

# Inequalities Project

## Detailed Findings



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Note that the quotes included in the pack are the opinion of individual respondents, though care has been taken to include quotes which aligned to key themes raised, and reflecting quantitative data.

# Introduction & Project Overview



# Executive Summary (i)

Disadvantage and inequality in the borough can be hidden within the overall affluence.

Within some neighbourhoods, there are concentrations of disadvantage, where a substantial minority of residents experience a range of interrelated challenges, overwhelmingly rooted in poverty.

Some groups, including those with low levels of English, learning difficulties or mental health issues and some ethnic minorities and lone parents, face additional barriers to success. Family challenges can draw disadvantage down through generations. Older people can fall into disadvantage as they age.

Residents on low incomes in Central Maidenhead, Dedworth and Datchet, Horton & Wraysbury reported feeling segregated from and forgotten amidst the wider affluence of the borough. The gap between rich and poor can exacerbate their feelings of disadvantage and stigma. There is a strong sense that life chances are shaped by where you are from and a sense of lack of opportunities and control.

*'I'm struggling and a lot of other people are struggling and in the same boat.... It can happen to anybody but where you live and what your circumstances are make a difference, oh god definitely it does. Who you socialise with and what you are surrounded by, of course it's going to have a big impact on what your life is like.'* (Female, lone parent)<sup>2</sup>

Some residents reported feeling that they had limited levers to improve their situations. Those working with disadvantaged communities highlighted low skills, often compounded by low self-esteem and self-confidence acting as a barrier to improving outcomes, and to seeking help to do so.

*"You have to look for the help and I think if you are feeling like that and feeling shameful [then you] don't want to look for the help and don't think it's out there..."* (Female, Datchet)<sup>2</sup>

# Executive Summary (ii)

The cost of living crisis is adding to existing challenges, and making it more likely for vulnerable households to spiral into crisis. Budgets that were previously tight, now don't appear manageable. Stress and depression linked to financial anxiety are eroding resilience and the ability to find positive ways forward. Residents in more disadvantaged neighbourhoods also reported rising anti-social behaviour.

*“The cost of living is affecting everyone. The food banks are so overrun now, people are struggling so much...I feel really uncomfortable when I go up there and I really do need to be up there because I'm struggling. It is hard and it plays on your mental health a lot.” (Female, Dedworth)<sup>2</sup>*

Those experiencing the highest levels of disadvantage and inequality often feel that they lack strong support and networks. However, in areas such as Dedworth, where there is a strong offer of support from within the community, residents recognise the positive difference that this makes.

Relationships have an impact on outcomes - a support network and somewhere to turn in times of challenge increases the ability to weather challenges, offering the opportunity to problem solve in collaboration.

Experiences of disadvantage differ according to where residents live and the types of problem they face. Disability, mental and physical illness are key factors which can upend lives – as are bereavement and trauma. Older people with long term health conditions and disabilities may fall into social isolation and poor quality of life, that is not necessarily linked to poverty. These households are sometimes spread across the borough, including in affluent areas adding to the challenge of targeting support.

*“My husband is very limited in terms of his health and he's in a wheelchair, but we fumble along. There's no point being miserable, and feeling sorry for yourself, because nobody wants to know.”<sup>2</sup>*

# Executive Summary (iii)

Parent or child illness and disability can have far reaching impacts on the rest of the family, with caring responsibilities and coordination of support, affecting ability to work, wellbeing and household finances.

*For two years my daughter couldn't go to school because no normal school is going to take her. The effect on me is that I couldn't work, someone had to be at home with her, either myself or my partner were interchanging and that really affected us." (Male, Riverside/Belmont)<sup>2</sup>*

Physical isolation, made more acute by weak public transport links, can make it difficult for residents to access jobs and services (particularly health), and restrict opportunities for socialising.

The high cost of housing in the borough and limited genuinely affordable options, affects a wide spectrum of residents, particularly in younger age groups.

However, the natural, physical and cultural assets of the borough, coupled with the thriving voluntary sector, offer opportunities. Although some people talked of a declining sense of community, others highlighted its strengths.

*I think in this area the community, we support each other - whenever someone knows something, we let each other know. I have my neighbours that come in and ask me do you need any shopping and they are very helpful people. I think everyone is kind of struggling financially at this moment, but I think the community as people, we are supportive to each other... [from case study]<sup>2</sup>*



# Introduction to the Project

Collaborative and cross-service

- The **Inequalities Project** has been **run collaboratively** between Public Health and the Strategy, Policy & Performance team, in partnership with a wide range of council services (including AfC, housing, Optalis, communities) and borough-wide partners, including from health and the VCS.
- **Overarching aim: to support all residents and communities to achieve their ambitions and fulfil their potential**, with a focus on those who are at risk of poor outcomes – thereby reducing demand for high cost, high threshold services.
- **The aim of this evidence pack** is to create a **stronger collective understanding** of how inequality and disadvantage are experienced in our borough, to help us, as a system, to develop a more effective, shared approach to preventing and reducing poor outcomes.
- The pack summarises the **key insights from the evidence** gathered. It focuses on the **voice of our communities and our frontline teams** within the council and partners (including health and voluntary organisations). Quotations represent the individual opinions and experiences of those interviewed.
- The pack concludes with a set of initial implications for how **we can strengthen our approach to best support residents**, in order to reduce disadvantage and inequalities.

# Project process

Mixed methods approach

This presentation summarises the key findings from frontline engagement; qualitative evidence from residents through interviews, focus groups and World Cafés; and by quantitative data, including from the RBWM 2022 Residents Survey and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This research has been undertaken from May – November 2022.

## Data

- RBWM 2022 Residents Survey
- EQiA Evidence Grid
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), via Berkshire Observatory
- Wider data, including service level data.
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

## Frontline Insight

- Completed 18 x individual interviews and;
  - 30 focus groups.
- with circa 100 members of staff including council, health and VCS partners.

## Community Engagement

Working with Lake Market Research, to conduct:

- 4 x Focus Groups
  - 12 x in-depth individual interviews
- Targeting specific areas & cohorts facing challenges
- World Cafés



# Overview of RBWM

A prestigious and affluent borough

- Windsor and Maidenhead is a symbolic borough, closely linked to the Royal Family and one of the most affluent local authorities in the UK.
- Half of our 89 neighbourhoods\* are in the top decile of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, and none are in the bottom 30%. However, the overall affluence results in some stark inequalities.
- A core of around 5-10% of households are struggling financially, and around another quarter are just about managing. There are many others who are experiencing other challenges – with their health, mental health, housing, social isolation, and employment - often, but not always, linked to poverty.
- This disadvantage can be hidden by the overall affluence of the area:
  - within positive outcomes at borough-level;
  - in the way we think and talk about the borough – and show ourselves to the world;
  - physically within the vista of affluent homes and beautiful countryside.
- Data highlights specific neighbourhoods with higher concentrations of disadvantage, but there are also clusters below neighbourhood level, and isolated households across the borough.
- The pandemic and cost of living increases, have made life more difficult for many of our residents. This is increasing inequalities and gives this work added urgency.

# Overview of RBWM

## Understanding our borough – Key demographics

- **153,497** people live in RBWM<sup>5</sup>
- **69%** of residents identify as **White British**, **9%** as **Other White Groups**, **13.1%** of residents as **Asian** or **Asian British**, **1.5%** as **Black** or **Black British**, **3.4%** as **Mixed** or **multiple ethnic groups** and **2.1%** residents as **Other** ethnicities (Census data 2021)<sup>5</sup>
- The **population is ageing**, between the 2011 and 2021 census **15-34 year olds make up 1.9% less of the overall population**, moving from 22.4% to 20.5%<sup>5</sup>
- **460** people aged 18 and over are registered to have a **learning disability**<sup>6</sup>
- Just over **20,421 residents** are living in neighbourhoods of **relative deprivation** (Deciles 3 -5 IMD)<sup>7</sup>
- The **median price** of a house in RBWM is **£510,000**<sup>8</sup>

- **13.3%** of residents do **not have access to a car or van** (Census data 2011)<sup>9</sup>
- **Life expectancy** for men is **81.8 years**, however there is **4.8 year** difference in life expectancy at birth between the **most** and **least deprived** areas of the borough for **males** (2017-19)<sup>10</sup>. For **women** it is **84.7 years**, with a **4.3 year** difference.<sup>10</sup>



# Overview of RBWM

A prestigious and affluent borough

Several **schools** in the borough have a proportion of **children on Free School Meals** that is over two or three times higher than the borough average<sup>11</sup>.

