

Bradford Community Priorities

**Are we
researching things
that matter to our
communities?**



Your Data, Your Voice, Your Say!

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“ No one ever asks us what we think about what's going on in Bradford. Thank you for inviting us to be involved in these workshops. ”



Community Areas of Research Interest (C-ARI)

Scan here to
view our C-ARI
report



At NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration: Bradford, we believe research should start with the voices of the people it serves. That's why we've worked closely with communities across the district to understand what really matters to them when it comes to challenges around the wider determinants of health. These include social, economic factors like housing, education, transport and employment. These conversations have shaped our **Community Areas of Research Interest (C-ARI)**, a set of priorities rooted in lived experience.

These insights will help us focus on the issues that impact residents the most and will shape our work going forward. This community-driven approach sits alongside our wider **Areas of Research Interest (ARI)** work with Bradford Council staff, creating a shared vision for a healthier Bradford.

Together, we're building research that reflects real lives, real challenges, and real opportunities for change.



Ten Prioritisation Workshops

We began by examining existing local evidence such as reports and local research shared by our partners, to draw out themes on the wider determinants and created a list of specific **Research Area Groups**. We then took these Research Area Groups to community settings and carried out a DIAMOND ranking exercise to prioritise each area in order of importance but also to draw out key challenges under each Research Area Group. We held ten prioritisation workshops across the district, two in each constituency covering Bradford South, Bradford East, Bradford West, Shipley, and Keighley & Ilkley.

We worked closely with our collaborators, academic colleagues, council neighbourhood teams and local Public Contributors (resident representatives) to identify and carry out 'intentional selecting' of micro organisations, underrepresented groups and residents who we rarely hear from to support this work.

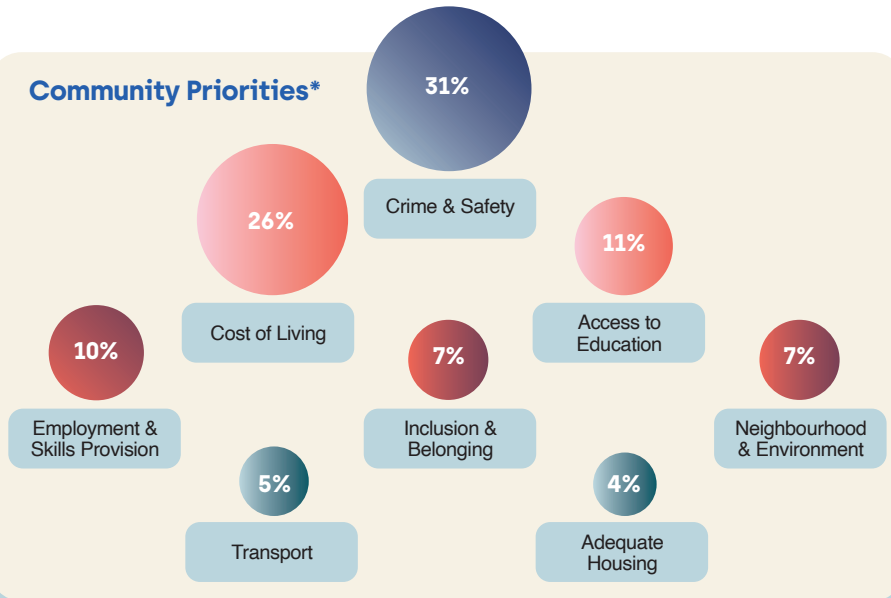
Following this data collection phase we held an academic-led 'question generating



session' and invited the ten community groups and residents that we worked with in our workshops. In this session we presented the themes from our workshops and facilitated the co-production of key questions under each of our eight priority themes. These questions have now been refined and published as our Community Areas of Research Interest (C-ARI).



Community Priorities*



*percentages may not total 100 due to rounding



Crime & Safety

Half of the community groups we spoke to ranked crime and safety as the number one priority. People are really worried about drugs and gangs. Knife crime and gang violence were mentioned a lot, along with shoplifting and burglaries, which many linked to poverty and addiction.

Another big issue is trust in the police. People feel response times are slow, follow-ups don't happen, and reporting crime can feel pointless or even risky. There's a strong call for more visible policing – not just patrols, but officers who engage with the community and build trust.

Young people came up several times in these conversations as there aren't enough safe spaces or activities for them, which leaves them vulnerable. People want schools to teach life skills and crime awareness, and they'd love to see more role models and mentors guiding young people away from trouble. Safety concerns aren't just about crime – road safety and reckless driving were



flagged, as well as online scams targeting vulnerable people. Domestic violence and grooming were also raised, especially in communities where these issues can be harder to talk about.

So, what can we do?

Residents had plenty of ideas: fund community-led projects, run awareness campaigns about drugs and crime, and set up neighbourhood watch groups. Better infrastructure like CCTV and safer streets came up too, along with more support systems like helplines and social workers. People want youth clubs, safe spaces, and programs that give young people hope and direction. And, of course, they want the police to show up, respond quickly, and work with the community instead of feeling distant.

Cost of Living

The cost of living crisis came up as a huge concern, touching almost every part of life. People talked about how rising prices are affecting mental health, crime levels, and even access to basic needs. Many said that Universal Credit, pensions, and wages just aren't keeping up with the cost of living. This is leaving lots of families struggling, and younger people are finding it almost impossible to afford a home. One person summed it up by saying, "Cost of living is a joke." