

# Building a strong and connected community: Identifying needs in Hammersmith and Fulham

**A final report for H&F Giving  
February 2025**

Prepared By  
Rocket Science

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# Joanna Kennedy, Chair & Louise Wilson, Executive Director

## H&F Giving

We live in a post COVID-19 world, where need in our borough has never been greater. As we navigate a time of economic uncertainty, rising costs of living and increasing levels of social isolation, the most vulnerable members of our local community are facing unprecedented challenges.

H&F Giving commissioned the following report to better understand the need in our local community. The full picture will enable us to work with our charity partners to provide long-term cost-effective solutions to the problems our neighbours are facing.

H&F Giving is an emerging place-based giving scheme. We are an independent charitable foundation set up to support need in the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham. Densely populated and diverse, the borough suffers from stark levels of inequality: we aim to connect the borough so that every person and every generation can give what they can or get what they need to thrive.

We work directly with charities in our local community to fund life changing programmes. Since 2018, H&F Giving has distributed over £1.5 million to community groups in the borough, supporting local organisations that make a big difference including by supporting digital literacy, helping refugees, or people affected by the cost-of-living crisis. In the last year, we've funded 47 community organisations supporting more than 10,000 residents. As part of our core activities, H&F Giving runs a range of targeted appeals and campaigns in the borough to unlock support. This includes raising funds for a Christmas Day lunch for older and vulnerable people, who would otherwise spend the day alone. But we want and need to do more. The information in this report will equip us with the knowledge to tackle the persistent inequalities faced by the people of Hammersmith and Fulham.

In this document, we present a comprehensive overview of the challenges facing our community. These include income and debt, basic living needs, community cohesion, health and wellbeing, education and employment, digital inclusion and other problems including lack of access to arts & culture, violence and abuse and climate change.

We identify how H&F Giving can serve as a critical connector to develop powerful collaborations and bring about change.

We are hugely ambitious, and these findings will help us to set our action plan. But we need the generosity of our local community to provide the much-needed funds to support this ambitious programme of work. As well as collaborating with local government and statutory services, we will also seek to work with local philanthropists, corporates, foundations and individual givers. With your help, we can continue to build a stronger, more inclusive community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

With best wishes,  
Joanna Kennedy, Chair & Louise Wilson, Executive Director

# About the research

In Spring 2024, Rocket Science was commissioned by H&F Giving to conduct a community needs analysis for Hammersmith and Fulham. H&F Giving is an emerging place-based giving scheme in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

As part of the consultation, Rocket Science analysed publicly available data, facilitated community workshops, held an open call for evidence and conducted interviews and focus groups with community members and local funders. This report reflects findings from the data collected from 41 local organisations, including responses from 66 individuals, with the aim of informing future directions and strategic priorities for place-based funding in the borough.

Importantly, this consultation included a cross-section of the borough's population, with efforts made to widen access and gather insights from as many organisations working at the frontline as possible. We know that participation in similar research projects is often more accessible to the most well-resourced individuals and community groups. We are mindful that there are many, particularly smaller, organisations whose views may have not been fully integrated into this piece of work. H&F Giving remains committed to seeking these voices out in their ongoing community work and any future consultation and engagement.

## Consultation

To understand community needs and local funding flows for a place-based giving scheme in Hammersmith and Fulham.

## Methods

- Data story
- Funding flow borough analysis
- Community consultation
  - Workshops
  - Open call for evidence
  - VCS survey
- Funding consultation
  - 121 interviews
  - Workshops

## Timeframe

April-November 2024

# Methodology

## Research stages

Between April and November 2024, the following methods were utilised:

### Data story

Analysis of public statistics relating to need and inequality post-2020 (ie post COVID-19)

### Funding flow borough analysis

Review of the funding database 360 Giving to map funding during 2021-2023; this was reflective of 57 funders distributing £23.3m of funding and 169 funded organisations receiving funds in borough

### Community consultation

Facilitation of two community workshops attended by 34 professionals working within the local area (e.g. local funders, community/business organisations, trustees, volunteer coordinators)

### Open call for evidence

A call for evidence about local needs, resulting in 11 individuals sharing 24 data sources and the identification of 'community leaders' to represent social housing residents and the experiences of young people living locally

### A voluntary and community sector survey

A survey on need, inequality and funding, gathering 19 responses, 11 of which were "by and for" organisations, including charities working across the arts, health, and children and young people sectors

### Stakeholder interviews

Interviews with H&F Giving's founding partners: Hammersmith United Charities and Dr Edwards and Bishop King's Fulham charity; as well as infrastructure organisations such as SOBUS and Young Hammersmith & Fulham.

### Funder consultation

Two workshops with 7 local funding organisations, with professionals representing perspectives on different themes, including local development, children and young people, private foundations and more.

A limitation of note is that we were unable to procure and review funding via the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, despite being the largest funder and service provider in borough. H&F Giving endeavours to complete a separate analysis on Council funding in future following the results of the Council's Third Sector Investment Fund, which will be announced in early 2025.

# Understanding local need

## Hammersmith and Fulham borough profile

Located in West London, Hammersmith and Fulham is a diverse and densely populated borough home to approximately 183,200 people.[1] The majority of residents are White (63.2%) though the borough also has a significant Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African population (12.3%).[2] The locality is culturally rich: 46% of residents were born outside of the UK representing over 100 different countries.[3]

The area is historically known for its economic and commercial activity and is home to major employers like Disney, L’Oreal, UKTV and the BBC, alongside major sports and cultural venues including Chelsea, Fulham and Queens Park Rangers football clubs, the Hammersmith Apollo, the Lyric Theatre and Riverside Studios. There is a range of employers of varying sizes and sectors, offering well-paid, secure work. Over half of residents aged 16 and over are in active employment.[4] However, these opportunities are not universal; certain parts of the borough have a high rate of economic inactivity where individuals face poorly paid or insecure forms of employment. White City is an area where a large proportion of residents are on Universal Credit (29.9%) and economically inactive (39.3%) compared to other local geographies.[5]

