



Southwark Resident Health & Wellbeing programme

Learning & evaluation report

October 2025

About this report

This report of the Southwark Residents' Health and Wellbeing Programme explores the impact of the programme's activities and what was learnt from the process of collaborative design with residents.

The project was commissioned by Southwark Council's Public Health team.

This report was written by the Social Life team, text by Nicola Bacon, Joel Simpson and Mena Ali. Jessica Cargill-Thompson and Simeon Shtebunaev helped coordinate engagement and co-design, alongside field team members Natasha Shah, Colin Campbell and Abiel Ghirmai.

We would like to thank all the residents who shared their thoughts and experiences with us. We appreciate the time and effort they put into taking part. We would particularly like to thank the contribution of Kingswood TRA, Rockingham TRA and Wyndham & Comber TRA who worked with the researchers to make the programme a success.

Social Life is an independent research organisation created by the Young Foundation in 2012 to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. Our work is about understanding how people's day-to-day experience of local places is shaped by built environment - housing, public spaces, parks and local high streets - and how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affect the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas.

www.social-life.co

1 Summary

The Southwark's Resident Health and Wellbeing programme was commissioned by Southwark Council in 2024. It worked on three large council estates to support the collaborative design of public health interventions to boost health and wellbeing and tackle the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This report captures what has been learnt from the co-design process and the impact of interventions on two of the three estates on resident health and wellbeing.

The three estates included in the programme were chosen because of their size and health and wellbeing needs: Rockingham Estate in the north of the borough, Wyndham & Comber Estate in the centre and Kingswood Estate in the south. Projects on two estates - Kingswood and Rockingham - took place within the time of the project funding, although one of the CICs on the Kingswood Estate was unable to deliver its funded work until autumn 2025. The project on the third estate - Wyndham and Comber - was delayed into autumn 2025 and is not included in this report.

The collaborative design process started in July 2024 and finished in early 2025, and the funded projects started their work between February to April that year, ending in August. In spite of the short length of project activities there is evidence of impact on health and wellbeing through community development activities and a large-scale community event - RockiFest - on the Rockingham Estate, and some promising but small-scale impact from work to tackle loneliness and improve community connections delivered by Paxton Green Timebank on the Kingswood Estate.

Alongside these outcomes there have been other benefits of the funding and co-design process. On Rockingham this included increased engagement with the community centre and the TRA, improving residents' sense of agency. Organisers describe RockiFest as having tackled loneliness and "opened the door to health and wellbeing on the estate". On Kingswood the funding helped the three CICs working on the estate understand each other's work and have a better idea of what is happening on the estate.

Generally there was support for the co-design process. This enabled projects to be designed and commissioned that were bespoke for each estate, recognising community strengths and vulnerabilities. There was consensus among partners that funding existing activities rather than bringing in new programming or a new organisation had been the best use of the funding. Partners noted that it is unusual and welcome to be funded for work that was ongoing and working well.

The RHAW project shone a light on the need for better models of place-based working that put residents and local relationships at the heart of service delivery and community empowerment.

Learning from the collaborative design process

We hope that the learning and transferrable lessons from the RHAW programme will support agencies and community organisations working to improve health and wellbeing through focused place-based work in close collaboration with residents. Our lessons and recommendations apply both to public health teams and community-based projects that sit outside the health system.

What worked well:

- developing a model of care, and clarity about parameters and expectations
- working with a community partner to leverage their networks and local knowledge, acknowledging this contribution through a small payment
- ensuring that that other initiatives (ongoing or planned) would not complicate or block the co-design process
- carrying out engagement before any workshops took place to establish an evidence base and ensuring engagement was informed by good social research practice in data gathering and analysis
- flexibility about timescales
- being informed by evidence about what works in boosting health and wellbeing
- awareness of the importance of the social determinants of health - the non-medical factors that underpin good health and wellbeing
- realism about what could be evidenced through the evaluation
- good ongoing support and involvement from commissioners.

What could have gone better:

- more realistic expectations about time needed for engagement at the start of the project
- more awareness about the difficulties of engaging over the school summer holidays
- a firmer shared understanding of the need for care and the need for clarity about parameters for the project

Across all the co-design activities it was critical to keep in mind two key factors: inequalities in power and access to resources and how these impact community activism; and tensions and anxieties in everyday life connected to the difficulties and vulnerabilities that many communities and individuals are currently experiencing.

Transferable lessons for other projects aiming to boost health and wellbeing

- Set out the parameters of what can and can't be addressed through the process and be realistic about the constraints and unexpected issues that can arise from working in an environment where priorities can change at short notice.
- Underpin the approach with an awareness of the importance of the social determinants of health - the non-medical factors that underpin good health and wellbeing.
- Work with a community partner (such as a TRA) to leverage their networks and local knowledge, acknowledging this contribution through a small payment.
- Arrange events or workshops and times and venues that are accessible and fit with busy lives, provide food and refreshments and childcare to encourage attendance.
- Involve a wide range of stakeholders, to ensure that that other initiatives led by the council or other partners (ongoing or planned) do not complicate or block the delivery of interventions.
- Carry out robust engagement before any facilitated groupwork takes place to establish an evidence base on health and wellbeing and ensure engagement is informed by good social research practice.
- Be flexible about timescales, acknowledging that resident engagement needs to go at its own pace.
- Feedback to residents often and transparently about what has come out of the work to date.
- Bring evidence about what works to boost health and wellbeing into the co-design process.
- Take a pragmatic approach about what can be evidenced through an evaluation.
- Keep in mind the realities of the impact of inequalities of power, access to resources and financial and housing precarity on residents' everyday lives and sense of agency clearer understanding about the limits of the funding and how it fitted within broader council place-based objectives.

2 The RHAW programme

In 2024 Southwark Council's Public Health team commissioned Social Life to carry out a collaborative design process on three large housing estates to explore how residents perceived their health and wellbeing, how this related to their everyday life on the estate, and how they were affected by the ongoing effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and the more recent cost of living crisis. Our aim was to understand what would support health and wellbeing and develop a project that would spend a £50,000 budget allocated for each estate. This project became known as the Southwark Residents Health and Wellbeing Programme, or RHAW.

The RHAW project aimed to design and deliver public health interventions that would have a tangible impact on health and wellbeing. Because of the short timescales and the focus on specific places our emphasis was on the social determinants of health, the non-medical factors that impact health outcomes and shape health inequalities. A key factor within this is the existence of social and community networks. These offer support and help access to services, there is strong evidence about the positive power of social networks to boost health equity.¹

“Social determinants of health – broadly defined as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, and people’s access to power, money and resources – have a powerful influence on health inequities.” – World Health Organisation²

Selecting three estates

The selection of the estates was based on data describing social need, housing conditions and community capacity. We created a matrix of data describing all Southwark estates over 900 homes (this is in Appendix 2). We spoke to officers and community representatives to explore which estates would be most appropriate, investigating what support already exists, what is known about community capacity and identifying ongoing initiatives which might complement or complicate the work. Finally, we secured the support of a community partner to support the work through helping understand the context and by mobilising their members and networks to support engagement and events. This was the TRA on two estates and the TRA working alongside a CIC on the third.

The three estates chosen were Kingswood Estate in the south of the borough, Wyndham & Comber Estate in Camberwell in the centre and Rockingham Estate to the north near Elephant & Castle.

¹ <https://www.who.int/news/item/30-06-2025-social-connection-linked-to-improved-health-and-reduced-risk-of-early-death>

² https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1

North: Rockingham Estate

Our data review revealed more problems of isolation and loneliness than other estates in the north of the borough and weaker links with neighbours. Health data indicated comparatively high levels of depression. Looking at the Index of Multiple Deprivation, Rockingham is more deprived in terms of the numbers of children and older people living in poverty, the income domain also scores poorly. Rockingham residents were more likely to be overcrowded and in arrears than people living in other larger estates in the north of the borough, as well as the most complaints per resident connected with damp, mould and leaks. The estate has a very active TRA and newly refurbished community hall, and residents were voicing a desire to put on more events.

Central: Wyndham & Comber Estate

This estate had higher levels of isolation and loneliness than other estates in the centre of Southwark and the data indicated weaker links with neighbours. The health data showed the highest number of two or more long-term conditions, as well as higher childhood obesity. Compared to other estates in the centre of the borough, Wyndham & Comber has the highest index of older people living in poverty and economically inactive residents. There were higher levels of overcrowding and some of the highest percentages of residents in arrears, high numbers of complaints per resident connected with stock conditions, as well as properties exposed to heat risk. A lot of work has been done recently in revitalising the TRA. The community hall hosts regular activities and ongoing gardening across the estate.

South: Kingswood Estate

Kingswood had comparatively higher levels of residents feeling isolated and lonely, childhood obesity and economic inactivity than other estates in the south of the borough. Looking at deprivation data, Kingswood has high numbers of children and older people living in poverty and scores poorly in the IMD income domain. Kingswood had a high percentage of residents in arrears. There is a strong TRA, and active community organisations including Kingswood Arts and Paxton Green Timebank.

Working with residents to develop projects to increase health and wellbeing

In summer 2024 we carried out street interviews and engagement with agencies on all three estates. These were followed by collaborative design workshops in August and then in November 2024 to refine ideas and develop a practical proposal for spending the funding. A review of health and wellbeing outcomes fed into this (this is in Appendix 3).

Projects were commissioned on two estates - Rockingham and Kingswood - in early 2025. On Rockingham the funding was used to support RockiFest, a day-long summer festival, and community development to support volunteers and involve residents in the preparation for the event. On Kingswood the funding was divided equally between the three CICs - Excel Beyond Barriers, Kingswood Arts and Paxton Green Timebank - to deliver activities to boost wellbeing and tackle social isolation. On Wyndham and Comber Estate the RHAW funded project, to improve public spaces for young people, will not start until later in 2025 and is therefore not included in this report.



Social Life has been working with residents to find out what is needed to support their health and wellbeing.

Help develop the projects you suggested, and decide on priorities for funding.

6–8pm, Thursday 21st Nov 2024
Rockingham Community Centre
Falmouth Road, SE1 6PD

Refreshments provided!

Social Life is an independent organisation based in Southwark.
 For more info:
www.social-life.co/
 Email: hello@social-life.co
 Phone: 0207 703 9630



Social Life has been working with residents to find out what is needed to support their health and wellbeing.

Help develop the projects you suggested, and decide on priorities for funding.

6–8pm, Wednesday 27th Nov 2024
Kingswood Library
37-38 Seeley Drive, SE21 8QR

Refreshments provided!

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Flyers publicising the November workshops on one estate

Evaluation

The Social Life team designed and carried out a light touch and focused evaluation and provided ongoing support to relationships with delivery agencies. Our focus was to capture participant data that would tell us about the short-term impact of the different interventions. We also carried out some interviews with providers, and attended the meetings, to evaluate the process, particularly to capture their perceptions of the effectiveness and impact of the codesign process and the allocation of funding.

3 The collaborative design process

Social Life was asked to facilitate a co-production process with residents in the three selected estates. This had three aims: to design appropriate interventions to support health and wellbeing; to oversee the implementation of the co-produced interventions; and to facilitate a collaborative approach to monitoring and evaluation of the co-production process and of the interventions.

We drew on our understanding of collaborative design to develop a bespoke process that acknowledged the circumstances and limitations of this project. We use the term “collaborative design” in preference to co-design because of the overuse of “co-design” and “co-production” and the number of differing approaches that this label is applied to. However agencies involved in this project found co-design and co-production to be familiar and useful, so we use the two terms interchangeably in this section.

How we understand co-design

Collaborative approaches to design are not new, but “co-design” has emerged as a shorthand for a more involved process building on many of the human-centred design principles evolving in the past century. Co-design means designing with people, not for them. It is about fusing lived experience and expertise and professional experience to facilitate a process of mutual exploration underpinned by care, creativity and sharing power.

“A co-design process that includes people from every sector and group at every stage, right from the beginning of the process – and with the input of all valued equally.” NESTA³

The process of collaborative design

Collaborative design processes are about making something together with communities, allowing everyone to contribute to the design in some way. The process should be underpinned by mutual learning and working together. Collaborative design should not be extractive, and participants should be recognised for their time and not be coerced into volunteering. Tangible benefits for the people involved should be a key outcome of the process. Clear principles of working together need to be observed by all participants.

Our co-design principles are to:

- share power
- prioritise relationships
- use participatory means
- build capacity
- be honest and transparent.

The RHAW co-design framework

As with any design process there are limitations to what is can be achieved. In a co-design process, it is very important that there is a shared understanding of parameters and limitations if the process is to be truly collaborative. To build trust with communities it is important to be transparent from the start of the work and set these constraints out clearly. In the RHAW project there were significant limitations driven by budget considerations, community capacity, the council’s statutory responsibilities and political priorities,

³ Nesta, By Us, For Us: The power of co-design and co-delivery: <https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/by-us-for-us-the-power-of-co-design-and-co-delivery/>

the timing demands of council approval structures, as well as a wish among officers to see certain types of interventions taken forward. There was a need to be clear with residents around the limitations imposed by the budget and procurement processes within a large and complex organisation.

Co-design processes aim to share power between the partners to allow for transformational processes which require time and being present. The timing of this project was relatively tight, and the budget restricted how much time the Social Life team and public health officers could spend on the estates.

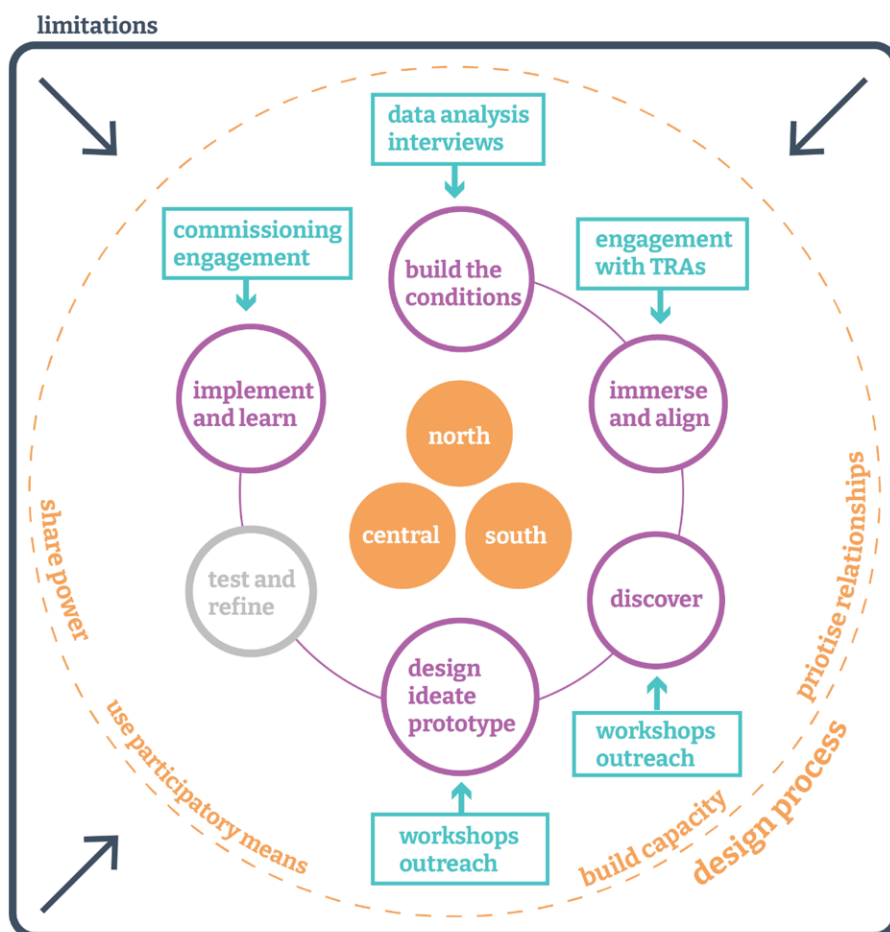
Design process

Within the design process we applied the principles of the double diamond⁴. In the discovery phase we approached residents through our field team and moved towards definition of the problem through workshops. Workshop design emphasised participation and was iterative and accessible to the community members. We developed the ideas through further outreach with residents who could not be able to attend events and workshops. Our intention was to work closely with the core resident group for each estate and local partners to deliver and evaluate the interventions.

