

# We Walworth

Key findings from baseline research,  
December 2022



# **We Walworth is a new project to engage everyone in the neighbourhood about food and inequality in Walworth - and figure out how we can work together to make this a better place to live.**

This report sets out the key findings from research carried out in Walworth from August to October 2022. This baseline research will be used to assess the impact of the We Walworth programme, comparing this initial data with a second round of research in February and March 2023.

The research was carried out by Social Life, a Walworth-based research and engagement agency.

We Walworth



# **1 The approach and the theory of change**

# A theory of change for We Walworth

**Three questions tied together the outcomes of the theory of change, developed as part of the initial proposal for the project.**

(1) how do the engagement activities support or hinder the development of new models of collaborations between local government, central government, and the local community?

(2) how do the engagement activities support or hinder the development of social capital in the local area?

(3) how do the engagement activities support or hinder the development of new initiatives around food?

**This theory of change will structure both the baseline research and the second round of research in 2023.**



# We Walworth baseline research methods

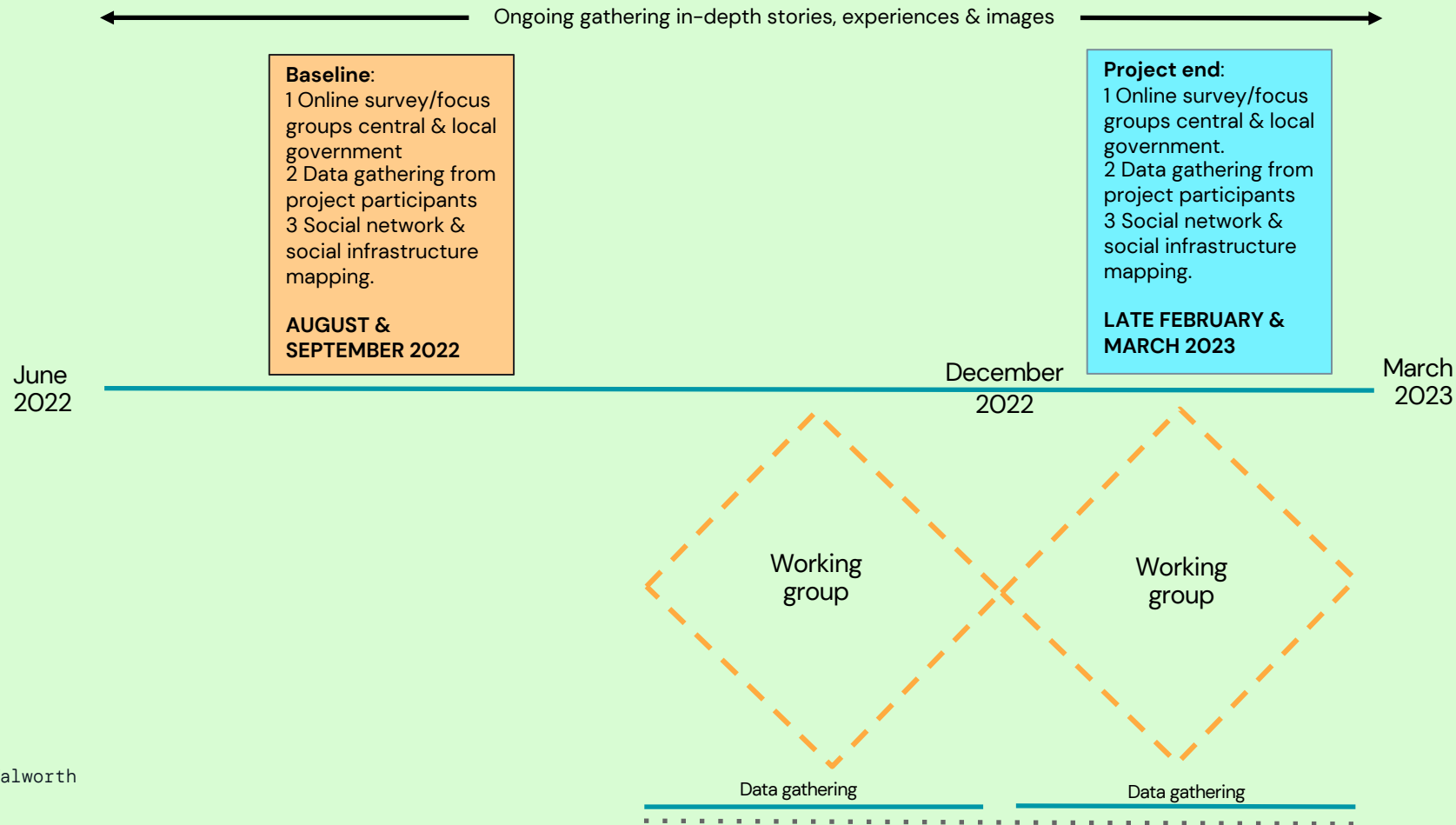
## Surveys

1. Online survey of local and central government representatives (11 local government and 6 central government representatives)
2. Survey of participants engaged through events (52 completed, of which 35 are residents)
3. Survey of social infrastructure providers (21 completed)
4. In-depth interviews with local and central government representatives (3 local government and 3 central government)

