

Haringey Employment Gap Research Project

Summary and Full Report

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The Haringey Employment Gap research project, a key part of **Opportunity Haringey**, was carried out during 2023 by London Metropolitan University in partnership with the London Borough of Haringey. The project is part of London Met Lab Empowering London initiative, which aims to engage the University with its community partners.

Acknowledgements

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Summary Report

The Council is developing '**Opportunity Haringey**' - an inclusive economic framework. The aim is to shape and drive forward the Council's ambitions for a local economy that moves from reacting and responding to the challenges of the pandemic to a pro-active partnership approach that unlocks the creativity of residents and businesses to harness Haringey's strengths to secure economic prosperity for all that is fairer and greener. Opportunity Haringey is being developed by undertaking economic analysis and engaging and listening to businesses, residents and a range of local and strategic partners in order to understand the range of needs, demands and aspirations across the many diverse communities in the borough.

The Haringey Employment Gap research project, a key part of Opportunity Haringey, was carried out during 2023 by London Metropolitan University in partnership with the London Borough of Haringey. The project is part of London Met Lab Empowering London initiative, which aims to engage the University with its community partners. The aim of the project is to identify those groups in Haringey who suffer the highest levels of unemployment and to highlight the barriers they face in accessing jobs. It is well known that Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents, people with disabilities, young people and lone parents experience higher levels of unemployment and this research project seeks to identify which particular groups are most affected and what the main barriers are in accessing work. The research project looks at how well existing employment advisory services in Haringey support Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents, residents with disabilities, lone parents and young people to get into work.

This **Summary Report** sets out the key findings and recommendations from the Haringey Employment Gap research project. It should be noted that while there are key differences in terms of the barriers to accessing work experienced by the different target groups in this research, such as race discrimination and discrimination against people with disabilities, there are also many common barriers that are experienced across all the target groups. Some of the key common barriers include low expectations and confidence to attain meaningful employment, poor experiences of employment support services, particularly of the Job Centres and for many women with children, especially single parents, unaffordable childcare. It should also be noted that many of the key findings and recommendations echo those of the recent [No Wrong Door report by City Hall and The Young Foundation](#) (2023) and [The Commission on the Future of Employment Support interim report](#) (2023) reports, particularly on how important it is to join up skills and employment support to deliver an accessible offer for job seekers.

1. Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups

Aim of studying black, Asian and minority ethnic residents in Haringey

Haringey is a diverse borough in terms of ethnicity. The total resident population was 264,000 in 2021, two thirds (67.1%) of whom are from a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) or Other White ethnic group, as compared to 60.7% in London as a whole. It is well known that the Black, Asian and minority ethnic population experience higher levels of unemployment than the White British population. The aim of studying black, Asian and minority ethnic residents is to identify the specific barriers they experience in accessing employment, to improve the targeting of employment support to Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents and to reduce the employment gap.

Main findings

- **A slightly lower proportion of ethnic minority residents are in work than white residents** – ethnic minority residents comprise 24.5% of the working age population but only 21.9% of the total in-work population
- **The employment rate is lowest for Bangladeshi/Pakistani residents (66.9%), other ethnic group (68.1%) and Black/Black British residents (69.9%)** as compared with 77.7% for the white population and 80.4% for mixed ethnic group.
- **Ethnic minority residents comprise a higher proportion of the unemployed** – 32% of the unemployed as compared with 24.5% of the total working age population
- **Unemployment in the Borough is higher among the ethnic minority population at 33% than the white population (22%)** and is especially and exceptionally high among the small Bangladeshi and Pakistani population (3,200) (78%).
- **Institutionalised discrimination** – was highlighted by Black participants in particular as a major barrier in accessing employment and in accessing 'good' employment and promotion opportunities when in work.
- **Childcare** – the lack of affordable childcare options emerged as one of the most significant barriers to accessing work for Black and Asian women with pre-school age children, and for single parents in particular. Childcare costs and the need for **flexible working hours** were key barriers for almost all women with pre-school and school age children. These structural factors force women into lower paid jobs which can be available at hours and times that suit women with young children when affordable childcare is not an option.
- **Digital exclusion** – as job application processes have increasingly shifted online, many participants experienced digital literacy, and digital poverty, as barriers to accessing employment

- **Lack of experience** – lack of relevant experience emerged as a major barrier to successfully accessing work for many Black and Asian participants. Many jobs require experience and getting a first step on the ladder is a major barrier. It had an impact on narrowing participants' ambitions and expectations, often forcing them into low paid (flexible hour) options where they do have experience such as in hospitality and cleaning.
- **Low expectations in terms of what jobs are realistically accessible** – experiences of structural barriers to employment left many participants with low expectations as to what is possible in terms of getting a job, the intersection of racism and lack of childcare, of low skills and of the ingrained attitudes of some employment services and advisors, can result in the low expectations experienced by many Black, Asian and minority ethnic participants
- **Experiences of employment advisory services were mixed, with experience of using the Job Centre** almost entirely negative – participants found them demoralising with a strong sense that the service is target driven and the focus is on getting unemployed residents into low paid and skilled, entry-level jobs with little attempt to build on people's ambitions to seek higher paid and skilled roles. Numerous participants also spoke of cancelled interviews and training without being informed. There were mixed but mostly positive experiences of **Haringey Works**, including **unanimously positive experiences of the Broadwater Farm outreach advisor based in the community** and many good experiences of advisors at Haringey Works, Wood Green. However, there were also a significant number of participants who had not received replies to 'cold' email contacts, of cancelled interviews not followed up and of some advisors not being helpful.

Key recommendations

It should be noted that many of the following recommendations should form the key elements of a strategy, led by the Council, to target employment support to all those groups in the borough suffering the highest levels of unemployment – including Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents, residents with disabilities and young people.

1. **Address race discrimination in the delivery of employment support services** in the Borough – again this will take many forms of action, including staff training, but Haringey should lead work with its partner organisations to challenge stereotypes and assumptions and the lack of recognition of Black and Asian unemployed residents' skills and aspirations
2. **Target employment support and advice services to the particular groups in the Borough suffering the highest levels of unemployment** – this should include Black African, Black Caribbean and 'other ethnic' residents but also the smaller Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities with especially high unemployment levels as well as people with disabilities and particularly people with mental health problems and young people. The Council should set **targets** to reach each of these groups both internally and with its partner organisations.

3 The key recommendation concerns engagement and the development of an outreach strategy both within the Council and with partners. The Council needs to take a lead on engagement with 'target' groups of unemployed people to develop stronger links and networks, including specific engagement strategies with Black and Asian residents and with residents from other ethnic groups experiencing especially high levels of unemployment, with young people; and with people with disabilities. As part of a successful engagement strategy, the Council working strategically with its partners **should further develop its employment support community outreach strategy and provision** – this should include a commitment to building on the model of outreach advisors based in the community, such as that currently operating on the Broadwater Farm estate – and should start with 'target' communities which have high levels of unemployment, face barriers in accessing jobs and have low levels of engagement with the Council's employment services such as Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents, young people and people with disabilities. **The outreach strategy should**

- map the social spaces used by the target groups
- Identify and establish links with key 'intermediaries' and partners
- Promote the co-location of employment support services jointly with key partners in the social spaces used by target communities including setting up an effective Haringey Works presence in key community spaces used by target communities in the Borough and making computers and space available.
- Build the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to target and reach those communities experiencing the highest levels of unemployment.
- Broaden the remit of employment advice support roles in Haringey Works to include outreach and community development skills in new and existing posts
- Review and develop more effective information on and signposting of employment support services in the Borough
- **Further integrate Haringey Works and Haringey Learns services – to include** developing a community outreach strategy for Haringey Learns, setting up the co-location and joint service delivery between Haringey Learns and Haringey Works, enhancing adult vocational training in the Borough for target communities, ensuring Haringey Learns services reach target groups, increasing free ESOL and digital skills ACL provision and providing free ESOL and digital/IT skills training in social and public spaces and community centres used by target communities

4 Haringey Works and the other employment advisory and support services in the Borough should be based on a person-centred, case-work model, with small numbers of cases.

- 5 **The Council both internally with Haringey Works and with partner employment advice services, including the DWP, should oversee encouraging higher expectations and 'good' employment outcomes** – a key barrier emerging from the focus groups with Black, Asian and minority ethnic participants was the low expectations of employment advisory services.
- 6 **The Council should lead on a review of current childcare policies and services in the Borough** – and prioritise the expansion of affordable childcare within the context of national policy, targeting childcare services to the needs of single parents and to Black, Asian and minority ethnic women
- 7 **The Council should lead on enhancing links with employers in the Borough** – developing paid work placement and apprenticeship schemes; mentoring opportunities; providing industry specialists to advise, coach and support unemployed young people and other target groups back into employment; further develop effective job fairs and employer workshop sessions in community spaces and develop greater disability awareness among large, medium and small employers in the Borough.

2. People with disabilities:

Aim of studying people with disabilities in Haringey

People with disabilities were also prioritised in this research project. It is well known that people with disabilities experience higher levels of unemployment than the non-disabled population. It is also the case, however, that people with disabilities are a highly diverse group with diverse needs, experiences and abilities.

Main findings

- Approximately **14% of the population in Haringey are disabled.**
- Almost **40% of people with disabilities of working age in Haringey are not in employment**
- Almost **70% of the disabled working-age population was aged 40-59.**
- The disability category most frequently reported by all age groups of disabled people comprised of individuals with **mental health conditions** (35%), followed by those affected by **physical impairments** (32%).
- the **income after tax of disabled Haringey residents is relatively low**, with a majority falling within the range of 1-2000 GBP per month range
- The education level varied amongst the disabled population, where 30% had no qualifications, and 30% had a Level 4 qualification or above.
- It should be noted however, that the disability employment gap in Haringey in 2021 was down to just under 20%, compared to 35% a few years earlier
- The main findings from the focus groups show that the key barriers to accessing work were **unfair treatment, discrimination and lack of disability awareness, and lack of training and support by employers.**

- An additional obstacle entailed **delayed diagnosis of neurodiversity**, thereby impacting the individual's educational trajectory, as well as employers' inflexibility to accommodate the person with this diagnosis.
- Furthermore, the potential employer's perception of people with disabilities, as well as a **lack of clarity about the employer's responsibility to make 'reasonable adjustments'** were also highlighted as a barrier.
- **Challenging experiences with the Job Centre, Connected Communities, and inflexible support programmes were also considered barriers.**
- **Lack of information about and availability of support**, residents with disabilities are very keen to work but need support which they are either not aware of or is not available. Participants were **not aware of what support the council has to offer** in terms of employment opportunities.
- Unemployment and underemployment is affecting residents with disabilities **not only financially, and also in terms of their mental health.**

Key recommendations

Based on these findings, the key recommendations are that the Council should:

1. **Work more closely with partner organisations to target employment support and related services to people with disabilities, impairments and long-term health conditions, in particular people with mental health conditions.**
2. **Develop an employment support outreach strategy (see above), mapping and reaching out** to community spaces used by people with disabilities and health conditions, and then offer services supporting this demographic in those places
3. **Provide wrap-around, holistic services for people with disabilities and long-term health conditions based on a case-working model of service delivery.** This should include employment support, health and well-being, including income maximisation, benefits and cost of living support.
3. **Coordinate a programme of disability awareness and training with local employers.** The evidence suggests disability awareness and training among employers is perhaps the single most important way forward if people with disabilities and health conditions are to be enabled to access employment.
4. **As one of the largest** single employers in the Borough, the Council can play a lead role in employing people with disabilities and long-term health conditions and in providing people with disabilities with the flexibility and disability awareness that would act as a good practice model to other local employers. This could include - reviewing its targets for employing people with disabilities and long-term health conditions; conducting an audit of the numbers of staff employed with disabilities and health conditions and a disability awareness audit to ensure the needs of people with neuro-diverse conditions, learning disabilities, people who are deaf and people with impaired

sight are addressed; reviewing recruitment processes to ensure they are disability aware and undertaking a programme of disability awareness training with line managers in service departments

3. Young People

Aim of studying young people in Haringey

The main aim of studying young people in the London Borough of Haringey is to look at ways of improving existing employment support services, and, in effect, reduce the employment gap in the Borough. To gain the understanding required to meet the needs of young residents and achieve improved employment outcomes, we need to hear from the young people themselves, who are one of the groups suffering the highest level of unemployment in the Borough, and assess the barriers they face in accessing jobs.

Main findings

- Of the 33000 young people aged 16-24 years in Haringey, 66% or 19,900 are economically active, **while 34% or 10,400 are economically inactive or unemployed.**
- Haringey has a **higher employment rate among the economically active population of young people compared to the national average.** However, analysis of the types of sectors where young people are employed in **Haringey indicates that the public administration, health and education sector and the distribution, hotel, and restaurant sector account for the highest number of young people**
- **Little employability support in school** (secondary and sixth form college), with most schools mainly interested in preparing students for sixth form and university.
- **Many young people need to build their self-esteem to develop 'job readiness'**, it was notable that **mental health issues**, especially anxiety and depression, were brought up in the focus groups as important factors to address
- **A lack of (employment or otherwise) initiatives for 18-25-year-olds** was highlighted in the focus groups.
- Several focus group participants spoke about the issue of **employers asking for experience**, even for entry-level jobs and internships, within the field of work that they were applying for. Difficulties in gaining relevant experience prevent young people getting a foot on the employment ladder.
- Many participants spoke about **adverse employment experiences and precarious working conditions** which had demotivating effects on how respondents pursued jobs.

- **Institutionalised discrimination and prejudice** were also mentioned, with young people in the focus groups saying they did not know how or where to report the issues experienced
- Except for Job Centre Plus (JCP) and Haringey Works, there were **little knowledge of employment services, events and information available in Haringey**
- **Many of the focus group participants seek support and job opportunities without using employment services; e.g., within their own networks** which may include helping family members with care or business
- **Some stated that the system implemented by Job Centre Plus facilitates little to no support in getting a (meaningful) job** and is an environment not suitable for young people

Key recommendations

1. Secondary **schools and sixth form colleges should work with employability support services** in providing **in-school and -college support for students** (e.g., employability and CV development workshops), especially if they show little interest in going to university.
2. **To identify, track, and support young people in Haringey who are not in education, employment, or training, a working group would be advisable**, monitoring young people whose activities are unknown and providing them with information, advice, and guidance about learning, training, and employment opportunities are key considerations in **influencing job outcomes and their attitudes towards employment**. Schools should also ensure that young people's destinations are shared.
3. **Young people with mental health issues** have difficulty finding work, and poor job market experiences contribute to prolonging the problems. **Alongside initiatives to reduce stigma surrounding mental health issues, a person-centred approach** that gives young people skills in finding work, managing money, social skills and staying in work is recommended.
4. Limited access to personalised support was stressed in the focus group discussions. The model for **Haringey Works, Haringey Learns and other employment advisory and support services** in the Borough should take into account a more **person-centred approach** based on a case-work model, with small numbers of cases. As a key element of this, the Borough's employment support services should prioritise **encouraging higher expectations in the employment outcomes of unemployed clients**. This should be through a number of avenues including staff training and the further development of paid work placement and apprenticeship roles.

5. The **Kickstart Scheme** was spoken about in favourable terms. The government has withdrawn this scheme, which has left a gap in **subsidised employment for disadvantaged young people**. Similar **ways of engaging with employers** in the future should be explored as they enable young individuals to work with employers who, in turn, are working towards **supporting more inclusive recruitment practices**.
6. **One-to-one personalised support** for young people should be provided through an expansion of mentoring provision. Many young people are demotivated by precarious employment conditions as employability training and job hunting etc. are unlikely to lead to anything particularly meaningful. This leads to **poor engagement**, which can be mitigated with mentoring support. More **support with long-term employment goals** can elicit more **stable employment trajectories** and avoid the demoralising trade-off between pursuing what they love and having an income.
7. **Local community and youth programmes** could provide **extra support for young people who already face barriers or are part of a family with complex barriers to finding a job**. This can improve the lives of not only the young person, but also their wider communities. **Bruce Grove Youth Centre, Living Under One Sun and Tottenham Hotspur Foundation** are in a good position to facilitate extra support for young people and their communities.
8. More **research into in-work poverty and precarious employment** conditions is required since there appear to be gaps in information about the quality of jobs available for young people vis-à-vis job-search motivation.
9. **Employability skills** training should also include **basic rights**, such as information about employment contracts, paid and unpaid breaks, sick/annual leave, and the National Minimum/London Living Wage. In the workplace, basic rights also include knowing **anti-discrimination** laws and **protected characteristics** such as age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy, race, religion, and sexual orientation

Full Report

1. Employment and unemployment in Haringey: the context

The Council is developing '**Opportunity Haringey**' - an inclusive economic framework. It aims to shape and drive forward the Council's ambitions for a local economy that moves from reacting and responding to the challenges of the pandemic to a pro-active partnership approach that unlocks the creativity of residents and businesses in order to harness Haringey's strengths to secure economic prosperity for all that is both fairer and greener.

Opportunity Haringey is being developed by undertaking economic analysis and engaging and listening to businesses, residents and a range of local and strategic partners in order to understand the range of needs, demands and aspirations across the many diverse communities.

The **Haringey Employment Gap** research project carried out by London Metropolitan University in partnership with the London Borough of Haringey during 2023 is a key part of this analysis and has focussed on identifying those groups in Haringey who experience the highest levels of unemployment and to highlight the barriers they face in accessing jobs. It is well known that Black, Asian and Minority ethnic residents, people with disabilities, young people and lone parents experience higher levels of unemployment and this research project seeks to identify which particular groups are most affected and what the main barriers are in accessing work. The research project looks at how well existing employment advisory services in Haringey support different groups of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, residents with disabilities, lone parents and young people to get into work.

The research project included a mix of quantitative data analysis and focus groups with residents, the results of which are discussed in this report.

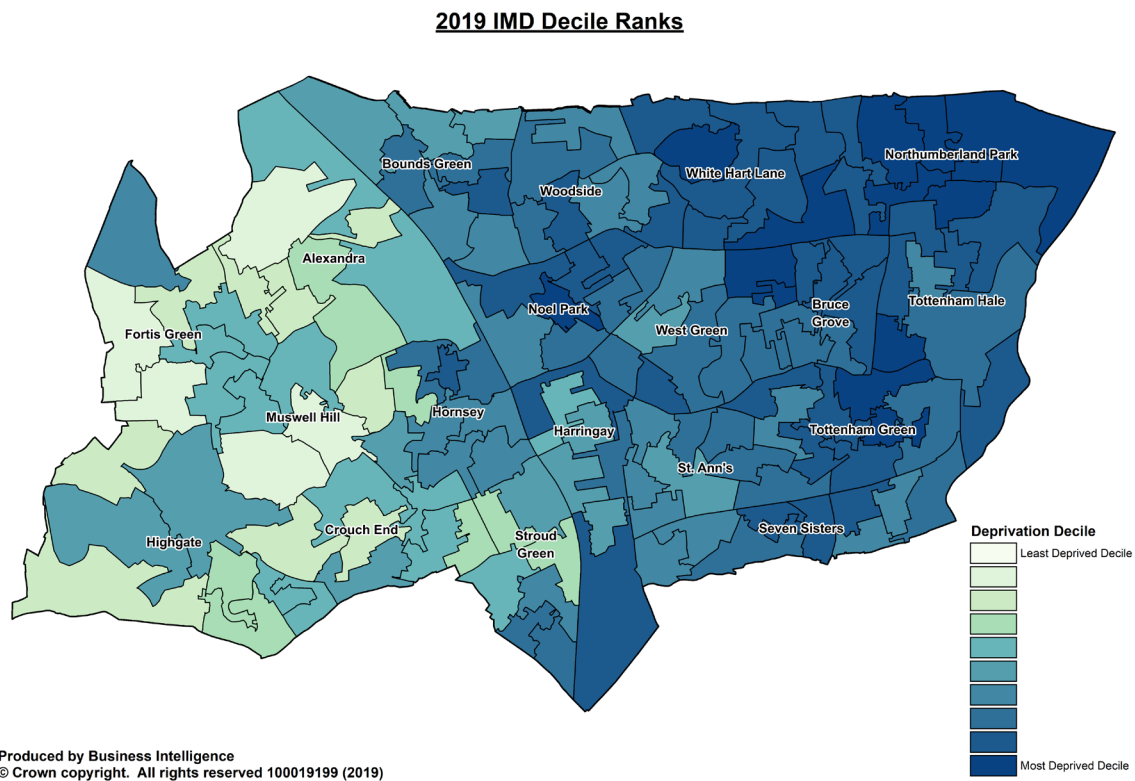
Diversity

Haringey is a highly diverse borough. The total resident population in Haringey was 264,000 in 2021, two thirds (67.1%) of whom are from a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) or Other White ethnic group, as compared to 60.7% in London as a whole. Overall, 17% of residents are from Black ethnic groups and one in ten are Asian (10%). Over 180 languages are spoken by residents in the Borough.

Geographical inequalities

Haringey is a deprived Borough, with deprivation heavily concentrated in the north and east of the borough. Haringey is the 4th most deprived Borough in London (as measured by the IMD score 2019) and deprivation levels are high, particularly so in the northeast of the borough (Figure 1).

Figure 1: 2019 IMD Decile Ranks, Haringey



The most deprived LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas or small neighbourhood areas) are concentrated in the east of the borough, where more than half of the LSOAs fall into the 20% most deprived in the country. By comparison, in the west a very small proportion of LSOAs fall into that category, and in the westernmost wards – Highgate, Fortis Green, Muswell Hill, Alexandra and Crouch End – there are none (Haringey, 2023). This east/west divide in Haringey can be clearly identified (see Figures 1-5 below) from any of a range of socio-economic indicators, including economic activity; unemployment; socio-economic group; educational qualifications; child poverty; free school meals; income or health. These levels of deprivation and inequality in the borough have a long and enduring history reflecting the structural and systemic nature of the high levels of deprivation, low income and inequality confronting the area.

Figure 2: Economically active population, Haringey 2021

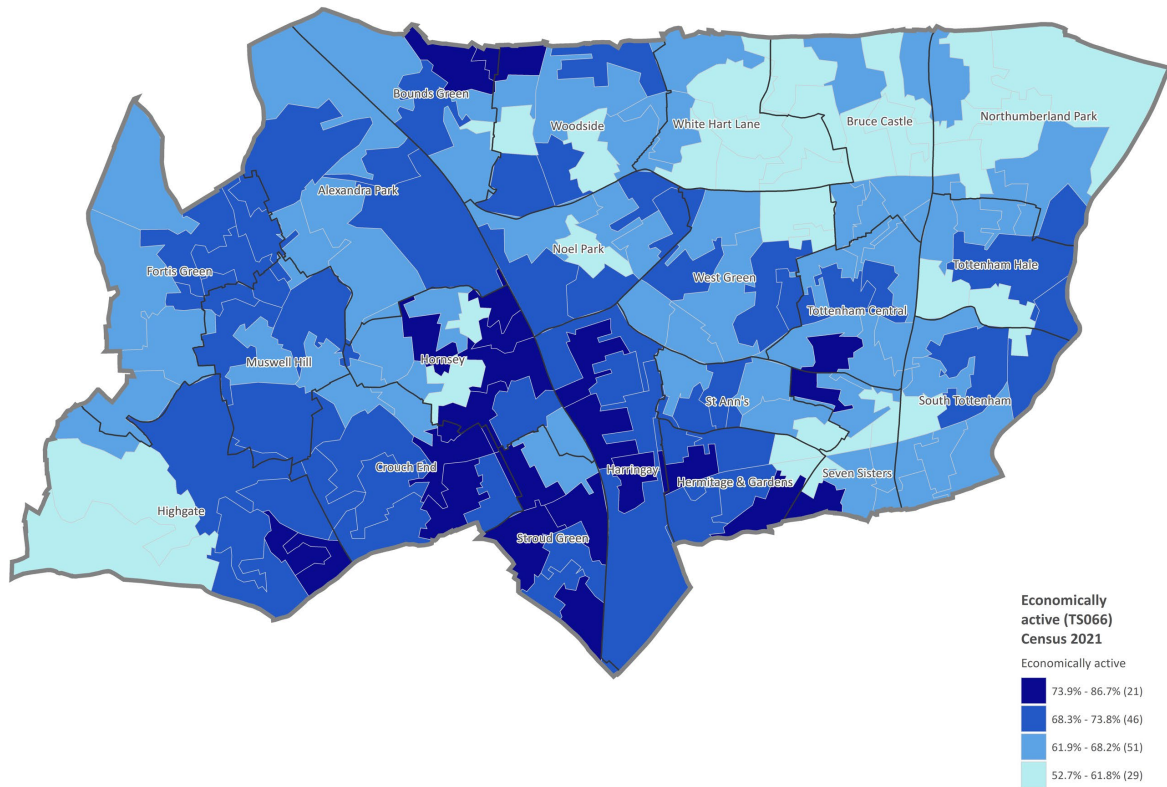


Figure 3: Unemployment, Haringey 2021

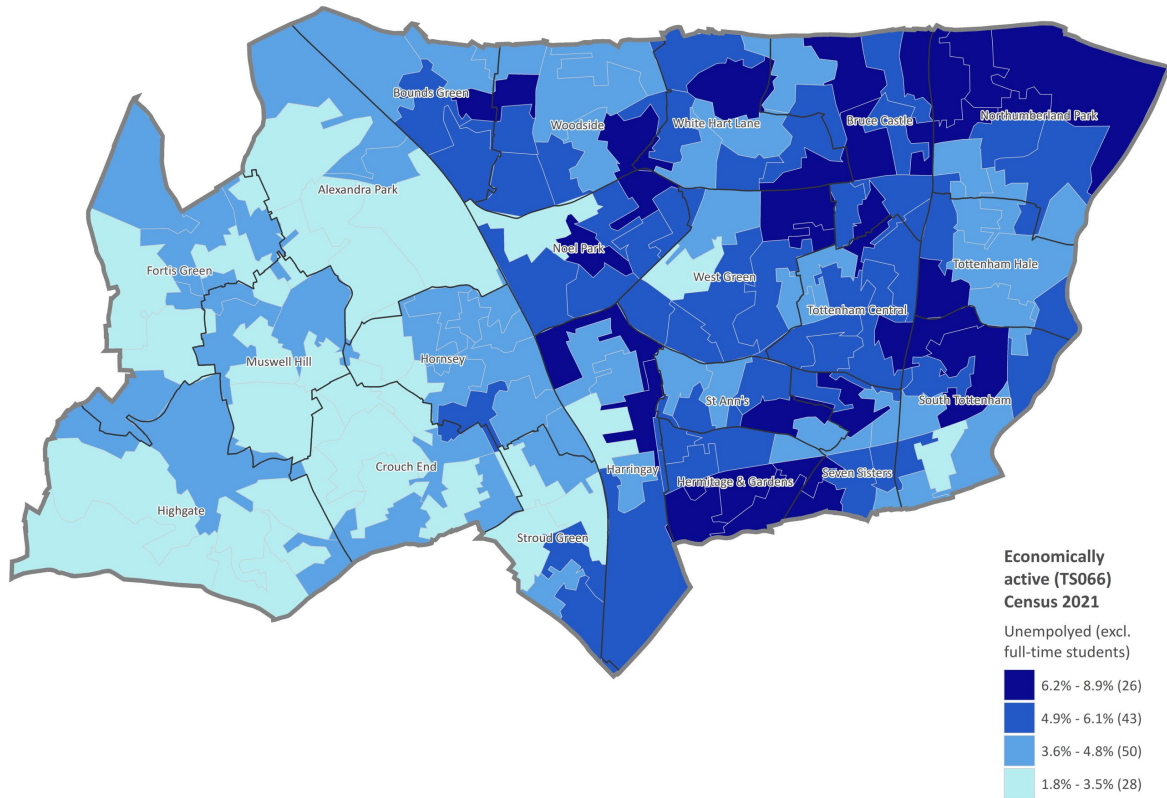


Figure 4: Highest Level of Qualification, Haringey 2021

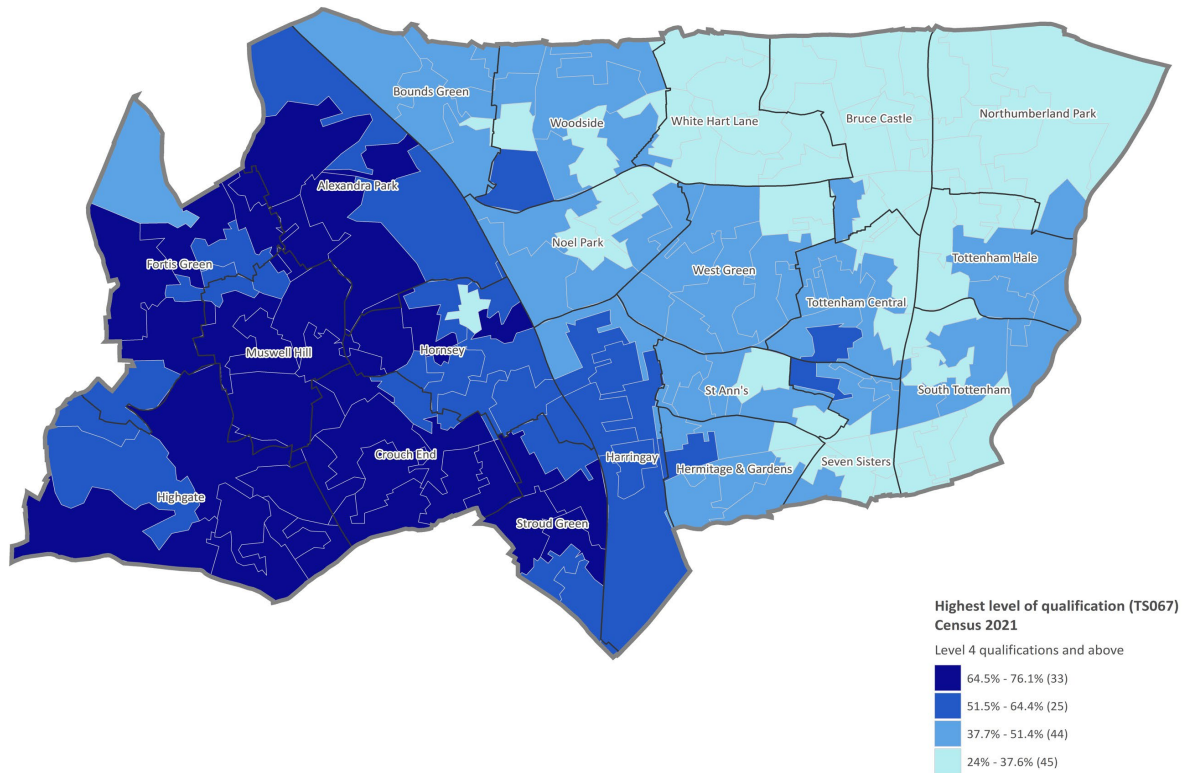
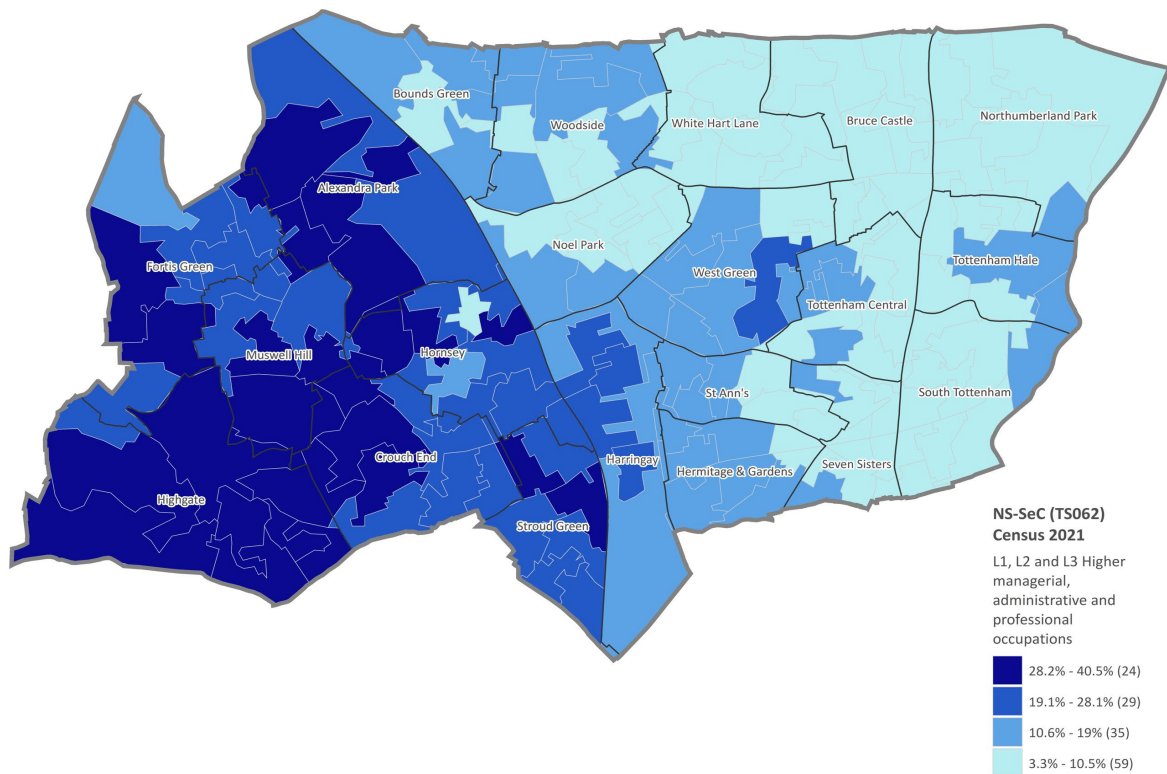


Figure 5: Population in Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations, Haringey 2021



Employment and unemployment

In 2021, there were 161,800 economically active people in Haringey, an economic activity rate of 78% which is just below the rate for London of 79%. Of these, 8,100 residents were unemployed, an unemployment rate of 4.8%, which is slightly higher than that for London (4.3%). In 2022, Haringey had a higher proportion of workless households, at 14.6% than for London as a whole (11.9%). Haringey also has a higher proportion of claimants (12,840 in August 2023), a rate of 6.8% as compared with 4.9% for London as a whole. (ONS. Nomis. Labour Market Profile. Haringey). The *Haringey State of the Borough* report (April 2023) also highlights that Haringey has a larger number of JSA and ESA claimants than the Statistical Neighbours or London averages with DWP local data showing a large increase in Universal Credit declarations/ claims being made during COVID-19 with a continued steady rise into 2021, and levels only falling slightly since then. The majority of UC claimants are in the East of the Borough with the wards with the highest number of claimants overall being Northumberland Park, Tottenham Hale, Tottenham Green, Bruce Grove and Seven Sisters.

