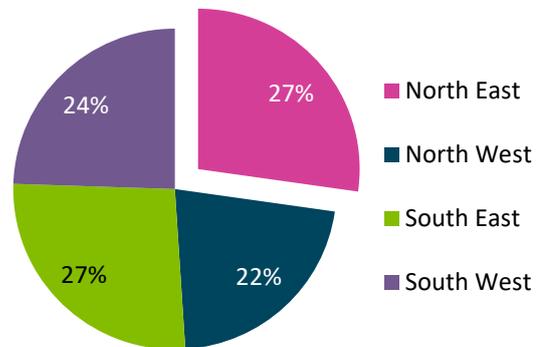


## Health and Social Care in the North East Locality

### *Research briefing*

In May 2019, we organised a series of engagement events in order to understand local residents' thoughts and expectations around shaping health and social care services in the context of the NHS Long Term Plan. We focused on **prevention, personalisation, and primary care**; as well as on **improving neighbourhoods as healthier spaces**.

We engaged with **346 local residents** over the course of **four events**. **79 people (27%)** lived in the North East locality.



The locality is home to **10 GP surgeries, 13 pharmacies and 4 dentists**.

As part of our regular outreach, in **2018 and 2019**, we received feedback from **334 locality residents** about their GP surgery and **25 residents** about their dentist. Making the total number of people we engaged with in the North East Locality **438**.

## What we have learned

The North East Locality has access to important **community resources** to support healthier lives for its residents, namely:

- ✓ Excellent access to green spaces, particularly Victoria and Mile End Parks.
- ✓ Access to cycle routes, which are well used, as well as access to paths for walking and running, in parks.
- ✓ GP surgeries that provide a good standard of medical care.

On the other hand, the area experiences **significant challenges**, namely:

- ! Lower levels of healthy life expectancy, with high rates of asthma, COPD, coronary heart disease and renal disease.
- ! High levels of unemployment, fuel poverty, child and elder deprivation.
- ! Older people at risk of isolation; with many living alone (particularly in Bow East) and many being house-bound.
- ! Lower levels of satisfaction among residents with their homes and where they live; local residents feeling unsupported to make healthy lifestyle choices and disenfranchised in relation to local decision-making.
- ! Residents feeling unsafe in their neighbourhoods; including concerns about violent crime.
- ! Poor air quality and high levels of pollution, caused primarily by heavy car traffic, particularly along Mile End Road and around Bromley by Bow station.
- ! Road traffic accidents along Mile End Road/Whitechapel Road;
- ! Competing demands on the canalside area, which is busy with pedestrians, runners and cyclists.
- ! Insufficient dentist services, particularly in the East of the borough; in turn, this means that the dental surgeries available are busier, more over-stretched and less able to provide appointments when needed.
- ! Poorer availability of GP appointments than in the South of the Borough, with 35% of patients saying that they wait for more than a week for an appointment.
- ! Unequal availability of leisure centres and exercising facilities, with Bow East and some parts of Mile End being further away from a leisure centre than other parts of the locality.

- ! Poor availability of organised health-promoting activities, such as exercising classes and groups.

## Reccomendations

- Support the organisation of exercise groups and classes for various groups (teenagers, parents with small children, active seniors) around the outdoor gym in Victoria Park.
- Expand the outdoor gym area in Victoria Park by adding a children's play area and tennis courts.
- Install more park benches and public toilets along the walkways in Victoria Park, to make it more accessible for older people and those with various conditions and impairments.
- The cafés serving healthy food in Victoria Park should be more affordable; subsidise a discount scheme to make them competitive with fast food outlets. A community vegetable garden could be a source of fresh produce for use in it.
- Introduce walkways on both sides of the canal, to encourage walking; separate cycle routes from pedestrian walkways in order to prevent accidents.
- Explore options to further pedestrianise the area around Victoria Park and the canal.
- Expand the small green areas around Devons Road, by adding outdoor gyms and more trees/ hedging to fight air pollution.
- Improve the promotion of social/ healthy living/ physical activity groups and classes to local residents, using posters, leaflets and the Internet.
- Improve provision of NHS dentists in the East of the locality.
- Consider opening a minor injuries unit, possibly integrated with a hub GP practice, in the East of the locality, to compensate for its relatively large distance from the A&E at the Royal London Hospital.

## Background

The North East Locality comprises **five wards**: Bow West, Bow East, Bromley North, Bromley South and Mile End. It is home to **78,984** people.

The high proportion of young people, and low proportion of older people, in Tower Hamlets is generally reflected in each ward within the NE Locality. Around 20% of the locality population are aged under 16, around three quarters are aged 16 to 64, and only 5% are aged 65 and over. Over 30% of the Borough's population are Bangladeshi, and more than half are from BME backgrounds.

### Community assets/ positive aspects

Excellent access to green spaces (Victoria Park, Mile End Park, Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park)

Fewer fast food outlets than the west of the Borough

Slightly lower child obesity levels than Borough average

Slightly lower rates of A&E and emergency hospital admissions for children under 5

### Health risks/ negative aspects

Healthy life expectancy in the locality is lower than Borough average for both men and women

High rates of coronary heart disease- including high rates of hospital admission for it

Highest rate of elective hospital admissions in Borough

The Eastern side of the locality has poorer access to dentists

High rates of unemployment

Slightly higher adult obesity and severe obesity levels than borough average

The Whitechapel Road area experiences high rates of road traffic accidents

Much higher asthma rates than borough average

High rates of fuel poverty

Highest rate of pre-diabetes in the Borough

Slightly higher proportion of adults with long-term illnesses than Borough average

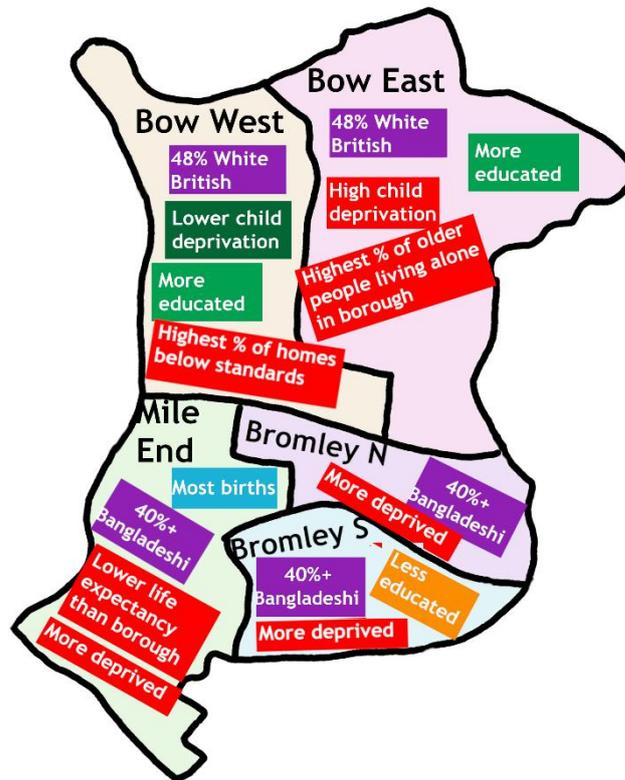
Highest rates of COPD in the Borough

High rates of child and elder poverty

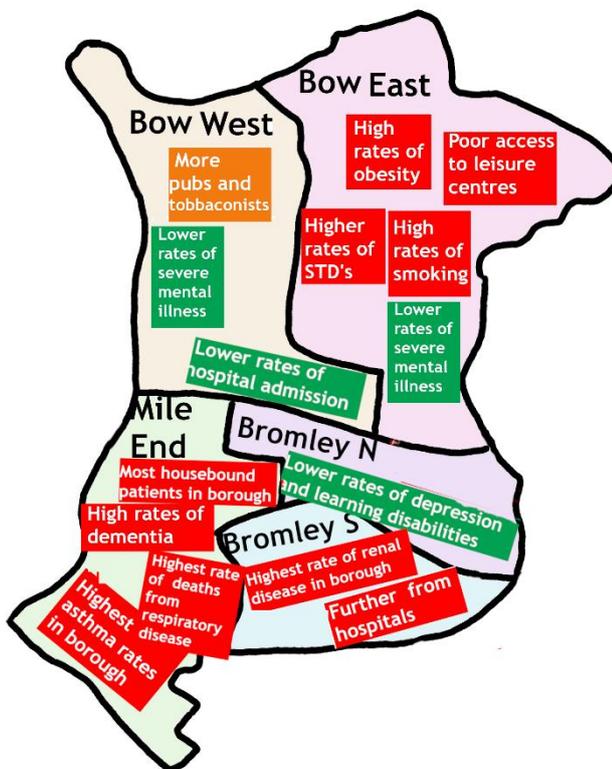
Much higher rates of deafness than Borough average

Higher rates of renal diseases than Borough average

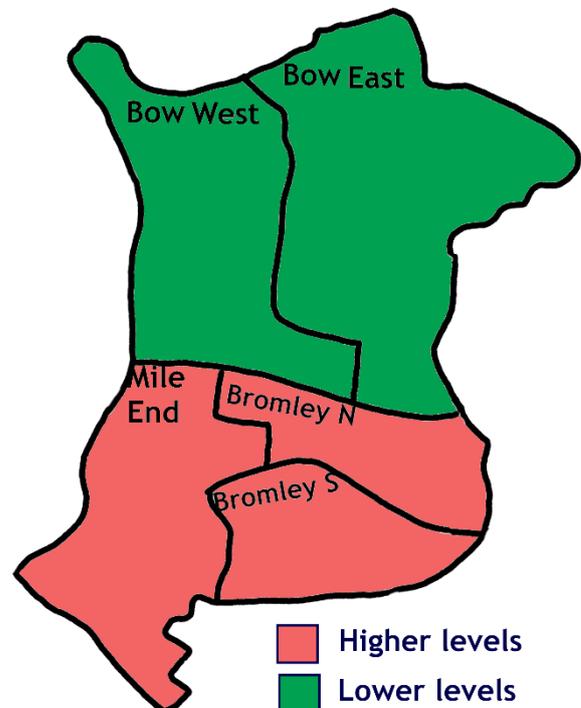
## Ward-specific issues: demographics and inequality



## Ward-specific issues: health



### Heart disease and hypertension incidence



- Higher levels
- Lower levels

\* Source for all background info including maps: [Tower Hamlets Locality Profile](#)

## Living in the North East locality

As part of our four “What would you do?” engagement events, we asked local residents to express the extent to which a series of descriptors of how residents’ experience of their local area should be, matches their personal experience, on a sliding scale (recoded as a 0 to 100 scale).

Overall, at a borough level, local residents’ views on most indicators was leaning positive; with the exception of “I can breathe clean air in my neighbourhood”, which was leaning negative. Differences between those in good health and those with poorer health outcomes were relatively small, but consistent. Residents in good health felt better supported to make healthy lifestyle choices; they were more satisfied with their living conditions and with air quality than their peers suffering from chronic illnesses, mental health conditions or disabilities. In particular, people suffering from mental health issues had a more negative view on almost all indicators: they felt less safe in their neighbourhood, less able to support themselves financially, less confident that they can access good healthcare services and also more disenfranchised in relation to local decision-making.

**Residents of the North East locality fared consistently worse than all the other localities across all indicators.**

**In particular, they were more likely to find that they are poorly supported to make healthy lifestyle choices, that air quality is poor, that health and social care services don’t work well together and that the neighbourhoods they live in are unsafe.**

**They felt significantly more disenfranchised in relation with how their local community was run, and less satisfied with their homes and where they lived.**

Definitely no

Definitely yes



I am supported to make healthy lifestyle choices



I am satisfied with my home and where I live



I can breathe clean air in my neighbourhood



Health and social care services work well together



I can access good healthcare services if I need them



I feel safe in my neighbourhood



I can financially support myself and my family



I have a say in how my local community is run



I can access good social care services if I need them



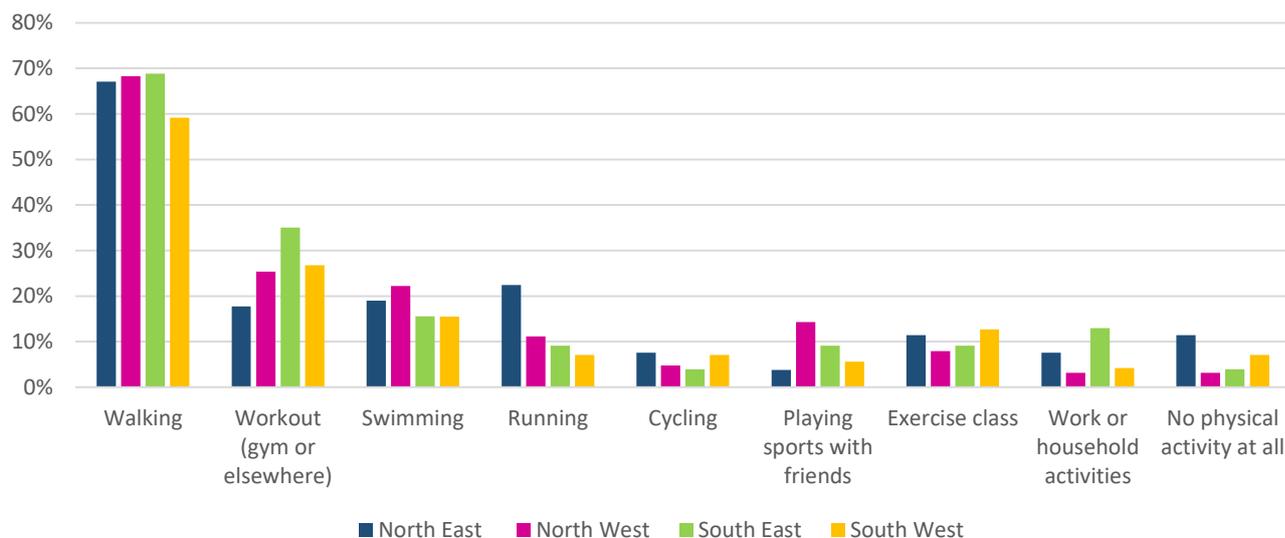
I am treated as an individual; my specific needs are considered



## Healthier neighbourhoods

As part of our four locality events, we asked local residents to tell us **what they like to do in order to stay physically active**.

Overall, by far, **walking** was the most popular form of exercise, named by **62%** of respondents. It was preferred by both men and women, and by all ethnic groups. It was also preferred by respondents aged 25 or over.



Residents of the North East locality were more likely to **run** than residents of the other three localities, and slightly more likely to **cycle**. This may have to do with the presence of Victoria Park in the locality, and of cycle routes along Mile End road.

On the other hand, they were less likely to work out or play sports with friends; and they had a higher percentage of respondents who said they didn't engage in any kind of physical activity. This could be related to the locality's high incidence of heart, respiratory and renal chronic illness, with many residents being too unwell to stay physically active, or being unaware of safer and less demanding ways to stay physically active while living with chronic illness. While leisure centres such as the Mile End Park Leisure Centre and Stadium offer a wide variety of exercising facilities and sports courts, access to leisure facilities at locality level remains patchy, with Bow East and some parts of Mile End being further away from sports and recreations facilities.

### I can do the types of physical activity that I enjoy in Tower Hamlets



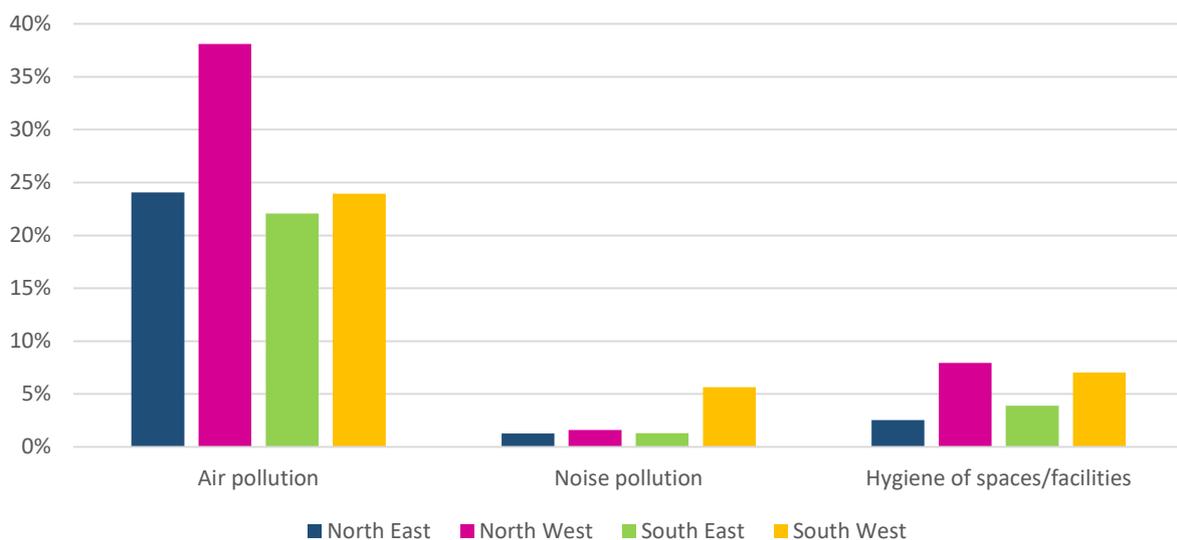
While in all localities a strong majority of respondents felt that they can do the types of physical activity that they enjoy in Tower Hamlets, the North East of the borough fared slightly worse than average in this respect.

We also asked participants to our four locality events to tell us what obstacles, if any, they found to being more physically active and having a healthier lifestyle in their local area. **69% of respondents** named at least one problem. The environment and safety issues, named by 30% of respondents in the borough each, were considered the biggest obstacle to healthier and more active living.

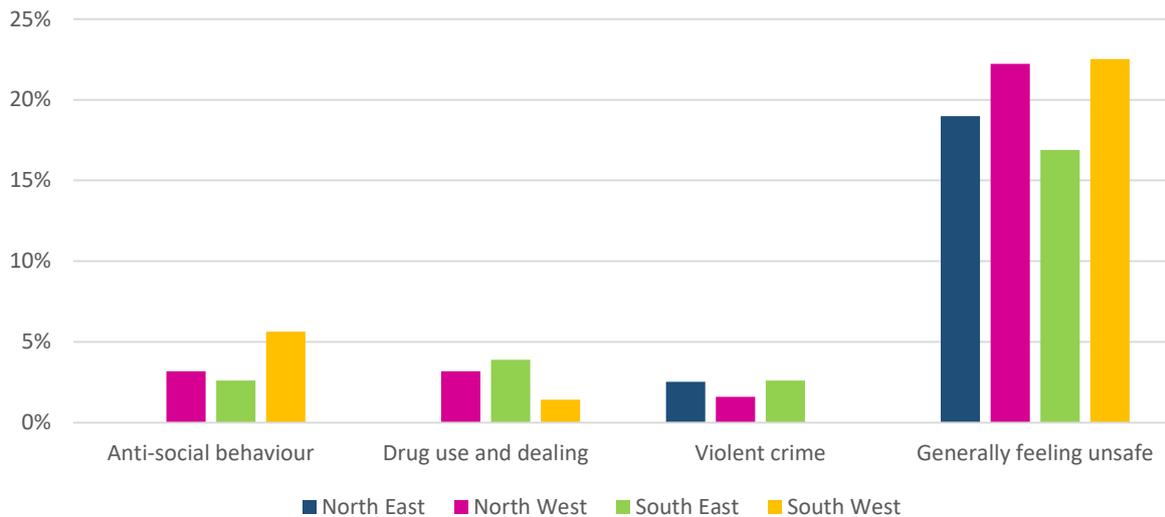
**For all four localities, air pollution was the biggest concern mentioned by residents, followed by generally feeling unsafe.**

Residents of the North East Locality were less likely to name environmental issues as a drawback to healthier lives than those living in the West of the Borough; which is surprising, given how they are more likely than all other localities to believe that air quality in their area is poor when directly asked.

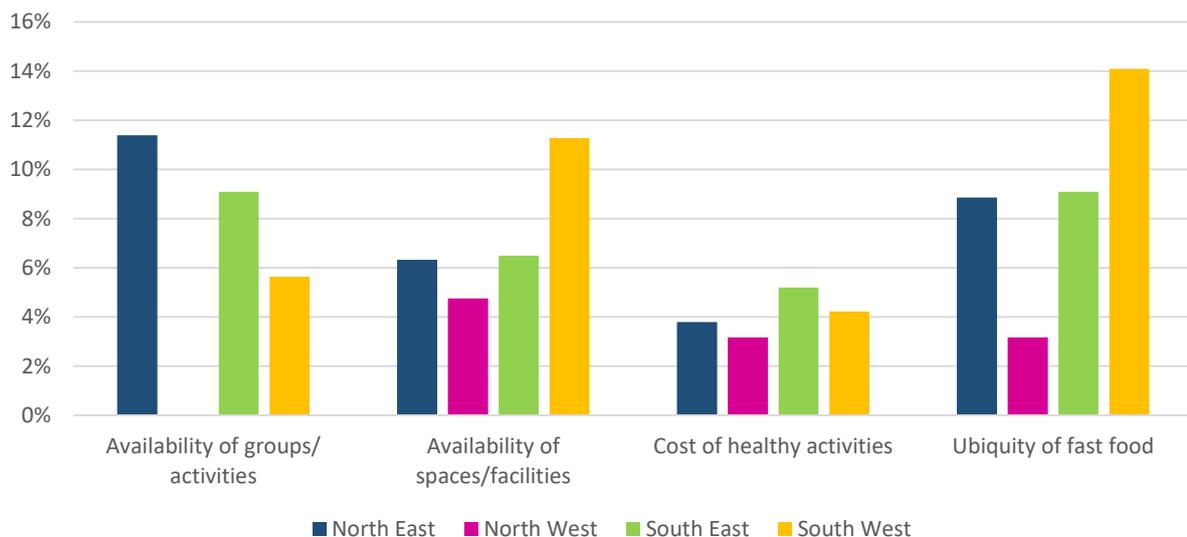
Nonetheless, nearly a quarter of them found that air pollution is a factor that stops them from living healthier lifestyles. It is likely that the presence of Victoria Park and other large green spaces plays a role in this.



Also surprisingly, despite being less likely than residents of other localities to say that they feel safe in their local area, residents of the North East locality were less likely to name safety and crime issues as concerns that stop them from having a healthier lifestyle than those living in the West of the borough. They did not mention drug use/dealing and anti-social behaviour concerns, but a small minority were concerned about violent crime.



People in the North East locality were the most likely to bring up the poor availability of organised groups and activities, such as exercising classes. Ubiquity of fast food restaurants was also a concern.



## Designing a healthier locality

As part of the four locality events we have held, we have asked local residents to show us on a map of their locality *what helps them stay healthy locally, what hinders their efforts to stay healthy, and what could be done to improve their health at a local level.*

Overall, in the borough, there was a high level of interest for:

- More youth- and family-oriented activities in parks; such as organised sports for children and teenagers; as well as possibly activities for seniors such as walking groups and light exercise classes.
- Involving young people, particularly boys, in social and sporting activities, as part of initiatives to prevent their involvement with drug use, dealing or gang violence.
- Developing play areas/ family areas in the green spaces that don't yet have one (especially the smaller ones that could be extended for this purpose).
- Providing subsidised gym membership or gym/swimming pool entries in leisure centres for those who would have trouble affording them at full price, such as benefits recipients.
- Making gyms and exercising facilities more inclusive for people who have disabilities or limitations in how they can use them.
- Installing more gyms in open spaces, as a free alternative to gyms; and organising exercising groups around them.
- Initiatives to provide more affordable alternatives to unhealthy fast-food; including food co-ops, growing food/allotments, community gardening and family-friendly cafes with healthier menus.
- Supporting community and cultural centres to expand their provision.

## North East Locality and Victoria Park

Victoria Park is a valuable community resource well-used by local residents. The outdoor gym in the park is appreciated; children's play areas and courts for team sports could be installed next to it. Outdoor exercise classes for mums' groups could be held near play areas. Installing more park benches and public toilets would make the park more accessible to people who are elderly, chronically ill or partially mobility-impaired.

The park could be further used to promote healthy living, for instance by opening more cafés serving affordable healthy food in the park, expanding the community garden for growing vegetables, or by organising more group classes and family-oriented events. The park would also be suitable for guided walks and trips.

The Council has occasionally closed the park for events and festivals; which local people have found to be disruptive, both as it means they lose access to the park temporarily, and because of rubbish abandoned in the park after events.

Overall, the area is suitable for running, cycling and walking, as well as well-served by gyms, but more opportunities for organised physical activity are needed by local residents, targeting different groups that would struggle to otherwise exercise on their own (e.g. the elderly, parents of small children). Several residents have said that they feel poorly informed about activities taking place in the borough. Leaflets, posters and the internet could be used to promote local events.

As the Mile End area is particularly affected by air pollution, multiple respondents expressed the view that the area around Victoria Park should be further pedestrianised, with some car-free zones around residential streets. More walking routes should go around the park and walkways should be available on both sides of the canal, and cycle routes should be separate from pedestrian footpaths.

They also expressed desire for better cycle routes, away from cars but also clearly separated from pedestrian routes, in order to avoid accidents. A bike share/ bike rental scheme has also been proposed. Residents living in blocks of flats report not having a space for bike storage in their home.

Better provision of electric charging points around the Mile End Station has also been proposed as a solution.

The Idea Store in Bow acts as a community and information hub; it could be used for activity such as cookery classes, to promote learning around healthy living.



