
Working paper

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Mapping livelihood insecurity in east London:

A guide to using secondary data to measure and map livelihood insecurity



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Abstract

Since 2021, UK households have experienced an unprecedented rise in the costs of living. Global and domestic events including the pandemic, invasion of Ukraine, and the UK's 2022 Mini-Budget, have caused economic shocks, supply chain issues, interest rate rises and inflationary pressures. The resulting cost-of-living crisis created by these sustained pressures is commonly understood as a fall in real disposable incomes that has left many households struggling to pay for food and energy. Policy responses to the crisis have included one-off cost-of-living payments, increasing warm homes discount for vulnerable households, energy bill and Council tax rebates, and a reduction in basic rate income tax, among other measures (Brown, 2022). In this paper we argue that while these initiatives have provided crucial support to struggling households, they offer only temporary relief and do not address the underlying problem of persistent livelihood insecurity that leaves households vulnerable to shocks and stresses.

We make this argument based on almost a decade of mixed methods research in east London, investigating with local communities their lived experiences of socio-economic changes linked to regeneration, and determinants and obstacles to prosperity. Since 2015, three waves of neighbourhood-based research carried out by citizen scientists – residents trained to work as social researchers in their communities – have identified livelihood insecurity as the main obstacle to prosperity for people living in east London (Moore and Woodcraft, 2023; Woodcraft and Chan, 2022; Woodcraft and Anderson, 2019). Critically, this research identifies that livelihood security requires more than simply work and income. Households draw on a range of assets, services, and networks for their livelihoods including affordable housing, food and energy security, internet access, affordable local childcare, and public transport (Moore and Woodcraft, 2023). Local networks of family, friends, and neighbours play a crucial role in helping people cope with insecurity, providing informal childcare to enable people employed on zero-hours contracts to work irregular shift patterns and enabling informal and community-led savings networks to operate (Woodcraft and Anderson, 2019).

A new survey of 4,000 households in east London shows livelihood insecurity is widespread, persistent, and does not map in a straightforward way onto employment status and household income (Woodcraft et al., 2024). Levels of income security, financial stress, debt burdens, food and energy security, and access to childcare and public transport vary significantly within areas that report similar levels of income. Preliminary analysis of prosperity levels by gender, age, and for different ethnic groups shows complex patterns of livelihood insecurity. This research shows that tackling livelihood insecurity and the cost-of-living crisis requires policy responses that go beyond promoting employment and income growth. Addressing the underlying causes of insecurity, in particular, how multiple insecurities intersect to create pressures for specific groups and places at certain times, will increase the resilience of communities to economic shocks. In this paper, we set out an approach to understanding livelihood insecurity through the lived experience of communities in east London. We provide guidance on how to use publicly accessible secondary datasets to measure levels of insecurity at the hyper-local (Lower Super Output Area) level to enable this approach to be replicated in other areas of the UK.

Keywords: *Cost-of-living, livelihood security, prosperity, in-work poverty, employment, east London, London 2012 Olympic Games, citizen science*

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1.0

Introduction

Since 2021, UK households have experienced an unprecedented rise in the cost of living. In October 2022, inflation soared to a 41-year high (ONS, 2022), and for the most part, wages have not kept up – annual wage growth only began to outpace inflation in the three months to August 2023 (ONS, 2023f) – resulting in the largest fall in living standards on record for the fiscal year 2022/23 (OBR, 2024). Food inflation remained persistent, reaching a 45-year high in March 2023 (ONS, 2023b) and core inflation – which excludes the price of volatile goods such as food, energy, alcohol, and tobacco – rose to the highest level since 1992 (ONS, 2023c). Despite inflation being close to the Bank of England’s 2% target (ONS, 2024b), the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) predicts that living standards will not return to pre-pandemic levels until 2027/28 (OBR, 2024). Many people are not just struggling with the rise in the cost of living but are also experiencing a much broader and deeper crisis of livelihoods.

The cost-of-living crisis is commonly depicted solely through these headline economic indicators, and policy responses have focused on mitigating rising prices and falling wages with a focus on households most at risk. Energy bill and Council tax rebates, cash transfers in the form of one-off cost-of-living payments, and a reduction in basic rate income tax have been introduced (Brown, 2022). These have been vital sources of support for people struggling with food and energy insecurity. However, viewing the cost-of-living crisis in narrow economic terms such as these, overlooks the rising inequalities and experiences of insecurity people have experienced in the years leading up to 2021, which have undermined the resilience of households to economic shocks. New survey data from east London shows livelihood insecurity is widespread, persistent, and does not map in a straightforward way onto employment status and household income (Woodcraft et al., 2024). Levels of income security, financial stress, debt burdens, food and energy security, and access to childcare and public transport, vary significantly within areas that report similar levels of income. Preliminary analysis by gender, age, and for different ethnic groups shows complex social and spatial patterns of livelihood insecurity affecting local levels of prosperity.

These findings show that responses to the cost-of-living crisis that focus solely on income, in the form of cash transfers and bill rebates for the households that are most at risk, are unlikely to be effective in the long term because they do not account for the full range of social and economic resources people depend on to make a living. This matters because the way societal challenges like insecurity, poverty, inequality, and the cost-of-living crisis are defined and measured determines the parameters for action. Measuring the wrong things limits opportunities for intervention. This is the argument made by the landmark Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission (Stiglitz et al., 2008), which in 2008 reported on the limitations of GDP as an indicator of societal prosperity and proposed the development of a basket of supplementary metrics to better represent the factors that drive sustainable prosperity, including wellbeing, mental and physical health, and environmental conditions. The ‘beyond GDP’ agenda has intensified in the decade since, and a plethora of new metrics have been developed focusing on well-being, quality of life, and social progress (Social Progress Imperative, 2024; Legatum Institute, 2023; OECD, 2020).

The ONS, for example, measures social and personal well-being by looking at health, relationships, skills and education, what we do, where we live, the natural environment, and our finances (ONS, 2024a). While these metrics represent significant progress in moving political debates and policy decisions about societal progress beyond headline economic measures, few if any of these measurement frameworks are developed with citizens and communities to reflect the specific conditions in different localities. Research by UCL’s Institute for Global Prosperity (IGP) in the UK, Lebanon and Africa shows that concepts like prosperity, well-being, and livelihood security are context-specific and diverse, varying within and between populations and geographies (Baumann et al., 2023; Davies et al., 2023; Woodcraft et al., 2020). This poses challenges for traditional methods of understanding the connections between economic and social areas of life, and points to the need for tools, approaches, and forms of evidence that enable policymakers to understand and work with complexity and diversity. For example, a lack of local area data to inform decision-making and report on changes is a pressing challenge.

The report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for ‘left behind’ neighbourhoods, makes it clear that the absence of data at a local level (defined as any level below local authority - ward, middle layer super output area (MSOA), Lower layer Super Output Area (LSOA)) is making it difficult to analyse and see progress when it comes to the UK Government’s levelling up mission (APPG for left-behind neighbourhoods, 2023). Without such data, inequalities and insecurity within local areas are not being sufficiently captured nor fully understood. This absence of data makes it difficult to understand local experiences of the cost-of-living crisis and how place, age, gender, ethnicity and other characteristics intersect to create specific forms of vulnerability. While the drivers of the UK’s cost of living crisis are global as well as domestic (Harari et al., 2023), we will show in this paper how the impacts of the crisis are being felt locally and unevenly.

In this working paper we discuss and measure ‘livelihood security’ as defined by citizens involved in long-term, community-based qualitative research in east London. In 2023, the livelihood security framework discussed in this paper was adopted by east London’s Growth Boroughs – Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Waltham Forest – as the goal and key success measure of a shared Inclusive Economy Strategy, replacing the previous Olympic legacy ‘convergence’ framework (LLDC, 2023), which is discussed in section 3. We argue this citizen-led livelihood security framework shows how concepts and metrics developed with and for communities based on lived realities, provide different insights about how people cope with insecurity and thereby, alternative starting points for policy and targeted interventions. To illustrate this argument, we compare two approaches to measuring the outcomes of regeneration in east London using secondary data: first, the Convergence framework which reports on economic, educational, health, and community safety outcomes at the borough-level; and second, we examine indicators of livelihood security at the hyper-local level. This analysis shows how different starting points for measuring success generate very different perspectives on who is flourishing, who is struggling, and who is benefitting from regeneration investments. In section 4, we identify where people are falling below the Greater London average for livelihood security. Building on a test-case analysis of east London, we offer guidance on how to apply this approach to measuring livelihood security using publicly accessible secondary datasets in other locations. We conclude with suggestions about policy principles and targeted policy ‘prescriptions’ to support livelihood security.

‘More than a job’: Drivers of Livelihood Security in east London

Livelihood security is identified by residents in east London as the main determinant of prosperity, providing a foundation for people to build upon and the possibility of a good life (Woodcraft et al., 2023; 2021). Conversely, livelihood insecurity is the main obstacle to people living well and flourishing (Woodcraft et al., 2021; Moore and Woodcraft, 2019; Woodcraft and Anderson, 2019).

This is the main finding from long-term research in east London investigating the determinants of prosperity and experiences of large-scale regeneration initiatives intended to improve the life chances and living standards of disadvantaged communities.

