10. Community safety and cohesion

Tower Hamlets has one of the most diverse populations in the UK and our residents get on well with each other, our crime recording practices have improved which is reflected in the increase in reporting of crime in the borough, and the Police and other local public services have been improving in how they tackle ASB issues.

Key findings

- People of different backgrounds get on well together in Tower Hamlets – 92 per cent of residents surveyed agree – a new historical high for the borough.

- Whilst the levels of reported cohesion are hugely positive, there has been a rise in racist and religious hate crime. There were 756 offences in year ending January 2018, less than the 829 offences in the previous year but significantly higher than the 572 offences recorded in 2016.

- In 2017-18, there were 32,233 crimes reported in Tower Hamlets, up 5 per cent from the previous year. This is in line with trends across London, and England and Wales, which have also seen rises of 8 per cent and 14 per cent respectively.

- Theft and handling stolen goods accounted for over one third (37 per cent) of crime in Tower Hamlets – similar to last year.

- Domestic violence accounts for the highest proportion (3,051 incidences) of violent crime in the borough, followed by violence with injury (2,835 incidences).

- There were 14,867 incidences of Anti-social behaviour in the borough last year.

- Robbery, Burglary and Knife Crime incidents have risen in the borough – up 23 per cent, 5 per cent and 13 per cent respectively from last year. This is in line with the trends across London.

- The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 which is an overall relative measure of deprivation in LSOAs in England, showed that Weavers, Bow West, St Peter’s and Mile End wards experienced the highest levels of crime deprivation.

- Drug use remains a significant concern for residents: more than half (56 per cent) felt that people using or dealing drugs was a very or fairly big problem in their local area.
Introduction
Safety and freedom from crime and anti-social behaviour are key to ensuring the borough is a vibrant and successful place. The vast majority of residents, in a borough often characterised as hyper diverse, agree that they get on well with each other. However the borough still suffers from high levels of crime and even in the context of greater confidence in the reporting of crime and there are concerning trends in the increase of certain types of crimes including hate crime.

The Tower Hamlets Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is a multi-agency strategic group set up as part of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Partnership approach is built on the premise that no single agency can deal with, or be responsible for dealing with, complex community safety issues and that these issues can be addressed more effectively and efficiently through working in partnership.

The CSP is made up of both statutory agencies and co-operating bodies within the borough. The statutory agencies are: Tower Hamlets Police; London Borough of Tower Hamlets; National Probation Service; London Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC); Hackney, City of London and Tower Hamlets Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC); London Fire Brigade; and NHS Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group.

To respond to matters of community safety, the council and its partners produce an annual Strategic Assessment(Crime and Disorder Regulations 2007), providing an analysis of the current community safety issues in the area, the changes in those levels and patterns, and the Partnership’s priorities to tackle the local issues. The strategic assessment and the findings of the public consultation carried out by the Partnership were then used to produce the Partnership’s Community Safety Partnership Plan 2017-21 for the borough. The CSP are due to produce the 2018 Strategic Assessment.

The CSP Plan’s four Priority Themes are:
- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) including Drugs and Alcohol
- Violence
- Hate Crime, Community Cohesion and Extremism
- Reducing Re-offending

Crime in Tower Hamlets
Many crime statistics are reported on a monthly basis but are also often subject to change because of for example, reclassification to other more relevant categories. This happens when more is understood about the crime following police investigation but also because decisions to prosecute a crime depends on enough information being available to charge or prosecute offenders.

According to the data from the London Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), in the year ending January 2018 Tower Hamlets recorded a total of 32,233 notifiable offences, ranking the borough 7th of the London boroughs and
accounting for 4 per cent of all notifiable offences in the Capital. This is a 5 per cent increase from the previous year where the total offences recorded were 30,640.

When comparing Tower Hamlets with that of our neighbouring boroughs within the MPS East Sector, Tower Hamlets had the 2nd highest number of notifiable offences, following Newham who had a recorded 34,806 total offences.

In London there were 829,475 total notifiable offences, an 8 per cent increase from the previous year2; and there were over 5 million offences across England and Wales in the year ending September 2017, a 14 per cent increase from the previous year3.

