

THE MAGNIFICENCE OF CROYDON (AND THE INEQUALITIES)



THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE VIDEO

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH | ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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INTRODUCTION

RACHEL FLOWERS - DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

In December 2019, I first read about a virus that had transferred from animals to humans, a public health marker that all Directors of Public Health are interested in.

From January 2020, there were memos across the NHS and local government about this “novel virus” and at the end of January 2020, I, along with all Directors of Public Health had a phone call with the four Chief Medical Officers of the four countries; England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.



In February we started seeing people going into hospitals and, sadly, start to die of what became known as COVID-19.

In March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared an outbreak caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) a pandemic.

From February there were emergency processes put in place in Croydon Council and the local NHS to start to coordinate and try and reduce the transmission of this very infectious virus as part of an outbreak control plan. Croydon took advantage of pre-existing multi-agency partnerships and engaged with a wide range of stakeholders.

As a Director of Public Health, I have always been vocal about the impact of inequalities within Croydon and seeing COVID-19 disproportionately impact on those people and those communities

already experiencing inequalities, the focus of this year’s report is the impact of COVID-19 on inequalities through the experience of Croydon residents.

This year’s report takes the form of a video and a data document to the themes discussed in the video. The video report shows ‘The magnificence of Croydon during the COVID-19 pandemic’ highlighting the inequalities within Croydon and the impact of COVID-19 on the borough.

Through the voices of some of the people of Croydon we can remember the challenge that the start of a global pandemic brought, showing how communities came together in difficult and fast emerging circumstances providing an opportunity to acknowledge what we did as a community, while acknowledging that inequalities are there and are growing.

OUR POPULATION

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the inequalities which existed within the borough were of great concern, as discussed in previous annual Director of Public Health [reports](#).

The pandemic has highlighted and worsened those inequalities both nationally and within Croydon.

There are pockets of high deprivation within Croydon - with one small area ranking as the third most deprived area in London (out of 4,642 small areas) and approximately 10,000 residents of Croydon living in areas that are amongst the 10% most deprived areas of the country.

In England, there is a relationship between deprivation and life expectancy. In Croydon, females born in the most deprived areas have a life expectancy that is 6.2 years lower than those born in the least deprived areas.

For males, this gap increases to 8.4 years. Life expectancy for both men and women has dropped due to the pandemic.

An estimated 65% of Croydon's population have a non-White-British ethnic group. Compared to London as a whole, Croydon has a higher proportion of its population who are Black / Black British.

