Inequality is reduced and people live in a cohesive community

Executive Summary

This outcome area sits within the Strategic Plan priority to 'create and maintain a vibrant and successful place'. It is a key component of social wellbeing and residents feeling safe and secure, achieving their full potential and participating in community life. The principle underpinning this aspiration is that residents, students, workers, visitors and local voluntary sector organisations are as central to the design, delivery and achievement of these outcomes as any services provided and funded activity.

There is no agreed definition of what constitutes resilience and therefore there is a lack of quantitative data covering the area. Some of the outcome areas are measures of perception and how people feel which can only be drawn from surveys and other qualitative data.

The scope of this assessment is to review inequality within cohesion and engagement where this information is available, both nationally and in the borough.

Resilience in social policy terms is most developed in the context of social work. It is difficult to quantify as an outcome in general terms where it may mean people's preparedness and perseverance in the context of a setback. There are potential outcome areas that could represent proxies for this area in terms of the prevention and re-enablement approaches within public services.

In the Simpson Diversity Index of 2013 Tower Hamlets was ranked the 16th most diverse local authority area in the country. In both the UK and in Tower Hamlets, data shows that there are inequalities across outcomes for BME communities, young and older people, certain religious groups, LGBT and disabled people. Examples include:

- Differences in health outcomes. BME people are more likely to suffer from poor health
- Muslim women in particular are less likely to be in employment
- LGBT people are more likely to suffer from poor mental health when compared to the general population
- Disabled people are less likely to be in employment when compared to the general population

The council's Annual Residents Survey shows that perceptions of cohesion in the borough are very positive, with 87% of people agreeing that the borough is an inclusive place in which people from different backgrounds get on well together. This is on par with the national trend for community cohesion at 89% but conflicting with the increase in reported hate crimes against a range of groups.

High rates of hate crime for some protected characteristic groups (particularly BME and religious groups) can be driven by international and political events that give rise to local community tensions. There is also anecdotal evidence that people with disabilities experience high levels of disempowerment, exacerbated by physical barriers and disability related access when attempting to participate in civic engagement and public life.

A number of key strategies are in place and are also being developed to support strong, active and inclusive communities who are empowered to influence and shape the borough in which they live and work. This approach could be enhanced through the development of local indicators to measure cohesion and resilience, in order to support the council measure its performance and benchmark against other local authorities with for example a similar demographic profile.

What is the purpose of the Strategic Plan Outcome Area?

Tower Hamlets is a place of opportunity but poverty and inequality can affect local people's ability to achieve their full potential. High levels of population growth in the borough continues to mark Tower Hamlets as the fastest growing borough and this is reflected in its diversity, for example there were 137 spoken languages recorded in local schools in 2017.

Diversity is one of the borough's great strengths but there is the potential for flashpoints as a result of international and broader political events such as the EU referendum and extremist groups. Known challenges include hate crimes against disabled people, particularly those with learning difficulties.

The public sector equality duty sets out the need for public bodies to eliminate discrimination, advance **equality** of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. The way in which the council is undertaking these duties is set out in the corporate approach across Council plans and strategies which seek to ensure that the council tackles inequality in all that it does. Specifically, the council's looks to:

- Engage and communicate effectively with local people;
- Establish a new collaborative relationship with the voluntary and community sector to deliver priority outcomes and build strong communities;
- Co-produce services with local residents;
- Promote community cohesion, bringing different parts of the community together, tackling divisions and encouraging positive relationships;
- Step up our Prevent programme to tackle radicalisation;
- Increase visits to our core cultural offer specific to Idea Stores and Leisure Centres.

This factsheet will look at the following areas within the topic:

- Community engagement - assessing levels of civic engagement, participation and sense of influence, as well as volunteering;

Cohesion – exploring people's feelings about their community and the extent to which they get on with people from different backgrounds.

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

The current funding programmes linked to cohesion include the 'controlling migration fund' set up to offer local authorities that are affected by migration the opportunity to develop programmes that mitigate the impact of migration at a local level.

Over the last two decades there have been successive programmes to encourage greater community involvement in local decision making, underpinned by the belief that this supports better civic engagement, decision making and builds trust. The legislative context has been the Local Government Act (1999) and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007) which place duties on local authorities to inform, consult or involve.

The Localism Act (2011), supported by the belief that effective community engagement builds the capacity of communities and enables problems to be tackled without the need for costly statutory intervention, builds on this drive by providing communities the right to take over and deliver local services, bid for assets of community value and approve or veto 'excessive' council tax rises. Despite these programmes the extent to which the Government has achieved its aims is difficult to gauge.

The last decade has also brought new challenges; Up until the vote that determined Brexit, there had been an expansion of the European Union (EU) with substantial and sustained increases in migration into the UK from both within the EU and outside, resulting in significant changes within local communities.

Concerns with immigration leading up to the EU referendum reached their peak since 1999 with 48% of people responding to a national Ipsos Mori survey citing the issue as a concern in June 2016. Cuts in local government funding also pose a challenge to sustaining cohesion by limiting the amount that can be done to build cohesion.

Civic/Community Engagement

Race

Studies conducted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) into community engagement and cohesion in England[1] identified a number of challenges. The study concludes that ethnic minority communities particularly at risk of not having their views heard effectively included refugees and asylum seekers, and migrant workers from EU accession states, such as Poland. Barriers cited by new arrivals include difficulties in the use of English, lack of information on engagement opportunities and time.

