

Building equal foundations: Tackling the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and other ethnic communities in Camden

August 2020

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Forewords



In May 2020, we established a senior level working group to review the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on our Black, Asian and other ethnic communities in Camden. We are now pleased to present our findings and calls to action in this report.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all and has been described by many as the greatest challenge the UK has faced during peacetime. In response to this crisis, we have seen our communities across Camden come together to support each other in extraordinary ways. People have been shielding, self-isolating and social distancing in order to contain the spread of infection. Many of us have been staying at home to work and to learn, and many have continued providing vital services on the frontline. We have all sacrificed seeing our loved ones and some of us have even lost those dearest to us.

But it has become clear that in Camden, and right across the country, the ways in which we have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic have not been the same. Residents from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 – people of Bangladeshi ethnicity have around twice the risk of death when compared to people of White British ethnicity, and people of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian, Caribbean and Other Black ethnicity have between 10 and 50% higher risk of death when compared to their White British counterparts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the existing structural inequalities that disproportionately affect people from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds. Perhaps most worryingly, the pandemic has exacerbated these.

As this troubling local and national evidence emerged of disproportionate impacts, we quickly established a working group made up of voluntary and community organisations, public health officials, councillors and others. The aim of this working group was to investigate the wide-ranging impacts of COVID-19 and gather evidence quickly so that we could take immediate action to protect our residents, and develop a call to action to make long-term, substantive change.

Significant change is only possible when we work closely with our communities to explore and tackle entrenched issues together. Throughout the process of gathering evidence, we listened to our residents and heard the painful truths of inequalities that have been holding so many back in our borough. We listened to young people speak of their hopes for the future, for a better and fairer Camden. We share that hope. And we share a commitment to building a society that works for everyone.

For so many of us, this commitment is a longstanding one, and we must acknowledge that we have been here before. Change has not come quickly enough, nor has it been radical enough. This time it will be different. This report and the calls to action are the next step in our journey to tackle structural inequality in Camden. We will co-design a better borough and we will take action together.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to this report: council officers, elected members, local residents and our voluntary and community sector partners. It has been a privilege to work with you to get to this stage. But this is not the end. Camden is one of the most diverse areas of the country, with a history of fighting for equality and progress. The spirit that marks our history is one that will also shape our present and our future.

For us, this report and the calls to action mark the next step in that history – the foundation upon which we will build a more equal borough. The structure that has existed until now did not work for us all and COVID-19 has shown us that we cannot accept or return to the way things used to be. We are building equal foundations and we are building them together to make Camden a better borough – a place where everyone has a chance to succeed, where nobody gets left behind, and where everybody has a voice.

Councillor Abdul Hai

Cabinet Member for Young People and Cohesion

Co-chair of the Black, Asian and Other Ethnic Inequalities and COVID-19 Working Group

Camden Council

Forewords



Evidence emerged during the very early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic that the health impacts were not going to be equally felt across society. As the pandemic has unfolded, this evidence base and our understanding has developed further, highlighting the disproportionate health impacts of the virus itself, but also the social and economic impacts of the measures taken to prevent its spread, on both the poorest in society and on Black, Asian and other ethnic groups.

Locally, we responded quickly in an effort to both understand these disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and other ethnic communities in Camden, and to inform local actions to prevent and mitigate against further disproportionate impacts. The health, wellbeing and safety of our residents has been paramount throughout. We have responded to this unprecedented challenge in so many ways – from ensuring our residents and communities have access to the advice and information they need in order to protect themselves and their families and stay safe, to providing both practical and emotional support to people who were clinically and/or socially vulnerable during the pandemic.

The evidence received and experiences heard during the course of this work will not only guide and shape our ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic in an effort to prevent future disproportionate impacts, but has also galvanised a renewed commitment and will to tackle longstanding inequalities and structural disadvantage and discrimination facing Black, Asian and other ethnic communities in Camden.

Creating the conditions that support happy, healthy, thriving lives, and help people fulfil their potential, is not something that any one organisation can do on its own. That is why all of our calls to action have residents and key partners at their core. To make real change will take a radical approach and will also require new ways of working with co-design, co-production and co-delivery at its heart. This work brings social value, partnerships and community empowerment into even greater focus than before, as we continue our journey for substantive change together as a borough.

This report is an important step on the journey towards building equal foundations, rather than the end. We are committed to not only tackling health inequalities across the borough, but also to eliminating the longstanding socioeconomic inequalities that persist in Camden. Together, I am hopeful we can make Camden a better borough and a place that truly works for everyone.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the many people and organisations that have contributed to this report. I look forward to continuing to work with you as we mobilise towards action.

Julie Billett

Director of Public Health

Co-chair of the Black, Asian and Other Ethnic Inequalities and COVID-19 Working Group
Camden and Islington Councils

Acknowledgements

Camden Council would like to thank everyone for their efforts in developing this work, sharing with us their lived experiences and insights, and for contributing to the development of this report and the calls to action.

Working group members

Co-chair: Cllr Abdul Hai – Cabinet Member for Young People and Cohesion, Camden Council

Co-chair: Julie Billett – Director of Public Health, Camden and Islington Councils

Councillor Awale Olad – Chair of the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee, Camden Council

Councillor Sabrina Francis – Deputy Mayor, Camden Council

Councillor Georgia Gould – Leader of Camden Council

Councillor Angela Mason – Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, Camden Council

Jenny Rowlands – Chief Executive, Camden Council

Gillian Marston – Executive Director, Supporting Communities, Camden Council

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Voluntary and community sector partners

Voluntary Action Camden Forum

Somali Youth Development Resource Centre (SYDRC)

Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre

Bengali Workers' Association

British Somali Community

Camden Cypriot Women's Organisation

King's Cross and Brunswick Neighbourhood Association (KCBNA)

Scene and Heard

Schools

Acland Burghley School

Regent High School

Eleanor Palmer Primary School

Torriano Primary School

Camden Centre for Learning

Royal Free Hospital Children's School

Others

Athian Akec – Member for Camden of the UK Youth Parliament

Paula Walker – Headteacher, Christ Church School

Jemima Wade – Headteacher, Argyle Primary School

Christine Gilbert – Future First

Anna Wright – Healthwatch Camden

Dr Neel Gupta MRCP MRCGP – General Practitioner; Elected Governing Body Member, NHS North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group

Dr Kevan Ritchie – North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group – Clinical Representative (Camden) Governing Body Member; Partner, The Bloomsbury Surgery

Sarah McDonnell Davies – Executive Managing Director, North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group – Camden Directorate

Camden Council services

Organisational Development

Inclusive Economy

Camden Learning

Adult Social Care

Policy, Participation and Communications

Public Health

Early Help

Housing Management

Housing Support Services

Development

Community Partnerships

Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on, and exacerbated, existing structural inequalities that disproportionately affect people from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds.

In Camden, over 34% of our residents are from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds and we recognise that the inequalities experienced vary across different groups. In some neighbourhoods in Camden, the levels of deprivation are within the top 10% to 20% in the UK. People who live in deprived areas have higher COVID-19 diagnosis rates and death rates than those living in less deprived areas, with the most deprived areas experiencing more than double the mortality rates from COVID-19.

Despite this, Camden has a COVID-19 age-standardised mortality rate that is significantly lower than the London average (55 versus 86 per 100,000) and has one of the lowest COVID-19 mortality rates amongst all London boroughs.

We are not complacent and we accept that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted our diverse communities. Some of the key findings in Camden are:

- The prevalence of key long-term conditions that increase clinical vulnerability to poor COVID-19 outcomes, such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity and high blood pressure, is higher in some Black, Asian and other ethnic groups compared to their White counterparts.
- Local GP data shows that prior to the pandemic, Black men and women, and Asian men, were more likely to be overweight and obese compared to the Camden average adjusted for age.
- A significantly higher proportion of Asian residents were shielding from COVID-19: 11% of Asian residents were shielding compared to a general population of 7%.
- There was a disproportionate number of new registrations in April and May from young people from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds for Kooth, an online mental health support service commissioned by Camden.
- Schools with the highest percentage of pupils with no access to digital devices have tended to be those with high percentages of disadvantaged and/or Black, Asian and other ethnic pupils.

- 73% of households with overcrowding points on the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme have a lead tenant from a Black, Asian or other ethnic background.

The work outlined in this report focuses on one protected characteristic, namely race. This is appropriate given the early yet strong statistical indications that the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted and increased the disadvantages experienced by people from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds in our community. The indications of disproportionate impact are clear, and it is important that the Council understands, analyses and considers actions to address these clear indications of disproportionate impact as soon as we can. As we progress with our work on tackling racial inequalities, we will consider the intersectional nature of inequalities, and the impact of multiple protected characteristics on a person.

This work, overseen by a senior level working group chaired by Councillor Abdul Hai (Cabinet Member for Young People and Cohesion) and Julie Billett (Director of Public Health), included a review of available evidence and the development of a framework of actions to tackle the inequalities identified. This evidence came from residents, councillors, a small number of voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups and practitioners. The working group also drew on national data, including the Public Health England report on 'COVID-19: understanding the impact on BAME communities', and the wider current social context, specifically the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in the UK following the death of George Floyd in the United States. This contributed to the fear and anxiety of our Black and Asian residents and we have acknowledged the urgent need to take action with our communities to tackle entrenched structural racism.

Some of the commitments made as part of this work include:

- **Participation:** Set up a citizens' panel for residents from diverse backgrounds as a critical friend to the Council to make sure we stay true to our objectives and deliver the change we are promising.

- **Health:** Go further to improve health outcomes in our Black, Asian and other ethnic communities, including working with our local NHS partners to improve population health outcomes and tackle inequality gaps in long-term health conditions experienced by Black, Asian and other ethnic groups. We will work with our Clinical Commissioning Group, primary care networks and Camden Healthwatch to deliver creative, innovative models of outreach, proactive care and delivery.
- **Housing:** Explore the use of housing voids to provide some temporary accommodation as an option to protect those living in severely overcrowded housing where someone becomes ill in a second wave of COVID-19 or similar pandemic. We will work with Public Health to agree priority households, particularly those with a family member identified as being clinically vulnerable to COVID-19.
- **Education:** Develop tutoring opportunities, delivering virtual work experience, and supporting access into STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) careers.
- **Voluntary and community sector:** Work with our grassroots VCS to ensure fair access to funding and facilitate discussions with the Government and larger funders to contribute to organisations being able to continue their vital work. We are committed to enabling collaborations across the sector to build a stronger VCS who help us to tackle structural inequalities.