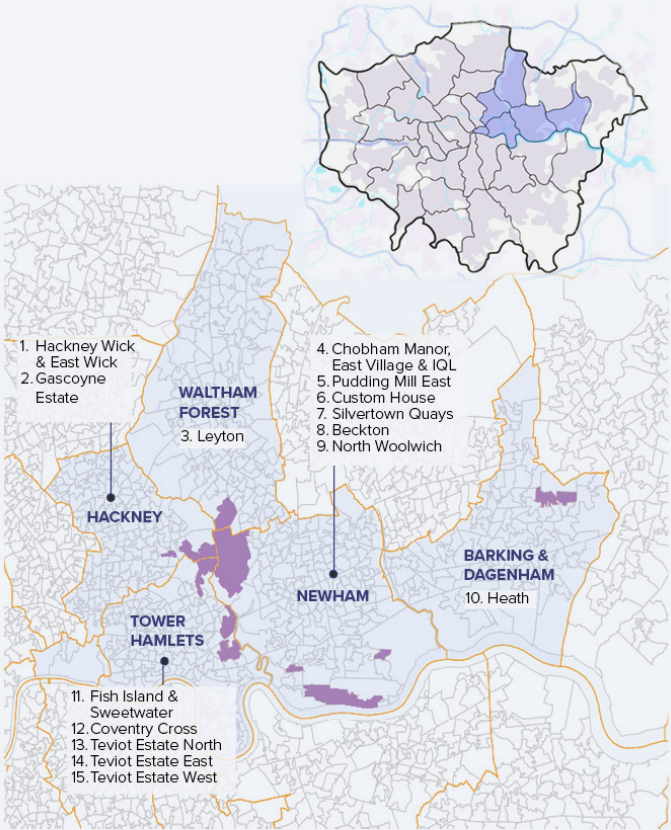
In this section we summarise the findings from this research, describing what constitutes a secure livelihood from the perspective of residents in east London and how these insights have been used to develop a new ‘livelihood security’ framework.

2.0

2.1 Livelihood Security is the foundation of prosperity

Since 2015, a team of academic researchers and citizen social scientists – residents trained to work as social researchers in their own neighbourhoods – have undertaken three waves of research investigating the drivers and obstacles to prosperity in east London. This work has focused on investigating the everyday realities of people living and working in neighbourhoods experiencing rapid changes linked to regeneration, primarily in and around the Olympic Park, the Royal Docks, Poplar, and Dagenham. Hackney Wick, East Village in the Olympic Park, and Forest Gate in Stratford were the focus of the first phase of research (2015-2016). Custom House in Newham, Heath in Barking and Dagenham, and Coventry Cross Estate in Tower Hamlets were added in the second phase of research (2017-2019). Fifteen areas are included in the latest phase of research – the *Prosperity in east London 2021-2031* Longitudinal Study (Woodcraft et al., 2024; Woodcraft and Chan, 2022) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Research sites in Prosperity in east London 2021-2031 Longitudinal Study



Source: Woodcraft and Chan, 2022

When asked what constitutes a prosperous life, research participants have consistently identified livelihood security as the main driver of prosperity (Moore and Woodcraft 2023; Woodcraft et al., 2021; Woodcraft and Anderson 2019). When invited to describe what a ‘secure livelihood’ means to them, people identified how secure income and good jobs, genuinely affordable housing, food, energy, public transport, internet access, childcare, and networks of family, friends, and neighbours are tightly interwoven resources – all of which are essential to manage day-to-day living and provide a foundation to build a prosperous future.

In the first two phases of research, both of which took place before the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis, a high proportion of participants felt they were living with multiple forms of insecurity and instability that undermined their opportunities to prosper. When describing these conditions, it was common to hear people talk about their struggles to cope with stresses caused by low-paid work, zero-hours contracts, unaffordable and insecure housing, and challenges accessing basic services. Research participants frequently discussed the necessity of having more than one job and feelings of precarity, as these quotes illustrate:

“How can we have a prosperous life for everyone, people of all classes? The situation is precarious for people around here. The combination of unaffordable housing, zero-hours contracts, portfolio careers ... people have no security. Jobs are not good quality...this is a toxic mix.”

Frances, a professional in her fifties working in the voluntary sector, has lived in Hackney for twenty years; interview; July 2015

“One of the things I am beginning to notice is that people working part-time, [such as] young mums are actually as poor, if not poorer, than those on benefits. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not saying people on benefits are better off, but there is that frustration. People going to work living hand to mouth. And although people are working, and they’re glad they’re working, they’ve got a purpose they’ve got a reason, but... it’s not making enough change, it’s not doing anything different in their lives. It’s actually adding to their stress because now they’re worrying about how they’re going to find their money, there’s no support bridging the gaps.”

Julia, long-term resident of Coventry Cross, Tower Hamlets; interview; 2017

Data from IGP’s *Citizen Prosperity Index* Pilot Study in 2017-2019, shows east London households in all income brackets were already struggling with job security, unaffordable housing, and low levels of disposable income before the pandemic and current cost-of-living crisis (Woodcraft and Anderson 2019). The research took place in 2017, when London’s economy was growing faster than any other region of the UK – the employment rate in London was at a record high of 75 per cent and total household wealth was estimated to be £1.8 trillion – yet levels of in-work poverty were rising steadily (ibid., 2019).

2.2 Conceptualising Livelihood Security

Based on this work, IGP has developed a ‘Livelihood Security Model’ (Figure 2) – a conceptual framework to represent the overlapping assets, services, and networks that people say scaffold their lives. We describe this as an ‘infrastructure’ for secure livelihoods. We do this to draw attention to the way people experience the complex interdependencies between for example, work, housing, food, energy, childcare, internet access, and public transport.

From a policy and service delivery perspective, this is significant because it illustrates how the resources that make up this infrastructure cut across different sectors and policy domains, which challenges conventional thinking that employment and income growth are the only routes to poverty reduction and prosperity – or latterly, out of the cost-of-living crisis. The idea of ‘good work’ has received attention in recent years with a focus on employment terms, job security, and the quality of jobs being created (Doshi et al., 2023; Wheatley 2017; Taylor et al., 2017), but the same attention is not being given to interactions between labour and housing markets, or to how basic services give people the capacity to seek and maintain work (Moore et al., 2023). We argue that bringing evidence about the lived experiences of communities into closer alignment with economic and social policymaking is essential to avoid obscuring the realities and root causes of social challenges that can potentially lead to misguided interventions.

Figure 2: Livelihood Security Framework



Source: Woodcraft et al., 2021; Woodcraft et al., 2024

Why does it matter what we measure?

Lessons from east London's regeneration story

In this section, we look at how different approaches to measuring the outcomes of east London's Olympic legacy regeneration can lead to very different ways of understanding who is flourishing, who is vulnerable, whether the legacy strategy is working, and the policy priorities and interventions that are needed.

First, we look at the 'Convergence Framework' adopted in 2009 by the Olympic host boroughs (now Growth Boroughs) to ensure legacy regeneration focused on social and economic outcomes, as well as physical transformation of the Lower Lea Valley.

Second, we look at the livelihood security framework discussed in the previous section, developed from community-based qualitative research led by citizen scientists and focusing on lived experiences of regeneration in east London.

The livelihood security framework was adopted in 2023 as the goal and key success measure of the Growth Boroughs shared Inclusive Economy Strategy, replacing the previous Convergence Framework (LLDC, 2023). The two frameworks explore the same broad area of concern (the outcomes of investment in regeneration in east London) but from different starting points: expert-led vs community-led 'success' measures; conventional economic indicators vs measures reflecting lived experience; and different geographies of measurement – borough-level vs hyper-local LSOAs.

3.0

3.1 ‘Convergence’: Measuring London’s Olympic legacy outcomes

London won the bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games on the promise of delivering a meaningful legacy for local communities in east London (Bernstock et al., 2022). The strategic frameworks shaping London’s Olympic legacy promises have evolved since the launch of the bid to host the 2012 Games. However, regeneration for the benefit of local communities and the transformation east London to address historical inequalities have remained consistent themes throughout (Navarro Eslava, 2022).

In 2008, east London’s Olympic ‘host’ boroughs – Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Greenwich, and Barking and Dagenham – made up the largest cluster of deprived communities in England and Wales, and experienced significant disparities with the rest of London including income inequalities, worse health and educational outcomes, and housing overcrowding (Sustr, 2022; London City Hall, 2016).

In this context, the Host Borough Partnership was established to focus on developing a shared strategy to ensure the physical regeneration of the Lower Lea Valley for the Olympic Games also delivered social and economic regeneration in these boroughs. In 2009, the Host Boroughs adopted the Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) with the objective of addressing inequalities and achieving ‘convergence’ between the host boroughs and the rest of London (SRF, 2009), stating:

“Despite being home to some of the most vibrant, diverse and dynamic communities in the capital, the facts remain that people in the growth boroughs earn less, have fewer qualifications, are more likely to be unemployed, live in poor and overcrowded housing, be a victim of crime and die younger than an average Londoner...

...This has been true since Victorian times and has blighted the lives of successive generations whilst at the same time holding back the performance of the east London economy. The task is to change this to the benefit of future generations and the UK economy as a whole.”
(Growth Boroughs Partnership, 2016)

The SRF and the Convergence Framework adopted the goal that ‘within 20 years the communities who host the 2012 Games will have the same social and economic chances as their neighbours across London’. Strategic investments and interventions were guided by the principle of reducing inequalities in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the average for London and organised around three key themes: creating wealth and reducing poverty; supporting healthier lifestyles; and developing successful neighbourhoods. Until 2016, progress on the Convergence Framework was measured annually using key indicators to report on change at the borough-level (Table 1) (Growth Boroughs Partnership, 2016).

After the 2012 Games, the Host Boroughs Partnership became the Growth Boroughs Partnership. The last report on Convergence in the six boroughs was compiled in 2017 (London Assembly Regeneration Committee, 2017), and noted that gaps in many indicators, including earnings, sports and physical activity, and children living in income-deprived households had not been closed. In 2021, the Growth Boroughs Partnership was restarted, focusing on the four boroughs neighbouring the Olympic Park: Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Waltham Forest.

Table 1: Convergence Framework Indicators

Indicator	Status 2009 – 2015
Children achieving a good level of development at age 5	Achieved Convergence
Pupils achieving 5 GCSE grades A* – C (including Maths & English)	Achieved 2020 target
Employment rate	On track to meet 2020 target
Pupils achieving at least Level 4 in English & Maths at Key Stage 2	
19-year olds achieving level 2 threshold	
19-year olds achieving Level 3 threshold	
Proportion of children in working age families receiving key benefits	
Mortality rates from all cancers at ages under 75*	Improvement on baseline but not on a trajectory to achieve the 2020 target, either because improvement from the baseline is too marginal or the 2015 performance is worse than that in 2014
Additional housing units	
Unemployment rate	
Percentage of working age population with no qualifications	
Working age population qualified to at least Level 4	
Life expectancy (male)* / Life expectancy (female)*	Gap identical or widened since base line year
Mortality rates from all circulatory diseases at ages under 75*	
Violent crime levels (Violence against the person, per 1,000 population)	
Median earnings for full time workers living in the area	
Job Density	
No Sport or Activity (0 times 30 mins per week)	
Recommended Adult Activity (3 times 30 mins per week)	
Obesity levels in school children in yr 6	
Overcrowding measure	

Source: 2015-16 Convergence Annual Report (Growth Boroughs Partnership, 2016)

3.1 ‘Convergence’: Measuring London’s Olympic legacy outcomes

Over a decade on from the 2012 Games, data suggests the physical and economic growth legacy of the Olympics can be argued to have been a success for east London. Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP) is an exemplar cultural, economic, innovation and residential district, which has been integral in London’s economic centre of gravity moving eastwards. East Bank, the Park’s new cultural and educational district has seen major institutions and universities build new campuses including BBC Music Studios, Sadler’s Wells East, V&A East, London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London, and University College London. East Wick and Sweetwater, and Chobham Manor – two of the five new residential neighbourhoods that are part of the Legacy Communities Scheme – have been completed, and development is underway at Stratford Waterfront. Over 11,000 new homes have been delivered within London Legacy Development Corporation’s planning area between 2012 and 2022 (Sustr, 2022), although this figure is not without controversy due to the low numbers of housing that are genuinely affordable in local terms (Bernstock, 2019).

In some priority areas, significant progress has been made towards ‘convergence’ ahead of the original target. Across most economic and educational attainment metrics, the gap has either narrowed or closed relative to the London average (Growth Boroughs Partnership, 2016). Some of the areas of improvement have been in economic participation, business growth and resident earnings which we examine below.

Taking the period 2010-2020, the four Growth Boroughs (Newham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest) reported an average population increase of 19% (Nomis ONS, 2022a). To put this into context, population growth in the City of London was the highest among all London boroughs at 49%. Tower Hamlets had the second highest rate of growth (34%), Newham the sixth (19%), Hackney the eighth (16%), and Waltham Forest the nineteenth (9%).

During a similar period (2010-2021) the Growth Boroughs reported an average increase in resident earnings of 22% (Nomis ONS, 2022c). Newham reported the highest growth in resident earnings (29%) of all London boroughs during this time. Waltham Forest had the third highest (25%), Hackney the seventeenth (19%), and Tower Hamlets the nineteenth (18%).

Business growth during the same period (2010-2021) averaged 120% in the Growth Boroughs (Nomis ONS, 2022b). Newham reported a 165% increase (the highest among London boroughs), Hackney a 149% increase, Waltham Forest 109%, and Tower Hamlets 76%.

The Growth Boroughs averaged an increase of 10% for employment growth across 2015-2020 (Nomis ONS, 2021a; Nomis ONS, 2021b). Hackney had the highest increase (21%) compared to all London Boroughs. Newham had the third highest (17%) while Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest reported a 5% and 4% growth, respectively.

Despite significant progress in job, business and resident earnings growth, the Convergence strategy has failed to shift the dial on many of the defining challenges east Londoners face, as its success is heavily exposed to structural changes in the national and regional economy. For example, health and wellbeing have remained persistent challenges for the Growth Boroughs. Obesity levels amongst young people are high and health outcomes across several key indicators are well below the London average (GLA Datastore, 2023a).

Table Sources: Column 1, Population Growth: ONS Mid-year Population Estimates (Nomis ONS, 2022a)
Column 2, Employment Growth: ONS Annual Population Survey (Nomis ONS, 2021a); ONS Labour Force Survey (Nomis ONS, 2021b)
Column 3, Business Growth: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) (Nomis ONS, 2022b)
Column 4, Resident Earnings Growth: ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) (Nomis ONS, 2022c)

Table 2: Economic Convergence in Growth Boroughs

	Population Growth 2010-2020	Employment Growth (2015-2020)	Business Growth (2010-2021)	Resident Earnings Growth (2010-2021)
1	City of London (+49%)	Hackney (+21%)	Newham (+165%)	Newham (+29%)
2	Tower Hamlets (+34%)	City of London (+20%)	Barking and Dagenham (+149%)	Islington (+26%)
3	Camden (+30%)	Newham (+17%)	Hackney (+149%)	Waltham Forest (+25%)
4	Westminster (+24%)	Barking and Dagenham (+14%)	Growth borough average (+120%)	Brent (+25%)
5	Islington (+24%)	Growth borough average (+10%)	Waltham Forest (+109%)	Barking and Dagenham (+24%)
6	Newham (+19%)	Southwark (+7%)	Redbridge (+98%)	Harrow (+23%)
7	Growth borough average (+19%)	Bexley (+7%)	Greenwich (+87%)	Growth borough average (+22%)
8	Barking and Dagenham (+17%)	Croydon (+7%)	Islington (+83%)	Haringey (+22%)
9	Hackney (+16%)	Hillingdon (+6%)	Tower Hamlets (+76%)	Croydon (+21%)
10	Greenwich (+16%)	Havering (+5%)	City of London (+75%)	Enfield (+21%)
11	Hillingdon (+15%)	Greenwich (+5%)	Enfield (+72%)	Kingston upon Thames (+21%)
12	Barnet (+14%)	Tower Hamlets (+5%)	Hillingdon (+70%)	Lambeth (+21%)
13	Kingston upon Thames (+13%)	Camden (+5%)	Harrow (+70%)	Bexley (+20%)
14	Southwark (+13%)	Waltham Forest (+4%)	Haringey (+69%)	Hillingdon (+20%)
15	Lewisham (+12%)	Brent (+4%)	Lewisham (+66%)	Ealing (+20%)
16	Redbridge (+11%)	Enfield (+3%)	Barnet (+64%)	Bromley (+19%)
17	Havering (+10%)	Merton (+3%)	Camden (+64%)	Sutton (+19%)
18	Sutton (+10%)	Kensington and Chelsea (+2%)	Hounslow (+60%)	Hackney (+19%)
19	Hounslow 9%	Wandsworth (+2%)	Brent (+58%)	Lewisham (+18%)
20	Waltham Forest (+9%)	Hammersmith and Fulham (+1%)	Southwark (+56%)	Tower Hamlets (+18%)
21	Wandsworth (+9%)	Bromley (+1%)	Merton (+55%)	Havering (+17%)
22	Croydon (+9%)	Westminster (+1%)	Havering (+55%)	Southwark (+14%)
23	Enfield (+8%)	Ealing (0%)	Ealing (+55%)	Wandsworth (+14%)
24	Lambeth (+8%)	Haringey (0%)	Bexley (+55%)	Greenwich (+13%)
25	Bexley (+8%)	Redbridge (0%)	Croydon (+53%)	Hounslow (+12%)
26	Bromley (+8%)	Islington (0%)	Lambeth (+50%)	Camden (+10%)
27	Brent (+8%)	Sutton (-1%)	Sutton (+48%)	Redbridge (+10%)
28	Richmond upon Thames (+6%)	Barnet (-2%)	Kingston upon Thames (+44%)	Barnet (+9%)
29	Harrow (+6%)	Harrow (-3%)	Bromley (+41%)	Kensington and Chelsea (+9%)
30	Haringey (+5%)	Hounslow (-4%)	Westminster (+35%)	Richmond upon Thames (+8%)
31	Merton (+4%)	Lewisham (-4%)	Wandsworth (+31%)	Hammersmith and Fulham (+6%)
32	Ealing (+2%)	Richmond upon Thames (-5%)	Kensington and Chelsea (+30%)	Merton (+4%)
33	Hammersmith and Fulham (+1%)	Lambeth (-5%)	Hammersmith and Fulham (+28%)	Westminster (-9%)
34	Kensington and Chelsea (-2%)	Kingston upon Thames (-11%)	Richmond upon Thames (+28%)	City of London (N/A)

3.2 Livelihood Security: alternative measures of Legacy impact

Survey data shows livelihood insecurity is widespread, persistent, and does not map in a straightforward way onto employment status and household income (Woodcraft et al., 2024). Housing affordability is a pervasive problem affecting all 15 areas in the *Prosperity in east London 2021-2031* Longitudinal Study, while levels of financial stress, debt burdens, food and energy security, and access to childcare and public transport vary significantly within areas that report similar levels of income. Preliminary analysis of prosperity levels by gender, age, and for different ethnic groups shows complex patterns of livelihood insecurity.

This research foregrounds the underlying issues causing a wider, chronic problem of livelihood insecurity, which goes beyond the current cost-of-living crisis. For example, the quality and security of work is a long-term issue in east London – and elsewhere in the capital – where many people who are in-work have struggled for several years to cover essential expenditure or to save for the future.

Despite high median earnings, London – with the North East – has the second highest poverty rate of any UK region (JRF, 2024). Before the cost-of-living crisis (2019/20), 27% of Londoners were living in poverty after taking account of housing costs (Trust for London, 2023a). Research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies showed that whilst national benefit reforms since 2011 have encouraged benefit claimants into work, many of the jobs people are moving into are part-time, low paying, and have little chance of career progression (IFS, 2023). This pattern is evident in east London. Many jobs are not providing a secure income, with almost one in five workers earning an income below the London Living Wage (LLW) (GLA Datastore, 2023b). Between 2005 and 2022, the average percentage of jobs in the Growth Boroughs paying less than the LLW increased by 3.9 percentage points, compared to a 0.3 percentage points increase in London (ibid., 2023b).

