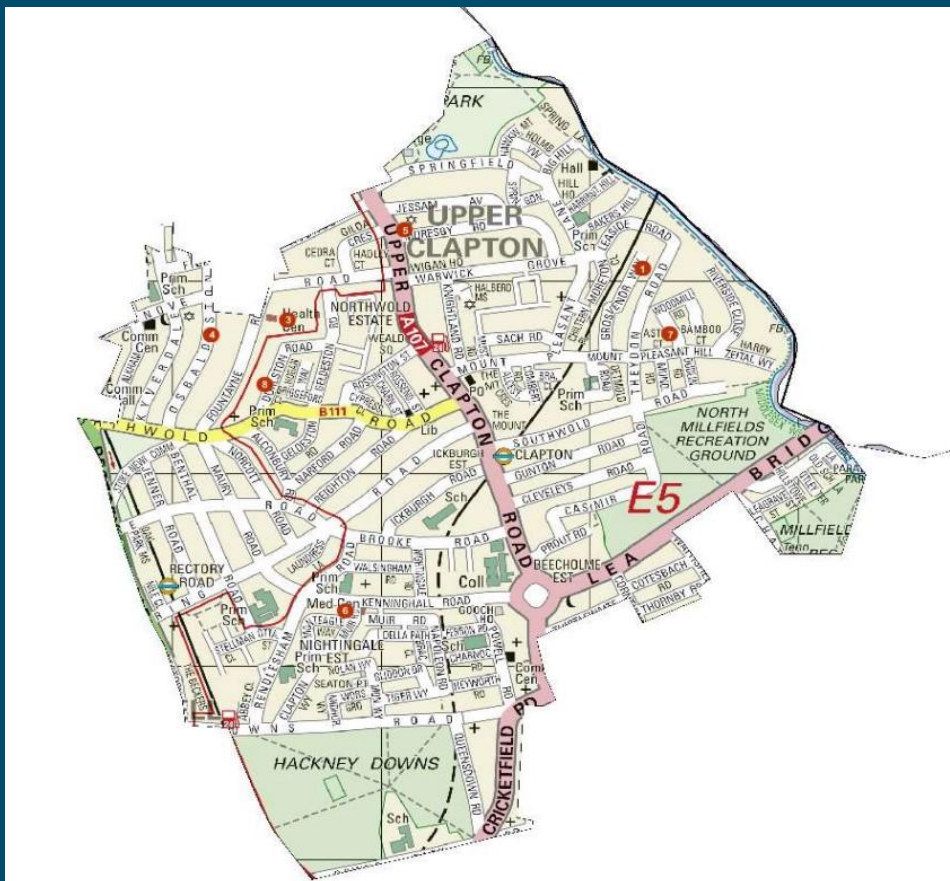


# Hackney Downs Neighbourhood Insight Report 2025



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## Acknowledgements:

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Social Prescribing (Family Action)  
Citizens Advice Hackney  
Al-Mubarak Ibrahim (University of Westminster)

## Neighbourhoods way of working

The Neighbourhoods way of working brings together residents, health and care services, local authorities and community organisations to improve the health and well-being of people living in Hackney and the City of London. It ensures that services work for local people by putting residents at the heart of decision-making.

Each of the eight Neighbourhoods in City and Hackney has its own strengths and challenges. We listen to residents, gather insights and work with partners to shape health and care services around the needs of local people. By focusing on what matters most to communities, we can help tackle health inequalities and strengthen (hyper)-local support networks.

By bringing people and services together, we aim to foster practical changes that improve access to services and enhance residents' quality of life.

## 2025 Update: Neighbourhoods Staff Handbook

The City & Hackney Neighbourhood Staff Handbook has recently been launched as a new resource to support staff in understanding and implementing place-based working within the Northeast London Integrated Care System (NEL ICS). The handbook includes useful insights, practical toolkits, frameworks, case studies, and evidence-based research from pilots, surveys, and resident engagement.

The handbook's content is structured around the Three Pillars of Neighbourhood Working:

- **Resident at the Centre**
- **Working Together**
- **Knowing Your Neighbourhood**

For further information, please contact Angela Clarke ([angela.clarke70@nhs.net](mailto:angela.clarke70@nhs.net)).

## Purpose of this Insight Report

Produced annually by Healthwatch Hackney, the Neighbourhoods Insight Reports highlight key health and care issues affecting residents across Hackney and the City of London.

Commissioned by the Central Neighbourhoods Team, these reports bring together quantitative data, qualitative insights and case studies of local residents' experiences to help build a better understanding of health and well-being at the Neighbourhood level.

By highlighting key challenges, strengths and opportunities for collaboration, these insights aim to support Neighbourhood teams, service providers and local decision-makers in shaping services that better meet residents' needs.

## About Healthwatch Hackney

Healthwatch Hackney is part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations across England, dedicated to amplifying the voices of residents and service users. We listen to people's experiences—both positive and negative—of health and social care services and ensure their feedback reaches those with the power to create meaningful change.

As an independent champion for Hackney residents, our mission is to improve health and social care services and outcomes. We achieve this by making sure the voices of local people are heard, influencing decision-makers and working collaboratively to shape better services for everyone in the borough.

## Contents (click title to jump to it)

<b>Acknowledgements:</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Neighbourhoods way of working</b>	<b>1</b>
2025 Update: Neighbourhoods Staff Handbook	1
<b>Purpose of this Insight Report</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>About Healthwatch Hackney</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Contents</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Who lives in Hackney Downs?</b>	<b>7</b>
Summary of key Neighbourhood demographic statistics	8
<b>Health outcomes in Hackney Downs</b>	<b>10</b>
Long-Term Health Conditions in Hackney Downs	10
Shared caseloads and high-intensity users	12
Confidence in managing long-term conditions	14
Contact with a health care professional	14
Support from local services	15
Conversations with health care professionals Vs perceived support for LTCs	16
Case Study – Community navigation and long-term condition support in Hackney Downs	16
<b>Health inequalities</b>	<b>18</b>
Children and young people	18
Case Study: Supporting a Young Person’s Mental Health in Hackney Downs	21
Older people in Hackney Downs	22
General population in Hackney Downs	25
Language Barriers	29
Barriers to GP registration in Hackney	30

Citizen's Advice .....	31
<b>Access to health services and support .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Access to mental health services.....	34
Hackney Downs: Residents' mental health experiences .....	35
Availability of mental health services .....	36
Mental health service demand across Neighbourhoods .....	37
Barriers to mental health services access.....	37
Alternative routes to mental health support.....	38
Access to GP services.....	38
Barriers to GP access.....	39
Comparing datasets – IPSOS MORI Vs Healthwatch Hackney.....	41
Additional roles reimbursement scheme (ARRS).....	42
Access to sexual and reproductive health services (SRH) .....	42
Young People's Access to SRH Services .....	44
Access to pharmacy services.....	47
Sexual Health Community Pharmacy Project .....	48
<b>Access to Adult Social Care</b> .....	49
Access to Community Rehabilitation Services .....	52
Multidisciplinary Team Meetings in City and Hackney .....	53
<b>Neighbourhood Assets in Hackney Downs.....</b>	<b>55</b>
Community hall hire .....	56
Community Health Champions.....	57
<b>Social prescribing</b> .....	58
Hackney Downs VCS Services .....	60
Social Housing Providers in Hackney Downs .....	62
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Neighbourhood Challenges and Opportunities .....</b>	<b>64</b>
Supporting Resident Engagement in City & Hackney Neighbourhoods..	66

## Summary

Hackney and the City of London are home to diverse and vibrant communities, each with distinct health and social care needs. At the Neighbourhood level, variations in demographic makeup, health outcomes and access to services are evident.

This report highlights key statistics and trends for Hackney Downs Neighbourhood, drawing attention to differences compared to other Neighbourhoods. It integrates quantitative data from various sources, as well as insights from local Neighbourhood teams and feedback from Healthwatch Hackney's engagement with residents.

In addition to service data and resident experiences, the report also explores local assets, focusing on the role of voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations in addressing health inequalities and supporting residents. By combining data with lived experience, this Insight Report aims to inform service planning, policy decisions and community-driven solutions to improve health and well-being in Hackney Downs.

## Glossary

Acronym	Title	Description
ASC	Adult Social Care	Support provided by different organisations to help people stay independent, safe and well.
ASQ	Ages and Stages Questionnaire	A developmental and social-emotional screening for children between birth and age 6.
BMI	Body Mass Index	A measure of body weight compared to height.
GP	General practitioner	GPs treat common medical conditions and refer patients to hospitals and other medical services for urgent and specialist treatment.
MDM	Multi-disciplinary meetings	Regular meetings between different health care professionals to discuss individual patients.
NEET	Not in education, employment or training	Young people aged 16 to 24 years who are not education, employment or training.
NEL	North-East London	NEL covers eight local authorities in London: Barking & Dagenham, City of London, Hackney, Havering, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.
NHS	National Health Service	The publicly funded healthcare systems of the United Kingdom.
PCN	Primary care network	Group of GP practices, community, mental health, social care, pharmacy, hospital and voluntary services in a geographical area. There is one PCN in each Neighbourhood.
VCS	Voluntary and community sector	The VCS also referred to as the third sector includes organisations such as charities, social enterprises, not-for-profit organisations and voluntary and community organisation whose primary purpose is not profit driven.
PMI	Patient Master Index	A dataset that records information on patients registered at GP practices, including demographic details and diagnosed conditions, particularly in Primary Care. It provides insights into population health trends and service usage within a specific area.

## Introduction

The London Borough of Hackney and the City of London form a single NHS health and care system, made up of eight Primary Care Networks (PCNs). Each area has its own characteristics and health needs. The eight Neighbourhoods in City & Hackney share their names and geographical boundaries with these PCNs. While structurally aligned, each Neighbourhood has distinct demographic profiles, health outcomes and levels of access to services.

In this report, the term *Neighbourhood* (with a capital 'N') refers not only to a geographical area but also to the wider network of voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, resident groups and professionals working together to improve local health and well-being.

It is hoped that the insights in this report will help Neighbourhood teams identify key characteristics of each City and Hackney Neighbourhood. This will support efforts to ensure that services and priorities better reflect the needs of local residents.

In this report, we look at the Hackney Downs Neighbourhood, its population profile, health outcomes and inequalities, access to services and key Neighbourhood assets. We end with recommendations for how Neighbourhood working could improve population health in Hackney Downs.

## Who lives in Hackney Downs?

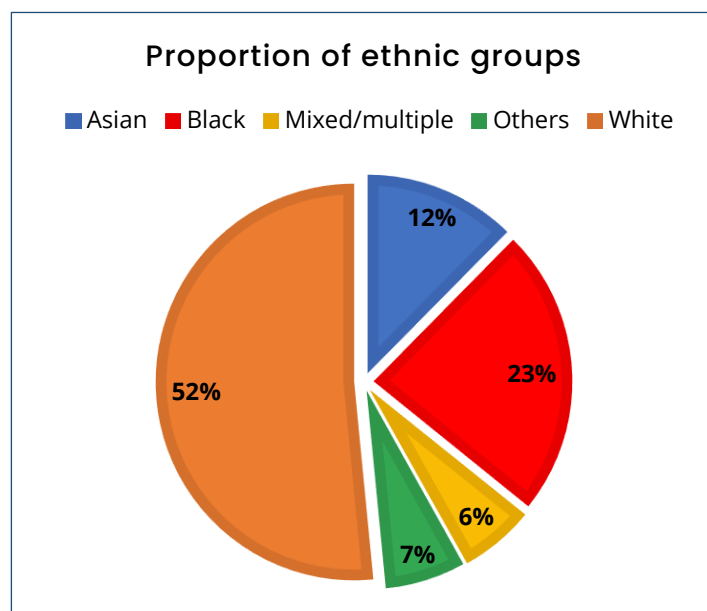
Hackney Downs is a diverse Neighbourhood in terms of age, ethnicity, digital participation and English language skills. Just over half of residents (52%) identify as White, with Black residents making up 23% and Asian residents 12%. A further 6% identify as mixed ethnicity, and 7% as "other" (see below table and graphs).



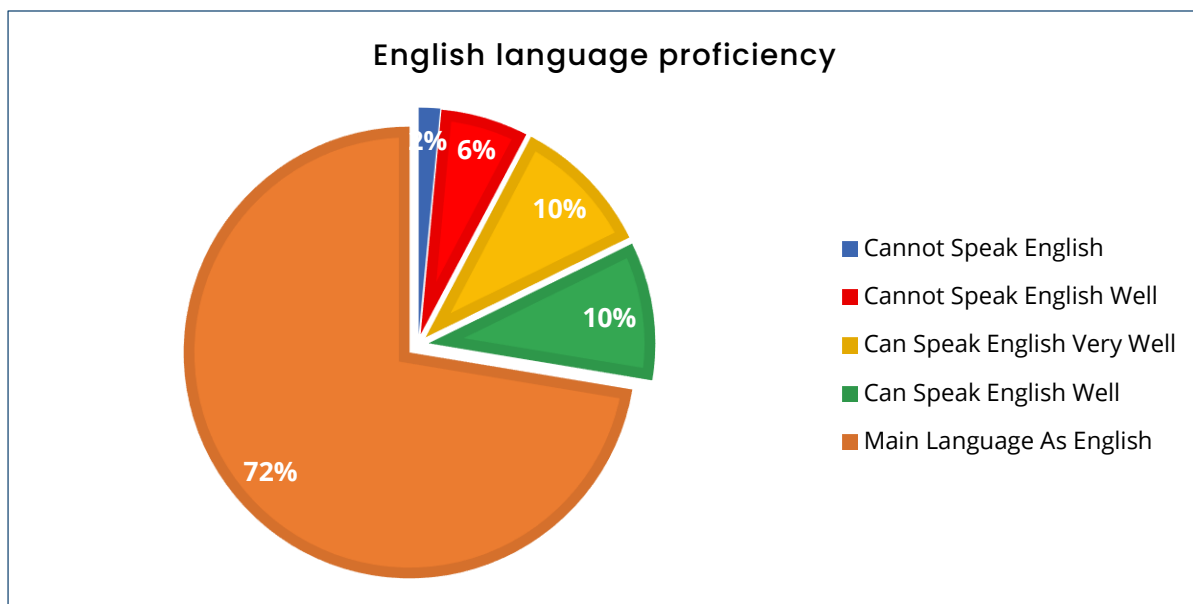
## Summary of key Neighbourhood demographic statistics

The Neighbourhood has a high percentage of young adults aged under 40 years old. Similar to the Hackney average.	62% of the Neighbourhood population is under 40 years old.
Hackney Downs Neighbourhood has the highest percentage of children aged under 18.	25% of the population is aged under 18 years old.
Neighbourhood has similar percentage of older people compared to the other Neighbourhoods	7% of the population is aged over 65 years old.
Digital inequalities are likely to be higher here than in the other Neighbourhoods.	14% of residents are likely to have never used the internet. 31% of residents are likely to be rare /infrequent users of the internet.
Lower level of English proficiency in Neighbourhood compared to Hackney average.	72% of residents speak English as their main language 8% of residents cannot speak English or cannot speak English well.

Source: NEL Health and Care Partnership, Baseline Needs Assessment (Aug 2022)

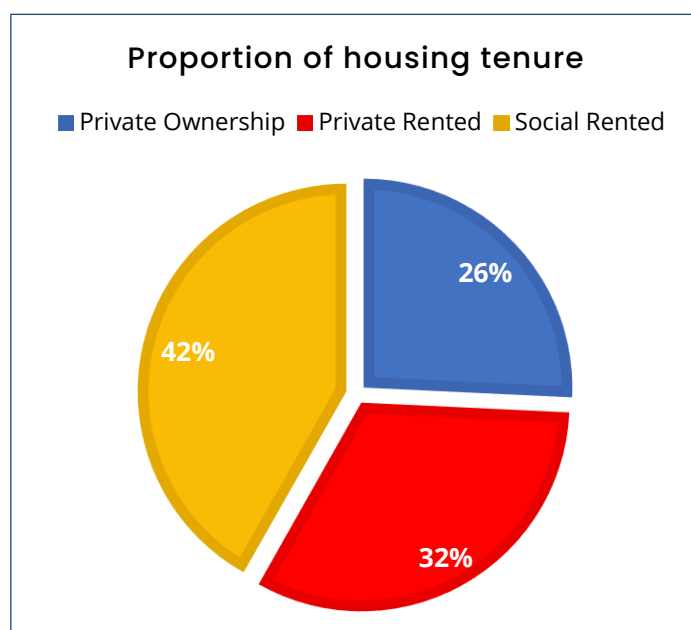


Source: Breakdown of Ethnicity in the Neighbourhood, NEL Health and Care Partnership, Baseline Needs Assessment (August 2022)



Source: English Proficiency in the Neighbourhood, NEL Health and Care Partnership, Baseline Needs Assessment (August 2022)

English proficiency in Hackney Downs is lower than the borough average. While 80.1% of Hackney residents speak English as their main language, only 72% do so in Hackney Downs ([ONS, 2021](#)). Healthwatch England's [Lost for words](#) report (2022) highlights inadequate interpreting provision nationally, with some patients turning to private services to communicate effectively.



Source: Housing Tenure in the Neighbourhood, NEL Health and Care Partnership, Baseline Needs Assessment (August 2022)

More than half of residents in Hackney Downs (54%) live in rented accommodation, while just 26% own their home.

Several factors contribute to health inequalities for people living in poor-quality housing in London, including high housing costs contributing to poverty, fuel poverty, overcrowding, disrepair, safety hazards, a lack of accessible accommodation, damp and mould, energy inefficiency and a high proportion of residents in temporary housing. Beyond these physical conditions, residents have also highlighted the significant psychological toll of struggling to secure suitable housing.

The [Health and Housing Impact Network](#) addresses the link between poor housing and health inequalities, supporting professionals through place-based and Neighbourhood-level approaches. In 2023, it launched the [Housing and Integrated Care Programme](#) to strengthen collaboration between housing, health and social care. The network provides [resources](#), [training](#) and peer-learning to tackle housing-related health issues. More details are available on the [Future of London](#) website.

## Health outcomes in Hackney Downs

### Long-Term Health Conditions in Hackney Downs

About 15 million people in England have a long-term condition (LTC). Long-term conditions or chronic diseases are conditions for which there is currently no cure and which are managed with drugs and other treatments.

LTCs are more prevalent in older people (58% of people over 60 compared to 14% under 40) and in more deprived groups (people in the poorest social class have a 60% higher prevalence than those in the richest social class with 30% more severe disease).