Overall, the borough is considered healthy with 53.8% of residents in 2021 describing their health as very good, a percentage which increased from 48.3% in 2011.[6] Over the last three years, smoking and childhood overweight have all decreased locally.[7] However, social determinants of health, such as isolation, remain an area of concern, given the large proportion of residents who live alone: 36% of individuals are in one-person households.[8] Other health disparities exist and many highlight geographic differences: the lowest rate of ill health (2.4%) is found in Fulham Palace and Hurlingham Park while the highest rate of ill health (5.7%) is found in Old Oak and Wormwood. [9]

[1] Office of National Statistics (2021). Census 2021. [Link](#)

[2] Idem

[3] Idem

[4] Office of National Statistics. (2023). Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity in Hammersmith and Fulham. [Link](#)

[5] Office of National Statistics (2021). Earnings and working hours. [Link](#)

[6] Office of National Statistics (2024). Housing prices in Hammersmith and Fulham. [Link](#)

[7] Public Health England (2021). Health Profile for London 2021. [Link](#)

[8] Idem

[9] Office for Health Improvements and Disparities (2021). Percentage of people who reported having a limiting long-term illness or disability. [Link](#)

# Understanding local need

Across London, the cost-of-living crisis creates social and financial divides in terms of people's access to a safe, long-term, affordable place to call home. The area's housing stock contains a high proportion of flats and maisonettes, which can lead to overcrowding. Locally, the borough has seen a recent decrease in home ownership. [10] The pricing out of residents is another feature of geographic inequality: disparities between housing prices and income are highest in Parsons Green East & Eel Brook Common and Shepherd's Bush North. [11]

This map illustrates the average ranking of the MSOAs across seven indicators:

- % of the population reporting bad or very bad health
- % economically inactive
- % living with a disability
- % of the working age population on universal credit
- crime rates per 1,000 pop.
- house price to income ratio % of SEN pupils

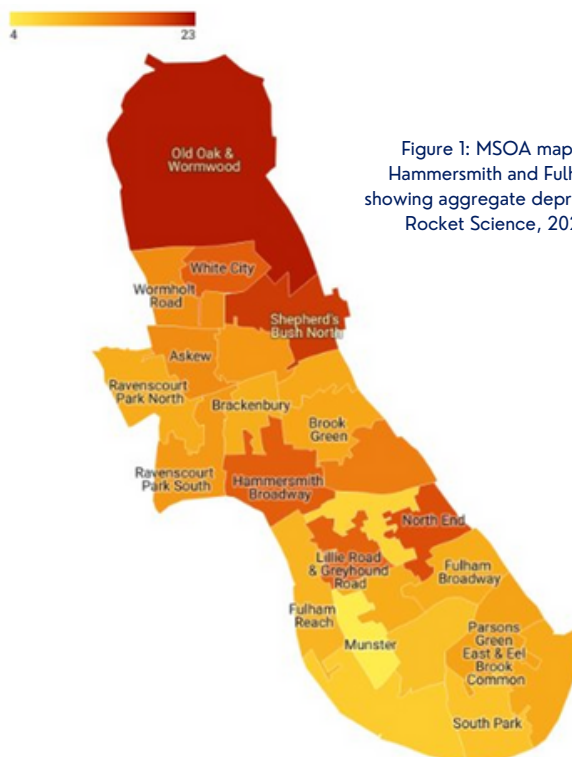


Figure 1: MSOA map of Hammersmith and Fulham showing aggregate deprivation, Rocket Science, 2024

An MSOA is a geographical boundary used for collecting and analysing public statistics within local authority districts. MSOAs are organised to have similar population sizes (an average of 7,500 residents) in order to compare data spatially.

Lighter zones represent a higher ranking (i.e. less deprivation) while deeper shades show the areas which rank lowest. This suggests that there is greater deprivation in the North of the borough than in the South. Notably, there are several instances of neighbouring areas being at opposite ends of the spectrum – such as highly scoring Munster sitting next to low scoring Lillie Road and Greyhound Road.

Across various data indicators, our review identifies the least deprived MSOAs as:

1. Munster
2. Baron's Court
3. Fulham Palace & Hurlingham Park

Meanwhile, the most deprived MSOAs are:

25. Old Oak and Wormwood
24. Shepherd's Bush North
23. North End

[10] Office of National Statistics (2024). Housing prices in Hammersmith and Fulham. [Link](#)

[11] Idem

# Understanding local need

## Needs for particular groups

Several key population groups emerged from the consultation as having unmet support needs across a range of areas such as education, employment, health and housing. These include:

- Older adults
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Single mothers
- Children
- Young people

The most commonly mentioned group across all thematic areas of need were families, children and young people (including the needs of single parents). Their needs are intersectional, featuring strongly throughout the report, and as such, are not confined to any single category of need.

The review of public data indicates additional groups with unmet support needs, such as minoritised communities, carers and disabled people, though these demographic groups were not highlighted widely in the consultation with community practitioners and local funders. Care has been taken to include reference to these groups through recent data where possible.

## A snapshot of need: Families, children and young people

Because there are fewer families and young people in H&F than the average local authority in England, this group may be overlooked when providing support. Of local young people surveyed by Partnership for Young London, for example, over half (52.65%) felt they did not know where to access local youth services. [12]

Often, families learn of voluntary or statutory support via the education system, though in Hammersmith and Fulham, school absence is high: in 2022/23, a significant 17.5% of local primary school pupils and 24.8% of secondary school pupils faced persistent absenteeism (defined as missing 10% or more sessions). [13]

[12] Partnership for Young London (2020). Growing up in Hammersmith and Fulham. Link

[13] Department for Education (2023). Pupil absence: full year release. Link



# Thematic needs

Compared to nearby boroughs, this high rate of secondary absentees was second only to Kensington and Chelsea at 27.4%. School absence rates are higher for those with special education needs (SEN). Hammersmith and Fulham has an overall rate of pupils with SEN at 6.4% of all students, compared to Brent at 4.2% and Ealing at 4.6%. In 2022/23, 31.7% of local pupils with SEN support were considered persistently absent. [14]

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the education system has increasingly expected that young people have consistent and reliable access to a digital device for their homework. In the borough, however, many young people report sharing a single device within their entire family, impeding their ability to access and complete their work in a timely manner.