Household incomes remain 12% below the London average (Woodcraft and Cook, 2022), and the proportion of children in absolute poverty where at least one parent works has seen a 10% increase between 2014/15-2022/23 (DWP StatXplore, 2024). Most adults and children in poverty are in working households – a consistent finding between 2011/12 to 2021/22 (Trust for London, 2023b). Not only has the number of children living in absolute low-income households grown by 11% between 2014 and 2022 (Woodcraft and Cook, 2022), but this increase is also exclusively being driven by children living in families where at least one parent works.

The cost-of-living crisis has brought the pressures of livelihood insecurity into sharper focus. Evidence from the [Cost of Living Calculator](#) (Robinson, 2023) presented at the Mayor of Newham’s Cost of Living Summit at the end of 2022, showed that multi-earner professional households living in east London were at risk of falling into poverty in 2023 due to rising essential costs, most notably housing, heat and childcare (in that order) (London Borough of Newham, 2022). The Calculator was developed to provide a better understanding of the local impacts of the crisis on London households. It is based on income and expenditure scenarios for different household types to understand how exposed they might be to inflation. The Calculator includes inputs on pay by occupation, housing costs, cost of essentials (food, travel, clothing, insurance), water and energy costs, and council tax. By looking holistically at a household’s monthly expenditure, the data provides a starting point for understanding the pressures different costs such as private rent, energy bills and childcare have on a family’s finances. Figure 3 provides an example of how it works.

3.2.1 What changes when outcome measures reflect lived experience?

Reviewing data on Convergence framework outcomes alongside the livelihood security framework shows that using headline measures of economic performance – reported as Borough-level averages – to assess legacy regeneration outcomes, reflects neither the aspirations nor lived realities of the communities who are the intended beneficiaries. For example, measuring average resident earnings growth at the borough level masks the dynamics of income inequalities at neighbourhood level. This is particularly evident in areas experiencing rapid population growth that are ‘importing prosperity’ by attracting higher-income households – as recent survey data from the Olympic Park suggests – and hyper-local areas where multiple forms of insecurity intersect with gender, race, and age to create complex spatial and socio-economic inequalities (Woodcraft et al., 2024).

We argue a livelihoods lens based on lived experience, rather than a cost-of-living lens based on headline economic indicators, provides decision-makers with new insights about sustained and acute pressure points and new pathways for developing targeted interventions.

However, we recognise that primary data collection at the neighbourhood level is costly and not always a practical option for local authorities, public agencies, or private-sector organisations. In the next section, we describe how key indicators of livelihood security can be measured at the hyper-local level using publicly accessible secondary datasets. Taking east London as a test case, we suggest a methodology that is applicable to any small area in the UK.

Figure 3: PRD Cost of Living Calculator

As of June 2023, a nurse, administrative assistant and their three-year old child renting a two-bed flat in Newham will not be able to afford their essential spending each month.



Source: Robinson, 2023

Measuring and Mapping Livelihood Security:

A transferable approach

In this section we show how livelihood insecurity can be measured and mapped using publicly available secondary data. Taking east London's Growth Boroughs as a test case, we identify Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs)¹ where livelihood insecurity is higher than the Greater London average and where it can be assumed that vulnerability to rising costs of living is likely to be most acute.

Our aim is twofold: to create a tool to identify areas experiencing different forms of insecurity that can be used by government, private and civic organisations in east London to guide interventions; and to develop a methodology that can be adapted for use elsewhere in the UK.

¹ LSOAs are small geographic areas with a similar population size that are used by government to improve the reporting and analysis of public statistics. LSOAs have an average of approximately 1,500 residents or 650 households.

4.0

4.1 Methodology

In this section, we describe the four-step methodology used to measure and map livelihood insecurity for LSOAs in the Growth Boroughs, which could be adapted for use in other parts of the UK where small-area statistics are available.

Step 1: Identify proxies for measuring livelihood security using secondary data

We identified secondary datasets suitable for measuring indicators of livelihood security. Each indicator uses publicly available data available at the LSOA or MSOA level, and where possible, data has been chosen which is updated annually, to allow change over time to be tracked (see Figure 2 and Table 3).

Step 2: Create composite indicators

Indicators are benchmarked against averages for Greater London. We took the median for all LSOAs within London as the threshold value and identified those performing worse than this threshold value.

Step 3: Map LSOAs which perform worse than the London average against each indicator

We coloured those LSOAs which performed worse than this threshold value in blue on the maps.

Step 4: Synthesize data using maps to identify priority LSOAs experiencing multiple forms of insecurity

We layered over each indicator, to identify those LSOAs which were performing poorly against all indicators for a livelihood security domain. These LSOAs are shaded the darkest colour blue.

Some domains such as ‘Feeling Secure about the Future’ and ‘Freedom from Financial Stress’ that are measured in the *Prosperity in east London 2021-2031* Longitudinal Study do not have suitable equivalents in publicly-available secondary datasets, or if they do, these are either not available at a granular (LSOA, MSOA, ward) level or accessing the data requires a special institutional license (e.g. Understanding Society survey data). In this case, proxies that capture the essence of the questions could be used as alternatives. In this analysis, we did not use proxies to map those two domains due to data limitations, however, we provide some commentary in section 3 based on primary data for 15 east London LSOAs (Woodcraft et al., 2024).

Figure 4: Methodology

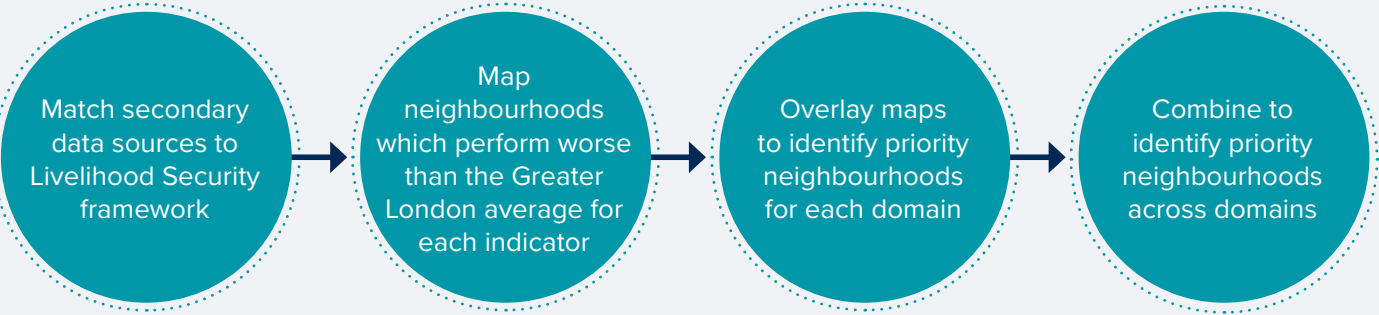


Table 3: Measuring Secure Livelihoods using secondary data.

Secure Livelihood Infrastructure Domains	Indicator	Data Sources
Secure Income and Good Quality Work	Gross annual household income	Income Estimates for Small Areas (ONS, 2023d)
	Economic inactivity - looking after home/family long term sick/disabled	ONS Census 2021 (ONS, 2021)
	Alternative claimant count	Alternative Claimant Count, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP, 2022)
	Children in absolute low-income families	Children in low-income families: local area statistics, Department for Work and Pensions 2022 (DWP, 2023)
Genuinely Affordable and Secure Housing	Household income after housing costs	Income Estimates for Small Areas (ONS, 2023d)
	Proportion of people renting privately	ONS Census 2021 (ONS, 2021)
	Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating	Energy Efficiency of Housing, England and Wales (ONS, 2023e)
Food and Energy Security	Fuel poverty	ONS sub-regional fuel poverty 2023 (DESNZ, 2023)
	Priority places for food index	CDRC Priority Places for Food Index ² (CDRC, 2022)
Access to Key Basic Services: Public Transport, internet and childcare	Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL)	Public Transport Accessibility Level (Transport for London, 2016)
	Number of children under 4	ONS Census 2021 (ONS, 2021)
	Digital propensity	Digital Propensity Index for England & Wales (ONS, 2023a)
	Percentage of population within easy reach of a public park, garden or playing field	Green space consolidated data for England (Friends of the Earth, 2020)
Feeling Secure about the Future	No suitable indicators publicly available	
Freedom from Financial Stress	No suitable indicators publicly available	

² (The data for this research have been provided by the Consumer Data Research Centre (CDRC), an ESRC Data Investment. Funding references ES/L011840/1; ES/L011891/1. The Priority Places for Food Index was developed by the CDRC at the University of Leeds in collaboration with Which?)

4.2 Livelihood insecurity in the Growth Boroughs

In this section we present maps showing the prevalence of different types of livelihood insecurity for LSOAs in the Growth Boroughs. Figures 5 to 8 map different dimensions of the livelihood security framework. For example, figure 5 shows how LSOAs in the Growth Boroughs compare to the Greater London average against the four indicators used to measure Secure Income and Good Quality Work. Colour coding goes from dark blue (LSOAs with higher levels of insecurity than the Greater London average in all four indicators) to lighter shades of blue (LSOAs with higher levels of insecurity than the Greater London average in some but not all indicators) to white (LSOAs that align with, or are performing better than, the Greater London average).