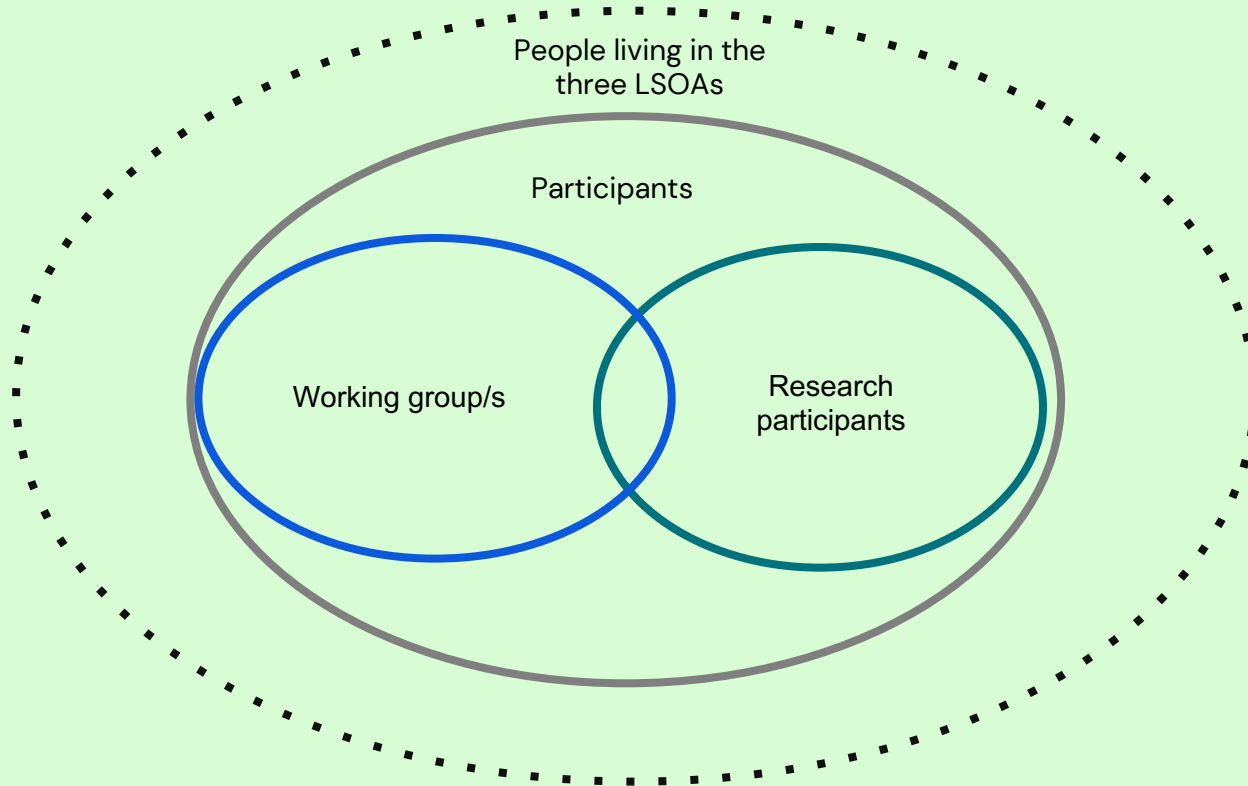
## Progress stories

5. In-depth interviews with residents (6 residents)
6. In-depth interviews with residents who are not involved in the project but might benefit indirectly (13 residents who use the Walworth Living Room)
7. In-depth interviews with participants in the We Walworth working group (2 local government, 3 central government representatives, and 2 residents)

# We Walworth: evaluation strategy



# Understanding who is involved



## **2 Key findings**



# The online survey of local and central government participants

The online survey provided insight into how local and central government representatives understand the concept of social capital. Two common themes were identified:

## **(1) Social capital is about community engagement**

“Activities that involve and bring communication with others”

“Hard to describe. How we bring our whole selves to a piece of work perhaps – our spirits or souls perhaps. Everyone is on an equal footing when we talk of social as opposed to money or power capital, and what we can then bring is our abilities to connect to each others and to make space for each other to thrive and flourish”.

## **(2) Social capital is about local networks and support**

“Being able to use networks of friends and family to live well”

“The networks between people which allow them to achieve common goals and solve problems”

“Trust and relationship built over years within community groups”.

# The online survey of central and local government participants

## **Main barriers that central government faces to improving social capital in Walworth:**

- lack of resources (funding, staff, investment in clear measurements about social capital)
- lack of 'on the ground' knowledge and distance from community issues
- communication (with the local community, across gov sectors)
- competing priorities.

## **Main barriers that local government faces to improving social capital in Walworth:**

- lack of resources
- communication
- disjointed work.

## **Key things local and central gov representatives would do in Walworth to build social capital:**

- provide a platform for community engagement
- identify community needs.

# In-depth interviews with local and central government

The first progress story is about expectations and project success. Building partnerships across government and with communities and developing new ways of working were common threads in central and local gov representatives' narrative about how success would look like at the end of the project.

