

**GREATER  
LONDON  
AUTHORITY**

**2022 Civic Data Innovation  
Challenge: Relationship Portfolio  
Mapping**

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# 1. Introduction

This report is prepared for the Greater London Authority Communities and Social Policy Unit following Grant Funding in respect of the 2022 Civic Data Innovation Challenge. The grant funding covers the period January to May 2023 (the programme ran from November 2022 to May 2023). The project was undertaken through a collaboration between Tapestry Innovation Ltd and the Institute for Connected Communities based at the University of East London. This project looks in depth at the issue of data and information flows informing place-based approaches and practices to enhance community safety, with a specific focus on children's and young people's safety within the London Borough of Islington. In other words, we want to see the better use of data to protect as many of our children from harm as possible.

Our working hypothesis is that neighbourhoods strong in social fabric and relationships of trust across the service provider landscape, embracing public participation, are facilitated through the co-production of information architectures that allow for effective flows of civic data to stakeholders. Therefore, this exploratory project aims to investigate this data challenge at the borough level through three lenses:

- **Community action.** This includes the degree to which residents feel empowered to act on local issues, in this case, community safety with a particular focus on young people.
- **Trust and social cohesion.** This considers the degree to which residents feel that they have access to trustworthy sources of information concerning local issues.
- **Social support.** This includes cross-organisational collaboration between anchor organisations and key stakeholders.

In practice, this project aims to understand, from the perspectives of key public institutes in the London Borough of Islington, how flows of community safety data increase protection and reduce the risk of violence in communities. Community safety data is the data flow for each organisation that is considered in the context of the analysed system, that is, the London Borough of Islington.

## ***What is relationship portfolio mapping?***

Relationship portfolio mapping is a visual representation of a client's organisational chart that gives an idea of the kind of connections and influence that each entity has over another. In summary, it is an informative way to describe each of the different entities' social capital.

## 2. Background and context

### *Previous and current research and innovation*

Islington's new Youth Safety Strategy for 2020–2025 builds on the successes achieved in recent years, focusing on new initiatives, innovations, and models to ensure that Islington remains a national leader in youth safety. The aim of the strategy is to make sure that the partnership can make effective responses at all stages of a child's and young person's development. The Strategy adopts a public health model, which means taking an evidence-based and intelligence-led approach to reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience among young people and their families, and the wider community.

We know that many young people living in Islington have become involved in offending because of adverse childhood experiences, trauma, discrimination, and exploitation. That is why it is essential to us, whilst simultaneously protecting the public and victims, that we do what we can to steer these young people on to the right path. We can only do this by working together as a partnership and alongside these children, their parents/carers, and the wider community. We know that organised crime groups target certain cohorts more, as they deem them to be more vulnerable.

Islington's percentage of young people is slightly above the London average, and each of the different issues observed, except for youth permanently excluded from state-funded secondary schools, have values above the London average, in some cases noticeably so, as is the case of NEETs and not-knowns and, especially, youth suspended from state-funded secondary schools.

A multi-agency steering group coordinated the development of this strategy, incorporating the voices of young people and families, and a comprehensive needs assessment led by Public Health, as well as a literature review, expert insight and learning from other areas. The Fairer Together Borough Partnership was launched in February 2020. The aim is to bring together the collective energy and resources of key partners across the borough to challenge inequality and make Islington fairer for all its residents (but especially for the more disadvantaged). The initiative is built around three key principles:

- Building strengths
- Building relationships
- Building community

For accountability purposes, the delivery group is aligned with, and reports to, the Youth Justice Services Management Board, which is Islington Council's governance board for matters related to youth safety and youth justice.

To help steer and maximise our actions into a doable and solution-focused project, the team worked on several iterations of our problem statement (detailed below) until we achieved consensus on bounding the substantive civic data challenge and what aspects we could realistically address within a five-month period. Illustrated below are the emergent statements that came out of our deliberative steps. Table 1 shows what we know via open

data sources about children and young people at risk of violence and/or living in adversity in the London Borough of Islington.

**Table 1. Open-source data on children and young people at risk of violence and/or living in adversity in Islington, 2023**

Measure	Total (Islington)	Percentage (Islington)	Percentage (London)
Estimated young population	83,385	33.61%	32.43%
Young people affected by knife crime	424	0.58%	0.39%
Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children looked after	55	0.10%	0.05%
NEETs or not knowns (16–17-year-olds)	130	4.07%	2.54%
CYP referred to social services	2,370	5.48%	5.44%
SEND in secondary schools	1,390	10.60%	10.25%
Suspended from state-funded secondary schools	1,340	10.22%	4.91%
Permanently excluded from state-funded secondary schools	1	0.01%	0.06%

The London Borough of Islington offers in-house and commissioned partnerships for its Universal Youth and Youth Hub Zones provisions. The purpose of its Youth Offer is described as Early Help, Education, PSED (Personal, Social and Emotional Development), L&E (Leisure and Entertainment) and Prevention of Crime. The broader Youth Offer is not provided under a single brand of arrangement that encompasses all providers, and it works in partnership with youth-based provider networks.