Model of care

The model of care sets out how we apply our co-design principles in practice:

- to share power we will adopt clear decision-making processes, so residents can influence the design
- to prioritise relationships we will adopt an open and welcoming approach to working with residents
- our use of participatory means will consider the accessibility needs of residents we work with
- we aim to build capacity by making we leave participants with meaningful outputs at every stage
- we will be honest and transparent in our communications.



⁴ <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-resources/the-double-diamond/>

Co-design on Kingswood and Rockingham Estates

The process of collaborative design on the three estates took place between June 2024 and February 2025:

- initial outreach to residents through street interviews and conversations with key stakeholders built awareness among residents and helped understand strengths and vulnerabilities and particular challenges to health and wellbeing on the estates
- collaborative design workshops were organised in summer and autumn 2024. The summer workshops developed propositions for activities on the estates, the autumn workshops refined the detail of potential projects and prioritised issues
- a review of evidence on impact of interventions on wellbeing and health informed the choice and design of the final project
- conversations with officers and community organisations about planned initiatives to reduce duplication with other activities and find synergies with other agencies' work
- final projects were agreed and commissioned in early 2025.

Initial outreach

We visited the estates on several occasions to speak to residents in spaces and places that were familiar and part of their everyday life on the estate. The aim was to explore perceptions of health and wellbeing as well as building an understanding of the social determinants of health on the estates. Our interviews explored how people felt about their community and neighbours, the local area and how they interact with other residents, as well as their experience of the pandemic and views about how health and wellbeing could be improved. The survey was also available online to give residents a further option to feed into the research. Demographic information was captured so we could begin to understand the views and experiences of different groups.

Observations of daily life on the estates and how people use social spaces took place alongside the estate outreach.

Kingswood initial outreach

We carried out 41 face-to-face interviews in July and August 2024 and eight people completed the online survey. We found that:

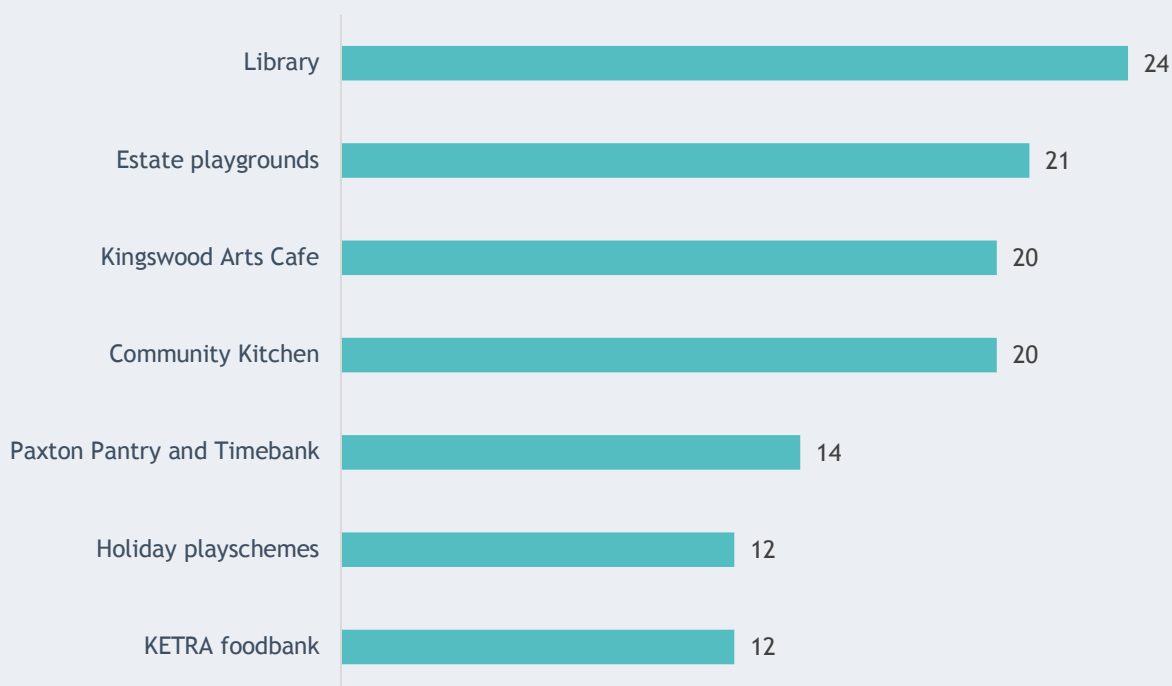
- the most common words used to describe the estate were “quiet”, “friendly”, “community” and “green”
- the groups perceived to have been most affected by COVID are older people, younger people and people living alone
- the groups perceived to need most support are teenagers and young adults, people with disabilities, older people and parents and families
- people surveyed disliked issues around safety and security, with a small number highlighting the environment, accessibility and the cost of living
- residents were most likely to spend time at the library, playgrounds, the community kitchen and the cafe
- the most common suggestions for improvements were support for young people, community events, accessibility to supports and support for children and families.

Kingswood interviews summer 2024: 41 residents interviewed in person plus eight online responses

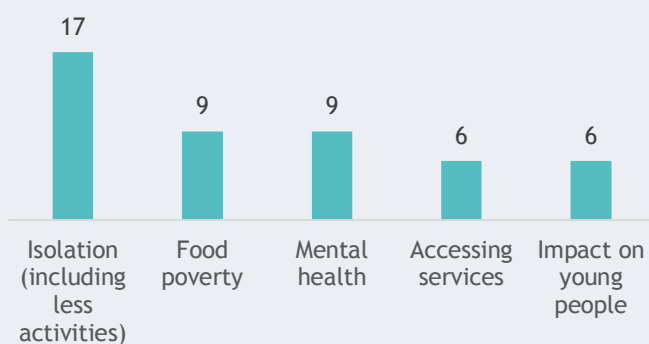
What three words describe the estate?



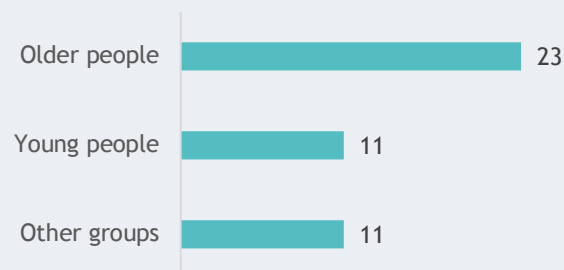
Where do you spend time on the Kingswood Estate?



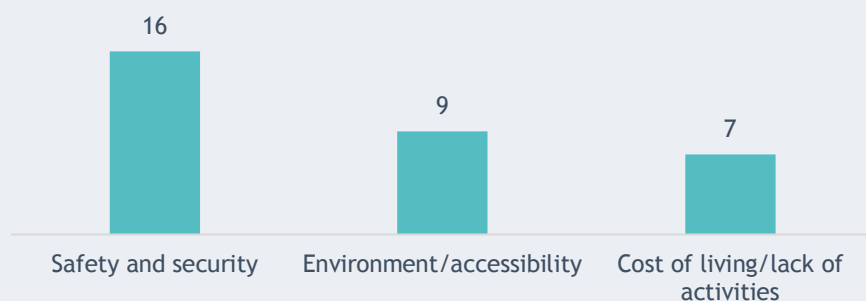
What has been the impact of COVID?



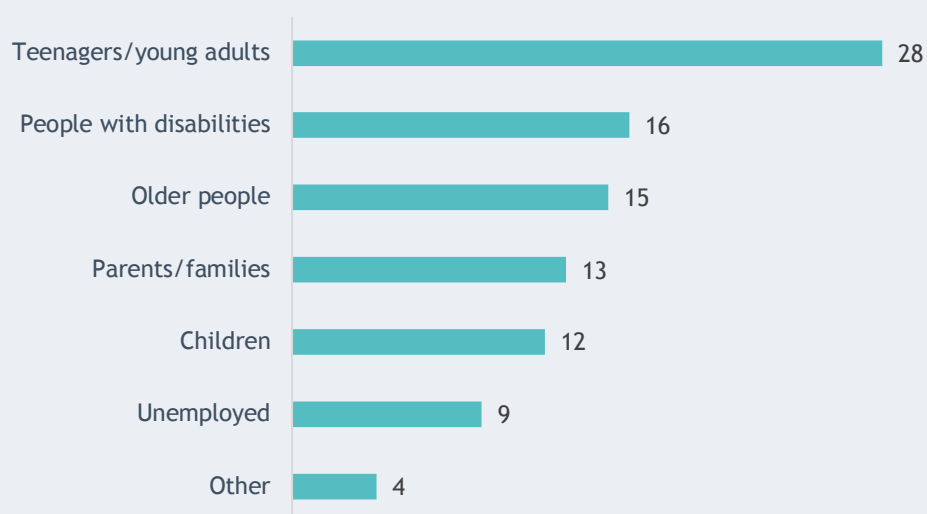
Who do you think has been most affected by COVID?



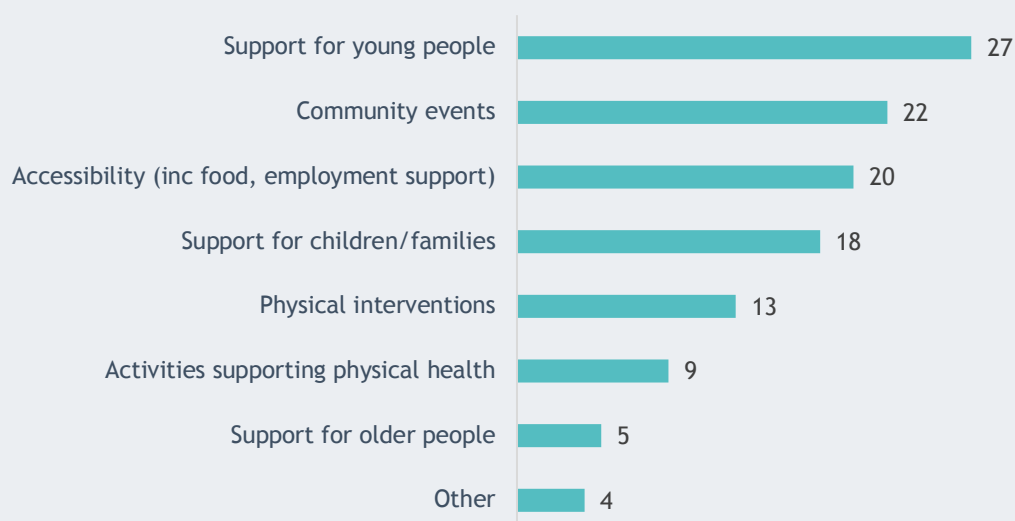
Is there anything you don't like about living on the Kingswood Estate



Do you think there are any particular groups on the estate who need extra support or opportunities?



What things would you like to see happen on the estate that would improve the health, wellbeing and everyday quality of life of people on the estate?



Rockingham initial outreach

In summer 2024 the Social Life field team carried out a resident's survey with 35 face-to-face responses and an additional five online responses. We found that:

- the most common words used to describe the estate were “quiet”, “good”, “green”, “community” and “friendly”. However, many words used also conveyed a sense that the estate is run down and in need of physical improvements
- the groups perceived to have been most affected by COVID-19 are older people, younger people and people who do not have English as their first language
- people were spoke to disliked the lack of cleanliness, feeling unsafe, poor maintenance and issues around drug use
- residents were most likely to spend time meeting other people on the estate: at the mosque, trips and community events, TRA meetings, the allotments or playgrounds, or on WhatsApp groups
- the places residents were most likely to use to spend time with others in the wider local area were Elephant Park, Dickens Fields and Newington Gardens
- the most common suggestions for improvements were community events, new or more activities, health and wellbeing, greening/gardens, support for young people and accessibility (lifts and wheelchair access).

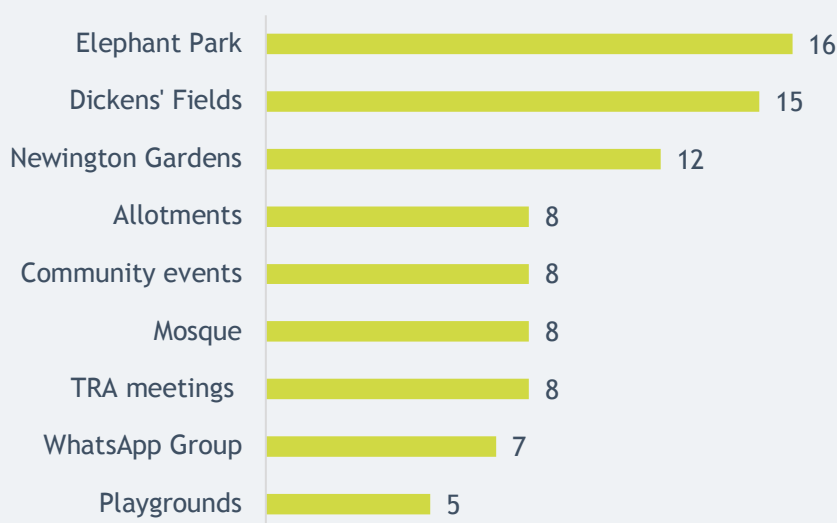


The Rockingham Community Centre

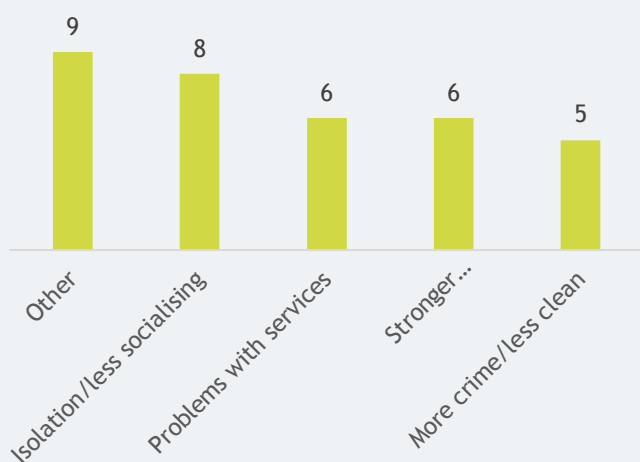
What three words describe the estate?