**What do you think would be gained by forming partnerships across government and with communities in Walworth?**

"Everything! The system is ripe for reform and could be improved upon. Lots of duplication centrally that leads to frustration locally – duplication across outcomes, duplication across funding, and general duplication of resources. Bits of Whitehall looking at an area like Walworth with a telescope, community looking back and seeing a kaleidoscope." (*central gov interview*)

**In your view, what would success look like at the end of the We Walworth project?**

"Being able to produce a new business case for a new way of working based on this and other projects – having the evidence on how a new way of working could look like." (*central gov interview*)

"I think a better understanding of the needs of those communities, and place-based aspects...Also it would be useful for communities to learn about how government and civil servants work, the things they have to do to make things happen."  
(*central gov interview*)

# Key findings from in-depth interviews with local and central government

The second progress story highlights some of the challenges and possible barriers to forming partnerships across government and with communities in Walworth. The short- and long-term challenges mentioned in the in-depth interviews corroborate the results of the online survey. Questions about the project's replicability and the best ways of evaluating the project's impact came up in one of the in-depth interviews.

## Barriers

At the community level: lack of trust in government, local people feeling disillusioned, local people lacking the confidence that their voices matter

At the local government level: lack of time, lack of resources, competing priorities, lack of trust from local groups

At the central government level: lack of trust from local groups, competing priorities, support from 'higher-ups'.

# Key findings from in-depth interviews with local and central government

The third progress story brings attention to the impact We Walworth is already having on those involved. Central government representatives welcomed the visits to the Walworth Living Room at least in part because these gave them a chance to (1) learn about Walworth (for some, this was the first time they visited the area) and (2) start build relationships with local communities.

When asked what they personally hoped to achieve by getting involved in We Walworth, central government representatives noted that it is about "[being] closer to communities, [being] able to understand what's going on, and [engaging] with people and [feeding] the learning into conversations with policymakers".

Among those interviewed, there is shared awareness, that central government work is detached from local communities and the project could help them better understand inner-city diverse neighbourhoods like Walworth.

"I think for government departments particularly, we are quite removed from lots of aspects of communities and especially inner-city ones. We tend to come from a certain sociodemographic background, usually white middle class people. That doesn't reflect the diversity of inner-city neighbourhoods. That difference is a massive opportunity to learn about what's really needed and what people value that would improve their wellbeing."

# Comparing residents' views to people living in similar areas

The We Walworth project focuses on an area with Walworth in central Southwark covering three lower level super output areas (LSOAs). The bottom half falls into Burgess Park.

In the next slide, we compare the the data collected from the 35 residents who took part in the survey of participants engaged through We Walworth events with Social Life's "Community Dynamics data" predicting how residents of small areas are likely to feel.<sup>1</sup>

Community Dynamics data models national survey data and ONS area classifications to predict how residents are likely to perceive their local area. Where a score is stronger than the prediction, this indicates an asset of the area; where it is weaker it suggests a vulnerability.

<sup>1</sup>For more information on this approach see [www.social-life.co/publication/understanding\\_local\\_areas/](http://www.social-life.co/publication/understanding_local_areas/)



This map shows the ONS area classifications for the area around the Walworth Living Room – shown as a blue dot.

The residents surveyed had stronger feelings of belonging, and more positive attitudes towards people from different backgrounds getting on, of collective control in the present and the future and of control over decisions affecting the area that would be expected across comparative areas. However feelings of safety were lower.

Data from the 35 residents surveyed at We Walworth events	Predictive data for the three LSOAs
<b>Sense of belonging</b> (Strongly agree + agree) <b>81%</b>	<b>Sense of belonging</b> (Strongly agree + agree) <b>3a: 58%; 3b: 58%; 3d: 60%</b>
<b>People from different backgrounds get on well together</b> (Definitely agree + agree) <b>94%</b>	<b>People from different backgrounds get on well together</b> (Definitely agree + agree) <b>3a: 78%; 3b: 81%; 3d: 87%</b>
<b>Safety after dark</b> (Very safe + fairly safe) <b>68%</b>	<b>Safety after dark</b> (Very safe + fairly safe) <b>3a: 70%; 3b: 84%; 3d: 81%</b>
<b>Collective control – present</b> "people in Walworth pull together to improve the neighbourhood" (Definitely agree + agree): <b>91%</b>	<b>Collective control – present</b> "people in Walworth pull together to improve the neighbourhood" (Definitely agree + agree) <b>3a: 44%; 3b: 49%; 3d: 57%</b>
<b>Collective control – future</b> "willing to work with others on something to improve the neighbourhood (Definitely agree + agree) <b>97%</b>	<b>Collective control – future</b> "willing to work with others on something to improve the neighbourhood": (Definitely agree + agree) <b>3a: 62%; 3b: 58%; 3d: 68%</b>
<b>Individual control over decisions affecting Walworth:</b> (Definitely agree + agree) <b>60%</b>	<b>Individual control over decisions affecting Walworth:</b> (Definitely agree + agree) <b>3a: 33%; 3b: 32%; 3d: 37%</b>
<b>Loneliness</b> (some of the time; occasionally; often) <b>51%</b>	<b>Loneliness</b> (some of the time; occasionally; often) <b>3a: 50%; 3b: 44%; 3d: 56%</b>

Profiles of the 35 residents who took part in the survey of participants engaged through We Walworth events	Census 2011 data for the three LSOAs
<b>Age:</b> 18–24y: 9%; 25–29y: 14%; 30–44y: 40%; 45–64y: 37%	<b>Age:</b> 18–24y: 19%; 25–29y: 15%; 30–44y: 37%; 45–64y: 29%
<b>Ethnic group:</b> Asian: 9%; Black: 33%; Mixed/multiple: 6%; White: 24%; Other: 27%	<b>Ethnic group:</b> Asian: 9%; Black: 38%; Mixed/multiple: 8%; White: 40%; Other: 5%
<b>Gender:</b> Female: 73%; Male: 24%; Non-binary: 3%	
<b>Education:</b> Achieved a qualification at degree level or above: 70%; Achieved an NVQ or equivalent qualification: 19%; Completed and apprenticeship: 7%; Have other qualifications including foreign: 4%	<b>Education:</b> Achieved NVQ Levels 3 or 4 and above: 40%; Achieved NVQ Levels 1 or 2: 24%; Completed and apprenticeship: 1%; Have other qualifications including foreign: 13%; No qualifications: 21%
<b>Employment status:</b> Employed: 63% (full-time or part-time: 43%; self-employed: 13%; zero hours contract: 7%) looking after children/home: 10%; looking for work: 13%; unable to work: 13%.	<b>Employment status:</b> Employed: 53%; Unemployed: 8%; Full-time students: 6%; retired: 6%; student: 12%; looking after children/home: 5%; unable to work: 5%; other: 5%.



# Key findings from the survey of participants engaged through We Walworth events

## Motivations to get involved in the We Walworth project

**All participants:** "I wanted to meet people": 33%; "I wanted to help my community": 48%; "I wanted to improve local services": 39%; "An earlier positive experience of getting involved with Pembroke House": 17%

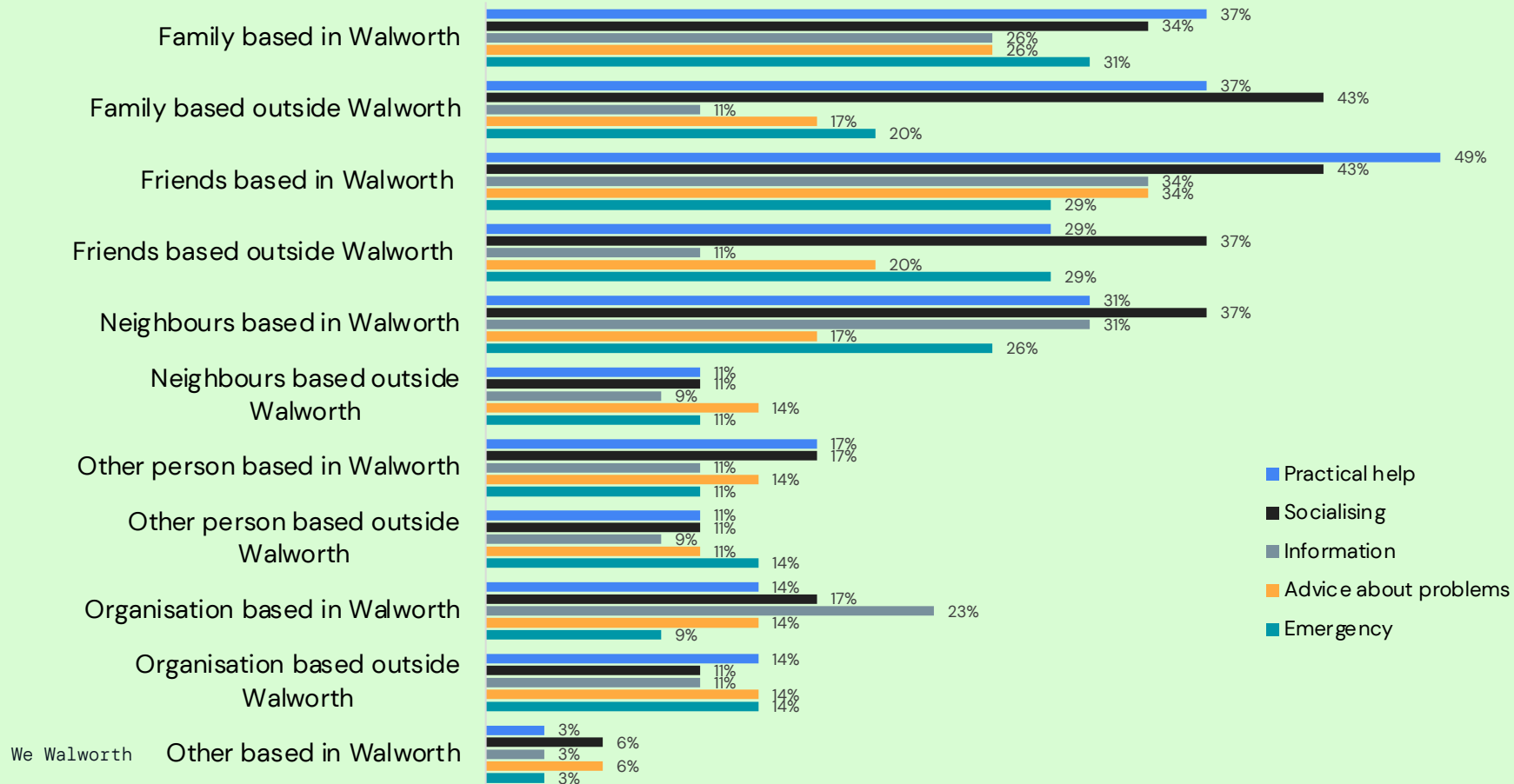
**Only residents:** "I wanted to meet people": 34%; "I wanted to help my community": 54%; "I wanted to improve local services": 34%; "An earlier positive experience of getting involved with Pembroke House": 23%

