



LONDON COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE SURVEY: WEEK TWENTY TWO/TWENTY THREE

FIELDWORK 7th – 17th September 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 121 organisations responded in full or in part to the week seven questions, which were live between Monday 7th and Thursday 17th September 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.

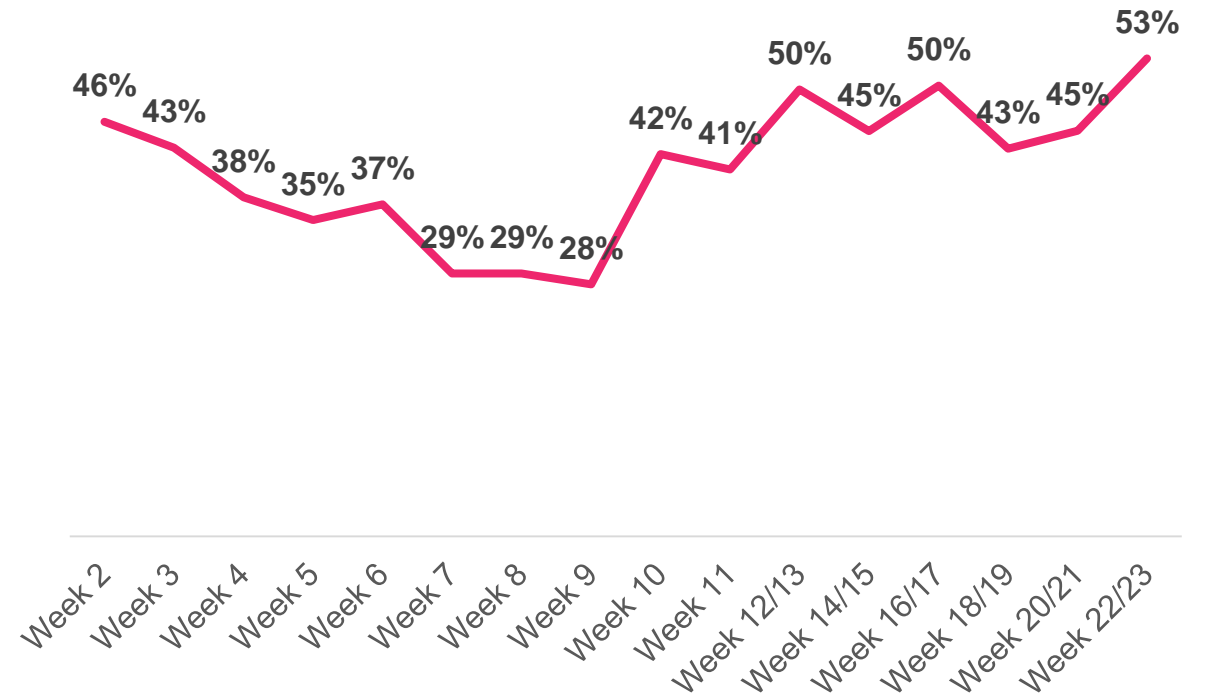
CHANGE IN NUMBER OF PEOPLE SEEKING SUPPORT

This week 53 per cent of responding organisations (64) saw an increase in the number of people seeking support in the last two weeks.

47 reported little change in numbers and 9 reported a decrease

No significant difference in patterns of increase were noted, when we looked at responses from organisations working with BAME Londoners (56%), young people (52%) or people with a particular financial need (52%).

Increase in numbers seeking support



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 (>10pp) increase in the proportion of organisations experiencing an increase in demand around poverty, education, debt issues, isolation and loneliness, access to health, domestic violence, victim support and immigration issues.

Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses	Issue	Proportion reporting higher demand	No. of responses
Employment	71%	63	Domestic violence	44%	41
Poverty	64%	56	Physical health	43%	51
Mental health	64%	78	Victim support	43%	28
Education	60%	48	Immigration issues	43%	47
Housing	60%	55	Childcare or Parenting	41%	34
Debt issues	55%	51	Substance misuse	35%	31
Homelessness	53%	47	Access to food	34%	80
Isolation and loneliness	52%	65	Discrimination	33%	40
Access to health	52%	58	Access to care	30%	46
Capacity Building/organisations or volunteers	49%	51	Hate crime	22%	32
Access to benefits	48%	66	Grief bereavement	21%	38
Digital connectivity	47%	66			

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, however we have seen an increase in groups citing need to provide new or changed services this week.

