



LONDON COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE SURVEY: WEEK SIXTEEN/SEVENTEEN QUESTIONS

FIELDWORK 27th JULY- 5th August 2020

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Community Response Survey

The 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.

This week's survey collected data over two weeks.

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 360 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 108 organisations responded in full or in part to the week seven questions, which were live between Monday 27th July and Wednesday 5th August 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

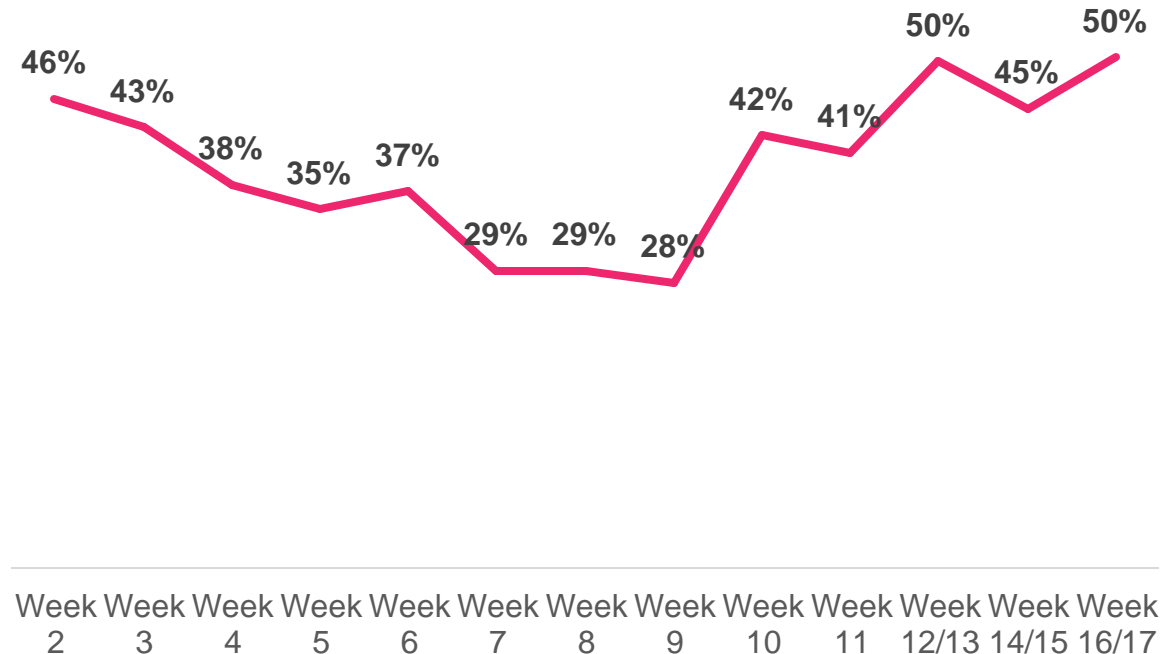
This week 50 per cent of responding organisations (41) saw an increase in the number of people seeking support in the last two weeks.

41 reported little change in numbers and 12 reported a decrease

Organisations working with socially excluded individuals and BAME Londoners were particularly likely to report an increase in demand (55 and 57 per cent respectively).

Organisations that work with with the general public (44 per cent) were slightly less likely to report an increase in demand.

Change in numbers seeking support (number of organisations)



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 a noticeable increase in the proportion of organisations experiencing an increase in demand around debt issues.

Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses	Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses
Employment	67%	55	Childcare or Parenting	47%	36
Mental health	65%	63	Education	47%	45
Poverty	62%	53	Domestic violence	42%	48
Physical health	60%	55	Discrimination	41%	39
Debt issues	57%	54	Hate crime	39%	38
Housing	57%	49	Access to health	38%	58
Digital connectivity	56%	54	Grief bereavement	37%	43
Capacity Building	54%	41	Substance misuse	34%	29
Isolation and loneliness	53%	64	Access to care	32%	50
Access to benefits	51%	61	Victim support	30%	27
Immigration issues	49%	43	Access to food	28%	67
Homelessness	48%	40			

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
Funding sustainability beyond the crisis	36
Planning for recovery/easing of lockdown	31
Capacity - due to increased demand	23
Funding general	18
Delivering services whilst following social distancing guidelines	16
Reaching vulnerable groups	16
Funding access to urgent funding for new needs	11
Staff wellbeing and mental health	11
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. Over time we are seeing a trend towards issues around employment and income becoming the top challenges beneficiaries face, although issues around mental health/social isolation are still frequently cited

Challenge	Number of organisations
Loss of jobs or lack of employment opportunities	39
Low income	34
Digital exclusion	28
Mental health	28
Social Isolation	25
Access to food and essentials	18
Inadequate accommodation	12
Family tension	10
Social distancing rules	<10
Access to benefits	<10

BENEFICIARY CHALLENGES BY BENEFICIARY GROUP

**Do biggest beneficiary challenges vary by the main groups of beneficiaries organisations work with?
Percentages shown are of responding organisations.**

Organisations working with socially excluded and vulnerable were particularly likely to mention issues around domestic violence (18%) and family tension (18%) compared to the cohort overall.

Organisations working with young people were more likely to mention family tensions (29%).