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), increase in police recorded crime from the previous year reflects a range of factors including continuing improvements to crime recording and genuine increases in some crime categories, especially in those that were already well-recorded.4

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 (IMD) includes an average crime deprivation score for which Tower Hamlets is ranked 13th highest out of 326 areas in England. The crime domain measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at a local level. The indicator captures data on reported incidents relating to violent crime, burglary, theft, and criminal damage.

A high proportion (43 per cent) of the borough’s Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are in the ten per cent most deprived nationally on this measure—this is the 5th highest percentage in England (after the boroughs of Lambeth, Newham, Islington and Hackney - where the proportions of highly deprived LSOAs range from 44-54 per cent).

Map 10.1 shows where the most deprived LSOAs on the crime domain are in the borough. There are significant concentrations of highly deprived areas on the crime domain in the West as well as the East of the borough. The least deprived areas on the crime domain are typically in areas around St Katharine’s Dock and the Canary Wharf areas. There are four wards that are in the most deprived 2 per cent of wards in England. These are Weavers, Bow West, St Peter’s and Mile End.
**Composition of crime**

Figure 10.1 shows the composition of crime in Tower Hamlets for the year ending January 2018. Based on data from the Metropolitan Police\(^5\), in 2017/18 there were a total of 32,233 notifiable offences recorded in Tower Hamlets, of which theft and handling stolen goods offences account for the highest proportion (37 per cent) with 12,080 offences recorded.

Violence against the person ranks 2\(^{nd}\) highest of all crimes recorded in Tower Hamlets (31 per cent) with 10,154 recorded offences.

Burglary is the 3\(^{rd}\) highest proportion of all crimes recorded in the borough (9 per cent) with 2,974 offences recorded.

**Anti-social behaviour including Drugs and Alcohol**

There were 14,867 incidences of ASB reported through calls to 101 and 999 in the year ending January 2018.

This data from MOPAC also shows that whilst Tower Hamlets experienced the highest numbers of ASB related calls within the MPS East Sector, it also saw a large reduction in reports of ASB incidences (18 per cent).

The Annual Residents’ Survey 2017\(^6\) captures resident perceptions about a range of council services and the area they live in including a suite of questions on residents’ concerns about anti-social behaviour. The issue of people using and dealing drugs remains the area with the highest percentage of people who think it is a major problem. Whilst there has been some
improvement over time it remains a concern to 56 per cent of people. See Figure 10.2.

The proportion of residents who feel people being drunk or rowdy was a problem was 39 per cent - the same level as last year, but well below the level (50 per cent) recorded in 2014.

The third highest area of concern was vandalism, graffiti and damage to property or vehicles with 35 per cent of people concerned about this issue. 60 per cent of residents agreed that Police and other local public services were successfully dealing with ASB issues in their local area.

The council is currently implementing the recommendations from the borough ASB review and ASB Blueprint to respond to ASB more cohesively and effectively:

- Introducing a Community (ASB) Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Case-conference (MARAC) to support the most vulnerable victims and perpetrators to address this type of behaviour and ensure that safeguarding principals are followed.
- Commissioning an Adult Mental Health Practitioner to specialise in ASB cases, providing assessment, expert guidance to enable ASB case investigators to support vulnerable victims and help vulnerable perpetrators to address their behaviour.
- Commissioning an independent ASB advocate service to provide emotional and practical support to victims and those affected by ASB throughout the investigation and enforcement process.
- We are working together more efficiently, training frontline teams, and residents, on the tools and powers that are available to prevent and tackle ASB, with the aim that they are used more effectively.
- Newly commissioned treatment services to identify a larger cohort of individuals using drugs / alcohol problematically and improve the outcomes of structured treatment interventions.
- Work closely with Children’s Services to identify and address parental substance misuse to minimise the harms and neglect experienced by children and prevent intergenerational substance misuse.
• A Late Night Levy came into effect on 1st January 2018. This will fund specialist interventions targeted at reducing late night and alcohol-related issues.
• The Substance Misuse Strategy Action Plan for 2017/18 will address the three strands of the strategy: Targeting resources to reduce drug-dealing and misuse through supporting individuals out of dependency, disrupting supply, and prevention through education and diversion programmes.
• Developing and implementing robust pathways for drug / alcohol related ASB which will ensure individuals are required to address their substance misuse issues, using all relevant tools and powers available.