Secure Income and Good Quality Work

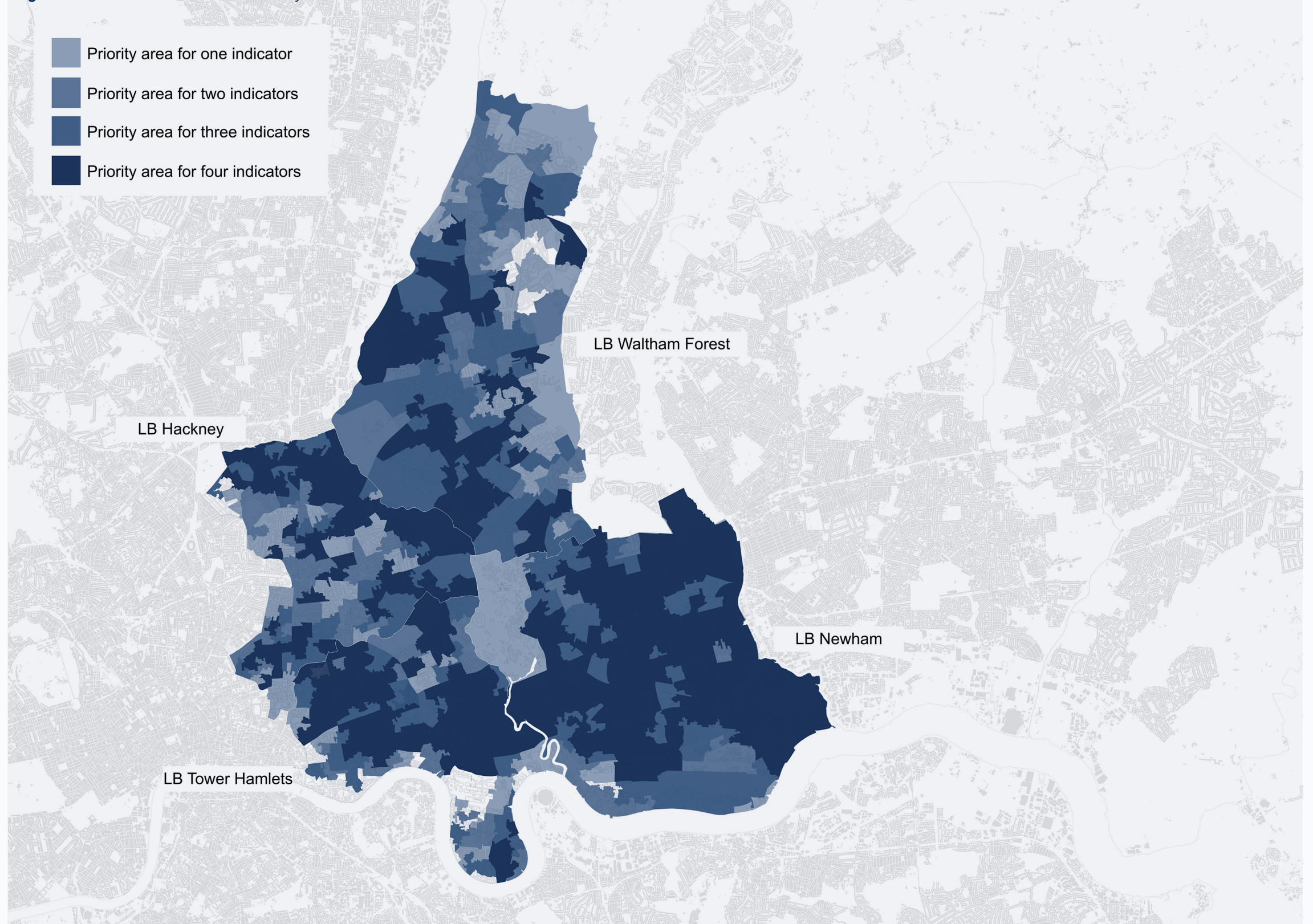
Figure 5 reports on levels of income security, benchmarking LSOAs against the following Greater London averages:

- Gross annual household income – £58,709 (ONS, 2023d)
- Economic inactivity due to looking after family or long term sick or disabled – 10% (ONS, 2021)
- Claimants in working households – 75% (DWP, 2022)
- Children in absolute low-income families – 55% (DWP, 2023)

There are 313 LSOAs out of a total 705 within the Growth Boroughs which fall below the Greater London average against all indicators within the 'Secure Income and Good Quality Work' domain. Newham has the highest number, but they are distributed across the Growth Boroughs.

77% of MSOAs within the Growth Boroughs have gross annual income below the London average; 75% of LSOAs have higher than average rates of children in absolute low-income families; 78% of LSOAs have higher rates of claimants in working households and 60% of LSOAs have higher rates of economic inactivity due to long term sickness or disability.

Figure 5: Secure Income and Good Quality Work



4.2 Livelihood insecurity in the Growth Boroughs

Genuinely Affordable and Secure Housing

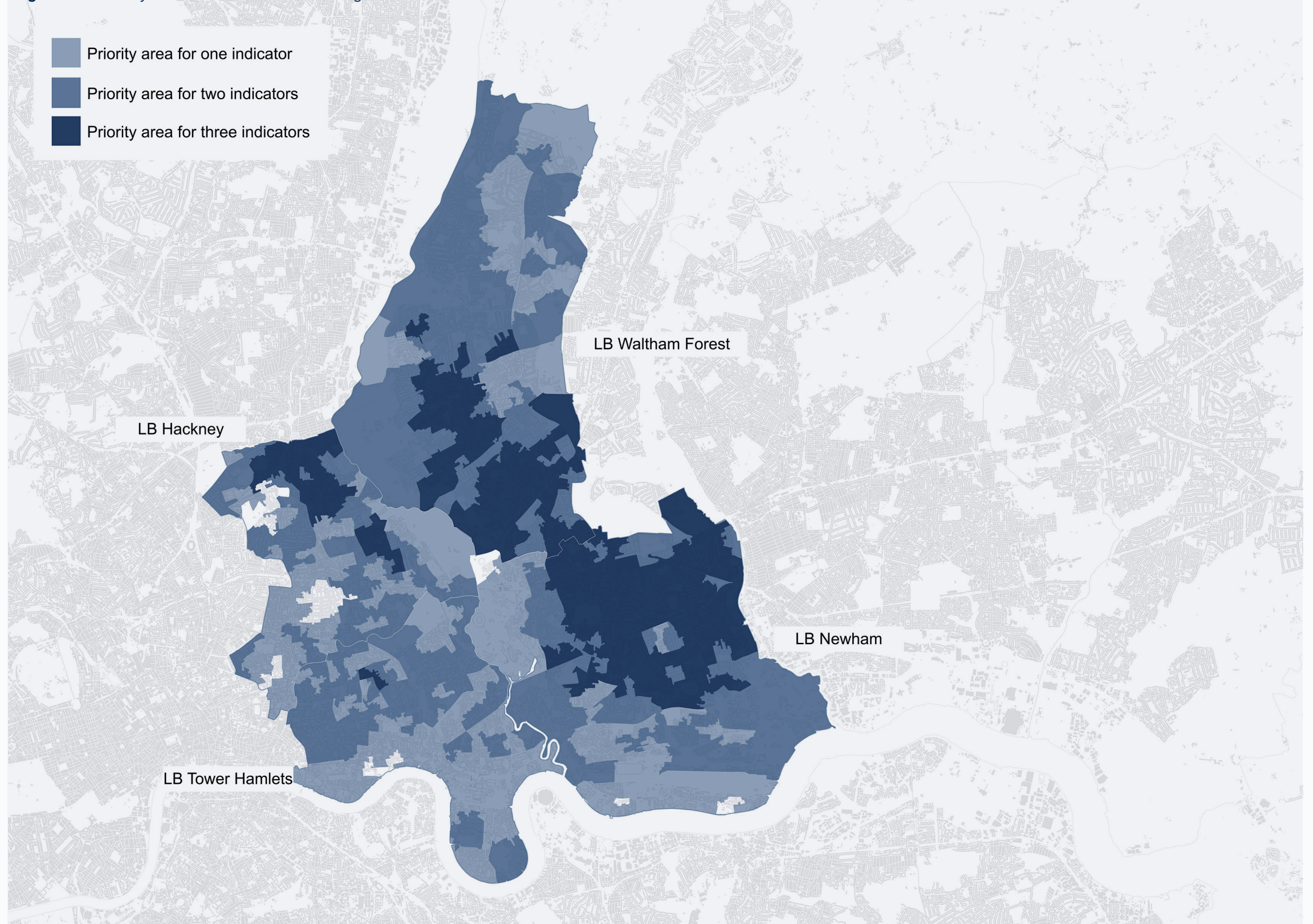
Figure 6 reports on levels of housing security, benchmarking LSOAs against average net income after housing costs, average percentage of residents in privately rented accommodation, and median energy efficiency scores for Greater London:

- Net annual income after housing costs – £32,497 (ONS, 2023d)
- People in privately rented accommodation – 29% (ONS, 2021)
- Energy efficiency score, EPC – 69 (Band D) (ONS, 2023e)

There are 172 LSOAs within the Growth Boroughs which fall below the Greater London average against all indicators within the Genuinely Affordable and Secure Housing domain. These are concentrated in Newham and the south of Waltham Forest.

86% of MSOAs within the Growth Boroughs have income after housing costs below the Greater London average; 63% have private rental rates higher than the Greater London average; 42% have poorer energy efficiency scores. High private rental rates and low incomes after housing costs are distributed across the Growth Boroughs, with poor EPC performance much more spatially concentrated in Newham and the south of Waltham Forest.

