

**30 June 2009**

## New report offers snapshot of Londoners' quality of life

Londoners are getting better at household recycling, air quality is improving, bird populations are increasing and the capital is becoming more carbon efficient, according to a new report published today (30 June, 2009) by the London Sustainable Development Commission.

The report gives a unique snapshot of the most important issues that affect Londoners' quality of life, showing what is improving and where more needs to be done.

The third 'London Quality of Life Indicators' report identifies 23 key areas or 'indicators' that contribute to a healthy, safe, equal and sustainable city. The report identifies these key issues to assess where the capital is improving and underperforming. The report's findings are designed to help policymaking organisations such as government departments, boroughs, charities and the third sector to develop and design their activities to improve how Londoners live, work and play. The report uses data gathered between 2005-2009.

The report scored improvements in 11 indicators, these are: reporting of street crime; child care provision; reduced carbon emissions; air quality (PM10s), household recycling; life expectancy; secondary education; carbon efficiency; electoral turnout; volunteering; and bird populations.

The Commission is an independent body, formed in 2002 to advise the Mayor of London on ways to make London a sustainable, world-class city.

John Plowman, Chair of the London Sustainable Development Commission, said: 'This report captures the breadth of challenges facing London. The indicators we use to measure progress show how key issues are linked and need to be tackled together. To live up to being a truly sustainable, fair and liveable capital we want to see policy solutions which reduce social and economic inequalities, tackle London's global environmental responsibilities and improve overall quality of life.'

'London must now become a resource efficient, low carbon economy, with opportunities for all. That is the way for London to emerge from recession strengthened against future economic, social and environmental shocks.'

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: 'I welcome this snapshot of London providing a valuable resource for a wide range of organisations. It is good news that in many areas of life for Londoners, standards are improving but this report underscores that policy makers cannot be complacent to the challenges that lie ahead.'

'At City Hall we have our shoulders firmly to the wheel to raise the quality of life for Londoners through improved transport, a greener environment, boosting recycling and cutting crime. We have already rolled out policing teams across all of the London boroughs to patrol bus hubs.

'There is much to do to improve the provision of affordable housing, but we are committed to 50,000 affordable homes in the capital by 2011. This comprehensive report will help us refine where we focus attention and resources as we progress this agenda. People can play their own part, for example parents can help their kids opt to take public transport, walk or cycle to school to reduce the impact of the morning dash by car.'

The report concluded there were seven underperforming areas, these are: decent homes; satisfaction with living in the capital; income inequality; fuel poverty; increased waste; housing affordability and the level of children walking to school.

The report also identified areas of concern within improving indicators, that are classed as 'hidden issues'; these included the cost of child care; GCSE performance in Black and Ethnic Minority groups; increase in waste generated; disparities in life expectancy within and between boroughs.

For the first time, the Commission has identified three 'cross-cutting issues' which should be considered by policymakers. These are: London's consumption of resources; threats to community cohesion; and the need to deliver change through innovative ways of working.

The Commission is now inviting views from Londoners on what needs to happen to improve London's progress on all 23 indicators. Copies of the report are available from [www.londonsdc.org/](http://www.londonsdc.org/) and [lsc@london.gov.uk](mailto:lsc@london.gov.uk)

## **ENDS**

Notes to editors:

- Full membership of Commission:  
<http://www.londonsdc.org/lsc/commissioners.aspx>
- Detailed findings of the 'London Quality of Life Indicators report:

**Where London is doing well** - Compared with the results recorded in our 2005 report, London has improved on 13 of the 23 indicators. Areas of notable improvement are:

- Percentage of pupils with 5 or more GCSEs (A\*-C) – a real improvement from 52.9% to nearly 60% and London is now above the national average;
- Household recycling rates – improvement of 9.7%;
- Crime levels continue to fall within London, reducing by 20% over the past 6 years. Substantial achievements have been made in reducing serious violence, knife and gun crime and burglary. Recent months have shown an increase in business crimes and this is thought to be linked to the recession;

- Bird populations – an overall positive picture, with improvement from 115 to 131 on the Breeding Bird Index and a 31% increase in some common bird species;
- Carbon efficiency for London has improved considerably and more than in the rest of the UK regions;
- Life expectancy has improved and is higher than the UK average; and
- Air quality – PM10 levels have improved.

**Hidden issues** - Despite these improvements, London still lags behind the national average on many indicators (see main report for details). Good results on some indicators also 'hide' a number of issues – for example:

- Although child care places are increasing, the cost of child care remains high;
- Although GCSE results have improved across London as a whole, results for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups' results continue to be lower than average;
- Although life expectancy has improved and is above the UK average, disparities in life expectancy exist within and between boroughs. These differences reflect Londoners' differential access to the determinants of good health such as good housing, financial security, and access to health services. In many cases, neighbourhoods where people experience multiple forms of deprivation exist right beside relatively wealthy neighbourhoods;
- Although household recycling rates have improved, the amount of waste collected has also risen;
- Although carbon emissions have reduced, much of this is a result of a decline in manufacturing industries with London importing significant levels of goods from abroad; and
- Although London's air quality has improved, it is still the worst in the UK for most pollutants and has caused the first UK breaches of the EU limit values, which are designed to protect human health.

**Where London is underperforming** - Five of the indicators show areas where quality of life is in decline. Others show no real overall improvement. Areas of notable decline (or underperformance) are:

- Satisfaction with living in London - a fall from 75% to 73% in response to high costs of living and other factors;
- Percentage of children living in poverty - from 2004-07, there has been no sustained improvement since 2000, where two out of five children (41%) in London lived under the poverty line after accounting for housing costs. This accounts for over 650,000 children, the worst rate in the UK for child poverty.
- Income inequality - percentage of people in bottom tenth and top tenth of income – this new indicator shows the large income gap prevalent within London compared with the rest of the UK;
- Travel to school - a reduction from 50% to 44% in the number of children walking to school and an increase in the number travelling by car, though both were within 5% of the national average;

- Fuel poverty - this new indicator shows that fuel poverty is getting worse in London. This is further exacerbated in London with its high housing costs compared to the rest of the UK; and
- Housing affordability - this new indicator shows that housing costs in London are higher than the rest of the UK and have been getting worse over the past few years (before the recent economic downturn). The average mortgage payments, as a percentage of average working household income is 26.4% compared with the UK figure of 21.7%.
- For copies of the report and to contribute views contact:

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