



# LONDON COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE SURVEY: WEEK NINE QUESTIONS

FIELDWORK 22<sup>nd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> 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 86 organisations responded in full or in part to the week seven questions, which were live between Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> 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.

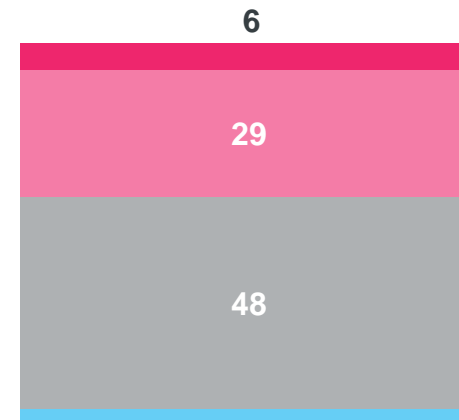
# CHANGE IN NUMBER OF PEOPLE SEEKING SUPPORT

**This week more organisations have seen little change (48) than an increase (35) in the number of people seeking support.**

However, the proportion of organisations seeing an increase in numbers seeking support has increased on last week, rising from 28 per cent two weeks ago to 41 per cent this week. This continues a change seen last week.

Relatively few organisations (3) are seeing a fall in the number of people seeking support.

**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 continue to see shifts in the types of issues being reported: the proportion of organisations citing issues around employment have increased, as has the proportion citing debt issues, access to benefits and discrimination. Other issues such as housing, digital connectivity, mental health and capacity building remain important, with a high proportion of organisations referring to them.

Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses	Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses
Housing	55%	38	Grief bereavement	38%	32
Employment	54%	46	Immigration issues	36%	33
Debt issues	52%	42	Access to food	35%	48
Digital connectivity	52%	54	Childcare or Parenting	35%	26
Capacity Building	50%	42	Physical health	33%	39
Mental health	50%	66	Victim support	33%	18
Access to benefits	48%	52	Domestic violence	32%	34
Poverty	47%	43	Access to health	29%	49
Discrimination	44%	32	Access to care	22%	32
Isolation and loneliness	38%	61			

# 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	43	Social distancing in delivery	<10
Planning for recovery/easing of lockdown	36	Digital skills or training	<10
Capacity - due to increased demand	21	Funding - relationship with existing funders	<10
Staff wellbeing and mental health	14	Capacity - due to furloughed staff	<10
Digital or tech equipment	12	Capacity - due to reduction in volunteers	<10
Funding - general	12	Capacity - due to staff working from home	<10
Need to provide new or changed services	11	Difficulty in delivering services online	<10
Capacity - general	10	Access to urgent funding for new needs	<10
Reaching vulnerable groups	10	Working with local authorities	<10
Maintaining beneficiary engagement	<10	Advice/training on supporting vulnerable	<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 digital exclusion widespread issues reported, followed by employment issues and social isolation, which has fallen slightly down the list.

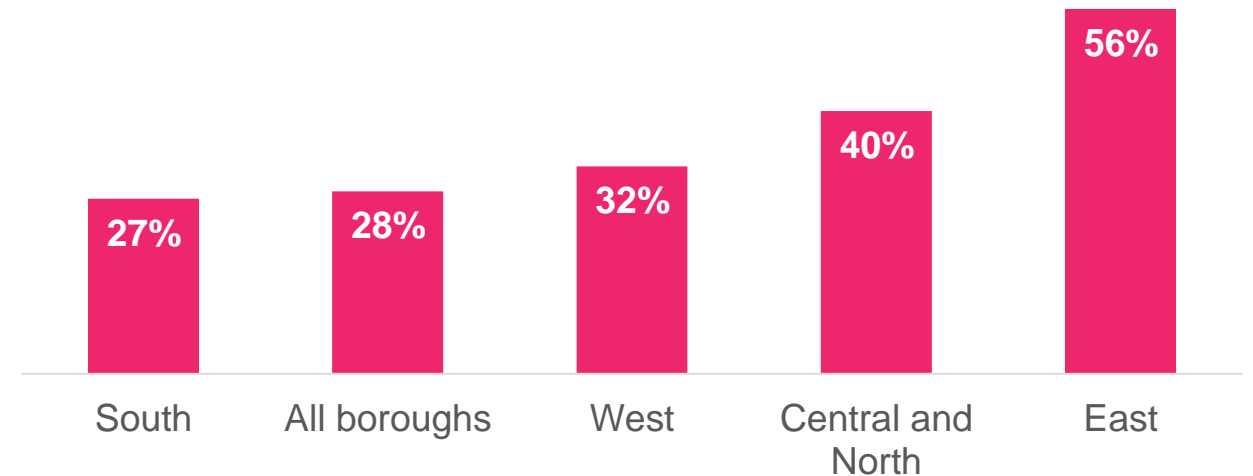
Challenge	Number of organisations	Issue	Number of organisations
Mental health	34	Access to local authority support	<10
Digital exclusion	26	Access to benefits	<10
Employment issues	26	Bereavement	<10
Social Isolation	25	Domestic violence	<10
Low income	21	Inadequate accommodation	<10
Access to food and essentials	14	Eviction	<10
Family tension	11	Home schooling	<10
Social distancing rules	10	Multi-lingual support	<10
No recourse to public funds	<10		

# CHANGE IN NUMBER OF PEOPLE SEEKING SUPPORT BY GEOGRAPHY

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

27 per cent of organisations working in the South, 28 per cent of organisations working across all boroughs and 32 per cent of organisations working in the West, reported an increase in numbers seeking support, versus 40 per cent in the Central and North and 56 per cent of organisations working across all boroughs

Proportion of organisations seeing an increase in requests for support by London sub-region



# RETURN TO WORK

This week's survey asked respondents about what guidance they needed to resume face to face services. We received 48 responses, with questions about:

- **Measures that need to be in place for face to face appointments (20)** – this includes practical steps, and also particular consideration for advice providers who are supporting at risk groups.