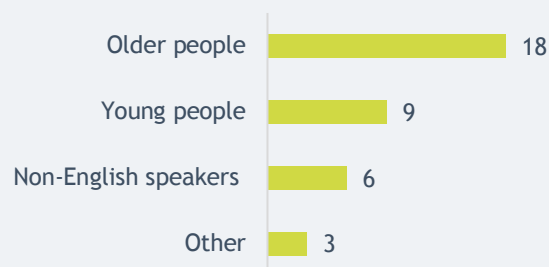
Where do you spend time on or near the Rockingham Estate?



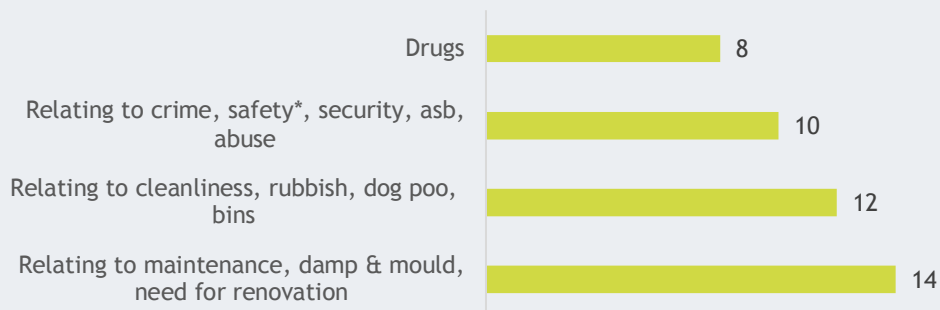
What is the impact of COVID?



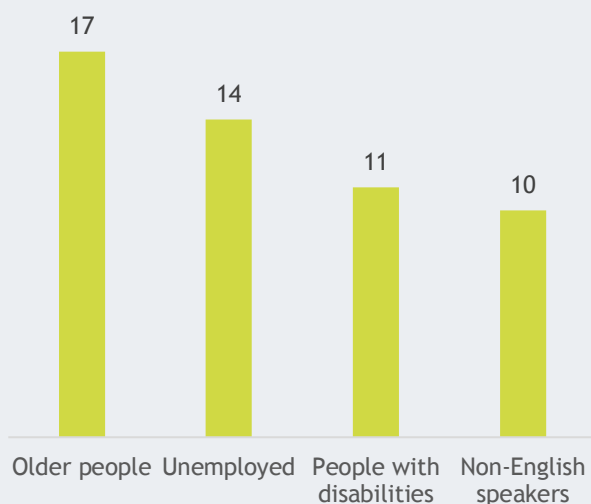
Which groups have been most impacted by COVID?



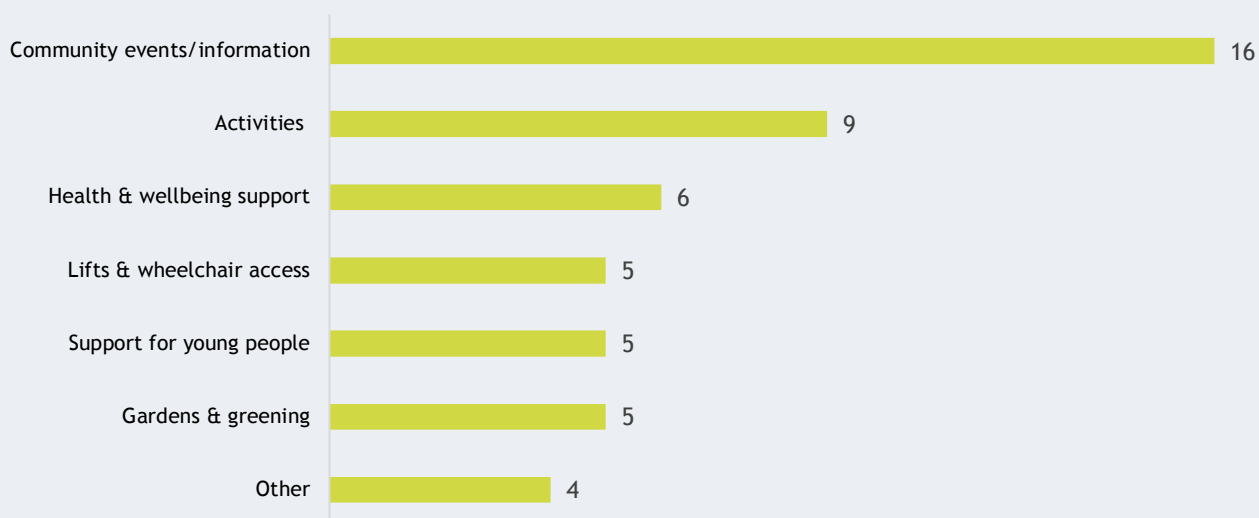
Is there anything you don't like about living on the Rockingham Estate?



Are there any particular groups on the estate who need extra support or opportunities?



What things would you like to see happen on the estate that would improve the health, wellbeing and everyday quality of life of people on the estate?



Co-design workshops and broader engagement

In summer 2024 we ran three back-to-back workshops in the Rockingham Community Centre and Kingswood Arts. We shared what we had heard through the survey. Residents discussed the data and used stars to vote for issues and ideas that they considered most important, they were also invited to add new ones of their own. The issues with the most stars were then interrogated by the group and potential projects were workshopped.

Further outreach

More discussions took place with council officers and community groups and key individuals and groups within the community. The aim was to understand more about the estate, to speak to residents who had not taken part in the street interviews or in the summer workshops and to understand what other activities and funding were targeting the estate.

November 2024

A final workshop aimed to refine the details of each potential project and gauge which project was a priority for participants, as well as feedback to residents and keep them engaged in the process. This was informed by conversations with Southwark officers and took account of the constraints of what could be funded through public health budgets. We tested three project options at this workshop. An online survey gathered views from residents on these options in parallel to the workshops.

Kingswood estate

August workshops

We ran two successive workshops at Kingswood Arts on Thursday 15 August. 21 people attended (plus one spoke on the telephone about her ideas as she could not be at the workshop in person).

The top priorities identified by participants to boost health and wellbeing were:

- support for existing activities
- more community events
- addressing the impact of the school street, exacerbating isolation
- relocation of the green gym
- free local swimming
- a youth club on the estate
- more opportunities for young people to participate in sport
- interventions to address the isolation of Kingswood Estate from rest of borough.

We attended the Kingswood Fun Day at the end of August and spoke to 20 additional residents, asking for their feedback and ideas.

November workshops

More people came to these workshops than came to the workshops in August. We tested three possible interventions that had emerged from our work on the estate.

- an umbrella project to tackle food poverty
- an initiative to reduce social isolation
- an on-site community support hub.



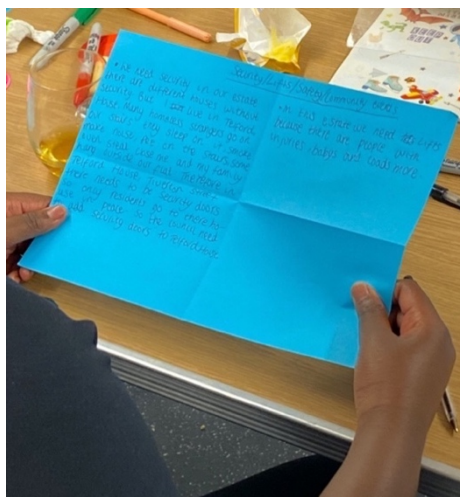
Kingswood: summer workshop, engagement at estate fun day, November workshops

Rockingham

August workshops

We ran two workshops at the Rockingham Community Centre on Monday 19 August. 21 people attended the workshops, and another gave their views afterwards. The top priorities identified by participants to boost health and wellbeing were:

- a wider range of activities including for teenage girls
- better communications and dissemination of information
- doors on the flats and warden patrols to deter drug dealing
- events that bring the community together
- a general facelift for the estate.



Rockingham summer workshops

November workshops

More people came to this workshop than to the workshops in the summer. Three possibilities for projects were explored:

- expansion of the community centre's programme
- a regular, estate-wide community event
- a green space strategy with coordinated improvements.

Agreeing the final project

The final project brought together feedback from the collaborative design process. Southwark public health officers assessed other planned activities on the estate and other departmental plans to make sure there was no duplication. The final decision was made by the Director of Public Health, this decision was informed by a review of evidence was carried out to scope which health and wellbeing outcomes might be delivered by these interventions.

Kingwood final project



On Kingswood it emerged that existing activities, run by three active CICs on the estate, could deliver some of the potential interventions. The funding was therefore divided equally between the three CICs. The CICs were asked as a condition of this to meet together regularly to help build their working relationships.

Evidence supported the choice of final project:

- research suggests that projects such as the Paxton Timebank have seen increased measures of social capital and improved mental wellbeing for those involved
- relevant to Kingswood Arts: evidence suggests attendance at youth clubs have positive short term and long-term outcomes relating to physical and mental wellbeing, pro-social behaviours, and educational outcomes
- relevant to Excel Beyond Barriers: children and families with SEND often also experience more social isolation than their peers, with accessible social activities positively impacting on mental health and boosting confidence.

Rockingham final project



The project that was agreed set up a new community event and expanded the community centre's programme. The aim was to help people come together, reduce isolation, and encourage more volunteers to get involved in running community events through their participation in events planned in the run-up to the festival. This responded directly to the wellbeing issues prioritised by residents, who had told us that their health and wellbeing would be improved by more community events, more activities at the community centre, support with managing their health and wellbeing and gardening and greening.

Evidence supporting the choice of final project:

- the most common benefit of attending community events is the opportunity to build social capital
- a full programme of inclusive, diverse events is more likely to improve health than a one-off event
- cultural events, such as festivals, also foster a sense of belonging and identity within diverse communities. Well-organised events create neutral spaces that encourage interaction between different groups, while events can motivate and empower communities to get involved in shaping their local community
- recruiting volunteers also boosts wellbeing and social connectedness, leading to increased self-reported life satisfaction, happiness, and reduced symptoms of depression. Volunteering has particularly strong wellbeing benefits for groups identified by Rockingham residents as needing more support, such as older adults, unemployed people, and people with chronic health conditions.

4 Health and wellbeing impacts of RHAW funding on the Kingswood Estate

The co-production process identified a number of different wellbeing issues facing people living on the Kingswood Estate. Residents told us that their health and wellbeing would be improved by more support for young people, community events, making existing services more accessible and support for children and families. The aim of the final project chosen was tackling social isolation and building accessible services.

Three CICs active on the estate - Excel Beyond Barriers, Kingswood Arts and Paxton Green Time Bank - were given an equal share of the RHAW funding. They were asked to meet with Southwark and Social Life in March, May, July and August. The aim of these meetings was to report on numbers of participants, monitor spend, report on activities, and reflect on the experience of the programme. The meetings were also a forum for the three CICs to collaborate and coordinate activities.

Excel Beyond Barriers

Funding was used to set up a Saturday playscheme to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities ages 4-16. This was targeted primarily towards estate residents. Some funding was also provided for a parents' group providing advocacy support.

Paxton Green Time Bank

Funding was used for additional time and outreach to target groups identified as needing more support with health and wellbeing: people with mobility issues or who are housebound; people who are unemployed, parents.

Kingswood Arts

Funding was planned to be used for an expansion of the Be Heard youth group, and elements of a new youth club and studio space in Kingswood House. Young people participating were to be involved in deciding how the proportion of the budget allocated to the new youth club space is spent. It was not possible for this to be spent on the original project timetable and spending will start in Autumn 2025.

Outcomes evaluation

A map of outcomes was developed capturing short- and long-term outcomes (see Appendix 1). The evaluation focused on short-term activities only, impact was captured through structured surveys and a small number of qualitative interviews.

Structured questionnaires were developed for each CIC focusing on the outcomes that each would be delivering, plus some questions about social isolation and building accessible services common to all three providers. CICs were encouraged to fill in a questionnaire for each participant taking part at the start of their engagement and at the end. It proved difficult to do this as the process could seem intrusive, and residents became involved in activities over the period of funding rather than starting as one cohort. Only Paxton Green Timebank succeeded in gathering before and after surveys of their volunteers.

What we found

Who benefited from the funding?

Of the 21 people who started volunteering at the Paxton Green Timebank during the period of the funding:

- 82% lived on the estate, a smaller number meet with friends, use facilities, shop or visit people on the estate
- 42% became involved in Paxton Green timebank to get help and support, the other main reasons to get involved were curiosity, to find out about it, and to meet people.

Of the nine people who completed forms using the Excel beyond Barriers Saturday playscheme:

- over half lived on the estate, a smaller number visit or use its facilities
- all had been coming to the Saturday playscheme or other Excel Beyond Barriers activity for children with special educational needs for between six months and a year
- half come to the playscheme because their child likes the others, a quarter because they like the activities and another quarter simply stated it was because their child has special educational needs and disabilities.

How do people use estate facilities?

Of the Paxton Green Timebank volunteers:

- 47% spend time in the area with people they know including friends and family, the most common places to do this are at home, at the shops or at friends' houses. Pubs, cafes, the library and the church were also mentioned
- 37% spend time in the area with people from different backgrounds to them, the most common places to do this are at the shops and out and about or on the bus, the library was also mentioned.

Of the parents or carers using the Saturday playscheme:

- almost all spend time in the area with people they know including friends and family, the most common places to do this are in parks and play areas. The community hall and library were also mentioned
- almost all said that they spend time in the area with people from different backgrounds to them, the most common places to do this are at parks and play areas. The community hall and library and the workplace were also mentioned.

Attitudes to the local community

We asked a series of questions about attitudes to the local community. We can compare these to modelled national data that predicts how people are likely to feel about everyday life and about their local communities.⁵ The data from the 21 volunteers suggests people signing up to volunteer with Paxton Green Timebank are more likely to feel socially isolated and disconnected from their neighbours than we would expect - their sense of belonging and neighbourly relationships are weak.