Some more established minority groups demonstrate high levels of participations in in local democracy compared with people from new communities whilst some established communities do not participate in the same way. These factors all provide a challenge in understanding local needs and priorities.

Gender/Age

Key findings from the JRF research into community engagement and cohesion in England highlights that amongst communities of refugee and asylum seekers, women and younger people are even less likely to be heard than older men. There are also clear challenges about who speaks for whom when new communities are represented. Despite informal networks providing valuable ways for local authorities

to communicate with new communities, traditional leaders do not necessarily represent the voices of women or younger people.

Voter Participation

Levels of turnout at UK elections and the percentage of people that are correctly registered to vote have declined substantially in recent decades. Although turnout for the 2010 general election was the highest since 1997, only 65% of registered voters participated; turnout levels for local authority, European Parliament and Police and Crime Commissioner elections are even lower. There is also evidence that a significant number of people in the UK are not registered to vote; the Electoral Commission has estimated that the most recent electoral register is only 84.7% complete. This equates to 7.5 million people that are eligible to vote in UK elections not being correctly registered to vote.

An inquiry into voter engagement in the UK by the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee[2] identified inequalities in registration and turnout. Research conducted by the Electoral Commission identified several demographic groups that are least likely to be registered to vote. These include:

- Students and younger people (under 35);
- Certain Black and Asian minority ethnic (BME) groups; and
- Commonwealth and EU citizens.

Age

Although evidence is ambiguous that young people are less likely to be registered to vote and also less likely to participate at elections than older people, it is estimated that only 44% of people aged 18-24 voted in the 2010 general election, compared with 75% of people aged over 55. The Electoral Commission's report on the 2011 Electoral Register also notes this, stating: "the lowest percentage of completeness is recorded by the 17-18 and 19-24 age groups (55% and 56% complete respectively)". In comparison, completeness across all age ranges was 82.3%, and for the 65+ age group the register was 94% complete. The most recent research on the 2014 electoral registers found a similar pattern.

Fewer younger people believe they have a duty to vote. Many commentators also argue that structural problems such as young people's position in the housing market, with a considerable number of young people occupying homes in the rental sector which has much less structural registration and difficulties in acquiring permanent employment, adversely affects rates of registration amongst young people.

Race

According to the Electoral Commission, some BME groups are significantly less likely to be registered to vote compared to those identifying as White British.

Completeness of the electoral register for White British people is 85.9%, for Asian people it is 83.7%, but for Black people it is 76%, for people of mixed ethnicity it is 73.4% and for people whose ethnicity falls into the "Other" category it is 62.9%.

EU and Commonwealth citizens resident in the UK are also amongst the most under-represented groups on the electoral register. There has been a marked decline in the number of non-British EU citizens registered to vote for the European Parliament elections between 2009 and 2014; the figure decreased from 1,043,629 registered to vote in the European elections in 2009 to 327,883 registered to vote in the European elections in 2014. Specific barriers faced by EU citizens wanting to participate in European Parliament elections include lack of guidance on the eligibility criteria to vote, and additional administrative forms to register on the electoral system.

Disability
The inquiry into voter engagement in the UK by the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee has identified that the current electoral administration does not make sufficient provision for universal access to electoral participation in respect of people with certain disabilities. As part of its inquiry the Committee received evidence from Mencap, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and also a joint submission from several charitable organisations for deaf people. This evidence emphasised specific barriers in accessibility of registration and voting in elections faced by people with disabilities, and also the low levels of participation for some of these groups. Inaccessibility of voting to people affected by sight loss was something that was raised frequently by people contacting RNIB. Currently, there is no facility for a person who is blind or severely visually impaired to cast a secret ballot. Provision is made for braille ballot papers however this and other available options involve the need for assistance.

For people with learning disabilities, understanding the eligibility to vote was highlighted as a specific issue for this group. As a result, low participation rates at elections were reported by Mencap with only 31% of its service users declaring they voted in the 2001 election. Alongside practical barriers, qualitative feedback provided by RNIB highlighted cultural exclusion from the democratic process; in the way that Parliament and the Government often communicate to people through party manifestos and other election material. Physical access was also reported to be one of the most serious issues in relation to disabled people participating at elections by the Chief Executive of the Association for Electoral Administrators. The Papworth Trust echoes this finding; its research into disabled people and democracy[3] shows that a majority of polling stations at the 2010 election included at least 1 significant access barrier.

Research compiled by the Papworth Trust also reveals that **disabled people are likely to be under-represented in public life.** In 2013/14, one in five people in the UK were disabled, but only about 7.3% of public appointments and reappointments were filled by disabled people, although this is a 2.3% increase compared with 2012/13. Guidance for Local Councils also excludes reference to disabled people as politicians. Papworth Trust asserts that despite each of the main political parties having its own disability group, the current picture of elected representatives suggests that there is still much work to be done on increasing the number of disabled politicians.