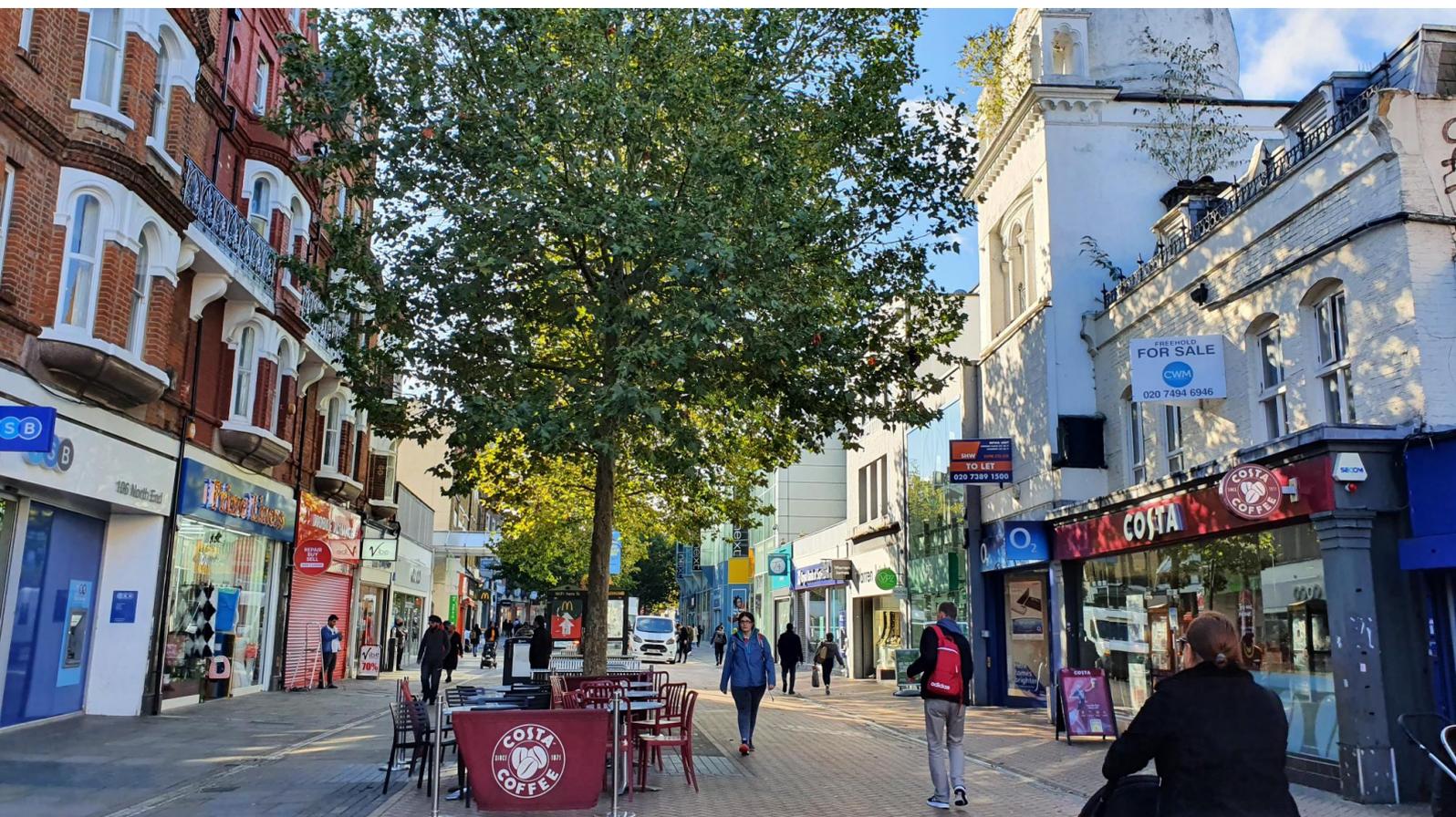
Croydon's non-White-British population are more likely to live in the more deprived areas of Croydon, with 48% of residents who are White British living in areas that are in the least deprived half of the country compared to just 26% of Croydon's non-White-British population.



According to the latest Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Croydon ranks **17** out of the **33** London boroughs in terms of deprivation – right in the **middle**.

“Croydon, like sadly London and England, had inequalities before COVID and COVID has driven a great big wedge in the inequalities.”

Rachel Flowers, Director of public health



“We were more vulnerable in Croydon to COVID because of those inequalities.”

Rowenna, teacher in Croydon

9% of Croydon’s population are aged 70 and above, over 40,000 people. More than 5,000 babies were born to Croydon mothers during 2020. The impact of COVID-19 on the life chances of these children is yet to be determined.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) reported in November 2021 that Croydon contains 128 nursing and residential homes – the largest number in London by some distance (the London borough with the second largest number of homes being Barnet containing 81 homes).

Many of our population both live and work within the borough and given the large number of care homes here employing over 3,000 staff and Croydon University Hospital employing over 3,600 staff, we know that there will have been many Croydon residents working in key people-facing roles throughout the pandemic.

Those working within care homes, hospitals and other front-line workers were more at risk of infection as they worked very closely with others and were unable to socially distance which increases the risk of exposure.



At its peak, there were almost 30,000 people living in Croydon regarded as ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’ who would have been particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

Other factors already in place made isolating particularly difficult. 17% of households in Croydon do not have any private outdoor space and 10% of built-up area postcodes are not within 900m / 10-minutes walk of a park or public garden.



“Lots of Deaf people didn't know what was going on with COVID. How are we expected to get more information, and where would we get it from?”

Jotti - resident from the Deaf community

“I was dealing with a residential home which obviously had people in it that were most at risk and most vulnerable.”

Jason, Care home owner

In 2019/20, more than 2,000 households in Croydon were in temporary accommodation and more than 2,500 households were owed a duty under the homelessness Reduction Act.

The Combined Homelessness and Information Network reported more than 300 rough sleepers in Croydon in the same year.

We know that there are over 3,000 people registered with the local sensory impairment team, approximately 51% being visually impaired and 49% hearing impaired. It can be difficult for this population to access services and information and some elements of the lockdown made this existing barrier more of a challenge.

ISSUES EXACERBATED BY COVID-19

The pandemic has caused financial inequalities to deepen with many of our residents losing income and relying on state-funded benefits to be able support themselves.