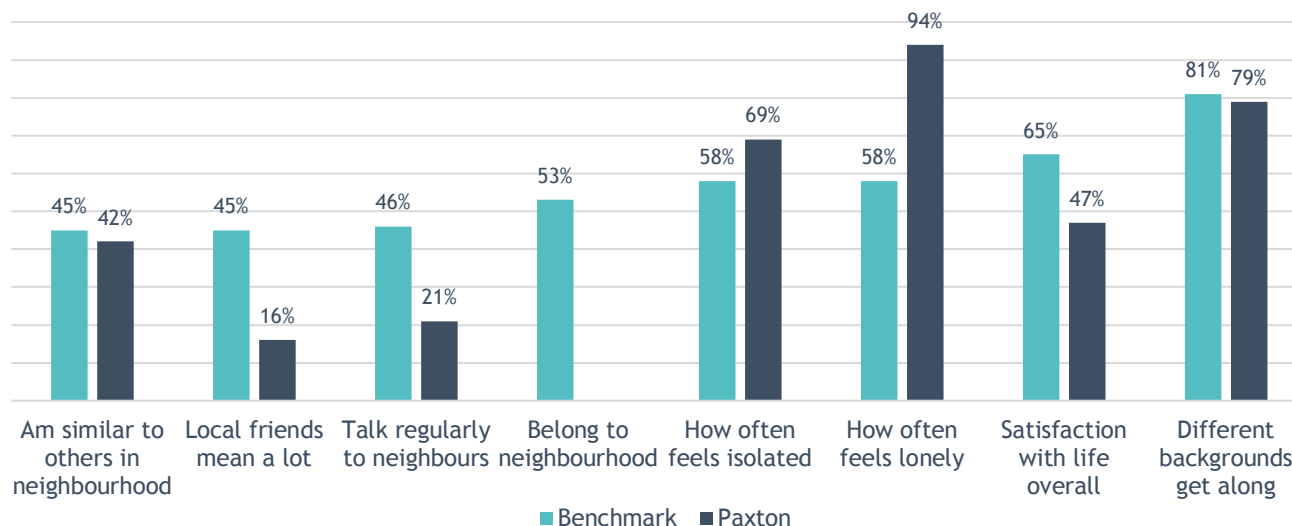
Paxton Green Timebank volunteers are less likely than people in comparable neighbourhoods to:

- feel that they are similar to other people in the area
- to feel that their relationships with others in the neighbourhood are important
- to talk regularly to others in the neighbourhood
- that they feel they belong
- feel that people from different backgrounds get on together
- feel dissatisfied with their quality of life.

⁵ https://www.social-life.co/publication/understanding_local_areas/

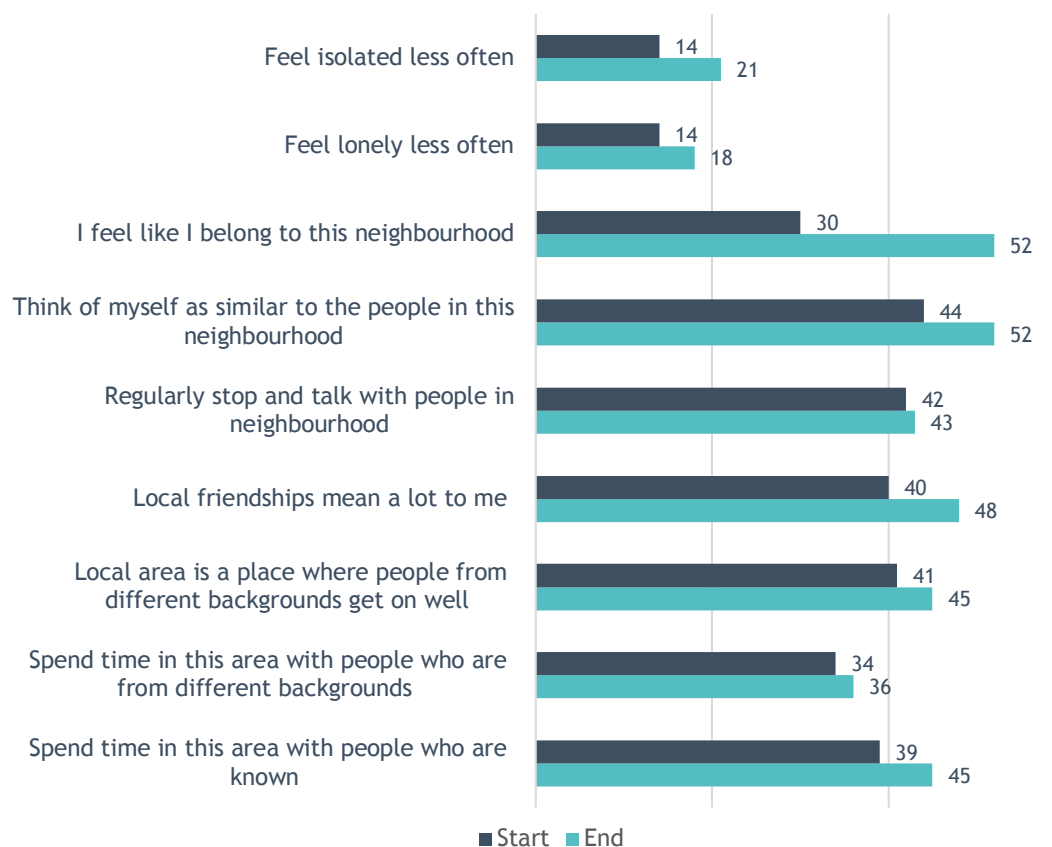
Paxton Green Timebank volunteers are more likely than people in comparable neighbourhoods to:

- feel lonely
- feel they are isolated.



Paxton Green Timebank, attitudes to community, comparison to national benchmarks, n=21

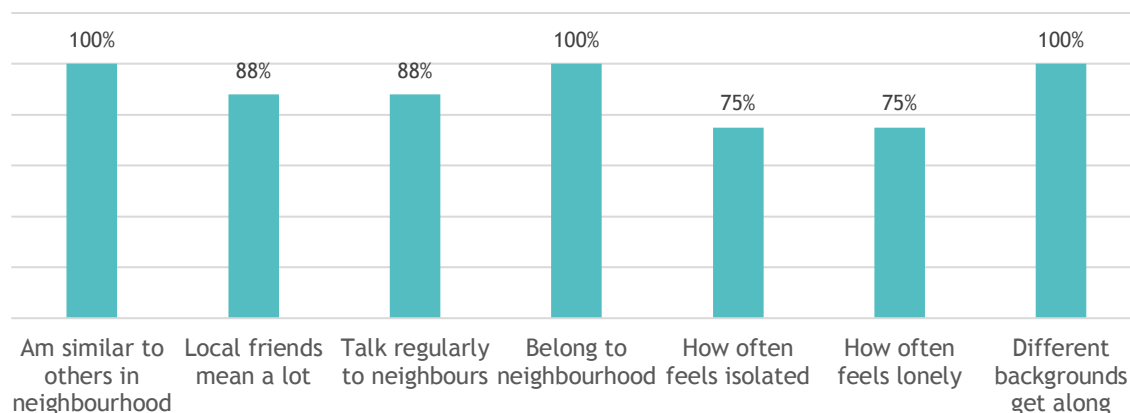
Paxton Green timebank volunteers who became involved early in the funded period also completed a form at the end of the funding period. Nine people did this. Overall, as a group, involvement in the timebank over the four-month period between March/April and July improved their sense of connectedness and their local social relationships across all the questions asked.



Paxton Green volunteers, changes in attitudes to community over time, n=9

The data was scored by giving a high score to more positive responses and a low score to more negative responses.

Families using the Excel Beyond Barriers Saturday playscheme gave positive responses to questions about the local community. We have not compared these to the benchmarked data because response numbers - nine people - are low.



Excel Beyond Barriers Saturday playscheme, attitudes to community (n=9)

4.1 The experience of the three CICs

The three CICs were asked, as a condition of the funding, to meet with Southwark and Social Life, to talk about the progress of their funded projects, to share information, and to discuss any issues which could lead to duplication and to open up the opportunity for further collaboration.

They described how the funding had been used.

“We have had extra broker time – a broker is person who talks to people on the ground... it’s also supported more sessions – open sessions, drop ins. Enabled Paxton to be physically open more often. Some special events were supported, two new members did well women’s workshops for example. Dan from a digital inclusion organisation came to do to sessions on phone safety, SNT did a session. Reflexology. A range of things to appeal to different people, with a wide appeal. This was more of what Paxton was already doing.

The Paxton funding was a different way of doing things, because it was more intensive.

We have had over 30 sign-ups through the extra funding at least ... it’s helped us to reengage with doctors at the practice, they set us up, we were an early model of social prescribing. And we’ve had more people becoming volunteers from the pantry” – Paxton Green Pantry

“It’s allowed us to keep up the playschemes. For parents it’s the only respite they get in the week. This is the main benefit; it gives them time to themselves... For children

they tell us that this is a place they can come to where other children are like them, they don't feel different or like they're a problem. We do activities and outings, to the playpark, to the Horniman, Burgess Park, Dulwich Park, to the cinema and to the family fun day at Kingwood Arts in March. Some parents tell us their children are calmer afterwards"

Parents' feedback is that the session offers respite, the children are always looking forward to making friends and socialising, and they seem more confident (some were confident at the beginning but have grown more so). There is a sense of group spirit amongst the youngsters

We have also tried to help parents by telling them what worked, how to help them focus. Tell them what worked. Has seen one mother in particular gain in confidence to deal with her children with very challenging behaviours. Now she felt confident enough that kids could walk to and from the playscheme by themselves." – Excel Beyond Barriers

"We've been through a huge transition, losing the Director and other staff and problems with the building. We closed over August, to take stock. Everything we were doing was initiated by previous team. So this project paused until the autumn term, we hadn't done enough groundwork with teenagers to reach largest numbers. We're launching new programme in next two weeks. The Café is starting September 13th. We want to build on the success of the community kitchen – we get around 60 people. We're going to start a desert programme for 12plus, can have desert and chill. We're going to build Kingswood Creators, so young people develop ownership of what happens in building." – Kingswood Arts

No actual collaborations came out of the meetings although some options were discussed, particularly focusing on food and access to Kingswood Arts' activities. All the CICs agreed that the value of meeting together over time was in understanding each other's activities and having a better idea of what is happening on the estate. Attempts were made to create a joint timetable of activities on the estate, but this proved difficult to action.

Generally there was support for the co-design process, and acknowledgement of the difficulty in attracting residents to events. It was suggested that some historic tensions between groups makes some residents unwilling to go to meetings. Carrying out the engagement before the workshops was appreciated as a way of reaching more residents.

There was consensus that funding existing activities rather than bringing in new programming or a new organisation had been the best use of the funding, and that it was unusual and welcome to be funded for work that was ongoing and effective, rather than having to scope a new project to secure funding.

"I liked the style of it, that it came through engagement." - CIC

5 The health and wellbeing impact of RockiFest

The co-production process identified a number of different wellbeing issues facing people living on the Rockingham Estate. Residents told us that their health and wellbeing would be improved by more community events, activities and health and wellbeing support. The aim of the final project chosen was to boost community cohesion by bringing people together from different backgrounds, to reduce social isolation, to promote the community hall and the TRA and build a pool of volunteers for the future.

A series of community activities started at Easter to feed into planning of the community event. This engagement and community development culminated in RockiFest on Sunday July 13th. This built on the success and positive memories of a previous estate festival. It also celebrated the 90th anniversary of the estate. An Events Coordinator was appointed by the TRA with some of the funding to develop plans and activities in the run up to the festival.

From 15th March, a “Saturday Social” was run each week for all residents, adults, children and teenagers. Every Saturday morning a free breakfast was on offer, alongside activities like yoga, table tennis, pool, boardgames and knitting. Some activities were intended to be family-friendly, others targeting specific groups including young people. Residents attending the events were encouraged to get involved in festival preparations, to become active on the day and to contribute their thoughts about what they would like to see.



The last Saturday Social before RockiFest

One-off events also fed into festival preparations and encouraged volunteering. These included a talent show and bingo on April 25th and a film and photography session for young people as part of the Active Communities Network regular group. Six residents came together in a heritage group and within this this oral heritage project was set up which recorded the memories and thoughts of seven residents.

Some estate improvements were funded through the RHAW funding, in response to what residents had expressed in the engagement about the appearance of the estate. The graffiti at the bottom of the

community centre was tidied up and refreshed, some flower beds were tidied up and the willow elephant installed on one of the shared green spaces.

RockiFest took place on Sunday July 13th. It celebrated the estate's 90th anniversary and was designed to provide activities for different ages and interests. The numbers of people attending were substantial, but organisers had no means to make an estimate of how many were there. As a visitor it felt crowded, a mixture of estate residents and visitors, many from neighbouring streets and estates.

“The Rockingham Estate is 90 and we had a festival to bring everyone together to celebrate on Sunday 13th July 2025. Funded by Southwark Council’s Residents Health and Wellbeing Programme and based on The 5 Ways to Wellbeing’ there was live music, bubbles, bikes, 2 elephants, aerial antics, a human castle, smoothies, food, acrobats, massages, breakdancing, sideshows, willow weaving, workshops, competitions, art, exhibitions, information and much more.” – Rockingham TRA

Outcomes evaluation

The research aimed to capture how involvement through volunteering or attending the festival had affected peoples wellbeing and supported the project’s goal of building social capital, improving wellbeing, and empowering residents to shape their local community. The evaluation used a theory of change (see Appendix 1) to understand the longer-term impacts on health and wellbeing.

After discussions with the Event Coordinator, it was agreed that the Saturday Socials were not an appropriate setting to collect data or demographic information. There was a concern that this could be seen as intrusive, undermining the aim of the sessions is to encourage people who have not been involved in activities on the estate to come forward.

We therefore focused our evaluation around two points:

- **RockiFest itself**, where we aimed to speak to people from a range of different backgrounds taking part in various activities at different times of the afternoon
- the experience of **people who became involved in groups and activities to contribute to RockiFest** in their meetings in early July (before the festival starts) and from **volunteers**.

Gathering data at RockiFest

Social Life researchers spent time at RockiFest to carry out structured interviews. On the day, the field team spoke to 49 people attending the festival. The survey included demographic information. As it was difficult to take appropriate consent from under 16s, they were not approached to be interviewed.

Gathering data from people volunteers and people involved in preparations for RockiFest

In the two weeks before RockiFest we spoke to 13 volunteers. These volunteers were involved in estate-based activities and in activities in the community centre. We hoped that by this time their engagement would be more secure and that data collection would not be experienced as intrusive. We also went to a meeting with Bangladeshi women in the week before RockiFest. At least 30 people came to this meeting, and we spoke to eight of them.

Our focus in the questionnaires was on the impact of volunteering and participation in community events on health and wellbeing. The questionnaires drew on a survey Social Life successfully carried out a Hackney Carnival in 2019⁶ to capture the social value of the event. We also captured demographic information.

