

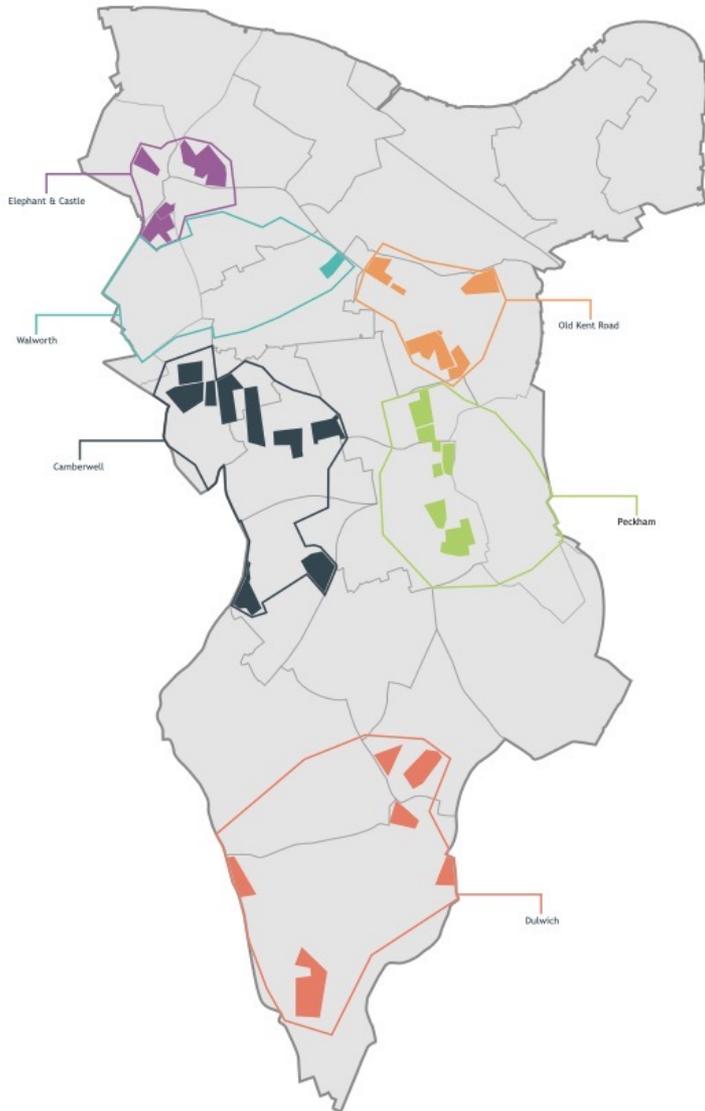


Understanding Southwark:

Daily life & the impact of COVID-19
across the borough (April 2020-Aug 2021)

22nd July 2021

Research on daily life & the impact of COVID-19 in Southwark



The year-long research was commissioned by Southwark Council (Public Health Division) to examine

- the impact of COVID-19 across the borough, and
- daily life in six areas going through change (marked on the map)

The research has built on the socio-economic benchmarking Social Life carried out in four areas of the borough:

- in Rotherhithe,
- around the Biscuit Factory in Bermondsey,
- on the Aylesbury Estate,
- and the area around the St Thomas Street development.

Research on daily life & the impact of COVID-19 in Southwark

Research across the borough (June-Aug 2020)

- A borough-wide survey that explored the impact of the pandemic
- In-depth research into the experience of vulnerable groups across the borough, including people with no recourse to public funds
- Online survey of businesses to explore the impact of COVID-19

Research in six areas (three phases: June - Sept 2020; Nov 2020 - Jan 2021; May – Aug 2021)

- Stakeholder interviews (over 140)
- Street interviews with local residents (over 510)
- Walking interviews with local residents (over 30)
- Trader interviews (over 85)
- Online interviews and focus groups with young people
- Digital mapping of stakeholder engagement

Research findings will...

- help shape the Council's neighbourhood and social regeneration work in the future, and
- inform strategies to improve health and wellbeing, and reduce inequalities.

Emerging key findings (April 2020-Aug 2021)

The pandemic has been especially challenging for our communities and our businesses in the neighborhoods we researched.