Research around the estimates of unemployment show that approximately 5% of the economically active population aged 16+ were unemployed in 2019/20, this increased to 7% in 2020/21. These increases were seen across London and England.

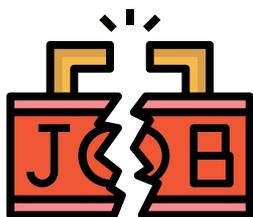
As would be expected, those living in more deprived areas of Croydon have higher proportions of their population claiming benefits and this gap has also increased during the pandemic.

“*The hard bit is the financial bit. That is the only thing I would actually worry about, that is the only worrying bit for me.*”

Donald - Owner, Yard Food

In addition to unemployment, up to the middle of September 2021, a total of 67,200 Croydon residents had been on furlough and 22,100 individual residents had claimed grants via the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

These financial difficulties facing the working age population has meant that the proportion of children eligible for free school meals has also increased during the pandemic, with more than a quarter of primary and secondary school pupils now eligible.



The **percentage** of working-age population claiming unemployment benefits (Universal Credit and JSA) **increased significantly** at the start of the pandemic and has remained higher than 2019 levels.

Prior to the pandemic, survey data tells us that 17% of Croydon adults felt lonely often, always or some of the time.

National studies into loneliness have shown that this increased during COVID-19, particularly during the January / February 2021 lockdown and that feelings of loneliness were higher amongst those from the least affluent populations, Black and Mixed ethnicities, disabled people and those with a long-term health condition and those aged 85+ or 16-24.

The number of domestic abuse offences increased sharply in Croydon during the first lockdown in 2020 and remains higher than 2019 levels.

The Combined Homelessness and Information Network reported an increase in the total number of rough sleepers in Croydon and across London in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20.

“Just before COVID, I had open heart surgery. I was quite concerned about the follow up.”

Priscilla - Volunteer

Since the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a greater demand for Mental Health services, particularly relating to anxiety, low mood, depression, suicide ideation and self-harm.

As such, the waiting lists for services have increased. To meet this demand there has been a significant increase in the number of virtual appointments while face to face appointments were maintained for the most vulnerable.

Similarly, there were interruptions to most of the health and wellbeing services, with some services such as Dentistry and Public Health Nursing being temporarily only accessible to those most in need and the most vulnerable.

“... I had COVID too myself - I had to isolate by myself in one room separately from my family for two weeks - I had to be patient and endure this.”

Jotti, Croydon resident



OUR COMMUNITY

“ *The pandemic revealed two things about Croydon. One was the sheer scale and depth of the inequalities that are faced here. And second was the absolute amazing community spirit that we also have.* ”

Rowenna, Teacher in Croydon

The Council's Gateway Discretionary Support team has financially supported 4,144 households for things such as food vouchers, emergency amenities and to move home.

The Education team has supported over 15,000 children eligible for free school meals across the pandemic by providing funding to local schools for food parcels and/or food vouchers and food and activity boxes throughout the holidays, as well as directly issuing vouchers and food parcels at the start of the pandemic when pupils were not in school.

In terms of financial support, 1,850 Test & Trace support payments were made between October 2020 and August 2021 to support those on low incomes required to self-isolate and by the middle of September 2021 22,100 individual residents had claimed grants via the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

“ *We had already started pre-planning thinking we were going into a lockdown.* ”

Markieu - Headteacher

“ *Our faith says, we are reaching out to you and you know we are gonna get over this.* ”

Petan - Christ Central Church



More than 2,500 devices , such as laptops, tablets etc, were issued by Croydon Council to help pupils continue their learning from home.



Croydon's voluntary sector and the infrastructure organisations have greatly contributed to the voluntary community action during the pandemic.

For instance, managing the network of food banks and food distribution outlets, providing online support services, reaching out to communities and individuals who became isolated and fearful during the lockdown.

It is reported that there were over 3,000 Mutual Aid volunteers attached to local Mutual Aid groups.

“And then I think it's just people... we step up, don't we?”

Sandy - Volunteer

“... was going there weekly to help sort the food donations from partners...”

Mary - Volunteer

The pandemic highlighted the diverse contribution of faith partners in Croydon by providing a tremendous opportunity to work more closely together around messages on infection prevention and control, COVID-19 misinformation, vaccine equity, access and uptake whilst providing their usual spiritual care in innovative ways.

This collaborative working has expanded to wider aspects of public health such as mental health e.g. 470 community members completed mental health first aid training sessions to support their community, including 53 faith leaders.