This innovative way of working together is the only way we will deliver on our ambition to make Camden a place where everyone has a chance to succeed, where nobody gets left behind and where everybody has a voice. We are committed to working out in the open with residents, elected members, VCS groups and businesses to continue to build the picture of the experiences of our borough's diverse communities, and tailor action plans together to find effective solutions to tackling inequalities.

This report summarises the findings of the working group and makes early recommendations on how we can continue this journey together. Through this work we aim to tackle racism and inequality head on. We may find ourselves in places of discomfort as we continue to have conversations and challenge everyone to act. However, we must take the time to build equal foundations in society and build a better, more equal place for everyone in Camden.

Introduction

Camden is one of the most diverse areas of the country, with a history of fighting for equality and progress.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Camden Council made a number of commitments:

- Keep vital services running – even if they have to be delivered in a different way – and introduce new services such as enhanced cleaning of buildings that provide care services
- Ensure no council tenant loses their home if they are affected by coronavirus, and urge other/private landlords to provide the same reassurance
- Ensure that those who work for care providers do not have to choose between their wage, their health, and the health of those they support
- Ensure everyone has access to food – especially those who are unwell, self-isolating or caring for others
- Work with Camden's voluntary and community organisations to support, encourage and mobilise the huge community spirit that exists in Camden.

We also made a promise to stay compassionate throughout this time and treat all lives as valuable. Working with our key partners, local VCS and mutual aid groups, we remain committed to achieving this goal.

The COVID-19 pandemic has both revealed, and exacerbated, existing structural inequalities that disproportionately affect people from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds. In Camden, over 34% of our residents are from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds and we recognise that the inequalities experienced vary across different groups. We also know in some neighbourhoods in Camden, [the levels of deprivation](#) are within the top 10% to 20% in the UK and that people who live in deprived areas have higher diagnosis rates and death rates than those living in less deprived areas, with the most deprived areas experiencing more than double the mortality rates from COVID-19. Despite this, Camden has a COVID-19 age-standardised mortality rate that is significantly lower than the London average (55 versus 86 per 100,000) and has one of the lowest COVID-19 mortality rates amongst all London boroughs.

We are not complacent and we accept that COVID-19 has shone a light on existing structural inequalities. Some of the key findings in Camden were:

- A significantly higher proportion of Asian residents were shielding from COVID-19: Asian residents made up 11% of the population shielding compared to 7% in the general population.
- There was a disproportionate number of new registrations in April and May from young people from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds for Kooth, an online mental health support service commissioned by Camden.
- 73% of households with overcrowding points on the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme have a lead tenant from a Black, Asian or other ethnic background.

Our work to protect those at most risk from the impacts of COVID-19 began early in the pandemic, before national data was published indicating the disproportionate impacts on Black, Asian and other ethnic communities. Our early actions included ensuring effective communications were delivered to our diverse communities in a way that was accessible, and offering tailored food packages to meet cultural requirements. The scale and pace of the response in Camden would not have been possible if we did not have deep wells of community partnership to draw on. Our vibrant and diverse VCS and the ability of residents to connect with and help one another played a pivotal role in this response, ensuring families were kept safe and bringing to the fore the needs and lived experiences of our communities.

Introduction

As part of wider work to tackle inequalities and in response to the emerging evidence, Camden Council launched a programme of work focused on how residents from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. In collaboration with our partners and communities, we looked into what actions the Council must take to ensure individuals are protected from the immediate and long-term impacts of the pandemic and bring about systemic change. To minimise the impact of the virus, we worked to act quickly to understand the impact on people and listen directly to those who work closest with our communities, as well as analysing whatever data was available to us. We have used the approach outlined in this report to review our work on cohesion and equalities, recognising both the need to respond to the crisis in an immediate sense, and to ensure we foster a collaborative approach in our wider work on tackling inequalities. We have tailored our approaches to engagement and gone deeper into our communities to understand people's different experiences.

This work, overseen by a senior level working group chaired by Councillor Abdul Hai (Cabinet Member for Young People and Cohesion) and Julie Billett (Director of Public Health), included a review of available evidence and the development of a framework of actions to tackle the inequalities identified. This evidence came from residents, councillors, a small number of VCS groups, and practitioners. The working group also drew on national data, including the Public Health England reports on '[COVID-19: understanding the impact on BAME communities](#)' and the wider current social context, specifically the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in the UK following the death of George Floyd in the United States. This contributed to the fear and anxiety of our Black and Asian residents and we have acknowledged the urgent need to take action with our communities to tackle entrenched structural racism.

The six areas in scope of the working group's review included:

- Understanding the lived experiences of people from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds
- Health inequalities
- The experiences of our most vulnerable residents – shielding people and Adult Social Care clients
- Housing supply and overcrowding
- Employment and the labour market (including our own workforce)
- Schools and education, including the digital divide.

By focusing on these topics, we have seen that COVID-19 has starkly exposed the cost of accepting high levels of health and social inequality – more than ever, we need to co-design services and solutions alongside our communities, rather than just deliver them. This means constantly challenging ourselves and bringing residents and communities with us on this journey. We can do this by trying out new tools for collaborating, bringing together residents, businesses and others to test how we can use data, information and technology to help us get under the skin of problems. We will not be afraid to take risks and experiment, recognising this is the key to learning and getting it right.

Introduction

It is important that we acknowledge what we have heard from the VCS around the financial impact of the pandemic and how limited funding for VCS organisations has impacted, and will continue to impact, service delivery. Many small organisations working with, and run by, Black, Asian and other ethnic communities shared that they lack finances and did not always receive some of the larger COVID-19 funding distributed. We also heard that a reduction or lack of funding for core costs (overheads) has impacted most of the VCS and this affects the level of resourcing at a time when our communities need help the most. Nearly all faith and VCS organisations have seen a reduction in donations. We will remember this as we move into the next phase of the pandemic, and we are committed to continuing to work with these groups to ensure fair access to funding and the commissioning of contracts. We will enable collaboration across the sector and facilitate discussions with the Government and larger funders to contribute to organisations being able to continue their vital work.

This innovative way of working together is the only way we will deliver on our ambition to make Camden a place where everyone has a chance to succeed, where nobody gets left behind and where everybody has a voice. Camden is committed to working with residents, members, VCS groups and businesses to continue to build the picture of our borough's diverse community's experiences, and tailor action plans together to find effective solutions to tackling inequalities.

This report summarises the findings of the working group and makes early recommendations on how we can continue this journey together. Through this work we aim to tackle racism and inequality head on. We may find ourselves in places of discomfort as we continue to have conversations and challenge everyone to act, however, we must take the time to rebuild the foundations of society and build a better place for everyone in Camden.

Tackling inequalities in Camden: Camden Council's work to date

Tackling inequality sits at the heart of Camden's overarching values, ambitions and strategies. Camden 2025 sets out a shared vision for the future of the borough, where everyone contributes to achieving a safe, fair, creative and active community – a place where everyone has a chance to succeed and where nobody gets left behind. Our Camden Plan is Camden Council's response to Camden 2025 and articulates our core purpose as addressing and reducing inequality and the barriers it creates by working with individuals, families and communities to open up the opportunities they need to get on in life.

Prior to the pandemic, we had been working on tackling inequalities throughout the Council's work. Earlier this year we produced a paper outlining our approach to cohesion and equality in 2020, which was agreed by the Council's Cabinet in January 2020. This included developing a council-wide strategic approach, joining the European Intercultural Cities programme, and exploring the range of inequalities across Camden, including socio-economic inequality.

Camden's Annual Public Health Report 2019/20 'Going Further on Health Inequalities Within Camden and Islington' continues the conversation from previous work on this theme, looking at what progress has been made to date on health inequalities locally, and considering what else we need to do and how we might need to work differently in the future to reduce these longstanding disparities. In February 2019, we launched the Camden Health and Care Citizens' Assembly in partnership with health and voluntary sector organisations in the borough. Made up of 43 residents broadly representative of the Camden population, the assembly will be at the forefront of developing recommendations for the future of health and care in the borough.

Key to all our efforts to reduce inequalities in Camden is the regular and meaningful involvement of our diverse communities' lived experiences. We have made a conscious decision as a council to invest in the sustainability of the wide range of voluntary and community (VCS) organisations that represent the people of the borough. Involving communities as equal partners in priority-setting, planning and decision-making can lead to services and programmes that are better matched with need, and in turn to improved life outcomes. We introduced a partnership model with VCS organisations to enable the sector to operate more strategically, focusing on social cohesion, community connectedness and taking a strengths-based approach to supporting residents.

Additionally, as a local authority we believe we should be providing opportunities for our citizens working in their own communities, as well as making sure that our workforce reflects our diverse communities. Supporting our Black, Asian and other ethnic background staff is a top priority and we are committed to being an employer that champions diversity and creates an environment for all our staff to thrive.

Building cohesion and equality cuts across all of our Camden 2025 outcomes. The following areas of work demonstrate Camden's approach to cohesion and equalities in practice:

Community Investment Programme

The Community Investment Programme (CIP) takes a neighbourhood-focused approach to designing, building and refurbishing community assets such as affordable housing and schools. The programme enables us to adopt a place-shaping approach working with residents on making communities great places to live and work, integrating new housing development with enhanced opportunities for employment and skills. One of the neighbourhoods where the Community Investment Programme is working to combat deprivation is in Gospel Oak and the northern part of Haverstock ward where the programme has invested over £55 million with a further £100 million of further investment planned.

Safer Camden Network

The Safer Camden Network approach aims to reduce violence and help communities feel safe. It is working with residents and partners to galvanise local resources and develop focused solutions in communities worst hit by violent crime. Starting in Gospel Oak, this approach will respond to changing demand, share learning, and over time focus on other priority communities in Camden.

Tackling inequalities in Camden: Camden Council's work to date

Faith Leaders' Forum

Camden's faith communities play a pivotal role in supporting community cohesion, such as the work carried out by St Luke's Church to support families around bereavement. We support Camden's Faith Leaders, Forum, where we hold regular meetings to support collaboration. We fund a full-time post to work with voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners to counter extremism by promoting cohesion.

Cohesion Impact Group

We also convene the Cohesion Impact Group, which supports the borough in the aftermath of an emergency incident and advises the Council on situations that could have a potential negative impact on cohesion, for example, a rise in hate crime or a terrorist incident. The group consists of faith leaders who can reach out to their strong networks and can be called upon in emergencies or heightened tensions.