Existing evidence suggests that the number of people with at least one long-term condition as well as those with multiple long-term conditions is increasing nationally. This might further increase pressures on the health and care sector, as treatment and care for people with LTCs is already estimated to take up around £7 in every £10 of total health and social care expenditure.<sup>1</sup>

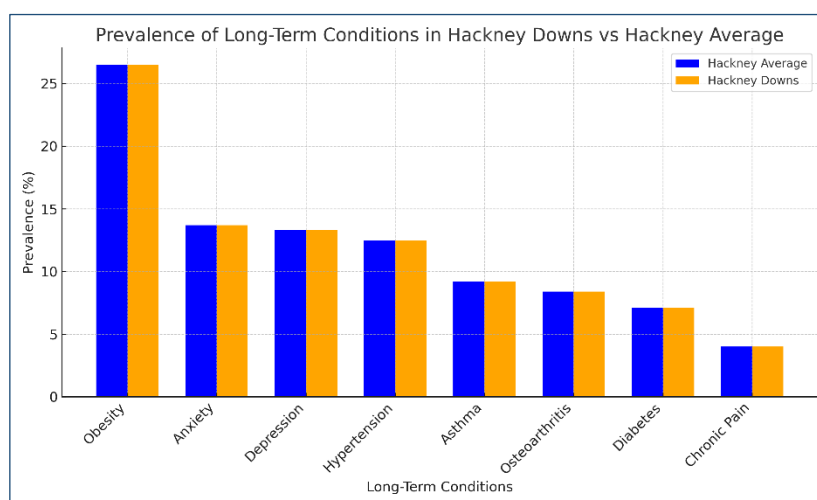
Compared to the Hackney average, Hackney Downs has a higher prevalence of obesity, hypertension, diabetes and osteoarthritis, while levels of anxiety and depression are slightly lower.

According to the [NHS Quality and Outcomes Framework \(QOF\) - 2024-25](#), the prevalence of these conditions in Hackney Downs Neighbourhood is:

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://cityhackneyhealth.org.uk/health-outcomes/long-term-conditions>

- |                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1) <b>Obesity</b> – 26.5%      | 5) <b>Asthma</b> – 9.2%         |
| 2) <b>Anxiety</b> – 13.7%      | 6) <b>Osteoarthritis</b> – 8.4% |
| 3) <b>Depression</b> – 13.3%   | 7) <b>Diabetes</b> – 7.1%       |
| 4) <b>Hypertension</b> – 12.5% | 8) <b>Chronic Pain</b> – 4.0%   |



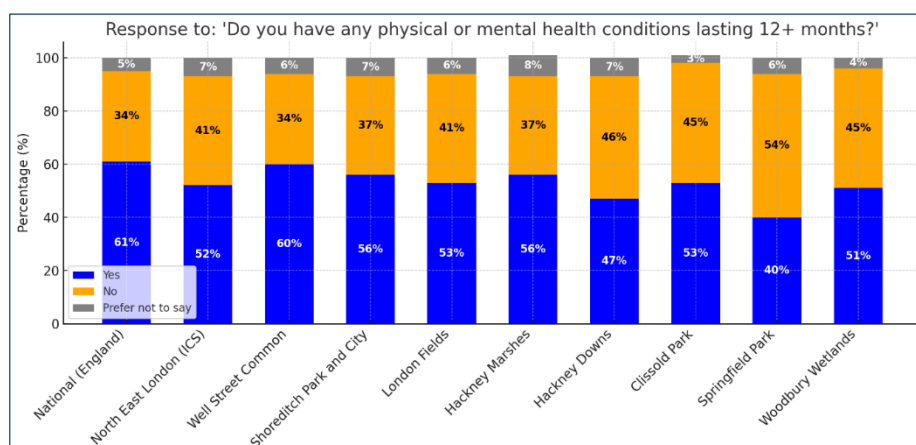
Source: NHS NEL Intelligence & Insights Team (Dec 2024)

Notably, two of the top three most prevalent conditions across all Neighbourhoods, anxiety and depression, are mental health related. This highlights the need for mental health support, which will be explored in more detail in a later section of this report.

### IPSOS MORI GP Survey

The [IPSOS MORI GP Patient Survey \(2024\)](#) is an independent annual survey conducted by IPSOS on behalf of NHS England, covering access to GP services, appointment experiences, quality of care and support for managing LTCs.

In Hackney Downs, 47% of respondents reported having at least one long-term condition. This is below the NEL average and one of the lower rates across Hackney Neighbourhoods.



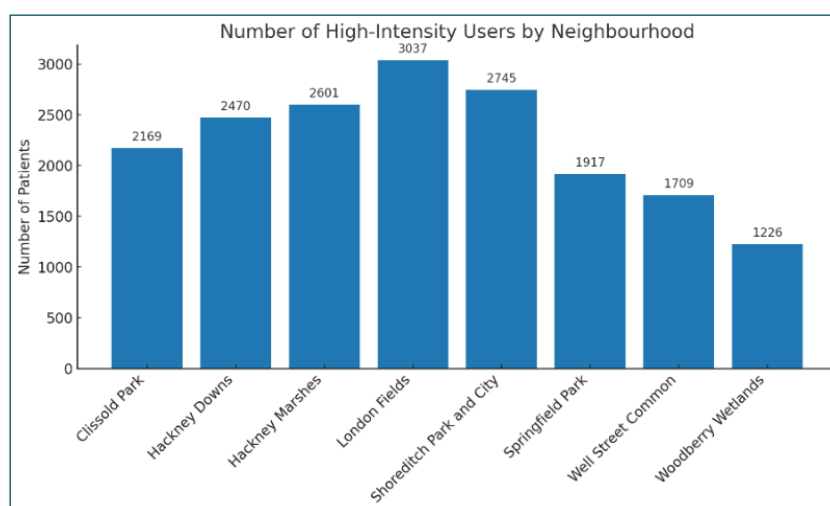
Source: Patients with Long-term Conditions by Neighbourhood (IPSOS GP Survey 2024)

## Shared caseloads and high-intensity users

The following analysis focuses on people referred to community therapy, community nursing, mental health services and adult social care between July 2022 and June 2024. It helps identify people with multiple service needs and frequent use of health and care services.

### High Intensity GP Users Across Neighbourhoods

High-intensity users are those with the most frequent GP appointments over the two-year period. This group is of particular interest due to their more complex health and care needs:



Source: City & Hackney Intelligence & Insights Team (Sept 2024)

Hackney Downs saw 2,470 high-intensity users, one of the higher totals borough-wide, suggesting greater service demand and complexity.

## Spotlight on Hackney Downs

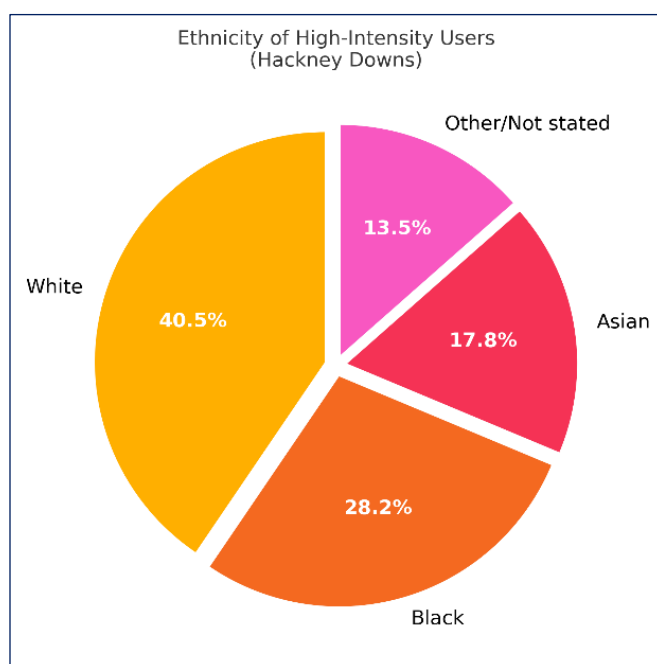
In Hackney Downs, 2,470 residents were identified as high-intensity users:

- 55.3% live in the most deprived quintile
- 6.3% are housebound
- 27.4% have three or more long-term conditions

The most common conditions include:

- **Hypertension** (30.2%)
- **Obesity** (24.5%)
- **Diabetes** (18.9%)

This profile suggests considerable deprivation and long-term health challenges, reinforcing the importance of multi-disciplinary support that addresses both clinical and social needs.

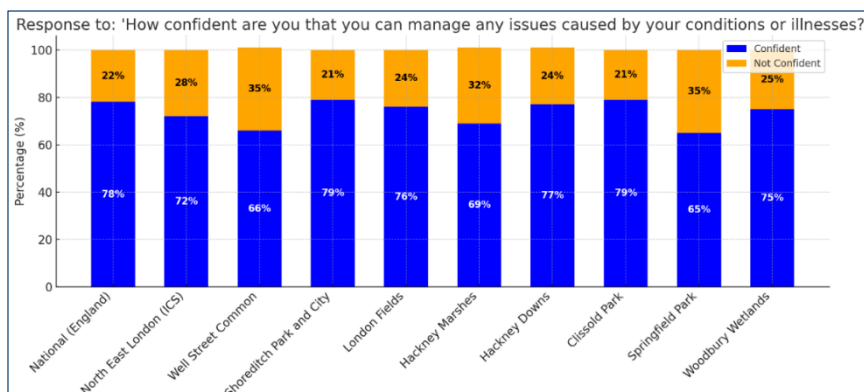


Source: City & Hackney Intelligence & Insights Team (Sept 2024)

The ethnic breakdown shows that over 40% of high-intensity users in Hackney Downs were White, with more than a quarter identifying as Black and nearly 18% as Asian.

## Confidence in managing long-term conditions

Hackney Downs residents were asked how confident they felt in managing any issues caused by their conditions or illnesses. 77% reported feeling confident, with 24% expressing a lack of confidence, above the City and Hackney average (71%) and pointing to a higher level of self-assurance in managing long-term conditions.

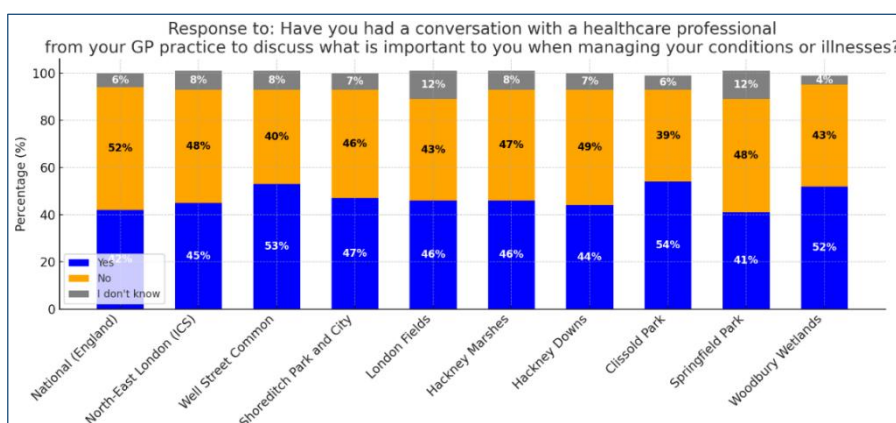


Source: Confidence to manage LTCs by Neighbourhood (IPSOS GP Survey 2024)

## Contact with a health care professional

Hackney Downs patients were asked if they had discussed what matters most to them in managing their health with a healthcare professional from their GP practice.

44% of respondents said they had, slightly below the City and Hackney average (46%). However, 49% of respondents said they had not had this conversation, while 7% were unsure. This highlights that, while Hackney Downs is doing relatively well locally, there is still room for improvement to ensure more residents can discuss their health needs.



Source: Support with Long-term Conditions by Neighbourhood (IPSOS GP Survey 2024)

Patients shared (with Healthwatch Hackney) their positive experiences of contact with healthcare professionals in GP surgery across Hackney Downs Neighbourhood, highlighting the impact of compassionate care:

*"Friendly and helpful (...) Doctors showing their care, **going the extra mile** to see if we are OK. Reception staff are very helpful and friendly (...) very helpful and cheerful..."*

**-Patient from The Gadhvi Practice**

*"Always received the best care and support during and after all my medical visits. The staff are excellent and Dr is highly professional, empathetic, great listener and offers **emotional and mental support at all times**. I am highly appreciative..."*

**-Patient from Rosewood Practice**

*"The staff's **communication and compassion** are remarkable. The doctors **truly listen** and explain everything clearly, making me feel valued."*

**-Patient from Clapton Surgery**

*"I never feel rushed during phone or in-person appointments. They **holistically consider the issue** and follow up when they say they will."*

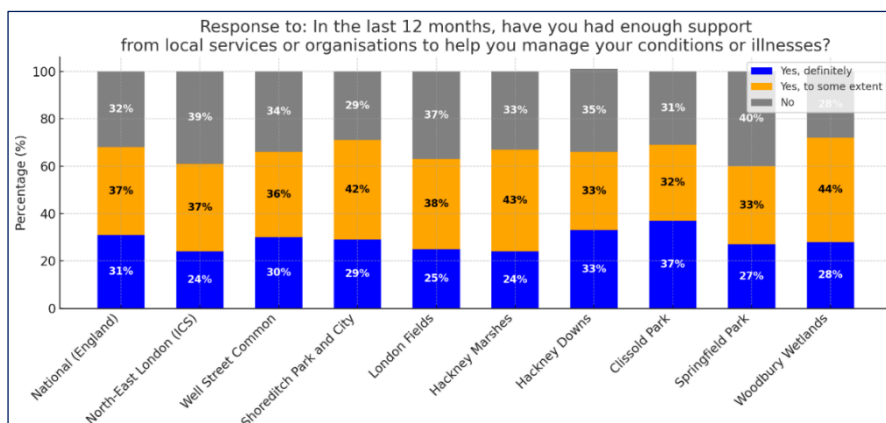
*"[The nurse] the took time in what she was explaining and showed signs of **interest in my well-being**."*

**-Patients from the Nightingale Practice**

## Support from local services

Hackney Downs residents were asked whether they had received enough support from local services or organisations to help them manage their conditions or illnesses over the past 12 months.

33% of respondents said they had definitely received enough support, while 32% felt they had received some support, but not fully. However, 35% of respondents said they had not received enough support. While this suggests that some residents in Hackney Downs are benefiting from local service support, over a third felt unsupported.



Source: Support with Long-term Conditions by Neighbourhood (IPSOS GP Survey 2024)



## Conversations with health care professionals Vs perceived support for LTCs

In Hackney Downs, just under half of residents (44%) said they had spoken with a healthcare professional about what matters to them when managing their conditions. However, only 33% said they had definitely received enough support from local services, and 35% felt they had not.

This suggests that while these conversations with health professionals are important, they may not be the only factor influencing how supported residents feel. Other services, such as social prescribing, support from the VCS, peer groups and accessible health information, are also likely to shape residents' experiences of managing their LTCs.

*"When I felt like the world was falling apart, I felt like someone genuinely cared. I felt like I could trust them and genuinely find out what my options are."*

**-Family Action Social Prescribing service user**

### Case Study – Community navigation and long-term condition support in Hackney Downs

#### Living with multiple complex conditions

John (name changed to maintain confidentiality) is in his 50s and has lived in Hackney all his life. He lives with diabetes, IBS, diverticulitis, arthritis and has had two different cancers, including ovarian cancer. He also experiences ongoing chronic pain and swelling that impacts daily life. John described how difficult it was to adjust when first diagnosed with diabetes:

*"I found it hard at first to align eating habits."*

He had to push for a referral to a dietitian, only to learn that he had been given incorrect information about his insulin and medication.

*"I was told to keep taking more insulin but the dietitian told me something different and explained it in more detail. The GP hadn't."*

John continues to feel unsupported by the system after more than a decade of managing multiple health issues.

*"It never feels like I'm going to get any extra support and I don't know where to go to get more information for things."*

#### Pain management and lack of personalised care

John has lived with ongoing pain for over 12 years. While he was referred to a pain management course, the support didn't meet his needs.

*"They kept telling me to visualise my pain and breathe through it but it didn't feel like it was helping."*

He felt the programme was about numbers rather than meaningful support:

*"It feels like they're just trying to fill up numbers... but it's not helping any of us."*

John no longer seeks help for pain:

*"I don't go for pain anymore. I know pain could be something worse but I don't have the energy. **I'm actually fed up.**"*

He also described feeling dismissed when asking about exercise:

*"**The GP** told me to do some form of exercise but **didn't signpost me to anything...** it was like, 'do this and that,' but **a blanket solution doesn't suit individuals.**"*

### **Barriers to navigating services**

John highlighted how hard it can be to find out about community or health services when there is little proactive communication from GP surgeries.

*"Reception is easy to talk to about appointments but **they never direct you to the bulletin board or the flyers,** it's only if you notice it."*

He said many useful services go unnoticed:

*"If there was better buy-in from GPs about other stuff, then referrals could be better. Advertising other services could be better. They **don't tell you about what's happening in the community.**"*

John added that the lack of a consistent GP makes it harder to get help:

*"I have to explain what's wrong with me every time I come to the surgery."*

### **Reconnecting through community-based support**

John shared that they eventually found support through [Together Better](#) after meeting a representative in the GP waiting room.

*"They were talking about a coffee morning... it **took me 5 months to get the courage to go,** but I'm so glad I did."*

He now attends Together Better sessions, especially the craft group and has connected with similar groups in Stratford and Tottenham.

*"**People talk and share** not only their experiences but other things that have helped them and that's been a really **helpful way of finding out what's going on in the community.**"*

However, John noted that one programme or one staff member can only do so much:

*"It would be great to have **more groups that can support the collective.**"*

### **Living with uncertainty**

John expressed concerns about the future and the mental impact of isolation:

*"I'm really **concerned about getting dementia—I need things to challenge me** so I don't get it."*

He feels that system changes are contributing to disconnection:

*"The **lack of connection** is really having its way with people... the surgery is trying to help but the **changes that have been made are really having an impact.**"*

He also reflected on his limitations due to post-cancer pain and the need to reduce stress as a parent:

*"**Working is a thing of the past for me.** I'd love to be out and about, but I can't afford to flare up again, I have to be less stressed because I'm raising a child."*

## Improvements suggested by John

Clearer, more proactive communication from GP surgeries about community services  
More personalised pain management and long-term condition support  
Continuity of care and consistent GP relationships  
More community-led group activities for people with complex health needs  
A wider range of non-clinical interventions to support wellbeing

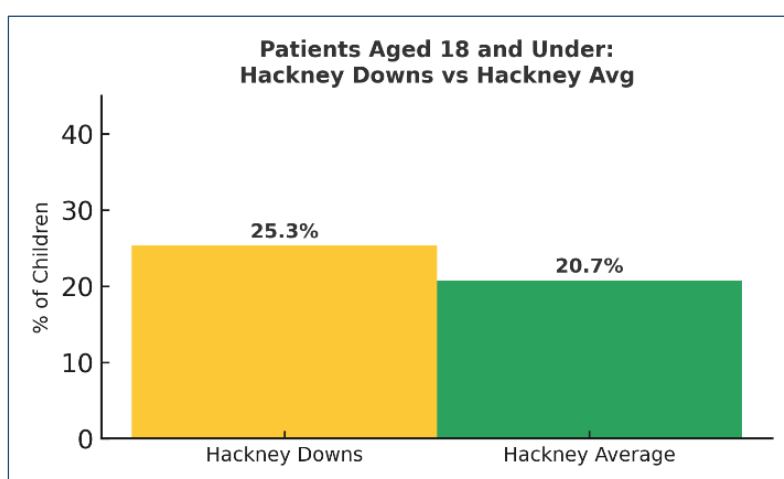
*"I know my body. I always have. But I still have to beg for help and I'm tired of begging."*

## Health inequalities

Health inequalities are avoidable and unfair differences in health between groups of people. They can show up in life expectancy, long-term conditions or access to healthcare. These inequalities are shaped by wider factors like income, housing, education, work and local environments (also known as the *wider determinants of health*).<sup>23</sup>

## Children and young people

This section explores health inequalities affecting children and young people in Hackney Downs Neighbourhood, focusing on key indicators that influence early-life health outcomes. According to Patient Master Index (PMI) data, 25.3% of patients in Hackney Downs are aged 18 and under.