By ethnicity

The employment gap experienced by Black, Asian and Minority ethnic communities is well documented. In Haringey, Black residents, Asian residents and residents from 'other ethnic groups' experience the highest levels of unemployment and lowest rates of employment in the Borough. Data on ethnicity highlights that employment and unemployment rates differ for different ethnic minority groups in the Borough with employment rates for the Black population in 2020 being 70% as compared with a rate of 78% for the White population. Similarly, data for the population of working age but not in employment indicates that while 22% of the White population are not in employment, the figure for the Black population is 30% with an especially high figure of 78% for the smaller Pakistani and Bangladeshi population (ONS. 2020). The 2021 Census also indicates that a significant proportion of the population in Haringey are unpaid carers (6.8%) and that this figure is higher at over 10% among the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic population with the highest rates among the Black Caribbean, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian population.

Disability

There also exists a significant employment gap between people with disabilities and non-disabled people. People with disabilities experience higher unemployment rates (ONS, 2020), poverty and in-work poverty rates (JRF, 2020), combined with lower educational qualifications (ONS, 2019). It is estimated that 14% of the population in Haringey have a disability, a total of 36,182 people (lower than the UK average which is one in five, or 20%) with mental health problems and physical disabilities accounting for the highest proportion of people with disabilities in the borough. The data indicates that the disabled population who are economically inactive in Haringey *is nearly twice as high* as the economically inactive non-disabled population in the borough.

Lone parents

The proportion of lone parents is also higher in the borough (15%) than in London (13%).

Employment and jobs

In 2021, there were 73,000 jobs in Haringey, two-thirds of which were full-time and one-third part-time. This is a significantly lower proportion of full-time and higher proportion of part-time jobs than for London as a whole. In part, this clearly reflects the structure of the local economy with the largest employers being the Wholesale and Retail industry, accounting for almost one in five or 20% of jobs, as compared with 11% in London as a whole; followed by Accommodation and Food Service which accounts for 11% of employment in Haringey and 7% in London; Health and Social Work which accounts for a further 11% of employment and Education a further 10%. Together these four sectors account for 50% of jobs in the Borough as compared with 36% in London. While these industries include a wide range of skills and pay levels, they also include a high proportion of both part-time and low paid jobs which is reflected in the lower wage levels in Haringey. Haringey also has a higher proportion of micro-businesses (94%, 1-9 employees) than London as a whole.

Overall, gross weekly and hourly pay levels are lower than for London with average hourly rates in Haringey for 2022 at £16.49 (ONS. Nomis. Labour Market Profile. Haringey). *The State of the Borough (2023)* report further indicates that Haringey has the eighth largest proportion of residents (19.2%) earning below the London Living Wage of all London boroughs and highlights the substantial variation in income between those living in east Haringey (Tottenham constituency) and those in the west (Hornsey & Wood Green constituency). Median hourly pay of residents in the west in 2022 (£20.71) was in line with the London top quartile, while in the East (£16.77) it remained in the bottom quartile. These findings suggest that in-work poverty is likely to be a significant issue for many residents, particularly for those living in the east of the borough. This is further reinforced by the fact that in 2021 over one third (36%) of Haringey residents rented from a private landlord with the median monthly private rent in Haringey costing £1,475 (Oct 21- Sep 22). This was previously £70 less than the London median but is now equal to it (Haringey. 2023).

2. Research Aims and Methodology

The Haringey Employment Gap research project is a project carried out during 2023 by London Metropolitan University in partnership with the London Borough of Haringey. The project is part of London Met Lab Empowering London initiative, which aims to engage the University with its community partners. The aim of the project is to identify those groups in Haringey who suffer the highest levels of unemployment and to highlight the barriers they face in accessing jobs. It is well known that Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents, people with disabilities, young people and lone parents experience higher levels of unemployment but this research project seeks to identify which particular groups are most affected and what the main barriers are in accessing work. The research project also looks at how well existing employment advisory services in Haringey help different groups of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, residents with disabilities and long term health conditions, lone parents and young people get jobs.

2.1. Research Aims

The aims of the research are to improve existing employment support services in the Borough and to identify the ways in which Haringey might most effectively use its levers to reduce unemployment among Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents, people with disabilities, young people and single parents and so reduce the employment gap in the Borough. Recommendations are made on how residents from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, residents with disabilities or long-term health conditions, lone parents and young people could be better supported to find work. The plan is for the research to feed into Opportunity Haringey, an inclusive economic framework.

The key research questions that the project addressed are set out as follows;

1. Which groups of residents in Haringey suffer the highest levels of unemployment and are most concentrated in low paid jobs? What is the employment gap?
2. Which black, Asian and minority ethnic residents experience the highest levels of unemployment in the Borough, including women BAME residents and lone parents?
3. What is the extent of unemployment among Haringey residents with disabilities and long-term health conditions, do rates vary according to the nature of disability?
4. What are the unemployment levels among young people and among different groups of young people in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability and educational qualifications?
5. What barriers do each of these groups experience in accessing jobs and skills?
6. What employment support is currently available to these groups and in what ways is it effective and ineffective?
7. What good practice is effective elsewhere throughout London and the UK in reducing unemployment among the groups identified above?

8. What key recommendations could LB Haringey take forward?

2.2. Research Methodology

The research involved both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The quantitative data analysis included analysis of ONS, DWP and London Borough of Haringey data sets.

The qualitative data collection involved a number of focus groups with unemployed people from each of the target communities as follows:

- Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents – a total of 4 focus groups were held, 3 with Black residents and one with residents of South Asian origin.
- People with disabilities – a total of 3 focus groups were held, two with people with neuro-diverse conditions and one with people with learning disabilities.
- Young people – a total of 3 focus groups were held with young people aged 18-25.

For the focus groups with unemployed residents, sub-groups suffering the highest levels of unemployment were identified from the quantitative data. Haringey lead officers then identified appropriate local community organisations working with each sub-group in order to set up focus groups face to face in appropriate community spaces. The numbers of participants taking part in each focus group and their composition in terms gender, age and ethnicity are summarised in each of the relevant sections of the report below. There were difficulties in setting up some of the focus groups, especially among young people and people with disabilities but also with specific minority ethnic communities. Some focus groups were cancelled due to lack of response and small numbers. In itself this is an important finding, suggesting the Council's employment services need to engage more fully with the community and with community organisations, developing networks and stronger links with those groups of residents from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, young people and people with disabilities who experience the highest levels of unemployment in the Borough. The number of focus groups and overall number of participants were therefore small, and some groups such as the Turkish community were not represented, however, the focus groups did enable in depth conversations to take place which highlighted the experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents, young people and residents with learning disabilities and neuro-diverse conditions.

Participants were given an information sheet (see appendix II) setting out the aims of the project and were all asked to read and sign a consent form (appendix III) with clauses respecting confidentiality. Participants were then asked to fill in a questionnaire which included questions on unemployment and employment history, educational qualifications, age, gender, ethnicity and health (see appendix IV).

The findings from the quantitative data and the focus groups are given below.

3. Black, Asian and minority ethnic population in Haringey – key findings

The employment gap experienced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities is well known and documented. In Haringey, one of the key findings from the quantitative data, is that Black residents, Asian residents and residents from 'other ethnic groups' experience the highest levels of unemployment in the Borough. A slightly lower proportion of ethnic minority residents are in work than white residents, with ethnic minority residents comprising 24.5% of the working age population but only 21.9% of the total in-work population. It is notable that the employment rate is lowest for Bangladeshi/Pakistani residents (66.9%), other ethnic groups (68.1%) and Black/Black British residents (69.9%). This compares with an employment rate of 77.7% for the White population and 80.4% for mixed ethnic groups. Ethnic minority residents also comprise a higher proportion of the unemployed; comprising 32% of the unemployed as compared with 24.5% of the total working age population. Finally, unemployment in the Borough is higher among the ethnic minority population at 33%, as compared with 22% amongst the White population. Unemployment is especially and exceptionally high among the small Bangladeshi and Pakistani population (3,200) (78%).

2.1. The quantitative data: key findings

To get a good overview of the employment situation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents in Haringey, both quantitative and qualitative data was used. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive research methods. Descriptive research methods are used in the initial data analysis to explore, find, and explain the current employment status of Black, Asian and ethnic minority residents in Haringey. Data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) covering the period 2020-2022, and LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker of council's own administrative systems) are the main sources used. The LIFT data (including 32 000 Haringey households) is taken from Haringey's benefit and housing systems and represent approximately one-third of households in Haringey who are on low income. The 32 000 households are in receipt of either Housing Benefits or Council Tax Reduction benefit, which can be used as a proxy for Haringey's households with the lowest income, and thus, most financially vulnerable families. The data is refreshed monthly so the cohort changes, is accurate at the time of extraction, and provides a snapshot picture of the situation.

Haringey has a diverse population in terms of ethnicity. A total of 57% of the population are White according to the 2021 Census, and 43% of the population are Black, Asian or mixed White/Black. Overall, 17.6% of residents are from the Black community, 8.7% are Asian and 7.0% from mixed ethnic groups. Figure 1 shows that the largest population in Haringey is White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British (31.9%), followed by other White (22.1%); with the next largest populations being African (9.4%), 'other ethnic group' (8.7%) and Caribbean (6.2%).

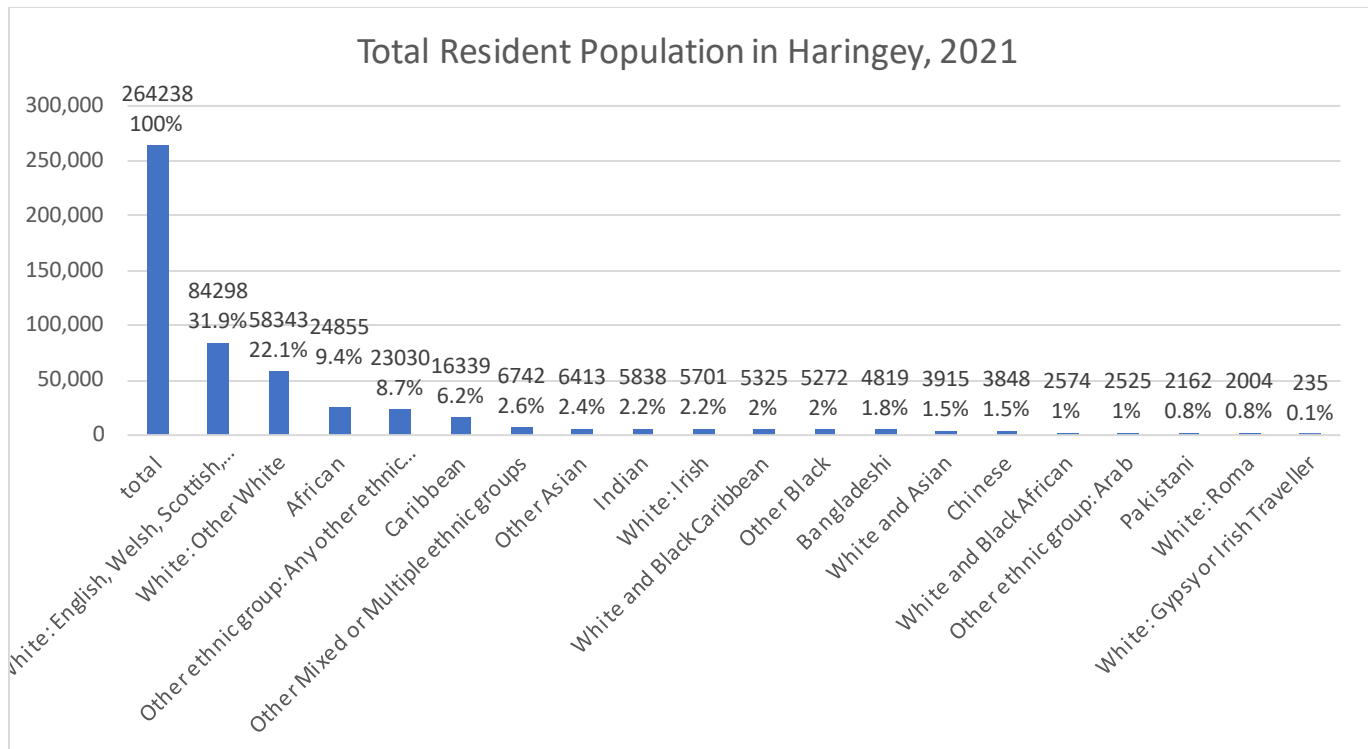


Figure 1 - Total Resident Population in Haringey by Ethnicity, 2021

Source: Office for National Statistics. Census 2021

Figure 2 shows the economically active population in Haringey and Figure 3 the economically inactive population. The data indicates that while the White population accounts for a higher proportion of the economically active population, they account for a lower proportion of the economically inactive. In contrast, the African and Caribbean populations account for a slightly lower proportion of the economically active and a higher proportion of the economically inactive in the Borough.

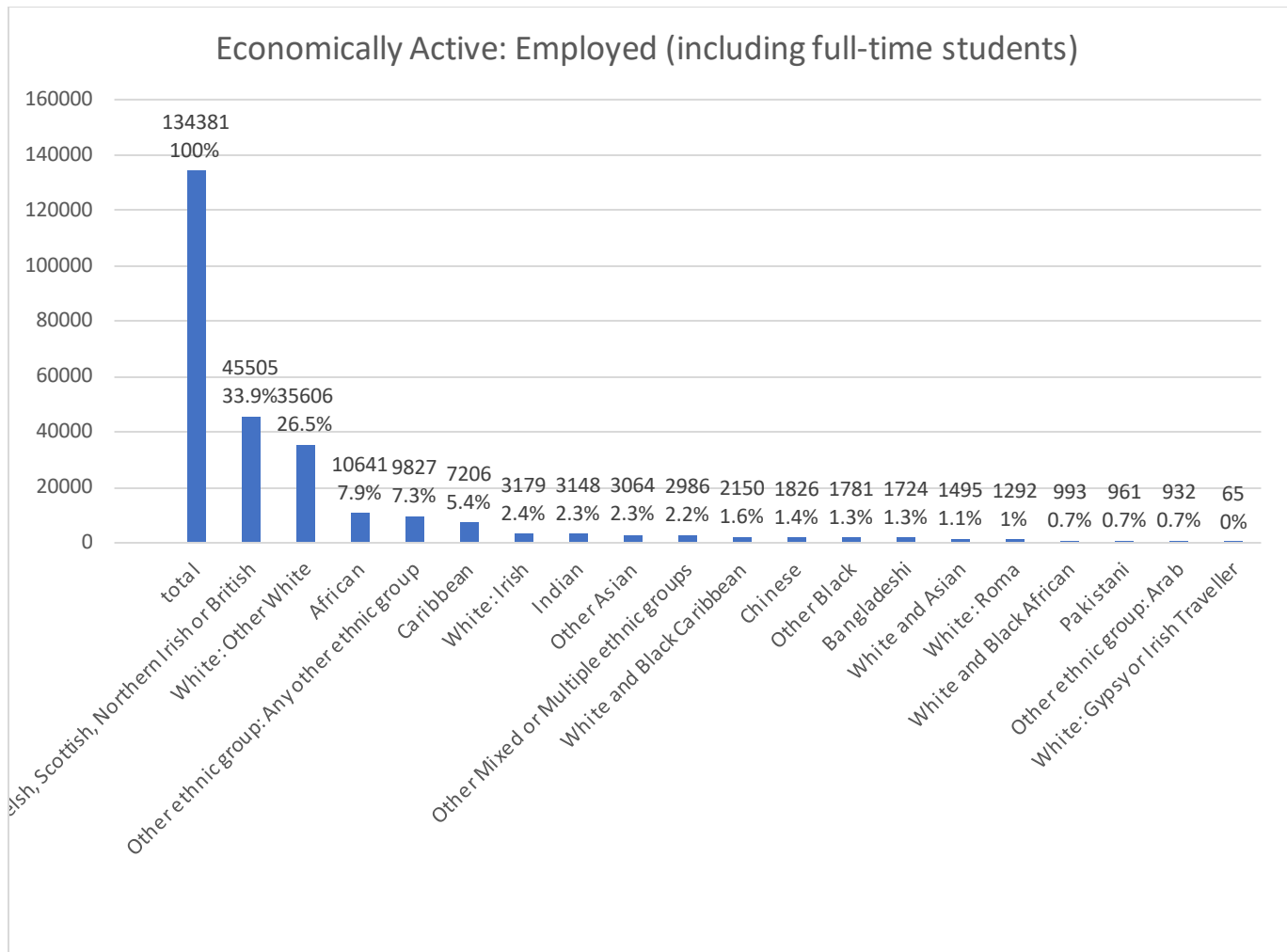


Figure 2 – Economically Active: Employed (including full-time students), 2021
 Source: Office for National Statistics. Census 2021

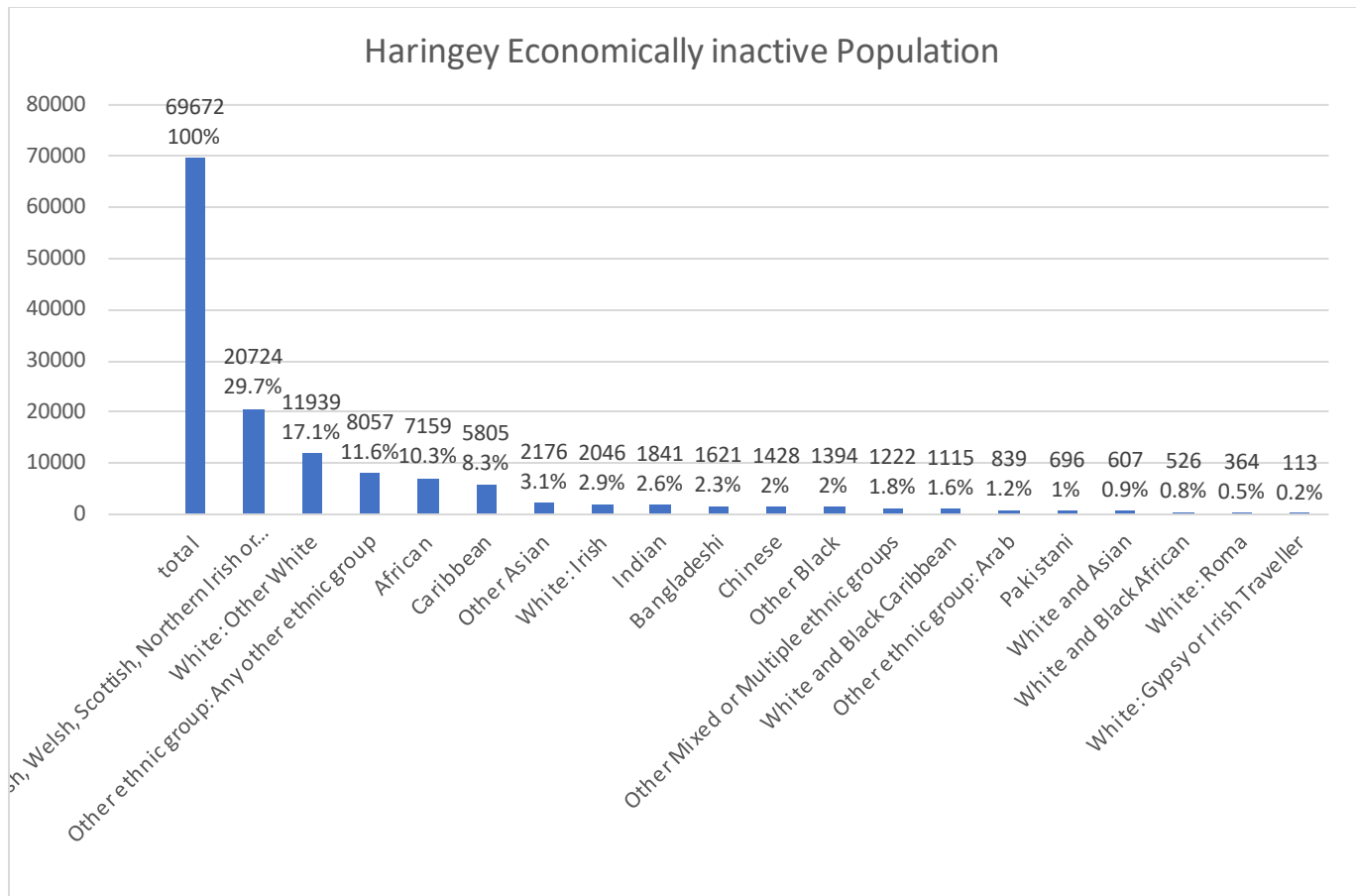


Figure 3 – Haringey Economically Inactive Population, 2021
 Source: Office for National Statistics. Census 2021

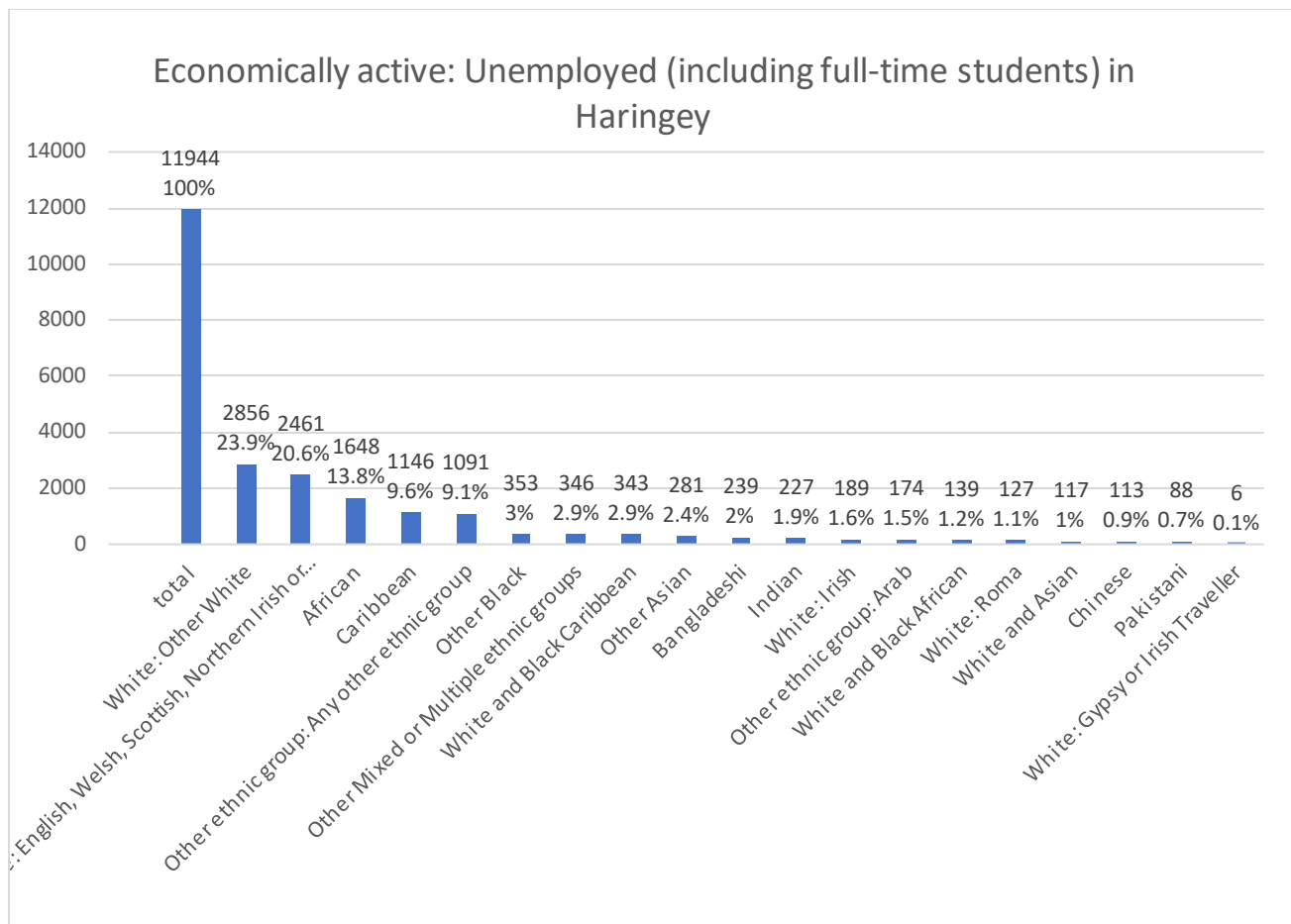


Figure 4 – Economically active: Unemployed (including full-time students), Haringey, 2021

Source: Office for National Statistics. Census 2021

The data in Figure 4 above shows that 11,944 individuals in Haringey are economically active and unemployed. The highest number and proportion are White: Other White (2,856, 23.9%) followed by White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British (2,461, 20.6%) and then by African (1,648, 13.8%). Caribbean (1,146, 9.6%) and other ethnic groups (1,091, 9.1%). This indicates that African, Caribbean and other White groups experience some of the highest levels of unemployment in the Borough.

Figure 5 shows that while the overall unemployment rates across all ethnic groups is 4.5% in Haringey, a total of 11,944 people, the 'other ethnic group' and African population have the highest rates of unemployment at 6.7% and 6.6% respectively. Those groups with higher than average rates of unemployment include other ethnic group (6.7%), African (6.6%), white and black Caribbean (5.9%), other mixed or multiple ethnic groups (5.4%), other black (5.2%), Chinese (5.2%), Caribbean (5%), other Asian (4.9%), white Roma (4.9%) and white and Asian (4.6%).

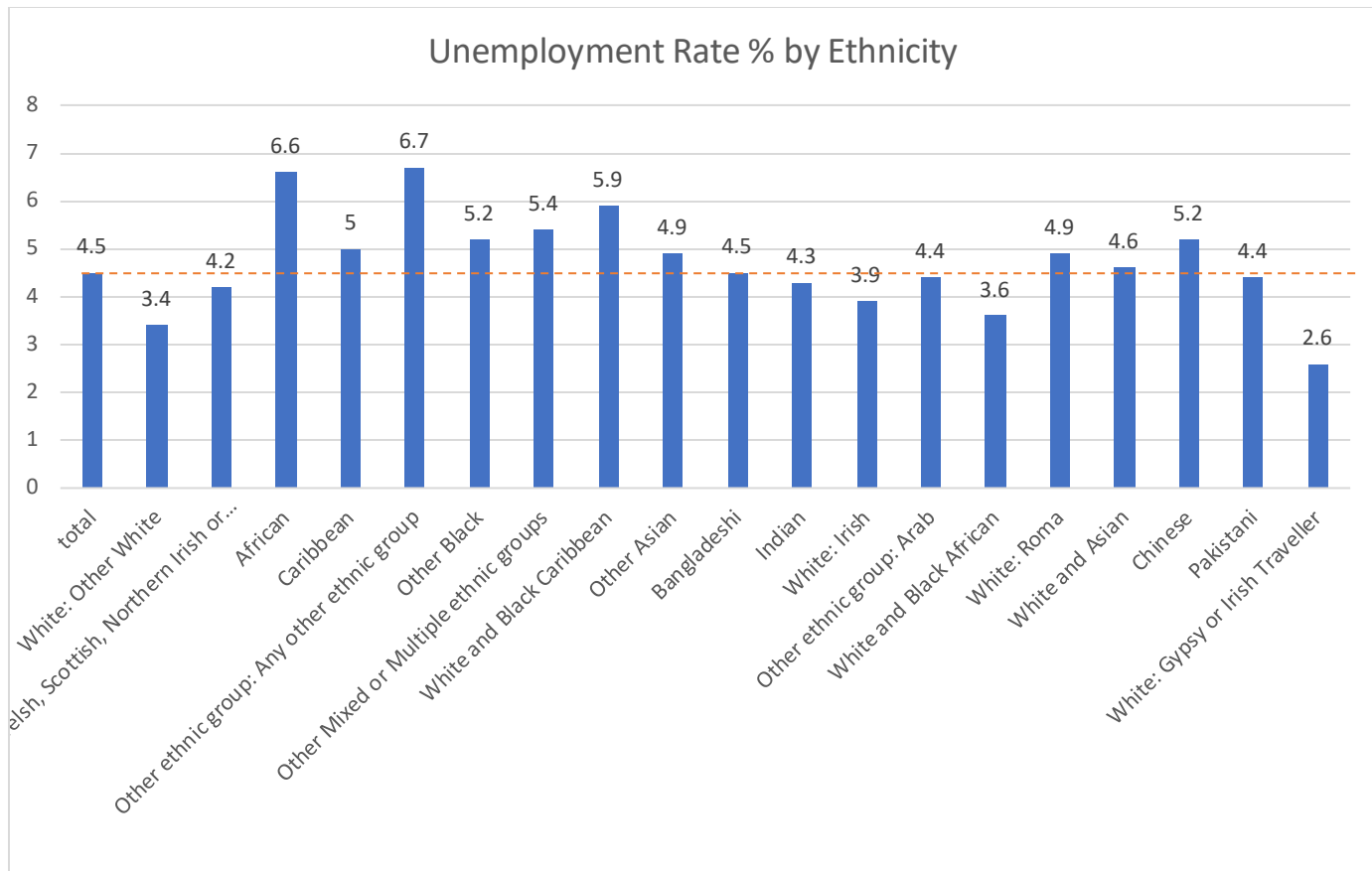


Figure 5 – Unemployment Rate (%) by Ethnicity, Haringey, 2021
 Source: Office for National Statistics. Census 2021

It should be noted that the following analysis and Figures are based on a slightly earlier data set, still from the ONS but using different classifications of ethnicity. This allows for a more granular approach, and to identify some of the more specific ethnic minority groups who suffer the highest levels of unemployment in Haringey.

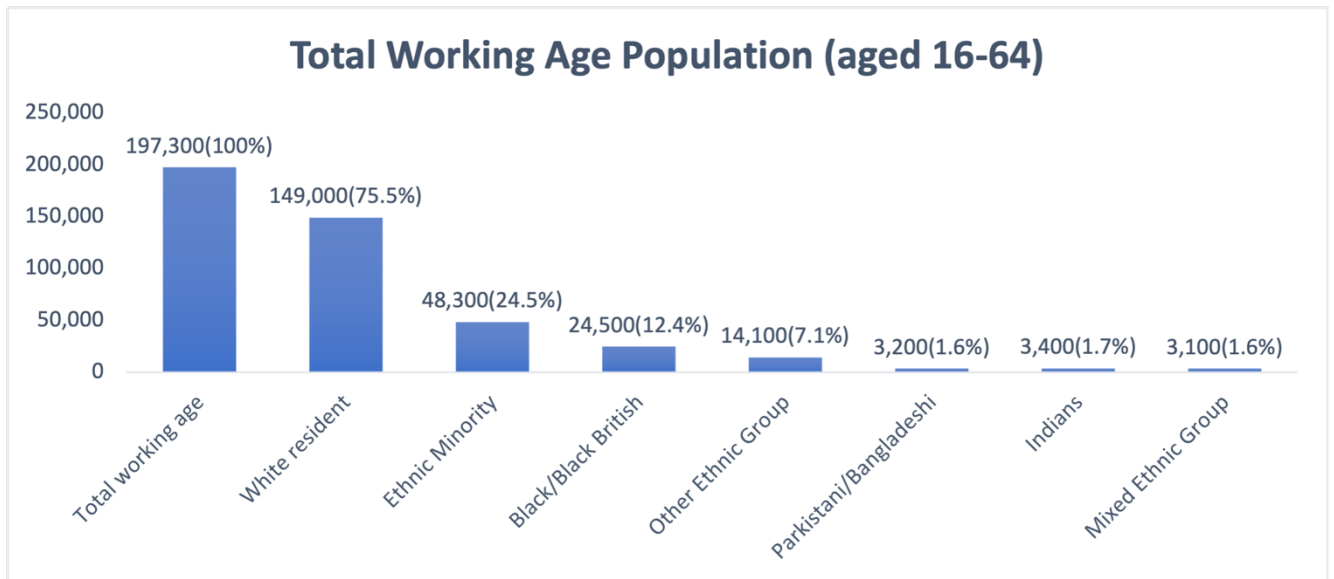


Figure 6 - Total Working Age Population by Ethnicity in Haringey, 2020
Source: ONS Data 2020

Figure 6 shows the total working age population in Haringey for 2020. Figure 7 shows the in-work population in Haringey. The data indicates that a lower proportion of ethnic minority residents of working age are in-work than are white residents. The ethnic minority population accounts for 24.5% of the working age population but for only 21.8% of the total working age in-work population. Similarly, while the Black population accounts for 12.4% of the working age population, the Black population accounts for a slightly smaller proportion of the total in-work population at 11.5%.