“Safe face to face appointment sessions, what measures need to be in place in order for this to take place? How do we physically support those clients who are still shielding? Home visits will not be resumed for a long time to come due to risk of infection. Will venues previously used still be available and will sheltered housing venues still be open to using their buildings?”

“Our advice services team would like to hear how other organisations are supporting people who have chaotic lives and struggle to engage with planned/ booked advice sessions. There are obvious risks in opening our drop-in advice services but equally there are people who will only engage in advice in this way. What are other organisations doing, how are they managing queues and demands? Triage is fine in theory but our experience in the advice centre is that even triage takes time and leaves a backlog, and people who are anxious tend to be less patient. Any ideas about supporting calm environments that also encourage social distancing?”



# RETURN TO WORK

- **Resuming group sessions (8)** and how to balance safety, numbers and costs.

“How can we guarantee the social distance while many desks are in one room and the meeting rooms are too small for our advisors to meet our clients. (Sometimes they are coming with their pushchair and children) For instance; Zumba, mindfulness, art and craft, story telling, English classes we run at the moment, how we can manage to run with 15 women in the previous rooms we used to hire, while they are too small for social distancing. If we invite smaller group of women to attend the sessions, then we need more sessions in different time and how we can calculate the budget while we have just survived with all resource we have been funded until now. Fundraising issue is huge stress for organisations such as MEWSo. People need us and they are connected with us, we can not let them down, but how we can manage to make sure we follow the roles of government for social distancing and stay safe while we struggle with space, budgets and high demand of women in needs.”

# RETURN TO WORK

- The impact of social distancing measures on human relationships and quality of care

“Our services have remained open throughout the crisis, with social distancing and PPE. Ensuring clients socially distance can be a challenge and constant reminders can be damaging to the therapeutic relationship. It would be interesting to discuss how we can balance meeting the needs of the clients and maintain effective communication while ensuring boundaries are there (supportive ways to have the conversation, means of challenging in a person centred and compassionate way)”

# STEPS TAKEN

A number of respondents also shared details of steps they have taken to prepare for reopening. This includes carrying out risk assessment, use of PPE, reducing group size and offering scheduled sessions for clients or members.

“We have carried out a "risk assessment" and followed the government guideline to social distance between our staff and members before reopening our centre. Members will now need to book a timeslot to visit our centre in this first phase of reopening.”

“We are planning to reopen on 20th July. We will have limited numbers of children (15 per session - 2 sessions per day), rather than our usual summer scheme where we have 120-150 children per day. We will have hand washing stations throughout the playground, all play is outside, staff supervision to ensure hand washing and as much social distancing as possible.”

# OTHER ISSUES RAISED

A number of groups shared good practice in reaching groups.

“We are supporting ESOL clients who are overwhelmed or unable to digitally connect by a postal service and we are seeing a good take up of this whilst we consider how to improve digital skills in the medium to long term.”

“Autistic people and the community are reaching out and coming together. This may strengthen us. We want personalised care - real not phoney choice and control over our own lives.”

# OTHER ISSUES RAISED

Impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQ+ Londoners was raised by a number of groups, in particular fear about public safety following the attack in Reading.

“We surveyed 2333 LGBTQ+ people about their wellbeing during lockdown. Four in five say their mental health has taken a hit”

“This week, a London trans-led group raised that the potential GRA changes have made their members not want to go out / be visible. The cancellation of Prides means that many groups have lost out on the fundraising opportunities they'd usually rely on at this time of year so their annual income will be affected.”

# OTHER ISSUES RAISED

- Needs of older Londoners were raised by a number of respondents, including digital exclusion, impact of TfL freedom pass changes and rising poverty.

“Lack of human contact, especially for those clients in the shielding group. They are feeling socially isolated. The fear of catching the virus, clients are very worried that there is still no vaccine for the coronavirus. Poverty, we are referring more clients to food banks because they cannot afford food shopping, They are on means-tested benefits. Accessing cash, Paying bills.

The biggest challenges this week is the Mayor's restrictions on the older person's freedom pass. Those client's with freedom passes cannot use them before 9.00am. Those with early morning hospital appointments have to pay for their travel before that time. Client's need reassurance from AUKW that the freedom pass restrictions will be lifted, unfortunately we cannot give it to them.

We are not able to see supporting documents e.g. bank statements, most clients are not computer literate and cannot send docs via email, we have to take their words for it when they say that they have no savings. Details of savings are needed when applying for benefits and grants.”

“We are very worried that the London Recovery Board the GLA are not considering older people in their strategic plans and that still no direct non online communications are being sent to older Londoners addressing their specific concerns.”



# NEXT STEPS

**The next survey will cover two weeks, being in the field between 29<sup>th</sup> June – 8<sup>th</sup> July.**

**Results available on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July.**