Personal Development Programmes, Citizenship Programmes, Sports, Outdoor Education and Physical Activity Programmes, Youth Based Accredited Programmes and Junior, Transition and/or Play Work Programmes are commissioned to VCS organisations.

Health, Sexual and Substance Misuse Programmes and Cultural, Creative and Performing Arts Programmes are offered in partnership, whereas Careers Programmes are offered exclusively by the local authority. Targeted programmes (such as programmes focusing on girls or young carers) in Islington are Commissioned to VCS.

***How can civic data be used to help strengthen community safety for children, young people, and families?***

The summary below details the key messages from the rapid evidence review on the different benefits and challenges in keeping communities safe through the use of open-sourced data:

- Although it is still emerging, we are seeing evidence of the transformative potential of open data in shaping the future of our civic life. It is at the local level that government most directly impacts the lives of residents – providing clean parks, fighting crime or issuing permits to open a new business (Goldstein & Dyson, 2013).

- Families would feel most empowered if involved in an ongoing co-operative relationship with state welfare and civic authorities through shared interaction with their data (Bowyer, et al., 2018).
- By applying Human-Data Interaction and giving supported families direct access to see and manipulate their own data, both during and outside of the support engagement, the locus of decision making could be shifted towards the data subject (Bowyer, et al., 2019).
- Data can be used for civic action and policy change by communicating using the data clearly and responsibly to expose hidden patterns and ideologies to audiences inside and outside the policy arena. Communicating with data in this way requires the ability to ask the right questions, find or collect the appropriate data, analyse, and interpret that data, and visualise the results in a way that can be understood by broad audiences. Combining these points transforms data from simple points on a map to a narrative that has meaning (Williams, 2015).
- As civic leaders scale engagement practices to account for more diverse perspectives, making sense of the large quantity of qualitative data becomes a challenge. Civic leaders could benefit from training in qualitative data analysis and simple, scalable collaborative analysis tools that would help the community form a shared perspective (Mahyar, et al., 2019).
- Public management sees efficiency combined with organisational and technological effectiveness as the goal of open government and big data. Civic technology sees modern information and communications technology advances in government as a new kind of innovation involving the interdependency of technological and social changes that bring about greater public participation and accountability (Ingrams & Melitski, 2019).
- Data can be used to map crime visually, presenting crime patterns on major roadways and streets to geographically represent crime attractors/generators and human movements that point at directionality embedded in city infrastructures. This technique is contrasted with other crime-mapping methods to demonstrate the utility of this approach when analysing the rate and velocity of crime patterns over time and in space (Spicer, et al., 2016).

#### Challenges:

- (Public) Safety is a difficult performance criterion to measure at the scale of the local neighbourhood and street. Much existing data are at the metropolitan scale, rather than at fine-grained local scales (Hawken, et al., 2019).
- Government and developers may increase choice by creating consumer-friendly apps, but this does not ensure that Volunteered Geographic Information (VGI) offers an act of civic participation. The burden is placed on the contributor to make it so (Sagiambut & Sieber, 2016).
- Tensions between surveillance and protection in circumstances where personal data are collected for security purposes are negotiated, and they require safety applications and practice, as well as a guiding framework (Yoo & Dourish, 2021).

- How much detail the public are entitled to expect from their criminal justice agencies (regarding the personal data that is collected from them), and how much those agencies should withhold, remains a contentious area in the UK (Sampson & Kinnear, 2010).

### ***Problem statement***

Vulnerable, at-risk, and socially excluded children and young people (aged 0–25), in London and throughout the UK, face an unprecedented intersection of problems and ‘toxic’ conditions. These can include poverty; parenting difficulties; domestic violence and abuse; poor mental health; child criminal exploitation; poor health and social care; being NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training); being excluded or at-risk of exclusion; fear of violence; fear about the future; and, generally, a paucity of positive relationships. To address this concern, the project team devised a problem statement to help frame our enquiry into a solution-focused project that is doable, and that tests our initial idea that there are deep-rooted problems with data management and sharing.

### ***Iteration 1***

Neighbourhoods that are strong in social fabric and relationships of trust across the service provider landscape (which embraces public participation) have better outcomes, but system leaders struggle to achieve whole system/whole place approaches to local service delivery. This project will co-design the information architecture necessary to help facilitate this.

### ***Iteration 2***

With a system problem, no one in the system has the willingness and capacity to fix the system. Are public bodies meeting their statutory responsibilities to address safety in their community?