- Existing challenges have been exacerbated by the impact of lock down, highlighting the inequalities already inherent for some communities.
- While a number of residents and businesses appreciated the support provided by the Council over the last 12 months, the research confirmed a number of consistent ‘threads’:
 - Mental health
 - Vulnerable populations
 - Housing
 - Youth services
 - Concerns from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities
 - Importance of ongoing engagement and dialogue with communities
 - Digital exclusion
- The following slides share some of this feedback.
- Your views are welcomed

While the Council has invested in tackling many aspects of the above, the research highlights that the pandemic impacts mean that much more needs to be done with an escalated time frame.

Emerging key findings (April 2020-Aug 2021)

1. Stakeholders and local residents from all six regeneration areas stated that **mental health issues** represent a significant challenge for local people, groups and their communities.

“The sense of hopelessness, no housing or jobs, overcrowding have had a huge impact on mental health. [We] have seen a lot of that before the pandemic, and even more so during it. Having done parent forums during the pandemic to ask people what are the challenges, it does come a point where parents are at their breaking point in such a confined space. [It] has been quite traumatic for some people.” (excerpt from interview)

2. There is concern that **vulnerable people are falling through gaps in government support schemes**. This includes people with no recourse to public funds, people in precarious and poorly paid work, people living in overcrowded housing, some single parents, and people experiencing mental health problems and people with disabilities.

“There really is a need for public institutions and private enterprises to support the work being done by organisations that work with the most invisible communities. Otherwise, there will simply be no one working with them or helping them. If they continue being invisible, they will simply get no help. If these institutions are not going to help this community, at least support the work of those who are already doing precisely that.” (excerpt from interview)

Emerging key findings (April 2020-Aug 2021)

3. Continued and additional support for young people including **youth centres and services that offer information** about local mentorships, apprenticeships and employment opportunities for young people.

“A lot of mentoring stuff would be good. To give you advice on managing finances, for example, you don’t learn that at uni. And, also, about future studies. I’ve never had a mentor but have friends who are a lot older who have been like mentors, role models. Mentors would be good, I would have been in a much better position than I am right now.” (excerpt from interview)

4. Local residents, stakeholders and traders agreed that better knowledge and increased visibility of **the needs of black, Asian and minority ethnic communities**, including BAME businesses and trader groups would ensure that they are supported more effectively.

“Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities are facing issues of racism - same as they have been before the pandemic, more so during the pandemic. They also experience economic exclusion and are further marginalized by gentrification.” (excerpt from interview)

Emerging key findings (April 2020-Aug 2021)

5. Despite the continuous investment in housing by Southwark Council, the pandemic highlighted the complex housing challenges. **Decent and affordable housing** for local residents remains a key concern for many groups we spoke to, including long-standing residents, newcomers and young people.

“[The] same things keep coming up: what’s an affordable house/flat, what’s for the community? A new plan was reissued...but again there’s nothing there about what is an affordable house. Until there’s a definition that can’t be interpreted in different ways, and it’s clearly written down, we will keep asking. What the council thinks is affordable, is not affordable for people. I think would be really nice to get that definition clearer and improved.” (excerpt from interview)

6. **New ways of promoting local consultation** could help tackle the widespread belief that voices of local people make little impact on local decision-making, especially the voices of people with limited resources (in time and money), BAME groups, and young people.

“Young people are definitely not involved in regeneration processes. Recently, there was an indoor event at the local community hall, but younger people are never encouraged to attend such events or have their opinions heard.” (excerpt from interview)

Emerging key findings (April 2020-Aug 2021)

7. Digital and data exclusion have been especially highlighted by the pandemic. COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures have increased the use of online platforms and services, making the lack of devices, data and skills among certain groups an increasingly pressing problem for older people, low-income groups, and local residents whose first language is not English.

Factors that supported local stakeholders' successful online engagement with users included:

- access to funds or securing funding from the outset of the crisis to purchase digital devices and internet data allowances for users in need
- having staff who could teach users lacking the skills how to use digital devices and/or how to use the online platforms
- availability of skilled staff or volunteers who could design and run activities/services on different digital platforms
- access to funds to run regular activities/services online
- allowing users to participate the way they feel most comfortable
- targeted platforms and content to appeal to different users.

Invitation to hear from you

As local stakeholders and residents, we would like to hear **your views on the issues explored by this year-long research.**

We would also like to know if there is anything you would like to add or highlight based on your own experiences in the local area, **things that have gone well** that we can build upon as well as **things that we need to address.**

Thank you!



© Social Life

Some rights reserved.

12a Peacock Yard, Iliffe Street, London SE17 3LH

www.sociallife.co