



Quality of life at home

Exploring people's perceptions of where they live before and during lockdown

August 2020



About this report

This research was commissioned by the Quality of Life Foundation to inform the development of a new set of quality of life principles. The research was carried out by Social Life and Kaizen in two phases: from late February to early March, and then from early May to early June 2020.

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The Quality of Life Foundation has been set up to raise people's quality of life by making wellbeing central to the way we create and care for our homes and communities. We are carrying out research into what people need from their local areas; building a quality of life framework; and instigating practical projects to support more long-term thinking in industry and government.

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Social Life was created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. All our work is about the relationship between people and the places they live and understanding how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas. We work in the UK and internationally.

www.social-life.co

Kaizen is a social business that specialises in designing, delivering and facilitating cutting edge engagement projects. We deliver work across the community sector including the areas of regeneration, education, employment, housing and the social care field.

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Summary

This report explores how the built environment impacts on quality of life, and how the built environment can be improved to enhance quality of life in homes and in local neighbourhoods. The research engaged people living in a range of settings, including areas going through regeneration, new housing developments and established areas.

Using face-to-face street interviews, the first part of the research in early March 2020 explored how people perceive the built environment's impact on their quality of life. Two weeks into the fieldwork, the COVID-19 crisis brought the research to a halt. A new research approach was devised to continue to capture the impact of the built environment on quality of life in this extraordinary time.

In the second phase of the research, the focus shifted towards examining the role played by the home environment as well as the local area in supporting or undermining quality of life during this difficult period. These interviews were carried out in May and early June 2020. At the start of this period the population of the UK was under tight restrictions and non-essential retail and facilities were closed, as the month progressed there were some slight relaxation of lockdown restrictions in the different UK nations.

Key findings

1. The impact of community and local relationships on residents' quality of life

- Many people interviewed reported that their relationships in the local community became tighter during lockdown. Their appreciation of these local relationships increased, and many reflected on the need for an improved work-life balance in the future that would allow them to feel more connected to their communities.
- The importance of local relationships cannot be overstated. It is through their local community that residents experience wellbeing. Likewise, it is through their local communities that they develop an appreciation of the built environment in which they live:

“The more members we have, the more we can identify problems in the area and try to get them resolved with the relevant authorities or organise information sessions - so my magic wand and wish would be to have every resident in Oakley Vale signed up to our Facebook page.”¹

2. At the local level, daily routines are supported by the available infrastructure such as parks, pubs and shops. These facilities connect people to one another and allow them to feel part of the neighbourhood.

- The ability to walk in an area (or walkability), and access to outdoor and green spaces, local amenities and community facilities are shared concerns amongst many.
- Focusing on daily routines can help us understand the networks, facilities, and other aspects of the physical and social infrastructure people rely on and value in their local areas.
- The importance of social infrastructure became visible as soon as the everyday order was disrupted by COVID-19. Under normal circumstances, day-to-day routines such as taking walks in the local park, stopping for coffee at a local café to chat with neighbours or taking kids to school are usually taken for granted. The suspension of routines during the period of lockdown highlighted their importance.
- For individuals, daily routines stabilise the notion of home, helping people create a space of domesticity and intimacy. Daily routines increase feelings of comfort, stability and ensure quality of life. They also make possible a separation between different moments of the day and periods of the week.

¹ Answer provided to an open-ended question included in the first phase of the research: “If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about this area, which would make it a better place to live, what would it be?”

“[Daily routine] changed massively. I wake up whenever I want – go to bed whenever I want. Routine has been lost. Not getting my girl up to go to school has been such a big change.”²

3. The experience of the lockdown showed that homes that can be adapted support both physical and mental health, increasing quality of life.

- Bedrooms, kitchens and living rooms need to be designed in ways that allow these spaces to play multiple functions and accommodate different users.
- Flexible design of private and communal gardens, gardens and porches should take into account the need to for socialise with neighbours. This can comply with social distancing guidelines at times of pandemic, and promote good relationships between neighbours at all times.

“We would make it more adaptable, we were thinking of knocking a wall down so the kids’ bedroom would be connecting to our bedroom.”³

“If a lot more blocks of flats had gardens - to allow socialising in a distance...a physical space for melding public and private space...I’d be thankful to be outside and stationary.”⁴

4. To understand quality of life through looking at people in a particular place, we need to understand how the lived and built aspects of the person’s environment are connected to each other.

- The relationship between the lived and built environment is revealed through local identities and relationships, as well the degree to which residents participate and engage in neighbourhood life. This approach to the built environment shows that our relationships with the people we live close to, co-production, active engagement and “open” planning are essential to increasing residents’ quality of life.
- Appreciation of the local area increased for many of the people interviewed during lockdown, as they had more time to get to know it. This, in turn, made them feel a sense of belonging at the time when many experienced isolation and disruption in their daily lives.

“Yeah, I feel a lot more connected to my local area, I feel I know it a lot better. The repetitive walks have made me see more of the inequality.”⁵

2 Answer provided to a question included in the second phase of the research: “Have your day-to-day routines changed? Are there any new routines you have taken up during the lockdown?”

3 Response provided to a question included in the second phase of the research: “If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about your home, which would make it a better place to live right now, what would it be?”

4 Answer provided to a question included in the second phase of the research: “If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about your local area, which would make it a better place to live right now, what would it be?”

5 Answer provided to an open-ended question included in the first phase of the research: “Which are the main things that you would say affect your quality of life in your local area?”

“I’d start by tidying up the neighbourhood, bring back a sense of pride. Regular refuse pick-ups. Once a week’s not enough. Fly tipping - big problem”; “Apathy or fly tipping. I can’t decide which one is worse. Maybe fly tipping, or does apathy lead to fly tipping? Anyway, I’d change that and improve the area.”⁶

5. The built environment impacts on our quality of life at different scales: as individuals; through the local neighbourhood; and as a result of regional and national policies and trends.

- At a personal level, the impact refers to how satisfied residents are with community life and the physical aspect of the built environment, as well as their sense of personal wellbeing.
- At the local level, the impact of the built environment relates to how available and accessible amenities, facilities and local services are.
- At a regional and national scales, the key impacts of the built environment on individuals are associated with affordability, cost of living, transport, or processes of urban change.

“When the regeneration kicks in there’s going to be more disruption and the air is going to be polluted and it’s going to be [noisier]”

“My child’s future. If they are fit and healthy then I’m content and happy. That’s how I judge my quality of life so I’d say it’s 10/10 right now, but it could change tomorrow - there’s a pandemic incoming”

“Worried about anti-social behaviour can be a strain”⁷

⁶ Answer provided to a question included in the second phase of the research: “If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about your local area, which would make it a better place to live right now, what would it be?”

⁷ Response to an open-ended question included in the first phase of the research: “If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about this area, which would make it a better place to live, what would it be?”

6. Design and planning are essential solutions to improve residents' quality of life but many times they need to be complemented by broader policy strategies.

- The built environment impacts residents' quality of life in a holistic way. This is why, to improve place-based quality of life, we need to combine small-scale strategies (such as local design solutions addressing traffic calming measures) with large-scale, structural solutions linked to policy (such those addressing air quality).

“Global economic equality. Part of the reason we are going through this pandemic is because our global economic system is wrong, our global agriculture, how we make food, keep animals etc. It's all wrong. It's really sad - it's sad this is the reality for so many people...We're living wrong with nature - this will get worse and I wish we'd wake up. This pandemic isn't even waking people up, we're sleep walking into totalitarianism, sleep walking into a nightmare. Very concerned about all this.”⁸

⁸ Response to an open-ended question included in the first phase of the research: “If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about this area, which would make it a better place to live, what would it be?”

Research approach

This research project was commissioned by the Quality of Life Foundation to inform the development of the Quality of Life Foundation's new set of quality of life principles and to assess how the built environment might be improved to enhance residents' quality of life.

The first part of the research, which took place in early to mid-March, was aimed at understanding the impact of the built environment on residents' quality of life. Fieldwork for this first phase was stopped abruptly by the lockdown. At that point, about 60 percent of the face-to-face, street interviews had taken place.

In response to the impact of the pandemic on daily life, the second phase of the research shifted its focus and approach, exploring not just the impact on quality of life of the neighbourhood, but also of the home.

Our quality of life, and how this is affected by our neighbourhoods and our homes, was dramatically changed by the imposition of restrictions on our lives to limit the spread of COVID-19. Working at home (for those who were able to) rapidly became the norm. Many have lost work, or feared for their income and housing security. One of the impacts of the lockdown, and its incremental loosening, has been that people are now spending considerably more time in their homes and in their local neighbourhoods. Local community activism is playing a more important role, mutual aid groups have emerged and existing networks and third sector organisations are actively engaged in supporting communities and, in particular, more vulnerable people and families. This was an unpredictable time, restrictions were changed at short notice, and it was not possible to predict daily life in a month, three months, or in a year's time.

The long-term impact of this on the economy will be harsh, there are likely to be significant long-term impacts on quality of life, on how people work, and how they use their homes and neighbourhoods. This will have a significant impact on the built environment profession and how they design and plan neighbourhoods and homes. New house building at scale will be profoundly affected by the likely economic recession, however the UK's high levels of housing need and pressures on supply will persist and in many ways, worsen.

The approach: Before lockdown

The research was guided by these questions:

- What are the key issues affecting the quality of life of residents in the local area?
- What are the perceptions of residents about what makes a local area a good place to live?
- How do residents perceive the impact of buildings, streets, spaces and landscape, land uses and communities of users (built environment) on their quality of life?
- In addition to the built environment, what other factors do residents perceive as having an effect on their quality of life?
- What are local residents' priorities for securing a better quality of life?

The Kaizen engagement team carried out 317 interviews, using a mixture of street interviews and door to door surveys in seven different places across the UK. Street interviews are a technique which takes as its starting point the aim to engage people in research during their day to day activities, where they feel comfortable. This ensures that a wider range of people takes part in the research, especially who might not otherwise participate in online research, focus groups, or consultations. We mainly targeted residents, but in certain cases we also spoke with some others who are visiting the areas to work, shop or socialise.

Site selection

A number of criteria were used to ensure that a wide range of areas were included in the research. These criteria included geography, size, settlement type, neighbourhood type, regeneration intervention, housing age, deprivation, ethnic diversity, tenure type, renowned architecture and design.

Three groups of locations were selected:

- **Typical locations**, which included locations in South Belfast (Portland 88 and the surrounding area), Corby (Oakley Vale), Bridgend (Parc Derwen)
- **Locations chose to represent a range of settings**, which included locations in Birmingham (Lozells), and Hackney (Kings Crescent estate)
- **Exemplary locations**, which included Poundbury (Dorset) and Manchester (New Islington).



Portland 88, South Belfast
(51 interviews)



New Islington, Manchester
(34 interviews)



Lozells, Birmingham
(57 interviews)



Oakley Vale, Corby
(61 interviews)



Kings Crescent Estate, Hackney
(55 interviews)



Parc Derwen, Bridgend
(26 interviews)



Poundbury, Dorset
(32 interviews)

The original intention was to carry out similar numbers of interviews in each area, however this was interrupted by the lockdown. Interviews were also planned in Edinburgh, Brentford (London), Accordia (Cambridge), Heighington, (near Darlington), and Wickets (Rotherham), however this too proved impossible.

Place profiles: Before lockdown



Portland 88 and surrounding area, Belfast

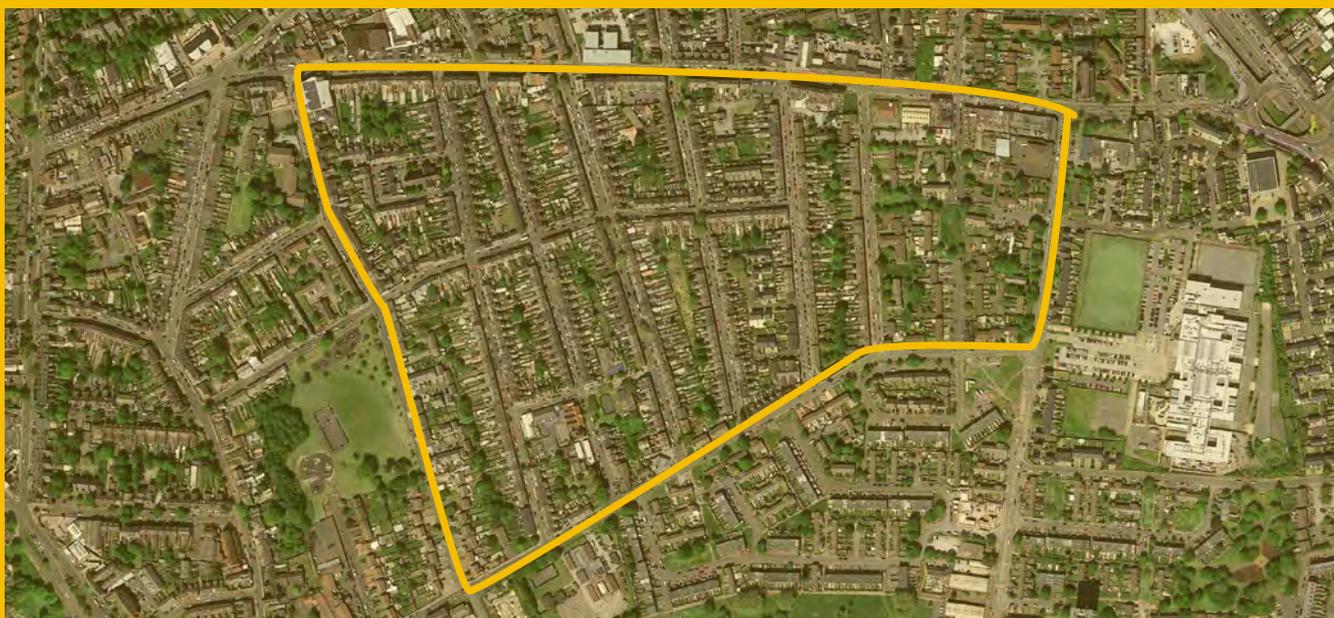
Portland 88 and the surrounding area are located in a small urban neighbourhood in South Belfast. The city centre is a short walk to the north, to the south a railway line separates it from the Holyland with Queen's University Belfast and the historic Botanical Gardens. In 2011, at the time of the last census, the ward in which Portland 88 is located has the second highest proportion of socially rented housing (41%) of the case studies behind Lozells in Birmingham (49%), and the second lowest rate of home ownership (25%) behind New Islington, Manchester (20%).

Ethnically, it is not as diverse as the other urban cases, in 2011 88% of the local population was white, and 11% Asian/Asian British. The average house price in Belfast is now £138,007⁹, around 40% below the UK average, and the Portland 88 neighbourhood is amongst the 20% most deprived areas in Northern Ireland.¹⁰

Social Life's Community Dynamics data suggests that compared to the national average, people living in and around Portland 88 are likely to have an average sense of influence; average to low life satisfaction; but a weak sense of safety, belonging, satisfaction with the area as a place to live, and less trust in people living in the neighbourhood.

⁹ HM Land Registry. (2020). UK House Price Index (2020) Local Authority level, March . Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-house-price-index-for-march-2020> (accessed 2, July 2020)

¹⁰ Northern Ireland Statistical and Research Agency. (2017). Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure. Retrieved from: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/deprivation/northern-ireland-multiple-deprivation-measure-2017-nimdm017> (accessed 2, July 2020)



Lozells, Birmingham

Lozells is a large neighbourhood in west Birmingham centred around Lozells Road, characterised by 19th Century terraced housing originally designed for industrial workers. At the time of the last census in 2011 the neighbourhood had the highest proportion of socially rented housing of all the cases (49%), and like the two other urban cases of Manchester and Belfast has a low proportion of home ownership (31%). The Lozells 2019 IMD score places it in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England.¹¹ Ethnically, it is the most diverse of all the cases, in 2011 61% of residents describe themselves as Asian/Asian British and 11% of as white. There is also a large black/African/Caribbean/black British community (22%). The neighbourhood has the largest proportion of under 17 year olds (32%) of all the cases, and the smallest 30-64 year old group (38%). The average house price of Birmingham is £185,499, 20% below the UK average.



Social Life's Community Dynamics data suggests that compared to the national average, people living Lozells are likely to have an average sense of influence; however in many ways Lozells residents are likely to have less positive perceptions of the neighbourhood than the national average, including their sense of safety, belonging, life satisfaction, satisfaction with the area as a place to live and trust in people living in the neighbourhood.

¹¹ HM Land Registry; Office for National Statistics. Retrieved from: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk> (accessed 2, July 2020); Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. (2019). Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019> (accessed 2, July 2020).



Parc Derwen, Bridgend

Parc Derwen is a new suburban neighbourhood of 1,209 new homes built between 2015-18 in the North of Bridgend, a small town between Cardiff and Swansea in south Wales. It is surrounded by primarily rural agricultural land, however there is substantial industrial land-use within and close to the town. The average house price in Bridgend is £156,365 (38% below UK average), and in 2011 at the time of the last census the neighbourhood has the highest home-ownership rate (82%) of all the cases, and the lowest number of people living in social (5%) and private (11%) renting. It is ranked in the top 20% least deprived on the 2019 IMD compared to the rest of Wales. Ethnically it is not very diverse, in 2011 93% of the population are, and very small numbers of Asian (1%) and

Black (1%) residents. It has the lowest proportion of under 17s of all the areas (7%), and the largest 30-64 group (48%).¹²

Social Life's Community Dynamics data suggests that compared to the national average, people living in Parc Derwen are likely to have a higher satisfaction with the area as a place to live and trust in people living in the neighbourhood; they are likely to have an average life satisfaction and sense of influence, safety and belonging.

¹² HM Land Registry; Welsh Government. (2019). Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. Retrieved from: <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation> (accessed 2, July 2020).

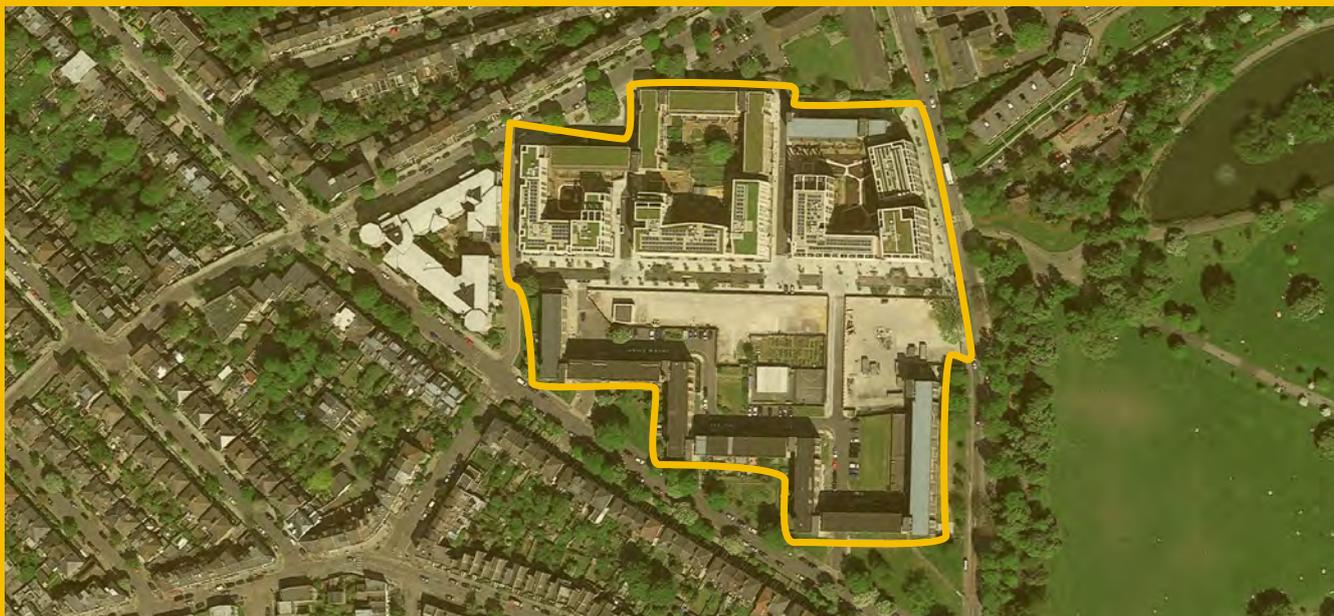


Oakley Vale, Corby

Oakley Vale is in the south of Corby, a medium size post-industrial town ringed by 20 miles of rural land separating it from Northampton, Leicester and Northampton. The average house price in Corby is £177,927 (26% below UK average), and the town has recently adopted a growth strategy bringing in a new railway station, a large civic building including a library and theatre called the Corby Cube, as well as new housing in the south. In 2011, at the time of the last census, Parc Derwen and Oakley Vale had the lowest percentage of socially rented homes (8%), and like Manchester and Hackney had the lowest home ownership rates (31%) compared to the other cases. It is not particularly ethnically diverse, with 88% being White, the black community is 7% of the town's population. It has a relatively young population, 29% are under 17 years old, making it the second youngest town of the cases. In 2019, its IMD score placed it within the top 30% least deprived small areas in England.¹³

Social Life's Community Dynamics data suggests that compared to the national average, people living in Oakley Vale are likely to have average life satisfaction and sense of influence; their sense of belonging and sense of safety is likely to be average to below average. The area cuts across small areas with some polarised Community Dynamics scores making it difficult to predict satisfaction with the local area, and trust in others living in the neighbourhood.

¹³ HM Land Registry; Office for National Statistics; Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.



Kings Crescent Estate, Hackney

Overlooking the Victorian Clissold Park in the affluent neighbourhood of Stoke Newington in North London, Kings Crescent Estate has undergone a number of redevelopments, with the latest beginning in 2016 adding 492 new homes. 97 of these new homes will be socially rented, and 111 more will be intended for shared-ownership. The 2019 IMD score places it within the 30% most deprived areas in the UK, and the average house price in Hackney are £638,863, making it the most unaffordable of all the cases. It is ethnically diverse, at the time of the last census in 2011, 62% of the population was white, 16% black African/Caribbean/black British, and 10% Asian/Asian British.¹⁴

Social Life's Community Dynamics data suggests that compared to the national average, people living on the Kings Crescent Estate are likely to have an average sense of safety, satisfaction with life satisfaction and with the area as a place to live, and sense of influence. Their sense of belonging and trust in people living in the neighbourhood are likely to be low.

¹⁴ HM Land Registry; Office for National Statistics; Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.