Youth Offending Service

Our Youth Offending Service has been tackling the issue of overrepresentation of Black, Asian and other ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System, building on the recommendations of the Lammy Review (2017). The Camden Youth Safety Taskforce Report explored issues around why some young people carry knives, the main causes of youth violence, and what can be done to address the problem of youth violence in Camden. We know that our young Black, Asian and other ethnic people are disproportionately affected by violence, with much of this as a result of structural inequalities. Following the publication of the Youth Safety Taskforce Report in 2018, we fund a range of projects that work directly with young people in Camden, and meet regularly with our Youth Safety Steering Group to ensure that at a strategic level our work has the best possible outcomes for our young people. The Youth Safety Steering Group has representation from experts in youth services and early help, employment and skills, public health and the Metropolitan Police Service, along with political leadership from Keir Starmer MP, Councillor Abdul Hai and our Youth MPs.

In 2019, the Youth Safety Steering Group awarded grants from the Camden Youth Safety Fund to support the delivery of the 17 recommendations set out in the Taskforce Report under the headings of 'prevent, identify, support, disrupt and enforce'. The funded projects have been evaluating their work over the past year. Their reports show that they have worked with nearly 1,500 young people, with an emphasis on young people aged nine to 16. Over half of those young people can be described as Black, Asian, or other mixed and other ethnic backgrounds. They have worked with more young men than women, however projects have recognised this and are focusing their next phases of work to reach more young women.

Working with schools

In education, Camden has built a strong approach to tackling school exclusions, recognising this as an equalities issue. We have set up an exclusions panel, chaired by Councillor Samata Khatoon, and our schools are transparent with data around exclusions and 'managed moves', with data now reviewed by ethnicity. The Council, via the Safer Camden Network, is currently developing a community mentoring initiative targeted at Black, Asian and other ethnic students most at risk of educational disengagement and/or exclusion.

Tackling inequalities in Camden: Camden Council's work to date

Initial response to COVID-19 pandemic

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been committed to working with our partners to save as many lives as possible and reduce the impact of COVID-19 on our residents. Early evidence that showed the disproportionate impact on people who are from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds highlighted the importance of supporting our diverse communities in a variety of ways. This has included ensuring that effective and accessible communications are shared with communities, including producing a toolkit for VCS leaders to create their own communications, videos and WhatsApp messages, recognising the different media channels that people use. We have also promoted and disseminated a diverse range of communications in different languages. Our Cabinet Member for Cohesion and Young People, Councillor Abdul Hai, participated in an interview on Bengali TV (Channel S) in April emphasising that people follow Government guidelines, maintain social distancing and only go out if essential.

In schools and education, access to laptops and Wi-Fi has been provided to disadvantaged children, and paper and other resources provided to families in need where possible. Some schools have provided free school meals vouchers to families and pre-paid food purchase cards to families experiencing food hardship. Over 11,000 food hampers have been given to families. We mobilised a Food Poverty Working Group to understand residents' lived experiences of food poverty during the pandemic and will use these insights to inform and develop a Food Poverty Action Plan.

We have been supporting our Black, Asian and other ethnic workforce by sharing regular communications with the Camden Black Workers Group, commencing staff focus groups to understand Black, Asian and other ethnic colleagues' experiences throughout the pandemic, providing a comprehensive wellbeing offer to all staff, and ensuring that all frontline staff have access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

However, we recognise that we must go further and faster as we move into the next phase of the pandemic, and we will do more with our partners to ensure that Camden's communities are supported. This report outlines calls to action that will contribute to tackling the challenges identified. It explains how we will go further with what we have delivered so far through working with our communities.

Black, Asian and Other Ethnic Inequalities and COVID-19 Working Group: Identifying the key issues

Developing a rich understanding of the key issues facing our diverse communities has been a fundamental aspect of this work. Whilst we have worked at pace to gather intelligence, we have taken the necessary time to consider the findings in granular detail, to ensure that the most effective interventions can be developed.

The working group has sought to play a leadership role in:

- Supporting council services to consider inequalities faced by Black, Asian and other ethnic communities in all their work
- Providing a central overview of the work being done to address the disproportionate impacts faced by Black, Asian and other ethnic communities, including contributing to pan-London and national work
- Identifying specific community groups that have been adversely impacted by COVID-19, consciously avoiding treating Black, Asian and other ethnic communities as a homogenous group
- Capturing local good practice and sharing this with partners and key stakeholders both across London and nationally
- Scanning the horizon to identify the work undertaken by other organisations, with the potential of collaborating on specific key areas
- Developing short, medium and long-term action plans, which will look ahead at how we tailor our response to the next phase of the pandemic, as well as how we can work with our residents, VCS and other organisations to develop and deliver approaches collaboratively. The action plans will also seek to ensure that the Council's wider response to recovery and renewal proactively addresses longstanding and new inequalities faced by Black, Asian and other ethnic communities.

To help shape the initial focus of the working group topics, we have heard from a small number of local VCS organisations working with Black, Asian and other ethnic groups, and some of our schools through virtual meetings with VCS leaders, grassroots organisations and faith leaders, as well as sharing email correspondence to encourage them to contribute to the Government's Women and Equalities Select Committee inquiry. A summary of contributions from VCS organisations and schools is included in Appendix 1.

We recognise that, while the experiences outlined in the report highlight challenges faced by many of our residents, they also do not represent those of all residents from similar backgrounds. We have continued to engage with residents and organisations throughout the project and have included this feedback throughout the report. We are also continuing this engagement process beyond the publication of this report.

Throughout the project we continued to proactively hear the experiences of our residents, partners and staff to help shape the framework for the action plans. These included:

- Camden's Youth MP, who joined us for the session on schools and education – a number of youth roundtables have also been held with young people across Camden.
- The voices and experiences of our diverse Black and Asian staff, which were collected through staff focus groups, internal communication tool Yammer and emails directly to senior leaders.
- Local headteachers, GPs and Camden Healthwatch, who contributed powerful evidence detailing the impact they are seeing of the pandemic, and who shared their views on the change that needs to happen within the healthcare system and schools.
- Our VCS partners and faith organisations, who we have actively engaged with from the beginning of this work through a number of channels to gather rich qualitative evidence of the lived experiences of our residents. We have also been working to diversify the range of engagement and voices heard in our local VCS.
- Elected members contributed lived experiences from their communities throughout the process.

The next section of the report outlines the key findings from these discussions and the data that we have gathered to inform early recommendations.

Disproportionality focus area: Health inequalities

Background and context

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the longstanding, entrenched health inequalities that exist both nationally and locally.

Although Camden has a COVID-19 age-standardised mortality rate that is significantly lower than the London average (55 versus 86 per 100,000) and has one of the lowest COVID-19 mortality rates amongst all London boroughs, the emerging evidence shows that there are wider health and wellbeing impacts of the pandemic, and that these are disproportionately experienced by Camden's Black, Asian and other ethnic communities.

Data from Public Health England and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows us that:

- People who live in deprived areas have higher diagnosis rates and death rates than those living in less deprived areas, with the most deprived areas experiencing more than double the mortality rates from COVID-19.
- People of Bangladeshi ethnicity have around twice the risk of death from COVID-19 than people of White British ethnicity.
- People of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian, Caribbean and Other Black ethnicity have between 10 and 50% higher risk of death from COVID-19 when compared to White British counterparts.

Whilst these analyses do not account for the effects of occupation, comorbidities or obesity, the statistics demonstrate a real risk and significant impact on Black, Asian and Other ethnic communities.

Local analysis shows us a similar picture. In North Central London, there has been a higher percentage of COVID-19 deaths in people born in Africa or Asia, when compared to those born in the UK or Europe (taken from death registration data).

We know there is a complex system that causes health inequalities to thrive. Pre-existing health inequalities amongst Black, Asian and other ethnic groups, and the interrelationship with deprivation and other social, economic, cultural and environmental determinants of health, are all likely to underpin the different experiences and health outcomes we have seen during the pandemic.

There has been a decrease in people accessing NHS services for a range of conditions that are not related to COVID-19, including people attending A&E for urgent and emergency medical issues, such as strokes and heart attacks. A Health Foundation survey found that access to health services for people with pre-existing conditions was 20% lower during the COVID-19 peak period – 10% said that they were unable to get an appointment and 22% cited concerns over contracting or transmitting the virus, or worries about breaking the lockdown. Not accessing care due to fear of contracting COVID-19 was higher for patients with diabetes (27%), heart disease (28%) and mental health illness (30%).

Locally, the VCS heard from some residents that the cancellation of hospital appointments for people with pre-existing health concerns has left many people with worsening health conditions. Additionally, some Black, Asian and other ethnic residents have felt unable to attend hospital if they experience non-COVID-19 sickness, out of a belief that hospital services are not available to them or will put them at risk of COVID-19.

During lockdown and as lockdown eases, there has been considerable concern in some communities around leaving the home, which is having a significant impact on physical health and mental wellbeing now and for the future. We have heard from the VCS that some mothers who do not speak English as a first language have been taking guidance to stay at home literally, therefore not exercising or going shopping. This may further exacerbate existing inequalities in health, such as higher levels of obesity that exist amongst some of our Black, Asian and other ethnic communities.

Disproportionality focus area: Health inequalities

Many residents have reported feeling more stressed, anxious, isolated or depressed as a result of COVID-19. Additionally, local evidence indicates that Black and Asian residents in Camden rate having a supportive community as being more important for their health and wellbeing than White residents, suggesting lockdown might have had a greater negative impact on residents who value community interaction more highly.

Key findings

Direct health impacts

- The prevalence of key long-term conditions that increase clinical vulnerability to poor COVID-19 outcomes such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity and high blood pressure is higher in some Black, Asian and other ethnic groups compared to their White counterparts.
- A significantly higher proportion of Asian residents were shielding from COVID-19: 11% of Asian residents were shielding compared to a general population of 7%.
- People who live in deprived areas have higher diagnosis rates and death rates than those living in less deprived areas, with the most deprived areas experiencing more than double the mortality rates from COVID-19.

Accessing health services

- Camden's Annual Public Health Report 'Going Further on Health Inequalities 2019/20' identified how issues around discriminatory treatment (actual and/or anticipated) shape people's experience and use of health and wider statutory services.
- Considerable research from the UK and abroad has shown that the fear of everyday discrimination is closely associated with a number of poor health and wellbeing outcomes.
- ONS (Office for National Statistics) data shows that in 2018 the gap in recent internet use among different ethnic groups had narrowed. This is particularly the case for adults of Bangladeshi ethnicity. In 2011, 31.4% were internet non-users, higher than the figure for UK adults overall (20.3%). In 2018, the figure for Bangladeshi internet non-users had dropped to 8.0%, a figure that is now lower than for the UK overall (10.0%). However, local evidence from residents and VCS organisations highlights that digital literacy remains a significant issue for older Bangladeshi people.