While early years provision, GCSE achievements and qualifications are all relatively strong in the borough, apprenticeship starts and achievement rates in further education are lower than national averages. [15] Apprenticeship starts have been marginally decreasing over the last three years while achievements are slowly rising.

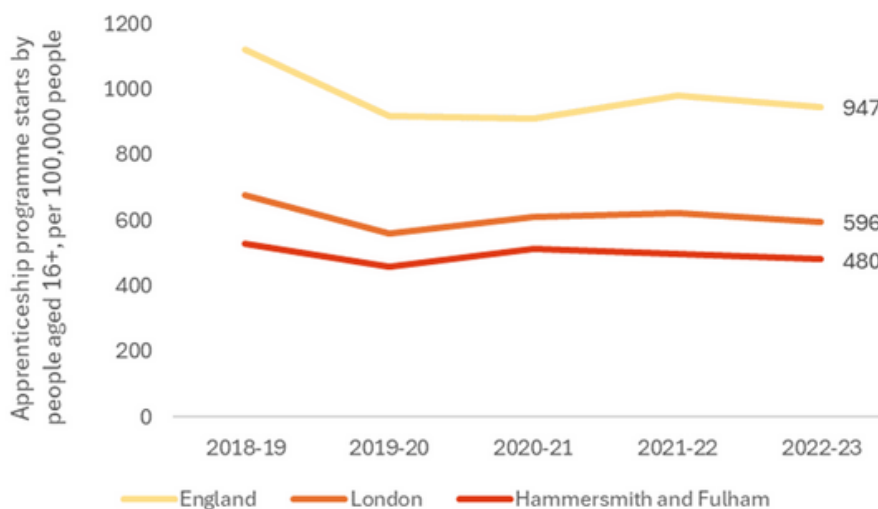


Figure 2: Apprenticeship programme starts by people aged 16+ per 100,000 people. [Link](#)

[14] Idem

[15] Department for Education (2023). Attainment at 19 years. [Link](#)

# Thematic needs

The consultation revealed that many professionals feel funding cuts have negatively affected youth provision in the borough.

Young people have limited access to warm, safe spaces where trusting relationships with adults are forged. Young people lacking trusting relationships with adults and public services has been reflected in emerging research: a third of young people locally said they distrust the police.<sup>[16]</sup> Where youth centres exist, low-cost activities for young people, especially teenage children, is limited.

Single parents, particularly mothers with teenage children, were felt to require further support. Since 2020, those consulted report how the borough has seen an increase in overcrowding with many young adults moving back in with their parents.

These families face a higher degree of social isolation and struggle with rising family tensions which can lead to violence. Employability support and development pathways for parents were also highlighted as needed to bolster the local workforce and particularly to contribute to the financial independence of young mothers.

[16] Partnership for Young London (2020). Growing up in Hammersmith and Fulham. [Link](#)

# Thematic needs emerging

The following table summarises the consultation on local needs. It highlights current areas of need; sub-themes and particular demographic groups or communities in need. "Area of need" groups commonly identified needs; "Sub-themes identified" explores some of the nuance identified in our consultations. The "particular groups in need" highlights demographic groups which show a greater occurrence of need in relation to each theme area.

Area of need	Sub-themes identified	Particular groups in need
Income, finances and debt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits lacking to cover essentials</li> <li>• Experience of in-work poverty</li> </ul>	Those in work who have never previously needed support
Basic living needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to affordable, healthy food</li> <li>• Meeting energy/fuel costs</li> <li>• Access and affordability of housing</li> <li>• Poor housing conditions including damp and mould</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unaffordable housing for people of all ages, particularly under 35s</li> <li>• Overcrowded housing for families</li> </ul>
Community cohesion and social infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth centres</li> <li>• Green space</li> <li>• Affordable transportation</li> <li>• Public spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people cannot afford to access activities such as those provided by sports clubs and gyms</li> <li>• Need for people of all ages to have opportunities to enjoy the borough that they live in</li> <li>• Activation of community spaces for those facing isolation and loneliness</li> </ul>

# Thematic needs emerging

Area of need	Sub-themes identified	Particular groups in need
Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Physical health</li> <li>• Recreation and sport</li> <li>• Social determinants of health</li> <li>• Environmental health concerns</li> <li>• Need for funding for creative programmes with a mental health benefit</li> <li>• Wait times for support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in residents displaying with mental health issues</li> <li>• Need for specialist mental health services e.g. for young women</li> <li>• Need for improved mental health awareness in schools</li> </ul>
Education and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School attendance</li> <li>• Lack of funding for schools</li> <li>• Staff and professional support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of alternative options for education for non-attenders</li> <li>• Need for improved career opportunities</li> <li>• Enabling mothers to learn and stay relevant in the fast-changing world of work</li> </ul>
Digital inclusion	Access to technology for educational purposes	Children and young people sharing laptops with their families, limiting schoolwork and learning
Other needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts and culture</li> <li>• Violence and abuse</li> <li>• Climate change</li> <li>• Disparity in finances and capacity between small and large VCS organisations</li> <li>• Need for more joined up working between charities</li> <li>• Smaller organisations could benefit from support to grow capacity and improve their financial security</li> </ul>	Children and young people with climate anxiety

# Income, finances and debt

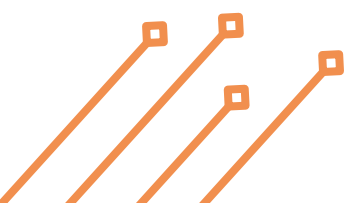
Participants from the community consultation voiced concerns over the continued **rising cost of living**, underscoring a critical need for financial support. Many families are facing hardship, finding it difficult to afford necessities such as food, utilities, and household goods, leading to a reliance on emergency support services that may assist in the short-term, but does not assure their longer-term resilience.

Average earnings in the borough as of 2022 were **£46,380**, which is higher than the London average of £37,146. This means that for an individual earning average wages and privately renting at the average rate of £2,494, 65% of their annual earnings goes towards rent. As is the case across the UK, we are seeing a rise locally in 'in-work poor' who struggle with affordability despite holding full-time employment.