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

At the time of writing this report, over 57,000 residents of Croydon have tested positive for COVID-19, approximately one in every seven residents. This is likely to be an underestimate of the total number of people who have actually had the virus.

There have been more than 1,000 COVID-19-related deaths and these account for approximately 23% of all deaths since 7 March 2020, meaning that almost one in every four deaths in the borough was COVID-19 related.

The latest ONS analysis showed that certain occupation groups had higher rates of death involving COVID-19; elementary occupations (in males), process plant and machine operatives (in females) and caring, leisure and other service occupations (in both sexes).

In Croydon, the majority of our working population have professional occupations – these include health and education professionals such as doctors, nurses and teachers. Approximately a fifth work in those occupation groups with higher rates of death.



65% of Croydon adults have received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccination. 30% of those aged 12-17 have received their first dose and the booster programme is well underway.



“ *I don't know how a vaccine works but I want one because it's going to save my life.* ”

James - Volunteer

“ *...we, as a global community, achieved something in 6-9 months that we had never been able to do before.* ”

Nick - owner of Ludoquist

Across London, those living in the most deprived areas have experienced more than twice the amount of COVID-19-related deaths than those living in the least deprived areas.

Similarly, those with a Black / Black British or Asian / Asian British ethnic group have also seen almost twice the amount of COVID-19-related deaths than those with a White ethnic group.

Vaccination uptake in more deprived areas and those with a non-White British ethnic group is also lower across London when compared to those living in less deprived areas / those with a White British ethnic group.

When considering the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on general and mental health, finances and employment, as well as missed education for children and young people, the true impact of COVID-19 will not be seen for many years.

“...It’s been a time of awakening...”

Pastor Bola - His Grace Ministries

The pandemic has shone a light on structural racism, its impact on health and subsequent differences in health and health outcomes. Racial and ethnic differences in COVID-19 diagnosis and death have persisted through the pandemic.

Racism has impacted ethnic minorities. Poor cultural sensitivity of national public health messaging contributed to the stigma, fear and lack of trust amongst some minority ethnic groups.

“ Teenagers sharing beds with their parents; no internet connection available. Sometimes there are rat infestations; damp is pretty common. And if you say to someone or a family, not only do you have to live in those conditions, but now you must be locked down in those conditions for months. ”

Rowenna - Teacher in Croydon

RECOMMENDATIONS



The pandemic is not yet over, and it continues to impact our lives. In addition, we know that there are simple, effective things that we can do as part of our daily lives to improve our health and wellbeing.

This includes continuing to remember to adhere to hands, face and space COVID-19 measures.

These things apply on an individual level and a wider system level. They will help us to bounce back to be a fairer and more connected borough.

These are the Five Ways to Wellbeing:



CONNECT - We need to connect – as an individual making connections with others will enrich you. Croydon has an array of clubs and groups for people who share common interests - why not join one and connect. As a system continuing to maintain the brilliant partnerships formed over the last two years to reach out and serve the community in the most effective and efficient way.



BE ACTIVE - We need to be active - being active and moving benefits both our physical health and mental health - play a game, think about how you get places, do gardening, discover a physical activity that you enjoy - there is so much to choose from in Croydon. As a nation a lot more people are working from home – let's think of innovative ways that we can all stay active even whilst working from home.



TAKE NOTICE - Take notice and be present in the here and now – being more aware of the present moment and reflecting on your previous experiences, will help you appreciate what matters most to you. Taking a moment to appreciate the little things, a smile, some fresh air, the hubbub of daily life. The pandemic has taught us that we cannot just do business as usual. We need to take notice of the world around us including inequalities that exist and prioritise opportunities to address these as a system.



KEEP LEARNING - Learning can be fun and can help to make you more confident -let's not forget all that we have learnt over the pandemic and utilise this learning to implement the changes that will make a difference.

