<sup>ccxvii</sup>

Data from The Health Foundation sheds further light into types of connections and how social and community connection impacts a person's health:<sup>ccxviii</sup>

There is also a correlation between community cohesion and reduced crime levels and increased community safety.<sup>ccxix</sup>

Whilst community connections promote health, the opposite is true for social isolation and loneliness which are linked to higher risks for a variety of physical and mental conditions including depression, cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease, anxiety, depression and even death. There is also evidence of a significant association between loneliness and both cancer and greater susceptibility to infectious diseases.<sup>ccxx</sup>

Responses to the Waltham Forest resident insight survey also confirm this link and show an association between social contact and wellbeing. The groups in Waltham Forest with least social contact levels, such as older adults, disabled adults and people who were out of work, also had the lowest wellbeing levels: 21% of adults over 65, and 28% of people with disabilities and long-term conditions said they have satisfactory levels of contact with people they liked. This is significantly lower than the levels reported by all residents. The survey also shows that in 2019 fewer people had 'as much social contact as they want with people they like' than in 2018 (37% vs 42%).<sup>ccxxi</sup>

### POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS



Connections and relationships help people feel cared for but also provide a feeling of self-esteem from supporting others

### COMMUNITY COHESION AND CONNECTION



Beyond immediate relationships, connections across communities help people feel included and valued

### SOCIAL PARTICIPATION



Community cohesion and connection. Beyond immediate relationships, connections across communities help people feel included and valued

### COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT



Community participation also leads to community empowerment where people feel a sense of control when they are part of a collective voice that can enable them to influence and enact positive change

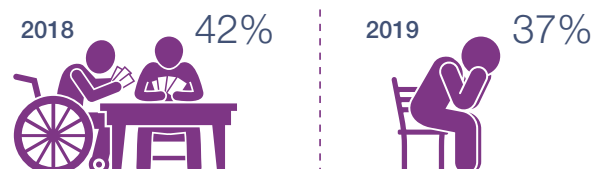
### Wellbeing

21% of adults over 65, and 28% of people with disabilities and long-term conditions said they have satisfactory levels of contact with people they liked.



### Social contact

In 2019 fewer people had 'as much social contact as they want with people they like' than in 2018





## The impact of COVID-19

The lockdown and ongoing social distancing measures have increased isolation and loneliness. The COVID-19 pandemic presents a risk of declining mental wellbeing in the short, medium and long term.<sup>ccxxii</sup> With the need for self-isolation, social distancing and lockdown curfews to curtail the spread of the virus, and in the face of deaths, social upheaval and a corresponding increase in consumption of news media, the prevalence of mental health conditions is expected to rise long-term. It is also worth noting that people most affected by COVID-19 are also in groups most likely to be affected by social isolation, namely the elderly and people with underlying health conditions. The pandemic also presents opportunities for community cohesion, and there has been an overwhelming response from the community in Waltham Forest to support one another and people at increased risk of social isolation (discussed further in chapter 19).

## The local response

### Five Ways to Wellbeing Campaign

The Five Ways to Wellbeing campaign promotes evidence-based actions in everyday lives (connecting, being active, learning new things, taking notice and giving)



Many of the actions promoted as part of the campaign address social isolation and encourage meaningful connections. Messages have been widely disseminated on social media, and training around wellbeing has been delivered to staff and in schools. A video explaining how the five ways to wellbeing can be utilised while socially isolating was disseminated in March. Further physical and digital local resources are also being developed and will be disseminated widely across the borough.

## Connecting Communities Programme

The Connecting Communities Programme's vision is to unlock the collective power of Waltham Forest's people to build an integrated, supportive and safe community where every resident and local organisation is empowered to lead change that makes Waltham Forest a better place to live.



The programme aims to improve social cohesion, social capital, and social responsibility through encouraging participation, social mixing, and providing opportunities for residents to form new social connections. The programme has three key pillars which include four community networks across the borough to mobilise people and resources, a series of innovations which bring people together with a focus on specific disadvantaged cohorts, and a communications campaign to promote inclusion and encourage social action.

The programme has made good progress to date. The four community networks have over 650 members between them and have had positive engagement from across the community. The Council was the first in the country to run a citizen's assembly on hate crime with the community taking the lead in identifying solutions to tackling the issues and developing solutions. The Common Room, an innovative and solution-focussed community centre, has had great success in supporting residents with their career plans, and the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Single Point of Contact service has improved satisfaction amongst learners and providers.