Source: NEL Intelligence & Insights Team, PMI Data (Dec 2024)

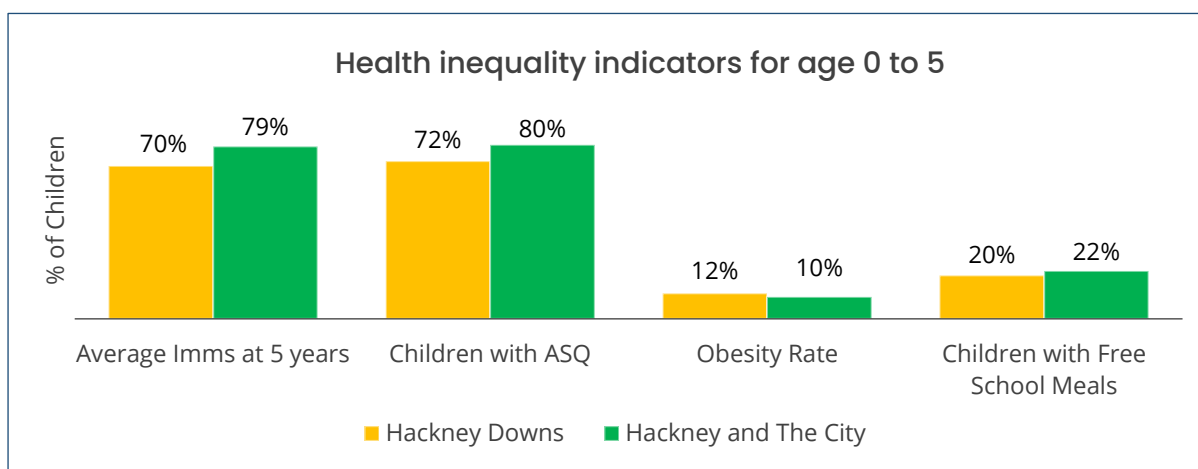
<sup>2</sup> [What are healthcare inequalities? – NHS England](#)

<sup>3</sup> [National Healthcare Inequalities Improvement Programme – NHS England](#)

The next graph illustrates the percentage of children who:

- Have received all recommended immunisations by age 5
- Have met developmental milestones, as assessed by the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)
- Are classified as obese based on their Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Are eligible for free school meals, a common indicator of socioeconomic disadvantage

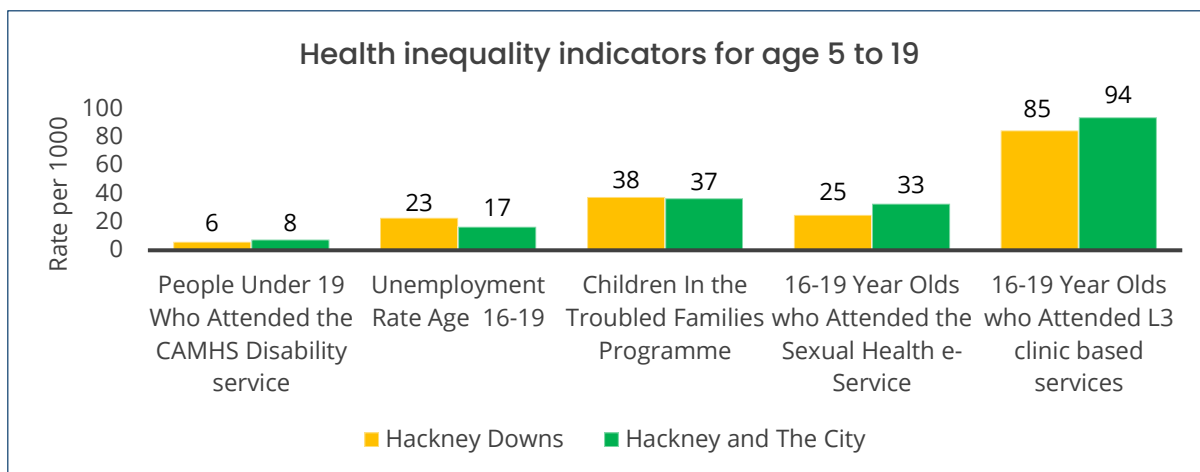
These indicators offer insight into early childhood health outcomes and wider social determinants in Hackney Downs.



Source: Hackney Council (2023)

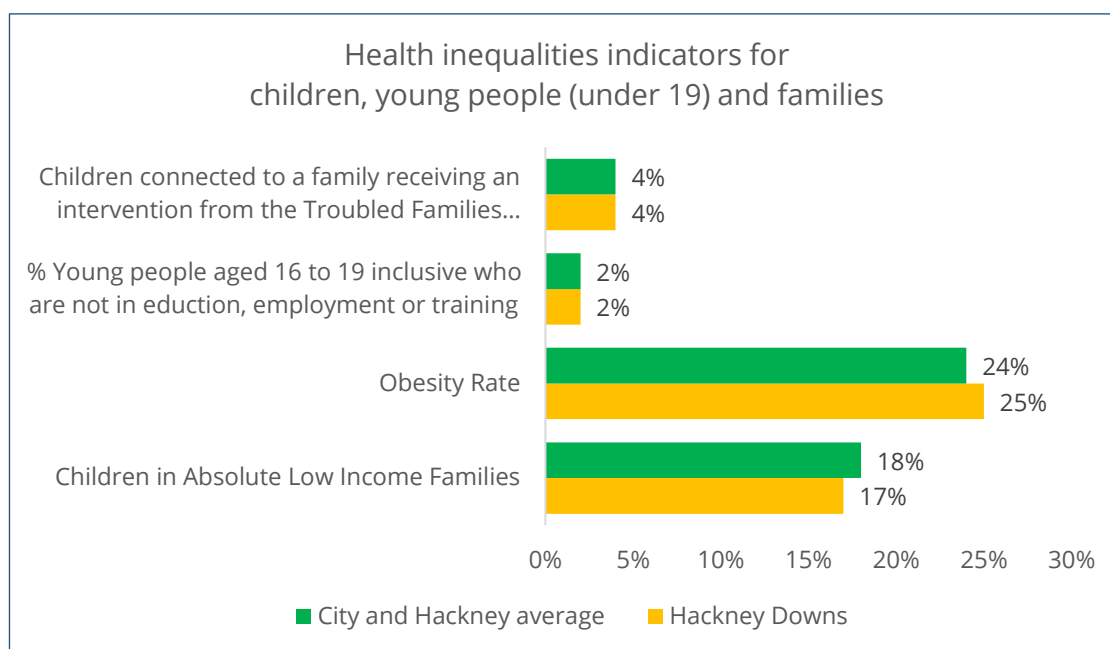
Health outcomes for under 5s in Hackney Downs are mixed. The proportion of children who are obese and those eligible for free school meals are broadly in line with the City and Hackney average. However, immunisation coverage is significantly lower than the borough average and fewer children are meeting developmental milestones as assessed by ASQ. As with other Neighbourhoods, the overall childhood immunisation rate remains below the national target of 94%.

The next chart shows how older children and teenagers in Hackney Downs are engaging with services and experiencing health-related challenges. Attendance at sexual health services is slightly below the borough average, while the youth unemployment rate is notably higher, 22 per 1,000 in Hackney Downs compared to 17 across City and Hackney.



Source: Hackney Council (2023)

The following graph highlights broader inequality indicators for children, young people and families in Hackney Downs.



Source: Hackney Council (2023)

Obesity rates at Year 6 are slightly higher than the City and Hackney average (25% vs. 24%). The proportion of children living in absolute low-income households (17%) is slightly below the borough average (18%). Rates of intervention through the [Troubled Families Programme](#) and NEET levels are consistent with the wider area.

## Neurodiversity among young people in Hackney Downs

Feedback from residents and professionals across City and Hackney has highlighted a perceived rise in the number of children and young people who appear to be neurodiverse.

A key initiative supporting neurodivergent young people in Hackney is the [Targeted Health Outreach \(THO\)](#) service. This service provides group activities and one-to-one casework for young people aged 14–19 (up to 25 in the over-18s group) with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and neurodiversity, who are not eligible for adult disability services.

The service includes a [Nature Connection Group](#), specifically designed for young people with autism or those on the neurodevelopmental pathway. These nature-based activities allow young people to participate at their own pace. Parents are welcome to attend and referrals can be made by CAMHS, schools, Hackney Education, parents, or young people themselves.

## Case Study: Supporting a Young Person's Mental Health in Hackney Downs

### Living with ongoing health challenges and supporting a young child

Vera (name changed to maintain confidentiality) has lived in Hackney all her life and is raising her 11-year-old son, who she describes as academic, well-behaved and sensitive. Vera has experienced serious health issues herself, including cancer in the past five years. She manages appointments for her son using the online GP system, which works well for her but she acknowledged that others who are less tech-savvy may struggle to access care.

Her son was born with a condition called congenital mega prepuce, which required early medical intervention. Vera said the care they received at the Royal London Hospital was excellent, especially in recognising and responding to her anxiety as a new parent.

*"It was really scary having issues with a newborn and a young child, but **they took my anxiety on board.**"*

### Seeking social and emotional support

As her son grew older, the medical issues subsided, but new concerns emerged around social interaction and mental health. He was referred to [Family Action](#), who signposted them to [Forest Road Youth Hub](#). At first, this provided helpful social opportunities, but Vera was concerned about the staff's response when her son injured his leg.

*"They didn't want to cut open or take down his trouser to inspect the cut because they thought it might cause an issue. It got worse because of the roundabout way they supported him."*

After that experience, they chose not to return.

### Separation anxiety and barriers to mental health care

Vera explained that her son suffers from anxiety, especially around being apart from her. This has been shaped by the loss of his other parent and Vera's own health issues. He worries she may get sick again if he leaves her side and still sleeps in her bed.

*"He says, 'You're my mum, I don't care.' But **I worry he'll be alienated by other kids his age.**"*

Vera wants him to socialise more but says accessing formal mental health support is a major barrier.

*"There's really **no point in trying to access CAMHS**, even if I do it, it'll be a six-month, if not more, waiting list."*

The lack of timely support is taking a toll on both of them.

### **Cost of living and social isolation**

Vera's son enjoys being challenged but becomes anxious and bored easily. This is especially difficult during school holidays. While she wants him to take part in activities, affordability is a major issue.

*"He doesn't want to go to holiday camps or swimming clubs without me. I took him to kickboxing for a while, but I can't always afford it. **When does mum get respite?**"*

*"I want to take him to different things, but I'm often spending money I don't have. I'm not working, **I've got to pay the bills, food is expensive – the cost of living affects us.**"*

She believes that more local youth groups and community hubs would help.

*"This would help him more than anything, interacting with other young people and finding out about other things he can do."*

Attempts to get him involved in football were unsuccessful due to his anxiety around loud groups, which was made worse by the lack of visible male role models of colour in his school.

*"He needs to be around more people his age, but **I can't find them and I don't know where to look.**"*

### **Access to information and community connections**

Vera finds it difficult to discover what's available locally. Much of the information is online, which she feels creates barriers for those who aren't digitally connected.

*"What about if you can't use links and connect online? **People need connecting with each other, not behind a screen.**"*

While after-school clubs have been helpful, she feels the local area is lacking in provision for her son's age group. A nearby park has been revitalised but is designed for toddlers.

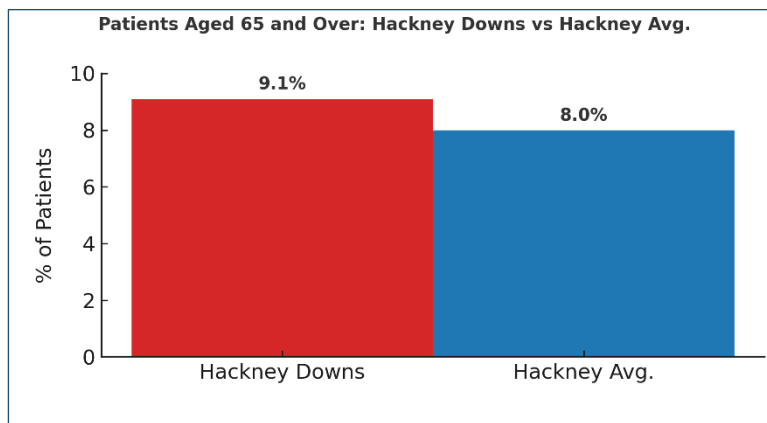
*"What are Year 7 kids doing in Hackney? Where are they going? I just want my son to be more street-aware and meet people but he can't do that at the park."*

## **Older people in Hackney Downs**

Ageing is not a uniform experience, older people's health and wellbeing are shaped by a lifetime of social, economic and environmental factors. According to Hackney Council's [Ageing Well Strategy 2020–2025](#), factors such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender and the environments in which people live all contribute to how well individuals age.



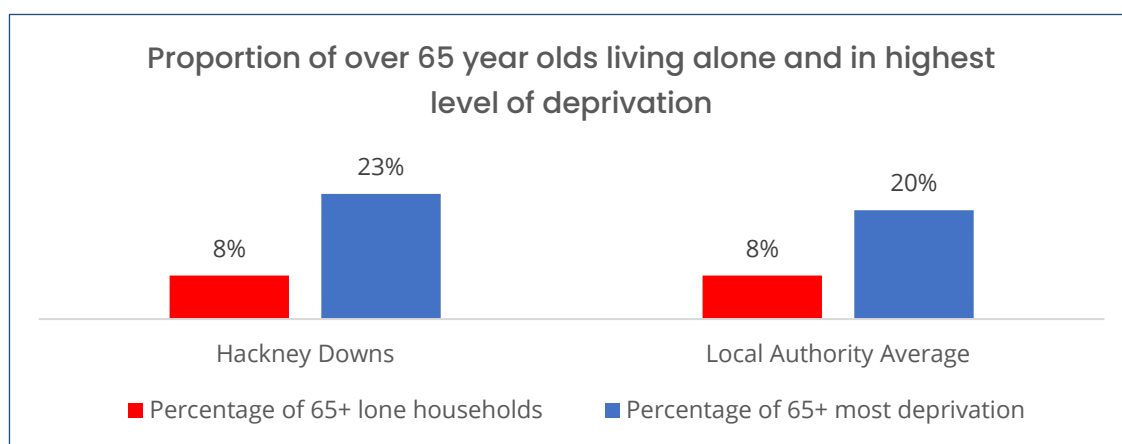
Older patients make up a larger proportion of the Hackney Downs population compared to the Hackney average. According to PMI data, 9.1% of patients in Hackney Downs are aged 65 and over.



Source: NEL Intelligence & Insights Team, PMI Data (Dec 2024)

While this data provides insight into the proportion of older patients in Hackney Downs, it does not capture the full extent of health inequalities faced by this group. Earlier data highlights two key indicators of inequality among older residents:

- A higher proportion of over-65s live alone, increasing the risk of social isolation and mental health challenges.
- A greater proportion live in the most deprived areas, where financial hardship and barriers to accessing healthcare and services can further impact health and wellbeing.



Source: Summary of Key Statistics from NEL Health and Care Partnership, Baseline Needs Assessment (August 2022)

Hackney Council's [Ageing Well Strategy 2020-2025](#) highlights the importance of recognising older people as a diverse and vital part of the community:



*"The diversity that exists in Hackney is one of our borough's greatest strengths and recognising that this diversity still exists as people age is essential (...) Part of changing the narrative is greater recognition that older people continue to give back to their communities and are supported in varied and different ways. **One of our greatest community assets are our older residents** (...) Challenges exist because of the way that society is run and organised. There is work happening all over the world to make places more age-friendly and to create cultural shifts in how older people are perceived, engaged, involved and treated."*

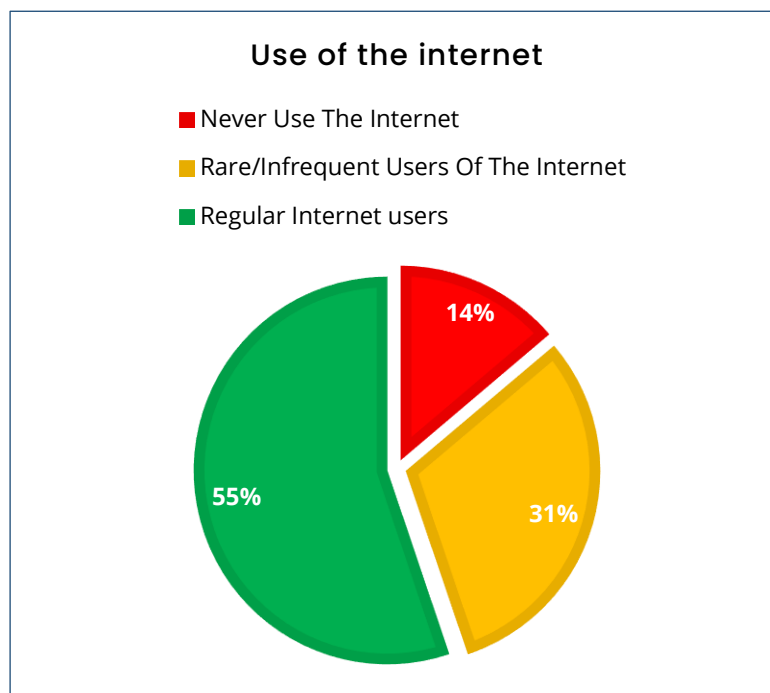
**Cllrs Chris Kennedy & Yvonne Maxwell**

## Digital Exclusion – Impact on health

Older people are disproportionately affected by digital exclusion, which can further deepen health inequalities. This digital divide means that many older residents struggle to book GP appointments online, use NHS services such as the NHS App, or access important health and financial resources.

*"I haven't been able to get a follow up appointment for nearly 2 months and have no idea about the outcome of certain exams because I have not been able to see my doctor. They have now this e-consult and self-referral service that **isn't user friendly for most patients, specially when they're older...**"*

**Older Hackney resident**



Source: Summary of Key Statistics from NEL Health and Care Partnership, Baseline Needs Assessment (August 2022)

Digital exclusion is a significant issue in the Neighbourhood, with almost half (45%) of residents being rare or infrequent internet users of the Internet. Those who lack digital

literacy are also at greater risk of fraud, misinformation and financial exploitation, which can contribute to stress, anxiety and worsening health outcomes.