Physical activity

- Obesity is a risk factor for severe illness and death from COVID-19.
- Local GP data shows that prior to the pandemic, Black men and women, and Asian men were more likely to be overweight and obese compared to the Camden average adjusted for age.
- COVID-19 has led to fundamental and immediate changes in how people lead their lives and how they can be physically active. There is considerable concern in some communities around leaving the home, which is having a significant impact on physical health and mental wellbeing now and for the future.
- The impacts can include weight gain, reduction in mobility for some people, poor mental health and wellbeing, and exacerbation of existing long-term conditions.

Mental health and wellbeing

- We know that Black and Asian residents in Camden rate having a supportive community as being more important for their health and wellbeing than White residents, suggesting lockdown might have a greater negative impact for these people.
- Early results from the Healthwatch Camden resident survey show that residents have been more stressed, anxious, isolated or depressed as a result of COVID-19.
- Camden has one of the highest rates of severe mental illness in the country and there are clear inequalities for, and within, this population group.

Disproportionality focus area: Residents at risk when contracting COVID-19

Background and context

This section sets out information relating to the experience of people who are Black, Asian and from any other ethnic groups who are known to Adult Social Care during the COVID-19 pandemic. It considers both the impact of the pandemic itself and whether Adult Social Care's (ASC) response to it had any disproportionate impacts. It also considers the impact on Adult Social Care and the local care sector's workforce from Black, Asian and any other ethnic backgrounds.

The Adult Social Care review of disproportionate impact reflects that whilst the data is important to understand any specific impact on people who are Black, Asian and from any other ethnic backgrounds, it does not tell the full story. The term 'BAME' can be problematic and risks the perception that a homogenous group is being described, and this is far from the case. Adult Social Care recognises the need to reflect genuine voices of the lived experiences of people from the many different backgrounds represented within Black, Asian and other ethnic groups.

We know that some people who are from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds who either work providing care, or have social care needs themselves, will be acutely aware of the added risk to their health and their families'. Adult Social Care has a high number of Black, Asian or other ethnic workers and some have stated that with COVID-19 and the George Floyd murder and resultant protests in the US they have been left feeling less safe.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of Adult Social Care's strengths-based approach. This supports people to maintain their independence by utilising their strengths and helps connect people to informal support networks, the VCS and formal services where necessary. As a council, we have built on our previous work with partners such as the VCS, and formed new relationships with informal community networks that have emerged. We have also forged closer partnerships with other council departments, care providers and health partners to ensure a co-ordinated response to our residents that addresses the direct challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, and keeps people safe and connected.

The impact on carers during COVID-19 has been significant, and the headline data that we hold in Adult Social Care does not tell the full story. There is further multi-agency work underway to more fully understand the impact of COVID-19 on Adult Social Care clients. There is also more to be done to hear the voices of people affected by COVID-19 and work with them to address the social and economic inequalities COVID-19 has exposed.

At a national level, the Government identified a cohort of people defined as medically vulnerable due to a clinical condition that would put them at high risk of developing complications from a COVID-19 infection. This population was subject to strict social distancing measures from the Government in order to keep them safe, becoming known as the 'shielded'.

Disproportionality focus area: Residents at risk when contracting COVID-19

Key findings

Adult Social Care

Care workforce

- The care workforce in London is made up of a much greater proportion of Black, Asian and other ethnic people (72% of the direct care workforce against 40% of population of London – 2011 census).
- 23% of the national workforce is over 55 years old so Black, Asian and other ethnic people in this group can be considered to be at much greater risk of serious illness from COVID-19.
- The care workforce is disproportionately from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds and therefore at greater risk of both infection and serious illness if they become infected (source: local data and Skills for Care social care workforce review, 2019).¹

Carers

- There is some evidence that carers from some Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds are less likely to access support through traditional channels (source: local VCS partner feedback and some indications from our local data).
- Bengali Workers' Association have reported that "social isolation is a concern for older people who find it hard to access social media and online tools. This is due to lower levels of digital literacy and due to language barriers in both reading and writing. Additionally, overcrowded households mean that it is harder to follow Government guidelines".

Adult Social Care clients

- There is currently no evidence that Black, Asian and other ethnic people known to Adult Social Care are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 when considering local social care data, such as deaths of people in receipt of social care and changes to care received. However, we acknowledge that the data picture is currently incomplete.
- There is no evidence from the data that Adult Social Care's emergency response has disproportionately impacted people who are from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds. However, we need to hear more from the people we work with to develop our understanding of this (source: local quantitative data).

People who were previously shielded and accessing food deliveries

- There were 826 people on the ASC shielded list. There is limited demographic data on shielded people at present but of those known to ASC, they were slightly more likely to be from a Black, Asian or other ethnic background when compared to all those known to ASC.
- In the wider shielded cohort, a significantly higher proportion of residents from Asian backgrounds were shielding from COVID-19 than Asian residents in the general population.
- There is a significantly higher level of Halal food requests amongst the shielded, compared to the Muslim population in Camden.

¹ The Intensive Care National Audit and Research Centre found that patients most likely to survive in intensive care were those aged between 16 and 49, 76% of whom were discharged. The number fell to 50% for those aged 50 to 69, and to 32% for those aged 70 and over.

Disproportionality focus area: Children and young people

Background and context

This section focuses on what we have heard from residents, a small number of VCS groups, schools and frontline staff regarding the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people who are from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds.

Our Early Help services have gained mostly anecdotal insight into the lived experience of our Black, Asian and other ethnic families. Since the lockdown, staff have been carrying out virtual visits, and a survey on these visits found that the needs of families have changed over time.

A snapshot showed the following:

- During weeks 1–2 of lockdown, **food poverty** was the major issue with families worried about how they would put food on the table and needing help with food packages.
- During weeks 3–4 of lockdown, **financial pressure** became the major issue, such as loss of jobs, business or furlough, ability to pay rent, and access to benefits.
- More recently, **emotional wellbeing and access to digital devices** seem to be the major issue in keeping children active and able to keep up with school work and social lives.

The Early Intervention and Prevention service has a high proportion of staff from a Black, Asian or other ethnic background and from the local area (81% in some settings). The service has indicated that it is crucial that they lead by example in valuing and sharing experiences and culture across settings. With a critical role to play with ensuring children have the best start to life, there are overlaps with housing, education and the VCS. Tackling structural inequalities is at the centre of what the service does and it is recognised that staff must feel supported to do their roles effectively.

In addition to this, there is often a ‘glass ceiling’ for staff, where they do not feel that management positions are open to them or that there is only room for one manager from a diverse background. The service has also reflected on the trauma experienced by Black people, in particular over spring 2020. Camden is committed to going on the journey with staff as they accept their own trauma and to lean into the discomfort of having conversations where people truly understand and accept differences and make changes.

Wider inequalities were also reflected on by young adults throughout the course of this project. In June 2020, roundtable discussions on education and policing were held to respond to the clear calls we have heard from young people in Camden about the impact of systemic racial inequalities and the need for change. The policing roundtable brought together young people who have experienced the criminal justice system, parents, elected members and the Borough Commander to discuss concerns regarding the work and role of the police in communities.

The roundtable discussion on education brought together headteachers, Camden Learning and elected members. Together they discussed the experiences of Camden young people in being educated about Black history, the impact and contributions of immigrants to Britain, and about the British Empire and its impact on world history and current events.

Unprecedented disruption was caused when the UK Government made the decision to close schools to all students from 23 March 2020, except for children of key workers and children who were considered to be vulnerable. Instead, the vast majority of children would undertake their learning from home, supported with materials from schools. The Government also announced that neither primary nor secondary school assessments would take place during summer, meaning that students would be awarded predicted grades.

In Camden, there are 48,823 children and young people aged under 19, and 25,037 Camden households have dependent children. In 2018, 43% of children in Camden were classed as living in poverty. There are 21,761 learners in Camden state schools, plus over 3,500 under-fives in early years settings. Half of these children are from Black and other ethnic groups compared to the national average of 21% (Autumn School Census 2019).

Disproportionality focus area: Children and young people

At the time of reducing the number of children physically attending schools in the UK, the Government also announced a number of initial measures to support families and local authorities, including:

- Allowing schools to provide meals and/or vouchers to support children eligible for free school meals
- Allowing schools to order food vouchers via Edenred, which would then be emailed or printed and posted to families, with the costs covered by the Department for Education
- Allowing nurseries to be eligible for a business rates holiday for one year.

The significant changes to the education system resulted in children being adversely affected, and further highlighted structural inequalities that both exist and affect the education and lifestyle of disadvantaged children and families, which can often be attributed to Black, Asian and other ethnic communities in particular.

Last year Camden's Youth Safety Taskforce awarded funds to several projects that agreed to meet some of the objectives set in the [Camden Youth Safety Taskforce report](#) to reduce violence among young people and create good opportunities for young people to grow their skills and make better choices.

Since the pandemic began, officers have been regularly consulting with these project leads to see how their projects have been affected, what impacts their users have experienced, and what support they may need going forward.

The emerging key issues as a result of the pandemic are returning to school, attainment, home education, digital divide, free school meals/Pupil Premium and mental health in young people.

Key findings

Roundtables on education and policing

Policing

- There was discussion about how data and statistics lay bare why there is so much concern in Black, Asian and other ethnic communities about disproportionate policing and why people connect so much with policing issues in the United States.
- Participants discussed the need to move forward to try to find concrete solutions about community policing and how we build trust and not police in a biased way.
- There is not a lot of trust between young people and the police but also a recognition that police play a role in communities. However, it should not just be the police's responsibility for to keep people safe in communities, but everyone's responsibility.
- Young people raised experiences in which they were profiled by police (both racially and geographically) and where they didn't feel they were able to understand and talk about their own rights in relation to the police.
- Parents spoke about needing to speak to their children about the police and how to protect themselves and the likelihood that they might be profiled or feel discriminated against.
- There was recognition by local police about the impact of Section 60 and how intrusive it can be – these methods are only used to avoid serious violence but there needs to be transparency and communication about their use.
- Young people expressed that they need a clear sign from the police that they have changed in a meaningful way.
- During lockdown, many young people felt that they could not go outside – not because of COVID-19 but fear of being arrested or stopped for being perceived to have breached social distancing or lockdown regulations.