New Islington, Manchester

New Islington is a former industrial area close to Manchester city centre to the west. Redevelopment by Urban Splash began in 2002. The area is a mixture of warehouses, offices, and terraced streets, and although the 2019 IMD places it in the 20% most deprived areas in England, the new homes have attracted more affluent groups into the inner-city, leading to some tension in the community. It is ethnically diverse relative to the other cases, but less so than the other inner-city areas in Birmingham and Hackney. At the time of the last census in 2011 77% of the population describing themselves as white, 10% black/African/Caribbean/black British, and 8% Asian/Asian British. Its age profile is average compared to the other locations, however, it has a large 18-29 group (34%).¹⁵



Social Life's Community Dynamics data suggests that compared to the national average, people living in New Islington are likely to have higher life satisfaction; average trust in people living in the neighbourhood and satisfaction with the area as a place to live; a slightly low sense of influence; and a low sense of belonging. Their sense of safety is difficult to predict from this data.

¹⁵ Idem.



Poundbury, Dorset

Poundbury is a new suburban town outside of Dorchester in the West of Dorset, intended to be a contemporary model of traditional and low-density street design. It was endorsed and built on land owned by the Prince of Wales, and began construction in the 1990s. By 2025 when completed it is planned to house 5,000 people. The average house price is £285,051, making it roughly 20% above the UK average, and the tenure ratios of the town are relatively average compared to the other six cases (59% own home, 21% socially rent, 17% privately rent). Ethically, it is the most homogenous case, at the time of the last census in 2011 96% of residents are white, with the next largest ethnicity being Asian/Asian British at 2.3%. In 2019 it scored within the top 40% least deprived areas in England, and has an older population with the lowest proportion of 18-29 year olds of all the areas (15.3%), and the highest proportion of over 65s (25%).¹⁶

Social Life's Community Dynamics data suggests that compared to the national average, people living in Poundbury are likely to have higher satisfaction with the area as a place to live and trust in people living in the neighbourhood; and average sense of safety, belonging, life satisfaction and sense of influence.

¹⁶ Idem.

The people interviewed: Before lockdown

- 85% lived in the area, 19% worked, 2% studied, and 6% had other interest in the area (some had more than one involvement).
- 13% had had a connection to the area for less than 1 year, 14% for 1-3 years, 15% for 4-5 years, 17% for 6-10 years, 15% for 11-20, and 27% for over 20 years.
- 46.2% were male, 53.5% female, 0.3% transgender.
- 18% were under 24, 53% aged between 25 and 44, 20% between 45 to 64, and 9% over 65 years old.
- 64% defined themselves as white, 18% as Asian or Asian British, 11% as black or black British, 3% as mixed, 5% as 'other ethnic group'.
- 41% had no children living with them; 17% pre-school children; 24% primary school children; 7% secondary school children; 21% children over 18.
- 49% were in full time work; 15% were in part time work; 9% retired; 12% were full time students.
- 9% had a disability that limited their day-to-day activities.
- 40% were owner occupiers; 33% private renters; 17% lived in social rented homes; 11% lived in other tenures.
- 62% said their views have not been consulted before.



Street interviews in Lozells

The approach: During lockdown

This part of the research relied on in-depth telephone interviews and participant photography as our key methods. The Kaizen team conducted 53 in-depth phone interviews between 5th May and 5th June.

Participants were asked for two photos of spaces in the home where people spend a lot of time; two photos of spaces in the local area that they still use during the lockdown (for example shops, chemists, laundrettes, markets, bus stops, parks; and one photo of a hand-drawn map of places, amenities or facilities in the local area that were relevant to daily life during the lockdown.

We selected participants for this phase of the research using a range of geographies, socioeconomic grades and age categories to capture a broad range of lived experiences in these challenging and changing times across the UK. Participants broadly reflected the UK population as a whole, we matched the UK wide geographic spread, and range of socioeconomic backgrounds and age groups.

The research team worked through their networks to identify people who matched these categories and approached them to ask them to participate. Although the total numbers of people interviewed is smaller than the first phase of research, the data from the in-depth interviews is much more complex and nuanced. The interviews were on average an hour long, with some lasting up to two hours. The in-depth interviews combined with the visual components enabled us to capture a snapshot of lived experience and perceptions at a particular and unique time.

Five questions guided the second phase of the research:

- How do residents' current living circumstances impact on their quality of life?
- What role does the local area play in improving or diminishing residents' quality of life during this difficult period of time?
- How do neighbourhood and community support systems (physical and virtual) contribute to supporting residents' wellbeing and quality of life at a moment when social distancing and lockdown measures keep many residents isolated?
- How has the lockdown changed the residents' perceptions of their local area and what is important to them?
- What are the key issues affecting residents' quality of life during the Covid-19 pandemic?

The people interviewed: During lockdown

- 83% lived in England, 4% in Northern Ireland, 8% in Scotland, and 6% Wales.
- Of those living in England, 9% lived in the east, 13% in London, 21% in the south, 17% in the Midlands, 15% in the north, and 8% in Yorkshire and the Humber.
- 19% had lived in the area for less than 1 year, 19% for 1-3 years, 11% for 4-5 years, 15% for 6-10 years, 25% for 11-20, and 11% had lived in the area for over 20 years.
- 28% were in the AB socioeconomic grades, 32% in C1 grade, 15% in C2 grade, and 25% were in the DE socioeconomic grades.
- 6% were aged between 10 and 17, 19% aged between 18 and 29, 26% between 30 and 44, 34% between 45 and 64, and 15% over 65.
- 43% were male, 57% female.
- 60% defined themselves as white, 13% as Asian or Asian British, 6% as black or black British, 17% as mixed.
- 64% were owner occupiers, 23% private renters; 8% lived in social housing, 6% lived in other tenures.
- 32% were in full time work, 17% in part time work, 4% were furloughed, 13% retired, 8% were full time students.
- 64% had no children living with them; 4% lived with pre-school children; 25% primary school children; 21% secondary school children; 2% had children over 18.
- 28% lived with a family member or flatmate who were at risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Defining quality of life

The study of the relationships between built environment and quality of life has been traced back to the late nineteenth century investigations into urban disease and tenement life in cities as diverse as London, New York, Buenos Aires, or Rio de Janeiro¹⁷. Despite this long history, examining how the built environment impacts quality of life remains a challenging task¹⁸. The elusiveness and complexity of the concept of quality of life poses some of the main challenges. The World Health Organization has developed a multidimensional quality of life instrument (WHOQOL), which is used to measure a range of subjective aspects of quality of life. The abbreviated version of this includes four domains of quality of life: environment, social relationships, physical health, and psychological health.¹⁹

It has been argued that the relationship between the built environment and quality of life plays out at different scales, from the most intimate scale of the home to broad urban and national scales.²⁰ Other studies have shown that the relationship between built environment and quality of life cannot be understood in isolation from socio-economic structures.²¹

We took all these considerations into account when we defined the research questions and operationalised the main concepts. We also draw on Publica's literature review for the Quality of Life Foundation²², which identified six main dimensions and 19 different aspects of the relationship between built environment and quality of life:

- Ownership: Long term stewardship; the trust deficit; giving constructive power to residents; the value of local knowledge
- Movement: From roads to streets; testing and adapting to change
- Belonging and togetherness: Displacement; resistance to change; diversity and social inclusion
- Feeling cared for: Levels of governance; taking responsibility for quality; a new role for the NHS
- Nature: Widespread appreciation for the value of greenery; measuring the effect of nature; sustainability, resilience and variety; engaging with nature
- Fun and wonder: Shared spaces; making engaging and involving places; the enabling role of authorities.

To pin down the different aspects of built environment that might have an impact on quality of life, we also rely on Carmona's (2018) systematic review of 271 studies that investigated what makes a built environment valuable. He argues that a high quality built environment is "one which returns the greatest value to its users with regard to meeting and sustaining them in healthy, socially rich and economically productive lifestyles that

17 Gaudie, E. (1974). *Cruel habitations: A history of working-class housing 1780-1918*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1974.

18 Eurostat. "Quality of life." Retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Quality_of_life_indicators

19 Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/healthinfo/survey/whoqol-qualityoflife/en/>

20 Sirgy, M. J., and Cornwell, T. (2002). How neighborhood features affect quality of life. *Social indicators research*, 59(1), 79-114.

21 Corburn, J. (2013). *Healthy city planning: From neighbourhood to national health equity*. London, New York: Routledge.

22 Quality of Life Foundation. (2019). "Literature review." Issued by L. Pritchard, Publica. Unpublished manuscript.

touch lightly on the environment.” The study finds that high quality built environments have a number of determinants. Among these, certain factors showed a strong association with place-derived health, social, economic or environmental value.²³

A high quality built environment...	
... features	... avoids
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> greenness in the built the environment (notably the presence of trees and grass, water, and open space – the latter if of good quality) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> car dependent and extensive forms of suburbanization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a mix of uses (notably the diversity of land uses within a neighbourhood) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> relentlessly hard urban space (absence of local green space)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> low levels of traffic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> too much very local permeability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> walkability and bikeability of places (derived from their strategic street-based connectivity and the quality of the local public realm) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the presence of rear parking courts and other segregated areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the use of more compact (less sprawling and fragmented) patterns of development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> poor maintenance / dilapidation (including of green spaces)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ready convenient connection to a good public transport network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a sense of overcrowding in residential areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the presence of unfavourable food stores
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> roads with higher traffic loads and speeds, wider carriageway widths, or which are elevated

²³ Carmona, M. (2018). "Place value: Place quality and its impact on health, social, economic and environmental outcomes." *Journal of Urban Design* 24(1): 1-48.

We also make use of Social Life's Community Dynamics Data to contextualise our findings. Community Dynamics Data maps questions from national surveys – the Understanding Society Survey and the Community Life survey - which focus on perceptions of place and wellbeing. This enables us to predict how people living in local neighbourhoods are likely to feel about the places they call home.²⁴

The sample sizes of the national surveys are not large enough to disaggregate responses directly to small local areas. We model this data to small areas using ONS's Area Classifications 2011. Our approach draws on a social sustainability framework developed by Social Life, which captures how the built environment and local services support and promote wellbeing and collective life; perceptions of belonging, wellbeing, relationships with neighbours and between people from different backgrounds; how people feel that they can influence their environment and how collectively take action to improve the area.²⁵

This is, however, predictive data and not a robust portrait of the neighbourhood. By comparing actual data about residents' perceptions to this prediction, we can generate an assessment of how well the area is faring compared to similar places. If an area is scoring more positively than the prediction, this suggests that there are strengths or assets in place that are supporting residents to thrive. Where a place scores is weak this suggests there are vulnerabilities and weaknesses that are undermining quality of life.

24 Social Life (2019) Understanding Local Areas http://www.social-life.co/publication/understanding_local_areas/

25 Woodcraft, S. et al (2012) Design for Social Sustainability. London: Social Life



Portland 88, Belfast



Lozells, Birmingham



Oakley Vale, Corby



Parc Derwen, Bridgend



Kings Crescent Estate, Hackney

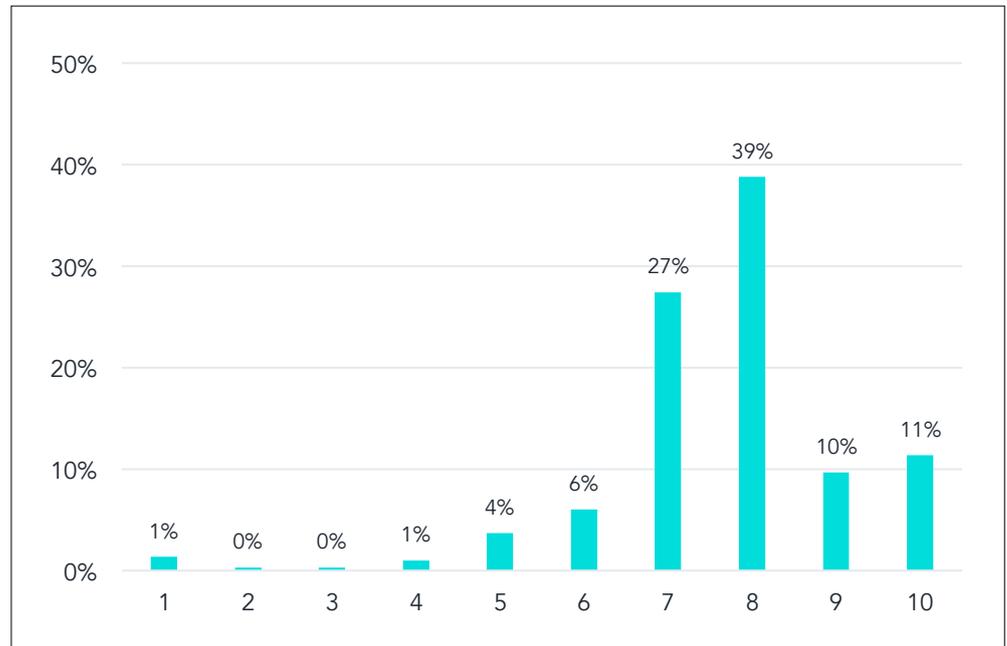


New Islington, Manchester

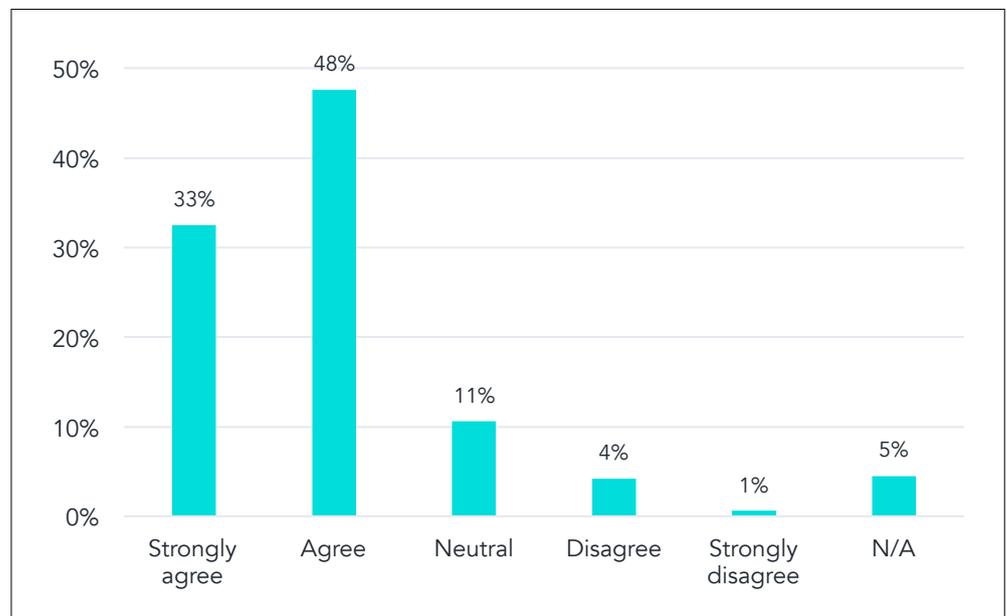


Poundbury, Dorset

60% of respondents reported their local area to be a positive place to live or work, giving a rating of eight or more on a scale of 1-10. 81% of respondents felt that their neighbourhood was a good place to live, 33% strongly agreed with this.



“Overall, on a scale of 1-10, how positive a place do you think this area is to live/work?”, (n=299)

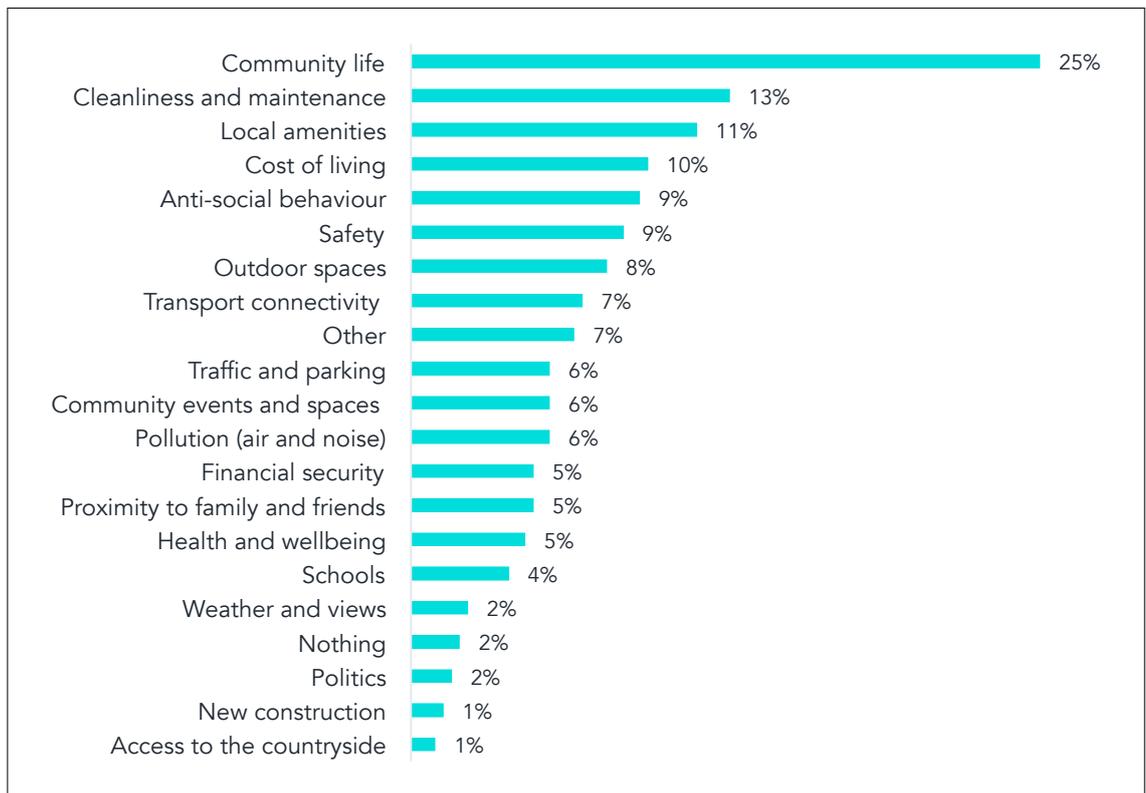


“To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements. I think my neighbourhood is a good place to live?”, (n=297)

3.2. Different facets of community

Community life

The critical importance of community was highlighted in responses to a range of open-ended and closed questions included in the survey. 25% of the people interviewed indicated community life was one of the main factors that affected on their quality of life.



“Which are the main things that you would say affect your quality of life in your local area?”, n=305, open-ended question, multiple responses possible

Responses indicate that this very wide sense of community is experienced differently by residents, some talked about belonging, relationships with others in the community, others about respect or a sense of togetherness.

A majority of those who reported that the community affects their quality of life cited its positive aspects. Some respondents, however, pointed out how issues about the community negatively affects quality of life.

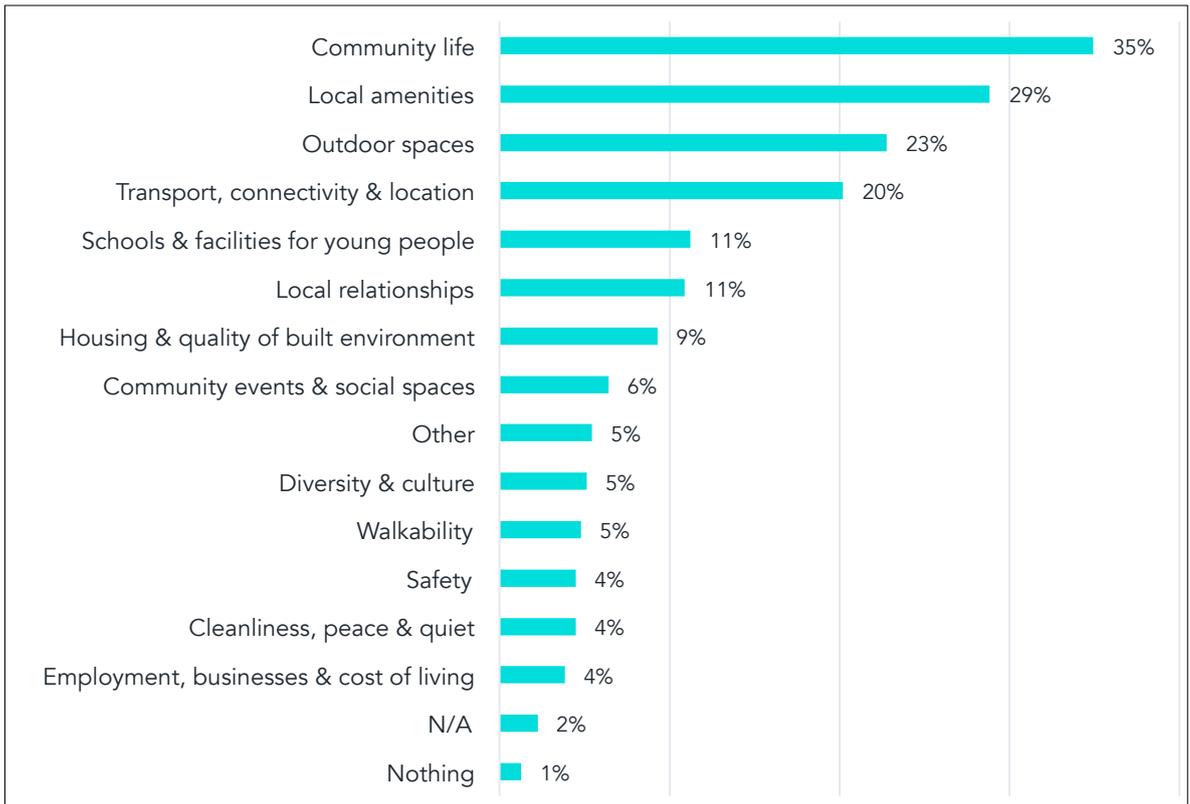
“Lovely neighbours, community feel”

“Hate my neighbours”

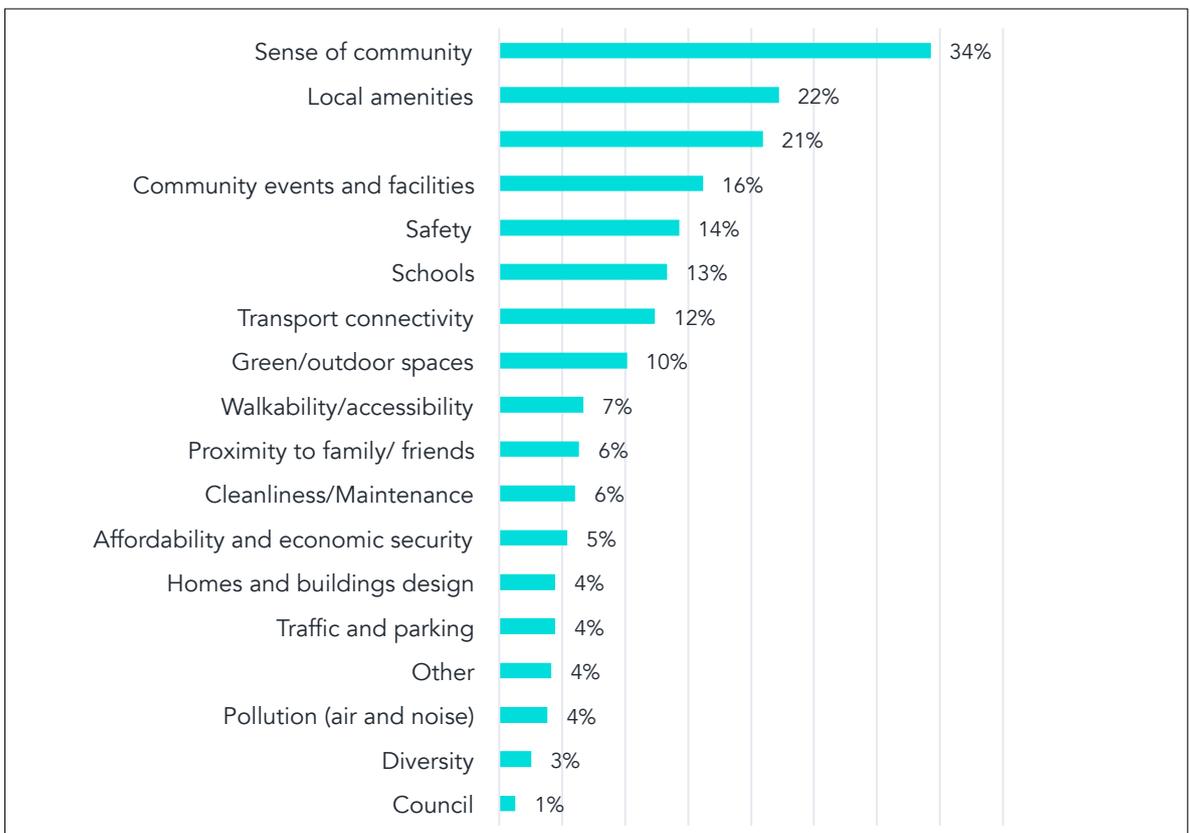
“Social aspect so important”

“Having good relationships with whole community”

“A lot of culture and it brings everyone together”



“What things do you like about this area?” n=312, open-ended question, multiple responses possible



“What things/factors are the most important in making somewhere a really good place to live” n=312, open-ended question, multiple responses possible

In their answers to these open-ended questions, respondents highlighted the importance of community life. Survey participants referenced community identity, respect, resilience and working together in the face of adversity as key aspects of community life. These answers also bring attention to local opportunities and barriers that have shaped community life over years. These include diversity, urban regeneration, local immigration, and displacement, among others.