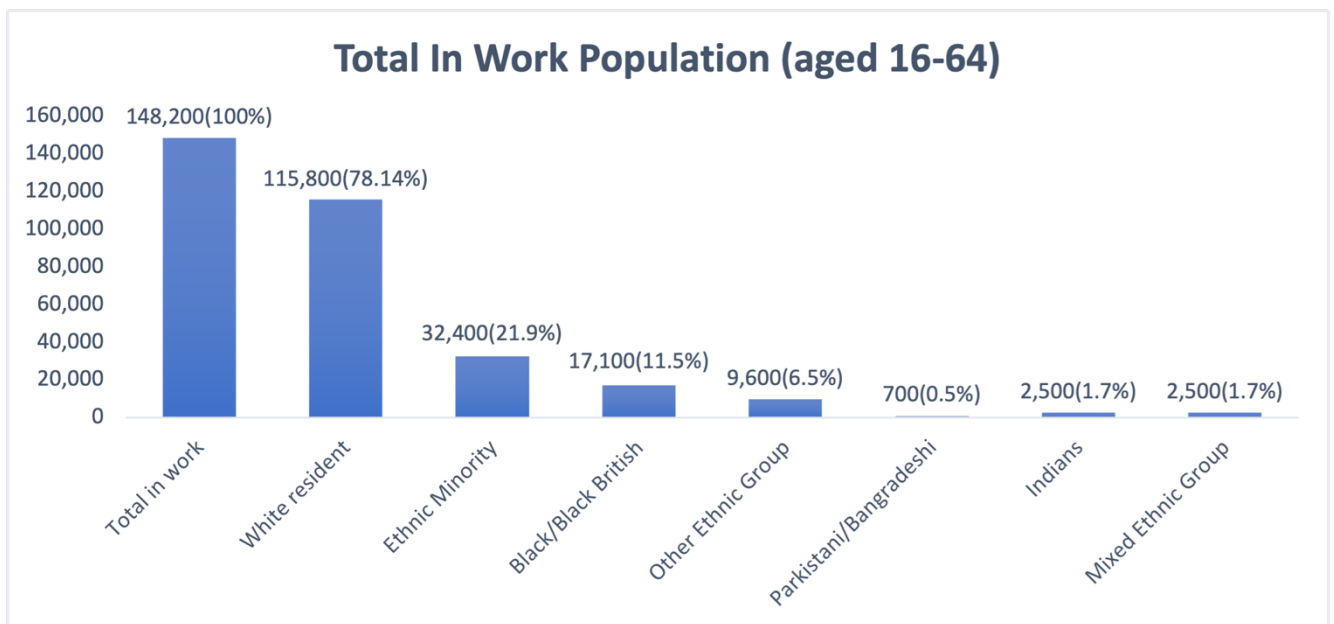


Figure 7 - Total in work population (aged 16-64) in Haringey, 2020
Source: ONS Data 2020

Figure 8 shows the employment rate in Haringey for 2020. The overall employment rate for the total population was 72%. However, the employment rate varies considerably for different ethnic groups. The employment rate is highest among the mixed ethnic population (80.4%), the white population (77.7%) and the Indian population (74.6%) but is significantly lower among other groups. The employment rate is lowest among the Bangladeshi/Pakistani population (66.9%).

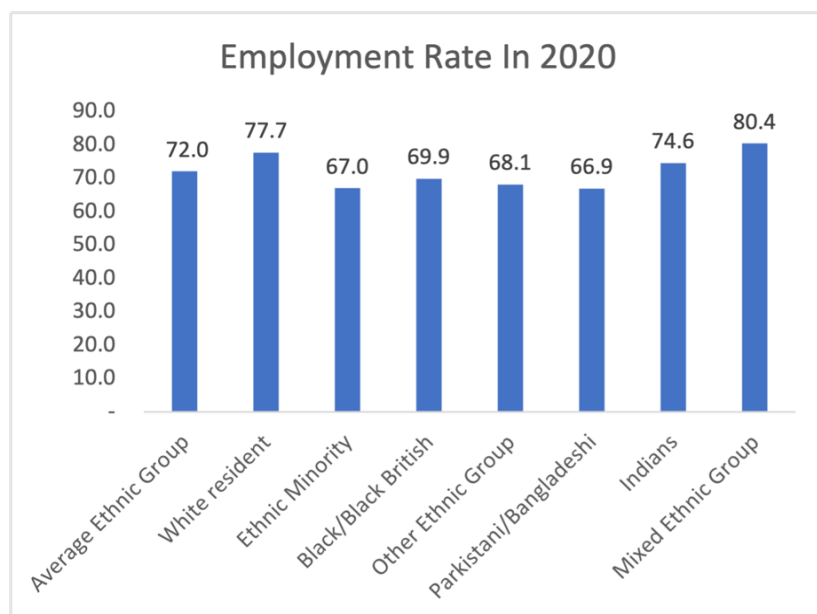


Figure 8 – Employment rate in Haringey, 2020
Source: ONS Data 2020

Figure 9 indicates the working age but not in work population. Again, this indicates slightly higher rates among the ethnic minority population in the Borough. The ethnic minority population accounts for 24.5% of the working age population but for 32.4% of the not in work population. Similarly, the Black population accounts for 12.4% of the working age population but for 15.1% of the not in work population. The Bangladeshi/Pakistani population accounts for only 1.6% of the total working age population in the Borough, but for 5.1% of the not in-work population.

It should be noted that not everyone who is of working age and not in work is categorised as unemployed, some might be economically inactive due to other reasons which are discussed further below.

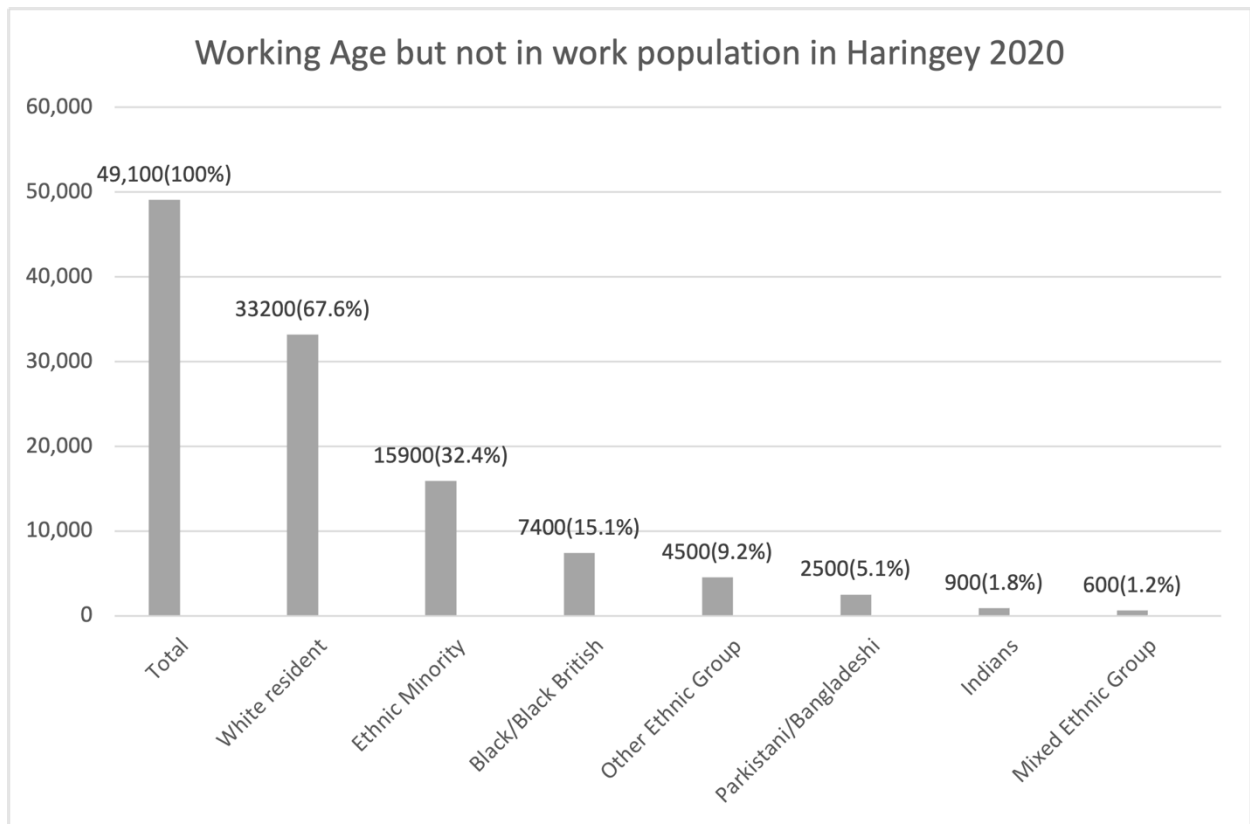


Figure 9 – Working age but not in work population in Haringey, 2020
Source: ONS Data 2020

Figure 10 shows that 25% of the working age population in Haringey are not in work (including unemployed). However, while the rate is lower for white and mixed ethnic groups, the proportion of the population not in work is higher among the ethnic minority population at 32.9% in general, with 30.2% of the Black population and 31.9% of other ethnic groups not being in work. The rate is highest among the smaller Pakistani and Bangladeshi population. The figures suggest that 78% of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi population of working age are not in work in the Borough. Out of 3,200 Pakistani and Bangladeshi residents, only 700 are in work and 2,500 are not in work. Lift data highlights the higher number of ethnic minority residents not in employment but in caring roles and with a disability which may be the key reasons for the differences highlighted above (Figure 12).

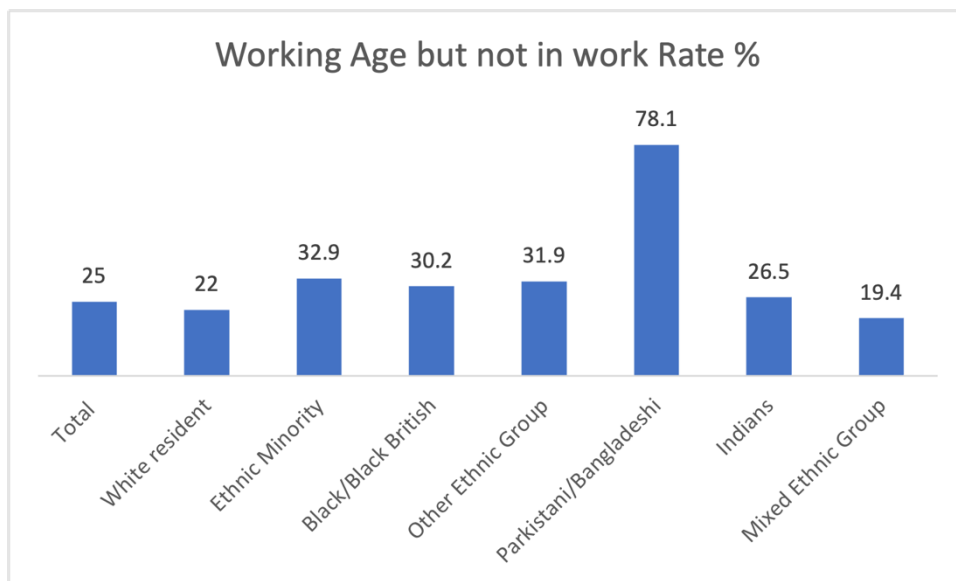


Figure 10 – Working age but not in work population rate for different ethnic groups, 2020

Source: ONS Data 2020

In terms of educational levels and qualifications, the ONS Census 2021 dataset shows different qualifications and education levels among different ethnic groups in the Borough. The data shows that the White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British population have the most qualifications especially at Level 4 and above (light blue colour in Figure 11) followed by the White: Other White population. The ethnic group with the least qualifications is the small White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller population.

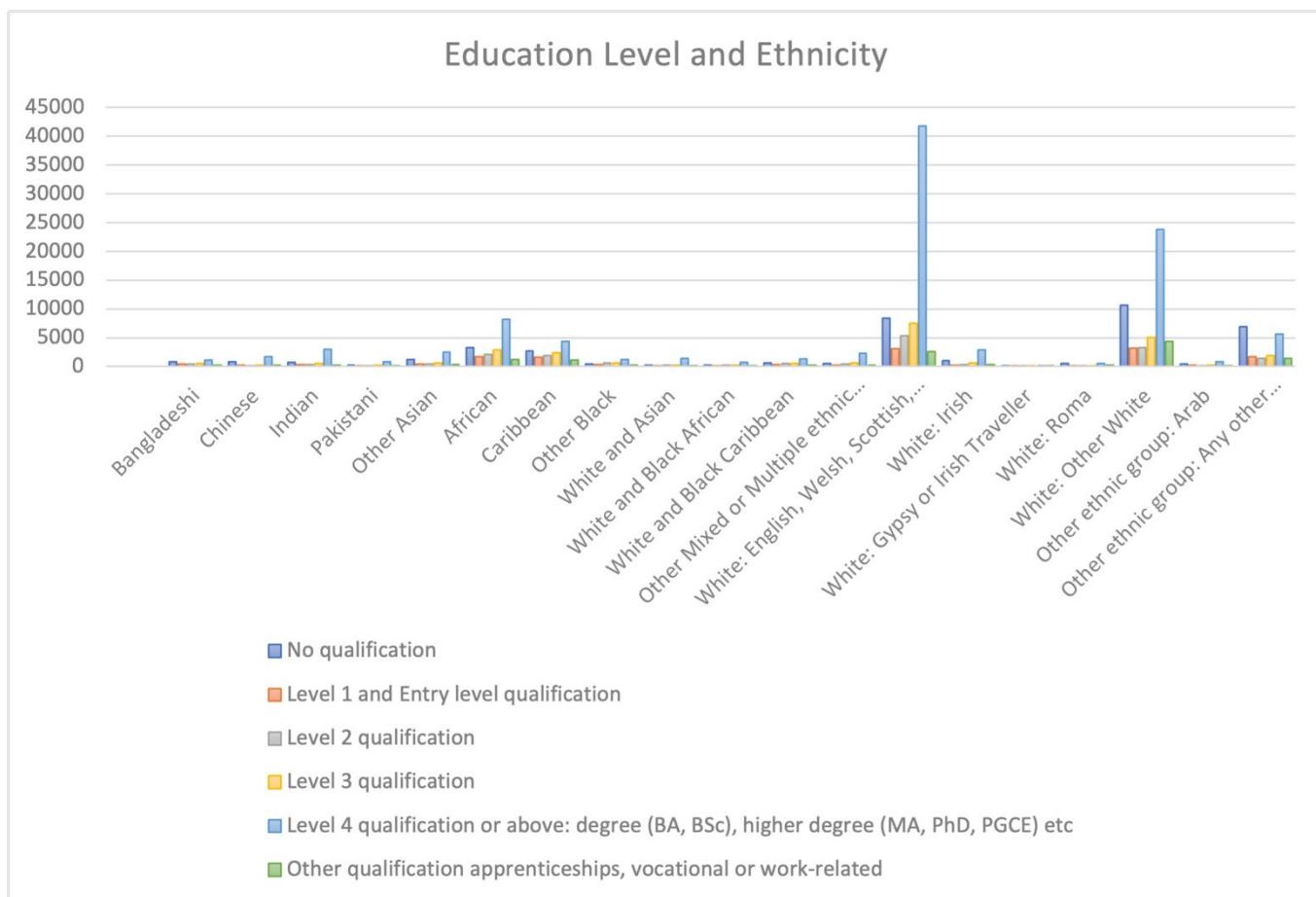


Figure 11 - Education Level by Ethnicity, Haringey, 2021

Source: Office for National Statistics. Census 2021

Finally, analysis of Haringey LIFT data is presented in Figure 12 which shows some of the key reasons people are not in employment and highlights in particular how significant proportions of the unemployed population in the Borough are unemployed due to a health problem or disability. This is the case among all ethnic groups but perhaps especially high numerically amongst the White and the Caribbean and African population. The barriers to employment faced by people with health problems and disabilities in the Borough are examined in more detail in Section 4 of the report below.

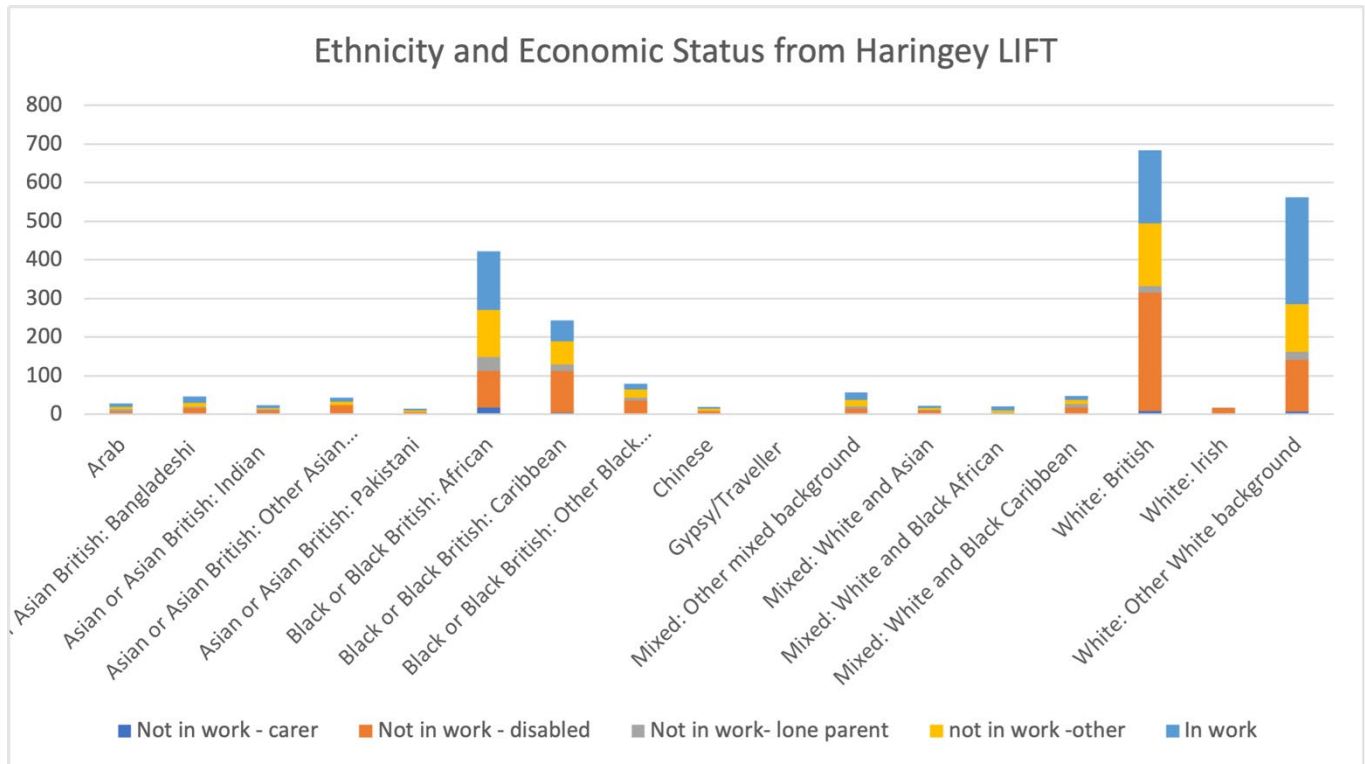


Figure 12 - Ethnicity and Economic Activity Status, Haringey
 Source: Haringey LIFT Dataset

3.2. Focus groups with Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents: key findings

Four focus groups were held with Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents with a total of 21 participants (18 women and three men). Three of the focus groups were with Black British, Black African and Black Caribbean residents and one was with South Asian residents. Two were held at the Broadwater Farm community centre and two in Wood Green library. The ages of participants were from 27 to 64 years old. Whilst the focus group participants included people with a wide range of experience and educational qualifications, the majority were currently unemployed and seeking work. A common experience had been losing jobs due to COVID. This included both people suffering ill-health as a consequence of contracting COVID and participants whose jobs were lost during the COVID period. Also, participants had faced worsening employment conditions and pay. One participant, an Uber driver, said he was working harder and longer and things had never been so bad with wages going down and the cost-of-living increasing.

The focus group discussions indicate that the key barriers and experiences Black, Asian and ethnic minority participants experienced in accessing work are as follows:

3.2.1. Discrimination:

The experience of race discrimination was identified by many participants both in the workplace and in accessing work. It was identified by participants as a key factor that needs to be addressed by employment advisory services in the Borough where it was felt that assumptions were made that meant services disregarded Black and Asian people's skills, experience and potential and instead directed them to entry-level, lower skilled and paid roles.

One Black African participant, previously with real estate management experience in Nigeria found she was only being offered cleaning jobs by Job Centre and other employment service advisors;

'I was a manager in Nigeria in a big estate firm, but when I put this my profession, they are sending me, delivery, cleaning this, I said no' (Black African woman)

'That's to do with mind-set, that's to do with discrimination, and it's often based on race. There's no way you could come from Nigeria, and you're saying you're qualified to come in to this role. That's the perception. So, she's a manager in Nigeria, that's Nigeria, let's disregard this. Let's give her a job in cleaning, after 30 years she can work her way up, and I think a barrier that needs to be highlighted is people's perception. You know, there's various buzzwords, people can call it conscious or unconscious bias'. (Black Caribbean woman)

'Yeah, it's funny, because when they talk about foreigners coming to this country, the first things they're all talking about is that there's not

discrimination. (laughing) But then, they go to do exactly the opposite. Right? I mean, yeah. I mean, it's like an implicit bias thing. No one was going to admit it, and that's what we are doing, that's what they do! You see. I suppose, that's why it's called implicit bias, because I mean, you're going to take maybe the people you feel may be more alike to them, people you already got maybe with suspicions of, not because they have done anything wrong, but maybe because we think they don't just fit' (Black Caribbean man).

These experiences of race discrimination underlie a number of connected factors which were raised by participants, including the lack of recognition of qualifications gained overseas. A number of participants had qualifications, both High School and degree level gained overseas which went unrecognised in the UK.

'I think of teachers who used to come from Ghana, Nigeria, Jamaica, qualified teachers who've had years of experience, as soon as they come here, wanting to teach they have to retrain, whereas I have colleagues who come from Australia ... So for me, again, race and gender is a barrier, and that's something to look at' (Black Caribbean woman)

Participants also discussed how having an accent can go against you in a job interview:

'which I found it funny because sometimes, even in social housing, when I see a lot of people sometimes they need an interpreter, but if you have somebody that can speak the language, it's a bonus for the company, a bonus for the society, and then you will find the funniest thing is ... sometimes they will be going around asking for anyone who can translate. Now suddenly we are useful because we can translate, but they have forgotten that they were mocking you'. (Black French African woman)

In terms of the experience of race discrimination in the workplace, participants highlighted being passed over by white colleagues for promotion, especially in a number of sectors and roles including hospitality and in customer service roles.

Several participants in their 50's and 60's also highlighted **age discrimination**.

Discrimination against people with health conditions and disabilities is discussed in more detail in Section 4 below, but participants in the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic focus groups also raised the issue, particularly the need for employer disability awareness with participants noting that employers frequently see disability and health conditions negatively, as a problem:

'And when they see that you're having a problem with disability, they're going to reject you, they not going to get back to you, because they think that, okay, you might be a problem. But they don't understand that sometimes the willingness is even stronger than someone who wake up in the morning and just go to work, and the thing is okay, this person has a condition, but it doesn't stop her from doing things. I don't think it's fair. They really need to be encouraged and still feel part of the society, and not be rejected. Because for you, when you look at them, you think they may be a failure. When someone

look at me, they don't know that I worked for everything, they don't know, but I know what I went through'. (Black French African woman)

3.2.2. Childcare and flexible working hours

The lack of affordable childcare options and need for flexible employment which fits in with childcare and school hours, emerged as perhaps the most significant issues for women participants with young children, especially for single parents.

Many of the women participants had young children and a number were single parents. For them flexible working hours was key. The lack of flexibility in many roles and the lack of affordable childcare, meant many of the women participants were forced into looking for low skilled and paid jobs, especially cleaning and social care, although even in these roles, employers want staff to cover shifts which are not possible for single parents in particular:

'I'm looking for cleaning work, but I didn't find anything. Maybe because the second problem is I have a child, she's three, and the time that they will give me is seven to two, you can't do that. But now I'm trying to go back to McDonalds, but I can't. They tell me they need a person who will be fully flexible time, day/night time'. (Black French single mother).

'because if you don't have anyone to pick them up, like me, for instance, I don't have no one to pick her up and keep her, and I don't have anyone to drop her off. So, it's just me and her, and that's where it is. So, what I do has to fit within the time that she's at school, and the time for her to be picked up'. (Black African woman)

'You want us to work, and then you didn't give us hours to put the child into school, and the nursery is so expensive. I used to put my daughter in the nursery for 15 hours extra for me to work, and then I need to get more hours, to cover my work from nine to three o'clock, she has just 15 hours, than I had to pay extra to cover the rest of the hours'. (Black Caribbean woman)

Another single parent commented:

'When I applied, they called me back, they want me to do the shifts, I can't have shifts in the morning or finish eleven at night because I look after my son. So, I'm looking for a job with school hours, not a weekend. They found to me a job at Costa, but they want Saturday, Sunday'. (Black British single mother)

One single parent with a young child with autism summed up the complex barriers facing her in accessing work:

'what you said about affordable childcare, it's true because even if I want to do my teaching assistant job they usually require someone from 8:45 to 3:30, obviously for the whole time of school, so if I pay for after-school club, then that's helpful then I can do it but I've still got an issue with the drop off, so it depends on if the employee's, if they're flexible so it's okay depends on whereabouts it is. You can pay again for breakfast club before school and

then obviously, the after-school club but then it affects ... the money would be great to come in, but I also want to be there for picking him up and dropping him, for his routine, because he's autistic and the consistency again of care. So, it's hard. So, it's like juggling within the time. So, in one sense, I'm better off not working, because then I can focus on what's important like my child and stuff like that, but then on the other hand, you've got the job centre on your back, but then it's a catch-22 situation like what he's saying, if you do work all the money's literally going on the bills, and then you have all the other things that get neglected, like your family life, and it's hard to juggle'. (Asian single mother)

3.2.3. Language

For a number of participants, language was a barrier to accessing work, this was the case for both some recent migrants and for some older Asian women returning to work when children had grown up. Whilst a number of participants had previously or were currently enrolled on English courses both through Haringey Learns and the local college, CONEL, this highlights the importance of free and accessible English language provision in the Borough. Not untypically, participants face a combination of barriers including language skills and childcare, which force them onto a narrow range of job roles:

'I came from Italy two years ago, so I'm new for this country and English is my second language. Now, I'm going to college, level one grammar. At the moment I am working, it's an app cleaning job because I couldn't find another. I have got one son, five years-old'. (Mixed ethnicity Italian woman)

3.2.4 Digital Exclusion

With the job application process increasingly online, participants highlighted the problems this can cause. In particular, it was felt that it shouldn't be assumed that people have the digital skills required to apply for jobs or conduct interviews online. The following quote is from a young woman, in her early 40's. the quote highlights that people do not necessarily have the digital skills or the equipment, be it smart phones, laptops or an internet connection, to apply for jobs online:

'don't take it for granted that everyone's good with technology, telling them just to go on the website. Even with Zoom, I only recently knew you had to install the app, and then was able to do the Zoom call, and I've got an appointment with Teams, today at two o'clock with the school, but I can't do the Teams on my phone. So, I have to physically go to the school to get the appointment done. So not everyone's good with technology'. (Asian woman)

3.2.5. Lack of experience

Lack of experience is a major issue for many. Many participants wanted to access jobs with significant labour shortages such as social care, social work and teaching but without experience. In particular, this highlights the need for paid work placement schemes and for more joined up working between key employers, such as the NHS and the employment support services in the Borough. More generally, however, the

lack of experience in new roles has an impact on narrowing peoples' ambitions, often forcing them back into or into low paid (flexible hour) roles where they do have experience such as in hospitality and cleaning.

A couple of examples stand out, both older Black women impacted by COVID, one in relation to her own health being compromised and the other losing her job in sales during COVID. Both women were previously in long-term professional roles, but used the period of unemployment as one in which to retrain in counselling. Both, were qualified but finding it very hard to get a paid job due to a lack of work experience in the role.

'So, I panicked, obviously, and then I actually decided to go for something I've always wanted to do. So, I've done three years of counselling. Now I'm trying to get into counselling, which seems to be another task. Because you need the experience, you need to at least have come from that kind of helping background. I suppose business development could be helping but it's not a caring, helping background to actually get my foot into any training/ counselling position. So that route I find it very difficult and have been looking for work for 2 years. I'm trying to get a counselling role but the no experience is an issue and so, to pay the bills, I'm now looking for any admin, data processing role'. (Black Caribbean woman)

3.2.6. Experiences of employment support services in the Borough

One of the main aims of the research and of the focus groups in particular, was to ask participants what their experiences are of the employment support services for unemployed people in the Borough. This included asking participants if they knew of employment support services in the Borough. It should be noted that contact with many of the participants was through their use of Haringey Works so clearly most knew of and were using the service, which is not necessarily representative of the wider unemployed population in Haringey and may mean recommendations in relation to making the services more widely known are not as prominent as they should be.

In general, experiences of using the employment support services in the Borough were mixed. As most of the participants are unemployed, most were in contact with local Job Centres and most, as stated above, were in contact with Haringey Works. Experiences of the Job Centre were almost entirely negative while experiences of using Haringey Works included many positive experiences alongside a number of recommendations for change.

Participants experiences of using the local **Job Centres** were almost wholly negative. In particular, participants stressed that they found the Job Centre a demoralising and degrading experience, one in which unemployed people were frequently stereotyped as not wanting work. There was a strong sense that the Job Centre service was target driven and as a result seeks to get people into any work however inappropriate and that the focus is on getting unemployed residents into low paid and skilled, entry-level jobs with little attempt to listen to people's ambitions to seek higher paid and skilled roles. Numerous participants also spoke of cancelled interviews and training without being informed.

'I hate going to the Job Centre, it's so demoralising. I think because they automatically assume no matter how short your unemployment was, you don't really want to work. That's the attitude that a lot of staff have, they automatically say that ...And then if they have like a job workshop, they just send you there even if you are not interested in that kind of job. They used to send me to do a retail, I have never worked in retail, I have no skills, no experience, nothing. If you are asking me to sell this I will just end up back at the Job Centre. So, they're like no, no, you have to go because you are unemployed you have to go ... Yeah, we had a group interview for healthcare assistant and I went there and it was cancelled, but nobody told me anything.'

(Black British woman)

This was followed by another participant in the same focus group adding:

'They had some library assistant jobs, and they said it was cancelled one time, I just thought, Wow, what a waste of time. They don't even reimburse you for your travel. They've got no advice for you. They're not very empathetic, that's the word, towards the clients'. (Black African woman)

'In the end, they will end up sending you to any job that's available, even brick laying some time. One of them said, you'll be okay, you can go in there, brick laying and things like that, and I say no, I haven't done that in my whole life, you see (laughing), no this is for younger people, I mean that's the sort of experience I'm talking about. I think for them they just want to, maybe, to tick their boxes'. (Black Caribbean man)

'People are absolutely really mean in the Job Centre, that's why I don't like the Job Centre. Really mean to people sometimes. You just like, Okay, you have to empathise with people, you have to understand, but they just blank you like, find something new to do something, or there is no money for you. So, when are they really gonna help people instead of forcing people into jobs that maybe don't like. Because for me, I always think when you do like something, you're going to give your best, but when you feel forced, just because you might lose your benefit, I don't think it's fair, and that's why we see, I'm sorry to bring it out, but we see sometimes somebody hitting on sick people, disabled people, being mean to them, because they didn't understand (Black African woman)

Participants experiences of using the **Haringey Works** service highlighted both positive and negative issues. Overall, the experience was uneven.

Many of the participants, particularly among the two focus groups based on Broadwater Farm estate were using Haringey Works to help them find work and most were in contact with and spoke highly of their experience of, the Haringey Works outreach employment advisor based on the Broadwater Farm estate. This advisor is based in the community, operating from different centres (including the local school and the gym, as highlighted below) and is in regular contact with clients, including making regular follow-up calls.

'Every Friday, yeah. When you come to the gym, after the gym, you have some cup of tea, which is very good. So, people come in, people walking by, they put a sign on, come and have a cup of tea and interact with people. So, it's very good. So that's where she came, every Friday. (Black African woman)

However, there were also less positive experiences. A significant number of participants had received no replies to 'cold' email contacts with Haringey Works or had cancelled interviews which had not been followed up.

'they call me only once, one interview and after that, the second one, that was cancelled and after the last two months they never called me or anything. I was told that next two weeks they're gonna call me again but nobody called me up. Just half an hour before the interview, he called me back telling me don't come today, he was helping someone else for the interview preparation and stuff. So, it's okay I'm gonna call you probably after two weeks, he's gonna call you back once he comes back from his holidays. I never heard anything back from him'. (South Asian man)

Some also spoke of some advisors not being especially helpful or of not having more than one or two contacts with an advisor:

'They did get back to me. It's just I feel like they're not really that ... The experience I've had with that advisor, that particular one, has not been that productive. You know what I mean?' (South Asian man)

Perhaps it is worth quoting one woman's experience and feedback in particular, as she raised a number of key points including perhaps what is a key point in relation to employment advice services overall - the lack of aspiration of the service for its clients:

'You make your application form, you say what you're able to do, the job coach when they're ready, they send you any job, anything! They can send you cleaning job, cook job, maybe you have said you got professional job that you have said that's what you want to do. Yeah, so the job coach is just sending you any job to protect themselves to cover their job. I think Haringey Works needs to get back to the table, to try to really give the coaches training in motivational interviewing. I'm signed up with Haringey Works, and to be quite frank, I just think it's redundant, the only word I can use, because my experience has been ... I signed up last year, and the person I was assigned with has contacted me once. By chance, I met somebody who I'd previously worked with, who is now involved in Haringey Works, and through her engagement I've been informed, and that's because that one individual is very proactive, but as a service, I've been contacted maximum by the person who's assigned to me maximum twice. And that's disappointing. I query with myself, if I had English as the second language, or if I wasn't confident to navigate the system, how is it for others? You leave messages, your calls are not responded to. And also, we've got to look at the digital divide. Not everybody has access to a laptop, or to internet service, and one of the things I did find challenging was that the world of work in terms of applying for a job has

changed greatly. So, you've got to be quite savvy to navigate your way around that, and that can actually be a barrier'. (Black Caribbean woman)

Drawing conclusions from participants experiences of employment advisory services, what stands out clearly is the importance of continuity and of frequent and follow-up meetings (face to face and online) with the same advisors. When advisors work in the community, in a variety of accessible and trusted locations, this works well. The importance of physically sitting with an advisor to go over job options, websites, application forms was highlighted time and again as important:

'with that employer, he told me exactly the same thing, go on our website, there's a link, he gave me a leaflet, go on our website and stuff. But sometimes you need someone to be with you during that process. Are you interested in plumbing, let's go on the website together'.(South Asian man)

'For me, it makes me more at ease to see the same person. Why? Because they will know you better than if they keep on changing, because the next person will be asking you the question that the person who saw you before is already aware of that, and then equals a lot of chaos for me personally. I rather see one person, they can follow me, and you build something, trust is a bit too much, but it makes you more at ease that this person knows what is going for. So, it's easy for you to open up, if there is any problem, and at least she will know how to support you, and I get that with [named advisor], which I'm quite happy, and because I saw some of the other people, they don't put you at ease that's why. Sometimes you feel like they're judging you already, without even knowing you really'. (Black African woman)

Perhaps the major issue to emerge from the focus groups is that of **low expectations**, the low expectations of many of the unemployed participants themselves borne out of their experience of the barriers they face, and crucially for this report, by the low aspirations and expectations of some aspects of the employment advisory services.