## Time spent on the We Walworth project in the last month

All participants: About a day: 6%; about half a day: 31%; less than 2 hours: 47%; more than a day: 16%

Only residents: About a day: 10%; about half a day: 29%; less than 2 hours: 52%; more than a day: 10%

# Local support and networks: responses from residents engaged at events



# In-depth interviews with residents involved in We Walworth

The first progress story illustrates residents' engagement journey with We Walworth. Residents started the journey with different skills, expectations and understandings of the project. They flagged that activities joined so far have been both a learning experience and an opportunity to meet new people.

"I think they're trying to collect data, information gathering. That's what I got from it. Literally what people think about the BBQs and outdoor eating. [...] Not really [haven't learnt anything new yet] – just getting to know people and their personal experiences. Rebecca was able to expand on why the BBQs were shut down, I knew a little bit about it from speaking to the park rangers."

*(Interview with resident)*

"It was through a community group I attend [...] They work with Walworth Living Room [...]. She told me about it and I told other people. It wasn't publicised which I find with so many things in Walworth! There's a newsletter from Southwark that I get lots of information from. We've had two sessions, the first one where they were telling us about the aim, we had a bbq and went out to talk to people and invite them to the next. The second one we evaluated the first BBQ and wondered how to make it better and find people in our network to bring along." *(Interview with resident)*

"As far as I understand it they are trying to bring the community together and hear their views. Some of it is about serving food to the community and having a space for people to come and for children to play, crafts and things like that. The BBQ is more recent and taking people's views in the park. I got to know a few people who work with the council for example. [...] It's early days still, but if there were opportunities and I was free I'd take them on. It's all to do with where we live. It exposes me to lots of new skills, social skills and people skills. Whatever training they are offering me. What I notice from the meetings I've been to (two)<sup>18</sup> they are very hands on approach to doing things instead of putting it on paper and leaving to one side." *(Interview with resident)*

# In-depth interviews with residents involved in We Walworth

The second progress story provides an initial answer to the question of what would make local people become more involved to shape the area. We learned that residents need to be reassured that their views and experiences matter. Transparency, clear communication and sharing information gathered through engagement are key to increasing local participation.

“Again, even just speaking to people [...] people have busy lives. I know that people always want something for something. Incentives work. Food, drink, a BBQ. That’s what people are really drawn towards. Also selling it well, you need the team to be uplifting and really encouraging people to come along and take part. I’ve always been a people person anyway and tried to help where I can.”

“If they are reassured that their opinion and involvement matters. Before I’ve been like, what’s the point? How will saying this truly contribute? Will my suggestions be considered? Finding a way to let people know that we’re not doing this just to be seen to be doing it. I’m [...] part of the PTA, I joined for representation because I’m African. I was sceptical that I would be heard. When I made a suggestion it was implemented! That changed my mind! [...] Break down the process for people to understand how these things happen. Even when things aren’t implemented, explain why they’re not being implemented. If you want continued involvement it’s the only way. People aren’t going to give their time in vain.”

“Holding sessions where people are invited to participate, communicate, and be part of decision making. Rather than having a consultation - which in my experience, they do only once everything has already been put together. We’re asked to respond, but we never know how it worked out or what the results were. I remember once I was at a consultation about changing the bidding process for council accommodation - but I don’t think it changed anything.”

# Conversations with residents not directly involved in We Walworth

The first progress story shows how project activities could support the development of social capital in the local area and help build stronger communities around the project. About a half of those who spoke to us do not use local social infrastructure. Burgess Park and Walworth Living Room were mentioned in a few conversation, but we learned that many of those who use the Walworth Living Room are not well connected to local resources. For a few, Walworth Living Room and Citizens Advice are key places in the community for support and getting information about local services and networks.

"My own back yard and my home. There's nothing around except Walworth Living Room. There was more a few years ago. Sure Start got taken away and so did the youth clubs, the bingo hall, the bowling – got shut down. Surrey Quays is the nearest place for that kind of thing. Your support space is your own home. The interior is strong, the exterior is disgusting." (*Interview with resident*)

"Wait, is that what it's called, the Living Room? When I first started coming here, I had been sick for 3 year. [...] I was staying indoors, not communicating with others. I didn't know that places like this existed. But six months ago, I started moving around again and found this place. It keeps me busy. You can chat with people and it's friendly. People take food and eat breakfast. Last week I got a packet of chicken! That saw me through for a few days." (*Interview with resident*)

"This place is so necessary. It's welcoming to everybody, and everyone is happy to get along. Even if you don't want to join in you can do what you feel like doing. I got involved with Pembroke House five years ago. They do music lessons for the kids and homework club, my kids went, and it was vital for them." (*Interview with resident*)

# Conversations with residents not directly involved in We Walworth

The second progress story focuses on experiences with the Walworth Living Room, where many of the We Walworth activities take place. We will collect stories from residents using this space again at the end of project and compare the accounts to understand how residents who are not directly involved in We Walworth may benefit indirectly from it. Through our conversations, we learned that food is an important part of life in this space, but for many people it was a secondary concern. A split between people who come to the Living Room 'just for the food' and people who are there to socialise was identified by staff, visitors, and volunteers.

