Newham London

COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY PROGRAMME 2021-2023 EVALUATION REPORT

WE ARE NEWHAM.

BUILDING A FAIRER NEWHAM

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

The Community Assembly programme is London Borough of Newham's flagship programme of participatory budgeting and is a beacon of best practice in participatory democracy. It was started in 2018 with the aim to deliver the Mayor of Newham's aspiration to create a culture of participation in the Council; to increase transparency and trust in local government and bring local people into the decision making process.

Since launch, the programme has become one of the largest participatory budgeting initiatives in the UK and delivered lasting transformation with more than 200 projects funded that have had real impact on the borough, including by improving engagement between the Council and residents. It is recognised by leaders in participatory democracy as a best in class example of what can be achieved.

Now in its third cycle, the Community Assembly 2022-2023 programme is fundamental to delivery of the London Borough of Newham's four-year Corporate plan 'Building a Fairer Newham'. Within this plan, Community Assemblies are included in the Council's commitment to build a "People powered Newham and widening participation".

Aim of this evaluation report

The aim of this evaluation is to assess the current cycle of Community Assemblies 2022-2023 and the two-year cycle of 2021-2023 as a whole. It adopted a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the four components of the Community Assembly programme: community assembly events, participatory budgeting, working groups and project clinics.

Based on the objectives for the Community Assembly programme, seven success criteria have been selected for evaluation:

1. Assemblies raised citizen awareness and involvement in decision-making
2. Assemblies created space for discussing and finding solutions to issues of local concern
3. Assemblies gave residents greater understanding and influence over setting of local priorities
4. Assemblies gave residents a greater say in allocation of funding within their neighbourhood
5. Assemblies enabled residents to participate in a variety of ways, including online and offline
6. Assemblies created a sense of connection between local residents and their local area
7. Assemblies were accessible for residents from all walks of life and lived experiences

Key activities, outputs and outcomes

Over the last two years, the overall funds allocated to the Community Assembly programme is **£1.6 million of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding**. Through two cycles of Community Assemblies, these funds were allocated to a total of **157 projects** that were voted on by Newham residents through the participatory budgeting process, 82 in the 2021-2022 cycle and 75 in the 2022-2023 cycle.

The projects that were successful each addressed a local priority. There were **24 local priorities** co-produced by residents across all eight neighbourhood areas for the two-year cycle.

A key metric to evaluate the impact of the programme is the number of residents who engage including by attending Community Assembly events, joining the Working Groups, voting on Newham Co-create, getting involved in project delivery or attending a project clinic.

Between 2021-2023, the Community Assembly programme created a total of **16,552 resident engagements** - 11,616 resident engagements in 2021-2022 and 4,936 resident engagements in the year to date. This is a step change in engagement with residents since the first round of the Community Assembly programme. From 2018-2020, the first two-year cycle of the programme, there were 3,147 resident engagements.

The total number of resident engagements is the compilation of the total number of participants for each activity. Residents are able to participate multiple times through various ways; therefore, it represents the number of times residents have participated rather than the number of unique residents involved.

A total of 53 projects funded by the Community Assembly 2021-2022 cycle have been successfully completed across the borough, creating a total of 5,256 resident engagements in project delivery, such as volunteering, regular activities and big events.

Overall participation across the Community Assembly programme:

Total resident participation 2021/2022	**11,616**
Community Assembly events	2,562
Working group members	115
Voters on Newham Co-create for local priorities	1,030
Voters on Newham Co-create for projects	2,616
Residents involved in project delivery	5,293
Total resident participation 2022/2023	**4,936**
Community Assembly events	1,763
Working group members	70
Voters on Newham Co-create for projects	2,835
Project clinics attendees	268
Total resident participation in the two-year cycle 2021-2023	**16,552**

Key impact of Community Assemblies on residents between 2021 and 2023

Another key metric to evaluate the impact of the Community Assemblies is the experience and perceptions of residents involved in Community Assembly events. The figure below shows that a majority of residents involved in Community Assembly events have a positive perception of the programme. It also demonstrates that positive perceptions and experience of Community Assemblies has increased over the two-year cycle, with more residents agreeing with each of the statements below in 2022/2023 than in 2021/2022.

For residents involved in 2022/2023:

- **89%** felt more connected to their local area after coming to a Community Assembly
- **85%** felt that the Assemblies provide an opportunity to discuss and identify issues of local concern
- **84%** felt that the Assemblies provide an opportunity to be involved in decision-making
- **82%** felt that the Assemblies give a greater say in allocation of funding locally

RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY ASSEMBLIES

■ Agree   ■ Neutral   ■ Disagree

The assemblies provide an opportunity for residents to be involved in decision making

	2021/2022	2022/2023
Disagree	10%	5%
Neutral	15%	11%
Agree	72%	84%

The assemblies provide an opportunity to discuss and identify issues of local concern

	2021/2022	2022/2023
Disagree	15%	5%
Neutral	14%	9%
Agree	69%	85%

The assemblies give a greater say in allocation of funding locally

	2021/2022	2022/2023
Disagree	13%	5%
Neutral	20%	11%
Agree	64%	82%

By coming to the community assembly I feel more connected to my local area

	2021/2022	2022/2023
Disagree	7%	4%
Neutral	14%	7%
Agree	76%	89%

Note: This figure is based on responses to feedback forms for the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 cycles. Feedback forms have been adjusted over the two-year cycle which means the number of respondents depends for each question, between 117 and 431. Some statements were slightly tweaked between the two cycles, for example "The assemblies allow residents to have a greater say in how the budget is going to be used to help respond to issues of local concern" became "The assemblies give a greater say in allocation of funding locally". More detail is available on each statement in Section 3 of the report.

Key learnings and findings

Newham's Community Assemblies are one of the largest participatory budgeting programmes in the country, and is recognised as a beacon of best practice by other authorities and experts in the field. Since launch, the programme has increased in reach and engagement with residents and between 2021-2023, it has created a total of **16,552 resident engagements**. However, there is an ambition to do more and engage more communities that are representative of Newham's diverse population.

Community Assemblies are widening participation but can be more representative of Newham's population. Residents involved in Community Assemblies report feeling empowered and able to have a say in local decision-making. Participation has significantly increased since the first cycle of the Community Assembly programme but evaluation has found, to date, those taking part in the programme are not reflective of Newham's diverse population. There is an overrepresentation of residents from a White ethnic background in most activities and young people are also less likely to be involved despite representing a large proportion of Newham's population. In 2022-2023, there has been a focus on broadening engagement which has led to improved ethnic representation at Community Assembly events. Successful projects from the 2021-2022 cycle have also engaged 1,880 children and young people.

Community Assemblies give an opportunity for residents to make local change and feel more connected to their local area. Residents involved in Community Assemblies appreciate the opportunity to get involved in their local community, make improvements to their local area and meeting other residents. Residents leading on project delivery feel that they could be more connected to each other across the borough.

Community Assemblies enable residents to be involved in the allocation of funding locally. In 2021, to encourage more residents to take part in the Community Assembly programme, the Newham Co-create platform was introduced. This has widened participation in participatory budgeting, with 60% of residents involved saying they felt it was a good participation tool. Going forward, more can be done to improve the voting process to make it easier to navigate – online and offline.

Community Assemblies enable the delivery of impactful projects. Since 2021, residents and local organisations have been more directly involved in the delivery of Community Assembly projects by signing grant agreements to deliver projects; the Council was responsible for the delivery of projects in the first cycle 2018-2020. This has created a significant increase in resident engagement and residents feel that the projects delivered are varied and make a difference in their local area. Simultaneously, this has increased the level of responsibility for project leads and more can be done to support them in the delivery phase.

Community Assemblies enable residents to get involved in both setting and addressing local priorities, however these priorities could be better linked to the Council's overall strategy. Residents are involved in the setting of the Community Assembly programme's local priorities but Council staff members feel they can be disconnected from the Council's strategy and residents are concerned that this can limit the range and scale of projects that could be considered through the Community Assembly programme.

Community Assemblies have become more accessible and inclusive but they are not fully accessible to all residents. There are persistent barriers to participation such as language, bureaucracy and connectivity. Accessibility has been improved since the last funding cycle, including through the introduction of hybrid online and offline

assemblies. Project clinics and additional support introduced in the 2022-2023 cycle have also improved accessibility and inclusivity.

Community Assemblies can involve lengthy administrative processes. Since 2021, there has been increased budget available and a shorter application timeline. This meant the two-year cycle of 2021-2023 put pressure on both residents leading projects and Council staff members that resulted in delays in project delivery and difficulties in assessing the feasibility of projects to support implementation. An internal audit has helped identify ways to improve processes including providing clearer accountability between project and Council teams around delivery.

Community Assemblies need to be more visible to Newham's residents in order to engage more people and increase the programme's overall impact. There is an opportunity to scale the Community Assembly programme through communications that build awareness, understanding and engagement amongst a broader range of communities within Newham.

Key recommendations

1. **Increase the representativeness of residents involved in Community Assemblies.** Increase recruitment of working group members and continue to encourage residents from all ethnic backgrounds to join Community Assembly events. This includes strengthening links to existing participatory processes within the Council such as Newham's permanent Citizen's Assembly and Youth Assembly to increase young people's participation.

2. **Extend the Community Assembly cycle to a two-year cycle** to allow for longer term planning, enable smoother implementation

processes, encourage more collaboration between Council services and more support for project delivery. The first year should focus on deliberation, project application and participatory budgeting then the second year should focus on project delivery and evaluation.

3. **Increase participation levels through improved communications around the Community Assembly programme.** Led by the Council's communications team, the ambition is to transform awareness of the programme so that residents better understand what it is and how to take part. A dedicated brand for the Community Assembly programme will be developed so that residents can more easily identify Community Assembly funded projects and be alerted to key milestones, including where events are happening and when funding applications are due. Key will be the use of project case studies to encourage residents from currently underrepresented communities to take part with the aim that communications overall improve accessibility and representation.

4. **Increase accessibility and inclusion of the voting process through a simpler online voting process and opportunities to vote in person.** This should include a revision of the 'shopping basket' system on the Newham Co-create digital platform and, at in person Community Assembly events, use of ballot boxes.

5. **Improve project delivery through an extended programme of project clinics.** Organise regular project clinics during the two-year cycle providing support to residents and local organisations applying for funding, or delivering projects. This should be done in collaboration with Council service teams and potential partner local organisations so that project teams have a 'one stop' shop of information and advice to support their project.

6. **Improve links between local priorities and the Council's strategy so that funded projects can contribute to the overall borough plan.** This can be achieved by linking the Corporate Plan's priorities to local priorities at the beginning of the cycle.

7. **Connect the funding available through Community Assemblies with other funding opportunities to support projects to scale**. Additional funding opportunities could be shared not only with any unsuccessful applicant to the Community Assembly programme but also for project leads to either find match funding or to find sustainable funding to extend their projects. This could be linked to Newham's crowdfunding programme.

Proposed new cycle

Community Assembly programme 2023-2025

- **June - July 2023 Assembly 2** Idea generation
- **June - August 2023** Project applications
- **October 2023 Assembly 3** Town hall project presentations and in person voting
- **October 2023** Online voting on Newham Co-create
- **November 2023** Successful projects announced
- **May 2023 Assembly 1** Priority setting
- **Year 1 April 2023 – March 2024**
- **Year 2 April 2024 - March 2025**
- **January 2024 – January 2025** Project delivery
- **June - July 2024 Assembly 4** Project promotion and networking
- **March 2024 – January 2025** Project monitoring
- **January 2025 Assembly 5** Project showcase
- **January - March 2025** Programme evaluation
- **May - June 2025** Celebration event
- **Project clinics** Project applications support
- **Project clinics** Project delivery support

Idea generation · Decision-making · Implementation · Learning · Deliberation

Section 1: Introduction

I. Background to the Community Assembly Programme

The Community Assembly programme is London Borough of Newham's flagship programme of participatory budgeting and a beacon of participatory democracy. It was started in 2018 with the aim to deliver the Mayor of Newham's aspiration to create a culture of participation in the Council; to increase transparency and trust in local government; and bring local people into the decision-making process.

The current 2022-2023 cycle of Community Assemblies is the third cycle of the programme and the second cycle with a £800,000 budget.

The Community Assembly 2022-2023 programme is fundamental to the delivery of the London Borough of Newham's four-year Corporate Plan 'Building a Fairer Newham'. Within this plan, Community Assemblies are included in the Council's commitment to build a "People powered Newham and widening participation".

Since the launch of the programme in 2018, there has been three cycles of Community Assemblies and two evaluation reports with associated recommendations. The first report was published in October 2020 by external evaluator Public Perspectives and assessed the 2018-2020 cycle. The second report was completed internally in February 2022 for the cycle 2021-2022. Both evaluations have shown that the Community Assembly programme is having lasting impact with projects successfully funded and resident engagement increasing cycle to cycle. A review of the cycles to date has led to the following key recommendations for improvements to be implemented:

- Increase Community Assemblies' budget to **£100,000** per neighbourhood instead of **£25,000**

- Provide a **blend** of **face-to-face** and **virtual options** for increased accessibility

- Simplify the application process to **one stage**

- The payment schedule for distribution of funds be reduced from four stages (50%, 25%, 15%, 10%) to three stages (50%, 25%, 25%) to reduce the administrative burden for projects groups and council officers, and increase the likelihood that projects can be completed within the timeframe

- Additional **support sessions** provided after successful projects announced to build capacity and empower residents, including project management, accessing additional funding streams, monitoring expectations, finance system

- **Local priorities** carried over to allow for longer application/short-listing stage and additional input from other departments

- **Catalogue of costs** provided to guide project applicants to make more realistic cost estimates.

II. Evaluation process

1. Aims of the evaluation

The aim of this evaluation is to assess the current cycle of Community Assemblies 2022-2023 and the two-year cycle of 2021-2023 as a whole.

The evaluation will be doing this by:

- Assessing the quantity and quality of Community Assemblies
- Assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme and ways of optimising the design
- Assessing Community Assemblies against success criteria
- Comparing the outputs and outcomes of this cycle with previous cycles of Community Assemblies

Based on the findings, this report will also outline key recommendations to improve future cycles of Community Assemblies.

2. Evaluation approach

The evaluation adopted a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the following components of the Community Assemblies:

- Community Assemblies events: Four series of **community assemblies** in each of the 8 neighbourhoods to provide hyper-local opportunities for participation, influence decision-making and feedback on progress.
- Participatory budgeting: **Participatory budgeting** process to identify, fund and implement local community projects in line with the priorities identified by the local community. This is supported by the **Newham Co-create** platform since April 2021.
- **Working groups** involving residents, ward members, council officers, and local stakeholders to review project applications, use their local knowledge of the whole neighbourhood area to decide which projects go through to the final round of voting and monitor the chosen projects to check they are developing as promised.
- **Project clinics** to support residents in the process of applying and delivering projects.

The key research activities included:

- The development of an updated theory of change based on the theory of change created in 2020. See Annex 1
- A series of focus groups with primary and secondary internal stakeholders. 'Primary stakeholders' refers to services directly involved in the delivery of Community Assemblies. These were Community Neighbourhoods, Environment Sustainability and Transport, infrastructure, finance and audit. 'Secondary stakeholders' refers to services who are not directly involved in the delivery of Community Assemblies but are connected to or interested in the programme. These were housing, public health, policy, design and youth.
- A survey sent to all 68 Councillors elected to represent the London Borough of Newham.

- A series of focus groups with residents engaged in the different components of the Community Assemblies. Three focus groups were held online with working group members, project leads from the current cycle (2022-2023) and project leads from the previous cycle (2021-2022).
- A survey sent to all Newham Co-create users who voted in the participatory budgeting phase of the Community Assemblies in 2022.
- Feedback forms from each series of Community Assemblies events between 2021 and 2023
- A series of conversations with Council officers and professionals running participatory budgeting processes elsewhere. These included Brent Council, East Ayrshire Council, Luton Council, Shared Future CIC and consultant Andy Paice.

Summary of stakeholders and residents engagement		
Who was engaged	**Process of engagement**	**Number of people engaged**
Internal stakeholders		
Community Neighbourhood Team	Focus Group	13
EST, infrastructure, finance and audit	Focus Group	7
Housing and public health	Focus Group	2
Policy, design and youth	Focus Group	6
Councillors	Survey	20
TOTAL stakeholders		**48**
Residents		
Working Group members	Focus Group	22
Project leads 2022-2023	Focus Group	11
Project leads 2021-2022	Focus Group	6
Newham Co-create voters	Survey	147
Community Assemblies feedback forms (2021-2022)	Survey	229
Community Assemblies feedback forms (2022-2023)	Survey	438
TOTAL residents		**853**

3. Success Criteria

The Community Assembly programme was evaluated against success criteria used in the previous two evaluation processes that assessed earlier cycles of Community Assemblies. For 2022-2023, these were updated with the theory of change for the programme to capture the changes made to the programme since it started in 2018.

The seven success criteria are as follows:

1. Assemblies raised citizen awareness and involvement in decision-making
2. Assemblies created space for discussing and finding solutions to issues of local concern

3. Assemblies gave residents greater understanding and influence over setting of local priorities
4. Assemblies gave residents a greater say in allocation of funding within their neighbourhood
5. Assemblies enabled residents to participate in a variety of ways, including online and offline
6. Assemblies created a sense of connection between local residents and their local area
7. Assemblies were accessible for residents from all walks of life and lived experiences

4. Analysis and reporting

This Community Assembly programme evaluation report includes quantitative and qualitative data from the research activities outlined with data from the monitoring of the programme delivery. Qualitative data from focus groups has been analysed through thematic analysis. This aimed to code the findings into key themes and issues linked to the aims of the evaluation, as well as identify exemplifying quotes to evidence the findings, volume and strength of opinion and any differences in opinion between different types of participants.

The timing of the evaluation means that some of the outputs and outcomes from the current Community Assemblies cycle of 2022-2023 have not yet been completed. The evaluation therefore focuses on the previous Community Assembly cycle and comparative data analysis between the two cycles.

The report is divided in three sections:

- Section 2: Key activities and outputs of the Community Assemblies, predominantly drawing on programme data from this cycle and the previous cycle.
- Section 3: Key learnings and findings from the Community Assemblies, predominantly drawing on the key research activities which include focus groups and surveys.
- Section 4: Recommendations, predominantly drawing on the key research activities which include focus groups and surveys.

Section 2: Key activities and outputs of the Community Assemblies

Between 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, the Community Assembly programme cycle was refined to improve processes, applying recommendations from the 2021/2022 evaluation report.

In the 2021/2022 cycle, the first Community Assembly focused on local priorities. In the 2022/2023 cycle the first Assembly was focused on idea generation and collaboration. This was to reflect a recommendation to carry forward local priorities and allow instead more time for applications and shortlisting.

Project clinics were introduced in the 2022/2023 cycle to provide more support to residents applying for funding and delivering projects.