“Camaraderie/sense of community, the mutual respect and trust for our neighbourhood” “On the whole it’s a good area but of course it has struggles, the people make it”

“It’s resilience. The/our neighbours’ capacity to recover quickly from adversity - look at Birmingham’s chequered past”

“Muticulturalness. People engage and mix”

“The community comes together when it has to. My neighbours, parts of the neighbourhood”

“The community spirit and resilience of the community neighbours / friends”

“Teaching each other to get on with life”

“Residential cohesion - really lucky with that”

“The vibrancy when people are around”

Perceptions of community was at the top of the list of the most important factors in making somewhere a really good place to live, 34% of respondents mentioned this. Perceptions of community have both concrete and elusive aspects. Concrete aspects include different forms of mutual support and activities that promote community resilience and ensure the wellbeing and safety of the local residents. The more elusive aspects focus on unity, local cohesion, sense of local identity and community spirit, and community values. This becomes even clearer when we look at what respondents answered when asked what makes somewhere a really good place to live.

“Sense of community; Everyone involved and included; Everyone knows everyone”

“Cohesion of people, more community spirit”

“Community cohesion, unity from all sections of the neighbourhood, love and understanding, tolerance. Being heard from the council. Strength from within our faith”

“Sense of community, sense of togetherness, good relationship”

“A strong community, with honest values with a sense of faith. A community that watches out for both its young and old (and the bits in between)”

“Being a part of the community, having a supportive neighbourhood. People who genuinely care about the environment they live in”

Local relationships

A majority of respondents rated relationships with people in their local area as being good and about a quarter rated them as being acceptable. Local relationships was frequently listed as one of the most important factors in making somewhere a really good place to live.

Of those surveyed, 21% brought up the importance of local relationships. Friendliness, respect for others and supportive networks are all important to building good rapport in one's local area.

“Mutual respect first and foremost. We don't share the same beliefs and values but we can still have equal respect for each other”

“Having a laugh with people - life gets too serious”

“Good respectful neighbours”

“Respectable people, no vandalism, no discrimination”

“The respect of others. Treat others like you'd treat yourself”

“Don't cause trouble, stay cool with most people”

“Nice people make an area a nice neighbourhood. Some people can't grasp this concept and like to tear into the good works of others”

“Supportive neighbours, supportive community, tolerance and understanding of each other's needs”

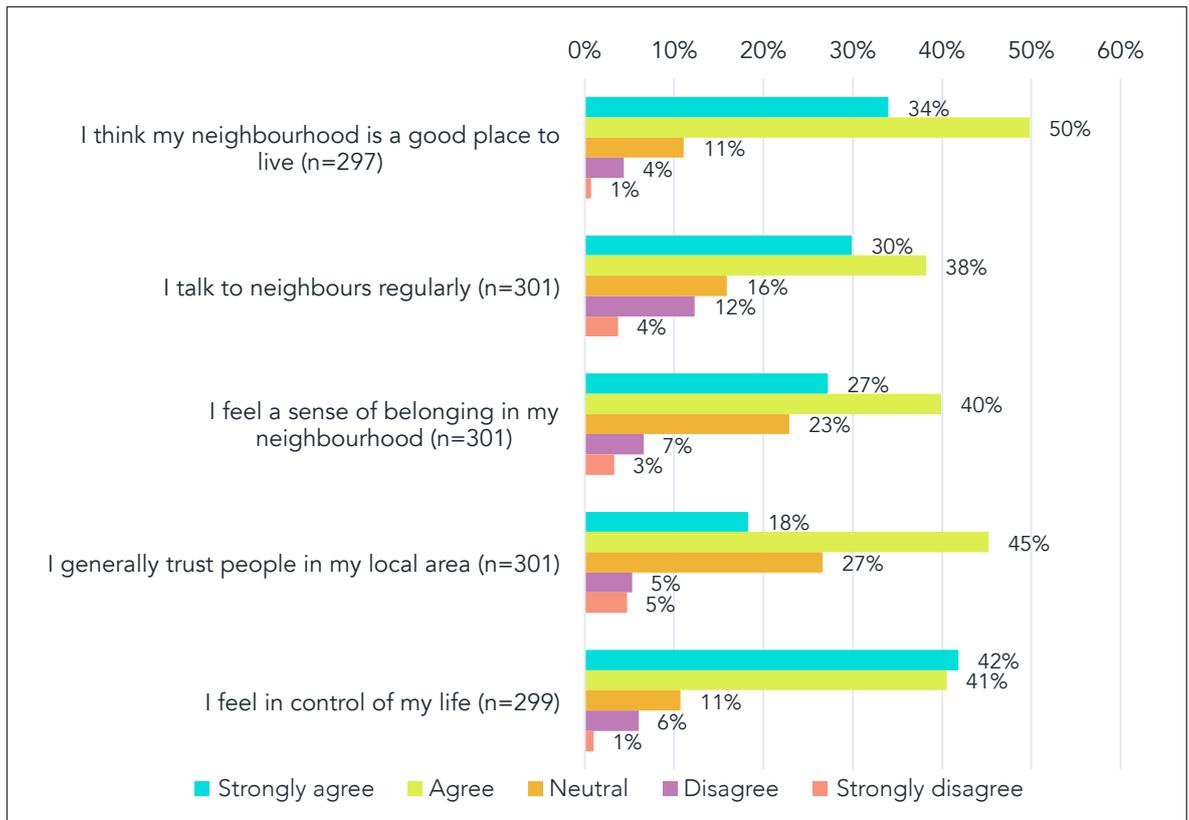
“Like I said, pride. Caring neighbours, common goals, supportive community, nice people (don't care what culture)”

“Good neighbours - that's essential in any neighbourhood, without that you're going to struggle with cohesion”

“Supportive neighbours / neighbourhood, respectful youth”

68% of respondents said that they talk to neighbours regularly. Levels of talking to neighbours for survey respondents were similar to national benchmarks.

Belonging and trust

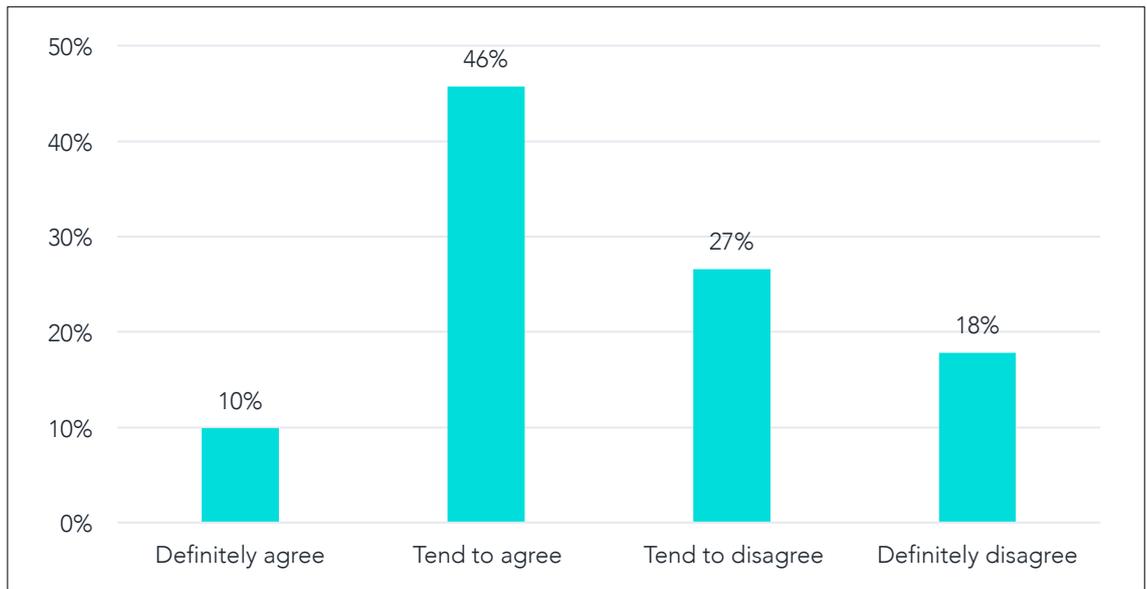


“To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements....?”

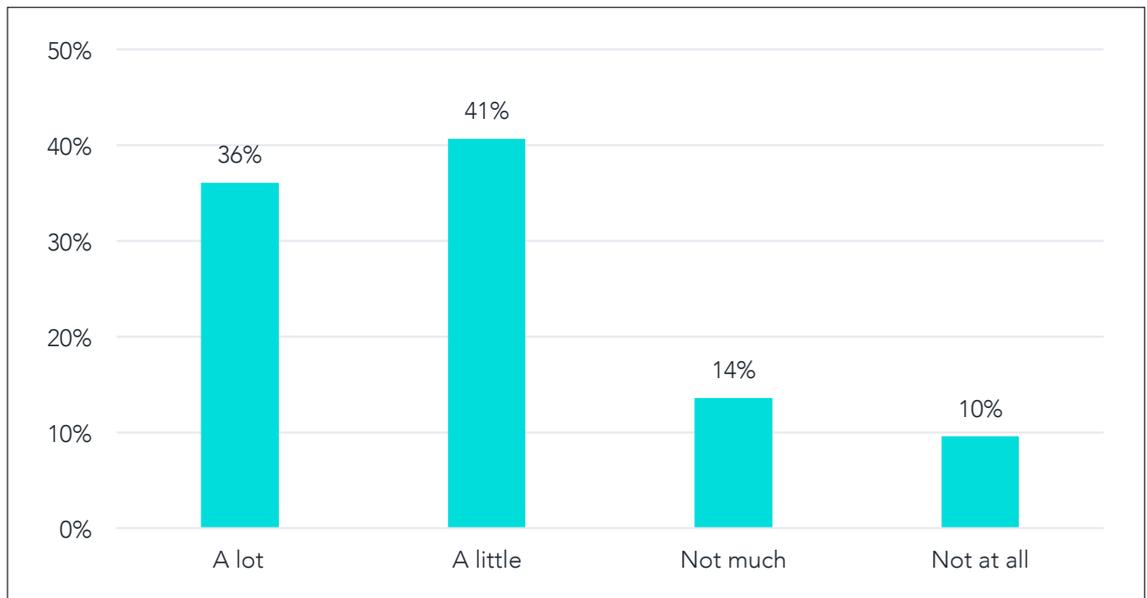
A majority of people interviewed reported that they felt a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood. Levels of belonging were similar to the national benchmarks (more detail on this is included in the Appendix).

63% of respondents said they trusted people in their local area. This is lower than the national benchmark, which is 69%.

Feelings of influence



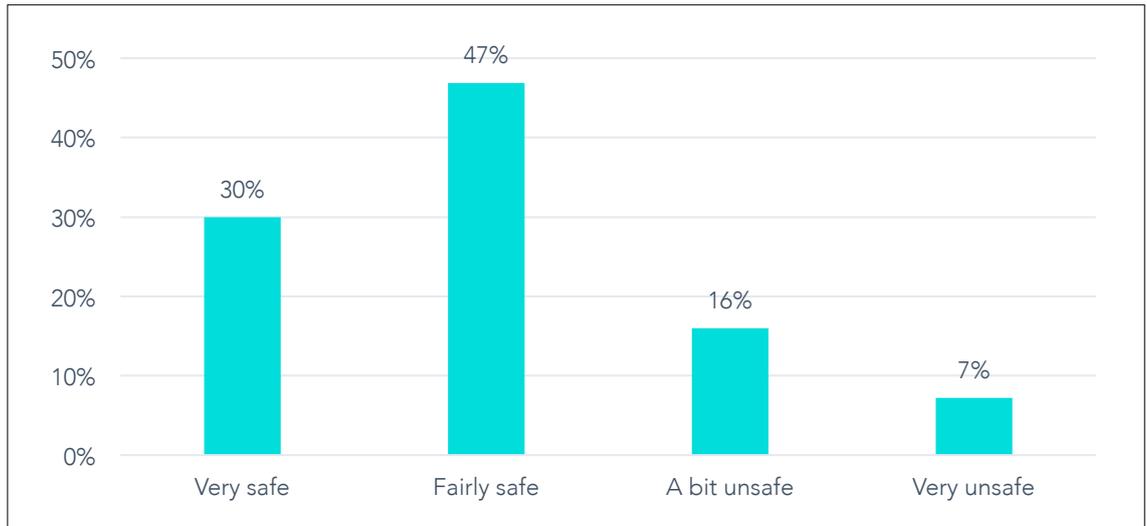
“To what extent do you agree or disagree that you personally can influence decisions affecting the local area?” (n=304)



“To what extent do you think that the community can influence decisions affecting the local area?” (n=280)

More than half of those interviewed reported that they can influence decisions in their local area: this is higher than the national benchmark, which is 28%. The survey also focused on perceptions of what influence the community has over local decisions. People interviewed had more confidence that they personally could influence local decisions than the local community could.

Sense of safety



“How safe do you feel walking alone in this area after dark?” n=307

Of those surveyed, a majority felt very safe and fairly safe in their area after dark. This is lower than the national benchmark, which is 86%.

Safety in the local area was mentioned in responses to several open-ended questions. Safety appeared as one of the most frequently mentioned factors that are most important in making somewhere a really good place to live. Safety in the local area is experienced in different ways including security for one’s life, crime-free environments, safety on the street, safety-promoting designs and an adequate police response:

“Not happy with area - happy with security of the area, open plan - not suitable for children”

“Nice living here, feels safer”

“Safety is key”; “safety - well lit”

“Increase safety with police, well lit”

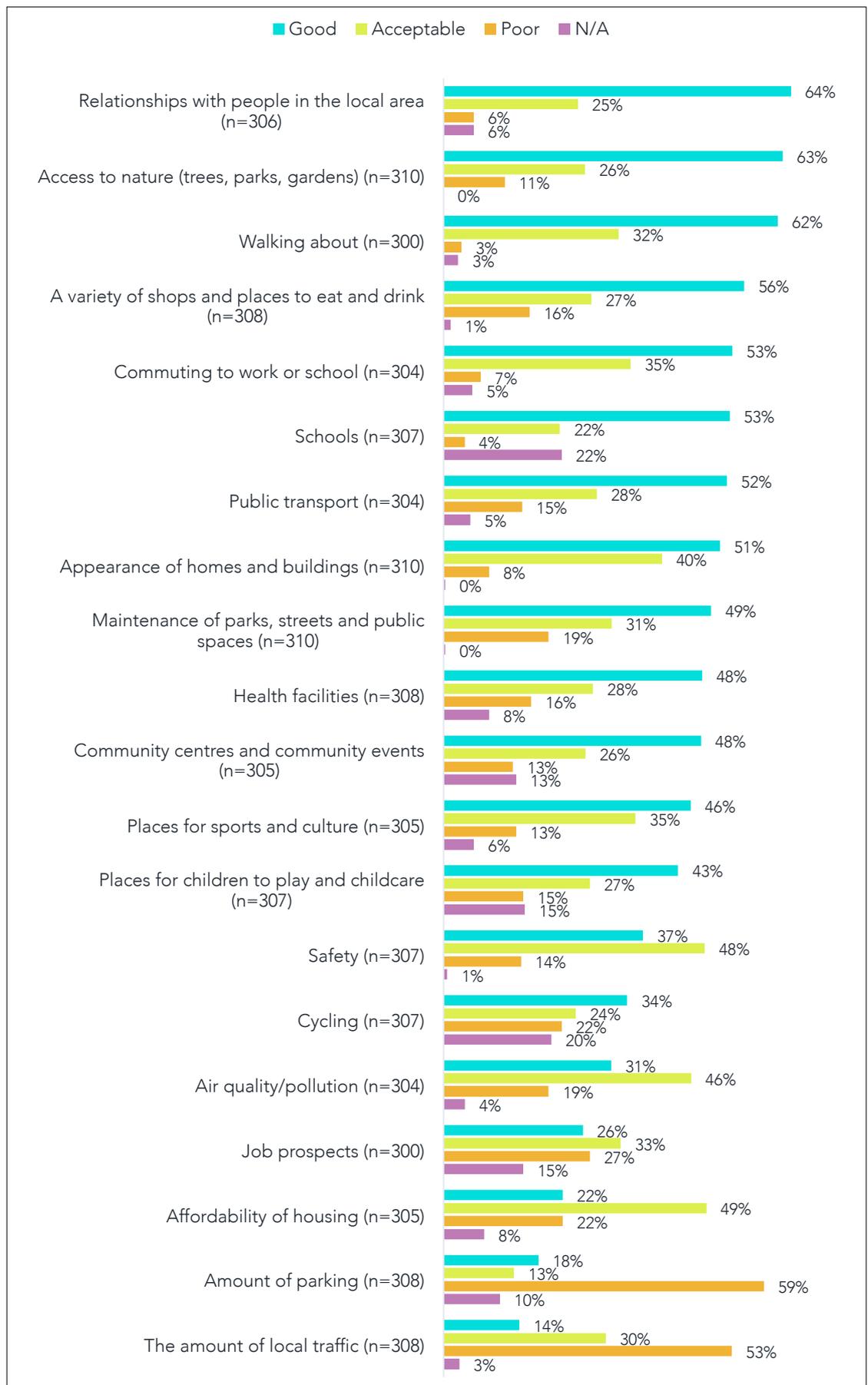
“A good place where children feel safe

“Safe environment for all the family

“Safe place where children can play”

“For me, safety for my children is a main factor”

Safe environments for children and teenagers was highlighted by a number of respondents across a number of open-ended questions.



“How would you rate the following aspects of this area? (rate: Good, Acceptable/ok, Poor, or NA)”

About half of the respondents rated safety as acceptable in their local area. When asked what effects quality of life in the local area, different aspects of safety were frequently mentioned. This covered a wide range of issues from road safety to fear of gangs and knife crime, to prostitution and drug dealing:

“Too many cars - not always safe for pedestrians or cyclists”

“Safety = peace of mind”

“Safe - as long as I’m safe (pleasant) I’m happy”

“People wear yellow jackets - patrolling - want to know more. Makes me feel nervous, who are they? There is a house being guarded at night”

“The most immediate thing is the lack of police presence or more to the point a rapid response time - that’s going to affect the quality of life for the majority of residents”

“Anti-social behaviour - had enough prostitution in the area, contraband use. I can’t open my kids’ bedroom windows - it stinks man”

“People with bad attitudes towards community and well-being”

Antisocial behaviour was frequently noted as one of the things people interviewed disliked about their local area. It was the second most cited issue, raised by 27% of interviewees. Some of the examples of antisocial behaviour mentioned show how the built and the lived environment are intertwined, making their individual impact on quality of life difficult to disentangle.

“The youth falls into wrong gangs”

“Too many crackheads”

“Stabbings, weird people, hanging around the block”

“High crime rate, lack of police presence, lack of lighting”

“Canal paths not good at night – sketchy”

“Anti-social behaviour. Knife crime is top of my list”

“Badly lit at night. More streetlamps needed”

Physical and design aspects are associated with perceptions of crime, as well as social issues such as lack of youth services and supports for local residents. Inadequate design such as lack of street lighting or isolated canal paths, or places that discourage footfall, are all associated with feelings of safety. However, improving perceptions of safety also means increasing youth-oriented resources and facilities, and tackling the lack of local opportunities for work, education and recreation. These findings show that in order to improve residents' quality of life, broader structural approaches are as important as local design solutions.

3.3 Physical and social infrastructure

Outdoor and green spaces

63% of respondents rated access to nature - trees, parks and gardens- as being good, 26% rated this as acceptable and 11% reported that their access to nature in the local area is poor.

Outdoor spaces were listed third among the main things that respondents liked about their local area. A wide range of green and blue spaces were mentioned, including canals, lakes, parks, forests and green spaces for children:

“Nice parks”

“Close to beach”

“Lovely for walking dogs; forest”

“Beaches nearby”

“The park is close and beautiful”

“Lovely green space”

“Playground in the park is good”

“Access to cycle path on embankment”

“We still have lots of green patches”

“Feels like I live in the country”

Outdoor and green spaces are seen by 10% of respondents as the most important thing in making somewhere a good place to live. A number of people interviewed highlighted that access to nature allows them to engage in a variety of forms of physical activity including walking, jogging and cycling. Some added that access to nature is vital for their interactions with their family, pointing to the social dimension of physical infrastructure.