Figure 6: Genuinely Affordable and Secure Housing



4.2 Livelihood insecurity in the Growth Boroughs

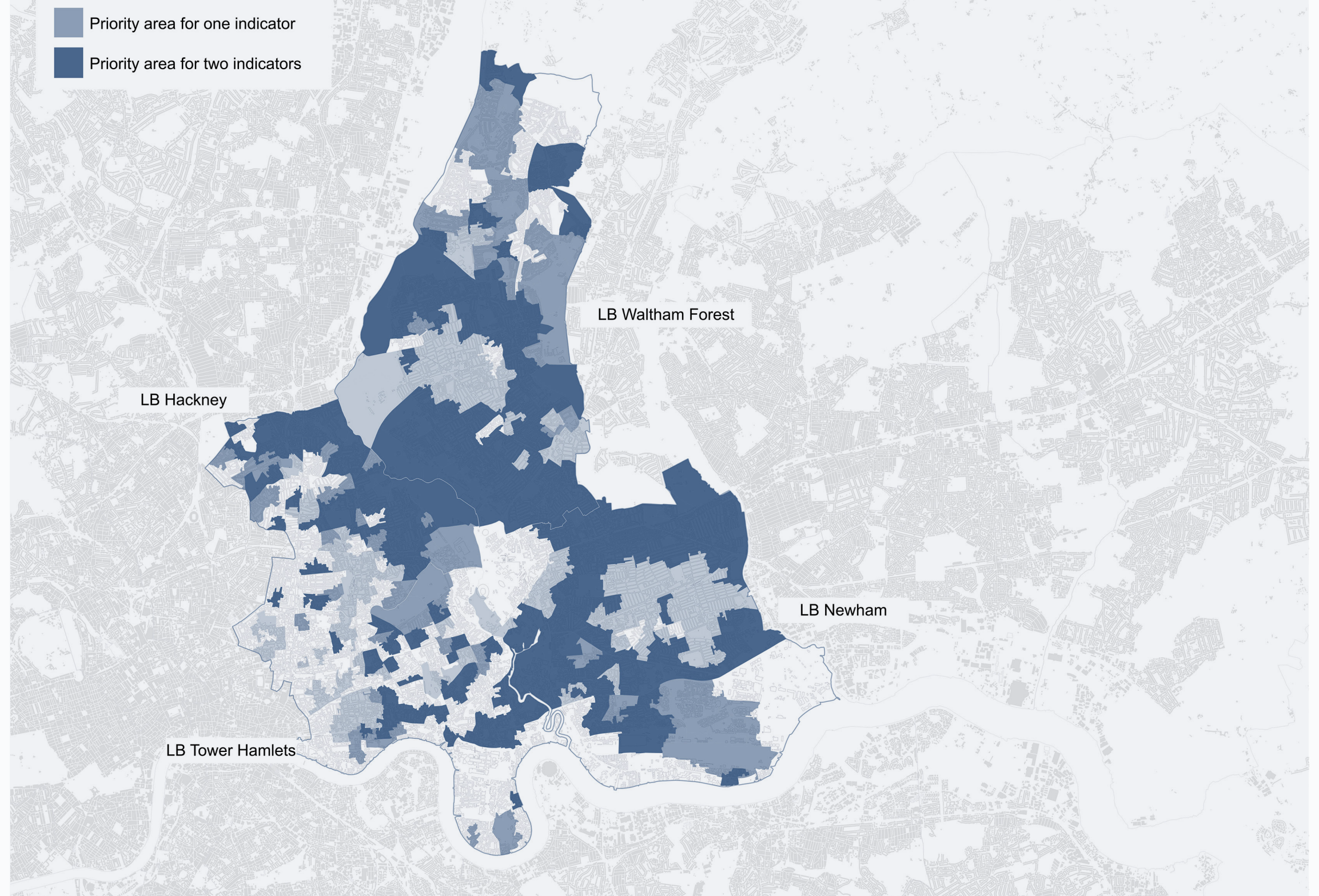
Food and Energy Security

Figure 7 reports on levels of food and energy security, benchmarking LSOAs against the proportion of households that are fuel poor compared to the average for Greater London (12%) and number of neighbourhoods that are within the 50% most deprived nationally (Priority Places for Food Index deciles 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) deciles for access to cheap, healthy, and sustainable sources of food:

- Proportion of fuel-poor households – 12% (DESNZ, 2023)
- Priority Places For Food Index (PPFI) – 7th decile (CDRC, 2022)

There are 258 LSOAs within the Growth Boroughs which fall below the Greater London average against all indicators of the Food and Energy Security domain. 70% of LSOAs have fuel poverty rates higher than the Growth Borough average and 52% have a PPFI of 5 or above.

Figure 7: Food and Energy Security



4.2 Livelihood insecurity in the Growth Boroughs

Access to Key Basic Services: Public transport, digital, green space and childcare

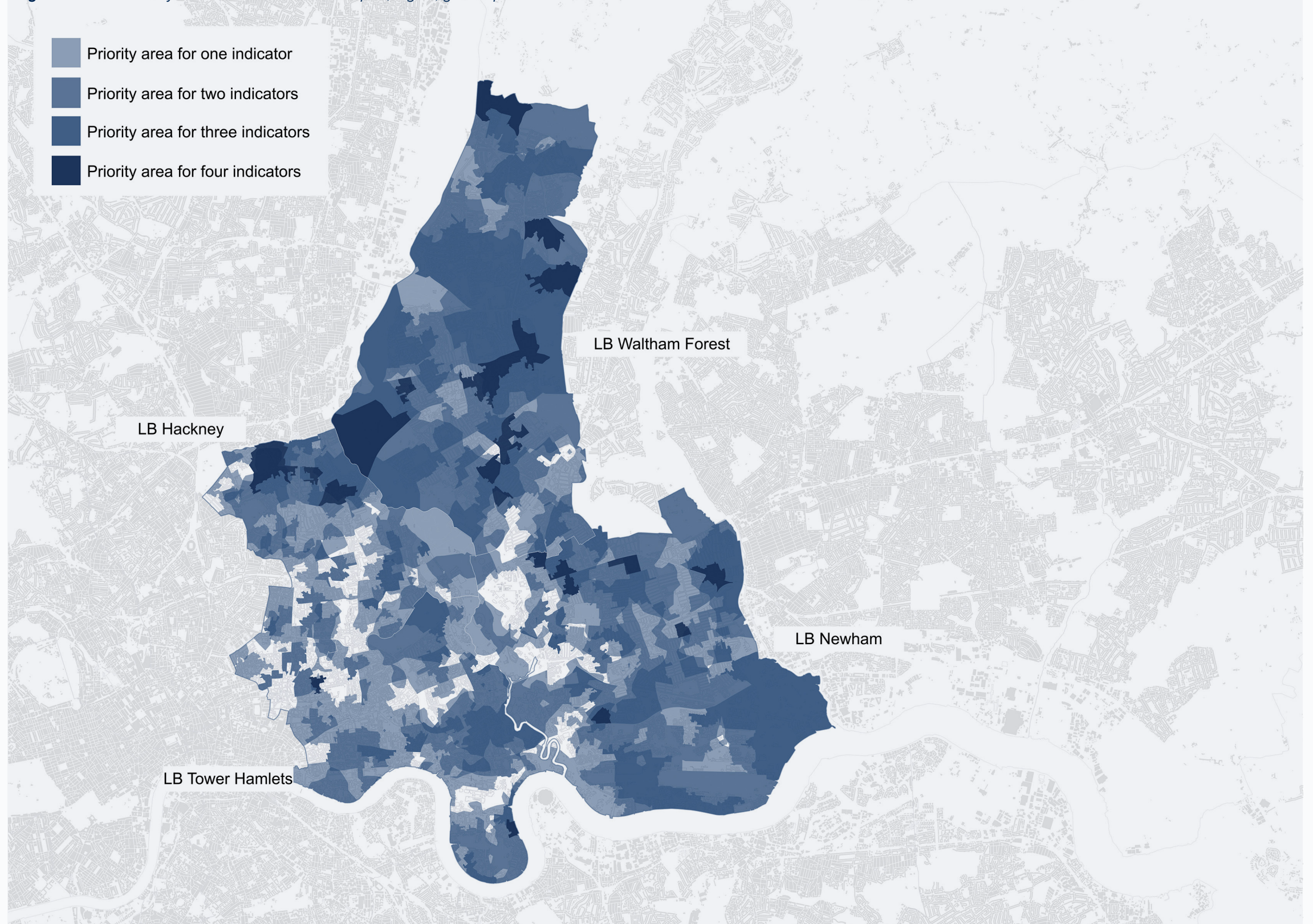
Figure 8 reports on access to two key basic services that support livelihood security – public transport and childcare. LSOAs are benchmarked against the following Greater London averages:

- Public transport accessibility level – contours 0-3 (Transport for London, 2016)
- Children aged 4 and under – 6% (ONS, 2021)
- Digital propensity – 96% (ONS, 2023a)
- Residents with no green space access – 54% (Friends of the Earth, 2020)

There are 104 LSOAs within the Growth Boroughs which fall below the Greater London average against all indicators within the Access to Key Basic Services domain and these are distributed across the Growth Boroughs, with some clustering in North Hackney and Central/East Waltham Forest.

Areas further from central London, including much of Waltham Forest and East Newham have poor public transport accessibility levels and 58% of LSOAs have worse access to green space than the Greater London average. 54% of LSOAs are home to more families than the Greater London average. In terms of digital propensity, most neighbourhoods perform above the Greater London average, with only 29% deprived in this indicator.