### Local digital inclusion support: IT classes at Marie Lloyd Centre

To help bridge this gap, local initiatives such as the digital inclusion IT classes at the [Marie Lloyd Centre](#) on Queensbridge Road offer free support to older residents who want to develop their digital skills. These sessions cover online safety, using the NHS app and online banking and finance.

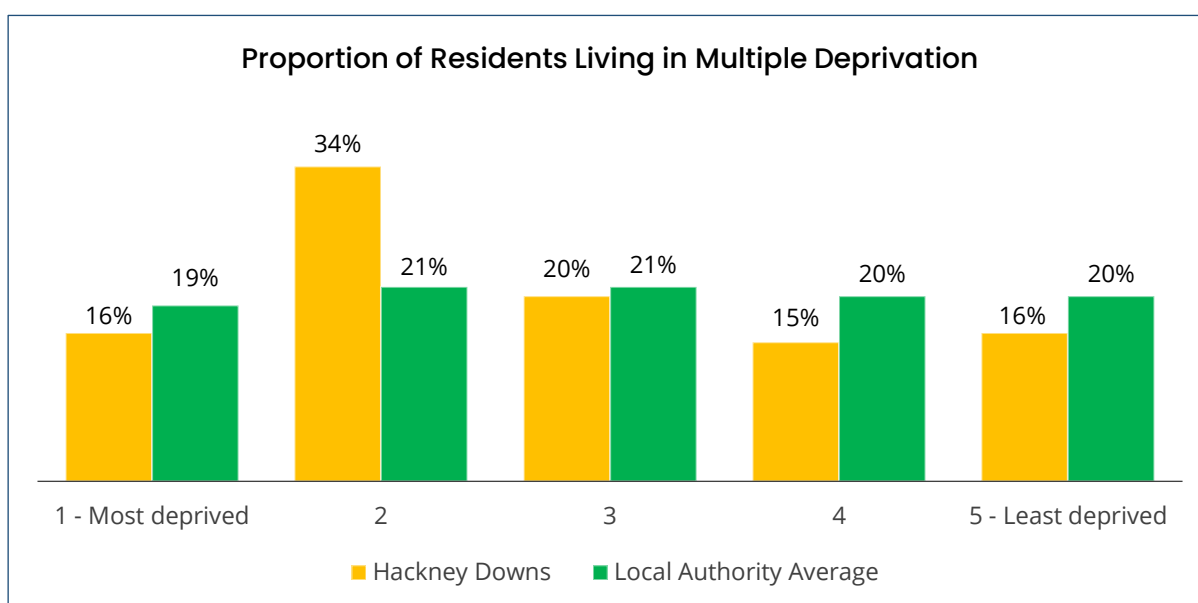
## General population in Hackney Downs

### Deprivation

Deprivation remains a significant issue across all age groups in Hackney Downs. The [Indices of Multiple Deprivation \(IMD\)](#) measure deprivation across domains including income, education, housing and crime. GP practices in this Neighbourhood serve communities with higher levels of deprivation than the borough average.

Deprivation in Hackney Downs is distributed as follows:

- 16% of residents live in the most deprived category (Level 1).
- 34% in Level 2 (the highest proportion across any single category).
- 20% in Level 3.
- 15% in Level 4, and 16% in the least deprived category (Level 5).



Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities English indices of deprivation 2019.

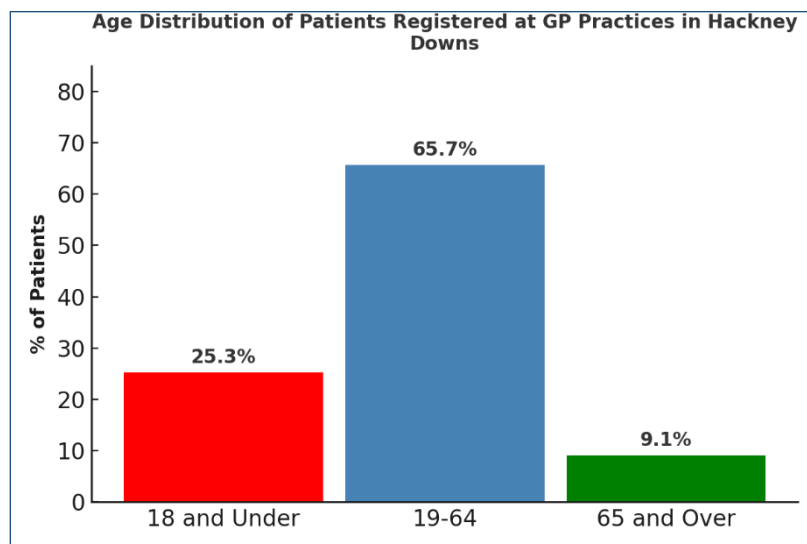
Half of all residents in Hackney Downs fall within the two most deprived categories, compared to 40% borough wide. Conversely only 31% live in the two least deprived categories, again below the local authority average of 40%. This relative imbalance contributes to a heightened risk of health inequalities, particularly in areas such as financial stress, housing stability and service access.

The demographic profile of patients registered with GP practices in Hackney Downs provides additional insights into the specific needs of the local population.

### Age distribution of registered patients

Hackney Downs has a younger population overall, with a notably high proportion of under-18s. It has fewer working-age residents compared to other Neighbourhoods.

- 25.3% of patients are aged 18 and under
- 65.7% are aged 19-64
- 9.1% are aged 65 and over

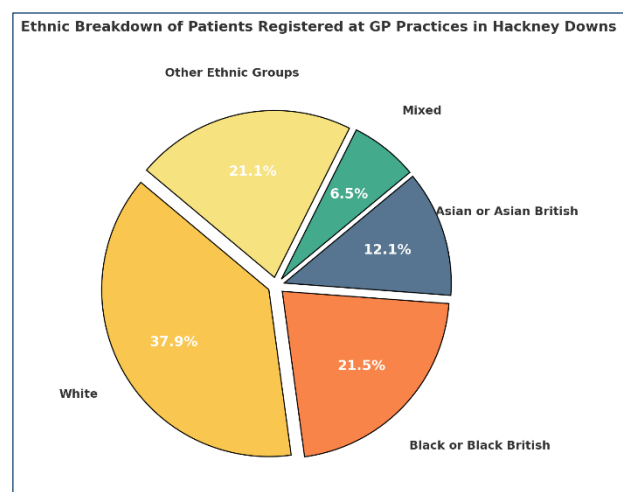


Source: NEL Intelligence & Insights Team, PMI Data (Dec 2024)

### Ethnic breakdown of registered patients

PMI data for Hackney Downs shows the following ethnic breakdown among registered patients:

- White – 37.9%
- Black or Black British – 21.5%
- Asian or Asian British – 12.1%
- Mixed Ethnic Background – 6.5%
- Other Ethnic Groups – 21.1%



Source: NEL Intelligence & Insights Team, PMI Data (Dec 2024)

Compared to the wider City & Hackney population, Hackney Downs has a lower proportion of White patients and a notably higher proportion from Other Ethnic Groups.

This is significant as:

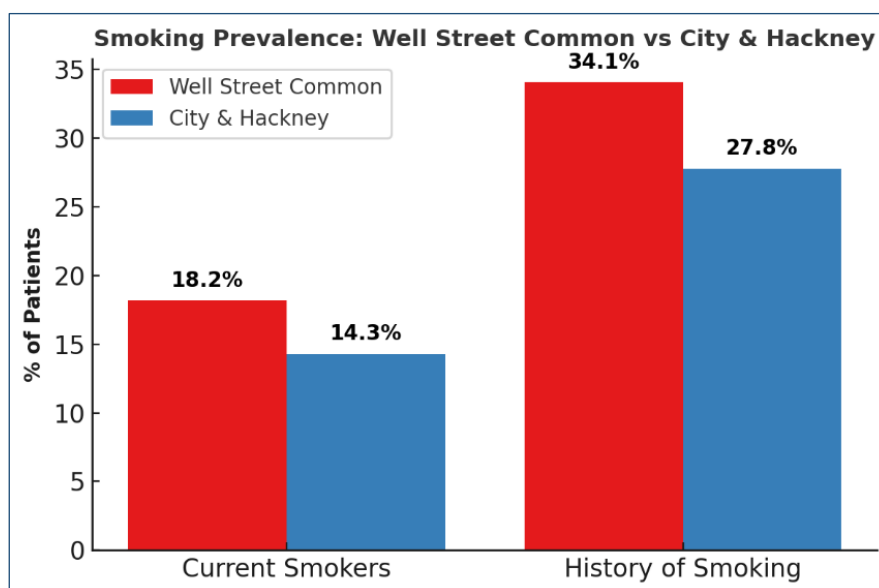
- Certain health conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, are more prevalent in some ethnic groups, requiring targeted prevention and early intervention.
- Barriers to healthcare access, including language, cultural differences and trust in services, can contribute to lower uptake of preventive care and later diagnoses.
- Higher deprivation levels in some communities further widen health inequalities, making access to tailored healthcare services essential.

## Smoking and health risks

Smoking remains one of the biggest causes of preventable illness and death in City & Hackney, contributing to significant health inequalities. According to the [Tobacco Needs Assessment for City & Hackney 2024](#), smoking prevalence varies widely across the borough, with between 14% and 21% of adults in Hackney estimated to be smokers and 10% to 11% in the City of London. This equates to up to 51,700 adult smokers in Hackney and 900 in the City.

Smoking rates are highest among men (27% in Hackney, 13% in the City) and are particularly elevated in specific ethnic groups, including Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean, Turkish/Kurdish/Cypriot men. Residents in more deprived areas are disproportionately affected, both in terms of smoking prevalence and the associated financial burden.

Encouragingly, 32% of those who successfully quit smoking through local cessation services are from the most deprived areas.



Source: NEL Intelligence & Insights Team, PMI Data (Dec 2024)

The health impact is stark. Smoking-related deaths and lung cancer rates in Hackney exceed London averages and smoking costs Hackney an estimated £101.9 million per year. Around 3,000 local households are pushed into poverty due to tobacco expenditure.

Efforts to reduce smoking include the [Gloji SmokeFree City & Hackney Service](#), which has seen 60% of people quitting at four weeks and 64% of those who quit at four weeks and were followed up remaining smoke-free at 12 weeks. However, young adults, men and some ethnic groups are underrepresented in cessation programmes, highlighting the need for better-targeted outreach.

In January 2025, the [Gloji SmokeFree City & Hackney Service](#) reported that:

- 60% of those who set a quit date successfully stopped smoking after 4 weeks (exceeding the 50% target).
- 64% of those followed up after a successful 4-week quit remained smoke-free at 12 weeks, showing the impact of targeted cessation.
- 32% of those quitting are from the most deprived areas.

Residents who accessed the Gloji SmokeFree service from October to December 2024 highlighted the challenges of quitting but praised the support available:

*"The lady we had (...) was amazing, very encouraging and praised our journey. She was very friendly and kept checking in with us. **Completed the journey without a relapse—1st time ever** as I had tried giving up several times."*

*"I'd tried to quit smoking several times previously by myself but failed. This time your support has been giving me **more confidence and determination** (...) My adviser is very friendly and weekly, biweekly calls are very enjoyable and nice to hear praises when I am progressing..."*

*"Victor was incredible! **I'm smoke free for 130 days now!** Can't believe it"*

*"I was **so happy with the help** I was given."*

*"Can I just say what a **brilliant service**. It has been such a **tremendous help with stopping** to smoke. Very **much appreciated** all the support given. Thank you."*

*"**Very good support** throughout"*

December 2024 PMI data reveals that smoking rates in Hackney Downs (13.2%) are below the City & Hackney Neighbourhood average (14.3%). While this is encouraging, it remains important to ensure that cessation support is accessible to all residents, particularly those who may still face health inequalities related to smoking.

Dedicated Neighbourhood clinics, such as the one [Clapton Library](#), provide crucial support for residents looking to quit smoking (see below weekly schedule of clinics).

## Gloji SmokeFree City & Hackney Clinics – Q3 Report 2024-25

Neighbourhood	Venue	Address	Postcode	Clinic Day	Start Time	End Time
Clissold Park	St Mungo's	16 Neville Rd	N16 8SR	Wednesday	14:00	17:00
Clissold Park	Somerford Grove GP Hub	Somerford Grove	N16 7UA	Friday	9:30	17:30
Hackney Downs	Clapton Library	Northwold Rd	E5 8RA	Monday	10:00	12:00
Hackney Marshes / Well Street Common	Homerton Library	Homerton High Street	E9 6AS	Tuesday	10:30	13:00
London Fields	St Mungo's	144-148 Lansdown Drive	E8 4NF	Wednesday	14:00	16:30
London Fields	Sandringham Practice	1a Madinah Rd	E8 1PG	Thursday	13:30	16:00
London Fields	Forest Road Youth Hub	29 Forest Rd, London	E8 3BY	Friday	15:00	18:00
Shoreditch Park & City	Shoreditch Park Surgery	8-10 Rushton St, London	EC4A 3JR	Monday	9:00	12:00
Shoreditch Park & City	Shoreditch Library	80 Hoxton St, London	N1 6LP	Monday	12:30	14:00
Shoreditch Park & City	Shoe Lane Library	Hill Hse, 1 Little New St	N1 5DR	Wednesday	12:00	15:00
Well Street Common	Turning Point	102 Mare Street	E8 3SG	Monday	13:00	16:00
Well Street Common	St Mungo's	146 Mare St	E8 3SG	Wednesday	11:00	13:00
Well Street Common	Elsdale Street Surgery	28 Elsdale street	E9 6QY	Friday	9:00	12:00
Woodberry Wetlands	Allerton Road Surgery	34a Allerton Road	N16 5UF	Tuesday	13:00	16:00
Woodberry Wetlands	Statham Grove Surgery	Statham Grove	N16 9DP	Tuesday	14:00	17:00
Woodberry Wetlands	The Heron Practice	Green Lanes	N4 2NU	Friday	9:00	12:00
Woodberry Wetlands / Clissold Park	St Mungo's	136 Church Walk	N16 8QQ	Wednesday	14:00	16:30

## Language Barriers

Language barriers are a significant factor contributing to health inequalities in Hackney Downs, particularly among ethnic minority communities. Findings from Healthwatch England's '[Lost for Words](#)' report highlight that people with limited or no English face difficulties at every stage of their healthcare journey, including:

### Registering with a GP

Many non-English speakers struggle to complete registration forms or communicate with reception staff, leading to delays in accessing primary care (see below for Healthwatch Hackney's 4<sup>th</sup> review of GP registration in Hackney).

### Understanding medical advice

Patients may not fully comprehend their diagnosis, prescribed medications, or treatment plans, increasing the risk of poor health outcomes.

## Access to interpreters

Many residents do not know that NHS interpreter services exist or find it difficult to request one. Even when interpreters are available, they may not speak the correct dialect or provide clear medical translations.

## Emergency care navigation

Language barriers can make it harder for individuals to explain their symptoms during urgent care visits, leading to misdiagnoses or delayed treatment.

The inequality of language can significantly impact access to GP services, as illustrated by one Spanish-speaking patient:

*"It is **absolutely different with an interpreter** because then I can fully express myself understand everything I am told and be able to follow instructions better. But when there is no interpreter then it is really difficult. And although all doctors are good and caring, some will allow me more time while others will rush a bit to see the next patient. One time I called in to book an appointment and I spoke to one receptionist who struggled to understand me. Then another one took over and she also struggled. Finally, one of the doctors took the phone and it was very difficult for him to understand me too, so I wasn't able to book an appointment. I had to call back again a couple of days later and try again."*

**-Spanish speaking patient**

## Barriers to GP registration in Hackney

A 2024 Healthwatch Hackney review of GP registration accessibility<sup>4</sup> found that barriers persisted, despite NHS policies ensuring universal access. While some receptionists displayed warmth, reassurance and a clear understanding of NHS registration policies, others insisted on proof of address or ID when this is not required by NHS guidelines:

*"She picked up on my anxiety about not having documents and she was reassuring and compassionate. She told me, 'don't worry, we don't want to see any papers'."*

**-Mystery shopper, on the phone**

*"The receptionist was nice and warm, she even laughed with me when I told her I forgot my postcode as I have just moved in."*

**-Mystery shopper, in-person visit**

*"When I asked for a paper form, she told me to "go next door, they take paper registrations, we don't"."*

**-Mystery shopper, in-person visit**

*"She told me I must record the exact date I entered the UK. She said it was very important and my application would be refused without this information."*

**-Mystery shopper, on the phone**

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<sup>4</sup> [GP registration in Hackney – The right to access healthcare \(4th review\) \(2024\)](#)



Since the report was published, Healthwatch Hackney has carried out follow-up work with GP surgeries previously identified as not following NHS registration guidelines. A subsequent round of targeted mystery shopping revealed a marked improvement: all GP practices in Hackney are now compliant and no longer request proof of ID or address.

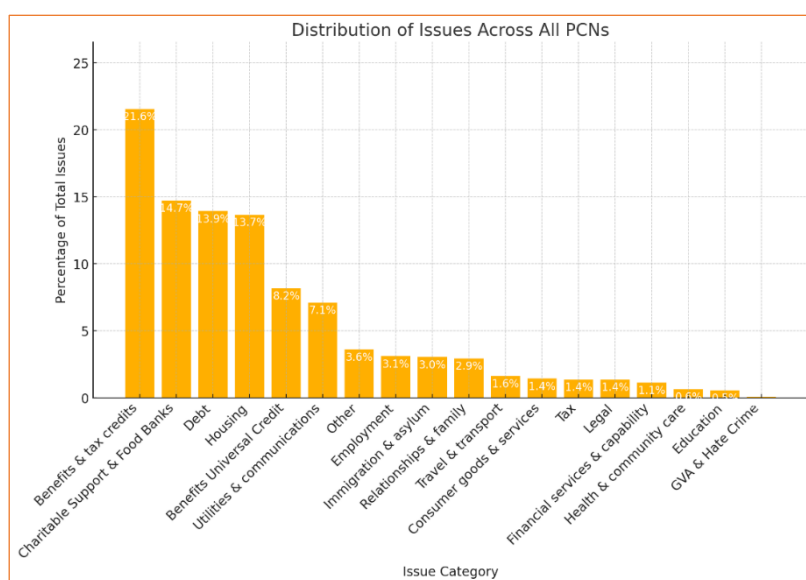
However, we remain concerned that the NHS's increasing emphasis on digitalisation may create new barriers to registration for patients who are digitally excluded or experiencing data poverty.

## Citizens Advice

[Citizens Advice Hackney](#) provides support to residents across the borough, assisting with a range of social and economic issues. Many of these, such as housing insecurity, financial hardship, employment difficulties and legal challenges, relate directly to the wider determinants of health, influencing residents' well-being beyond medical care.