- Woodlands Park Primary School - 36.4%
- Riverside Primary School & nursery – 33.1%
- Larchfield Primary and Nursery School - 27.3%
- Churchmead Church of England VA School - 27.1%

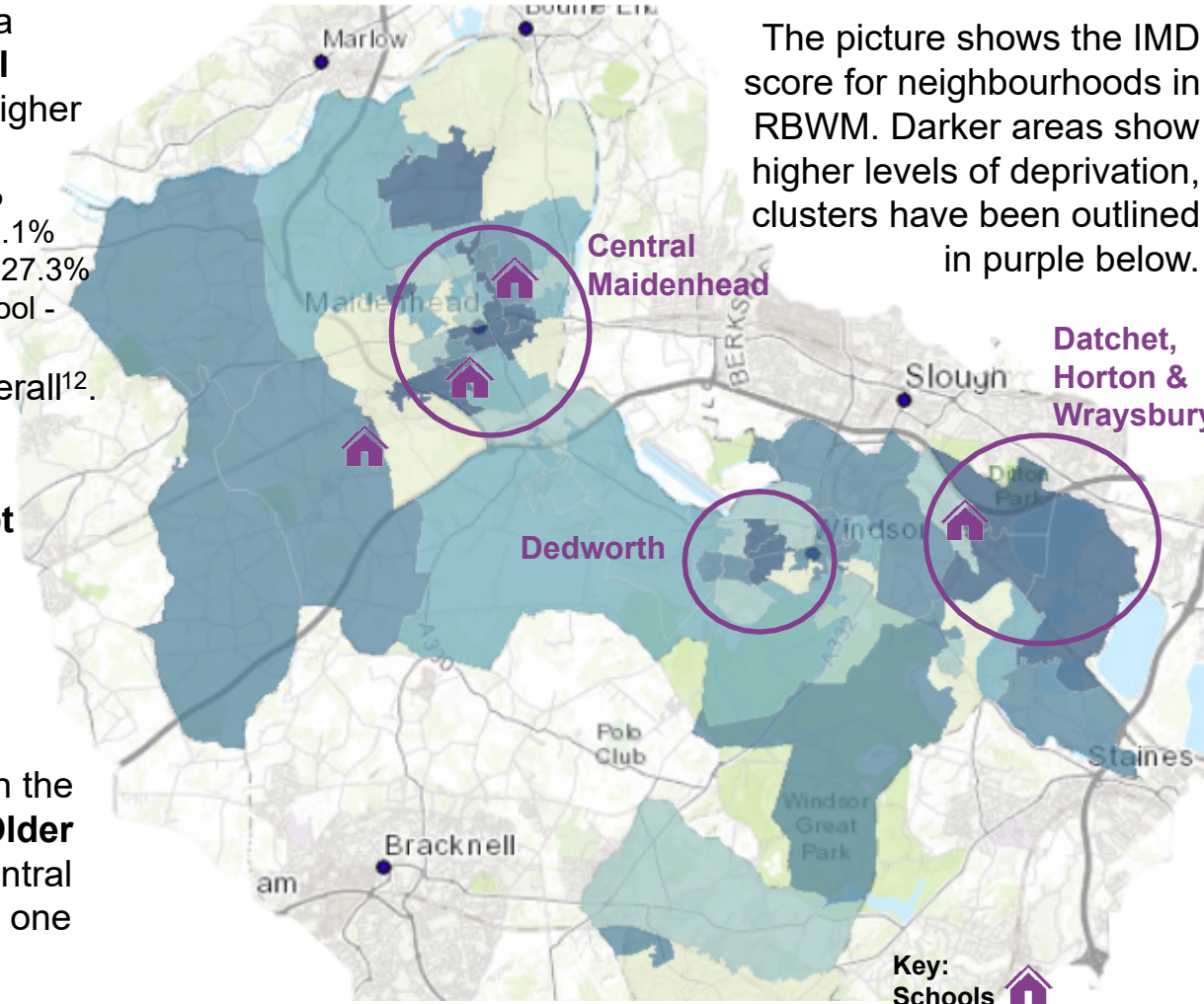
Compared to 11.7% in the borough overall<sup>12</sup>.

In **three out of 19 wards**, **almost 9% of residents are in receipt of Universal Credit**.<sup>13</sup>

- Clewer & Dedworth East – 8.8%
- St Mary's – 8.7%
- Oldfield – 8.5%

Three neighbourhoods in RBWM are in the **20% most deprived in England for Older People** as per the IDAOPi\*. Two in Central Maidenhead In St Marys, Belmont and one in Clewer and Dedworth East.<sup>14</sup>

The picture shows the IMD score for neighbourhoods in RBWM. Darker areas show higher levels of deprivation, clusters have been outlined in purple below.



\* Income deprivation affecting older people index

# Challenges & Assets

The overall wealth of the borough creates challenges.

## Challenges

- Those facing disadvantage may get **hidden** by the overall affluence  
*"In Slough issues are out in the open, easier to see - on the street, here things are more hidden"*<sup>1</sup>
- **Designed for the wealthy**, e.g. expensive school uniform and lack/cost of public transport. Eight schools in the borough do not have public transport links  
*"funding for services and facilities typically isn't tailored to a more disadvantaged community i.e.) high costs for services, travel, facilities, goods etc."*<sup>1</sup>
- **Housing is extremely expensive**, both rented and bought  
*"Lack of affordable housing in the borough is affecting work, schooling, and lives"*<sup>1</sup>
- The **scale of the gap** to the very affluent can lead to feelings of shame and dissatisfaction.  
*"Previously people would just go without, now people want the same things as everyone else, sky TV, mobile phones... and will forgo some bills for these items"*<sup>1</sup>
- **Harder to get funding** for support, due to lower numbers requiring it.  
*"At a higher level we also get less funding because we are a wealthy borough"*



# Challenges & Assets

The overall wealth of the borough, also creates opportunity

## Assets

- Resource available to support by **volunteering and making donations**  
*“There was a pensioner winter fuel payment of £300 which was not means tested. A group decided they don't need this payment so they pooled it together and gave it to the less affluent in the area”<sup>1</sup>*
- Breadth of formal and informal **support groups** available  
*“Online neighbourhood support groups emerged quickly in lockdown with children swapping science experiments online”, faith groups and churches also support residents<sup>1</sup>*
- Potential for willing residents to **role model or mentor** others  
*“potential for aspiration/ incentive...could use business owners as role models for young people”<sup>1</sup>*
- **Diversity** of residents and community groups  
*“Different communities and perspectives are a strength. Drawing on these different perspectives through feedback, exploring peoples feelings on topics.”<sup>1</sup>*
- High quality of **natural assets**, e.g. parks and green spaces and public space.
- Tourism opportunities, with global appeal & further economic opportunities through proximity and transport links to London





# Cost of Living

## Impacting residents unequally

Increases in the cost of living are having impacts on all residents, but causing the greatest challenges for those with the lowest incomes, and may exacerbate existing inequalities. *Residents' survey found that 58% are very concerned. 6% already experiencing financial challenges – another 25% just about managing.*<sup>3</sup>

For households on a tight budget, such as those living off Universal Credit, the increases in costs are causing difficult choices, between heating, eating and other essentials. A number of interviewees reported rising numbers of residents building up utility and fuel bill debts, or getting into rent arrears. *“A £15 pre-payment card used to last from Monday until Friday, and then a cold weekend. Now it runs out on Wednesday.”*  
*“Previously, you’d work through the numbers and come up with a plan. Now the numbers just don’t work.”*<sup>1</sup>

The long term impact of the current increases are multiple and serious including health impacts through people avoiding heating their homes to reduce fuel costs or increased social isolation impacting on mental health. *“Domestic heating [or lack of] can impact on pre-existing body circulatory problems and cause deterioration in a person’s condition”*<sup>1</sup>, *“The cost-of-living crisis can increase levels of social isolation in RBWM due to poor mental health, financial worries, and inability to socialise due to expensive travel”*<sup>4</sup>

### In RBWM:

The **cost of living is the biggest concern for residents** over the next 1-3 years. Over half of respondents (53%) named it as their top worry, and over two thirds (70%) of 18-34s.<sup>3</sup>

**65% of those socially renting and 60% of those privately renting** said that financially their households were **just about getting by or finding it difficult**, compared to 32% of residents overall.<sup>3</sup>

Local CAB data shows an **increase** over the last 3 years of those with **disabilities, long term health conditions** and those of **ethnic minority backgrounds accessing their services**.