# Primary care in the locality

## Dentists

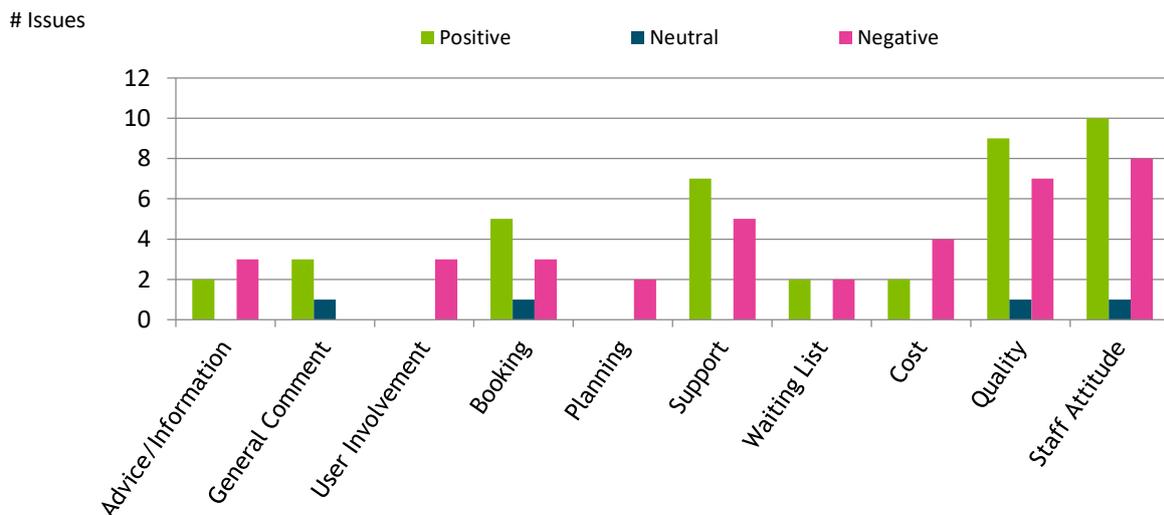
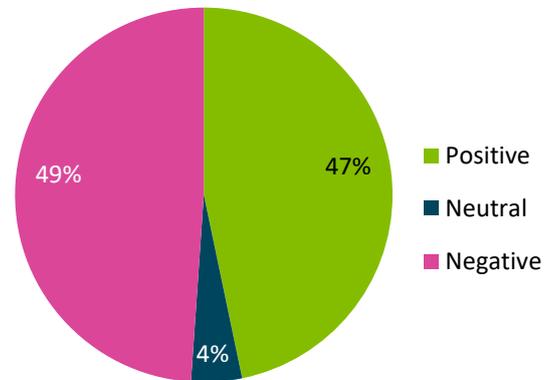
The North East locality is home to 4 dental practices.

According to the Tower Hamlets North East Locality Profile, access to dentists is mixed across the North East locality with the western side of the locality generally having good access (including to dentists with addresses in the North West locality) and the eastern side of the locality having some of the furthest distance to travel to a dentist in the Borough.

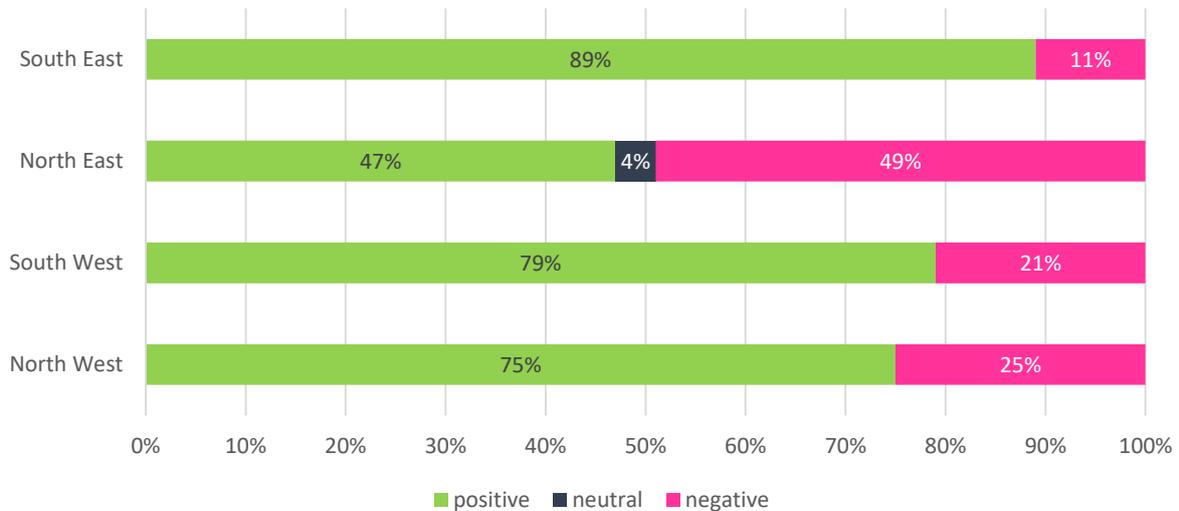
In 2018 and 2019, we have received feedback from 46 service users, identifying 92 issues.

Overall, local residents' experience with dentists in the area has been mixed.

A majority of patients feel that they are receiving a good service from polite and compassionate professionals, and that they are well supported; however, a significant minority have had negative experiences on all these fronts; and some have complained about poor communication, particularly around private payment for treatments, as well as poor customer service at reception.



## Patient opinion of dental services is the lowest of all four localities.



- This place is a professional team of specialists, always busy, but always top quality. Receptionists are very friendly and helping, and always very busy, doctor is really caring and attentive, have never had any problems here.*
- Clean and very professional clinic. Satisfied with the very professional specialists. Always friendly service. Flexible appointment and payment system. Very reliable and convenient prices. Also do NHS patients. Recommended for any type of dental service. Some dentists do speak Russian as well. Close to city and much cheaper.*
- Surprised to see negative reviews on this site. Other than a slight wait to be seen, which the receptionist apologised for, my experience was fine.*
- I came here after a dentist down the road managed to chip one of my teeth in a deep clean; resulting in decay and toothache months later. The dentist at [your practice] did a check-up and then was able to do the small filling in the same session- bonus! He was really precise and a perfectionist about making sure it was exactly the right size/shape for my bite. Reception staff were efficient and helpful.*
- Despite my 90 year old mother being a registered in that dentist she was unable to be seen by them. They have no disability access and furthermore after we had taken her to an emergency out of hours dentist and an assessment was done they refused to accept the assessment or even advise me as to what my next options are. The only way I can describe the service i received was careless and inconsiderate. I'm having to take her to a private dentist now. I'd advise anyone to stay away as they made it obvious they don't care.*
- Receptionists don't seem to understand basic customer service, they turned me off the whole place. I'd rather my teeth fall out one by one than deal with them again.*

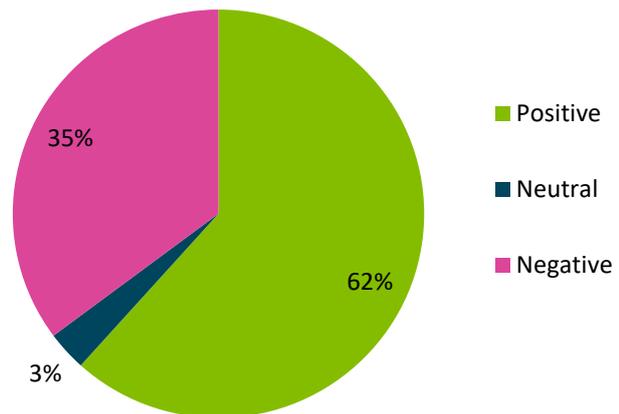
## GP surgeries

The North East locality is home to **10 GP surgeries**.

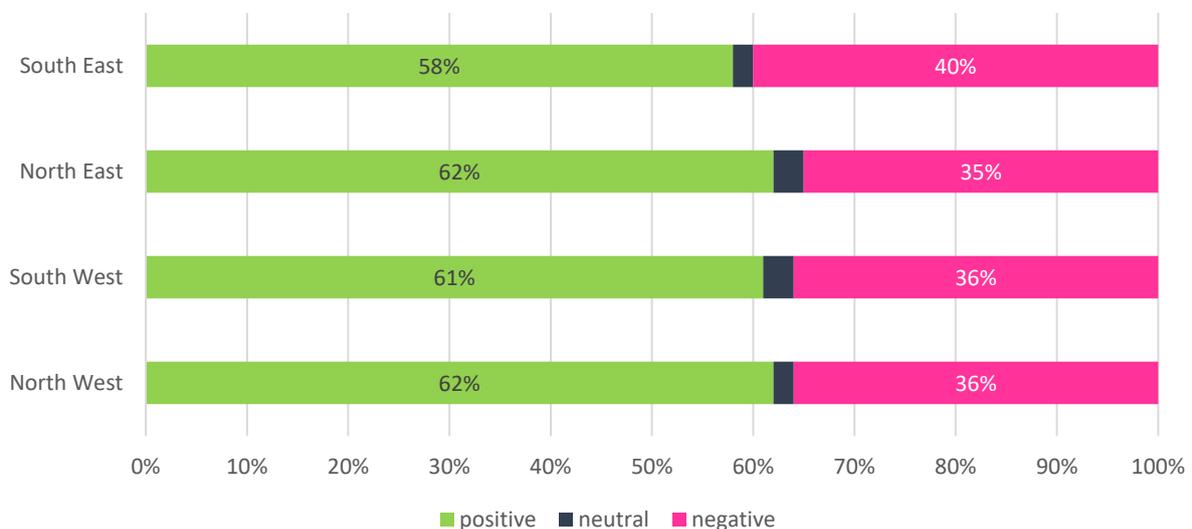
According to the Tower Hamlets North East Locality Profile, access to GP practices is unequal across the North West locality, with parts of Mile End and Bow East having some of the furthest distance to a nearest GP within Tower Hamlets.

In 2018 and 2019, we have received feedback from 367 service users, identifying 1614 issues. Additionally, we have analysed data from the GP Patient Survey 2018.

Overall, the opinion of patients who gave feedback to Healthwatch was **broadly positive**.

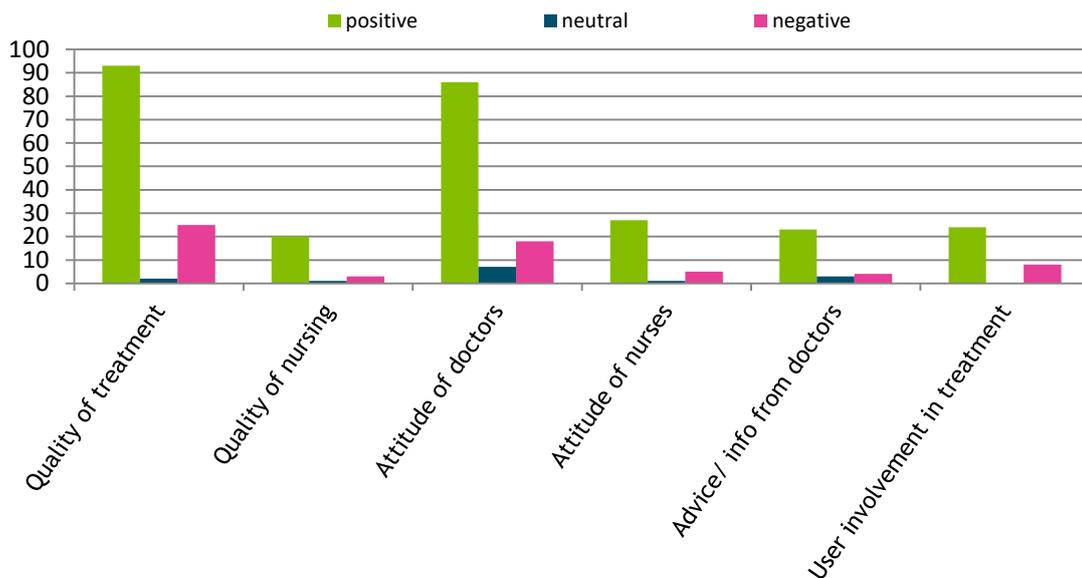


Satisfaction with GP surgeries is broadly similar across localities.



## Quality of treatment and nursing

Residents of the North East locality are generally happy with the quality of service they receive from doctors and nurses; they find medical professionals to be helpful and compassionate. They are satisfied with how doctors communicate and they feel empowered to make their own informed decisions about their treatment.

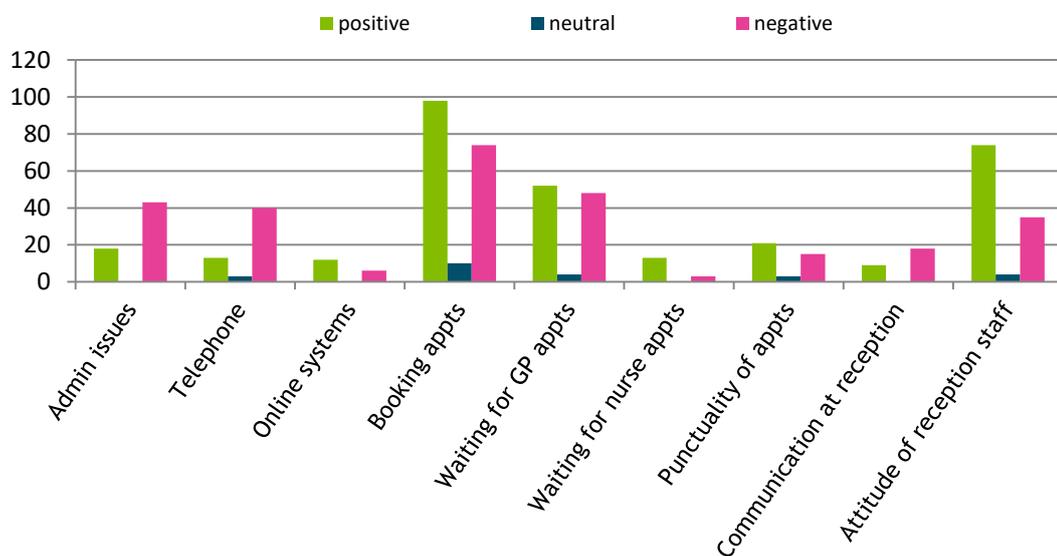


- I have visited for a variety of reasons and have always found the doctors and nurses to be extremely helpful, caring, and friendly and will always take you seriously.*
- I was fortunate to have a particular nurse as the nurse who carried out my smear test. She has an excellent bedside manner, very calming and caring, an absolute asset to the GP practice.*
- I was really impressed with the Dr I saw today. He was friendly and listened to what I was saying. He understood my concerns but was also very reassuring. He was able to help me with everything I wanted to talk about today and I feel like my care is in good hands. I'm very grateful.*
- [I am under treatment for drug addiction and my GP] is very interested in my recovery. They make sure that I am doing well and he won't prescribe me medicine without asking me why I need the medicine, and he makes sure that the medicine will benefit me in the end. He also is very understanding and respectful to me. He wrote a sick note for me that was respectful and professional. He didn't say I have a drug addiction to my job which was nice.*
- My GP is a fantastic GP who made me feel listened to and respected. She helped me with a problem I have had for a long time, talking me through options clearly, following up to let me know my results, and throughout making me feel confident we could sort things. It really made the world of difference, thank you. Thanks also to the rest of the staff at St Andrews who are friendly and efficient!*

## Organisation and access to services

While patients find that reception staff are polite and friendly, communication with reception is thought to be lacking; GP practices are difficult to reach by telephone and admin issues cause confusion.

Local people's experience of making appointments is mixed: while overall opinion leans positive, some users find that they have to wait an unreasonable amount of time for an appointment, or that appointments don't run on time. Nurse appointments appear to be easier to book than GP appointments.



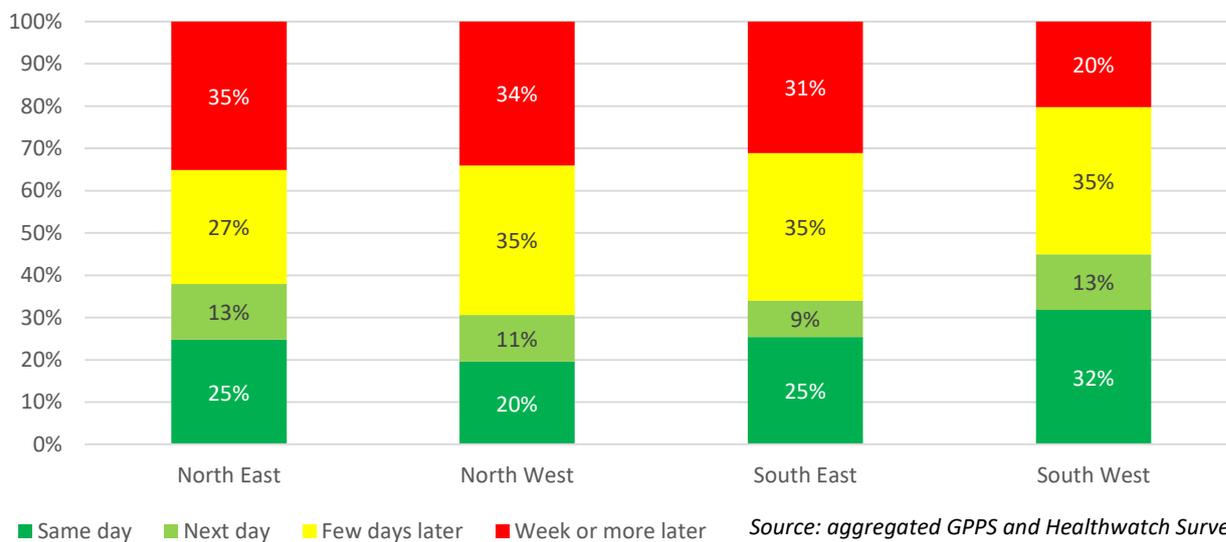
These issues mean that some patients may find GP services to be **difficult to access and inefficient**. Because practices have difficulty dealing with high volumes of telephone calls, some patients end-up turning up at the practice in person in order to book emergency appointments in the morning; reception staff are under pressure, consequently, to deal with multiple patient queues. This may contribute to communications and admin errors happening.

Poor efficiency in booking appointments while dealing with a high volume of patients may also mean that appointments are not allocated sufficient time, causing them to over-run; which means delays for the next patients.

- ☛ *There's a time frame which you have to call during, and even then they may not have any appointments available. In general, it is hard to schedule an appointment. It can take about 15-30minutes to have your call answered. Normally, I have to call the next day because I can't get through. The doctor is always running late, usually 20-30 minutes.*

*In March 2019, we have analysed data from the national GP Patient Survey, as well as a survey we have carried out ourselves, online and face-to-face, in order to understand how patients access GP services.*

Patients in the North East locality are the most likely to wait for more than a week for an appointment. On the other hand, they are more likely than average to be seen the same day or the next day.



Opinion of waiting for appointments is mixed, with some patients feeling that they have been seen promptly enough, while others believing that they had to wait an unreasonable amount of time.

- 👉 *My child got a next day nurse appointment; I think that's entirely reasonable. My experience booking the appointment was very good. When I need an appointment I always get one straight away. The appointments are for the baby, so I have no issues.*
- 👉 *If I need it immediately, I ask for an emergency appointment and am always seen the same day.*
- 👉 *I called to make an appointment with a GP and was seen the next day; I think that's somewhat reasonable. With emergency appointments it's really good, with my symptoms they are really good, and they will see me straightaway; but calling is so bad, and it is difficult to go online for me. Sometimes you can't get appointments. I can't be waiting on the phone all day.*
- 👉 *As the appointment was offered to me as a general check-up, I don't mind the fact that I had to wait more than a week for it, but if I had to wait this long for when I needed to see a doctor I would not be happy.*
- 👉 *I got my nurse appointment within two weeks to four weeks, I think that's a bit too long. My experience booking the appointment was poor. I am an unwell person. My family had to phone the surgery on two to three occasions to get this appointment. We need appointments but it is very hard to get one.*
- 👉 *It is incredibly difficult to get an appointment unless you are willing to wait for weeks, which unless you have an appointment for a repeat prescription, is never the case.*

## How patients access GP services

Most appointments in Tower Hamlets GP surgeries are **booked over the phone**. Differences between localities are relatively minor. Overall, the North East locality is fairly typical of how patients book appointments throughout the borough.

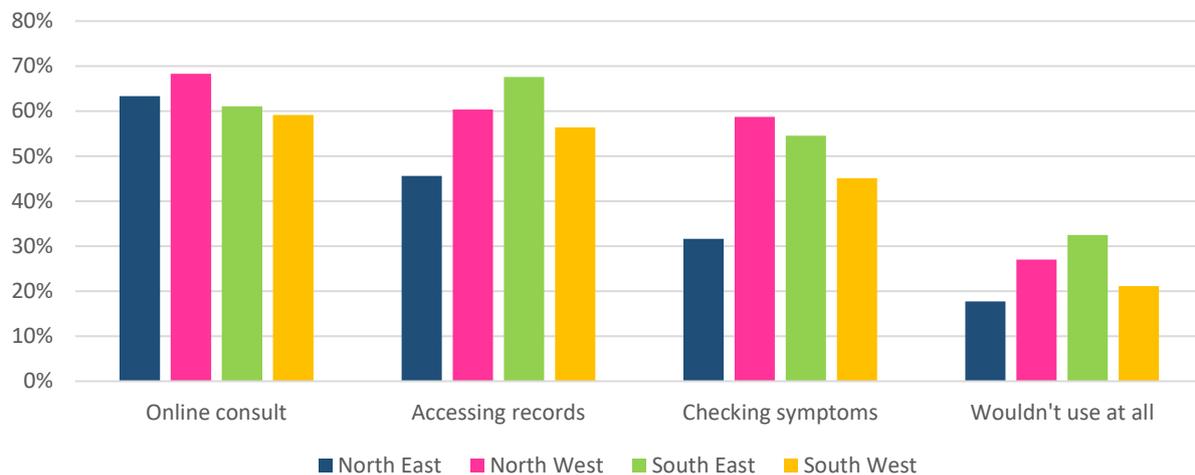


Source: aggregated GPPS and Healthwatch Survey data, Total 6094 responses; NE Locality 1612 responses

Issues around contacting GP practices by telephone are often brought up by patients:

- *GP and nurse services have got better, but telephone still takes long to answer, hard to get an appointment when we need, have to take off from work to suit appointment time. Reception desk mostly with one staff member during afternoon with long queue*
- *Sometimes it can be hard to get through to reception. In general, it isn't (unless you ring at 8 am when they open in which case you will probably end up in a queue) but on at least one occasion when returning a call from a GP after work the phone has not been answered for over 15 minutes.*
- *Phone rarely answered even in opening hours. On several occasions the phone has rang during opening hours for 25 mins without being answered*

As part of our four What Would You Do events, we asked local residents if they would use an NHS app for GP services, and for what purpose. Residents of the North East locality were the least likely to say that they would not use the app at all, but they were less interested than residents of the other localities in accessing their medical records or checking their symptoms online.



Patients find online tools to be useful, provided that they are user friendly and that they work efficiently and as intended.

- The best thing about [my GP surgery] is that you can do almost everything online. They have appointments, symptom checkers and repeat prescriptions. Telephone consultations are really convenient and usually mean I can get my problem sorted quickly and efficiently.*
- We especially welcome the ability to go online to book appointments, ask for repeat prescriptions and have them sent through to our designated chemist.*
- My experience booking the appointment was very good. I initially booked online, but changed it after checking for cancellation which I phoned to do. I find the online service easy.*
- My experience booking the appointment was good. It was easier to book online than wait in a phone queue*
- A nice staff member helped me set-up my patient access account, which is so convenient for me as I don't have to call in or come in to the practice to book appointments.*

On the other hand, if online systems are not functional, either for technical reasons, or for practical reasons such as poor availability of appointments in the practice, people's trust in them decreases.

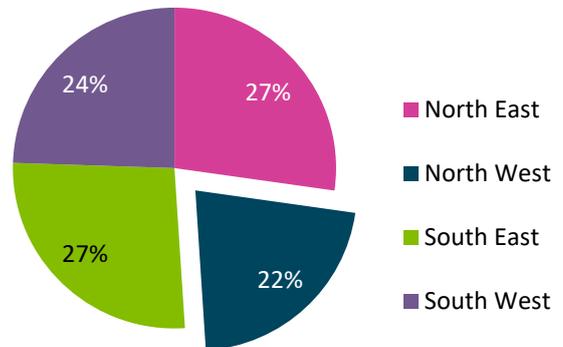
- The practice introduced an "E-consult" feature that really works well, apart from when you get a voicemail asking you to ring up and book an appointment only to be told no appointments for a minimum of 20 days and you need to come into the surgery at 8am to try and get a same day.*
- For three years I have been using this practice and every visit something is missed. Don't bother with online services as there is no response. When you call in the answer is to schedule an appointment.*

## Health and Social Care in the North West Locality

### *Research briefing*

In May 2019, we have organised a series of engagement events in order to understand local residents' thoughts and expectations around shaping health and social care services in the context of the NHS Long Term Plan, with a particular focus on **prevention, personalisation, and primary care**; as well as on **improving neighbourhoods as healthier spaces**.

We have engaged with **346 local residents** over the course of **four events**. **63 people (22%)** lived in the North West locality.



The locality is home to **10 GP surgeries, 14 pharmacies and 14 dentists**.

As part of our usual outreach, in **2018 and 2019**, we have received feedback from **367 locality residents** about their GP surgery and **46 residents** about their dentist.

## What we have learned

The North West Locality has access to important **community resources** to support healthier lives for its residents, namely:

- ✓ Excellent access to hospitals (Mile End Hospital; and Royal London Hospital nearby).
- ✓ Very good access to GP surgeries, providing high quality clinical treatment and nursing.
- ✓ Very good access to dentists and pharmacies.
- ✓ Very good access to leisure centres.
- ✓ The Whitechapel Market, as a source of fresh produce
- ✓ Lower rates of housebound patients and dementia than the rest of the borough.

On the other hand, the area experiences **significant challenges**, namely:

- ! High smoking rates and high density of tobacconists.
- ! High density of fast food outlets.
- ! High rates of severe mental illness.
- ! Very high levels of air pollution.
- ! Local residents feeling concerned about drug dealing/use and antisocial behaviour in their neighbourhoods.
- ! Poor hygiene of public spaces.
- ! Vulnerable rough sleepers in public places.
- ! Longer waits for GP appointments than residents in the South of the borough, with 34% of patients saying that they had to wait more than a week for an appointment, and only 20% being seen on the same day (lowest rate in the borough).

## Reccomendations

- Work with GP surgeries in the locality to improve patient access and reduce waiting lists.
- Introduce more cycle paths and pedestrian routes connecting the smaller parks in the locality with Victoria Park; in order to encourage walking and cycling as alternatives to driving.
- Examine the possibility of partially pedestrianising the Mile End area, in order to cut down on air pollution and heavy car traffic.
- Expand the small green spaces situated in the Bethnal Green- Brick Lane area; including the installation of outdoors gyms.
- Review provision of street bins in the Aldgate- Whitechapel- Bethnal Green area, to prevent rubbish dumping and dog fouling.
- Improve street lighting in the areas around Cambridge Heath, Bonner Road and Globe Road; to prevent antisocial behaviour and drug dealing/use, and to help local residents feel safer in their neighbourhoods.
- Improve resources and funding for NHS and charity-based services to tackle severe mental illness, substance abuse and homelessness.
- Improve resources and funding for initiatives able to prevent homelessness, including social housing provision, employability, and support for people who cannot work to support themselves because of disability or illness (physical or mental).

## Background

The North West Locality comprises of **four wards**: Spitalfields and Banglatown, Weavers, St Peter's and Bethnal Green. It is home to **71,551** people.

The high proportion of young people, and low proportion of older people, in Tower Hamlets is generally reflected in each ward within the NW Locality. Nearly 20% of the locality population are aged under 16, around three quarters are aged 16 to 64, and 6% are aged 65 and over. Over 30% of the borough's population are Bangladeshi ethnics, and more than half are from BME backgrounds.

### Community assets/ positive aspects

Excellent access to hospitals, with Mile End Hospital in the locality and Royal London Hospital nearby

Very good access to GPs, dentists and pharmacists, most neighbourhoods are within 500m of each

Very good access to leisure centres, most neighbourhoods are within 500m of nearest one

Levels of alcohol consumption are low (partly because of the area's religious makeup)

Lowest rates of housebound patients in the borough

Age-standardised rates of dementia much lower than borough average

### Health risks/ negative aspects

Healthy life expectancy in the locality is lower than borough average for both men and women

Highest rates of mortality and under 65 deaths in the borough

Higher smoking rates than the borough average and the highest density of tobacconists in the borough

The Whitechapel Road, Brick Lane and Shoreditch areas experience high rates of road traffic accidents

Much higher rates of severe mental illness than the rest of the borough

High density of fast food outlets

Highest rates of cancer mortality in the borough

Highest levels of air pollution in the borough.

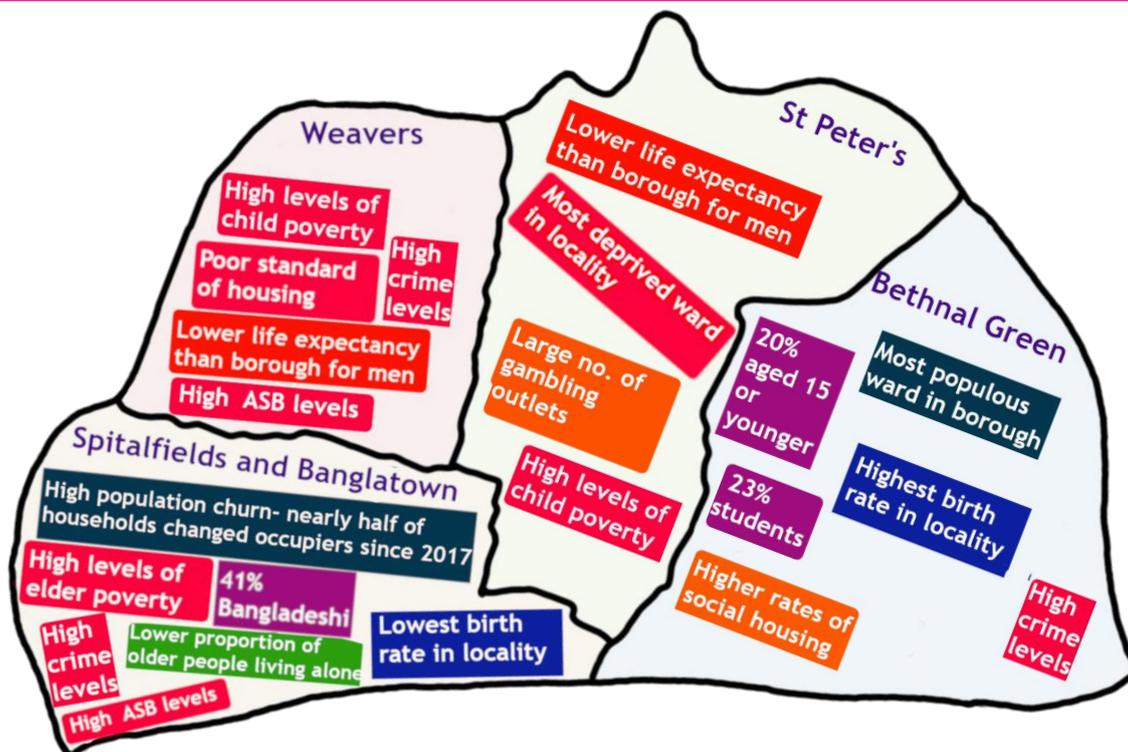
Children born in the locality have lower birth weights

Highest rates of heart disease in the borough

Higher rates of cataracts and senile macular degeneration than borough

\* Source for all background info: **Tower Hamlets Locality Profile**

## Ward-specific issues: demographics and inequality



## Ward-specific issues: health



\* Source for all background info including maps: Tower Hamlets Locality Profile

## Living in the North West locality

We have asked local residents to express the extent to which a series of descriptors of how residents' experience of their local area should be matches their personal experience, on a sliding scale (recoded as a 0 to 100 scale).

Overall, at a borough level, local residents' views on most indicators was leaning positive; with the exception of "I can breathe clean air in my neighbourhood", which was leaning negative. Differences between those in good health and those with poorer health outcomes were relatively small, but consistent. Residents in good health felt better supported to make healthy lifestyle choices; they were more satisfied with their living conditions and with air quality than their peers suffering from chronic illnesses, mental health conditions or disabilities. In particular, people suffering from mental health issues had a more negative view on almost all indicators: they felt less safe in their neighbourhood, less able to support themselves financially, less confident that they can access good healthcare services and also more disenfranchised in relation to local decision-making.

**Residents of the North West locality were the most likely to feel that they feel safe in their neighbourhoods. They also felt that they had the highest levels of involvement in relation to how their local community is ran.**

**Surprisingly, despite having the poorest air quality in the borough, they were the most likely to agree that they can breathe clean air in their neighbourhoods. This could indicate differences in air quality between different areas in the locality, or differences in awareness.**

Definitely no

Definitely yes



I am supported to make healthy lifestyle choices



I am satisfied with my home and where I live



I can breathe clean air in my neighbourhood



Health and social care services work well together



I can access good healthcare services if I need them



I feel safe in my neighbourhood



I can financially support myself and my family



I have a say in how my local community is run



I can access good social care services if I need them



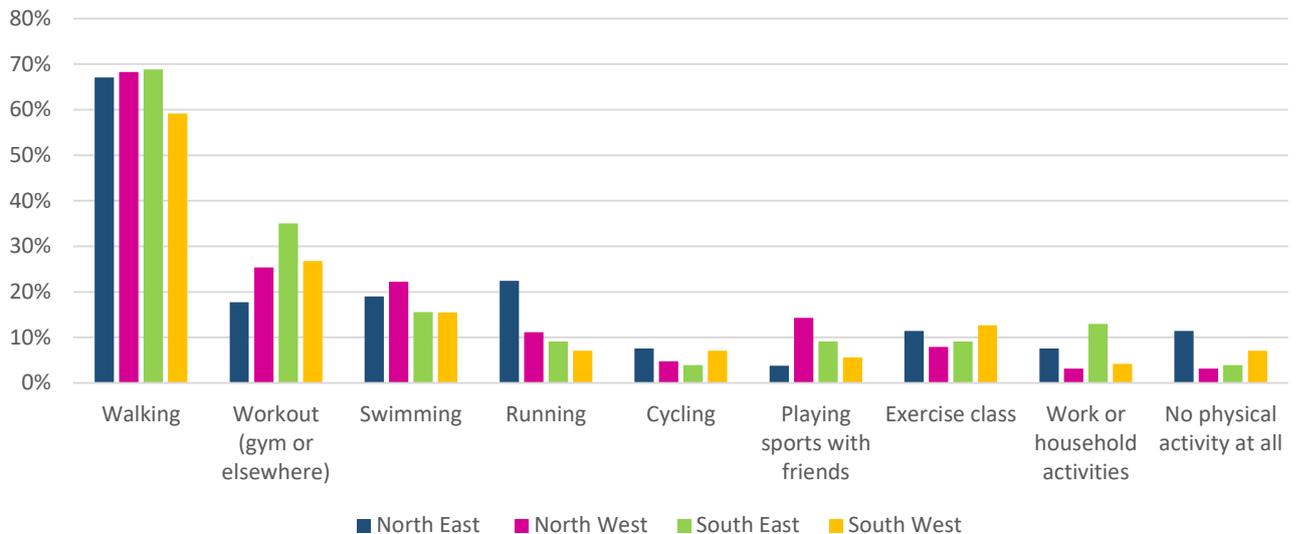
I am treated as an individual; my specific needs are considered



## Healthier neighbourhoods

As part of our four locality events, we asked local residents to tell us **what they like to do in order to stay physically active**.

Overall, by far, **walking** was the most popular form of exercise, named by **62%** of respondents. It was preferred by both men and women, and by all ethnic groups. It was also preferred by respondents aged 25 or over.



Residents of the North West locality were more likely to swim and play sports with friends. They were less likely to rely on household and work tasks for physical activity, and less likely to not exercise at all. This could be a consequence of access to leisure facilities in the borough being generally good.

The Whitechapel Sports Centre in the locality offers badminton, basketball and volleyball courts, while the privately owned Play Five a Side court in Bethnal Green offers facilities for football, tennis and hockey. The Whitechapel Sports Centre and York Hall Centre both offer swimming pools as well as sauna or spa treatments, and in the summer residents also have easy access to the London Fields Lido in neighbouring Hackney.

Exercise classes, on the other hand, enjoyed less popularity than in the other three localities.

## I can do the types of physical activity that I enjoy in Tower Hamlets



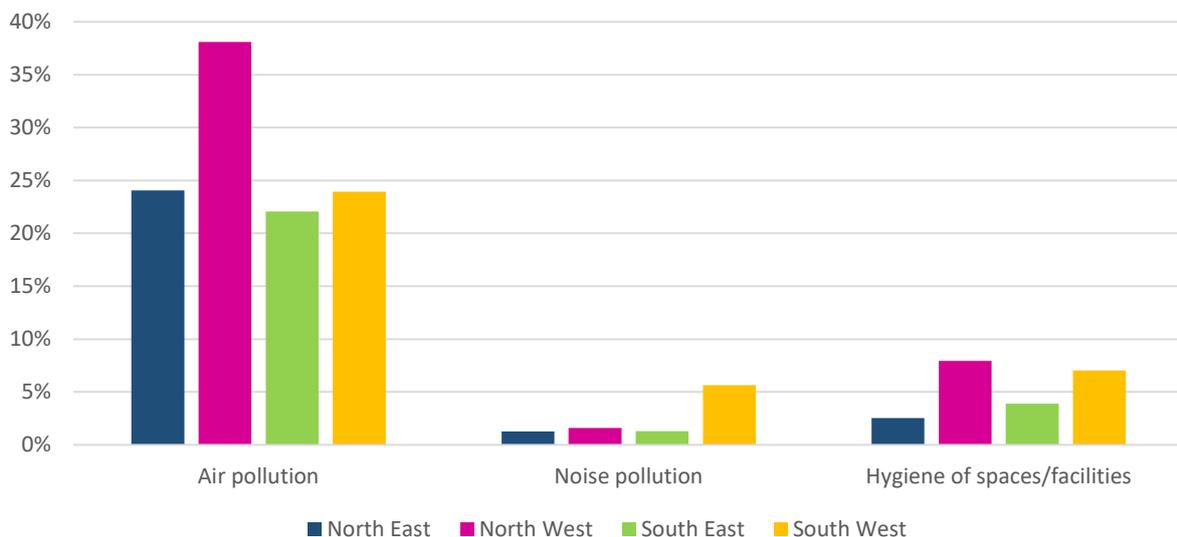
While in all localities a strong majority of respondents felt that they can do the types of physical activity that they enjoy in Tower Hamlets, the North West of the borough fared slightly better than average in this respect.

We have also asked participants to our four locality events to tell us what obstacles, if any, they found to being more physically active and having a healthier lifestyle in their local area. **69% of respondents** named at least one problem. The environment and safety issues, named by 30% of respondents in the borough each, were considered the biggest obstacle to healthier and more active living.

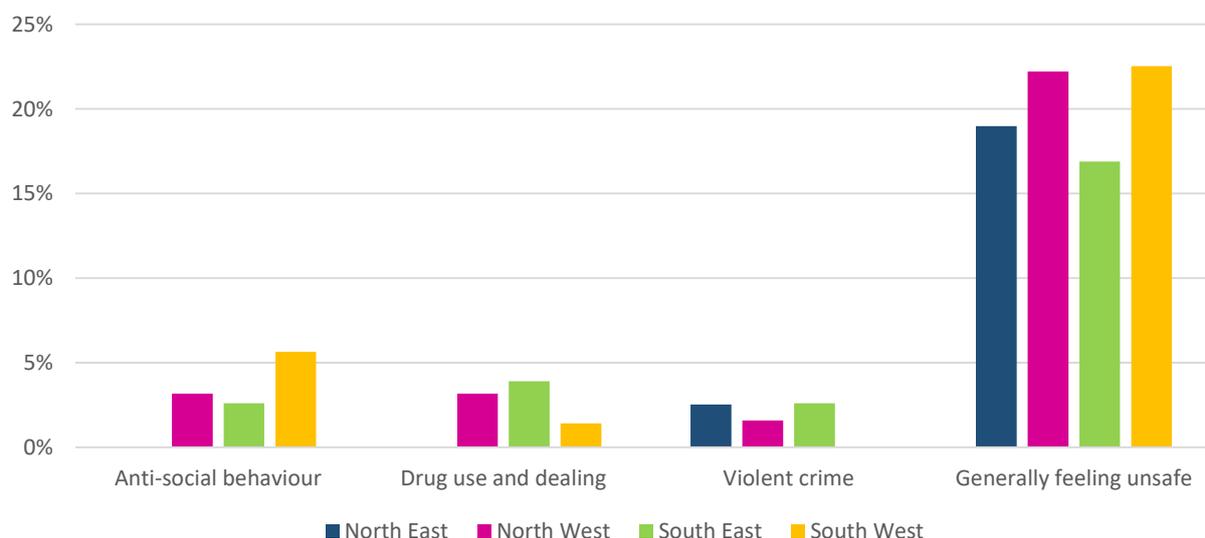
**For all four localities, air pollution was the biggest concern mentioned by residents, followed by generally feeling unsafe.**

Residents of the North West Locality were the most concerned with air pollution and with the hygiene of public spaces; despite the fact that when directly asked they were the most likely to agree that they can breathe clean air in their local area.

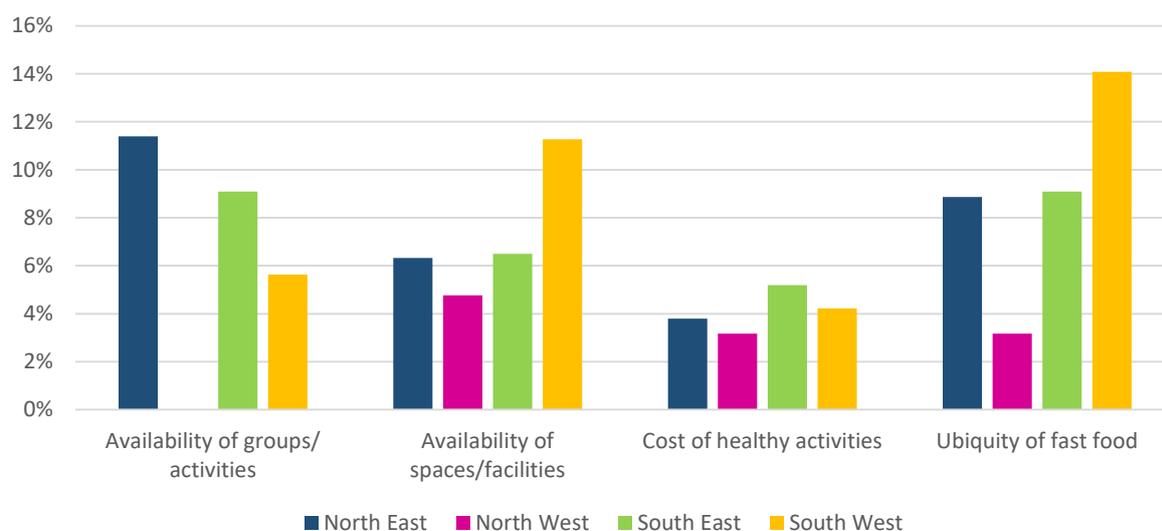
The locality has the highest levels of air pollution in the borough, with Weavers, Spitalfields and Banglatown being the most affected areas.



Residents of the North West locality were more likely to feel that lack of safety impacts upon their chances of having a healthy lifestyle than those living in the East of the borough, despite the fact that, when directly asked they were the most likely to say that they feel safe in their neighbourhoods. They were also concerned about drug use/dealing and antisocial behaviour.



People of the North West locality were the least likely to bring up concerns around the availability and cost of exercising facilities. None of them said that the availability of organised groups/ activities was poor.



## Designing a healthier locality

As part of the four locality events we have held, we have asked local residents to show us on a map of their locality *what helps them stay healthy locally, what hinders their efforts to stay healthy, and what could be done to improve their health at a local level.*

Overall, in the borough, there was a high level of interest for:

- More youth- and family-oriented activities in parks; such as organised sports for children and teenagers; as well as possibly activities for seniors such as walking groups and light exercise classes.
- Involving young people, particularly boys, in social and sporting activities, as part of initiatives to prevent their involvement with drug use, dealing or gang violence.
- Developing play areas/ family areas in the green spaces that don't yet have one (especially the smaller ones that could be extended for this purpose).
- Providing subsidised gym membership or gym/swimming pool entries in leisure centres for those who would have trouble affording them at full price, such as benefits recipients.
- Making gyms and exercising facilities more inclusive for people who have disabilities or limitations in how they can use them.
- Installing more gyms in open spaces, as a free alternative to gyms; and organising exercising groups around them.
- Initiatives to provide more affordable alternatives to unhealthy fast-food; including food co-ops, growing food/allotments, community gardening and family-friendly cafes with healthier menus.
- Supporting community and cultural centres to expand their provision.

## North West Locality

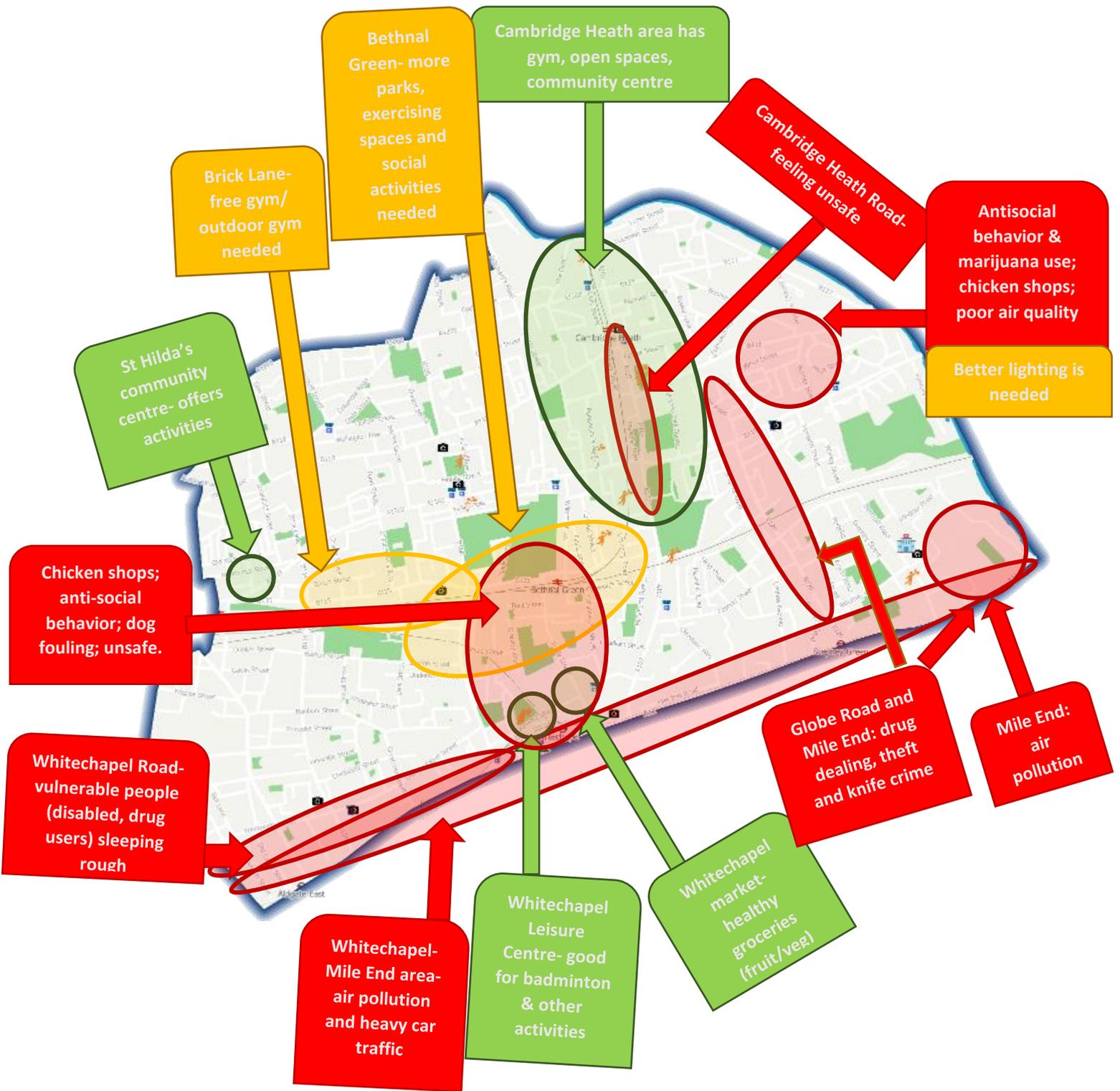
Air pollution along Whitechapel Road and Mile End Road- particularly around Mile End, is caused by heavy car traffic. Residents have expressed a desire for more walking paths and cycle routes, possibly connecting parks; thus encouraging alternatives to driving through the area.

The locality is home to the Whitechapel Market, where a good selection of fresh fruit and vegetables can be bought, but also to numerous fast food and takeaway shops serving primarily or exclusively unhealthy options. Community gardens and fruit and veg street stalls in more areas of the locality have been suggested as solutions.

Multiple residents complained about poor hygiene, dog fouling and improperly disposed of rubbish in the Aldgate- Whitechapel- Bethnal Green area. A review could be carried out by local authorities to check that sufficient litter bins are provided along the main roads.

There are reports of vulnerable homeless people, including sufferers from various disabilities and those who engage in substance abuse, sleeping rough on Whitechapel Road. The locality is home to the East One Health GP Practice for homeless people, the Providence Row Housing Association and to the Whitechapel Mission, both supporting homeless people; as well as to the RESET Drug and Alcohol service based in the Mile End Hospital. Better resources and funding for this type of local NHS and charity-based services could prevent rough-sleeping among vulnerable people.

The areas around Cambridge Heath, Bonner Road and Globe Road are affected by drug using and selling, which makes local residents feel unsafe. Better street lighting and more community-building activities have been suggested as solutions.



# Primary care in the locality

## Dentists

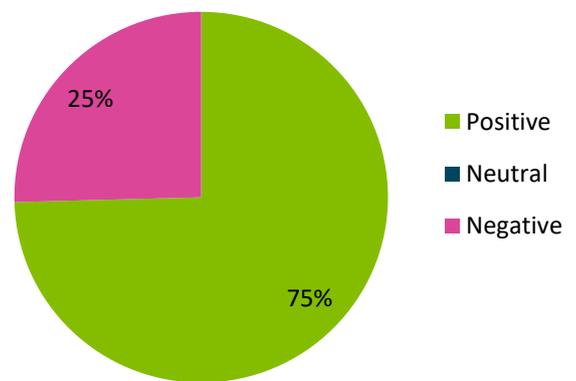
The North West locality is home to 14 dental practices.