### ***Iteration 3***

There is a whole-system problem with the lack of ‘data transparency’ of routinely collected performance data (e.g., impact/outcomes) held by public bodies – a formally established organisation that is (at least in part) publicly funded to deliver a public or government service – who jointly have responsibility for preventing, protecting and promoting community safety at a Ward level.

### ***Iteration 4***

The GLA Civic Data Project acknowledges that civil society groups and volunteers working at Ward level need better access to data and information from their local public service providers. Once this current problem of the lack of place-based M&E data transparency and accessibility is solved, it would contribute to: (1) better democratic engagement and community empowerment; (2) collaborative relationships and social capital; and (3) improved outcomes within public and social infrastructure – which are the top 3 themes in the GLA Civic Strength Framework for London.

### *Iteration 5 (A combination of the 4 statements above)*

Research shows that neighbourhoods that are strong in social fabric and relationships of trust across the service provider landscape produced better outcomes in keeping residents safe from harm. However, there is a whole-system problem with the lack of transparency and accessibility to routinely collected data held by public bodies. The GLA Civic Data Programme acknowledges that Civil Society Groups and volunteers working at Ward level need better access to data and information from their local public services. If effectively resolved, this would contribute to: (1) better democratic engagement and community empowerment; (2) helping to build relationships and social capital; and (3) improved outcomes within public and social infrastructure.

### ***Profusion Workshops***

Profusion served as the Learning Partner for the team. Profusion is a London-based company which offers data consultancy for other companies and projects. Their flagship is the Data Academy, through which Profusion offers an in-depth exploration of data collection, data management and data analysis that allows different companies and projects to unlock the full potential of available data. Through our experience with Profusion, we were encouraged and supported to reflect on different aspects of our project, which followed the workshop series programme. Later in this report, the most pertinent workshops supporting our project are highlighted and discussed. The golden threads that ran through each of the workshops were 'problem solving' and 'communication'. Accordingly, Profusion explains:

**Problem solving:** Establishing a strategy for creative thinking to help overcoming present issues and stimulate creative thinking (and unleash creative powers) to identify general solutions, and to recontextualise the solution around the specific problem we aim to solve. Resulting from the session, the team revised the project. The four principles mentioned at the workshops were applied to project meetings in revising and developing a shared understanding of the purpose of the project (e.g., goal, interview questions and end users).

**Communication:** Streamlining and creating fluid communication in a project to ensure that the goals and mission are clear between all stakeholders, and that members avoid duplication, which drains time and resources. A shared understanding has not universally been achieved, resulting from misunderstanding of self-expressions and organisational responsibilities as they relate to the report. Difference in working cultures and communication have resulted in stops and starts, and lack of clarity about purpose.

From the topic/thematic areas covered in the Profusion sessions, we have highlighted those most relevant and/or applicable to our project.

### ***Challenges of working with data***

- **Data quality:** Civic data can be incomplete, inaccurate or outdated. It can be challenging to ensure data quality when data are collected from multiple sources, such as government agencies, NGOs, and community organisations.
- **Data accessibility:** Civic data may not be easily accessible or available in a machine-readable format. This can make it difficult to collect and analyse data, which can hinder the ability to draw insights and to make informed decisions.

- **Privacy concerns:** Civic data can contain sensitive information, such as personal data or information about vulnerable populations. It is essential to ensure that data are collected, stored and used in a way that respects individuals' privacy and protects their personal information.
- **Lack of standards:** Civic data may not follow consistent standards or be consistent across different jurisdictions. This can make it challenging to compare data across regions, identify trends, and draw accurate conclusions.

- **Understanding context:** Civic data can be complex, and it is often challenging to understand the context in which data were collected. This can lead to misinterpretation and misrepresentation of data, which can affect the accuracy of analysis.
- **Stakeholder management:** Working with civic data often involves engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including government officials, community organisations and the public. It is important to ensure that stakeholders are involved in the data collection and analysis process to ensure that data are relevant and meaningful.

- **Ethics and bias:** Civic data can be subject to biases, such as geographic, demographic, and cultural biases. It is essential to address these biases to ensure that data are accurate, reliable, and unbiased. Additionally, ethical considerations must be taken into account when working with civic data, such as ensuring that data are used for the public good, and that the privacy rights of individuals are respected.