# Q19

## What's great about living here?

Waltham Forest is home to a range of community assets which benefit residents' health and wellbeing, including a diverse community, vibrant cultural calendar and wealth of green space.

The beating heart of Waltham Forest is its vibrant, culture-led, diverse community. The borough has a long history of makers and creators whose creativity, radical thinking and shared sense of purpose has helped to drive innovation and progress across the borough. The area has been home to many notable cultural figures, both historical and contemporary, including William Morris, Alfred Hitchcock, and Damon Albarn.



The borough's present-day community also has access to a range of assets which contribute to good health. Community assets include the skills and knowledge of community members, friendships and connections between residents, the physical and environmental resources on offer, and facilities available, all of which contribute to positive health and wellbeing.<sup>ccxxiii</sup>

### 2019 Borough of Culture

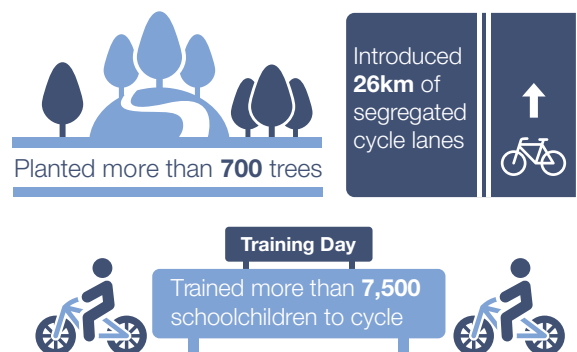
Waltham Forest was the first London Borough of Culture and its fantastic programme carried with it a profound sense of community ownership. During the programme, all 88 schools in the borough were involved and more than 1,000 volunteers signed up to be involved.<sup>ccxxiv</sup> The borough achieved challenging targets including seeing over 500,000 visits to cultural events. Young people received work experience, coaching and career opportunities in the creative sector, and residents felt empowered to create, deliver, promote and share their cultural experiences.



Throughout 2019, more than 1,000 projects, events and cultural activities formed the Borough of Culture programme, involving over 800 artists and creative organisations. The future of culture across Waltham Forest is set to go from strength to strength, building upon the robust community links forged throughout 2019.

### Enjoy Waltham Forest

This successful programme has been introduced to make the streets and roads of Waltham Forest fit for all its residents to use, whether they walk, cycle, use public transport or drive.



This development has not only made the borough a better place to live, work and travel, it has also helped to attract more residents, visitors and businesses. This has improved the local economy and generated new jobs, not to mention the positive impact the increased uptake of walking and cycling is having on improving the health and fitness of residents.



## A Family-Friendly Borough

The local Walthamstow Wetlands is an internationally important nature reserve, providing home and shelter to a wide range of wildlife, from rare waterfowl to majestic birds of prey. With family-friendly activities and fun-filled events for adults such as talks, tours and workshops, Walthamstow Wetlands provides a unique setting in the heart of London for people of all ages to learn, discover and explore.

The borough is also home to many parks, playgrounds and open spaces. Residents can enjoy free exercise classes delivered outside by Our Parks or visit some of the markets and festivals taking place in Waltham Forest's green spaces. Families and children have the choice of many libraries and leisure centres, and the borough's high streets feature lots of small, independent businesses.

## Resident satisfaction



With so many fun and inspiring activities and events in Waltham Forest, it is not surprising to find high levels of civic pride throughout the borough.

As of spring 2020:

- 88% of residents surveyed reported satisfaction with the local area
- 82% of residents felt that they strongly belonged in Waltham Forest
- 76% of residents feel comfortable talking to people in their local area

## The impact of COVID-19 and the local response

**Waltham Forest's community have rallied together around the most vulnerable in the face of the pandemic.**

The impact of COVID-19 has demonstrated both the strong sense of community throughout Waltham Forest and the efficiency of its local Council. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Council established the Community Help Network with established community groups and volunteers to enhance and coordinate the community response for those in need. The COVID-19 pandemic saw a huge response from the community ranging from supporting vulnerable residents with daily tasks and errands to providing [financial assistance to residents](#) experiencing hardship.

