



People access a range of education, training, and employment opportunities and feel they share the benefits from growth

Executive Summary

Employment in Tower Hamlets is now on par with the rest of London, but some groups of residents are still less likely to be in work than others. This equalities assessment reviews employment inequalities by equalities strand, both nationally and in the borough, using the employment rate as the primary measure since this is the key performance measure used in the Tower Hamlets Strategic Plan.

There are significant inequalities in employment outcomes which mean that some groups are not benefitting from growth in the borough as much as others. Women, BME residents, young people, older residents, Muslim residents, and disabled people all have employment rates below the borough average. These lower employment rates are largely driven by high levels of economic inactivity, particularly for BME

women and disabled people, suggesting that these residents are further away from the labour market. There is also evidence that Trans people and pregnant women face discrimination in the labour market, though there is a lack of employment data for these groups.

Some of the key findings from this review are:

- The gender gap in the employment rate in the borough is 21.1 percentage points – it is 27.8 percent for BME women
- The Race gap in the employment rate is 25.6 percentage points.
- 16-24 year unemployment levels are 14 per cent compared to 11 per cent in London
- Unemployment is 7 percent for 50-64 year olds in Tower Hamlets compared to 4 per cent in London
- The employment rate gap for disabled residents compared to non-disabled residents is 27 percentage points.

These challenges are well-known in the council and a new Integrated Employment Service (IES) is being developed to help residents furthest away from the labour market. This approach should apply lessons from the OECD, which reviewed employment initiatives in 23 countries and found that successful interventions were targeted, flexible, independent, person-centred, joined up, long-term, engaged with the community, engaged with employers and evaluated. Tower Hamlets should also learn from the Scottish government's employability pipeline which will help deliver a joined up, coordinated approach to employment support

What is the purpose of the Strategic Plan Outcome Area?

High levels of growth in Tower Hamlets present real opportunities for our residents. Between 2009 and 2014, employment in the borough grew by 25 per cent, compared with 14 per cent in London during the same period.¹ The borough now hosts over 256,700 jobs – more than the number of working age residents – and accounts for 5 per cent of all jobs in London. This growth is expected to continue over the next decade. By 2036, the number of jobs is expected to increase by another 78 per cent², more than five times the projected growth of London (14 per cent) and higher than the projected growth in the borough's population which is expected to grow by 29 per cent in the same time period (to 383,800 residents in 2036)³.

On the other hand, not everyone is benefitting from this growth. Only 14 per cent of local jobs are filled by Tower Hamlets residents and 75 per cent of the borough's employment is concentrated in the City Fringe and Canary Wharf.⁴ One in five residents says they are concerned about a lack of jobs.⁵ Though employment rates in Tower Hamlets have continued to improve and are now on a par with London,

some groups of residents are less likely to be in work or more likely to be unemployed than others.

This would suggest that the outcomes that the council could seek to pursue would be for there to be a focus on getting unemployed and workless households into jobs including targets for those that are both short term and long term unemployed groups. Both current and future employment programmes should include related targets and track the status of beneficiaries to provide a baseline and evaluative data.

A second area of focus could be on securing more local employment for local residents that would include exploring the predominant employment sectors in the borough and the growth sector needs within the borough.

What is the national picture in terms of inequality for this topic?

Gender

The gender gap between men and women's employment rates in the UK has fallen over the past two decades, but still remains substantial. In 2014, 69 per cent of women in the UK worked compared with 82 per cent of men – a 13 percentage point gender gap.⁶ There is also a considerable gender wage gap despite some convergence. Women in the UK earn around £2 less than men for each hour worked – an 18 per cent gender wage gap.⁷ These inequalities are complex and driven by many different societal factors, but are largely driven by the household division of labour, as women can tend to withdraw from the labour market and shift into part-time work after having children.⁸ The wage gap continually rises for women after the birth of their first child and by the time their first child is 12 years old, a woman's hourly wages are a third below men's.⁹

Age

Around 12 per cent of all young people aged 16 to 24 (843,000 in the UK) are not in education, employment or training¹⁰ which is higher than in many other countries¹¹. The unemployment rate for young people is more than twice the rate for all working age adults (14.0 per cent for those aged 16-24 compared with 5.3 per cent for those aged 16-64).¹² Young people are also more likely than other age groups to claim Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA): in Great Britain, 2.7 per cent of people aged 18- 24 claimed JSA compared with 1.9 per cent of people aged 25-49 and 1.5 per cent of people aged 50+.¹³ Finally, young people in work are more likely to be underemployed, meaning that they would like to work more hours. In 2014, one in five workers aged 16-24 were underemployed, more than double the percentage of any other age group.¹⁴