“Green, green; love the green area. It's where we spend most of our time. I'm very child-centred so that's my priority.”

Of those interviewed, the people who rated access to nature as good or acceptable also tended to rate walking about in the local area as good or acceptable. However, more research is needed to confirm whether more positive perceptions of outdoor spaces are associated with higher levels of physical activity.

People interviewed giving a 'better' rating to walking about also tended to give a 'better' rating to maintenance of streets and public spaces, suggesting that there is a connection between positive perceptions of outdoor spaces and the enjoyment of walking about the local area.

Connectivity, walkability and mixed use

The survey findings support other emerging evidence on the impact of connectivity, walkability and mix of uses on quality of life.²⁶ The importance of active modes of transport, including public transport, walking and cycling, and local vibrancy were raised up by a large number of people interviewed.



Many respondents brought up concerns about local walkability. This photograph was taken in Lozells, Birmingham, during the first phase of the research in March 2020 before lockdown

26 Gauvin, L., Richard, L., Kestens, Y., Shatenstein, B., Daniel, M., Moore, S. D., ... & Payette, H. (2012). Living in a well-served urban area is associated with maintenance of frequent walking among seniors in the VoisiNuAge study. *Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 67(1), 76-88; European Union. (2019) "Promoting active modes of transport. A Policy Brief from the Policy Learning Platform on Low-carbon economy." Retrieved from https://www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/plp_uploads/policy_briefs/TO4_PolicyBrief_Active_Modes.pdf

Transport connectivity was raised by 7% of people interviewed as affecting their quality of life. Some focused on the positives, outlining how public transport improved their quality of life, while others discussed the shortcomings of transport in their local area.

“Don’t need to use car - everything within walking distance”

“Rubbish public transport”

“Need nearer shops and bus stops, and more buses”

“Everywhere is within walking distance”

“The transport - trains bad”

“Good transport links, good access to city centre”

“Having freedom due to location of things”

Public transport and active transport (walking and cycling) were at the core of people’s views about connectivity. 62% of respondents rated walking about in the local area as good, 32% as acceptable and 3% as poor.²⁷ Cycling had much lower ratings, with 34% of respondents rating it as good, 24% as acceptable and 22% as poor. 20% of respondents rated cycling as not applicable, indicating that they either do not cycle or that this option was not available in their local area.

53% of respondents rated commuting to work or school as good, 35% as acceptable and 7% rated as poor.²⁸ While a similar percentage of respondents rated public transport as good (52%), a higher percentage of respondents rated it as poor (15%), and 28% rated it as acceptable.

Congestion, transport and connectivity was the top concern when people were asked what they disliked about their local area. Streetscape design, lack of parking spaces, inadequate public transport, lack of signage along roads and pedestrian routes were listed among the factors that made transport and connectivity a local problem:

“Winding roads”

“Busy with cars (but that’s’ to be expected)”

“Layout is dangerous and dreadful”

“No parking; people come in on the bus”

“Have to drive to the shops”

“Lack of signage of where things are”

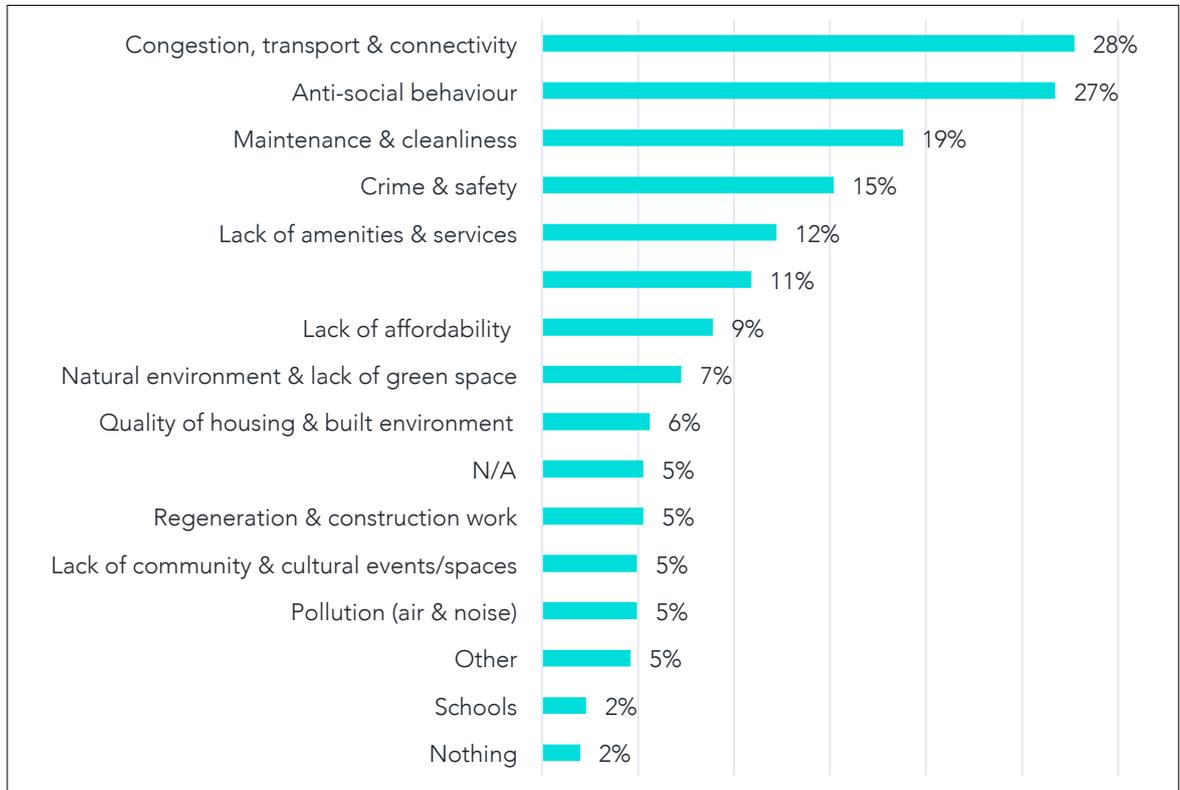
“Very busy roads during school times (pick-ups)”

“For older people no bus service”

²⁷ For ratings of walking about n=300, 2.7% of respondents answered N/A. For ratings of cycling, n=307.

²⁸ For ratings of commuting to work or school, n=30, 5.3% of respondents answered N/A. For ratings of public transport, n=304, 4.9% of respondents answered N/A.

“Relatively isolated from London; Trains diabolical; No centre”
 “People walking through”
 “The parking is an absolute nightmare”



“What things do you dislike about this area?” n=303, open-ended question, multiple responses possible

Schools, health centres, sports clubs and other community facilities were mentioned as enhancing quality of life in the local area. Schools in particular were highlighted as a major factor that makes somewhere a really good place to live. About half of the respondents rated schools, places for children to play and childcare and places for sports and culture in their local area as good.

A significant number of people interviewed said that schools, health centres, sports clubs and other community facilities support community life by increasing integration between different members of the community, as well as increasing opportunities. The presence of these facilities was seen by a majority of respondents as enhancing vibrancy, bringing a mix of uses to an area. However, for some people interviewed the lack of these facilities lowers their quality of life.

These quotes are taken from answers to the question, what impacts on quality of life in the local area?

"Ability to socialise; Opportunities and facilities to socialise; Places to gather; Things to do"

"When I see nothing for the youth my heart bleeds. When I see the youth crying out to be heard - my heart bleeds. That affects your quality of life"

"Local things to do"

"(Lack of) vibrancy"

"Community events and outings"

"More community, more centres"

"Being able to be a part of things as a group"

"Gangs. We need to find something for the young"

"Having lots of clubs to go to stops me being a recluse. Helps me be social"



Community centre in Kings Crescent Estate in Hackney. Photograph was taken during the first phase of the research in March 2020 before lockdown

Availability of local amenities was the second most cited reason for what makes somewhere a good place to live, highlighted by slightly less than a quarter of those interviewed. The range of issues mentioned brought together concerns about proximity, affordability and variety of amenities. These findings indicate that a mix of uses is a desirable design and management strategy, a conclusion reached by a number of emerging research studies that focus the relationship between built environment and social cohesion:²⁹

“Amenities nearby, everything within walking distance”

“Variety of affordable shops”; “everything you need on doorstep”

“Everything accessible”

“Things to do on your step / amenities close at hand”

“Everything I need without using public transport”

“Reasonable shops”

“Good amenities for all residents.”

²⁹ For a review of the scholarship that investigates the connection between mixed land use, quality of life and physical health, see: Mazumdar, S., Learnihan, V., Cochrane, T., & Davey, R. (2018). “The built environment and social capital: A systematic review.” *Environment and Behavior*, 50(2), 119- 158.

Local traffic and parking

Local traffic and parking are high on the list of factors given by people interviewed as impacting on quality of life. Only a very small minority of these responses were positive. When asked what they would change about the local area to make it a better place to live, improvements in local traffic and parking were among the most frequently mentioned.



Learning from what local communities have to say about parking in local areas can improve place-based quality of life. This photograph was taken in Kings Crescent Estate, Hackney, during the first phase of the research in March 2020 before lockdown

As the examples below show, respondents cited a wide range of issues related to traffic and parking:

“My street – I’d call where I live a car park with houses in it. Double parking - treacherous for the emergency services. This is a major issue”

“Traffic, problems with parking causes a lot of stress”

“Too much traffic and cars parked on roads”

“4 spaces in the area - not enough car parking spaces which is why people tend to park wherever which in turn causes issues with the emergency services”

“Car park next to school can’t be used! More affordable parking”;

“Car parking situation - looks like a car park”

“Remove overlay; Parking control”

“Get rid of traffic and make it more pedestrianised”;
“Pedestrian zone, reduce speed limits”

“Not enough double yellow lines. Parking at school awful. This could be said about any road in [the local area].”

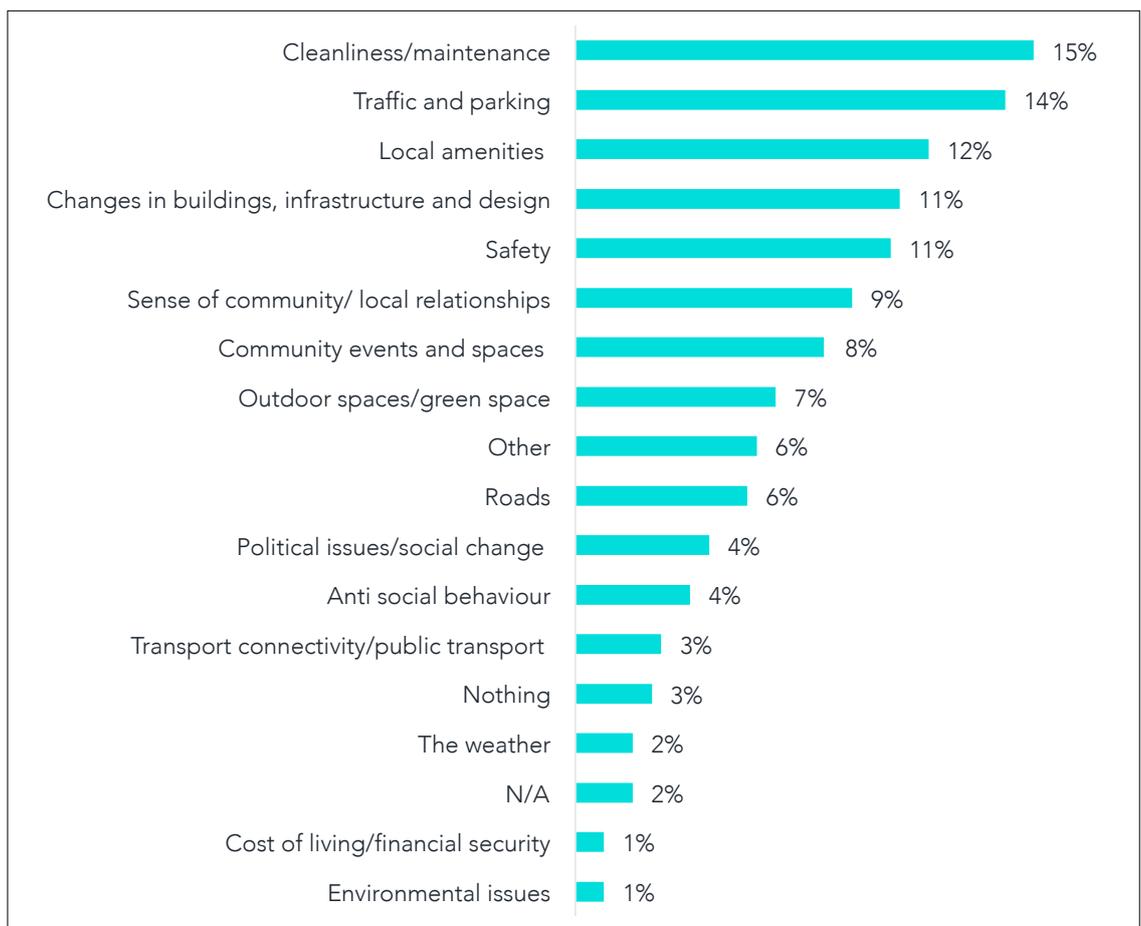


Local traffic in Lozells, Birmingham. Photograph was taken during the first phase of the research in March 2020 before lockdown

Only 18% of respondents rated the amount of parking in their local area as good, 13% as acceptable and 59% reported that parking in the local area is poor. Local traffic was rated as good by even a lower percentage of respondents, with over half of the respondents rating it as poor. Among the twenty issues respondents rated for this question, these two issues had the lowest percentages of positive ratings.

Some of the respondents who mentioned that the amount of traffic in their local was 'acceptable' or 'good' tended also to give 'acceptable' or 'good' ratings to the amount of the parking in the local area. This indicates that these issues are, to some extent, connected, tackling them might require a combined design approach.

31% of respondents rating it air quality and pollution as being good, 46% acceptable and 19% poor. A number of respondents connected air quality and pollution in the local area to local traffic conditions. Air quality and pollution are affected by wider factors, so these findings tell only a partial story. However, they confirm that traffic and parking have wide-ranging impact on quality of life. This is supported by a number of research studies focused on design strategies that consider the role of urban street design and comprehensive traffic calming.³⁰



“If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about this area, which would make it a better place to live, what would it be?”, open-ended question, n=313

30 For a review of this scholarship, see Hart, J., & Parkhurst, G. (2011). "Driven to excess: Impacts of motor vehicles on the quality of life of residents of three streets in Bristol UK." *World Transport Policy & Practice*, 17(2); and Hassen, N., & Kaufman, P. (2016). "Examining the role of urban street design in enhancing community engagement: A literature review." *Health & Place*, 41, 119-132.

Maintenance, cleanliness and aesthetics

Almost half of respondents rated maintenance of parks, streets and public spaces as good, 31% as acceptable and 19% reported that maintenance is poor.

Cleanliness and maintenance of the local area was a shared concern among those interviewed, this was at the top of the list of things they would like to change about their local area. While cleanliness and maintenance are important aspects of physical infrastructure, the responses emphasise how these affect people's experience of place. These findings are in line with growing research on the impact of local maintenance on neighbourhood life.³¹

"The animosity over the refuse - one of the bones of contention is the local municipal dump. The smell that rises come the summer is irritating - putting it mildly a decision was made 7 years ago - after a brief consultation - and it was here"

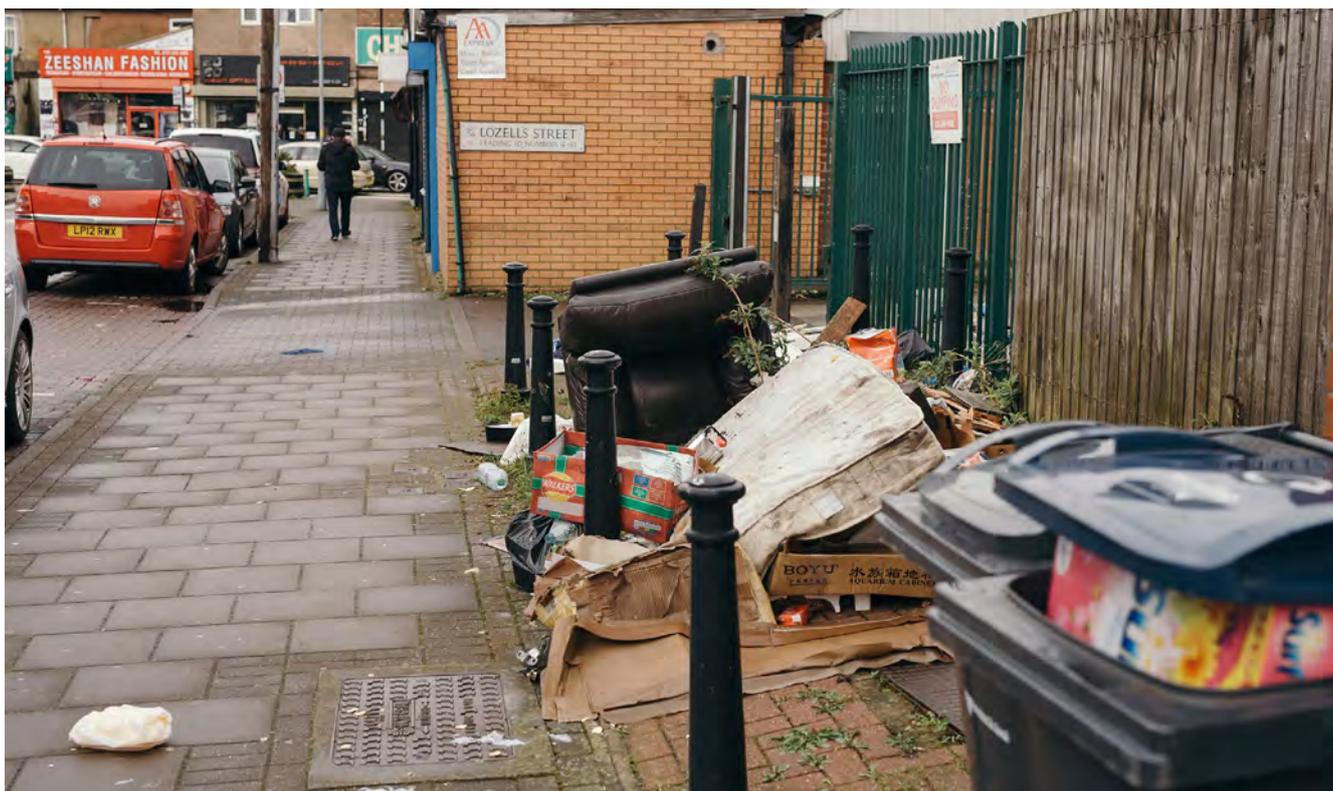
"Change the mindset of folk with dogs. If you're going to have a pet then pick up after it - it's as simple as that. More awareness around that, i.e. public information - Yes?"

"Get rid of the glass and people dumping their old washing machines outside the front of houses";

"Have a meeting with the council leader and ask "why have you disenfranchised Lozells?" because that's how it feels. Then have a mass clear up of the neighbourhood";

"Cleaner area. Sometimes it's quite messy. That would be a good thing to resolve."

³¹ Loukaitou-Sideris, A., & Sideris, A. (2009). "What brings children to the park? Analysis and measurement of the variables affecting children's use of parks." *Journal of the American Planning*.



Concerns about local maintenance and fly tipping were brought up by many respondents in Lozells, Birmingham. Photograph was taken during the first phase of the research in March 2020 before lockdown

Cleanliness and maintenance was the second most frequently mentioned issue when people were asked what affects their quality of life in their local area. Talking about maintenance, a number reported that quality of life is impacted by both the built and lived environment. They pointed out that a poor physical environment had a negative impact on local identities and community relationships, together reducing quality of life:

“The general grubbiness of the surrounding area. Not seen it so bad. It’s as though the residents have no pride, which I know isn’t true. It’s as though the council don’t care either. Fly tipping/litter”

“Being clean, good/clean environment”; “Living in a place where rats pop up all the time ain’t great”

“The/my community and its blatant disregard for its own neighbourhood in relation to fly tipping and litter in general. You won’t have to look far - it’s everywhere”

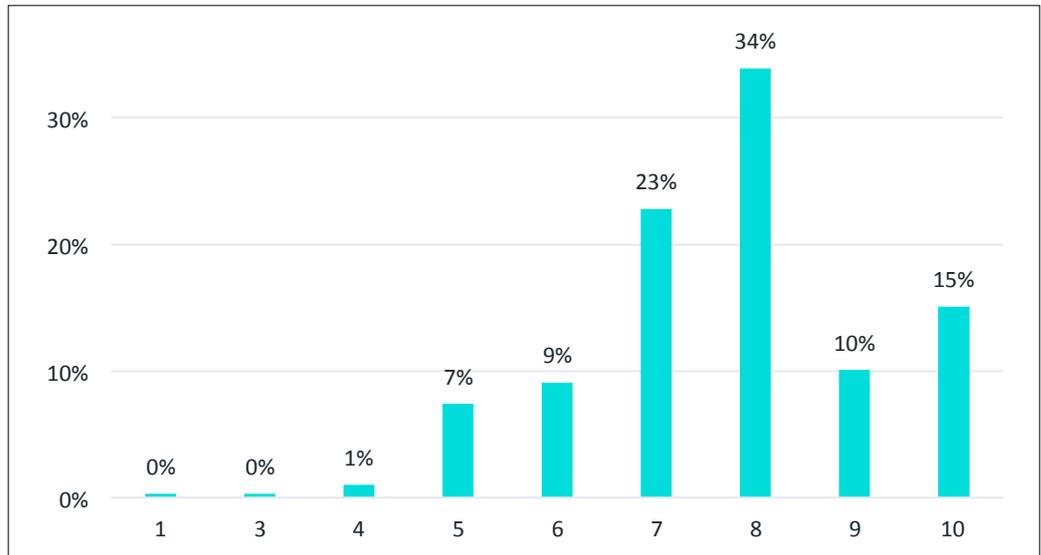
“Oh, that’s easy. The rubbish fly tipping. Start there then everything will change around here”

“Residents not recycling their refuse - it spills out into the street until it becomes a health hazard / eyesore. It’s not fair to the community on the whole. They tend to get the blame for the few.”

3.4 Zooming out: life satisfaction and affordability

Life satisfaction

Over 70% of respondents said that they are satisfied with their life nowadays. People interviewed had an average life satisfaction score of 7.69, which is slightly higher than the national average of 7.56 .



“Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?”, (n=298)

Financial stress

The cost of living and affordability were frequently raised in connection to quality of life and what is important in making somewhere a good place to live. These are affected by issues beyond the local neighbourhood, but have a significant impact on everyday quality of life.