Four thousand residents volunteered to help.<sup>ccxxvi</sup> Volunteers spent over 1,000 hours packing food and over 3,000 hours supporting shielding and vulnerable residents over the telephone. Volunteers also delivered food to residents and food banks, delivered prescriptions and baby bank supplies, and knocked on doors of residents in need. More than 3,400 food parcels were delivered to eligible residents. Local community and voluntary sector organisations were integral to the local support offer, and together received £39,000 raised through crowdfunding. Residents also generously donated food to food banks and PPE to frontline staff. Some residents also provided short-term foster care for some of the borough's most vulnerable young people.

Waltham Forest's residents and exceptional volunteers came together in times of need and demonstrated the true meaning of community spirit. The response also highlighted the huge amount which can be achieved by local people working together.

As well as responding to specific health concerns identified and described throughout this report, it is important to make use of the community assets available to help residents stay well. Now more than ever, as the borough begins the recovery process from the COVID-19 pandemic, Waltham Forest must capitalise on its community, infrastructure and opportunity for residents to support sustainable improvement in health and wellbeing.

# Q20

## What does the future look like for the health of people in Waltham Forest?

As this report has demonstrated, the health of the people in Waltham Forest is a product of a complex set of factors. Particularly in current circumstances with the many unknowns presented by the COVID-19 outbreak, it is difficult to predict future needs and outcomes. However, the causes and consequences of elements of the populations' health are clear.

### Future health priorities

<p>Keeping residents safe and recovering from COVID-19</p> 	<p>Alcohol and drugs</p> 	<p>Mental health</p> 	<p>Long-term conditions</p> 
<p>Physical activity and diet</p> 	<p>Children and young people</p> 	<p>Physical environment</p> 	<p>Reducing inequalities</p> 

Waltham Forest's population is ageing and spending an increasing proportion of life living with ill health. The need for prevention, early identification and effective treatment of long-term conditions like diabetes and heart disease is ever more pressing. Inequalities are rampant and hinge

on population-level characteristics like deprivation, age, sex, and ethnicity. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact across different groups as a result of these inequalities, and consequently both exposed and worsened them.

## The impact of COVID-19 and the local response

Little is known about the ongoing effects of COVID-19 on the population's wider health but preliminary investigations suggest that the outbreak and corresponding restrictions have already and will continue to impact residents' health beyond the immediate risk of infection. Future priorities arising out of COVID-19 are likely to include a continued focus on residents' mental health; support in response to risky behaviours like substance misuse which are expected to face increased demand upon the easing of restrictions; a renewed focus on physical activity and diet after many people's lifestyles have been significantly disrupted; support for the borough's children and young people, a group widely recognised as disproportionately impacted by the restrictions; the reciprocal relationship between the population's health and the physical environment of the borough; and reducing inequalities.



More broadly, the Council will continue to focus on the Waltham Forest Health and Wellbeing Board's current priorities: alcohol and drugs, better mental health for all, and healthy living for all. The ambitions for the future health of Waltham Forest residents will continue to be that residents are born, live and age in the best health, with minimal inequalities.

One of the ways in which the population's health will continue to be supported is through improvements being made to local healthcare services and the way they are delivered. As described in chapter 9, the future health and care system will move towards a single, integrated model of person-centred, holistic care delivered in the local community. This work has begun with Primary Care Networks, which allow small groups of General Practices to work together, and will extend throughout the health and care system. The redevelopment of Whipps Cross hospital is a key part of this strategy. The hospital itself will be rebuilt more

efficiently, making use of vertical space, and creating room for other community facilities on site. The redevelopment is part of wider plans to deliver more services closer to home.



Health is also interwoven through wider Council priorities. In 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and launched the Climate Emergency Commission. As described in chapter 17, climate change is having a significant and predominantly negative impact on the population's health. Climate change is a systemic issue, and as such Waltham Forest is taking a cross-system approach to tackling the emergency by involving a range of partners in energy, waste, transport, and housing, among others. The Council intends to maximise the opportunity for further action against Climate Change as part of the borough's recovery from COVID-19, drawing on the common factors underpinning both crises. The innovative measures being taken locally are a step in the right direction towards a healthier future.