"At first, I was nervous to come here, I didn't think anyone cared. Felt ignored as I didn't know the staff members. But then I made an effort to come back, and to talk to people. Sometimes I still feel ignored, but now I see familiar faces at least. The set up and atmosphere is good. Inviting, comfortable. If you're awkward the first time you might not come back, so it's important that people introduce themselves. Being around other people. I find peace from outside worries here, I don't think about them for a while. Sometimes people get signposting for other help here, but I think they want to expand that and make it more regular. At the moment, people just come from outside organisations then go away again."

"I come here for the company more than the food. Though I do like the tea and coffee because at home I can't pour the kettle. But the most important thing is being talked to, so I know that someone is there. It was harder at the beginning as I would just sit there. I am very nervous, go crazy indoors and get anxious outdoors."

"I've been a couple of times to get food but this is the only time I've stayed. This is partially because I have mental health issues and a lifetime of trauma, but I find it loud, claustrophobic. I'm very sensitive to energy – over there by the fridge I found people blocking the space. You've got tickets with numbers now but even so people are crowding the area. It's enough not to make me want to participate."

# The survey of social infrastructure providers

65% of the 21 providers we surveyed said that most of their clients are regulars who live in Walworth, and 35% reported that their clients include a mix of local people and occasional visitors from outside the area.

## Perceptions of We Walworth

43% of those surveyed were aware of the We Walworth project

24% of the providers we surveyed were involved in the project, and their motivations for joining it varied:

- 40% said they joined the project because they wanted to improve local services
- 20% said they wanted to help their community
- 20% joined because of an earlier positive experience of getting involved with Pembroke House
- 20% mentioned that they became involved for other reasons.

The social infrastructure providers we spoke to ranged from cafes to community organisations:

- 48% were in the community sector
- 33% were in the private sector
- 10% were in the public sector.

We asked how long they had been working in the area:

- 64% were set up before 2006 (of these, half were set up before 2006)
- 26% were set up in 2021 or 2022.

# Survey of social infrastructure providers: perceptions of Walworth

## Individual control over decisions affecting Walworth:

20% of those surveyed said they felt they had control, 50% reported having 'some control', 30% 'no control'.

"I have a lot of influence and power because I know a lot of families and I have built a network up and those families tell me a lot. I am from East London but when I am in Walworth I bump into so many people." (*social infrastructure provider interview*)

"No, because of the things we see that continually happen. Nothing changes after speaking to officers or councillors." (*social infrastructure provider interview*)

"[I have] some control and influence. My role is being a facilitator and conduit. I could share my perspective and propose ideas, so I felt I had a voice to influence what happens in the area. The residents feel that they are unable to control the decision-making in the area." (*social infrastructure provider interview*)

## Collective control:

75% of those surveyed agreed that "People in Walworth pull together to improve the neighbourhood"

95% of those surveyed agreed that "Willing to work with others on something to improve the neighbourhood"

90% of those surveyed agreed that "When people in Walworth get involved in their local community, they really can change the way that their area is run"



# Mapping social networks and use of social infrastructure

**Surveys of participants and of social infrastructure providers asked about use of different spaces and places. Participants were asked where they went to to socialize, for advice, for information and in an emergency. Social infrastructure providers were asked what relationships they have with other organisations.**

This draws on an approach to understanding social infrastructure<sup>2</sup> in local areas as a local eco-system made up of different sorts of services and supports, ranging from **formal** social infrastructure (libraries, parks, schools, community centres for example) and informal social infrastructure (including cafes, hairdressers, WhatsApp groups). The relationships between residents and between different agencies within the system are central in making the system work for residents.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on this approach see [www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/connective\\_social\\_infrastructure\\_O\\_O.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/connective_social_infrastructure_O_O.pdf)

This will be repeated at the end of the project to see the impact on where residents go to for support, to socialize, for information and in an emergency; and on the networks between social infrastructure providers.

A sign of increased social capital would if that social infrastructure providers have denser relationships, that there is an increase in the number of relationships between places and spaces and more providers have become involved in these networks.

A second sign of increased social capital would be if residents are going to more organisations for support, either a bigger range of organisations or contacting or visiting individual organisations more frequently.

It would then be important to find out whether these changes can be attributed to the activities of We Walworth.