CAB data indicated that the **most common types of debt issues** people wanted help with in 2022-23 were:  
**-energy debts**  
**-council tax arrears**<sup>15</sup>

# Cost of Living

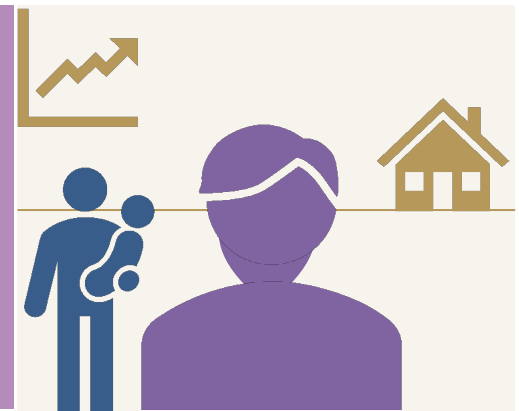
## Impacting residents unequally

Concern about the rising cost of living is causing stress and anxiety, which has knock on effects on wellbeing, relationships and parenting. *“It makes you feel like a rubbish parent, I can’t really give my children what I want to because it costs too much.” (Female, Dedworth)<sup>2</sup>*

Those just about managing risk being pushed into difficulties. Higher numbers of residents are accessing foodbanks, seeking support for debt management, and reporting increases in evictions. **VCS organisations are reporting an increase in the numbers of single and childless residents, and those in low paid work, coming forward to seek help.** *“We are seeing a lot of new clients [at the Food Bank] who say they would never have dreamed they’d need to come here”<sup>1</sup>*

VCS interviewees suggest that services which are dependent on donations from other residents are likely to struggle, as residents who would previously have been able to donate are now struggling. *“Foodbanks are struggling as donations are depleting. This is costing them money to keep supplying food which may have adverse consequences in the future”<sup>1</sup>*

*“I’ve got a friend who is so depressed they have started cutting themselves – they’ve got a mortgage and the mortgage has now gone up by another £400. He is just about scraping by now, so where is he supposed to find that money? Then he’s going to go into debt so how long will it be before they kick him out of his house and he’s homeless?... He has gone to see specialists about it because he’s worried that he could end up killing himself, that’s how bad it has got. He is actually skipping meals so that his kids can eat...”  
(Male, Datchet)<sup>2</sup>*



# Key Cohorts & Areas

Where and by whom are inequalities being experienced in RBWM

- Inequality is **clustered in particular neighbourhoods** - although there are households or smaller groups experiencing challenges across the borough.
- The IMD shows **highest levels of disadvantage** in the following areas, and this was supported through our engagement.
  - *Central Maidenhead (St Mary's, Oldfield, Belmont, Riverside)*
  - *Dedworth in Windsor*
  - *Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury*

The following **cohorts** are more likely to experience inequalities (confirmed by Residents Survey), as such **our work should take into account the specific needs of:**

- *Residents with low income / in poverty*
- *Residents in Social housing*
- *Residents in Private Rented housing*
- *Residents of Black and Asian ethnicity*
- *Those aged 75 +*
- *Those living with a disability*
- *Those with caring responsibilities*

Experiences of disadvantage and inequality differ between neighbourhoods and cohorts, some of these groups are likely to be clustered in areas of deprivation others dispersed across the borough.

- **Those aged 75+** are likely to be dispersed through RBWM, including in rural areas which may exacerbate the risk of social isolation and loneliness. This cohort are also more likely to be disabled
- **Social housing estates**, are often located in deprived neighbourhoods and can experience stigma and concentrations of anti-social behaviour
- Younger residents in low paid employment, are more likely to live in **private rental**, and to struggle with rising costs, mental health and accessing assets of the borough e.g. green spaces.



# Key Cohorts & Areas

## Areas of deprivation

**Geography impacts on how inequalities are experienced locally, however key challenges are shared.**

The key challenges identified in focus groups with residents demonstrate shared concerns across the different clusters of deprivation. Feeling that they are not listened to, even forgotten about, compared to their more affluent neighbours.

Residents were experiencing multiple challenges which were closely linked and they felt unable to solve these in isolation, often experienced as a lack of control over their lives. Some felt that the areas they lived in and perceived lack of support, were determining their outcomes.

However there are also important differences in experience: Datchet, Horton & Wraysbury is a rural area. Central Maidenhead and Dedworth are urban.

Datchet residents with low incomes were more likely to be concerned about public transport and isolation. Residents in central Maidenhead were concerned about infrastructure and overstretched services. Those in Dedworth seemed best served through current support, with increased resilience, but gave fewer examples of residents pulling together independently.



***“Definitely a correlation between the environment people grow up in and where they are. Sometimes people fight for different but sometimes they just fall into things.”<sup>1</sup>***

# Key Cohorts & Areas

Insight from our Residents in Dedworth

- **Lack of opportunities** especially for young people, linked to an increase in anti-social behaviour and drug use

*“There are not enough things for teenagers to do so they get up to mischief – I think they need more youth clubs.” (Female)<sup>2</sup>*

- **Cost of living, mental health and crime**

*“If you can’t afford to pay for things then it has a detrimental effect on your mental health.” (Female)<sup>2</sup>*

*“The cost of everything going up and rising, we aren’t going to move out of our council properties and leave it for someone else who needs it, we are just going to be stuck there for the rest of our lives.” (Male)<sup>2</sup>*

## Assets

Dedworth residents highlighted the strong community spirit, amenities and community projects, councillors, and Windsor castle and river as strengths of their local area.

- Residents in Dedworth **cited the most examples of support**, mentioning the Abri job hub & others

*“I go to our local Housing (Association), Abri, and speak to one of the women there. They are amazing, they help you out as much as they can, with the job search and the Hub down at the flats, they give you Food Bank vouchers weekly. They are good if you’ve got the balls to ask for help but it is embarrassing” (Female)<sup>2</sup>*

- However, they were also **least likely to think of examples of the community pulling together**, independent of services.



# Key Cohorts & Areas

## Insight from our Residents in Datchet

Whilst the other areas looked at are located more centrally in towns, Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury include some of the few areas in the borough defined as rural. This impacts on the ways in which challenges are experienced, with isolation, transport and loneliness featuring more strongly.

- **Transport** – poor bus services or transport links are negatively impacting opportunities

*“You look on the job websites like ‘Indeed’ etc. but most of the jobs are out of the area and most people can’t drive or there’s no public transport to get to these jobs so they are restricted.” (Male)<sup>2</sup>*

- **Poor mental health, loneliness and isolation**

*“I think a lot of people feel isolated and depressed” (Female)<sup>2</sup>, “You have to look for the help and I think if you are feeling like that and feeling shameful and don’t want to look for the help and don’t think it’s out there.” (Datchet)<sup>2</sup>*

### Assets

Datchet residents highlighted the community feel, open green spaces and good primary schools in their local area.

- **Anti- social behaviour** and community cohesion

*“The park is really nice but we have encountered some anti-social behaviour, my kids have been bullied there, there has been physical contact and bad language in that park.” (Female)<sup>2</sup>*

- **Cost of living crisis** and **lack of opportunities**

*“We live quite close to the airport and everyone got laid off from the airport during Covid so that was I don’t know how many thousand jobs.” (Male)<sup>2</sup>*



# Key Cohorts & Areas

Insight from our Residents in Central Maidenhead

- Increase in resident population **straining existing infrastructure** e.g. schools, GP's & specialist services (i.e. mental health)  
*"They want to attract new people to the town and want to build lots of lovely affordable housing and actually they could just take care of the infrastructure that is already here and the people that are already here, rather than trying to attract new people."*  
(Female, Riverside/Belmont)<sup>2</sup>
- Lack of **affordable housing** and suitable opportunities within Maidenhead  
*"Maidenhead has got to the point where it might price itself out of itself, the people who live in Maidenhead can't live in Maidenhead because it's too expensive."* (Male, St Marys). *"All of my children work out of Maidenhead, in Bracknell and Slough."*  
(Female, Riverside/Belmont).<sup>2</sup>

## Assets

Safe place to live, with good community assets for example schools and sports facilities. Well connected, especially to London.

- Cost of Living and **household finances**  
*"The challenge is budgeting with gas and electricity. I've just moved into a flat, I moved in two months ago, and obviously it is going to be a struggle."*  
(Male, Riverside/Belmont)<sup>2</sup>
- Groups or individuals **feeling left behind** by the prosperity and development in Maidenhead.  
*"I think there is a two-tier system happening in Maidenhead – you've got the commuters who work in London who are on a much higher salary...and then people who live in Maidenhead and you've got the salary difference. The town is catering more for the people who've got money and not for the people who haven't."* (Male, St Marys)<sup>2</sup>





# Key Themes

## Overcoming or compounding challenges

The next section explores Inequalities through the key themes which have emerged from the project. We will look at these themes both as challenges and as “protective factors”, these are the factors in a persons life which help them to achieve positive outcomes and overcome challenges. We will explore the following **five themes**:

1. **Poverty and low income** – lack of resource & households in debt
2. **Housing** – access to affordable, quality and appropriate homes
3. **Life Skills** – struggling to navigate daily life
4. **Health** – mental and physical illness
5. **Relationships** – negative relationships or relationship breakdown