Figure 8: Access to Key Basic Services: Public transport, digital, green space and childcare



4.2 Livelihood insecurity in the Growth Boroughs

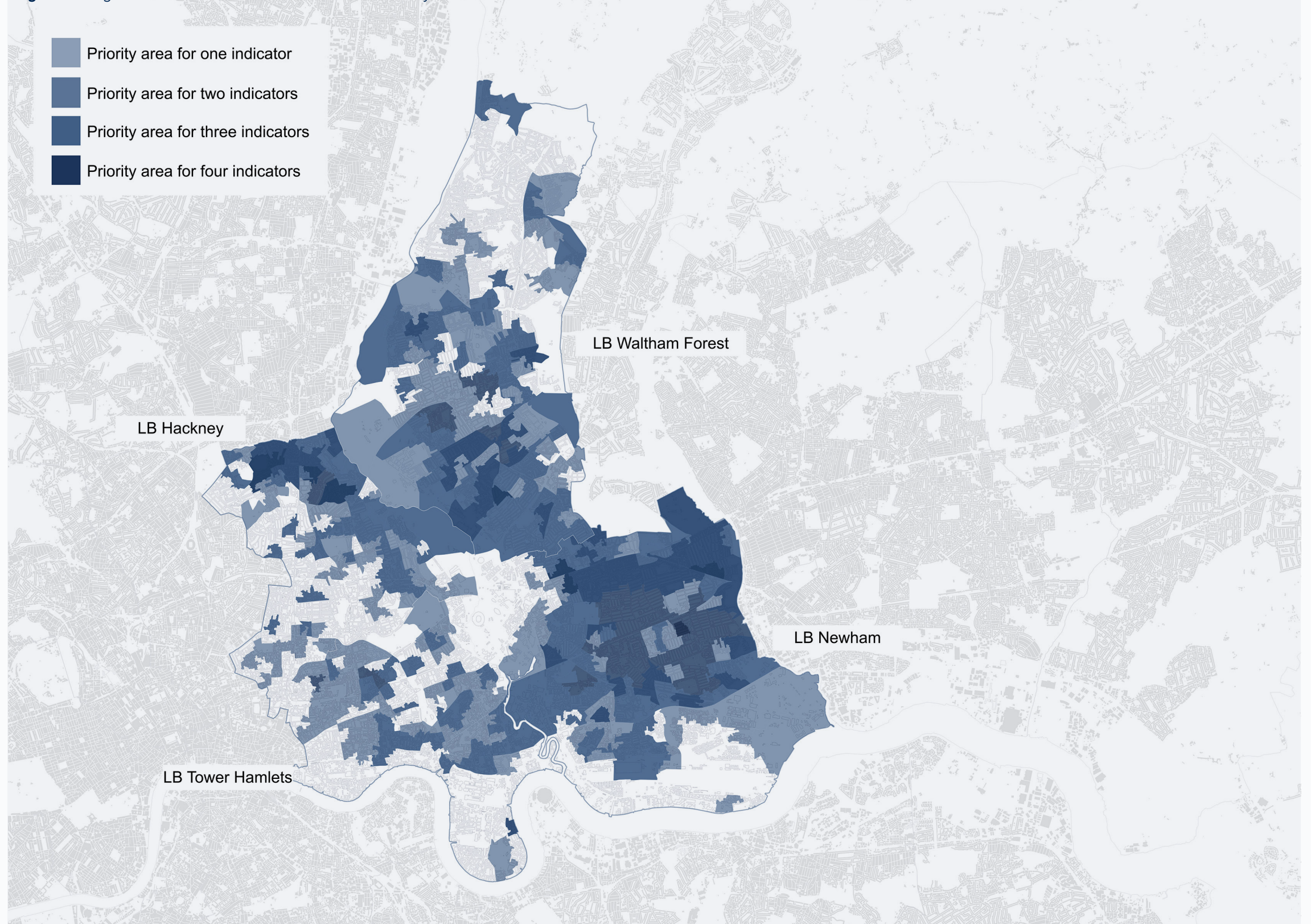
Neighbourhoods most at-risk of Livelihood Insecurity

In Figure 9, data are synthesized into one map showing the LSOAs experiencing the highest levels of insecurity across all indicators. This analysis identifies 10 LSOAs and 19,169 residents most at risk of experiencing multiple forms of livelihood insecurity and thereby most vulnerable to future economic shocks such as the cost-of-living crisis.

What do livelihood security measures tell us about the cost-of-living crisis?

This analysis shows how multiple forms of livelihood insecurity intersect to create long-term challenges as well as short-term vulnerabilities to economic shocks. It brings insecurity into sharper focus than focusing solely on headline metrics used to report on the cost-of-living crisis. In the context of major pressures on public spending, with local authorities hard hit, formulating policy problems based on lived experiences creates scope for more targeted responses that are likely to have greater traction and make for more effective use of limited resources.

Figure 9: Neighbourhoods most at-risk of Livelihood Insecurity



Action on Livelihood Security: Policy Principles and Prescriptions

This paper outlines how a livelihood security framework developed from qualitative research about the lived experiences of east London residents offers a different way of understanding what drives vulnerability to economic shocks. By taking account of the full set of assets, services, and networks that people depend on, and recognising how these are interdependent, the livelihood security framework brings policy responses into closer alignment with the realities communities face. Hyper-local insights about livelihood insecurity in east London identify neighbourhoods most likely to be vulnerable to economic shocks and provide local authorities with an alternative starting point for developing targeted responses to the cost-of-living crisis that will address the underlying, chronic issue of livelihood insecurity.

In this section we look at how lessons from this work in east London can be applied in other contexts to develop policy, strategy and interventions that support livelihood security by strengthening the underlying 'infrastructure' of assets, services and networks that people rely on. We propose four principles for developing policy and interventions that 'work in the direction' of livelihood security and suggest practical policy prescriptions that map to the dimensions of livelihood security identified by community-based, citizen-led research.

5.0

5.1 Policy principles

Table 4: Four Policy Principles

1. Start from lived experience	Investigate social policy problems from perspectives of people and communities that are affected to capture complexity and context e.g. multi-dimensional approach to livelihood insecurity.
2. Measure what matters	Frame challenges and formulate policy responses to reflect what matters to local communities.
3. Address gaps in local data	Call for gaps in local data to be addressed through new small-area livelihood insecurity statistics.
4. Work at hyper-local level	Experiences of insecurity are context specific; taking a hyper-local – or ‘meso’ -focus allows for targeted interventions.

5.2 Policy ‘prescriptions’

The following policy ‘prescriptions’ are examples of practical ways for local authorities and public agencies to create resilient local systems that support livelihood security. In this section we draw primarily on two models: Universal Basic Services (UBS), an emerging field of innovation and practice, and community anchor organisations, an established and well-evidenced approach to community empowerment and enterprise.

5.2.1 Universal Basic Services

UBS is built on the principles of shared needs, social solidarity and collective responsibility, and provides a safety net in times of crises irrespective of income or growth levels (Moore and Boothroyd, 2022). It lays the foundations for a prosperous and secure life, while also creating new opportunities for social and democratic participation. It is an approach to public services that focuses on how to operationalise livelihood security by addressing the interconnecting nature of resources people draw on through a whole-systems approach at the local level. UBS seeks to address the systemic issues and deep-seated structures that prevent people from leading fulfilling and flourishing lives. A Universal Basic Income (UBI), while important for those on the lower end of the income distribution, does not directly address these structures.

Universal Basic Services (UBS) are an infrastructure of seven free and widely accessible services: free at the point of need and accessible in ways that enhance the capacities and capabilities of citizens to navigate future waves of structural and socio-economic transformations such as climate change, automation, and the rise of artificial intelligence (Moore, Snower and Bruni, 2022). The seven UBS (Portes et al., 2017) are:

- **Transport:** public transport such as buses, trams, and trains.
- **Food:** healthy, nutritious and affordable food, community kitchens/supermarkets and other forms of food provision.
- **Information:** digital access including internet, devices, and skills.
- **Legal and Democracy:** legal services and wider access to civic participation and engagement.
- **Health & care:** Access to healthcare, mental health services, and adult social care.
- **Education:** Access to schools, nurseries, other education institutions and childcare.
- **Shelter:** Access to affordable housing and utilities.

There are currently several pilot studies and initiatives exploring the provision of free and universal access to public goods and services, with many examples of UBS applied in practice in the UK and globally. For example, in the UK, food initiatives in the form of community kitchens, community meals, community supermarkets, and free school meals, are aligned with the principles and implementation of UBS. In London, the Greater London Authority (GLA) allocated £135 million to provide free school meals for primary school children in state-funded schools for the 2023/24 academic year, a saving to families in London of £440 per year per child (GLA, 2023; GLA, 2024). Community supermarkets in Essex, Barking and Dagenham, and social supermarkets across the UK have established in recent years which subsidise surplus food and focus on reducing waste.

Initiatives in Brighton and Hove, Sussex, and Liege (Belgium) focus on the provision of healthy, sustainable, and organic foods by mobilising local food and agricultural systems. Local and visiting volunteers, part of the Sussex Gleaning Network in Brighton and Hove (Miller, 2022), collect surplus fruit and vegetables from farms to help people experiencing food poverty. The fruit and vegetables are sent to local charity partners such as FareShare (a charity targeting hunger and waste), who distribute them throughout their networks to cook and provide meals. In Liege, 28 food co-ops and 300 producers formed the Liege Food Belt, which sources organic staple foods both locally and sustainably (Beddington, 2023). ‘Breaktime Soup’ is one part of this programme where a non-profit organisation that aims to help long-term unemployed people into employment, produces organic soup with local produce for 5000 pupils in deprived schools, utilising sustainable transport to deliver the food, namely cargo bikes.

Elsewhere, digital inclusion pilots such as the ‘Connecting Communities’ project in Tower Hamlets, east London, which provided households with free internet access, devices, and training, have demonstrated the economic and health benefits of improving people’s access to education, employment, and other services (Moreno et al., 2021). A recent evaluation of the second phase of the pilot has reinforced these findings (Bernstock et al., 2023). Through their Inclusive Economy Service, the London Borough of Camden piloted a small-scale digital and transport UBS offer to see how free services impact people’s lives (Gould and Moore, 2021; Bidé and Dew, 2021).

5.2 Policy ‘prescriptions’

An evaluation of these interventions demonstrated beneficial impacts in terms of improving mental wellbeing due to less financial stress, reducing social isolation, increasing access to key services and employment opportunities. This approach was scaled-up into a larger digital inclusion project by the Good Work Camden programme which targeted 100 jobseekers (Morris, 2022). Initial results from this pilot highlighted improvements in access to opportunities in employment and education.