Finally, recovery from COVID-19 is a key priority for the Council in both the short and long term. The Council is working to ensure that it continues to be well-resourced and able to maintain provision of high-quality services, while also taking forward learning from the crisis response. It will continue, alongside a broad range of partners, to work with the community to protect the health and wellbeing of the local population, with a focus on the most vulnerable.

The Council understands the significant financial impact which COVID-19 has had on both residents and businesses, and will work to support local innovation and entrepreneurship. It recognises that the key to recovering from COVID-19 is engagement and involvement with residents, and thus this will sit at the heart of our recovery. The Council is utilising the current momentum and opportunity for change to help Waltham Forest emerge from the crisis as a more resilient and more connected community.

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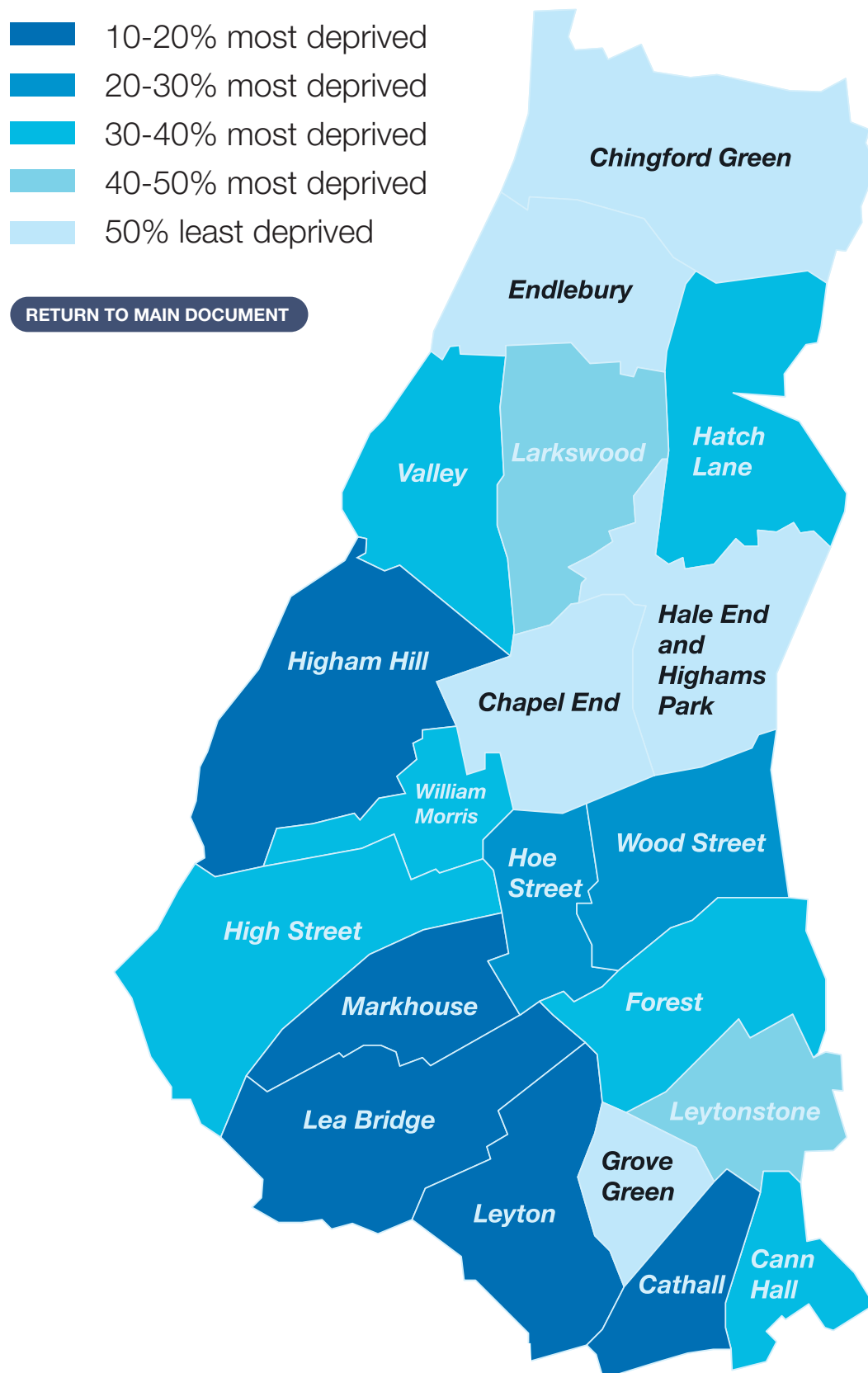
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## Deprivation in Waltham Forest by ward