The data from Citizens Advice covers only the borough of Hackney and not the City of London. We will therefore refer to PCNs rather than Neighbourhoods to analyse this dataset.

## Issues raised across Hackney PCNs



Source: Citizens Advice Hackney, 2025

Benefits & Tax Credits (21.6%) is the most frequently raised concern across Hackney, followed by Charitable Support & Food Banks (14.7%) and then Debt (13.9%). These trends suggest financial insecurity is a major driver of residents seeking advice, with many requiring support for benefits and even food assistance.

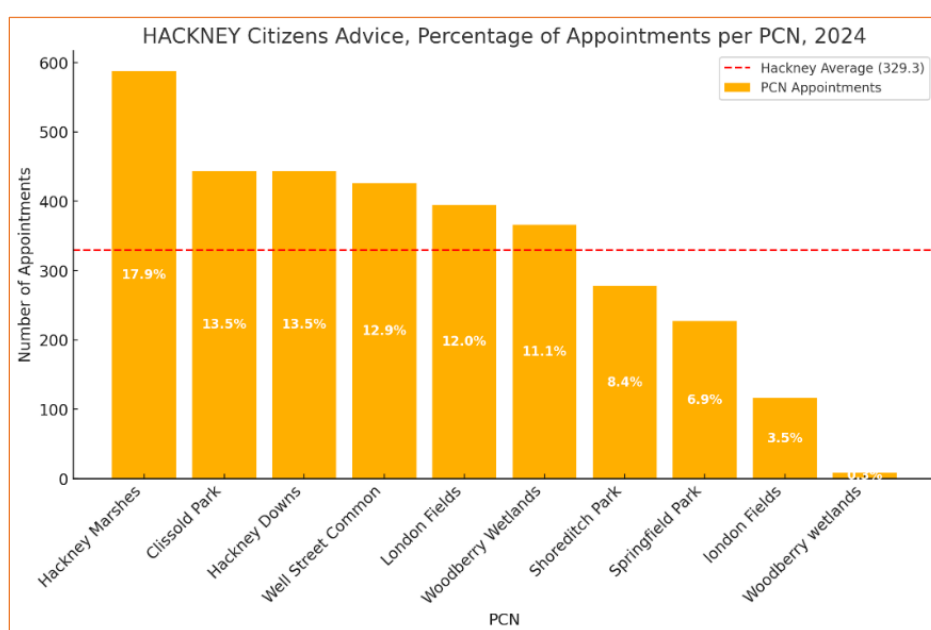


This aligns with insights shared by [Family Action](#) regarding the top referral issues to social prescribers (see below). In the years since the Covid-19 pandemic, housing, financial challenges and mental health have been the three most common concerns among those referred for support, with many residents struggling with rent arrears and financial distress.

This trend is supported by data from Citizens Advice, which identifies financial insecurity as a key reason residents seek support. Family Action has also reported that demand for help with these issues exceeds service capacity across City & Hackney, indicating that some individuals using social prescribing services may also be turning to Citizens Advice for additional support.

## Appointments by PCN

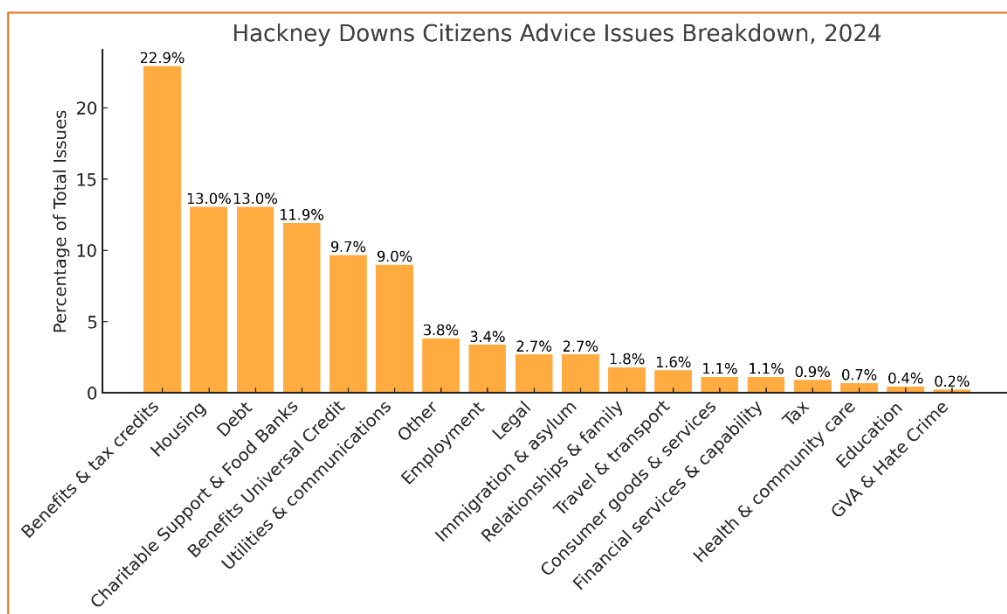
The next graph compares the number of appointments booked per PCN, giving insight into the demand for the Citizens Advice service across Hackney. Hackney Downs accounted for 13.5% of all Citizens Advice appointments across Hackney, placing it among the higher-demand Neighbourhoods.



Source: Citizens Advice Hackney (2025)

## Issues raised in Hackney Downs

The next graph details the breakdown of issues raised in Hackney Downs. The most common issues raised were Benefits & Tax Credits (22.9%), followed by Housing (13.0%), Debt (13.0%), and Charitable Support & Food Banks (11.9%).



Source: Citizens Advice Hackney (2025)

These figures highlight persistent financial and housing challenges for Hackney Downs residents. The high demand for advice on welfare, debt, and emergency support services suggests that many are facing significant economic strain. These financial pressures directly impact on residents' physical and mental health.

## Access to health services and support

We now explore how local residents access key health care and support services, focussing on the following services:

- Mental Health Services
- GP Services
- Sexual Health Services
- Pharmacy Services
- Adult Social Care
- Adult Community Rehabilitation Services
- Multidisciplinary Team Meetings (MDMs)

## Access to mental health services

One in four people in England experience a mental health problem each year.<sup>56</sup> Mixed anxiety and depression is Britain's most common mental disorder, with 7.8% of people meeting the criteria for diagnosis.<sup>7</sup>

Anxiety and depression rank as the second and third most prevalent LTCs in City & Hackney, underscoring the widespread impact of mental health challenges across the Neighbourhoods.

### Groups disproportionately affected by mental health issues:

- **Black/Black British individuals:** More likely to experience severe mental health problems and face barriers to accessing appropriate care.<sup>8</sup>
- **People living in high levels of deprivation:** Economic hardship linked to increased mental health issues, with structural inequalities exacerbating.<sup>9</sup>
- **Disabled individuals:** Higher rates of mental health problems due to social isolation and discrimination.<sup>10</sup>
- **LGBTQIA+ community:** Faces unique stressors, including discrimination and stigma.
- **Young women aged 16–24:** Demographic has seen rising mental health concerns.

The following graph illustrates the prevalence of diagnosed depression among residents aged 18 and over, highlighting the need for mental health support in Hackney:

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<sup>5</sup> [Priory Group – Mental health statistics UK 2025](#)

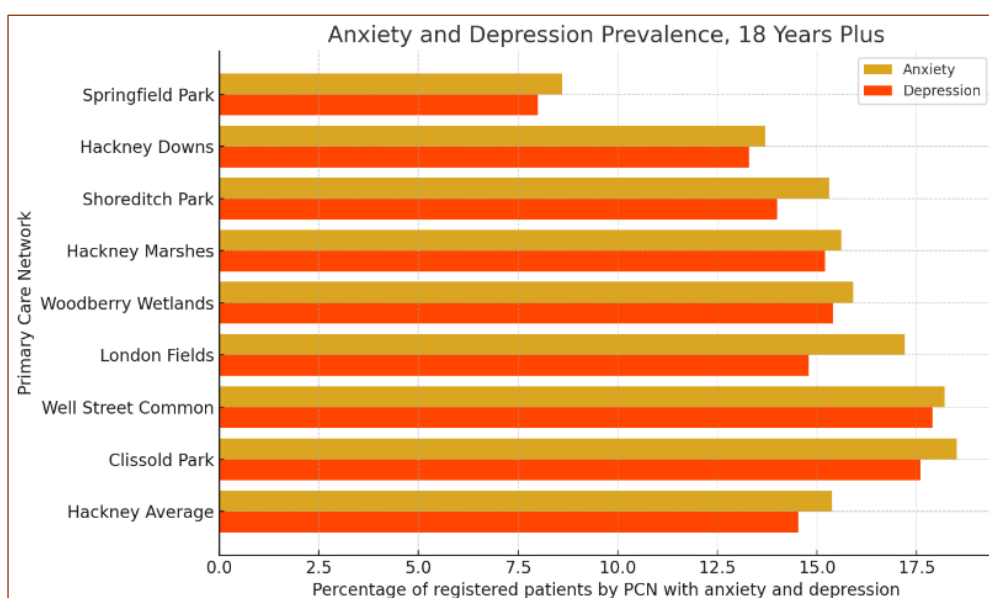
<sup>6</sup> [University of Oxford – Mental illnesses reduce life expectancy more than heavy smoking](#)

<sup>7</sup> [NICE \(2011\). Common mental health disorders | Guidance and guidelines | NICE](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Understanding ethnic inequalities in mental healthcare in the UK: A meta-ethnography – PubMed – 2022](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Structural racism leading to stark health inequalities in London, report shows – The Guardian Oct 2024](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Mental Health Foundation – The most common diagnosed mental health problems: statistics](#)



Source: NHS Quality and outcomes Framework (QOF - Dec 2024)

## Hackney Downs: Residents' mental health experiences

Mental health remains a significant concern in Hackney Downs Neighbourhood, with high recorded rates of diagnosed depression among residents aged 18 and over.

Historically, Hackney residents have expressed frustration with long waiting lists for CAMHS. Families share experiences of delays in referrals and uncertainty over treatment timelines, often leaving them feeling unsupported:

*"Holding out for a referral just made my son worse. We learnt that **it's no use asking for help** because you won't get it."*

**-Hackney parent**

*"CBT was offered, but we don't know when. It felt like **we were put on hold** until he ages out of the system."*

**-Hackney parent**

*"I think my GP was trying to warn me it would be a long wait and that services were very pushed. It seemed that **unless she was actually suicidal, there would be no help.**"*

**-Hackney parent**

Despite challenges, when residents manage to access mental health support many have positive experiences with compassionate professionals:

*"I would like to show **gratitude** to the mental health occupational therapist who supported me during a very tough period of my life. This therapist showed **empathy and understanding** and **made me feel validated**. This therapist was a blessing especially during the wait for psychotherapy to begin and the work was more **beneficial** than any changes I've had with CBT."*

*"I suffer from depression and was so stressed today (...) However, this lady nurse who attended to me today calmed me down and assisted me to get me better with **good advice and kind of talk therapy**. My blood pressure was high at first but when she eventually advised me on how to feel better, my blood pressure had come down on second and third measure."*

#### **Patients from Nightingale Practice**

However, many residents remain unaware of alternative ways to access mental health support beyond GP referrals (see below for the **III – 'option 2'** service). Concerns have also been raised about specialist mental health services, with some reporting poor communication and a lack of empathy.

Residents highlight the need for a more preventative approach:

*"I felt like I knew about everything too late. It was only after a crisis that I found out what services were available."*

#### **-Patient at Together Better Coffee Morning**

## **Availability of mental health services**

Residents in Hackney Downs can access a range of mental health services, including GP-led mental health support, talking therapies, crisis intervention teams and specialist secondary care services.

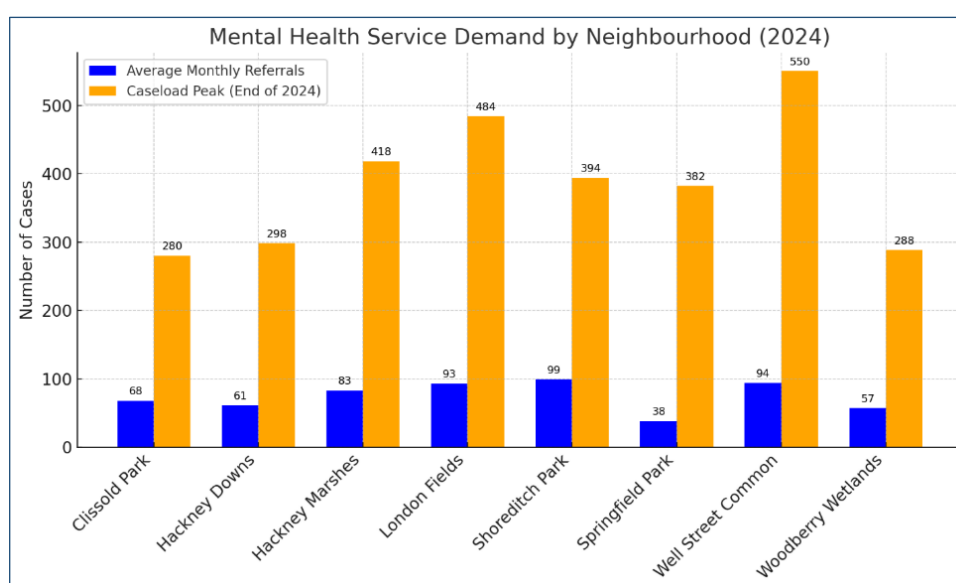
### **Local services include:**

- **GP Services** – Often the first point of contact for individuals experiencing mental health difficulties, with [options for referrals to specialist care](#).
- **Hackney NHS Talking Therapies** ([IAPT – Improving Access to Psychological Therapies](#)) – Providing CBT, counselling and guided self-help for common conditions like anxiety and depression.
- **City and Hackney Crisis Assessment Hub (Walk-in)** Providing immediate support, guidance and care. A trained [crisis assessment team](#) offers a safe, compassionate environment, assessments and referrals to further services.
- **Specialist Mental Health Services** – The [East London NHS Foundation Trust \(ELFT\)](#) delivers specialist care for individuals with complex or severe mental health needs through Community Mental Health Teams and psychiatric inpatient services.
- Demand for mental health support in Hackney Downs has been steadily rising, with an average of 61 referrals per month in 2024 (see below graph)
- Caseloads in the neighbourhood peaked at 298 by the end of 2024.
- Neighbourhood teams collectively handle an average of 593 referrals per month.

- **VCS Support** – Charities and local organisations offer peer support, social prescribing and advocacy for mental health service users (see [City & Hackney Wellbeing Network](#)).

## Mental health service demand across Neighbourhoods

In 2024, Hackney Downs recorded the third lowest caseload across the Neighbourhoods, peaking at 298 individuals, indicating a lower demand for mental health services compared to several other Neighbourhoods. The Neighbourhood also saw an average of 61 new referrals per month, reinforcing the ongoing pressures on local mental health services.



Source: East London Foundation Trust (2025)

## Barriers to mental health services access

Despite availability of services, many residents face challenges in accessing timely and appropriate mental health care.

### Common barriers include:

- **Long waiting times** – Delays reported in accessing therapy and specialist mental health care, often waiting several months.
- **GP appointment difficulties** – Challenges in securing timely GP appointments can delay referrals.
- **Digital exclusion** – Increased reliance on online mental health services and virtual therapy can be a barrier for residents without reliable internet access or digital literacy.

- **Stigma and cultural barriers** – Some residents, particularly from ethnic minority communities, report stigma surrounding mental health that discourages from seeking help.
- **Limited crisis support** – Out-of-hours crisis services not always accessible when urgently needed.

## Alternative routes to mental health support

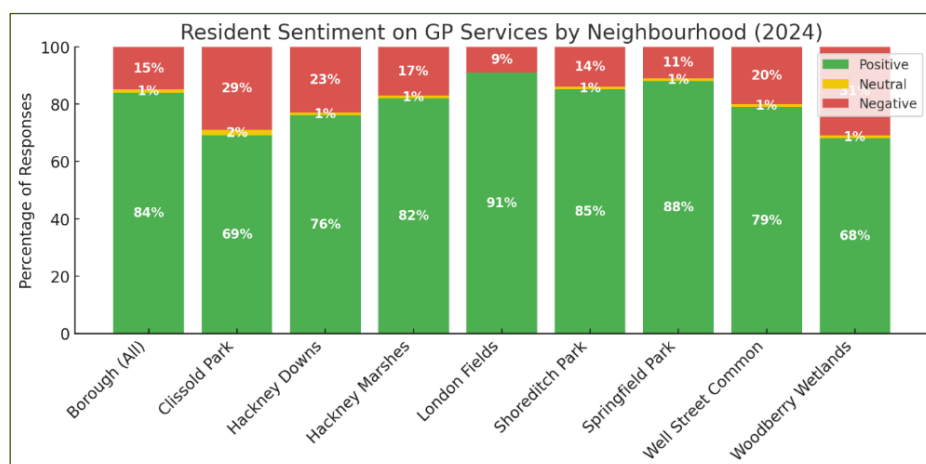
### 111 Mental Health Crisis – ‘Option 2’ Service

In 2024, [NHS 111's mental health crisis option](#) was introduced. Residents experiencing a mental health crisis can now select ‘option 2’ when calling 111, connecting them directly to local mental health services without needing a GP referral. Hopefully this will address some of the barriers to seeking help with a mental health crisis.

### Access to GP services

Healthwatch Hackney compiles resident and GP patient feedback gathered through outreach, surveys, [NHS Choices](#), [Care Opinion](#) and across social media.

Healthwatch Hackney’s [2024 GP Experience Report](#) highlights a range of resident experiences in Hackney Downs. While feedback varies, many reviews continue to express appreciation for the quality of care received. The report also reflects ongoing challenges in accessing services.



Source: Overall Patient Sentiment: Healthwatch Hackney GP Experience Report (2024)

Some patients in Hackney Downs reported difficulties accessing GP appointments. Booking systems were at times described as confusing or inconsistent. Telephone-only booking remains a barrier for some people in poor health, those with non-traditional

working hours, caring responsibilities or living with mental health conditions or neurodiverse needs.

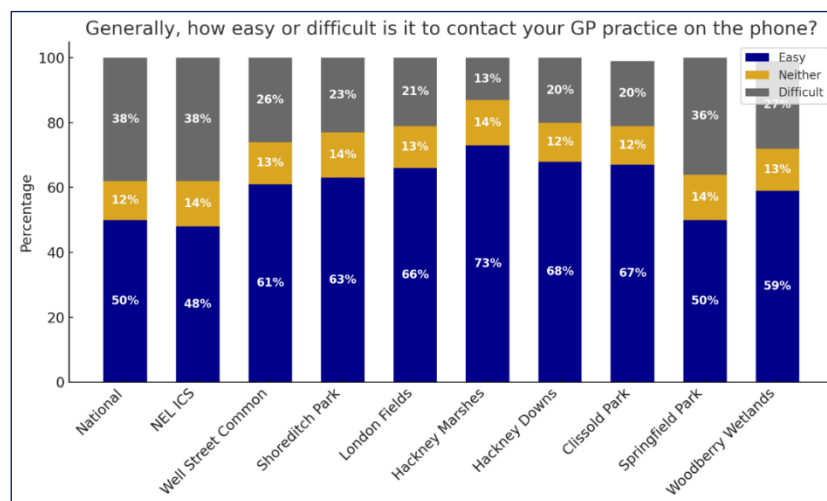
## Barriers to GP access

Feedback collected by Healthwatch Hackney indicates that most residents are satisfied with the care provided by healthcare professionals at their GP practice. However, access remains a significant concern, with many residents reporting difficulties in contacting their practice, highlighting this as a widespread and persistent issue.

The [IPSOS MORI GP Patient Survey \(2024\)](#) begins by assessing patients' ability to contact their GP practice. It asked patients three key questions on accessing their GP:

- Via telephone
- Via the practice website
- Using the NHS app

### Question 1: GP Access via telephone

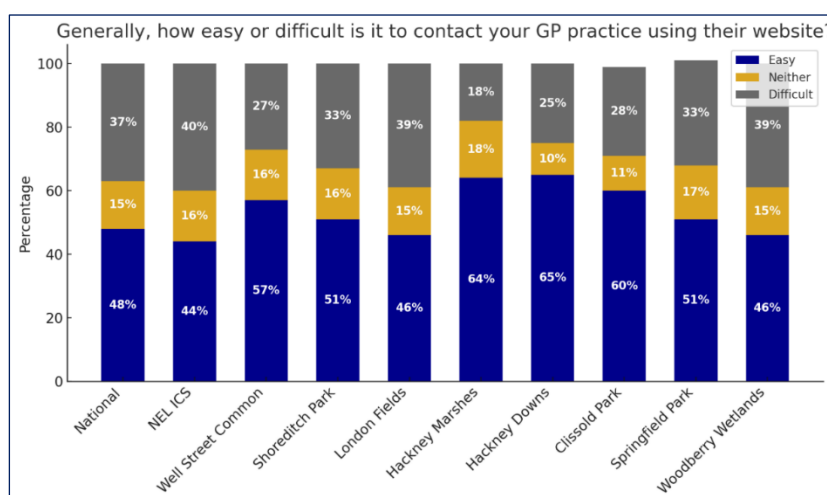


Source: Contact with GP practice by phone (IPSOS GP Survey 2024)

In Hackney Downs, 68% of respondents said it was easy to contact their GP practice by phone. However, access by phone remained a challenge for around one in five residents (20%), highlighting persistent barriers to GP access. This suggests there is still room to improve telephone booking systems:



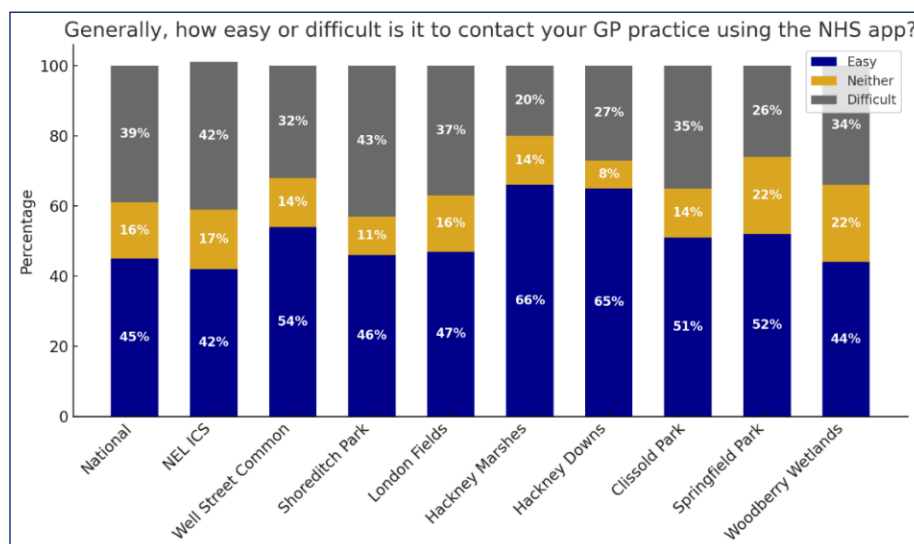
## Question 2: GP Access via practice website



Source: Contact with GP practice via website (IPSOS GP Survey 2024)

In Hackney Downs, 65% of respondents said it was easy to contact their GP practice online. However, 25% still reported difficulties with online access, pointing to ongoing issues with digital exclusion and website navigation. Further improvements are therefore needed to ensure everyone can confidently use these digital access routes.

## Question 3: GP access via NHS app



Source: Contact with GP practice using NHS App (IPSOS GP Survey 2024)

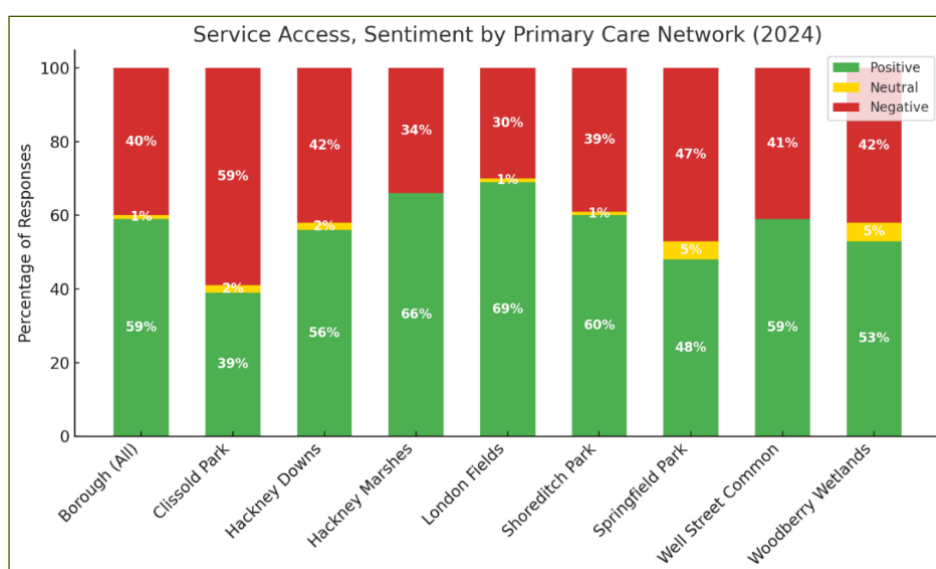
65% of respondents in Hackney Downs found it easy to contact their GP practice via the NHS app. However, 27% still faced difficulties using the app, highlighting ongoing digital barriers, particularly for residents with limited digital skills or access to technology.

Taken together, the findings on telephone, website and NHS app access suggest that most residents in Hackney Downs can contact their GP practice without major difficulties.

However, a minority still report challenges across all three methods, particularly when accessing services online. These findings highlight the need for ongoing improvements to ensure that digital and telephone systems are accessible and reliable for everyone.

## Healthwatch Hackney feedback on GP access

In 2024, feedback collected by Healthwatch Hackney showed that 56% of respondents from Hackney Downs felt positively about their GP access, while 42% shared negative experiences. This suggests a slightly more positive than negative experience overall.



Source: Overall GP Access Sentiment: Healthwatch Hackney GP Experience Report (2024)

## Comparing datasets – IPSOS MORI Vs Healthwatch Hackney

The 2024 IPSOS MORI GP survey and Healthwatch Hackney GP feedback largely align in assessing GP access across City & Hackney. Both indicate that while many residents find access relatively easy, experiences vary by Neighbourhood.

For Hackney Downs, the two data sets show strong alignment. The IPSOS survey reports that 68% of residents found it easy to contact their GP by phone, 65% via the website and 65% via the NHS app.

Similarly, Healthwatch Hackney feedback shows that 56% of those who shared their experiences reported a positive experience of accessing GP services, reinforcing that GP access is generally well-regarded. However, challenges persist, particularly with online services (approx. 30% negative sentiment).

## Additional roles reimbursement scheme (ARRS)

The Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) has enabled practices to recruit a broader range of healthcare professionals, such as pharmacists, physiotherapists, mental health practitioners and social prescribers. The aim is to improve patient access to care, alleviate pressure on GPs and provide a more holistic, multidisciplinary approach to healthcare.

The ARRS workforce in Hackney Downs has been developed with a focus on local population health needs and health equity. Roles have been introduced based on identified service gaps. Some staff are directly employed by the PCN, while others are integrated through partnerships with third-party providers, fostering a flexible approach to care.

## Access to sexual and reproductive health services (SRH)

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) remains a priority across City and Hackney, where rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) continue to be among the highest in the country. In 2023, there were 7,693 new STI diagnoses in City & Hackney, with particularly high rates of gonorrhoea, syphilis and chlamydia in younger age groups.

The chlamydia detection rate among females aged 15 to 24 in City & Hackney was 3,388 per 100,000 in 2023, significantly higher than the England rate of 1,962. This suggests effective local screening and strong uptake of sexual health services among young people.

*See table below for a summary of key indicators for Hackney, updated March 2025<sup>11</sup>.*

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<sup>11</sup>The data in this UKHSA report either refers to Hackney or both Hackney and City of London combined. Unfortunately, the UKHSA automated report does not highlight which of these options applies for each data item.

## Sexual and Reproductive Health Indicators – Hackney (2023)

Indicator	Hackney	England	Comment / Rank
New STI diagnoses (all ages)	2,942 per 100,000	704 per 100,000	Significantly higher; ranked 3rd highest
STI diagnoses excl. chlamydia (under 25s)	2,547 per 100,000	520 per 100,000	High rate; ranked 3rd highest
Chlamydia detection (females 15–24)	3,388 per 100,000	1,962 per 100,000	High detection, good testing coverage
Gonorrhea diagnoses	867 per 100,000	149 per 100,000	High burden; ranked 3rd highest
Syphilis diagnoses	67.3 per 100,000	16.7 per 100,000	Ranked 9th highest
HIV testing rate (all services)	14,103 per 100,000	2,771 per 100,000	Very high testing coverage
New HIV diagnoses	75 (Prevalence: 6.8 per 1,000)	— (Prevalence: 2.4 per 1,000)	High prevalence; ranked 9th highest
Late HIV diagnoses (2021–23)	38.9%	43.5%	Slightly better than England
LARC rate (excl. injections)	42.2 per 1,000	43.5 per 1,000	Stronger provision in SHS; lower in primary care
Abortion rate (2021)	19.5 per 1,000	19.2 per 1,000	Similar to England
Repeat abortions (under 25s)	34.1%	29.7%	Slightly higher repeat rate
Births to mothers under 18	Data suppressed	0.6%	No local figure available

Source: [Summary profile of local authority sexual health \(Hackney\) – UKHSA \(Mar 2025 update\)](#)

Public Health Hackney and Homerton Healthcare provide a range of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, including contraception, STI testing and treatment, HIV prevention and specialist care.

## Residents can access free SRH services through various providers:

- **Online:** [Sexual Health London \(SHL\)](#) offers at-home STI testing kits, routine contraception (oral contraceptive pill) and emergency hormonal contraception (EHC).
- **Clinical Services:** The [Homerton Sexual Health Service](#) operates four clinics, including the Clifden Centre and John Scott Health Centre, which accept walk-in patients. Specialist services include PrEP for HIV prevention and LGBTQIA+ support.
- **Pharmacies:** [Pharmacies in City & Hackney](#) should provide free EHC, condoms for under-25s and chlamydia and gonorrhoea testing/treatment. However access varies and a 2025 campaign by LBH City & Hackney SRH Team aims to improve visibility of these services.
- **GPs:** All [local GP practices](#) offer sexual health advice, STI and HIV testing and Long-Acting Reversible Contraception ([LARC](#)), such as implants and coils.

## Accessing pharmacy-based emergency hormonal contraception (EHC)

From October 2025, EHC will be available free of charge nationally. This will address issues of the inconsistencies in access that have been reported.

A [NEL-wide Patient Group Direction](#) now enables more pharmacists to provide EHC and chlamydia treatment, helping to reduce variation across the system. A City & Hackney sexual health awareness campaign is also planned for 2025 to improve visibility and understanding of pharmacy-based sexual health services.

For a full overview of available SRH services in City & Hackney, including clinic locations and pharmacy services in Hackney Downs, see the [interactive SRH services map](#). For those seeking LARC, such as implants and coils, City & Hackney service locations can be found on the [LARC access map](#).

## Young People's Access to SRH Services

### Addressing Barriers to Access

Consultation findings from the City & Hackney [Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy \(2024\)](#) identified several key barriers to SRH access:

- **Confidentiality Concerns** – Many young people worry about parents or peers knowing about their visits.
- **Service Awareness Gaps** – A lack of knowledge about available SRH services remains a challenge.
- **Limited Walk-in and Evening Services** – Young people expressed a need for more flexible clinic hours.

The City and Hackney Participatory Research Project Report 2023, provided by LBH's Children, Young People, Maternity and Families, gathered the views of over 100 young people aged 16–25 from across the borough. While not specific to Hackney Downs, the insights offer valuable context on the barriers young people face when accessing SRH services.

Findings reinforce the importance of culturally competent care, confidentiality, accessible information, and inclusive environments. Many young people reported uncertainty about what services were available, fears around being judged and concerns about privacy when accessing support close to home.

### Young people commented:

*"I wouldn't go to my GP for stuff like that – it's **too awkward**, especially **if your parents go there too**."*

*"It's **hard to know what's out there** – no one talks about it unless it's in school, and even then, they don't go into much detail."*

*"**Some places just feel off**, like you're being judged or they're not used to dealing with people like me."*

*"I'd go if there was someone more like me there, or even if my friends said it was okay. **It's not just about access, it's about how safe it feels**."*

### Key Hackney SRH Services for Young People:

- [Health Spot Clinic \(Forest Road Youth Club\)](#) – Provides weekly SRH clinics (Tuesdays 3–7 PM) offering STI testing, contraception and health promotion for young people.
- [Clifden Centre Walk-in Clinics](#): (Homerton University Hospital) Hosts dedicated walk-in SRH clinics for under-19s every weekday, offering contraception, PrEP, vaccinations and STI treatment.
- [Young Hackney Health Services](#): Includes sexual health drop-ins and outreach initiatives across the borough, focusing on youth-friendly and accessible services.
- [Positive East](#): Specialises in HIV prevention, testing and support for young people at higher risk.
- [Body & Soul](#): Provides a trauma-informed support network for young people living with or affected by HIV.
- [Pharmacies Offering SRH Services](#): 36 pharmacies across all eight Neighbourhoods should offer free condoms, STI testing and emergency contraception to young people.

## Condom distribution scheme – Mystery shopper findings

The [Condom Distribution Scheme \(CDS\)](#) provides free condoms and lubricant to young people aged 13–25 across City & Hackney, available from participating pharmacies after in-person or online registration. A [Mystery Shopper exercise \(2024\)](#) assessed service quality across 22 pharmacies, including F.A. Strange Pharmacy, Regal Pharmacy and Hackney Pharmacy in Hackney Downs.

Findings highlighted good staff engagement and confidentiality in many locations but also inconsistencies in condom availability, lack of visible CDS materials and limited privacy options. Some pharmacies did not actively signpost young people to other SRH services, such as STI testing or emergency contraception.

## Digital & Mapping Resources

A new [online interactive map](#), developed by the LBH SRH Team, is being introduced to help young people easily locate sexual health clinics, pharmacies, GP practices and youth hubs. This tool enhances accessibility and visibility of SRH services, ensuring young people can quickly find confidential and youth-friendly support near them.

This interactive map complements existing service directories and addresses a key challenge identified in mystery shopper exercises: the lack of clear signposting to SRH services.

## Insights from young people across City and Hackney

As part of ongoing efforts to understand young people's needs and knowledge gaps regarding sexual and reproductive health (SRH), workshops were conducted across schools and academies in City and Hackney from June 2023 to December 2024. This work was carried out by LBH's [Young Hackney](#) Health and Wellbeing team, providing valuable insight into young people's awareness and concerns.

### Key findings:

- A total of 775 students participated in 39 sessions across City and Hackney.
- Surveys conducted before and after the sessions demonstrated a significant improvement in students' understanding:
- On average, 51% of students rated their knowledge as 'Good' or 'Very Good' before the sessions.
- This increased to 90% after the sessions, highlighting the effectiveness of the workshops.



### School staff comments:

*"Very likely to have a **positive impact**."*

*"**Great videos, good examples**, very approachable facilitation."*

*"Very good. Kind and firm, **helpful, approachable and knowledgeable**."*

*"My group was very **interested and engaged**."*

*"Well structured and planned, **right approach for the age of the students**, warm welcoming questions, **encouraging to share**, supporting all students."*

*"I enjoyed the session and I am sure my students too. The **facilitator was very approachable and kind** in answering all questions, which **encouraged greater participation**."*

### Topics young people most wanted to learn more about (when asked):

- Drugs and Alcohol
- Smoking and Vaping
- Stress and Anxiety
- Sex and Pleasure
- Relationships
- Personal Hygiene
- Puberty
- Sex and Consent

## Access to pharmacy services

Pharmacies provide vital community healthcare, offering medication, health advice and minor ailment treatments.

Hackney Downs has [four community pharmacies](#). However, the number of pharmacies alone does not guarantee accessibility; factors such as service availability, opening hours and language support still impact whether residents can effectively access pharmacy services.

According to a [Healthwatch England report \(2024\)](#), to which Healthwatch Hackney contributed, a nationally representative poll found that 72% of respondents had used a pharmacy in the past three months, demonstrating their critical role in local healthcare. However, unexpected closures due to staff shortages disrupted access for 7% of patients. Some pharmacies operate with only one pharmacist, leading to closures at lunch or during absences.



## Medication Shortages

Pharmacists report difficulties in obtaining drugs, which result in patients experiencing problems receiving their prescribed medication. This can include common medicines such as HRT and painkillers.

*"You **need to keep on top of your medication** or you're not going to have anything for the weekend. Two days can be a really long time and it can be quite detrimental for our condition..."*

**-Hackney pharmacy user**

## Language and Translation Barriers

The [Hackney Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment \(2022\)](#) states that all Hackney pharmacies *should* have access to [Language Line UK](#) for interpreting services. However, a Healthwatch Hackney audit of 18 pharmacies (Dec 2023) found that many relied on Google Translate, multilingual staff or asked patients to bring an English-speaking friend, compromising patient confidentiality.

*"I **had to bring my teenage son with me to translate, which was embarrassing.** There should be a better system for people who don't speak English well."*

**-Hackney pharmacy user**

## Limited Awareness of Available Services

Many residents are unaware that pharmacies offer contraception, blood pressure checks and minor illness consultations, leading to underutilisation.