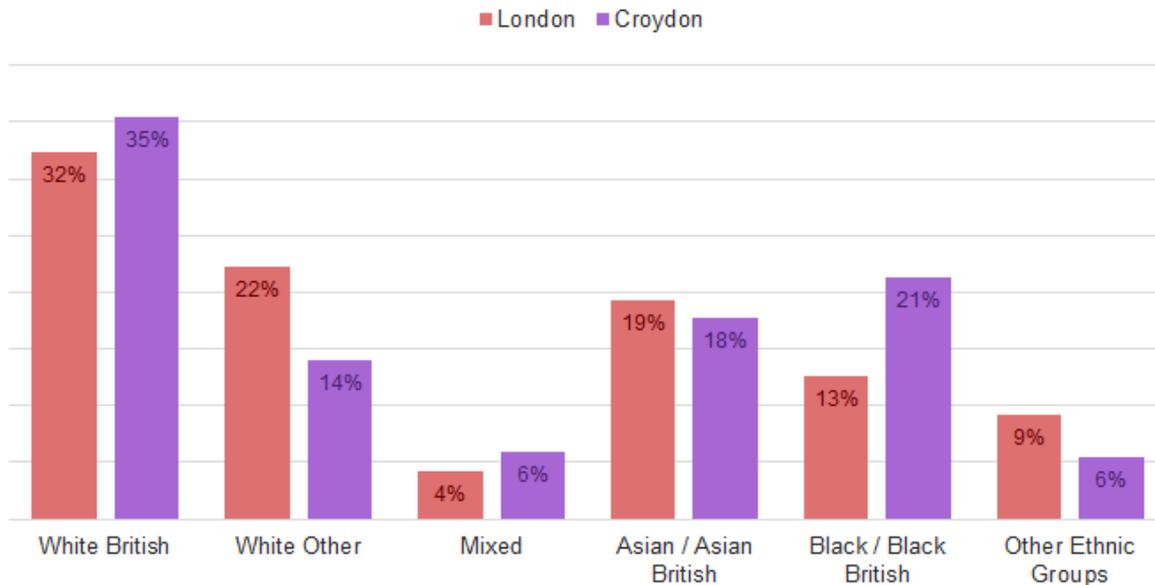


BEING GENEROUS – Doing small acts of kindness for other people whether that be through giving your time, with your words, or through your deeds- such as signing up for volunteering will support you to feel good. Despite current financial struggles, we must all work towards creative solutions to achieve better outcomes.

POPULATION STATISTICS

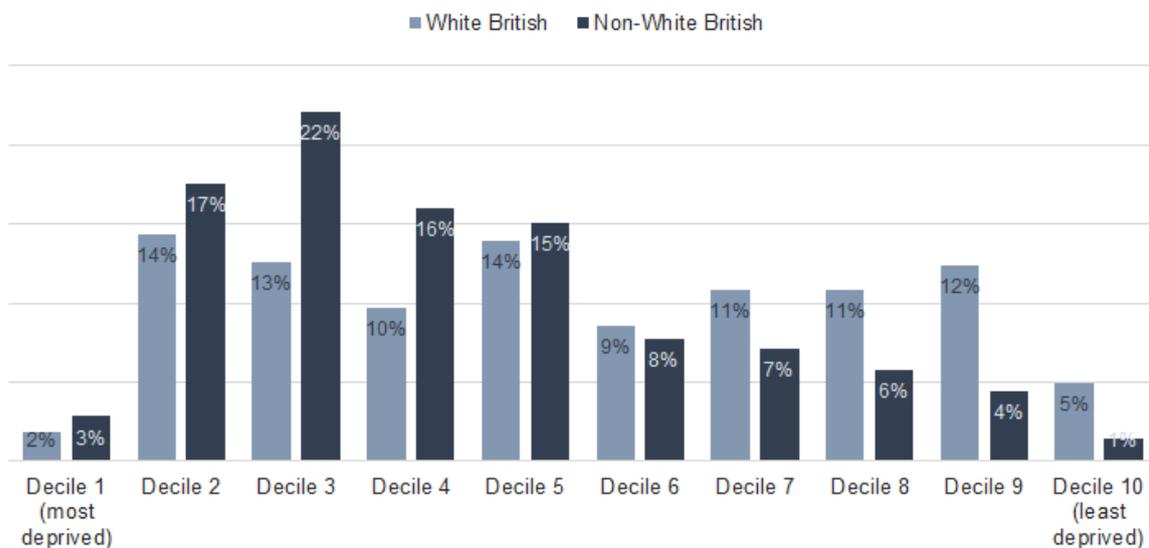


Estimated population of Croydon and London by ethnic group



Source: National Immunisation Management Service, excludes those where ethnicity is recorded as Not Stated