### ***Dealing with bias***

- **Confirmation bias:** Confirmation bias is a type of bias where one seeks out or interprets data in a way that confirms one's preconceived beliefs or hypotheses, while ignoring or discounting data that contradict them.
- **Self-selection bias:** Self-selection bias, also known as self-selection effect or selection bias, is a type of bias that occurs when individuals voluntarily choose to participate in a study or survey, leading to a non-random sample. In other words, individuals who choose to participate in a study may differ in important ways from those who choose not to participate, or who are not given the opportunity to participate.
- **Sampling bias:** Sampling bias is a type of bias that occurs when the sample used for analysis is not representative of the population being studied. This can lead to inaccurate or incomplete conclusions about the population.
- **Response bias:** Response bias is a type of bias where the way questions are phrased or presented can influence how people respond, leading to inaccurate or incomplete data. For example, if a survey question is biased towards a certain answer, respondents may be more likely to choose that answer.
- **Time period bias:** Time period bias is a type of bias where the time period being analysed is not representative of the overall trend. For example, if data are collected during a period of unusual market conditions, the results may not be representative of the long-term trend.

- **Survivorship bias:** This is a type of bias where one only looks at the successful outcomes and ignores the failures or dropouts. For example, if one only looks at vulnerable individuals that survived or succeeded, and ignores the ones that ended with a bad outcome, the analysis would be biased towards the successful ones, and any generalisations made from these successful individuals is very likely to be misleading
- **Reporting bias:** This is a type of bias where the data being analysed are influenced by factors such as selective reporting or publication bias. This can result in an incomplete or distorted view of the data.

**Designing surveys and integrating data:** The conversational guide was designed before the surveys:

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Defining purpose:</b> Before designing your survey questions, it is important to have a clear understanding of what you want to achieve with your survey. This will help you to select the right questions and ensure that you collect relevant data.</li> </ul> |
|--|
- **Identifying target audience:** Knowing who your survey respondents are is essential to crafting effective survey questions. Your survey questions should be tailored to the specific demographic group that you are targeting.
  - **Use clear and concise language:** When designing survey questions, it is important to use clear and concise language that is easy for respondents to understand. Avoid using technical jargon or complex language that may confuse respondents.
  - **Keep your survey short and focused:** Long surveys can be overwhelming for respondents, which may lead to higher rates of non-response or dropouts. Focus on collecting the most important data by keeping your survey short and to the point.
  - **Pre-test your survey:** Before launching your survey, it is important to pre-test it with a small group of respondents. This will help you to identify any issues with the survey design, and to ensure that your questions are clear and easy to understand.
  - **Ensure data privacy and security:** Ensure that the data collected in the survey are secure, and that data are only used for the intended purposes. Let respondents know how their data will be used and provide them with the option to opt-out of participating in the survey.
  - **Consider using incentives:** Offering incentives such as gift cards or coupons can increase response rates and encourage participation in your survey. However, be aware that doing so creates a self-selection bias, so you may have more data overall, but the data may be biased towards those who seek incentives.

### 3. Methods

This is an embryonic project, and it set out to co-design the information architecture necessary to help facilitate a whole-system/whole-place approach to local service delivery. Therefore, the methodology adopted is solution-focused, and it followed three distinct stages.

Firstly, we undertook a rapid evidence review to better understand how data challenges in keeping communities safe are conceptualised. This procedure involves screening both grey

and peer-reviewed literature for information about already existing data that might help illustrate or contextualise, if not answer, the problem statement. Most importantly, we reviewed grey literature on community safety downloaded from the Council's website, looking for what sources of data they integrate into their published reports, for insights into pathways and data flows adopted by the Council.

Secondly, we conducted a round of bellwether interviews with practitioners (e.g., public officers, data analysts, civil servants, and civic actors) to better understand the data challenge from an organisational perspective. This procedure involved the production of a conversation guide, the goal of which was to allow the participants the space and opportunity to articulate what data are important to them, and where they obtain their data sets and subsequently share data sets. The conversation guide covered five questions:

- Can you tell me how you are currently using data and information on community safety in a way that empowers community involvement?
- How do you think data can be better used to facilitate community involvement?
- Can you share the data that you are currently using, so we can advise on how this can be better used to facilitate community involvement?
- How do you think Covid-19 has influenced your answers?
- Would you be interested in getting involved in the second phase of this project?

In total ( $N=26$ ) stakeholders were contacted; however, conversations were held online with ( $N=9$ ) between March and April 2023. Different stakeholders were reached through emails and phone calls to arrange conversations with them. Project participants came from the Greater London Authority (GLA), the Mayor's Officer for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), the Local Government Association (LGA), the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), London Councils and Islington Council. Some of these stakeholders replied to emails to refer us to other people within their organisations who would be more appropriate to talk to, considering the aim of this project.

The final stage in the process was a synthesis of the information we had obtained in reflection of the problem statement to identify the known blockages and drivers in accessing and publishing civic data in the protection and promotion of community safety. This took place in a series of workshops where we were able to discuss, debate and discover solutions together, based on the range of information we had independently collected.

The conversations took place on Teams, where notes were taken by the interviewer. There was an intention to hold a second round of meetings face to face, but none of these took place due to the timeframe of the project and the stakeholders' availability, as well as because some of the information we aimed to collect was obtained during some of the online conversations.