*"People talk about primary care and just automatically think GPs and that's not the case."*

**-Pharmacist, Hackney**

## Sexual Health Community Pharmacy Project

The Neighbourhoods Programme has partnered with local pharmacists and residents to enhance sexual health services, focusing particularly on understanding emergency contraception use and young women's contraceptive choices.

Through collaborative efforts, including focus groups with community pharmacists and young residents, and a borough-wide survey developed with Hackney Council, the project aims to gather valuable insights and address misconceptions about contraception options.

Special attention is being given to culturally sensitive outreach, particularly engaging Bengali women through community-led peer research, facilitated by [Volunteer Centre](#)

[Hackney](#). Additionally, resident advisors from diverse backgrounds have been instrumental in mapping local sexual health resources and supporting tailored engagement strategies.

**March 2025 Update:** Next steps include hosting a co-design workshop with residents and pharmacists to improve communication, awareness, and referral pathways for contraception and sexual health services.

## Access to Adult Social Care

Adult Social Care (ASC) supports residents in City & Hackney who need help due to age, disability or LTCs. The goal is to help people live independently and with dignity. Services are provided through a mix of council teams, NHS partners, voluntary sector organisations and private care providers.

### Adult Social Care in the London Borough of Hackney (October 2024)

As of October 2024, approximately 3,300 residents were receiving ASC support across the London Borough of Hackney (LBH). In the year from September 2023 to August 2024, around 800 unpaid carers also received a service either directly from ASC or through its commissioned partner at the time, [Carers First](#) (now delivered by [City & Hackney Carers Centre](#) – April 2025).

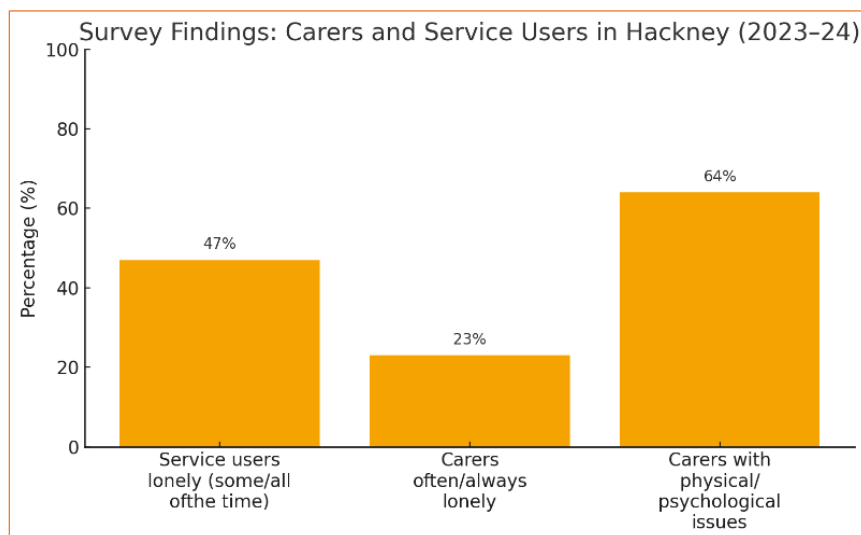
Survey findings from the [Adult Social Care User Survey \(ASCS\) 2023-24](#) and the [Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers in England, 2023-24](#) highlight challenges faced by both carers and service users in Hackney:

- 47% of service users said they felt lonely some or all of the time.<sup>12</sup>
- 23% of carers reported feeling often or always lonely, with some describing feelings of isolation and depression.<sup>13</sup>
- 64% of carers said they had physical or psychological health issues.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> [Adult Social Care User Survey \(ASCS\) 2023-24](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers in England, 2023-24](#)



Information provided by Adult Social Care (Oct 2024)

These figures reflect the extent of social isolation and health challenges faced by many people supported by Adult Social Care.

## Local Strategy and Vision

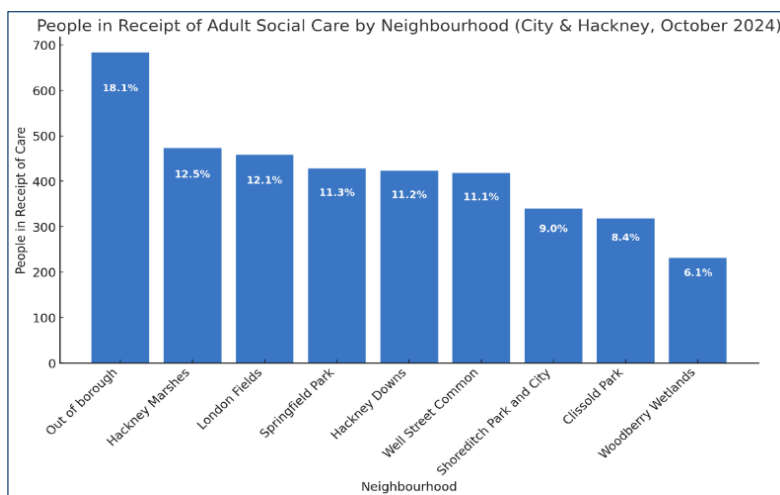
The [Hackney Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-26](#) promotes a strengths-based, holistic approach to health and social care. It supports prevention, early intervention and a 'no wrong door' model to ensure people can access the right help at the right time, particularly those with complex needs or acting as unpaid carers.

The [Hackney Adult Carers Strategy \(2024-2027\)](#) recognises the vital role of unpaid carers. While there are an estimated 19,000 unpaid carers in Hackney (including young carers and carers of children), only a proportion are eligible for support from ASC, which supports adult carers of adults.

One way the strategy commits to improving support for carers who do engage with ASC is by increasing the number of carers' assessments. Between the first and second half of 2024, Hackney Council increased the number of carer assessments by 19%.

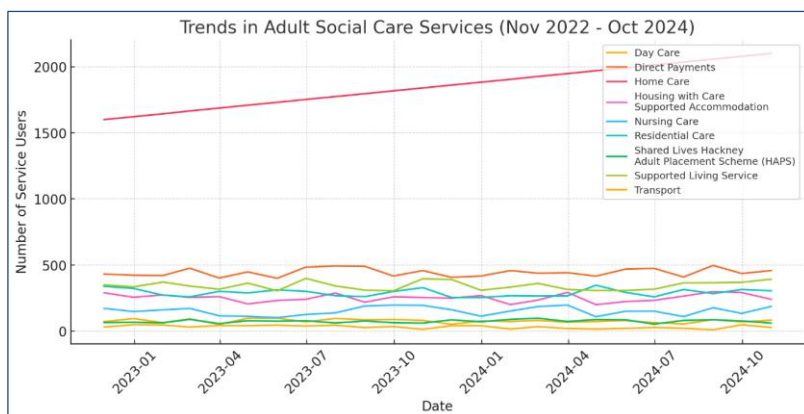
## Neighbourhood-Level Data

Neighbourhood-level data is only applicable to long-term ASC services (not carers). As of October 2024, 11.2% of all long-term ASC service users in Hackney lived in Hackney Downs, placing it in the mid-range compared to other Neighbourhoods.



Information provided by Adult Social Care (Oct 2024)

## Trends in Adult Social Care Services (Nov 2022 – Oct 2024)



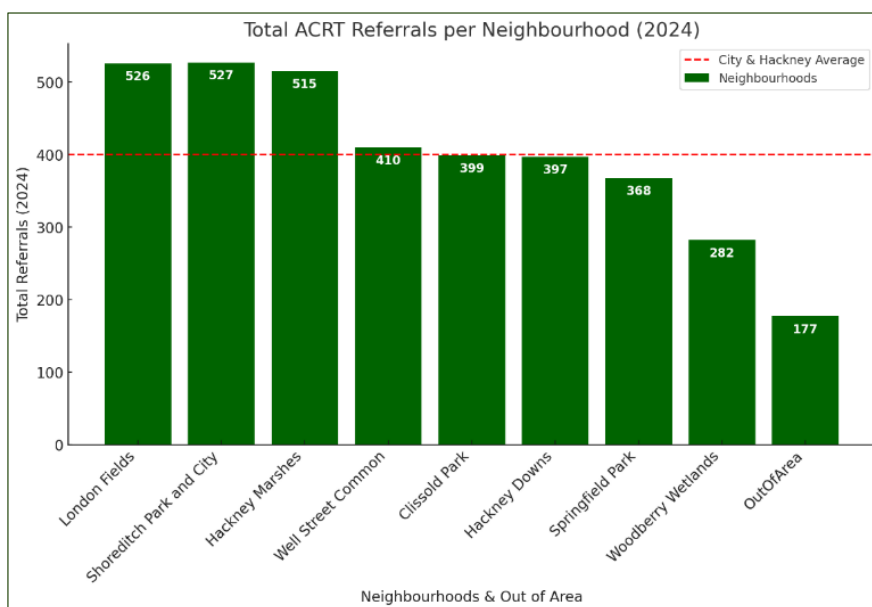
Information provided by Adult Social Care (Oct 2024)

Between November 2022 and October 2024, the number of people receiving home care in City & Hackney rose from 1,626 to 2,138, reflecting rising demand and a shift towards preventative care, reablement and support at home after hospital stays.

Loneliness and social isolation remain significant concerns, especially among service users and unpaid carers.

## Access to Community Rehabilitation Services

The [Adult Community Rehabilitation Team \(ACRT\)](#), based at St Leonard's Hospital, is a multidisciplinary service including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, psychologists, dietitians, and rehabilitation assistants. ACRT supports residents to set individual goals and provides tailored [group programmes](#), run by specialists throughout the year.



Source: City & Hackney [ACRT](#) (2025)

In 2024, there were 397 referrals from Hackney Downs, placing the Neighbourhood just below the City and Hackney average. A total of 3,959 clinical activities were delivered to local residents, including assessments, therapy sessions and reviews, provided at home, in clinics and community settings.

### New Community Assessment Clinics

To improve access and reduce wait times, new Community Assessment Clinics have opened at Frampton Park Baptist Church and St Leonard's Hospital. Open to residents across all Neighbourhoods, these clinics prioritise high-demand areas such as walking aid provision and neuro-physiotherapy, helping to streamline care pathways.

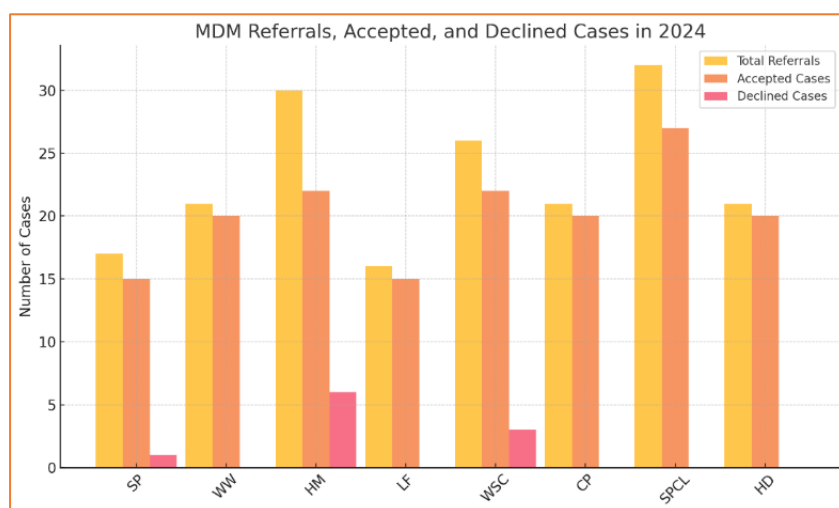
## Multidisciplinary Team Meetings in City and Hackney

[Multidisciplinary Team Meetings \(MDMs\)](#) play a key role in City and Hackney's Neighbourhoods way of working by facilitating collaborative, multi-agency working. Residents with complex needs often require support from various services, organisations and professionals, each addressing different aspects of their care.

MDMs bring together the people supporting a resident, including professionals, families, carers and those close to them, on a regular basis to develop a holistic, person-centred plan. These meetings help address not only medical needs but also wider social determinants of health, such as housing, financial difficulties and safeguarding concerns. By reducing siloed working and enhancing information sharing, MDMs promote a more coordinated and effective approach to care.

### Cases referred in 2024

In 2024, there were 21 referrals to the Hackney Downs MDM team. The acceptance rate in 2024 stood at 95%. Out of 21 referrals, 20 cases were accepted and 1 declined.

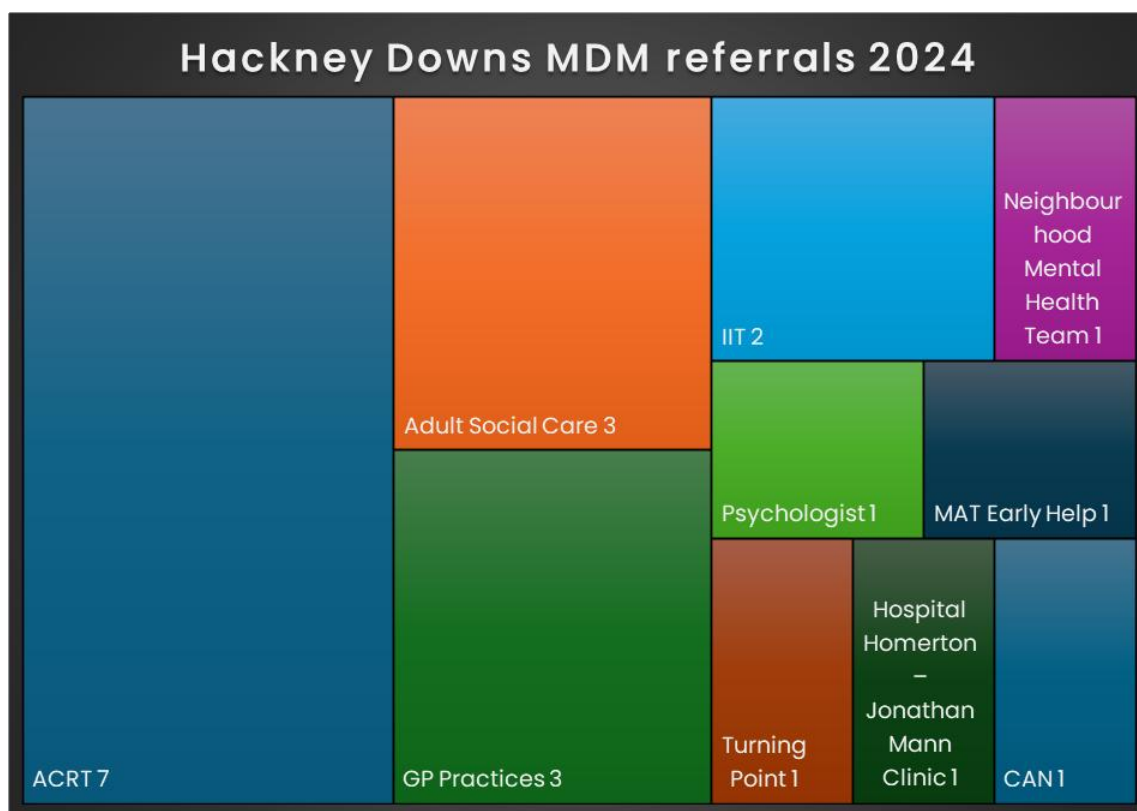


Source: Homerton Healthcare NHS Trust, MDM Team (2025)

Hackney Downs had a moderate number of referrals, with an acceptance rate above the City and Hackney average. The number of declined cases in Hackney Downs decreased from 2023 to 2024.

## Referral Sources

The following tree map of referral sources provides insight into which agencies were most engaged in the MDM process.



Source: Homerton Healthcare NHS Trust, MDM Team (2025)

## Insights from the MDM Team

As part of ongoing efforts to improve the effectiveness of MDMs, the following key observations regarding impact, professional feedback and challenges were shared by the MDM Team (2025):

### Impact on Residents

While historical data on outcomes has not been systematically collected, GPs and ACRT report that residents discussed at MDMs often experience positive changes. From the new tax year, a new system will be introduced to track outcomes more consistently and effectively.

One recent case involved a resident with multiple risks (post-stroke), non-adherence to medication, facing eviction and language barriers. Through the MDM, professionals coordinated input from District Nurses, mental health services and a social prescriber, while the chair liaised with the housing association. This joint effort reduced the risk of homelessness and improved care access.

## Feedback from Professionals

Health professionals across City and Hackney have expressed strong support for MDMs, noting that they foster collaborative problem-solving and holistic care. However, one recurring challenge shared was the low number of referrals.

## Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Inconsistent attendance from some services limits the full potential of MDMs. To address this, the new MDM team lead is actively visiting local teams to boost engagement, increase referrals and ensure more residents benefit from coordinated support

## Future Developments

City and Hackney MDMs are moving towards an Integrated Neighbourhood Team (INT) model to deliver more coordinated care closer to home and reduce pressure on health and social care services. Each Neighbourhood will bring together district nursing, therapy and social care teams, working alongside voluntary and community sector organisations for the first time.

INTs will also develop tailored strategies to address local health inequalities by drawing on community networks. A dedicated City of London group will meet its specific needs and plans are underway to explore integrating children's services into the INT model.

## Neighbourhood Assets in Hackney Downs

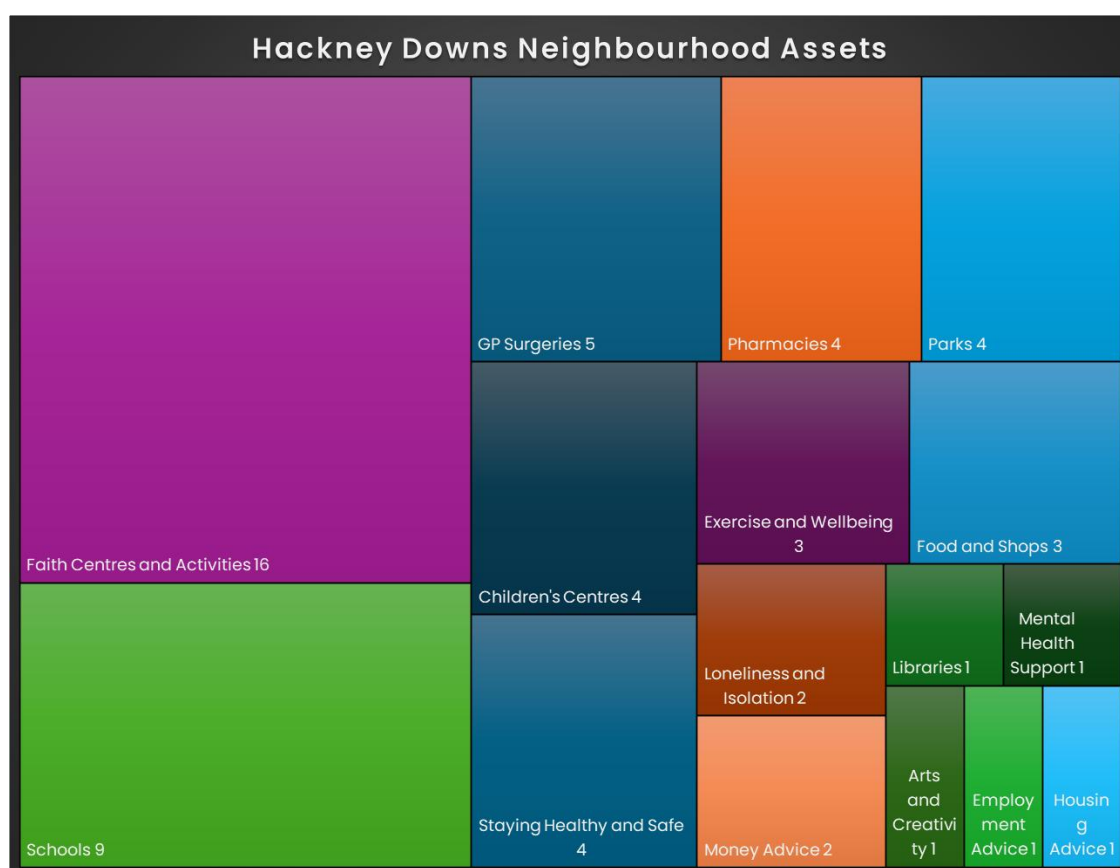
The Well Street Common Neighbourhood is home to a diverse and vibrant range of voluntary and community organisations that deliver vital services to local residents. These organisations play a key role in promoting health and wellbeing, tackling social inequalities, and strengthening community connections.