4. Haringey disabled population and employment

This section of the report focuses on residents with disabilities. In England, a person is considered having a disability if they “have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on [their] ability to do normal daily activities” (Equality Act, 2010). Overall, 18% of the English population report having a disability (ONS, 2023a), many of whom are of working age. According to the Equality Act (2010), people with disabilities are protected against discrimination in the labour market, and the employer and educational institutions must make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to support people with disabilities participating in education and work life. Despite this, however, people with disabilities are considered the most vulnerable group in society due to higher unemployment rates (ONS, 2020), poverty and in-work poverty rates (JRF, 2020), combined with lower educational attainment (ONS, 2019).

While there has been a decrease in the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people (ONS, 2023b), a gap still remains. There are many contributing factors to this persistent gap. The LCF (2022) report highlights the key barriers to employment faced by people with disabilities and long-term health conditions identified in the literature as:

- limitations associated with having an impairment or health condition
- lack of relevant work experience, skills and qualifications
- digital exclusion, and
- established employer attitudes and workplace practices which limit the availability of job opportunities offering sufficient flexibility to be accessible.

The LCF (2022) report goes on to show that the literature divides the barriers to engagement into two types - individual barriers and structural barriers. Individual barriers include disability or health-related issues which include the fact that:

- the specific nature of an individual’s disability/impairment or health condition may impact directly upon their capacity to undertake work or training and restrict the kinds of work or workplaces which they can access
- many individuals with disabilities/long-term health conditions have multiple clinical needs (for example, both physical and mental health needs). However, the fragmented nature of the health system means they struggle to get the joined-up health-related support they require to optimise management of their conditions and lessen the impact of these on their everyday lives
- the education and employment histories of many disabled adults place them at a disadvantage with a lack of recent work experience due to time out of employment (for some people, this can be years or even decades); lack of “work readiness”; low levels of education and skills; low levels of confidence in their own prospects; and, for those in work, low levels of confidence to change jobs and progress their careers
- adults with disabilities/long-term health conditions often also experience a range of other challenges which can compound their disadvantage and hamper their ability to engage with employment and skills development, such as low income, housing vulnerability, limited access to transport, financial difficulties and debt.

The structural barriers identified relate to the ways in which the functioning of the labour market excludes and disadvantages adults with disabilities or health conditions and includes:

- Lack of suitable jobs to meet the needs of many disabled individuals for part-time and flexible roles
- For those who acquire a disability/health condition while in work, a lack of flexibility and support from employers which can force them to exit employment.
- Unfair treatment and discrimination on the grounds of their disability/health condition, both in trying to get a job and in the workplace, such as bullying and harassment and negative attitudes from employers. (Plant et al. LCF. 2022)

To get a good overview of the employment situation of residents with disabilities in Haringey, both quantitative and qualitative measures were used. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive research methods. Descriptive research methods are used in the initial data analysis to explore, find, and explain the current employment status of residents with disabilities in Haringey. Data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) covering the period 2020-2022, and LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker of council's own administrative systems) are the main sources used for the study. Intersectional data of people with disabilities is not available for lower geographies than what ONS have published due to the sample size availability. Thus, the intersectionality of disabled people's employment data is not fully captured at the local level but available at the national level. The LIFT data for the 32 000 Haringey households in LIFT is taken from Haringey's benefit and housing systems and represent approximately one-third of households in Haringey on a low income. The 32 000 households are in receipt of either Housing Benefits or Council Tax Reduction benefit, which can be used as a proxy for Haringey's households with the lowest income, and thus, most financially vulnerable families. The data is refreshed monthly so the cohort changes, is accurate at the time of extraction, and provides a snapshot picture of the situation.

However, data from the ONS and DWP are typically at a high granularity level with no subgroups consisting of various disabilities. Thus, the key aim of the quantitative research was to identify the subgroups of people with disabilities who experience some of the highest levels of unemployment in the Borough to better target services. It should be noted that while the terms people with disabilities and long-term health conditions are used throughout the report, the terms themselves are inadequate. One key aim of the research was to move beyond this categorisation. Data from DWP: Personal Independence Allowance (PIP), Attendance Allowance (AA), and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claimants were categorised into main identifiable subgroups of disability to provide an overall picture of the percentage of people in each category. The categorisation was conducted with a health care professional at King's College Hospital to avoid misjudgements.

The main challenge of this study was to formulate meaningful subcategories with various disabilities and their intersectional and employment data. Unlike any other personal identity, such as ethnicity, age or sex, the definition of a person's disability was purely based on medical diagnosis. Certain disability conditions can be

categorised into groups based on the purpose and knowledge of data collectors. It was noted that disabled people can have more than one disability where they are identified with a primary disability that is reported in some systems, but not in others. Therefore, the quantitative analysis used available data sources to identify common patterns to derive meaningful statistics.

The quantitative data analysis highlighted the following sub-groups as experiencing the highest levels of unemployment in Haringey. Focus groups were then conducted with some of these sub-groups in order to get more detailed information on the barriers they are experiencing in accessing employment:

1. **Mental health condition** - Moderate mental disorders (Depression, Anxiety, other moderate mental disorders)
2. **Long-standing illness (of more than 12 months)** - Long term health condition (Diabetes, IBS, heart, asthma, other chronic disease, chronic pain, Hypertension)
3. **Physical impairment** - Musculoskeletal or mobility disorder (osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, problems with legs, arms, CFS, Fibromyalgia, back, spin, muscle condition)
4. **Neurodiversity e.g., Autism, ADHD** - neurological disease (epilepsy, MS)
5. **Sensory impairment** - Sensory disability (hearing, blind)
6. **Learning disability or difficulty** - Moderate or mild form of learning disability
7. **Other** - behavioural disorders (alcohol/drugs misuse)

To get a better understanding of the experiences of residents with disabilities, a qualitative approach was also conducted. Suggestions for focus groups were made on the above-mentioned categories. Interviews were conducted in three focus groups with residents with neurodiversity (autism) or learning disabilities/difficulties (two focus groups), and a total of 23 residents participated in the focus groups. Each focus group contained between six to ten residents. Before the interviews, information about the research project was given to the participants, and after the interviews they filled in a questionnaire answering demographic background questions. Informed consent was provided by all participants, and to make the participants at ease, support workers were present during the interviews. This also helped in the interpretation of the message the participants conveyed. The conversations from the focus groups were recorded and transcribed, and the analysis and recommendations from the focus groups recorded in the report. For documents provided during the interviews (including the topic form), please see appendices II-V.

The residents represented different ethnicities, genders and ages. The tables below offer an overview of the demographic information about the participants.

Table 1. Ethnicity of the participants (as described by the residents themselves).

Ethnic group	Number of participants
Black British	9
Mixed (not specified)	3
Mixed (black-Asian)	2

White (unspecified)	3
Mixed (white-Asian)	2
Other	2
Not answered / unspecified	2

Table 2. Age brackets and number of participants

Age brackets	Number of participants
18-24	6
25-29	7
30-34	2
35-39	1
40-44	2
45-49	1
50-54	2
55-59	2

Table 3. Gender of the participants.

Gender	Number of participants
Male	15
Female	8

As mentioned earlier in this section, people with disabilities are often affected by other debilitating/long-term health conditions than their primary diagnosis. While filling in the background questionnaire (see appendix IV), some participants disclosed what these other conditions are. Participants reported being diagnosed with ADHD and ASD, being neuro-divergent (autism), and having dyspraxia, epilepsy and a visual impairment (blindness). Other conditions accounted for were sleep apnoea, problems relating to the menstrual cycle and having a learning disability. Mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety were also reported by several participants.

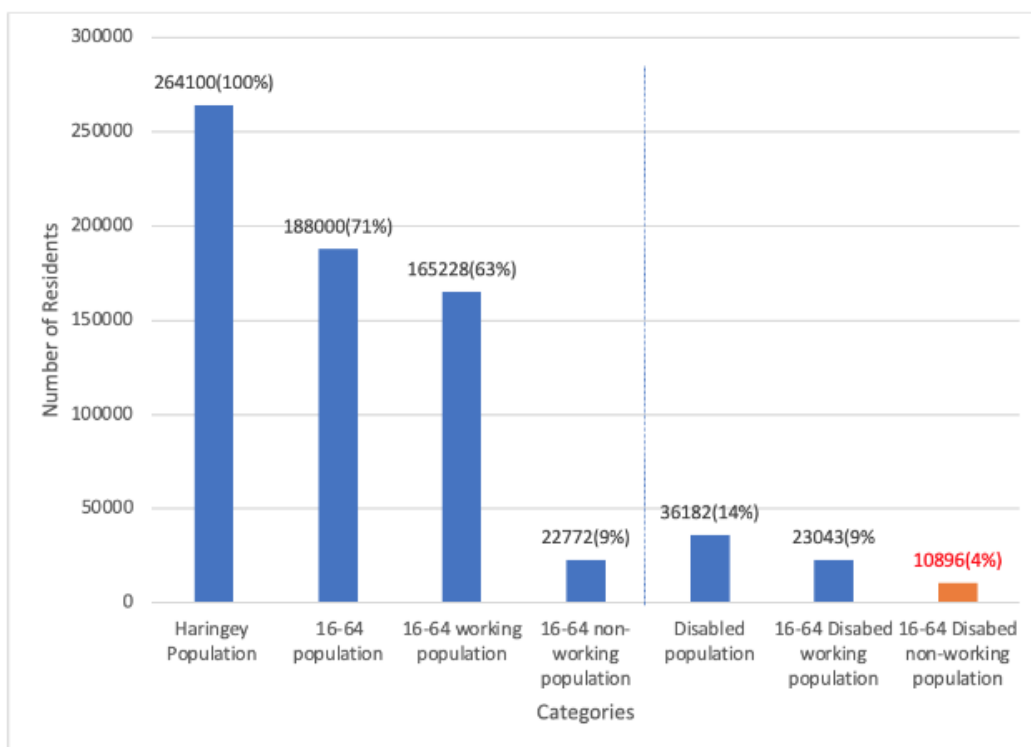
Despite a quite complex mix of health conditions, 17 participants reported in the questionnaire that they were of very or fairly good health, while seven participants reported not very good or not good at all health. Most participant did not answer the question regarding whether the disability/long-term health condition reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, but two participants filled out that this is indeed the case.

The discussions held in the focus groups provided the research team with valuable input, and the qualitative data complements the quantitative data. The qualitative data has limitations, however, as it only focuses on residents with learning disabilities/difficulties and neuro-diverse (autism) residents. To get a more nuanced picture, focus groups ought to have taken place with focus groups focussing on the other subcategories as well.

4.1. Quantitative data analysis and findings

4.1.1. The disabled population and employment in Haringey

Before focusing on the out-of-employment disabled population in Haringey, it is useful to get a brief overview of the population in Haringey in general. Figure 1 below shows the demographic and employment status of residents. As can be seen from this figure, out of the total population of Haringey (264,100 residents), the working age population (residents aged 16 to 64) stands at 188,000 residents, which is 71% of the total population. Among this working age population, a total of 165,228 residents (88%) are currently economically active, while the remaining 22,772 residents (9%) are not.



Data Source – LIFT, Annual Population Survey 2021 - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

Figure 1. Population and Working Population, Haringey, 2021.
 Source – LIFT, Annual Population Survey 2021 - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

Figure 1 also highlights residents with disabilities in relation to the rest of the population. It is estimated that 14% of the population in Haringey, or 36 182 residents, have a disability. This translates to approximately one in seven residents. In contrast,

the UK-wide figure stands at one in five, or 20% of the population (HoC, 2022), which suggests that the overall disability rate in Haringey is somewhat lower than the national average. Of residents with disabilities, 23 000 are of working age and in employment, and 10 900 are considered of working age but non-working. This group, visible in the orange bar above, *may include* individuals who are unemployed, have retired earlier than expected, or are unable to work due to their disabilities.

The out-of-work disabled population makes up 4% of the total Haringey working-age population, and 47% of the disabled working-age population (Figure 1). It is known that people with disabilities in general face lower rates of economic activity than the non-disabled population, and this is also the case in Haringey. As can be seen from Figure 2 below, the disabled population who are economically inactive in Haringey is *nearly twice as high* as the economically inactive non-disabled population in Haringey.

The past few years, however, there has been a decrease in the disability economically inactive population gap. In 2019, the economic inactivity rate for the disabled population in Haringey was at almost 50% compared to the non-disabled population at 17.5%. Two years later, this rate among the disabled working-age population was down to 40% in comparison to the non-disabled working age population, which stood at 20%. While an increase in activity of the disabled population in Haringey is indeed good, it must be highlighted that this is now similar to the levels of London in general, whereas Haringey prior to 2021 had higher inactivity rates for the disabled population.

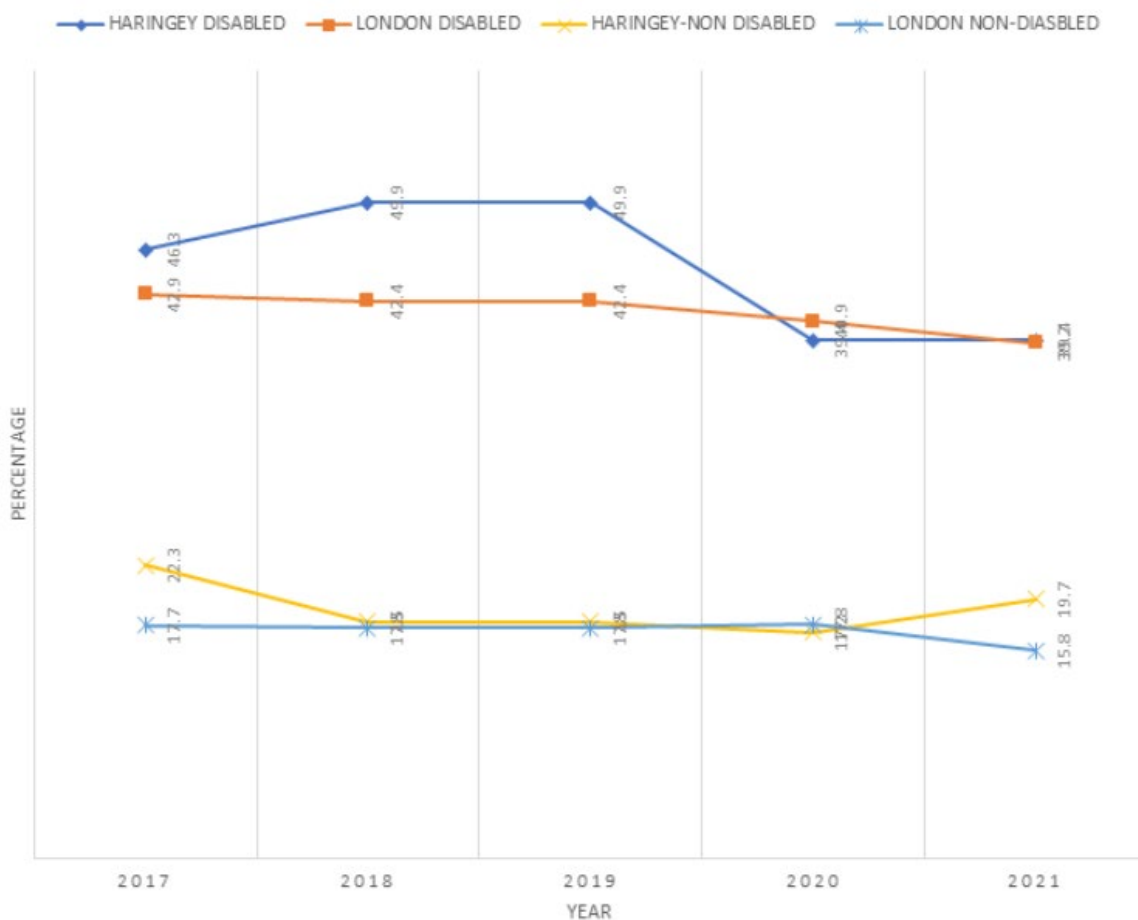


Figure 2. Economic inactivity amongst the disabled and the non-disabled population (Haringey and London).

Source: Annual population Survey¹

As highlighted above, there is a large difference between the disabled and non-disabled population when it comes to economic inactivity. This difference is also seen in terms of the differences between the disabled and non-disabled residents in terms of employment (Figure 3 below).

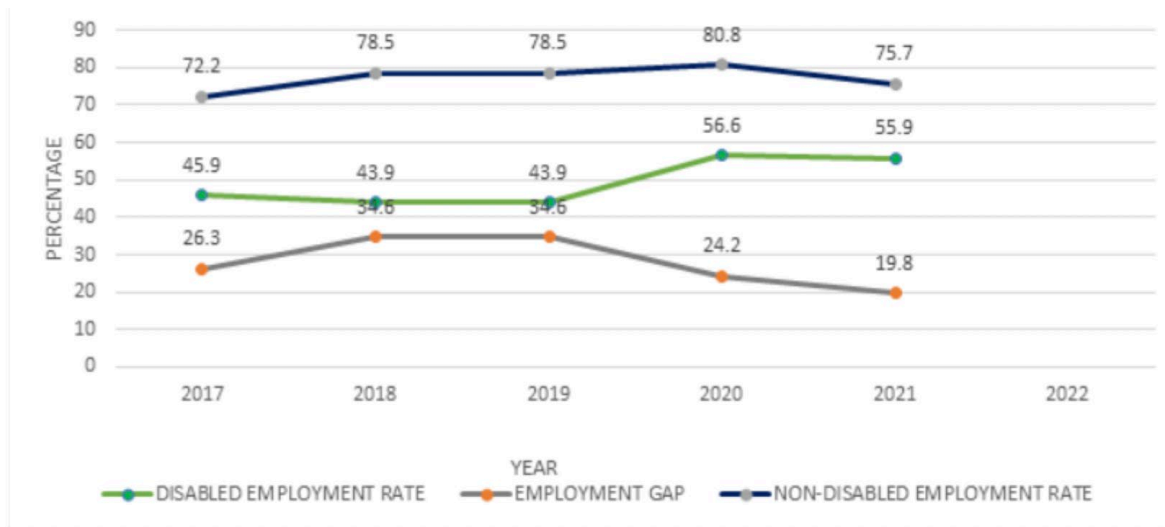


Figure 3. Disabled and non-disabled employment rate and employment gap, 2017-2021.

Source: The Department for Work and Pensions

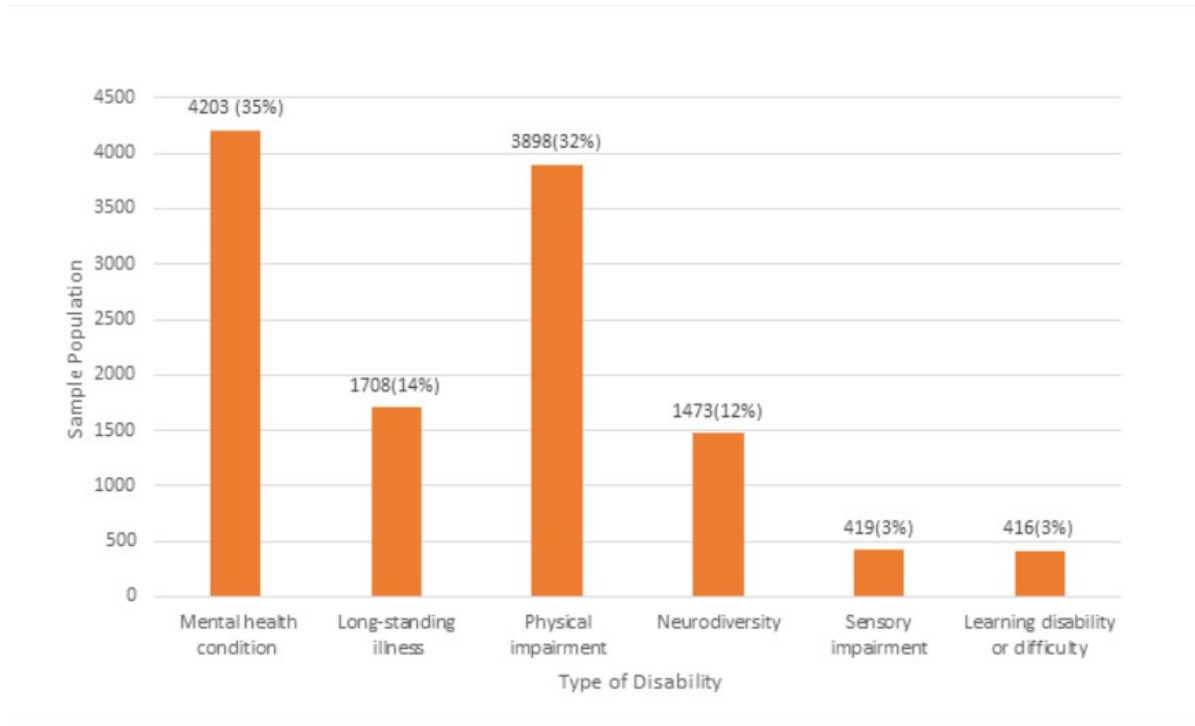
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-employment-of-disabled-people-2021>)

Figure 3 demonstrates the employment rate amongst the disabled and the non-disabled populations, as well as the (disability) employment gap from 2017 to 2021. The employment rate is defined as the number of people in paid work as a proportion of the working population, and the employment gap here highlights the difference between the disabled and the non-disabled population. This figure highlights the persistent employment gap that continues to exist between the disabled and the non-disabled community. However, during this period, the employment gap decreased from its peak at almost 35 percentage points in 2018 and 2019 to just under 20 percentage points in 2021. It must be noted, however, that the employment rate in the non-disabled population decreased during that year, while the employment rate in the disabled population did not change much. Hence, whilst the employment gap decreased, the employment rate of the disabled population did not increase. It is also important to point out, that this figure does not say anything about hours worked or earnings (see section 4.1.3).

¹ <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/employment-rates-by-disability>

4.1.2. The disabled population in Haringey in general

Having had a look at the employment situation amongst the disabled population in relation to the non-disabled population, it can be useful to get a better understanding of the disabled population in general. Figure 4 displays what types of disabilities people with disabilities have reported. It is important to reiterate, however, that many residents with disabilities declare more than one disability.



<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

Figure 4. Reported disabilities and categories in Haringey.

Source: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/login.xhtml?invalidSession=true&reason=Session+not+established>.

Figure 4 shows the most prevalent debilitating health conditions reported by a sample of people with disabilities in Haringey. Of this sample, which represents about one-third of the total disabled population, it can be observed that at 35%, mental health conditions are the most prevalent disability in the borough. This is closely followed by physical disabilities at 32%. After this, various long-lasting illnesses and neurodiversity (14% and 12%) follow, and sensory impairment and learning disability/difficulty both affect 3% of the disabled population in Haringey.

Apart from understanding what type of disabilities residents in Haringey have reported, it can also be helpful to see how this reporting is in relation to health conditions reported by the population in London overall. Thus, figure 5 below demonstrates the most common health conditions among residents of Haringey in relation to residents of London. It indicates that hypertension is the most occurring health condition among residents of both London and Haringey. Whereas London in general has a higher percentage of residents suffering from hypertension. However, obesity is of higher

occurrence in Haringey compared to London in general.
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

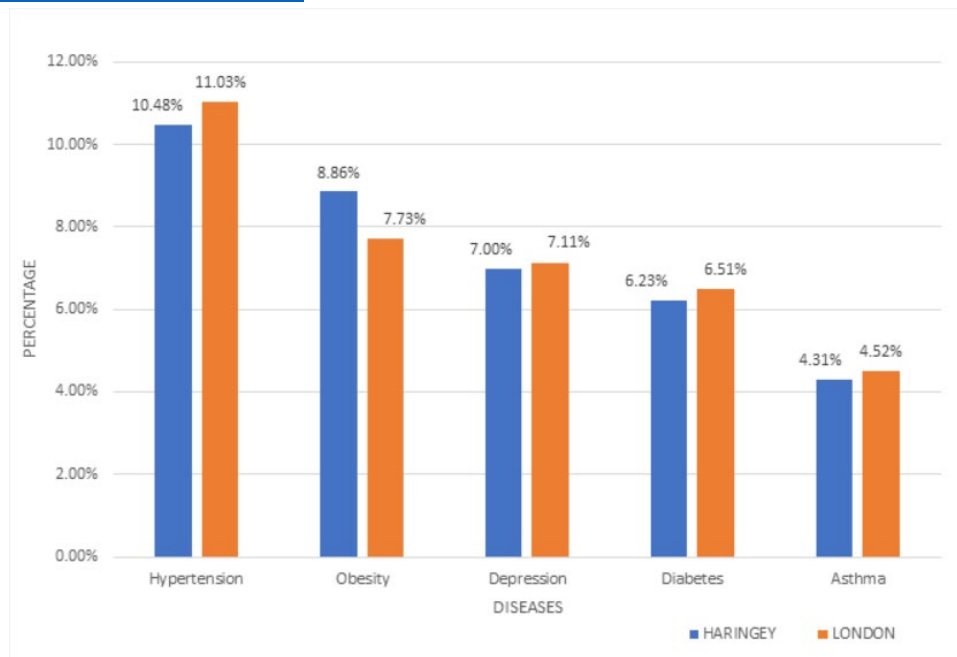
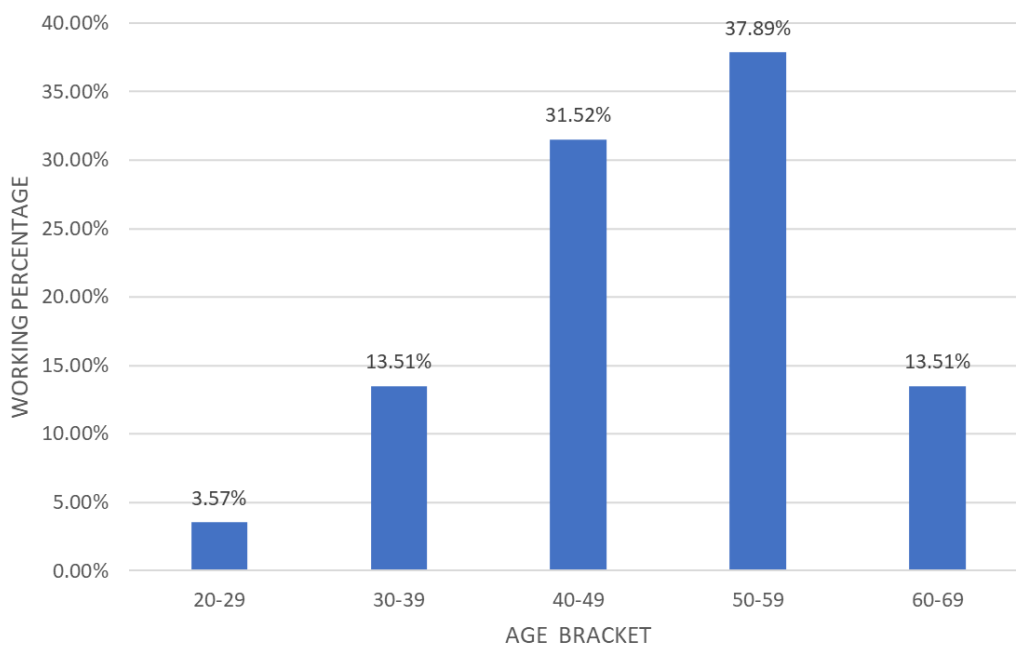


Figure 5. Prevalence of Diseases as Percentage of People Registered with GPs. Source: North London Partner NHS PowerPoint Presentation, Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF), 2019, Given by the Council

Figure 6 below shows the working age distribution of disabled residents in Haringey².



² Please note the age brackets in this figure are slightly different than that of the others. While the working age is set at 16 to 64, these age brackets slightly deviate from that.

Figure 6. Working age distribution of disabled residents in Haringey.

Data Source - LIFT data. In Work Disabled Jan 2023 Haringey

As can be seen from Figure 6, 38% of residents with disabilities are aged between 50 and 59, whereas only 4% of working age residents with disabilities are aged 20-29. This could indicate that disabilities are more common amongst the older working age population, and it also suggest where efforts in terms of employment support need to be put in place.

People with disabilities are often lumped into one broad category, but there is an immense variation between different disabilities. Some disabilities affect residents' lives on a day-to-day basis. Some are born with their disabilities, and some get the disabilities later in life. Disabilities also vary in terms of what areas of their lives are affected. This is particularly the case when it comes to education.

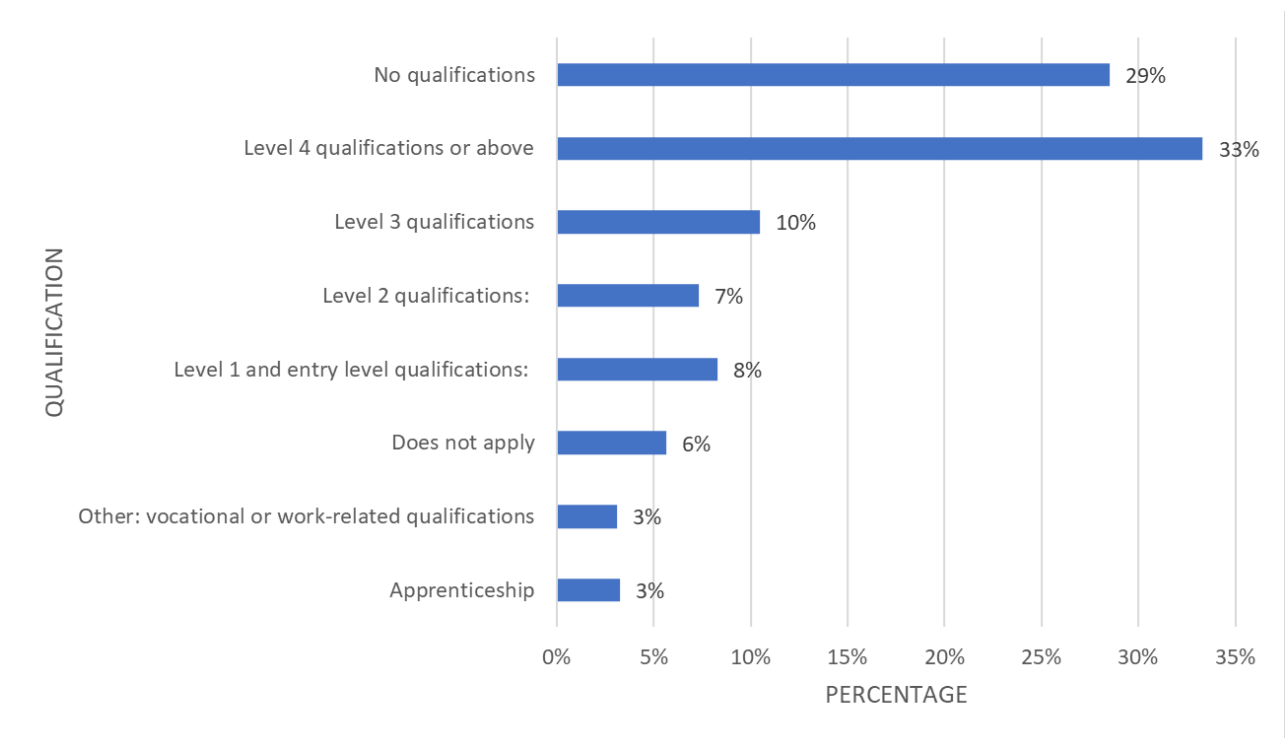


Figure 7. Qualification levels, disabled residents, Haringey, 2021 – 2022

Source : <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity>

As can be seen in Figure 7, there is immense variation in terms of educational/qualification levels amongst residents with disabilities. Almost one third of this population have no education at all, whilst another third has at least a Level 4 qualification or above.

4.1.3. People with disabilities and income

This section focuses on income amongst the disabled population in Haringey.