Volunteering

Gender

Data captured by the UK Civil Society Almanac[4] shows no gender differences were observed in the rates of formal volunteering[5] with broadly equal proportions of men (41% compared with 43% of women) volunteering. However, more pronounced differences were reported in terms of informal volunteering;[6] with more women than men having volunteered informally in the last 12 months (56% of men and 62% of women). Similarly, a significantly higher proportion of women volunteered informally on a regular basis (39%) compared to men (29%). Despite these similarities, rates of participation can differ between men and women depending on the type of activity being undertaken. According to data from Helping Out, the 2007 national survey of

and charitable giving, women were considerably more likely to provide caring roles and men more likely to give advice and represent others. This difference in activity can in part be driven by divisions in labour, as across English regions and Wales, females take on a higher share of the unpaid care burden than males in a similar proportion regardless of economic activity. Though less conclusive, a 2009 evidence review by the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR)[7] suggests there are some indications that overall boys and young men aged 16 to 19 are less involved in volunteering than girls and young women. Gender also appears to have a clear impact on the type of activity in which young people are involved, with boys more likely to be involved with sport type voluntary activities and girls outnumbering boys in social service type activities.

Age

Differences between age groups in terms of formal volunteering rates is becoming noticeably pronounced; 2015/16 data from the Cabinet Office's Community Life Survey[8] highlights those aged 75 and over showed the lowest rates of regular volunteering within the last two years. Rates remain stable in other age groups – in 35 to 49 year olds (27%, no change from last year), in 50 to 64 year olds (also 27%, no change from last year) and 65 to 74 year olds (31%, a 2% drop from last year).

However, the lowest rates of regular volunteering are now reported in 26 to 34 year olds; only 21% report volunteering monthly. This decrease in volunteering can be attributed to a number of factors, but by far the most commonly cited reason respondents gave for not formally volunteering on a regular basis was work commitments (50%) followed by home and childcare obligations at 28%, whilst 10% did not think that they were the 'right age' to volunteer.[9]

Key Differences within Youth Volunteering Groups

In particular, rates of youth volunteering were observed by the Institute for Volunteering Research to vary by age, gender, ethnicity, education and income level. According to the IVR, those on the younger end of the 16 to 24 age group (16 to 19) tend to volunteer more than those 20 and over both formally and informally, and at both regular and irregular intervals.

Age & Race

Data from the 2005 Citizenship Survey[10] shows that White British and Black British 16 to 24 year olds had higher rates of both formal and informal volunteering than their Asian peers. Rates of younger white and black volunteers were, respectively, 48 and 47 per cent for informal and 30 and 29 per cent for formal volunteering. This compared to 38 per cent of Asian 16 to 24 year olds who reported volunteering informally at least once in the previous month, and 25 per cent who volunteered formally at least once in the previous month.

Wider Socioeconomic Factors

Recent research conducted by the British Youth Council on behalf of the Cabinet Office[11] found that for most young people from across the country, a lack of funding to start projects and cover personal costs such as transport, meant that they were prevented from taking part in social action in the way they wanted. In the 2007 Helping Out people survey,[12] many young people especially older youths, say they cannot financially afford spending a large part of their free time doing unpaid work. Others say they lack the time because they need to care for a family member, and 29 per cent said that they needed to earn money in their spare time. In 2012, the Prince's Trust undertook a workshop with young people to discuss barriers to social action and volunteering opportunities; concerns raised by participants included their fears and negative experiences for having mental health problems, a criminal background or being a young parent proving to be big obstacles.

Evidence compiled by DEMOS on youth social action in the UK[13] also implies that young people with lower educational attainment and income levels are less likely to volunteer. Equally, some researchers have found that there may actually be increased levels of certain types of voluntary and community work among some marginalised youth groups. For example, young ex-offenders, young people who have been homeless, have disabilities or identify as LGBTQ have been found to be

disproportionately active in voluntary activity in comparison to their relative proportion of representation in the population. This suggests an over dependence on volunteering to help improve employability and act as a route into employment for these particular groups, which is supported by considerable policy initiatives that are consistent with this message.

Cohesion

Race

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's research into community engagement and cohesion in England[14] reports that cohesion at a national level is influenced by a sense of equity in access to services and funding, levels of diversity and change in communities. Anecdotal feedback from JRF's qualitative studies also finds that minority communities harbour anxieties about racism, based upon experiences of harassment and discrimination.

Hate Crime

The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) has reported an increase in the levels of hate crime recorded in London in the twelve months to December 2016 when compared to the previous year, from 16,005 offences to 19,247.[15] Additionally there have been increases in each individual strand of hate crime. Figures for December 2016 were:
- 15,806 racist hate crimes;
- 2,012 sexual orientation hate crimes;
- 3,761 faith related hate crimes;
- 756 disability hate crimes; and
- 190 transgender hate crimes.

The number of hate crime offences recorded in 2015/16 in England and Wales[16] for the five centrally monitored strands were as follows:
- 49,419 (79%) were race hate crimes;
- 7,194 (12%) were sexual orientation hate crimes;
- 4,400 (7%) were religious hate crimes;
- 3,629 (6%) were disability hate crimes; and
- 858 (1%) were transgender hate crimes.

The Home Office has reported an increase in offences between 2014/15 and 2015/16 recorded by the police in which one or more hate crime strands were deemed to be a motivating factor. This was an increase of 19 per cent compared with the 52,465 hate crimes recorded in 2014/15. This rise in reporting levels is attributed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to action taken by police forces to improve their compliance with the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS); this has led to improved recording of crime over the last year, especially for violence against the person offences. Together with a greater awareness of hate crime, and improved willingness of victims to come forward, this is likely to be a key

factor in the increase in hate crimes recorded by the police in 2015/16 compared with the previous year.