Local assets include services that support mental health, reduce loneliness and isolation, encourage physical activity, and provide faith-based support and social prescribing.

The neighbourhood is further enriched by a wide network of community venues, food services, children's centres, and arts initiatives. Many of these organisations work in partnership with healthcare providers, local authorities, and voluntary sector partners to offer residents holistic, joined-up support.

An interactive map of these local services is available through the '[Find Your Neighbourhood](#)' function of the [City and Hackney Neighbourhoods](#) website. By entering a postcode, users can explore geographically mapped services in their area, complete with contact details and location information.





Source: <https://cityandhackneyneighbourhoods.org.uk/neighbourhoods/hackney-downs/>

## Community hall hire

The following table presents the community hall hire spaces available in the Hackney Downs area, as listed on the [Hackney Council's community halls directory](#). These venues offer a variety of facilities suitable for events, meetings and activities, catering to the diverse needs of the local community.

Hackney Downs Neighbourhood Community Hall Hire			
Venue	Type of venue	Capacity	Wheelchair access
<a href="#">Lea View Community Centre</a> <a href="#">Springfield, London, E5 9DX</a>	First-floor hall with balcony. Suitable for fitness classes, events + parties. Kitchen with fridge, microwave, oven + hob.	100	Yes

<a href="#">Lea View Community Centre</a> <a href="#">Springfield, London, E5 9DX</a>	Ground floor of Lea View Community Centre, 27m <sup>2</sup> . Bay-fronted window, ideal for meetings, conferences, or as breakout space.	20	Yes
<a href="#">Mountford Community Hall</a> <a href="#">Cecelia Road, London, E8 2HY</a>	West of Hackney Downs Park, 9-minute walk from Overground station. 98m <sup>2</sup> hall, inc. tables, chairs + kitchen. Ideal for parties, gatherings, meetings + exercise classes.	60	No
<a href="#">Nightingale Community Centre</a> <a href="#">Olympus Square, London, E5 8PL</a>	Ideal spaces for parties, social gatherings, meetings, conferences, training, clubs, baby groups + fitness/dance classes.	100	Yes
<a href="#">The Mount Community Hall</a> <a href="#">The Mount, London, E5 9DR</a>	56m <sup>2</sup> hall, lino flooring, small kitchen. Ideal for small gatherings, meetings or private fitness sessions.	30	Yes
<a href="#">Wrens Park Community Centre</a> <a href="#">Warwick Grove, London, E5 9LL</a>	88m <sup>2</sup> hall, stage, kitchen, projector, tables/chairs. Used for Performances, classes, parties + events.	100	Yes

## Community Health Champions

The [City & Hackney Community Health Champions](#) (CHC) programme empowers local residents by training volunteers (known as Community Health Champions) to be trusted sources of health information in their communities.

Delivered in partnership by [Volunteer Centre Hackney](#) (VCH) and City & Hackney Public Health teams, the programme recently awarded [Community Health Champion Network Grants for 2024-2025](#) to local voluntary, community, and faith-sector organisations to strengthen their involvement in promoting community health.

Each year, the programme collaborates with Champions to identify health priorities reflecting residents' most pressing issues.

For 2025, these priorities are:

- **Physical Activity**
- **Diet, Nutrition, and Food Poverty**
- **Vaccinations and Immunisations**
- **Long-Term Health Conditions** (focusing specifically on cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer)

In addition, the CHC programme recognises cross-cutting themes such as Mental Health and Wellbeing, the Cost of Living, Health Literacy, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and adopting a Whole Person Approach.

To effectively address these priorities, the CHC team provides Champions with ongoing support, through tailored training, peer support sessions and targeted communication resources.

Champions also play a crucial role in gathering insights into local health needs, which the CHC team shares with health and care partners to inform service design and help reduce health inequalities.

For more information, or to explore collaboration opportunities with Community Health Champions, please contact:

- Ros Jones ([rosalind.jones@cityandhackneyph.hackney.gov.uk](mailto:rosalind.jones@cityandhackneyph.hackney.gov.uk)) or
- Jo Hunt ([joanne@vchackney.org](mailto:joanne@vchackney.org)).

## Social prescribing

Social Prescribing is a service that connects residents with community resources to enhance their health and well-being. In City and Hackney, [Family Action](#) delivers [Social Prescribing](#) across eight PCNs and 41 GP practices. This initiative aims to improve mental health and well-being by linking individuals to community support, reducing reliance on traditional health services.

Social Prescribers assist service users in accessing a wide range of community-based activities, including social groups, arts and creative sessions, physical activities, smoking cessation, weight management, healthy lifestyle programs, skills development and volunteering opportunities. In addition, [volunteer befrienders](#) support service users in overcoming barriers and engaging with local support networks.

### Who is Social Prescribing for?

The service is available for residents aged 18 and over who may be experiencing:

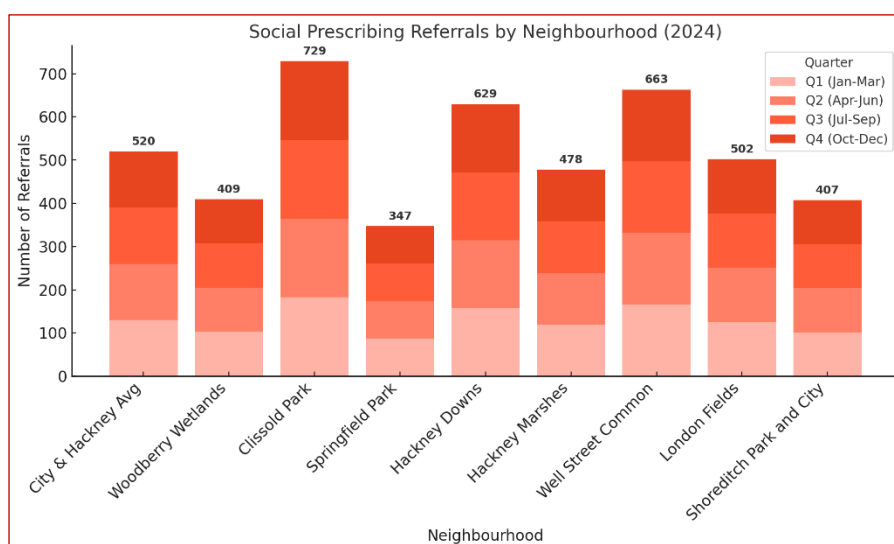
- Social isolation
- Mild to moderate mental health issues

- Long-term health conditions (LTCs)
- Social or financial challenges
- Limited engagement with healthcare services
- Disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Barriers due to language, disability, or cultural background

Additionally, the [Macmillan Social Prescribing Service](#) supports individuals aged 18 and over who have had a previous cancer diagnosis, providing a person-centred approach to enable them to live well during and after cancer treatment.

## Referral Trends Across Neighbourhoods

In 2024, 4,164 referrals were recorded across City and Hackney. Hackney Downs Neighbourhood recorded 629 referrals, above the Neighbourhood average of 520.



Source: [Family Action](#), 2025

## Key themes from referrals include:

- **Mental health difficulties** (particularly anxiety and depression).
- **Social isolation**, particularly among older adults and single-parent households.
- **Financial hardship** and housing insecurity, with many residents needing foodbank access, financial aid or housing support.

## Service User Insights

Feedback from residents highlights the impact of Social Prescribing in Hackney Downs:

*"...Since seeing you, I'm better able to chase things up. Before, I felt I couldn't. **Nothing can replace human contact.**"*

*"I started to feel that **someone knows I exist**. My mind is starting to be alive now, I'm not as lonely."*

*"**It's been amazing**, just having that regular session and someone to help make a plan with—I had no idea those resources were out there and for free!"*

*"My **social prescriber helped me** access foodbanks, money vouchers and the benefits system when I was at my lowest and struggling and has helped me begin to work on myself through art and counselling'.*

## Hackney Downs VCS Services

### Neighbourhood Forums and Action Groups

The [Neighbourhood Forum programme](#) runs across all City & Hackney Neighbourhoods. It offers a structured way for residents and professionals to connect, share information and co-produce service improvements aimed at reducing health inequalities.

Each Neighbourhood has an [Action Group](#), made up of residents and professionals, who work together on agreed health and wellbeing priorities each year. In 2024, Hackney Downs's action group decided on:

- **Community navigations services for people with LTCs**
- **Health support for children & young people:** Enhancing existing services & support with obesity

Bi-annual Forums provide accessible spaces for residents to meet with local services, share experiences and gather insights to influence change at the hyper-local level. In Clissold Park, the Forum is facilitated by [Damali Beautiful Vision CIC](#), who support Global Majority community members and their families in their navigation of bereavement after the loss of a young child or young adult.

### Nightingale Luncheon Club

The [Nightingale Luncheon Club](#) is a non-profit organisation based at 19 Olympus Square, Nightingale Estate, E5 8DS. It offers affordable lunches from 12:00 to 1:30pm, Monday to Friday, with no annual membership fee required. The club also hosts a monthly drop-in session with a Social Prescriber, where residents can receive support with issues such as housing, form-filling, and referrals to other support organisations.

## **Centre for Osteopathic Research and Excellence**

[CORE](#) (Centre for Osteopathic Research and Excellence) believes everyone has the right to a pain-free life and aims to make osteopathy accessible to all. Its charitable arm offers low-cost or free treatment to eligible residents, who currently make up 40% of its clients.

## **North London Muslim Community Centre**

The [North London Muslim Community Centre](#) (NLMCC) supports people from all backgrounds in ways that are culturally appropriate to the needs of the Muslim community. It is Hackney's leading provider of Muslim-appropriate social and welfare services. The centre offers a range of services, including a nursery, children's centre, youth services (ages 8–19), advice and advocacy (18+), and a lunch and wellbeing club for older people (55+).

## **Shelter Hackney**

[Shelter Hackney](#) is a local service run by the national charity Shelter, offering free housing advice and support to Hackney residents facing housing issues or homelessness. The service provides help with eviction, rent arrears, disrepair and homelessness and is open to anyone living in Hackney.

Support is available via a helpline or at the drop-in service. The aim is to help people secure safe, stable housing and prevent homelessness. Shelter Hackney works across multiple Neighbourhoods.

## **Hackney Playbus:**

[Hackney Playbus](#) operates a converted double-decker bus, bringing early years play environments to housing estates and public parks in East London. Their free sessions cater to children aged 0–4, offering activities that support early learning and development.

## **Hackney Quest**

[Hackney Quest](#) works with young people and families to help them build confidence, develop life skills and reach their full potential. The charity offers youth mentoring, after-school activities, family support services and tailored programmes that nurture resilience, leadership and emotional wellbeing.

## Food Banks

[Hackney Foodbank](#) is dedicated to providing emergency food parcels to individuals and families facing crises or poverty within the Hackney community. Operating on a voucher referral system, they ensure that those in need receive essential support with dignity and compassion. Their services are available six days a week at various locations:

- **Monday:** Homerton Food Bank Centre at Kingsmead Kabin, Kingsmead Way, Homerton, E9 5QG, open from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm.
- **Tuesday:** Dalston Food Bank Centre at Our Lady and St Joseph Church, 100a Balls Pond Road, Dalston, N1 4AG, open from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.
- **Wednesday:** Upper Clapton Food Bank Centre at St Andrews Church, 106 Bethune Road, Stoke Newington, N16 5DU, open from 5:00 pm to 6:45 pm.
- **Thursday:** Stoke Newington Food Bank Centre at St Mary's Church, Stoke Newington Church Street, N16 9ES, open from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm.
- **Friday:** Hoxton Food Bank Centre at the Museum of the Home, Fire Gate 3 Entrance, Geffrye Street, Hoxton, E2 8EA, open from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm.
- **Friday:** Hackney Quest provides free community meals twice a week and distributes food parcels every Friday to support those experiencing food insecurity.
- **Saturday:** Pembury Food Bank Centre at Pembury Community Centre, 1 Atkins Square, Dalston Lane, E8 1FA, open from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

## Social Housing Providers in Hackney Downs

As highlighted above, close to half of residents in Hackney Downs live in socially rented accommodation (42%). Social housing providers (also known as Registered Social Landlords) operate across multiple Neighbourhoods, managing properties for individuals and families in need of affordable housing.

These providers often reflect the diverse needs of local communities. Some offer sheltered accommodation for older residents (e.g. [Anchor Hanover](#)), while others have strong cultural or faith-based links, such as the [Industrial Dwellings Society](#) (IDS), which has longstanding ties to the Jewish community; the [North London Muslim Housing Association](#); and [Shian Housing Association](#) (a Black Minority Ethnic-led organisation).

Several providers also deliver wider services that support resident wellbeing, including employment programmes, financial inclusion support, youth activities and health and wellbeing initiatives. The chart below provides a selection of the key social housing providers operating across City & Hackney Neighbourhoods.

<b>Network Housing Association</b>	<b>One Housing Group</b>	<b>Newlon Housing Association</b>	<b>London and Quadrant Housing Association</b>	<b>Southern Housing Association</b>
<b>Anchor Hannover</b>	<b>Peabody Housing Association</b>	<b>North London Muslim Housing Association</b>	<b>Clarion Housing Association</b>	<b>IDS</b>
	<b>Guinness Trust</b>	<b>Sanctuary Housing Association</b>	<b>Shian Housing Association</b>	
		<b>Notting Hill Genesis</b>		

## Conclusion

Hackney Downs is a young, diverse Neighbourhood with high levels of deprivation and health inequalities. Many residents face challenges linked to poverty, poor housing and long-term health conditions, particularly children, older people and ethnic minority communities.

Access to care is uneven, with long waits for mental health support and limited awareness of available services. Digital exclusion and language barriers affect access, especially for older residents and those with limited English.

Young people face growing needs related to anxiety, neurodiversity, sexual health and inclusion. Older residents are more likely to be digitally excluded and at risk of isolation.

The Neighbourhood has a strong network of community groups, peer-led support and social prescribing. However, awareness and access remain limited for many residents.



## Neighbourhood Challenges and Opportunities

Snapshot summary of key themes emerging from this year's Neighbourhood Insight Report

Challenges	Opportunities
<b>Mental Health</b>	<b>Mental Health</b>
Long waits and gaps in support for low-level mental health needs. Young people in particular face barriers to accessing help and navigating services.	Promote direct access NHS Talking therapies. Promote <a href="#">NHS 111 'Option 2'</a> mental health crisis line + peer support to improve access / earlier intervention for young people and adults.
<b>Access to GP Services</b>	<b>Access to GP Services</b>
Resident frustration with appointment systems / inconsistent communication. Key barriers: Online systems, including NHS app.	Upskill residents on use of NHS app. Promote digital inclusion initiatives like IT classes at Age UK's <a href="#">Marie Lloyd Centre</a> and GP practice-based digital inclusion champions. New roles via ARRS / better triage models to help improve patient experience and reduce pressure on GPs.
<b>Long-Term Conditions (LTCs)</b>	<b>Long-Term Conditions (LTCs)</b>
Residents report difficulty managing LTCs like hypertension, diabetes and COPD. Support is fragmented and poorly signposted.	Strengthen signposting and outreach through schools, children's centres and social prescribers. Promote early years support and family health interventions.

<b>Children and Young People</b>	<b>Children and Young People</b>
Below average outcomes for under 5s (immunisations and development goals). Obesity and food insecurity also affect older children.	Promote early intervention through schools to help families navigate support / address challenges before they escalate.
<b>Housing and Health</b>	<b>Housing and Health</b>
Poor housing a major issue, closely linked to mental and physical health challenges.	Align housing, health and advice services through the Neighbourhoods model. Use co-located and outreach support to reach residents most affected.
<b>Cost of Living Support</b>	<b>Cost of Living Support</b>
High deprivation and widespread financial hardship. Food insecurity and benefit-related issues regularly raised.	<a href="#">Social prescribing</a> / <a href="#">Citizens Advice</a> Hackney play critical role in helping residents access financial, legal and housing support. Promote cost-of-living hubs.
<b>Digital Inclusion</b>	<b>Digital Inclusion</b>
Around 45% of residents are digitally excluded or rarely online, limiting access to services.	Promote digital skills classes ( <a href="#">Marie Lloyd Centre</a> ), free data access and equipment schemes. Offer in-person alternatives where possible.
<b>Community Navigation</b>	<b>Community Navigation</b>
Residents – especially those with LTCs – struggle to access and navigate support services. Awareness is low.	Use Neighbourhoods forums and outreach teams to raise awareness. Promote interactive map and community connector roles.

## Supporting Resident Engagement in City & Hackney Neighbourhoods

Involving residents is essential to successful Neighbourhood working. Without residents sharing their experiences to shape local priorities and service delivery, addressing health inequalities effectively becomes challenging. Resident engagement requires thoughtful planning to ensure everyone has opportunities to participate, especially those who might otherwise face barriers, such as digital exclusion.

Healthwatch Hackney runs monthly [resident engagement surgeries](#) for Neighbourhood professionals, providing peer guidance and support on effective resident involvement. These meetings are open to those engaging with residents across City and Hackney. To learn more or attend a session, email [info@healthwatchhackney.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchhackney.co.uk).

Neighbourhood Forum meetings continue to provide a valuable space for discussing local challenges with those who live and work in the Neighbourhood. These forums are now held quarterly in each Neighbourhood and are further supported by Neighbourhood-specific Resident Action Groups. These groups bring together residents and professionals to explore forum issues in greater depth and determine how best to implement insights gained through resident engagement.




To [find out more](#), contact: [VCSNeighbourhoods@hcv.org.uk](mailto:VCSNeighbourhoods@hcv.org.uk) or visit the [Resident & Community Engagement](#) page of the City & Hackney Neighbourhoods website.



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