

Briefing Paper 1

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Putting Newham and Tower Hamlets on the SDG Map

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SDG framework and its relevance for London

In September 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of 17 time-bound and quantifiable goals were adopted by the United Nations and its 193 member countries (United Nations, 2019). Developed from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that preceded them, the SDGs (2016-2030), consist of 169 targets and 244 associated indicators that are universal and depend on the engagement of all countries, not just developing countries as focused on within the MDGs (Friedman and Gostin, 2016, p.14).

While the MDGs saw advancements in many countries in terms of national averages, concerns that they ignored disadvantaged communities and about rising inequalities in developed countries led to the SDG focus of 'leave no one behind' (Friedman and Gostin, 2016, p.14).

For the SDGs to be achieved, their integration and adoption within governments at all levels (national, regional and local) will be essential. While there has been much enthusiasm and effort at national and regional level and some limited work around the multiple domains of development within the SDG framework at city level (eg SDGs for Manchester, mapped by University of Manchester team), SDG mapping at local level remains absent (University of Manchester, 2018).

By focusing on boroughs across London, given the high concentration of people and significant challenges, such as employment, housing and food security, there will be a greater opportunity to attempt to address these problems and mobilise change from a local level as part of the global movement.

This research, funded by a UEL-London Scholar grant, aims to track the progress for the London boroughs of Newham and Tower Hamlets using the overarching and inclusive development framework of the SDGs through its 17 goals and 169 indicators. The first phase of the project brought together a team of 6 academics and 17 students. The objectives were:

1. Develop SDG mapping toolkit that carries out a statistical review at borough level to indicate the current gaps, opportunities and challenges the boroughs face in achieving the SDGs by 2030.
2. Identify and map the progress of the SDGs and its 17 goals and 169 indicators in Newham and Tower Hamlets.
3. Apply the SDG mapping toolkit in other contexts at a local level to transform how the SDGs are implemented and achieved.

Why Newham and Tower Hamlets?

Newham and Tower Hamlets are boroughs of great diversity, wealth and inequality. Their many strengths are overshadowed by poor living conditions, high unemployment, economic exclusion and inequalities in education, health and opportunities.

Newham – UEL’s home borough - and Tower Hamlets are boroughs located in the inner east part of London. Newham has one of the youngest populations in the country, evident in its dynamic culture and economy (Trust for London, 2019). Equally, Tower Hamlets is a place with a rich history which, from the beginning as a historic dock and manufacturing area, has grown and developed at a faster rate

than anywhere else in the United Kingdom (UK) (Trust for London, 2019).

However, both boroughs can also be painted in a different light. With 36% low-paid employees and 37% people living in poverty, Newham remains one of the most deprived boroughs in London despite its progress since 2011 in affordable housing and employment (Trust for London, 2019). Similarly, Tower Hamlets continues to have the worst unemployment and child poverty rates in London (Trust for London, 2019).

The SDGs offer a globally-agreed agenda for sustainable and inclusive prosperity that can help to tackle some of the borough’s most significant challenges. By deploying this universal yardstick for global development, the project will draw attention to the gaps, the opportunities and the challenges the borough’s face in achieving the SDGs by 2030.

Our SDG mapping toolkit

To be able to carry out a statistical review, the current SDG framework has been contextualised, for application at the sub-national level, and input into an excel spread sheet in preparation for data analysis. Any indicators that are inappropriate at the borough level are identified or altered to reflect the ethos of the goals and targets. Data is RAG-rated (Red, Amber, Green) to identify negative trends (Red), progress (Amber) and positive trends (Green). This process highlights where targeted interventions may be needed. Our toolkit also reveals where further work is needed to adapt the SDG framework, making it relevant for cities and their boroughs. ***The Table on page 3 captures data for SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production in both Newham and Tower Hamlets.***