Race
Between 2014/15 and 2015/16 the number of race hate crimes increased by 15 per cent (up 6,557 to 49,419 offences). Data from the Home Office shows a peak in July 2013 in racially or religiously aggravated offences following the Lee Rigby murder.

More recently, national events such as the voting patterns in the EU referendum have had a negative impact on social cohesion. The results clearly show that the areas with the largest Brexit vote were in the most deprived areas. Related to this, are the reports of increased numbers of racial incidents in the wake of the referendum result, with perpetrators reportedly making explicit reference to the decision to leave the EU.

Information released following the result of the EU Referendum by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC),[17] which covers Northern Ireland as well as England and Wales, showed that there had been a sharp increase in the level of reported and recorded hate crime on 19 June 2016, tailed by an even sharper rise in 20 July 2016. The number of aggravated offences recorded then declined in August, but remained at a higher level than prior to the EU Referendum. Overall, the number of racially aggravated offences recorded by the police in July 2016 was 41% higher than in July 2015. These increases fit the widely reported pattern of a growth in hate crime following the EU referendum.

Overall, race hate crime was the most commonly recorded strand of hate crime in all 44 police forces in 2015/16. Race hate crimes also accounted for the majority of hate crimes in all forces in 2012/13, ranging from 62 per cent of the 604 hate crimes recorded by Suffolk, to 94 per cent of the 295 hate crimes recorded by Bedfordshire. The majority of these incidents (93,000) were personal crimes (such as assault or personal theft offences). The distribution between forces reflects the ethnic diversity of the police force area, with areas with larger proportions of BME communities tending to have a higher proportion of race hate crime. Furthermore, of the monitored strands asked about in the 2011/12 and 2012/13 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) (race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and gender-identity), the strand most commonly perceived as an offender's motivation for committing a hate crime was the offender's attitude to the victim's race which accounts for around 154,000 incidents on average a year.[18]

Key Differences within Racially Motivated Hate Crime
Race & Age
Adults in non-White ethnic groups were much more likely to be victims of a racially motivated hate than White adults (1.3% and 0.1% respectively, 2011/12 and 2012/13

CSEW). This is a more pronounced difference in the likelihood of victimisation for overall CSEW crime (of which hate crime incidents are a subset), where 23 per cent of adults from a non-White ethnic group were victims of crime, compared with 20 per cent of White adults (2011/12 and 2012/13 CSEW).

Race & Religion/Belief
Analysis of 2011/12 and 2013 CSEW data on racially motivated hate crime by religion shows that Muslim adults were more likely to be a victim of racially motivated hate crime (2%) than other adults.
Based on data from the CSEW for 2011/12 and 2012/13, it is estimated that there were an average of 70,000 incidents of religiously motivated hate crime per year. This total was split mostly evenly between personal crimes (34,000 incidents) and household crimes (36,000).

Religion
The numbers of religious hate crimes recorded by the Home Office between 2014/15 and 2015/16 increased by 34 per cent (up 1,107 to 4,400 offences). A key cause of this growth has been attributed to the Charlie Hebdo shooting in January 2015.

Based on combined data from the 2011/12 and 2012/13 CSEW, there were an estimated 278,000 hate crimes on average per year for the five monitored strands. Religion was the second most commonly reported motivating factor in these hate crime incidents, with an average of 70,000 incidents per year. Around one-quarter (24%) of the religious hate crimes recorded in 2012/13 by the police were violence against the person and of these violent crimes, 64 per cent involved injury.

Sexual Orientation
In 2015/16, across 40 police forces, sexual orientation hate crime was the second most commonly recorded hate crime. In 2012/13, the police recorded 4,267 sexual orientation hate crimes, compared with 4,362 the previous year (a fall of 2%). Ten per cent of police recorded hate crimes that year were sexual orientation hate crimes. While there was some variation between forces, sexual orientation hate crimes accounted for 20 per cent of hate crimes or less across all forces (ranging between 3% and 20%).

Around two in five (42%) sexual orientation hate crimes involved violence against the person and of these violent crimes, a half (52%) involved injury; a similar proportion (43%) involved public order offences. In October 2013, Stonewall released '*Homophobic Hate Crime: The Gay British Crime Survey 2013*'. This survey, based upon the responses from 2,544 lesbian, gay and bisexual adults from across Britain during February and March 2013, provides an alternative source of

information about sexual orientation hate crime.[19] Key findings include the following:

- One in six lesbian, gay and bisexual people have experienced a hate crime or incident in the last three years;
- One in ten victims experienced a physical assault;
- More than three-quarters of victims did not report what they had experienced to the police and two-thirds did not report it to anyone.

Disability

In 2015/16 the police recorded 3,629 disability hate crimes (6 per cent); an increase of 44% since 2014/15 from 2,515 offences.[20] Although this upward trend may suggest improved identification of hate crime as a factor, it is possible that this is caused by an actual increase in criminal hate behaviour or a rise in the numbers of victims coming forward to report a hate crime.