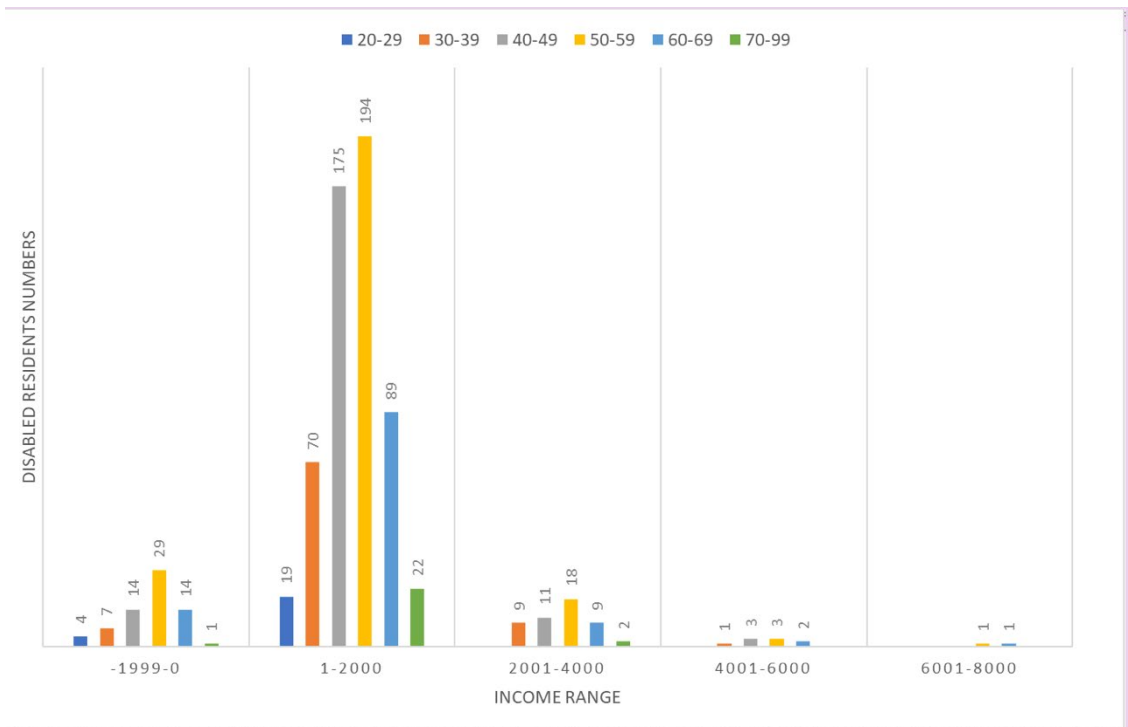


Figure 8. Income after cost of different age brackets
 Source: LIFT data, In Work Disabled Jan 2023 Haringey

Figure 8 is based on LIFT data (representing ca 30% of low-income households in Haringey), and the income of the disabled population in this group can be seen here. Based on this, the income after tax of disabled Haringey residents is relatively low, with a majority falling within the range of 1-2000 GBP per month. Moreover, there are only a few individuals in each age group whose income falls in the higher range of 2001-4000. The chart also highlights that there is little variation in income levels across different age groups in Haringey.

Figure 8 only shows part of the disabled population's income due to it being based on LIFT data. There are other aspects to this data, however, including the uptake of Universal Credit (Figure 9) and the Council Tax Reduction benefit (Figure 10), which are often used as proxies to distinguish low-income households.

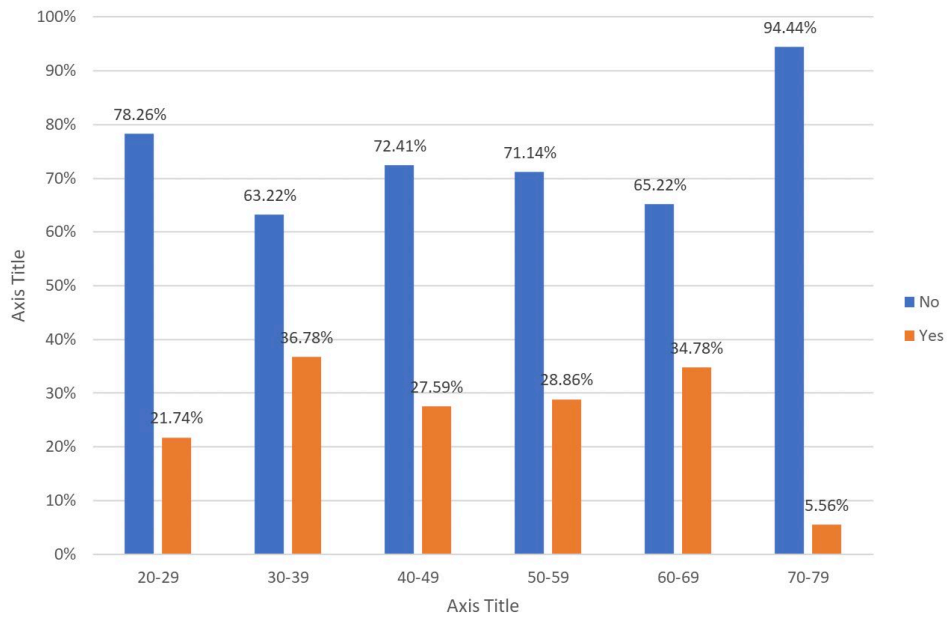


Figure 9. Universal Credit take-up of disabled residents according to age brackets, Haringey, 2023

Data Source – LIFT extract In Work Disabled Jan 2023 Haringey

What becomes evident from Figure 9, which is based on LIFT data, is that 22% of disabled people aged 20-29 receive Universal Credit. The equivalent to the age group 30-39 is significantly higher, at almost 37%. It is unclear as to why the uptake among the younger age group is lower than the older age groups.

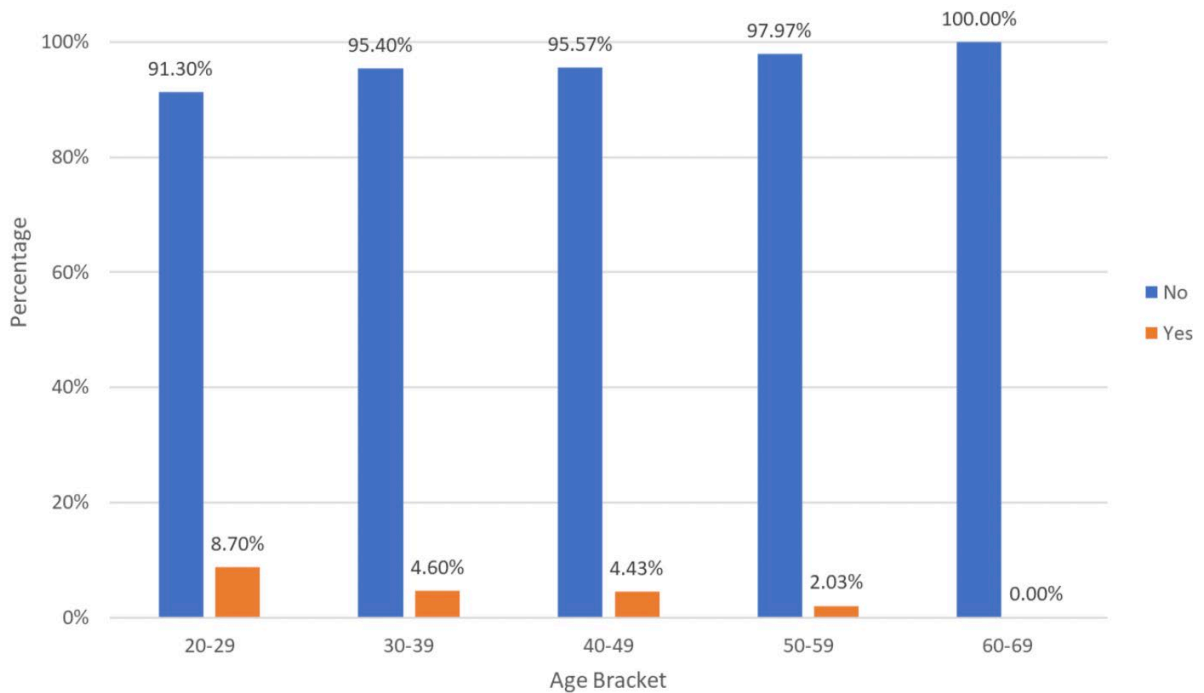


Figure 10. Take-up (yes or no) of the CTR (Benefits) by disabled people in different age groups, Haringey, 2023

Source: LIFT data, In Work Disabled Jan 2023 Haringey

Figure 10 is based on LIFT data, which again represents one third of all low-income households in Haringey. Based on this sample, Figure 10 shows the uptake (yes or no) of Council Tax Reduction benefit in households where at least one person has a disability. From this, it becomes evident that 9% of the younger population (20-29) receive this benefit. This is the highest level of any of the other age groups. The reasons for this should be further investigated, but this can be linked to Figure 8, which clearly shows that the population in this age bracket are indeed on a low income. However, it is unclear as to why the take-up of Universal Credit by this age group is so low (see Figure 9). Interestingly, the age group of 60-69 does not have any recorded CTR beneficiaries, as 100% of the disabled working residents in that age group are not in receipt of this benefit. Additionally, both the age groups of 30-39 and 40-49 demonstrate a similar pattern, with approximately 95% of the working-age disabled residents in those age groups not taking up CTR benefits.

4.2 Focus group findings

As noted earlier in this chapter, three focus groups were conducted to get a more detailed picture of the potential barriers to employment experienced by the specific groups of residents with disabilities and long-term health conditions. This section outlines the key findings from these focus groups.

It should be noted that, each focus group included people with widely different life experiences and what follows is an attempt to highlight some key issues emerging. There were experiences, such as discrimination and lack of accommodating employers and benefit systems, which were common to people in all of the groups but there were also barriers and experiences which were specific to people with particular disabilities, health conditions and impairments. The following attempts to highlight and capture both the common and particular experiences.

It is also important to reiterate that many participants have complex needs. Many participants have multiple health conditions. Particularly amongst the focus group with neuro-diverse participants, many participants suffered poor mental health. Intersectionality, such as age, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, and experiences of exclusion from employment was only partly highlighted by the participants in the focus groups. This differs a lot from the experiences highlighted in the BAME focus groups (see chapter 3 in this report).

From the qualitative data gathered in the focus groups, many interesting aspects related to employment were highlighted. Table 4 below draws on data collected through the background information sheets (appendix IV) and it summarises the employment status of the participants of the focus groups.

Table 4. Employment status of the participants of the focus groups

Employment status	Number of participants
Working fulltime	1
Working part time	6
In fulltime education or training	1
Not working, but seeking employment	7
Not working, not seeking employment	6
Unclear/unanswered	2

As can be seen from Table 4, only one participant worked full-time. Most participants either worked part-time (six participants) or were not working but looking for employment (seven participants). Six of the participants were not working and not looking for employment. This was from one of the focus groups with residents with learning disabilities, where many participants were not in a position to apply for jobs. Most of the participants who were working or had previously worked, however, were working between 7 to 20 hours per week, and they worked mainly in retail (supermarkets) and warehouses. Some of the participants who were working part-time were eager to take on more hours. Participants with neurodiversity (autism) were the ones who were most likely to participate in the labour market, but participants from one of the focus groups for residents with learning disabilities/difficulties also were either had worked, worked or was looking for work. In these focus groups, there were also participants who volunteered and created their own art works.

4.2.1. The key barriers to accessing work identified by participants in the focus groups

From the focus groups, it became evident that there are some key barriers preventing the participants from participating in employment (or preventing the participants to work more hours). These barriers were:

- **Unfair treatment, discrimination and lack of awareness, training and support by employers and in the workplace** – perhaps the key barrier to emerge was unfair treatment and discrimination both in trying to get a job and when in the workplace. The issues highlighted time and again were a lack of awareness and support by employers in the workplace and associated issues of stigma, stereotyping and ignorance concerning neuro-diverse participants. Many examples were given of a lack of support and awareness. One particular example was about an employer blaming the participant on being

'too sensitive' (due to having autism), when the participant was faced with racism at work. It also became clear that it is difficult to distinguish between racism taking place at work, or discrimination due to the disability.

"And then there was a situation where my client, this elderly [person] that I was looking after was actually racist. And I didn't know, like, what my place was, how to deal with that. So, I mentioned it to my boss, and then she was like, I'm being too hypersensitive. And then when I tried to stand up for myself, because it is related to the autism where I can't speak in those moments, completely overwhelmed. So, also trying to educate [the manager] on [what racism is]." (participant in the neuro-diverse focus group)

"I was dealing with a client over the telephone, and I had to do like some calculations, and I was under pressure. And I think I was a bit overwhelmed. Another job I was in, there was a colleague who was bullying me, and kind of picking on me, and I did kind of make a mistake, which led to me losing that work." (participant in the neuro-diverse focus group)

"I don't know whether it was discrimination, I hope not, but let me tell you. So first when I started working at [company name], everything was going fine. Next there were two women, I don't know why, but they were [White women], so they started [...] picking on me, but every single time I did something they would [tell the manager]." (participant in one focus group for people with learning disabilities)

"Sometimes I had discrimination at work, its recent, and that, I had that experience, but now when people are talking to me, it's how to communicate to other people around, it is I had these difficult times, but sometimes it is hard to have those things, sometimes I have to speak to the higher bosses at work, the manager or someone..." (participant in one focus group for people with learning disabilities)

- **Receiving a neuro-diverse diagnosis relatively late in life** was something that negatively affected both their education as young people and employment prospects as adults. Despite a few of the neuro-diverse participants having obtained Undergraduate (Bachelor) or Postgraduate (Master) degrees, they felt they had not been supported enough during their education, and not done as well as they saw themselves doing. The issue of being accepted to University to study, and then not being able to get a job was also raised, as was the issue of underemployment (working with tasks that require less experience of training than a person has).

"I've got a degree, I'm not really highly educated, but yet, there's more people in this room [referring to their peers], who are more educated than me. And I think that the system is flawed, because if you are trained, or educated at university level, and you're given the opportunity to study at that level, then shouldn't you be able to use that

education, to better society, so to speak, and yourself by continuously doing what you've been trained?" (participant in the neuro-diverse focus group)

"This is the thing. I've had people straight up, beat it around my head that, even [if I have a Master's degree], I'm not going to get anywhere with [the degree]. I can maybe go and get like a waiter job or somewhere in a low position or anything like that." (participant in the neuro-diverse focus group)

- **The employer's inflexibility when a person is in the process of being assessed for neurodiversity** was also highlighted. Not only were participants faced with long waiting times to be assessed, but they received little support from the employer in this process. Thus, it was highlighted that many participants felt misunderstood at work, which again can be linked to the lack of awareness from the employer's side. It was suggested that the employer ought to be more understanding and take a more holistic approach on how to be more flexible towards the employees during their medical assessments.

"Late diagnosis of autism absolutely... not assume that this is the approach we're going to take and to suggest maybe the more one on one discussion [in order to be more accommodating]"

- A related issue, that is the **uncertainty and lack of clarity over at what point and to whom to disclose information about a health condition** (in this case, neurodiversity) **became evident**. One participant highlighted how the experienced lack of hours offered by the employer (although this participant was self-employed) once the diagnosis had been received.

"I had my diagnosis like, three months ago. So, it's fairly [recent]. I was not actually fired, but they just stopped giving me work, and it is to do with my autism because I did disclose it with them. I was [working within a particular setting], and I was a self-employed contractor... I'm not actually sure how it works. So, I was honest with them. I'm just saying, like, I was struggling, the shifts are quite long, and just like having sensory issues" (participant in the neuro-diverse focus group)

- **Potential employer's perception of people with disabilities** was also highlighted as an issue. It seemed that some potential employers did not know how to accommodate to different abilities, and when the participant exceeded the potential employer's expectation, the employer seemed unsure of the participant. As highlighted by one of the respondents:

"... and they said, you've got all the necessary skills, and you can talk well enough, which I'll be honest with you, I feel like often being able to talk well enough has been used against me in a lot of ways. They said that the issue was, from my body language, I gave off an aggressive

demeanour, and from my body language, it looked like I didn't want to be there.” (participant in the neuro-diverse focus group)

- The participants in the neuro-diverse focus group displayed having awareness of the Equality Act (2010), but it also became clear that the participants thought it is **unclear what the employer actually needs to do to make 'reasonable adjustments' to better accommodate their needs.**

“For instance, you can go to work and say you've got a common cold, and yet there'll be accommodations for that. But yet, in your experience, and others speaking to say that you've been diagnosed with autism, or even if you're going through the process, there is no accommodations, to think about what a company can do, to assist employees, and to be treated the way some people in this room have been treated. And that level is, in my opinion, a high level of discrimination, that is probably underlined and not even looked at, compared to other individuals who they get to be seen as being discriminated against.” (support worker in the neuro-diverse focus group sharing the experiences of some of the participants)

- Another barrier to employment was according to one participant in the focus groups for neuro-diverse participants, was understandably so, **eroding confidence** as feeling let down by many systems, discriminated against and turned away by the employers.

“But at a certain point that really sort of eroded away at my confidence, and my outlook, so that it got to a point where I was thinking to myself - All right, what's the problem with me then? How is it that I'm flaming this thing out, dealing with the pressure, dealing from the jobcentre, as well as at home and I still don't seem to be getting anywhere. Especially with one or two of the places where I was at that was supposed to be assisting me. It seemed as if they were more into the fact that they had a graduate in there rather than somebody who's here looking for work. And especially sometimes when I would be very direct with them, they would be quite surprised.” (participant in the neuro-diverse focus group)

4.2.2. Key findings regarding employment and related support systems and structures

From the focus groups, various support systems were discussed. The key findings from this discussion are the following:

- **Challenging experiences with the Job Centre.** One of the prominent experiences highlighted by several participants in the neuro-diverse focus group, was the lack of consistency at the Job Centre. Being in touch with several officers was experienced as a challenge in the focus group with neuro-diverse residents. Another experience with the Job Centre that was highlighted in a negative light was perceived unprofessionalism by an officer, as well as a

not very accommodating place to discuss the participant's case. Being met with unprofessionalism can be exhausting for everyone, but particularly by people with disabilities. Please note, however, that this critique is not raised against the Job Centre as a whole.

“The thing is, the way that the appointment was with the person, the officer, the person was taking about three or four phone calls during my time with them. Answering other person's phone calls, I thought it would be in a room where you can speak quietly, but the appointment was actually in a public area. So, I'm sitting like, the person is looking here, is looking there, looking out the window, this and that, speaking to people on the phone, it's just so unprofessional. But you know what? My mind is cut off. I don't care anymore. Whether they did the referral to whoever, I don't care anymore.” (participant in the neuro-diverse focus group)

- Another challenge that was highlighted was with the **Connected Communities**. The participant highlighted long waiting periods after referral, or even appointments not being arranged. Participants also highlighted contacting Connecting Communities via email, but not necessary getting a response.

“I had an appointment in January with Connected Communities. I think I was supposed to be referred in the autumn, some sort of person in Connected Communities [...] I've not heard anything since [the interview took place in June], about the appointment.” (participant in the neuro-diverse focus group)

- **Inflexible support programmes** were also highlighted as a negative experience. When it comes to some support systems, participants who wanted more hours were left on their own, as more support is available for unemployed participants. When Shaw Trust was discussed, one of the participant was eager to work more hours. However, their part-time employment prevented them from getting more support.

“...and I was told [Shaw Trust] could only help me if I was unemployed. So, the adviser [at the Job Centre] said, well, you know, you could give up your current job and then you can go on the programme.” (participant in the neuro-diverse focus group)

- **Age limits accessing autism services were also highlighted, as was lack of clarity around the general availability of support systems in terms of employment.** Some participants had indeed accessed Haringey's support system (such as Haringey Works, for example) previously, but they were now unsure of what support Haringey offers to help people with disabilities getting employment. Geographical location (post code lottery) was also highlighted as something that could determine what support would be available to the participants.

“I don't know if they exist at the moment. I don't know if those sessions exist as such. [...] We don't think they do. But there are other programmes that Haringey Works offer to support people.” (participants in the neuro-diverse focus group)

- **Difficulties creating applicant profiles and filling in job applications** was highlighted by both participants from the neuro-diverse focus group and one of the focus groups with participants with learning disabilities. Issues with organisational skills, timekeeping, being easily distracted were highlighted as challenging.
- **Overlooking the complexities of the lives of people with disabilities, as well as their cultural backgrounds.** The participants in all focus groups had regular life challenges as well. This is something that is often overlooked when it comes to planning support for people with disabilities. Some of the participants had caring responsibilities, which is not assumed when discussing people with disabilities. This adds a layer of complexity when it comes to making all practicalities work. Some participants in the focus groups with learning disabilities also helped at home with various tasks, and some parents saw it as their duty to care for their adult child with learning disabilities. Hence, there was a parental resistance towards participating in society. Others pointed to how time-consuming having medical appointments (linked to their health conditions) were, and how this also affects their ability to work.

“I became [a family member's] carer, not by choice, but just circumstances, I became a family caregiver for that relative” (participants in the neuro-diverse focus group)

“[Interviewer] You're very busy. Would you have time for a job do you think? [Participant] One day, one day, yeah.” (participant in one focus group for residents with learning disabilities)

”The other cultural aspect of it is that within certain groups within the local community, and it's obviously it's very diverse, there is this cultural view that this is my son or daughter, I am responsible for them, I will be the one that works, I will be the one that takes care of them, I will be the one that pays the bills. Not they will go and earn their own money. There's a whole host of issues.” (support worker in a focus group of people with learning disabilities)

- **The importance of a meaningful job was also highlighted.** Often, people with disabilities, and particularly with learning disabilities, are assigned with what could be considered menial tasks, but it is important to take their abilities and interests into account when supporting them into employment. One of the participants in one of the focus groups with learning disabled participants highlighted their interest in books, and their interest in working in a book shop. Even if employment was not available for many people with learning disabilities, it became clear that some volunteered in a charity shop and took

great pride in it. However, an issue arose if the participant wanted to do more hours. This, because the participant in question would have needed more support to get to and from the place, and the escort assigned for this only works a few hours per week. Thus, this can be further linked to the point above of **overlooking the complexities of the lives of people with disabilities**.

- **Challenges with various fairs organised by the council was also highlighted.** Whilst there was a recognition of the council supporting residents into volunteering roles, the way in which they were organised was critiqued.

“I mean the council run things like volunteer fairs. Things like that they're not accessible. You go to a volunteer fair, how many people at a volunteer fair site, how many know Makaton or BSL? They don't. So it's all very well saying about volunteering, but they're not, you know, they need to provide support for people to volunteer, and that's not going to happen.[...] For example, this [participant] wants to go and volunteer. How are they're going to communicate anything [as the participant is non-verbal]? How is where they're going to be volunteering know that they're asking, 'I need to go to the bathroom, I need to go to the toilet', how they're going to know that? There's a whole host ... we break down as much of that as we can, but there just isn't the support out there, and that boils down to there isn't the money for the support out there. Which, you know, Haringey is no different to any other council, there is no money. Everyone's strapped for money, we're all in the same boat, irrespective of what local authority you're in.”
(support worker in one focus groups with people with learning disabilities)

4.2.3. Other findings

From the discussions in the focus groups, other aspects of the participants' employment situations were also highlighted. Below, a few key points are highlighted.

- Participants find the organisations, through which they were recruited to this research project, **very helpful**. It became evident how **important these organisations are for the participants**: both in terms of meaningfulness and receiving support from peers and support workers. It became clear that these organisations are incredible vital for their wellbeing and training.

“Yeah. we used to do activities and that. Such as how to do mathematics, yeah you do different activities that occupies our mind and also train us to get a good job. That's how it is. Yeah. Be positive.”
(participant in one focus groups for people with learning disabilities)

- It also became clear that the participants **have aspirations and want to be part of the wider community**. They dream of working with animals, with children, in bookshops, in retail, in graphic design and so on. It is easy to forget that people with disabilities also have their personal preferences and interest, and like everyone else they thrive in supportive environments.

“After some of my artwork is ready [...] I show it to all the people, and I've been sharing lots of work on social media.” (participant in one focus groups for people with learning disabilities)

- **Covid increasing the vulnerability of people with learning disabilities**. It became clear from the support worker in one of the focus groups with people with learning disabilities, that Covid had set them back several years in terms of developing skills and being connected to the community.

“[...] there was a community presence, and everybody had a visible presence within the local community, but then COVID hit, and then with the injustice and self-confidence to actually go out there and talk to people to build that back up” (support worker in one focus groups with people with learning disabilities)

- **People with disabilities is a very broad group of people with different abilities, aspirations and need of support**. It is therefore important to avoid lumping them all into one category, and recognise their differences, even within the same 'subcategory', such as learning disability.

4. Key findings from the quantitative data and focus group data analysis of young people in Haringey:

5.1. Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive research methods. Descriptive research methods are used in the initial data analysis to explore, find, and explain the current employment status of the young people's subgroups in Haringey. The primary data sources of this analysis are taken from NOMIS (ONS, Census and labour market statistics), Jobs and Skills Demand, Lightcast Nov 2022 Data set and LIFT Data of c32k Haringey households. The age group of 16-24 is considered as young people, whereas analysis is further categorised into the age groups of 16-19 and 20-24. The main challenge of this study was the (1) lack of data about young people's education that is linked to their employment and (2) lack of records of local support for Haringey young people. The quantitative analysis presented below compares the analysis of available data sources with national trends and provides recommendations to improve the employment of the young people of Haringey.

Figure 1 shows there are a total of 156,900 economically active people of working age (16-64) in Haringey, 19,900 or 13% of whom are young people between the age of 16 - 24.

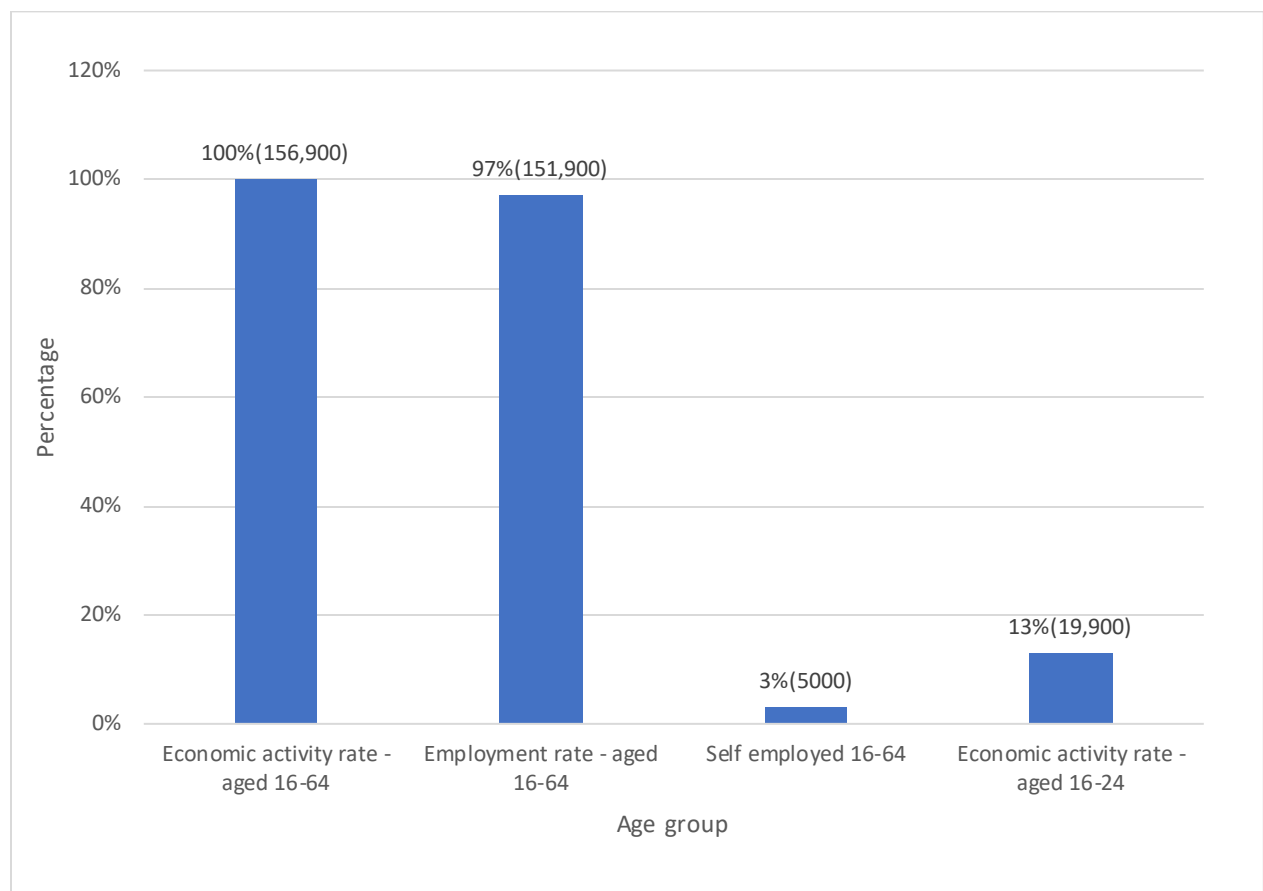


Figure 1. Economic activity rates, Haringey, Jan – Dec 2022

Source:

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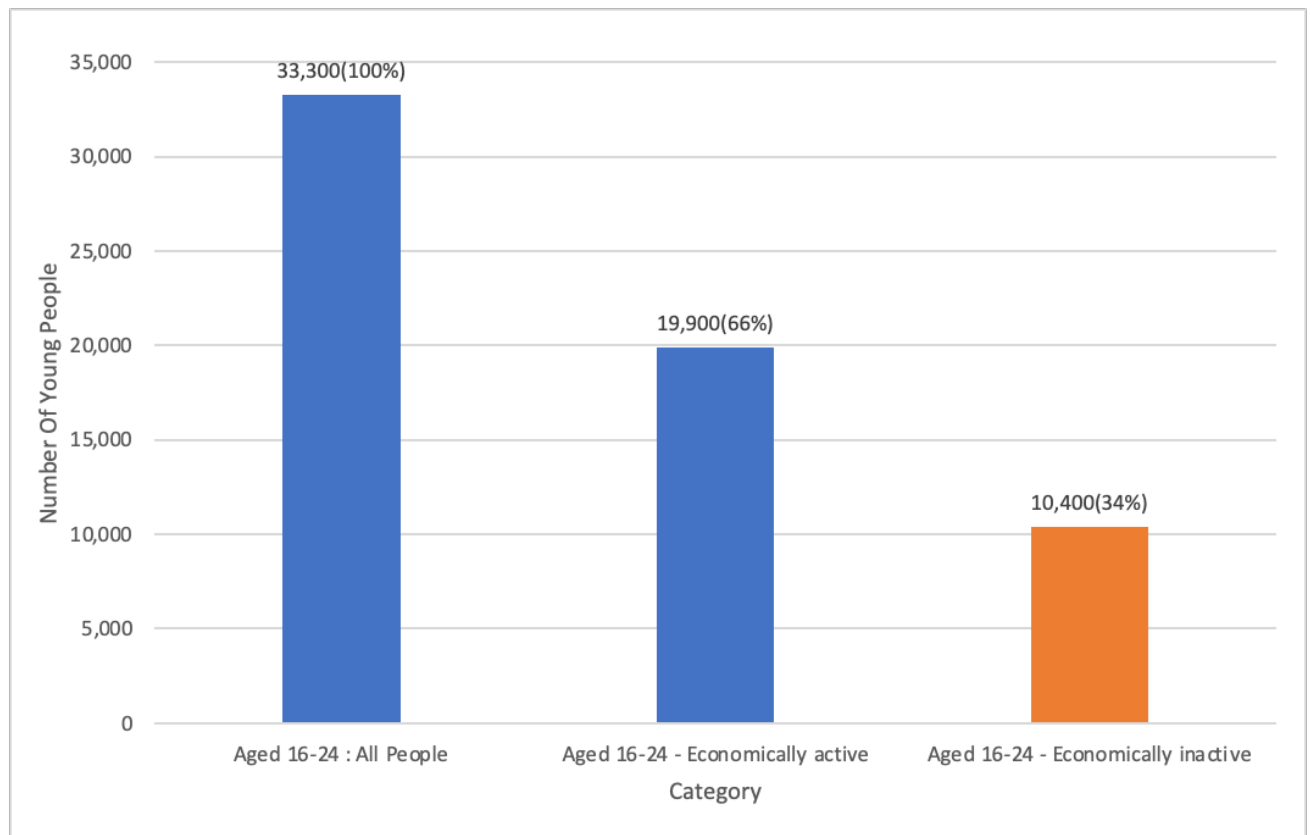


Figure 2. Economic activity of young People, Haringey (Jan – Dec 2022)

Data source:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/components/kwcellComponent.asp?menuopt=43&subcomp=>

Figure 2 shows that out of the total 33,000 young people aged 16-24, 19,900 or 66% are economically active, while the remaining 10,400 or 34% are economically inactive or unemployed. This data highlights the significant proportion of young individuals who are actively participating in the economy but also points to a significant number who are unemployed or economically inactive.

In terms of economic activity among young people, Haringey exhibits a higher percentage of young individuals engaged in economic activities compared to the national average. Specifically, 66% of young people in Haringey are economically active, as compared to the slightly lower national rate of 60%.

A closer examination of the data reveals that among the young population aged 16-19, which is 13,100, only 34% (4,500) are economically active and 66% economically inactive.