After RockiFest we separately interviewed the RockiFest coordinator and the volunteer coordinator.



Logo created by residents for RockiFest

Who we spoke to

- People attending RockiFest were more likely to be employed than the volunteers, volunteers were more likely to be retired or self-employed.
- Volunteers were more likely than participants to be council tenants or outright owners of their homes; participants were more likely to be renting from a private landlord or buying on a mortgage.
- A larger proportion of volunteers than participants described themselves as women than men, although across both groups more women than men were interviewed.
- Volunteers were more likely than participants to describe having a long-term physical or mental health condition.
- Volunteers were more likely than participants to be aged between 30 and 44 years old, or to be over 75 years old. Participants were more evenly spread across age groups.

⁶ https://www.social-life.co/publication/hackney_carnival_social_economic_impact/

- Volunteers were more likely to be from white backgrounds (46% described themselves as white British/English/Welsh/Scottish, 23% as from other white backgrounds, 15% as Irish).
- Participants were more likely to be from a wider range of ethnic backgrounds (21% were described themselves as African, as 11% Caribbean and as 15% Bangladeshi).
- The eight Bangladeshi women we spoke to as a separate group were not asked about their backgrounds as the focus in these conversations was on informality.

What we found

The volunteers

All the volunteers we spoke to lived on the Rockingham Estate

Motivation for involvement

When asked why they chose to become involved in the preparations for RockiFest, a third mentioned wanting to help bring the community together or supporting the community. Around one-fifth spoke of how getting involved would be good for their children, and another fifth described it as a good opportunity to socialise. Enjoyment and having fun made up 14% of responses. Two volunteers had relevant skills that they felt they could contribute to the event.

“Because community is important to me and for each of us. Building community makes everyone's lives better.” – Volunteer (male, aged 75+)

“I've got two young kids. It's a good way to get them to play, to get to know other people, [to have] good social interactions.” – Volunteer (female, aged 30-44)

Social networks

Overall, the volunteers and people involved in preparations already have strong social networks on the estate and who wish to strengthen and develop these.

- Over 90% of volunteers said that they spend time in their local area with people they know, including friends and family.
- Over 90% of volunteers said that they spend time in the area with people from different backgrounds.
- When asked whether volunteering meant they spent more time with people that they know in the area, 91% agreed. All volunteers reported that volunteering meant that they were able to spend time with people from different backgrounds.
- All volunteers reported that they plan to continue volunteering on the estate after RockiFest.
- Half stated that they would be interested in getting involved more community events, such as the events on at the community centre.

“I am planning to join the TRA and hopefully organise more events with/ for the community” – Volunteer (female, aged 30-44)

“I want to see a summer event, I'd love to see a sociable and joyful thing - a BBQ. The community centre does really well. Offers art for kids” – Volunteer (female, aged 30-44)

Neighbourhood perceptions and belonging

We asked a series of questions about attitudes to the local community exploring social connections, local relationships, social integration and belonging.

- 91% agreed that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.
- 92% agreed that the friendships they have with others in their neighbourhood mean a lot.
- 93% said that they regularly stop and talk to people in their neighbourhood.
- 62% said that they feel similar to other people that live in the neighbourhood.
- 85% said they feel that they belong to the neighbourhood.
- 46% said that they feel lonely often or some of the time.
- 52% said that they feel isolated often or some of the time.
- 84% said that they were mostly or completely satisfied with the quality of their life overall.

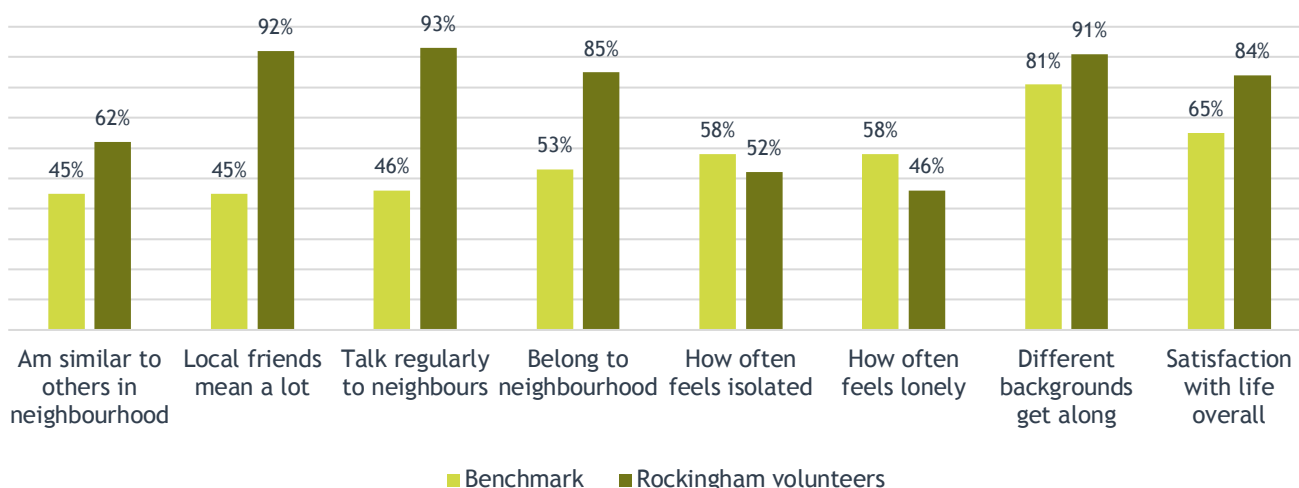
We can compare these responses to modelled national data that predicts how people are likely to feel about everyday life and about their local communities.⁷ From this, the 13 volunteers are less likely to feel socially isolated and disconnected from their neighbours than would be expected in comparable places.

RockiFest volunteers are more likely than people in comparable neighbourhoods to:

- feel that they are similar to other people in the area
- to feel that their relationships with others in the neighbourhood are important
- to talk regularly to others in the neighbourhood
- that they feel they belong
- feel that people from different backgrounds get on together
- feel dissatisfied with their quality of life.

RockiFest volunteers are less likely than people in comparable neighbourhoods to:

- feel lonely
- feel they are isolated.



RockiFest volunteers, attitudes to community, comparison to national benchmarks, n=13

⁷ https://www.social-life.co/publication/understanding_local_areas/

Most volunteers felt that taking part in RockiFest had a positive impact on them. Five volunteers mentioned that it has helped connect them to the community on the estate, and three mentioned that volunteering helped them to meet new people and socialise.

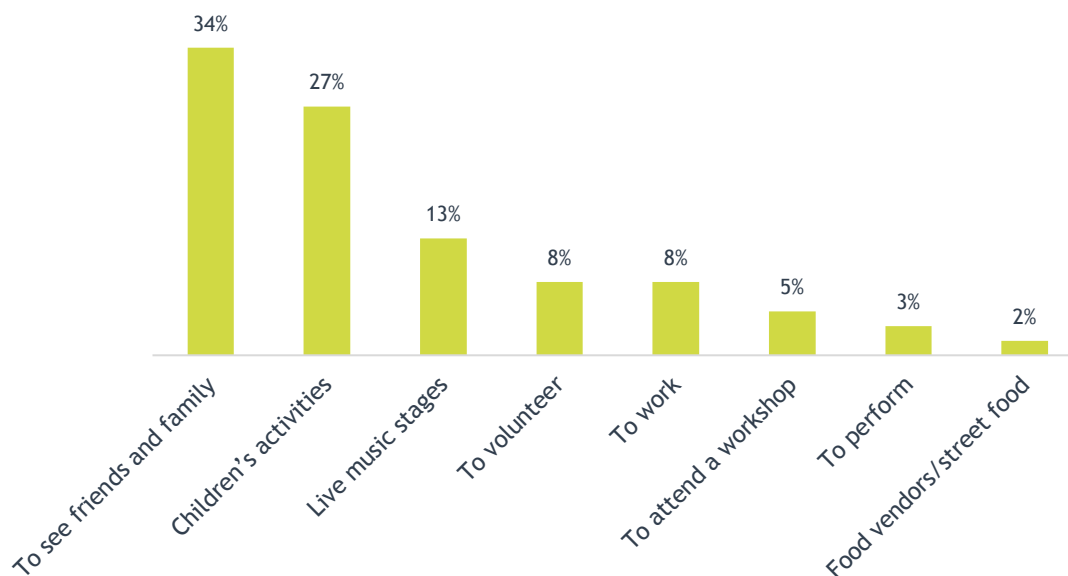
“It's really opened up a sense of community for me, tying me into my local environment. It's given me a project, I've learned lots. I've made a couple of new friends I knew the TRA already. I've got to know all the kids.” – Volunteer (female, aged 45-64)

“I meet people here, I love it. I can have coffee. I love it that my daughter can invite friends. It has been really important I get a lot of benefit from the community centre. I've done the first aid course for free. "Something dropped from my shoulders when I came to the centre", especially important is the impact on her daughter.” – Volunteer (female, aged 30-44)

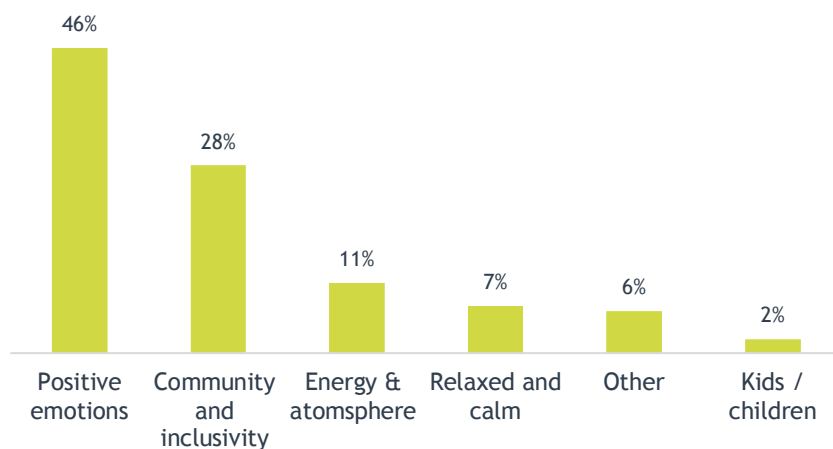
Survey of people attending RockiFest

We interviewed 49 people who came to the event.

- Over half were living on the Rockingham Estate, of these 54% had lived there for over 11 years, 19% for 6-10 years, 24% for 2 years or less.
- Of the attendees who were not residents of the Rockingham Estate, 23% lived around Elephant and Castle, 35% lived in another part of Southwark, 42% lived somewhere else.
- 34% said they came to see friends and family, 27% said children's activities and 13% said they came for the live music.



Why did you come to RockiFest? (n=62)



Which three words would you use to describe how taking part in RockiFest makes you feel? (n=142)

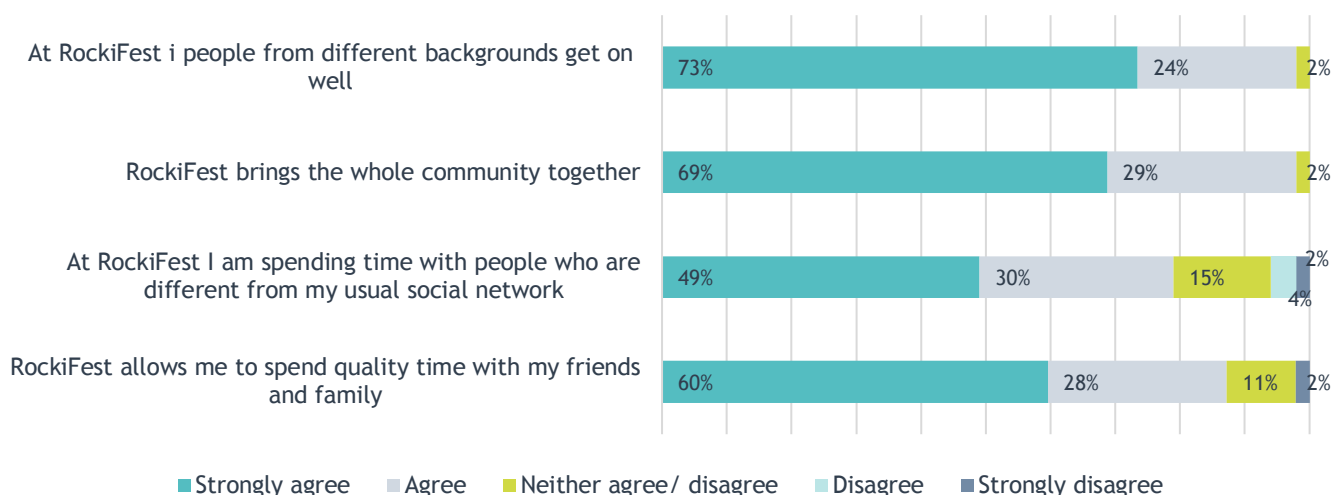
We asked how they had heard about RockiFest, 33% heard about it through the flyer, 34% heard about it through their own networks and groups, and 23% through word of mouth. 14% had in some capacity been involved in the preparations for RockiFest.

Perceptions of RockiFest

We asked the people interviewed to describe how taking part in RockiFest made them feel in three words. Almost half of responses (47%) described feeling positive emotions, 30% of responses mentioned themes of community and inclusivity. 10% of responses described themes around positive atmosphere and energy, using words such as “energising” and “lively”.

The people we spoke to were positive about the impact on the community.

- 73% said they strongly agree that RockiFest is an event where people from different backgrounds get on well, 24% said they agree.
- 67% said they strongly agree that RockiFest is an event that brings the whole community together, 29% said they agree.
- 49% strongly agreed and 30% agreed that by attending RockiFest they were spending time with people who are different to those in their usual social network.
- 60% strongly agreed and 28% agreed that RockiFest allows them to spend quality time with my friends and family.

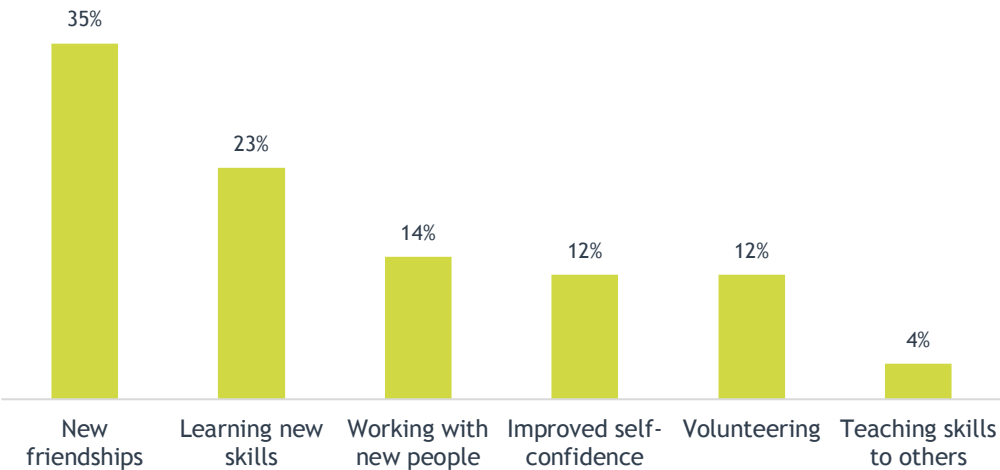


Perception of the social impact of RockiFest, n=47-48

The survey asked attendees if they feel RockiFest celebrates the cultural diversity of the Rockingham Estate, 88% either strongly agreed or agreed. We asked a follow up question to understand why they might think this, 43% of responses mentioned the diversity of people and cultures that have come together for the festival. Around a quarter (26%) of responses mentioned that there is a diverse range of activities, with something for everyone to enjoy. The festival bringing everyone together was cited by 25% of those interviewed.