Each year, more than 2,000 residents receive treatment for substance misuse problems in Tower Hamlets. Engagement of individuals causing crime or ASB in treatment is vital, contributing to the prevention of crime and reducing the social and economic costs to society. Public Health England estimates that each £1 spent on drug treatment will save £4 on costs to society.7

A new measure has been introduced in 2017/18 which records how effectively services engage offenders who commit crime / ASB because of their drug / alcohol use into treatment programmes to help prevent further offending. Figure 10.3 shows the number of offenders required to engage in structured treatment programmes via criminal or civil orders.

**Violence including Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**

The Community Safety Partnership monitors violence against women and girls through a number of priority performance indicators. These are the number of domestic violence offences reported to the Police, the number of rape and other sexual offences, the number of individual crimes of harassment recorded and the sanction detection rate which broadly reflects the proportion of the offences that were solved or led to a prosecution. The Violence Against Women and Girls & Domestic Abuse Steering Group also monitors the number of professionals receiving training and the reported increase in awareness of violence against women and girls.

Data from MOPAC indicates that for the year ending January 2018, with 3051 incidents reported there has been a slight increase in the number of Domestic Violence (DV) offences of around 1 per cent, and a decrease in the number of...
sanctioned detections of about 3 percentage points. This is less than the MPS average, where an increase in offences of 5 per cent was recorded.

Table 10.2 indicates that the total number of recorded incidents of Rape increased by 12 per cent in the year ending January 2018 at 299 incidents, compared to the previous year which was 267 incidents.

The overall number of sexual offences recorded increased by 6 per cent in the year ending January 2018 at 770 incidents, compared to the previous year which was 725 incidents.

There has been a 2 per cent decrease in the rate of violence with injury in the borough for year ending January 2018 with 2,835 incidents reported, compared to the previous year which was 2,978 incidents.

Youth violence has decreased by 9 per cent for the year ending January 2018 with 679 incidents reported, compared to the previous year which was 748 incidents.

In regards to the number of professionals receiving training and reported awareness of VAWG, for the year ending March 2016, the council recorded 702 multi-agency professionals having received training relating to VAWG. All reported increased awareness of VAWG and 100 per cent positive feedback received.

The Tower Hamlets Community Safety Unit focuses on improving investigations and victim care, and continues to work hard with partners to secure the best outcomes for victims in terms of risk management, safeguarding and support, as well as criminal justice disposal.

- This includes delivering a VAWG training programme to raise awareness including VAWG Champions Project, ‘whole school’ approach, 3 day compulsory training for Children Social Care social workers on VAWG, Local Safeguarding Children Board Domestic Violence Training and harmful practices to improve early identification assessments and partnership approach to prevention.
- Increasing the number of domestic abuse reports and access to specialist services via the delivery of core projects and campaigns.

The CSP also monitor the victim satisfaction rate for DV victims accessing emotional and practical support through Victim Support is 84 per cent in the borough. While
the latest victim satisfaction at the Specialist Domestic Violence Court is 92 per cent as of Quarter 2, which is higher than any other London Borough.

Hate crime
Hate crime is recorded as a Priority Performance Indicator (PPIs) and is reviewed by the Tension Monitoring Group and the No Place for Hate forum which are partnership groups that work to respond to and tackle cohesion challenges. Table 10.3 shows that the vast majority of hate crime incidents for the year ending January 2018 were Racist and Religious Hate Crimes (756 incidences). This is the second highest in the MPS, but a decrease of 8 per cent from the previous year.

The rate of Homophobic Hate Crimes in Tower Hamlets was 118 incidents in the year ending January 2018.

There were 22 Disability Hate Crimes recorded in the borough for the year ending January 2018.