Tackling energy insecurity: social tariffs

From 2022, the UK Government implemented a strategy of energy price caps, one-off payments, and benefit top-ups, reflecting a compensatory distribution approach to rising energy bills. While these are essential to those on the lowest incomes, cash transfers alone are not sufficient to address the challenges of livelihood insecurity. Such an approach is failing in two key aspects. Firstly, it does not address the broader, chronic problem of livelihood insecurity. Secondly, a price cap system does not bring the added value to people in the form of a ‘social wage’ (defined as the value of the service as a replacement of income) or incentivising a just and fair transition (Moore and Boothroyd, 2022).

In the ‘shelter’ part of UBS, a utilities allowance (electric, gas and water) would be provided alongside zero rent and council tax exemptions for 1.5 million new social housing units (Portes et al., 2017).

Another element aligned with a UBS for energy is a ‘social tariff’ which would implement a pricing system based on energy consumption or subsidising costs for those on lower incomes. This has been advocated for by many organisations, MPs, and charities as well as formally proposed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) as part of a National Energy Guarantee (Chapman and Kumar, 2023). Using a ‘rising block tariff’ (RBT), household consumption of energy would be split into marginal prices. In the three-tier system below in figure 10, households would be entitled to ‘free basic energy’ with up to 1050 kWh of electricity and 2700kWh of gas for free, with charges being applied after exceeding those thresholds. The price at the intermediate tier would be the same as the 2021 energy price cap with the final tier charging a price 30% higher.

While this system matches to a UBS for energy and goes beyond the UK Government’s policy intervention of price caps, it does not account for the chronic problem of livelihood insecurity that goes beyond the cost-of-living crisis. Energy insecurity intersects with other elements described in this paper such as food, housing, employment, access to key services as depicted in the livelihood security model and analysis, which are excluded from their proposal. Therefore, a social tariff combined as part of a comprehensive shared infrastructure of services outlined in UBS including retrofitting could yield a transformative, efficient, and more effective policy response (Moore and Boothroyd, 2022).

Figure 10: RBT system for a social tariff

Electricity tiers (kWh)	Electricity prices	Change vs October 2012 price cap	Gas tiers (kWh)	Gas prices	Change vs October 2012 price cap
<1,050	Free	-100%	<2,700	Free	-100%
1,051–2,900	21p	0%	2,701–12,000	4p	0%
2,901+	27.3p	+30%	12,001+	5.2p	+30%

Source: The National Energy Guarantee (Chapman and Kumar, 2023)

Reducing energy costs: retrofitting

Complementing the ‘shelter’ element of UBS, a mass programme of retrofitting the UK’s housing stock – which is one of the most inefficient in Europe (Donkin and Marmot, 2024) – would help to reduce energy bills while also aiding the green transition and creating new job opportunities for people in their local communities (Moore et al., 2022). Retrofitting includes home insulation, triple glazing, and installation of heat pumps. In Waltham Forest, a holistic approach to housing is being used to assess the links between housing affordability and other areas like the cost of childcare as well as interventions that help tackle health inequality (Temple and Jump, 2023).

The benefits of UBS are not limited to the people who utilise the services through improved prosperity and livelihood security, but also extend to local authorities and the local economy. An integrated approach to service provision has the potential to significantly reduce costs, improve efficiency and allocation of resources, thus, enabling a better use of taxpayers’ money. Equally, by investing in and expanding peoples’ capacities and capabilities to participate economically and socially through greater access to employment, highstreets, healthcare, education, other key services, and social capital, we can improve local productivity. At a national level, it is fiscally possible to finance a programme of UBS. Percy and Reed (2021) have modelled how a reformed and simplified taxation system treating incomes equally would generate £33 billion for public services and £11 billion for net-zero every year, all of which would make significant progress to tackling the cost of living, improving livelihoods, levelling-up and driving us towards net-zero by 2050.

5.2.2 Community Power: Community Anchor Networks

Community anchors are independent, community-led, multi-purpose organisations concerned with economic and social development that furthers the interests of local communities. Community anchor organisations take a holistic approach to leadership and action on priority issues with a strong focus on local accountability, amplifying local voices, building the community sector, providing local services and support, and community ownership of assets (Locality, 2022; Henderson and McWilliams, 2017). Facilitating dialogue and partnership working between government agencies and grassroots actors is a key feature of community anchor organisations, which often emerge and develop

in the context of neighbourhood renewal, estate regeneration, and community enterprise programmes focused on enhancing opportunities for disadvantaged and marginalised areas (Thake, 2006; 2001). While it has received inconsistent attention from central government policymakers over the past two decades (Henderson and McWilliams, 2017), the community anchor model has been widely adopted in the UK, championed over several years by Locality, Local Trust, CLES, the Scottish Community Alliance, Building Communities Trust in Wales, and local authorities including Birmingham, Kirklees, and Leeds. Critics of the approach argue that community anchor organisations are part of a wider post-welfare policy agenda, primarily focused on urban areas, that has shifted responsibilities for public services and the management of communities from government to the private and third sectors without adequate funding models to meaningfully tackle structural inequalities (Mooney, 2010). However, practice-based case studies about the activities of community anchor organisations identify a wide range of sustained impacts including greater community resilience, improved health and wellbeing outcomes, reductions in loneliness, employment and development opportunities for marginalised groups including women and minority ethnic populations (Locality, 2022; CLES, 2009).

In east London, the Communities Anchor Network (CAN) is a co-ordinated partnership of communities in and around the Olympic Park, working closely with some of the larger Park partners, such as London Legacy Development Corporation. The CAN embraces the concept of ‘community power’, which New Local defines as “the belief that people should have a say over the places in which they live and the services they use. It is a growing movement – with communities across the country, and the world, working together to improve places, public services and each other’s lives.” (2023). To effectively embed this approach, community anchors need a strong diagnostic of local needs as well as a place-based understanding of the opportunities for communities to organise and respond to their local circumstances, as reflected in the emerging acceptance of citizen science and citizen-led evidence to inform policy in east London.

Conclusion

In 2022, the term ‘permacrisis’ – describing the feeling of living through an extended period of instability and insecurity resulting from a series of catastrophic events – was chosen by Collins Dictionary as the word of the year. Despite this acknowledgement of pervasive and chronic insecurity as a lived experience, political debates and policy responses to spiralling costs of living have continued to treat the ‘crisis’ as a critical moment requiring rapid, short-term solutions, and not as an enduring and entrenched feature of 21st century life.

The research presented in this paper shows that for households in deprived areas of east London, livelihood insecurity is a chronic problem that is becoming entrenched. This is despite almost two decades of unprecedented regeneration investment and traditional employment and income-based approaches to tackling deprivation, poverty, and inequality. We have demonstrated that adopting a definition and measures of livelihood security based on the lived experiences of east London communities provides a different starting point for designing policy responses and interventions to tackle the underlying causes, rather than the symptoms, of insecurity.

Acknowledging livelihood security is the key determinant of prosperity for people in east London foregrounds its critical importance for long-term, sustainable and resilient communities and local economies. Recognising that livelihood security is multi-dimensional and context specific creates space for policy responses and interventions that go beyond cash transfers and energy bill rebates, instead focusing on the underlying infrastructure that people rely on for their livelihoods. Our goal in sharing the livelihood security model developed by citizen social scientists, and an approach to measuring levels of insecurity using publicly accessible secondary data, is to provide transferable tools that can be used by local authorities and other organisations developing place-based regeneration, social value, or inclusive economy strategies.

6.0

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About us

The Institute for Global Prosperity

The Institute for Global Prosperity aims to rethink what prosperity means for people around the globe. The vision is to help build a prosperous, sustainable, global future, underpinned by the principles of fairness and justice, and allied to a realistic, long-term vision of humanity's place in the world. The IGP undertakes pioneering research that seeks to dramatically improve the quality of life for current and future generations. Its strength lies in the way it allies intellectual creativity to effective collaboration and policy development. Of particular importance to the IGP's approach is the way in which it integrates non-academic expertise into its knowledge generation by engaging with decision-makers, business, civil society, and local communities.

PROCOL UK

Prosperity Co-Lab (PROCOL) UK is an innovative initiative to develop transformational thinking and action on shared prosperity for the UK. The goal is to achieve a sustained shift in public debate, policymaking, investment and community action for shared prosperity. Led by the IGP at UCL, PROCOL UK brings together citizen-led research, cutting-edge academic research, and collaborative, multi-stakeholder partnerships with communities, government, business and researchers, to develop new forms of knowledge and new ways of working that bring about transformational change. PROCOL UK's work addresses the question 'What are the pathways to shared prosperity in the UK?' in the context of pressing challenges facing British society: climate emergency, rising social and financial inequalities, Brexit, austerity and public services, and the changing nature of work in the era of AI and robotics. They work across major challenges to identify the new forms of knowledge, governance and ways of working for shared prosperity.

London Prosperity Board

The London Prosperity Board is an innovative cross-sector partnership established by the Institute for Global Prosperity (IGP) to rethink what prosperity means for London. The goal of the London Prosperity Board is to change the way decision-makers think and act for prosperity by developing new forms of evidence and new ways of working that make shared and inclusive prosperity a reality.

Partnering Regeneration Development Ltd (PRD)

PRD is a policy, research and strategy consultancy focused on delivering better outcomes for places and communities. They create evidence-led strategies and provide delivery advice to help local authorities achieve their potential. Their core areas of work include socio-economic research and strategy, community engagement and partnership structures. They empower their clients to implement transformative projects and drive positive, equitable change. PRD has been working in and around Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park for over a decade, supporting the evolution of new approaches to inclusive economy in east London.



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