In 2012/13, the police recorded 1,841 disability hate crimes, compared with 1,757 offences the previous year (a 5% increase). Disability hate crimes accounted for four per cent of all hate crimes recorded by the police in 2012/13. There was little variation in the proportion recorded by forces with the exception of Norfolk and Suffolk, whose disability hate crimes accounted for 19 per cent and 20 per cent respectively of the hate crimes those forces recorded. A third (32%) of disability hate crimes involved violence against the person; of these offences, 61 per cent involved injury. Public order offences accounted for 30 per cent of disability hate crimes.

The Life Opportunities Survey provides additional information on disability hate crime. In December 2011, the Office for Disability Issues published the Life Opportunities Survey Wave One results 2009/2011 based on a total of 31,161 interviews with adults aged 16 and over, across 19,951 households. The survey found that two per cent of all adults interviewed had been a victim of hate crime in the past 12 months.

Gender Identity

The Crime Survey for England and Wales has only asked about gender-identity hate crime since 2011/12. Even though the data has been analysed using statistics from combined years of the CSEW, the numbers reporting a gender-identity motivated crime is still very small and therefore a reliable estimate for this particular strand of hate crime cannot be produced.

Gender-identity hate crime is the least commonly police recorded hate crime, with 361 offences in 2012/13. This compares with 309 offences in 2011/12, an increase of 52 offences, or by 17 per cent. However, due to the relatively low number of police

recorded gender-identity hate crimes, care should be taken in examining trends in this type of hate crime. For example, in 2010, the police in England and Wales recorded 352 gender-identity hate crimes, similar to the 2012/13 figure. Around one per cent of all police recorded hate crime is gender-identity hate crime, with the proportion of offences of this type below five per cent of all hate crime across all forces. Just under a half (47%) of gender-identity hate crimes were public order offences and a third (32%) was violence against the person offences.

Refugee Anxiety

In 2010, the Coalition Government pledged to reduce net migration to below 100,000 annually. This pledge drove a series of policy changes including the Immigration Act 2014 to restrict non-European migration but overall the Coalition Government was unsuccessful in meeting its target; partly due to free movement within the European Union. In light of the current Government's stance on immigration and the net migration pledge, considerable national and international pressure was applied before the Government announced its decision to take in around 20,000 additional refugees by 2020, under the expansion of the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Programme, citing moral responsibility as the main reason. This triggered a positive shift in media and public discourse and was reinforced by considerable online mobilisation. 1.5 million People signed a petition calling on the UK to welcome refugees and large demonstrations took place in London and other cities whose participants called for a welcoming approach. This was also supported by political leaders who showed increased interest in separating economic migration from refugee protection.

Despite these developments, public polls at the time did not suggest any shift in attitude overall; three out of ten people preferred that the UK did not take in any refugees, revealing that persistently anti-immigration views remain unwavering. Whilst seven out of ten people wanted the UK to commit to refugee protection, only one-quarter wanted the Government to adopt a significantly more generous stance. In the short term, the UK is unlikely to change its approach to the refugee crisis and is considering more stringent rules around spontaneous arrivals in its forthcoming asylum strategy, and limiting its participation in EU-wide quota schemes.[21]

Analysis of media coverage of immigration also suggests problems of accuracy and distortion, in addition to the use of stereotypes.[22] The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that the UK differs in its coverage of the refugee crisis compared to other countries, describing British media coverage as the most negative and polarised.[23] These findings reinforce studies revealing how regularly the public miscalculate the size and composition of migrant populations. A recent study by Ipsos MORI in 2014 showed that the UK public estimated the foreign-born share of the UK population to be 24 per cent; more than twice the official estimate

of 13 percent. People often mistake the make-up of the immigrant population too; respondents to a study carried out by Migration Observatory mentioned refugees and asylum seekers, two of the smallest migrant groups most frequently, whilst they made the least reference to students who currently comprise the largest migration category to the UK.[24]

Multiculturalism

Britain's foreign-born population and its diversity have grown faster than that of almost any other country in Europe over the past three decades. From 1993 to 2014, the foreign-born population in the UK more than doubled, from 3.8 million rising to 13.1 per cent of the total population.[25] Each year, more than half a million people enter the UK as long term immigrants; this figure has remained stable over the past decade and includes students – a group many do not regard as immigrants. The UK is increasingly a diverse society; a report predicts that one in five UK residents will be from a minority community in 2051. This estimate is echoed by the Government Foresight Office who has made a similar projection in relation to strong growth in diversity.[26]

Whilst many consider Britain's model of multiculturalism to be robust, growth of EU powers, the impact of international conflicts and prejudice reinforced and reflected in national press have all served to challenge the UK's acceptance and protectiveness of its diversity. Many now consider multiculturalism to have created a false sense of harmony by establishing a system for the distribution of power and resources, which worked for some time but which is now unable to adapt to change. Particularly at the local level, it is being argued that multiculturalism has encouraged the creation of culturally and spatially distinct communities, represented by 'community leaders', and that very little was to be gained from integration when accessing services and funding.

Another challenge levelled at multiculturalism is that, far from being a system that engages with the whole of British society, it isolates minority communities. This serves to maintain exclusion of minority cultures by hindering a two-way conversation with British culture. It is also charged with exacerbating rather than counteracting racial tensions and of having devalued and alienated the culture of the white working class in the UK. Policy makers are now debating whether multiculturalism should remain intact or be altered or replaced by a different model and value system. As a result, building community cohesion has become the national response, with campaigns focused on formulating a common set of British values from which spring a set of civic rights, entitlements and responsibilities.[27]

Age

The EU referendum also highlighted the issue of inter-generational conflict that has been a feature of debate, often pitching older citizens against younger voters. Early

reports suggested that a majority of younger voters between 18 and 24 supported remain, but were outnumbered by older voters voting to leave – the result being compounded by a lower turnout and lower levels of registration amongst younger voters.