Disproportionality focus area: Children and young people

- Young people called for relationships with the police to be friendly and mutual. When they encounter the police they often have a ‘fight or flight’ reaction, such is the concern about harassment.
- There was discussion of the positive contribution of community policing, particularly when they are actively engaging with, and seeking to build relationships with, citizens. Examples have been fostering conversations with young people and doing food drop-offs.
- There needs to be a change in approach to social issues such as poverty (that often leads to knife crime) that is not left to be solved by policing.

Longstanding structural inequalities in education

- There was a shared reflection that having Black History Month as a focus point for the teaching of Black history isn’t sufficient and is very much focused on African-American history.
- The role of the British Empire is not taught with complete transparency and hides the negative impacts of its colonial past.
- Black history is too focused on slavery and the fight for equality and civil rights rather than pre-slavery history and the successes and contributions of Black people to modern social and economic life. This can be disempowering for Black, Asian and other ethnic students.
- There was strong support for the idea that Black history should be part of the regular curriculum from an early age and not just as supplementary GCSE or A-Level topics.
- Participants reflected that sources of independent learning such as the British Library did not feel accessible enough to young people, or were not doing enough to make themselves feel welcoming or available to young people wanting to learn.
- Young people said that the curriculum should equip young people to have the skills to call out and challenge racism, and be reflective about their own views and prejudices alongside teaching about a wider understanding of history, art and culture.
- There was a discussion about ensuring that school staff reflected diversity of communities and ensuring progression for Black, Asian and other ethnicity teaching staff and head teachers in schools.
- There were also reflections that a diverse curriculum and education are needed across the country, not just in schools and in communities that are themselves diverse – it is about everyone having an awareness of diverse contributions to society, but also our shared and collective responsibility for injustice and inequality and systems of prejudice and exploitation.
- Young people raised concerns about unconscious bias in predicted grades and how this might affect the educational outcomes of Black, Asian and other ethnic students – there was a desire that this was actively monitored.
- Young people reflected on the value of youth centres and spaces as safe places for dialogue in which young people were equal partners – and also as potential spaces for learning, recognising the education gap stemming from the lockdown.
- Young people reflected on the education gap and the inequality in access to digital support and additional learning support (for example, those who are able to afford private tutoring to catch up on missed education) and wanted to understand how this gap would be addressed when schools returned or in the interim.

Overall impact on schools (shared by schools)

- There are currently 41 state primary schools including one academy and two free schools in Camden. In December 2019, St Aloysius Primary School was closed due to low numbers. There are 10 state secondary schools, including one stand-alone academy. There are two special schools and four pupil referral units including one alternative provision free school. There are 33 independent schools in Camden.

Disproportionality focus area:

Children and young people

- There are 163 languages and dialects spoken in Camden schools (ONS, 2011 Census table QS204, all people aged 3+). The proportion of children with English as an additional language in primary schools is 56% (School Census, autumn 2019), compared to 21.2% nationally, and in secondary schools is 49.3% (School Census, autumn 2019), compared to 16.9% nationally. The most widely spoken languages after English are Bengali with 2,920 speakers; Somali with 1,520; Arabic with 1,160; Albanian/Shqip with 885, and French, Spanish and Portuguese, each with more than 320 speakers.
- Data indicates that approximately 3,400 pupils in Camden schools do not have access to a device at home and 1,200 do not have access to the internet at home.
- With recent events and discussions relating to the Black Lives Matter movement, we heard from some young people that there is a lack of education on Black history in schools, and when it is taught there is a lack of information on positive Black history.
- Young people raised that they need to be involved in shaping decisions and in finding solutions to tackling systemic racial issues, including those related to exclusions and policing.

Free school meals/Pupil Premium

- Families reported having trouble accessing food and fresh vegetables.
- Families have experienced difficulties using food vouchers or receiving hampers due to fears of stigma, and some food vouchers have not been used at all.
- Low levels of digital access and/or literacy in homes have meant food vouchers could not be sent electronically and families were unable to apply for free school meals if they became eligible due to COVID-19.
- There has been a lack of awareness of the changes to qualification criteria for free school meals to some children who have no recourse to public funds.

Home education

- Living conditions and issues such as overcrowding have meant that some children have had limited space for home learning and this space is often shared with siblings.
- Families have experienced difficulties in accessing necessary resources and some schools have raised concerns around the levels of engagement with online learning resources.
- Language barriers have had an impact on some parents being able to confidently support home learning.
- The full impact on progress will not be known until children begin to return to school.

Digital divide

- Schools with the highest percentage of pupils with no access to digital devices have tended to be those with high percentages of disadvantaged and/or Black, Asian and other ethnic pupils.
- Disadvantaged and/or Black, Asian and other ethnic families have required the most support to access remote learning. Students' lack of access to digital devices has exacerbated computer literacy issues.

Disproportionality focus area: Children and young people

Attainment

- Comparative performance of ethnic groups at the end of Key Stage Two in Camden for the academic year 2018/19 shows that all groups perform above the expected national standard apart from Black Other.
- At Key Stage Four (2018/19), Progress 8 scores vary across ethnic groups with most groups having nationally average scores. The lowest attaining group at Key Stage Four is White British disadvantaged students, who perform significantly below national averages. Caribbean students also perform significantly below average.
- There has been a particular focus on Somali students following the initiative of the Youth Safety Steering Group. At the end of Key Stage Two, Somali pupils perform in line with all Camden pupils and their progress across Key Stage Two is well above average.
- Performance of Somali students at the end of Key Stage Four is slightly below the national average, however Progress 8 scores are in line with the national average.
- In using predicted grades this year, there is a potential for bias to impact the results of disadvantaged and/or Black, Asian and other ethnic students. Evidence shows that Black students receive lower A-Level predictions than their peers, however they often perform better than predicted grades. The existing gap in attainment for students has the potential to widen further as a result of the compounded disadvantages experienced in the pandemic.

Returning to school

- Anecdotal information from schools is that some communities are more reluctant for children to return to school, with the most noticeable gap between expected returns and attendance occurring in schools with higher levels of disadvantaged and/or Black, Asian and other ethnic pupils.

Mental health

- Camden has commissioned Kooth, an online mental health service for 11 to 18 year olds. April and May data showed 38.16% and 55.33% new registrations for support were from young people from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds.
- Schools have expressed concerns that there may be an increasing demand for mental health services amongst young people, with challenges around mental health support provision and access to services.
- Additional support for parents may be required as a result of the pandemic.
- Staff may also need additional mental health support, as well as increased skills and confidence to support the mental health and wellbeing of pupils and parents.

Disproportionality focus area: Children and young people

Youth Safety Steering Group funded projects

- Most Youth Safety Steering Group funded projects initially shut down, but after a few weeks most were able to continue sessions virtually.
- The numbers of young people projects were able to work with had initially decreased due to not being able to do outreach work on the streets and schools not allowing visitors. However, most of the projects have maintained relationships with those known to them as most vulnerable. Numbers have recently started to go back to normal as restrictions have lifted slightly.
- The main causes for concern on these projects were difficulty maintaining some relationships without face-to-face meetings, furloughed staff resulting in a lack of capacity for sessions, and the lack of sufficient guidance for youth services to operate during lockdown.
- Some projects were able to access funding from other sources, gain access to open spaces from other local organisations, receive training on delivering sessions virtually, and had volunteers and local businesses help with delivering sessions and loaning equipment for sessions.
- The main issues that projects reported were facing young people were:
 - Deteriorating mental health and an increase in social isolation and loneliness
 - Lack of access to digital devices where many young people resulted in using their phones to complete school work
 - Anxieties around leaving the home and going back to school, and fear of transmitting the virus to older members of their family
 - Increased tension and conflict in the household, with many young people feeling safer outside of their homes
 - Increased negative interactions from police and confusion around Government guidelines
 - Worries around biased grading at school and their next steps
 - More recently: digital fatigue and frustrations around learning virtually.

Disproportionality focus area: Housing supply and overcrowding

Background and context

The need to provide good quality, safe and secure housing is a longstanding issue in Camden. The Council's vision is to be a family-friendly borough where families are no longer priced out and having to move out of the borough. Structural inequalities that lead to poverty, along with low housing supply and high housing demand, mean that access to housing remains a priority issue.

Through engagement with VCS organisations, we have heard lived experience of how COVID-19 has exacerbated these inequalities, which has in turn had a disproportionate impact on Black, Asian and other ethnic communities. From overcrowded households and lack of access to green spaces impacting on wellbeing and family relationships, to the ability to work from home both educationally and professionally, the impact is significant.

The recently published [Public Health England report](#) reveals that people living in the most deprived areas of the country are twice as likely as those living in the least deprived areas to be diagnosed with and to die from COVID-19. According to Government statistics, Black, Asian and other ethnic communities are more likely to live in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods nationally. There is a clear link too between overcrowded households and deprivation. Overcrowding is significantly more prevalent in lower-income households than in wealthier ones, affecting 7% of the poorest fifth of households, as opposed to 0.5% of those in the richest fifth.

As such, the Council has considered housing supply and overcrowding to be an immediate cause for concern in Camden and we have examined how we can alleviate the subsequent disproportionate impact on Black, Asian and other ethnic residents.

We also welcome the '[Making Housing Affordable After COVID-19](#)' report by the Affordable Housing Commission. The report outlines that the pandemic has exposed the structural weaknesses in the current housing system, and the urgent need to increase the amount of affordable social housing for families. Our Community Investment Programme (CIP) is our ambitious 15-year plan to build homes, schools and community facilities. As part of this we will build 1,100 council homes and 300 genuinely affordable homes to rent. On the CIP programme we aim to go further in tackling racial inequalities by working with communities to increase representation of people from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds in resident engagement, to ensure we build homes that are fit for purpose.

Key findings

- The main causes for concern are overcrowded homes in private rented or social housing, and unsanitary conditions, which have had an impact on psychological and mental wellbeing.
- Some Bangladeshi and Somali residents with large families are living in overcrowded environments and therefore cramped conditions. During lockdown, there were reports of tensions in households due to a lack of personal space and family members feeling they could not leave the house in case they contracted the virus. School-aged children were finding it hard to study due to lack of space, especially exam-aged children.
- Some Bangladeshi families are living in multi-generational households with elderly family members, who are some of the most susceptible to the virus.
- Families experiencing overcrowding have found face-to-face meetings in open space, such as socially distanced play dates in the park, hugely beneficial, along with voluntary groups allowing access to their open spaces.