Organisations working with BAME Londoners were much more likely than other organisations to mention digital exclusion (39%) and low income (46%) and inadequate accommodation (18%).

What have funders done during the response to COVID-19 that has been helpful and/or a barrier for your organisation?

We received 83 responses to this question and the overwhelming majority of these were positive. The most common response related to **Funder Flexibility (28)**, organisations reflected on the ability to adapt programmes in order to respond to emerging needs, reduction of reporting requirements and open trust communication with funders.

“Been extremely flexible about use of funds for specific purposes (once permission sought and received); providing additional funds with no application process; repurposing funds from projects to core; friendly approachable attitude, supportive, quick responses”

“..led by London Funders and the GLA, the majority of funders (trusts and foundations, government departments, GLA and our local authority) have been proactive, collaborative, and made a huge effort to simplify processes and communicate quickly. The 'funders pledge' made very early on was actually really effective! For XXXX, as a community organisation, we have felt very supported by the recognition of the role of community based organisations such as ours. So the focus of the emergencies funds on meeting community need was helpful in the early stages. Beyond the 'formal' collaboration of the London emergencies fund (for example) we found other trusts and foundations very responsive to the fact that as things were so uncertain, and changing so rapidly, the best thing they could do was to offer unrestricted funds, or lift the conditions on existing funds. A number of our funders did this proactively, and others when requested – and that is a significant reason why we have been able to adapt and sustain our work. The willingness of funders to listen to what was happening in communities, and enquire about need has been really encouraging – and should lead to a much better understanding of those communities and their pressure points in the future”

What have funders done during the response to COVID-19 that has been helpful and/or a barrier for your organisation?

- Emergency Funding (21) – the second most common response related to the creation of emergency funding and in particular the London Community Response and Felix Project. However a number of people also raised concern about much of the current funding being short term, and worry about the future.

“Funders have been really amazing during covid 19. The hold that was put on Grant's was great as we couldn't deliver services. The extra funding from the NET we received really made a difference and helped us meet people need.”

“LCRF has been really helpful, assessing projects quickly-we were lucky to receive funding and with 9 months in which to spend it. Some Emergency Funders had a very short window for applying, which was unhelpful and the majority of funders insisting funds are spent within 3/6 months is also challenging.”

Current experiences, challenges or support needs around owning or leasing space

We asked respondents about their experiences of access to space. Common themes in the response included lack of appropriate spaces, impact of COVID-19 and costs. Groups also raised the need for guidance on property management and negotiating leases.

Social distancing and impact of Covid

“leased spaces are currently unused, despite rent reductions we still need to cover them. Due to social distancing measures, some spaces are now too small to use and so there is additional cost in securing temporary working space (particularly in the case of providing group work). In some areas, budget constraints mean we cannot return to in person work when this is the best approach to be able to support perpetrators of abuse.”

“We are desperately in need of repurposing our building to be a better more Covid compliant space.”

Current experiences, challenges or support needs around owning or leasing space

Appropriate spaces

“This area is a huge concern for our organisation as our space is inadequate and not always fit for purpose. We rent space from church community halls who are currently struggling to survive under COVID19 and or are run down and badly maintained. We need to secure space fit for the voluntary sector groups but we have no resources to research into opportunities that might be suitable for us so any help would be great.”

“As the demand increases we are in urgent need to move to bigger premises. At present we are hiring a small church premises in Eastham. We need more space to store our laptops, give our vulnerable users care. We are looking for all 5 days premises . Our existing premises will not be sufficient for us to deliver projects with social distancing/ also our demand for services increased due to Covid.”

Current experiences, challenges or support needs around owning on leasing space

Guidance and support needs

“Where Section 106 agreements are put in place the lease terms need to be scrutinised as well as the initial offer. We have been stung by this to the point where we have had to pull out.”

Costs and shared space

“We would love to own our own space! Funding this seems prohibitive for a small organisation that is dependent on grant funding and donations so advice on the possibilities would be very welcome. We struggle as an organisation that rents- there are very few appropriate spaces and although we are grateful to have access to a reasonable amount of office space, we have never had adequate project delivery space (small rooms, poor accessibility, no outdoor space, poor ventilation, inadequate heating, limits on when we can use it). We coped previously by squeezing in, something that is no longer possible. It would be wonderful to have community hubs- we have long imagined having a community centre filled with a range of allied organisations who could share expertise across a range of intersecting issues.”

ANY OTHER ISSUES

Concerns about transportation for vulnerable elderly people to medical appointments and other services - previously carried out by volunteers, many of whom are over 70 years old.

It has highlighted accommodation issues especially as it has been hot and in overcrowded environments with everyone home the inside becomes like pressure cooker!

NRPF new / pregnant mums in lockdown - health visitors are not responding or completing routine checks - we are supporting very vulnerable and isolated mums in crisis calls re their babies.

The needs of SEND adults and their families require attention. This group is socially isolated and experiencing the impact of isolation e.g poor mental and physical health and reduced prospects.

Services that were offering free food parcels dwindling but need is still there and growing due to loss of work and delays in receiving UC if people were in work and earning above a certain threshold.



NEXT STEPS

The next survey will cover two weeks, being in the field between 10th August – 19th August

Results available on Monday 24th August.