CYCLE FOR 2021/2022

On Newham Co-create website

- Share ideas
- Vote for top priorities
- Vote for projects
- Register for assemblies
- Information on progress

April 2021
Assembly 1
Local Priorities ideas

May to June (on Platform): Vote on Top 3 Priorities Submit project proposals

July 2021
Assembly 2
Project proposals

£100,000 CIL FUNDING FOR PROJECTS

July: Voting on projects (on Platform)
Aug: Announcement of successful projects and commence delivery of projects

Nov 2021
Assembly 3
Feedback on project progress

Nov to Feb: Monitor delivery of projects

Feb 2022
Assembly 4
Project delivery
Feedback on whole cycle

Working Groups

Stages:
- Applications for new members
- Finalise priorities
- Screen project proposals
- Monitor project delivery

CYCLE FOR 2022/2023
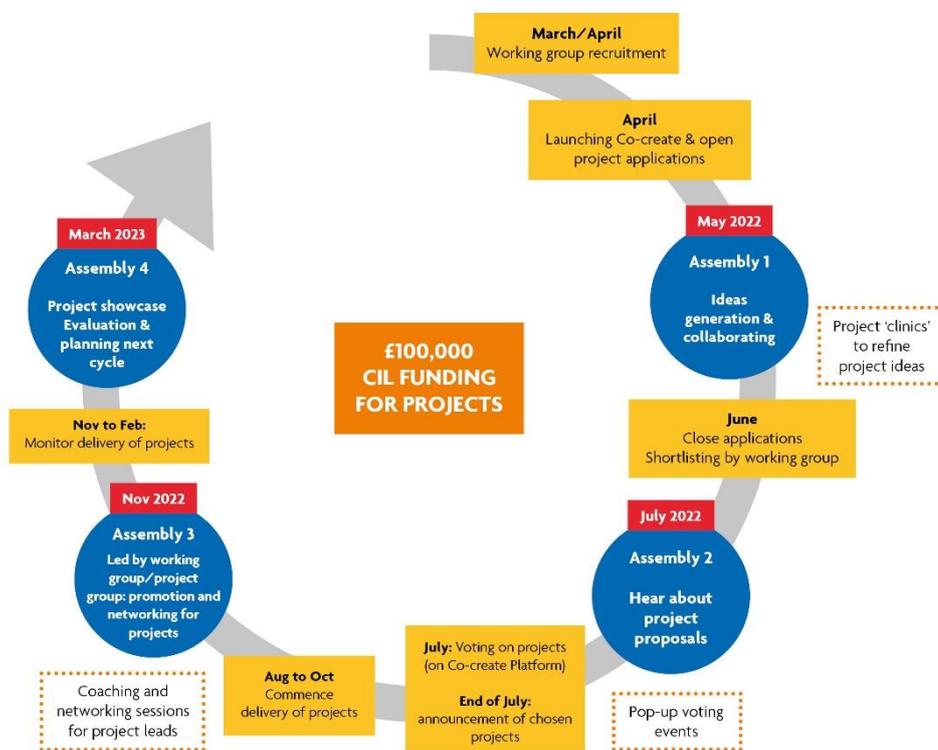
I. Community Assembly events

There were four series of Community Assembly events per cycle between 2021 and 2023. Each series included eight assemblies, one per neighbourhood area. Community Assembly events were open to everyone who lives, works or learns in the local area.

1. 2021-2022 cycle

Key activities and outputs per Assembly event

In 2021/2022, the Assembly events consisted of the following activities:

- Assembly 1 (April 2021): Local priorities ideas

In the first Assembly, the new Community Assembly cycle was presented and the platform Newham Co-create was introduced. Participants discussed priority topics for the neighbourhood in small groups and submitted them on Newham Co-create. Participants were invited to continue to submit priority topics following Assembly 1.

1205 priority ideas were submitted in total ([see Participatory budgeting](#))

- Assembly 2 (July 2021): Project proposals

In the second Assembly, the final local priorities were presented after a voting phase on Newham Co-create between the two assemblies. Project applicants then presented their project idea and how it aligned with the local priorities. Participants were invited to vote for their favourite projects on Newham Co-create following Assembly 2.

- Assembly 3 (November 2021): Feedback on project proposals

Assembly 3 focused on the successful projects. Project leads presented their project and gave an update on what they had done since receiving funding. Participants had the opportunity to share what they found interesting or exciting about the projects.

- Assembly 4 (Februrary-March 2022): Feedback on the whole cycle

Assembly 4 brought the cycle to end, with an update on the projects delivered in the area. An update on the evaluation of the Community Assemblies was also given, with key recommendations shared with participants and an opportunity to give further feedback.

Overall cycle attendance

For the 2021-2022 cycle, there were a total of **2,562** residents participate in local Community Assembly events. This represents the number of times residents have participated in the assemblies, but does not represent unique attendees as some residents may have participated in a number of Assembly events.

In 2021-2022, Stratford and West Ham Community Assembly had the most residents attend with a total of 538 resident participation over the whole cycle. East Ham had the lowest numbers of attendance with 238 resident participation. The Stratford and West Ham Community Neighbourhood has a population of 43,303 and East Ham Community Neighbourhood has a population of 50,679.

Overall attendance at Community Assemblies per neighbourhood 2021/2022

Neighbourhood	Attendance
TOTAL	2562
Stratford & West Ham	538
Plaistow	409
Custom House & Canning Town	318
Green Street	281
Forest Gate	262
Beckton & Royal Docks	259
Manor Park	257
East Ham	238
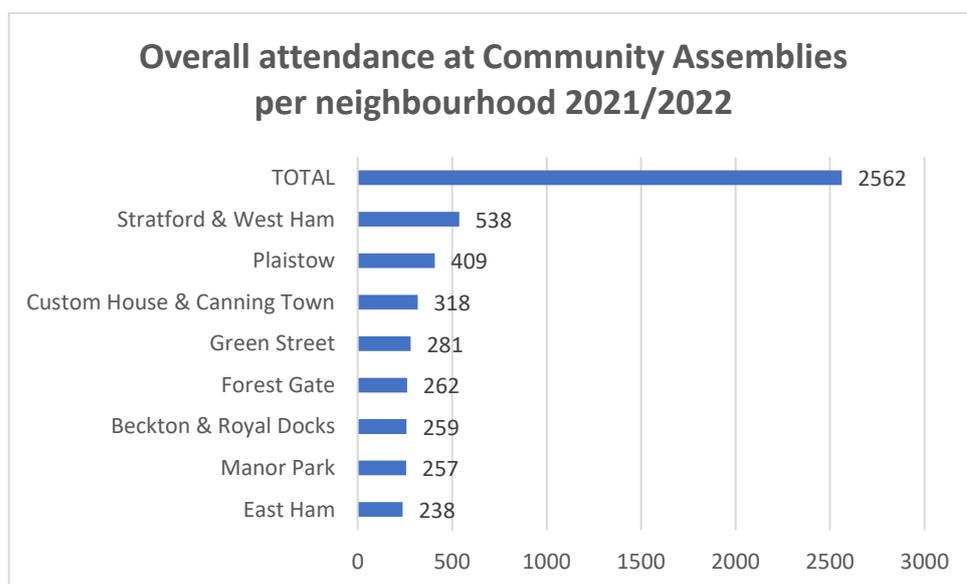
Attendance per Assembly event

Four series of Community Assemblies were held in April, July and November 2021 and March 2022 across the borough. There were 1,187 participants in the April Community Assemblies including 325 new participants; 605 participants in the July Assemblies including 232 new participants; 376 participants in the November Assemblies including 95 new participants and 394 participants in March including 94 new participants. In total, 746 new residents participated in a Community Assembly event in 2021/2022.

In April 2021, two events were held, one in the morning and one in the evening, which might have influenced the number of attendees.
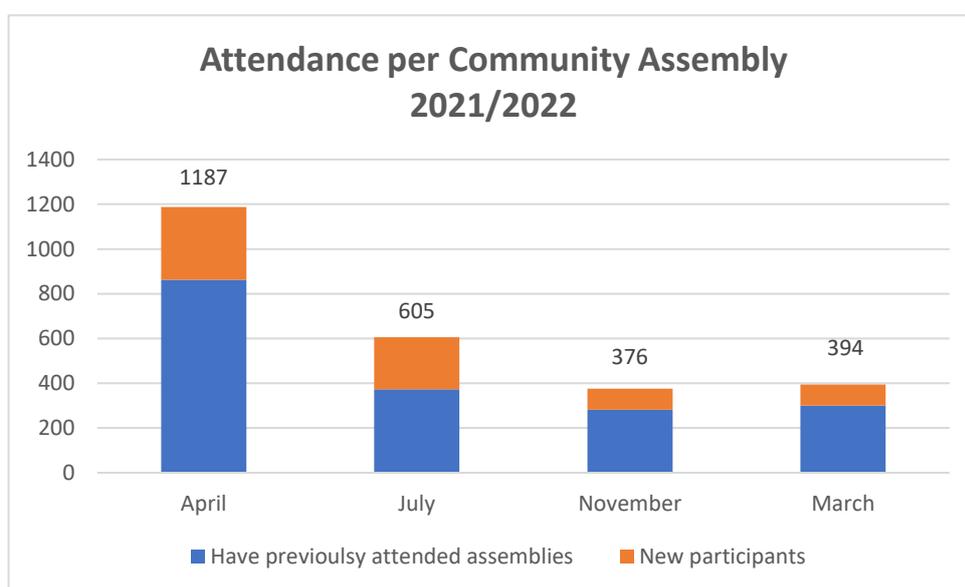
Demographics of Community Assembly events participants 2021/2022

From the total number of residents attending Community Assembly events in 2021/2022, a total of 229 feedback forms were filled in.

Analysis shows that 64.3% of Community Assembly participants who filled in feedback forms identified as female; 31.7% identified as male; 3.1% preferred not to state their gender, while less than 1% described their gender as gender-fluid or non-binary. For context, 53% of Newham's population are male and 47% female (mid-2020 ONS MYE).[1]

Gender of Community Assemblies participants 2021/2022
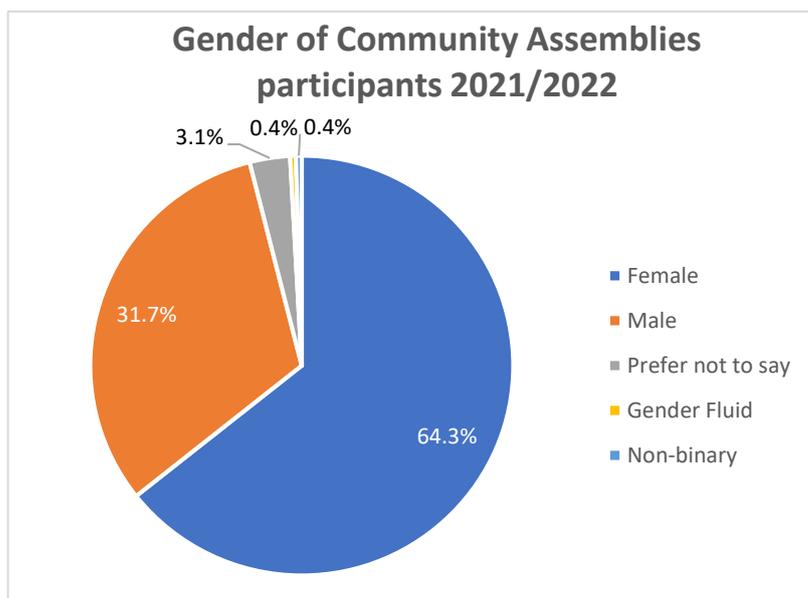
Data analysis showed that 42.8% of Community Assembly participants who filled in feedback forms were White; 21% were Black; 18.8% were Asian; 8.3% preferred not to state their ethnicity; 4.4% were from a mixed background; 3.5% were from other groups and 1.3% were from a Chinese background.

Ethnicity of Community Assemblies participants 2021/2022

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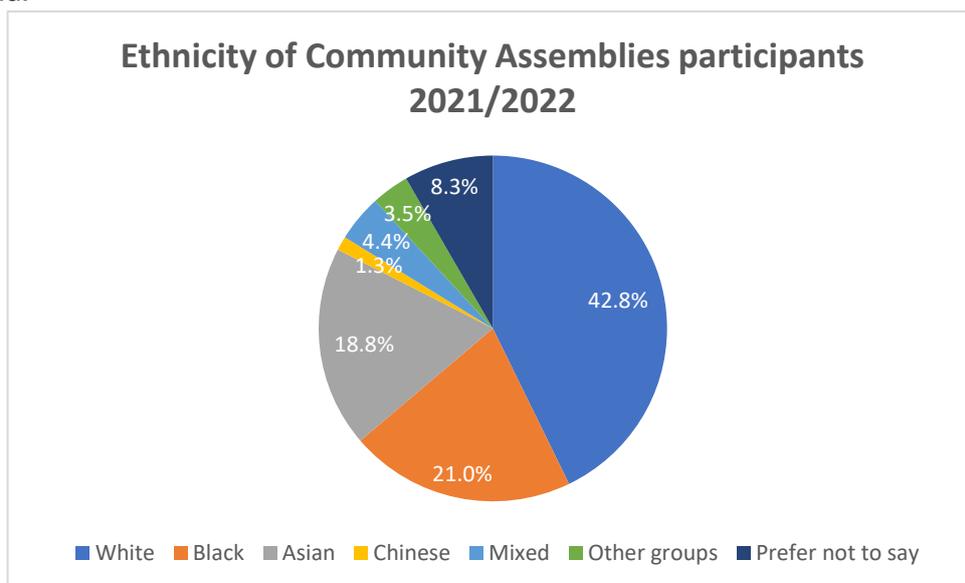
[1] Source: Newham Info – Newham Facts and Figures

This data shows a higher proportion of residents from a White background than representative of Newham's population (27.6% of Newham's population) and a lower proportion of residents from an Asian background (45.4% of Newham's population).[2]

When it came to age, 74.2% of Community Assembly participants who filled in feedback forms were between 25 and 64 year-old, 20.1% were over 65 and 1.3% were under 25. This shows a much lower proportion of young residents were engaged in Community Assemblies than representative of Newham's population.
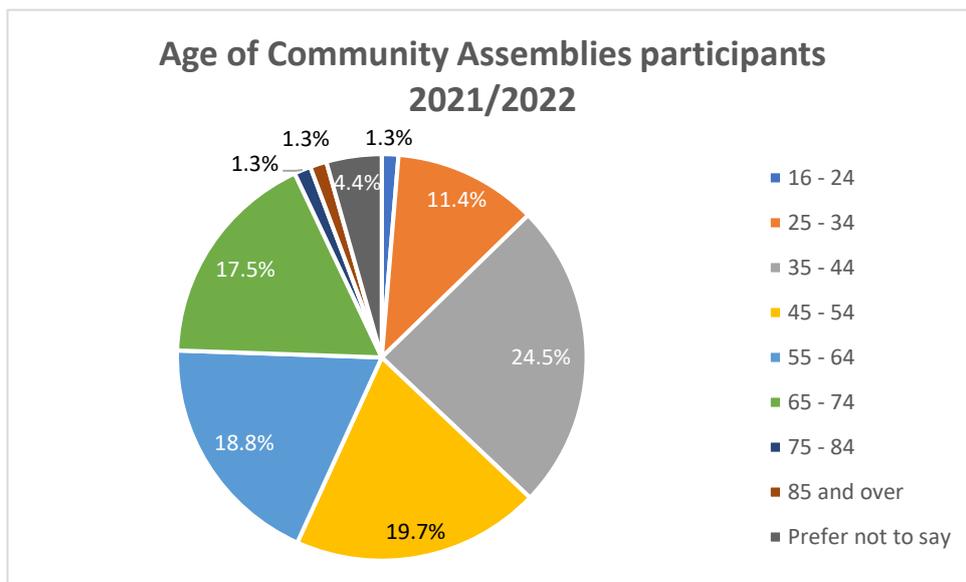
Of participants, 74% of Community Assembly participants who filled in feedback forms said they didn't consider themselves to have a disability; 21.1% declared they had a disability and 4.8% preferred not to answer

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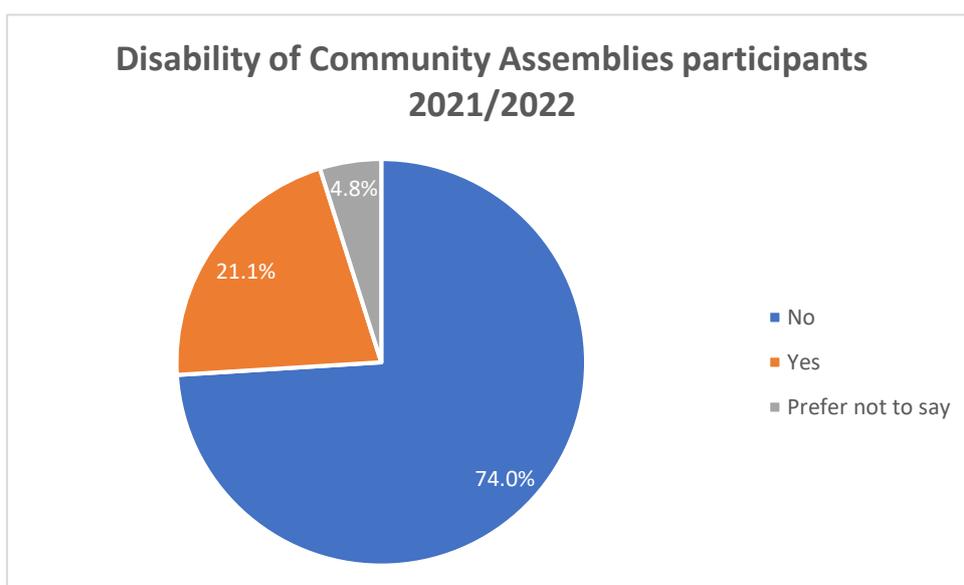
[2] Source: Newham Info – Infographic October 2020

2. 2022/2023 cycle

Key activities and outputs per Assembly event

In 2022/2023, the Assembly events consisted of the following activities:

- Assembly 1 (May 2022): Idea generation and collaboration

In the first Assembly, the new cycle was presented with a reminder of the local priorities for each area. Participants were then invited to discuss ideas for projects that could tackle the local priorities in small groups.

- Assembly 2 (July 2022): Hear about project proposals

In the second Assembly, project applicants presented their project ideas and how it aligned with the local priorities. Participants were invited to vote for their favourite projects on Newham Co-create following Assembly 2.

- Assembly 3 (November 2022): Promotion and networking for projects

Assembly 3 focused on the successful projects. Project leads presented their project in a marketplace format. Each project had a stall to present their project and what they had been doing or what they were planning to do. Participants had the opportunity to sign up to volunteer to support project delivery. Project leads were also filmed presenting their projects and the videos were posted on Newham Co-create.

75 projects were successfully voted on this year.

- Assembly 4 (planned for March 2023): Project showcase

Assembly 4 will be a showcase of what the projects have achieved during the 2022-2023 cycle. with opportunity to build connections between project leads, Council service teams and encourage shared learning.

Overall cycle attendance

For the 2022/2023 cycle, three series of Community Assemblies were completed in May, July and November 2022. The total number of residents participating in these events was **1,763** (this represents the number of times residents have participated in the assemblies, but not unique attendees).

Plaistow area had the most attendance with a total of 282 resident participation. Beckton and Royal Docks had the lowest number of attendance with 146 resident participation. This may have been impacted by the July Assembly taking place only online in Beckton and Royal Docks due to the heatwave.