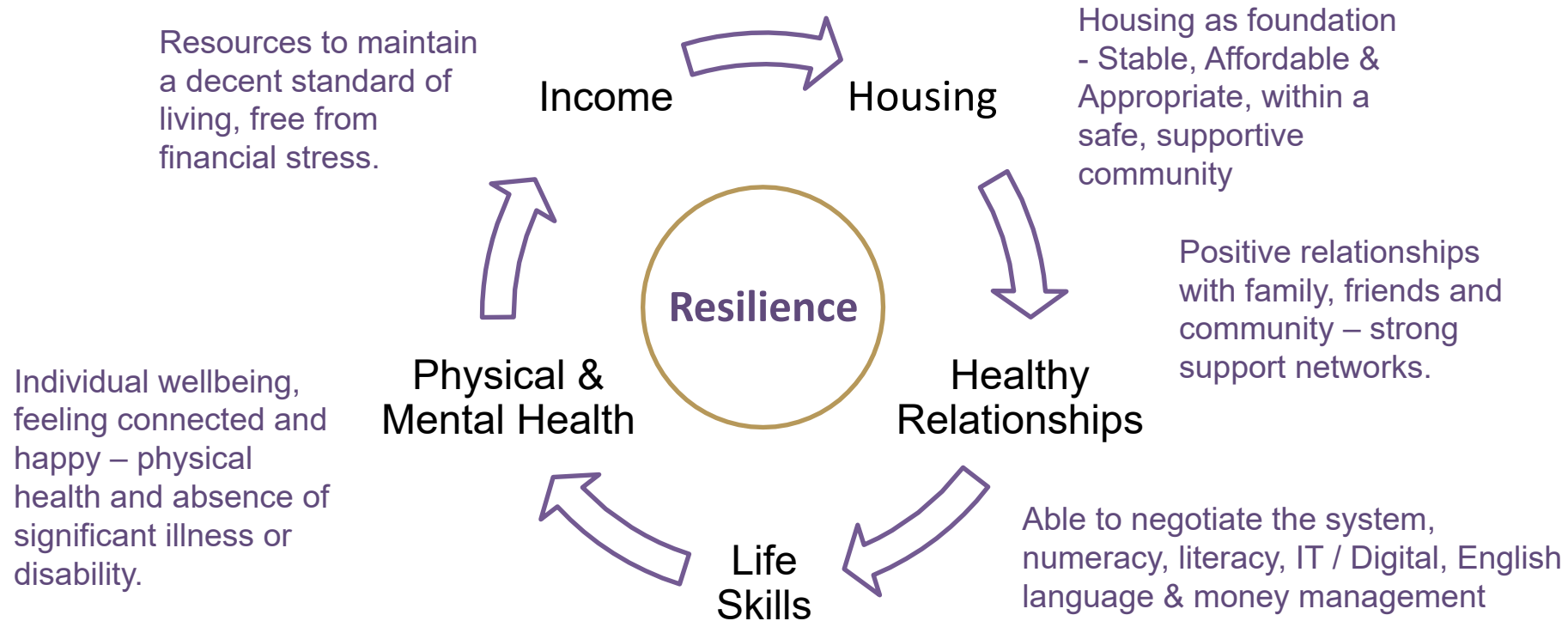
**The same factors can either cause challenges, or act as protective factors.** They are **interlinked and exacerbate one another**, meaning that it is often **difficult to pinpoint a single, root cause** or to **resolve an issue in isolation**. When a resident experiences interlinked and complex challenges, they can cause feelings of **chaos** in the lives of residents, **spiralling out of control** and removing any feeling of agency.

*“Those suffering in one area of life are more likely to suffer in all areas of their lives. E.g those who have disadvantaged backgrounds appear to struggle more often with poor mental health. It is a cycle.”<sup>1</sup>*

# Protective Factors

## Underpinning resilience

Positive outcomes across the following five factors underpin individual lives and thriving communities. They also act as protective factors, which build the resilience, which enables individuals to overcome or bounce back more quickly from challenges and negative experiences.



# Key Emerging Inequalities

## Poverty and Low Income

Poverty is both a cause and consequence of wider Inequalities. Those struggling financially in the borough include those on benefits. Unemployment, disability, caring responsibilities or old age can contribute to these challenges. *“UC is survival money... you can’t live on it long term.”*<sup>1</sup>

Those working in low paid sectors – may be working two or more different jobs – often insecure and unstable and possibly in and out of work. For example, through zero hours contracts: *ONS estimates indicate that zero hours contracts have grown fivefold since 2008, currently 3% of the workforce*<sup>16</sup>

Caring responsibilities increase the chances of living in poverty with 24% of informal carers in this situation compared to 21% of those without caring responsibilities<sup>9</sup>. *“With special needs schools, there is a long waiting list to access those facilities... For two years my daughter couldn’t go to school because no normal school is going to take her. The effect on me is that I couldn’t work”*<sup>2</sup>

Rises in the cost of living are increasing the numbers of residents who are experiencing financial difficulties – and making it more difficult to stay out of debt. *“it’s not easy to live on benefits without getting into a mess – especially now.”*<sup>1</sup>

### In RBWM:

**6068 households on UC**<sup>13</sup>

**2671 pupils eligible for FSM (21/22)**<sup>12</sup>, **AFC report increase to 2937 for 22/23**

**3.28% of households are experiencing hunger.** 9.26% struggle with food insecurity & 9.39% are worried about their food security (Jan 2021)<sup>12</sup>

In 2020 - **6.4% were experiencing fuel poverty**<sup>12</sup>

2011 Census data indicates that **3.8% of households are overcrowded**<sup>9</sup>

### In the UK:

In Dec 2021, **42% of UC claimants were in employment**<sup>17</sup>

Disabled people are almost twice as likely to be unemployed as non-disabled people<sup>18</sup>

Most minority ethnic groups earn less than White British employees<sup>19</sup>

# Key Emerging Inequalities

## Poverty and Low Income

Not having enough money makes it harder to deal with other challenges, to achieve ambitions and enjoy life.

*“you can’t think about much else when you don’t have any food to put on the table”<sup>1</sup>*

It causes stress, anxiety and low self esteem, which in turn affects relationships and wellbeing.

*“I’m so stressed about money that I am shouting at my kids all the time”<sup>1</sup>*

Living in affluent borough can make it harder to live on a low income, and can increase feelings of inadequacy and shame.

*“parents feel bad that their child can’t have the expensive Xmas present or latest iphone like their classmates”<sup>1</sup>*

It can feel like a two tier system, where those without resources struggle to access support.

*“richer families pay for private assessments and don’t have to wait to get support [for SEND children]”<sup>1</sup>*

Interviewees linked the consequences of poverty and specifically the impact of cost of living rises to an increase in crime, with people turning to stealing to meet their basic needs. *Crime goes hand in hand with poverty, kids see people with money and then see crime e.g. burglary and drug dealing as the route forward”<sup>1</sup>. “There isn’t enough food at the food bank, shoplifting is going up”<sup>1</sup>*

This crime and anti-social behaviour in turn affects business and wider incomes. *“We’ve had so much damage, especially taxis, they get raided on a daily basis, the taxi drivers don’t even bother reporting it anymore and have given up because they know the police do nothing. They were raiding working vehicles like cars, taxis, vans.” (Female, Boyn Grove)<sup>2</sup>*

The consequences of low income can be severe, across all protective factors on health, relationships, housing and skills /the ability to find paths out of challenging situations.



# Key Emerging Inequalities

## Voices of our residents on Poverty

Financial concerns, especially the short term impact of the cost of living crisis and knock on effect of the global pandemic are impacting on our residents' outlook for the future and their sense of control over their own destinies.

*"I work full time and I'm actually looking to do an apprenticeship to become a paramedic, which is more money than what I'm on now. But even then, it will work out the same amount. I'll just be getting less basic universal credit and obviously more wages. So like my income in the household doesn't really change"<sup>2</sup>*

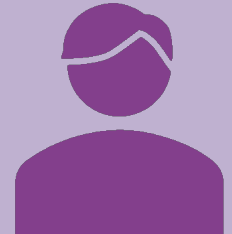


(18-35 yr old Resident)

*"The public transport in the area is an issue. People are pretty much limited in where they look for employment, they are pretty much limited to Windsor or maybe over towards Ascot a little bit. There's only a handful of options to people and it's not necessarily the jobs you want to do"<sup>2</sup>*



(Male, Dedworth)



*"I think with Covid hitting it has caused a lot of pressure on a lot of people hasn't it, not just mentally but financially as well and it's just like trying to pick the country up again and make it work and it is hard, it really."<sup>2</sup>*

(Female, Dedworth)



# Key Emerging Inequalities

## Housing

Barriers to finding secure, decent, affordable housing in the borough is a major underpinning cause of inequality and disadvantage. It is also driving younger, less affluent residents to live elsewhere.

**Affordability** – The high cost to rent or own housing in the borough is prohibitive for many residents. The affordability ratio is one of highest in the country. Private rents are expensive and rising, including through the Elizabeth line effect.

*“I saw an example of a 30% rent increase- when residents challenged, they got evicted”*

### Social housing

- There is a lack of social housing stock: few larger family homes leading to overcrowding; and a lack of accessible homes restricts downsizing and limits options in borough.
- Rising demand, driven by private rent rises.

*‘Of all the places we operate, we are most worried about supply in RBWM’*<sup>1</sup> – housing provider.

- RBWM does not own temporary accommodation – increasing challenge of placing in borough.
- Challenges resolving poor maintenance and adaptations.

### In RBWM:

5% in receipt of housing benefit (Aug 2022)<sup>12</sup>

3.07 households per 1,000 were in temporary accommodation (higher than England which is 2.15) (Q4 2021-22)<sup>12</sup>

Three most common reasons for homelessness (according to our housing dept):

- Private Rental Eviction
- Family and friends eviction
- Domestic Violence

Homelessness can be hidden, i.e. sofa surfing

The average monthly private sector rent for a 2 bedroom property in RBWM was £1,187, compared to £735 the English average (2020/2021)<sup>12</sup>

Almost a third (31%) of 18-34 year olds cited access to affordable housing as one of their biggest concerns over the next 1-3years, much higher than the 13% of all residents.<sup>3</sup>

**44%** of adults in contact with secondary mental health services in RBWM live in stable and appropriate accommodation. This is lower than both the Southeast and England averages, 52% and 58% respectively (2019/20)<sup>10</sup>

# Key Emerging Inequalities

## Housing

### Private Rented Sector (PRS)

**Short term contracts** are increasingly popular in the private rented sector, this creates instability for some residents - *“Lots of 12 month tenancies which is a complete joke, no stability for people, need a 4 or 5 year lease.”<sup>1</sup>*

- **Housing Residents with Complex Needs**

Residents with complex needs struggle to find **appropriate accommodation**, i.e. adapting a home for those with **limited mobility**. Permission is needed to make adaptations in PRS, often requiring financial support. In social housing there is a shortage of suitable properties.

- **Risky behaviours or complex needs**

Accommodating residents with **challenging behaviours** is complicated for housing services. Neighbours may not want a particular type of client living in their area and grouping those facing disadvantage into particular areas, can create issues in the wider community. *“Its not just about support services for the person affected but also for the people around them. Everyone's in a lifeboat and it is pulling people out the water to the lifeboat that might sink”<sup>1</sup>*

- **Support to sustain accommodation**

Some tenants lack the skills to manage a tenancy sometimes linked to other key challenges for example mental health. Services may have difficulties offering support tailored to every households different needs.

- **Impact of poor housing**

Poor housing impacts on health – examples were given of residents living in housing with mould going to the GP with respiratory conditions.

Lack of suitable housing exacerbates family tensions, issues for households with disability.



# Key Emerging Inequalities

Voices of our residents on Housing

Housing issues were raised frequently during our research, including lack of affordable options to buy or rent, housing quality and maintenance of rented homes.

*“Rents and everything in general, private renting is so extortionate around these local areas - because you’re near the Royal Borough it is sky-high. If you go out of the Royal Borough area it is slightly cheaper...like as far out as Reading you start getting cheaper private rentals but if you’re working in this area it is too far to commute.”<sup>2</sup>*



(Male, Datchet)

*“Too many flats are a common complaint from residents, too many flats are being built and too many properties are being put up ...and there is a lot of development of ‘affordable housing’ but it’s not actually affordable for anyone... There is a lot of housing, which is good in one way, but it’s not ‘considered’ affordable housing”<sup>2</sup>*



(Female, Riverside/Belmont)

*I got stuck in my lift on Monday for an hour and a half, our front door to the building has been broken from vandalism so anybody can walk in if they push the door, and if it’s not that then it’s the car park gates. I’m paying rent not only on my flat but I also have to pay rent on the car park because otherwise I would have nowhere to park.... on the whole I feel quite unsafe.” (Female, Maidenhead)<sup>2</sup>*

# Key Emerging Inequalities

## Life Skills

**Skills are a toolkit which help to navigate daily life. Without these skills individuals and groups are disadvantaged.** The project highlighted these key skills gaps affecting some of our residents:

**Basic life skills** - These include skills to manage a household, hold down a job, and live in a complex world. For example cooking, paying bills, buying furniture. *“often tenants don’t realise that when you get a council house, it’s an empty property. They don’t know how to get set up with utilities, where to buy furniture, they haven’t got any savings to get themselves even the basics,”*<sup>1</sup>

**Skills for employment** – Residents who struggled in formal education can find it hard to find opportunities to develop the skills needed to gain employment and to progress out of lower paid jobs. *“Difficult to gain the skills to increase income.... If you are working in some jobs it doesn’t matter how hard you work your hourly rate will be the same - if you want more you have to find a way to change job, but how?”*<sup>1</sup>

Pathways into work and further education can also be limited for those with SEND or learning disabilities.

In particular, digital skills are harder to develop for those who are not in work.. *“If people are under/unemployed they will have less opportunity to develop digital skills and will get ‘left behind’”*<sup>1</sup>

### **In RBWM:**

25.00% of residents highlight that they have a low level of financial knowledge and 20.00% report low levels of confidence managing their money (2020)<sup>12</sup>

Only 29% of the demand for face-to-face debt advice could be met by local supply (2019)<sup>12</sup>

In 2020 – **4.7%** of **16- to 17-year-olds** in RBWM were **not in education, employment or training**<sup>20</sup>

1% cannot speak English or cannot speak English well<sup>5</sup>

14.1% of school-aged children have English as an additional language<sup>21</sup>

### **In the UK:**

WEA data shows 1/3 who have no qualifications live in poverty<sup>16</sup>

Those with a higher level of education had higher levels of food security, of those with only entry level attainment 74% were food secure, this rises to 92% for Level 4 or above<sup>22</sup>

# Key Emerging Inequalities

## Life Skills

**Financial management & budgeting** - Many residents lack skills for managing on a tight budget, not getting into unmanageable debt, making rational decisions about spending and saving. This is particularly important given cost of living rises.

**English language skills and culture** - Lack of fluency in English is a major barrier to employment and integration. Cultural differences, can also make it more difficult to access to services. *Those who speak English as a second language also felt that the confusing benefits and employment systems were big barriers to finding long term employment.*<sup>4</sup>

**Confidence & self-esteem are closely linked to life skills** – It can be very challenging to increase your skills, or even ask for help if you don't feel good about yourself. Not having or feeling confident and lacking skills can further increase **feelings of isolation**.

*"You almost need to have a certain amount of confidence I feel to go to a food bank and there are going to be people who don't want to tell anybody."* (Female, Datchet)<sup>2</sup>

**Digital exclusion is a particular issue for older populations** - Residents highlighted that increased use of the internet in daily life and in accessing support can be a barrier for older people, increasing isolation and risk of being scammed<sup>4</sup>

*"Also don't assume that everyone could do things on email. Not all old people use e-mail. My husband wouldn't have a clue. A lot of people haven't got computers. The older people could do with the support, because they've never been brought up with them."*<sup>2</sup> (65+ yr old Resident)

*"Everything is online and older people report not having access to computers/internet at home. They are really struggling because they cannot speak to a person about services."*<sup>1</sup>





# Key Emerging Inequalities

Health – Mental and Physical Illness

**Long term conditions** – these conditions make it harder to work and can lower self esteem, for example younger people diagnosed with conditions found there was limited targeted support as it was unusual and surprising for those in their age group. In contrast older groups complained their poor health was seen as inevitable

*“Life costs you £583 more on average a month if you're disabled. Families of disabled children on average, face extra costs of £581 a month. For almost a quarter (24%) of families with disabled children, extra costs amount to over £1,000 a month. 2 million (43%) of the 4.5 million children in poverty are living in a family where someone is disabled”<sup>18</sup>*

**Ageing borough** – Two trends, an ageing population and the social changes which see more of us living alone - are likely to exacerbate poor health, isolation and loneliness in the future. Health decreases over age and can gradually or suddenly leave residents unable to meet their basic needs. This causes disadvantage and multiple challenges: including isolation and loneliness.