Outcome and impact

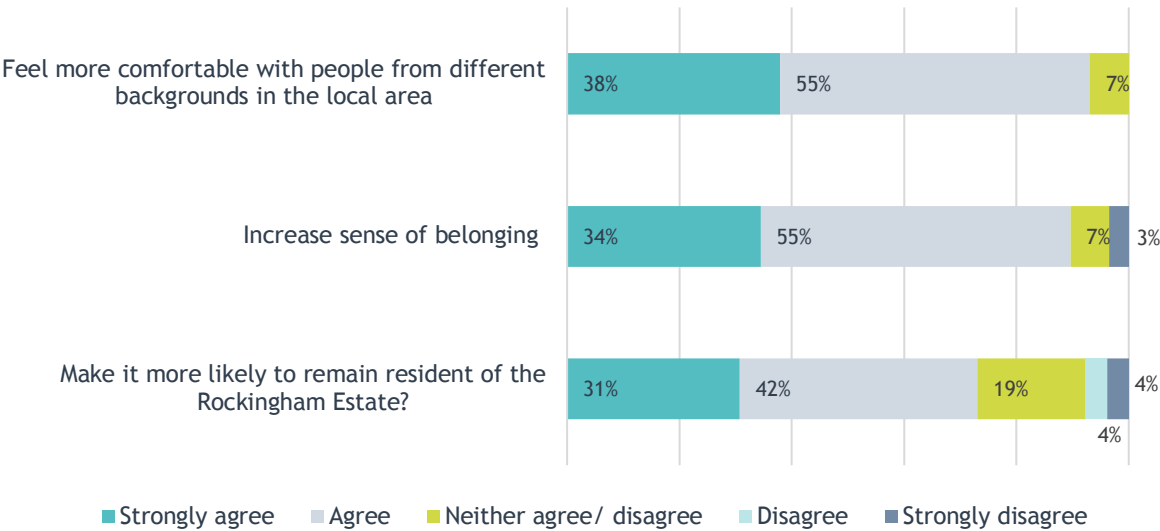
We asked people attending what they experienced through engaging with RockiFest. The most common answers were new friendships, learning new skills, working with new people, improved self-confidence and volunteering.



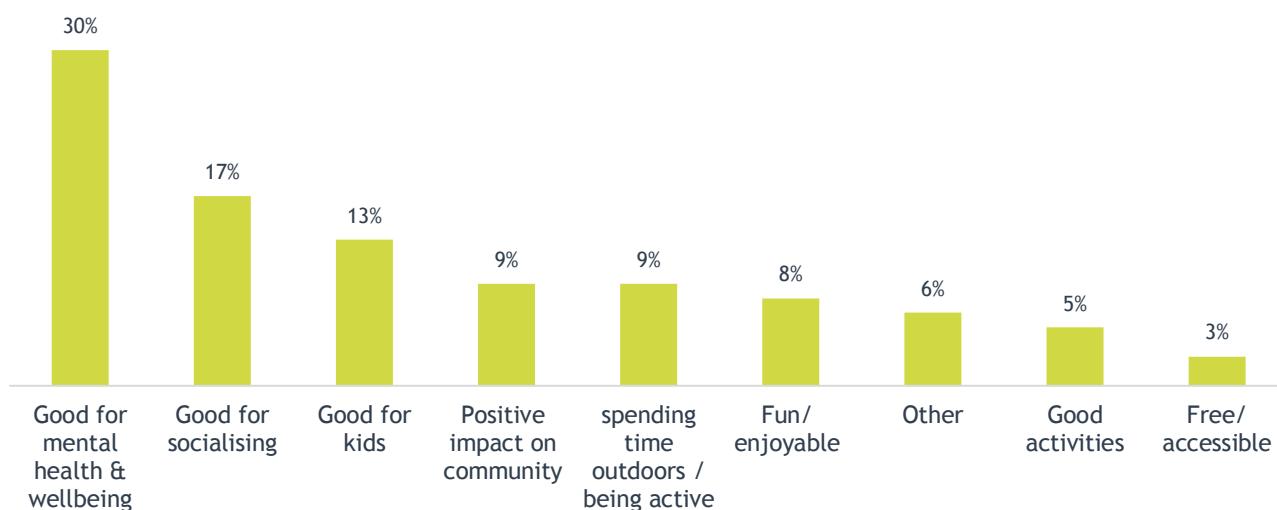
Benefits of engaging with RockiFest, multiple responses allowed (n=57)

We asked Rockingham Estate residents if coming to RockiFest has made them want to take part in estate activities in the future, 80% agreed.

People interviewed at the festival felt that being at RockiFest made them feel more comfortable with people from different backgrounds (93% agreed), increased their sense of belonging (89% agreed) and made it more likely that they would stay living on the Rockingham Estate for a number of years (73%).



Most attendees (86%) felt that attending RockiFest had a positive impact. We asked an open-ended question to understand more about the impact: the positive impacts on health and wellbeing, socialising, benefits for children, spending time outdoors and making people happy all featured in the answers.



Perceptions of the impact of RockiFest, multiple responses allowed (n=77)

“This is good for people on a whole. Coming together. It's good for people's mental health. A lot of people isolate themselves.” – Attendee (female, aged 45-64)

“It's really nice to meet people in the community. My little one meeting friends - we're new to the area so it's really helpful. The nature side of things - supporting wellbeing. I'd be keen to get involved to give more back.” – Attendee (female, aged 30-44)

“Pleasantly surprised to see free fun things to do in the community for the kids. Accessible by foot to. wellbeing wise it helps you keep busy, free from stress and is a safe space.” - Attendee (male, aged 45-64)

“You can see that everyone is really happy. By improving wellbeing you improve everyone's health. happiness is the best medicine” – Attendee (male)

The Bangladeshi Women's Group

There is a large Bangladeshi community living on the Rockingham Estate. For a long time, a very active Bangladeshi Women's Group ran activities from the community centre, but the group dispersed during the pandemic. A year ago it was re-opened by a resident and member of the TRA who now voluntarily run sessions on Wednesday mornings from the community centre, regularly attended by at least 30 women living on the estate.

We attended one of these sessions to informally interview some attendees. This took place a few days before Rockifest. Most interviewees, as well as others present at the session, were planning to attend or volunteer at the festival. Eight people were interviewed altogether, four individually and two were conducted in pairs. As the interviews were informal, the questions varied, but all focused on why the interviewees were attending or volunteering at the festival, and the impact they hoped the festival would

have. Two of the most frequently mentioned aspirations for the festival were that it would address the isolation experienced by some residents and improve socialising between residents overall

In most cases, interviewees felt that because the festival was an opportunity to socialise with residents across the estate, it would also have a specific impact on the Bangladeshi community. Several expressed a need for greater social cohesion between Bangladeshi residents and other communities living on the estate

“The festival will be an opportunity for people to get to know each other”

“We live in this area too long, but we don’t know people. We can also see our [Bangladeshi] community. Not only ours, we can meet other culture people. People from different culture get on well together but this is a good opportunity to meet everyone.”

“We have peace [between different ethnic groups] but we want positive chaos. We are not growing – things like the festival are a way to get people chatting.”

[Events are important for] “people who stay indoors. I see it a lot in my community particularly.”

Several interviewees felt that Rockifest was particularly important for signposting the community centre to residents who were no longer accessing it, particularly older Bangladeshi residents. This was linked to interviewees’ views that the festival could encourage more Bangladeshi women to explore activities aimed at supporting their wellbeing.

“Older people need to speak about their feeling”

“I do know one lady who has mental health. She comes to the exercise [classes at the community centre for Bangladeshi women]. So many people ask me about the exercise classes here – old ladies. They really want to be in a group. It’s very helpful for them. It’s important that it’s only women, because of our religion. Some people’s husbands died, some ladies feel lonely. Some people feel depression. It’s very important.”

“Some women are quite isolated. It’s not their fault, it’s the social structure. There shouldn’t be fear [to express feelings of loneliness] – it’s 2025. They don’t speak about domestic violence. Most of the houses I go, men don’t do anything. Women don’t get time to take care of themselves.”

In one case, an interviewee also felt that by increasing the number of Bangladeshi women participating in activities, the group could improve its long-term activity provision:

“[I hope the festival can] bring more funding to the community centre. We need English classes – face to face. I do English for Action once a week online. There need to be Bengali speakers to run classes in Elephant and Castle because people don’t want to travel to Camberwell.”

Festival organisers evaluation

The festival coordinator, whose role was funded through the RHAW programme, was interviewed alongside a volunteer organiser who is part of the TRA. They were asked to reflect on the impact of the funding overall, and the success of the festival and the Saturday Socials leading up to it.

Aims of the funding

The organisers took a holistic view of how the funding was spent, touching on all aspects of the intended outcomes - including increased socialising, reduced isolation, and more participation in community events.

Their interpretation of the aims of the funding was shaped by a deep understanding of the changing nature of the estate and the wider area. For example, the aim of reducing isolation on the estate was viewed through the lens of community building. This was recognised as an important way of addressing the declining sense of community at the Rockingham, with increasing numbers of private occupiers and the gentrification of the wider area. The aim of encouraging resident participation in event planning and delivery was viewed as a way of encouraging greater unity and inclusivity within the TRA and in the activities at the community centre.

“Before Covid, the community centre – it was the Bengali women’s group and the Somali women’s group. Now it’s a more diverse usership.”

Impact on community centre participation

Organisers highlight increased engagement with the community centre and TRA following the festival. They have received more requests for hall hire than usual, and the volunteer outreach in the lead up to the festival identified “20 people interested in doing community research”, which would enable the TRA to have a clearer picture of how residents would like to use the community centre.

“More people will come to the [TRA’s] AGM ...The TRA also sold out the coach trip this year, a direct impact of the festival”.

Impact on resident perceptions of agency

Expanding opening hours at the community centre and supporting residents to enjoy volunteering in and around RockiFest has improved residents' perceptions of their agency. Where previously residents had felt daunted and/or alienated by the process of applying for funding from the council, the festival has inspired many more residents to turn up to the community centre seeking the support of the organisers to help them access grants to deliver activities on the estate, such as a repair shop.

As part of inviting residents to take part in the festival, organisers had productive conversations with people who were worried that volunteering or working might affect their state benefits, and were able to reassure them:

“We didn’t know that [there were those misunderstandings]. We had people come forward through Saturday Socials – that wanted to do things like providing food or cleaning or monitoring the bouncy castle but were worried they had to be paid in cash rather than invoice. And they were frightened about not getting their benefits. They worry as their accounts are surveilled.”

The festival has further demonstrated to the organisers that, with the right resourcing and appeal, community centre activities can be a valuable space for residents to access benefits advice and other supports, such as digital literacy training.

Impact on resident isolation

Where the festival organisers had identified behavioural signs of loneliness in some of the new volunteers, in select cases they have noticed specific positive changes.

“There’s a resident who lives opposite who was quite isolated, who has become a regular volunteer. He would only talk about what his problems were. Now he asks about you, he’s outwardly interested. We’ve got him funding to attend the coach trip, with a helper.”

Impact on residents’ physical health

Organisers describe the festival as having ‘opened the door to health and wellbeing on the estate’. Several activities at the festival were said to have encouraged residents to engage more with their mental and physical health.

“We had over 100 health checks on the day, whereas before [at other events] we’ve had just three, and that included us!”

“I had no idea how that healing area was going to go. But it was really popular.”

“Lots of people got a lot of exercise on the power-cycles that wouldn’t have cycled in a long time.”

Organisers expect this boost in interest to improve uptake in exercise classes offered at the community centre - including the breakdancing, taekwondo and Zumba.

Impact on TRA resourcing

The RHAW funding has also had specific impacts on the resources available to the TRA. Organisers were able to deliver a large-scale festival for the first time in 11 years and ensure that it had a stronger health and wellbeing outlook.

“We wouldn’t have done as big an event. We would have had what we did last year on a budget of £1000.”

“If it hadn’t been funded, we would have had a bar [in order to fund the event]. And that would not have been great from a health and wellbeing perspective.”

Having the money to fund the festival organiser’s role was said to give the TRA ‘the leverage to fund other things such as the photography workshop’, run in the lead up to the festival for girls 14 and under, who were identified in the co-design as a group in need of increased activity provision. Connections to local stakeholders through the festival also supports future TRA activities.

“We’ve made some good connections – to Spokesmead for example. They can sponsor things for our Christmas social – they just saw the festival poster on Facebook.”

Learnings for future activities

Organisers discussed several learnings which would improve the provision of health and wellbeing activities in future. It was felt that more time was required to plan and promote a festival - this would enable more opportunities to identify volunteers with particular skills. The need to treat the festival as a 'catalyst' for more diverse health and wellbeing provisions was also recognised.

“We did it very fast, we could have waited more time. Some people said just pay professionals, but the idea was that it was homegrown. The balance of trying to make the festival happen and trying to allow the community to feel ownership of it.”

Collective decision-making taking place through WhatsApp had created an accessible pathway for the volunteer group for the festival - a core group of 22 people joined this. Whilst organisers reflected that the group could have been smaller, to mitigate against internal disagreements, they also believed that this had been valuable. It was also thought that enabling the festival to be organised more regularly would foster a more dedicated volunteer base. This would help organisers navigate several event planning challenges, such as estimating numbers for a non-ticketed event, having back-up plans in the event of bad weather and gauging who was attending

6 Lessons for future collaborative design

The RHAW programme experimented with a collaborative design process across three social housing estates to develop interventions to boost health and wellbeing and tackle the long-term aftermath of COVID-19. An alternative for the public health team would have been to draw on the evidence base of potential activities that impact health and wellbeing, and to commission services based on this, without engaging residents in such an in-depth and resource-intensive way. A critical question is whether the investment in co-design generated enough value to compensate for the reduction in funding available for direct delivery, had commissioning decisions been made on evidence alone.

