



LONDON COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE SURVEY: WEEK EIGHT QUESTIONS

FIELDWORK 1st-4th JUNE 2020

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Community Response Survey

The weekly COVID-19 Community Response Survey asks civil society organisations who work in London, a small number of questions to understand the impact of COVID-19 and associated policy measures, such as social distancing, on vulnerable populations in the capital.

The first week of the survey focused on asking baseline questions to capture organisational profiles, and included a small number of questions relating to the immediate impact post-lockdown of COVID-19.

Surveys from week two onwards are shorter, and ask organisations a number of questions about changes they have seen in the last week.

We aim to increase the size of the cohort and will continue to ask new joiners the week one baseline questions.

Results from the survey are shared with responding organisations and with decision-makers supporting the pan-London response to COVID-19.

Cohort details

The questions were sent to more than 250 Civil Society organisations who have agreed to take part. The organisations were recruited through existing contacts and mailing lists held by the GLA Community Engagement and Equality & Fairness teams.

In addition, larger organisations and infrastructure providers were asked to cascade the invitation down to their networks.

A total of 97 organisations responded in full or in part to the week seven questions, which were live between Monday 1st and Thursday 4th June 2020.

Note: due to the relatively small sample size and the targeted way in which recruitment was conducted, it is important not to extrapolate from any findings in the weekly survey to all civil society organisations in London or any particular population of Londoners. Results from the weekly survey should be used alongside other sources of intelligence to understand the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable communities.

CHANGE IN NUMBER OF PEOPLE SEEKING SUPPORT

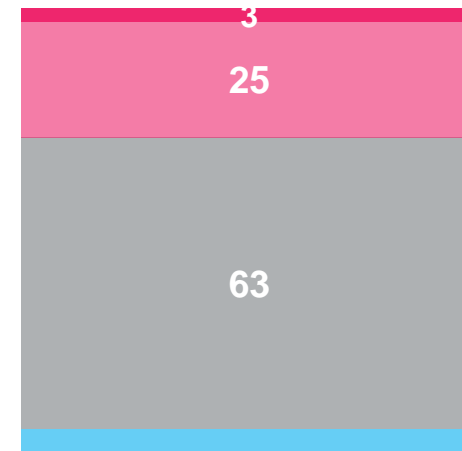
This week more organisations have seen little change (63) than an increase (28) in the number of people seeking support.

Relatively few organisations (just 5) are seeing a fall in the number of people seeking support.

The proportion of organisations seeing an increase in numbers seeking support has stayed similar to last week, although over time it has fallen from 46 per cent six weeks ago to 29 per cent in the most recent week.

Organisations working with the socially excluded were more likely to report an increase (35 per cent) than those working with the general public (20 per cent) or young people (26 per cent).

Change in numbers seeking support (number of organisations)



■ Much lower ■ Lower ■ About the same ■ Higher ■ Much higher

CHANGE IN NUMBERS SEEKING SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC ISSUES

We asked responding organisations to tell us whether the number of people seeking support for a range of specific issues was higher, the same or lower compared to last week. We asked them to only answer if they deal with and have seen each of the issues. This week we have seen an increase in the proportion of organisations mentioning debt issues, capacity building and immigration issues

Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses	Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses
Isolation and loneliness	52%	62	Physical health	33%	39
Mental health	50%	68	Discrimination	31%	29
Debt issues	43%	44	Access to care	31%	39
Digital connectivity	42%	60	Access to food	28%	57
Employment	41%	46	Victim support	28%	18
Capacity Building	41%	39	Domestic violence	25%	32
Housing	38%	39	Grief bereavement	23%	30
Poverty	37%	46	Access to health	23%	48
Access to benefits	36%	50	Childcare or Parenting	18%	33
Immigration issues	36%	28			

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOUR ORGANISATION IS FACING THIS WEEK?

We asked responding organisations to tell us the three biggest challenges they were facing last week. The most common challenges are still longer-term funding and recovery planning

Challenge	Number of organisations	Issue	Number of organisations
Funding - sustainability beyond the crisis	45	Difficulty in delivering services online	<10
Planning for recovery/easing of lockdown	41	Need to provide new or changed services	<10
Social distancing in delivery	17	Capacity - due to staff working from home	<10
Capacity - due to increased demand	14	Capacity - general	<10
Funding - access to urgent funding	13	Funding - relationship with existing funders	<10
Funding - general	12	Capacity - due to reduction in volunteers	<10
Digital or tech equipment	11	Personal Protective Equipment	<10
Digital skills or training	11	Capacity - due to furloughed staff	<10
Reaching vulnerable groups	11	Advice/training on supporting vulnerable	<10
Funding - sustainability beyond the crisis	45	Difficulty in delivering services online	<10
Planning for recovery/easing of lockdown	41	Need to provide new or changed services	<10

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOUR BENEFICIARIES ARE FACING THIS WEEK?