The Tower Hamlets Community Safety Unit is:
- Delivering action plans to impact on all forms of hate and agree and publish a borough wide approach to community cohesion.
- Increase the reporting of hate incidents and provide access to specialist services via delivery of core projects and campaigns.
- Delivering training and support to frontline staff and those with responsibilities under the Prevent Duty, to ensure clarity and efficiency of the referral process.

Reducing re-offending
The categories of robbery, burglary and knife crime are also Priority Performance Indicators (PPIs). Robbery in summary terms involves theft from a person using force or the threat of force. Burglary incidences involve stealing by entering / trespassing onto property. Knife crime generally relates to all offences where a knife is used as a weapon.

Data from MOPAC shows an increase in the volume of overall Robbery, Burglary and Knife Crime reports in Tower Hamlets for the year ending January 2018, similar
with trends across London. There were 297 more incidences of robbery taking the annual figure for robberies to 1,573 incidences. The proportion of burglaries has also risen to 2,974 reported incidences which was an increase of 5 per cent. There were 680 incidences of reported knife crime.

Re-offending is also tackled by assessing offenders who are at risk of re-offending including those linked to a substance misuse need and actively targeting them to engage offenders into treatment and other diversionary programmes.

Recent data suggests that the number of offenders who have been successfully engaged to prevent re-offending has decreased. However there were also far fewer individuals assessed as at risk in 2016/17 and in the last two quarters of 2015/16. Lower engagement numbers are caused by a variety of reasons including wider changes to the probation service, the Courts and the substance misuse treatment system in 2016/17.

The Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) is working together with the Partnership to locally deal with the needs of prolific offenders. The Integrated Offender Management (IOM) function has developed a fully functioning case management model that ensures Police offender managers understand the drug and alcohol needs of offenders and how to refer, engage and retain individuals in substance misuse treatment. The IOM unit has working arrangements with the DIP and other partners to identify and address other key areas of offender needs including accommodation, mental health, benefits, etc.

The IOM:

- In partnership with local agencies, will assist in delivering parts of the Police and Crime Plan, including a drive to utilise ASB powers with an emphasis on Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) with both positive and prohibitive requirements put in place.
- Continues to utilise all aspects of MOPAC commissioned services to ensure all offenders are effectively targeted and provided with the help and support they require.
• Is working with Housing Providers to ensure tenancy agreements are not being breached, with an open communication channel in place between them and partners, to benefit from this unique position to effectively target offenders.

• Is exploring cross-border work with neighbouring boroughs, with the opportunity to align resources and provide effective management of offenders across borough boundaries.

To tackle gangs, guns and knife crime, we:

• Developed a Partnership Action Plan in response to the recent increases in knife crime volume for under 25 year olds and repeat victimisation, to enhance prevention and intervention locally.

• Are enhancing preventative work to either not carry knives in the first place or where they are already carrying them, to desist from doing so and to support more young people to step away from gang involvement and to do so earlier.

• Provide support to Secondary School Heads, so that knife crime is recognised as a borough-wide issue, not just one relating to individual schools, which will help in breaking down barriers which can arise when we try and engage with schools on this issue.

• Established a network of ‘Safe Havens’ to encourage more reporting of violent crime, particularly amongst young people.

• Encourage the Police to utilise Stop and Search Powers in relation to knife crime.

• Are developing a partnership response to young knife crime victims, in order to increase their confidence in and willingness to engage with the Police.

Other emerging weapon enabled crimes include the use of acid and corrosive substances in robberies in the borough, we set up a Task and Finish Group to bring key partners together to investigate the true picture, develop an action plan and communications plan to address this.

In relation to young people in the borough, we are working with the LSCB and Youth Offending Board to:

• Reduce young people’s chances of becoming victims of crime.

• Reduce first time entrants to the Youth Justice System.

• Reduce the number of young victims of knife crime.

• Tackle child sexual exploitation and other forms of criminal exploitation linked to active drugs markets in the borough.

• Develop analysis of trends and patterns of youth offending and re-offending.