Anti-Semitism

During 2015, police forces recorded a 25.7 per cent rise in anti-Semitic hate crime compared to the levels recorded the year before in all, but eight of the forty-five geographic police forces surveyed. Violent anti-Semitic crime surged by 50.8% over the same period. In 2016, a report by Campaign Ag[28]ainst Anti-Semitism (CAA) found that 2015 had been the worst on record for anti-Semitic hate crime[29]. Expectations that this prevalence in anti-Semitic crime would gradually return to levels prior to the international events in Israel during 2014 have proven incorrect. The volume and nature of anti-Semitic crime has also noticeably escalated; in 2014, 16.9% of all anti-Semitic crime involved violence. This figure rose to 20.3% in 2015 of the proportion of anti-Semitic crime involving violent acts. On average, this equates to one in five anti-Semitic crimes in 2015 involving an act of violence against a Jewish member of public. Despite rising levels of anti-Semitic crime, the report by CAA noted that there had been a decrease of 7.2% in the charging of anti-Semitic crime. The absence of more granular crime data also makes it difficult to ascertain whether anti-Semitic crimes recorded by the police were being perpetrated by particular groups driven by far-left ideology, or whether those engaging in anti-Semitic acts are doing so more frequently.

In 2015, Campaign Against Anti-Semitism carried out research into the prevalence of anti-Semitic crime in the UK, commissioning polling by YouGov. The polling revealed that 45% of British adults held at least one form of anti-Semitic prejudice, 26% held at least two forms of anti-Semitic prejudice, and 17% held at least three forms of anti-Semitic prejudice. Additionally, the polling revealed widespread fear amongst British Jews, with 45% of British Jews saying they feared they had no future in the UK, and 25% saying that they had considered emigrating in the last two years due to anti-Semitism.[30]

Islamophobia

Mainstream media reporting about Muslim communities is contributing to an atmosphere of rising hostility towards Muslims in Britain, according to research undertaken by the University of Cambridge in 2016.[31] Growing coverage of prejudiced narratives and misconception about Muslims by some sections of the media is also seen as contributing to public disaffection, and creating social and economic exclusion for the Muslim community in the UK. English nationalist organisations such as Britain First and National Action have fed on the rise in media interpretations of Islamophobia, and used as a catalyst to increase tensions at a national and local level, contributing to a more antagonistic environment for Muslims in the UK.

Data published by Tell MAMA in June 2016 suggested the UK had seen a 200 per cent[32] spike in anti-Muslim incidents over the previous 12 months. 12 month rolling figures from the Metropolitan Police for Tower Hamlets and Greater London showed there was a significant increase in the number of Islamophobic incidents recorded in the 12 months leading to July 2016. It is unclear whether this is a result of improved public confidence and developments in the reporting process, or a reflection of increased hostility experienced by the Muslim community in London.

Islamophobic Crime	12 months to July 2015	12 months to July 2016	% Change
Tower Hamlets	41	73	78%
London	816	1,313	61%

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

Cohesion
Sexual Orientation

Anecdotal feedback gathered by the Tower Hamlets LGBT Community Engagement Forum during their consultation on social care needs of younger and older LGBT in the borough shows that LGBT individuals who belong to a strong cultural community, tend to experience persecution once they come out to their community, with many down playing their sexual orientation in order to avoid family estrangement, discrimination and/or abuse.

Findings from the consultation into domestic abuse by the LGBT Community Engagement Forum reveals that one in six LGBT people have been the victim of hate crime (verbal or physical), which may be a contributory factor to a greater psychiatric morbidity risk.[33] Research undertaken by RaRE into LGBT mental health highlights transgender people might be at even greater risk, due to non-conformity (as opposed to having LGBT identity since transgendered people may identify as heterosexual).

Disability

The Local Voices project is the council's key method for engaging, connecting and consulting with disabled people living, working or studying in Tower Hamlets. The project is funded and supported by the council and led by an independent steering group of local disabled people, and facilitated and supported by Real - the borough's user-led organisation of disabled people. A workshop run by Local Voices in 2013 on attitudes towards disabled people found that negative reporting against the disabled community in some parts of the media, and unfortunate

associations of disabled people as "benefit scroungers", with a distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor detrimentally impacted on their sense of self, well-being and their ability to participate in society as equal citizens. As a result of negative attitudes of service providers, the media and members of the public the disabled community feel worsening attitudes is linked to increasing hate crime experienced by the group.

This finding is reflected in the 2016 Annual Residents Survey which observed a marked difference in the percentage of respondents with a disability strongly agreeing that people from different backgrounds get on well together. Only 76% of disabled respondents agreed, which is 12 percentage points lower than respondents who do not have a disability.

Age
Based on Public Health England's model which estimates subjective loneliness for older people at the local authority level, Tower Hamlets is ranked as 1 out of 33 for London and 1 out of 326 for England.[34] This suggests that the borough's older residents are amongst the loneliest in England. Poor health, deprivation, widowhood and living alone are all factors which are considered to contribute towards this high level of loneliness.