A spreadsheet document was developed as a register of the people contacted, their job roles, the organisations for which they work, and the outcome with each of them. There was

a stakeholder who suggested some links,<sup>1</sup> as these would be useful to find information relevant to the project.

## 4. Findings

This section details our fieldwork experience, and what information and insights we were able to obtain to address the problem statement. Between March and May 2023, a series of meetings were held to establish what the project would involve, and to plan how it would be conducted, as well as to develop the semi-structured interviews/conversation questions. Once this had been done, the steps described below were followed.

Firstly, the problem statement was agreed, and invitation letters were sent by email to the stakeholders that would potentially take part in one-to-one conversations. As it was not possible to obtain email addresses or contact phone numbers for some stakeholders, a couple of emails were sent to generic email addresses.<sup>2</sup> A total of 26 stakeholders were contacted, including those in senior positions at the Greater London Authority (GLA), the Mayor's Officer for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), the Local Government Association (LGA), the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), London Councils and Islington Council. These positions included:

- Chief Executive MOPAC
- Head of Oversight Performance/Strategy and Oversight Directorate
- Deputy Mayor of London for Policing and Crime
- Deputy Mayor, Fire and Resilience
- Policy Advisor
- Performance Insights Lead
- Evidence and Insight Unit
- Head of Private Office and Secretariat
- Head of Evidence and Insights
- Social Research and Evaluation Lead
- Executive Member for Community Safety
- Director of the VRU
- Principal Policy and Programme Officer
- Civil Society Policy Officer
- Senior Delivery Officer, Youth Programmes, Policy, and Participation
- Principal Policy and Project Officer – Children and Young People
- Director of Community Safety Islington
- Principal Policy and Project Officer for Education at London Councils
- Director Strategy and MPS Oversight
- Data Performance Team Children and Young People Director
- Head of Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

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<sup>1</sup> Public voice packs and survey scripts: <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/mopac-surveys>  
Latest MOPAC Quarterly Report: <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-and-strategies/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/MOPAC-Q3-Reports-22-23>  
Policing and Crime: An evidence base for London: <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/policing-and-crime--an-evidence-base-for-london>

<sup>2</sup> foia@islington.gov.uk, dp@islington.gov.uk, transparency@local.gov.uk and communitysafety@islington.gov.uk.

- Senior Executive and Community Safety Consultant
- Counsellor (Islington)
- Principal Monitoring & Evaluation Officer
- Head of Data & Performance

The range of answers from these stakeholders was varied. Some ( $N=4$ ) replied to the invitation letter saying that they would not be the appropriate persons to talk to, considering the aim of the project, and suggested that we contact other organisations. Some others ( $N=3$ ) referred us to other people with whom it would be more appropriate to hold the conversations. Due to no response, others ( $N=9$ ) were either sent reminders by email or, unsuccessfully, by phone. Indeed, voice messages were left for ( $N=3$ ) of them; however, replies were not received to either emails or voice messages. Conversations were either held or scheduled to be held between March and the beginning of May with ( $N=9$ ) of those ( $N=25$ ) stakeholders contacted.

Some of the stakeholders with whom conversations were successfully held recommended that we approach:

- Community Safety
- Community Development/Engagement
- Youth Services
- Youth Offending Services
- Public Health

To summarise, a significant challenge has been accessing the right people based in public institutes to talk about the strategic and practical applications of open-source data as they relate to matters of community safety.

Based on rapid evidence review, we found that, in the case of Islington Council, community safety scenarios were presented on their website, with a focus on how to report these, and how to get help. Also, there was information about legal requirements related to personal data, but very limited information was available about community safety data per se.

Some actual data were found after browsing through different websites and clicking into different links from the Islington Council site, through the Metropolitan Police website, which then carried one to the ONS website. The most relevant and updated data were obtained from the ONS website; however, to obtain this data, it was necessary to search for 'Community safety' within the website, and to navigate through a couple of links, after which, a list of spreadsheets with community safety data was found. These spreadsheets listed from the newest reports (at the top) to previous ones (downwards), each of them usually reflecting a quarter of each year; thus, there are four documents per year. The documents need to be downloaded to be opened. Each spreadsheet document contains nine different sheets that need to be navigated through to find context-specific information; in one of those, there are around 400 rows listing each of the boroughs in England and Wales. It is here that specific data about community safety in Islington can be found.