Race

While ethnic gaps in employment have decreased in recent years, there are clear inequalities in employment and wages that persist for ethnic minorities in the UK. In 2013, unemployment rates for people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds were twice as high as the unemployment rates for White people (12.9 vs. 6.3 per cent).¹⁵ In particular, young people from BME backgrounds experience the worst long-term employment outcomes. Between 2010 and 2015, they saw a 49 per cent increase in unemployment compared to a 2 per cent fall in unemployment for young White people. There are also substantial pay gaps for BME groups. For example, Black workers with degrees earn 23.1 per cent less than White workers with degrees.

Religion

A recent report from the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee found that Muslim people suffer the greatest economic disadvantages of any other group in society.¹⁶ Muslims in the UK face unemployment rates twice that of the general population (12.8 vs. 5.4 per cent). Muslims are also nearly twice as likely to be economically inactive than the general population (41.0 vs. 21.8 per cent). Nearly half of economically inactive Muslim women (44 per cent) are inactive because they are looking after their family or home compared with 16 per cent of all women who are inactive. The reasons behind this disadvantage are varied and complex, but include discrimination and Islamophobia, stereotyping, pressure from traditional families, a lack of tailored advice around higher education choices, and insufficient role models across education and employment. These findings have serious implications for Tower Hamlets since the borough has the highest proportion of Muslim residents in England & Wales, making up 38 per cent of the population compared with a national average of 5 per cent.¹⁷

Disability

The relationship between disability and employment is complex because of the huge diversity within the population of disabled people. While some disabled people are not able to do paid work because of their impairment, others see the opportunity and right to work as crucial. Overall, disabled people are less likely to be in work than non-disabled people (47 vs. 77 per cent) and disabled people who are economically active are more likely to be unemployed (12 vs. 8 per cent).¹⁸ Employment rates are particularly low for people with a learning disability (6.8 per cent) and people in contact with secondary mental health services (7.1 per cent).¹⁹ Disabled people are also much more likely to be economically inactive than non-disabled people (47 vs. 16 per cent). In addition, disabled people facing changes to their work requirements due to welfare reform. To date, one in five people (19 per cent) who were claiming Incapacity Benefit have been found 'fit for work' under the new Work Capability Assessment to qualify for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).²⁰ A further 35 per cent of people who were claiming Incapacity Benefit were placed in the Work Related Activity Group of ESA, and are expected to undertake job-related activity, such as training and work-focused interviews.

Sexual orientation

There is a lack of data on employment for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people, even at a national level, as sexual orientation is currently not captured in most official survey data. However, in the Labour Force Survey, same-sex couples could identify as cohabiting or in a registered civil partnership when completing the survey. Analysis comparing these self-identifying same-sex couples with married different-sex couples found that men in same sex couples were almost as likely as married men to be in work (70.9 vs. 72.8 per cent).²¹ On the other hand, women in same sex relationships were more likely to be in work than married women (79.2 vs. 72.7 per cent). The analysis also found that men and women in same-sex relationships earn slightly more than their counterparts in different-sex marriages. However, while the available data does not show any inequalities in employment rates or wages, there is evidence of workplace discrimination. A quarter (26 per cent) of LGB employees are not open about their sexual orientation at work and one in five (19 per cent) LGB employees say they have experienced verbal bullying from colleagues, customers or service users because of their sexual orientation in the past five years.²²

Gender reassignment

There is currently no data available on trans-gender or trans-sexual people in the UK, but qualitative research finds that employment is the most problematic area of life for trans people.²³ 42 per cent of trans people who were not living full-time in their acquired gender said that it was their job or workplace which prevented them from doing so. Around a quarter of trans people (23 per cent) changed job or intended to do so because of their transition.

Marital status

For both men and women, those who are married are more likely to be in employment than their single counterparts. 87.9 per cent of married men were in employment compared with 61 per cent of single men, a 26.9 percentage point difference.²⁴ Similarly, 77.7 per cent of married women were in employment compared with 57.3 per cent of single women. A lower proportion of single people in employment is likely part of an age-related effect, since younger men and women are more likely to be unmarried and in full-time education.