# How residents use social infrastructure to support their lives

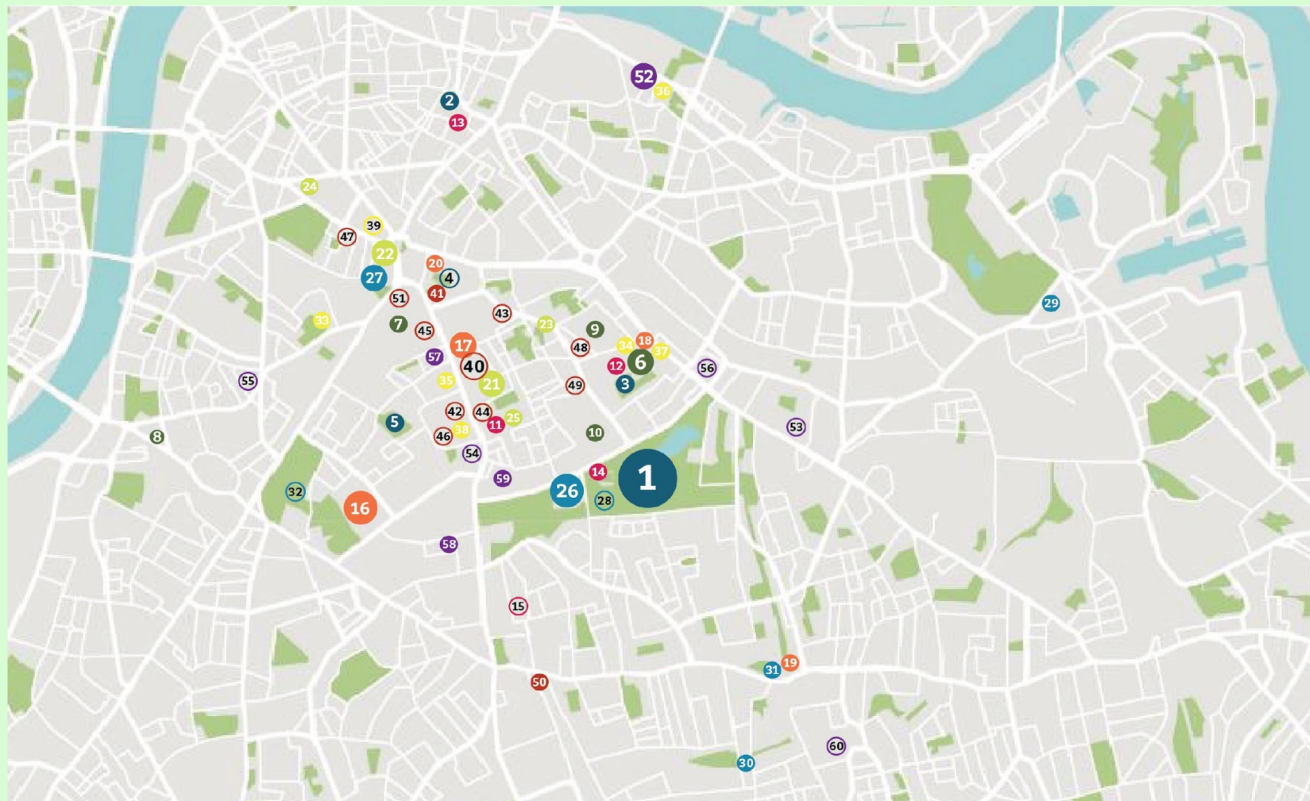
The number of times social infrastructure providers were mentioned by We Walworth participants for socialising, accessing information, support or help in emergencies is indicated by size of the circle.

● Solid circles are formal social infrastructure.

○ Rings are informal social infrastructure.

Key on next slide.

Go to this [link](#) for a full size version of the map.



# Social infrastructure supports legend

## Map Details

- Formal social infrastructure
- Informal social infrastructure
- -----● Frequency of mentions

## Parks and Green Space

- 1 Burgess Park
- 2 Mint Street
- 3 Surrey Park
- 4 Elephant Springs
- 5 Pasley Park

## Community Space

- 6 Walworth Living Room
- 7 56a infoshop
- 8 Notting Hill Genesis
- 9 Pembroke House
- 10 Creation Southwark CIC

## Children, Family and Young People

- 11 Inspire
- 12 Surrey Square School
- 13 Charles Dickens School
- 14 First Place
- 15 Espacio Mama

## Libraries

- 16 Brandon Estate Library
- 17 Walworth Library/Heritage Centre
- 18 East Street Library
- 19 Peckham Library
- 20 Newington Library

## Places of Worship

- 21 Baptist Church
- 22 Metropolitan Tabernacle
- 23 English Martrys
- 24 St George's Cathedral
- 25 St Peters Church

## Sports and Exercise

- 26 Burgess Sport
- 27 The Castle Centre
- 28 Tiger Clubhouse
- 29 Everyone Active
- 30 Peckham Boxing
- 31 Peckham Leisure Centre
- 32 Sports Team in Kennington Park

## GPs or Health Services

- 33 Hurley Clinic
- 34 East Street GPs
- 35 Manor Place GP

- 36 NHS
- 37 Old Kent Road Surgery
- 38 The Gym
- 39 Princess Street GP

## Pubs, Cafes, or Hairdressers

- 40 Walworth Road
- 41 Elephant Park
- 42 CheeMc
- 43 Diogenes The Dog
- 44 Louie Louie
- 45 Manor of Walworth
- 46 Orbit Brewery
- 47 Princes of Wales
- 48 The Huntsman & Hounds
- 49 Taplow
- 50 The Crypt
- 51 Theos Pizza

## Others

- 52 Southwark Council
- 53 Old Kent Road
- 54 ExC
- 55 Kennington
- 56 Muslim Association of Nigeria
- 57 Police
- 58 Wyndham
- 59 Citizen Advice
- 60 Trade Union

A number of places and spaces mentioned by participants were not mapped, either because they were too generic or because the location unknown or far from Walworth.