Disproportionality focus area: Housing supply and overcrowding

The local data shows:

- 73% of households with overcrowding points on the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme have a lead tenant who is from a Black, Asian or other ethnic background, compared to a general population of 34% (2011 census).
- The largest proportion of people in overcrowded households are Bangladeshi (18%), Black African (12%) with Somali (9%).
- 46% of the completed council homes under the Community Investment Programme are occupied by Black, Asian or other ethnic households (however we do not have ethnicity data for 13% of occupants (as of January 2020).
- 49% of Camden Living (housing provided by the Council below market rent, but above social rent) tenants were from a Black, Asian or other ethnic background (as of July 2018).
- Neighbourhoods with highest percentages of homes without private or shared gardens were Somers Town (79%), Euston (73%), Hatton Garden and Theobalds Road (67%), and Holborn, St Giles and Bloomsbury South (67%)

Disproportionality focus area: Employment and the labour market

Background and context

The immediate impacts of COVID-19 on the labour market are disproportionately felt, particularly for key workers and those employed in 'shut down' sectors – for example retail, hospitality and construction. Analysis suggests that the longer-term labour market impacts will also be disproportionate, with women, younger people and low earners most at risk of losing their jobs.

Whilst the availability of hard data on ethnicity is limited, the data that does exist shows that even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, labour market inequalities disproportionately impacted Black, Asian and other ethnic communities.

For example:

- According to a House of Commons Library report, the UK unemployment rate between October and December 2019 was 5.8% for people from Black, Asian and Other ethnic groups, compared to 3.4% for people from a White background, and 3.7% overall.
- A 2018 ONS report highlighted how 'employees of Chinese, Indian, and mixed or multiple ethnicity all had higher median hourly pay than White British employees in 2018; while employees in the Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups had lowest median hourly pay'.
- A Carnegie UK Trust report found that millennials from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds were '58% more likely to be unemployed than their White counterparts; 47% more likely to be on zero-hours contract; 10% more likely to be working a second job; 5% more likely to be doing shift work; and 4% less likely to have a permanent contract'.

Lessons from previous economic downturns and labour market shocks also offer useful indications of potential challenges. Following the economic downturn after the 2008 financial crisis, there was an increase in unemployment rates across ethnic groups nationally. The unemployment rate for people from a White background reached a peak of 7.8% in 2011, while the rate for people from Black, Asian and Other Ethnic backgrounds increased to a peak of 14.7% in 2009.

As a council, we have also been working closely with our own workforce to ensure that we protect our most vulnerable colleagues and make our workplaces as safe from COVID-19 as possible. We have also had a specific focus on understanding the impact of COVID-19 on our Black, Asian and other ethnic workforce, considering what actions needed to be taken to support them throughout and beyond the pandemic.

With the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and other ethnic communities clear, and with 40% of our workforce being from a Black, Asian or other ethnic background, protecting employees and the wider labour market became a significant issue.

Key findings

Immediate impacts of COVID-19 – a disproportionate national picture

- Whilst 77% of businesses continued to trade, a high proportion of those in the accommodation and food service, as well as in the arts, entertainment and recreation sectors paused trading or closed altogether ('shut down' sectors).
- Workers in shut down sectors are amongst the lowest paid across the workforce, with the typical pay for workers in those sectors less than half of that of those able to work from home.
- People from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds have been more likely to be in shut down sectors, or to be key workers facing the biggest health threats.
- People in their early 20s are 2.5 times more likely to work in shut down sectors.
- Low earners are seven times as likely as high earners to have worked in a sector that was shut down.
- 17-21% of men with Level 0-2 qualifications were in locked down sectors, compared to 10% with Level 4+ qualifications.

Disproportionality focus area: Employment and the labour market

- Parents faced additional challenges whilst schools and day-care were closed to all except children of key workers.
- Key workers are disproportionately likely to be female.

Sectors where the largest share of workers have been furloughed via the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme:

- 80% Hospitality or accommodation and food services
- 68% Arts, entertainment and recreation
- 41% Construction.

Local employment and income-focused support services

Access to financial support

- Of the 821 council tenants who submitted Universal Credit claims from 23 March to 27 April 2020, 50% were from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds.
- Around 9,100 of the working-age population in Camden were claiming Employment and Support Allowance, with approximately 40% coming from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds (May 2019).
- Data from Citizens Advice Camden in relation to enquiries received between early March and mid-May 2020 showed a higher proportion of people from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds making financial and employment enquiries.

Access to employment support

- 52% of residents supported into apprenticeships via the Inclusive Economy team were from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds (48% construction and 60% non-construction).
- 68% of residents who accessed Adult Community Learning opportunities over the past academic year were from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds.

Disproportionality focus area: Employment and the labour market

#	Service	Council-run/ commissioned	% of Black, Asian and other ethnic residents
1	Gospel Oak Job Hub / Regent's Park Job Hub	Council-run	91%
2	West Euston Partnership	Commissioned	81%
3	Somers Town Job Hub	Commissioned	52%
4	Hillside Clubhouse	Commissioned	27% (39% did not disclose)

Camden Council workforce

We carried out an assessment of workforce sickness data to understand the impact on Black, Asian and other ethnic staff, and ensure that the relevant support and safeguards were put into place.

Upon assessment, sick and/or self-isolating Black, Asian and other ethnic staff were underrepresented compared to the number of staff in the Council. However, as of May 2020, for 13% (nearly 600) of staff ethnicity was recorded as 'Unknown',² so, this may not give us the full picture.

However, we are not complacent and recognise the structural inequalities that impact our Black, Asian and other ethnic staff. Our commitments are not seasonal. We have been doing lots of work to become a truly inclusive organisation over the past year – and events across the globe, coupled with the huge health inequalities exposed by COVID-19, have highlighted just how urgent this work is.

We know we're not there yet. We need to go further and faster and lean into areas some of us may find uncomfortable – always being guided by our shared core values of social justice and equality.

In 2018 and 2019 we commissioned two pieces of research focused on helping us to better understand the experiences of our Black, Asian and other ethnic staff. The first looked at experiences around development and progression, and the second focused more on our people processes and recruitment. From this research, we worked closely with our Camden Black Workers Group to develop our commitment to conscious inclusion statement - which is our clear and unequivocal commitment to root-out racial discrimination and makes clear that we do not tolerate any form of discrimination, victimisation, harassment or bullying - and an action plan. Some of the things we put in place as a result of the research included:

- Our sponsorship and mentoring scheme
- Trialling new approaches to anonymised recruitment
- Creating a senior leadership sponsor for inclusion – our Executive Director Corporate Services, Jon Rowney
- Running several workshops and developing an e-learning module – designed to help all staff and people managers to better understand the impact of, and mitigate against, unconscious bias.

This was just the beginning however, and we know that we can, and must, do more. So many of our workforce and community have shared thoughts and ideas for example through the staff listening box exercise we ran last year, and particularly over the past few weeks. We are listening to what you have said, looking again at what this research told us and the commitments we made in the action plan – and asking, 'Does this go far enough, and what more should we be doing?'

² Excludes school staff.

We know that words are not enough, and that we need our commitments to translate to action quickly.

Disproportionality focus area: Employment and the labour market

Some of the things we need to do to address the issues we face will take time, and we will ensure all our staff help us in developing the right actions through our new staff inclusion forum.

In the meantime, we want to tell you about some of the immediate action we plan to take imminently, which includes:

- Creating more opportunities for open and honest conversations with each other
- Looking again at our sponsorship and mentoring programme to see how we could develop it further in light of staff feedback, including mutual (sometimes known as reverse) mentoring
- Working with our workforce to develop a series of resources – including websites, podcasts, books, blogs etc. – to help us all to learn from each other
- Creating a way for staff to raise concerns and report issues or discriminatory behaviour anonymously
- Looking at how we can go further with anonymised recruitment and how can be more transparent and inclusive in our interview process
- As well as specific measures to support our Black, Asian and other ethnic colleagues who are more vulnerable to COVID-19 – see ‘Calls to Action’ section.

Moving towards action

Taking the necessary action to ensure people are safe and informed, and providing reassurance to our communities, remain our biggest priorities. We must demonstrate working in the open and take robust community interventions that are impactful. At the start of July 2020, we published the [mid-point findings](#) of this project as part of working in the open to ensure that we could feed residents' lived experiences into the report.

We have also implemented a range of actions, both during the emergency response phase and beyond, drawing on the lived experiences of our Black, Asian and other ethnic communities to prevent and mitigate further disproportionate impacts in the short term. These short-term actions include:

Tackling health inequalities

- **Data collection:** In line with local and national recommendations for better ethnicity data collection, we have started working with local registrars to set up processes for routinely collecting and recording ethnicity as part of the death registration process.
- **Risk assessment:** We have implemented an individual staff risk assessment tool, which specifically considers ethnicity and aims to reduce the risk of employees' exposure to and acquisition of COVID-19. A series of Q&A sessions are being hosted for managers across the Council to support implementation of the tool in a culturally sensitive way.
- **Communications:** We have convened the Black, Asian and other ethnicities VCS network, which is focusing purely on communications to enable a two-way dialogue, helping us to both share and develop culturally competent and accessible information, provide reassurance and tackle misinformation about COVID-19 and about public health interventions, such as Test and Trace.
- **Mental health:** We have developed a well-targeted mental health communications campaign using local insight to alleviate fears and anxiety around the pandemic and to support and encourage Black, Asian and other ethnic residents to access early help.
- **Physical health:** Developing and adapting our physical activity and weight management programmes, to provide online support during the pandemic, with a particular focus on reaching residents from Black, Asian and other ethnic communities and from areas of high levels of deprivation.

Our most clinically vulnerable high-risk residents

- **Care home support:** We are continuing weekly contact with care homes and home care agencies as part of our COVID-19 Adult Social Care response.
- **Testing:** Since July, care home staff are given coronavirus tests every week and residents monthly in line with the new Government approach to testing. Repeat testing will be initially prioritised for care homes primarily looking after over 65s or those with dementia before being rolled out to all adult care homes. Care homes will request tests through the national portal. Commissioners are sending out information to care homes following local public health advice and they are supporting care homes with any queries they may have about the system.

Children and young people

- **Free school meals:** Supported the continued provision of food for all pupils attending school. Additionally, supplied over 11,000 food hampers to pupils not attending who are eligible for free school meals. Total council support has consisted of over £400,000, including cost of food and supplier wages.
- **Home education:** Negotiated a home-schooling set of guiding principles with schools.