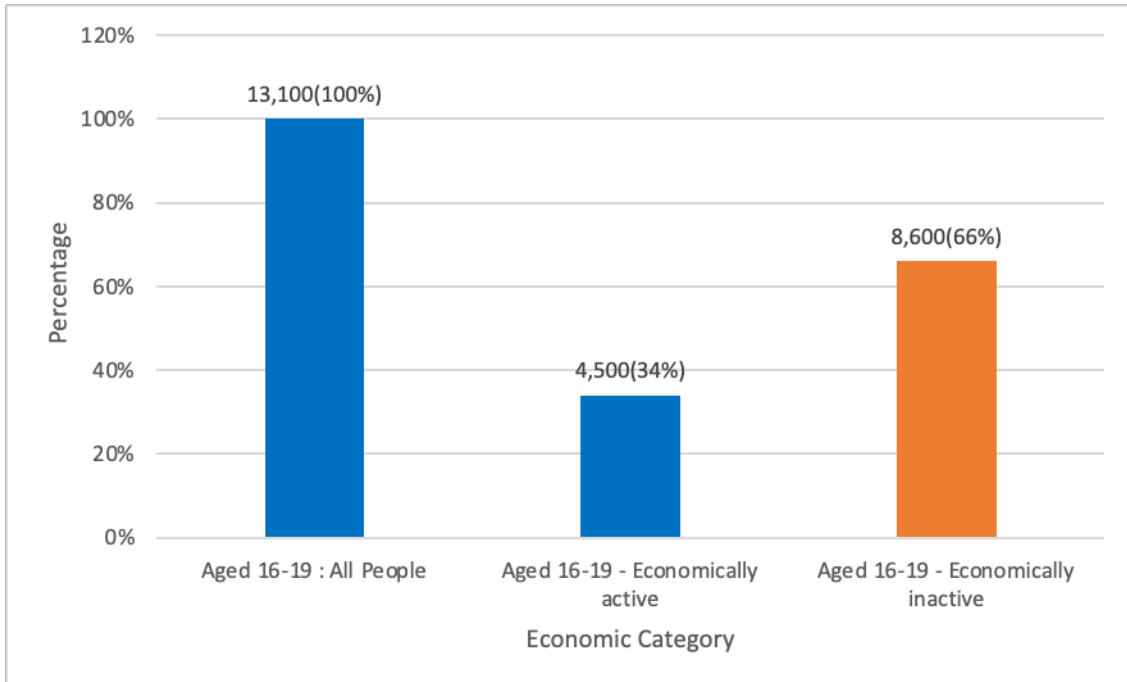


Figure 3. Economic activity of young People (16-19), Haringey (Jan – Dec 2022)

Data source:

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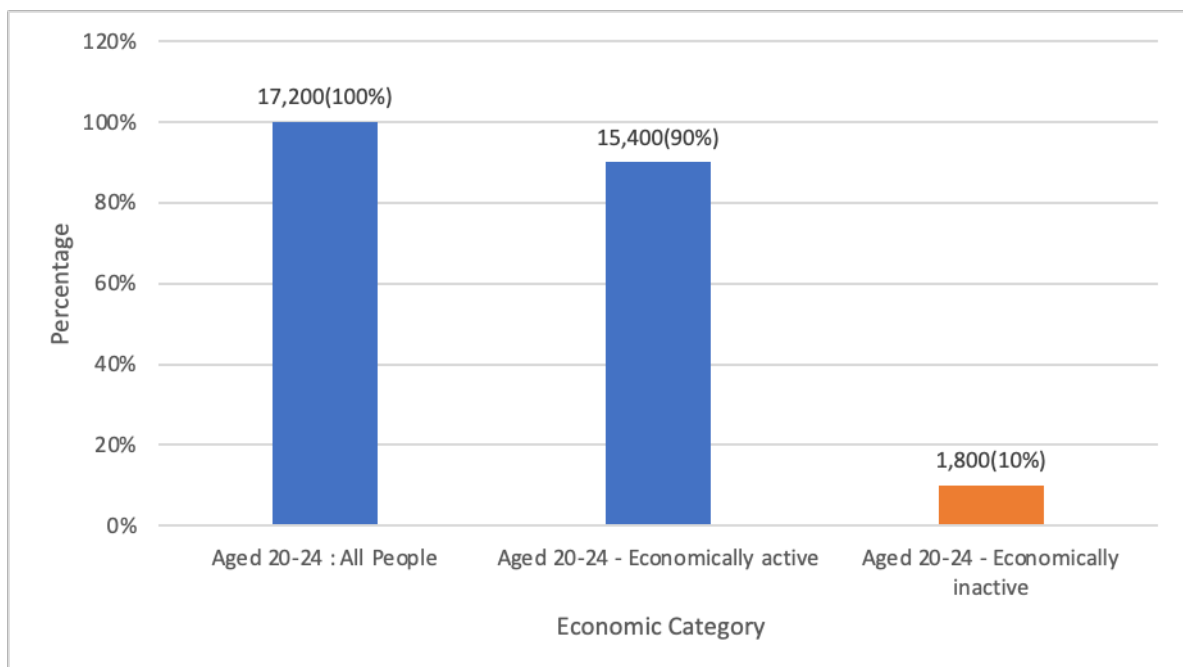


Figure 4. Economic activity of young People (20-24), Haringey (Jan – Dec 2022)

Data source:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/components/kwcellComponent.asp?menuopt=43&subcomp=>

The age group of 20 to 24 years has the highest percentage of economically active individuals at 90% (15,400) with only 10% (1,800) of young people aged 20 to 24 years are economically inactive (Figure 4).

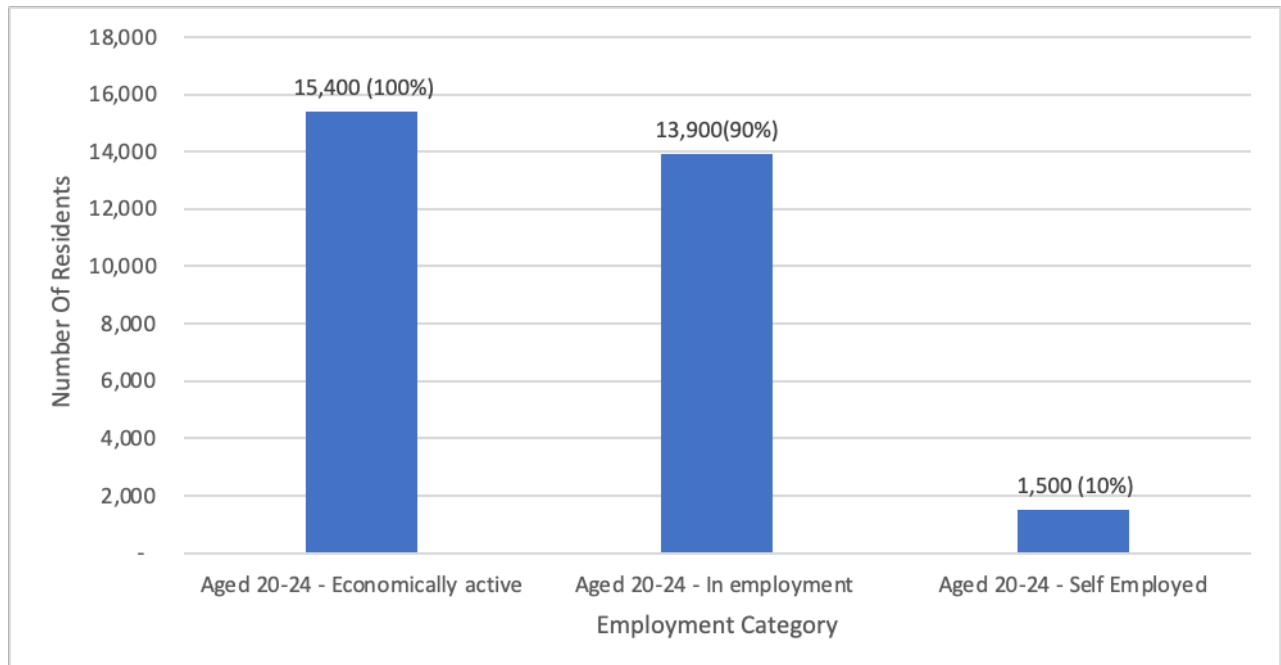


Figure 5. Employment and self-employment of young people (Aged 20-24), Haringey (Jan – Dec 2022)

Data Source:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/components/kwcellComponent.asp?menuopt=43&subcomp=>

Figure 5 indicates that out of the total 15,400 economically active young people aged 20-24, the majority, 90% or 13,900 residents, are employed, while approximately 10% or 1,500 residents are self-employed.

A closer examination of employed young people between the ages of 20-24, reveals that 67% (10,300) are engaged in full-time employment and 33% (3,600) in part-time employment. In contrast, young people aged 16 to 19 years who are in employment in Haringey are all employed part-time (Figure 6).

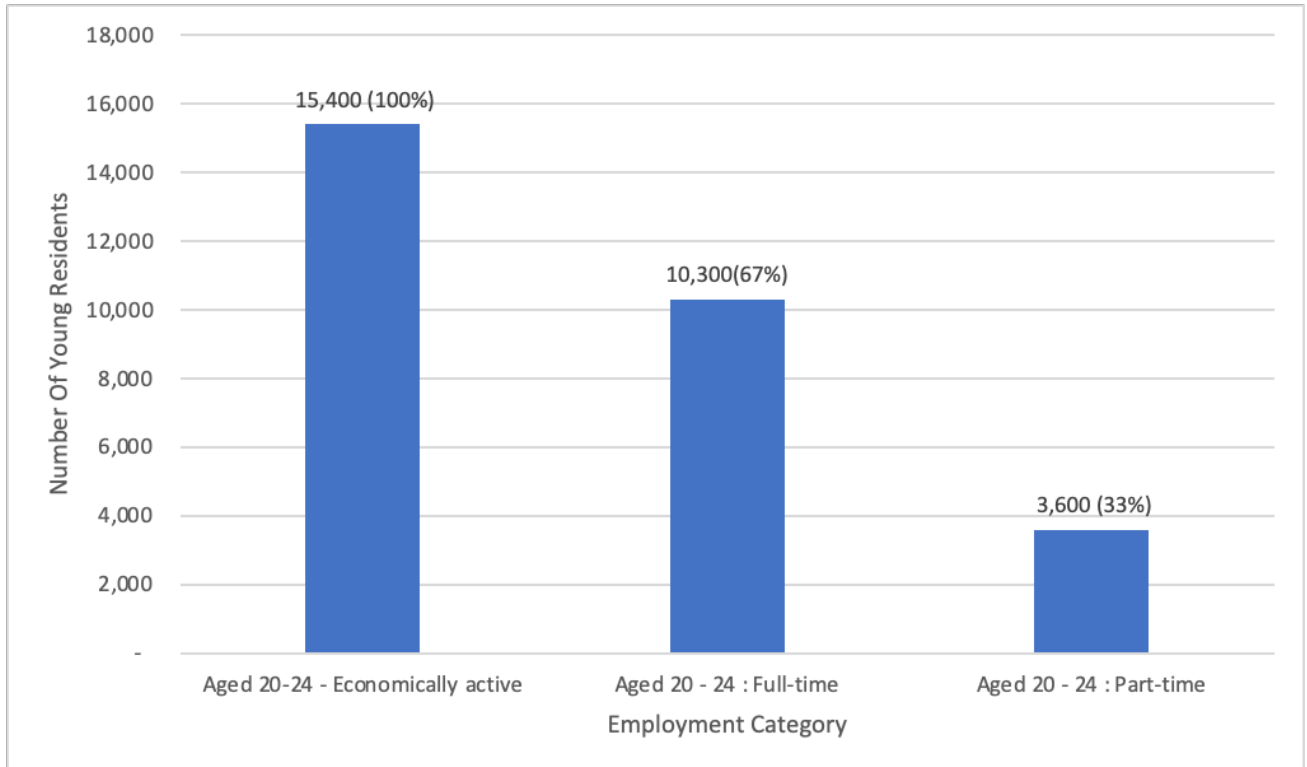


Figure 6. Hours of Employment of young people (Aged 20-24), Haringey (Jan – Dec 2022)

Data source:

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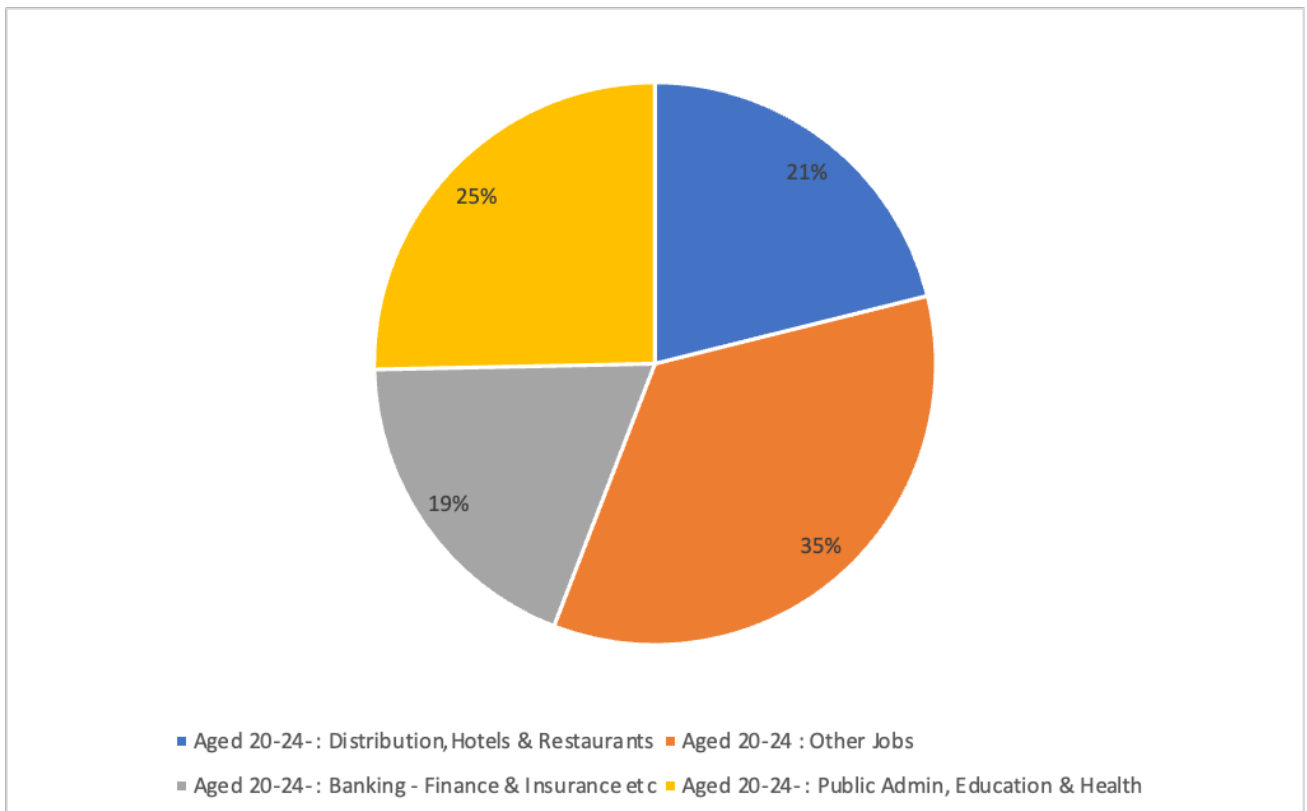


Figure 7. Employment sectors of young people Jobs, Haringey (Aged 20-24) (Jan – Dec 2022)

Data source:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/components/kwcellComponent.asp?menuopt=43&subcomp=>

Figure 7 indicates the employment sectors where young people aged 20-24 are employed in Haringey. Public Administration, Education and Health stands out as the sector employing the highest number of young people aged 20-24 years, with 25% (3,500) of this age group employed within this sector, with a further 21% (2,900) employed in the Distribution, Hotels & Restaurant sector. Among the 16-19 age group, the primary source of employment is the Distribution, Hotels and Restaurant sector with 73% (3,300) of this age group engaged in jobs within this sector.

The following data analyses job roles posted and is from data collected by Haringey Council. The data (Figure 8) highlights the top posted occupations and indicates that the largest numbers of job roles posted were for general cleaners, followed by NHS roles, construction helpers, nurses, and secondary education teaching professionals. Overall, the NHS (63), nursing (65) and secondary education training (59) unique job postings are higher in numbers than general cleaners (21) construction helpers (10) or delivery drivers (12). Delivery drivers, learning support assistants, and property managers also exhibit notable position intensity. Given the high position intensity, it is important tailored training programmes, apprenticeships, or vocational courses can be developed to address the specific skills required for healthcare and education occupations in particular.

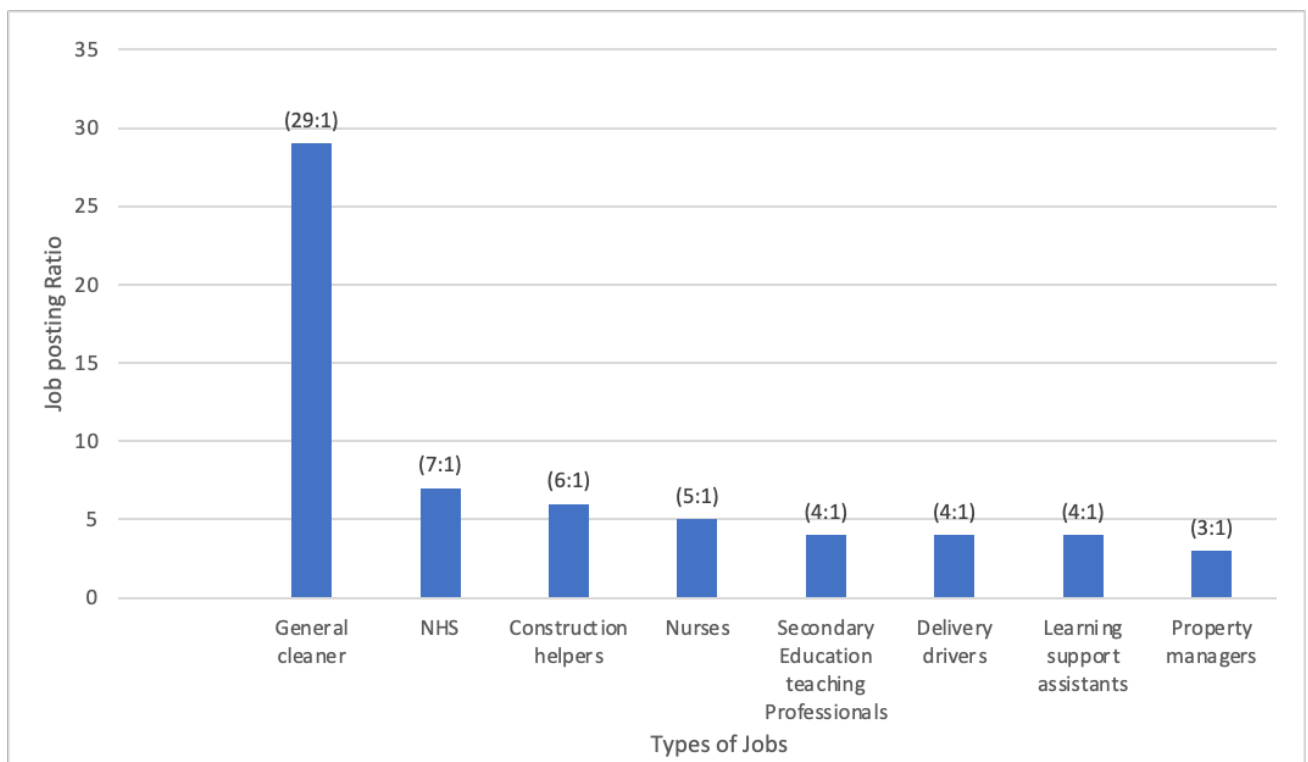


Figure 8. Top Job roles posted with high Posting Intensity November 2022
Data source – data received by Haringey Council (Jobs and Skills Demand, Lightcast Nov 2022 Data set)

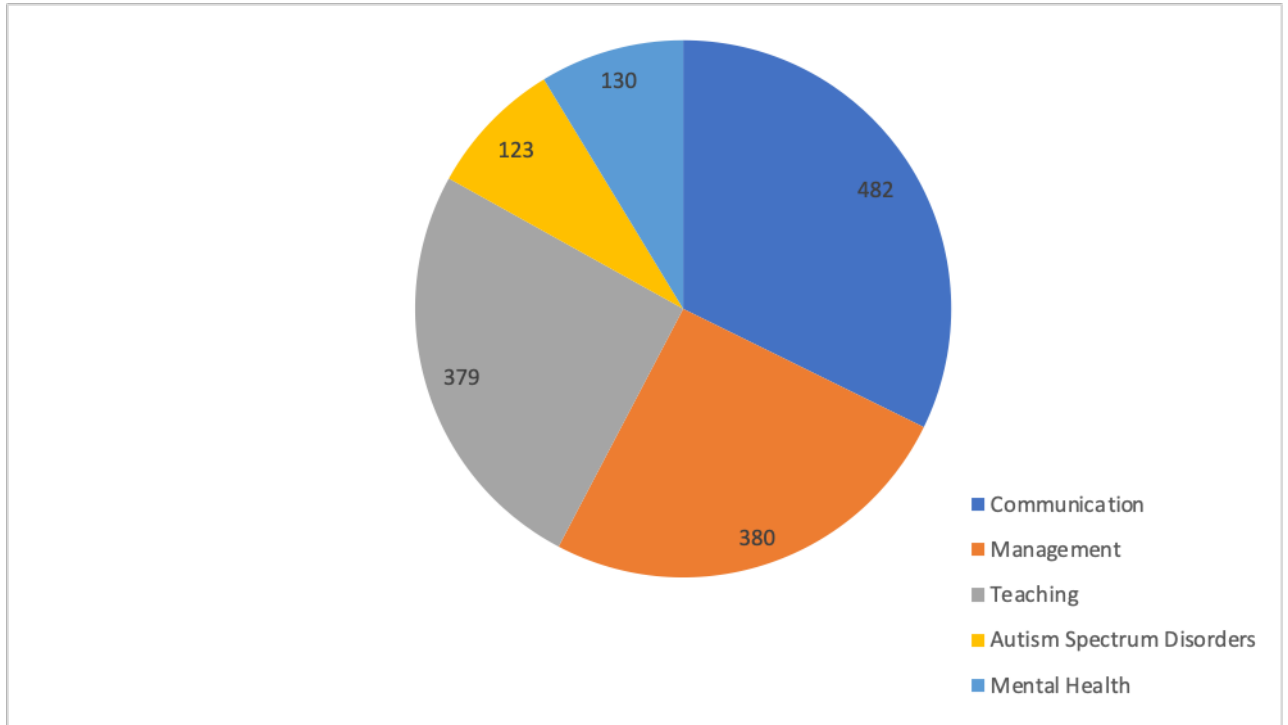


Figure 9 Top Job Postings with skills, November 2022
Data received by Haringey Council (Jobs and Skills Demand, Lightcast Nov 2022 Data set)

Figure 9 illustrates that the skills most in demand in these postings include communication, management, teaching, autism spectrum disorders (ASD), and mental health support workers.

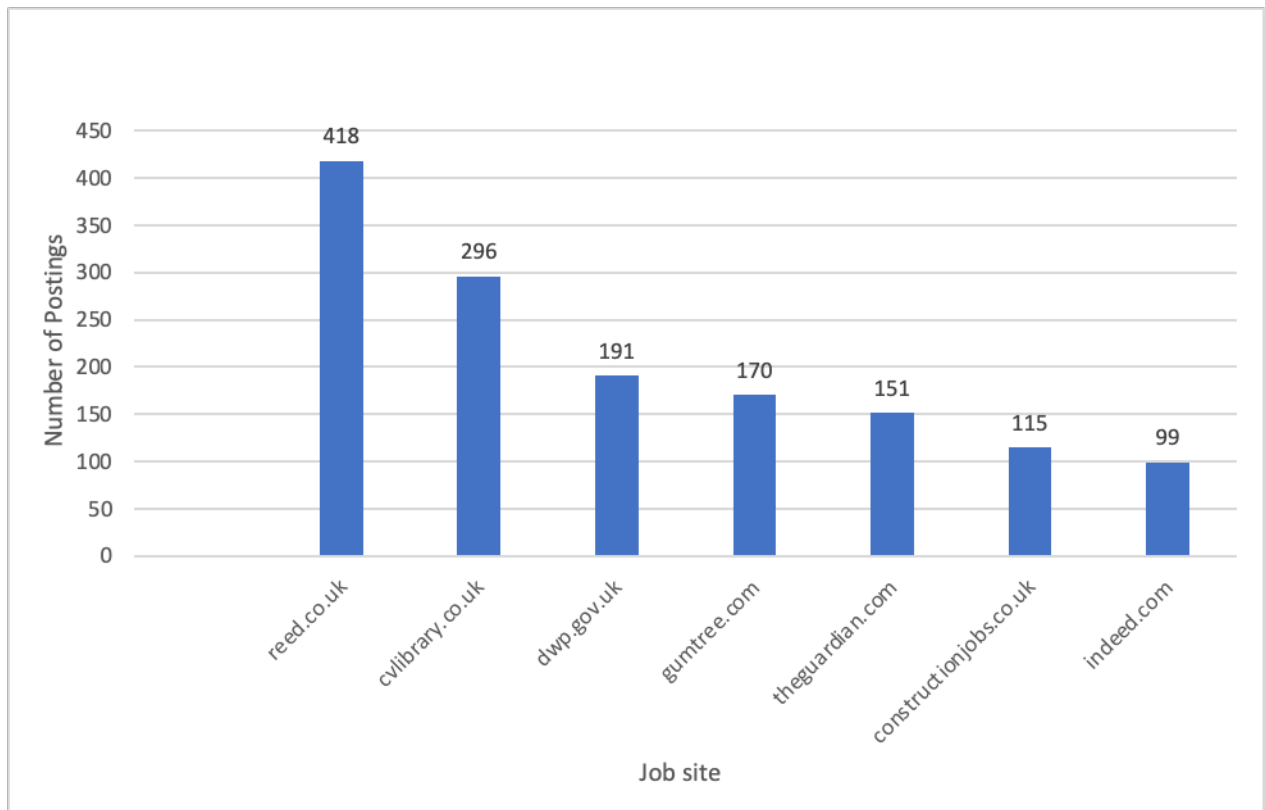


Figure 10 Top Posting Websites, November 2022

Data received by Haringey Council (Jobs and Skills Demand, Lightcast Nov 2022 Data set)

The chart illustrates the top posting sites for job vacancies in Haringey during November 2022 which include reed.co.uk having the highest number of job postings, followed by cvlibrary.co.uk, dwp.gov.uk, gumtree.com, theguardian.com, constructionjobs.co.uk, and indeed.com. These platforms play a crucial role in connecting job seekers with potential employers.

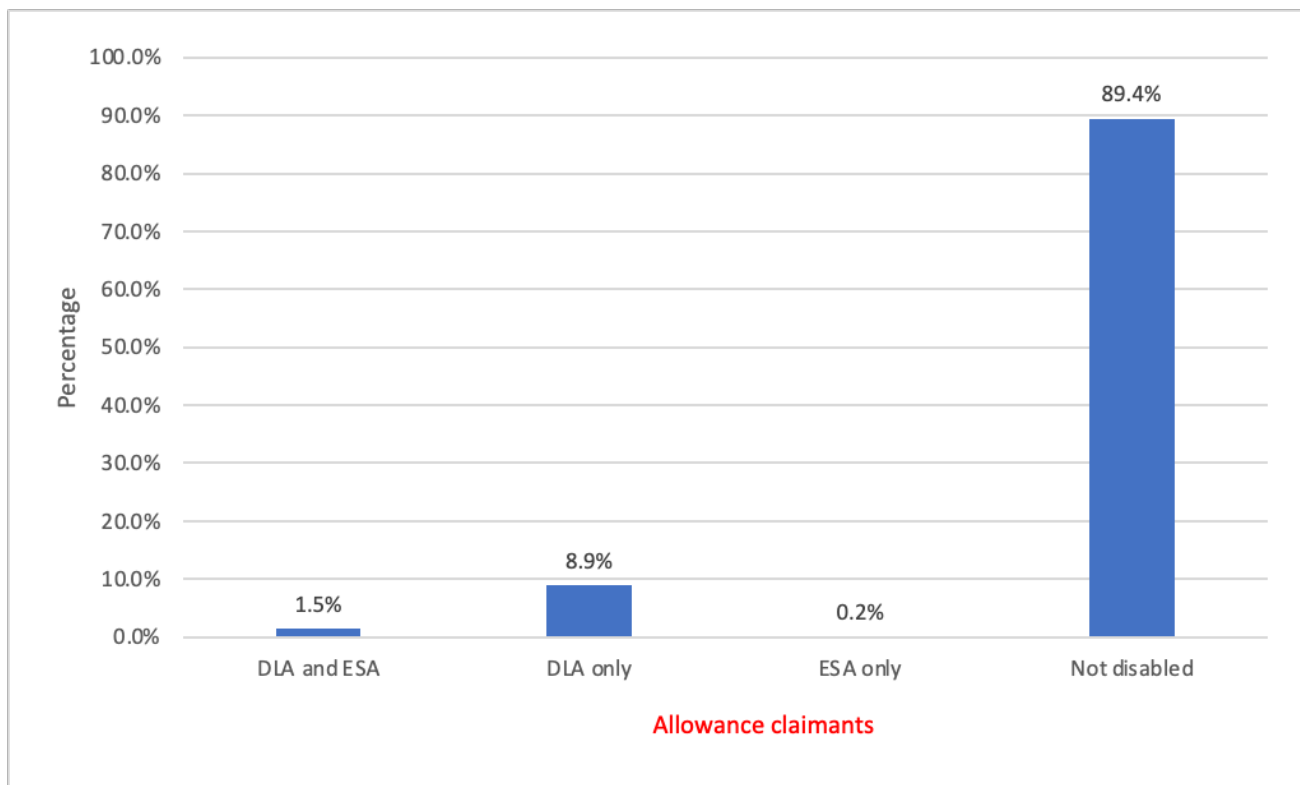


Figure 11. Disability Allowance Claimants Among the Working Young People of Haringey

Data source: LIFT Data of c32k Haringey households (LIFTyp18_25Feb datasetinandoutofwork615)

Figure 11 shows the numbers of young people in Haringey in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) benefits. While a significant majority of young residents (89%) indicate that they do not identify as disabled, it is important to note that a small percentage of the young population, approximately 1.5%, claims both the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) benefits. This indicates that a subset of the working-age young population faces challenges related to disability. Furthermore, Figure 11 reveals that 8.9% of the young working-age population claims only the DLA benefit. This suggests that there is a notable portion of young individuals who receive financial support specifically through the DLA program, which is designed to aid individuals with disabilities.

5.2. Focus group findings

This section outlines the key qualitative findings from the focus groups with young people. The discussion topics revolved around employability skills and support, as well as careers advice received by students and young people's encounters with mainstream employment services, such as Jobcentre Plus (for a brief statistical overview of long-term youth unemployment in Haringey and what has been referred to as a 'acute youth crisis,' see Haringey Council/Officers Intelligence Group, 2021). Focus group participants also discussed job readiness and barriers to

employment and accessing services (the focus group topic guide is available in Appendix V).

5.2.1. Demographic breakdown and employment information of focus group participants

The qualitative analysis below draws on a small sample size. Despite the interesting findings emerging from the data, it should, therefore, be noted that it is hard to generalise based on a small group of young individuals with specific lived experiences. Three focus group discussions with a total of 17 young residents were conducted in the following locations: Wood Green Library (Haringey Works), Rising Green Youth Hub in Wood Green and online via Microsoft Teams. Some focus group sessions were cancelled due to no attendees/low turnout. All the participants live in Haringey and are between the ages of 18 and 26.

Gender		Age	
Female	5	18-20	6
Male	5	21-23	1
Self-defined/non-binary	1	23-26	4
Unassigned	6	Unassigned	6

Area of residence (Ward in the London Borough of Haringey)		Highest educational qualification	
Hornsey	1	Secondary School	1
Tottenham Green	1	Sixth Form/College	5
Wood Green	2	University Degree	5
Seven Sisters	2	Unassigned	6
Harringay	1		
White Hart Lane	2		
West Green	1	Disability	
Northumberland Park	1	Yes	3
Noel Park	1	No	8
White Hart Lane	1	Unassigned	6
Unassigned	4		

Ethnicity		Highest educational qualification	
Mixed - White-African	1	Secondary School	1
Black Caribbean	2	Sixth Form/College	5
Romanian	1	University Degree	5
Black African	2	Unassigned	6
South Asian – Bangladesh	1		

Mixed - White-Asian	1
Turkish	1
Ecuadorian-French	1
Unassigned	7

The focus groups highlighted that the type of work and the employment experiences of young people are often rooted in work that is poorly paid, unprotected and insecure ('precarious' employment).

Employment status

Seeking employment (how long; what sort of job)?

Working full time	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. "I have been looking for jobs on job listing websites like Indeed and Totaljobs." • Yes. "Five months. Software Developer, Front-end Developer, Back-end Developer, Full Stack Developer, Waiter, Cashier."
Working part time	3	
In full time education or training	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. "I'm looking towards getting a job in a hotel."
Not working, but seeking employment	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. "I have been seeking work for one year, I'm looking for Junior Office positions."
Not working, not currently seeking employment	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. • Yes. "Have been looking for internships and placements in finance for three/four months." • Yes. "I'm looking towards getting a job in a hotel." have been looking for a job for two and a half months." • No. "I am not looking for another job at the moment." • Yes. "I have been looking for part-time work for the last two years. I am looking for work in Health and Social Care, such as Health Care Assistant, Social Worker and Customer Service."
Unassigned	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not Applicable: 1 • Unassigned: 7

5.2.2. Employment experience

Young employees have been hit the hardest by rising unemployment nationally during the COVID pandemic, with young people under the age of 35 accounting for almost 80% of jobs lost in 2021 (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Whilst official figures show that long-term unemployment amongst young people increased during the pandemic, with more than 200,000 under-25s out of work for six months or more (*ibid.*), unemployment levels in the London Borough of Haringey have fallen in 2022 to below its statistical neighbours and London levels (Haringey Council, 2023). A fall

in youth unemployment, however, does not give any indication of how young people experience the process of seeking jobs, employment services and workplace culture. **Focus group participants spoke about several barriers to work, as well as both adverse employment experiences and 'precarious' working conditions.** They also highlighted how negative experiences could have demotivating effects and impacted upon how they pursued jobs and services.

'Sometimes customers were being rude to you.' (FG participant, Wood Green Library, 20 years old, female)

'The less enjoyable stuff was staff and customers not being very nice to you. I think especially in a lot of the capacities that I've worked in, especially with working like as a nanny and like with kids, sometimes like the parents can like be quite a big part of that experience for you and how they treat you and like what they see you as and stuff like that.' (FG participant, Wood Green Library, 25 years old, female)

Many of their adverse employment experiences were rooted in different forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, ableism and ageism. Another focus group participant (Rising Green Youth Hub) outlined how they had been treated unfairly by their employer, as they did not receive:

'...a contract about, like, how many hours I'm supposed to work in the week, in the month, or whatever.'

And when they asked their employer for time off, they were dismissed under very cruel and suspicious circumstances.

'According to my friends who've had loads of jobs, I am actually entitled to, like, some time off. I asked for that time off and expecting to be paid. "Can I please take some time off in like a month because my friend has invited me, blah blah blah... and then [my manager] the entire time said, "yeah, I know, it should be fine. Shouldn't be an issue." Literally the day before I'm supposed to go and take my time off, like, fly out of the country, he messages me at like 10 o'clock on WhatsApp saying "Hi [...]. Really sorry to tell you, especially considering that you're traveling soon, but unfortunately you haven't passed your probationary period, we're going to have to let you go. Consider this your one week's notice; genuinely wishing you all the best in the future..." My probationary period ended like a month ago. And like there was no formal sit-down chat.' (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

This incident, of course, raises two concerns: employers' treatment of young people; and, to what extent do young people know about their statutory rights and the complex nature of employment contracts, including details about leave entitlements and probation periods. This is discussed further in the Recommendations section.