According to the Tower Hamlets North West Locality Profile, access to dentists is also generally very good within the Locality, with most neighbourhoods within 300 metres to their nearest dentist. Many dental clinics are located in or near the bordering City of London area as well as Spitalfields and Aldgate.

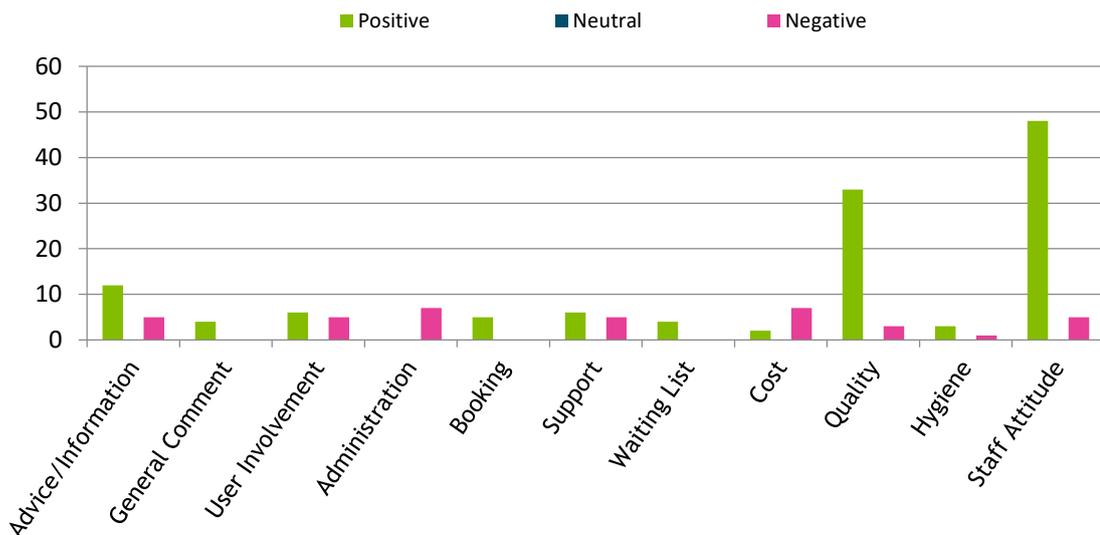
In 2018 and 2019, we have received feedback from 46 service users, identifying 177 issues.

Overall, local residents' experience with dentists in the area has been broadly positive.

Patients feel that they are receiving a good service from polite and compassionate professionals, and that they are seen relatively promptly; only a minority of service users complained about the cost of private treatments and lack of clarity around communicating them.



# Issues



Patient opinion of dentists is broadly in line with the borough average; with patients in the South East locality being slightly more satisfied, and those in the North East being less satisfied.



- This practice stood out for a couple of reasons. First off, the dentist was wonderful: she kept me informed, reassured me, and explained things to me in a manner that no other dentist has. Second, the reception staff are excellent, accommodating and friendly.*
- I registered as an NHS patient after moving to the area and was able to get an appointment for a check-up very quickly. Later on, I needed an emergency appointment (I was offered a slot that afternoon or the next day) and then a root canal (which was completed in one session less than two weeks later). I've been really happy with the treatment and the team are great.*
- The dentist was happy to perform a check-up, clean and preventative treatments under the basic NHS fee, which has not been my experience at other dentists - and seemed very caring and professional. The reception staff are obviously very busy but also efficient, knowledgeable, and professional. Would definitely recommend. Thanks.*
- We had a problem with my daughter's referral letter to NHS central booking dental department. Our dental doctor went out of her way to rectify the problem by contacting NHS central booking on several occasions & keeping me updated along the way. Also generally when we have an appointed we are dealt with politely & don't have to wait that long.*
- Appalling. I had treatment under the belief that this is an NHS practice. It was a particularly busy day and the receptionist told me to sign a document. As it was really busy at the desk, I signed it without reading. It turns out the document was an agreement for them to charge private prices. Please be wary of this. Terrible staff.*
- The Receptionist refused to print a simple claim form for me, dentist then said it's okay to and then was spoken to by the same receptionist privately and she changed her mind. Was asked to pay upfront for treatment I had not received yet however refused to print a form which I required to claim back the cost. Atrocious. Save yourselves and do not come here.*

## GP surgeries

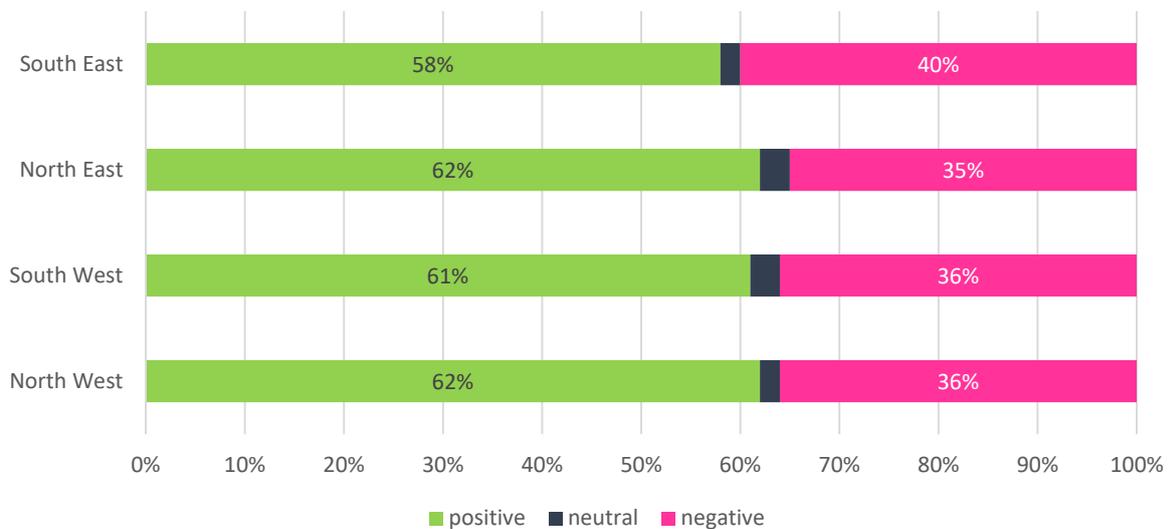
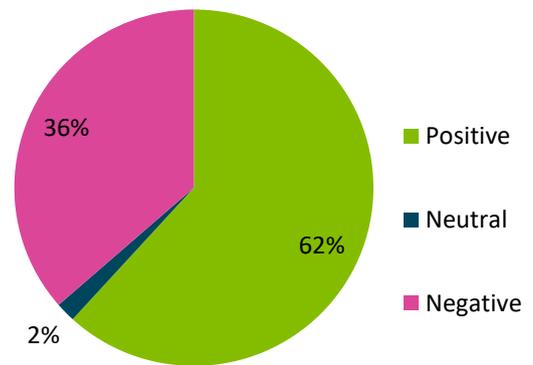
The North West locality is home to **10 GP surgeries**.

According to the Tower Hamlets North West Locality Profile, access to GP practices is generally very good within the Locality, with most neighbourhoods within 500 metres of their nearest GP.

In 2018 and 2019, we have received feedback from 334 service users, identifying 1462 issues. Additionally, we have analysed data from the GP Patient Survey 2018.

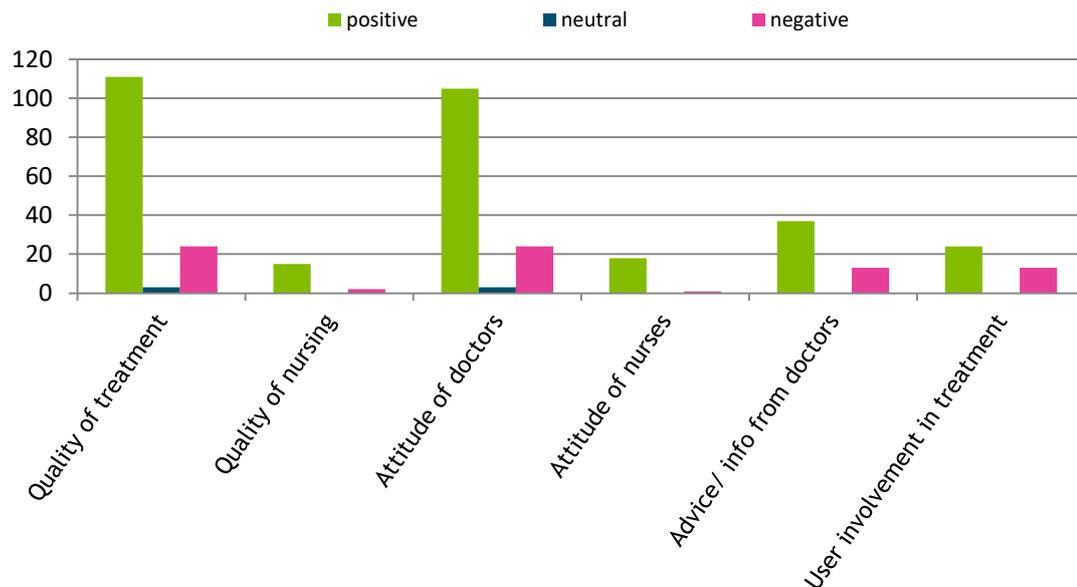
Overall, the opinion of patients who gave feedback to Healthwatch was **broadly positive**.

Satisfaction with GP surgeries is broadly similar across localities.



## Quality of treatment and nursing

Residents of the North West locality are generally happy with the quality of service they receive from doctors and nurses; they find medical professionals to be helpful and compassionate. They are satisfied with how doctors communicate and they feel empowered to make their own informed decisions about their treatment.

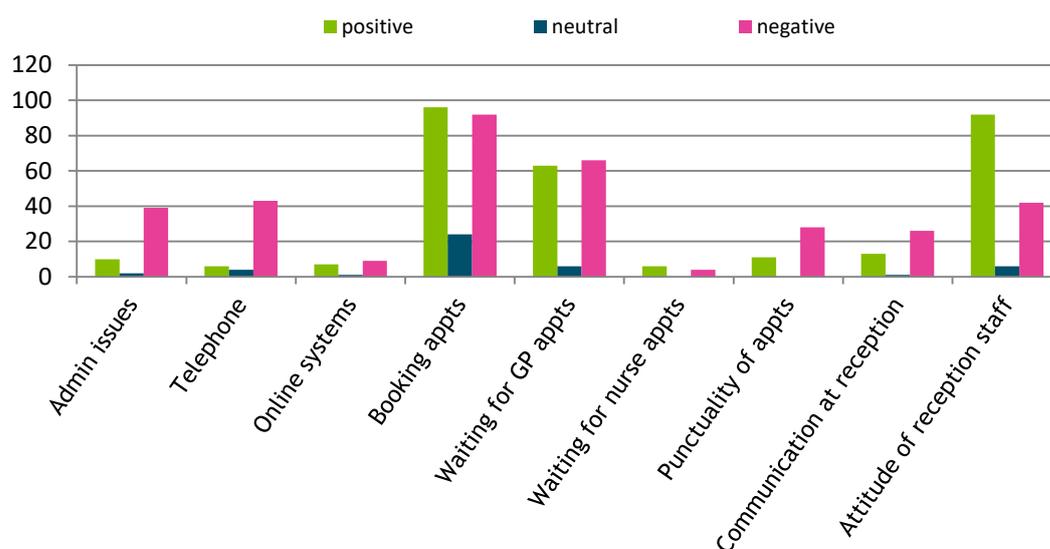


- I'm very pleasure to say that this GP is extremely important and very useful. Every time when I book an appointment or even go there to have any information or when I go to see the doctor I have an absolutely great treat from EVERYONE .From the receptionist, nurses and doctors. They are an amazing people I've seen ever .I'm registered in this GP since 4 years ago and I'm extremely happy and I do recommend that for everybody else.*
- Whether I see a doctor or a nurse I usually end up leaving in a good state as they are helpful in every sense, whether it is to book an appointment with the Hospital or for follow ups or for emotional support. Their one to one support is usually always top notch, willing to listen to any and all issues in a calm and friendly manner and when dealing with any sickness they swiftly act according to the situation.*
- I am nervous about blood tests, but the nurse always puts me at ease and I hardly notice her doing the test - such a pro! Every nurse I have seen has had a great caring manner and excellent skills. The doctors I have seen are great too. I have a longterm medical condition and one particular doctor is the only GP I have ever had who has taken an active interest in my ongoing health.*
- My GP is fantastic and I cannot speak highly enough of him, he makes sure I am involved in all decisions about my treatment.*

## Organisation and access to services

While patients find that reception staff are polite and friendly, communication with reception is thought to be lacking; GP practices are difficult to reach by telephone and admin issues cause confusion.

Local people's experience of making appointments is mixed: some users find that they have to wait an unreasonable amount of time for an appointment, or that appointments don't run on time.



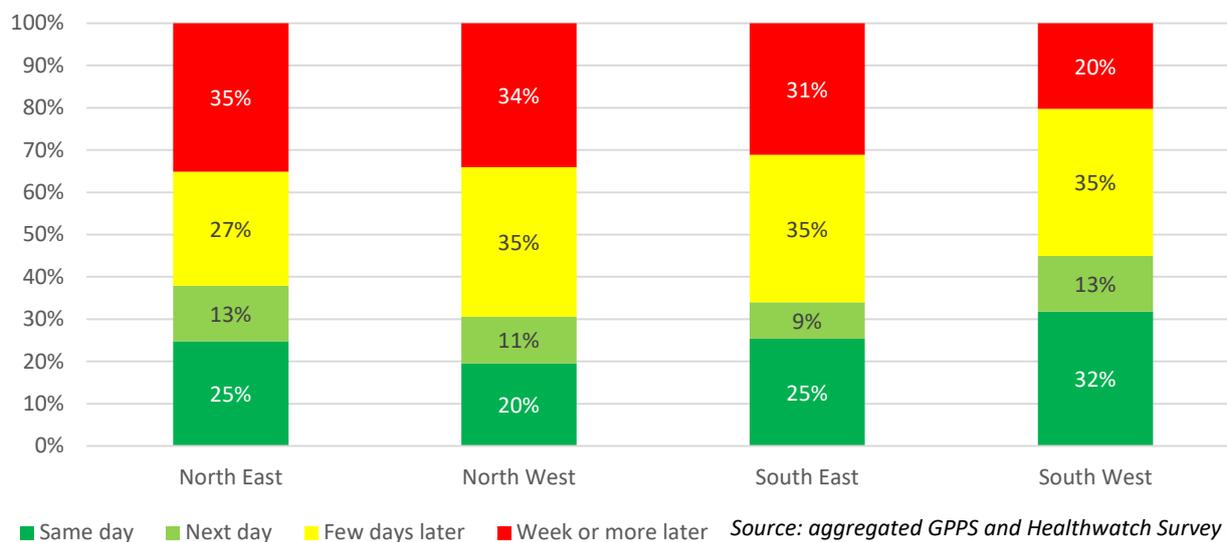
These issues mean that some patients may find GP services to be **difficult to access and inefficient**. Because practices have difficulty dealing with high volumes of telephone calls, some patients end-up turning up at the practice in person in order to book emergency appointments in the morning; reception staff are under pressure, consequently, to deal with multiple patient queues. This may contribute to communications and admin errors happening.

Poor efficiency in booking appointments while dealing with a high volume of patients may also mean that appointments are not allocated sufficient time, causing them to over-run; which means delays for the next patients.

- It is often difficult to get a suitable appointment through the admin office, whose sole purpose in life seems to be preventing one from seeing a doctor. However the care from the doctors I have seen has been the best I have ever experienced. Especially two particular doctors. Both extremely thorough. Often they run late, but I know it's because they are giving others the care they need.

*In March 2019, we have analysed data from the national GP Patient Survey, as well as a survey we have carried out ourselves, online and face-to-face, in order to understand how patients access GP services.*

Patients in the North West locality are the least likely to be seen on the same day, and more likely to wait for more than a week than those in the South of the borough.



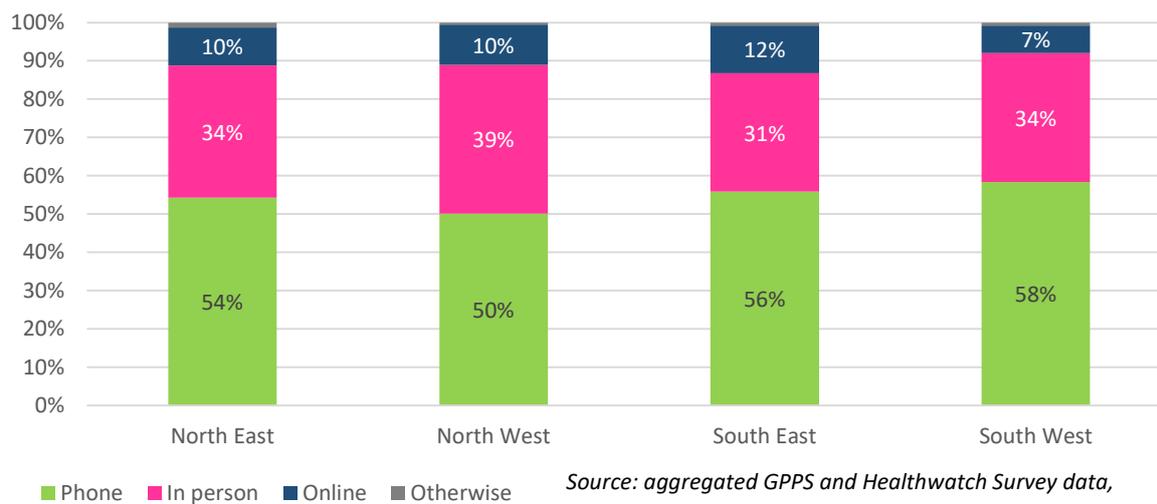
Source: aggregated GPPS and Healthwatch Survey data, Total 3358 responses; NW Locality 925 responses

Opinion of waiting for appointments is mixed, with some patients feeling that they have been seen promptly enough, while others believing that they had to wait an unreasonable amount of time.

- *I booked a same-day nurse appointment. My experience booking the appointment was very good. Quick and easy process. The best around here, very helpful.*
- *I was late for my appointment but the reception staff suggested that I could go to the walk-in if I had time to wait. I was able to see a doctor in less than half an hour. Very happy with this GP surgery.*
- *My experience booking the appointment was very good. Very easy to access; but it took two-three days to be seen! I think that was unacceptably long*
- *It took four-six days to see the nurse. My experience booking the appointment was poor. It takes too long. I want to see improvement in viewing times, especially if sent from the hospital.*
- *There are never any routine appointments, only emergency appointments and not even those. If you call between 8-9am, as you are supposed to, they are always already fully booked. If it is an emergency then they send you to the walk in centre. You can never get a routine appointment; it's always fully booked.*
- *My wife had an emergency but they couldn't see her. I call and have to wait a long time to set an appointment. My GP told me to come in an emergency but the receptionist said it wasn't allowed when emergencies happened.*

## How patients access GP services

Most appointments in Tower Hamlets GP surgeries are **booked over the phone**. Differences between localities are relatively minor. Patients in the North West locality are the most likely to book appointments in person and the least likely to book them over the phone.

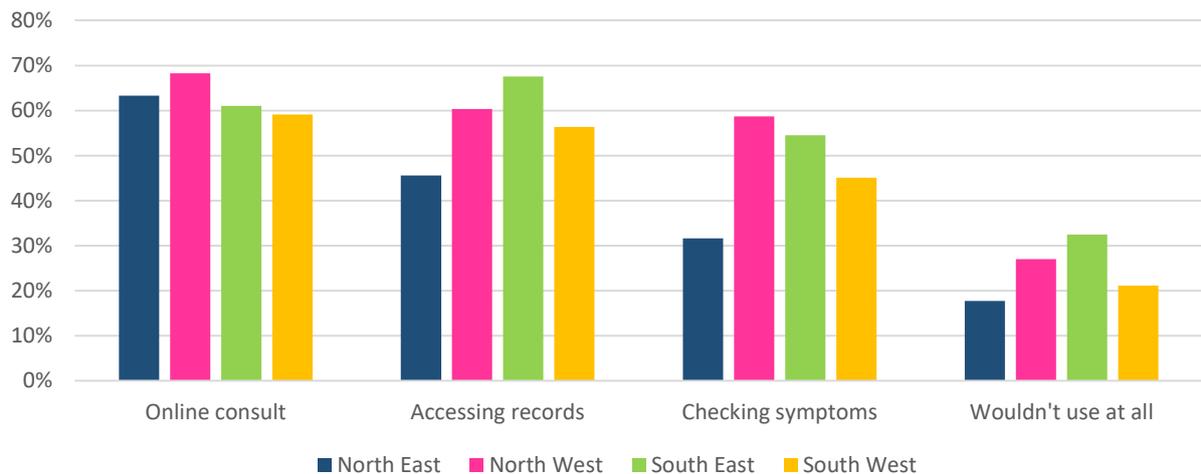


Issues around contacting GP practices by telephone are often brought up by patients:

- *My experience booking the appointment was fair. They need to have more people working on the phones at 8am instead of in the afternoon. They should also have cleaner facilities, and the phone call booking system in the morning needs to improve.*
- *Appointments are unavailable, can't get through on phone, always being fobbed off. Receptionists need to be retrained and have respect for patients and show respect.*
- *I struggle with the scheduling over the phone. It takes too long, and all the appointments fill up in the first 5 minutes. Initially, I was scheduled at [another GP Hub] for my last appointment, but then at the last minute, they rescheduled me to a practice in Bethnal Green.*
- *My experience booking the appointment was very poor. You're either told to call at a particular time or no one answers the phone and when they do there are no appointments available. Calls can take 7-8 mins to be answered which is far too long.*
- *I called doctors for my mum, it took me 19 mins just to get through. I've told her to change; as this keeps happening at her GP. I think the manager of this practice needs to sort out the services as it's quite bad- can see them losing a lot of patients or even worse losing the practice*

As part of our four What Would You Do events, we have asked local residents if they would use an NHS app for accessing GP services, and for what kinds of purpose.

Residents of the North West locality were the most interested in online consultations and in checking their symptoms; on the other hand, they were slightly more likely to say that they would not use such an app. This points towards inequalities between different demographics- with some people being heavy users of online services and taking advantage of them to a full extent, and some remaining digitally excluded.



Patients find online tools to be useful, provided that they are user friendly and that they work efficiently and as intended.

- I would recommend everyone registers for the patient access service as you are able to book an appointment to your likely from the available slots and with a doctor of your choice.*
- My experience booking the appointment online was very good. Very easy to access.*
- I'm happy with the online service. I find it easier to use and I don't have to talk to anyone.*

When online services are not responsive, people's trust in them decreases.

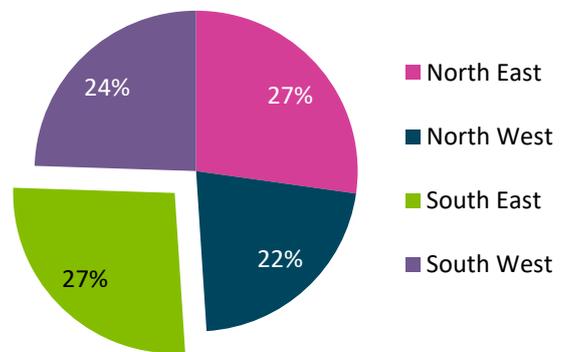
- The online portal is handy, although not always 100% reliable. However, in general the practice makes good use of new technology for patients' benefit.*
- My experience booking the appointment was very poor. It's very hard to book online and the phone service is hard to use and take a long time.*

## Health and Social Care in the South East Locality

### *Research briefing*

In May 2019, we organised a series of engagement events in order to understand local residents' thoughts and expectations around shaping health and social care services in the context of the NHS Long Term Plan. We focused on **prevention, personalisation, and primary care**; as well as on **improving neighbourhoods** as healthier spaces.

We engaged with **346 local residents** over the course of **four events**. **77 people (27%)** lived in the South East locality.



The locality is home to **9 GP surgeries**, **12 pharmacies** and **17 dentists**.

As part of our usual outreach in **2018 and 2019** we received feedback from **292 locality residents** about their GP surgery and **112 residents** about their dentist. Making the total number of people we engaged with in the South East Locality **481**.

## What we have learned

The North West Locality has access to important **community resources** to support healthier lives for its residents, namely:

- ✓ The Mudchute/Millwall Park is well-used as exercising space (including an outdoor gym)
- ✓ Less fast food outlets and pubs than in the rest of the Borough.
- ✓ Access to GP surgeries which offer a good quality of clinical treatment and nursing.
- ✓ Lower rate of road traffic accidents than the rest of the Borough.
- ✓ The largest life expectancy in the Borough; and good levels of healthy life expectancy.

On the other hand, the area experiences **significant challenges**, namely:

- ! Significant health inequalities between the deprived North of the locality (particularly Lansbury and Poplar) and the more affluent South.
- ! Child and elder poverty in the North of the locality.
- ! High levels of crime in the North of the locality.
- ! Residents feeling concerned about drug use and dealing in some parts of the locality, particularly around Limehouse.
- ! Poor provision of affordable gyms and leisure centres; private gyms are available, particularly in the South of the locality, but they are not affordable for all residents.
- ! Poor provision of green spaces, apart from Mudchute park; particularly in the North of the locality.
- ! Air and noise pollution resulting from building sites.