*“The health is a problem at the moment. I was never ill, for the last 25 years in my last job I never had a day off sick. [Now] I've got COPD, diabetes, hypertension, so there's always something going on.... as soon as I retired, I suddenly collapsed and that was it...I can't do hardly anything. I can't do the cleaning anymore I get out of breath; I struggle”<sup>2</sup>*

## In RBWM

The groups most likely to report mental health as one of their key concerns over the next 1-3 years were 18-34s (19%) and social renters (18%). Three times the overall rate of 6%<sup>3</sup>

15% increase in PIP (disability benefit) cases involving psychiatric disorders (Nov 21 – Oct 22) with a 13% increase for overall PIP claims<sup>13</sup>

43% of unemployed in UK have poor mental health (Jan 2021)<sup>23</sup>

Poverty is particularly high within families where there are adults cared for, with more than one-third living in poverty. The inability to work is the key driver for poverty among carers. In 2017/18, some 36% of working-age carers were not in work, compared with 23% of non-carers<sup>24</sup>

**26.3% of current smokers work in routine and manual jobs.** This is statistically worse when compared with the overall borough smoking prevalence (2020/21)<sup>25</sup>

# Key Emerging Inequalities

Health – Mental and Physical Illness

**Mental health** was the key concern emerging through frontline interviews – residents in RBWM are reporting stress, loneliness, anxiety and across the board. Particular challenges and experiences, for example cost of living or experiencing debt or domestic violence were linked to increasing stress and mental health issues among residents *“Loneliness is an absolute theme, it is a national issue, and RBWM is no exception.”<sup>1</sup>*

Poor mental health in turn, may create other challenges, by lowering self esteem, and undermining people’s resilience to manage other areas of their lives, for example *“I work with a depressed mother who often retreats to a darkened room. Then ends up ordering takeaways 3-4 times per week to feed her children, costing her several hundred pounds every month and taking her further into debt”<sup>1</sup>*

*“One common pattern I see with service users is for older adults with chronic mental illness – it is really hard to break the cycle. I have seen this pattern recurring many times, with individuals over 40 who have had a mental illness like psychosis, at that age they seem unlikely to fully recover. There tend to be on-going symptoms and I notice in contact with others, these individuals tend to be perceived as odd. This leads to challenges with social integration and sometimes to life on the streets. There we see alcoholics mixing with other vulnerable groups and these individuals are at high risk of problematic drinking”.<sup>1</sup>*

**Frontline staff account of Challenges faced by Residents with Chronic Mental Illness**



The quote above from a frontline member of staff shows an example of mental health challenges at the most extreme. This cycle shows the inter-play between mental health, isolation, housing and addiction. Breaking these cycles is a key challenge for our approach to inequalities.





# Key Emerging Inequalities

Voices of our residents (those with a disability / 65+) on Health

Long term health conditions often correlated with age or disability and contributed to feelings of isolation and loneliness; these residents often feel they are not being supported appropriately.

*“There’s a lot of older people now up here. We’ve been up here a long time and a lot of the older people up here are quite sort of lonely and on their own and struggle. You can have a little walk around the local shops but as you know, they’re expensive and the buses are only one an hour. There’s nowhere to go and nobody to talk to and things like that, do you know what I mean?”<sup>2</sup>*



(65+ yr old Resident)

*“I think all of my age group, we’re just cast aside and you become not essential anymore we get to a point where we are not wanted any more. You know? Because of the fact that you are not actually producing anything. I worked as a plumber since I was 12 years old and because we are not contributing to the system, we’re just cast aside and that’s the feeling I get. I’m sure a lot of people feel the same”<sup>2</sup>*



(65+ yr old Resident)

*“The buses are only one an hour now and it’s difficult trying to get out if you want to go shopping. So, you try and get to Wickham or Reading or somewhere, you’ve got several buses or several trains to there. For disabled people because I use a mobility scooter, there’s just no sort of transport.”<sup>2</sup>*

(65+ yr old Resident)



# Key Emerging Inequalities

Voices of our residents (those with a disability / 65+) on Health

Long term health conditions often correlated with age or disability and contributed to feelings of isolation and loneliness; these residents often feel they are not being supported appropriately.

*“Health-wise it definitely depends on your background. Anybody that says heavy manual work is good for you has never done any, because it catches up with you over time, and it does. It’s what I’ve done, I’ve worked outside all my life. I’ve never worked in an office, and I suffer from arthritis for example. I’ve had both my knees replaced and one shoulder has been replaced with arthritis.”<sup>2</sup>*

(65+ yr old Resident)



# Key Emerging Inequalities

## Relationships

**Partner relationships and conflict.** Lacking supportive relationships in childhood can increase the risk of negative relationships in adulthood. Romantic relationship breakdown or bad relationships emerged as key challenges. With relationship breakdown and abusive relationships linked to stress, financial difficulties, debt, isolation and mental health difficulties. Stress may in turn contribute to damaging relationships, causing a negative cycle; *“Most of those accessing support for domestic violence have had ACEs (adverse childhood experiences), people have often seen domestic abuse at home, often they are repeat victims and some have substance issues as result”.*<sup>1</sup>

**Community and social relationships,** can supplement for lacking or poor community or family relationships however frontline accounts noted that it is *“hard these days, as there seems to be a lack of a sense of community for some”*<sup>1</sup> Further highlighting that **the enablers of community,** for example digital access, transport and community might further exclude some residents’.

**Support services:** Services can provide sustained relationships and support, but are not a substitute for friends and family: *‘what people need is friendship. And that’s very hard to give if you’re providing services, because you need to think about efficiency, processes...’*<sup>1</sup>

### In RBWM:

137.5 per 10,000 of under-18 year olds are in need as a result of family stress or dysfunction or absent parenting. This is significantly higher than the national average of 93.8 children per 10,000<sup>33</sup>

12% of residents indicated they feel lonely always, often or some of the time Over a quarter (26%) of those with a disability, one in five (20%) of those who are not working, and 15% of over 75s<sup>3</sup>

52% of over 75s never engage with any local community groups, activities or events, 56% of those with a disability and 60% of those living in social housing<sup>3</sup>

### In the UK:

Nearly half of children in lone parent families live in poverty, compared with one in four of those in couple families (2022)<sup>26</sup>

# Key Emerging Inequalities

## Relationships

**Parental and family relationships**, offer a key support system to children and teach life skills, care leavers for example often face significant challenges as a result. AFC noted a increase in risk to children, linked to what they call the toxic trio, parental drug abuse, mental health challenges and domestic abuse. **Neglect, abuse or the absence of parents** was one of the most common factors for negative outcomes in the individual stories and case studies shared with us, for example see below.

*Until Sophie was 9 she lived with her mother who used drugs, Sophie and her siblings experienced some kinds of neglect as their mother prioritised buying drugs.*

*Sophie then moved to live with her nan as her mum's house was no longer a manageable living environment. Sophie's nan was dependent on alcohol and and when Sophie reached her teenage years, her nan struggled to manage Sophie's behaviour.*

*Sophie was placed into care as a result. Moving frequently with inconsistent adult support throughout her childhood left Sophie with **anxiety, low self esteem and at risk of unhealthy adult relationships**.<sup>1</sup>*



At a less extreme but serious level parental illness, stress, conflict or an absence of skills or self esteem in parents can also impact on children's outcomes. Children may step in to take on the role of young carers. People learn parenting from their parents and own childhood experiences, without role models it can be even harder to learn how to parent. *“They don't have family around to tell them it is ok to have days as a parent where you don't get dressed until lunch time or do your hair. This can have a greater impact on mental health and the potential for post-natal depression”<sup>1</sup>*

# Inequalities Group Together

What are the root causes or underpinning challenges?

The challenging circumstances individuals are born into can compound across the life course forming barriers to achieving positive outcomes.

The risk of poor outcomes increases when a number of the 5 key challenges, outline above, are combined.

Individuals who have experienced the care system are at particular risk and are over-represented among those experiencing the worst outcomes.

The next slide shows the life story of **Tom, a man who was taken into foster care at 6 weeks.**