22% of respondents rated the affordability of their home as good, 49% as acceptable and 22% as poor. Job prospects in the local area were rated even lower: only 26% of respondents rated this as good, 33% acceptable and 27% poor.

When asked what are the most important things that impact their quality of life in their local areas, the people interviewed highlighted many financial and affordability problems:

“Money, not affording childcare”

“Struggling to make ends meet. It’s the same for most people in my situation” “Affordable housing is a real issue”

“Cheaper accommodation - rent”

“Emotionally - the rough sleepers. I know it’s not my immediate area (as in locally) but it stays with me and my quality of life.”

“Salary to cost of living ratio. London I was stressed even though I was earning more, but here I earn less but can still live”

“The rent is too much therefore we have to leave”

“The basics in terms of cost of living, not just this area (it’s everywhere)”

“Cost of living, minor begging / rough sleepers, starting to see this around here now.”

3.5 Different experiences of place

The first part of the research that took place before lockdown did not select a representative sample within each area and the numbers of people interviewed were relatively small. This means that the findings cannot be generalised to the larger population.

People living in different tenure

There are a number of differences between the views of people living in different tenures, particularly in answers to questions about life satisfaction, influence over decisions, talking to neighbours and satisfaction with the local area. Respondents living in social rented housing were less positive about their perceptions of safety and trust compared to those living in other tenures. Homeowners were more confident of their capacity to influence decisions about the local area than people living in in other tenures. Homeowners also reported higher life satisfaction.

Of those surveyed, people interviewed living in social rented housing were less positive about their neighbourhood, a lower proportion of them thought that it was a good place to live.

- Respondents living in private rented homes reported that they talked to neighbours less than owner occupiers and people living in social rented housing
- A higher percentage of respondents living in owner occupied housing have a score of '10' on life satisfaction, on a 1-10 scale.
- Of those surveyed, private renters were less confident that their community can influence decisions affecting their local area compared to owner occupiers and people living in social rented housing



The community can influence decisions...



I can influence decisions...

Perceptions of influence over the local area visualised: sense of own influence and community influence

Different age groups

People interviewed aged 65 and over reported distinctive views. Of those surveyed, respondents in this age group were more positive about their local area, including perceptions of local traffic, and belonging. They had higher life satisfaction but lower trust in other people.

- A lower percentage of people aged 25-34 rated shops and places to eat and drink in their local area as acceptable.
- A higher percentage of those aged 45-64 reported that they 'strongly agree' that they talk to neighbours regularly
- A higher percentage of people aged 45-64 reported that they feel a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood.
- A higher percentage of respondents in the 13-24 and 65+ age groups responded that they think that their community can influence decisions affecting their local area.
- A higher percentage of people aged 65 and over group rated the amount of local traffic as good.
- A higher percentage of those in 65+ age group rated cycling in the local area as good.
- A higher percentage of people in the 65+ age group reported that they strongly agree that their neighbourhood is a good place to live.
- Older respondents were more likely to talk more regularly to neighbours.
- A higher percentage of those in the 65+ age group reported that they disagree or strongly disagree that they generally trust people in their local area.

Different ethnic groups

There are also differences between respondents who defined themselves as white and those defining themselves as from black or minority ethnic backgrounds (BAME). Some of these are about perceptions of design features. White respondents had more positive perceptions of local walkability, access to nature, local maintenance or amount of local traffic. Other important differences refer to broader social issues that affected quality of life locally. BAME respondents had more negative perceptions of job prospects locally.

- A higher percentage of white respondents rated their access to nature (trees, parks, gardens) as good.
- A higher percentage of BAME respondents rated the maintenance of parks, streets and public spaces as poor.
- A lower percentage of BAME respondents rated the appearance of homes and buildings as good.
- A higher percentage of white respondents rated access to a variety of shops and places to eat and drink in their local area as being poor.
- A lower percentage of BAME respondents rated the amount of local traffic in the local area as being good.
- A lower percentage of white respondents rated job prospects in the local area as poor.
- A lower percentage of BAME respondents rated commuting to work or school in the local area as being good.
- A higher percentage of white respondents rated air quality in their local area as being good.
- A higher percentage of white respondents rated walking about as good than BAME respondents.
- BAME respondents were less positive about trusting people in their local area compared to people describing themselves as white.

Length of time living in the area

People who lived in an area for over 11 years were more positive about neighbourliness, local influence, wellbeing, and belonging:

- a higher percentage of respondents who lived in the area for 11+ years agreed that they can personally influence decisions affecting their local area
- respondents who lived in the local area for longer tended to rate their relationships with people in the local area as being “good” or “acceptable”
- a lower percentage of respondents who lived in the area for less than one year reported that they talked to neighbours regularly. A higher percentage of respondents who lived in the area for 20+ were reported that they talked to neighbours regularly
- respondents who lived in the local area for longer were more likely to agree that the community can influence decisions affecting the local area
- a higher percentage of respondents who have lived in the area between 11 and 20 years have a score of '10' on life satisfaction, on a 1-10 scale.

Perceptions of quality of life in local neighbourhoods during lockdown

This section brings together findings from the 53 in-depth interviews carried out in the second phase of the research, which took place between 5th May and 5th June 2020.

The lockdown had a significant impact on people, their homes and local neighbourhoods. Restrictions on daily life resulted in many people spending most of their time in their homes, putting a significant burden on the home and relationships in the household.³² At the same time, local organisations and emerging informal mutual aid groups have actively supported vulnerable people and communities.³³

The data collected is particularly rich not only in the narratives it reveals but also visually. Participants provided around 200 photographs and 35 maps of local areas. The photographs captured a mix of interior and outdoor spaces, showing how the use of space in homes and in the local area changed during lockdown and illustrating which spaces became significant in everyday life. The cognitive maps gave us additional insight into changes in routines and emerging uses of local areas.

Together, the narrative and visual components of the research brought attention to five main themes:

- the need for adaptable spaces in the home
- the role of home and routines in the local area
- changes in relationships with family and local communities
- appliances that would have improved the experience of lockdown
- what makes a good place to live in light of the lessons learned during lockdown.

32 See, for instance, Gurney, C. 2020. "Out of harm's way? Critical remarks on harm and the meaning of home during the 2020 Covid-19 social distancing measures." Working paper, UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence. Retrieved from <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/200408-out-of-harms-way-craig-gurney-final.pdf> (accessed 2 July, 2020).

33 See, for instance, the stories documented here, by local activists: <https://seriouslydifferent.org/igp-stories/community-organisations-will-lead-the-post-covid-recovery>.

4.1 Old home, new home, same home

Adaptability during lockdown

Participants with children and those who worked from home during the lockdown had, in most cases, to adapt their homes to the new circumstances during lockdown.

Adaptable spaces inside the home



Some moved furniture around while others used rooms in the home differently. Many had to do both so they could accommodate to the changing experiences of the lockdown: the very intense first few weeks that brought many changes and the later weeks when many were a bit more at ease, as new routines became part of the everyday household life.

Moving furniture around³⁴

“Yeah I’ve had to move my living room and get a desk in... couch and bed was making me lazy.”

“We’ve added a table in the parents’ bedroom where my son has been doing his schoolwork...My wife setup her home office in the basement/guest room... My daughter has been using an area in the living room, next to the kitchen, so there was someone on every level of the house.”

“We’ve rearranged furniture...our living room is kind of my home office...I used to give private tuition in a reception room, which I’ve turned into a chill out zone...My wife and I both work from home, and we’ve been managing each other’s space.”

“No not really - as not working don’t need an office space, so haven’t had to change the house at all or use it differently. My house is cleaner :)”



Using and sharing spaces inside the home

³⁴ The quotes used in Section 4 were edited for clarity.

Perceptions of how easy or difficult it was to share spaces in the home depended on a variety of factors, including the number of people sharing a space, the presence of young children, the number of rooms, and more personal factors such as the experience of working independently and enjoying activities separately from the rest of the family. Some participants and their families experienced more challenges than others, especially when the space they shared was limited and parents and children were around the house all the time. Some of those with children found it more difficult to work from home.

Participants who did not live with small children often reported an easier experience overall during lockdown. Likewise, participants living in households where everyone had independent activities in the house thought that their experience could have been worse. In a few cases, participants noted that their children had a more difficult time than the adults being around the family all the time. As we explore below in detail, bedrooms and kitchens bore most of the pressure of lockdown as they supported not only the new 'working from home' environment but also, in several cases, these were the spaces where emotions erupted and were played back and forth.

Using bedrooms differently

"I was working in my bedroom at parents place...Bedroom became office, became everything."

"Yes, our top bedroom (loft) had a desk and it's now being used as a home office for my wife, so she can have a quiet space away from the children. In our lounge area, we've added a table for the kids to do schoolwork."

"It has not been the easiest, my big sister is using my dad's desk, she has to move her things off when he comes home so he can do his invoices. My big sister would come to visit us and did not live with us before the lock-down...She has a boyfriend, she wasn't at home very often, decided to isolate with us, it feels very different...It helps she can go to work, we get a break and she gets a break from us too."

"We have all found it difficult because it is frustrating, it is limiting the extent of our world is within half a mile of the house. We get deliveries done, because of the risk and the vulnerabilities of wife and mother in law."

"Really a test to the relationship, being with someone 24/7 we have been married 37 years...We cope quiet well, we have unpacked into our house, he sits upstairs we have breakfast together all day and I sit downstairs doing my work we get together after I finish work...How small our world has become, I have seen my mum and my sister but that is it. Having only your husband to talk to means you rely on each other a lot. It's the physical connection that is important."



The multiple lives of bedrooms

Using the kitchen space differently

"I find it difficult when mum's working in the kitchen, me and mum being in each other's way."

"Mum normally works from home anyway, she's struggling more because everyone's here. Mum works in spare room. Dad is in kitchen which is pain as we have to be quiet as he's on phone a lot. Brother is always outside, climbing things in garden, loving not being at school (he's 13)."

"On one hand it's relatively easy because we've got the space here but it's not been great for my wife because she's constantly getting interrupted. The kids aren't quite old enough to understand that she needs to work and isn't available for to play in the day! She switches up the space, tries out new places to work which has been hard. Loft would be best but it's still too dusty and not comfy chair in there. Mostly using the kitchen table."

"Using the kitchen most of the time. Kitchen was normally my evening time but now spend most of my time there."



Kitchen during lockdown

Participants reflected on the social and emotional dimensions of changes in the home. Some of these reflected the pressure of working from home, others spoke about the need to adjust to being together with others in the same space day after day:

“Definitely difficult. Pre-COVID-19 work got done while they’re at school but now it’s all shared space. Kids are in living room making noise and I’m working in dining room (they’re attached spaces) but I have meetings sometimes so I have to boot them out of living room then, challenge managing that.”

“It’s been stressful for everyone... living on top of one another is difficult...It’s more pressure to get the children’s attention. My wife and I try to get one hour of alone time every day. We put the children to bed and then I go out for a walk or do something on my own.”

“I would have another little separate building at the end of the garden. Would be a really handy makeshift office for my wife. Post lockdown would be a guesthouse / playroom. A separate place for people to escape to.”

“I think he [the boyfriend] struggled more when I was in the same room as him. I think he found it hard because I was different when I was working; he experienced me in work mode. Since we did the move it’s created healthy boundaries between us during the day. I think it makes us appreciate the evenings and weekends more. I receive weekly counselling and that’s been quite tough to negotiate. My boyfriend wanted to give me the space so he sat in the car for the first few weeks as the poor guy has broken his toe! Usually, he’d go for a run but now I’m allowing him to wear headphones and listen to loud music / play computer games whilst I’m in therapy!”



New home, old home: sharing spaces transformed the home during lockdown

Quality homes under duress

Exploring ways to for make homes more adaptable also brought attention to the limits or faults in home design, the lack of space or resources to make needed changes to the home environments to respond to the new needs of the household.

Some participants mentioned that the layout of their home had an impact on their quality of life during lockdown:

“Decent space indoors, that’s what we’ve struggled with the most. This allows more privacy, space to spread and get your tasks done etc.”

“If I’d known COVID-19 was going to happen I wouldn’t have moved into this flat, this experience has made me want to prioritise the space in flat and having an outside space.”

In response to a question about what would make their home more adaptable to lockdown needs, many said that their homes were adaptable as they were. Some however noted that a bigger garden, larger storage room, or additional office space or, overall, a larger space would help them with the emerging needs of their household



Gardens were spaces with multiple functions during lockdown

When asked about what one change would make their home a better place to live during lockdown, the majority echoed that a that a larger home would have improved their experience. Bigger gardens and improved interior spaces were mentioned. A few other participants said they could have used bigger windows and others would have benefitted from home leisure spaces:

“We would make it more adaptable, we were thinking of knocking a wall down so the kids’ bedroom would be connecting to our bedroom.”

“Eventually, I would turn the rooms into having a front room, and a living room- dining room and open plan kitchen at the back. More privacy for me and my mum. But cannot decorate yet as the dust will impact my mum.”



Some people had limited access to sunlight and fresh air

Most people interviewed explained that they have access to a private or shared garden. The majority of had access to other outdoor spaces as well. These extensions of the home space were appreciated as a source of sunlight, fresh air, for providing additional space for activities especially for children, as well as for its positive impact on wellbeing. With a few exceptions, participants said they got enough sunlight and fresh air (87% of those interviewed).

“One of our neighbours opened his garden to all tenants (we’re four households). We have three local parks...My Mum has a big garden and we used to go every weekend (...) I miss that...having your own outside space is nice...I wish we had that.”

“Yes, there’s a communal back garden for the block. Oh yeah there’s a park nearby. There’s not a lack of that round here.”

“We do have a garden but it’s not designed to play in. I live on a hill so the garden is a really funny shape. There are loads of parks around here. Across the road is one big park. Lots of outdoor space in this part of the world.”



Some people had limited access to sunlight and fresh air

“Yes, we have a garden but also, we live in a small fishing village, have plenty of access to the outdoors, lovely beaches, coastline and the countryside. We get out every day - the weather has really helped.”

"We have a river close by and the little square that we're in has grassy space outside the front of the houses. You'll be able to see when I draw the map but we live down an alley that has no car access. Think of it as a countryside cul de sac. Kids play out in front and back and there is a mini swing in the front garden. Shared community garden on the river towards the back. And there is a chicken area (neighbour has chickens) we call it chicken land. As you can imagine, kids love it. My daughter uses the neighbours' gardens and the trampoline like I said before. She has rabbit too. Kids want to constantly go in there which has been hard to tell them they can't at the moment!"

A few participants did not have access either to private or communal gardens and had to rely exclusively on parks and other outdoor areas during lockdown. They spoke about the additional burden this created for them and others in their situation:

"No outside space which is something that has been a challenge. Green square just across the road from us - go and sit in sun. Lack of parks in walking distance to central Leeds. One nice park in walking distance in city centre but other than that have to drive. Green space could be improved certainly."

"Communal garden but can't use it because people throw things down into garden so never use it. Water, paint gets thrown down. Parks nearby but have been closed recently. Every day the kids run around the estates on their bikes."

"Our garden is overlooked by lots of the neighbours so it's not the best space. I say garden but really, it's a concrete drive that I have put some fake grass over! More of a yard. Despite the above we've used the garden more than we ever would have before. We're really lucky with local outdoor space. We're close to the quayside, two parks and you can even walk to the coast from here. I miss going to the beach. We usually drive there or take the metro so that's been tough to not do over the last five to six weeks."

4.2 Routines: old and new

Household routines

Cooking and cleaning were the most frequently mentioned new routines. Other participants explained that they coped with lockdown by dedicating more time to their hobbies.

Cleaning and cooking

"I clean, I wash everything and I take the post, he does not get the post...I have become an OCD about that, I want to sit and relax in my house, I feel like the outside world is tainted...I feel like I have a bubble around my house, sanctuary around my house...My husband uses the upstairs bit and I work from downstairs."

"Cooking was my 'me' time. However, now I have less time to enjoy cooking as the kids want to get involved with it."

"We have been cleaning windows, washing walls and a lot more gardening. Less driving I go to the petrol station each week, give my car a run and stick it from the car wash."

"I really like that we have to make all the shopping last. Cooking has become much more creative. Much more satisfaction."

"Keeping yourself focused and not getting fed up and listless and doing nothing. Sometimes have days like that and then one morning few days ago sun was shining, cleared the guttering of pine needles with ladder - very lucky to be able to do that at my age. Finished that. Washed windows. Doing those jobs changed my mood completely, felt positive... 'Widow walker.' Walked at least an hour and half with elderly widowed lady in the woods - enjoyed this."



Kitchen during lockdown

Spending more time on hobbies

“More gardening! I did a webinar (like a seminar but online) on drawing birds from a guy in San Francisco. People online from all round the world – four and a half thousand. You don’t see all 4,000 screens of course but it’s live! That was great.”

“I have been coping by doing things...I love art, music, I listen to podcasts, I read books, I have been listening to Buddhists about letting things go and doing yoga too... Being grateful, no one I know has died...I try not to listen to news, so depression.”

“Life has changed physically, where you can go and what you can do and your normal activity has to be re-aligned...Plan out and finding more time-filling things that are constructive to do...I always go out for a walk, make an account to take the social distancing.”



Spending time at home during lockdown

Other emerging routines centred around spending time with friends and the extended family, especially online. The first weeks of lockdown were experienced as a complete break with “the normal” but, as time went by, many people accommodated to new rhythms. New routines helped bring order and predictability to life in the home and in the neighbourhood, and to calm the disruption of lockdown. Yet, for our participants, not all routines were long-lasting, life kept changing during lockdown as new challenges and needs emerged:

“Lots of phone calls at beginning from friends and family but gradually depleted, I think maybe people getting a bit depressed probably, at start was fun maybe for people but don't think people think that anymore. I think families are suffering the most I imagine.”

“Expected to work from home and kids are home so you lose routine. Lose all the routines, bedtime, eating etc...Was a shock for a few weeks, but I let it go and we found our feet and then adapted after a few weeks. Got used to the house always being messy.”

A few people interviewed reflected on the types of design that would better support the new routines and needs for socialisation brought about by lockdown:

“If a lot more blocks of flats had gardens - to allow socialising in a distance...a physical space for melding public and private space...I'd be thankful to be outside and stationary.”



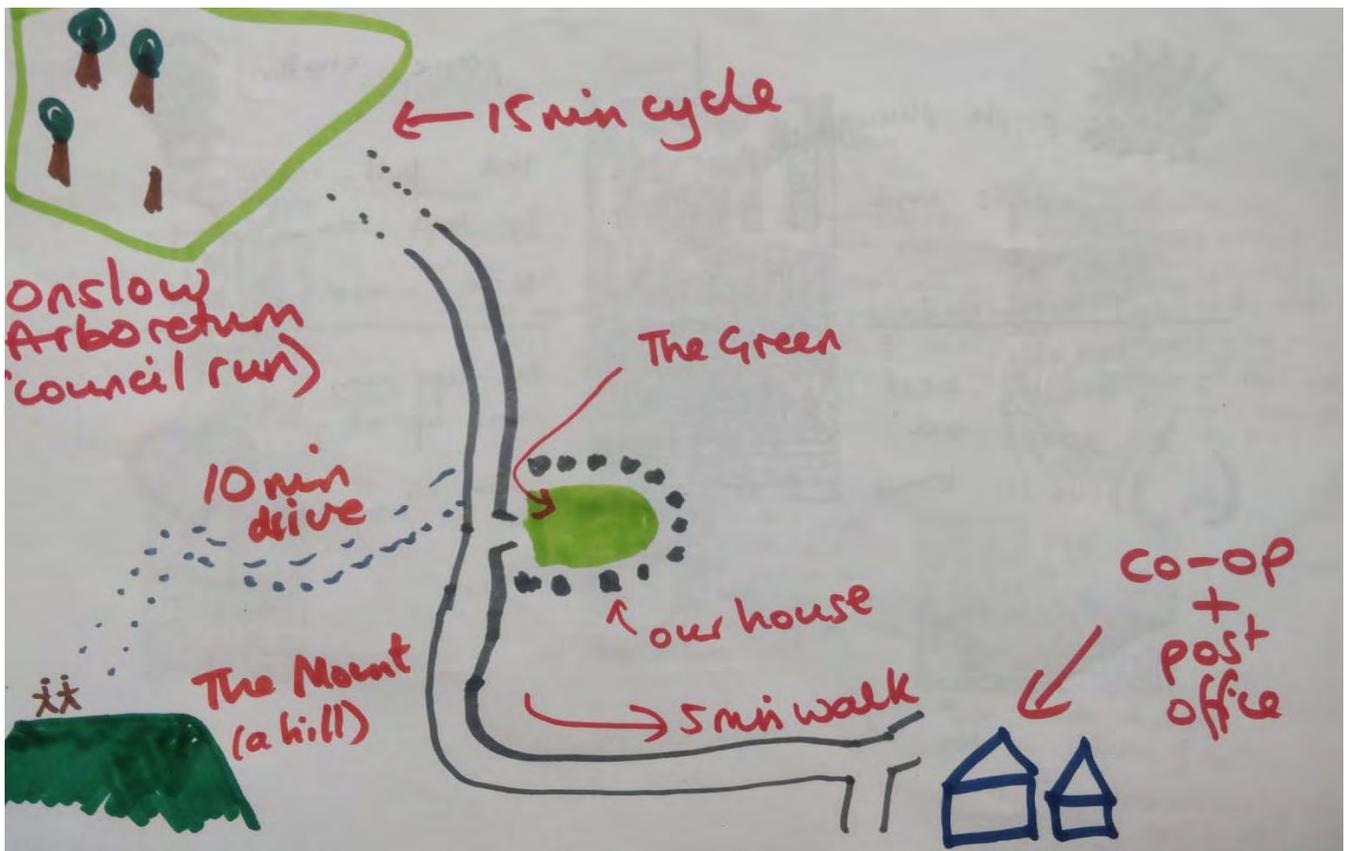
Do we need to rethink the design of private gardens in light of the COVID-19 experiences?

A different set of household routines emerged quickly when someone in the house became sick with COVID-19.

“It has been really hard to share space during lockdown due to being sick. Having to make sure I don’t get too close to my mum. In particular, negotiating shared spaces like the kitchen and bathroom - having to make sure these are really clean (lots of disinfecting). Using separate plates and utensils - every time open the fridge door having to clean it. Being more clinical about how I move around the house. As an Asian family communal eating is part of the culture, haven’t been able to do that due to being so ill. Also having to put all my clothes into a black bag and wash separately from mum, it’s not been a great experience. I feel lucky that it is a big house and that I have a double room to myself. My mum has had the rest of the space and not been restricted. Mum has been really anxious, as she was worried both about keeping herself separate and safe, whilst also worried about me. Feeling unable to help, so has been leaving cups of tea and water outside the door. At the worse of it - visibly I looked really ill which worried my mum. Using WhatsApp/ phone to message as at times it was too painful to speak...A secondary impact, was my mom became a little bit ill, as she wasn’t eating properly and looking after herself.”