## Recommendations

- Conduct further research into the root cause of health inequalities in the Borough; between the wealthier and poorer wards.
- Increase provision of youth centres and youth activities, particularly around Lansbury and Limehouse.
- Design public health programmes, particularly for young people, around substance misuse and sexual health.
- Introduce more cycle routes and cycle parking facilities around Canary Wharf, Lansbury and Cubbitt Town.
- Install outdoors gyms in Poplar Park and Langdon Park; extend Langdon Park by adding a children's play area as well as an outdoors gym.
- Organise exercising classes and family activities in Poplar Park.
- Consider funding a subsidy scheme that restaurants and takeaways can use to offer discounts to children and young people for approved healthier meals.
- Consider funding a subsidy scheme that gyms and leisure centres can use to offer discounts to children, young people, the elderly or people in receipt of benefits.

## Background

The South East Locality comprises of **six wards**: Limehouse, Lansbury, Poplar, Canary Wharf, Blackwall & Cubbitt Town, and Island Gardens. It is home to **85,028** people.

The South East locality has the highest number of births in the Borough. It also has, on average, seen some of the highest population churn rates in the Borough across LSOAs in each of its wards. Canary Wharf in particular has seen some of the biggest churn rates in its neighbourhoods in the Borough - this is as high as to 91% and 100% in some neighbourhoods, indicating areas of redevelopment in the ward.

The high proportion of young people, and low proportion of older people, in Tower Hamlets is generally reflected the SE Locality. Just over 20% of the locality population are aged under 16, around three quarters are aged 16 to 64, and only 5% are aged 65 and over. Over 30% of the Borough's population are Bangladeshi, and more than half are from BME backgrounds. The SE locality, with the exception of Poplar and Lansbury, tends to have less Bangladeshi residents and more residents from other ethnic minority backgrounds. Limehouse and Island Gardens have a higher White (British and non-British) population.

### Community assets/ positive aspects

Longest life expectancy in the Borough

Healthy life expectancy in the Borough higher than average (except Lansbury)

Lower rate of road traffic accidents than rest of Borough

Somewhat lower crime than rest of Borough

Lowest density of tobacconists in Borough

Lower rates of mental illness than rest of Borough

Lower air pollution levels than rest of Borough

Less fast food outlets and pubs than rest of Borough

### Health risks/ negative aspects

Further away from hospitals than the rest of the Borough

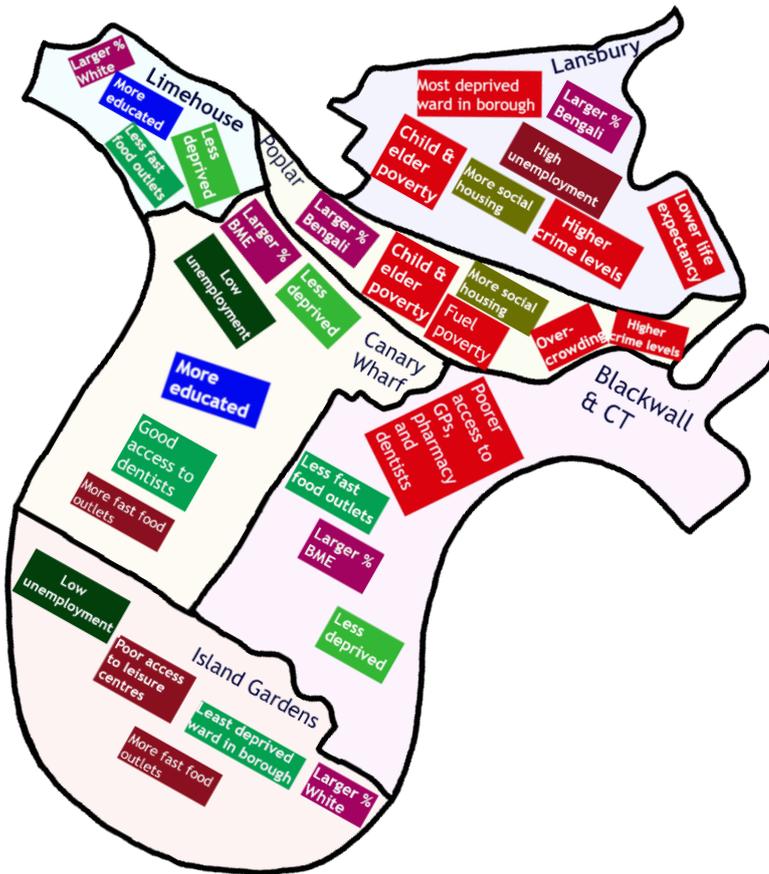
Poorer access to green spaces than the rest of the Borough

High levels of health inequality between the more affluent wards and the more deprived ones

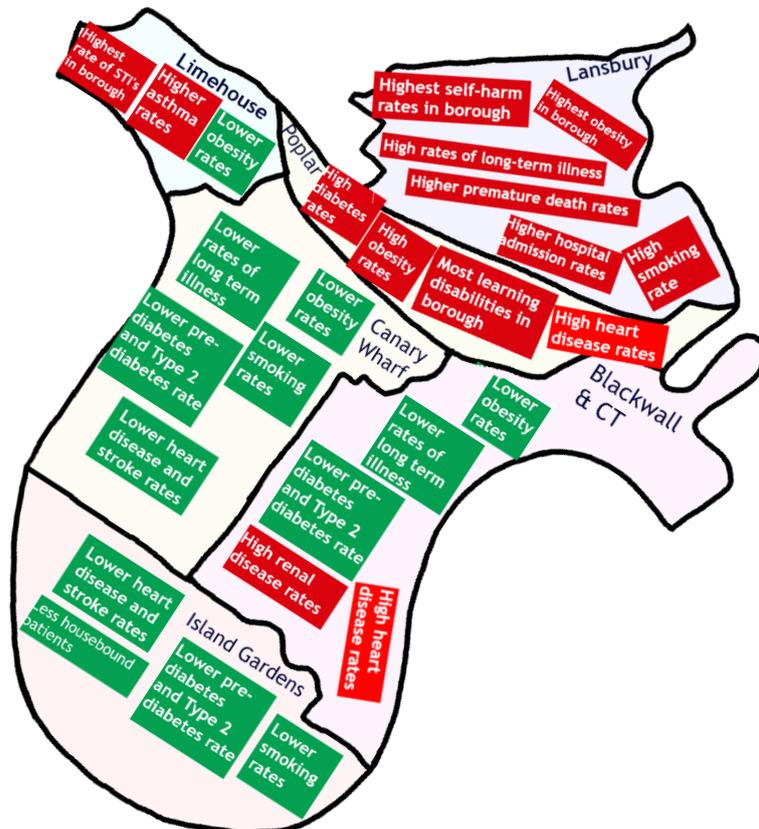
\* Source for all background info: **Tower Hamlets Locality Profile**

## Ward-specific issues: demographics and inequality

2



## Ward-specific issues: health



\* Source for all background info including maps: Tower Hamlets Locality Profile

## Living in the South East locality

As part of our four “What would you do?” engagement events, we asked local residents to express the extent to which a series of descriptors of how residents’ should feel about their local area matches their personal experience, on a sliding scale (recoded as a 0 to 100 scale).

Overall, at a Borough level, local residents’ views on most indicators was leaning positive; with the exception of “I can breathe clean air in my neighbourhood”, which was leaning negative. Differences between those in good health and those with poorer health outcomes were relatively small, but consistent. Residents in good health felt better supported to make healthy lifestyle choices; they were more satisfied with their living conditions and with air quality than their peers suffering from chronic illnesses, mental health conditions or disabilities. In particular, people suffering from mental health issues had a more negative view on almost all indicators: they felt less safe in their neighbourhood, less able to support themselves financially, less confident that they can access good healthcare services and also more disenfranchised in relation to local decision-making.

**Residents of the South East locality had, on all indicators, experiences close to the Borough average. On all indicators, they fared better than residents in the North East locality, but they were less likely than those living in the West of the Borough to be satisfied with their homes/where they live, and to feel that they can support themselves and their families financially.**

Definitely no

Definitely yes



I am supported to make healthy lifestyle choices



I am satisfied with my home and where I live



I can breathe clean air in my neighbourhood



Health and social care services work well together



I can access good healthcare services if I need them



I feel safe in my neighbourhood



I can financially support myself and my family



I have a say in how my local community is run



I can access good social care services if I need them



I am treated as an individual; my specific needs are considered

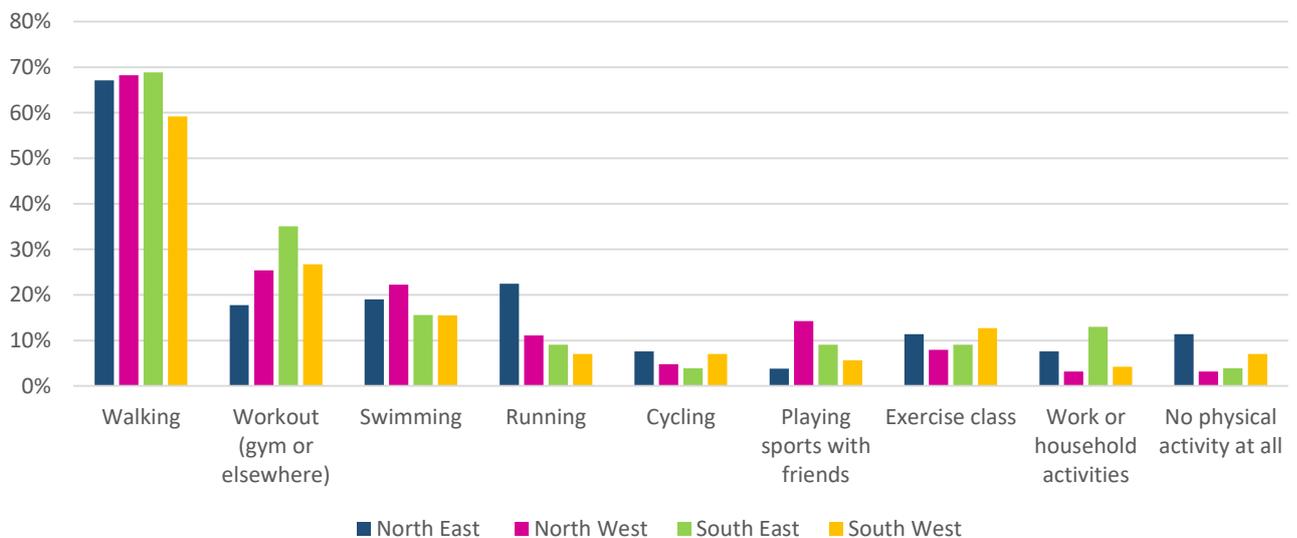
= North East    = South East

= North West    = South West

## Healthier neighbourhoods

As part of our four locality events, we asked local residents to tell us **what they like to do in order to stay physically active**.

Overall, **walking** was by far the most popular form of exercise, named by **62%** of respondents. It was preferred by both men and women, and by all ethnic groups. It was also preferred by respondents aged 25 or over.



Residents of the South East locality were the most likely to work out, in a gym or elsewhere. They were more likely to rely on housework or professional work for physical activity. On the other hand, they were less likely to cycle. All DLR stations in the locality have cycle parking facilities and routes signed for cyclists do exist alongside Poplar High Street, Westferry Road and Eastferry Road, but large areas such as Canary Wharf, Lansbury and Cubbitt Town are relatively poorly served by them.

The South East locality has generally poorer access to leisure centres than the other localities, particularly in parts of Lansbury, Poplar and Island Gardens. A large number of private gyms offer workout facilities and personal training services, but their price may be prohibitive for some residents. The outdoor gym facilities in Millwall park are well-used and appreciated by local residents.

## I can do the types of physical activity that I enjoy in Tower Hamlets



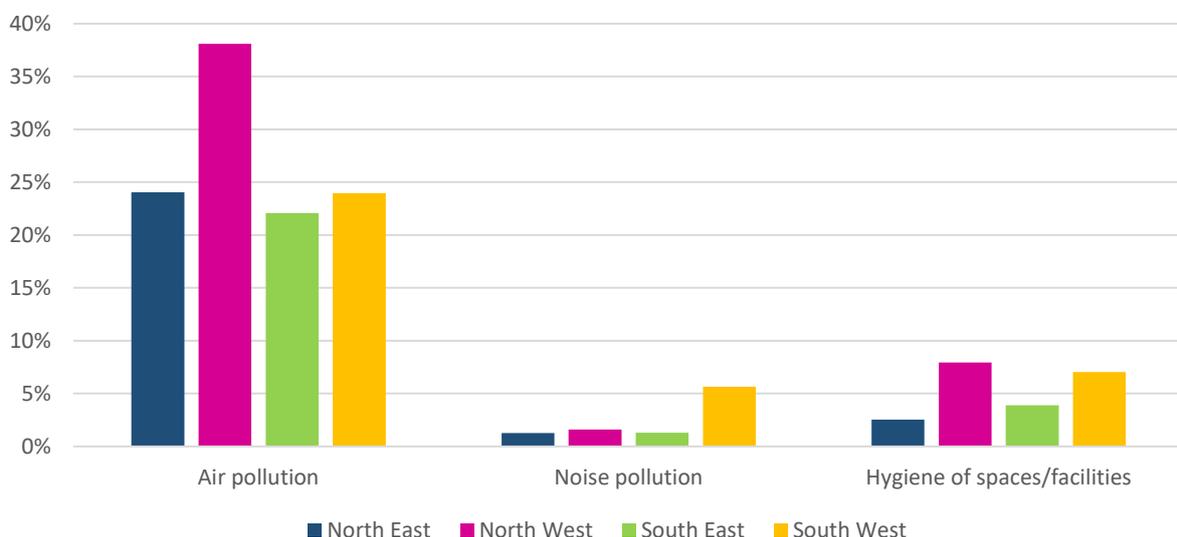
While in all localities a strong majority of respondents felt that they can do the types of physical activity that they enjoy in Tower Hamlets, the South East of the Borough fared the best in this respect.

We have also asked participants to our four locality events to tell us what obstacles, if any, they found to being more physically active and having a healthier lifestyle in their local area. **69% of respondents** named at least one problem. The environment and safety issues, named by 30% of respondents in the Borough each, were considered the biggest obstacle to healthier and more active living.

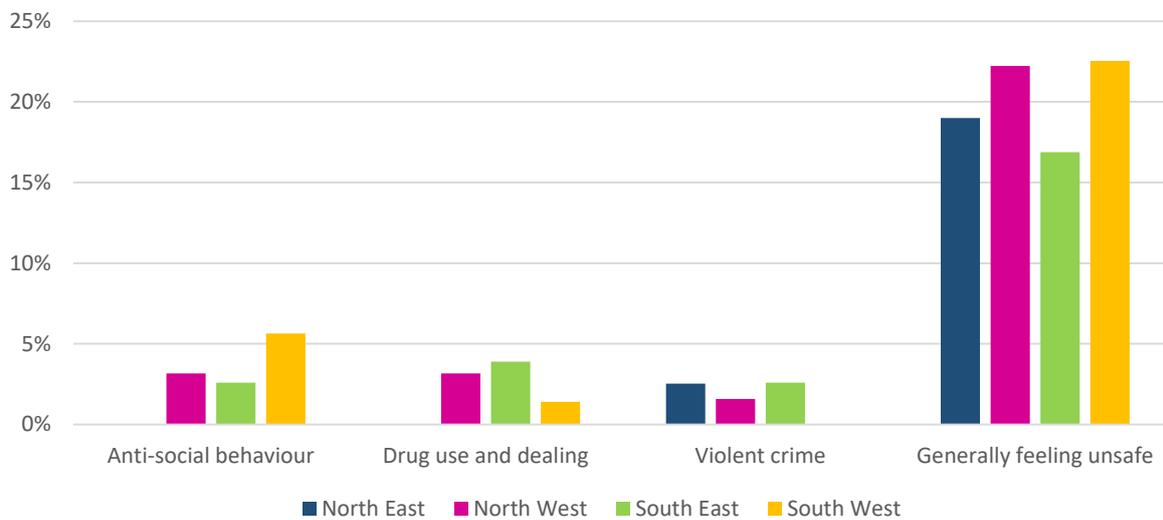
**For all four localities, air pollution was the biggest concern mentioned by residents, followed by generally feeling unsafe.**

Residents of the South East Locality were less concerned about environmental issues than those living in the West of the Borough.

Nonetheless, nearly a quarter of them found that air pollution is a factor that stops them from living healthier lifestyles. Building developments were blamed for air and noise pollution.

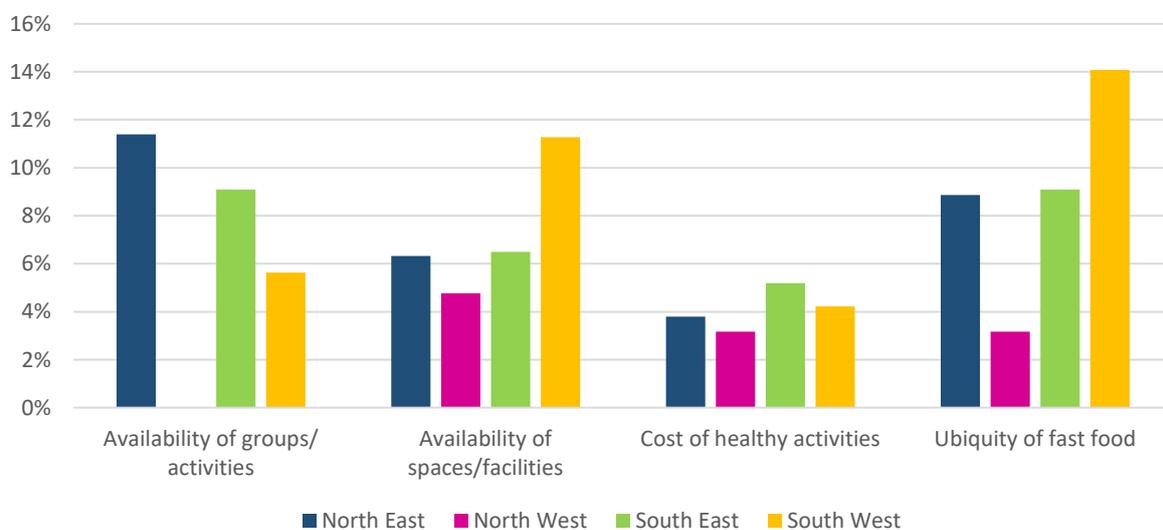


Residents of the South East locality were less likely to feel unsafe than those living in the West of the Borough. They were, however, the most likely to feel concerned about drug using and dealing.



South East locality residents were the most likely to complain about the cost of healthier choices. This could be a consequence of the large number of private gyms and leisure facilities, which are more expensive than the Better leisure centres. Ubiquity of fast food is also an issue; primarily around Canary Wharf, healthier takeaway options are widely available, but significantly more expensive than their unhealthier counterparts.

Availability of groups and activities such as exercising classes was also brought up; in particular, a few residents brought up the point that few classes are available at times convenient for full-time workers, and community organisations struggle to find space to hold them at convenient times.



## Designing a healthier locality

As part of the four locality events we held, we asked local residents to show us on a map of their locality *what helps them stay healthy locally, what hinders their efforts to stay healthy, and what could be done to improve their health at a local level.*

Overall, in the Borough, there was a high level of interest for:

- More youth- and family-oriented activities in parks; such as organised sports for children and teenagers; as well as possibly activities for seniors such as walking groups and light exercise classes.
- Involving young people, particularly boys, in social and sporting activities, as part of initiatives to prevent their involvement with drug use, dealing or gang violence.
- Developing play areas/ family areas in the green spaces that don't yet have one (especially the smaller ones that could be extended for this purpose).
- Providing subsidised gym membership or gym/swimming pool entries in leisure centres for those who would have trouble affording them at full price, such as benefits recipients.
- Making gyms and exercising facilities more inclusive for people who have disabilities or limitations in how they can use them.
- Installing more gyms in open spaces, as a free alternative to gyms; and organising exercising groups around them.
- Initiatives to provide more affordable alternatives to unhealthy fast-food; including food co-ops, growing food/allotments, community gardening and family-friendly cafes with healthier menus.
- Supporting community and cultural centres to expand their provision.

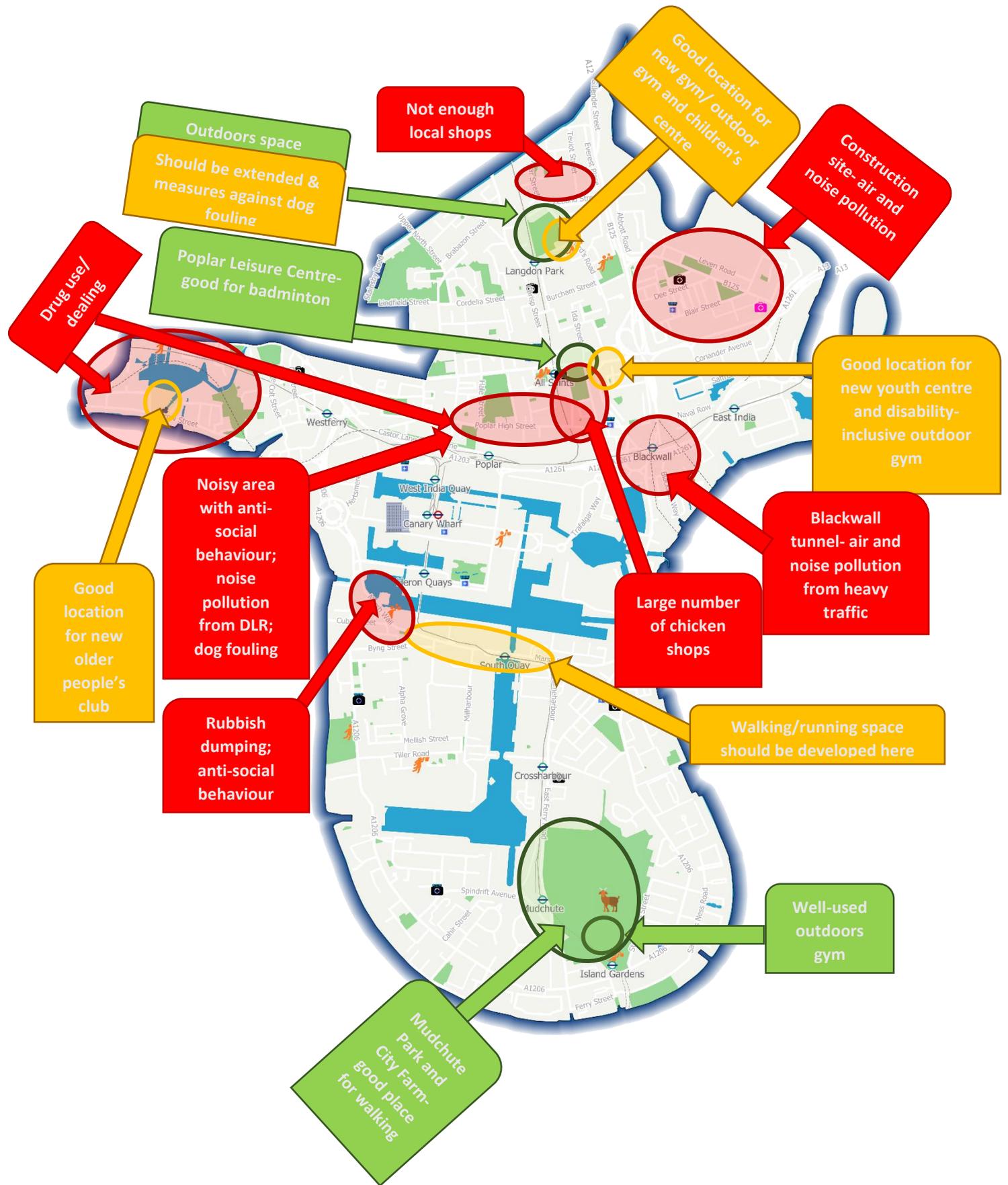
## South East Locality

The locality is well-suited for walking and running, and is well served in terms of community activities (e.g. HARCA, The Cabin in Poplar and Neighbours in Poplar). The Cabin in Poplar is offering activities specifically for men- a group not particularly addressed by other organisations. Most community organisations are in the Poplar area, while provision of similar services in other parts of the locality may be poorer. The New City College and Idea Store provide resources for learning. There is a need for a new youth centre and more youth activities, particularly among youth anti-social behaviour and drug use concerns.

The area experiences air and noise pollution, partly because of road traffic and partly because of construction sites (which also cause road disruptions, worsening the traffic, and make it more difficult for pedestrians to walk on pavements). Road traffic around the Blackwall Tunnel is particularly heavy and a few residents have expressed concerns about road safety and speeding drivers. The area is well-served by public transport.

The north of the locality is relatively poorly served by parks; Langdon Park is beloved by locals, but seen as too small- it could be extended with the addition of an outdoor gym and play area. More pedestrian routes could be developed around it. Poplar Park is a useful space but insufficiently used- its use could be promoted by organising events for families and children. The largest park in the locality is situated in its least deprived ward- inequalities in access to green spaces are tied to inequalities of income.

Some parts of the Borough are poorly served by local shops; and with a high prevalence of fast food outlets. They also tend to be the locality's poorest areas, around Lansbury and All Saints. On the other hand, some parts of Canary Wharf have multiple healthy lunch takeaway options, but they are significantly more expensive than fast food outlets, and their customers tend to be highly paid office workers who work in the area, rather than local residents.