Pregnancy and maternity

There is no official data on pregnant women's participation in the labour market, but we do know that employment rates for women with children are lower than those for women without children.²⁵ There is also evidence that discrimination and poor treatment of pregnant women and mothers has increased over the past decade.²⁶ A survey of over 3,000 mothers between 2012 and 2014 found that three in four mothers (77 per cent) said that they had a negative or discriminatory experience at work during their pregnancy, maternity leave or on their return to work.²⁷ 11 per cent of mothers have lost their job after telling their employer they were pregnant or on maternity leave, either by being made redundant (1 per

cent), being dismissed (1 per cent) or feeling so poorly treated that they felt they had to leave (9 per cent).

What is the local picture in terms of inequality for this topic?

Gender

Women in Tower Hamlets face a greater gender gap in employment than in London overall. During the four year period from 2012 to 2015²⁸, 76.0 per cent of men in Tower Hamlets were in employment compared with 54.9 per cent of women – a 21.1 percentage point gender gap. In London, 77.6 per cent of men were in employment compared with 63.5 per cent of women – a 14.1 percentage point gender gap.²⁹

The gender gap is particularly wide for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women. While the gender gap for all ethnic groups was 21.1 percentage points, it was 27.8 per cent for BME women and just 7.5 percentage points for White women. The gender gap for BME women has also seen little change over the past decade, compared to White ethnic groups which have seen a large reduction – from 19.8 percentage points in 2004-07 to 7.8 percentage points in 2012-15.

Age

In Tower Hamlets, approximately 3.4 per cent of young people aged 16 to 18 are NEET (280 young people in total)³⁰. This is slightly higher than the rate in London, where 3.1 per cent of 16 to 18 year-olds are NEET. However, both of these rates are likely to be under-estimates as employment or education activity is unknown for a substantial proportion of young people (10.9 per cent in Tower Hamlets and 10.4 per cent in London).

Young people (16-24) in the borough also face a higher unemployment rate than in London (14 vs. 11 per cent) and unemployment for young people is around twice the rate for all adults (14 vs. 8 per cent).³¹ In addition, a slightly higher proportion of young people (18-24) are in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance than in London (2.9 vs. 2.2 per cent)³².

Older people in the borough also face higher unemployment. In 2011, 7 per cent of Tower Hamlets residents aged 50-64 were unemployed compared with 4 per cent in London.³³ In addition, 4.5 per cent of older people aged 50+ were in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance compared with 2.2 per cent in London³⁴.

Race

During the four year period from 2012 to 2015, 80.3 per cent of White residents were in work compared with 54.8 per cent of BME residents – a 25.6 percentage point gap.³⁵ This is nearly twice the ethnic gap in employment rates in London, which was 13.9 percentage points during the same period. There is also a clear difference by gender, with women experiencing a greater ethnic gap than men (34.6 vs. 14.3 percentage points). While the gap has been closing for men (down by 9

percentage points since 2004-07), the gap has widened for women (up by 5.2 percentage points since 2004-07).

BME women born outside of the UK have particularly low rates of employment, with an average employment rate of 50 per cent.³⁶ The employment rate was considerably lower women born in Pakistan (27 per cent), Somalia (26 per cent) and Bangladesh (19 per cent). Qualitative interviews with Bangladeshi and Somali women found that these groups of women face slightly different barriers to work, but that both groups face barriers that include a lack of relevant qualifications, difficulty with the English language, difficulty balancing work with caring responsibilities, confusion about how work would affect their benefits, and discrimination based on their ethnic identity.³⁷

Religion

In Tower Hamlets, employment trends by religion correlate broadly with trends by Race. Muslim residents are the only religious group to have an employment rate below the borough average, at 39 per cent compared with 59 per cent of all residents.³⁸ Muslim residents are also more likely to be economically inactive (48 per cent) than the average for all residents (33 per cent). Among residents who are economically active, Muslims face an unemployment rate that is twice that of the borough average (25 per cent vs. 12 per cent).

Disability

In Tower Hamlets, 48 per cent of disabled people are in work compared with 75 per cent of non-disabled people.³⁹ This substantial employment gap – 27 percentage points – is similar to that in London (29.1 percentage points) and in England (27.1 percentage points). Disabled residents are also more likely to be unemployed (12.7 per cent) than non-disabled residents (8.3 per cent).

Around 11,810 Tower Hamlets residents are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), nearly three times as many as those in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), though this trend is similar to that in London and England.⁴⁰ Nearly half of residents in receipt of ESA, 5,570 residents or 49 per cent, are claiming due to poor mental health, making it the most common reason for claiming ESA by far.⁴¹ The proportion of ESA claimants with a mental health condition is the same in London and England (49 per cent). It is estimated that only 10 per cent of people receiving ESA are being supported by Jobcentre Plus or the Work Programme.⁴²

What are the good practice examples on tackling inequality in the topic area?

Lessons from 23 OECD Countries

The OECD brought together learnings from 23 different countries to identify ways to tackle long-term unemployment for vulnerable groups, including disabled people, ethnic minorities, and older people. They found that successful approaches to tackling unemployment had the following qualities⁴³:

- **Targeted:** Interventions are designed to meet the needs of a particular vulnerable group or deprived geographical areas.
- **Flexible:** Support is not only about employment, but covers a wide range of barriers to employment, such as poor housing or childcare.
- **Independent:** Advice and guidance is impartial and free from institutional bias.
- **Person-centred:** A personalised intervention is developed, taking into account a person's needs, aspirations and skills.
- **Joined up:** A partnership approach coordinates activity in the local labour market and offers a more integrated service.
- **Long-term:** Post-employment support is provided to ensure that sustained outcomes are achieved.
- **Engaged with the community:** Community engagement can help build trust in an organisation, provide access to hard-to-reach groups and provide a local view on the needs of clients.
- **Engaged with employers:** Local initiatives are largely focused on the supply side, but those that do not involve employers are often not successful.
- **Evaluated:** Evaluation identifies what works, and this evidence is published and disseminated to ensure that these lessons are learned even after project funding runs out, so that others don't re-invent the wheel.

The Employability Pipeline

The Scottish government has developed an 'employability pipeline' to provide a structured approach to the delivery of employment services in Scotland, particularly for those who are further away from the labour market. This helps to provide a 'joined up' approach as described above. The employability pipeline is a conceptual framework which outlines a five stage journey towards employment and the activities to help people move forward⁴⁴:

Stage 1 – Engagement, Assessment and Referral: Includes needs identification and developing action plans.

Stage 2 – Needs Assessment and Barrier Removal: Includes confidence building, ESOL courses, and financial advice.

Stage 3 – Vocational Activity: Includes work experience placements and accredited pre-employment training.

Stage 4 – Employer Engagement & Job Matching: Includes job search support and careers information advice and guidance.

Stage 5 – In-work/Aftercare: Includes further skills development and occupational health and well-being support.

28 out of the 32 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in Scotland use this pipeline approach. These LEPs have highlighted a number of benefits of this approach⁴⁵:

- **A more strategic approach:** The pipeline allows employability partnerships to assess their provision to identify gaps and duplication.
- **Better use of resources:** The approach allows partners to better use collective resources and provide more consistent funding to projects.
- **Better partnership working:** The approach organises partners around a shared goal and provides clarity on each service's role within the employability pipeline.
- **Improved services for clients:** Partners are able to develop a better understanding of clients' needs, take a more person-centred approach, and ensure that a wider range of support is available.

However, there is not enough evidence to demonstrate the impact that the pipeline approach has had on employment outcomes.⁴⁶ Not all LEPs using this model have collected data on how many clients move into work, whether this employment was sustained or what support was given. It will be crucial to collect monitoring information if this model is taken forward in order to measure outcomes and identify which interventions are most effective.

Tower Hamlets Council is developing an Integrated Employment Service (IES) which aims to help residents who are the furthest away from the labour market. This service will apply the lessons from Scotland and abroad to deliver a holistic and client-centred approach for residents.

What evidence is there that we are making a difference?

The employment rate in Tower Hamlets has risen substantially over the past decade, from 54.5 per cent in 2005 to 69.5 per cent in 2015 – an improvement of nearly 15 percentage points – which puts employment in the borough on a par with London and the rest of the country.⁴⁷ Trends also indicate that inequalities are reducing for some groups. The gender gap between male and female employment has fallen from 24.5 percentage points in 2012/13 to 17.1 percentage points in 2015/16, though this is still higher than the gender gap in London.⁴⁸ The unemployment rate has also fallen for disabled people, from 17.2 per cent in 2014/15 to 12.5 per cent in 2015/16 – a fall of 4.7 percentage points in just one year.

The council delivers a range of employment and skills services to support residents into work and help to reduce inequalities. These services, along with partners, have supported around 3,000 residents into work in 2015/16. Approximately 80 per cent of these residents were from an ethnic minority group and 46 per cent were women.⁴⁹ The services available to residents include:

- The Integrated Employment Service which aims to identify and engage residents most in need of employment support and address broader needs which can act as a barrier to employment, such as health, housing, and

welfare reform. The service is still being developed, but will be based on the Raising Aspirations project which took a multi-agency and client-centred approach to support long-term unemployed and economically inactive residents into work through mentoring and coaching. The project was piloted in East India & Lansbury and helped 148 residents achieve a qualification and 76 residents to secure employment.