Income inequality also shows stark geographic divides. Income deprivation is a statistical classification based on the proportion of people in a geographic area who are out of work or on low earnings. In LBH&F, the least deprived ward is Palace Riverside where 6.2% of the local population is estimated to be income-deprived.

**However, in the most deprived ward, Wormholt and White City, 24.4% are estimated to be income-deprived.** The disparity between these extremes is significant. Across the entire borough, one in every three children live in income-deprived families and 49% of people over 65 are income deprived.

Low-income households, particularly those living in social housing, often struggle to furnish their homes with **essential items**. As highlighted by various local funders' grant initiatives, in recent years, residents are requesting support to purchase flooring, beds, cookers, washing machines, and other critical appliances upon moving into social housing, where these items are not routinely provided. Direct relief grants, largely offered through household support funds, allow residents to secure essential household items, helping alleviate the immediate financial pressures for families who would otherwise go without.

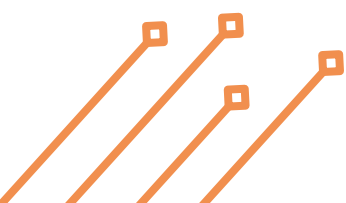


# Income, finances and debt

A family's strained financial situation often leads to wider social impacts, such as affecting children's ability to demonstrate certain class or status markers which can be particularly challenging. Examples were shared around bullying in school for not owning certain brands or styles, or being able to afford extracurricular opportunities to socialise with one's peers. In response, participants explained how some young people are attempting to make money themselves, some who fall into a form of 'grey economy' where income is generated in an ad hoc or informal manner, lacking stability and often relying on personal relationships to build a pipeline of work through activities such as child-minding, pet-sitting, shopping or cleaning. Concern was raised by several participants on the wellbeing of these working young people and how the pressure of working informally to sustain themselves at an early age may result in missed social and educational opportunities.

Needs around income, finances and debt are often characterised by feelings which participants named as "fear" and "shame" that lead to a sense of isolation. Examples include returning from a leave of absence at work earlier than one is ready because of financial pressure, or sudden costs arising in a medical emergency which wipes out any savings. Those working locally to provide financial and debt advice shared that most individuals report having less than £1,500 in savings at any given time.

Financial strains are affecting a widening demographic of residents, including young adults leaving care and individuals in work who have not previously been a significant group accessing benefits or support. Families and single parents in particular, were noted as lacking adequate support to feed their children and provide essential items (such as school uniforms, household goods). Delays due to bureaucratic processes were felt to intensify frustration and create gaps in support, with an increasing portion of residents having complex support needs and seeking aid from disconnected support providers (such as individuals voicing food or childcare assistance needs whilst visiting a local theatre café). Family hubs were identified as providing important support around finances and debt for local families though with recent closures, the transition of where to now find advice has been confusing. There is a sense in the community that provision is decreasing though it may be that knowledge and awareness of what exists is simply fragmenting.



# Income, finances and debt

Community members further emphasised that **high childcare costs** are another major financial barrier, requiring parents to rely on informal support from relatives or forgo paid employment opportunities. In turn, this exacerbates the cycle of economic hardship and limits social mobility, pointing to a need for affordable childcare solutions and employment support initiatives that cater to the unique needs of parents by considering scheduling and providing childcare.

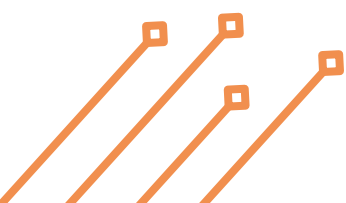
In 2017, Step Change estimated that approximately 12,000 local residents were in debt totalling a staggering £31million. [17] Debt is often held around essential housing costs (rents and mortgages), credit card overdrafts, and loan accumulations. The borough had particularly high average mortgage arrears levels: clients from Hammersmith & Fulham had average mortgage arrears at £14,421 compared with a London average of £4,448. [18]

In terms of debt, many residents seek assistance too late, not realising they are in debt or not recognising the detriment of **debt accumulation** (e.g., Council tax, water bills, credit card debt, etc.). Some local funders support individuals with direct grants which can be used to combat unexpected situations of indebtedness, stopping a one-off crisis from growing. However, a lack of understanding and awareness around the implications of debt, such as missed Council tax payments, was highlighted as a common pathway into crisis. Given the stress on Citizens Advice Bureau, **engagement with financial corporates** (such as banks, finance teams, etc.) through accessible community workshops and Q&A sessions was suggested by several participants as a possible method of improving local knowledge around financial health and wellbeing.

We heard how financial difficulties are almost always accompanied by need in other areas of life, such as **mental health** need or **low literacy** or minimal **English skills** making it difficult to secure consistent income generation streams, or advice in moments of crisis. Of those with multiple complex needs, individuals with the 1-2-1 care of a **support worker** were felt to receive significantly greater benefit compared to their peers who may be falling outside systems of support and care, indicating the value of holistic advice and consistent, relational support.

[17] Step Change (2017). London in the Red: Hammersmith and Fulham. [Link](#)

[18] Idem



# Basic living needs

Reflecting the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, the most commonly mentioned needs were those associated with everyday living costs, namely **food, energy and housing**. This includes the ability to access hot and nutritious meals, as well as shower and laundry facilities. Funders noted that where, geographically, requests for basic living needs are decreasing, this is often not because needs are actually decreasing but because residents are being moved out of London. **1 in 50 people in the borough have no home** and the average time taken to process new housing-related benefit claims in the borough for Quarter 3 of 2023/24 was 21 calendar days.[19] Frontline workers interacting with young people have also noted requests for help towards meeting their parents' **day-to-day bills**.

Residents' living needs are often hidden from view. Advice organisations tend to be the first to receive knowledge of basic needs, though burdened with significantly increased demand, there is growing concern that these needs might fall through the cracks. In 2023 the most common use of the local Citizens Advice was in relation to **fuel debt**. The majority of local CAB clients in 2023 were white, female, aged 35-39 and sought support **in-person** (34%) or via **telephone** (32%). To combat the invisibility of these basic living needs, some consultees suggested services could provide regular home visits to increase intervention points leading to greater independence and safety.