Moving towards action

- **Digital divide:** Provided 806 devices and 119 4G Wi-Fi routers for young people with social workers and looked-after children, and 279 devices and 121 4G Wi-Fi routers for disadvantaged Year 10 students continue to be rolled out. Many schools have distributed their own stocks of laptops and tablets for pupils to use at home and businesses have also donated devices directly. This work is ongoing and part of our longer-term commitment to young people in Camden.
- **Mental health:** Published guidance for parents, staff, and pupils on managing and looking after their mental health.

Labour market and employment

- **COVID-19 safe workplaces:** Shared Public Health information and advice with local businesses to enable safe working environments.
- **Data sharing:** Started to initiate conversations with the Department for Work and Pensions to release timely labour market data to inform tailored economic renewal.

Overcrowding

- **Providing facilities outside of homes:** Provided Wi-Fi in tenant halls and established the gardens for all project, providing access to outdoor space and family play time for overcrowded families.
- **Temporary accommodation:** Although paused re-letting homes during the peak of the pandemic, we acted quickly to move families in hostels with shared facilities into self-contained flats.

Voluntary and Community Sector

- **Camden Giving COVID-19 Charity Fund:** Shared information with Camden Giving about disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and other ethnic communities to brief their panels – resulting in all of the 20 applications for support for Black, Asian and other ethnic communities being awarded funding in the second round; a total of £90,950.
- **Funding advice:** Hosted Q&A sessions about other funding available, for example National Lottery COVID-19 funding, which have been attended by organisations working with Black, Asian and other ethnic residents, as well as targeted sessions such as free carers awareness training for organisations working with Black, Asian and other ethnic communities during Carers Week.
- **External support:** Promoted Ubele fundraising workshop for Black, Asian and other ethnic organisations and the resource hub.

Calls to action: Key principles

We have worked with our partners at a rapid pace to understand the impact of COVID-19 on our residents from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds.

This is a testament to everyone's genuine commitment to make Camden a better, fairer place for everyone. From the start of this process, we recognised that the impact of COVID-19 on our diverse communities is linked directly to the deeply entrenched structural inequalities of society. And so, with this knowledge we are making a commitment to go beyond addressing the immediate impact of the virus and to dismantle a system that does not work for so many of our residents and build new ones.

Our approach to this work has been relational rather than bureaucratic, bringing together our elected members, residents, professionals, voluntary and community sector representatives and council officers to discuss evidence and start to form action plans. Not only have we discussed evidence at weekly meetings, we have had roundtables with young people and we have attended meetings with voluntary and community sector and faith leaders to hear experience of the pandemic first-hand and feed these into the framework for our action plans.

Key principles that we are embedding as an organisation as a result of our work are:

- **We need to listen and learn:** We will not have all of the answers and we will be open to uncomfortable conversations. We are here to dismantle an entrenched system, and this will take time.
- **We do not treat our residents as a homogenous group:** We recognise differences in experience and take a 'neighbourhoods' approach – by this we mean a tailored approach to specific groups' needs.
- **Developing an intersectional approach to equalities:** As human beings, we each have multiple identities. We want to focus on people's whole selves, rather than just their individual equalities characteristics in isolation. This will help us truly know our communities and move away from homogenising groups.
- **We build on people's strengths:** We help our communities build resilience to short and medium-term impacts of the pandemic. Councils are uniquely able to engage, direct and incentivise the local collective resources of the public, private, academic and civic anchors in our places. The fastest route to equality is to start sharing power and resource with local places – they will do the rest.

A shared endeavour

The last few years have taken us on a journey of letting go of old structures and hierarchies, seeing the strength and power in our communities and investing in our residents' capacity to change their lives and their neighbourhoods. Addressing this disproportionate impact is a shared endeavour and we want our residents, particularly our Black, Asian, and other ethnic residents, to play an active role in our response. We must ensure this work does not take place in isolation and that the whole organisation works together with residents and members.

We are recommending doing this by:

- **Encouraging residents to continue to share their lived experiences of COVID-19** and help us garner the evidence we need to take action. We will use Commonplace, an online engagement platform.
- **Encouraging residents to work with us and our partners** to shape and deliver the actions in our plan, acting as a critical friend to make sure we stay true to our objectives and deliver the change we are promising. We propose setting up a representative panel of residents who be recruited through community groups and organisers as well as VCS partners working with Black, Asian, and other ethnic communities in the borough. We would work with these across social networks to be able to reach voices that are not normally heard.
- We are setting up a **task and finish group** and **elected members working group** for the next 12 to 18 months, which will ensure that we take a collaborative approach to tackling inequalities.

We must also go a step further and ensure that we harness the strengths of Camden's large institutions in the [Knowledge Quarter](#) and other key settings to work with our communities to address inequalities. We must work in partnership with key stakeholders who provide jobs, healthcare and education.

We will not be able to unlock the power and creativity of our communities without place-based leadership. Therefore, we will develop a range of partnership opportunities to address disparities in healthcare, education and employment in particular.

This deliberative engagement approach will permeate local public services more and more, ensuring that everybody has a voice and a stake in change. As an organisation we must be led by our core values of equality and social justice – and we must go further and faster.

Building on Camden 2025

Camden is a borough of contrasts, with some of our diverse communities experiencing poorer life outcomes right next to some of the wealthiest companies in the UK. Any recovery and renewal process must consider how to respond to existing and growing inequalities, or risk deepening the divide within our society.

We are building upon our [Camden 2025](#) vision to ensure that as an organisation and a place we put tackling racial inequalities at the centre of what we do.

What are our calls to action?

Healthy, independent lives: People from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds should be able to live a healthy, independent and happy life.

The best start to life: Children and young people from Black, Asian or other ethnic backgrounds should be given the best start to life and the opportunity to develop all their capabilities.

Strong growth and access to jobs: People from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds should be able to access the work that is right for them.

A strong and diverse voluntary sector: Fair access to funding and capacity building of the sector supporting Black, Asian and other ethnic communities.

Safe homes: People from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds should live in a home where they feel safe.

A happy and healthy workforce: Camden's workforce feels safe and supported to do their job.

Healthy, independent lives

We will work together across the health and wellbeing system in Camden to prevent and mitigate further health impacts of COVID-19 on our Black, Asian and other ethnic communities in the short term, and take sustained action to tackle longstanding health inequalities affecting Black, Asian and other ethnic groups. We will work with our partners across the healthcare system to address concerns of discrimination in health and care services.

- We will work with our Black, Asian and other ethnic communities to develop, test and implement culturally competent communication campaigns that harness the strengths of our local communities. We will ensure key public health messages on how to stay safe, and on testing and contact tracing reach deep into our communities in order to build awareness, understanding and trust. We will also build trust in and awareness of the availability and safety of local health services, to support our communities to re-engage with and access these services.
- We will strengthen and further develop targeted health education and promotion programmes in order to raise health literacy at an individual and community level, support healthy behaviours and increase engagement with and access to preventative interventions and services. We will design, develop and deliver these programmes with our Black, Asian and other ethnic communities, and we will adapt or evolve our local health services so they are tailored and appropriate for all.
- We will develop and take forward a programme of training and development as an integrated care partnership, to deepen our understanding of health inequalities and their determinants, in order to develop new solutions, develop new ways of working and deliver inclusive services for all.
- We will go further to improve long-term condition outcomes in our Black, Asian and other ethnic communities. We will work with our local NHS partners to develop a new approach to improving population health outcomes at the level of neighbourhoods within Camden, focusing on action that will target health and care inequalities, including inequality gaps in long-term health conditions experienced by Black, Asian and other ethnic groups. We will work with our CCG, primary care networks and Healthwatch Camden to deliver creative, innovative models of outreach, proactive care and delivery.

The best start to life

We will look across the entire system to ensure that everyone in the borough gets the best start in life. We will work directly, and with our partners, to rapidly increase access to digital devices and resources to support the reduction of the disadvantage gap in education, and we will use the new education strategy to tackle disproportionality in attainment. We will use our influence to tackle disproportionate representation in the youth justice system and will take steps to ensure our own practice is anti-racist. In Children's Safeguarding and Early Years, we will strive to be the best Black, Asian and other ethnicity corporate parents, providing a culturally sensitive service and support offer that meets the needs of our children and young people. We will also support our Black, Asian and other ethnic residents into employment through targeted careers advice and guidance, focusing on sectors where these groups are underrepresented.

- We are committed to reducing inequalities and promoting life chances by developing tutoring opportunities, delivering virtual work experience, and supporting access into STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) careers.
- We will support home learning in creative and quality ways, and we will reduce the digital divide.
- We will ensure that children are safe and healthy as we transition back into school. This will include supporting children with mental health and wellbeing.
- We are committed to encouraging take up of free school meals, and we will support schools to make these culturally appropriate i.e. halal.

We are committed to a work environment that is happy and healthy.

- We are committed to developing ways to give energy to people on the ground who want to progress and ways of having more conversations about personal development.
- We are committed to the management team being more representative of communities and frontline staff. We are exploring ways to promote new managerial positions to Black, Asian, and other ethnic applicants.
- We will explore a better trauma-informed approach for Black staff to feel supported in bringing their best and most authentic selves to work.
- We will investigate how we can build trust between staff and their managers and foster better relationships.
- Our ambition is to become a learning environment – where people feel comfortable to teach each other and we need to learn to accept differences.

Strong growth and access to jobs

We will invest in high quality employment support that is both available to all and responsive to the specific labour market challenges that disproportionately impact residents from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds. To do this, we will effectively use relevant data, and connect with residents across Camden, to design our 'Job Hub' employment support services. Through this approach, we will endeavour to understand and highlight the lived experience of the labour market for residents from a diversity of Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds. With a more informed understanding of the barriers to good work, we will deliver support that is specific to individual needs and aspirations – working with established and specialist organisations and local employers to ensure that there are accessible and clear pathways into work.

- We will continue to support our local businesses to practise safe social distancing and share public health information with businesses to ensure employees and patrons are safe.
- We will scale up our 'neighbourhood' approach to providing employment support and work with residents to design new Job Hubs. This builds on the Job Hub that has been piloted in Gospel Oak and provides accessible, relational support that responds to a resident's specific needs.
- We will be transparent with our data on the labour market, and we will lobby the Government to provide timely labour market information broken down by ethnicity, to enable us to support our Black, Asian and other ethnic communities who may be adversely affected by the pandemic.
- We will regularly collect data from local services, including VCS partners, as well as collecting stories from residents who are receiving support from our Job Hubs, to better understand the specific challenges on the ground, and to evaluate the impact of our work. This will ensure that we have the capacity to effectively respond labour market change and provide effective support.
- We are committed to working with education services, schools and partners to ensure that support for children across the borough has strong reach into Black, Asian and other ethnic communities and is reaching pupils claiming Pupil Premium.