Overall attendance at Community Assemblies per neighbourhood May, July & November 2022

Neighbourhood	Attendance
TOTAL	1763
Plaistow	282
Stratford & West Ham	255
Green Street	248
East Ham	228
Custom House & Canning Town	213
Forest Gate	212
Manor Park	179
Beckton & Royal Docks	146
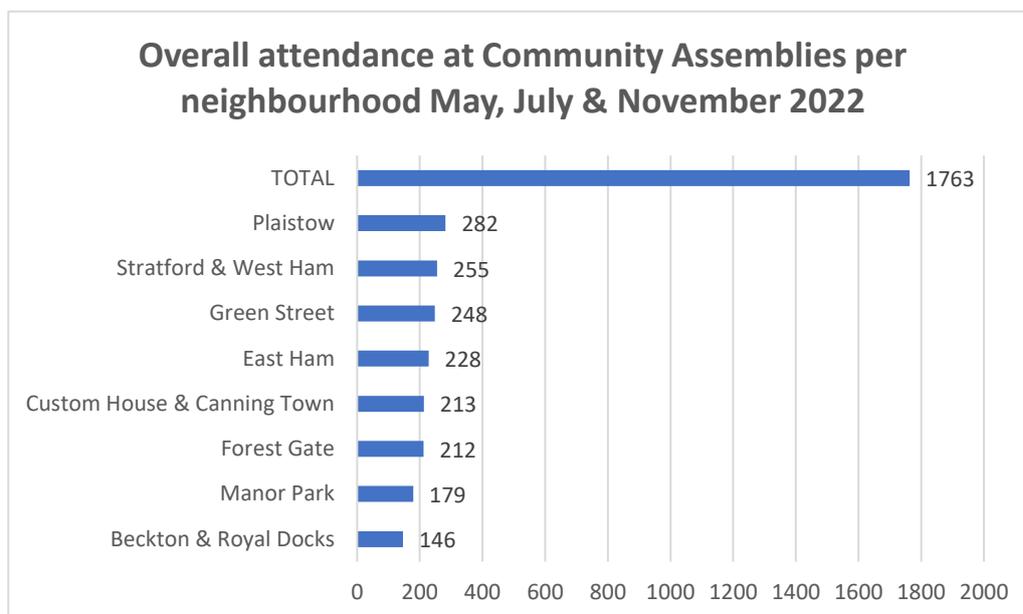
Attendance per Assembly event

In this cycle of the Community Assembly programme, to increase participation, hybrid online and offline sessions were trialled for the first time. In May, 35% of residents joined online and 41% joined online in July.

In July 2022, the Beckton and Royal Docks Assembly was held online only due to the heatwave which may have impacted both the number of attendees and the percentage of residents joining online. In November, the Community Assemblies were only held in person due to the marketplace format of the Assemblies. Project leads were filmed presenting their projects and the videos were published on Newham's YouTube channel and Newham Co-create for online engagement. The videos have attracted a total of 194 views on YouTube as of December 2022.

Attendance per series of Community Assemblies May, July & November 2022
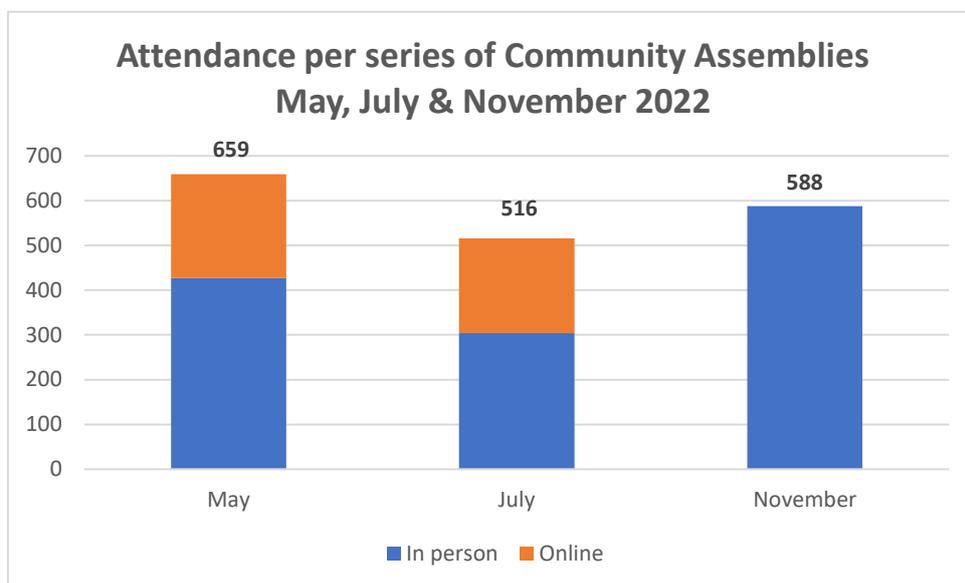
For the 2022/2023 cycle, the information gathered on demographics of Community Assembly participants was different from the previous cycle, due to changes made to the feedback forms. Feedback forms for Community Assembly events were integrated to the resident survey at the beginning of the cycle, which assesses all library activities. In the resident survey, the demographics collected are age and ethnicity. A question on disability was added ahead of the November assemblies. Paper surveys were also available, which had a question on gender. Therefore, for each demographic question the number of respondents is different. For May, July and November assemblies, a total of 438 feedback forms were completed, which is much higher than in the previous cycle.

Out of the 274 residents who indicated their gender, 60.2% identified as female, 32.1% identified as male and 7.7% preferred not to say. These figures are close to the ones from the previous cycle of the Community Assembly programme and show that it is engaging a higher proportion of women than represented in Newham's population.

Gender of Community Assemblies participants 2022/2023

- Female: 60.2%
- Male: 32.1%
- Prefer not to say: 7.7%
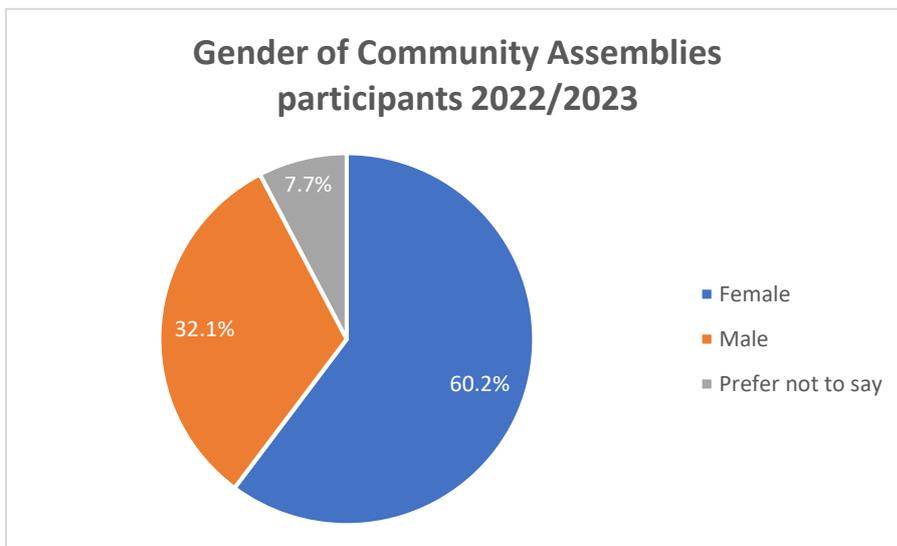
Out of the 353 respondents in feedback surveys who indicated their ethnicity, 30% were from and Asian background, 29.2% were from a White background, 21.2% were from a Black background, 5.7% were from other groups including Filipino background, 5.4% were from a mixed background and 1.4% from a Chinese background. 7.1% preferred not to indicate their ethnicity.

This shows that compared to the previous cycle, the ethnicity of Community Assembly participants had become more diverse and representative of Newham's population, with 7 in 10 of its residents from a non-White background.[3]

Ethnicity of Community Assemblies participants 2022/2023

- White: 29.2%
- Black: 21.2%
- Asian: 30.0%
- Chinese: 1.4%
- Mixed: 5.4%
- Other groups: 5.7%
- Prefer not to say: 7.1%

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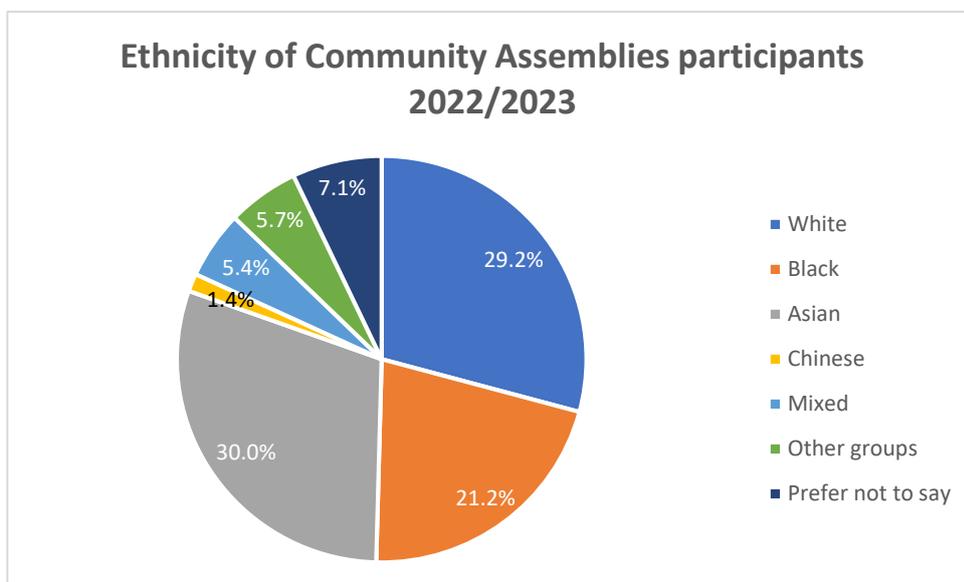
[3] Building a Fairer Newham - Corporate plan 2022-2026, p.12

Out of the 357 respondents who indicated their age, 63.6% were between 25 and 64 years old; 30.5% were over 65; 2.5% were under 25 and 3.4% preferred not to say. As in the previous cycle, this shows a much lower proportion of young residents were engaged in Community Assemblies than representative of Newham's population.

Age of Community Assemblies participants 2022/2023

- Prefer not to say: 3.4%
- Under 25: 2.5%
- 25-34: 7.0%
- 35-44: 15.7%
- 45-54: 17.1%
- 55-64: 23.8%
- 65+: 30.5%
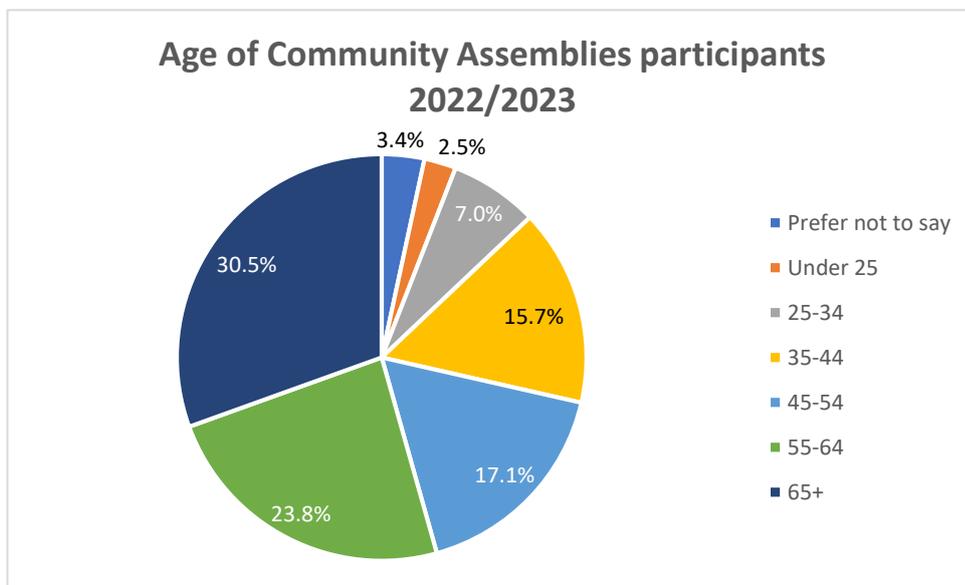
Out of the 249 respondents who indicated whether they had a disability, 73.9% said no, 18.5% said yes and 7.6% preferred not to say. This represents a slightly lower proportion of participants with a disability compared to the previous cycle.

Disability of Community Assemblies participants 2022/2023

- No: 73.9%
- Yes: 18.5%
- Prefer not to say: 7.6%
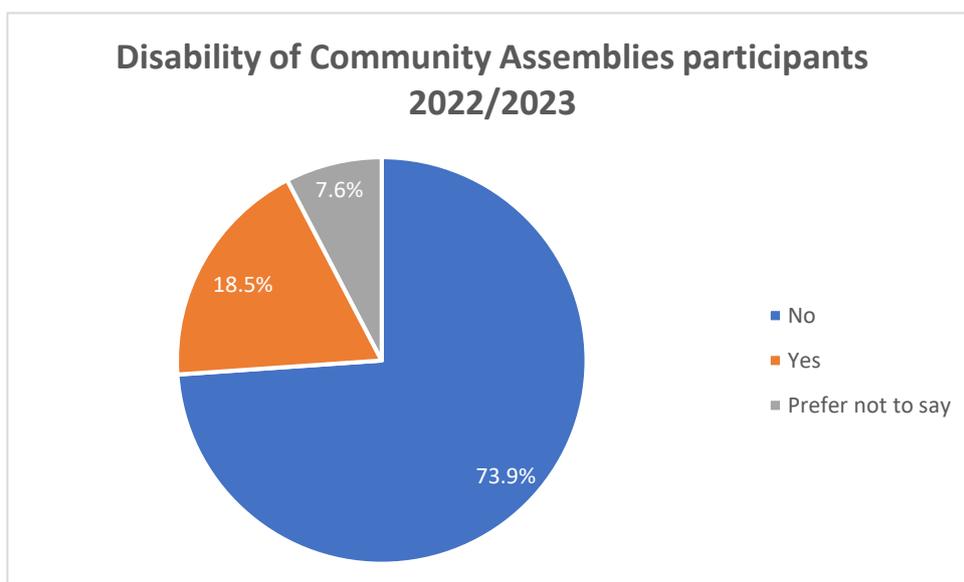
II. Participatory budgeting

Participatory budgeting is at the heart of the Community Assembly programme, involving residents in identifying, funding and implementing local community projects in line with the priorities identified by the local community. This is supported by the dedicated Community Assemblies page on the Newham Co-create digital platform since April 2021.

1. The process

In the 2021-2022 cycle, there were two phases of voting for participatory budgeting. The first vote focused on the top priorities for each local area and the second vote focused on allocating funding to projects.

In the 2022-2023 cycle, there was one phase of voting to allocate funding to projects as the local priorities were carried forward from the 2021-2022 cycle.

The Community Assemblies Co-create project page was launched to support the voting phase of participatory budgeting. It contains a main description of the programme, a project page for Community Assembly Working Groups and a project page per neighbourhood area.

Residents and Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCFS) organisations apply for Community Assembly funding after Assembly one. A total of £100,000 is available for projects in each neighbourhood. VCFS organisations can apply for up to £20,000 and individual residents can apply for up to £5,000. Project applications are reviewed by working groups and shortlisted against criteria for CIL funding and neighbourhood priority areas (see Working Groups for more detail). Shortlisted projects are uploaded on Newham Co-create for voting. Anyone who lives, works or learns in the area can vote for projects in their area. Each voter has a 'shopping basket' of £100,000 that they can allocate to projects that they would like to see in their area. Projects who received the most votes are selected for funding for a total of £100,000 per area. Successful projects are announced on Newham Co-create after internal consultation and sign offs are completed.

Number of users registered on Newham Co-create between June 2020 and November 2022
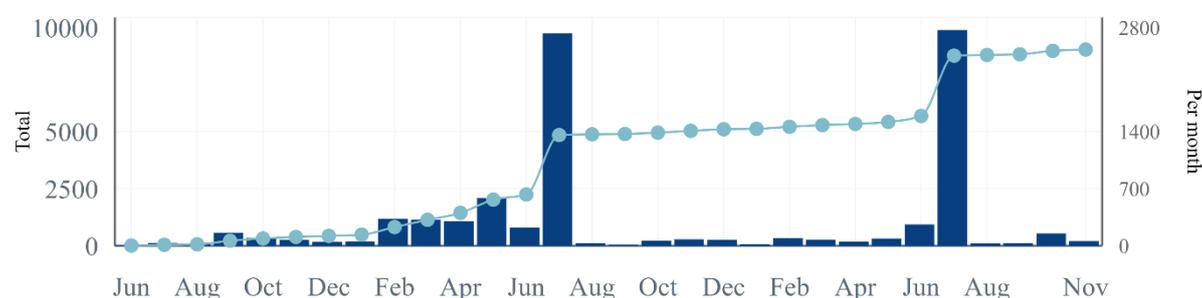
The graph above shows peaks of registration in July 2021 and July 2022 when participatory budgeting is open on Newham Co-create.

2. Voting on cycle 2021-2022

Defining and voting on local priorities
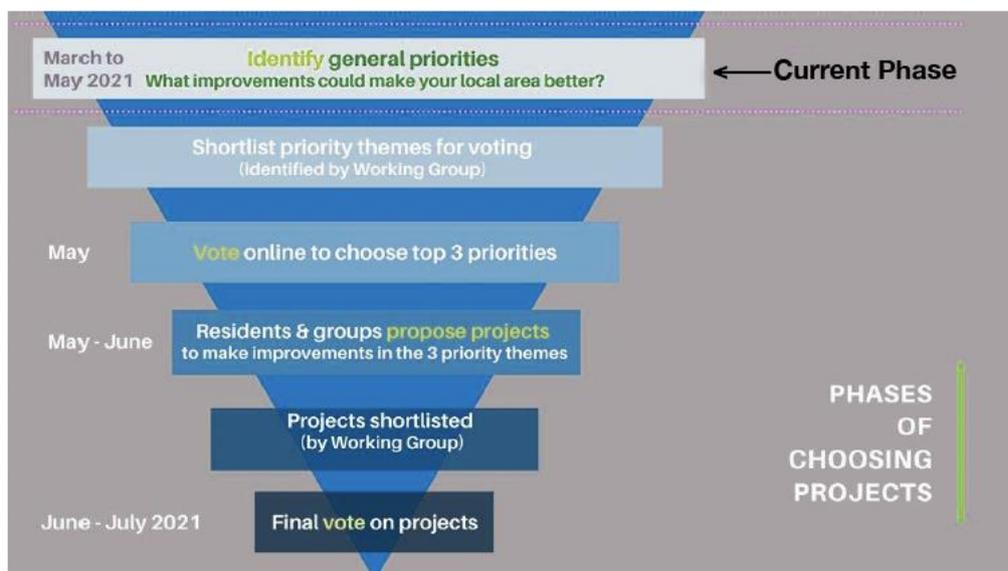
Between March and May 2021, residents were invited to submit priority themes for their local area on Newham Co-Create.

1205 priority ideas were put forward by residents in this phase. This image shows the most popular categories of themes.

In May 2021, working group members sifted the priority areas submitted by residents, to come up with a list of up to 10 priority themes per neighbourhood. These shortlisted themes were posted on Newham Co-create, and residents were invited to vote for their top priorities for their neighbourhood.

A total of 1,030 residents took part in the voting phase for the top 3 priorities.

STRATFORD & WEST HAM — Environment, Safety, Culture

FOREST GATE — Cleanliness, Environment, Public Spaces

MANOR PARK — Public Spaces, Environment, Biodiversity

PLAISTOW — Cleanliness, Safety, Public Spaces

GREEN STREET — Cleanliness, Safety, Public Spaces

CUSTOM HOUSE AND CANNING TOWN — Safety, Youth Activities, Public Spaces

BECKTON & ROYAL DOCKS — Cleanliness, Environment, Public Spaces

EAST HAM — Safety, Environment, Public Spaces

Voting on projects

Between May and June 2021, residents and VCFS organisations were invited to submit project proposals that tackled the priorities of their local area.

206 project ideas were put forward by a two-stage application process. Working group members assessed these applications against criteria for CIL funding and neighbourhood priority areas. 141 were shortlisted by working groups, and were posted on Newham Co-create to move forward to the next voting phase.

In July 2021, **2,616** residents voted for the projects that they would like to see in their area on Newham Co-create. The graph below shows the number of voters per area. Please note that residents could vote in several areas, therefore the total number of voters in the graph below is higher than the total number of unique resident voters.