**Nutritional health and food insecurity** was a recurring theme, with food banks across the borough reportedly operating at capacity to meet growing demand. Families are struggling to cope with **limited budgets** and find it increasingly difficult to access nutritious meals, as evident in the rising obesity rate locally. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, despite childhood overweight decreasing obesity in the borough has increased from 12% to 18% of all adults over the age of 18.[20] This highlights the need for continued support of healthy food distribution programmes, as both a cost of living and health concern. New initiatives should build on existing action in this space, as in the case of the Food for All Partnership, a local coalition of key providers addressing food inequity.

[19] Department of Work and Pensions (2023). Housing benefit and council tax benefit statistics. [Link](#)

[20] ONS (2023). Overweight statistics. [Link](#)



# Basic living needs

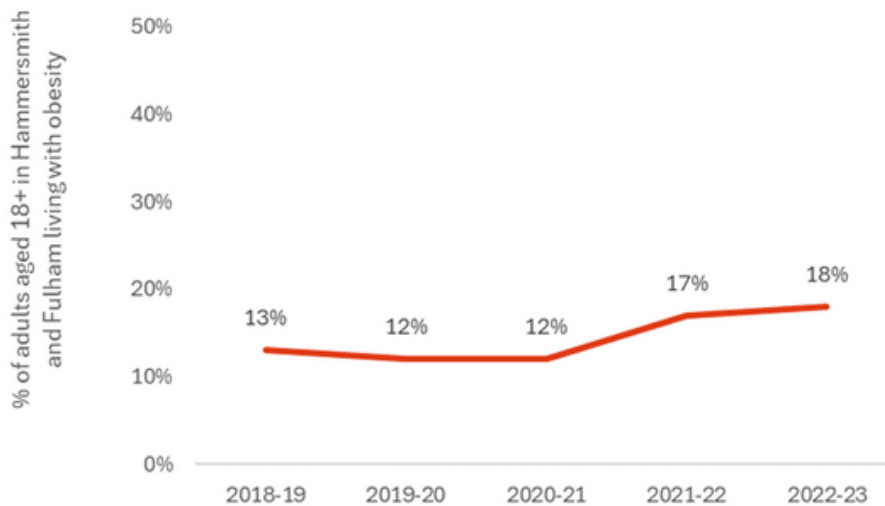


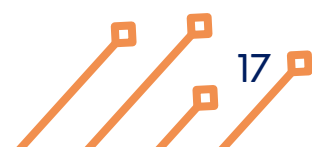
Figure 3: Percentage of adults aged 18+ in Hammersmith and Fulham living with obesity. [Link](#)

Housing costs are a significant concern locally. In 2024, the average price of a home in the borough was £767,000, 16x the average annual salary. Home prices are the third highest in all London boroughs.

**Home ownership decreased** from 34% in 2011 to 32.1% in 2021. Only 16% of all homes are owned outright. **Private rents have also risen** to an average of £2,494 per calendar month for a 2-bedroom flat, higher than the October 2024 average London rate of £2,172.

CHAIN data also shows a **94% increase in London rough sleeping between 2022-23 and 2023-24**: 462 people were seen rough sleeping in the borough, predominately in the center and North of Hammersmith and Fulham. [21]

[21] CHAIN (2024). Rough sleeping counts: London. [Link](#)



# Community cohesion & social infrastructure

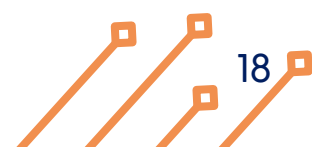
**Community cohesion** remains both a significant area of concern, but also of opportunity across Hammersmith and Fulham. Professionals highlighted the role of accessible **public spaces, transport options, and community hubs**—particularly warm hubs during colder months—in supporting feelings of connection and community belonging amongst residents. However, many voiced concerns about the limited availability of such spaces, worsening reports of disconnection among vulnerable populations, including both younger and older age groupings.

For young people, the **lack of safe and engaging spaces** in which to gather has been linked to increased risk of isolation, disengagement, and, in some cases, exposure to unsafe environments, including street-based activities associated with gangs and knife crime. The need for **accessible, supervised recreational spaces** was a recurring theme during consultations, with parents and local advocates emphasising their role in reducing youth vulnerability while fostering a sense of belonging.

Safe spaces were felt to be linked to tackling antisocial behaviour, especially for disengaged youth with nowhere else to gather. Expanded investment in youth clubs and mentoring programmes was seen as one strategy to reduce anti-social behaviours and associated tensions in the borough.

Research participants shared the **important role of grassroots organisations** in addressing challenges around community cohesion. These have deep insight into community needs and have established trust with local residents.

Many argued that efforts to support and expand the **capacity** of these groups would be more effective than introducing new initiatives or external actors, which would need to build rapport with the community from scratch. By strengthening established organisations, the borough can ensure a more responsive and sustainable approach to fostering cohesion.



# Community cohesion & social infrastructure

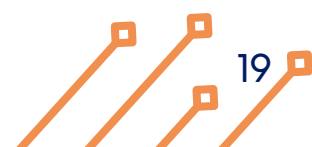
The provision of **safe spaces** emerged as a priority for addressing both immediate safety concerns and longer-term community cohesion. This includes spaces for youth-focused programming, such as after-school clubs, sports activities, and creative workshops, which offer young people constructive alternatives to spending unsupervised time on the streets.

Professionals also expressed that residents have interest in programming designed to bridge **generational divides**, such as inter-generational activities or skill-sharing sessions, to enhance a sense of connection across age groups. Befriending schemes, social clubs and community events were all highlighted as proven ways of building social capital locally.

The COVID-19 pandemic **disrupted social programming** in the borough, particularly for young people. Summer schemes and organised social events, which previously provided structure and engagement during school holidays, saw significant reductions in their availability. The reduction or absence of these programmes not only limited recreational opportunities, but also removed an essential support system for families and young people alike.

As Hammersmith and Fulham looks ahead, professionals feel that restoring and enhancing these initiatives should be a priority for rebuilding community ties, ensuring young people have access to positive outlets.

**Wellbeing activities** for personal development emerged as another component for building community cohesion, particularly to benefit working adults. The consultation suggested programmes such as mindfulness workshops, fitness classes, and arts-based activity to address mental health challenges, reduce isolation and foster personal growth.