In the local area

Daily exercising and walking about in the local area were some of the most popular routines during the lockdown. Interviews showed that daily walking had a special impact on how participants related to their local area and their understanding of how they fare in relation to others. Walking and cycling were not only appreciated for their impact of physical health but also for supporting wellbeing and overall feelings of belonging during a time when many complained of feeling disconnected from the world around them.

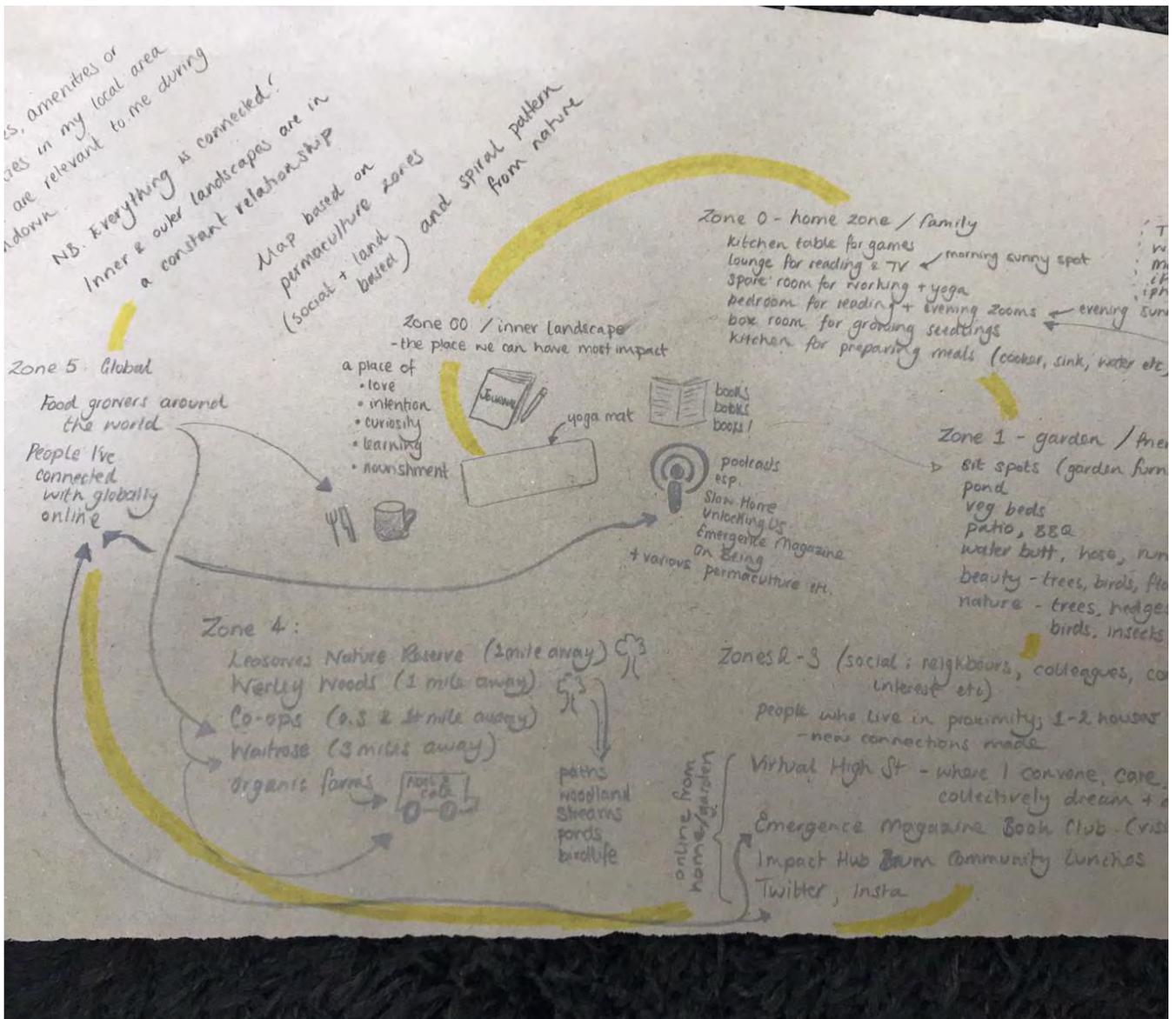


Cognitive maps drawn by participants illustrate their new routines in the local area

"I'm aiming to go out once a day. Sometimes that doesn't happen I'm also quite lucky that I can rent out a bike from the rent a bike scheme."

"Me and my wife started to go on daily walks, which is something we didn't do so much before."

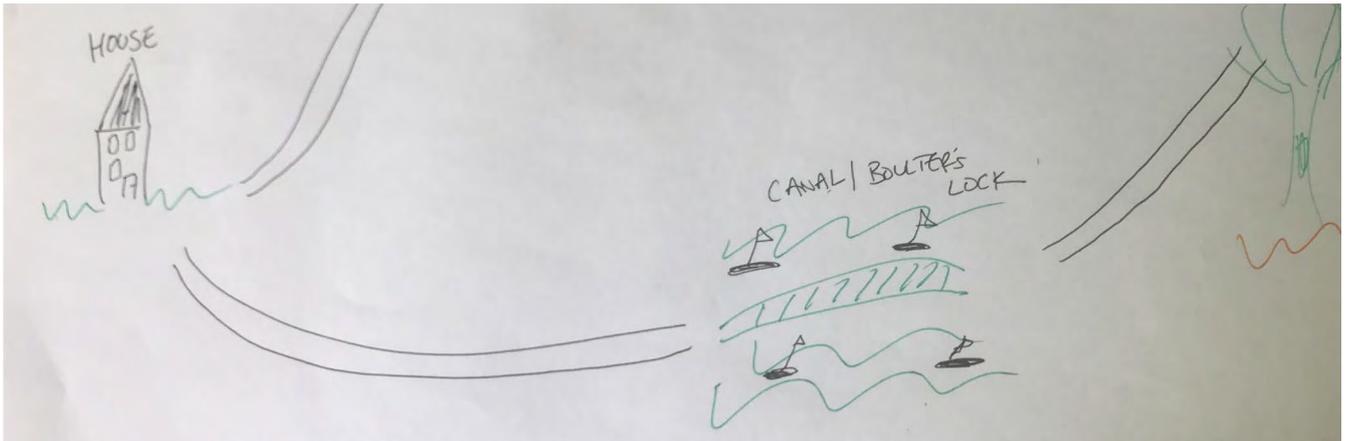
"Daily walk - we have our 4 or 5 preferred routes that are loops around the city centre. On occasion gone to a park and sat and enjoyed for a bit. Change in guidelines made that feel ok - "Stay Alert". Nothing's changed but those guidelines change your perspective and behaviour which feels strange."



Cognitive maps also illustrate the in-depth understanding some participants acquired due to their daily walks

For some participants, walking about also entailed a more thorough exploration of the local area. They explained that these new routines played an important role in making them feel more connected to and learning more about the areas where they live:

“That its beautiful here, really appreciate where we live. we’ve got to see it properly, really enjoyed getting out and exploring it every day, finding new spots and places. I’ve been here 25 years and still finding new places to explore. It’s a really good place, you have the same faces that you get to know, but then you also get the tourists in the summer which makes it interesting.”



Cognitive maps illustrate the new ecosystem of life during lockdown. While smaller than before, the local world came to be known in much more detail

An increase in local walking about has made some people think that walking could become a routine in normal times:

“Have everybody walking to schools when the schools go back instead of shuttling in cars. It’s been so much better not having school traffic.”

“It would be nice if there were ways that this could lead to cars and traffic being off road more. Increase in traffic has been shocking. Maybe we’ve contributed that though by driving further afield for walks!”

“Get rid of cars, it feels much busier now than when the lockdown first happened...Nothing has changed, I think people just decided the lockdown is not for them”

“I’d probably give it more wider pavements. Lot’s more people biking – more bike paths and pavements. Lots of queues taking up the space on the pavement. Wider pavements yeah.”

“Walking through city centre is lovely in some ways as there aren’t crowds, virtually no-one in early days. Appreciated where we were a bit more than we had previously. Our perception shifted a bit - noticing buildings more than before. Normally would be avoiding crowds, head up, looking around more than before.”

“I think my local area has less traffic, I’m hearing the birds, clearer skies, fresh air, construction sites stopped functioning for a while...I see more people exercising, we’re in a meditative mood, it’s really positive...I like the rainbows in the windows...The whole local area: people realised they don’t have to live their lives the way they always did...Maybe we can readjust.”



Cognitive maps show how limited the local world became during lockdown

As the map above illustrates, old routines and the infrastructure that supported them were on people's minds. During interviews they referred to old routines, especially when asked about how they felt about being outside and about the places they would have liked to be able to go to but were closed. Most of the participants responded that they missed their local amenities.

"At the weekend we used to grab some lunch or a drink and a packet of crisps for the kids at the local pub after a walk... these are the things you miss and you can't do that."

"Nowhere in particular - parks are still open, although I've noticed some play areas were locked up... To be totally honest, I would appreciate social gatherings - concerts, pubs, etc... as this is lacking originality."

"I miss the pub for the social aspect. When you work so hard you want your rewards and it's a shame that's not there. So many people are flouting every single rule possible, that's disappointing. This whole thing has been a glorified holiday for most. I suppose I have a bit of jealousy because I'm working more than ever and don't get to go to the pub at the end of it!"

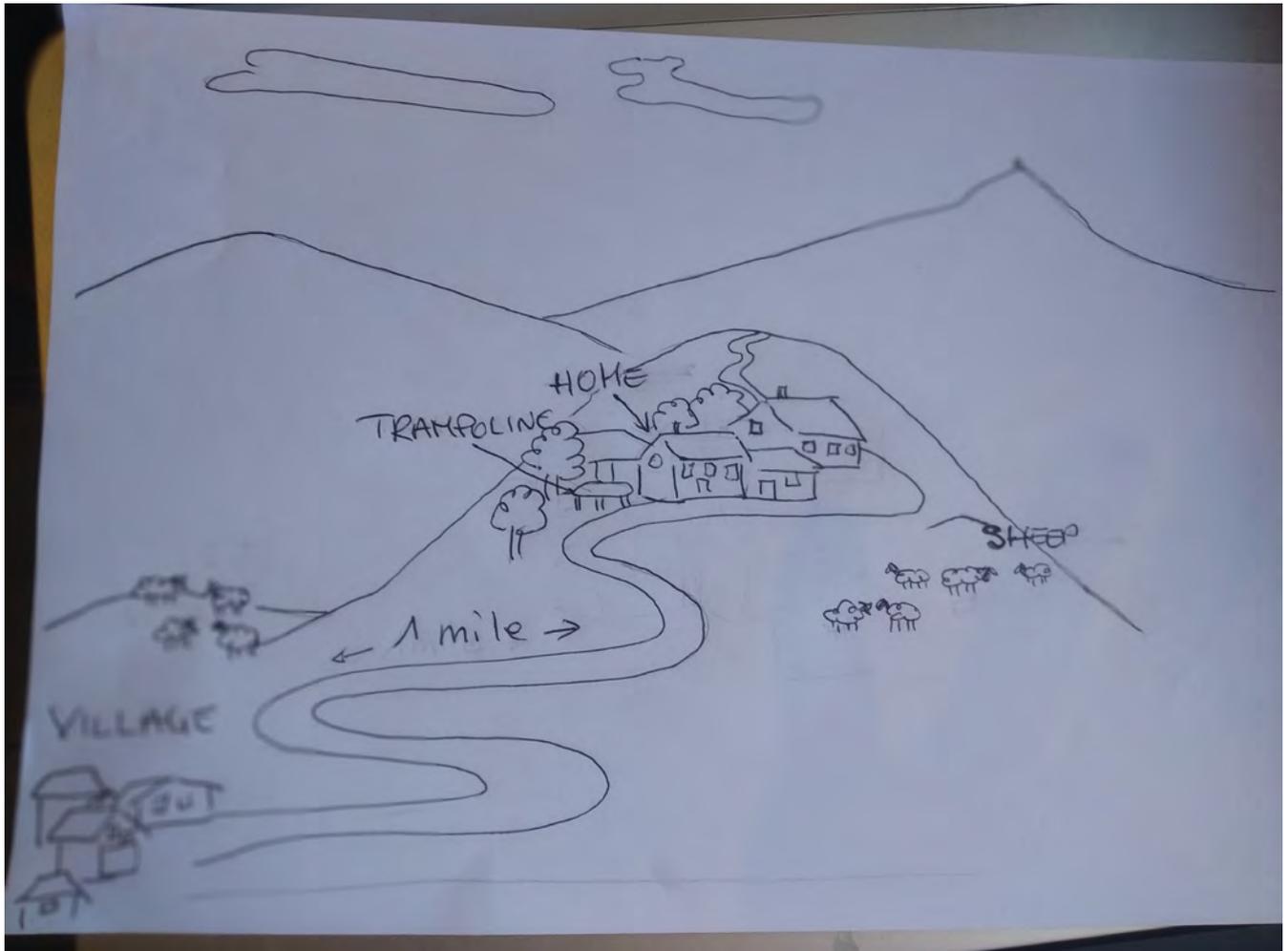
“Wish I could go to Bristol to see son who is in lockdown there. Swimming pool closed, would normally go there once a week with young son, that’s an important part of routine that breaks up life which has been removed.”

“The Pub!!! Shops and pub are places I wish I could go to but the place I’m missing the most is Bramall Lane to watch Sheffield United. Could do with a hairdressers actually! Alright with how it is to be honest. Local builder stuff is open - everything seems to be working as it is.”



A few maps that bring to life the places in the local area that adults and children could still enjoy

Old and new routines were supported by the available infrastructure including parks, pubs and shops. Reflecting findings from before lockdown, the in-depth interviews show that local facilities not only connect residents to one another but also allow them to feel part of the neighbourhood.



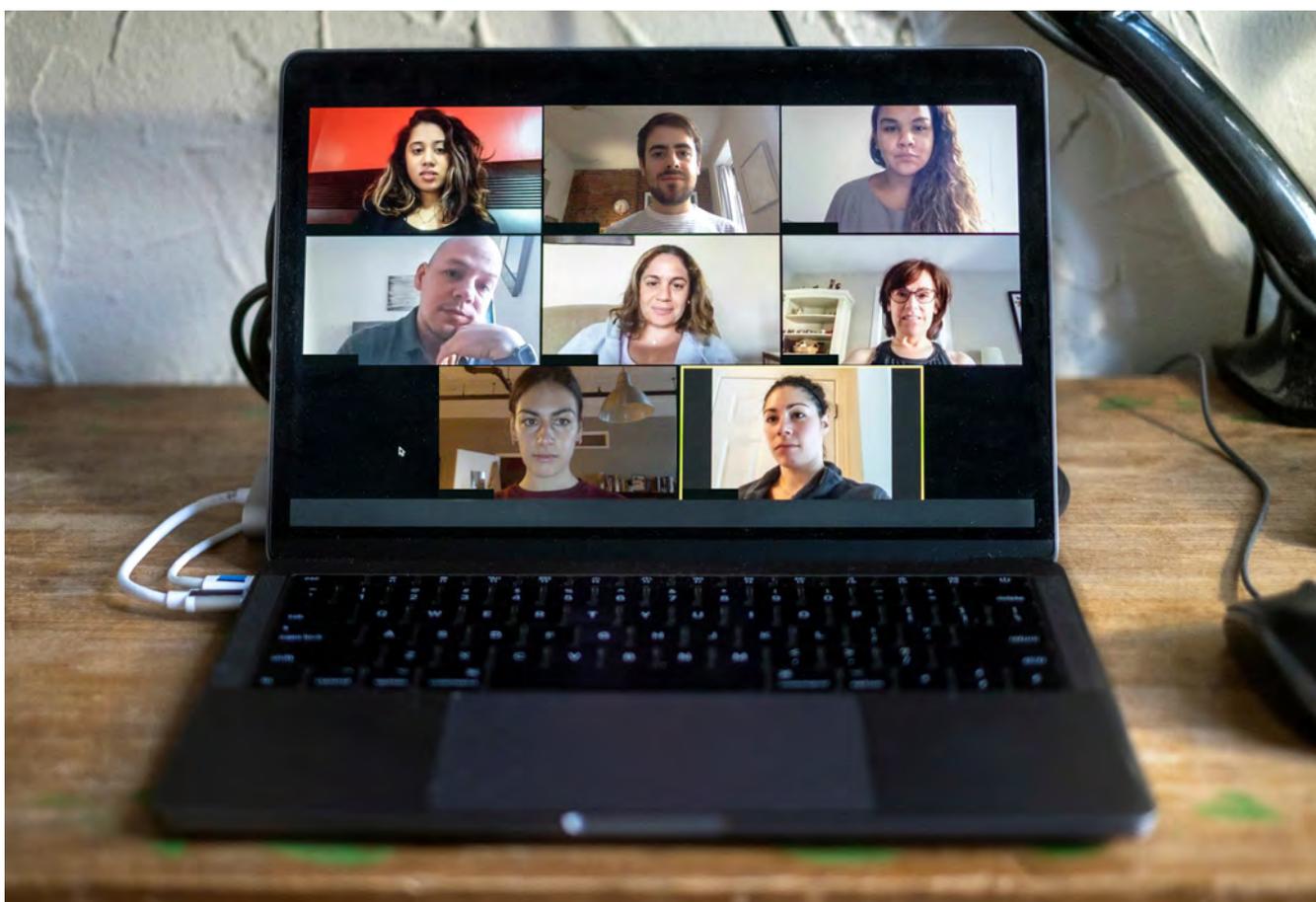
Disruptions in everyday life brought attention to the routines and infrastructure that many people took for granted in their everyday life

By focusing on daily routines, we understand better the different aspects of the physical and social infrastructure people rely on and value in their local areas. The suspension of routines such as stopping for coffee at a local café to chat with neighbours or taking kids to school highlighted their importance. For individuals, we see that daily routines stabilise the notion of home, helping people create a space of domesticity and intimacy. New daily routines helped increase feelings of comfort, stability and supported quality of life under the new circumstances. They also made possible a separation between different moments of the day and periods of the week.

4.3 Relationships and socialising

Family and friends

Some of the participants reported that they missed interacting with friends and family. The majority also noted that they used more online platforms to stay in touch with family and many highlighted an increase in online interactions. Some started to use these online platforms to reconnect with the extended family, a practice that was not common before lockdown.



The importance of online platforms for socialising, Source: Shutterstock³⁵

“WhatsApp. Skype, Zoom. Yes, more often from before. Making contact with people has been a nice thing about this. Family in New Zealand - reconnected with them via group Zoom’s has been good.”

“Going to watch football, I would go down the road I am a Spurs fan...I miss restaurants and nice food and the cinema, not the same thing watching Netflix or whatever big miss for me. I have had to do socializing at work, functions, Council meetings.”

³⁵ We substituted the Zoom photograph that a participant shared with us for a Shutterstock photograph because we did not have consent from all the participants in the family Zoom meeting to include their photograph in the report.

In response to a question about the impact of the lockdown on children and their relationships with family members and people outside their home, some people interviewed noted that their relationships with family members became tighter, while others reported some challenges, particularly with homeschooling. Parents spoke of how, while their children were able to stay in touch with their friends online, they still missed them and found the new forms of social interaction challenging.

“With me it’s frustrating. Sore point has been the schooling. Struggle to get them to do their work. 700,00 children haven’t received homework online I hear so I know it shouldn’t but that does make me feel better. I feel they’ve done ok. I get on their nerves. Lose my temper, turn into someone I don’t like. I have to make threats like ‘I’m taking your tablet!’ Love them though, of course.”

“I think it has increased closeness with parents” “They want to talk to parents more because they don’t have their friends” “My daughter is much more huggy with me and touchy, her friends are all huggy and she would just come over and say can I have a hug” My daughter has a WhatsApp group with her friends on my phone, we were thinking of transitioning her to get a phone...It has also helped strengthen relationships, one of my daughters friends moved to a different school, she was missing her and wanted to see her but now she speaks to her.”

“Youngest child may have difficulties reconnecting with people after this, I think. It will be challenging after lockdown to relearn those relationships had previously. May be difficult for kids to reconnect with friends again because they haven’t had that social ongoing relationships with friends. Now life is more orientated around family so will need to adapt to a different life after lockdown. When connecting with people outside of your household it takes time and takes respect to get to place where you understand each other.”

“Very isolating time...Felt bad for how I acted whilst at parents while I was depressed, didn’t want to talk much, help out, they were amazing, but I felt like a kid again, felt very infantilised.”



Exploring the neighbourhood by foot or bike was one of the main new routines during lockdown. Some did it alone, others with their household

“It was hard as they miss family especially their granddad and grandma as they live 10 minutes away, I had to explain to them that they couldn’t see them because of the virus. “Siblings are closer together, she looks after him more often. They are more hands on and excited about their baby brother sister arriving soon...My daughter misses her family and friends and asks when the virus is over.”

“I think we did get on well before too, so worked well. More challenging for the children, they are more irritable, we spend time with one child at a time as they need more attention. In the beginning of the lock-down it was me working from home, playing with the kids, cooking doing everything around the house and my husband was working all the time. I had to have a conversation with him because it felt like the ‘1920’s housewife era.’...Clear conversation my husband, you are a parent- can’t be present in meetings all day 9-5.”

Local community

The majority of people interviewed reported close contact with their neighbours during this period. A small number of participants mentioned they had limited contact with neighbours. This period of social exchange often happened through brief chats after clapping for the NHS on Thursdays.

“For some people, their social life is in the pubs, pubs are closed some people have pub friends, means they have no friends...people are missing the pub culture.”

“Community feeling, I feel like I know who lives on my street, I can have a conversation” “Connectivity to my street, my community and town.”

Most participants noted that new support groups emerged in their local areas. Some of these groups relied on informal network and remained ad hoc, offering help to older neighbours by shopping for them or simply making sure vulnerable neighbours knew there was help in the community if they needed it. Other support groups were formalised through various online platforms or local institutions (including churches and local authorities) and they relied on volunteers to run regular services such as weekly food drop-offs.

“Yeah, I drove over up the hill to distribute leaflets through the doors, telling people to give me a call if they needed anything...I’ve been helping someone with dementia delivering his prescriptions, etc...This kind of community groups is ideal, really.”

Other activities ensured a continuation of community life even under the difficult situations of lockdown and social distancing:

“I think people are supporting local businesses and that has been great. New independent restaurants that had only just opened have been well supported by locals. People buying take away food and drink etc. The local music venues are community places. Lots of drive to support the local places. Collective support of local community and supporting businesses that are still open. New restaurants having to turn people away due to selling out on – delivery and collection! Take out Sunday dinner has been really popular.”