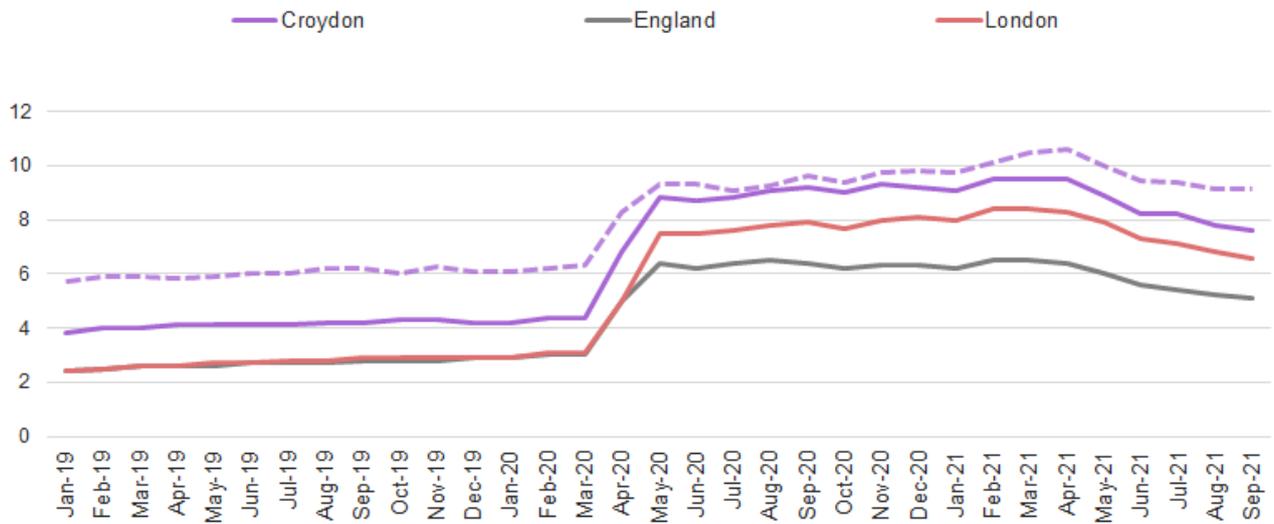
Estimated population of Croydon by ethnic group and deprivation decile



Source: National Immunisation Management Service, excludes those where ethnicity is recorded as Not Stated and Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019)

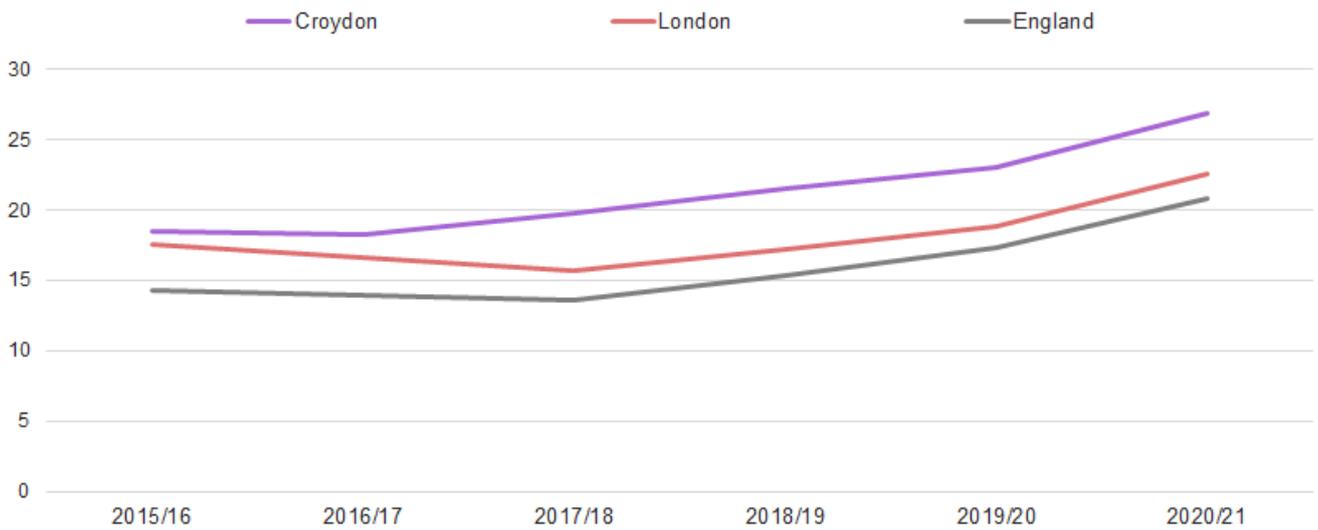
Due to rounding, figures may not equal 100%

% of working age population claiming benefit principally for the reason of being unemployed