Most of the agencies and groups benefiting from the RHAW funding recognise the value of intensive resident engagement and how this steered resources to existing initiatives that were in place. On Rockingham Estate in particular the funding has created appetite for more activities and organisers believe that it has re-energised community life. Learning from the experience of the RHAW programme is one way of maximising Southwark's investment in co-design, to support future initiatives across the borough.

“It is an easy amount of money to waste, we could have done one new project and got no outputs. It was good that it used services that re already set up. The three organisations have infrastructure. £50k sounds like a lot but goes really quickly.” – CIC, Kingswood Estate

“RockiFest wasn’t just a celebration, it was a catalyst. It reconnected neighbours, showcased the potential of the newly reopened community centre, and reminded people that together, they can shape the future of the Rockingham Estate” – SGTO newsletter, summer 2025

The co-design process supported three very different interventions to be designed and funded, each appropriate to its context and local community. At a precarious time, when many people are preoccupied with difficult life circumstances, it was possible to generate enough conversations and discussions to build consensus for a distinctive and appropriate proposal for each estate. However the funding also revealed the extent of poor coordination among agencies and council teams, and the barriers these can create for residents to take action to improve social connections and community wellbeing

Learning from the collaborative design process

The learning and transferrable lessons from the RHAW programme are relevant for agencies and community organisations who working to improve health and wellbeing through focused place-based work in close collaboration with residents. Our lessons and recommendations apply both to public health teams and community projects run by agencies that sit outside the health system, this could include housing associations, community anchors or neighbourhood partnerships.

What worked well:

- developing a model of care, and clarity about parameters and expectations
- working with a community partner to leverage their networks and local knowledge, acknowledging this contribution through a small payment
- ensuring that that other initiatives (ongoing or planned) would not complicate or block the co-design process

- carrying out engagement before any workshops took place to establish an evidence base, and ensuring this engagement was informed by good social research practice in data gathering and analysis
- flexibility about timescales
- being informed by evidence about what works in boosting health and wellbeing
- awareness of the importance of the social determinants of health - the non-medical factors that underpin good health and wellbeing
- realism about what could be evidenced through the evaluation
- good ongoing support and involvement from commissioners.

What could have gone better:

- more realistic expectations about time needed for engagement at the start of the project
- more awareness about the difficulties of engaging over the school summer holidays
- a firmer shared understanding of the need for care and the need for clarity about parameters for the project
- a clearer understanding about the limits of the funding and how it fitted within broader council place-based objectives.

Across all the co-design activities it was critical to keep in mind two key factors: inequalities in power and access to resources and how these impact community activism; and tensions and anxieties in everyday life connected to the difficulties and vulnerabilities that many communities and individuals are currently experiencing.

Transferable lessons for other projects aiming to boost health and wellbeing

The RHAW project has generated lessons for future community activities that are specific to the three estates, alongside learning that is relevant for other co-design activities across Southwark and beyond. The experience of RHAW is relevant to place-based collaborative design initiatives that aim to generate proposals for initiatives to tackle health inequalities and improve health and wellbeing.

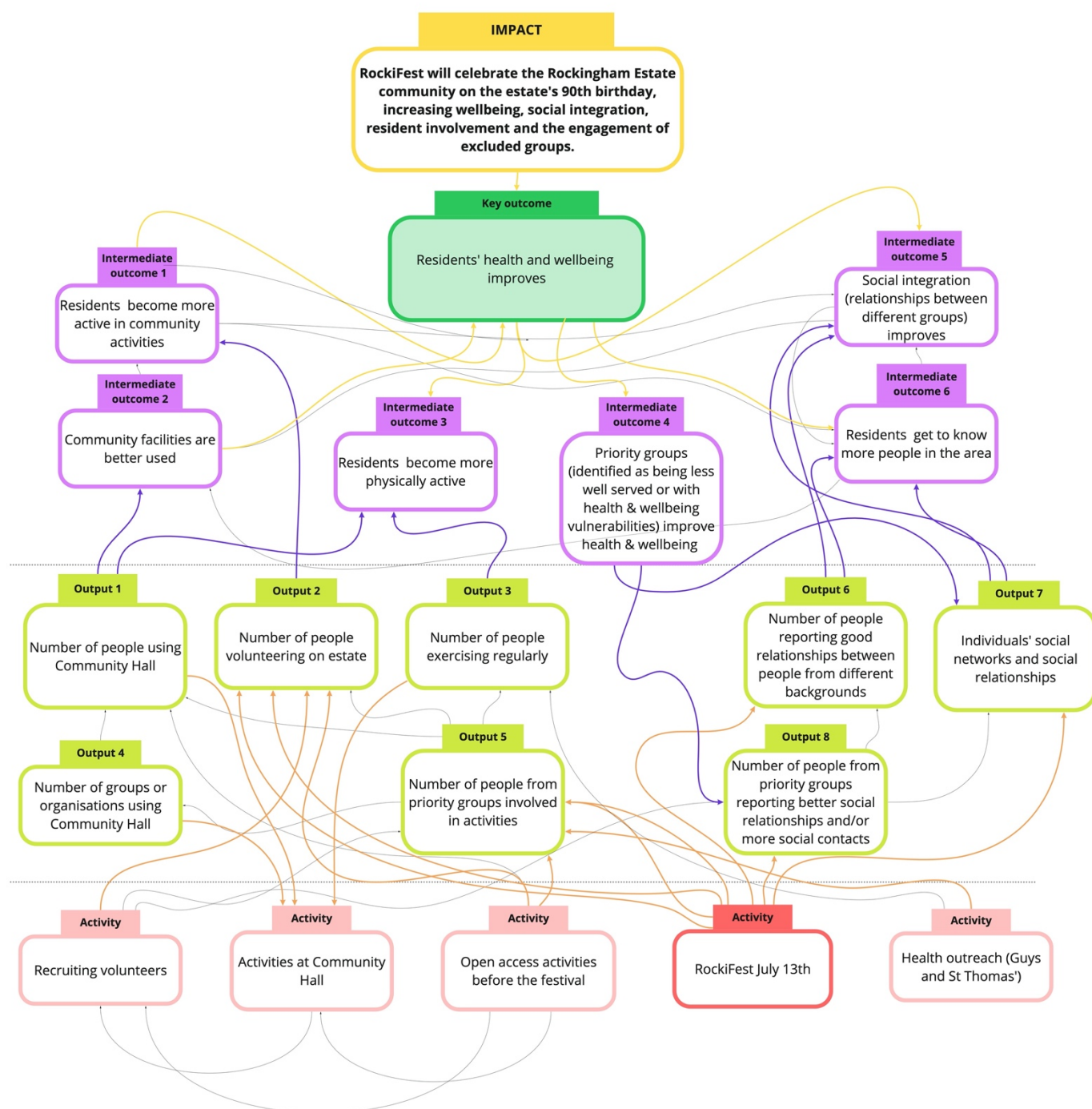
- Set out the parameters of what can and can't be addressed through the process and be realistic about the constraints and unexpected issues that can arise from working in an environment where priorities can change at short notice.
- Underpin the approach with an awareness of the importance of the social determinants of health - the non-medical factors that underpin good health and wellbeing.
- Work with a community partner (such as a TRA) to leverage their networks and local knowledge, acknowledging this contribution through a small payment.
- Arrange events or workshops and times and venues that are accessible and fit with busy lives, provide food and refreshments and childcare to encourage attendance.
- Involve a wide range of stakeholders, to ensure that that other initiatives led by the council or other partners (ongoing or planned) do not complicate or block the delivery of interventions.
- Carry out robust engagement before any facilitated groupwork takes place to establish an evidence base on health and wellbeing and ensure this engagement is informed by good social research practice.
- Be flexible about timescales, acknowledging that resident engagement needs to go at its own pace.
- Feedback to residents often and transparently about what has come out of the work to date.
- Bring evidence about what works to boost health and wellbeing into the co-design process.
- Take a pragmatic approach about what can be evidenced through an evaluation.
- Keep in mind the realities of the impact of inequalities of power, access to resources and financial and housing precarity on residents' everyday lives and sense of agency.

Appendix 1: Detail of the evaluation plans

The Rockingham estate

An outline theory of change for the Rockingham Estate project was developed capturing short- and long-term outcomes, outputs and activities. This was developed at the start of activities so includes some actions that did not go ahead as planned. Given the timescale of this work the evaluation focused on intermediate outcomes only.

In this project there are a lot of interrelationships between outcomes, outputs and activities - the key dependencies are highlighted.



A Theory of Change for RHAW on the Rockingham Estate, developed at the start of the project

Rockingham outcomes and outputs map

These are based on outcomes/outputs to be delivered, and outcomes that would be expected from similar interventions.

Short term outcomes						Outputs	
	Residents get to know more people in the area- Relationships with neighbours	Social integration - relationships between people from different backgrounds	Increased sense of belonging	Wellbeing	Social isolation	Engagement of groups less well served or with health & wellbeing vulnerabilities	Number of activities at Community Centre, and number of residents using Community Centre
RockiFest survey	x	x	x			x	
People involved in groups contributing to RockiFest	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Volunteers	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Output monitoring						x	x
Tracking questions for volunteers (to be asked at start and end)	Talk regularly to neighbours	To what extent do you agree or disagree that this local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?	Do you feel you belong to this local area?	Satisfaction with life overall	How often feel lonely		
	Belong to neighbourhood	Am similar to others in neighbourhood			How often do you feel isolated from others?		
	Local friends mean a lot						
	Can borrow things from neighbours						
	People willing to help their neighbours						
Impact of attending RockiFest	Impact of RockiFest on friendship networks	Impact of RockiFest on sense of community, social integration, relationships between people from different backgrounds	Impact of RockiFest on sense of belonging				

Questions are taken from national surveys including the Understanding Society Survey and Community Life.

6.1 Kingswood Estate

Outcomes map

	Short term outcomes						Long term outcomes				
	Relationships with neighbours	Relationships between people from different backgrounds	Social isolation	Improved wellbeing	Improved behaviour of children and young people	Building accessible services	Improved physical health	Improved mental health	Improved confidence	Educational outcomes	Pro social behaviour children and young people
Paxton Timebank	x	x	x	x		x		x			
Kingsdale Arts	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Excel	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Questions	Talk regularly to neighbours	To what extent do you agree or disagree that this local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?	How often feel lonely	Satisfaction with life overall	SDQ	Perceptions of use and value of services					
	Belong to neighbourhood	Am similar to others in neighbourhood	How often do you feel isolated from others?								
	Local friends mean a lot										
	Can borrow things from neighbours										
	People willing to help their neighbours										

Questions are taken from national surveys including the Understanding Society Survey and Community Life.

Appendix 2: Data matrix

		North					Centre										South				
		Rockingham	Tabard Gardens	Dickens	Four Squares	Rouel Road	Aylesbury	Kinglake	Brandon	Friary	Tustin	Comber & Wyndham		Elmington	North Peckham	Oliver Goldsmith	East Dulwich	Denmark Hill	Rye Hill	Kingswood	
#	Social need																				
1	Social isolation: Community Dynamics mapping	3b	3b	75%3b; 25%3d	3b	80%3b 10%3c 10%3d	3b	3b	60%3b 25%3a 15%3d	3b	3a/3b 50/50	3b	3b	70%3b 20%3a 10%3d	80%3b 20%3a	80%3b 20%3a	80%3b 20%3d	3a/3b mix	3b/3d mix	80%3b 10%3a 10%3d	
1.1	Wellbeing: How often feels isolated (diffience from overall)	-11.86%	-11.86%	-10.09%	-11.86%	-10.96%	-11.86%	-11.86%	-8.66%	-11.86%	-7.58%	-11.86%	-11.86%	-9.44%	-10.15%	-10.15%	-10.45%	-7.58%	-8.32%	-10.30%	
1.2	Wellbeing: How often feels lonely (diffience from overall)	-15.11%	-15.11%	-12.29%	-15.11%	-14.26%	-15.11%	-15.11%	-12.10%	-15.11%	-12.46%	-15.11%	-15.11%	-12.92%	-14.05%	-14.05%	-12.85%	-12.46%	-9.47%	-13.45%	
1.3	Links with neighbourhood (aggregate diffience from overall)	-10.01%	-10.01%	-9.33%	-10.01%	-9.75%	-10.01%	-10.01%	-9.87%	-10.01%	-10.55%	-10.01%	-10.01%	-9.95%	-10.22%	-10.22%	-9.46%	-10.55%	-8.64%	-9.84%	
2	Health: long term limiting illness, depression/mental ill health, childhood obesity																				
2.1	Number of residents with two or more long term conditions	2	3	4	3	2	1-2	3-4	3-4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	2-3	3	2	
2.2	Depression/ mental health illness	60.3	76	57	66.3	84	41.3	53	54.8	47.8	50.6	51	51	63	60.3	48.2	55.3	67	59.3	49	
2.3	Childhood obesity	57.3	54	46.7	59.8	58.7	62.3	53	73.8	62.3	63.8	65	65	65	62.4	69.2	58.3	45.7	49.8	71.2	
3	Disadvantage: IMD, children living in poverty, older people living in poverty																				
3.1	Index of multiple deprivation (IMD)	2	2.5	4	3	1.6	1.6	2	3	3	2.8	3	3	2.6	2.4	2	4.2	4	3.1	2	
3.2	Children living in poverty (IDACI)	1.7	1	2	2	1.6	1.3	2	2	2	2.6	3	3	2.6	1.8	2	3	3	1.1	1	
3.3	Older people living in poverty (IDAOPI)	1.2	1	1	1	1.3	1.1	1	1	1	1.8	1	1	1	1	2	1.8	2	2	1	
4	Employment: un-employment; low pay																				
4.1	Economically inactive (percentage of population)	0.3	0.34	0.3	0.33	0.42	0.406	0.285	0.305	0.3	0.4	0.38	0.32	0.356	0.365	0.324	0.38	0.295	0.31	0.36	
4.2	Income domain (1=most deprive; 10=least deprive)	1.5	3.5	3	2	2.4	1.5	1.75	1.8	2	2.9	2	2	2	1.8	2	3.2	3	2	1	
Housing data																					
1	Overcrowding	31.2%	25.9%	22.0%	20.9%	20.7%	32.0%	27.7%	23.1%	28.1%	30.9%	28.4%	27.9%	23.1%	15.2%	24.9%	29.3%	23.7%	33.2%	24.1%	
2	Arrears	45.2%	43.2%	46.9%	54.8%	56.6%	55.8%	49.0%	48.7%	48.9%	43.9%	53.0%	44.5%	47.6%	50.6%	44.1%	43.8%	40.7%	42.8%	51.4%	
3	Number of temporary/insecure tenants	0	0	0	0	0	157	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
4	Damp/mould																				
5	Heat Risk (degree of risk taken from GLA Climate Risk Maps)	3.5	3	3.5	4	7	8.5	8.5	5	8	8	7.5	8	7	8.5	6	6.5	6	5	5.5	
6	Properties with district heating systems	4.18%	2.25%	4.90%	47.68%	57.22%	42.15%	15.52%	41.44%	3.77%	20.93%			17.11%	44.71%	23.95%	2.11%	1.66%	3.03%	2.35%	
7	Stock condition																				
Community supports																					
	Strength of local services and supports for the community						Aylesbury, Kinglake and Lodge - North Walworth														
	Existence of a functioning community organisation or anchor, or TRA	Has 3 TRAs	Has TRAs, ex TMO				Has TRAs, no single organisation	Very active TRA, new hall	Has been supported in past											Established connections	
Other interventions																					
	Estate regeneration investment/activity						Major regeneration				Major regeneration										
	Housing major works		Damp and mould work has been carried out by the Repairs Service.	Major works, pre-QHIP (internal, external works)		Heating scheme recently completed	Health & safety works while the regeneration of the estate is ongoing	Very recent QHIP (internal, external works)	Recent works to roofs and heating.	Recent QHIP (internal, external works)	Recent QHIP (internal, external works)	no	Recent heating works.	Recent works to the externals	Heating works ongoing	No	No	NO	Recent QHIP (internal, external works)	Currently on site and nearly complete: significant damp & mould works here	
	Other initiatives						Great Estates programme planning works				Tustin Hidden Homes, 13 new council homes										
							Social Life research summer 2024														
Contextual data																					
	Modal Age of Dwellings	1930-39 and Post 2009 split	1930-39	1930-39 and Post 2009 split	1973-1982	1973-1982	1965-1972	Pre-1900	1930-1939; 1955-1964; 1973-1982	1930-1939; 1955-1964; 1973-1982	1965-1972	1945-1954; 1964-1972	1945-1954; 1964-1972	1955-1964; 1973-1982	1930-1939	1945-1954	1955-1964	1945-1954	1945-1954	1945-1954	

Appendix 3: The evidence review

This review was carried out to inform the selection of interventions to ensure that activities had evidenced potential to improve resident health and wellbeing.