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



SDG12, Responsible Consumption & Production, Newham and Tower Hamlets

Goal	UNSD Indicator Code	Target	Indicator	Custodian Agency(ies)	Partner Agency(ies)	Updated Tier Classification 2018	UEL Researcher	Borough	Measure	Provenance	Data	Relevance of measure to indicator (R, Y, G)	Rating in progress to goal (R, A, G)	Confidence in rating (R, A, G)	Rationale for choice of measure	
G12	C200203	12.2 By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources	12.2.2 Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP	UNEP	OECD	Tier I	LS	Newham		https://www.newham.gov.uk/Documents/Misc/Research-HouseholdSurvey8.pdf	49% rated street cleaning and 65% rated rubbish collection as excellent or good				UK Environmental Accounts 2018 do not record City or Borough level DMC.	
								Tower Hamlets	Does Borough collect DMC/capita statistics? Y/N	https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Borough_statistics/Research-briefings/BP2018_11_Environment.pdf	Figures released for April 2016 to March 2017 show that 8.8 million (refuse and recycling) collections took place over that period. The proportion of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting in Tower Hamlets is very low by national standards at 26.7 per cent ranking the borough 24th out of 33 London boroughs.					
G12	C120301	12.3 By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses	12.3.1 (a) Food loss index and (b) food waste index	FAO, UNEP		Tier II (a)/ Tier III (b)	LS	Newham	Number of businesses signed up to the 'Courtauld Commitment 2025' initiative on food waste. Is Borough tracking FL and FW? Y/N	London Enterprise Partnership Jamie Izzard, Board Secretary Tel: 020 7983 4420 Email: londonenterprisepanel@london.gov.uk https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/business_waste_final.pdf	Local authority collected waste (LACW): this includes all waste under the control of local authorities or agents acting on their behalf. It includes all household waste, street litter, waste delivered to council recycling points, waste from municipal parks and gardens, council office waste, Civic Amenity waste, and some commercial waste from shops and smaller trading estates where local authorities have waste collection agreements in place.					
								Tower Hamlets	Number of businesses signed up to the 'Courtauld Commitment 2025' initiative on food waste. Is Borough tracking FL and FW? Y/N	London Enterprise Partnership Jamie Izzard, Board Secretary Tel: 020 7983 4420 Email: londonenterprisepanel@london.gov.uk (Contact Ian Palmer PR Officer, WRAP 01295 819 677) https://resource.co/article/nine-london-boroughs-join-trifocal-food-waste-campaign-11746	Out of the nine boroughs, Tower Hamlets is one of the boroughs that is signed up to the focus on valuing food through TRIFOCA. TRIFOCA*, the city-wide pilot project aimed at helping Londoners reduce food waste while promoting healthy and sustainable eating and recycling of unavoidable food waste.					
G12	C120a01	12.a Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production	12.a.1 Amount of support to developing countries on research and development for sustainable consumption and production and environmentally sound technologies	Under discussion among agencies (OECD, UNEP, UNESCO-UIS, World Bank)		Tier III			NA							

Methodological challenges in tracking SDGs

1. Most data is drawn from the national or Greater London statistics. While the data quality has been high, the depth of detail at borough level is quite coarse. This has made it challenging to identify inequalities at a local level, which is essential and necessary to assess whether the 'leave no one behind' ethos of the SDGs is being met.
2. Some data has lacked detailed key information creating space for misleading interpretations of notable gaps. This is especially evident with the data related to poverty, education, gender equality, food security and inequality. In sum, there are extensive data gaps and doubts about how to interpret key indicators that need to be addressed to monitor the SDGs effectively at borough level.
3. For the 17 SDGs, there are 169 indicators established to help monitor and provide visualisations that permit comparisons amongst countries. However, not all indicators carry the same relevance at all levels, and some are inappropriate for the local level. Therefore, it raises the question of whether the SDGs at the local level need to be implemented through a territorial dimension to achieve the collective goal at any geographic scale

References

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