Religion/Belief
The council's Annual Residents Survey shows that perceptions of cohesion in the borough are strengthening; in 2016, 81 per cent of people surveyed felt that the borough is an inclusive place in which people from different backgrounds get on well together. However, in the previous Religion and Belief Equality Scheme consultation undertaken by the council, many participants voiced their concern over certain factors that cultivated fear and tension in the community, owing to their religion or belief. Faith communities being subject to deliberate targeting by media was also a pressing worry for participants, which has contributed to negative portrayals, impacted detrimentally on interfaith relations and created tension between communities.

Race
Views of secondary school students from the 2016 Pupil Attitude Survey commissioned by the council showed that the BME student population (excluding Bangladeshi students), were more likely to disagree with the statement that young people of different backgrounds got on well together in Tower Hamlets. Feedback from a workshop for young people as part of the scrutiny review into the effectiveness of the Prevent strategy in the borough, also highlighted concerns around cohesion, suggesting more work is required to reduce barriers and promote greater cross-cultural interaction amongst young people outside of formal settings. It was suggested that whilst people of different backgrounds respected one

another, there was a need to do more to develop relationships, interaction and engagement outside of formal structures and settings.[35]

The Tower Hamlets New Residents and Refugee Forum (NRRF) enables new communities to have access to local policy negotiation, and ensure dialogue between new communities and service providers. Following the result of the EU referendum, the NRRF held a service user workshop attended by 27 residents, asking them about their experiences and feelings on this subject. Key feedback includes two thirds of the group feeling less safe or comfortable than they had prior to the referendum. A number had experienced some levels of abuse including people saying things such as "your benefits are going to stop and you'll be told to go". There was also strong awareness of press reports of serious incidents, and this increased the sense of unease and insecurity. In the short term, participants felt community tensions remain arguably strengthened by the referendum campaign.

Built Environment, Access and Inclusion
Disability
Workshops run by Local Voices in 2013 and anecdotal feedback gathered from service users by researchers on areas of concern for the local disabled community, identified that social isolation experienced by disabled people is exacerbated by accessibility issues, due to the poorly designed built environment and accessibility of transport services provided in the borough and on a wider geographic scale.

Engagement/Digital Inclusion
Disability
In 2013, Local Voices undertook research into participation and voice; the research identified high levels of disempowerment felt by the disabled community, and a general sense that disabled people do not necessarily have the same opportunities to contribute to consultations and/or be involved in decision-making as non-disabled people. The research also acknowledged that disabled people have low levels of digital literacy which is compounded by physical and disability related access.

Age
Feedback received by the council through consultation work undertaken as part of developing the Community Engagement Strategy shows that participants across all age groups felt it was important to ensure that particular population groups, such as the elderly and those with specific access or educational needs including language barriers, should not be excluded when the council adopts more digital technology to communicate and engage with residents.

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

Engagement

The Scottish Government has set out 10 National Standards for Community Engagement[36] which provides a useful framework for considering engagement:

1. The Involvement Standard
   We will identify and involve the people and organisations with an interest in the focus of the engagement.

2. The Support Standard
   We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement.

3. The Planning Standard
   We will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken.

4. The Methods Standard
   We will agree the use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.

5. The Working Together Standard
   We will agree and use clear procedures to enable the participants to work with one another efficiently and effectively.

6. The Sharing Information Standard
   We will ensure necessary information is communicated between the participants.

7. The Working with Others Standard
   We will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement.

8. The Improvement Standard
   We will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants.

9. The Feedback Standard
   We will feedback the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected.

10. The Monitoring and Evaluation Standard
    We will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement meets its purposes and the national standards for community engagement.

These standards highlight the importance of having clear and agreed purposes and putting in place methods that achieve these purposes. It also emphasises the need to improve the quality of community engagement through a commitment to learning from experience for continuous improvement. Through the council's community engagement strategy we will ensure that we develop effective methods of change through a clear sense of purpose when engaging the community, developing and sustaining strong working relationships between stakeholders and building on the skills and knowledge of all those involved to increase understanding and support action on the needs and issues that communities experience. These standards will be applied by the council in both formal and informal community engagement.

What evidence is there that we are making a difference?

Cohesion

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

- No Place for Hate (NPFH) Forum brings key agencies together to work in partnership to make Tower Hamlets a better place to live, work and visit by developing and promoting a co-ordinated response to race and hate crime that protects and supports victims, deters perpetrators; challenges prejudice and hate, and contributes to creating a safer, more cohesive community. In 2015/16, there has been an increase in the reporting mechanisms for victims of hate crime, which can be partly attributed to the establishment of two new third party reporting centres; also an increase in the number of referrals to the Police, Hate Incident Panels and Victim Support Hate Crime Caseworkers across all strands, demonstrating increased access to support and protection for victims. Awareness raising activities held by the council to challenge inequalities across all strands; this includes working with different BME, faith, elderly, young, disabled, gender and LGBT communities. Over 500 local people have been trained on how to tackle discrimination across all protected characteristics and over 1,000 people have increased awareness of NPFH.

- No Place for Hate campaign – 84 local people including residents, school governors and other professionals have been trained as 'No Place for Hate' champions since the campaign was launched in 2008. Recruitment for champions remains ongoing.