Number of users who voted in 2021 per area

Area	Number of users
Beckton and Royal Docks	395
Custom House and Canning Town	384
East Ham	573
Forest Gate	550
Manor Park	300
Green Street	325
Plaistow	286
Stratford and West Ham	671
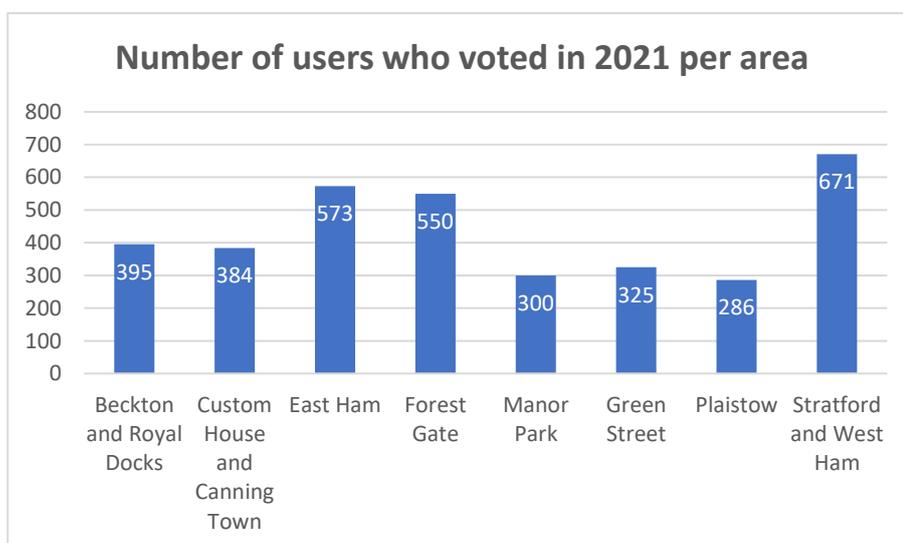
Out of the 2,616 residents who voted on Newham Co-create, 53.9% identified as female, 42.2% identified as male and 3.9% preferred not to say.

Gender of voters July 2021
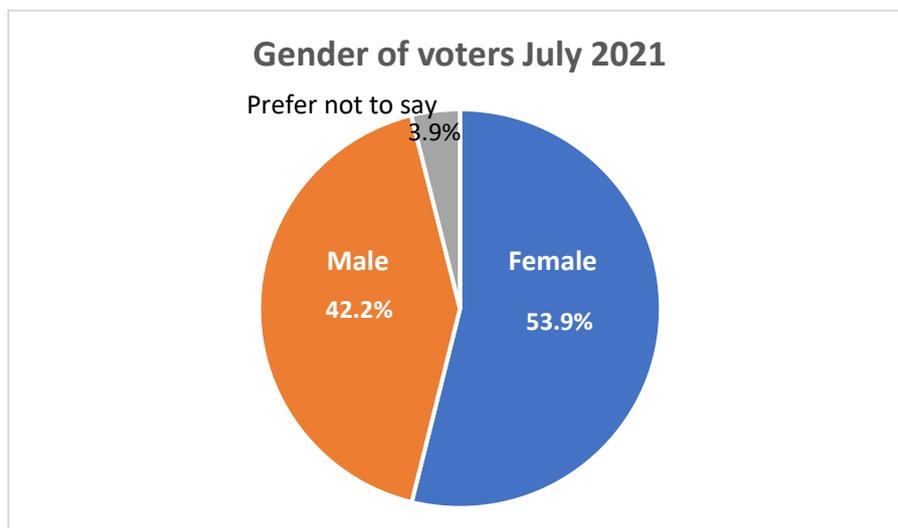
A total of 24.9% of residents who voted on Newham Co-create were under 30, 61.5% were between 30 and 59 years old and 10.8% were over 60. 2.8% preferred not to state their age.

Age of voters July 2021
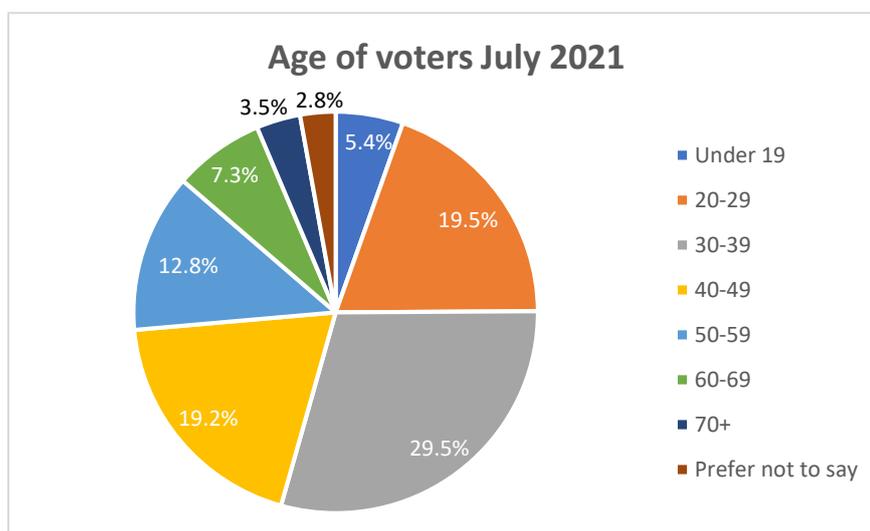
A total of **82** projects were successfully voted to be taken forward. They were announced on Newham Co-create in August 2022. The projects were categorized according to the following themes:

22	Community Gardens, parks and nature		15	Greening the public realm
8	Play and sports		8	Youth programmes
6	Community spaces		6	Arts, crafts and wellbeing
5	Community safety		4	Inclusive bookshop and mini libraries
3	Waste and recycling		2	Food and welfare
2	Inclusive facilities		1	LGBT Visibility

3. Project delivery for cycle 2021-2022

Once the chosen projects were announced, grant agreements were drawn up for each project, and 36 projects were agreed to be delivered wholly or partially by the Council. This was due to these projects taking place on Council-owned land or requiring infrastructure that would need to be installed or maintained by the Council. A project manager was appointed to oversee the high number of projects being delivered by the Environment and Sustainable Transport Team.

Project delivery

Out of the 82 projects successfully voted for, 53 projects were successfully completed, 23 projects are still in progress and six projects did not go ahead.

For two of the six projects that did not go ahead, resident project leads could no longer deliver the project due to personal circumstances. Two projects were not feasible for delivery, including one that was re-scoped and successfully voted for to be delivered in the 2022-2023 cycle instead. One project lead was not able to meet one of the grant agreement's conditions; and one project was partially completed but the project was suspended due to financial obligations not being met.

Projects per neighbourhood

Neighbourhood area	Number of successful projects	Number of project completed
Beckton and Royal Docks	11	6
Custom House and Canning Town	9	8
East Ham	10	4
Forest Gate	12	9

Green Street	10	4
Manor Park	8	5
Plaistow	12	9
Stratford	10	8
TOTAL	**82**	**53**

Project outputs

At the end of the cycle, each project had to complete an evaluation form to receive the last instalment of 10% of the grant.

Below is a table with the number of participants engaged in project delivery, based on answers to the question about project beneficiaries from the evaluation form. Resident engagements represent the compiled number of all participants involved in projects either as beneficiaries or involved in delivering the projects. Residents could be involved in multiple activities per project and in multiple projects, therefore it is not the number of unique residents involved.

A total of **5,293** resident engagements were reported by 36 projects, including 1,880 children and young people. This also included 384 volunteers, both one-off and regular. Regular activities were attended by 804 residents while larger, one-off events organised by projects funded by Community Assemblies attracted over 1,100 residents.

Total number of resident participation in project delivery	5,293
Number of volunteers	384
Number of residents who attended regular activities/sessions	804
Number of children and young people	1,880
Number of residents who attended big events (launch, open day, celebration, markets)	1,100

4. Voting on cycle 2022-2023

Between May and June 2022, residents and VCFS were invited to submit project proposals that tackled the priorities of their local area.

A total of 154 project applications were put forward. Working group members assessed these applications against criteria for CIL funding and neighbourhood priority areas. 114 were shortlisted by working groups, and were posted on Newham Co-create to move forward to the next voting phase.

In July 2022, **2,835** residents voted for the projects that they would like to see in their area on Newham Co-create. The graph below shows the number of voters per area. Please note that residents could vote in several areas, therefore the total number of voters in the graph below is higher than the total number of unique resident voters.

Number of residents who voted in 2022 per area

Area	Number
Beckton and Royal Docks	355
Custom House and Canning Town	361
East Ham	243
Forest Gate	850
Manor Park	213
Green Street	590
Plaistow	387
Stratford and West Ham	816
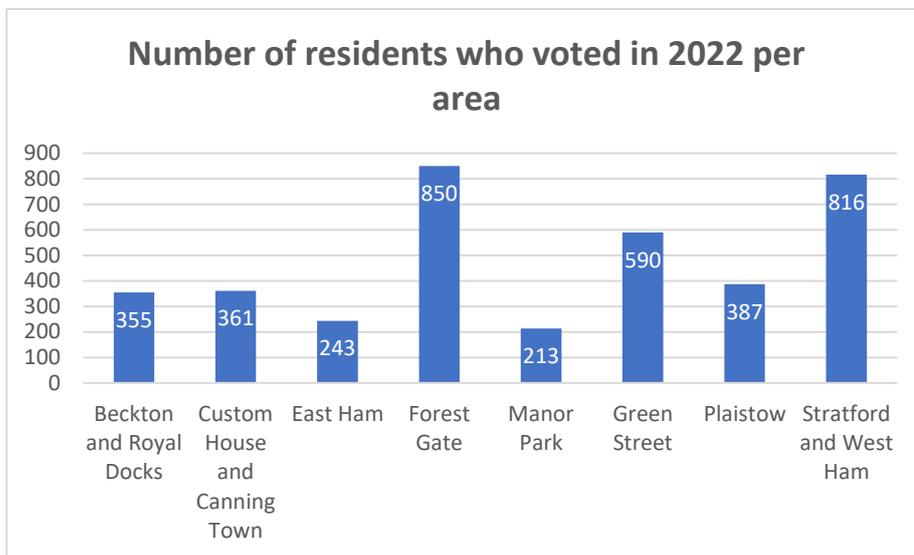
Out of the 2,835 residents who voted on Newham Co-create, 58.8% identified as female, 37% identified as male and 4.2% preferred not to say.

Gender of voters July 2022

- Prefer not to say 4.2%
- Male 37.0%
- Female 58.8%
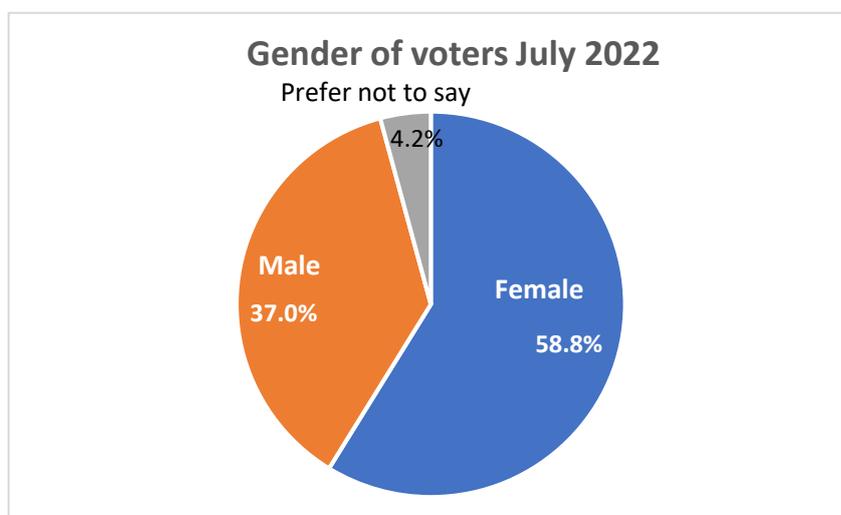
A total of 24.3% of the 2,835 residents who voted on Newham Co-create were under 30, 62.4% were between 30 and 59 years old and 11% were over 60. 2.4% preferred not to state their age.
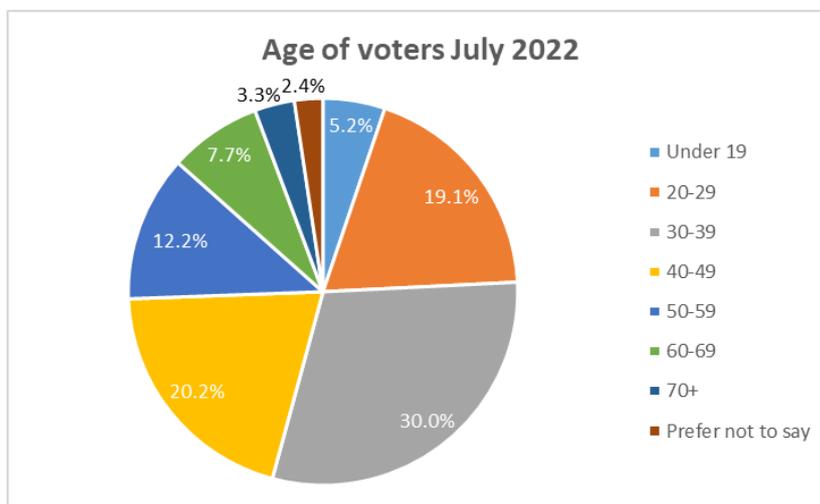
Ethnicity and disability are not currently part of the data collected on all users of the Newham Co-create platform. The data on ethnicity and disability below is based on the sample of 147 residents who responded to the evaluation survey about their user experience of the digital platform.

Out of these respondents, 48.3% were from a White background, 15% were from a Black background, 10.2% were from an Asian background, 2.7% were from a mixed background, 2.7% were from an unknown background, 2% were from a Chinese background and 2% were from other groups.

Although the base of respondents is much smaller, there is an overrepresentation of residents from a White background compared to Newham's population.
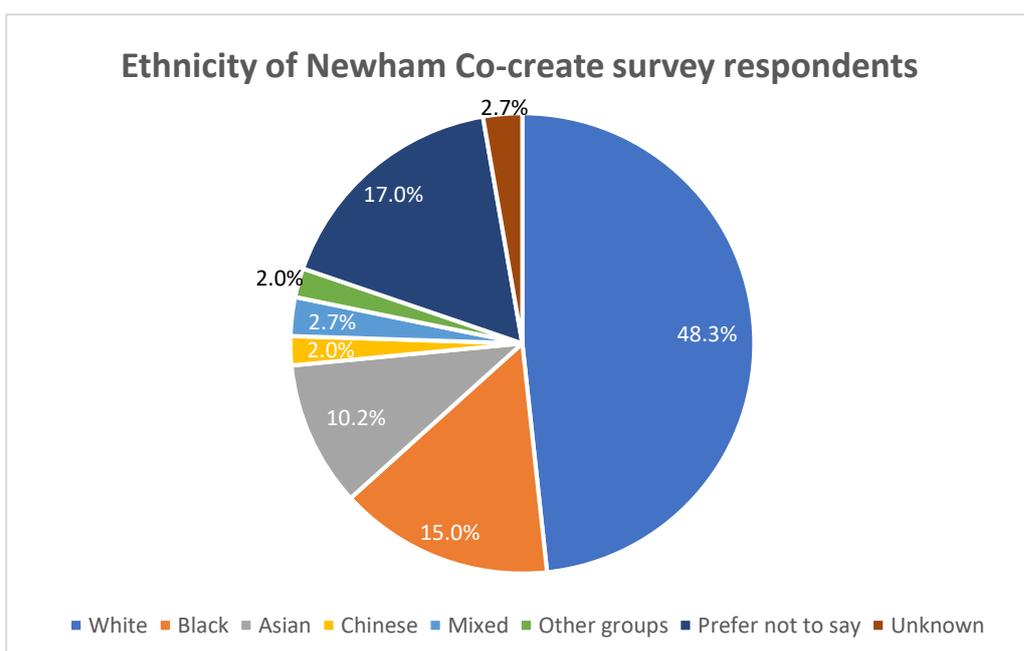
A total of 73.5% of respondents said they didn't consider themselves to have a disability; 16.3% said they had a disability and 10.2% preferred not to say.

Disability of Newham Co-create survey respondents
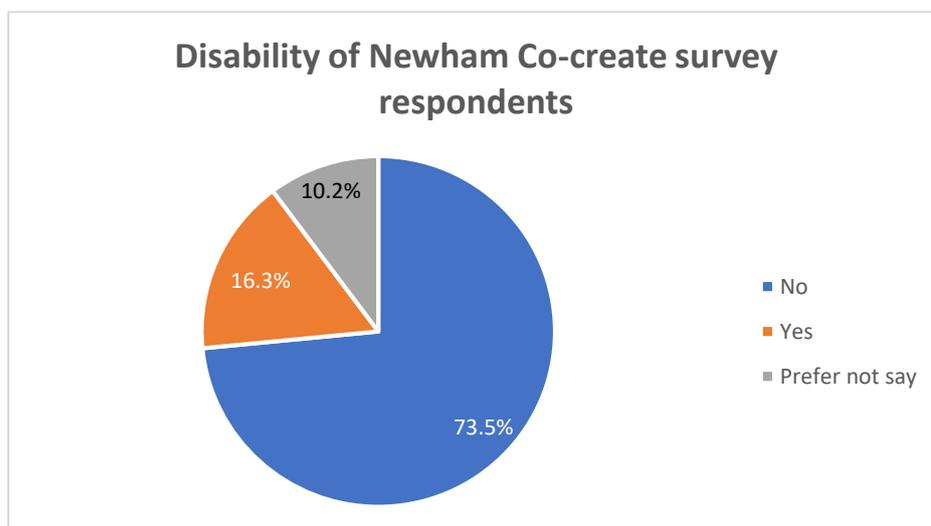
The evaluation survey asking residents about their user experience of voting on Newham Co-create in 2022 also asked residents if it was the first time they voted for Community Assembly projects. A total of 53.1% said they had voted for Community Assembly projects before and 43.5% voted for the first time.

Was this the first time you voted for Community Assembly project?
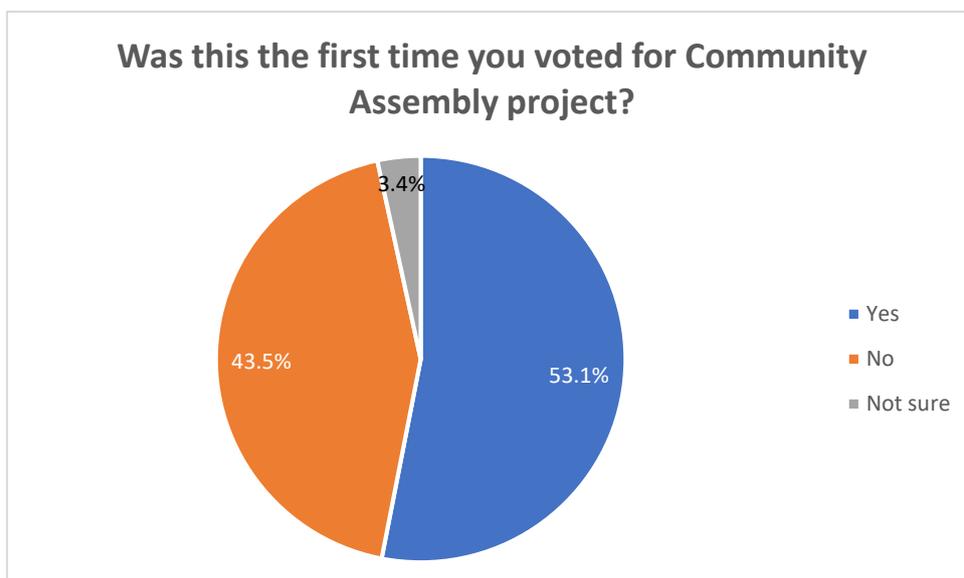
A total of **75** projects were successfully voted to be taken forward. They were announced on Newham Co-create in September. Themes of those projects are listed in the diagram below.