4.4 Missing pieces

Appliances

About half of the participants said they have all the appliances they needed to adapt successfully to lockdown. They pointed to things they had around the home that improved their quality of life during this period. These appliances are not important in themselves but also because of the routines they grounded, both new and old. An overwhelming majority of participants reported they had enough Internet broadband and electronic devices.

“One of the things I was insistent was that I bought a bread maker...Everything in the kitchen stuff works.”



Baking during lockdown

"I don't think I need anything at the moment, I have bought an outdoor pizza oven... for my birthday. It is a good thing to do with my husband, make a pizza and have a glass of wine and play games. We used to play lots of games before, we got old and boring."

"We have everything we need, we might update it when we come out the scenario. Extra food storage in our garage, I have cleared up space. I thought it might become a big issue because of food shortage, we have dry foods we keep now we did not do before."

Other participants raised a range of appliances that could have helped them respond better to the emerging needs of life under lockdown.

"A good coffee machine would be good. Our local coffee shop stayed open they sell essential goods too."

"Bread maker. Things to be more sufficient, less shopping. But the problem is not enough space in house/kitchen for these things."

"Have laptop for everyone in house as of quite recently - this has been really good."



Many of the appliances that participants said would have improved their lockdown experience were either for the kitchen or the 'working from home' space

"A dishwasher would be great. Would appreciate now more than ever due to more washing up!"

"Yes, have a washing machine but don't have a dishwasher."

"Breadmaker- but they were sold out everywhere."

"I enjoy sewing I have the sewing machine but hard as I would have to look after my mum then come back to it and it is hard to do it as lose the place, don't do as much of that, I enjoy knitting too."

"I wake up 6am feed her 7am..... I have my mum on a vegan diet..... she falls asleep then I go to the park.....everything revolves around her, giving her drinks."

"Difficult sharing space, very challenging to start with. Banned devices at first because arguments about them. We had to work at being a team, talking to each other, no more "mine" attitude. Focus on teamwork. Kids made their own plans about how they'd play with each other and share everything. Everything is shared. Very challenging at first but after 2 weeks got used to it. If internet stops, we have other games we can play now."

4.5 Learning from the lockdown: what makes a good place to live

Many of the things suggested by the people interviewed in the first the phase research as making a place good to live in, such as community life, outdoor and green spaces and local amenities – were mentioned in the second phase of the research. Participants in the second part of the research talked extensively about outdoor and green spaces. The importance of outdoor spaces to quality of life was highlighted by the experience of lockdown

“Having outdoor space of your own. Can’t put a price on it. Big park very close. Sets your mind at ease knowing outdoor space is close by.”

“Again, access to green space. Just a patch of grass isn’t good enough. Somewhere near by that’s well looked after.”



The importance of outdoor spaces to quality of life was further highlighted by the experience of lockdown

Safety, manageable local traffic and maintenance featured less prominently in the in-depth interviews than in the first phase of the research before lockdown. After lockdown, the need for more work-life balance and economic security, together with access to outdoor spaces, were main issues participants prioritised in making a good place to live.

Less traffic, pollution and noise were among the most frequently mentioned responses to a question asking what had changed for the better in the local area during lockdown:

“It’s brilliant because there are no airplanes in the sky. We were standing outside the other night and we couldn’t hear the main road down in the valley. It’s the only link across the country up here so usually full of lorries. Nice to have a break.”

“I like the lack of traffic - Like the lack of air traffic...Peace and quiet, can hear wildlife better without traffic and aeroplanes...Really hope some good comes out of this - something better for planet”. Hopes that environmentally some positive change occurs.”

Work-life balance and rethinking relationships

In contrast to the first phase of the research, but not unexpected given that many local businesses and community hubs were closed, local vibrancy was rarely mentioned among the things that make a good place to live during lockdown. However, local amenities and vibrancy were frequently discussed when discussion how it felt to go outside in the local area during lockdown.

Interviews with participants in the second phase of the research demonstrate that lockdown required an innovate response to the shrinking social world. The majority of participants reported that they spent more time thinking about how to improve relationships with their families, neighbours and the environment. Many participants noted that lockdown made them reflect on the roles they play in the world around them. It made them question whether the existing infrastructure can support environmental change and reforms of systems that perpetuate inequality and racism.

“There are no communal areas for groups of flats – I’ve been looking into co-living, but it seems to be oriented to a specific demographics. People go to the theatre, have a hobby, etc... and find a place to congregate - it’s curious that it’s externalised...a village hall is a place to socialise, not a business selling community...The virus has been triggering the excuse to talk to each other and socialise.”

“Everything in the ecosystem that’s beyond human being the priority. People sharing and exchanging. If that could become the cultural norm. That’d be great.”

“If people are economically stable could help others that are struggling...Everyone can look after the street we will not need the government...People are connected I am the only mixed-race person on this street.”

“Nice being together as family more, having conversations you wouldn't have had before because too 'busy.' Slowing down, taking stock, spiritually rewarding time as being grateful for what we have. Changed things for a lot of people who have worked from home during this time and realised how good it can be working from home. Lots of people have told me how they don't want to go back to the office now. I hope the old conventions die now and people have better work/life balance and can work from home rather than an office if they want. What matters is the work gets done and if, so let people work from home. Quality of life is dictated so much by work, so hope that a shift occurs from this time where people can work in a way that makes them happier (less commuting, less time in office, more time with family etc).”

“Appreciating your family, valuing that people are healthy, valuing what you have rather than chasing after everything you don't have. I think I'll slow down after this. As long as we're healthy and happy we don't need to rush so much. Connecting more with family. I call my Mum very morning now. I learnt you need to connect with your family more and have fun...Getting to spend more time with your family.”

“The ability to be self-sustainable (space to grow food, self-isolate, outside areas etc.) is important [in making somewhere a good place to live]. This is a good period to take stock of what's important in life.”

“I still feel very disconnected from people that live around my parents (but that would apply to anywhere I lived to a certain extent). This area highlights the privilege of people that live here, middle class, well to do but with pockets of deprivation. Part and parcel of what's wrong with our society – I feel isolated being here.”

“Social disparity, the economic effects of it and even the mental health is something to focus on, at work we are thinking about Mental Health in September as this will be a major problem.”

Affordability and economic security

Some participants also raised economic security and its impact on quality of life. In those discussions, people talked about homelessness and the larger scale issues that affect wellbeing and life satisfaction. This included broader financial and political issues. These are beyond the design and planning of a particular neighbourhood, but play an important role in what makes a good place to live. This reflects the findings of the first phase of the research before lockdown.

“Homelessness problem now and before. Was always noticeable before. It breaks your heart. With so few other people around in centre you notice the homelessness more. Still get people coming up to you asking for money. Hard seeing people struggling with homelessness and no one else being there.”

“Really fortunate that financially we can get through this period. We were unwell but got better.”

“I’d address the inequality. I live in an area where the rich and the poor are segregated, where you see the nice houses and gardens and the deprivation of other areas...during lockdown things became more apparent...I’ve walked every street around my place...I would take out some of the divide...The Pakistani community doesn’t have access to the nice park, where you pay £40.00 a year for access, we went there on an open/free day, it’s really nicely kept.”

“More affordable housing, keep young people in the town.”

“Work it is draining, mentally and physically and being static... In July, I will be made redundant, the hardest year ever to find work...I was a freelancer for 12 years, I will leave with a bit of money to buy some time finding work and finding something that will keep me motivated...You have to be the safety net for my daughters that are in their 20’s, both in jobs...My husband is retired, I need to earn enough to support all of us.”

Belonging

When asked whether the experience of the lockdown changed their perception of their local area, the sense of belonging to the local community was raised up. Two types of answers were offered by respondents. Some participants felt that relationships in the local community became tighter during lockdown and they noted how they appreciated their local areas more, having had the chance to explore more. These people emphasised that they used to take the local area for granted, but now they felt more connected to it. Other participants said their perceptions did not change, but they mentioned that they gained more knowledge about local assets that were available to them during the lockdown including green spaces, access to a variety of shops, and enjoying nature.



Participants learned more about the local area during lockdown, which in some cases translated into a greater appreciation and feelings of belonging.

"It's made me appreciate it more... when I think of people living in boxes, I'm more grateful for what I have."

"There has been a big change about people that were pro-Tory they are not any more...Both of us lost hope, it was a Labour constituency in the area speaking to our neighbours before they were Tory and they changed their mind...Learnt a big a lesson."

"The sense of community is a lot stronger."

“Given me sense of appreciation of community. I think I’ve just taken it for granted and feel appreciative of it.”

“People looking out for each other more because they realise they have to. Making sure people are ok. Speaking to each other more. People here always did but more now.”

“Community feeling in the local area, we are all in this together. People are not ignoring each other, more of a feeling of a collective identity, you connect with people.”

“Made me fall in love with the city a bit more...I got a leaflet saying you have support - the leaflet was so nice it was early stages of the lock-down. It said that if you need anything, they are here to support me with food or anything. I did not need the support but it was good they did that. Once a year we have a street party and everyone puts money into it... Street party funds might be used to buy food for others in the local community...Couple of old people that were living deprivation, people know neighbours that need help now they can’t unsee what they have seen.”

Not all participants changed their perceptions about the local area, and some of them felt more disconnected than before. The in-depth interviews supported the findings from the first phase of the research on the impact of belonging on residents’ quality of life. In many cases, residents experience wellbeing through their local community. The local community can support or hinder an appreciation of the built environment in which people live.

“The lockdown brought to light how many people take the mick and are selfish...‘We’re going to carry on as before’ has been the attitude I’ve seen.”

“I would change my neighbours. They are not nice people. I’d love to be able to say ‘Hi, how are you’ to neighbours...It has to do with my job and the fact I’m not British...I don’t like being told by my neighbours what to do etc.”

Community facilities

The experience of the lockdown made participants reflect on the importance of putting more resources toward community facilities. This echoed again the findings of the first phase of the research before lockdown, where facilities for young and older people, as well as community centres, were issues of concern for many.

“Generally, I struggle with nothing to do locally. If I could change anything it would be a youth centre or something for young people otherwise, we just sit in field or at friends. Boring. Leisure centres expensive.”

“I would create more things for young people and teenagers to do. It has been really apparent how little there us for them to do, they can only go for a walk or be on a bike. Just putting in more activities/things for them to do outside. Also, I have lots of friends who are creative and they could put on some street performances, something fun.”

“Going forward probably more support for people with mental health needs, special needs...We could be better and be more supportive of those people, more support during COVID-19.” “Families with children/special needs.”



With community facilities closed, participants with children tried to take advantage of outdoor spaces as much as possible

Conclusion

Place-based quality of life

These findings show that quality of life has many dimensions. We found that life satisfaction, social support and perceptions of environment - including its connectivity, mix of uses, aesthetics, maintenance and safety - are critical aspects of residents' quality of life.

The findings reveal that in order to understand place-based quality of life we need to understand how the lived and built aspects of environment tie together. The built environment is experienced in everyday activities - commuting, walking about, socialising with neighbours at community centres, local café or farmers' market. Community life – our relationship with the people living in our neighbourhoods, our feelings about our local community – is connected to the built environment's design and infrastructure. Together, these findings suggest that local relationships, good maintenance, and an "open" planning approach that takes into account the various needs and voices of local people are essential to increasing residents' quality of life.

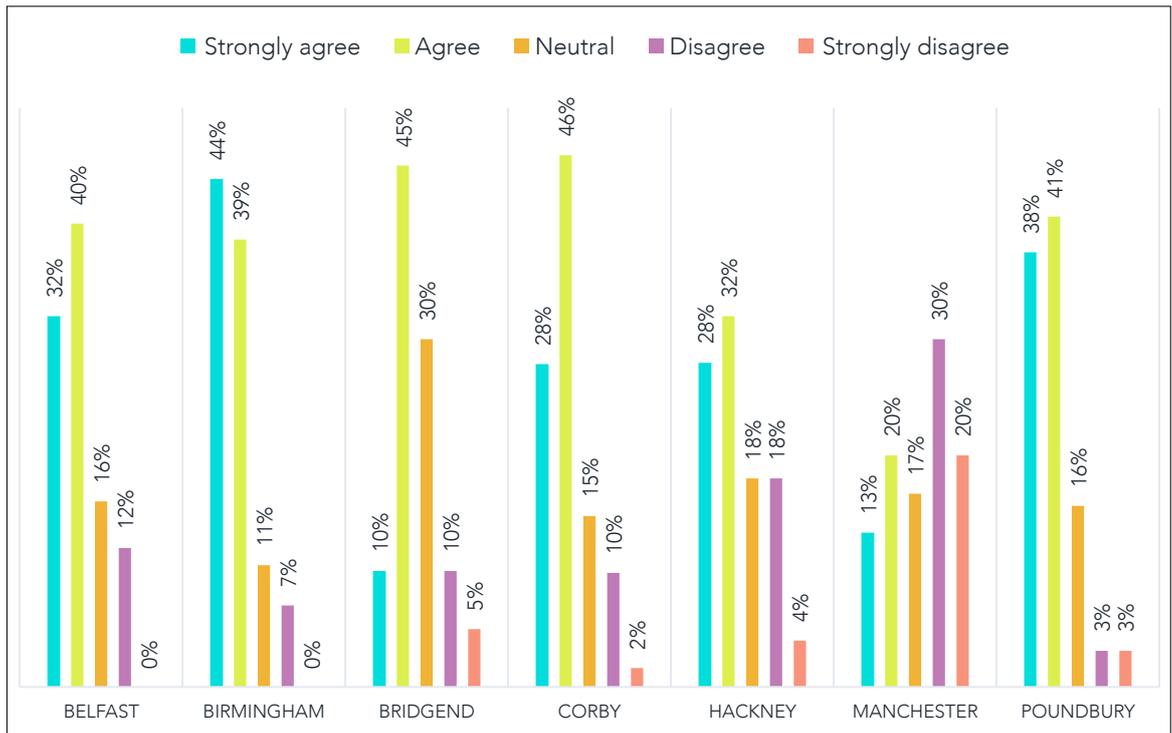
Our work highlights:

1. the need to combine small-scale and local design with large-scale, structural solutions to improve quality of life. For example, crime is associated with both physical and design aspects and also broader social issues such as lack of opportunity for young people
2. the need to understand how the social and physical aspects of the built environment complement or hinder each other. One example is how poor maintenance of streets both impacts quality of life through the lack of cleanliness and by undermining local pride and overall feelings about the local community.
3. the role of daily routines and the infrastructure that support them. For example, access to local amenities such as parks and cafés are essential to residents' day to day life and to the way they relate to others. The disruption of these routines and the closure of pubs and shops during lockdown has highlighted how these places are essential for community life and a sense of wellbeing.
4. the multiple scales on which the built environment affects quality of life. Our sense wellbeing is key, alongside wider factors including housing, the cost of living, transport, work-life balance and processes of urban change.
5. the role of adaptable spaces in supporting physical and mental health. The experience of the lockdown showed that bedrooms, kitchens and living rooms had to play multiple functions and accommodate multiple users at the same time. Flexible design of interior and exterior spaces in the home can increase quality of life.

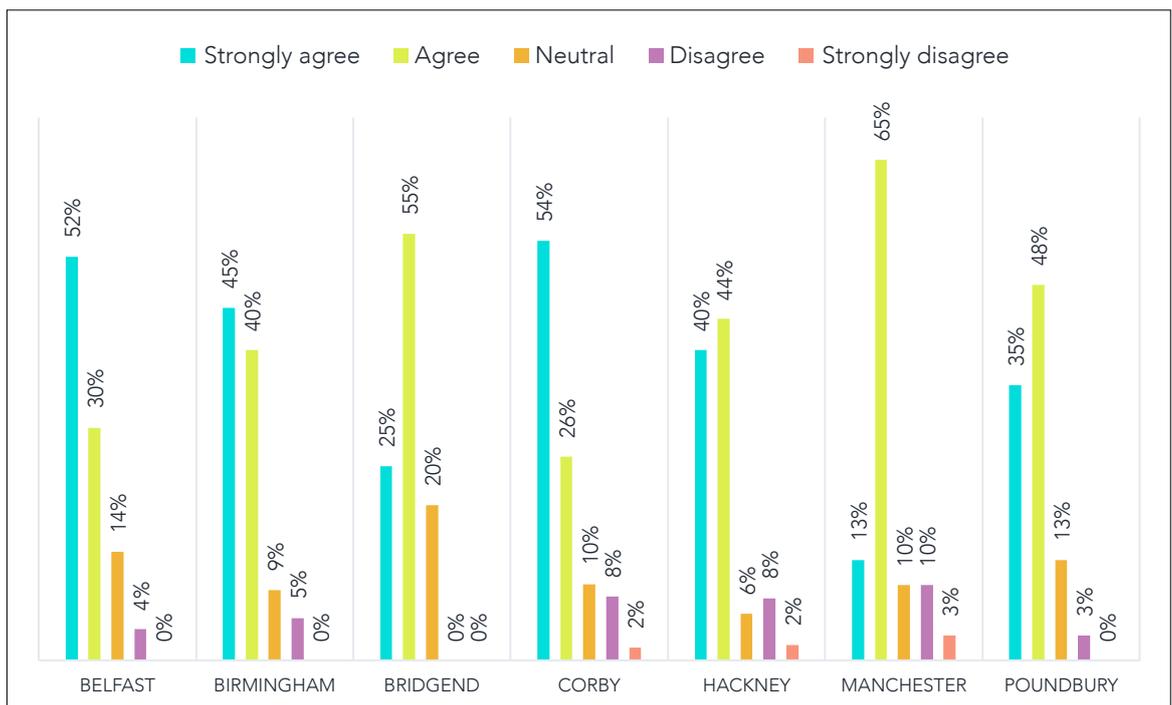
Local relationships, outdoor spaces, everyday routines and the infrastructure that support them, alongside affordability and environmental issues are fundamental in understanding quality of life in “normal” times and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Experiences during lockdown emphasised the particular importance of parks and other outdoor spaces, the adaptability of homes and the need to rethink wider factors that have an impact on quality of life.

Breakdown of survey data by location

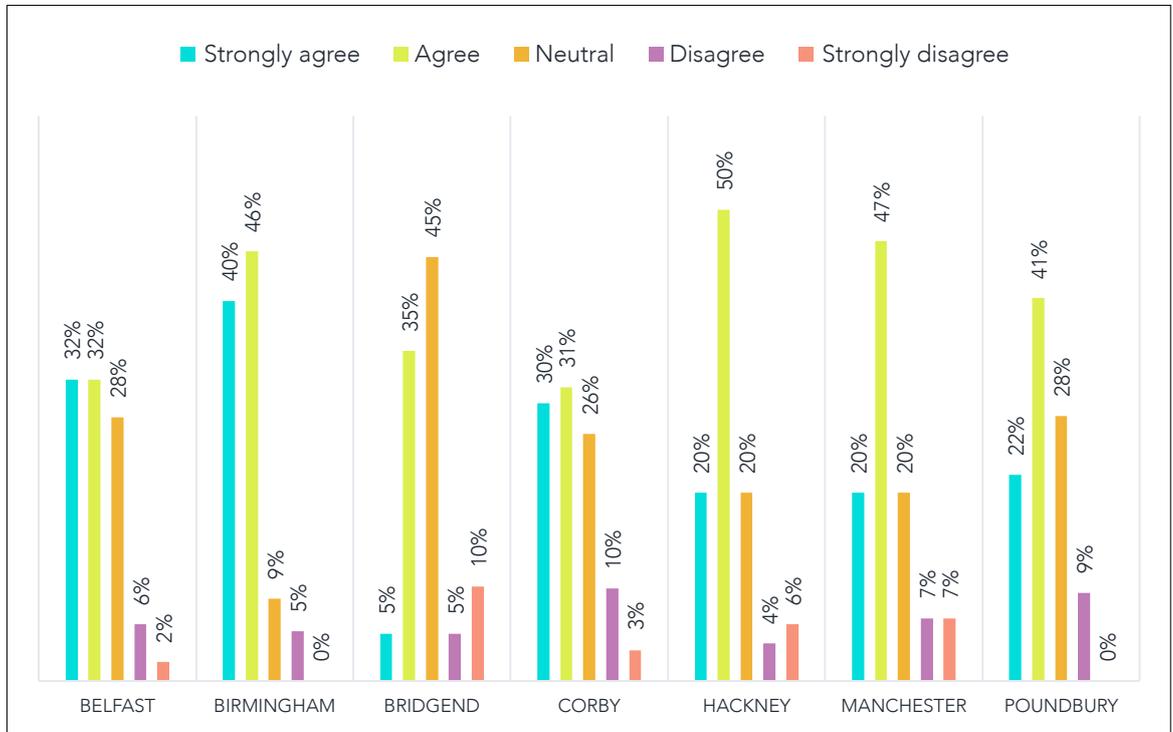
Talking to neighbours in the seven areas



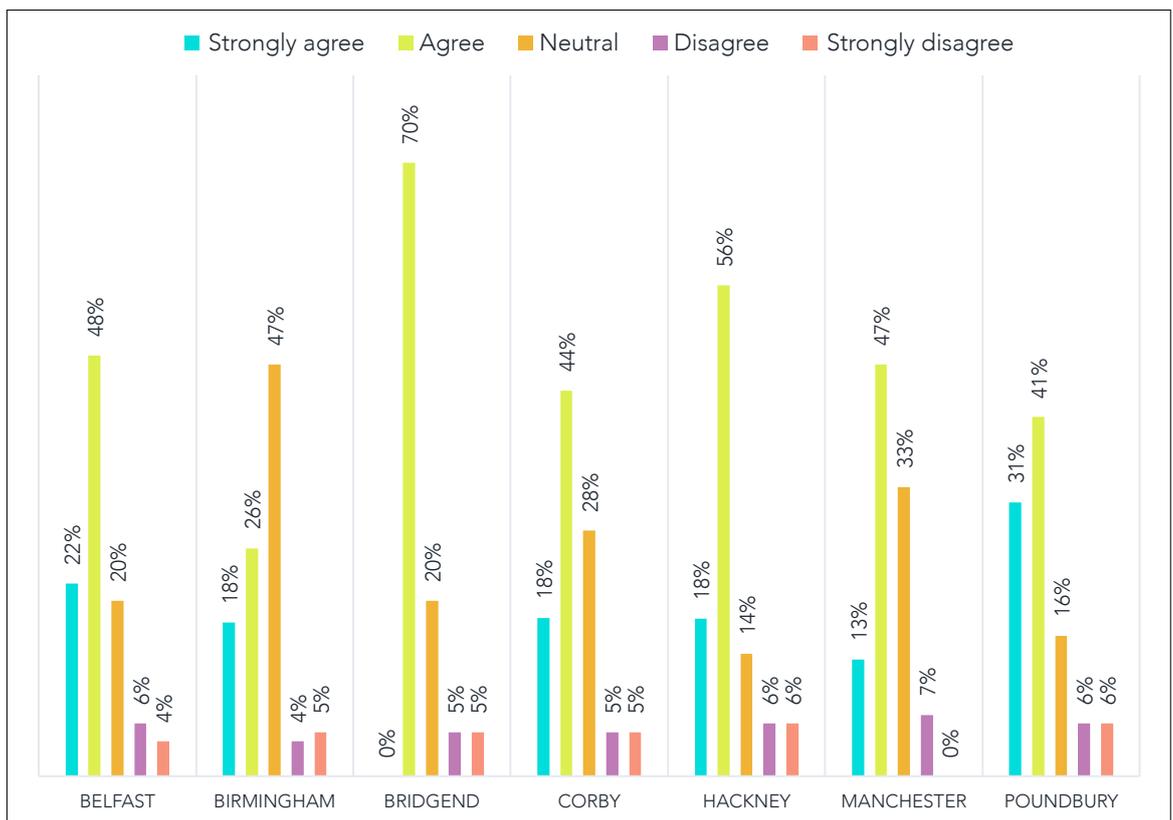
Feeling in control of life in the seven areas