We asked responding organisations to tell us the three biggest challenges their beneficiaries were facing in the last week. Mental health and isolation remain the most widespread issues reported, followed by digital exclusion. Employment issues are becoming more commonly reported.

Challenge	Number of organisations	Issue	Number of organisations
Social Isolation	42	Access to local authority support	<10
Mental health	38	Access to benefits	<10
Digital exclusion	34	Bereavement	<10
Employment issues	24	Domestic violence	<10
Access to food and essentials	14	Home schooling	<10
Social distancing rules	14	Multi-lingual support	<10
Low income	12	Access to PPE	<10
No recourse to public funds	10	Eviction	<10
Family tension	<10		

BENEFICIARY CHALLENGES BY BENEFICIARY GROUP

Do biggest beneficiary challenges vary by the main groups of beneficiaries organisations work with?

Organisations working with socially excluded and vulnerable were particularly likely to mention employment issues (45 per cent of organisations) and digital exclusion (35 per cent)

Organisations working with young people were more likely to mention mental health (57 per cent of organisations), low incomes (43 per cent) and family tension (17 per cent)

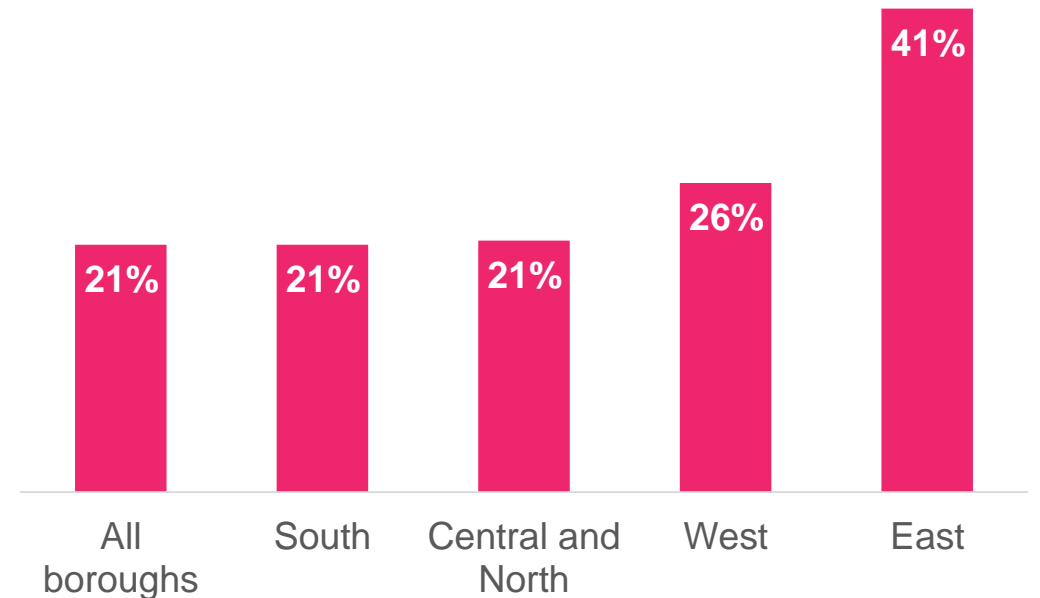
Organisations working with the general public were particularly likely to mention social isolation (50 per cent)

CHANGE IN NUMBER OF PEOPLE SEEKING SUPPORT BY GEOGRAPHY

Organisations working in the West and East London sub-regions are more likely to report an increase in the number of people seeking support, compared to last week.

21 per cent of organisations working in the South, and 21 per cent of organisations working across all boroughs, reported an increase in numbers seeking support, versus 26 per cent in the sub-region, and 41 per cent in the East.

Proportion of organisations seeking support by London sub-region



POSITIVE CHANGES DURING CRISIS

Increased use of tech/digital (40) – by far the most common positive change identified by respondents was an increased use of tech/digital to deliver services. Organisation spoke about their ability to reach people they would not have been able to before and the increased flexibility for staff.

“An increase in digital service provision is more inclusive for some, for example those people who need a considerable amount of time and resources to travel due to disability. We recognise that online opportunities can act as one tool in increasing their opportunities to participate and also to access services. We will keep developing our digital offers where we can see the benefits, while finding solutions to digital exclusion.”

“We have been able to establish zoom groups on line which we will continue to support carers who are unable to attend other groups due to caring responsibilities”

POSITIVE CHANGES DURING CRISIS

Willingness to work together/improved partnership working (21) –

Many respondents also highlighted that there has been a higher degree of collaborative working, both across civil society organisations and with statutory agencies.

“Better relationships and collaborative working with local authority. Opportunities for innovation and creativity. Changing rapidly - both ourselves and statutory organisations, who are doing things that would usually take many years to change”

“We need to ensure that the new levels of collaboration & partnership working we have felt during lockdown are enabled to continue beyond. The way we have seen different organisations from the statutory, business and 3rd sector had been heartwarming. I wonder what we could achieve for our society if we make sure this becomes the 'modus operandi' for all youth & community development work in perpetuity?”