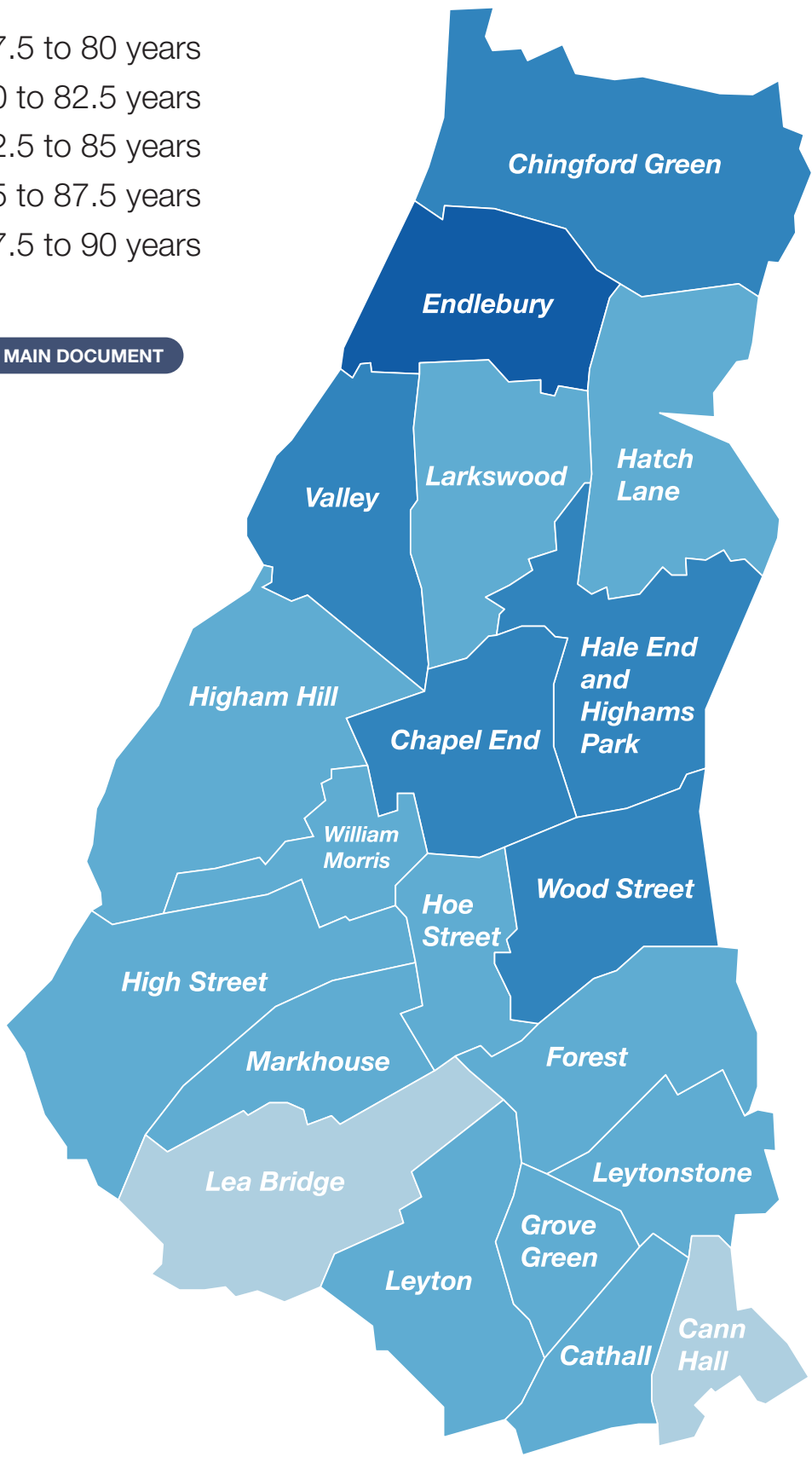
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# Life expectancy at birth, Female