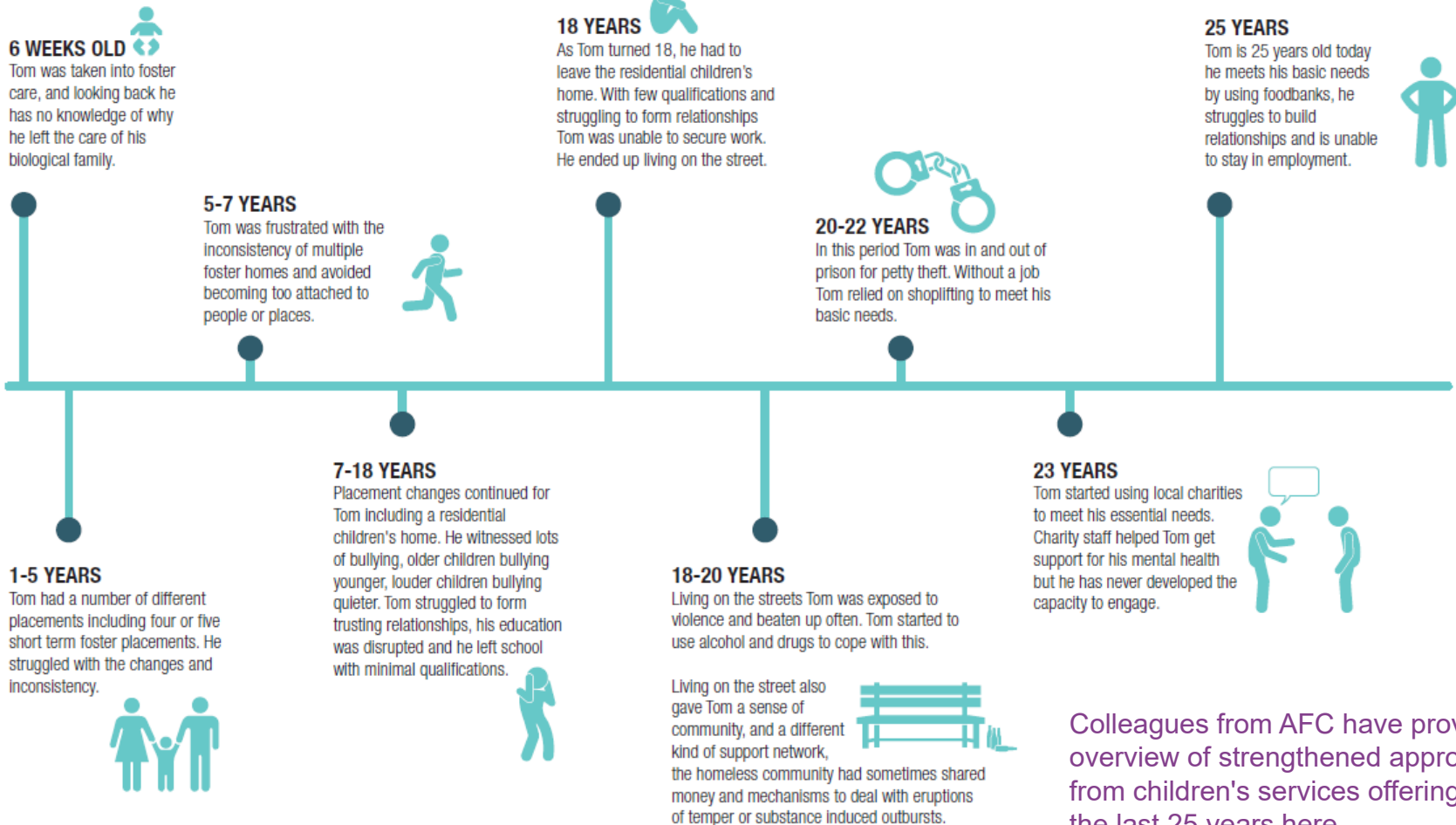
Thinking of our key challenges and protective factors, we can see these playing out in Tom's life:

- **Poverty and Low Income** – Tom is living in poverty and depending on food banks to meet his basic needs. Poverty is also often a cause of children being taken into care.
- **Housing** Tom is homeless, this has exposed him to further challenges – impacting on his relationship building and mental health.
- **Relationships** Tom struggles to form attachments as his early relationships have impacted his trust in people
- **Health** Tom's health isn't specifically referenced however, in the UK those who are homeless have worse health than the general population.<sup>27</sup>
- **Skills** Educational disruption has left Tom lacking some key skills to sustain a job.

# Inequalities Group Together

What are the root causes or underpinning challenges?

**TOM IS A 25 YEAR OLD MAN, THIS IS HIS JOURNEY SO FAR, TOLD FROM HIS PERSPECTIVE. THIS LIFE STORY WAS SHARED WITH US BY A CHARITY VOLUNTEER WHO HAS BEEN HELPING TOM TO RE-INTEGRATE INTO SOCIETY.**



Colleagues from AFC have provided an overview of strengthened approach from children's services offering over the last 25 years [here](#)



# The best start in life

## Children and Young People

The strong relationship between childhood experiences and adult outcomes, and to intergenerational outcomes was a strong theme. This highlights the importance of getting the support for children and parents right.

Residents living on low incomes, highlighted that the cost of living was impacting on their ability to parent and especially to feel like good parents. *“It makes me feel rubbish because I can’t afford everything that I want to... I work part time I can’t work more than that because I have young children and it has to work around them too.” (Female, Dedworth)*

Further the impact of the lack of activities for young people in the local area, the high cost associated with clubs and the lack of specialist provision. *“Young people have it tough, there is nothing for them to do...We used to have youth centres but there is nothing like that around anymore.” (Female, Maidenhead), “For the RBWM football club for my son, he wanted to join and it was £180 that it would have cost me for the whole year, that is insane.” (Female, Riverside/Belmont)*

This was in turn linked to increases in antisocial behaviour i.e., vandalism and arson. *“When you get to the [school] holidays they run riot...it is a bit harder to take your kids to the park because you’ve got big groups of lads and girls...up to what teenagers get up to.”*

### In RBWM:

Higher than average number of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) at 15.9% of pupils of school age. Partly due to the number of children in special schools in the borough, many of whom may not be resident in RBWM<sup>33</sup>

Largest school readiness attainment gap in Berkshire East between.<sup>33</sup> Only 53% of those eligible for free school meals were developmentally ready for school, at the end of reception compared to 74.3% of those not eligible (2018/19)<sup>28</sup>

6.3% of young people aged 16 to 17 are not in employment, education or training (NEET). This is significantly worse than the rest of Berkshire East and England<sup>33</sup>

39.3% of year 6 children living in Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury are obese and overweight compared with 18.8% of children in Sunningdale and Cheapside (2017/18-2018/19)<sup>29</sup>

### In the UK:

Children who grow up in poverty are at greater risk of childhood traumas e.g., sexual abuse, parental separation or substance misuse<sup>32</sup>

# The best start in life

## Voices of parents

Parents living in relative deprivation spoke about the challenges they face parenting. Highlighting the challenges in accessing timely support for their children, the inequalities they felt were present in the system and the importance of non-judgemental support.

*“Otherwise, what a parent manages to get for their child is just a reflection of what they know and quite often that’s not very much because obviously you’re not well read and everything. I’ve been applying for various therapies for my daughter in a special needs school and I’ve just been told it’s in the pipeline and that’s it. So, unless you have money and unless you are able to fight, you’ve got a lawyer...you won’t get for your child what you need. You can see parents that are financially stable who are financially able to fight for their child are able to get those. There’s huge inequality in that sense.”<sup>2</sup>*

*“I’d like to go somewhere you are not going to get judged and I think talking to other parents and adults really does help instead of carrying it all around on your own. I know there’s loads of people who have struggled in the past and have got nowhere to go, ...sometimes you can’t always turn to your family. It’s better sometimes to talk to a stranger... I’m not just talking about myself but there are loads of people and I think that this is why they’re turning more to alcohol, drugs, you know. It’s a cycle”<sup>2</sup>*

*“There are long waiting lists for mental health services, for a child’s diagnosis of ADHD you’re talking five years minimum and we were on the top priority waiting list because my husband is in the Army, we got social services involved and we had to wait three years.”<sup>2</sup>*





# Representation and diversity

## Building a more inclusive borough

The census 2021 results have shown that the borough is becoming increasingly diverse with ethnic minority representation\* in the borough increasing by 11% since 2011, to make up 31% of the resident population. This raises the importance of reflecting on how we are serving all of our residents.

Some groups highlighted the lack of representation they saw of individuals like them, in positions of power in the council and in the way the borough is depicted, including in the media. This was linked to a feeling of exclusion, not feeling equally part of the community, and to worries about different treatment or potential discrimination. *“Just being left out puts that thought in your mind. Is it because of race/religion etc”*

*“A local mosque in Maidenhead have been asking for planning permission for years, it is quite a small mosque, and nothing is happening, but you see all these big flats coming up, I don’t know what that’s all about”*

Frontline staff also highlighted the role of unconscious bias, for example services might look differently at those whose cultural norms differ from their own, particularly when they are different to the majority.

Examples of residents showing a lack of empathy for particular groups was also highlighted. *“There is much stigma around rough sleepers...teenagers and lower income groups...Complaints [are] made...in an unempathetic tone.”*

Education focusing on learning about other cultures and religions, especially those in minority, was felt to create understanding and break down stereotypes. *“there is not enough education about the ...Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community for those outside of the community that identifies the historical racism, their lifestyles, disadvantages that they have faced, in a way that doesn’t just highlight the negative stereotypes. This would help to change perceptions.”*

# Perceptions of existing support

- Residents were positive about local sources of support within the community, and this suggests opportunities to strengthen what is already working well.
- However, residents identified a lack of awareness of what is available and the need to feel confident and overcome feelings of shame, in order to ask for help.
- This points to a need for better communication and sign-posting and more outreach to those who lack confidence to engage, so that those who are informed, are not missing out on help.

*“There are other resources like the Baby Bank which is a place where they have things that they can hand out to children, from newborns up to school age, like prams and cots and things like that and even school uniforms, but it’s not widely known about so it is about spreading the word to families that are really struggling.” (Female, Riverside/Belmont)<sup>2</sup>*

- Where criticisms were raised, these focused on feeling that services were *‘faceless, nameless’<sup>2</sup>*, with frequent staff changes and commitments to take action not being followed through.
- Face to face support within the local community was generally preferred. Some residents lamented not being *‘able to walk in to the Town Hall and speak to someone’<sup>2</sup>* any more.