The following section summarises the scope of the legal and policy data landscape that Islington Council publish and have a duty to follow. As mentioned, on the Council's website, there is general information about different types of community safety scenarios, what these are about, how they can be reported, and how to get support if people in the community are involved or affected by any of them. These scenarios include (with one click to access each of these):

- **Violence against women and girls:** There is information about what it is and what it involves, as well as about how to report it or get support. However, there are no specific data.
- **Knife crime:** Knife crime can affect us directly and indirectly in our community. Levels of knife crime across London have been rising over the past five years. In 2019/20, Islington recorded 554 knife crime offences, which was a 19% reduction compared to 2018/19; however, levels are still higher than five years ago.
- **Crime and policing:** Links to report crime and emergencies, and related to more information about boroughs, youth crime, youth justice service and partnership work to reduce crime in Islington.
- **Report anti-social behaviour:** Links to report crime, and guidance about how to do so.
- **Prevention:** A couple of contacts to get information about how to prevent crime and violence.
- **Safer spaces:** Information about the Safer Spaces campaign in Islington, which was launched in 2021 to promote a safer Islington.
- **Violence reduction strategy 2022–2027:** There is information about six key priorities, and actions to be taken related to these to reduce crime and promote community safety.
- **The Safer Islington Partnership (SIP):** SIP coordinates work on crime reduction and community safety in Islington. The Council is a lead authority in this partnership, which also includes the Police, Islington Primary Care Trust, London Fire Brigade, the Probation Services, and representatives from the voluntary, community, faith and business sectors.

Also communicated on the website is how Islington Council can work together with different organisations, where the current priorities for this partnership are:

- Youth crime
- Hate crime
- Anti-social behaviour
- Violence against women and girls

In addition, there are circumstances when Islington Council is likely to share data with other public authorities and organisations where there is a legal basis for doing so, which might include:

- Other local authorities
- Government departments, including HMRC
- Health service providers
- The police
- Fire brigades
- Housing associations

- Voluntary and charity organisations
- Independent suppliers of council services (e.g., care homes)

This section provides data on crime and anti-social behaviour in Islington. The latest crime data and maps are available from the Metropolitan Police Service.

In Islington:

Crimes reported in January 2023:

- Violence and sexual offences: 38
- Shoplifting: 28
- Other theft: 24
- Theft from the person: 23

The Council publishes information about the legal requirements for handling personal data,<sup>3</sup> and there is very little guidance or instructions given about accessing and using held community safety data.

Graph 1 illustrates the procedure to obtain relevant civic data from the Islington Council website, and the three different ways this task may be accomplished, as well as the procedure for navigating and obtaining data from alternative open-source databases like the ONS and the probation service.

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<sup>3</sup> UK Data Protection Act 2018

Law Enforcement Directive - Part 3: The LE provisions in the Bill only apply to competent authorities for the purposes of the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, including the safeguarding against and the prevention of threats to public security (commonly referred to as the Law Enforcement Purposes). The purpose of the Safer Islington Partnership and the Community Safety team is to prevent and support the police in investigating and detecting criminal activity and prevent threats to public security.

Privacy notice

LBI will use the information you provide for the sole purpose of recording declaration and agreement to abide by the terms of the Information sharing agreement/Terms of reference. Information will be shared on a strict need to know basis with other organisations who have signed up to our Community Safety Information Sharing Protocol and will be treated in the strictest confidence. For further information on how your data will be handled and retained, please refer to our full Privacy Notice.

Organisations sharing information

This agreement must be formally approved and signed by a lead person, with the necessary authority, for the organisations or service area listed below before any information sharing takes place. All parties will ensure that the Information Sharing Agreement and any associated documents are known and understood by all staff involved in the process.