- 77.5 to 80 years
- 80 to 82.5 years
- 82.5 to 85 years
- 85 to 87.5 years
- 87.5 to 90 years

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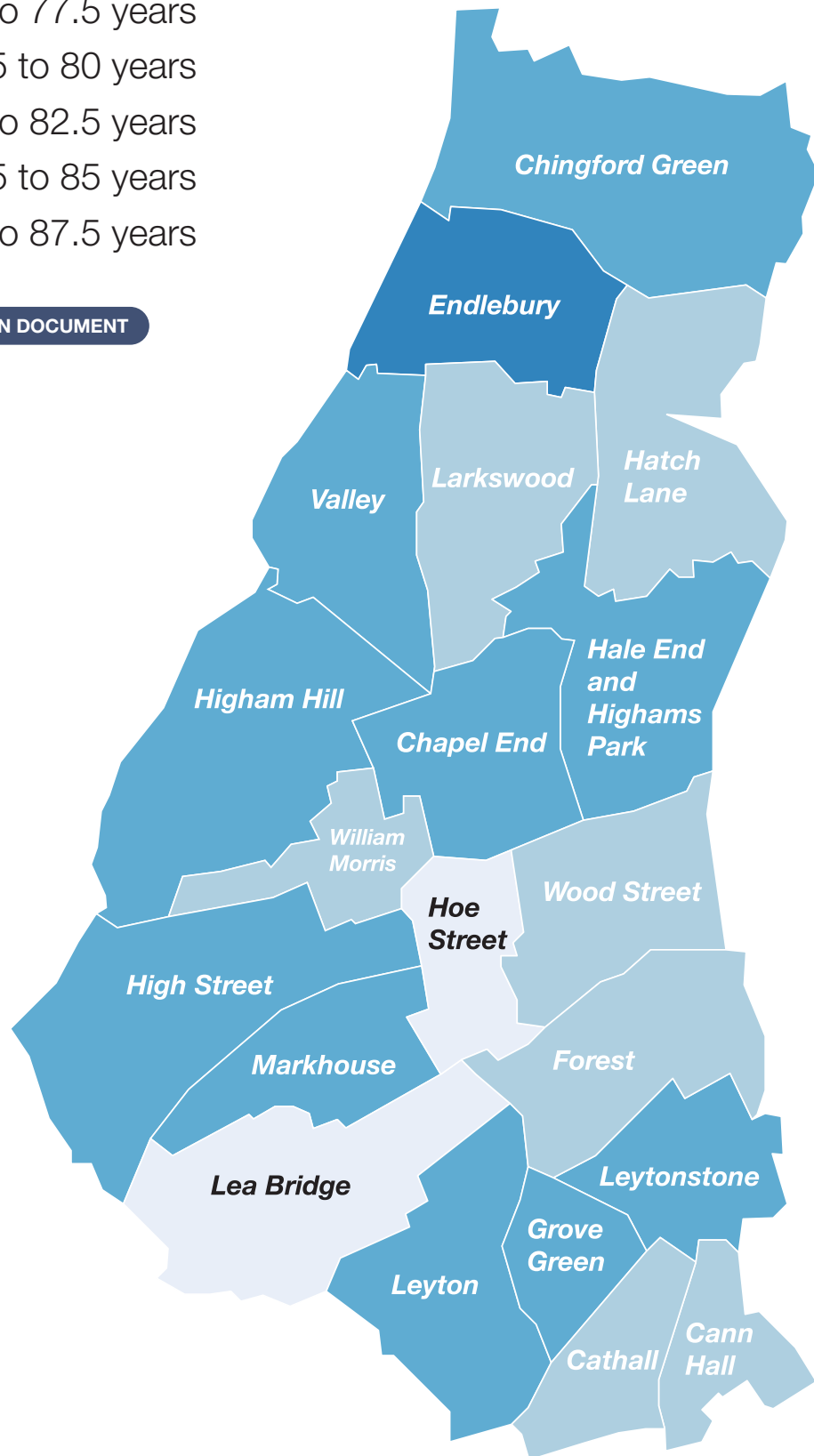


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# Life expectancy at birth, Male

- 75 to 77.5 years
- 77.5 to 80 years
- 80 to 82.5 years
- 82.5 to 85 years
- 85 to 87.5 years

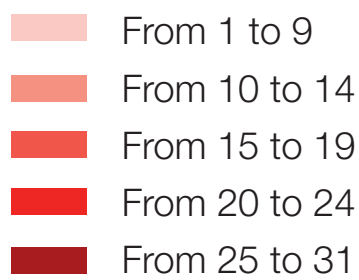
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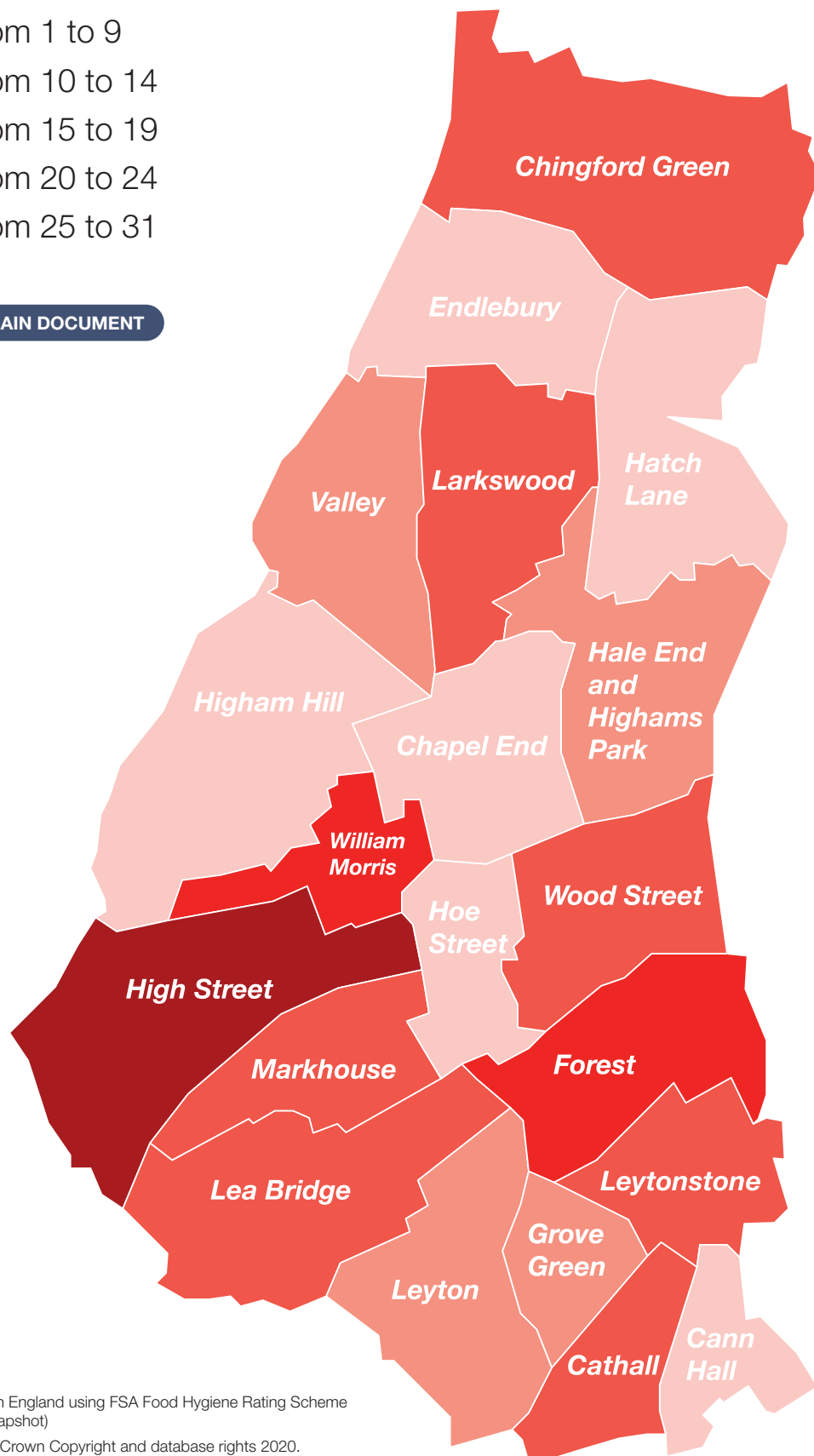
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## Number of fast food outlets in Waltham Forest by ward



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