# Health and wellbeing

Many research participants emphasised the importance of access to affordable food, mental health support, and inclusive healthcare services. This includes eye tests and glasses, immunisations, oral hygiene and the wider referral system in order to access a GP.

Broadly, population-level health indicators in the borough have been improving since 2015 before slipping back in 2020/21 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NHS Health Index reflects this, through its composite score combining various data domains pertaining to healthy people, lives, and places. Subdomains encompass specific measures such as obesity, alcohol misuse and air pollution. A score of 100 represents average levels of health in England in 2015. Hammersmith and Fulham's Health Index score decreased only slightly between 2020 and 2021 and ranked slightly lower than average among local authorities in London in 2021. Note: a higher score represents better health.

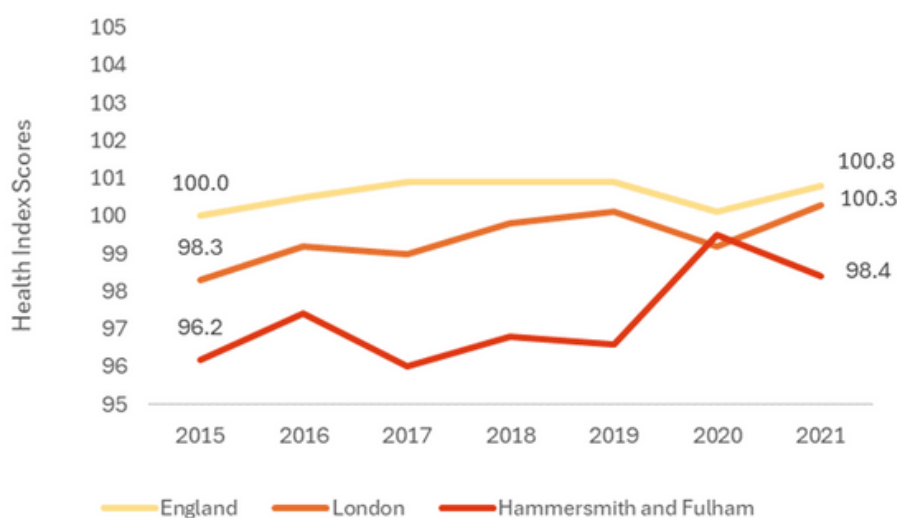


Figure 4: Health Index Scores. [Link](#)

Borough health strengths include the lowest prevalence of high blood pressure in all of London and that smoking tobacco is decreasing: in 2022, 8.4% of adults in Hammersmith and Fulham reported smoking cigarettes. [22][23]

[22] OHID (2021). Local health indicators. [Link](#)

[23] ONS (2022). Cigarette smokers. [Link](#)

# Health and wellbeing

Despite these strengths, areas for improvement remain. Inadequate **accessible green space** was articulated as a particular requirement in the borough. Certain areas, such as the A40 and Westfield, were cited as having particularly poor air quality, causing health problems such as asthma, especially for young people. As of April 2023, **air pollution was high in H&F (10.0)**: which is above both the London (9.6) and England (7.8) averages. [25]

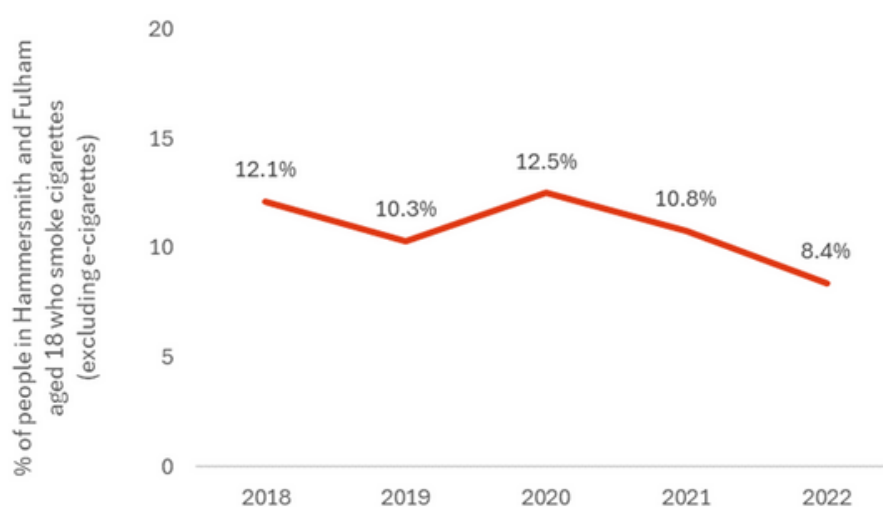


Figure 5: Percentage of people in H&F aged 18 who smoke cigarettes (excluding e-cigarettes). [Link](#)

Social isolation and related mental health challenges were considered a significant issue. Several creative community organisations noted that older adults, and particularly those aged 18-25, experience high levels of **loneliness and isolation**. The COVID-19 pandemic shift to digital health services has intensified this, as many residents have limited digital skills and find it difficult to access critical health resources.

These barriers emphasise the necessity for community-led mental health initiatives that include **in-person, culturally sensitive support options**. Several funders voiced how community mental health programmes, such as **social prescribing** and creative therapies, could be expanded to address these needs. In a post-COVID-19 landscape, this support is essential, as many residents continue to experience increased isolation, uncertainty, and stress.

[25] Department of Health and Social Care (2023). Wider determinants of health. [Link](#)

# Health and wellbeing

Overall, the borough anecdotally reports an increase in **mental health needs** as well as **neurodiversity** (namely dyslexia, autism and ADHD). Wait times for accessing mental health support are high and there is felt to be an over-reliance from statutory services on outward referrals to third party providers like Mind. Given that Hammersmith and Fulham has one of the highest suicide rates in all of London, many participants in the consultation emphasised greater mental health support should be a future priority. [26]

**Poor mental health is often symptomatic** of other unmet support needs with consultees commenting that, upon diagnosis of depression or anxiety, individuals should be referred into holistic advice covering other need areas like finances and housing. Training should be offered for all frontline professionals on how to signpost within the borough. We also learned that demand for advice services is well-beyond capacity, raising a question around who is best positioned to meet such need.