# 1. Implications: Community hubs

- Both residents and those working with communities were in favour of bringing together advice and information into one place, through community hub models. These ways of working are already being taken forward, for example, within primary care hubs and libraries.

*“Have a common place where people can find out information about social services and support networks and things like that.” (Male, Riverside/Belmont)<sup>2</sup>*

*“If there was a Hub somewhere, maybe like in a community library, where you could go and there was somebody designated there that could help you, .... [where you] can pop along and say, ‘Look, I’ve got an issue, where do I go, can you signpost me?’ and they say, ‘This is what you need to do’. I think that would help.” (Female, Dedworth)<sup>2</sup>*

- There were also strong calls for more places where the community could get together, to build connections, and combat isolation and loneliness. Many residents felt that community facilities and activities had declined over time.

*“It would be nice if there was somewhere for people to go in the local area who are lonely and want to meet friends and new people. Like a community centre, not just for children but for people like you and me who are now single...just meeting new people and doing different things – a community centre that is for all of us.” (Female, Maidenhead)<sup>2</sup>*

## 2. Implications: Community building

- Residents set out a vision of the council, residents and the voluntary sector working together to create stronger communities. This supports work already in train through the 'Embedding Community Response', 'World Cafes' and Innovation Fund programmes and supports a strong role for the council in building community capacity.

*"I don't think it's one particular thing when you're looking at trying to bring the community back together.... what you are trying to do is to rein everything in, but you need support with that and that's where the investment comes in or little ideas – enabling the community to come together to create these opportunities." (Female, Datchet)<sup>2</sup>*

*"I think the Council has a role to inspire and create community locally and the two ways they can do that are communication – getting the message out, transparency, showing what's available - and saying what's missing and saying, 'We need some help here' so that people can say, 'Oh I can help you and I can activate it'. You can't really call on people to do stuff when they don't know where they are potentially needed." (Male, Maidenhead)<sup>2</sup>*

*"The Council would run it at the community centre with volunteers but it needs some energy behind it to get it started. This is the answer, this is what we need." (Female, Datchet)<sup>2</sup>*

- Whilst there is a strong case for focusing community building activities in neighbourhoods with the highest levels of disadvantage, there individuals or small groups of households experiencing isolation or struggling across the borough. More targeted support to build networks, such as Wellbeing Circles, offer opportunities to work with individuals and small groups.

# 3. Implications: Addressing key issues

There are a number of opportunities to address key barriers to reducing disadvantage and inequalities in the borough.

- **Infrastructure and access to services:** There would be benefits in improving transport links for those without access to a car – focused in particular on supporting access to jobs and health services, through the new Transport Plan. There are opportunities to address residents’ particular concerns about the impacts of development in Maidenhead on infrastructure and access to services.
- **Housing:** the scale of housing challenges support the council’s plans to develop new social and affordable housing options – including for those requiring adapted or supported accommodation.
- **Skills:** Budgeting and financial management skills are particularly important due to the current cost of living rises. The Multiply Fund offers opportunities to strengthen provision. Building confidence, resilience and self-esteem are equally, if not more, important to enable all residents have the life skills to maximise their potential.
- **Support for parents, especially in the early years:** A stronger focus on ‘a best start in life’ for children at risk of disadvantage is important in embedding a preventative approach to reducing inequalities and breaking the cycle of disadvantage.
- **Intervening earlier and dealing with issues in the round:** An individual may not meet the threshold for any one service but have a low level of need across many areas. This research supports further strengthening of early intervention which addresses issues in the round.

# 4-5. Implications: Cost of living / Building an inclusive borough

## 4. Targeted support to help residents deal with rising costs of living

The cost of living is making life more difficult for residents and is having greater impacts on those who are already struggling.

Many residents in this research reported having to take difficult decisions, including choosing between heating and eating.

Stress caused by financial anxieties is having widespread impacts – perhaps even greater than those caused by reduced spending power.

The council's cost of living response, including the Here to Help campaign is important and offers opportunities to build an effective partnership to tackle wider disadvantage and inequality.

*“I’m trying to avoid even thinking about it, because that’s going to lead to depression and like anxiety and things like that... [but] I’m aware there’s no easy way and these are things you can’t escape from.”*  
(Male interviewee)<sup>2</sup>

## 5. Building an inclusive borough

The council has a role to play in promoting an inclusive borough, which celebrates all communities and neighbourhoods through the ways in which it talks about the borough.

Messaging can encourage empathy, respect and connections within and between communities and reduce feelings of shame and isolation reported by residents facing disadvantage.

Within Maidenhead, the development of new housing and regeneration of the town centre, creates opportunities to build a stronger sense of place and community.

The increasing diversity of the borough prompts a greater focus on how the council is serving those with different cultures and needs.

*“Because it’s a Royal Borough I think they tend to hide a lot of the underlying issues like homelessness.”* (Male, Riverside/Belmont)<sup>2</sup>



# References

The primary research conducted for this evidence base consisted of two key sets of interviews, which make up the quotes included (in purple) in this pack.

1. **Frontline interviews** - conducted by an internal team with staff across the council, health and voluntary, community sector.
2. **Community interviews** - conducted with residents by a Market Research Agency who were targeted as they were experiencing or at risk of key challenges and are therefore less likely to be satisfied with their experiences of living in the borough.

The quotes included in the pack are the opinion of individual respondents, though care has been taken to include quotes which aligned to key themes raised by a number of individuals and corresponding to quantitative data.

- 1 – Frontline Interviews, RBWM 2022 Inequalities Project
- 2 – Resident Interviews and Focus Groups, RBWM 2022 Inequalities Project
- 3 – RBWM 2022 Residents Survey, [Residents' survey 2022 | Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead \(rbwm.gov.uk\)](#)
- 4 – World Café Evaluation Report
- 5 - ONS (2022); [Census 2021](#)
- 6 - Frimley System Insights at 12-12-22
- 7 - Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2019); [English indices of deprivation 2019](#)
- 8 - ONS (2022); [Median house prices for administrative geographies](#)
- 9 - ONS (2012); [Census 2011](#)
- 10 - Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (2022); [Public Health Outcomes Framework](#)
- 11 - [The Best School Finder & School Catchment Area Checker | Locrating](#)  
Accessed 11/11/22
- 12 - LG Inform [Home | LG Inform \(local.gov.uk\)](#)
- 13 – DWP Stat Explore [Stat-Xplore - Log in \(dwp.gov.uk\)](#)
- 14 – Berkshire Observatory <https://rbwm.berkshireobservatory.co.uk/>
- 15 – Citizens Advice (2022); [Cost of living dashboard](#)
- 16 – RBWM EST Working Group Insights Pack (2022)
- 17 - Universal Credit statistics, 29 April 2013 to 13 January 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 18 - [Disability facts and figures | Disability charity Scope UK](#)
- 19 - [Household income - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- 20 - Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (2022); [Wider Determinants of Health profile](#)
- 21 - Department for Education (2022); [Schools, pupils and their characteristics](#)
- 22 - [Family Resources Survey: financial year 2019 to 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- 23 - [Unemployment and mental health - The Health Foundation](#)
- 24 - [UK Poverty 2019/20 | JRF](#)
- 25 - Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (2022); [Local Tobacco Control profiles](#)
- 26 - [Overall UK Poverty rates | JRF](#)
- 27 - [22.7 HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS\\_v08\\_WEB\\_0.PDF \(local.gov.uk\)](#)
- 28 - Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (2022); [Public Health Outcomes Framework](#)
- 29 - Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (2022); [Obesity Profile](#)
- 30 – [Public health profiles - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)
- 31 - [Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On - The Health Foundation](#)
- 32 - [Children in poverty at greater risk of childhood traumas | UCL News - UCL – University College London](#)
- 33 – Berkshire East HNA [Local Health Needs Assessments and Profiles - Berkshire East JSNA \(berkshirepublichealth.co.uk\)](#)

# Appendix 1

## Child Services enhanced support for care leavers

Key challenges in Tom's life resonated with our colleagues from AFC who wanted to outline some of the key processes & approaches in place in order to minimise the risk of challenges compounding across the life course for care leavers.

- **Early Years** – Children's services promote health connection with birth families through extended conversation to develop the young persons understanding of family network. This is often documented in a life story book.
- **Child-centred care focused on stability and healthy attachments** - Emotional attachment training is provided for professionals to ensure best practice. Enhanced focus and a formal structure to promote placement stability, including placement stability meetings, which involve intense support and intervention to minimise the risk of placement breakdown.
- **Enhanced 18-25 support package** – Care leavers are now supported from 18-25 years old, pathway planning begins at 16 or younger to ensure provision is made for the transition to adulthood . Including, virtual school to support young people into training/employment. Assigned a personal advisor. Focus on accommodation through a strengthened relationship between AFC and housing, incl council tax exemption.