- Cohesion offer in schools to help foster cohesion between different parts of the community by encouraging interaction in a sustainable way through different approaches such as 'Train the Trainer' technique rather than one-off events for particular community groups.

- Home Office grants secured to deliver a range of community based services aimed at developing resilience, leadership and confidence within the community to challenge radical and extremist narratives. This includes tailored training opportunities, commissioned cohesion projects and curriculum resources targeted at young people.

- Tension Monitoring Group (TMG) established to communicate about cohesion related tensions in the borough, and to inform measured and unified preventative actions and responses. The Group works by establishing a multi-agency partnership approach to share information and intelligence, and develop early interventions to manage imminent and current tensions or cohesion related issues. The Group also operates as a 'virtual team' keeping in regular contact, dealing with issues as they arise, and keeping each other informed of any current and upcoming incidents.

- Establishment of a Community Cohesion working group – a partnership between the council and local stakeholders to drive forward the development and implementation of initiatives, in order to develop a more cohesive borough. Individuals and organisations within the group will take a lead on developing and implementing sustainable initiatives around community cohesion, and support the development of partnership and engagement opportunities between organisations.

- The council commissions a range of community activities and events to promote the One Tower Hamlets principles, and to celebrate and commemorate the borough's diverse history, religion and culture. These events also mark the significance of these groups and the contribution of these communities to the borough.

- The refreshed Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy sets out a number of activities to help develop leadership and resilience within the voluntary and community sector through capacity building, opportunities to participate in co-production and collaborative commissioning as well as developing and promoting new ways of volunteering to strengthen cohesion.

Engagement

The council is developing a Community Engagement Strategy. The strategy will set out how we will engage the local community to better meet local needs and embed opportunities for participation in the council's work. It will aim to ensure that the council's engagement work is informed by the needs and the inequalities particular communities may face. The strategy will focus on a number of areas including improving digital inclusion; as the council becomes increasingly digital it is essential that work is undertaken to improve digital skills and access, particular among community groups that are often excluded. The strategy will also help to foster cohesion between different parts of the community by encouraging interaction in a sustainable way rather than through one-off events for particular community groups.

Resilience

The council undertook a refresh of its Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Strategy in 2015. The refreshed strategy sets out how the council will work with the VCS over the next three years to deliver local services. It aims to drive a significant change in the way the council currently operates. This includes a redefined delivery partnership with the voluntary sector based on outcomes and commissioning, so communities get the help they need in a way that demonstrates the best use is made of limited resources. Co-design and co-production of services with the sector and transfer of assets to community ownership where appropriate. As well as redefining relationships between the council and citizens by providing more volunteering opportunities, and developing schemes to enable citizens to act as local champions.

What more do we need to know?

While there is a wide range of qualitative studies and some data on the cohesion and engagement themes within this strategic priority, local intelligence is limited especially around the theme of resilience. The most detailed data comes from the Home Office/ONS's statistical bulletin on hate crime in England and Wales but even this information has limited analysis to draw on, resulting in inconclusive findings. The council's Annual Residents Survey also provides information on views on cohesion in the borough on an annual basis, but this is perceptual data and does not take into account the impact of national and international events on the borough.

In general, a lack of equalities monitoring by services within this priority makes it difficult to assess inequalities at a service level, and between different protected groups in Tower Hamlets, and benchmark performance against other local authorities.

For some protected characteristics, particularly LGBT people data is non-existent at a local level. As a result there is an over dependence on qualitative feedback from surveys and consultation undertaken within these groups to identify and measure perceived inequality. Services focused on cohesion and engagement also rely heavily on Annual Residents Survey data to evaluate the effectiveness of their work in meeting outcomes.

Being able to decipher Hate Crime incidents efficiently can be a challenging task due to the way they are recorded. We are able to secure grants for improving security of faith institutions from the Home Office, but this is dependent on incidents of Hate Crime being reported in the vicinity. Current recording has meant gaining this information is a troublesome and laborious process.

What are the priorities for tackling inequality?

Developing resilience and strengthening cohesion is a challenge for the council and its partners, especially within the context of diminishing funding from central government, combined with the nature of the challenges faced by the local population in Tower Hamlets. Defining politically what we mean by resilience and developing local indicators will support the council to guide its approach and evaluate its performance.

There is also no universally accepted definition of cohesion which raises a variety of challenges when measuring outcomes. The extent to which people get along with each other is among the most common determinant used. However, to address the wider socio-economic factors that determine social cohesion the council will need to develop local indicators to understand the inequalities between different protected groups, and measure the effectiveness of interventions on cohesion levels in the borough.

Building resilience from within the community is a strategic goal for the Prevent Delivery Plan. The aim is to achieve this through ensuring that communities feel confident in challenging all forms of extremism, and helping to promote co-operative working across the council. This includes structures such as the Tension Monitoring Group and the 'No Place for Hate' Forum which include representatives from different teams in the council and sections of the community. Also co-operative working (particularly in messaging) is fostered through projects involving Prevent, community cohesion, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Hate Crime.

Equalities monitoring by all services within this priority should also be made mandatory to support the council in developing its understanding of persistent inequalities in these areas for protected characteristic groups.

Services Engaged

- Communications
- Customer Access
- Third Sector Team
- Education and Partnership
- Tower Hamlets LGBT Community Engagement Forum (community group)
- Tower Hamlets Local Voices (community group)

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Endnotes

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