Where mental health services are provided, the consultation revealed that **cultural context**, including language and faith/religious needs, need to be better taken into account when supporting community members from the global majority. Some participants highlighted difficulties with virtual engagement on more emotive topics for these populations and requested that when virtual support is the primary provision, services should explain the context for offering support in this way.

Health is a place-based need that demands **place-based support options**. One key agent of change in relation to health need locally was felt to be housing and resident associations with the potential to conduct outreach by coordinating and convening free or low-cost sessions around health and wellbeing. Other place-based partnerships, like the historic West London Mental Health Trust's work with SOBUS, were identified as a strong mechanism for tackling inequalities, avoiding duplication and encouraging joined-up working.

Geographically deprived areas face poorer health outcomes. There is a considerable **difference in life expectancy** between the most and least deprived areas in Hammersmith and Fulham, which correlates to wage levels, particularly in males. This stark inequality means that a man in College Park and Old Oak is expected to live until 74 while a man in Palace Riverside has a life expectancy of 82.

[26] ONS (2022). London borough suicide rates. [Link](#)

# Education and employment

The consultation identified gaps in education and employment opportunities, particularly for adults over 50 and for young people navigating limited local resources. Many participants expressed that adult education programmes and accessible employment resources are sparse, especially for older adults seeking new qualifications or part-time work. These obstacles can trap residents in low-income situations, diminishing their long-term financial security and career prospects.

Young people, in particular, face barriers in **accessing information** about local services and educational opportunities. Representatives from local organisations observed that many schools, overwhelmed by logistical demands, struggle to disseminate information effectively. The **changing landscape of provision** makes communication even more difficult. A lack of awareness limits young people from using free or low-cost services which could provide mentorship, skill-building, and guidance on career options.

The consultation findings also highlight a financial strain caused by **inadequate support for youth services**. Some organisations report they are providing meals and safe recreational spaces for young people, despite it falling outside their mission and funding scope. Demand for such services surged during COVID-19 but have remained high indicating a need for consistent funding to maintain these programmes.

**Parents** are a group with particular needs in relation to employment. Community providers have recently received an influx in questions from mothers who want to return to work, but who are struggling to find adequate childcare or support for their families. While the rise in remote working has benefited many seeking to return to work while continuing their caring responsibilities, working from home can create higher levels of stress on parents and can physically isolate them from support networks in the wider community.

Poor self-esteem, lack of confidence and depression are key inhibitors to finding and maintaining secure employment. These qualities were felt to be combatted in many **out of school activities for children and young people** though these programmes are under supported. Without them, the experiences and aspirations of the next generation will be limited, negatively impacting their social development and potentially increasing anti-social behaviour.

# Digital inclusion

The 2023 Lloyds Bank Essential digital skills survey found that 84% of the UK population had foundational-level skills, compared with 86% of all Londoners. [27] At the national level, this rate had increased from the previous year when just 80% of UK residents met the foundational standard.

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham has an ambition to reach digital inclusion by 2025 and is working with a residents' Digital Accessibility Group (DAG) and VCS network to establish local priorities. As of January 2024, 85% of all premises in Hammersmith and Fulham have 25 megabytes (MB) or greater, compared with 79% of all English premises. [28]

Work is also being done to **streamline the council website** to enhance inclusion, including the creation of micro-sites and a **single sign-on method** across services. Online platforms coordinating available services, resources and opportunities were often discussed as a potential solution to increasing awareness. However, some participants raised concerns over how many residents would actually use such a tool. **Word of mouth** was felt still to be a strong method of knowledge-sharing and awareness-building. Personal recommendations which have been tested tend to be trusted over an online source which lacks verification.

In 2023 a pilot was launched with Good Things Foundation to bring more residents online, and an in-person **drop-by session** provided further support. Similarly, regular "Techy Tea Parties" are run by a voluntary organisation in the borough to raise digital skills.

Age UK has long been active locally. In 2019, they developed a National Lottery Community Fund initiative called the Staying Connected Digital Inclusion Project, to remove barriers to information technology that can disadvantage older people. The project is now in its 5th and final year, but has not received repeat funding to continue at the same scale, which may result in a gap in provision. Last year, the project supported 842 local digital skills learners and hosted 468 outreach events, workshops, IT classes, and online activities.

[27] Lloyds Bank (2023). Consumer digital index essential digital skills. [Link](#)

[28] Idem



# Additional needs

Sport, arts and cultural organisations and activities were felt to be an untapped source of social benefit, particularly supporting the provision of warm community hubs and combating loneliness. Examples were shared of the social value from residents of all ages playing in local sport leagues, and of local theatres running support groups around mental health and grief within the community.

Art and sport were more broadly identified as giving many people a **sense of purpose** and playing an influential role in developing **transferable skills** and combatting poor mental health. Qualities like teamwork, communication and self-expression were all noted directly as related to involvement in sport and the arts. Such opportunities were felt to reduce loneliness, isolation and feelings of disenfranchisement.

The concept of **cultural capital** was raised by multiple participants; the idea that exposure and knowledge around arts and culture is a valuable form of social capital which lends to greater connection, acceptance and opportunity. The consultation called for more **entry points into the arts**, either as audience members, artists or participants. Strengthening the culture capital of those least likely to encounter the art world and believe they belong within it, is one method of generating wider social impact.

Though not widely reported, an additional need was raised around **tackling climate change locally**. Both young people and their families need support to know how they can take action over climate change without struggling with **climate anxiety**. Schools were not seen to be doing enough in regard to environmental education and awareness-raising, with the voluntary sector attempting to fill gaps.

# Additional needs

Participants highlighted the need to **empower parents in early childhood development**. Many families are expressing challenges in accessing the knowledge and resources necessary to support their children's formative years. Initiatives such as parenting workshops, access to educational materials, and local peer-support networks could strengthen early childhood outcomes, ensuring children have a strong start in life.

**Addressing violence and abuse**, particularly domestic and financial abuse, was another issue of concern. Women and girls experiencing such trauma often face barriers in accessing immediate help as well as long-term recovery services. Community organisations spoke of the need for culturally sensitive, trauma-informed care, and for safe spaces where survivors can rebuild their confidence and resilience.