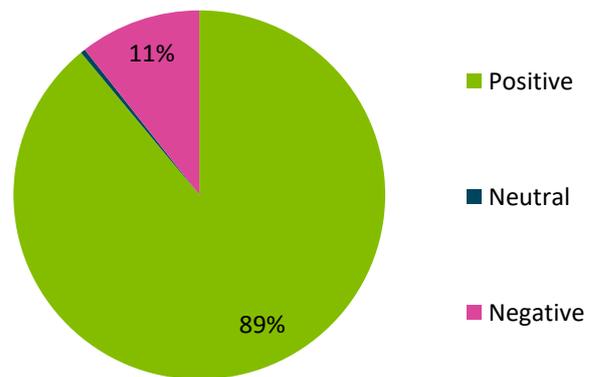
# Primary care in the locality

## Dentists

The South East locality is home to 17 dental practices.

According to the Tower Hamlets South East Locality Profile, access to dentists is mixed. Canary Wharf has some of the best access in the Borough, whilst parts of Blackwall & Cubitt have some of the furthest distance to travel.

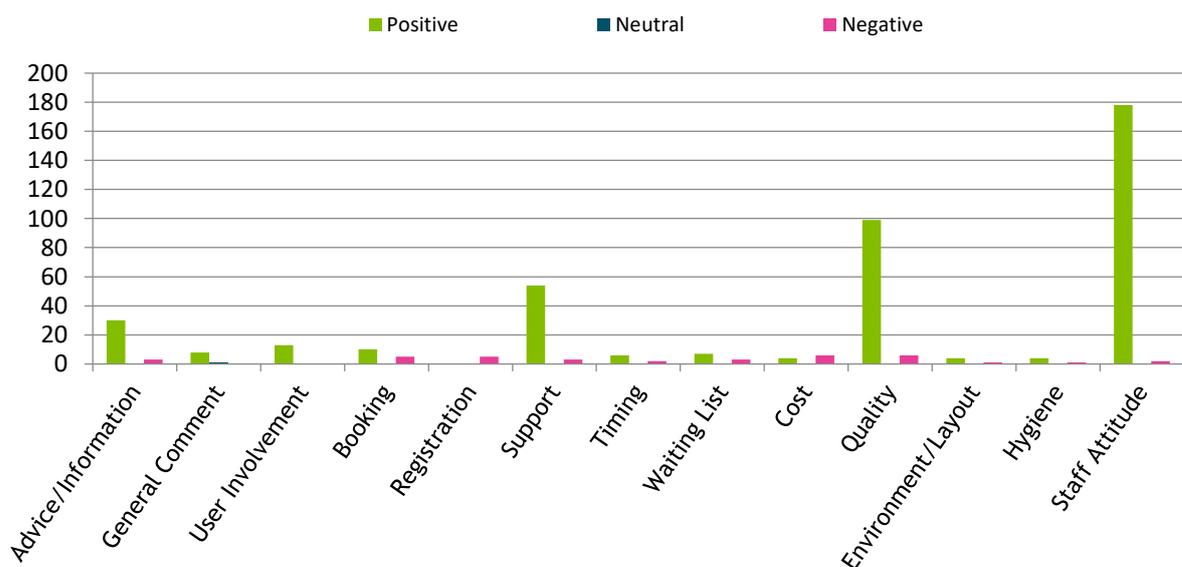
In 2018 and 2019, we have received feedback from 55 service users, identifying 207 issues.



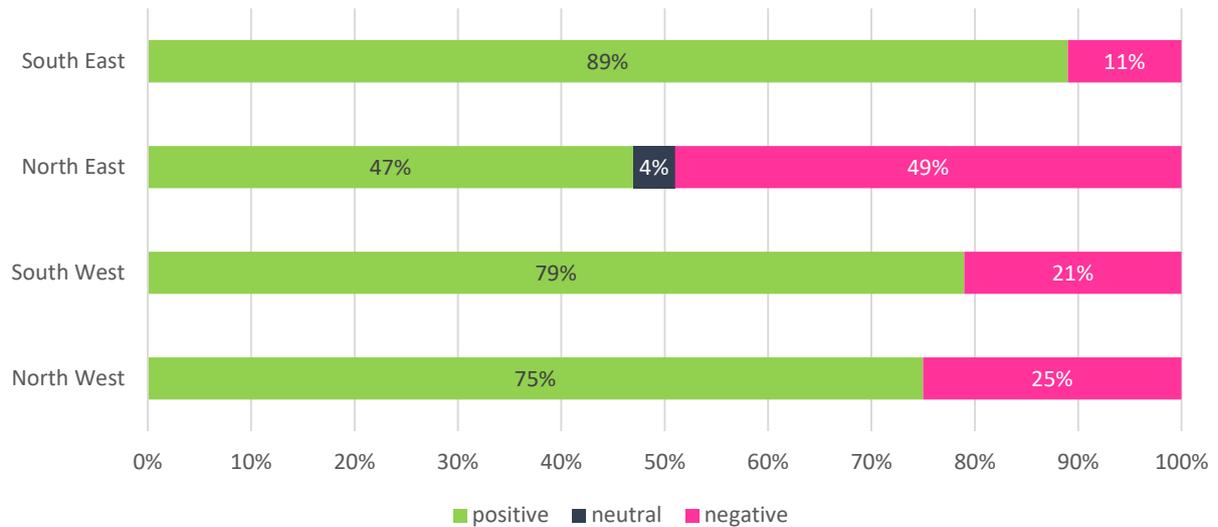
Overall, local residents' experience with dentists in the area has been positive.

Patients feel that they are receiving a good service from polite and compassionate professionals, that they are well-supported to make informed choices about their treatment and that they are seen relatively promptly. A minority of service users complained that some treatments are only available privately; or available privately straight away while NHS patients are put on a long waiting list.

# Issues



## Patient opinion of dentists is the highest of all four localities.



- Had my wisdom tooth removed, the procedure and risks were clearly explained. The process itself was quick, the dentist provided great care.*
- Today I came to my appointment, just a normal examination for the first time. The reception staff were friendly they explained everything that I asked; they also explained how it works with the exemptions and the charges. Inside the surgery, the dentist was lovely, she examined and explained everything.*
- As a 52 year old guy, I have used a few dentists and this practise by far is the best. From the first appointment for a broken tooth, all the way through my treatment plan for an implant the staff were courteous polite, and accommodating to all the needs of a patient with a busy schedule. The outcome was a first class service, with a fair pricing structure but by far first class treatment and a fantastic outcome. A special thank you to the dentist who treated me. This guy's work is amazing. A credit to the profession.*
- Very quick to refuse treatment for NHS patients. Probably NHS does not pay as much as private work.*
- After being referred for a wisdom tooth extraction and being told I would only have to wait a couple of weeks for an appointment. I am now in my fourth month still waiting on the "waiting list" for an appointment to come through. I have been taking painkillers and have been on antibiotics and all I want is to remove this tooth. I have called the practice and informed them of my suffering and they still say I have to wait because there are referrals ahead of me. They did however inform me that I could be seen straight away privately for £250 other than that I had to wait for the next appointment. I asked will I be seeing someone different and they said it is the same surgeon only that we will fit you in. How can you justify letting patients suffer on the basis whether or not they can pay privately. This is so unfair on so many levels. I have since had my tooth out at the hospital. Thank goodness there is some help out there.*

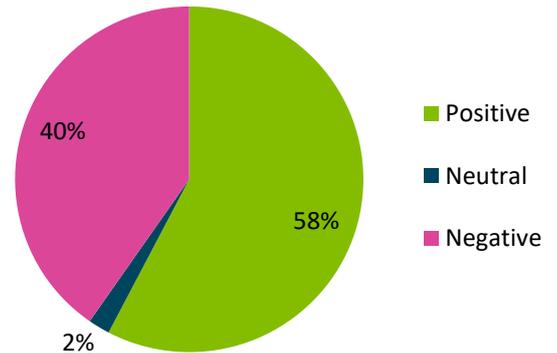
## GP surgeries

The South East locality is home to **9 GP surgeries**.

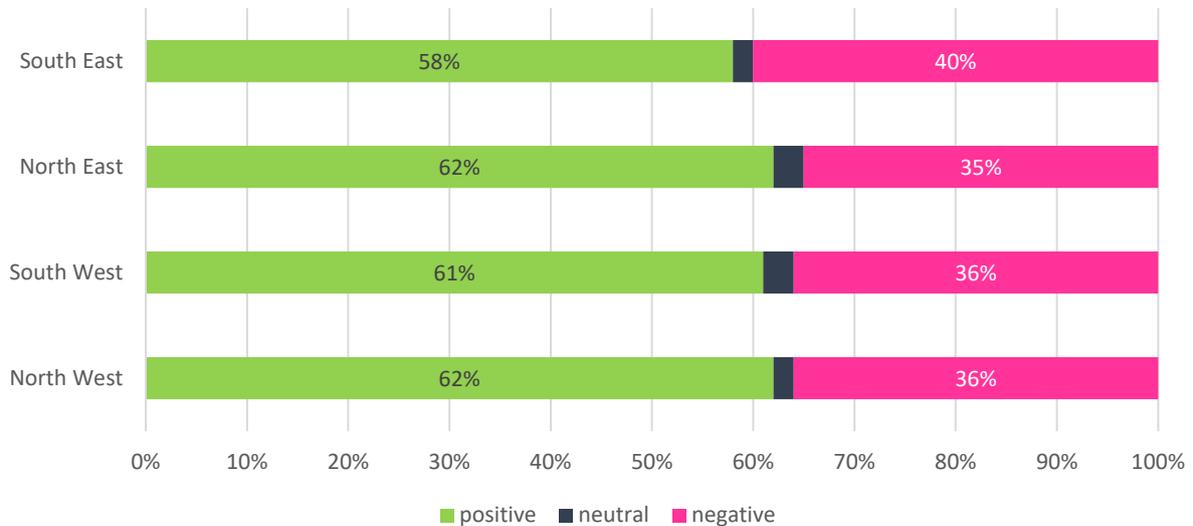
According to the Tower Hamlets South East Locality Profile, access to GP practices is generally unequal. Parts of Blackwall & Cubitt Town have the furthest distance to travel to the nearest GP, which is as much as 2km away in some neighbourhoods.

In 2018 and 2019, we have received feedback from 334 service users, identifying 1462 issues. Additionally, we have analysed data from the GP Patient Survey 2018.

Overall, the opinion of patients who gave feedback to Healthwatch was **broadly positive**.

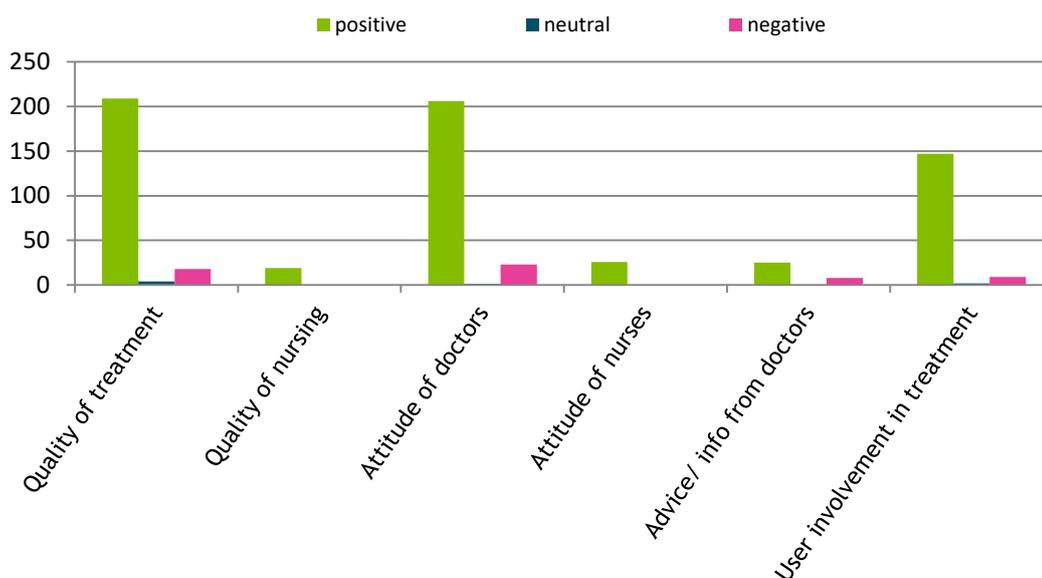


Satisfaction with GP surgeries is broadly similar across localities.



## Quality of treatment and nursing

Residents of the South East locality are generally happy with the quality of service they receive from doctors and nurses; they find medical professionals to be helpful and compassionate. They are satisfied with how doctors communicate and they feel empowered to make their own informed decisions about their treatment.

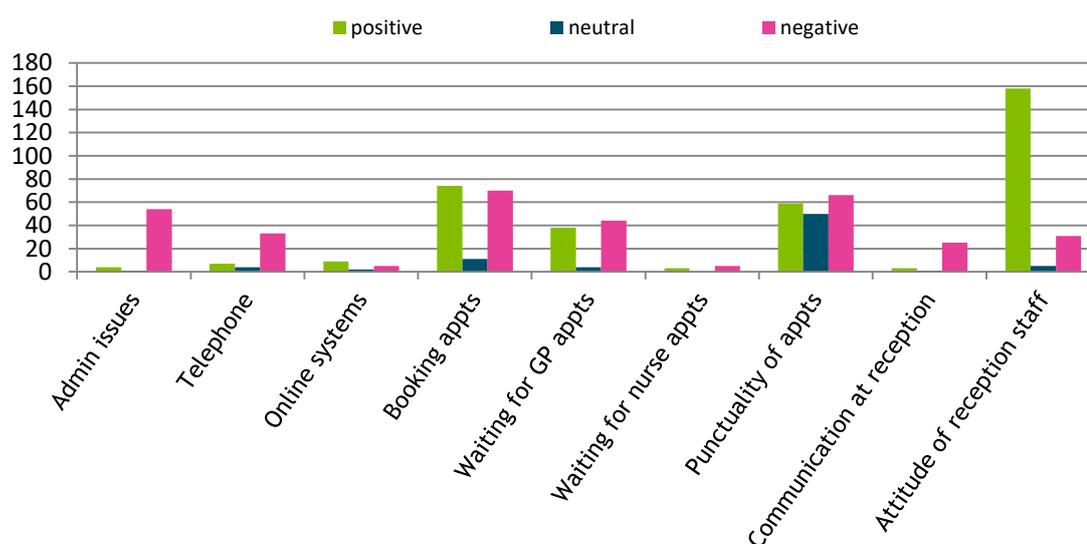


- This has to be the best GP ever. The medical staff and non-medical staff alike are so helpful! They really listen to you, they ask questions and dig deeper rather than just hand you a prescription and be done with it. Very helpful and friendly professionals.*
- Had two appointments with two doctors both on time and went really well, all my inquiries were sorted out. I do my research before visiting any doctor and it was pleasant to see that both doctors are knowledgeable and very professional.*
- My Doctor has been most effective in supporting me to access specialist care while taking into consideration my history and choices. He has ensured that my case was managed as required while maintaining a good level of communication with me.*
- I visited the nurse due to a two week flu, fever and skin irritation issue. Immediately she was comforting, reassuring, a listening ear but at the same time direct with advice and professional care. I have had so many bad experiences with doctors, nurses and health care professionals in the past due to my Crohns that I avoid at all costs, and I am a personal trainer so I know this is terrible. However, she was truly a breath of fresh air, she even realised I had never had a smear test so did that along with a sexual health check, I've never been given this time before, I'm usually rushed out of the room. A personal approach goes a long way, not just about knowledge but people who make the difference to somebody's day and ultimately their life. Everybody needs a nurse like this, she is a great asset to the NHS :)*

## Organisation and access to services

While patients find that reception staff are polite and friendly, communication with reception is thought to be lacking; GP practices are difficult to reach by telephone and admin issues cause confusion.

Local people's experience of making appointments is mixed: some users find that they have to wait an unreasonable amount of time for an appointment, or that appointments don't run on time.



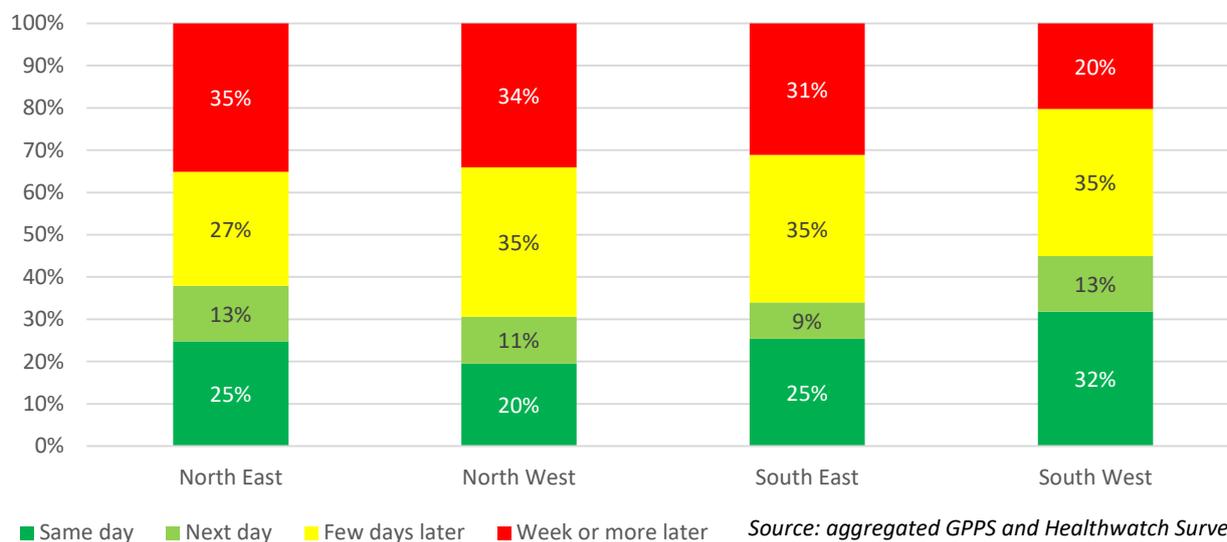
These issues mean that some patients may find GP services to be **difficult to access and inefficient**. Because practices have difficulty dealing with high volumes of telephone calls, some patients end-up turning up at the practice in person in order to book emergency appointments in the morning; reception staff are under pressure, consequently, to deal with multiple patient queues. This may contribute to communications and admin errors happening.

Poor efficiency in booking appointments while dealing with a high volume of patients may also mean that appointments are not allocated sufficient time, causing them to over-run; which means delays for the next patients.

- *My dad came in the morning to book the appointment, you can't book over the phone anymore unless you call at 8 am. [It's] frustrating, you can't book your appointment in advance and you can't get through on the phone. The waiting times can be hit and miss but usually it's OK. Receptionists are helpful, but they don't have answers, when you enquire about why they weren't picking up the phone on trying to book an appointment.*

In March 2019, we have analysed data from the national GP Patient Survey, as well as a survey we have carried out ourselves, online and face-to-face, in order to understand how patients access GP services.

Patients in the South East locality are slightly less likely to wait for more than a week than those in the North of the Borough.



Opinion of waiting for appointments is mixed, with some patients feeling that they have been seen promptly enough, while others believing that they had to wait an unreasonable amount of time.

- *Never more than a few days for an appointment, however sometimes available on the day!*
- *My experience booking the appointment was good. I was given same day appointment for my child. I got through to reception in 10 minutes, the doctor called back 10 minutes later and asked us to come in. All good.*
- *I never have any problem getting an appointment. I don't have any problems with my GP practice. They are very good, able to get appointment as and when needed.*
- *To see my regular doctor, I have to wait a long time, more than 1-2 weeks. I am a very unwell person, I feel the need to see my doctor regularly. I waited more than a week for a nurse appointment, I think that's a bit too long. Other than this everything is okay.*
- *Nurse appointments are horrendous. I need a monthly blood test due to medication, I had to wait 10 days for my nurses' appointment. My sister is in hospital in a coma and she contracted MRSA, I was feeling unwell and called the GP to get tested, I had to wait two weeks to see the nurse, luckily, I never had MRSA. How many people could I have spread MRSA to? I waited three weeks to see the travel nurse. This is a regular occurrence with nurse appointments, but if you have the GP app getting to see the doctor is fine. Just don't expect to see a nurse when you need to.*
- *Two doctors it's impossible to get an appointment with, no nurse appointments for holiday vaccinations for four weeks, I have to wait two weeks to see a nurse for regular blood tests. It's a good surgery, but they need to sort out the appointment system.*

## How patients access GP services

Most appointments in Tower Hamlets GP surgeries are **booked over the phone**. Differences between localities are relatively minor. Patients in the South East locality are the most likely to book appointments online and the least likely to book them in person.

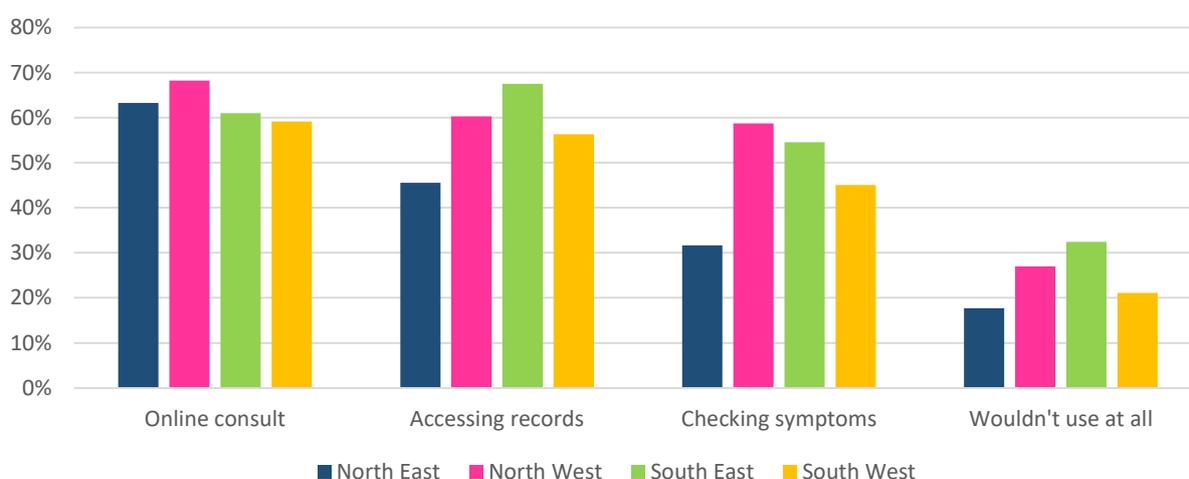


Issues around contacting GP practices by telephone are often brought up by patients:

- My experience booking the appointment was fair. They are busy, that's why they don't answer calls. There are emergency appointments available that's really good. Lunchtimes they are closed and takes a long time for them to answer calls.*
- The surgery phone line closes for Lunch hours randomly, there is no set time. The automated answer system should mention the Specific time instead of ".....during the lunchtime...." I have wasted so much time trying to make repeated calls on numerous occasions, even trying after an hour and a half, the line is still closed. 'During the lunchtime' leaves the receptionists to decide however long they wish to keep it closed. On the other end, Patient doesn't know when the line will re-open. On a busy day, you have to make a number of calls to get through to someone on the phone as the number shows busy. Why can't you get a Call Queuing System in place, so patients can stay on the queue and can get first come first serve experience, rather than trying the luck to get through? I had to call up to 40 times to get hold of someone (Yes, I called repeatedly as I needed to book an appointment urgently).*
- It takes almost an hour for someone to answer the phone. It is quicker to go there and book the appointment. But it's wasting my time. Should not be like that.*
- The biggest problem with me is my GP surgery cannot phone me. My previous surgery had no problems calling me, and the dental practice here has no issues phoning me, but my GP appear to have a problem.*

As part of our four What Would You Do events, we have asked residents if they would use an NHS app for accessing GP services, and for what purpose.

Residents of the South East locality were the most interested in accessing their medical records online; everyone who said that they would use the app and all expressed interest in this feature. Interest for checking symptoms online was also relatively high. On the other hand, they were also the most likely to say that they would not use such an app. This points towards inequalities between different demographics- with some people being heavy users of online services and taking advantage of them to a full extent, and some remaining digitally excluded.



Patients find online tools to be useful, provided that they are user friendly and that they work efficiently and as intended.

- It's easy to book online as it can take too long for someone to answer the phone.
- My experience booking online was very good. Easy and you can choose the time you want.
- Online booking makes it easy to book since all available time slots" can be seen.

On the other hand, if online systems are not functional, either for technical reasons, or for practical reasons such as poor availability of appointments in the practice, people's trust in them decreases.

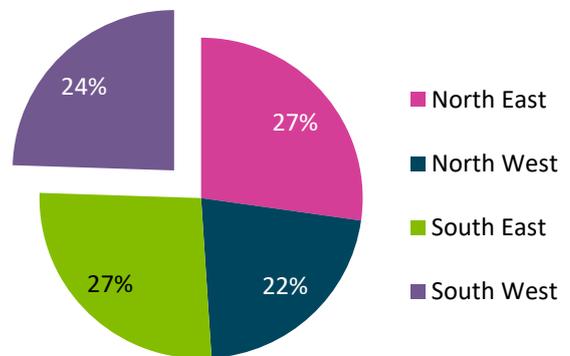
- Online services don't work, they're not reliable- they should make them more reliable, a lot of times you don't get a response from the practice. My husband tried e-consult- he filled the form and he never heard back.
- I like the idea of online appointments, but the system doesn't work. You always have to call on the morning of the day you want to be seen. I tried it once, I filled in the questionnaire- I received the standard automated reply- "someone will get back to you within 24 hours" and no one ever did! It's been one month!

## Health and Social Care in the South West Locality

### Research briefing

In May 2019 we organised a series of engagement events in order to understand local residents' thoughts and expectations around shaping health and social care services in the context of the NHS Long Term Plan. We focused on **prevention, personalisation, and primary care**; as well as on **improving neighbourhoods** as healthier spaces.