Theme	Count		Theme	Count
Nature & sustainability	9		Table tennis & skate facilities	4
Youth programmes	9		Improved community facilities	3
Health & wellbeing	8		Community safety	3
Trees & planters	8		Community shop / food bank	3
Community gardens	7		Upcycling workshops	3
Sports & play equipment	6		Creative arts & events	2
Parks and green spaces	5		Bike hangars	1
Murals	4			

5. Project delivery for cycle 2022-2023

Once the chosen projects were announced, grant agreements were drawn up for each project. Out of those projects, 23 projects are supported by external organisation Compost to manage the allocated grant. Compost is commissioned by Newham Council to support local residents and small, non-constituted organisations to manage the funding received through the Community Assembly programme. It acts as an account holder and supports project leads to deliver within budget.

Project delivery

Project delivery will be taking place between September 2022 and May 2023. A total of 30 projects have already started across all neighbourhoods as of December 2022.

Projects per neighbourhood

Neighbourhood area	Number of successful projects	Number of projects started
Beckton and Royal Docks	8	4
Custom House and Canning Town	9	5
East Ham	12	3
Forest Gate	12	5
Green Street	7	4
Manor Park	8	1
Plaistow	10	4
Stratford	6	4
TOTAL	**72**	**30**

III. Working Groups

1. The process

Each Community Assembly in Newham's eight Community Neighbourhood areas has a Working Group associated with it. The Working Group demonstrates a model in which local residents, Councillors, Council officers and local stakeholders all work together to improve the quality of life in the Community Neighbourhood area.

Working Group members review project applications submitted after the first round of Community Assemblies, and use their local knowledge of the whole neighbourhood area to decide which projects go through to the final round of voting.

The Working Group monitors the chosen projects to check they are developing as promised and provides support through monitoring visits.

The Working Group also plays a role in communicating with local residents and groups about the Community Assemblies to ensure they have a wide and representative reach.

2. Working groups composition for 2021-2022

Number of resident working group members per area in 2021-2022

Neighbourhood area	Number of resident working group members
Beckton and Royal Docks	12
Custom House and Canning Town	14
East Ham	16
Forest Gate	16
Green Street	16
Manor Park	14
Plaistow	14
Stratford	13
TOTAL	**115**

A total of 62% of resident Working group members for 2021/2022 identified as female, while 38% identified as male. This is consistent with an higher representation of female residents in other parts of the programme.

Gender of Working group members 2021/2022
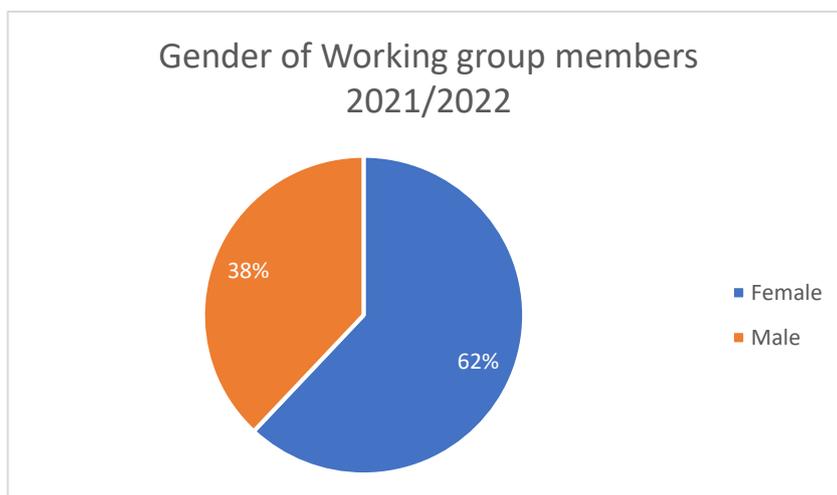
In 2021/2022, 56% of the resident Working group members were from a White background, 15% were from a Black background, 13% from an Asian background and 8% from a mixed background. This represents an higher representation of residents from a White background compared to Newham's population.

Ethnicity of Working group members 2021/2022
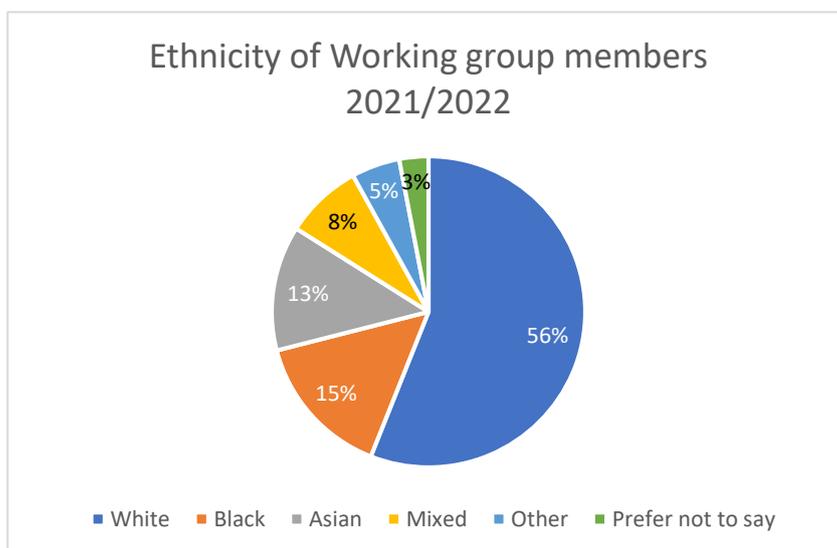
A total of 15.4% of resident Working group members were under 30 in 2021/2022, 79.4% were between 31 and 60 years old and 5.1% were over 60. This represents a lower representation of young people and older residents compared to Newham's population.

Age of Working group members 2021/2022
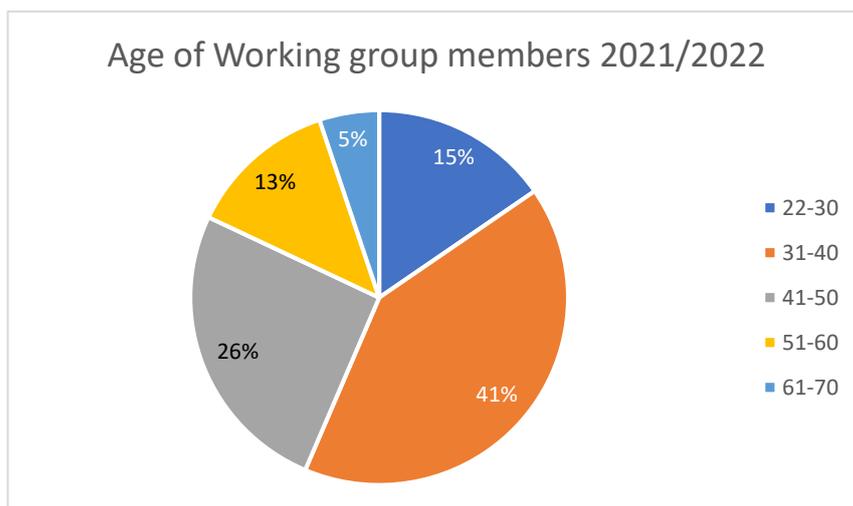
A total of 10% of resident Working group members from 2021/2022 considered themselves to have a disability.

Disability of Working group members 2021/2022
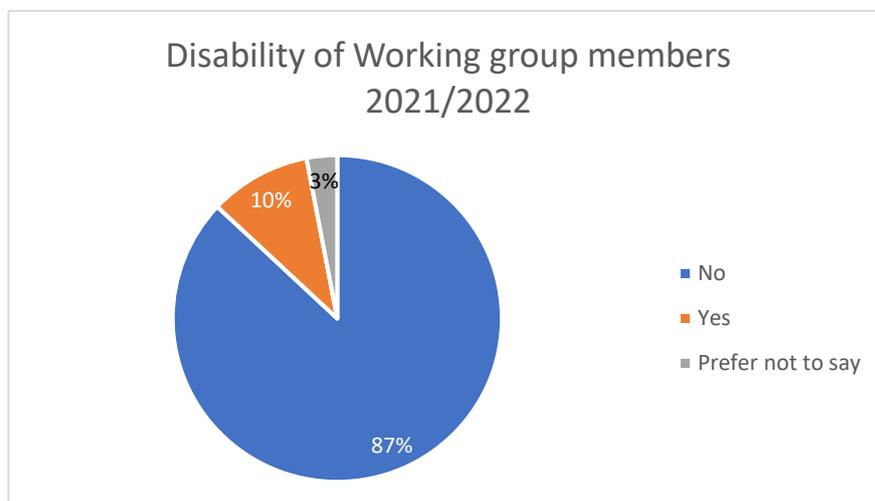
3. Working groups composition for 2022-2023

There were less residents recruited as Working group members in 2022/2023, with low numbers of residents in Manor Park and Forest Gate.

Number of working group members per area in 2022-2023

Neighbourhood area	Number of resident working group members
Beckton and Royal Docks	8
Custom House and Canning Town	12
East Ham	11
Forest Gate	5
Green Street	10
Manor Park	4
Plaistow	11
Stratford	9
TOTAL	**70**

For 2022/2023, the demographics shown below do not include 'Prefer not to say' responses for ease of comparison with 2021/2022.

In 2022/2023, there was a more even representation of gender among resident working group members, with 55% of respondents identifying as female and 45% identifying as male.

Gender of Working group members 2022/2023
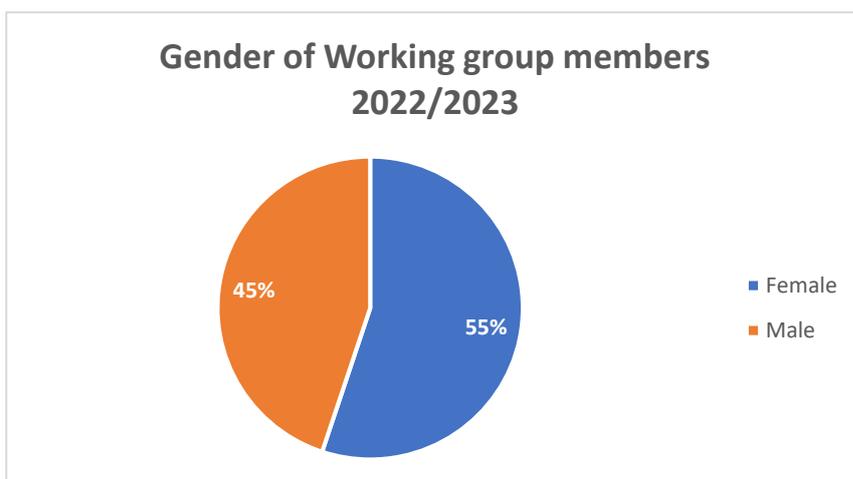
Diversity of ethnic backgrounds has increased compared to 2021/2022 but there is still an overrepresentation of residents from a White background, with 42% indicating a White background, 27% from a Black background and 16% from and Asian background.

Ethnicity of Working group members 2022/2023

- White: 42%
- Black: 27%
- Asian: 16%
- Mixed: 2%
- Chinese: 7%
- Other: 7%
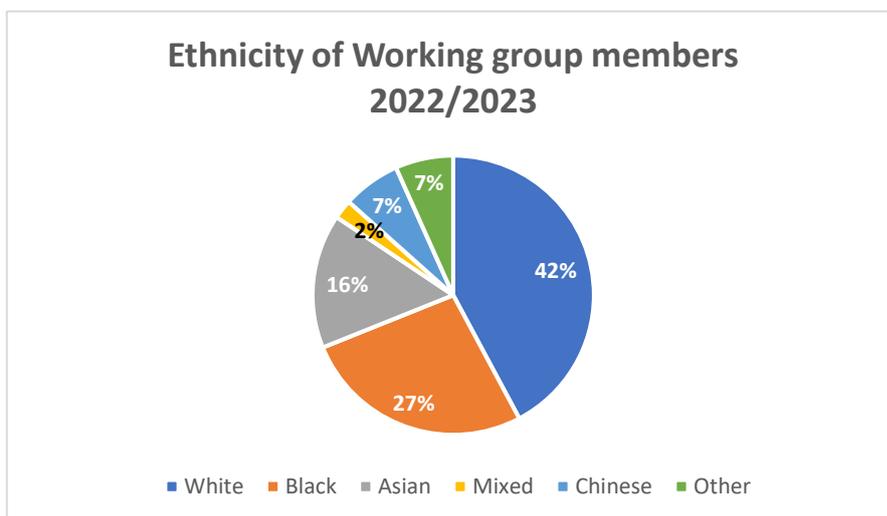
In 2022/2023, there was a much higher percentage of older residents in Working groups, with 50% of respondents being over 50 years old. In contrast, there were only 6% of respondents under 30.

Age of Working group members 2022/2023

- 16-21: 2%
- 22-30: 4%
- 31-40: 21%
- 41-50: 23%
- 51-60: 19%
- 61-70: 23%
- Over71: 8%
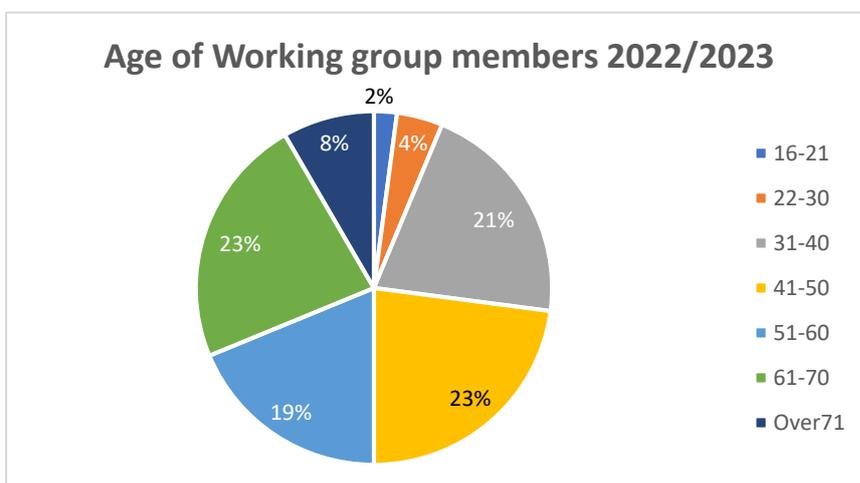
A higher percentage of residents involved in Working groups in 2022/2023 indicated a disability with 27% of respondents saying they had a disability compared to 10% in 2021/2022.

Disability of Working group members 2022/2023

- No — 73%
- Yes — 27%
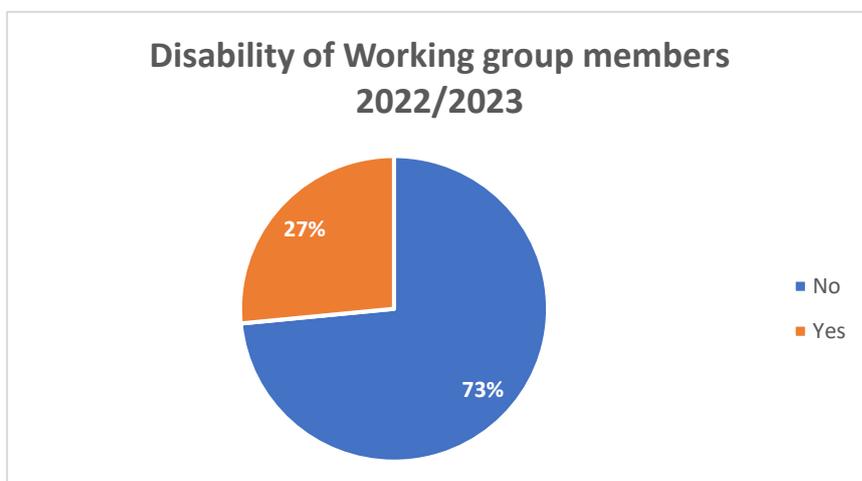
IV. Project Clinics

Project clinics were introduced to the Community Assembly programme in the 2022-2023 cycle to provide an additional level of support for local organisations and residents in completing applications and developing project delivery plans.

Four project clinics were delivered online by November 2022 and attended by project leads and working group members from all neighbourhood areas.

Project clinic	Date	Number of participants
Working Group Training	May 2022	131
Project clinics for for resident applying for Community Assembly funding	May 2022	32
Project clinics for VCFS groups applying for Community Assembly funding	May 2022	47
Project clinic for all residents and VCFS groups on funding and project management (co-delivered with Newham Council's Strategic Partnerships and Engagement Manager and Compost CIC)	October 2022	58
TOTAL		**268**

Section 3: Key learnings and findings from the Community Assembly programme

I.   Overall reflections

Community Assemblies are delivering on their objective of embedding participatory budgeting, and participatory democracy in Newham. The programme is securing increasing levels of engagement and participation with research finding that Community Assemblies are valued by Council staff, VCFS organisations and residents. It is seen as a programme that enables people living, working and learning in Newham to take part in decision-making, participate in the local community, make local improvements to their area and meet other residents. Since launch in 2018, the refinements made to the Community Assembly programme including to the amount of funding available and support given to residents and local organisations to participate have made it more accessible and increased participation.

Looking ahead, the evaluation has highlighted that there are still improvements to be made to achieve even more from the Community Assembly programme and funding. This includes making the programme more accessible to a more diverse range of Newham residents so that participants better reflect the diversity of the borough, particularly its young population. At the same time, ongoing efforts must be made to streamline processes and share ways of working between residents leading projects and Council service areas so that the delivery of projects is more efficient – and impactful. There have been some improvements to process and additional Council staff resources have helped, there is an acknowledgment that the timeline of the current cycle of Assemblies is too short to deliver meaningful projects in collaboration with all parties involved.

While steps taken to make the programme more inclusive, including introducing the digital platform Newham Co-create and hosting hybrid in person and online assembly events have helped, there is scope for the programme to be more inclusive and for participation levels to increase further.

Support made available in the current cycle has improved residents' experience of the programme but there is a room for improvement as local organisations and residents face barriers in all stages of project application and delivery.

This section is based on the thematic analysis of comments from the focus groups with Council staff stakeholders and residents involved in the Community Assembly programme. In addition, insights have been included in the relevant themes, based on feedback forms from Community Assembly events; the survey evaluating the user experience of residents who voted on Newham Co-create in 2022 and the evaluation survey sent to all 68 councillors elected to represent the London Borough of Newham.

II.   Participation and representativeness

The evaluation found that Community Assemblies were appreciated by Council staff and residents alike as an opportunity to participate in decision-making. Residents mentioned it made them feel empowered, able to have a say in what happens in their local area. Both Council staff and residents said that participation levels could be increased by reaching out to more residents and increasing the diversity of residents involved. The depth of participation was also mentioned as something that could be improved.

Council staff and residents appreciated the opportunity to participate through Community Assemblies and mentioned the benefits of the programme for Newham Council.

"Not many Councils have residents leading on improvements in their areas" – Council staff member

"Newham has chosen to listen to residents" – Project lead 2022-2023

"It's a really good experience and you can feel like you are involved in the process about locally based projects" – Working group member

There were comments on participation levels and representativeness, with concerns that Community Assembly participants were not representative of the wider community.

"How can we engage people who don't feel connected to the borough" – Project lead 2022-2023

"Residents not representative of the wider community" – Project lead 2022-2023

Some Council staff and residents felt that the scope of participation in decision-making was limited.