As trauma-induced fear over transportation limitations continue to impact employment opportunities and mobility, driving lessons were mentioned as one method to unlock economic potential and improve overall quality of life.

The importance of the voluntary and community sector providing support for community needs was emphasised throughout the consultation. However, participants noted a growing disparity in the **financial security** and **capacity** between small and large VCS organisations.

It was felt that more could be done to enable joined-up working between local charities, and smaller organisations in particular could benefit from an increased support offer, either peer-to-peer or from an external coordinator or funder such as H&F Giving.

# H&F Giving's role as a funder

## Founding principles

H&F Giving, like other Place-based Giving Schemes, has a unique role in supporting residents and communities in Hammersmith and Fulham working with the voluntary sector. Whilst our consultation revealed great ambition for H&F Giving, such expectation has to be tempered by what is possible given the size and resources of the organisation, as well as what is within the purpose of Place-based Giving:

- More than grant-making, leveraging and sharing other assets to strengthen communities.
- Amplifying the voice of local communities and collaborating with others to meet local needs.
- Building capacity and connections between communities, businesses, charities and services to harness skills, space and support for the benefit of local people.

Fundamental to this is understanding:

- How H&F giving sits within the wider support and funding ecosystem within Hammersmith and Fulham so it fills gaps, builds upon but does not displace support.
- Its role as an independent funder and ability to build a better understanding of local need, galvanising investment and funding in order to target resources to communities.
- How it can align local giving with more sustainable funding trends; equitable flexible, multi-year and giving core-cost funding.

The following sets out suggestions from the consultation process, and ideas for taking these forward.

# H&F Giving's role as a funder

## **Focusing on increasing investment into the borough to those that need it most**

H&F Giving is committed to providing sustainable funding to those closest to the community's needs. This commitment requires both unlocking new sources of funds within the borough, through relationship-building with local businesses, individuals, regional and national funders and supporting grantees.

H&F Giving could support the growth of organisations, building their capacity so that they are 'funder ready' for others. This could be about taking more risk by supporting smaller organisations which would otherwise not be 'fundable' to others, developing learning networks to share insight and practice on delivering services and support, demonstrating impact and facilitating collaboration between organisations in order to secure other funding together.

Grassroots organisations report difficulty securing funding for their core costs, despite the essential role they play in maintaining long-term stability of support for communities. The administrative and emotional burden of applying for funding is significant and favours larger organisations that have the requisite fundraising skills. H&F Giving could provide more core cost funding that allows these organisations to continue what they do best, adapting to changing community needs as these emerge.

It is clear that the competition for the reduced levels of funding for providing support and services to the community is likely to continue. Apart from increasing efforts to secure further investment and unlocking funding from businesses and individuals, H&F Giving is in a unique position to corral efforts with other funders to maximise investment into the borough. By leveraging its role as a convener, H&F Giving can facilitate collaboration among funders to fill gaps in need, ensuring that applications outside one funder's scope are directed to others who may be able to help. This interconnected approach requires strategic coordination, but has the potential to reduce duplication and foster a more cohesive funding landscape.

# H&F Giving's role as a funder

## **Convening: Building connections across the borough**

Widely, the consultation revealed how H&F Giving can serve as a critical connector, uniting stakeholders across the public, private, and voluntary sectors.

### **Connecting funders**

H&F Giving is well-positioned to bring funders together to share insights, streamline processes, and adopt a united approach. Hosting events such as "Meet the Funder" sessions could create a platform for dialogue, enabling applicants to ask questions and understand funders' intentions and the nuances of particular funding opportunities.

### **Unlocking the corporate sector**

The borough is home to numerous successful businesses which could provide significant funding for community projects. However, these opportunities often remain untapped owing to gaps in communication and alignment.

H&F Giving can act as a matchmaker, representing the network of local funders while sharing the voluntary sector's needs and highlighting the potential impact of prospective corporate partnerships.

This approach not only increases immediate, often flexible funding, but also builds relationships which extend beyond the value of individual grants.

# H&F Giving's role as a funder

## **Engaging cross-sectoral partnerships**

At the heart of H&F Giving's convening role is its connection to the community itself. By fostering engagement between funders, grassroots organisations, and local leaders, H&F Giving can ensure that local funding strategies remain rooted in lived experience.

It was suggested that celebrating community achievements—through existing recognition such as annual business awards, showcases, borough-wide events, and public promotions— can further strengthen these relationships, ensuring the voluntary sector's work is recognised and valued.

One prominent funder also identified a gap in training and knowledge-sharing for local VCS organisations, suggesting funders could play a more proactive role in capacity building.

This could include workshops on budgeting, applying for core funding, and building sustainable operational practices. Many VCS organisations felt that H&F Giving working with others was well-positioned to play a greater role in providing these types of non-financial support.

# Conclusion

The data gathered through this needs analysis highlights the complexity of inequality facing many Hammersmith and Fulham residents. Strategic, long-term funding which addresses both immediate needs and systemic issues is considered essential to effect meaningful change.

By working collaboratively with local funders, statutory and community organisations, H&F Giving has an opportunity to play a critical role in enhancing quality of life within the borough. Though, with finite resources and only a small team, H&F Giving must prioritise need and not spread itself too thinly, but focus on its potential to influence and catalyse others.

This consultation has revealed the importance of a collective and collaborative approach to supporting needs in the borough. The energy and commitment of the voluntary sector and community organisations to help make Hammersmith and Fulham a better place to live for its people is clear.

H&F Giving is at a pivotal stage in its development and this process has provided a focus and direction for the organisation as it works to champion investment and funding into the borough, working alongside the statutory sector, businesses, individuals and the VCS. There is immense opportunity and appetite for the borough to work better together, a mission which could unite sectors towards positive impact for all.

H&F Giving will be taking some time from January to March 2025 to digest the results of this research and create an action plan in response to its findings. Please reach out to [team@hfgiving.org.uk](mailto:team@hfgiving.org.uk) if you have any questions or would like to learn more.

We would like to thank everyone who took part in advancing our understanding of local need through this consultation. Together, we look forward to building a strong and connected community with a brighter and fairer future in Hammersmith and Fulham, where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.