Generic Places & Spaces	Numbers of mentions
Online	16
Homes/Neighbours/Friends	10
Parks	8
Pubs	7
Cafes	5
Schools	4
Restaurants	3
CFCs	3
Locksmith	2
Library	2
Colleague	2
Walworth	1
Various Cultural Organisation	1
Solicitors	1
Places of Worship	1
News outlet	1
Local Businesses	1
Local Newsletter/WhatsApp Group	1
Emergency Services	1
COP	1
Church	1

Outside Walworth/Location Unknown	
Generic Places & Spaces	Numbers of mentions
Harrow Recreation Ground Uses Association	1
Queen's Park	1
Princes Street	1
Shelter	1
Stars	1
Arttech	1

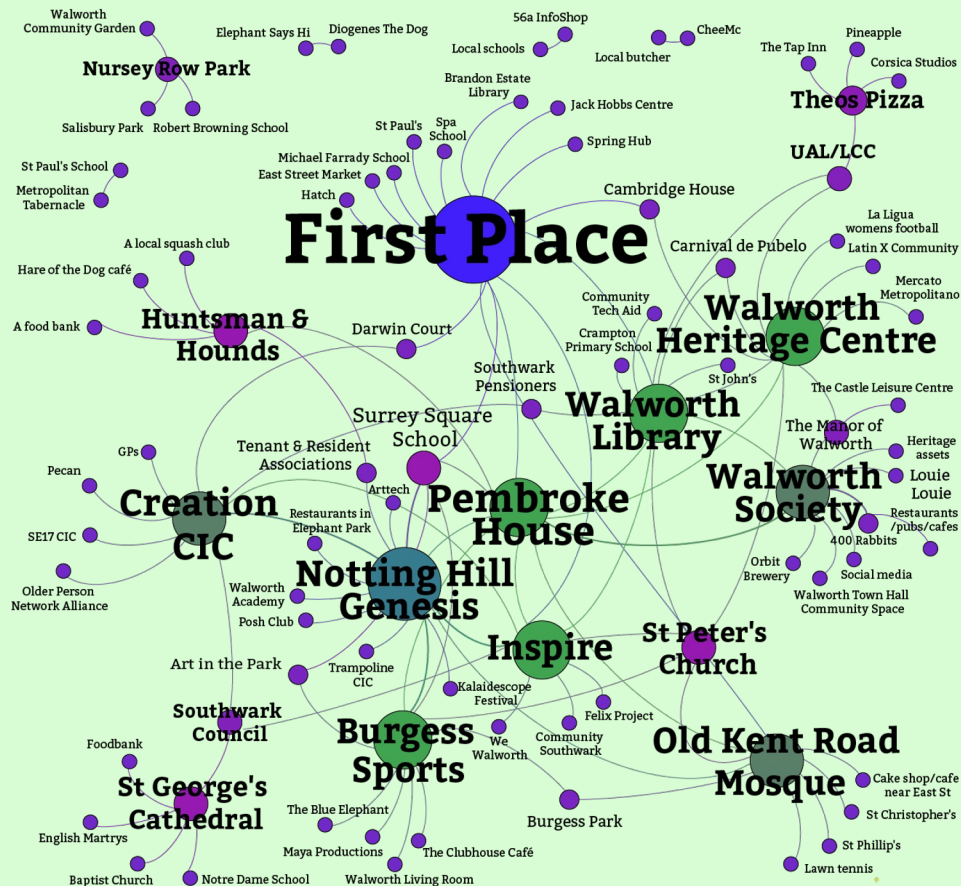
## Networks between social infrastructure providers

The map shows the importance of networks between large community based organisations, including community hubs, childrens' centres, faith organisations, housing associations and local interest groups.

The size of the node in the network indicates the number of times social infrastructure providers were mentioned by other providers as being collaborators or partners.

The width of the line indicates the strength of the relationship.

Go to this [link](#) for a full size version of the map.



# **3 The research and next steps**

**This research was carried out by Social Life, the evaluation and learning partner for We Walworth.**

The research will be repeated in February and March 2023 to build a picture of the impact of We Walworth on the key indicators in the theory of change.

### **This report**

The report was written by Olimpia Mosteanu with input from Izzy Gibbin and Nicola Bacon.

The research was carried out by Olimpia Mosteanu, Izzy Gibbin, Susherrie Suki and Nicola Bacon with Kevin Dykes, Clara Fiti and Toni King from Southwark Council.

**We are very grateful to all the people who contributed their time to this work through taking part in face-to-face interviews and completing surveys.**

**Social Life** was created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. All our work is about the relationship between people and the places they live and understanding how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas. We work in the UK and internationally.

[www.social-life.co](http://www.social-life.co)

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# Find out more:

[wewalworth.org.uk](http://wewalworth.org.uk)

# Get Involved

[rebecca.towers@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca.towers@southwark.gov.uk)