"Decision making is focussed on hyper local projects" – Council staff member

"It's more like a supported grants scheme" – Council staff member

Insights from Community Assembly events feedback forms on participation

A majority of residents who filled in feedback forms at Community Assembly events felt that they provided an opportunity to be involved in decision-making, with an increase in respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to that statement in 2022/2023. A total of 84% of respondents felt that the assemblies provided an opportunity to be involved in decision-making in 2022/2023, compared to 72% in 2021/2022.

The assemblies provide an opportunity for residents to be involved in decision making

	2021/2022	2022/2023
Strongly Agree	28%	31%
Agree	44%	53%
Neutral	15%	11%
Disagree	5%	3%
Strongly disagree	5%	2%
Don't know	2%	0%
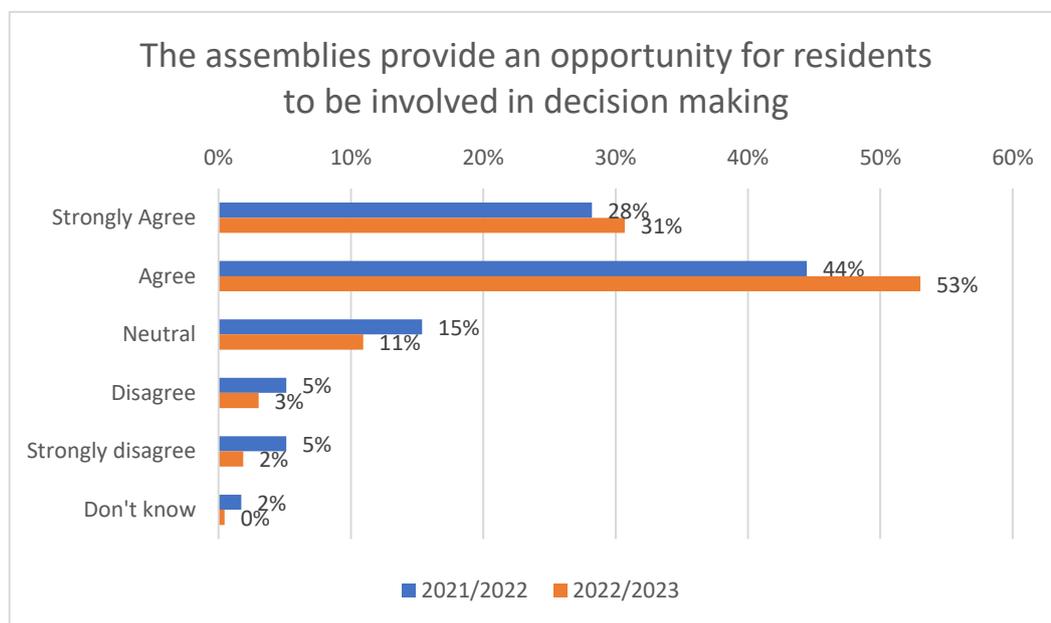
Key recommendations:

- Increase participation levels via a wider communications plan
- Target communications and outreach to communities currently underrepresented

III.   Local change/improvements and networking/connection

Community Assemblies were appreciated by Council staff and residents for the opportunity they gave to make local change and improvements to their area. They were also appreciated as a way to make connections and network in the community.

Council staff and residents mentioned how the Community Assemblies enabled local residents to make change in their local area.

"Great connections formed amongst residents. Taking more pride of their area. Through Community Assembly projects residents are branching out to do other things to make their area better" – Council staff member

"Encouraged us to think about our neighbourhoods in a different way. Own our neighbourhood, rather than council responsibility." – Project lead 2022-2023

"It allows you to make a difference in your neighbourhood" – Working group member

Council staff and residents also mentioned how Community Assemblies enable local residents to feel more connected to their local community and to meet and network with their neighbours.

"People have felt more connected to their community through the project." – Project lead 2021-2022

"It was great to meet new people and learn new skills" – Working group member

"There is a connection with residents and the area, the platform brings people to talk about it" – Council staff member

A few Council staff members and residents felt that there could be more opportunities to connect and network.

"Can there be a way to bring people that have similar ideas and could this be realised together in a collaborative way?" – Project lead 2021-2022

Insights from Community Assembly events feedback forms on local connection

A majority of residents who filled in feedback forms at Community Assembly events felt more connected to their local area after attending, with an increase in respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to that statement in 2022/2023. A total of 89% of respondents felt more connected to their local area by coming to a Community Assembly in 2022/2023, compared to 76% in 2021/2022.

By coming to the Community Assembly I feel more connected to my local area

Response	2021/2022	2022/2023
Strongly Agree	32%	37%
Agree	44%	52%
Neutral	14%	7%
Disagree	4%	3%
Strongly disagree	3%	1%
Don't know	2%	1%
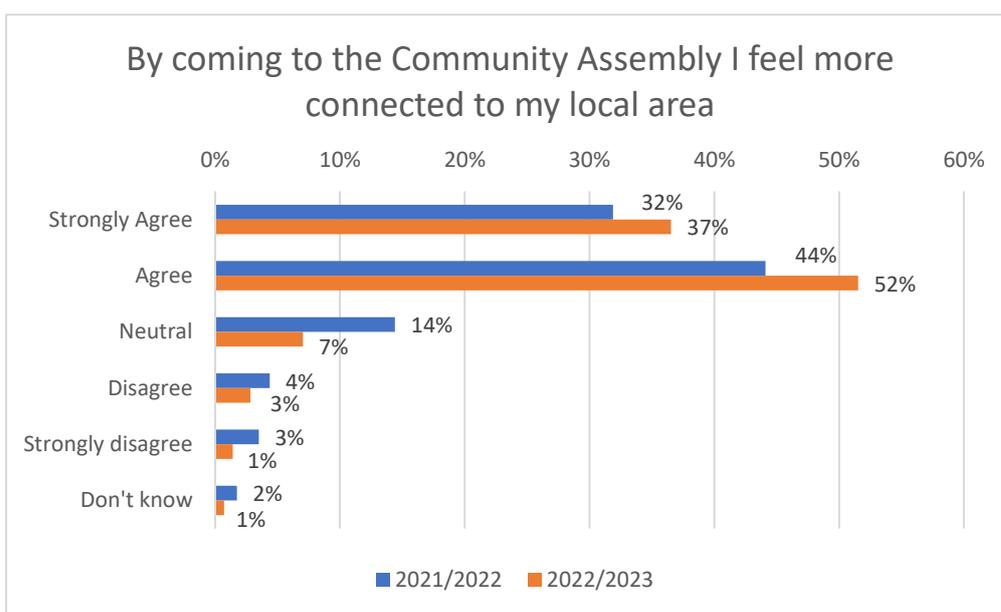
Key recommendation:

Organise networking sessions across all neighbourhood areas for project leads

IV.   Accessibility and inclusion

Research found that several Council staff and residents felt that Community Assemblies were not accessible or inclusive enough. The common issues that were barriers to participation were language, accessibility for residents with disabilities and digital access. A few Council staff and residents felt that accessibility and inclusion processes had improved since previous cycles.

Accessibility and inclusion challenges were mentioned for different activities of the programme such as application forms, Newham Co-create and the scoring for working groups.

> *"Language barrier for forms" - Working group member*

> *"Process not supportive of those with learning difficulties, particularly those who are neurodiverse" – Project lead 2022-2023*

> *"It was a bit tricky for me as IT can sometimes be an issue for me. I went to the library to print everything out, read it out then prepare my answers" – Working group member*

A few Council staff members and residents commented on improvements to accessibility and inclusion for this cycle.

> *"When I joined, there was no rewards and recognition but now it has been introduced." – Working group member*

> *"The hybrid assemblies were good and inclusive" – Council staff member*

Insights from Community Assembly events feedback forms on accessibility and inclusion

Respondents to Community Assembly feedback forms felt overall that Community Assemblies were easy to understand and participate in, with an increase in respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to that statement in 2022/2023. A total of 90% felt it was easy to understand and participate in 2022/2023, compared to 82% in 2021/2022.

It was easy for me to understand and participate in today's assembly

	2021/2022	2022/2023
Strongly Agree	35%	38%
Agree	47%	52%
Neutral	11%	6%
Disagree	4%	2%
Strongly disagree	3%	1%
Don't know		1%
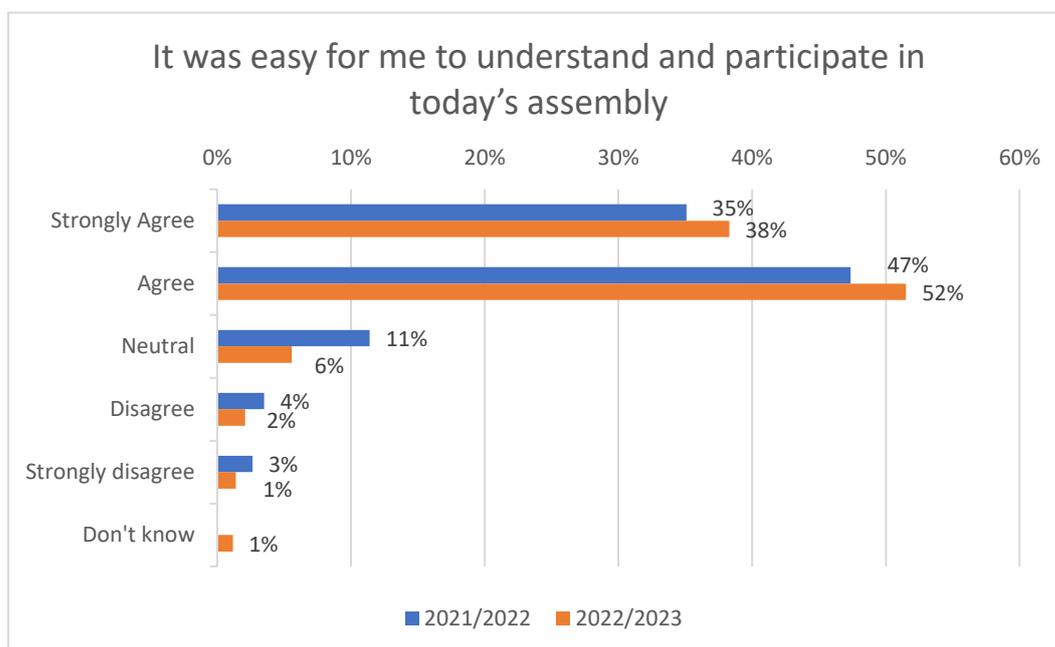
Key recommendations:

- Extend the support available for residents at all stages of the Community Assembly cycle
- Provide key documents in languages other than English
- Continue to provide hybrid assemblies
- Consider a hybrid voting system with opportunities to vote in person in addition to online

V.   Processes, timeline of the programme and resourcing

The majority of Council staff and residents commented on the complex administration involved in the Community Assembly programme. The common difficulties highlighted were lengthy processes, delays in the programme and the workload and paperwork involved both for Council officers and residents. Some staff members and residents mentioned some improvements in processes since the programme was launched. Several staff and residents felt that the timeline of the Community Assembly was too short to deliver the projects. A few staff felt that there were not enough resources to run the programme. A few residents also felt that the process was smooth.

Council staff and residents commented on the difficulties they faced in different phases of the programme with the processes involved, including the application process, the feasibility phase, the announcement of projects and the grant agreements and funding arrangements with Compost.

"Compost funding still not released which is delaying the projects" – Working group member

"Admin time costing more than it is worth" – Project lead 2021-2022

"Council departments are disjointed and 'normal' process for things like planning take very long for residents and community groups" – Project lead 2022 – 2023

"Waits on signing off for many of the stages delays the process" – Council staff member

Some Council staff and residents who were involved through several Community Assembly cycles have mentioned improvements in processes, including through the audit process.

"We've been able to improve on the documentation for projects from inception, budget, spend profile, we've developed a reporting template for CN teams." – Council staff member

"We now have strategies and processes in place after two cycles, great opportunity for service." – Council staff member

"It improves every year" – Working group member

Council staff and residents who commented on the timeline of the programme felt that the Community Assembly cycle was too short as a whole or that some phases felt rushed.

"Increase timeline of programme to possibly 18 to 24 months - 1st year design and setting up, 2nd – implementation" – Working group member

"Reviewing timescale and feasibility to ensure project is successful" – Project lead 2022-2023

"Timescales can be too short - more time is required to better scope and develop ideas" – Council staff member

A few Council staff members commented on the resourcing with some departments appreciating more resourcing added to deliver Community Assemblies and others mentioning they don't have enough resources.

"No dedicated resource from Highways, we didn't have time to review the projects after the voting period" – Council staff member

A few residents felt that the process was smooth.

"Application process was very smooth" – Project lead 2022-2023

Key recommendations:

- Extend the Community Assembly cycle to a two-year cycle to enable smoother processes, better collaboration among services and more support for project delivery
- Increase collaboration and internal communications between Council internal services
- Include time for internal processes, sign-offs and consultation with relevant services in the Community Assembly cycle
- Continue to appoint or identify dedicated officers in all services involved in Community Assembly delivery
- Continue to communicate more frequently with Compost
- Continue to collect feedback from all parties involved to improve processes

VI.   Newham Co-create and voting system

Council staff and residents commented on Newham Co-create both as an engagement platform and as a tool to support the voting system of participatory budgeting. They also commented on the voting system as a whole. Some Council staff and residents felt that Newham Co-create was difficult to navigate and especially the voting system. Others felt Newham Co-create was useful as a tool to find all the information and connect. While some Council staff members and residents felt positive about taking part in participatory budgeting, others felt that the process could be made more accessible to increase the number of voters.

For Council staff and residents who felt that Newham Co-create was difficult to navigate, the sign up process and the voting system were mentioned as barriers.

> *"Voting process - not inclusive, hard to navigate on Newham Co-Create, the shopping basket gave the idea that people had to spend money" – Project lead 2022-2023*

> *"Co-create website hard to navigate, really hard to look at so many projects online on the website." – Project lead 2022-2023*

For Council staff and residents who appreciated Newham Co-create as a tool for participation, the opportunity to connect, see information in one place and reach a wider audience were mentioned.

> *"I think Co-create helps residents to see people care about allocated areas that need to be improved" – Staff stakeholder*

> *"Co-create was great way of connecting" – Project lead 2021-2022*

Some Council staff and residents felt that the voting system could be improved to be made more accessible, especially for digitally excluded residents.

> *"Online voting process excluded those that are not digitally active" – Project lead 2022-2023*

> *"Young People not included in voting process" – Council staff member*

"Could representatives from council have a ballot box in public spaces" – Project lead 2022-2023

Some staff members and residents also appreciated the opportunity to participate in voting for funding allocation.

"Voting process and outcome was quite exciting" – Working group member

"Getting the news that we had got enough votes." – Project lead 2022-2023 [answering the question What is your best memory]

"Allowing residents to vote for where the areas funding is spent is a great way of giving residents a greater say" – Council staff member

Insights from the survey evaluating the user experience of residents who voted on Newham Co-create in July 2022

An evaluation survey was sent to residents who voted for Community Assembly projects in July 2022 on Newham Co-create. A total of 147 residents filled in the evaluation survey. Below are the main insights from the survey.

A majority of 60% of respondents felt that Newham Co-create was a good participation tool, while 12% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

I feel that Newham Co-create is a good participation tool

Response	Percentage
Strongly agree	21%
Agree	39%
Neutral	24%
Disagree	7%
Strongly disagree	5%
Don't know	3%
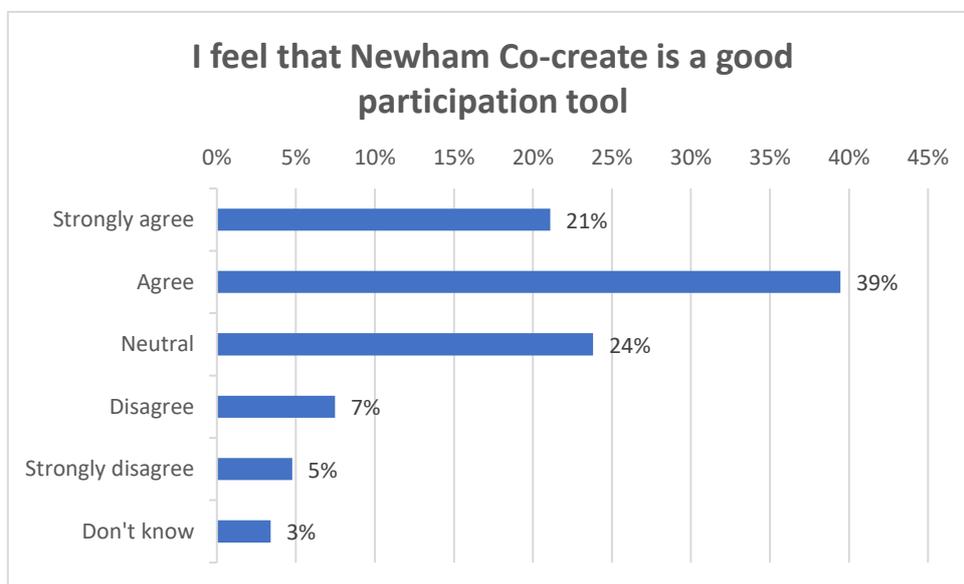
A majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that Newham Co-create was easy to access and that it was easy to understand and participate in the voting for Community Assembly projects. In contrast, 19% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that Newham Co-create was easy to access and 17% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that it was easy to understand and participate in the voting for the Community Assembly projects.

Accessibility of Newham Co-create

	It was easy for me to access Newham Co-create	It was easy for me to understand and participate in the voting for Community Assembly projects
Strongly agree	18%	22%
Agree	41%	46%
Neutral	20%	16%
Disagree	12%	5%
Strongly disagree	7%	12%
Don't know	1%	1%
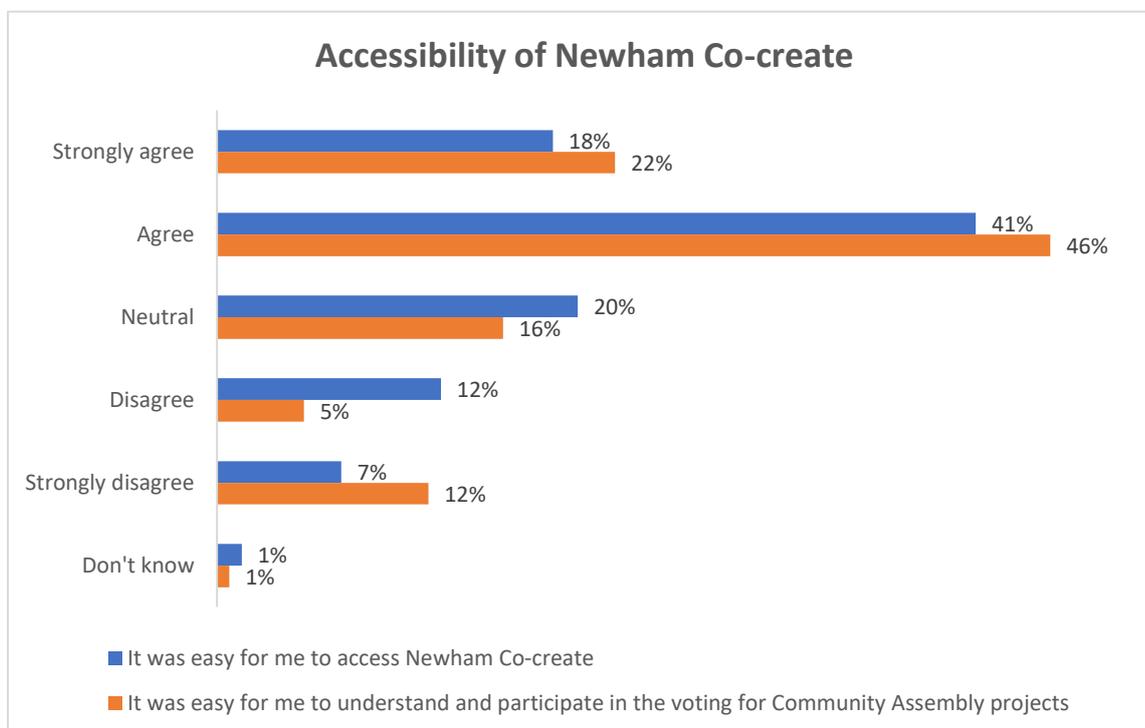
Key recommendations:

- Simplify the voting process on Newham Co-create
- Organise in person voting events in each neighbourhood alongside the opportunity to vote on Newham Co-create

VII.   Communications and feedback

The research found that several Council staff and residents felt communications and marketing of the Community Assembly programme could be improved to increase participation levels. Comments focused on efforts to reach out to the wider community, increase awareness with clearer communications and celebration of the programme's achievements.