- Skillsmatch is a job brokering service which was set up in 1997 to meet the needs of employers in the borough, particularly those in Canary Wharf. In 2014/15, Skillsmatch helped 939 residents into employment.⁵⁰
- Idea Store Learning provides skills training and ESOL courses to help address low levels of English, maths and literacy skills. In the past year, 664 residents have taken a course in Functional English, Maths and Language and 399 residents took an ESOL course. The large majority of these learners are BME women.
- The Careers Service works with young people to raise their aspirations and attainment and reduce the number of NEETs in the borough. The service provides Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) and job matching for young people.
- £1,220,000 of Mainstream Grants Programme funding is available to voluntary organisations to further jobs, skills and prosperity in the borough. The scheme will require funded projects to target key demographic groups who are furthest from the labour market and who are not being served by the mainstream provision currently available. These groups include BME women, people with health issues or a disability (particularly those with mental health issues), young people, and those adversely affected by welfare reform. Projects will deliver a range of activities to help advance residents into skills training and employment, including advice and guidance, volunteering and work experience.
- The Women into Health and Social Care programme provides accredited training and a 6 month paid work placement in the health sector. The majority of residents in the programme are BME women (61 per cent) and have been un-employed for more than two years (59 per cent). In the first cohort of 23 women in the programme, 17 secured employment following the programme (73 per cent).
- The Working Start programme targets residents who are long-term unemployed, affected by welfare reform, or are economically inactive. Residents receive support to take up a paid five month work placement followed by an apprenticeship or employment. The majority of residents who have taken up the programme are BME women.

- As an employer, the council offers 50 apprenticeship places each year in a range of career areas. The council also plans to offer 20 pre-apprenticeship placements for people with disabilities.

What more do we need to know?

While there is a wide range of literature and data on national inequalities of employment outcomes, local intelligence is limited. The most detailed data available comes from the Census, but this data is only collected every ten years. The Annual Population Survey also provides information on the local labour market on an annual basis, but these are survey estimates and not precise measures. Small sample sizes (around 500-600 residents per year) mean that the estimates are not very accurate, particularly for sub-groups of the population. For example, the employment rate of 50 per cent for BME women typically has a confidence interval of around ± 12 percentage points. This makes measuring inequality between groups in Tower Hamlets or benchmarking the borough against other geographical areas difficult.

For some equalities groups – particularly for LGB and trans people – employment data is very limited or non-existent even at a national level. This means we have to rely on surveys within these groups that measure perceived inequality or discrimination, rather than measuring employment outcomes. To fill this gap, the Office for National Statistics is exploring ways in which it can collect information on sexual identity in the next census in 2021.

What are the priorities for tackling inequality?

Employment in Tower Hamlets is now on a par with London and the rest of the country, but inequalities mean that some groups are not benefitting from growth in the borough as much as others. Women, BME residents, young people, older residents, Muslim residents, and disabled people all have employment rates below the borough average. These lower employment rates are largely driven by high levels of economic inactivity, particularly for BME women and disabled people, suggesting that these residents are further away from the labour market.

These challenges are already well-known in the council and a wide range of support is already offered to help boost the employment and skills of residents. To evaluate the support on offer, the council recently commissioned an independent review of its employment provision across the borough.⁵¹ The key recommendation to come out of this work was for the council to take a more strategic role and lead the establishment of a clearer, better coordinated approach to employment and skills provision. The report also found that there is a need for more targeted provision

to support vulnerable families, as some interventions were reaching residents who were close to the labour market and who may have found employment without the support from the council.

To meet these requirements, the council is developing an Integrated Employment Service (IES) which aims to focus on residents furthest away from the labour market through the provision of a wide range of support. This approach will apply the lessons from Scotland and abroad to provide more effective support for groups with lower levels of employment and those affected by welfare reform to promote greater equality.

The IES will embed a CRM or universal assessment and tracking tool across services. This system should provide valuable insight about employment barriers and outcomes for Tower Hamlets residents, and it is recommended that the system capture data on as many equalities strands as possible so that this can be disaggregated and analysed to better understand employment inequalities in the borough.

Services Engaged

- Workpath

Reviewed: August 2017

Endnotes

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