Challenge	Number of organisations
Funding sustainability beyond the crisis	42
Planning for recovery/easing of lockdown	33
Capacity - due to increased demand	26
Delivering services whilst following social distancing guidelines	26
Funding general	24
Capacity - general	19
Need to provide new or changed services	19
Reaching vulnerable groups	18
Funding access to urgent funding for new needs	13
Staff wellbeing and mental health	12

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. This week the top issues identified remain consistent with W20/21, loss of employment, low income, mental health & social isolation are the top four issues.

Challenge	Number of organisations
Loss of jobs or lack of employment opportunities	39
Low income	38
Mental health	38
Social Isolation	29
Access to food and essentials	27
Digital exclusion	27
Social distancing rules	17
No recourse to public funds	15
Inadequate accommodation	13
Access to benefits	8

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, and are relative to the cohort overall.

Organisations working with young people were more likely to mention mental health (44%), social distancing (28%) and family tension (12%).

Organisations working with BAME Londoners were more likely than other organisations to mention loss of jobs (48%), digital exclusion (33%) and No Recourse to Public Funds (22%).

Organisations working with low income Londoners were more likely to mention loss of jobs (52%) access to food (36%) and access to benefits (16%).

ANY OTHER ISSUES

This week we heard from a number of groups about their confusion about social distancing measures, availability of covid tests and the challenges they present to communities.

“Lack of clarity in guidance for community centres on the 6-person rule makes it extremely difficult to plan for re-introduction of face-to-face services. We have therefore decided not to reintroduce them until there is clear guidance, or the 6-person restriction is lifted...If 15 people are in the same room, is there a meaning to a 6-person rule at all, since the 6 people would be socially distancing in any case? What is the difference between 2 groups of 6, each internally socially distancing and a group of 12 all socially distancing. Is there a requirement of more than 2 meters between the two groups, or merely that members don't address each other when they talk? Nor do we know how to distinguish "visiting" and "socialising" from taking part in community activities, which often have an element of both of those. You see the lack of clarity?”

“We continue to have raised with us issues faced by deaf people who are finding that practical everyday life is impacted by the wearing of masks by others, rendering communication often difficult or impossible when out shopping, on transport etc”

“Since last week our benefactors have reported that they have no access to COVID-19 tests. This is hugely important and very worrying for us as they are the most affected by the crisis - BAME, vulnerable, low income people with a language barrier and lack of trust towards hospitals.”

ANY OTHER ISSUES

Food aid organisations are also raising a number of different challenges, including access to space, increasing demand, concern about individuals they are no longer able to support.

“We are in desperate need of a venue to continue to run our foodbank from ..where we are at the scouts hut was short term and they like schools etc are having to resume back to normal services ..please help with locating a place for us to continue to provide essential services from.”

“These past two week have been incredibly stressful. 2 food aid providers that formed during the crisis , Harlesden and Willesden (PCC) closed. We had been expecting this and asked they pass their clients to us gradually but we were inundated with calls and referrals . On top of this we lost many of our drivers and some of our packing volunteers. In response we have had to limit the number of postcodes we serve and send people away. We have tried to research into finding other places for people to access food aid but found there are so many strings attached to most places its hardly worth sending them there.”

“We have over 20 vulnerable adults who need food deliveries each week. They pay a small subscription but cannot access the centre, hence deliveries. The management committee have decided that they may withdraw the service from these vulnerable people my concern is that the same situation with Mercy or Errol may happen, due to lack of food. I am worried”

ANY OTHER ISSUES

A number of partners raised concern about the lack of join up between services, and this leading to local agencies not getting timely information about needs.

“We will be working with children after school and on Saturdays for our term time provision. We have asked our local borough whether we will receive information on any school closures due to outbreaks as we will need to know this to ensure we run a safe provision. Already in a neighbouring borough children in year 7 and 8 have been sent home after only 3 days at school. This information needs to be shared throughout all sectors that work with children”

“We are seeing an increase in families seeking asylum or seeking to clarify their immigration status housed in initial accommodation (Home Office accommodation for vulnerable people - in our case pregnant women and those with young children). As the existing IA centres are full, families are being housed in hotels across London. We are seeing a lack of joined up multi-agency support for these families. A similar approach is being used across the South-East, but councils seem to be leading a multi-agency approach where the Home Office, accommodation providers, CCGs, Migrant Help and local NGOs are meeting weekly to ensure needs for these families are met. We are not seeing the same happen in London with (in some cases quite large) groups of families being housed in hotels with local agencies unaware. As such, families have struggled to access essential services and are unsure where to get support from (in one instance, we were aware of families housed in one London borough reaching out to volunteers back in Calais to ask for support, as they were the only support agency they knew how to contact).”



NEXT STEPS

The next survey will cover two weeks, being in the field between 21st September – 30th September

Results available on Monday 5th October.