A strong and diverse voluntary sector

We will listen to the VCS and ensure that we maintain strong connections with the organisations that work with Camden's diverse communities. We will work with our grassroots VCS to ensure fair access to funding and facilitate discussions with the Government and larger funders to contribute to organisations being able to continue their vital work. We are committed to enabling collaborations across the sector to build a stronger VCS who help us to tackle structural inequalities.

- We will continue to ensure that funding supports organisations working with diverse communities to meet shared outcomes for Camden 2025. This includes our Community Impact Fund's partnership development theme that will encourage applications to develop and strengthen partnerships with smaller Black, Asian and other ethnic organisations.
- With the wider voluntary and community sector and others, we will work in partnership with grassroots organisations run by and for Black, Asian and other ethnic communities to help them build capacity and increase their resilience.
- We will work with the VCS to strengthen communications and relationships by brokering connections between organisations working with Black, Asian and other ethnic communities, council services and mutual aid groups.
- We will actively work with Black, Asian and other ethnic communities to encourage participation in citizen action to shape, influence and co-design public services, volunteering and citizen voice.
- We will be advocates and champions for the importance of grassroots organisations and their role in making neighbourhoods inclusive and cohesive and supporting community wellbeing. Influencing national funding agencies and charitable funders to better support grassroots organisations.

Every year, Camden spends approximately £400 million on services, goods and supplies on behalf of our communities. We want to drive social value and value for money through every pound we spend, harnessing our buying power to create benefits and opportunities for our residents. Creating social value means placing people's lives at the centre of our approach and tackling the negative elements of lived experiences of our Black, Asian and other ethnic residents and communities. This could be done by providing employment and skill, addressing pay inequalities, creating better access to jobs, improving community cohesion and improving the environments people live and work in.

Working with procurement:

- We will work with Black, Asian and other ethnic VCS groups to help build bid writing and skills capacity and networks to help improve prospects in tendering and securing resources.
- We will call on suppliers who have offered to donate time via their social value offer to the Council to provide support to organisations around their business and tendering capacity.
- We are committed through our commissioning and procurement processes to raise awareness of the services provided by the VCS sector, and widen the supply chain of Black, Asian and other ethnic not-for-profit organisations and businesses that can deliver services.
- We will review our procurement procedures to reflect that services should proactively consider an equalities organisation when obtaining three quotes for procurements under the OJEU threshold.
- We will commit to pre-market engagement with potential bidders to establish any potential lack of diversity and jointly identify ways to improve this going forward.
- We will explore further opportunities to promote business-to-business tendering among Black, Asian and other ethnic VCS organisations so that they have a more balanced client list, enabling our partners to tender for with each other, rather than being financially dependent on one or two larger organisations.
- We will work with our larger organisations to report on spend with Black, Asian and other ethnic VCS organisations through amending our contractual provisions.

Safe homes

We want to see a reduction in the number of residents who are in severely overcrowded housing and a significant increase in residents able to take practical steps to mitigate the impact of living in overcrowded conditions. We aim to tackle structural inequalities through inclusive participation and procurement approaches when building homes.

- We are committed to proactively supporting tenants to find homes that meet their needs in order to address overcrowding; including communicating mutual exchange opportunities.
- We will explore the use of housing voids to provide some temporary accommodation as an option to protect those living in severely overcrowded housing who become ill in a second wave or similar pandemic – we will work with Public Health to agree priority households particularly for those with a family member identified as being clinically vulnerable.
- We will be courageous about taking further steps towards wider resident engagement drawing on the learning from having engaged in less traditional ways during lockdown, with the aim of increased representation of Black, Asian and other ethnic residents.
- We are committed to reviewing the Community Investment Programme's approach to procurement and working with more inclusive/representative contractors and creating a framework for this.

A happy and healthy workforce

We want Camden Council to be a great place to work and an organisation we all have pride in. Being a truly inclusive and diverse council is a vital part of this. We need to make sure that everyone who works for Camden Council feels valued, safe and respected every day. It is clear that despite our efforts, we have not progressed as far, nor as quickly as we would like. We will not tolerate any form of discrimination, victimisation, harassment or bullying against our Black, Asian and other ethnic workforce. We remain committed to removing all of the barriers that prevent people from being their best selves at work, being listened to, valued and respected and from fulfilling their true potential.

- It is our priority to keep staff safe whilst they work so we will ensure they continue to have access to PPE, that risk assessments are completed, and equality impact assessments are carried out.
- We are committed to working with the Camden Black Workers Group and Black, Asian and other ethnic colleagues to ensure that all staff plans around inclusion and diversity are co-designed and fit for purpose. We will establish a new staff Inclusion Forum to share our plans, update our progress and hold ourselves to account.
- We must ensure that our own house is in order. We want to create an environment where we make brave and radical decisions to ensure we rid ourselves of any obstacles to people being themselves, and we don't accept the unacceptable. We have begun to deliver a Zero Tolerance Working Group in Adults Services and we are having 'Uncomfortable Conversations' led by Black and Asian colleagues, who are sharing their experiences of racism and discussing with White colleagues how they can become allies.
- We are committed to becoming active bystanders and will roll out anti-racism training so that all colleagues are comfortable to confront uncomfortable conversations or racist incidents when they occur.
- We will commit to sign up to the Race Equality Charter to enable us to self-reflect on institutional and cultural barriers at work and develop progressive solutions for action.

In the overview, we reflected that the focus on one protected characteristic is appropriate given the early yet very strong statistical indications that the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted and increased the disadvantages experienced by some sections of our community. The indications of disproportionate impact are clear, and the Council has a better understanding of this and is able to consider actions to address those impacts. We know that inequalities are experienced in many different ways and are often intersectional.

Being Black, disabled and a woman will mean the impacts could be far greater, and we will work with our residents to better understand these experiences and take action to tackle these intersectional inequalities.

Notwithstanding, Camden Council is committed to striving for equality for all of our citizens. This is a longstanding commitment Camden Council has made and is also to some extent reflected in the legal obligations on all Local Authorities in particular as detailed in s149 Equalities Act 2010. The Council is obliged in the exercise of all of its functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share and do not share protected characteristics – age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.

This work does not replace the Council's wider equalities work and obligations but rather supplements and informs it. The Council remains alert to any other indications of disproportionate impact on any other groups and stands ready to undertake a similar exercise should that be appropriate. As part of our work to strengthen our approach to equalities, we strive to be a beacon local authority for the data we collect on protected characteristics, to enable effective decision making. We will improve our data collection internally as well as lobbying government to provide more timely data where applicable.

A happy and healthy workforce

A full set of commitments are available in the **appendix of this document**. This is only the start and we want to continue to work with our residents and partners to shape the action plans. We will continue to share more information on how you can register to get involved in the residents' panel or share your views on a tool we use called Commonplace.

We believe that we have a once in a generation moment to turn all the pain and loss of the COVID-19 crisis into a coalition for lasting change. The story of the crisis in Camden shows the real cost of an unequal society and economy, but also the power of community and a community's ability to lead change.

We are committed to innovating to improve our core services, and constantly testing, learning and iterating as we go whilst working with our communities. We know with COVID-19 being a global pandemic we will need to do things differently to ensure our communities are protected, residents stay connected and ensure we adapt our services to meet this challenge.

Appendix 1: voluntary and community sector and school contributions

VCS	Schools
Somali Youth Development Resource Centre (SYDRC)	Acland Burghley School
Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre	Regent High School
Bengali Workers' Association	Eleanor Palmer Primary School
British Somali Community	Torriano Primary School
Camden Cypriot Women's Organisation	Camden Centre for Learning
King's Cross and Brunswick Neighbourhood Association (KCBNA)	Royal Free Hospital Children's School

<p>Common experiences we heard from some of Camden's Black, Asian and other ethnic citizens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental wellbeing: feelings of anxiety and isolation, fear of not being helped if ill, and stress relating to accessing basic supplies. • Financial difficulties for people who do not qualify for the Government's furlough scheme or other grants as self-employed due to being so for less than a year. • Mothers who do not speak English as a first language have been taking guidance to stay at home literally, therefore not exercising or going shopping. 	<p>Insights from representatives of faith institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families expressed disappointment, particularly around the lack of information on burials for the first month of the crisis, and the loss of burial rights and communal healing for the grieving.
<p>Insights from organisations working with Camden's Asian communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misinformation: Anxiety and fear due to COVID-19 misinformation being circulated amongst communities. • Domestic violence: There has been an increase in the number of domestic abuse calls that VCS organisations are receiving from residents. • Language barriers have been reported, which have affected people's ability to understand Government guidelines during the pandemic and the quick spreading of misinformation; it has been reported that language and cultural barriers also meant some abuse survivors hesitate to reach out to statutory bodies. 	<p>Insights from organisations working with Camden's Bangladeshi communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older Bangladeshi people have found it hard to access social media and online tools due to lack of digital proficiency and language barriers, resulting in a lack of access to the right information and guidelines. • Overcrowded households have made it harder for people to follow Government guidelines on self-isolation.

Appendix 1: voluntary and community sector and school contributions

Insights from organisations working with Camden's Somali communities

Education

- Families who are predominantly living in overcrowded surroundings with school exam-aged children have the added difficulty of maintaining education and revision schedules without the space or equipment to do so (Wi-Fi, laptops, books etc), making it difficult for children to learn effectively in this crisis.
- Some parents have to decide who gets to use a shared laptop to do work that has been set.
- Additionally, some parents find it difficult to home-school due to low literacy levels.

Unconscious bias

- The decision that exam results will be based on predicted results has also contributed to concerns, with several mothers expressing that their children's predicted grades are lower than they should be, and this method will be detrimental to their child.
- Children are showing signs of extra worry and anxiety as a result.
- A recent Children's Commissioner's report states that evidence has shown that the poorest students and Black students receive lower A-level predictions than their more privileged peers and often perform better than their predicted grades in final exams.

Overcrowding

- Many large families are living in overcrowded environments, often with young children (siblings sharing rooms) living in cramped conditions.
- Many have reported this as a significant issue, which is raising tensions in their households, as they have no means to separate and risk bringing the virus into the house if they go outside to find space.

Gig economy

- Many people from the Somali community are minicab drivers. They were not aware of available Government support and often had negative experiences or perceptions of Universal Credit.
- Some who managed to get council tax or rent paid were trying to live on just their tax credits.