**Chart 1. Data flow from different sources including Islington Council**

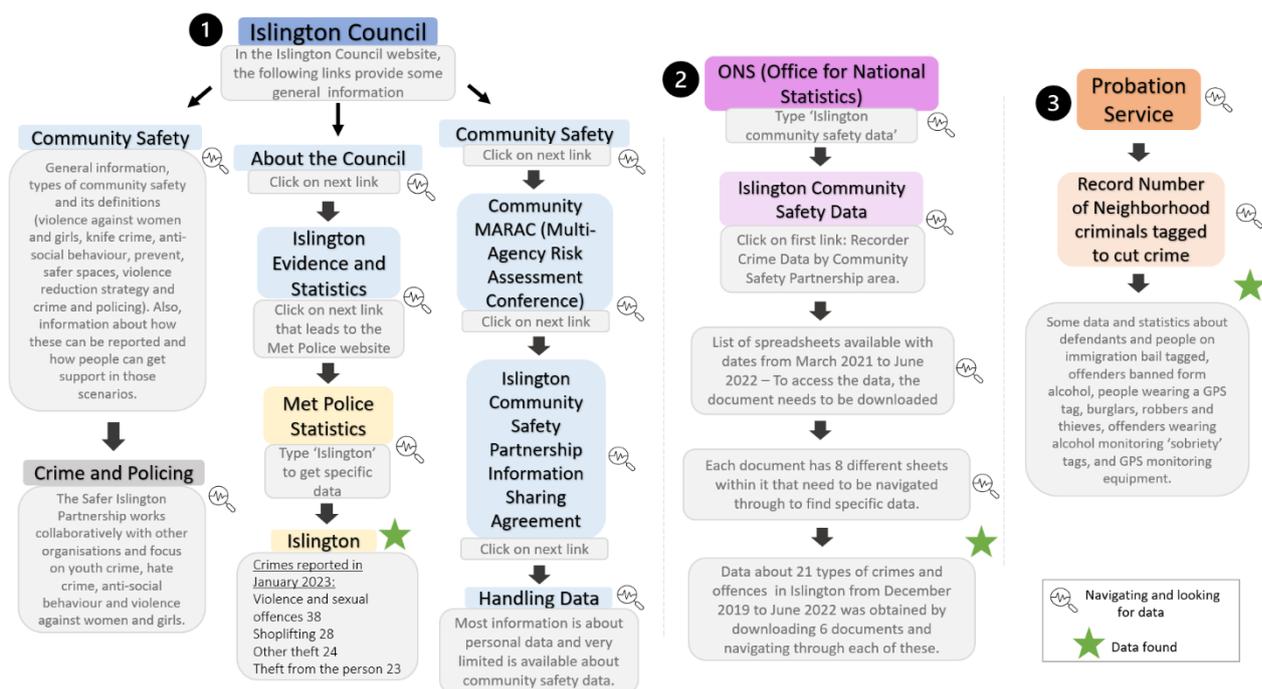


Table 2 illustrates the type of community safety information that can be partially found by community members using the website. These spreadsheets are not easily understood by lay members of the public, but they do highlight the most recent crime and disorder figures, from March 2021 to June 2022. Once these spreadsheets are downloaded, crime data can be found there that can be accessed by navigating across the eight different sheets within the document. Looking at the 'Table of Contents' sheet, a link to different data sets can be found.

**Table 2. Crime data for Islington between 2019 and 2022**

Crime or offence type	Data year ending December 2019	Data year ending December 2020	Data year ending December 2021	Data year ending June 2022
Total recorded crime (excluding fraud)	30034	25405	24700	27571
<b>Total violence against the person:</b>	6343	6062	6623	7087
Homicide	4	4	3	3
Death or serious violence caused by illegal driving	0	0	0	0
Violence with injury	2321	1940	2056	2360
Violence without injury	2497	2388	2598	2776
Stalking and harassment	1521	1730	1966	1948
<b>Total theft offences:</b>	16316	12237	11411	13447
Burglary	2641	1208	1803	1805

Residential burglary	1806	1445	1322	1302
Non-residential burglary	835	663	481	503
Vehicle offences	3141	2623	2296	2716
Theft from the person	3072	2183	2544	3071
Bicycle theft	1037	1437	1069	1102
Shoplifting	1468	1035	928	1134
All other theft offences	4957	2851	2771	3619
<b>Sexual offences</b>	629	490	630	670
<b>Robbery</b>	1584	1181	989	1020
<b>Criminal damage and arson</b>	1510	1454	1496	16
<b>Drug offences</b>	1332	1547	1123	1181
<b>Possession of weapons offences</b>	237	191	165	163
<b>Public order offences</b>	1764	1967	1998	2086
<b>Miscellaneous crimes against society</b>	319	276	265	290

***Whole-system problem with the lack of transparency and accessibility to routinely collected data held by public bodies***

Based on this project (and other projects undertaken by the team), we have found a set of reoccurring data challenges that validate the problem statement. They are:

- A data problem is a whole-system problem, and because it is a whole-system problem, it is too big for any one organisation to solve. Therefore, the problem remains unaddressed.
- Data exist in silos and are not systematically collected and stored.
- Everyone is collecting data, but they are not communicating or sharing data.
- There is a lack of capacity in organisations to curate and use all their held data.
- There is a lack of consistency in held data.
- Lack of consistency throughout time makes longitudinal appraisals difficult.
- Immediacy bias when data only describe a moment in time.
- Topical bias when data are curated to answer a precise question.
- Exposure bias when dissemination is too wide.
- Dispersion of data (e.g., hidden data) makes it difficult to find data when you have no idea where data are.
- No informed M&E framework or baseline for the CVS to follow.
- Difficult to pool data sets to tackle defined issues in the community.
- Cost linked to sourcing data – time consuming.
- SME do not talk to one another, due to limited resources. However, they collect data, but do not share data.
- Lack of a unifying data strategy (e.g., Strategy, framework, and baseline).
- No central or coordinating process to collect and share data sets.
- No, or limited, cloud to make data accessible between organisations.
- Data sets are disorganised, and not curated when published.
- Timeframes, age groupings, postcodes and geographic footprints do not always align when bringing data sets together to make a difference.