Some spoke about their work experiences and the nature of the work as being repetitive.

'It was quite repetitive, I just find it kind of like it's just doing the same thing over and over, and it was just like mainly to just earn some money. [...] It's not something I'm really interested in. It was just to earn some money.' (FG participant, online session)

Others mentioned that they found themselves in a 'jack-of-all-trades' role at work.

'...everything that they [the employer] say is my job, is my job' (FG participant, male, Rising Green Youth Hub)

'I was like an office assistant or researcher. Wait... a light-quiz technician. A script writer. I literally did so much stuff over the course of that job and I was only there for like 10 months. [...] The entire team was working within, like, this constant "crunch culture" and like for some people, they can, like, really thrive in environments like that because they like the pressure. But, some people don't. I'm kind of one of those people from in the middle of, like, yeah: a bit of pressure is good, but too much of it, all of the time, will make me lose my mind.' (FG participant, non-binary, Rising Green Youth Hub)

Some of the young focus group participants gave accounts of positive work experiences and how these could be applied in a range of employment settings in the future. Although the majority repeatedly expressed that the jobs that they've had or are currently having are not relevant to what they want to do, some spoke of these job experiences as opportunities to develop transferable skills.

[The job] was not relevant at all to what I really wanna do in the future. But it was like a good experience in terms of, obviously, when you're working with little kids, you need to understand, like, how to be patient. So, like there's a few like transferable skills. If there's like a stressful situation, how do you go about that? (FG participant, online, 18 years old)

That job [betting shop] literally was a test of character. I also thought that job helped me working on my patience and learning how to, like, handle stressful situations at work. (FG participant, online, 24 years old)

I've worked kind of everywhere, like pubs and being a nanny. Like I've done everything. Yeah, generally good experiences. I think. Yeah, they've always been very different. It's always been a lot more kind of like physical work versus mental, so I think this is why, now, it's weird for me to be around a laptop and sit, and not have to, like, you know, run after a kid, or like pour a pint. [...] Regardless, there's always something, I think, for me to take from it. (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

The process of seeking work is sometimes both degrading and dishonest. Two participants mentioned that they regularly felt that employers offered false hope, by saying, for instance:

"we're gonna reply in three to five working days," and I would want them to be

honest. I wouldn't want them to lie [...] and then for me to wait a couple months, and still not have the job. Yeah.' (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

The competitive nature of today's labour market was also discouraging when seeking employment.

'The reason I've been failing at my job applications is not because I suck, it is because 1,000 people apply for the same job. [...] A lot of them have a Bachelor's or experience, and I'm trying to get the job to get the experience; and a lot of them have been like interns or on apprenticeships, which kind of defeats the purpose of getting that internship or apprenticeship if they want somebody who already have experience of that.' (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

Later in the focus group discussion, the same participant concluded that 'It's not hard to *find* the job. It's hard to *get* a job. [...] I am the "baby of the group" and I just get swept aside.'

Experience, often accompanied by social capital – '*who you know*,' according to most of the participants, were key factors in successfully finding a job.

'Yeah, it's basically about experience and you're guaranteed to get the job.' (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

Gaining valuable and relevant experience, however, proved difficult to many of the focus group participants:

'[Seeking work experience], as an adult, means I have less confidence to do so because you kind of put yourself in like a vulnerable, vulnerable position when you say, "can I do some work for free at your place?" [...] It can end up becoming a thing where you're going there, doing the work experience and end up staying there for like a while longer because they're dangling the prospect of the job in front of you. But then they never actually employ you when it's like, well, great.' (21-year-old FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

5.2.3. Career aspirations

According to the most recent '*State of the Borough*' report, just over a half of Haringey's residents state they've been 'feeling optimistic about the future often or all of the time (54%),' which is a significant decrease from previous survey (66%) (Haringey Council, 2023). Optimism about the future is slightly higher among younger residents than older residents. **Unemployed residents are amongst the least optimistic in Haringey** (*ibid.*).

Participants attending the focus groups had mixed opinions about their possible employment trajectories. Although few were optimistic about the future of work, there were several indicators of career aspirations, as such. Many of the young people

seem to have some sort of career path plan, often divided into short- and long-term employment prospects.

‘So, I was thinking in the short term, I do wanna like to learn a trade; but in the long term, I’ve always liked wanted to work with young people.’ (FG participant, online)

‘I would like to take an apprenticeship as a teaching assistant, so I’m searching for it at the moment, or go to college to get a certificate in supporting, teaching and learning in schools, so that will help me to find a role as a teaching assistant.’ (FG participant, online)

The short- and long-term strategies of some of the participants were shaped by their reality of facing a trade-off between pursuing what they love and having an income.

‘I think I just got a [...] two-day-a-week job, but it’s still freelance. But it’s like at least I know how much money is coming in now; whereas before, I was kind of like in a very volatile state of never knowing how much money I was going to get from like doing lots of zero-hours-kind-of-jobs. So I think the next step for me is kind of like just knowing that I have this money coming in, like I can kind of breathe a bit and like figure out what’s gonna happen after that, like upskill probably, and also just kind of, yeah, maybe volunteer or maybe just kind of do some more work to just have more on my CV. [In the long run,] I want to be an entrepreneur and like, do my own thing. Umm, but also like work, I think, as a creative director or something.’ (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

This approach to work resembled the employment strategy of one of the online focus group participants.

‘So right now, rather than looking for the job I want to do, I want to find a day job since I want to work in the arts, which is known for being a very hard job sector to get into or get a good salary from. I first have to make sure I’m financially secure, so right now I’m just struggling to find a job I could do on the side rather than my main job.’

Seeking some form of financial security seemed to be a priority. **Correspondingly, due to financial constraints, intensified by the cost-of-living crisis, the reality is that many young people choose an(y) income over the possibility of pursuing a more worthwhile and meaningful career.**

‘I’ll have patches where I’d apply to, like, literally anything, even if it’s a job that’s like ‘I would hate that job.’ I would hate knowing that I would hate myself a little bit at the end of the day for like consigning myself to that, but also at the same time: ‘I need money.’

Some weeks, I would be [...] just expanding, like, you know, the search radius of what it is I’m actually looking for; I’m at this point right now where like I’m just applying to anything and everything.’ (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

One participant, however, stated, 'I'm a very unambitious person. Like, I am OK with just having enough to survive.' Yet, he had a very clear idea of their career aspirations, and the steps required to reach his goal. He spoke about, initially, seeking jobs as a low-end developer, but need an internship to gain the relevant work experience. For this participant, the issue was not a lack of aspiration, but to get a foot in the door.

'I have not been in the country long enough, so, honestly, my best bet would be an internship. But it's not going well because everybody's applying for internships as well; I'm the least qualified [...] compared to other people. I'm just like, "What's the point in even applying."' (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

Despite their **adverse employment experiences**, outlined in the previous and succeeding sections, and the financial reality faced by many, especially in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, there are clear indicators that the participants ultimately want to **pursue 'meaningful' jobs**.

'I don't really want to be stuck in the job, that's boring, or where my heart is not really there. So, yeah, I'd like to have a job that I actually enjoy doing.' (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

'I would like myself to wake up, and I'm going to go and enjoy my job.' (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

5.2.4. Barriers to employment and accessing services

The key barriers to employment identified by the young participants in the focus groups are as follows:

- employers' emphasis on work experience;
- unfair treatment, both in the workplace and, although less common, when accessing employment services;
- financial barriers, including the cost-of-living crisis;
- racist, sexist, ageist, ableist³ and class discrimination, including institutionalised discrimination;
- lack of provisions providing one-to-one employment support or mentoring;
- mental health issues; and,

³ 8.9% of the young working-age population in Haringey claims Disability Living Allowance (DLA), which suggests that a notable portion of young individuals receive financial support specifically through the DLA programme, which is designed to aid individuals with disabilities. In contrast, a minimal proportion of 0.2% claims only the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) benefit. Approximately 1.5%, claims both the DLA and the ESA benefits. This indicates that a subset of the working-age young population faces challenges and barriers related to disability, requiring financial assistance and support for their livelihoods. No one attending the focus groups for young Haringey residents specifically brought up the topic of disability as being a barrier to employment in the focus groups, except for when a mental health condition becomes a barrier, and, perhaps, also a disability. This could indicate that there is a stigma attached to disability amongst young people in Haringey and that more work is required to facilitate open discussions about disabilities and encourage employers to both eradicate barriers to work and stigma for disabled (young) people.

- lack of awareness, training and support by employers in the workplace.

Barriers associated with employment services, such as Jobcentre Plus, are discussed in a later section. It should also be noted that the participants come from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and, thus, have distinct, lived experiences. It follows that some of the key barriers emerging from the data may be unique to some of the individuals (for a brief statistical overview of long-term youth unemployment in Haringey and what has been referred to as a an 'acute youth crisis,' see Haringey Council/Officers Intelligence Group, 2021).

Several focus group participants spoke about the issue of **employers asking for experience** within the field of work that they were applying for.

‘As for some of the jobs that I wanted to go for, they always wanted like certain experiences that I didn’t have.’ (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

This is **perceived as a barrier for many young people as they struggle to gain any relevant experience**. Employers, according to numerous participants, ask for experience even for entry-level jobs and internships.

‘Like, these are volunteer roles – a volunteer[!], you get nothing out of it! [...] Let’s say I’m level one; people, like, with level 5 applied for that [volunteer role]. And I had a good interview; like they honestly said, I did a wonderful, excellent interview in the feedback, but compared to everybody else, I was trash.’ (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

‘I have interviews where employers just look over my CV and tell me this is nothing, or we do not know why you want to apply to us, and because of that I just remain silent.’ (FG participant, online)

Financial barriers for Haringey’s young population manifest themselves in various ways, including:

- through not being able to attend training or pay for education, leading to career stagnation or low-paid, uncertain and insecure work;
- through issues surrounding childcare;
- through unaffordable expenses, such as travel and work attire, required to work; and,
- through not being able to pursue the jobs that they are genuinely interested in.

Here is an example of the latter:

‘A lot of people that get the jobs that I want have done like loads of like free work because they have basically the support of, like, family or whatever. They don’t pay rent. Unfortunately, I don’t know have that luxury; like, I pay my own rent. So, I can’t take as much free work in like creative work. Whereas some people can do like an internship for two years and not get paid because they’re not paying to actually survive and live in London. That is, in

terms of barriers, a lot of unfair advantage.’ (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

Work attire and travel expenses were also brought up as a barrier.

‘The fact that loads of the jobs that I’m interested in or fit my career goal, unfortunately, are like hours away.’ (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

‘...I never went back because every other job offer required me to be in a suit and tie.’ (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

The **negative impact that financial hardship** experienced by young people (and others) has on finding suitable employment opportunities and the young job seeker’s mental health, which, in turn, impacts their ability to look for work, is well documented. ‘When every day becomes an all-consuming battle to afford essentials and deal with the effects of hardship, it’s no wonder that this can add to problems and make it harder to secure work’ (Porter and Johnson-Hunter, 2023).

Poor communication and little support from employers and employment services were issues that were regularly brought up in the focus groups. One participant who took part in the focus group discussion in Wood Green Library experienced poor communication, leaving her frustrated and dispirited.

‘I went to a Jobcentre close to me. They took my number [...], but they never called me again. I was so looking forward to them calling me. Nowadays, [getting a] job is like ‘whom you know’. If you know someone, you just call them. At the Jobcentre, they don’t help—like, they just took my details. [...] I never went back to them again; just call people I know, “do you have any vacancies?”’

Another participant attending the same focus group session, followed up:

‘...When you get support from Jobcentre, you have to prove every time that you’ve applied for something [...]. You have to have like evidence, and [do] that alongside also like maybe having a job. It’s a lot of work [and] a very long process. And I think that’s something that was also quite a big barrier.’

Stigma attached to some jobs and the tendency to **underestimate the importance of some jobs**, were a key barrier for some participants. A focus group participant at Rising Green Youth Hub said that they repeatedly were told by family members and others, ‘you wanna try and find yourself a proper job.’ The participant made two further points: (1) ‘the only jobs that kind of feel within reach for me are like retail, customer service, call centre stuff;’ and (2) to this participant, ‘these are all proper jobs because they require a lot of like, you know, skills, energy and resources.’

‘They are actually like valuable jobs. But like when you’re constantly told all the time “you need to get a proper job,” it’s like “OK, cool; well, these are the only ones that feel reachable for me at the moment.” But why do I feel like the loser when I applied to them and get rejected?’

The participant raises crucial concerns about how we speak about and value certain jobs. Many of the jobs that we relied on, or were important to us, during the COVID-19-related lockdowns, are often perceived as not being 'proper jobs.' The lesson has not been learnt, and society still tends to speak derogatory about many jobs – the ones that typically are within reach for young people. Many of the participants asked for dignity at work and a fair income to be the norm; or, in the words of a participant (Rising Green Youth Hub), 'people wanna work, but they don't wanna be treated like crap to get money; [...] we don't want to be exploited.'

Discrimination and unfair treatment at work are perhaps the main barriers to work, but to what degree a young person is likely to experience these barriers are typically rooted in the identity characteristics of the individual. One participant with a South Asian background (online focus group) spoke about how his self-identity had been affected by numerous questions about his nationality despite being a British citizen (he was born outside the UK). The **identity issues** that he experienced had a negative impact on his confidence, which, in turn, made job interviews challenging. Identities emerged out of **youth cultures** where also often perceived as a barrier to successfully passing job interviews.

'I've been discriminated against because of my tattoos and piercings, and I personally feel like that's a slap in the face because you shouldn't like judge someone or, like, turn away someone because of like the amount of tattoos they have and what they look like, how their hair is like.' (FG participant, online)

Another participant from the same focus group agreed, and added:

I've been turned down. [...] They can see on my CV that I've got the skills. I've got this specialist experience as well. I feel like [...] they would accept me through email; let's say they get my CV and they don't know what I look like. But, as soon as I go to my interview, [...] I can just see like they're not really fond of like my tattoos or piercings.'

How they're being perceived in job interviews and at work, and scrutinised due to, e.g., their 'race,' ethnicity, accent, sexuality, class or gender does not only influence whether or not they will be employed, but have long-lasting effects on how they perceive themselves, sense of belonging and their **confidence in seeking future employment**.

One participant was particularly concerned about the treatment that they had witnessed at work, often by senior members of staff.

'At my last job – legally speaking – they shouldn't have done like a bunch of stuff like send stuff about people with autism; people who aren't cis; also, just really weird things about, like, how they treat women.' (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

These experiences were at the back of the young person's mind when seeking employment.

‘Whenever a job posting or listing [...] go into detail about “we are an equal opportunity employer,” I love to jump on those kinds of jobs and like apply to them because it’s like, “cool, you’re actually keeping in mind, like all this stuff that you know doesn’t put everyone on equal footing.” [...] I feel like it should just kind of be like a given that you should expect that at any job that you applied for, not just like these “nice cushy ones.” I feel like it [equal opportunity] shouldn’t be an exclusive thing for certain jobs.’

‘If they don’t advertise being equal opportunity [and] I don’t get that job, it’s not really much skin off my teeth because it’s like, I wouldn’t want to take that risk anyway.’ (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

A lot more should be done, according to several participants, about **discrimination in the workplace**; and, employment services could play a role in providing support since it can be difficult for young individuals to deal with issues of workplace discrimination internally, as this participant (Rising Green Youth Hub) makes clear: ‘if I show up and [colleagues] find out that I’m not like a cis woman, and then they start acting really weird towards me, it’s just like, “OK, I don’t really know what to do with this information because I could make a complaint, but you’re my boss.”’

The same participant also points out that employment services should avoid sending individuals in the direction of jobs where they may experience discrimination. They asked for separate employment ‘**forums**’ or ‘**safe spaces**’, so that ‘if you’re trans or non-binary or if you are on the spectrum or deal with like mental health issues or some kind of neuro-divergency, [then] this is a community where people who can help find jobs that are like friendly’ towards ‘your group.’

In sum, young people, on balance, want to work, but there are several barriers that make it difficult for them to either do so, or do so smoothly. As one of the participants attending the Rising Green focus groups said, ‘...people like to complain about young people not working: “they don’t want to work!” Well, “no!” – they want to be treated fairly.’

Welfare and mental health

Another key barrier identified by participants in the focus groups is the issue of mental health and young job seekers’/employees’ welfare. Although the need to track young people’s mental health outcomes vis-à-vis the labour market is an obvious one (MacDonald et al., 2023), this is somewhat neglected. ‘Young people have fared worse than other age groups, with rates of probable mental health disorders rising to one in six children (aged five to 16) in England, compared with one in nine three years earlier’ (MacDonald et al., 2022), and as this report makes clear, for many, mental health issues are linked to employability and workplace experiences.

The focus groups highlighted the **lack of awareness and support by employers** in the workplace with regards to issues of **stigma and ignorance concerning people with mental health conditions**.

The level of support needed by individual young people to gain employment varies. Supporting young people to improve their mental health and welfare is likely to also have a positive impact on their employability skills. This is more likely to be

achieved with long-term funding, person-centred approaches or flexible support as there is no quick-fix and young people should be treated as a heterogeneous group.

‘...With a lot of young people, mental health comes in and plays a part as well, like for example with me, I found it hard to engage when I was in a low mood, when my anxiety was playing up. So, I thought like mental health is also got a big part to play in our engagement with [employment opportunities and services].’ (FG participant, online)

Although the participants concerned about mental health issues in relation to seeking employment acknowledge that employment services are not there to ‘diagnose’ job seekers, they feel that some services are in a good position to signpost job seekers to relevant sources of support.

‘I kind of wish they emphasised more, when you show up to the Jobcentre, in regard to like mental health, ‘cause I feel like that is a really big barrier for like a lot of people. I don’t know the ins and outs, but I feel like a lot of the people who probably show up or have dealt with long-term unemployment are probably the same people who have like a lot of issues, like going on up here [pointing to their head] that they don’t know how to resolve. Yeah, I get it; the point of the Jobcentre is supposed to help people get back into work, but I feel like they kind of overlook that aspect of “here are some resources to like help you get diagnosed; here are some resources to help you manage whatever conditions that you might have that might make getting a job, or maintaining a job, keeping a job down a bit more difficult.”’ (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

Some participants had experiences of caring employers, and stressed the positive impact that dignity at work could have on their mental wellbeing.

‘My last job was like “if something is wrong tell us.” And my old manager, like, pulled me aside, “I know you use they/them pronouns and I know that we should be better than that because [using correct pronouns] matter.’

A more personable approach from employment services that is not solely focused on short-term employability outcomes can also go a long way to improve positive welfare outcomes, including self-worth, and, in turn, more stable employment trajectories.

‘...If you’re trying to like get employed and it’s been a while, it kind of just creates this impression of like so much of your self-worth as a human being revolves entirely around, like, your employability and whether or not you have a job.’ (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

The news media and many politicians regularly draw on common tropes or **stereotypical conventions**, maintaining that ‘young people are not in work due to laziness, poor work ethic, or some kind of personal indulgence’ (Zaphir, 2021). This claim is not only incorrect with harmful consequences for out-of-work young people, but, if taken seriously, can also cause decision makers behind support mechanisms

applied by employment services to neglect the underlying issues, and, thus, fail to resolve several issues that contribute to youth unemployment.

'The root cause of a bunch of like a lack of engagement, on some level, for a lot of people gotta be like "there's no point!" And I don't know how other people feel about this, but, me personally, I can't help but feel like if it was just a bit more personable, like if it wasn't just like "yeah, sign up here, give us your email, we'll send your details." [...] Actually, having like a person to talk to and them saying like, "we care about your progress; you've been telling us about these things, and we'll help redirect you to resources that will, actually, enable you to go on to do bigger and better things, and just being treated like, "yeah, you were capable."

To tackle this issue, another participant from the same focus group brought forward the idea of a '**mentoring system**' [a representative from Haringey Works did inform the participant of similar initiatives already in existence]. 'Somebody who actually care about the young people to take them through the process' of finding work. They stressed, furthermore, that it should not be:

'...like a tick-box exercise thing: "I sent you to that job placement; I'll put you there and forget about you." Because young people are quite complex, so some people might stutter and may not have confidence in their interviewing ability, or they might be waiting for ADHD assessment to assess their mental capability and capacity. And so, we need that in place, somebody to take you through the journey. Because people are quite capable, have a lot of skills.'

Precarious employment

The UK is undergoing **socio-economic changes** that are both rapid and seismic. One of the changes that have affected young people the most the past decade is the rise of precarious employment and inequality more broadly. The pandemic has further 'heightened the precarity in young people's lives and futures' (MacDonald *et al.*, 2023). Precarious employment refers to an aspect of the labour market, consisting of low-skilled and -paid jobs, with workers on short-term or zero-hours contracts, often unregulated with few opportunities for progression, which can lead to both financial uncertainty and career stagnation (see, e.g., *ibid.*).

There are gaps in information and statistics about the quality of jobs available for young people. As has been outlined above, many participants spoke about adverse employment experience, including precarious working conditions. These experiences have demotivating effects on how they perceive the labour market and pursue jobs more generally.

For many focus group participants, the idea of precarious employment has more or less become the norm.

'I think I've always moved from job to job...' (FG participant, online)

'I was kind of like in a very volatile state of never knowing how much money I was going to get from like doing lots of zero-hours kind of jobs. So I think the

next step for me is kind of like just knowing that I have this money coming in, I can kind of breathe a bit and like figure out what's gonna happen after that...'
(FG participant, Wood Green Library)

Precarious work conditions and job insecurity are often accompanied by young adults 'churning' around in the labour market, moving in between jobs, work schemes, being out of work, college, training programmes, more short-term employment etc. One participant (Wood Green Library) describes the challenging circumstances of juggling between zero-hours work and engaging with employment services.

'[Whilst trying to engage with Jobcentre Plus] I would never know when I was going to work necessarily like I would pick up a shift I'd go here. [...] Okay, so now I'm going to get an appointment, and I have to change everything around again and [I must choose] between me going to an appointment or me earning more money, I'm always going to go and earn money. I feel like there was just always quite a lot of like, phone calls and emails and like me having to catch up with people.'

A participant attending the Rising Green Youth Hub focus group session, graduated with a BSc in Management and Business, but can't find any work in a relevant subject area. He gave the impression of someone who had given up on employment that matches his interest, and instead accepted **the 'precarious reality' of work**. He is now:

'...planning on getting a driving licence so [...] hopefully I can get driving jobs. But [...] obviously [this doesn't make sense] because I went to study business management [...] and then I'm gonna take a driving job...'

One participant spoke about the uncertainty and unpredictable nature of his zero-hours job. He had to daily 'check their website and then you have to say, "I'm available," to which another participant attending the same session (Rising Green Youth Hub) responded, 'Ohh, it's one of those "that's-what-we-have-for-you" agencies.'

5.2.5. Employability skills and support

The quantitative data analysis shows the top posted occupations with high position intensity (the level of effort employers are putting into hiring for these positions). Many of the young research participants had skills matching the positions with 'high intensity (vacancies in, e.g., health & social care, education, construction), but they gave a clear indication of the lack of information with regards to access these types of jobs. Many focus group participants also acknowledged the need to acquire more employability skills.

'I'll be honest. Yeah, I need more skills. I need to learn more. I need more lessons. I can't be like, "I know this," but in my mind "I don't know it." I would like to learn more to gain experience and then maybe teach someone else from my experience.' (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

In the three focus group discussions held as part of this research, the following **concerns about employability support** or skills were raised by the participants:

- how to find relevant apprenticeships;
- how to develop and apply their employability skills (especially, CV writing; cover letters; interview skills);
- how to start (and maintain) a business (this is covered in the section on entrepreneurship and self-employment);
- how to retrieve relevant work experience in order to be in a position to pursue a job that they're interested in;
- how to improve money management skills;
- how to gain access to industry experts and 'specialised'/specific employability advice; as well as,
- employment rights, including:
 - written terms outlining job rights and responsibilities;
 - National Minimum Wage;
 - paid leave; and,
 - protection for whistleblowing and against unlawful discrimination.

As will be made clear in a later section, participants were particularly disappointed with the lack of support in **developing employability** skills and career readiness in **their secondary schools and sixth form colleges**. Although some schools facilitate, e.g., CV-writing workshops, 'Careers day,' most schools were mainly interested in **preparing students for sixth form college and university**.

Due to the precarious conditions inherent in many jobs, the competitive nature of the labour market and the increase in mental health issues, some participants requested **more support with developing their self-confidence**, and saw this as not being entirely separate from developing employability skills. For some, it's not enough to develop generic employability skills; the training and advice need to be more 'bespoke' and, also, cater for young people with low self-esteem, as well as anxiety and mental health issues.

The **lack of personalised employment support** could be one of numerous reasons why several participants spoke about how they developed employability skills, and even retrieved support with finding jobs, apprenticeships, internships and being self-employed, *outside* of mainstream employment services.

'I've always learned through like YouTube, like Internet and also just like going to things and like seeing what people can, like, teach me. I'm very much the person that like, if I see someone that I'm interested in, I like will be like, okay, like, let's meet up, let's talk... They don't mind giving [employability] advice to young people.' (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

Money management is another theme that may permeate young people's employment opportunities and trajectories. One participant from the online focus group responded as follows, when asked about the type of employability skills that they need to develop:

'I think I need to kind of work on money management skills like how I'm managing my money; what's coming in and what's going out. I feel like I overspend and then at the end of the month, I'm just like, where has it gone?'

Finally, one of the focus group participants at the Rising Green Youth Hub session, felt that **employability skills training** was almost always 'too dry.'

'You wouldn't teach preschool children "this is an 'E' remember this." [Rather, you would do] something that engages the children to actually be inclined to actually do or understand it. Because I'm not going to like a lot of the stuff [employability skills training], It's just mentally exhausting. [I struggled in] school, and it's just like going into another thing like school, which is like soul crushing and eating me out.' (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

Job readiness and preparedness

Very **few participants stated that they are 'job-ready.'** With regards to being prepared for seeking employment and the job itself, one participant made it clear that:

'...it was me going out and like figuring things out myself. [...] With both college and uni, like, I didn't feel like nobody ever kind of guided me. But it was because of the work that I wanted to do. I think it was very much like if I wanted to do like law or like medicine or like these kinds of like straightforward path careers, they had all the time in the world for you. But then if you wanted to explore outside of that, they were quiet. They didn't really know what to do or like where to point you...' (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

Another participant from the Wood Green Library focus group pointed out that 'gig' and zero-hours work do not prepare you for a 'proper job.'

'[Do I feel "job-ready"??] I don't know – probably not – just because I think I've always moved from job to job; it's only like recently that I've got like a proper like job.'

A participant from the same focus group gave a similar answer to the question about job-readiness.

'No, 'cause on some level, like, I know I am ready for a job, but it kind of feels like I'm not at the same time because I want to work but [...] I feel like I'm more student than like an employable member of the state who's ready to contribute to the economy.'

Again, some may feel ready to seek or embark on work, in theory, but due to **issues of self-esteem**, emanating from a range of negative experiences of seeking employment and work environments, it can be tough to go through with the process.

'It's strange because, in terms of like where to look for the stuff that you want, I know about it in theory, but then actually like applying to them, in practice, like for some reason it's kind of just slightly too much of, like, a jump and a

skip and away from my brain to be like, “Ohh, I’d get it; it’s easy.” (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

Those who had more personalised support, generally speaking, felt more prepared to seek work, although, again, it seemed like a gap between being ready in theory and in practice.

‘I feel prepared to look for jobs, and that’s because I was assigned a career mentor. There is somebody from my university who is employed in the job sectors [relevant to me]. They look at where I am with my CV and for my job searches and tell me if I’m doing a good job at looking for jobs; in their opinion, I’m doing great. It’s just that, since I’ve never actually had a job, I just don’t know if I’m mentally prepared for it, and especially since education mostly focuses on academics rather than practical skills.’ (FG participant, online)

In sum, in addition to the young person acquiring employability skills, job-readiness and -preparedness depend on various factors, such as the person’s self-esteem and previous experiences associated with both the process of seeking work and the workplace. As the next section will outline, almost all the participants across the three focus groups agreed that the necessary employability skills and support required to get into work have not been instilled in secondary schools or colleges

5.2.6. Employability support in school (secondary and sixth form college)

The *State of the Borough* report (Haringey Council, 2023) states that post-Key Stage 5, Haringey pupils are less likely to go on to HE institutions than pupils among Similar Neighbourhoods and London boroughs. Students leaving KS4 and KS5 are also less likely than other young people in London to take on an apprenticeship. Several focus group participants spoke about the fact that **little to no support in developing employability skills and career readiness took place in schools**. What’s more, many stated that schools failed to speak about apprenticeship, or even mention that the apprenticeship route is a potential path to employment. Instead, most schools were mainly interested in **preparing students for sixth form or university**.

With regards to whether schools, or sixth form colleges provided adequate or sufficient employability support, the following answers were typical responses from the participants:

‘...it was me going out and like figuring things out myself. [...] With both college and uni, like, I didn’t feel like nobody ever kind of guided me.’ (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

‘My school just helped me create a CV. I think else it was entirely on to me.’ (FG participant, online)

‘I guess they technically [provided some employability skills training], but it’s kind of more of like a lip-service-kind-of-job of just like, “we did technically, like, ohh, hey, look at this is kind of how you get a job; or, see what you’re

interested in, and then just pursue that.” But they don’t tell you what to do apart from “email them.” (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

‘I’ve tried to find things myself. I try to see what opportunities I have. Yeah, and I’m just exploring what else I need to do to get a job. Provide for myself.’ (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

‘The only time they actually taught us about actually getting a job was in secondary school. They talked about interview settings where we just came and dressed up and our social studies team came to do the interview; we were the interviewees. I was supposed to do something like that in the college I went to. Everything else I know [about employability skills] were things I learnt from my community.’ (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

‘[Did we get any support with employability skills?] Not really. All they did was we had like a careers day where they told us about different careers, but that’s the most they did. They didn’t really tell us, for example: “How are you supposed to look for jobs? How do you prepare for a job?”’ (FG participant, online)

‘You need to do the research yourself and see what decisions you can make. They [the school] just give you a plan and tell you that, this is what we do. But they don’t actually really explain it to you.’ (FG participant, online)

According to some participants, work experience placements in secondary schools appeared to be the most beneficial, and sometimes the only, way that schools prepared students for work and for students to gain employability skills.

‘Yeah, in secondary school. Basically, in year ten, obviously, [...] they give the students up with work experience; the students can actually go out in the real world, and they work for a company for two weeks or a week. [...] I was working for a company in Wood Green called Shoe Zone. I’m busy still there now kind of thing.’ (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

‘During secondary school, we have like work experience weeks and all that. [...] But it was very vague, it was more focused on “yeah, learn your stuff and then if you’re really that interested in it, you’ll naturally will pursue it anyway.”’ (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

Although the consensus was that **schools need to do more to facilitate employability (skills) training**, some participants had positive experiences of how schools, especially secondary schools, prepared them for work.

‘Secondary school made me ready for apprenticeship. However, my last sixth form that I was at a few years ago, I, personally, didn’t think they made me job-ready. I had to kind of like do it all on my own.’ (FG participant, online)

'I went to Aylward Academy sixth form [in Edmonton, Enfield] and we had a meeting about going into apprenticeships, and they were motivating us to look for apprenticeships.' (FG participant, online)

'I went to someplace with my school [where we were introduced to] nursing, or psychiatric nurse/medicine.' (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

The latter quote outlines a school excursion to a workplace that led the young person to later pursue a 'degree apprenticeship' in psychiatric nursing.

So, with regards to employability, what should schools focus on? Besides offering more employability skills training, the focus group participants were particularly enthusiastic about the prospect of **gaining more practical skills, including money management, and attending more work placements.**

'The school system teaches you X times X, when it should be teaching you how to work out a mortgage...' (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

'If I was the headmaster of the school and like literally, "Ohh yeah, everything sorted. Do whatever you want," I would probably like try to set up like some kind of programme where kids can like opt into taking half a day off during the week to be able to actually go somewhere and work; try and get in touch with like companies or businesses, local or otherwise. Or like remote jobs where students can do like a little bit of like work experience ongoing throughout the year or like throughout term instead of just two weeks where you're basically like the errand kid at some random office.'

One participant (Rising Green Youth Hub) explained that he did a project in secondary school [in Antigua] that he found very useful, and thought should be expanded upon in all secondary schools [in, e.g., Haringey]. This educational challenge allowed the student to develop essential entrepreneurial skills in school.

'I've done business plans in secondary school. [...] I made one 'electrical plan', on building technology. We had to create an overview of businesses within the world, the field of building and the field of the electric, electrical engineering. [...] You research competitors in that area, how we can be different from them; who are target audience. Basically, the kind of branding, and like what services is you offer.'

Another participant from the same focus group session suggested:

'...a weekly session to talk about different topics [associated with] employability, like interview skills, CV building and stuff like that. It could incorporate, you know, communities into the schools. So, like have little workshops or something where the students can go out into the community or volunteer. And hopefully get experience, because that's the one: like a lot of [employers] don't really care about your qualifications; they care about experience, and they've been not even given the chance that you put your foot in the door. They're basically being shut off for the rest of their life.'

Careers advice in school

According to several focus group participants, employability initiatives (workshops/skills training/support) in schools tend to **treat students in homogeneous ways** (as if they all are on the same trajectory with same interests). **A career advisor, or coach, could therefore provide valuable and more personalised support.**

'I did [get to meet a careers advisor in secondary school]. But I think, again, it was very much like at the time, I'll go do medicine, which is why I got an appointment; but outside of that, they weren't like kind of giving out appointments just for careers advice.' (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

'In my school, we have a careers office. [...] They gave us opportunities to learn what careers you wanna do. For example, like when it came closer to like when we had our work experience, we could talk to them about it. And before we chose our sixth form options, [we could] talk about what, like, courses we wanna do? And sometimes they'll do weekly... they bring someone in to give group sessions about, like different careers. So, like one week it might be somebody who works in the performing arts, and give a speech about what it is like to work in the performing arts. And that was really helpful in that regard.'