POSITIVE CHANGES DURING CRISIS

Working remotely (17) – groups identified benefits of home working and flexibility for staff.

“Remote working is going really well in our team, and it's helped us create a lot more space for shared decision making”

Community Spirit (15) – the increased sense of community spirit and kindness was another positive change that organisation identified.

“community spirit - neighbours, unprompted by organisations looking out for each other”

FACTORS THAT HINDERED WORK

Digital barriers (24) – respondents spoke about both the challenges in supporting people who don't have access to tech or data, and also the complexity of trying to deliver services remotely.

“It has been difficult to reach the most vulnerable members of our community who are perhaps digitally excluded. It has been frustrating that most advice or access to services has been provided online, which is inaccessible to those without the internet.”

“Providing effective support and supervisions - especially to volunteers. Informal channels of resolution - where a chat would have solved. Everyone having the right tech at home, especially for confidential home delivery of telephone appointments.”

FACTORS THAT HINDERED WORK

Lack of clarity from government and other statutory agencies (17) – respondents referenced operating in a context with limited information that specifically addressed the concerns/needs of civil society.

“The inability to plan. Lack of specific guidelines with regards to reopening.”

“Lack of clarity in government guidelines have often meant a lot of time in checking specific details.”

Capacity & impact on Staff (16) – in a context of increasing demand, organisations have faced reduced staff and volunteer capacity.

“In addition, we have lost volunteers and beneficiaries due to extenuating circumstances - many are dealing with difficult personal circumstances which means that they cannot commit to projects. In addition, we have been working with reduced staff (and volunteers), as we have made the decision to furlough approximately half of the paid staff, as part of the government scheme, due to concerns about financial sustainability. However, the demand for help from those we work with has increased.”

WHAT IS NEEDED

Funding (33) – respondents addressed the need for core/long term funding and a focus on local grassroots organisations.

“Long term unrestricted (flexible) funding that enables the sector to continue responding to the different challenges arising from the different stages of the crisis in the way that is most accessible for our service users (BME migrant women)”

“Autonomy for organisations to know what's best for those they support. A relaxation of the 'one size fits all' model in terms of support and funding.”

“Better support for smaller charities providing vital frontline services; better information and understanding of clients groups' needs from local and central government. Provision to support staff wellbeing in the short and longer term.”

WHAT IS NEEDED

Voices of community fed into planning/recovery (18) – the need for meaningful engagement and partnership with communities and civil society was a reoccurring theme in the responses.

“We also need civil society to be actively engaged in defining what a better future can look like. Communities need to be not just in those discussions, but leading them. Civil society's unique role is to amplify the voices of the communities we work alongside, and make space for people who have felt the most impact to shape the solutions. The learning we have had during this crisis from those communities needs to shape the future agenda. Decision makers including the GLA also need to commit to commissioning and learning from research led by people with lived experience of a problem, and to create opportunities for their active involvement in designing policy solutions.”

“Co-design funding allocation priorities with community organisations, understand the real issue facing people at grassroots levels. Also through relationships building- more consultations on specific initiatives.

WHAT IS NEEDED

Cross-Sector Partnerships (13) – recognising the role of all the different partners and agencies within the system, and the importance of working collaboratively.

“The will from government (local, regional, national & global!) and commercial sector partners, and grass roots 3rd sector organisations to continue to work together in the same pro-active & honest ways around all 'themes' - physical & non-physical health, crime, housing, employment, communication skills, peace building”

“Better integrated partnership work with each partner working to their strengths to provide a wrap-around package of support to service users.”

Work to reduce inequalities (12) – organisations also spoke about the need to ensure tackling inequalities is a priority for the recovery process.

“So much it is hard to know where to begin! The economic system has to be there for people who are at the sharp end bit for those who have the most. Our society must be judged by how it treats the most vulnerable, and those with many needs.”

ANY OTHER ISSUES

A common theme in responses this week was issues around transitioning out of lockdown, this included practical considerations for delivering face to face services, impact of changes or reduction in the levels of support provided by charities/statutory agencies and concern from different communities about safety of returning to school or work.

“We are concerned that once things return to some kind of 'normal', the unprecedented levels of support seen throughout the pandemic will rapidly decline. Thereby leaving our most challenged citizens in our most deprived areas to fend for themselves. Austerity has meant that much of the support that has been provided during the pandemic will not be available post lockdown through Local Authority / Statutory Services due to cutbacks.”

“We are struggling to work out how to open our services safely with social distancing measures and would like to know if there is any specific support we can get with ensuring we get this right as a small charity working with individuals who have very low levels of English and a service delivered completely by volunteers.”



NEXT STEPS

Week eight survey in the field between 8th – 11th June.

Results available on Monday 15th June.