- Excessive number of criteria to collect statutory data and ambiguous definitions add to the inconsistencies found in data sets.
- Data sharing agreements are lacking.
- No one-stop-shop to source the right data sets.
- It requires a high level of skill and time to source the right data sets.
- Data and measurements should be free from politics and changes in government.

Nonetheless, we do have solutions to help address the data challenge identified above, which include:

- Prioritisation of data is needed by all organisations.
- Data sharing agreements used, framework and baseline implemented.
- Centralised platform, with a smart and accessible interface, to access the right data at the right time.
- Design a smart way to find the right data.
- Ensuring data sets are accessible and of good quality.
- Accessible and easy to understand data sets.
- Quality data. Data have been cleaned and are consistent and curated for the end users.
- Unified timeframes that map over geographic footprints of residents.
- Case study approach on one borough in the 'shadow' development of a centralised system is required.
- Observations into how data sets are being used, curated, and shared is needed from the private sector.
- National programme.
- Training programme for the public and third sectors to upskill the workforce in curating, managing, and using data to help with evidence-based decision making.
- Public bodies should have a moral and social responsibility to improve how they collect and share data.
- Data collection and sharing should be mandatory for all organisations funded through public funds.
- Demographic data should be standardised across all organisations using the same categories.
- National training programme.

## 5. Discussion

There is limited evidence in this solution-focused project of the utilisation of open-source for better democratic engagement and community empowerment, for building relationships and social capital, and, finally, for improved outcomes within public and social infrastructure. From a civil society perspective, it was difficult to find the direct contact for most of the stakeholders contacted. Initially, some of their email addresses were searched for through their organisation website or LinkedIn page. We also attempted to contact some of them by phone; in these phone calls, the person answering the call referred us to the right department or extension. On occasion, after being referred to three or four different people, we got to the right extension, but the person was not in the office, so a voice message was

left. Of those contacted through email, some took a few days to respond, and some responded within just a couple of days. A couple of meetings scheduled for April were rescheduled, as the stakeholders were unable to attend these due to busy agendas.

Desktop research information is very limited in regard to actual data about community safety. There is very general information about crime, how to report it, and how to get support. There is also information about legal requirements on personal data, but not as much on community safety data. To find data online, it is necessary to navigate through different websites and download documents, which in turn may not be easy to access and understand by those who might not have IT literacy skills. The spreadsheet documents can even be visually overwhelming, due to the amount of information included, and because of the level of detail with which it needs to be scrutinised to find the specific information about Islington.

## **6. Conclusion**

We can confidently say that there is a broken relationship in how civic data flows and is used by stakeholders to improve outcomes in community safety. Without a doubt, more energy and resourcing are needed to tackle this whole-system challenge. Whilst this project has focused on the London Borough of Islington, we can assume that the same set of data challenges exist for all 32 boroughs in London (Plus the City of London). Whilst open-data sources should not singlehandedly drive evidence-based decision making, they do provide a valuable partial picture of social problems across time and space to help stimulate and frame joined-up decision making in a period when there is heightened concern about community safety, and constraints on public spending. For example, we have seen an increase in the shift from providing universal services for young people, to targeted and remedial interventions at the expense of early interventions; in other words, a behaviour of treating the symptom, rather than the root cause of the problem. However, we are optimistic that with the right investment and spirit of innovation, we can better harness open-source data sets to meet contemporary challenges for community safety. The first step is through linking and aggregating the right data sets (e.g., health, social care, education, housing, policing etc.) together to build the full picture of the lives of children and young people who are, or who are at risk of becoming, victims, and offenders – the two categories are not mutually exclusive – of crime and violence. With prioritised, aggregated, curated and easily accessible civic data sets that are user friendly, both the public and the VCS sectors will have the impetus to make better use of data to inform community safety policies and influence practice.

The next stage in this solution-focused project would be to work with a London Borough Council and VCS stakeholders to help test the aforementioned process using open-source data to help support the 2024/25 budget review and commissioning cycle for children and young people services, to see if more whole and curated data sets can make a difference to how people, places and programmes interact to build safer communities.

### **Limitations**

Paradoxically, working with an SME on a relationship portfolio project did not produce the results as anticipated, due to a breakdown in relationship. Tapestry Innovation Ltd failed on

multiple fronts to work collaboratively in the generation and sharing of primary data, which inevitably caused our own internal data blockage. Data were used as leverage, highlighting a transactional relationship. Tapestry Innovation Ltd managed to antagonise key stakeholders in their questioning style, and subsequently failed to share insights and information with the wider team on the results of the conversations. This collaboration started with good faith; however, it soon withered due to a breakdown in trust; lack of agreement over the project's goal and deliverables; an unwillingness to work within the parameters of the grant award; and inflexibility to the rhythm and flow of a university system versus being a sole trader. Undoubtedly, there are lessons to be learnt here about engaging an SME as part of a grant programme.

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