What do we mean by wellbeing

A 2020 conceptual review by the What Works wellbeing Centre⁸ suggests that community wellbeing is “greater than the sum of individual wellbeing of all the people living in an area.”⁹



Individual wellbeing:

How we subjectively feel about our life and objectively whether our human needs are being met



Community wellbeing:

Includes individual wellbeing, but is more than the aggregated individual wellbeing in an area

Proposed Project: Rockifest Revisited

There is good evidence to suggest that the proposed series of community events and summer festival can support community mental health and wellbeing

Festivals and events:

A 2021 review of the literature¹⁰ on the relationship between events and wellbeing identified that:

- While small community events, by virtue of their scale, are unlikely to have significant economic impact, they are important socially and culturally.
- Events have the potential to directly address issues related to social isolation and loneliness, which are both key influencers on individual wellbeing
- Wellbeing research points to the value of regular participation or attendance at events in driving self-reported improvements in wellbeing. A thriving, inclusive and diverse events providing varied

⁹ Sarah Atkinson Anne-Marie Bagnall, Rhiannon Corcoran, Jane South 2017; What is Community Wellbeing? Conceptual Review, What works Wellbeing.

¹⁰ Parkinson, A., Buttrick, J., Usher, S., & Knight, E. (2021). The Contribution of Events to Scotland's Wellbeing: Final Report. Waverhill: Social and economic research

and inclusive opportunities for engagement, is more likely to contribute to improvements in subjective wellbeing than one off events.

- Several research reports highlight the impact of events in making people feel happier. However, the extent to which someone's enjoyment of an event or festival translates into longer-term life satisfaction is less clear in the evidence base.
- The most frequently referenced wellbeing impact associated with event or festival attendance relates to its ability to build social capital.
- The social aspect of events and their ability to facilitate interaction with friends, family and neighbours is recognised in the evidence base as a key driver for supporting mental wellbeing.
- Cultural events can play an important role in helping people to cope with stress.
- Local pride and appreciation of an area are closely linked to feelings of attachment and a sense of belonging. Improving perceptions of place. Enabling local communities to collaboratively produce festivals and events can also lead to a collective process of placemaking.
- Events enhance the social relations of communities by providing a hub for socialising. Socialising was found to occur between generations and diverse ethnic and socio-economic groups.
- Events also provided a neutral space in which to promote cohesion by providing space for interaction for different groups within the community.
- Festivals and events play a role in generating a shared sense of belonging and identity.
- The ability to influence local decisions is an important factor in creating a sense of empowerment within communities. The evidence base around events provides a range of examples of the contribution that events have provided in motivating and empowering communities to shape local activities where they live.
- The literature also presents numerous examples of the role of events in providing volunteering opportunities and the impact of a volunteer's experience on their wellbeing and social connectedness.

Volunteering and wellbeing

Volunteering is positively linked to enhanced wellbeing, including improved life satisfaction, increased happiness and decreases in symptoms of depression ¹¹ (What Works Wellbeing, 2020). The evidence also points to stronger wellbeing benefits of volunteering for some groups compared to others, including:

- people in later years of life
- people from lower socio-economic groups
- the unemployed
- people living with chronic physical health conditions
- people with lower levels of wellbeing.

The frequency and amount of volunteering undertaken affects the wellbeing outcomes of involvement. Higher frequency volunteering is associated with higher subjective wellbeing compared to lower frequency volunteering. In other words, regularly engaging in volunteering can help to achieve and sustain improvements in wellbeing.

Key design considerations for events

- To what extent have opportunities for community co-design and co-production been built into the development and delivery of the event or festival?
- Has the event or festival established a programme of activities prior to and following the main event to deepen engagement or undertaken targeted work with specific groups?

¹¹ Stuart, J. Kameräde, D. Connolly, S. Paine, A. Nichols, G. & J. Grotz (2020)- 'The Impacts of Volunteering on The Subjective Wellbeing of Volunteers: A Rapid Evidence Assessment'. What Works Wellbeing

- Are currently underrepresented groups in the profile of participants and audiences known, and have steps been taken to ensure that the event or festival is inclusive and accessible?
- Has the event or festival built in opportunities for local people to volunteer? Is there a legacy plan for the volunteers recruited?
- Has the event designed in opportunities and places for the community to interact (physical and online)?
- Has the event considered opportunities to involve audience members as active participants to deepen their engagement?
- Have efforts been directed towards supporting audiences and participants to seek out future events and festivals to expand their cultural participation?

Evaluating the health impact of events:

- The focus for event organisers should be on capturing basic outputs on the number of participants (or participations), audience size and volunteers along with appropriate profile information.
- Equalities, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is a central consideration in process of developing a measurement framework for the events sector.
- Event organisers can then decide, subject to resources available, on particular outcome areas to explore in further depth. The use of a Theory-Based Approach can support event organisers in both designing their event and measuring its impact.

Thoughts and suggestions

The process itself could be a key part of building community cohesion

Access to support for organisations to implement

- Each project has a steering group made up of TRA, Providers, Public Health, Social Prescribing, other key agencies
- Link with key organisations for priority groups e.g. age UK, Aging Well Southwark, Active Youth, Timebanks and volunteering organisations
- Access to wellbeing training for staff and volunteers
- Involvement of key groups in the codesign, planning and delivery of activities
- What other resources and in-kind support can be leveraged?

Series of community events and activities

- Emphasise that this is a series of community activities and events culminating in the summer festival
- Consider how older residents, teenagers, unemployed, non-English speakers will be engaged and involved in the project, events and activities
- Use [Wheel of Wellbeing](#)/5 ways to wellbeing to theme individual events and festival to create continuity between events and activities and a consistent wellbeing message and brand.

Volunteering

- Who will recruit and support the volunteers - is there an existing organisation e.g. timebanks?
- Training in wellbeing and resilience for volunteers (provided by council)

Proposed Project: Activities around food and social isolation

- Hosted by different groups, and bringing in appropriate support and signposting
- Complement the existing community kitchen and to extend reach
- Fortnightly sessions led by different CICs and organisations e.g. family support centre, youth, middle-aged men

There is strong evidence associating food insecurity with poor mental and physical health. However, the evidence is mixed on the long-term effectiveness of community food initiatives in addressing household food insecurity, which requires upstream policy interventions.

Food insecurity and health outcomes

- Household food insecurity refers to people compromising the quantity or quality of food, experiencing anxiety about food supplies lasting and acquiring food in socially unacceptable ways¹²
- Food insecurity is more common in people with long-term health conditions, those who are unemployed and from low-income households, have disabilities, younger people, are from an ethnic minority or are in lone parent families¹³.
- Older adults living alone are at increased risk of malnutrition as well as social isolation. intervention which combines nutritional and social support together may be more effective¹⁴.
- Food insecurity is associated with adverse health outcomes
- Poor mental health, psychological distress and diagnoses of depression and anxiety among adults have consistently been found to be elevated among people experiencing food insecurity
- Relationships may be bidirectional, as deterioration in mental health has been associated with transition into food insecurity¹⁵.
- Childhood experiences of hunger have been found to associate with poor physical and mental health into late adolescence¹⁶
- Food insecurity can exacerbate social isolation and loneliness and affect quality of life and can have a detrimental impact on social and mental wellbeing¹⁷
- People that are socially isolated are more likely to live alone which is associated with dietary behaviours such as lower diversity and intake of fruit, vegetables and fish¹⁸. Persons who are socially isolated could have other characteristics that impact food access, preparation and intake such as adequate transportation, proximity to food markets and functional impairment¹⁹.
- Food restriction also could increase loneliness due to reducing the ability to bond with others through consumption of similar food²⁰ Woolley et al., 2020)

¹² Radimer KL, Olson CM, Campbell CC. Development of indicators to assess hunger. J Nutr. 1990 Nov;120 Suppl 11(suppl_11):1544-8. doi: 10.1093/jn/120.suppl_11.1544. PMID: 2243303

¹³ Garratt EA, Armstrong B. Food insecurity and food bank use: who is most at risk of severe food insecurity and who uses food banks? Public Health Nutr. 2024 Sep 26;27(1): e174. doi: 10.1017/S1368980024001393. PMID: 39324772; PMCID: PMC11505125.

¹⁴ McHugh, J., Lee, O., Aspell, N., Lawlor, B. A., & Brennan, S. (2015). A shared mealtime approach to improving social and nutritional functioning among older adults living alone: study protocol for a randomized controlled trial. JMIR research protocols, 4(2), e4050

¹⁵ Heflin, C. M. (2017). The role of social positioning in observed patterns of material hardship: New evidence from the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation. Social Problems, 64(4), 513-531.

¹⁶ Kirkpatrick, S. I., McIntyre, L., & Potestio, M. L. (2010). Child hunger and long-term adverse consequences for health. Archives of pediatrics & adolescent medicine, 164(8), 754-762.

¹⁷ Park, S., & Berkowitz, S. A. (2024). Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Quality of Life Among Food-Insecure Adults. American journal of preventive medicine.

¹⁸ Hanna, K. L., & Collins, P. F. (2015). Relationship between living alone and food and nutrient intake. Nutrition reviews, 73(9), 594-611

¹⁹ Locher, J. L., Yoels, W. C., Maurer, D., & Van Ellis, J. (2005). Comfort foods: an exploratory journey into the social and emotional significance of food. Food & Foodways, 13(4), 273-297.

²⁰ Woolley K, Fishbach A, Wang RM. Food restriction and the experience of social isolation. J Pers Soc Psychol. 2020 Sep;119(3):657-671. doi: 10.1037/pspi0000223. Epub 2019 Nov 14. PMID: 31724417.

Social eating

- The act of eating with others, which has deep social and cultural significance and has been shown to have multiple possible social and individual benefits including improved nutrient or food intake, although a lack of causal evidence has been noted.²¹
- Communal eating, whether in feasts or everyday meals with family or friends, is a human universal. Those who eat socially more often feel happier and are more satisfied with life, are more trusting of others, are more engaged with their local communities, and have more friends they can depend on for support.

Food banks

- The demand for charitable foodbanks has been steadily increasing²².
- A 2022 report by the Independent Food Network and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation²³ found that the underlying reason that people needed support from a foodbank was because the income they received was simply not enough to cover their basic needs.
- The report identified that although people would rather not have to rely on food aid, and they often felt ashamed on their first visit, most saw it as a key source of support and social connections.
- An earlier review of interventions to address household food insecurity in high income countries²⁴ suggest that the reliance of food banks on donations of volunteer time and food limit the assistance that they were able to provide. The review concludes the solutions to household food insecurity lie upstream in social protection policies.

Social supermarkets

- Social supermarkets are characterised as not-for-profit social enterprises that sell mostly food, at low or symbolic prices to those living near or in poverty.
- A 2023 study²⁵ found that Social Supermarkets are more inclusive and mindful of the diversity and agency of their members. They combat their idea of food support recipients as passive citizens and can reduce stigma, although some members of Social Supermarkets expressed feelings of embarrassment, particularly when queuing in public before entering a Social Supermarkets. The report concludes that Social Supermarkets can provide an alternative model for providing food support that could be used alongside foodbanks

Thoughts and suggestions

Providing a coordinator role to work across local food provision may be too a challenging a role given existing tensions between providers.

Suggestions

- Split the funding between the organisations to build on existing activities
- Link the funding to requirement to engage with key groups identified by Social Life
- Require funded projects to consider how they maximise impact and coverage by working together
- Explore how access food provision can be a gateway to other advice and support welfare benefits advice, volunteering opportunities, wellbeing advice
- Link with social prescribing and other key organisations to increase awareness and referrals

21 Jönsson H, Michaud M, Neuman N. What Is Commensality? A Critical Discussion of an Expanding Research Field. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2021 Jun 9;18(12):6235. doi: 10.3390/ijerph18126235. PMID: 34207626; PMCID: PMC8295993

22 House of Common Library 2024. Food banks in the UK.

23 Pushed to the Edge: Poverty, Food Banks and Mental Health, 2022. Independent Food Network

24 Loopstra R. Interventions to address household food insecurity in high-income countries. *Proc Nutr Soc*. 2018 Aug;77(3):270-281. doi: 10.1017/S002966511800006X. Epub 2018 Mar 27. PMID: 29580316.

25 Ranta, R., Nancheva, N., Mulrooney, H., Bhakta, D., & Lake, S. (2024). Access, dignity, and choice: social supermarkets and the end of the food bank model in the UK? *Food, Culture & Society*, 27(4), 1216-1233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2024.2321409>

- Link project to the library and increase support and advice offered from the library to create a sense of a local hub.
- Support project with a steering group that includes funded organisations meets 4 x a year (TRA?) with attendance from public health, SP other relevant orgs
- Provide wellbeing training to volunteers - including food and mental health

Social Life is an independent research organisation created by the Young Foundation in 2012 to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. Our work is about understanding how people's day-to-day experience of local places is shaped by built environment - housing, public spaces, parks and local high streets - and how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affect the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas.

www.social-life.co