> *"Improve the promotion of the scheme as so many residents had no idea about the Community Assemblies let alone the grants available for projects." – Project lead 2022-2023*

> *"I felt at times that I didn't know what was going on - there were times where there were large gaps in communication - it made us feel out of the loop" – Working group member*

> *"Share success stories more widely" – Council staff member*

Key recommendations:

- Consolidate the existing communications plan in collaboration with the Communications team
- Improve branding of the Community Assembly programme so it is easily recognisable and understood for all Newham residents
- Communicate key dates and milestones of the cycle at the beginning of the cycle
- Focus communications on the impact and successes of projects at the end of each cycle to share learning and inspire participation

VIII. Working groups and scoring system

Most comments from working group members on the working groups focused on difficulties related to the scoring system in the shortlisting phase. Comments mentioned the process of scoring, the applications and the timescales.

"Scoring- it was very complicated in the beginning. Not everyone is familiar with these type of statistics. It took me two evenings to figure out the scoring. It should be easier" – Working group member

"Assessment of applications was quite difficult, applicants did not always provide all required information." – Working group member

A few working group members also felt there could be more opportunities to meet and discuss applications.

"I would like to meet as a working group and discuss the applications and projects" – Working group member

Key recommendations:

- Improve process of scoring and shortlisting of projects
- Recruit more resident Working group members and increase diversity of the members
- Better involve internal services in the shortlisting of projects to improve feasibility
- Consider renewing members of the Working groups

IX. Support and project clinics

Both Council staff and residents commented on the support provided throughout the Community Assembly programme with similar amounts of comments highlighting the existing support provided and comments pointing at the lack of support or need for more support.

For Council staff and residents who appreciated the support available, the focus was on efforts from Council officers and partner organisation Compost to guide residents through the process. Compost is commissioned by Newham Council to support residents and non-constituted small organisations to manage their Community Assembly funding.

"Officers made it clear that they were contactable so I didn't feel that I was on my own" – Working group member

"Highways were supportive when physically present" – Project lead 2021-2022

A few Council staff and residents also appreciated the training sessions and project clinics.

"Better this year was training about the process too" – Working group member

"Project clinics are good, need to encourage and support more people to get involved" – Council staff member

For Council staff stakeholders and residents who felt that more support was needed, their comments focused on difficulties faced by residents especially at application stage as well as guidance on the level of expectations for project leads.

"Provide more information to applicants during first assembly" – Council staff member

"Council needs to realise that all residents of different capabilities need support to get involved in the Community Assemblies." – Project lead 2022-2023

Key recommendations:

- Provide better guidelines on how to participate at all stages of the cycle, e.g. how to apply, how to vote on Newham Co-create, what is expected from project leads, etc.
- Increase the level of support available to residents and local organisations through a sustained programme of project clinics in collaboration with Council services and local organisations.

X.   Community Assembly events, hybrid and logistics

Council staff stakeholders and residents alike felt positive towards Community Assembly events, with comments on the opportunity to meet, discuss local issues and hear about projects. Several Council staff and residents appreciated the hybrid assemblies, explaining that they were more inclusive and enabled more residents to get involved. A few residents also liked the opportunity to return face to face and felt there could be more in person meetings.

Community Assembly events were mentioned as useful and interactive events.

"I think it was good when we had the assembly meeting when we could meet councillors and officers to discuss things" – Working group member

"Assemblies are like milestones and useful" – Working group member

"My best memory was of the presentation at the Town Hall" – Working group member

The hybrid assemblies, introduced in the 2022-2023 cycle, were appreciated for their inclusivity and opportunity to reach more residents.

"Hybrid model was good as it targeted those with online access and those who preferred to attend in person" – Council staff member

"Assembly available in person and on zoom, allowing more people to attend" – Working group member

A few residents still hoped for more in person opportunities.

"I hope for more in person meetings as I attended a working group meeting and was the only person there. Everyone else was online."

Insights from Community Assembly events feedback forms on satisfaction with the events

A majority of respondents to Community Assembly feedback forms felt that Community Assembly events were useful, with an increase in respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to that statement in 2022/2023. A total of 93% felt that Community Assembly events were useful in 2022/2023, compared to 82% in 2021/2022.
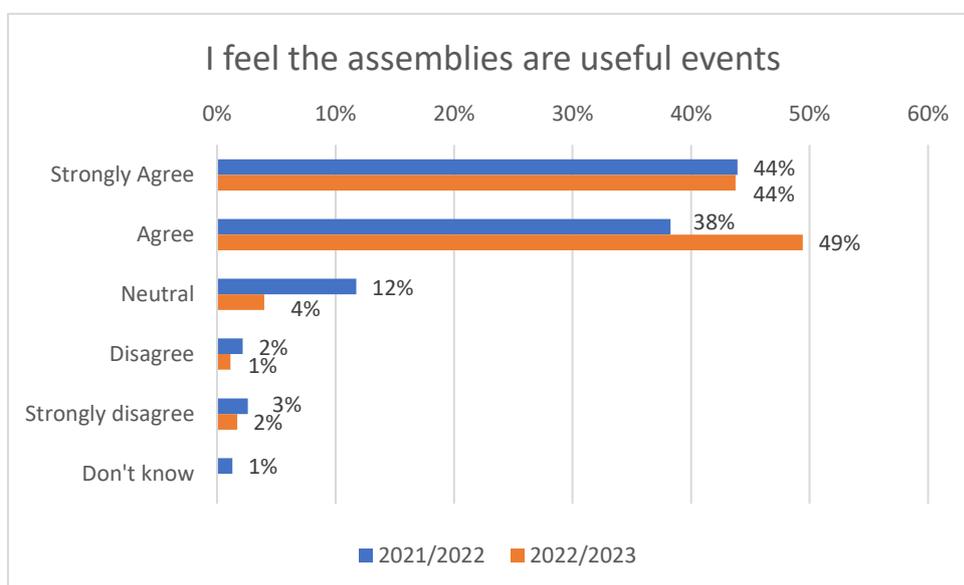
A total of 79% of respondents to Community Assembly feedback forms in the 2022-2023 cycle also reported feeling better or happier after attending Community Assembly events.

Did you feel better or happier after attending this assembly?

- Yes 79%
- No 5%
- Not sure 15%
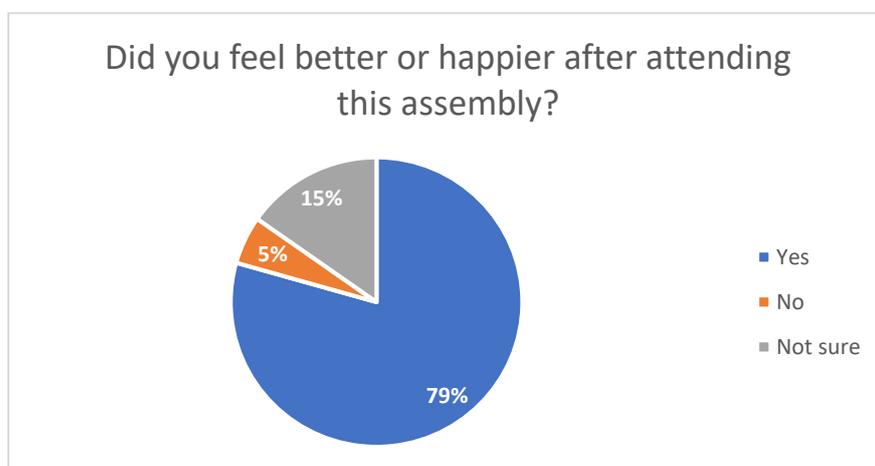
XI.   Project delivery and monitoring

Both Council staff and residents appreciated Community Assemblies as an opportunity to deliver impactful projects in Newham. Project delivery was mentioned as a highlight or a best memory by several project leads and working group members. Some challenges were also mentioned relating to meeting expectations and differences between neighbourhood areas in terms of variety and amounts of projects.

Positive comments focused on the variety of projects delivered, the impact on the local area and the benefits of delivering a project both for project leads and working group members.

"The highlight for me was the variety of projects and working together to make our area better" – Working group member

"Enabled local greening and environmental initiatives to be developed and delivered" – Council staff member

"When I visited a project. The proposal replicated the actual project. I was greeted nicely and I got to know the project lead. It is a memory I like to hold onto." – Working group member

"Supporting people who are homeless and seeing the impact through the project, how someone is able to turn their lives around through participation." – Project lead 2022-2023

Some Council staff members and residents felt that there could be more variety in the projects delivered and that some neighbourhood areas had less applications than others.

"Some neighbourhoods didn't have many applications" – Project lead 2022-2023

"Too many of the same projects for example planters and herb gardens. Need more variety." – Council staff member

> **Key recommendation:**
>
> - Extend the Community Assembly cycle to a two-year cycle with the second year focused on project delivery to allow more time to plan, engage, deliver and evaluate the impact of projects

XII.   Local priorities

Both Council staff and residents mentioned challenges linked to the local priorities set in the first Assembly of the cycle 2021-2022. Several Council staff members felt that the local priorities didn't address the local issues or were not linked to Council strategies. Some residents felt that the local priorities were limiting or confusing. A few staff members felt that local priorities encouraged residents to discuss local issues collaboratively.

For Council staff, the main challenges focused on linking local priorities to issues of local concern and Council strategies.

> *"It is a good space to discuss ideas but I don't think all the important issues are being tackled and these issues are what we hear about every week from residents" – Council staff member*
>
> *"Projects need to better align to strategies" – Council staff member*
>
> *"I think most of the priorties in all neighbourhoods had elements of repetition which means to me we need to look at the demographic of who is attending and why" – Council staff member*

For residents, the main challenges were focusing on local priorities being limiting or confusing.

> *"Local priorities - some of the projects/groups would have found it hard to align to these" – Working group member*
>
> *"Priorities were limiting - ideas came first and then the three priorities were chosen, some of the projects couldn't go forward" – Project lead 2021-2022*
>
> *"2 of the 3 local priorities were very similar for our neighbourhood" – Project lead 2021-2022*

A few positive comments on local priorities mentioned they enabled residents to discuss local issues together and think more widely about their area.

> *"Residents become aware that some priorities are bigger than the challenge they are facing" – Council staff member*
>
> *"Helps residents/orgs to link their projects to local priorities, therefore building a greater understanding." – Council staff member*

Insights from Community Assembly events feedback forms on identifying issues of local concern

A majority of respondents to Community Assembly feedback forms said that assemblies provided an opportunity to discuss issues of local concern, with a significant increase in respondents agreeing to that statement in 2022/2023. A total of 85% felt that the assemblies provided an opportunity to discuss and identify issues of local concern in 2022/2023, compared to 69% in 2021/2022.
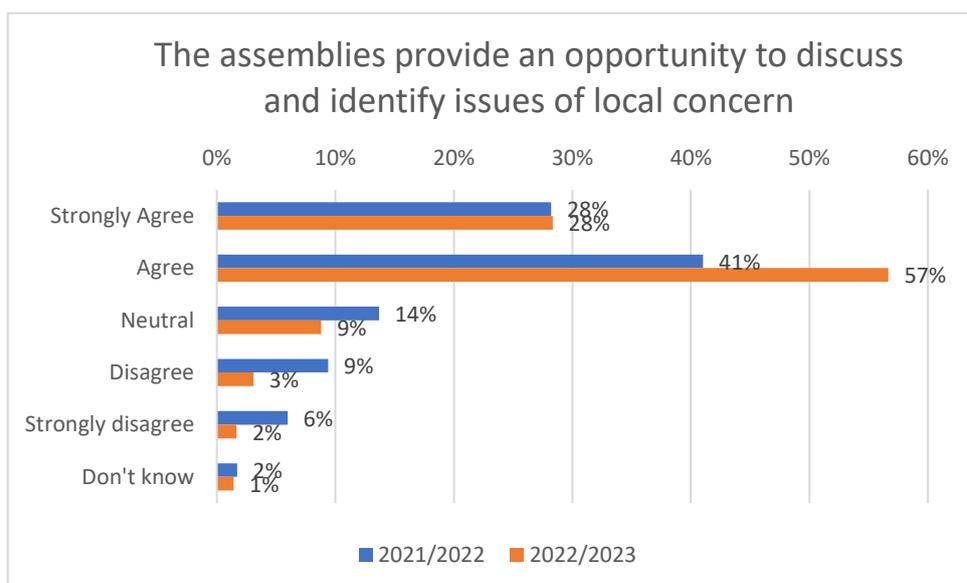
Key recommendations:

- Better link the setting of local priorities with issues of local concern and wider Council strategies
- Ensure that local priorities are distinct and don't overlap to allow for a greater variety of projects
- Provide feedback loop so that staff members and residents understand how the projects delivered responded to priority issues

XIII. Funding

Several Council staff and residents commented on the funding made available through the Community Assembly programme. Some felt that the funding was a great opportunity to get projects started. A variety of challenges were also mentioned by both staff and residents ranging from expectations, reporting and fair share of the funding available.

Among Council staff and residents who mentioned the funding as a highlight, the focus was on getting their project funded.

"Newham funding was the first pot of funding for us, highlight is getting recognition" – Project lead 2022-2023

"Initial support from Community Assemblies funding has opened the door for other funders." – Project lead 2022-2023

"Great to see fledgling orgs applying for further funding and growing" – Council staff member

Some challenges were mentioned referring to the allocation of funding and the responsibilities attached.

"Can we provide some guidance/guidelines around how many times a VCFS group can apply over the years." – Working group member

"Up against bigger organisations, difficult for smaller grassroots" – Project lead 2022-2023

"Residents may not want the responsibility for the funding" – Council staff member

"Projects need to be costed realistically to ensure they can be successful - having equipment, storage in parks and open spaces will need to meet certain standards" – Council staff member

"It is great to have more money available than first year, can it realistically grow more to feel more meaningful?" – Council staff member

Insights from Community Assembly events feedback forms on allocation of funding

A majority of respondents to Community Assembly feedback forms said that assemblies allowed residents to have a greater say in how funding is allocated locally, with a significant increase in respondents agreeing to that statement in 2022/2023. A total of 82% felt that the assemblies allowed them to have a greater say in how the budget is used in 2022/2023, compared to 64% in 2021/2022.

The assemblies allow residents to have a greater say in how the budget is going to be used to help respond to issues of local concern

	2021/2022	2022/2023
Strongly Agree	28%	39%
Agree	36%	43%
Neutral	20%	11%
Disagree	6%	3%
Strongly disagree	7%	2%
Don't know	3%	2%
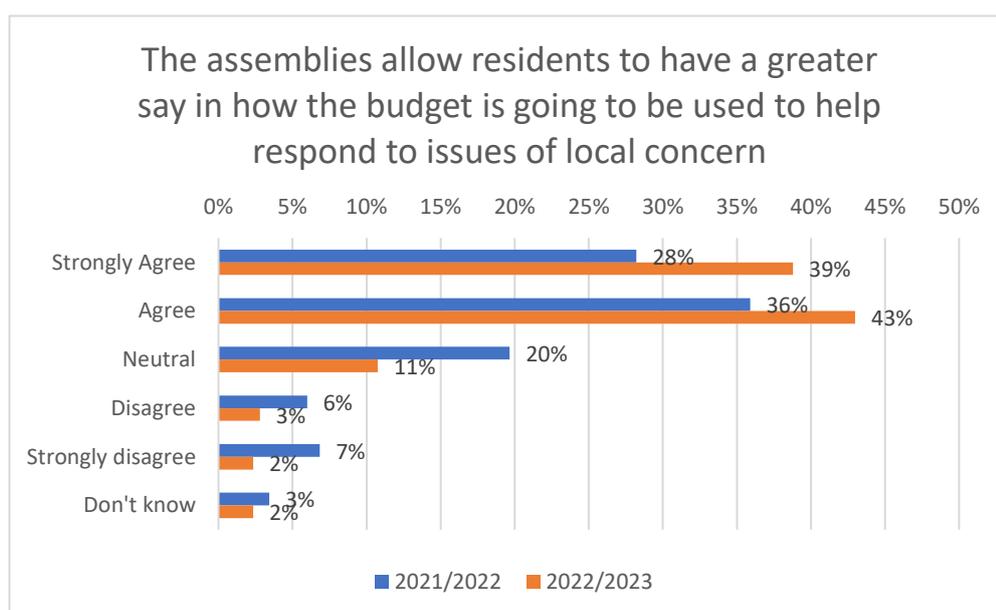
Key recommendations:

- Continue to allocate CIL funding through participatory budgeting
- Identify additional funding available in Newham Council for participatory budgeting
- Provide more support to residents and smaller organisations with their funding applications
- Provide support to unsuccessful applicants and project leads to find additional funding opportunities

XIV. Role of Councillors

A few residents commented on the involvement of Councillors in Community Assemblies, hoping that local Councillors could be more involved in the programme to build awareness and encourage neighbourhood involvement.

> *"More cabinet members to attend. It highlights to the community that they care about the projects and the assembly" – Working group member*

Insights from the evaluation survey of Councillors' experience of the Community Assembly programme

A total of 20 Councillors out of 68 answered the feedback survey on Community Assemblies. Among them, 40% had attended Community Assembly events several times, 35% had attended them regularly and 25% had attended once. Out of the 20 respondents, 35% said they never attended a Working group, 30% attended a Working group several times, 25% attended once and 10% said they attended regularly.

When asked what prevented them to attend Community Assembly events, a majority of the Councillors said they didn't have time or had other Council or personal commitments. When asked what prevented them to attend Working group meetings, most Councillors mentioned time and other commitments too. A few of them also mentioned a lack of information on working groups and their expected involvement.

When asked how they found Community Assemblies, the Councillors who filled in the survey had diverging opinions. While half of these Councillors felt positive, the other half questioned some aspects of it or the project as a whole.

Positive comments highlighted the organisation of the events.

> *"I have been very impressed by the amount of preparation and work that has gone into them by officers"*

Councillors who challenged the programme felt that it was not innovative enough and a few Councillors questioned whether this was the best use of CIL funding.

> *"Standard community meeting, nothing ground breaking or exciting"*

When asked how they found Working groups, most Councillors didn't comment, several felt positive about attending and a few felt it could be improved.

Key recommendation:

- Better involve Councillors in the Community Assembly programme

Section 4: Recommendations for the future cycles of Community Assemblies

Based on the evaluation of the programme and the key issues to consider identified for each part of the Community Assemblies, the following key recommendations should be considered:

1. Increase the representativeness of residents involved in Community Assemblies. Increase recruitment of working group members and continue to encourage residents from all ethnic backgrounds to join Community Assembly events. This includes strengthening links to existing participatory processes within the Council such as Newham's permanent Citizen's Assembly and Youth Assembly to increase young people's participation.

2. Extend the Community Assembly cycle to a two-year cycle to allow for longer term planning, enable smoother implementation processes, encourage more collaboration between Council services and more support for project delivery. The first year should focus on deliberation, project application and participatory budgeting then the second year should focus on project delivery and evaluation.