Sense of belonging the seven areas



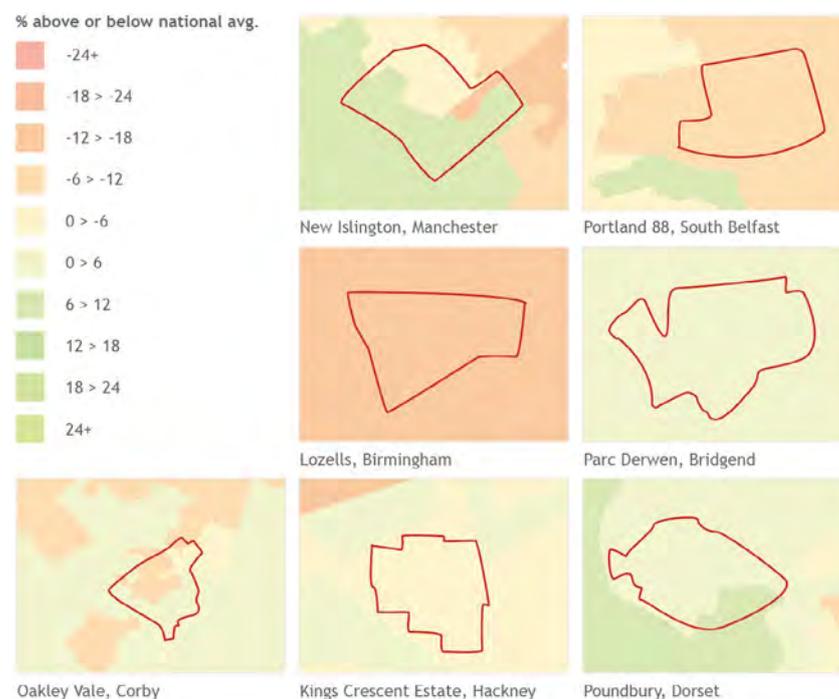
Trust in people in the local area



Comparisons with national data

Social Life's Community Dynamics data give us another way to understand differences between the seven locations included in the first phase of the research. These indicators use national data (for example from the Understanding Society Survey) and ONS output area classifications (OACs) to generate predictions about how respondents living in a particular local area feel about safety, their sense of belonging, satisfaction with life, among other things.

How safe do you feel walking alone after dark

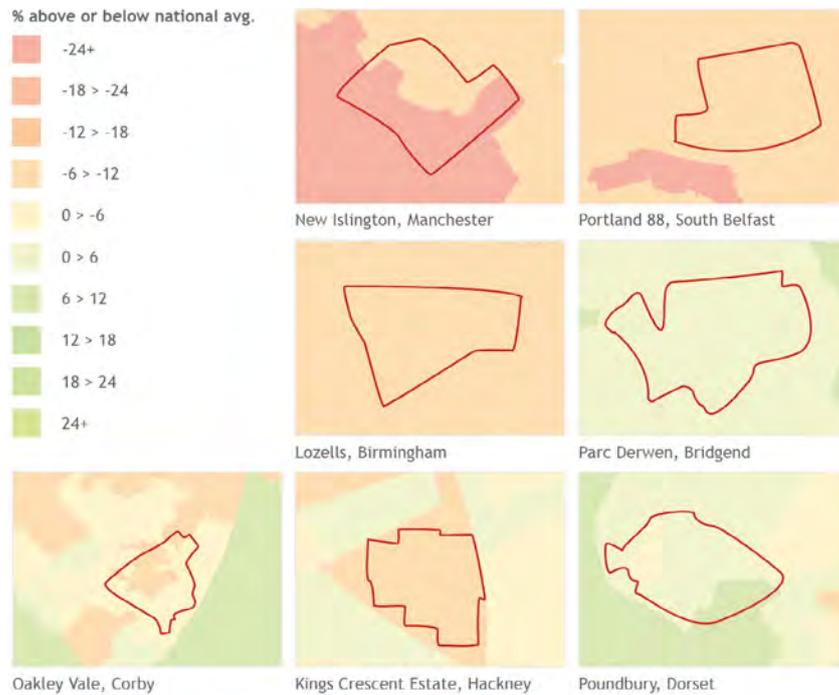


Predicted strength of feelings of safety when walking alone after dark (Social Life 2020)

When we look at the map above, we see that

- the community dynamics indicators predict that all the seven areas score between -18% to +12% in comparison to the national average on how safe people feel when walking alone in the dark
- Birmingham scores significantly worse out of all the areas
- Manchester has the most variation, with the south-western area closer to the city centre scoring much higher than the less developed north-eastern of the city
- in Belfast, the entire study area also scores relatively low, below the national average, but the area around the train station to the south west has a better predicted score in feelings of safety

Belong to neighbourhood



Predicted strength of sense of belonging to neighbourhood (Social Life 2020)

- Birmingham scores the worst, with the entire area falling between 18 to 24% below the national average and this predicted score is homogenous across the neighbourhood
- Poundbury in Dorset scores the best, followed by Parc Derwen, predicted scores being relatively close to the national average
- The sharpest contrast in predicted scores can be seen in Oakley Vale, yet the rural south-eastern edge scores much better

Satisfaction with life overall



Predicted strength of satisfaction with life overall (Social Life 2020)

- All the areas fall between -12% to +12% compared to the national average
- Of all the areas, Manchester scores the highest in terms of satisfaction with life
- Birmingham scores the worst
- the predicted scores for Oakley Vale, Hackney, Dorset and Bridgend position them closest to the national average.

Satisfaction with local area as a place to live



Predicted strength of satisfaction with local area as a place to live (Social Life 2020)

- The more urban areas in Manchester, South Belfast, Hackney and Birmingham have lower predicted scores compared to the national average in regard to satisfaction with the area as a place to live.
- Oakley Vale in Corby, as is the case with the other community dynamics indicators, has the widest variation of predicted scores regarding feelings of satisfaction with the local area
- Birmingham and Bridgend have the most homogenous scores across the local areas included in the first phase of the research

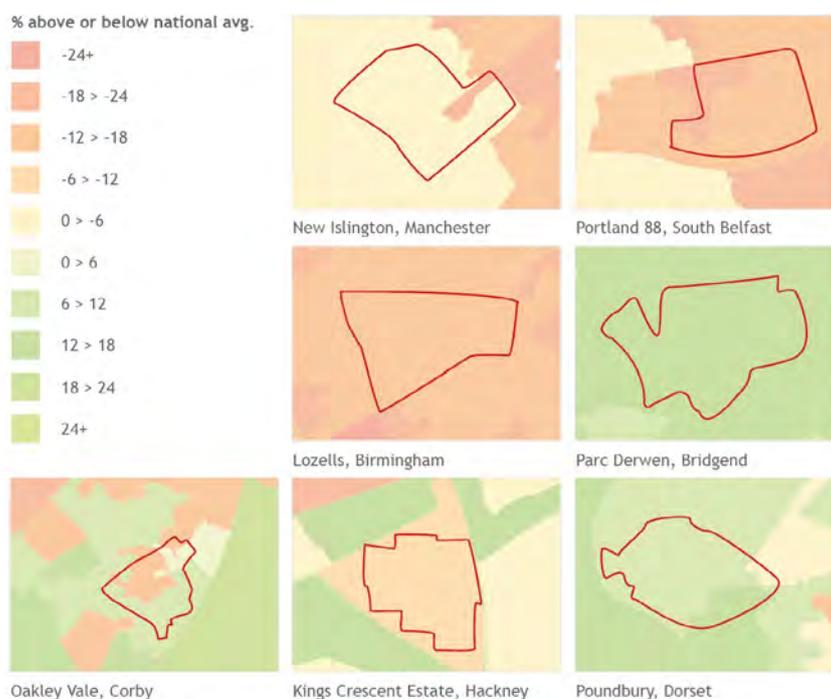
Agreement that you can influence decisions affecting your local area



Predicted strength of agreement that you can influence decisions affecting your local area (Social Life 2020)

- In Manchester, the more inner-city, south west portion of the study area the predicted scores are worse, and in Belfast it is the south-west area closer to the railway line and station that scores worse
- In Birmingham, the study area and neighbourhood is more homogenous, this is across most of the Community Dynamic indicators
- In Hackney, however, the study area, King's Crescent Estate scores marginally worse compared to the surrounding neighbourhood, the same applies to New Islington in Manchester
- In Oakley Vale, the suburban study area scores relatively close to the national average, however the more rural, eastern edge scores significantly better

Trust in people living in neighbourhood



Predicted strength of trust in people in the local area (Social Life 2020)

- All the areas fall between -24% to +18% in comparison to the national average, making trust in people living in the neighbourhood one of the indicators with the most variation in predicted scores
- Birmingham and Belfast score the worse relative to the national average
- Oakley Vale has the most variation in predicted scores with a substantial difference between the lowest and highest score within the study area
- On the whole, the more rural or suburban areas of Corby, Dorset, and Bridgend have much stronger predicted scores compared to the national average than the more urban areas of Manchester, Belfast, Hackney and Birmingham trust of neighbours

APPENDIX THREE

Participant profiles, 2nd phase of research

Region	Age	Current occupation	Type of home	Tenure
East	65-74	Beekeeper	Detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
East	35-44	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say
East	18-24		Detached	Rent – private landlord
East	55-64	Cashier	Detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
East	35-44	Self-employed	Semi-detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
London	55-64	Therapist, works for charity	Purpose built flat, low rise	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
London	45-54	CEO	Detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
London	35-44	Teaching Assistant	Purpose built flat, low rise	Rent - council
London	10-17	Student	Other	Live with my parents
London	45-54	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say	Prefer not to say
London	45-54	Part time freelance project management and part-time working in a school.	Other	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
London	35-44	Community	Semi-detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Midlands	35-44	Project Lead	Detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Midlands	35-44	Director	Semi-detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Midlands	45-54	Security	Purpose built flat, low rise	Rent – private landlord
Midlands	65-74	Retired	Semi-detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage

Midlands	30-34	Fire fighter and intervention provider	Semi-detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Midlands	30-34	PHD	Semi-detached	Rent – private landlord
Midlands	45-54	Senior development officer, community engage	Semi-detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Midlands	18-24	Arabic teacher and Graphic Designer	Converted flat	Rent – private landlord
Midlands	18-24	PE teacher in a school	Other (please specify)	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
N. Ireland	55-64	Carer	Terrace house (including end terrace)	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
N. Ireland	75+	Retired	Semi-detached	Rent – Housing Association
North	45-54	Self-employed	Detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
North	18-24	Manager of student union	Terrace house (including end terrace)	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
North	30-34	Cleaner	Terrace house (including end terrace)	Rent – Housing Association
North	18-24	Work as a baker	Converted flat	Rent – private landlord
North	35-44	Hairdresser	Semi-detached	Rent – Housing Association
North	45-54	Pottery maker. Ceramicist	Detached	Rent – private landlord
North	10-17	Picking for deliveries during lockdown	Semi-detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
North	18-24	Student	Semi-detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Scotland	35-44	Self-employed	Purpose built flat, low rise	Rent – private landlord
Scotland	75+	Retired	Bungalow	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Scotland	65-74	Financial Director - semi-retired.	Detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Scotland	18-24	I work in public affairs	Purpose built flat, low rise	Rent – private landlord

South	35-44	Freelance consultant, wife does online fashion	Semi-detached	Rent – private landlord
South	65-74	Semi-retired, now works part time as a steward	Other (please specify)	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
South	25-29	Managing tuition centre	Detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
South	45-54	Nurse	Terrace house (including end terrace)	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
South	35-44	Psychologist, working with children with autism	Semi-detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
South	45-54	Basket making business	Semi-detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
South	45-54	Owens a carpentry business	Terrace house (including end terrace)	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
South	55-64	Self-employed	Bungalow	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
South	10-17	Student	Semi-detached	Live with my parents
South	65-74	Retired Police officer	Detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
South	45-54	Surgeon	Detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Wales	45-54	Self-employed builder but work very slowed down	Other	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Wales	45-54	Busker, labouring as and when	Other	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Wales	65-74	Retired	Semi-detached	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Yorkshire and the Humber	35-44	Self-employed builder	Semi-detached	Rent – private landlord
Yorkshire and the Humber	25-29	Work in SEN school	Terrace house (including end terrace)	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage
Yorkshire and the Humber	25-29	App developer	Purpose built flat, low rise	Rent – private landlord
Yorkshire and the Humber	45-54	Working for the BBC working on projects	Other	Own it outright/buying with a mortgage

Interview guides



QUALITY OF LIFE QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1. Connection to the area [tick all that apply]:** live work study or have another interest
- 2. How many years have you had a connection to this area?** <1 1-3 4-5 6-10 11-20 20+
- 3. On a scale of 1-10, how positive a place do you think this area is to live/work?** (1=terrible, 10= great) _____

4. What things do you like/dislike about this area?

Like	Don't like

5. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about this area, which would make it a better place to live, what would it be?

6. Based on your experience of places where you have lived, what things/factors are the most important in making somewhere a really good place to live (ie: what makes a good place good)?

7. How would you rate the following aspects of this area? (rate: Good, Acceptable/ok, Poor, or NA—put G/A/P/NA)

- | | |
|---|---|
| Access to nature (trees, parks, gardens) _____ | Commuting to work or school _____ |
| Maintenance of parks, streets and public spaces _____ | Amount of parking _____ |
| Appearance of homes and buildings _____ | Safety _____ |
| Places for children to play and childcare _____ | Schools _____ |
| Community centres and community events _____ | Places for sports and culture _____ |
| Health facilities _____ | Relationships with people in the local area _____ |
| A variety shops and places to eat and drink _____ | Affordability of housing _____ |
| The amount of local traffic _____ | Air quality/pollution _____ |
| Cycling _____ | Walking about _____ |
| Job prospects _____ | Public Transport _____ |
| Other _____ | |

8. How safe do you feel walking alone in this area after dark?

- Very safe Fairly safe A bit unsafe Very unsafe Don't know

9. To what extent do you agree or disagree that you personally can influence decisions affecting your local area?

- Definitely agree Tend to agree Tend to disagree Definitely disagree

10. To what extent do you think that the community can influence decisions affecting the local area?

- A lot A little Not much Not at all Don't know
 Comment _____

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements....?

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I think my neighbourhood is a good place to live.	NA <input type="checkbox"/>					
I talk to neighbours regularly.						
I feel a sense of belonging in my neighbourhood.						
I generally trust people in my local area.						
I feel in control of my life.						

12. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? [scale 0:10 where 0=not at all and 10=completely] ____

13. Which are the main things that you would say effect your quality of life in your local area?

14. Would you be interested in taking part in a focus group to talk more about these topics? We are offering a £15 voucher for all participants. If so, please give us your contact details (separate sheet of paper).

Yes, definitely Yes, possibly No

ABOUT YOU:

15. To what extent have your views about the area been consulted before?

A lot Quite a bit A little Not much Not at all

16. Which ethnicity do you feel best describes you? ____ other _____ I'd rather not say

17. Gender Identity: Male Female Transgender Self Identify _____ I'd rather not say

18. Age 13-17 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75+

19. Do you have children that live with you, and if so how old are they? [tick all that apply]

No children living with me Pre-school Primary Secondary Over age 18

20. Are your day-to-day activities limited due to a physical or learning disability or health problem?

Yes No

21. Which of these best describes what you're doing at present? Full Time work Part Time work

Retired Self Employed Zero hours contract work Full Time Student

Looking after children/the home Looking for work Unable to work Prefer not to say

22. How would you describe the home where you live?

Own it outright/buying with a mortgage Rent - council Rent – Housing Association

Rent – private landlord Shared Ownership Student Accommodation Staying with friends

Homeless Other _____

23. Is there anything else you would like to say?

General Comments:	KZ Notes
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Area: Belfast B'ham Brentford Bridgend Cambs Corby Edin Hackney Heighington Manchester Poundbury Rotherham
 Belfast: Estate Community Rotherham: Estate Community

LOCATION of Interview _____ Date _____ Interviewer _____

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Quality of Life Foundation in-depth phone interview questionnaire

WARM-UP: general information about the place where you live
and changes in your life due to the Covid-19 pandemic

1. Tell us about the place where you live:

a). Who lives with you? _____

b) Are there any family members/ flatmates who are at high risk of severe illness from Coronavirus living with you? Yes No

c). Is there anybody with special needs living with you? Yes No

d). How many people are sharing the place where you live? _____

e). How long have you lived there? <1 1-3 4-5 6-10 11-20 20+

2. How has your life (and that of the members of your family who are living with you, if applicable) changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown measures? [INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERVIEWER: depending on the interviewee's profile, ask about changes in their work situation, education timetable, caring responsibilities, changes in the lives of their children and teenagers]

3. What are the biggest challenges you're experiencing right now? *[INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERVIEWER: If interviewee doesn't mention it, enquire if loneliness, financial insecurity or family relationships have been a problem]*

BEING AT HOME IN THE PLACE WHERE YOU LIVE

4. Have your day-to-day routines changed? Are there any new routines you have taken up during the lockdown?

5. Are you using parts of your home differently? Have you made any changes to your home (or room if living in a multi-occupied home) to adjust it to current needs? (for example, moving furniture around, dividing up rooms to create new spaces, taking over rooftops/gardens, etc.)

10. Do you have access to outdoor spaces? What kind of spaces are they? Can you use them during the lockdown?

11. Is your home adaptable to your current needs? What would make it more adaptable?

12. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about your home, which would make it a better place to live right now, what would it be?

RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS

13. Are you able to stay in touch with family members and friends who do not live near you these days? How do you stay in touch with them? Do you do it more often than before? What else has changed in your relationships with family and friends?

14. [INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERVIEWER: Ask only if interviewee lives with children]:

a. Are your children able to stay in touch with family and their friends?

b. What has the impact of the lockdown been on your children and their relationships with you, with each other, with people outside the home?

15. Have you had any contact with your neighbours during the lockdown? How do you communicate with them? Do you do it more often than before?

16. Do you know of any support systems (physical and/or virtual) in your neighbourhood? Have you been part of any of them, if so in what ways?

YOUR LOCAL AREA

17. When you go out and about what do you do? Do you stay in your immediate local area? How often do you go out? How about other people you share your home with, where are they going when they go out?

18. How does it feel to be outside in your local area during the lockdown? Are there places you wish you could go to but that are currently closed?

19. Are there any things in your local area that have changed for the better during this time?

20. If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about your local area, which would make it a better place to live right now, what would it be?

WRAP-UP: overall thoughts

21. Has the experience of the lockdown changed your perception of your local area and what you can like/dislike about it?

22. Given the experience and context of lockdown, what things/factors would you say are the most important in making somewhere a really good place to live (*ie: what makes a good place good*)?

Go over the following demographics (1-11) at the end of the conversation.

1. Which ethnicity do you feel best describes you?

White Black Asian Mixed/other _____ I'd rather not say

2. Gender Identity:

Male Female Transgender Self Identify _____ I'd rather not say

3. Age:

10-17 18-24 25-29 30-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75+

4. Do you have children that live with you, and if so how old are they? [tick all that apply]

No children living with me Pre-school Primary Secondary Over age 18

5. How many people live with you in your home? _____

6. Are your day-to-day activities limited due to a physical or learning disability or health problem?

Yes No

7. Which of these best describes what you're doing at present?

Full Time work Part Time work Retired Self Employed
 Zero hours contract work Full Time Student Looking after children/the home Furloughed
 Looking for work Unable to work Prefer not to say

If employed, what job are you doing? _____

If recently unemployed, what was your last job? _____

8. How would you describe the home where you live?

Own it outright/buying with a mortgage Rent - council Rent – Housing Association
 Rent – private landlord Shared Ownership Student Accommodation
 Staying with friends Homeless Other _____

9. Is your home a.....?

Terrace house (including end terrace) Semi-detached Detached Bungalow Converted flat
 Purpose built flat, low rise Purpose built flat, high rise Other _____ Don't
 Know

10. How many bedrooms are there in your home? _____

11. Do you have access to outside space at your home? Yes No

If yes, which best describes it:

Private garden Private balcony Shared garden Shared balcony
 Other _____

Thanks to our partners



Berkeley Group is our founding partner. They build homes and neighbourhoods across London, Birmingham and the South of England, reviving underused land, creating welcoming, sustainable and nature-rich places where communities thrive and where people of all ages and backgrounds enjoy a great quality of life. They have provided leadership and support since the Foundation's inception, with funding for the core business and ongoing research. They are also piloting YourQOL, a digital app that allows residents to rate their homes and communities based on how it affects their quality of life, developed by the Quality of Life Foundation and Commonplace.



U+I plc is a property developer and investor focused on regenerating overlooked and underestimated urban spaces. They have provided funding and logistical support for the core business and are piloting YourQOL.



Grosvenor Britain & Ireland is part of a global property company with a 340-year track record of making and managing places to deliver lasting commercial and social benefit. They have provided the Foundation with funding support and are piloting YourQOL. They have provided the Foundation with funding support and are taking part in our post-occupancy evaluation tool.



dRMM is a London-based, international studio of architects and designers renowned for creating architecture that is innovative, high quality and socially useful. They have provided help with the direction of the Foundation, as well as logistical and marketing support.



ING Media is our media partner. They are the only PR agency that can navigate the complex worlds of property, architecture, design, regeneration and culture to help brands, organisations and cities thrive in a connected world.



UKGBC aims to radically improve the sustainability of the built environment, by transforming the way it is planned, designed, constructed, maintained and operated. Together we are working on new guidance to demystify the practice of measuring the social value of buildings and places.