• Continue to work effectively with partners and improve the partnership approach.

• Establish a hub and bespoke delivery model for the provision of education, training and employment support for children and young people in the criminal justice system and utilise existing services including the council’s new WorkPath programme.
• Deliver relevant and good quality group intervention programmes in partnership.
• Provide all front line youth work staff directly employed or employed by commissioned service providers with training on the basics of the youth justice system and the implications of decisions made by young people at various stages of the system. This will ensure young people and their families are able to make informed choices and are supported to reduce any negative outcomes on life chances.

Community cohesion
Based on the Annual Residents’ Survey 2017, perceptions about cohesion in the borough continue to improve. Figure 10.4 indicates that 92 per cent of residents view their local area as a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. This is a 5 percentage point increase from last year and is an historic high for the borough.

The LBTH Community Engagement Strategy 2018-21 sets out how we engage and empower the local community to better meet local needs and embed opportunities for community participation.

To promote and strengthen cohesion in the borough, the council delivers a range of activities which includes the following:

• The council, through the Tension Monitoring Group (TMG), communicates with its partners about community relations in the borough. The group informs actions and responses to issues that may increase community concerns or raise tension between communities. The TMG members share information and intelligence, and develop interventions to manage emerging and current issues. In 2017, the TMG held emergency meetings following terrorist attacks in the UK and a spate of acid attacks in East London to consider their impact on community relations and agree and deliver joint actions to mitigate tensions which arose as a result.

• The ‘Creative Communities’ project works with teachers and school councils to promote cohesion and active citizenship in schools and the wider community. In 2016/17, each participating school consulted parents and community members to agree on an issue which was impacting negatively
on local community cohesion. They then identified and worked with relevant community groups and organisations to address the issue. For example, one school tackled adult illiteracy in their community by holding reading sessions with adults. The project also developed lesson plans for teachers around the concepts of cohesion and equalities.

- A number of projects have been established through the Building A Stronger Britain Together programme which aim to develop community leadership, resilience and confidence and increase community cohesion. They include youth and women’s empowerment, challenging harmful cultural practices and interfaith work to increase mutual understanding.

- The council commissions activities and events to promote the One Tower Hamlets principles, and to celebrate and commemorate the borough’s diverse history, religion and culture. Black History Month, International Day of Disabled people, LGBT History Month, Diwali and Holocaust Memorial Day are some examples. It also supports projects which promote mutual understanding and coming together of different faiths and beliefs; this includes the support and strengthening of the Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum which works to ensure the views of the faith sector are represented in the shaping of local policies and services.

- Through Section 106 funding drawn from two commercial developments, one in Mile End and the other in Aldgate East, the council will be delivering community cohesion projects in both areas. The projects are being commissioned using a co-production model and aim to increase participation in the local community, support local neighbourhood groups that bring people from different backgrounds together and hold events that increase cross-cultural understanding. The projects which begin in 2018 focus on improving the natural environment, enlivening public spaces, digital arts and community markets.

- The council commissions a New Residents and Refugee Forum to engage with migrant residents and those working with them to identify and address local needs. For example, the Forum addressed a spike in hate crimes following the EU Referendum. Forum members and the council’s Hate Crime Team worked to promote hate crime reporting by migrant communities.

- Community Cohesion Co-production Pilot Programme – the council is piloting a co-production model to commission community cohesion projects. The council worked with voluntary sector organisations, local people and others to develop a Cohesion Outcomes Framework and commissioned community cohesion projects to meet these outcomes. One of the projects commissioned empowers and supports the integration of local migrant women through intercultural friendship clubs and community volunteering.
Find out more

This report was produced by the council’s Corporate Research Unit as part of the Borough Profile 2018. For more in-depth analysis about Tower Hamlets, please visit the Borough Statistics page on the council’s website or get in touch with the team at cru@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

Endnotes

1 Statutory Instruments 2007 No. 1830.
2 The Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), Crime and ASB Dashboard. Available at: https://data.london.gov.uk/resources/snb-dashboard/
7 Public Health England, Why invest, 2018