Source: Claimant Count, from NOMIS

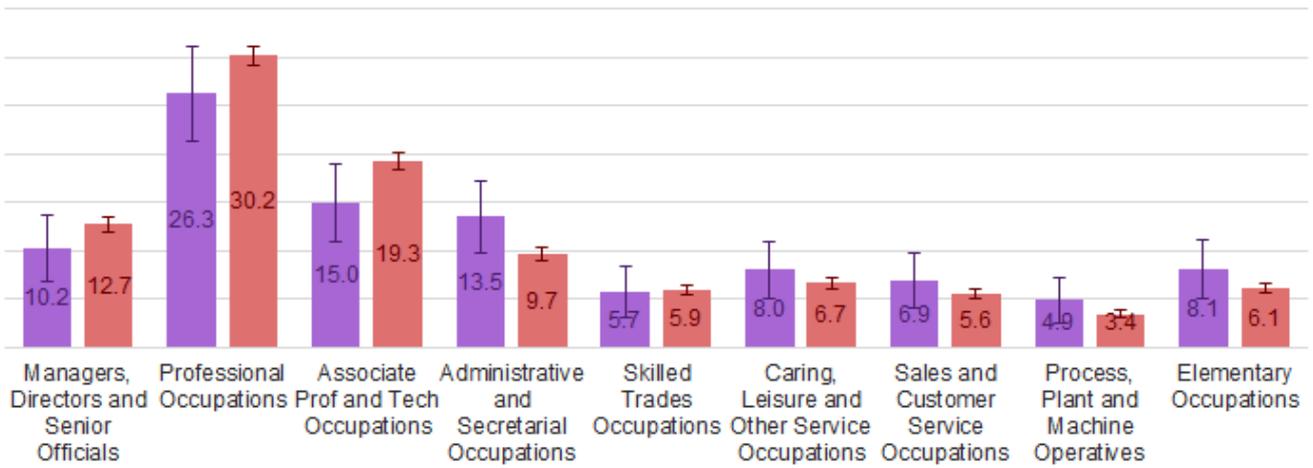
% of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals



Source: School pupils and their characteristics, Department for Education

Estimated proportion of employed population by broad occupation group, June 2020-July 2021

■ Croydon ■ London



Source: Annual Population Survey, from NOMIS



REFERENCES

Further information regarding the health and wellbeing of Croydon's population can be found on the Croydon Observatory:

<https://www.croydonobservatory.org/health-wellbeing/>

Indices of Multiple Deprivation

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

Population estimates - Taken from National Immunisation Management System. Restricted data provided by UKHSA

Life expectancy

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/public-health-outcomes-framework>

Clinically extremely vulnerable Restricted data provided by NHS Care homes

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/files/cqc-care-directory-zip>

Births

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/2020>

Access to green space

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/accesstogardensandpublicgreenspaceingreatbritain>

Housing

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

Rough sleeping

<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>

Benefit Claimants

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/ucjsa>

Furlough

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-coronavirus-covid-19-statistics#coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

Self Employment Income Support Scheme

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-coronavirus-covid-19-statistics#self-employment-income-support-scheme>

Free school meals

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>

Loneliness

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/public-health-outcomes-framework>

<https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-10/Active%20Lives%20Adult%20Survey%20May%202020-21%20Report.pdf?>

COVID cases and vaccination

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

COVID-related deaths

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/datasets/deathregistrationsandoccurrencesbylocalauthorityandhealthboard>

Unemployment

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/umb>

Occupation

[https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19relateddeathsbyoccupationenglandandwales/deathsregisteredbetween9marchand28december2020#:~:text=elementary%20occupations%20\(66.3%20deaths%20per,per%20100%2C000%20males%3B%20848%20deaths\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19relateddeathsbyoccupationenglandandwales/deathsregisteredbetween9marchand28december2020#:~:text=elementary%20occupations%20(66.3%20deaths%20per,per%20100%2C000%20males%3B%20848%20deaths))