3. Increase participation levels through improved communications around the Community Assembly programme. Led by the Council's communications team, the ambition is to transform awareness of the programme so that residents better understand what it is and how to take part. A dedicated brand for the Community Assembly programme will be developed so that residents can more easily identify Community Assembly funded projects and be alerted to key milestones, including where events are happening and when funding applications are due. Key will be the use of project case studies to encourage residents from currently underrepresented communities to take part with the aim that communications overall improve accessibility and representation.

4. Increase accessibility and inclusion of the voting process through a simpler online voting process and opportunities to vote in person. This should include a revision of the 'shopping basket' system on the Newham Co-create digital platform and, at in person Community Assembly events, use of ballot boxes.

5. Improve project delivery through an extended programme of project clinics. Organise regular project clinics during the two-year cycle providing support to residents and local organisations applying for funding, or delivering projects. This should be done in collaboration with Council service teams and potential partner local organisations so that project teams have a 'one stop' shop of information and advice to support their project.

6. Improve links between local priorities and the Council's strategy so that funded projects can contribute to the overall borough plan. This can be achieved by linking the Corporate Plan's priorities to local priorities at the beginning of the cycle.

7. Connect the funding available through Community Assemblies with other funding opportunities to support projects to scale. Additional funding opportunities could be shared not only with any unsuccessful applicant to the Community Assembly programme but also for project leads to either find match funding or to find sustainable funding to extend their projects. This could be linked to Newham's crowdfunding programme.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1 – THEORY OF CHANGE

Community Assemblies
Theory of Change Evaluation Framework October 2022
Project Timescale: April 2021- March 2023

Newham London

AIMS

The Community Assembly programme is London Borough of Newham's flagship programme of participatory budgeting and a beacon of participatory democracy.

It was started in 2018 with the aim to deliver the Mayor of the London Borough of Newham's aspiration to create a culture of participation, increase transparency and trust and bring local people into the decision-making process.

In its third cycle, the Community Assembly 2022-2023 programme aims to work towards 'Building a Fairer Newham' which is people-powered and widens participation.

CONTEXT AND ASSUMPTIONS

1. The London Borough of Newham's aspiration under the leadership of Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz is to work towards "Building a Fairer Newham". Community Assemblies are part of priority 7 of the Corporate plan for 2022-2026 which sets out to build a "People powered Newham and widening participation".

2. Three cycles of Community Assemblies have taken place since 2018. Community Assemblies 2022-2023 is the third cycle. The budget allocated is £100,000 per each of the eight neighbourhood areas.

3. Key recommendations from previous evaluation reports have resulted in increasing the budget allocated from £25,000 to £100,000 per neighbourhood areas, increasing the support available and streamlining processes.

CHALLENGES

1. Ensure high, inclusive and diverse reach and participation in the process amongst residents and community groups.

2. Ensure high standard project delivery alongside high standard engagement/programme delivery.

3. High level of staff resourcing and number of internal teams involved to deliver the community assemblies.

4. Ensure easy access to the programme alongside robust processes enabling accountability.

5. Since 2021, shorter timescale of one year to deliver more projects with a much larger budget.

6. Limited time for marketing and communications to engage a wider Newham community and VCF sector.

7. Lack of project applications in some neighbourhood areas, supplemented by Working Groups.

EVALUATION AIMS

1. Assessing Community Assemblies against this framework

2. Assessing the quantity and quality of Community Assemblies

3. Assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme and ways of optimising the design

4. Assessing Community Assemblies against success criteria

5. Comparing the outputs and outcomes of this cycle with previous cycles of Community Assemblies

DESIRED OUTCOMES

1. Enhance and embed participatory democracy.

2. Increase the transparency, accountability and trust in the Council and its decision-making.

3. Newham's local neighbourhoods are shaped by local residents and community groups.

4. Local residents from all neighbourhood areas and backgrounds get involved in the Community Assemblies.

Key Activities and Mechanisms For Change → Measure → Research Activity / Source → Key Success Criteria

WE ARE NEWHAM.

BUILDING A FAIRER NEWHAM

Community Assemblies
Theory of Change Evaluation Framework October 2022
Project Timescale: April 2021 - March 2023

Newham London

Key
- 🟧 Community assemblies
- 🟨 Working groups
- 🟥 Participatory budgeting
- 🟦 Project clinics

Key Activities and Mechanisms For Change	Measure	Research Activity / Source	Key Success Criteria
🟧 Four series of **community assemblies** In each of the 8 neighbourhoods to provide hyper- local opportunities for participation, influence decision-making and feedback on progress	🟧 Attendance number, diversity and experience of residents who attended Community Assemblies	🟧 Community Assemblies stats and feedback forms	🟧 Assemblies raised citizen awareness and involvement in decision-making
🟥 **Participatory budgeting** process to identify, fund and implement local community projects in line with the priorities identified by the local community. This is supported by the **Newham Co- create** platform since Spring 2021	🟥 Number, diversity and experience of residents who voted on Newham Co-create	🟥 Newham Co-create stats and Newham Co-create feedback survey	🟧 Assemblies created space for discussing and finding solutions to issues of local concern
	🟥 Local priorities identified by each neighbourhood	🟥 Project data	🟧 Assemblies created a sense of connection between local residents and their local area
	🟥 Number of projects submitted, accepted and delivered per neighbourhood and across the borough	🟥 Project data collected by Neighbourhood and Participation team	🟧🟥 Assemblies enabled residents to participate in a variety of ways, including online and offline
	🟥 Project leads' experience of the programme	🟥 Project leads focus group	
🟨 **Working groups** involving residents, ward members, council officers and local stakeholders to develop community priorities and implement local community projects funded through participatory budgeting	🟨 Number, diversity and experience of residents who were involved in Working groups	🟨 Working Groups stats and focus group	🟥🟨 Residents have a greater say in allocation of funding within their neighbourhood
			🟨 Assemblies gave residents greater understanding and influence over setting of local priorities
🟦 **Project clinics** to support residents in the process of applying and delivering projects	🟦 Attendance number, diversity and experience of residents who attended Project Clinics	🟦 Project Clinic stats and feedback surveys	🟧🟦 Assemblies were accessible for residents from all walks of life and lived experiences

🟧🟥🟨🟦 Experience of internal Council teams	🟧🟥🟨🟦 Internal focus groups and feedback survey for local Councillors
Design improvements of the Community Assemblies programme	Review of previous evaluation reports and recommendations
Design of the Community Assemblies programme	Good practice from other participatory budgeting examples in the UK
Sense of connection/capacity to influence of residents involved in Community Assemblies	Data from Newham survey

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APPENDIX 2 – LIST OF SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS FOR 2021-2022

Project Name	CIL Funding	Compost/ EST/ VCFS/ resident
MANOR PARK		
Manor Park Community Pop-Up Market	£5,000.00	Resident
Manor Park Community Garden	£20,000.00	VCFS
Community Arts Cafe, Performance and Exhibition Space in Plashet Park	£20,000.00	VCFS
Plant street trees along the Romford Road	£5,000.00	EST
Trees for the Avenues and Romford Road	£5,000.00	EST
The Living Wall	£20,000.00	EST
Mini Lending Library	£5,000.00	Compost
Street Planters in East Ham North, Little Ilford and Manor Park Ward	£20,000.00	EST
TOTAL	**£100,000.00**	
PLAISTOW		
Community Garden - New City Green - Wild Green E13	£20,000.00	VCFS
Greenway Benches and equipment	£19,160.00	VCFS
Plaistow Park play Space trees	£4,992.00	EST
New City Park - play equipment	£4,850.00	EST
Parklets	£3,850.00	EST
Free Little Library	£5,000.00	Compost
Community Litter picking	£5,000.00	Compost
New City bins & benches	£5,000.00	EST/Compost
Community Garden - Walton Road	£20,000.00	VCFS
Parks and People Non Pointed Archery	£4,250.00	Compost
There is no Planet B (arts and crafts)	£4,820.00	Compost
Upcycling and Sewing	£5,000.00	Compost
TOTAL	**£101,922.00**	
BECKTON		
Beckton Community Projects youth club	£5,000.00	Resident
Beckton ponds access improvement	£4,970.00	EST with Parks
Community gardening for well-being	£5,000.00	Community Group
Inclusive Community hub	£20,000.00	Community Group

Beckton Nature Play and learning	£17,260.00	Community Group
Social Space North Beckton park pavilion	£4,800.00	Resident
MUGA Beckton Youth Zone	£5,000.00	EST with youth service
Britannia Village improvements	£20,000.00	VCFS
Camel Road playground	£5,000.00	Resident
Improvements to park map signage	£3,550.00	Resident
Permanent play street Beckton	£5,000.00	EST- highways
TOTAL	**£95,580.00**	
FOREST GATE		
Youth Led Forest Gate Planting Project	£8,000.00	VCFS
Creating an environmentally friendly open space	£20,000.00	VCFS
Creating a new home for The Magpie Project and other community groups	£20,000.00	VCFS
Going Green the high street: Woodgrange Road and Upton Lane	£16,000.00	EST- highways
Woodgrange Market: A Community Space	£5,000.00	Resident /EST highways
A new nesting raft and nesting box for ducks in Forest Lane Park	£350.00	Resident
Permanent Rainbow Crossing on Woodgrange Road - LGBT Visibility	£7,250.00	EST- highways
Greening concrete dominated estate in central Forest Gate	£5,000.00	Resident
Bio-diverse corridors	£5,000.00	EST- highways
Make the most of what we have (£1750 given)	£3,500.00	VCFS
Odessa Park Improvements	£5,000.00	EST- highways
Signposts and Trails to Playgrounds	£5,000.00	EST- highways
TOTAL	**£100,100.00**	
CUSTOM HOUSE & CANNING TOWN		
What's the point	£20,000.00	VCFS
Youth Cafe	£12,496.00	VCFS
Cody Dock Community Forest	£12,814.00	VCFS
Ling Road Tree & Flower pit	£4,824.00	EST
Improving & Maintaining Green spaces	£3,000.00	Compost
Youth community centre	£19,962.00	VCFS
Re-greening Victoria Dock Road	£1,754.00	Compost
Play wheels - mobile play van	£17,500.00	VCFS

Custom House Bookshop BAME	£10,000.00	VCFS
TOTAL	**£102,350.00**	
STRATFORD		
Stratford XLP Youth Hub	£20,000.00	VCFS
Community Van	£7,500.00	VCFS
Cook, Eat and Grow: sustainability and well-being for young people and families	£3,500.00	VCFS
Growing Roots and Floating habitats	£9,875.00	VCFS
Anti-fly tipping project (Love E15)	£5,000.00	Compost
Greener Together – Space for Play and Exercise	£20,000.00	VCFS/LBN housing
Health and Wellbeing through Digital Inclusion for domestic Abuse survivors.	£9,930.00	VCFS
Make Do and Mend	£1,912.00	Resident
The Potential Project 21	£2,500.00	Resident
Art in the Park	£20,000.00	VCFS/EST parks
TOTAL	**£100,217.00**	
Green Street		
Hamara Ghar Community Garden	£5,000.00	Resident
Improvement to Priory Park	£20,000.00	EST
Tree Planting & Planters	£15,000.00	EST
Green St Pocket Park Initiative	£20,000.00	EST
Community Food Growth Project	£5,000.00	Resident
St Stephens & Dorset Road Alleyway	£5,000.00	EST
Community Safety for Women & Girls	£5,000.00	VCFS
Stondon Walk Community Project	£5,000.00	EST
Renovation and Enhancement of Dorset Road Community Garden	£5,000.00	VCFS
Greening the Green	£15,000.00	VCFS
TOTAL	**£100,000.00**	
EAST HAM		
Making East Ham Safer, Cleaner, and More Accessible	£20,000.00	VCFS
Urgent refurbishment and improvements needed in Barking recreational ground.	£5,000.00	Council-parks
East Ham Nature Reserve enhancement for local residents	£11,000.00	VCFS
Additional funding for refurbishment and improvements in Barking recreational ground. (resident application above)	£15,000.00	Council-parks
Changing Places Toilet in Central Park Cafe	£5,000.00	Council-parks

Tiny libraries for E6	£1,000.00	Compost
Grow Together, Be Together - Improving a Community Garden in East Ham	£20,000.00	VCFS
Tackling anti-social behaviour in Central Park	£7,000.00	
Adding art to fly tipping hotspots	£5,000.00	Compost
Additional funding for Changing Places Toilet in Central Park (resident application above)	£11,000.00	Council-parks
TOTAL	**£100,000.00**	

APPENDIX 3 – LIST OF SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS FOR 2022-2023

Project Name	CIL Funding	Compost/ EST/ VCFS/ resident
MANOR PARK		
10 More Trees	£5,000.00	Resident
Plashet Park Community Nature Trail	£20,000.00	VCFS
Flats Pickers Community Litter pick	£3,050.00	Resident
New play equipment at warrior square park	£20,000.00	Working group
Manor Park Community Centre outdoor table tennis table	£5,000.00	Resident
Fly-tipping Greenery on Carlyle Road	£5,000.00	Resident
Improvement to warrior square	£20,000.00	Working group
Bike hangars	£20,000.00	Working group
TOTAL	**£98,050.00**	
PLAISTOW		
Plaistow Eco Hub First Avenue Urban Wilderness Regeneration	£19,997.96	VCFS
Safer streets	£9,250.00	VCFS
Plaistow Park Water Fountain and Benches -	£5,000.00	Resident
Tunmarsh Lane Orchard and covered seating area	£20,000.00	VCFS
Swings Plaistow Park	£5,000.00	Resident
One basketball hoop, football goals and a new play log in New City Green	£4,800.00	Resident
Wild Green E13	£9,300.00	VCFS
Social Alleyway	£5,000.00	Resident
Little Free Pantry	£3,000.00	Resident
Bridges Community Memorial Garden	£12,100.00	VCFS
TOTAL	**£93,447.96**	
BECKTON		
Beckton Community Projects	£19,895.10	VCF
Family Forest School:Learning, Planting & Litter Picks	£20,000.00	VCF
Royal Docks Grass Routes	£20,000.00	VCF
South Beckton E6 Community Allotments	£19,700.00	VCF
Youth FC	£4,150.00	Resident
A permanent base for TS Thunderer	£20,000.00	VCF

Beckton Ward Panel Community Engagement Project	£ 3850.00	Resident
TOTAL	**£103,745.10**	
FOREST GATE		
Food For all in Newham	£12,300.00	VCFS
Youth Led - Nature and bio diversity	£20,000.00	VCFS
Trees the High street	£5,000.00	Resident
A Green Oasis in the Town Centre	£20,000.00	VCFS
Let's repair	£3,379.00	Resident
Wayfinding Wall Murals	£5,000.00	Resident
Safer Pavements Greener Pavements	£5,000.00	Resident
Clean, green E15 - A lace to grow	£9,000.00	VCFS
Get in Touch with Nature FL	£4,750.00	Resident
Dance for Wellbeing	£5,000.00	Resident
Forest Gate and Maryland environmental Network	£8,700.00	VCFS
Shine a Light	£4,667.00	Resident
TOTAL	**£102,796.00**	
CUSTOM HOUSE & CANNING TOWN		
Young Generation Leaders	£10,000.00	VCFS
The Barber Connect Project	£5,000.00	Resident
Walk Together	£5,000.00	Resident
Refurbish Front of Anchor House & Supporting Young People into Employment	£20,000.00	VCFS
New Way Row Project	£20,000.00	VCFS
ACT Gardening project	£10,000.00	VCFS
Planet Youth For CH&CT	£5,000.00	Resident
Futur.Shock Youth event Series	£18,088.00	VCFS
The ACID Project	£20,000.00	VCFS
Moving Forward- Feeling Balanced	£4,523.00	Resident
TOTAL	**£117,611.00**	
STRATFORD		
Stratford Skate Hub – Olympic Park	£20,000.00	VCFS
Collaborative Community Mural	£20,000.00	VCFS
Community Wardrobe	£5,000.00	VCFS
Welcome to the Channelsea: Caring for our Blue Green Future	£18,680.00	VCFS
Chobham Manor for the Community	£20,000.00	VCFS
What's The Point _ School Knife Crime Intervention Project	£16,320.00	VCFS
TOTAL	**£100,000.00**	
GREEN STREET		
Drug Crime Reduction Program	£20,000.00	VCFS

H4H - Health and Mental Wellbeing Project	£19,810.00	VCFS
Wildflower Areas to Connect People with Nature	£19,761.00	VCFS
Community Garden Project	£20,000.00	VCFS
Corners of Beauty	£2,200.00	Resident
Priory park play equipment	£20,000.00	Working group
Young Talent	£750.00	Resident
TOTAL	**£102,521.00**	
EAST HAM		
Skate Newham	£5,000.00	Resident
Brampton Community Garden	£5,000.00	Resident
COG Cycling & Mechanics project	£19,600.00	VCF
Folkstone Road Allotment Accessible Community Garden	£20,000.00	VCF
Connect in Nature - Women's Empowerment Circles	£3,040.00	Resident
WILLOW - a collaborative theatre project in Central Park	£5,000.00	Resident
Waste Not Workshops	£10,800.97	VCF
East Ham Community Events	£9,431.40	VCF
William Green Community Project	£20,000.00	VCF
Generation East London	£13,070.00	VCF
Meeli's Social Club	£5,000.00	Resident
Voices through the wind	£2,000.00	Resident
TOTAL	**£117,942.37**	

APPENDIX 4 – FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDES

The core of this evaluation report is based on 90-minute focus group discussions with Council staff members and residents involved in the Community Assembly programme. Below are the key elements of the discussion guides used during the focus groups. They were held on Zoom using breakout rooms and capturing outputs on Jamboard.

Discussion guide for focus groups with Council staff members

Time	Activity	Description
10 minutes	Introduction to the focus group	Explain aim of the evaluation, aim of this focus group and housekeeping.
20 minutes	What worked well (Strengths)	Key benefits of the programme and what went well. Prompts: • What were the highlights of your involvement in the Community Assemblies? • What are the benefits in general? What are the benefits for your team and your service? • What did you learn from being involved in the programme? • What has improved in this year's cycle compared to last year's cycle? • Have the community assemblies brought positive change in your area of work/the way you deliver your work? In what way?
20 minutes	What could be improved (Challenges)	Key challenges of the programme and what could be improved. Prompts: • What were the main challenges you faced in your involvement? What are the common barriers you encountered during the process? • Have the community assemblies impacted the way you work/your work negatively? If so, how? • What could be improved? For the programme in general/for your work in particular? • What needs to change/what would you do differently?
15 minutes	Recommendations	If you could make 3 key recommendations, what would they be?

10 minutes	Success criteria rating exercise	Please put a post it note with your name in the scale from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree'. Then, add a post it note to comment on the reason why you have chosen this sentiment.
5 minutes	Wrap up	Thank you for taking part Any questions?

Discussion guide for focus groups with residents

Time	Activity	Description
10 minutes	Introduction to the focus group	Explain aim of the evaluation, aim of this focus group and housekeeping
20 minutes	What worked well (Strengths)	Key benefits of the programme and what went well for the Prompts: • What was good? What worked well? • What are the highlights of the community assemblies/of your involvement? • What is your best memory? • What would you say to a neighbour who wants to get involved?
20 minutes	What could be improved (Challenges)	Key challenges of the programme and what could be improved: Prompts: • What did not work well? What was difficult? • What were the challenges/barriers to get involved? • What could be improved? What needs to change?
10 minutes	Feedback plenary	Each group will now have two minutes to share one highlight and one thing to improve.
15 minutes	Recommendations	If you could make 3 key recommendations, what would they be?
10 minutes	Success criteria rating exercise	Zoom poll on success criteria rating
5 minutes	Wrap up	Thank you for taking part Any questions?

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