Other participants from the online focus group session provided positive comments to the participant who gave the latter account of the involvement of the careers office in facilitating employability initiatives. One participant responded:

'We have a careers officer as well, where I would go and ask him for advice about what to do if I finish my course'

Whilst another responded:

'I don't really recall being taught how to make a CV or even having a careers advisor. To be honest, I think there was once a careers fair, but that was as much as they provided.'

School encouraging university studies

Degree programmes, paid-work, apprenticeships, and internships offer different things, for different young people. There is a well-established attitude in schools and sixth form colleges toward apprenticeships as a means of entering a paid profession; the attitude towards degrees is different. Focus group participants stressed the importance of **treating students in heterogeneous ways**, by taking into account the range of life and work trajectories that they have: a degree may not be suitable for all; some could benefit from apprenticeship; others might enjoy and be ready to embark on paid work.

“Do this, do that, get good grades, you get into a good college.” In my college, “Do this, do that, get good grades, get in the university” (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

‘I think they [schools and colleges] just want you to just go to university. It wasn’t so much about the career, or the job, you’re gonna have; it was like, you need to go to university and then off you go. That was it.’ (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

‘Schools simply teach you how to get back into school.’ (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

When asked about what careers advice the participants received in school, some answered emphatically:

‘It was mainly about what course in uni I wanted to do. It wasn’t really anything like about jobs. It was just about what course...’ (FG participant, online)

‘In our school, it was more so like the focus of getting into university.’ (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

‘There was so much focus, at our school, on like grades and getting into uni and that sort of thing that I think the general assumption just across the board was like “yeah, our kids go on to university [...] and by the time they get there they’ll know what they wanna do when they’ll set their own career path.”’ (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

Some participants outlined that they were even, to some extent, indirectly discouraged from pursuing paid work, and certainly apprenticeships.

‘[In secondary school,] we mostly focused on sixth forms. I don’t want to sound so arrogant, but Gladesmore was ranked one the best schools in London and a lot of us were indirectly told we should go into academics rather than an apprenticeship. [...] They just made it sound like if you go to sixth form and then university, you are almost guaranteed employment. [...] But, by the first year of university, when I started looking for work, I quickly found out that was not the case at all. Employers do not care about your education; they want experience and training.’ (FG participant, online)

The education system, in the view of many of the participants, should **accept that students have different aspirations and levels of readiness to pursue work, apprenticeships and university degrees**. Employability initiatives need to be tailored around the supposition that young people’s transition into work is complex and heterogeneous. A couple of participants, though, stated that universities seem to do a better job, than secondary and sixth forms education providers, at providing students with more personalised employability skills training and support (‘...my university does loads of like employability workshops’ [FG participant, online]).

5.2.6. Apprenticeship opportunities, information and support

There are still **misconceptions about apprenticeships** that influence young people's career choices. And, as we have seen in the preceding sections, there is an accompanying lack of information about apprenticeships, according to many research participants.

Two participants from the online focus group session found the idea of 'degree apprenticeships' attractive since employers are increasingly interested in candidates with not only a degree, but also relevant work experience. However, a third participant responded that 'if you go to university then someone with a "normal degree" will be ranked "higher" than someone with a degree apprenticeship.'

Many secondary school and sixth form students are left confused about apprenticeships and sometimes discouraged to pursue one: '[whilst in school,] a lot of us were indirectly told we should go into academics rather than an apprenticeship. So, lots of us just pushed it aside' (FG participant, online). However, some participant had retrieved enough information about apprenticeships to gauge that being an apprentice can be a valuable path into some professions.

'I would like to take an apprenticeship as a teaching assistant. So, I'm searching for it at the moment. [...] I think apprenticeship is more suitable for me because I went to uni but I wasn't really successful; with an apprenticeship, I can learn on the job, get paid at the same time.' (FG participant, online)

Many of those who did have an **understanding of apprenticeship routes**, valued what they have to offer; especially as a means of gaining valuable experience. Many focus group participants did not know of where to go for further information about, or a directory of, relevant apprenticeships though. One participant (FG participant, online), however, recommended an app called Meetup.

'...It just depends on what you're interested in. So, if you, for example, are interested in gardening; if you just write gardening, then there are loads of like different places that you can attend and it's not always like physical meetups, it's also video calls. And they can give you information on like where to find apprenticeships. And I use it often for like my engineering stuff. It's a good place for networking, basically, and finding out what jobs are available and, any volunteering places and stuff.'

Another participant (FG participant, online) recommended a website, which gives an overview and list of internships.

'It's called UpReach. It's for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. And then once you apply for it and you get accepted into it, you get like someone who helps you with like applications and stuff, and then, you know, there's also, like opportunities on there – mainly internships; not too much about apprenticeships.'

5.2.7 Entrepreneurship and self-employment

The focus group discussions did indicate **some interest in pursuing self-employment and entrepreneurship**. One participant said:

‘Yeah, I think I want to definitely be, like, freelance. I’ve been freelance kind of off and on for like a few years. So, I want to kind of, I guess, be an entrepreneur and like, do my own thing.’ (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

Not all participants were equally enthusiastic about the idea of pursuing entrepreneurship or being self-employed.

The **reality of self-employment comes across as a coping mechanism for young people without regular sources of income or employment**. For some of the participants, their interest in being self-employed appeared to be more out of necessity than merely a passion for owning one’s own business.

‘I sometimes think about starting my own business, but not in the sense of, like, making it my main job, if that makes sense, it is more like another way to bring in money.’ (FG participant, online)

One participant also spoke about the entrepreneurial potential of social media with regards to promoting products or being an ‘influencer.’

‘Nowadays, you can just [open up a shop] online. An online business, however, can just mean so many things because it could mean, ohh, you have your first job and then, like, you might be an influencer. So let’s say if you went in the medical field you can be a doctor influencer and that’s where you can make money or, for example, let’s say I’m really talented at drawing, I can set up a shop online where I can take commissions and people can commission me to do art stuff for them. Like there’s so many different options for online businesses. So yeah, it’s just something I think about a lot, and I might do, might not...’ (FG participant, online)

Support with starting a business

The desire to start a company is common among young people, but they face barriers because they lack experience. Through social media or local services, entrepreneurs should be able to **easily access information** and training about business and money management, leadership, as well as strategic thinking and planning skills, access to technology or networking events, but local authority and employment services could also play a role. One participant (Wood Green Library) who was self-employed was asked about whether they had received any support in school or from the local council and employment services. Her answer was, ‘No. But, I think, again, [...] I’ve kind of done that myself.’ As will be made clear in a later section, many focus group participants sought support from non-mainstream employment services.

For the most part, participants had a realistic picture of potential challenges involved in being self-employed, and a few acknowledged that it is ‘harder than it may sound

at first' (FG participant, online); participants suggested that **advice and support are, therefore, required to successfully** run your own business.

'To be an owner of a business, that is a big, biiig, you know, huuuge, Mount Everest step to take.' (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

'Having a business or being self-employed, if you want it to be successful for a lifetime, you have to know how to *maintain* having the business, not just knowing how to start...' (FG participant, online)

'I personally feel like when it comes to starting a business, it's not an easy process as much as it sounds easy, it's like a *process*. With this day and age, a lot of people want to be in entrepreneurship and stuff. And I personally feel like, especially with young people, we should be actually given more support and advice [with regards to self-employment and entrepreneurship].' (FG participant, online)

Although acknowledging how hard it can be to be self-employed, one participant was prepared for the 'give-and-take' nature of self-employment.

'Yeah, it can be hard [to be self-employed]. But I think the payoff of the freedom kind of goes with that. You know, like if I want to go on holiday I can. If I want to, like, work less, I can do that.' (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

Some budding entrepreneurs wanted like-minded partners and wish there were easier ways to develop collaborative relationships between compatible professionals.

'I'd like a partner, so it's not me doing the whole job; like for them to buy and then I sell it, or for them to be creative. I would like them to give me advice.' (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

Another participant from the same focus group was also asking for support in building a collaborative network.

'I think just having more links to [relevant collaborators] and kind of having those gaps bridged with people that actually, you know, work in industry.

When asked about the **type and mode of workshops needed by young people interested in self-employment**, one participant (Wood Green Library) suggested that 'what could be helpful is not necessarily just one-on-one kind of conversations. I think just also like having group discussions with other people who are also trying to do their business.' Young people tend to better understand their own needs and wants by participating in group discussions, where they are in a position to create a level of influence and choice. She continued:

'...but also like engaging with like other outside services and bringing them in to actually deliver stuff because they'll also attract young people.'

The idea of bringing in **industry specialists to run employability workshops** was brought up by several participants.

‘[Industry specialists] who have their own businesses could actually come in and like talk to us, give us careers advice; like, you know, kind of how you do an invoice; how you actually set up your own business; like, how do you like find a partner; how to network; how do you do these things.’ (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

Why industry specialists?

‘They’re *in* the industry they’ve worked in the industry; they know what it’s like. They can actually help you and give you realities about what the businesses are actually like, versus someone being like, “I don’t know and like, here we go, we’re both not going to know together.”’

There was also a need for more **‘instant support’**, for example, in the form of a drop-in centre.

‘[With mainstream employment services] you have to wait for people to get back to you. And then it’s like, by that time, you’ve kind of already figured it out.’ (FG participant, Wood Green Library)

Long waiting time and lack of specialist knowledge is why some participants sought support from non-mainstream employability services.

‘I just use my network of people that also are self-employed that I’ve, like, had for years. So, I just kind of ask them if there’s anything that I need. I also read quite a lot about what I should do and watch YouTube videos and stuff and look at people that I want to replicate.’

The same participant (Wood Green Library) also added that HMRC had been very useful and patient with her requests.

‘When you call like the people that actually, like, do the whole invoicing, HMRC, they’re actually okay, like, on the phone. It seemed daunting, but they’re actually very, like, nice people and they do kind of talk you through stuff. [...] I’ve been on the phone sometimes about three hours, literally going through like my form, and talking about where can I claim stuff because you can get taken off and so like you don’t get taxed as much. There’s this whole like scary thing, but it’s not actually true of being self-employed. You have to just do admin and like numbers and sit down, but if you put on some music when you have coffee, you can kind of get through it, you’ll be fine.’

5.2.8. Employment services, organisations and websites

Except for Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and Haringey Works, there were **little knowledge of employment services, support and information available in Haringey**. As we have seen in the preceding section, many of the focus group participants seek

support and job opportunities without conferring (mainstream) employment services. Instead, they are likely to reach within their **own networks and communities**; partly to seek work and employability support, and partly to help members of their families or communities with care or business. Some participants use **apps and websites** (e.g., meetup.com, upreach.org.uk) to help them find relevant employment opportunities and online video platforms like YouTube to seek employability advice; this worked particularly well for those interested in entrepreneurship, apprenticeship and internship.

Some of the focus group participants were quite critical of the 'system' put into effect by JCP. In various ways, they often stated that JCP provided:

- little to no support in getting a (meaningful) job;
- little to no specialised knowledge in relation to their chosen career path;
- an environment that was perceived as not being suitable for young people;
- little support, or signposting to available support, in developing, e.g., interview skills and money management; and,
- little to no personalised support, and, thus, failed to recognise individual needs and issues, such as low self-esteem and mental health issues.

The few focus group participants who had heard about Haringey Works spoke favourably about it. However, for one participant (Wood Green Library), 'it was kind of this like lag. [...] Appointments took too long, I need to know now, because otherwise, like, I have to go nannying again; I have to go to work in a pub again and like I need to pay rent. [A Haringey Works employment advisor] said that they were gonna get back to me and they didn't. And then in that time, when they did get back to me, I had already got a job and so it was a bit like, "Well, yeah, it's okay now."' (The issue of lack of instant employment support was raised in the preceding section.)

Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and Universal Credit

One-to-one meetings at JCP consist of 10-minute appointments, usually every week or every two weeks. The Jobcentre is described by the focus group participants as a place that **provides job seekers with financial support** to find a job, where **'applying for a job is like having a job'** (FG participant, Wood Green Library). If you do not meet the work search targets, you get sanctioned, and the benefit allowance stops. This could be difficult for a young person who lacks experience and may end up doing a job they do not want to do or are not able to find a job they want because they don't have the time and support in place.

One participant (FG participant, Wood Green Library) found their first encounter with JCP discouraging:

'I went to a Jobcentre close to me. They took my number [...], but they never called me again. I was so looking forward to them calling me. Nowadays, [getting a] job is like 'whom you know'. If you know someone, you just call them. At the Jobcentre, they don't help—like, they just took my details. [...] I never went back to them again; just call people I know, "do you have any vacancies?"'

It was also stated that JCP is not a suitable environment for young people.

'While they're helpful service financially, they're not so good with finding jobs because I quickly found their service was meant for out-of-work people, because when I go to appointments and the only jobs they have are things that require years of experience and they often have to ask me questions like, what was your last job? Do you have anyone under 18 that depends on you? And while I understand it's just part of their service, it does make me feel really out of place and a little humiliated to just know that I don't fit in this service intended.'

'It's a place that isn't really for young people, so a lot of times they just don't know what to do with me.' (FG participant, online)

Although yearning for a more person-centred JCP, one participant at the Rising Green Youth Hub focus group gave a positive account of the Kickstart scheme.

'[As part of the] Kickstart scheme, I came across a job on, a football coach job and there was a junior office job. [...] I eventually took the junior office job and then basically in the first two months the job was going well. [...] After the Kickstart ended, the company themselves started to pay me, not the Universal Credit. And at that point, [the company] moved me on to another department, basically the leafletting department.'

Not only was he moved to a different department without any notice, but the wages decreased also. This participant is now unemployed but feel like he's being churned around in the 'system,' moving in between jobs, work schemes, being out of work, college, training programmes, more short-term employment etc., as outlined in the above section on precarious employment.

JCP is in a good position to **share resources that potentially deal with some of the root causes behind (youth) unemployment**. For example, a participant attending the focus group session at Rising Green Youth Hub experienced unfair treatment and employment contract issues in one of their jobs, but didn't know where to seek help. They said that, to them, it would've been beneficial...:

'...if there were just some more resources, especially at the Jobcentre, because they got notices, like boards. Yeah, like, "Are you in, like, a strange work environment where stuff doesn't seem as legit as it could be? Let us know." I literally had no idea where to go.'

Similar requests were made by several focus group participants; especially, that **JCP should be more person-centred and take mental health issues and other potential barriers to work into account** when making decisions, including facilitating resources on, e.g., mental wellbeing, or at the very least, signposting relevant customers to agencies for specialised support.

'I'm on Universal Credit, Job Seekers' Allowance and a whole bunch of like benefits provided by the government that help; like 'Oh yeah, cheers!' Thank

you. Don't get me wrong, those resources are invaluable, and they're really needed. I'm glad I have access to them. But, I kind of wish they emphasised more, when you show up to the Jobcentre, in regard to like mental health, 'cause I feel like that is a really big barrier for like a lot of people. I don't know the ins and outs, but I feel like a lot of the people who probably show up or have dealt with long-term unemployment are probably the same people who have like a lot of issues, like going on up here [pointing to their head] that they don't know how to resolve. Yeah, I get it; the point of the Jobcentre is supposed to help people get back into work, but I feel like they kind of overlook that aspect of "here are some resources to like help you get diagnosed; here are some resources to help you manage whatever conditions that you might have that might make getting a job, or maintaining a job, keeping a job down a bit more difficult." (FG participant, Rising Green Youth Hub)

A participant attending the same focus group, felt that one of the JCP advisors *did* notice his concerns.

'...They saw me struggling. So, they said, 'hey, we see you're doing poorly, so let me actually tell you about a service...'

The JCP advisor also informed him about a Prince's Trust event that he found immensely encouraging. He admitted though that this encounter constituted an element of luck. 'The Jobcentre should be the bridge between all these different services...'

Although most participants asked for a more **personalised approach from JCP advisors**, one participant (Rising Green Youth Hub), felt that the fact that JCP had made certain employability events mandatory had helped attendance. The before-mentioned Prince's Trust event is a case in point since attendance was excellent, possibly due to the pre-event warning: 'if you don't attend, you get sanctioned.' Regardless, one should not conflate forced/high attendance with positive engagement and outcomes. In addition, other employability/employment services are not in a position to sanction participants due to non-attendance.

5.2.9. Engaging with young people in Haringey

This final section is an important one since the topic of **lack of engagement and lack of employment information** simultaneously emerged from the focus group discussions and the process of setting them up. Several Focus Group sessions were cancelled due to no attendees/low turnout, which coincided with participants speaking about lack of awareness of (employability) services and initiatives facilitated by Haringey. These concerns resulted in a change to the topic guide used in the last two sessions as questions around how Haringey could better engage with its young resident, especially with regards to employability initiatives, were incorporated. The following are the measures that Haringey should take account of to better reach out to young residents and facilitate employment support, as suggested by the focus group participants.

- The preferred platform to develop employability skills and job industry knowledge amongst some participants is through workshops, where young people can meet **experienced industry experts or businesspeople**.
- **In-person** events are preferred to **online sessions**. ‘Yeah, definitely in person. I feel like technology got us all lazy. So, I personally feel like it will encourage us more to, you know put ourselves out there, meet different people and engage.’ (FG participant, online)
- Many young people need to **build their self-esteem** and deal with issues around mental health to develop ‘job readiness.’
 - Mental health issues, especially anxiety and depression, were brought up in the focus groups as important factors to address too.
- Using **social media** – Instagram was the preferred platform – to reach young people was suggested to be the best way for Haringey to communicate with young people and sharing information about employment events and employability skills.
 - This could also involve specialised online groups and forums (a forum specifically for young people interested in, e.g., working in the arts and a separate forum for those interested in hospitality).
- Too often, the young people feel that they attend **events that are not relevant to their area/expertise**.
 - As one participant from the online focus group discussion said, “...why am I here, like, this has nothing to do with what I want.”
- **Involve youth workers in supporting young people transitions into employment** and have youth centres and mentors making announcements about relevant employability training and support. It was stated numerous times that a more personalised approach to young job seekers is necessary to identify mental health and welfare issues. ‘...Because young people are quite complex, so some people might stutter and may not have confidence in their interviewing ability, or they might be waiting for ADHD assessment to assess their mental capability. So, we need that in place, somebody to take you through the journey [of seeking employment].’

6. Single parent population in Haringey

The research was focussed on those groups in Haringey which experience the highest levels of unemployment and face the greatest barriers in accessing work. This includes single parents and the remit for the research was to include single parents as a focus. The following section presents data on the numbers of single parents in the Borough. Overall, 15% of households in Haringey are single parent family households, a figure which is slightly higher than the London average of 13% (Haringey. HRW Snapshot. 2023). The focus groups with Black, Asian and minority ethnic participants included a small number of single parents (5 in total).

The barriers facing single parents in accessing work are especially difficult to negotiate. Above all, they include **childcare and flexible working hours** for both pre-school and school aged children. Many of the single parents in the focus groups highlighted the high cost of childcare, limitations in the hours of available funding for childcare and the difficulty in finding jobs which fitted in with school and childcare hours. Many mentioned job vacancies in hospitality and in retail being only available on a shift basis and with weekend working. The impact of these barriers on their job **expectations and aspirations** meant that only the lowest paid roles were often being considered by single parents as a possibility for them. Cleaning jobs were frequently mentioned as the only option although even then jobs need to be close enough to home to allow for dropping off and picking up children. One single parent mentioned the catch-22 of being required by the Job Centre to apply for and take up employment when in reality she needed to be at home and available to care for her young child with autism.

6.1. Quantitative data analysis

Figure 1 shows that there are a significant number (10,647) of single parent households with dependent children in Haringey. Out of this total, a very high figure of 49% or 5,197 of these single parent households are currently unemployed, highlighting the challenges faced by this group in finding employment. However, it is important to note that 51% or 5,450 single parent households are engaged in some form of employment. Further analysis reveals that among the employed single parents, 53% or 2,909 are working in part-time positions, while the remaining 47% or 2,541 are in full-time employment. This implies that only 24% or 2,541 of the total single parents in Haringey are working in full-time employment, indicating the need for more support, especially in relation to affordable childcare and flexible working hours as highlighted in the focus groups by single parent participants, and opportunities for single parents to access stable and sustainable employment.

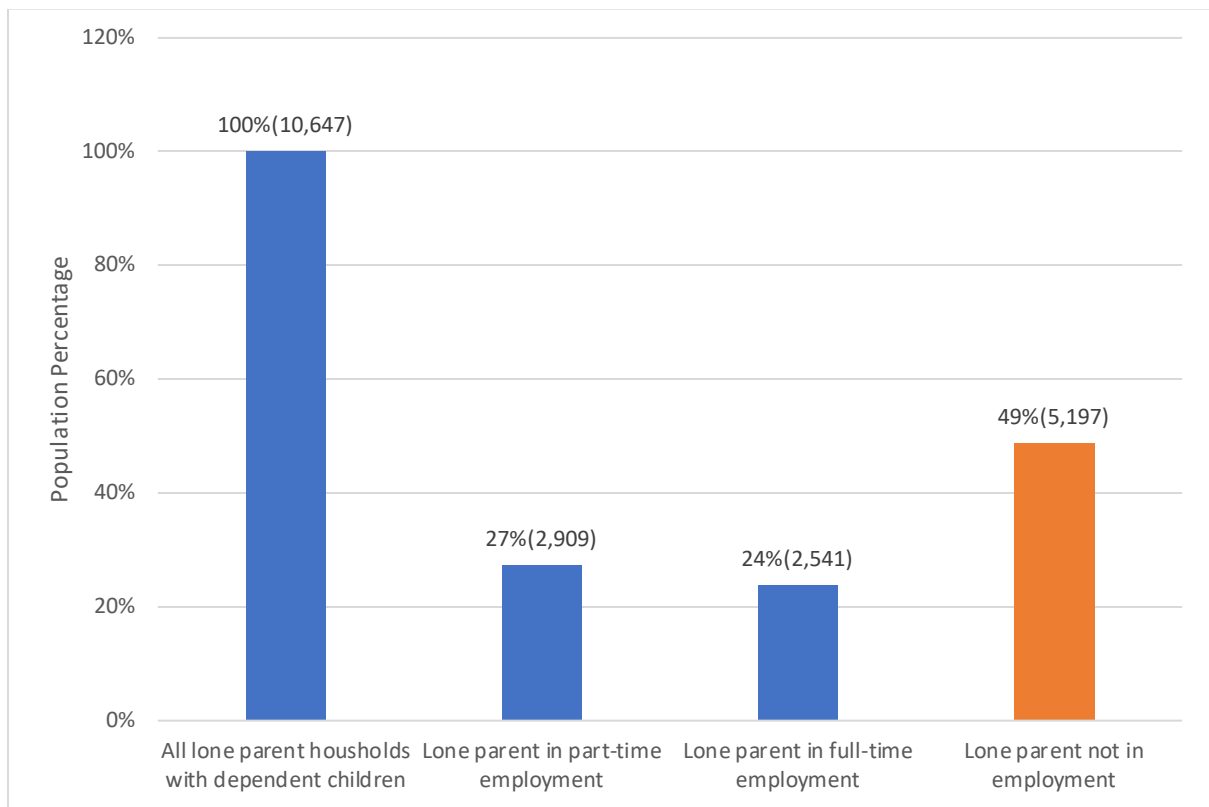


Figure 1- Single parent population, Haringey

Source:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/submit.asp?menuopt=201&subcomp=>
 ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 13 July 2023]

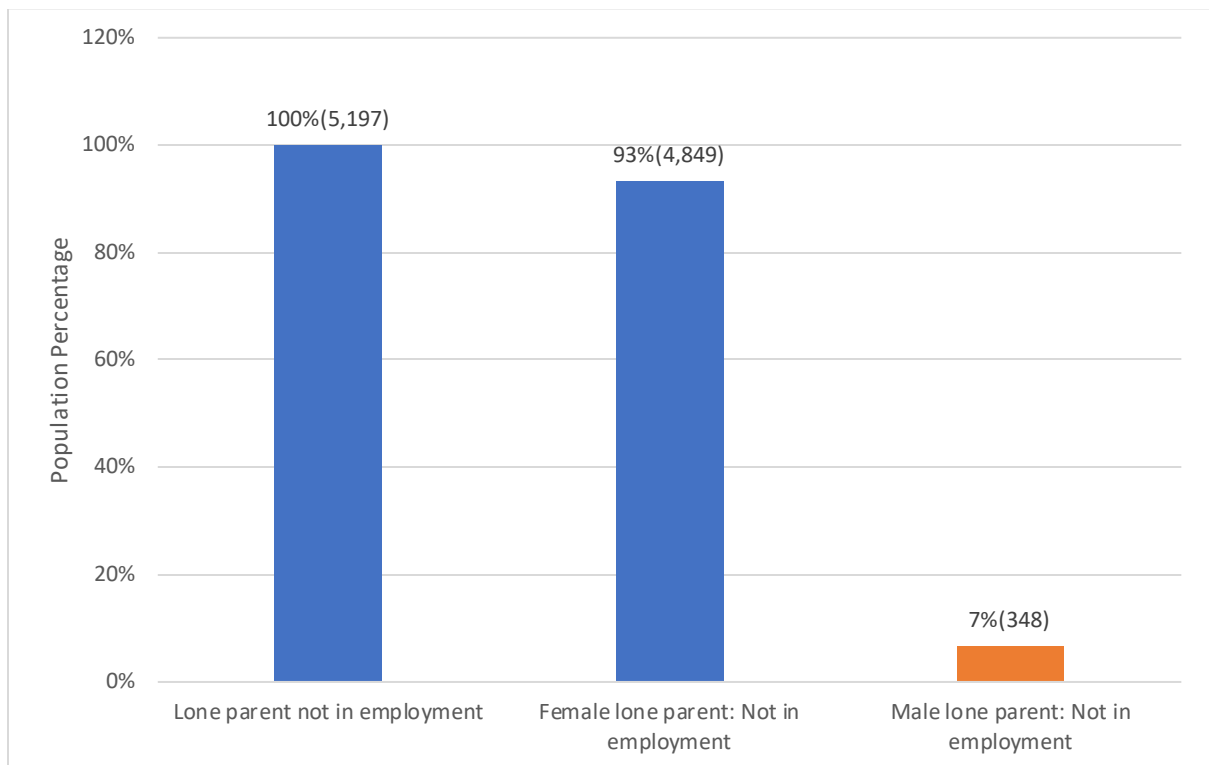


Figure 2 – Single Parents not in Employment

Source:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/submit.asp?menuopt=201&subcomp=>
ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 13 July 2023]

Figure 2 provides insight into the gender distribution among single parents who are not in employment. It reveals that out of the total number of single parents who are currently unemployed, a large proportion, approximately 93% or 4,849, are female single parents, while only a small percentage of 7% or 348 are male single parents. This data highlights the significant representation of female single parents who face the challenges of unemployment and underscores the need for targeted support and resources to address the specific needs of this group in Haringey.

Appendix I

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Appendix II

Haringey Employment Gap Research Project. Information Sheet for participants

This research project is looking at how well existing employment services in Haringey help different groups of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, residents with disabilities and long term health conditions, lone parents and young people get jobs. The aim of the research is to improve existing employment support services and to reduce the employment gap in the Borough.

We know BAME residents, people with disabilities, lone parents and young people experience higher levels of unemployment in Haringey, but currently, it is difficult to accurately assess, and respond to, the employment support needs of specific groups. This is because the available data groups the population into large, general groups which actually comprise several sub-groups, each with different experiences and needs. The purpose of this research is:

- to identify those sub-groups in the Borough who suffer the highest levels of unemployment,
- to highlight the barriers they face in accessing jobs and
- to suggest improvements so that the employment support services in the Borough are better able to meet the needs of the specific groups of people who currently suffer the highest levels of unemployment.

The research is being carried out jointly by the London Borough of Haringey and London Metropolitan University. It involves a number of focus groups with the employment support service providers themselves and with different groups of residents. **This is where you can get involved. By being part of a focus group, we hope you will be able to give us your experiences of looking for a job and whether or not you know of or have used any of the employment support services in the Borough and how you think these could be improved to help support you in getting a job.**

Your participation is voluntary and anonymous. You can withdraw at any time. We ask you to sign the consent form but at no time will we use your name and you can sign it using a name which is made up.

You will benefit from the research by giving your views and shaping future services in the Borough.

The focus groups will be led by a member of staff from London Metropolitan University and supported by a member of staff from the London Borough of Haringey. There may also be a student from London Metropolitan University present who is here on their work placement to help run the focus group by going through the information sheet and consent form with you and asking some initial questions.

If you have any questions or would like to make a complaint about the project,
please contact the project officer Helen McDonough
Helen.McDonough@haringey.gov.uk

Appendix III

**Participant Consent Form – Focus Group
Haringey Employment Gap Research Project
Research Investigator: Jane Lewis**

I have been given information about the research project (information sheet and verbal clarification) and about my participation in the above-mentioned research project.

I understand my participation is voluntary. I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time with no penalty.

I understand everything I say is confidential, and my participation will be anonymised.

I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and that the data will be safely stored in line with GDPR (2016) and DPA (2018) for up to ten years, and then it will be destroyed.

I understand that the anonymised data may be used by the researchers to produce original research outputs (research articles etc.) and anonymised quotations by me may be used.

If I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Dr Jane Lewis (j.lewis@londonmet.ac.uk), or if I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research has been conducted, I can contact the Research and Postgraduate Office at London Metropolitan University (rpo@londonmet.ac.uk).

By signing this consent form, I consent to being part of this research project.

Signature

Name (please print) and date

Appendix IV

Haringey employment gap project: resident focus group. Questionnaire

Thanks for coming to the focus group

We would be grateful if you could complete the information below. We need this in order to know a bit more about the people who have come to the focus group.

Please note that the information is confidential, anonymous and will not be passed to anyone else

1. Do you live in Haringey? Where roughly?

2. What is your current employment status? (please tick as many as apply)

Working full time

Working part time (how many hours per week)

In full time education or training

Not working but seeking employment (see question 3)

Not working, not currently seeking employment

If working full or part-time, where are you working, what job are you doing and how long have you been doing it for? If in education/training – where and what are you doing?

3. If you are currently seeking work, how long have you been looking for work? And what sort of job are you looking for?

4. What is your **highest** educational qualification? (please give details)

5. How old are you?

6. What is your gender (please tick)

Male

Female

7. Is your gender the same as the sex recorded on your birth certificate? (please tick)

Yes

No (please enter the term you use to describe your gender)

8. What is your ethnic origin

9. Do you have dependent children (under 18-years)? Yes/No

Age

Gender

10. Your housing (please tick)

Home owner

Social housing tenant (council tenant or housing association tenant)

Private tenant

Homeless or in temporary homeless accommodation

Other (eg sheltered or supported housing)

11. Do you have internet broadband at home? Please tick

Yes (see question 12)

No

12. How would you describe your internet broadband connection at home?
(please tick)

Excellent

Good

Poor

Very poor

Do you have a laptop? Yes/No

Do you have a smartphone? Yes/No

13. Your health. Over the last 12 months, would you describe your health as:
(please tick)

Very good

Fairly good

Not very good

Not good at all

14. Disability. Do you have a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more or are you visually impaired or deaf?
(please tick)

Yes (see question 15)

No

15. Does your condition or illness reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities? (please tick)

Yes, a lot

Yes, a little

Not at all

16. If you have a disability or long term health condition or have a visual impairment or are deaf, could you give some details eg 'severe arthritis', 'dyslexia', 'depression'. You can give more than one answer

17. If you have a disability or are visually impaired or deaf, and you are not working, do you think it affects your chance of getting a job? (please tick)

Yes

No

If yes, could you say in what ways:

Appendix V:

Haringey Employment Gap project topic guide for focus groups with residents

Introductions and welcome

Participants will be asked to fill in an anonymous, individual survey questionnaire form (with basic information on age, ethnicity, gender, health conditions) along with the consent form before the focus group starts.

Ice breaker

Asking everyone individually, what their current employment situation is: in work?
Looking for work?

ALTERNATIVELY

What would be your ideal job/employment situation and why?

Interview questions/topics:

Job experiences:

1. Are you in work, or unemployed and looking for a job at the moment?

If looking for work, how long have you been looking for a job? What sort of job are you looking for?

If you are working, what job are you doing (for how long, where do you work, is it full-time or part-time and how many hours, are you self-employed?) are you looking to change your job? why?

Have you applied for a job in the last six months? If you didn't get it, why do you think you didn't get it?

2. Have you been employed in the past, what sort of jobs have you done?

Barriers to accessing employment:

3. What are your recent experiences of looking for a job? Do you find it hard to find a job?
4. What barriers have you experienced in finding a job Is this harder as a person with (depending on the specific focus group) a disability/learning disability/health including mental health condition, as a person who is black,

Asian or from an ethnic minority, as a woman, lone parent. Have you experienced any discrimination? Could you say a little bit more about this.

Job search:

5. How/where do you look for jobs?
6. Do you look for jobs online? Have you had any problems using IT (do you have IT skills and access to laptop and broadband at home)? If not got access at home, where do you go to access the internet/use a laptop?
7. Do you require support looking for work?

Employment support services:

8. Where would you turn to if you if you needed support looking for work?
9. What type of support would help you most?
10. Have you accessed any support services the Borough is providing in helping you finding a job?

How did you find out about these? What are your experiences of these?
Could they have been more useful or easier for you to use? in what ways?

When you stopped using the service, was there any follow up?

Have you experienced any barriers in using any of these services?

How could the employment support services work better to support you getting a job? Or a more skilled/well paid job?

If you were interested in being self-employed/starting up a business, would they support you in this, what help would you find useful?

Education and training:

11. Would you be interested in developing new or existing skills? If so, what would you like to do? What do you think this would lead to?
12. Where would you go if you wanted to develop new skills? How would you find out about it?
13. What are/were your experiences of education/training as a child and as an adult? Have you experienced any barriers in accessing education/training?

What should be done to make it easier to access education/training?

Summary and any other points

Ask the participants if they have any other questions, and how they would like to engage going forward. participants

Thank the participants for taking the time to speak with us.

Questions, please contact Jane Lewis j.lewis@londonmet.ac.uk