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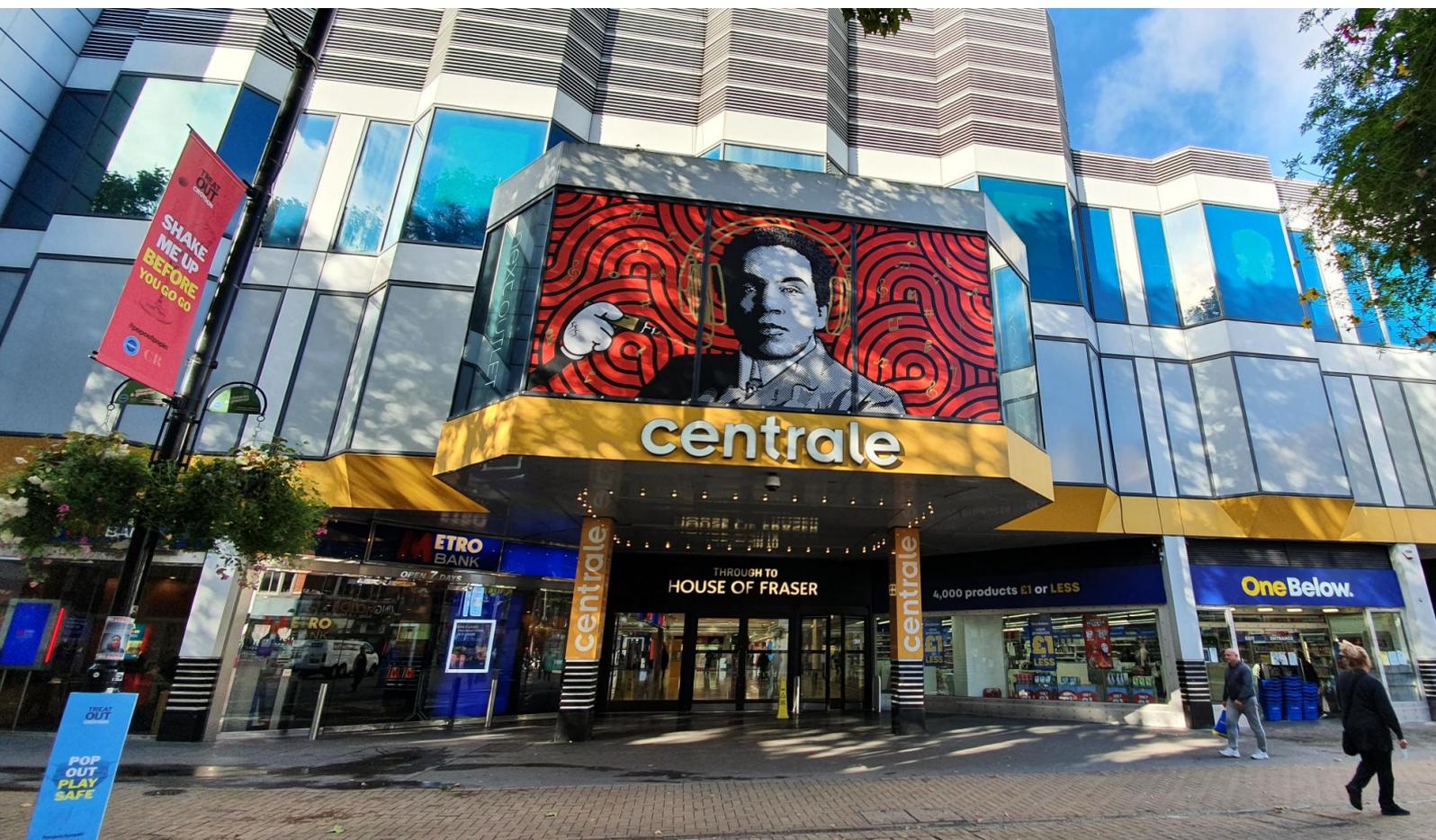
<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/apsnew>

COVID-19 mortality and vaccination

<https://analytics.phe.gov.uk/apps/chime/>

Domestic abuse

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/domestic-and-sexual-violence-dashboard>



The cost of the video report is funded through the COVID-19 Contain Outbreak Management Fund.

Watch the Croydon video accompanying this data document on Croydon Council's YouTube channel:

www.youtube.com/user/croydoncouncil

My sincere thanks and gratitude to everyone who took part in the video who are named in the photos below, and to Rise Media.

Thanks also to colleagues in Croydon Council who contributed to compiling the video and data:

- Damian Brewer - Public Health Principal, who provided the British Sign Language support in the video
- Dr Jack Bedeman - Public Health Consultant
- Denise Dixon, Susan Mubiru and Bevolly Fearon - Public Health Principals
- Carol Lewis - Senior Public Health Intelligence Analyst
- Denise Malcolm - Senior Communications Officer
- Bethan Crowden - Communications Officer



Markieu



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Jotti



James



Jason



Sandy



Mary



Petan