We engaged with **346 local residents** over the course of **four events**. **71 people (24%)** lived in the South West locality.



The locality is home to **8 GP surgeries, 9 pharmacies and 9 dentists**.

As part of our usual outreach, in **2018 and 2019**, we have received feedback from **417 locality residents** about their GP surgery and **55 residents** about their dentist. Making the total number of people we engaged with in the South West Locality **543**.

## What we have learned

The South West Locality has access to important **community resources** to support healthier lives for its residents, namely:

- ✓ GP surgeries that provide a good standard of medical care and shorter waiting times for GP appointments than the rest of the Borough.
- ✓ Good access to hospital services (Royal London Hospital and Mile End Hospital nearby).
- ✓ Good access to pharmacies.
- ✓ Residents feeling well supported to make healthy lifestyle choices and well equipped to support themselves and their families financially.
- ✓ Good access to sports fields and exercising facilities, particularly around schools.
- ✓ The Watney Market, which is a good source of fresh, affordable produce.

On the other hand, the area experiences **significant challenges**, namely:

- Significant health inequalities between the more affluent ward St Katherine & Wapping, and the more deprived rest of the Borough.
- High prevalence of long-term illnesses, including diabetes, heart and kidney disease; with Stepney Green having the lowest levels of life expectancy in the Borough.
- High density of fast food outlets, sweet shops and pubs.
- High levels of air pollution; very poor air quality.
- Noise pollution from traffic, particularly along Whitechapel Road and in the Limehouse area.
- Poor availability of exercising spaces and facilities that are not attached to schools/ that are available for all.
- Poor hygiene in public spaces and around exercising facilities.
- Local residents feeling unsafe in their neighbourhoods; including concerns around anti-social behaviour.
- Overcrowding on public transport; poor accessibility of public transport for people with mobility impairments.

## Reccomendations

- Improve provision of affordable healthy food choices; consider introducing a healthy food subsidy scheme.
- Improve provision of walkways and cycle routes, particularly in the South of the locality, connecting green spaces.
- Promote cycling as an alternative to driving; since the area already had good cycle lanes.
- Consider making Cannon Street Road one way, to cut down on congestion and air pollution.
- Install more outdoor gym equipment and exercising/sports facilities. Suitable locations for it could be: along the Shadwell basin, Altab Ali Park, Stepney Green Park, the green on Glamis Place.
- Expand green areas such as the Altab Ali Park and the green on Glamis Place to include children's play areas as well as exercising facilities.
- Clamp down on antisocial behaviour and drug use around the area between the Watney Market, the Royal London Hospital and Aldgate.
- Increase the number of benches alongside pedestrian routes; and on green spaces.
- Improve public transport connections between the South of the locality and Victoria Park.
- Increase uptake of online service use in GP surgeries; currently, South West locality residents are the least likely to book appointments online.

## Background

The North East Locality comprises of **five wards**: St Katharine and Wapping, Whitechapel, Shadwell, Stepney Green and St Dunstan's. It is home to **72,387** people.

The high proportion of young people, and low proportion of older people, in Tower Hamlets is generally reflected in each ward within the NE Locality. Around 20% of the locality population are aged under 16, around three quarters are aged 16 to 64, and only 7% are aged 65 and over. The Stepney Green and St Katherine & Wapping wards tend to be older. The area has the lowest birth rate in the Borough.

Over 30% of the Borough's population are Bangladeshi, and more than half are from BME backgrounds. More than half of the population in Shadwell and St. Dunstan's in Bangladeshi, representing the highest concentration of Bengali residents in the country; while nearly half of the residents in St Katharine and Wapping are White British, a much higher proportion than the rest of the locality.

### Community assets/ positive aspects

Good access to hospitals (Royal London and Mile End)

Better access to leisure centres than the rest of the Borough

Good access to pharmacies

Slightly lower incidence of cancer and mortality from cancer than the Borough average

### Health risks/ negative aspects

Extensive inequalities in health outcomes between the more affluent St Katharine & Wapping and the rest of the locality

Higher prevalence of long-term illnesses- except St Katharine and Wapping

High levels of overcrowding in housing- except St Katharine and Wapping

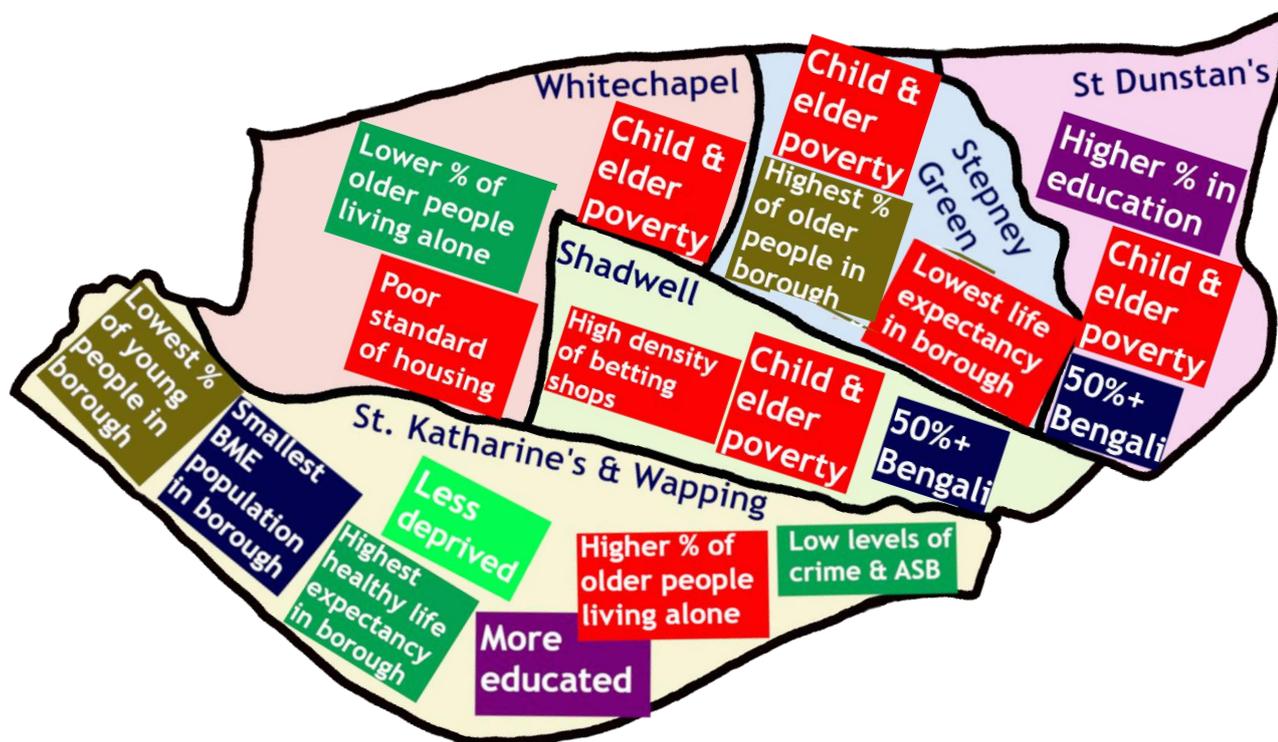
Higher density of pubs and fast food outlets than rest of the Borough

Higher rates of Type 2 diabetes, heart and kidney disease- except St Katharine and Wapping

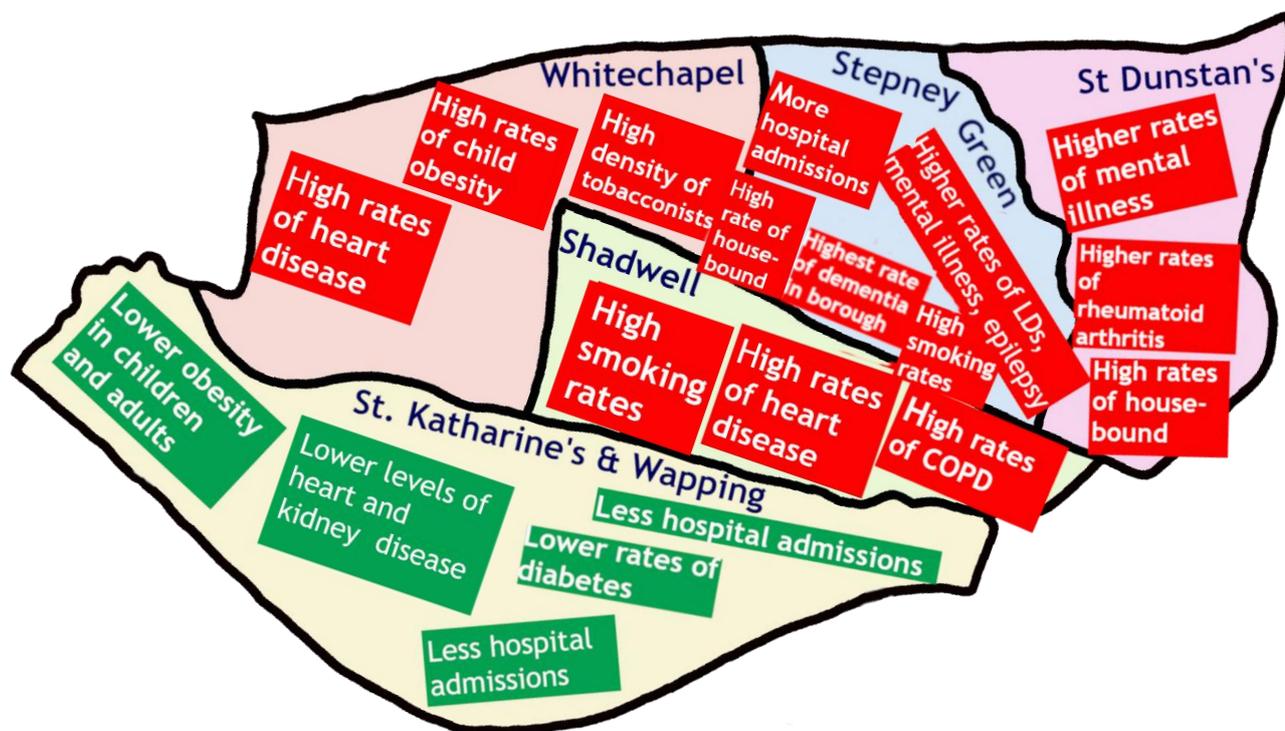
The Whitechapel Road areas experiences high rates of road traffic accidents

Very high levels of air pollution- among the worst in the country

## Ward-specific issues: demographics and inequality



## Ward-specific issues: health



\* Source for all background info including maps: Tower Hamlets Locality Profile

## Living in the South West locality

As part of our four “What would you do?” engagement events, we asked local residents to express the extent to which a series of descriptors of how residents’ should feel about their local area matches their personal experience, on a sliding scale (recoded as a 0 to 100 scale).

Overall, at a Borough level, local residents’ views on most indicators was leaning positive; with the exception of “I can breathe clean air in my neighbourhood”, which was leaning negative. Differences between those in good health and those with poorer health outcomes were relatively small, but consistent. Residents in good health felt better supported to make healthy lifestyle choices; they were more satisfied with their living conditions and with air quality than their peers suffering from chronic illnesses, mental health conditions or disabilities. In particular, people suffering from mental health issues had a more negative view on almost all indicators: they felt less safe in their neighbourhood, less able to support themselves financially, less confident that they can access good healthcare services and also more disenfranchised in relation to local decision-making.

**Residents of the South West locality felt the best supported to make healthy lifestyle choices and the best equipped to support themselves and their families financially; they were the most likely to think that health and social care services work well together.**

**On the other hand, they had lower than average levels of satisfaction with air quality.**

Definitely no

Definitely yes



I am supported to make healthy lifestyle choices



I am satisfied with my home and where I live



I can breathe clean air in my neighbourhood



Health and social care services work well together



I can access good healthcare services if I need them



I feel safe in my neighbourhood



I can financially support myself and my family



I have a say in how my local community is run



I can access good social care services if I need them



I am treated as an individual; my specific needs are considered

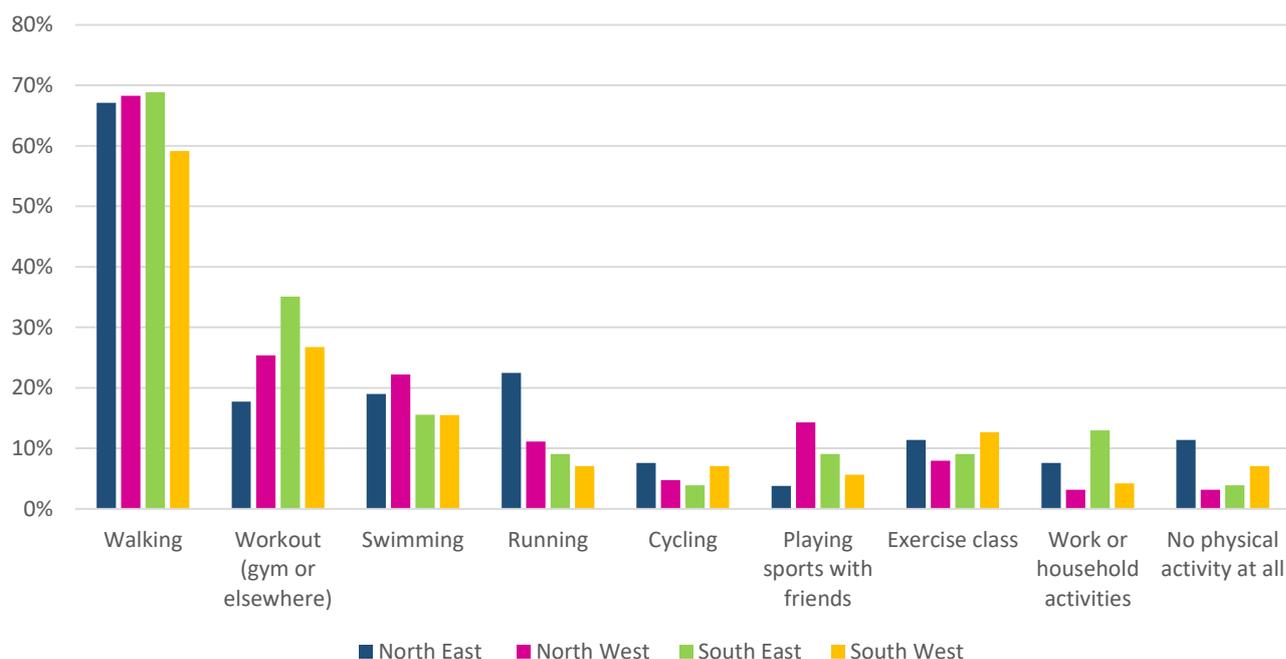
 = North East     = South East

 = North West     = South West

## Healthier neighbourhoods

As part of our four locality events, we asked local residents to tell us **what they like to do in order to stay physically active**.

Overall, by far, **walking** was the most popular form of exercise, named by **62%** of respondents. It was preferred by both men and women, and by all ethnic groups. It was also preferred by respondents aged 25 or over.



Residents of the South West locality were walking less, but taking more exercise classes than those in the other three localities.

The South West Locality is generally well-served by exercising facilities and sports fields; however, many are attached to schools or youth centres, which means they may not be available or suitable for all ages. The Shadwell and Whitechapel areas are less well-served than Wapping and Stepney.

## I can do the types of physical activity that I enjoy in Tower Hamlets



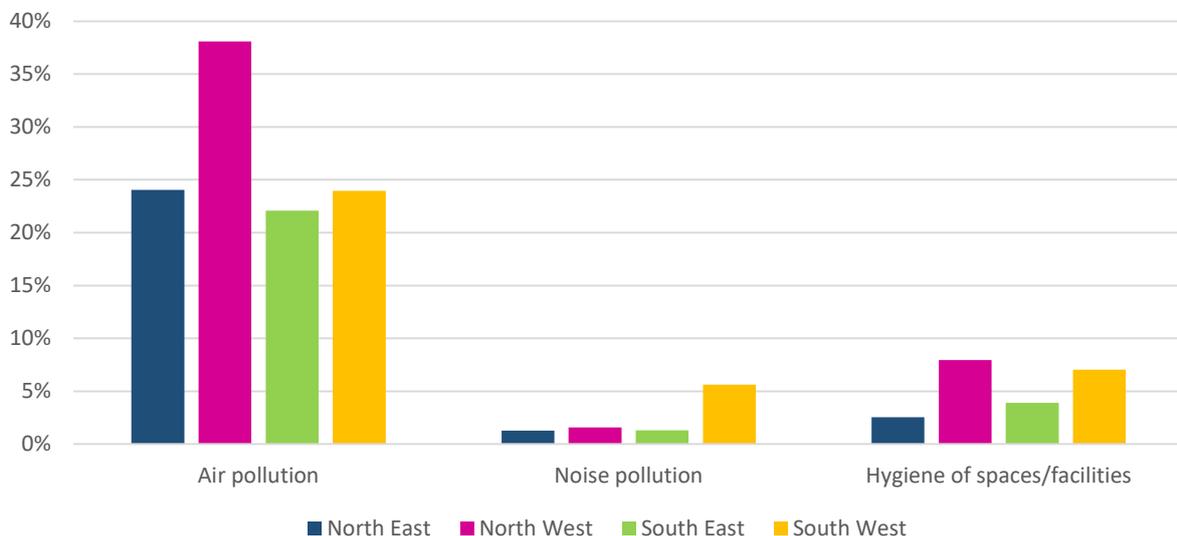
While in all localities a strong majority of respondents felt that they can do the types of physical activity that they enjoy in Tower Hamlets, the South West of the Borough fared the worst in this respect.

We have also asked participants to our four locality events to tell us what obstacles, if any, they found to being more physically active and having a healthier lifestyle in their local area. **69% of respondents** named at least one problem. The environment and safety issues, named by 30% of respondents in the Borough each, were considered the biggest obstacle to healthier and more active living.

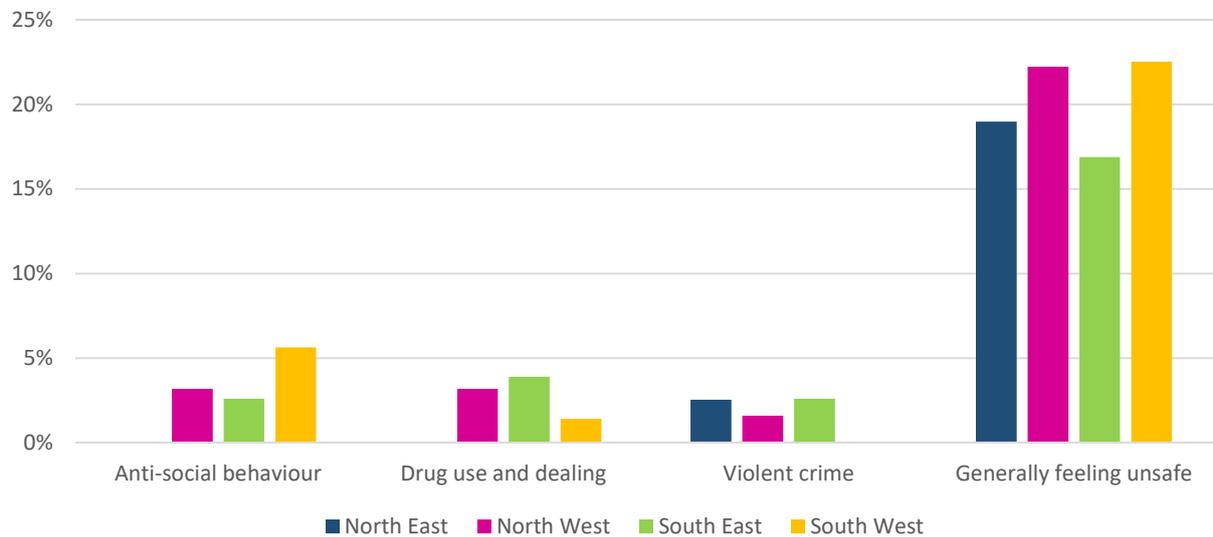
**For all four localities, air pollution was the biggest concern mentioned by residents, followed by generally feeling unsafe.**

Residents of the South West Locality were most likely to complain about noise pollution- primarily from traffic.

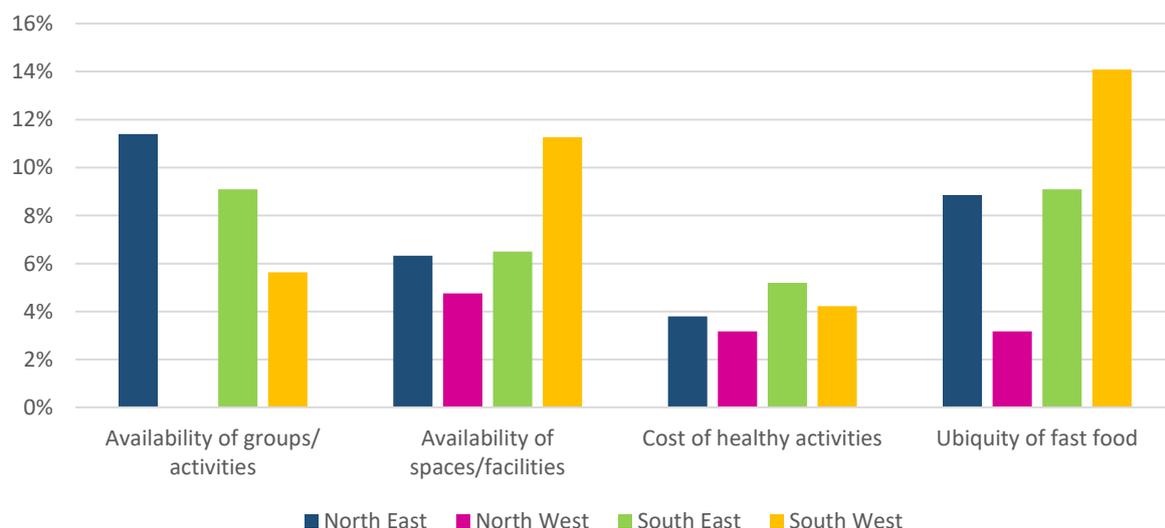
They also expressed concerns around the hygiene of public spaces, around issues such as dog fouling and rubbish dumping.



Residents of the South West locality were more likely to feel unsafe than those living in the East of the Borough. They were also the most concerned about anti-social behaviour. On the other hand, they had a lower level of concern about drug use and dealing, and none of them brought up violent crime.



People in the South West locality were the most likely to be concerned about the availability of spaces/ facilities for physical activity, such as gyms and sports courts, and about the ubiquity of fast food. The areas around Whitechapel Road, Watney Market and Stepney Way have a particularly high density of fast food outlets.



## Designing a healthier locality

As part of the four locality events we asked local residents to show us on a map of their locality *what helps them stay healthy locally, what hinders their efforts to stay healthy, and what could be done to improve their health at a local level.*

Overall, in the Borough, there was a high level of interest for:

- More youth- and family-oriented activities in parks; such as organised sports for children and teenagers; as well as possibly activities for seniors such as walking groups and light exercise classes.
- Involving young people, particularly boys, in social and sporting activities, as part of initiatives to prevent their involvement with drug use, dealing or gang violence.
- Developing play areas/ family areas in the green spaces that don't yet have one (especially the smaller ones that could be extended for this purpose).
- Providing subsidised gym membership or gym/swimming pool entries in leisure centres for those who would have trouble affording them at full price, such as benefits recipients.
- Making gyms and exercising facilities more inclusive for people who have disabilities or limitations in how they can use them.
- Installing more gyms in open spaces, as a free alternative to gyms; and organising exercising groups around them.
- Initiatives to provide more affordable alternatives to unhealthy fast-food; including food co-ops, growing food/allotments, community gardening and family-friendly cafes with healthier menus.
- Supporting community and cultural centres to expand their provision.

## South West Locality

The South of the locality is well-served by parks, that many residents think of as pleasant places to walk in; walkways and cycle routes between parks could encourage walking and cycling, both as leisure activities and as an alternative to driving. Some residents have expressed a preference for more trees and landscaping choices closer to preserving the natural environment of the area.

In the North of the Locality, rather than bigger parks, there are only smaller green spaces, not suitable for children to play in. They should be expanded to accommodate play areas. Furthermore, the area between the Watney Market, the Royal London Hospital and Aldgate is perceived to be unsanitary and unsafe, because of drug use and anti-social behaviour. Older residents have remarked that in many areas in the locality, there are no or few benches.

The North and central areas of the locality are busy with traffic, as they are crossed by main roads connecting Central and East London. Lorries often circulate on these main roads, creating congestion and slowing down traffic. Residents often experience traffic jams. The Limehouse area is particularly affected by air pollution resulting from ongoing traffic. It has been suggested that Cannon Street Road (connecting Whitechapel Road and Commercial Road) could be made one-way to cut down on traffic.

Public transport along the routes is often over-crowded, making it harder for people to travel. The DLR is accessible for wheelchair users, but the Overground is not. There is no direct bus route connecting Wapping (the South of the locality) and Victoria Park. A transport scheme for children young people (similar to school buses) could improve their access to parks. Cycle lanes are good and cycling should be more heavily promoted as an alternative to driving.

The Watney Market offers a good selection of groceries, including fresh fruit and vegetables. Nonetheless, residents on low incomes find healthy food difficult to afford. Multiple residents have expressed desire for more allotments. Sweet shops are ubiquitous.

The locality is gentrifying rapidly; new flats and office buildings have been built, and some residents feel that sense of community is diluted or lost.



# Primary care in the locality

## Dentists

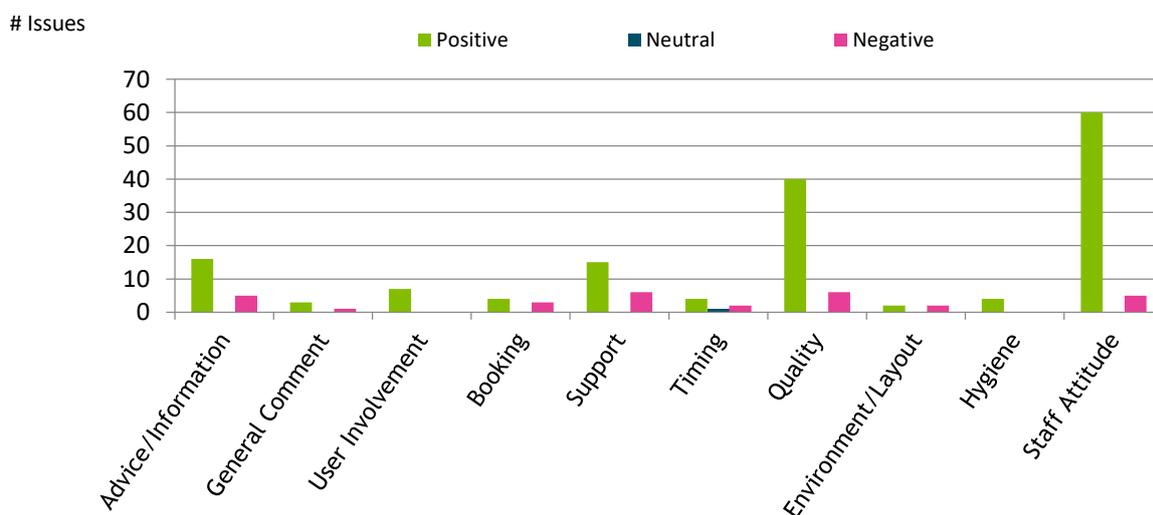
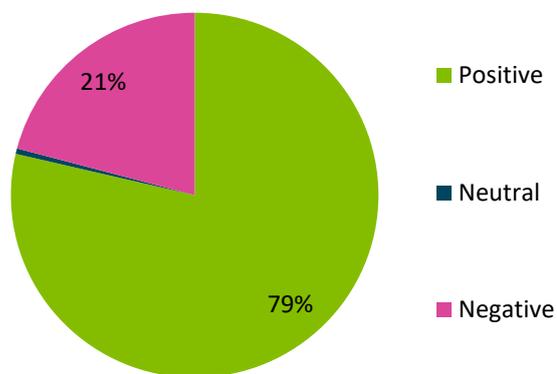
The South West locality is home to **9 dental practices**.

According to the Tower Hamlets South West Locality Profile, access to dentists is varied across the South West locality and is similar to the rest of the Borough overall. The average household in each LSOA area is no more than 2km from a dentist, and many neighbourhoods are within 500 metres.

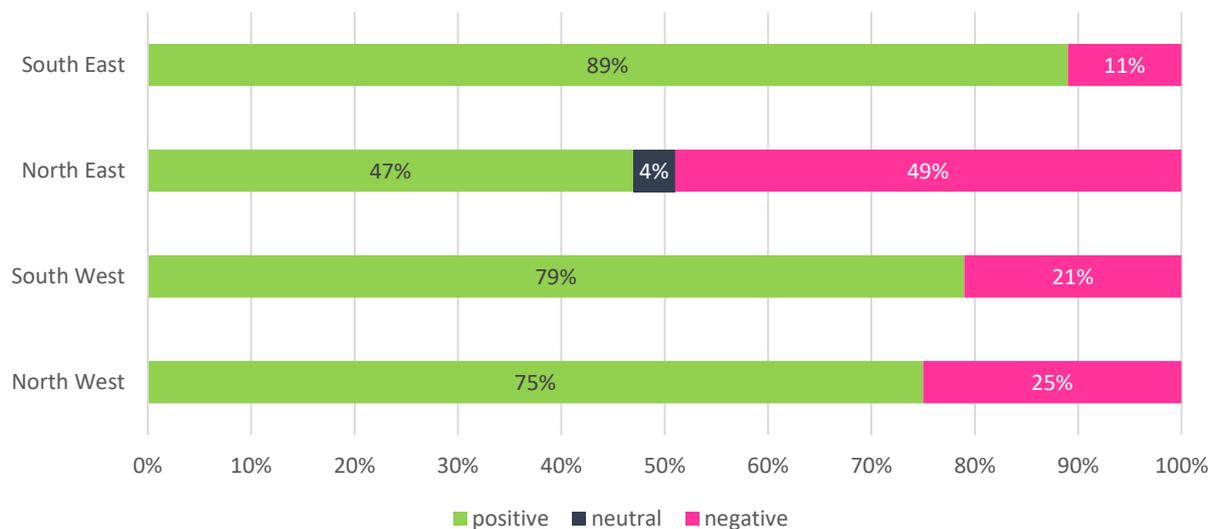
In 2018 and 2019, we have received feedback from 55 service users, identifying 206 issues.

Overall, local residents' experience with dentists in the area has been broadly positive.

Patients feel that they are receiving a good service from polite and compassionate professionals, and that they are well-supported to make informed choices about their health; only a minority of service users complained about difficulties in booking and communicating with reception.



Patient opinion of dentists is broadly in line with the Borough average; with patients in the South East locality being slightly more satisfied, and those in the North East being less satisfied.



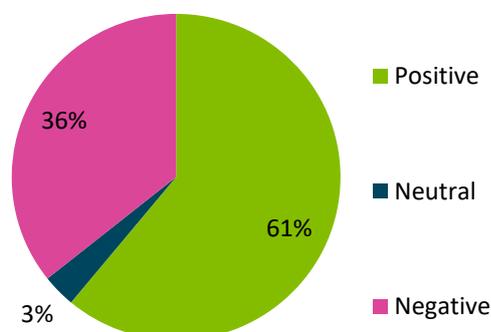
- I came here to get a second opinion after I felt I was being far too 'upsold' to and pressurised to spend a lot of money at my university's recommended private dentists and I didn't trust them. While obviously not as fancy as the private place, I have received kind and caring treatment and advice, and the dentists makes sure he explains everything he is doing very clearly so you know what's going on. Only left one star off because it's often really hard to get through on the phone so have ended up leaving appointments too long. Reception and assistant staff are really nice too. God bless the NHS.*
- I had a wonderful experience at this dentist. As soon as you walk in, the first thing that strikes you is how clean the whole premise is. The receptionists are very cordial. The dentist and the assistants were experts. They were so very patient with me in answering my queries. The dentist gave me all the options to save my tooth and it was easier for me then to make my decision about my treatment. I recommend this dental practice to everyone.*
- The dentist was very friendly, excellent work on my tooth, she was gentle and very thorough with her advice and treatment. Happy to return in the near future.*
- Good practice. Only problem is that they send texts without saying who the appointment is for e.g. you or one of the kids. They do send emails though as well so the texts remind you to check your emails I guess.*
- Genuinely they most unhelpful and rude receptionist staff work here - the couple times I have contacted them have been stressful and the result is never straight forward or easy. You'd think booking an appointment would not be hard - but it really really is. Dentist was actually fine so it's a bummer their receptionist staff are so so so rubbish!.*

## GP surgeries

The South West locality is home to **8 GP surgeries**.

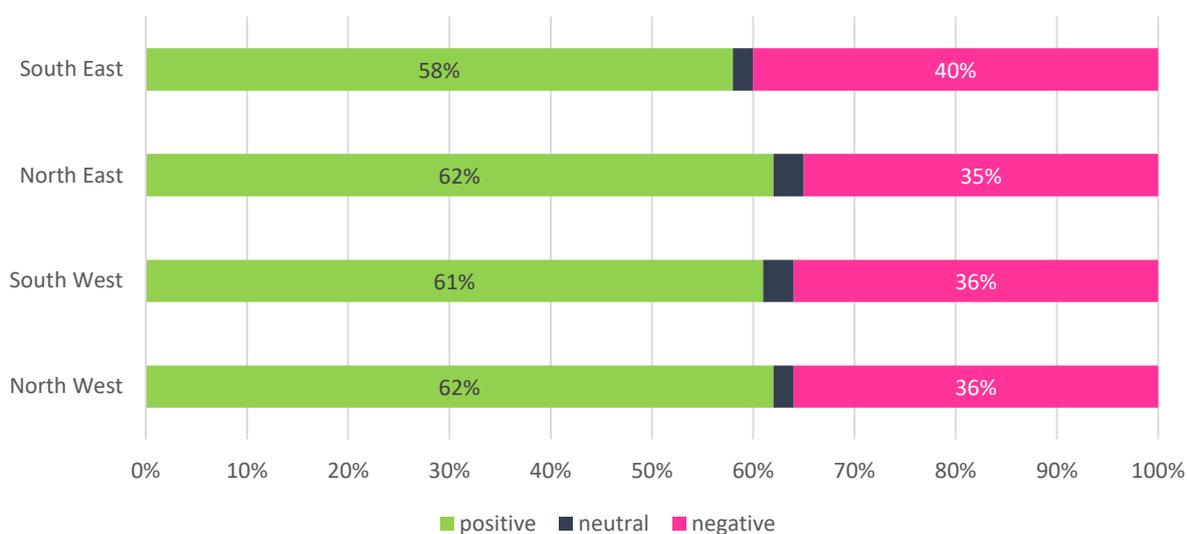
According to the Tower Hamlets South West Locality Profile, access to GP practices is fairly good across the South West locality, with the average being less than 0.5 km away from a GP.

In 2018 and 2019, we have received feedback from 417 service users, identifying 1721 issues. Additionally, we have analysed data from the GP Patient Survey 2018.



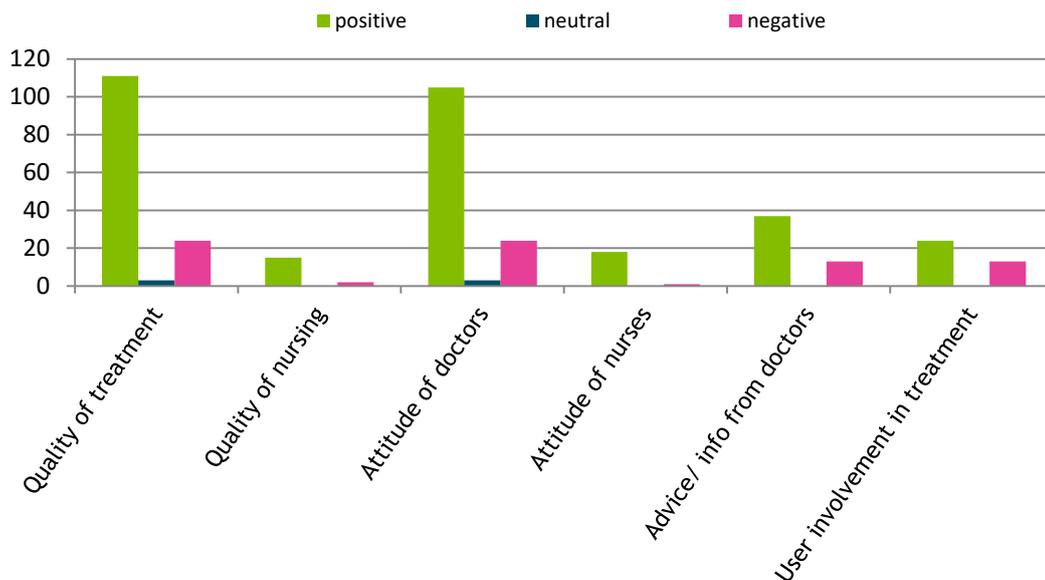
Overall, the opinion of patients who gave feedback to Healthwatch was **broadly positive**.

Satisfaction with GP surgeries is broadly similar across localities.



## Quality of treatment and nursing

Residents of the South West locality are generally happy with the quality of service they receive from doctors and nurses; they find medical professionals to be helpful and compassionate. They are satisfied with how doctors communicate and they feel empowered to make their own informed decisions about their treatment.

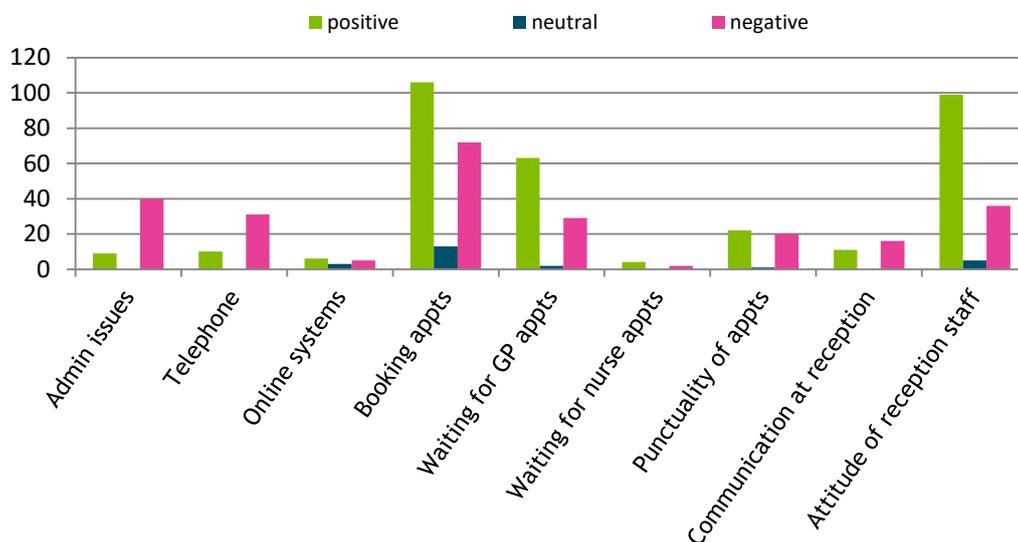


- Although it is quite a mixed / deprived area the service is excellent. The reception Staff are friendly and professional, always a pleasure to deal with. The Practice Nurse is just wonderful, always upbeat, knowledgeable and approachable. I am also really impressed by the care, dedication and time given by the doctors all of whom are great. Since my mother, who suffers with dementia, has moved in with us in Whitechapel I spend increasingly more time seeking medical help. My practice have been amazingly supportive and have made this move so much easier.
- The doctors are knowledgeable, caring and always take their time to address the problem. As a mother of 4 young children, I have extreme confidence in the doctors. They have always been friendly and fun with them that they actually like visiting the doctors.
- I had an excellent experience today. I was unsure if I actually needed to see my doctor so I asked the receptionists advice. She thought I did and managed to get me an appointment the same day. When I got there I only waited a few minutes before I was called in by the doctor. I was listened to, not rushed, and assessed before being involved in the discussion about further treatment. Other places could learn a lot from looking at how this practice runs.

## Organisation and access to services

While patients find that reception staff are polite and friendly, communication with reception is thought to be lacking by some; GP practices are difficult to reach by telephone and admin issues cause confusion.

Local people's experience of making appointments is better than in the other localities and people are happier with the amount of time they have to wait to be seen by a GP; nonetheless, a significant minority of users find that they have to wait an unreasonable amount of time for an appointment, or that appointments don't run on time.



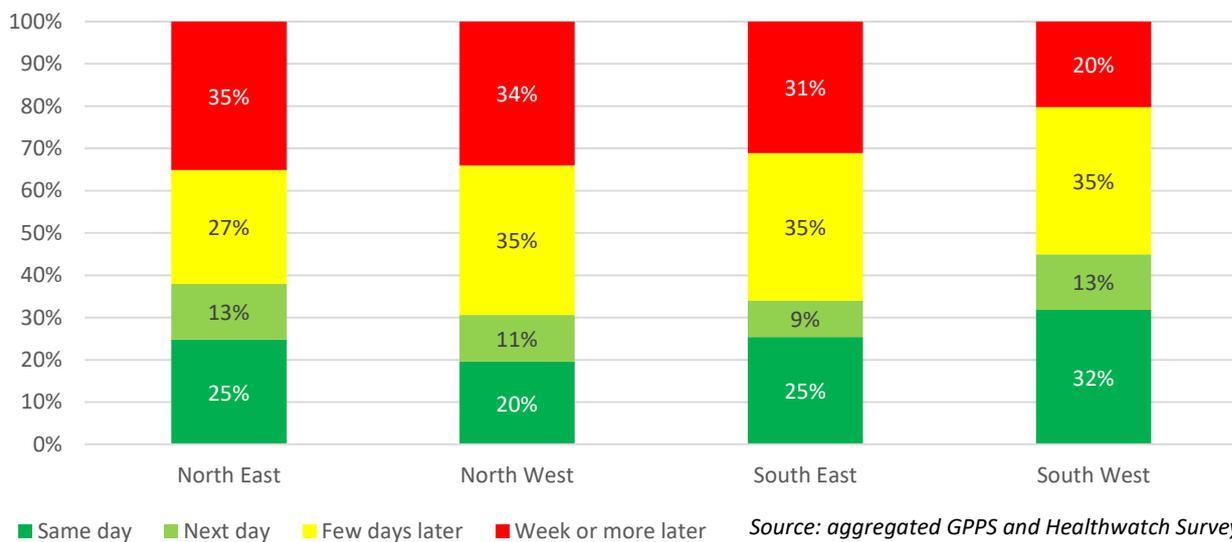
These issues mean that some patients may find GP services to be **difficult to access and inefficient**. Because practices have difficulty dealing with high volumes of calls, some patients end-up turning up at the practice in person in order to book emergency appointments in the morning; reception staff are under pressure, consequently, to deal with multiple patient queues. This may contribute to communications and admin errors happening.

Poor efficiency in booking appointments while dealing with a high volume of patients may also mean that appointments are not allocated sufficient time, causing them to over-run; which means delays for the next patients.

*I visited this morning to discuss a few things. I sat down and only waited a few moments, it was my first time to the surgery so I didn't know the process. She called me into the room and immediately 'told me off' because I didn't go into the room when my name was shown on the screen and therefore she had to call me in. As it was my first time I wasn't aware of this, when she did call me in, she didn't wait - she shut the door on my face.*

In March 2019, we have analysed data from the national GP Patient Survey, as well as a survey we have carried out ourselves, online and face-to-face, in order to understand how patients access GP services.

Patients in the South West locality are the most likely to be seen on the same day, and the least likely to wait for more than a week.



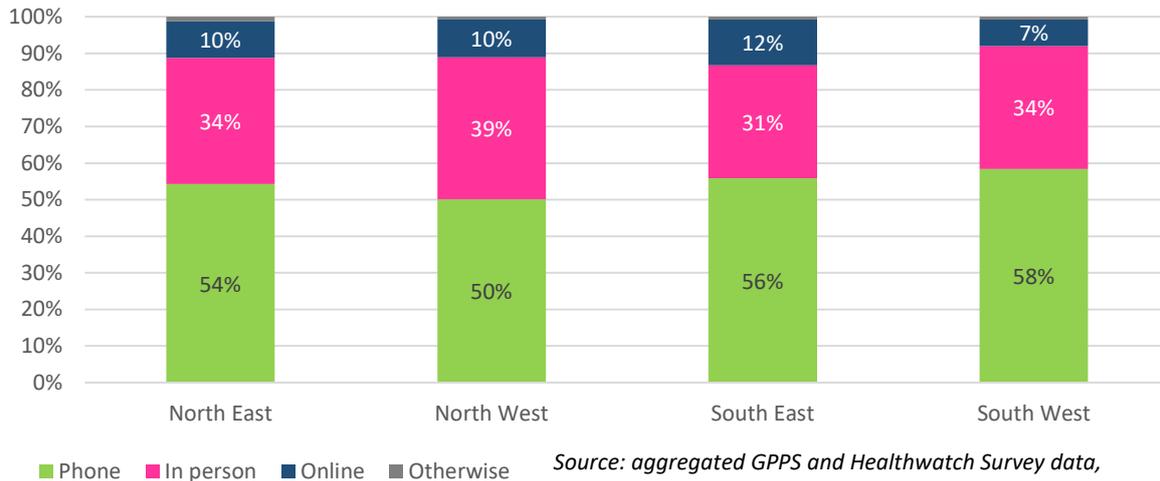
Source: aggregated GPPS and Healthwatch Survey data, Total 3358 responses; SW Locality 647 responses

Opinion of waiting for appointments is better than in other localities, with most patients feeling that they have been seen promptly enough, while a few believe that they had to wait an unreasonable amount of time.

- *My experience booking a routine appointment was very good; I was seen after more than a week. Always polite. If you ask for a quick appointment they do book you in early. No complaints at all.*
- *When I've needed a same day emergency appointment I've always gotten one, which I think is vital for a surgery. All in all I'm very satisfied with the care I receive.*
- *Very welcoming at the reception, they keep me informed of all the latest events to help with health and wellbeing. Can make appointments on the day and be seen by nurse or doctor.*
- *I booked appointments with a GP and nurse, both for myself and for my child, as I have given birth recently. I was seen within two-three days, I think that's somewhat reasonable.*
- *Just spent an hour chasing a prescription that I had requested two months ago. Had called in and was told I needed an appointment. Waited two months as it was not rated as urgent. Doctor issues a new prescription but the pharmacy did not receive it. Turns out one was printed for me two months ago but was told to schedule an appointment. Do these people talk to each other?*
- *You need to wait over a month for the next available appointment. You can book same day, but the phone lines are relentlessly engaged when you try calling at 8am. There appears to be no queue or waiting system on the phone - it just sends you in circles then cuts you off*

## How patients access GP services

Most appointments in Tower Hamlets GP surgeries are **booked over the phone**. Differences between localities are relatively minor. Patients in the South West locality are the least likely to book appointments online and the most likely to do it by telephone

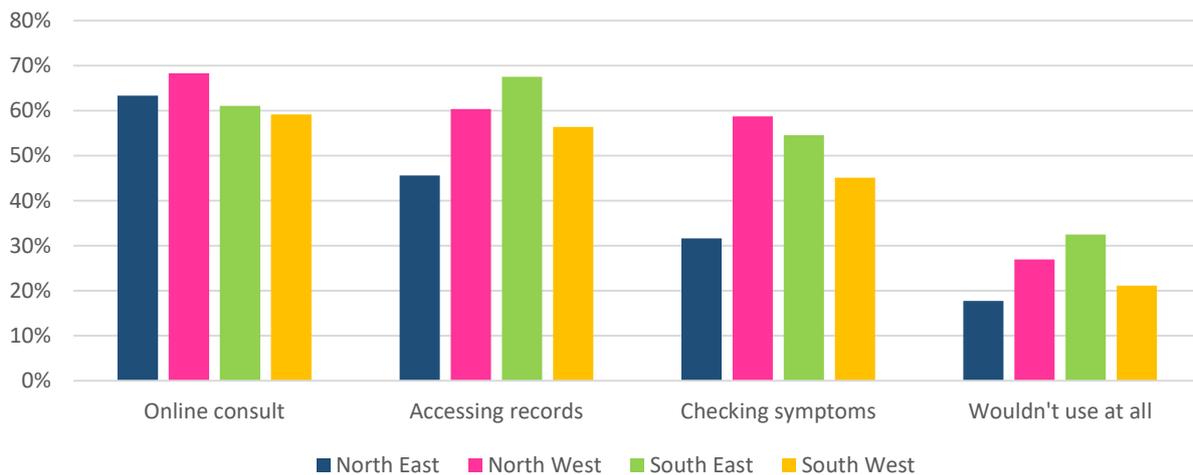


Issues around contacting GP practices by telephone are often brought up by patients:

- Is the phone line connected? Doctor tells me I need a 30 min appointment. Books me in for 11am on a weekday which of course I need to change, as I'm working. Can only book a 10 min appointment online. Tried to call reception seven times consecutively but nobody answers the phone.
- Cannot get through via phone. Will just keep ringing and ringing. One feels like a commodity rather than a human being.
- If I call before the surgery opens, I get a voicemail message telling me to call during opening hours. Then I call as soon as the lines open, I wait for more than 20 minutes, then when they finally get to me they tell me "there are no more appointments, you'll have to call back next morning". I have to explain to them that I need to be seen today because I have a serious chronic condition- and that's when usually they manage to give me an appointment. They try to offer me a telephone consultation first, but I prefer face to face appointments because I get to ask about more things.
- I am having such an awful experience with both of the practices. I am waiting on the phone over 30mins just to speak to a receptionist and when they pick up they sound so miserable especially the staff in Cable street surgery. Few days ago I was 12th person in the queue!!!

As part of our four What Would You Do events, we have asked local residents if they would use an NHS app for accessing GP services, and for what kinds of purpose.

Residents of the South West locality were slightly less likely than those in the North West or South East of the Borough to use the app for accessing records or checking symptoms, but also less likely to say they would not use it at all.



Patients find online tools to be useful, provided that they are user friendly and that they work efficiently and as intended.

- I booked an appointment online and my experience booking the appointment was very good. I like that I got text message reminders.*
- My experience booking the appointment online was very good. Easy process when you get to know how to access the online services, but never promoted from any of the practice staff.*
- Overall the practice seems to be making a lot of changes to improve how the system works - the hours are long which mean you can get an appointment after work, they have introduced a new online system to make appointments, and it is easy to get last minute cancellations on the phone if you call on the day you need.*

On the other hand, if online systems are not functional, either for technical reasons, or for practical reasons such as poor availability of appointments in the practice, people's trust in them decreases.

- I do like online access but unfortunately you can't always use this for nurses' appointments or cannot book 2 appointments.*
- The online booking system is a farce. It just acts as a calendar and can't do much through it. They should take example from [another] practice, which is much up to date and the staff is much more respectful of the patients.*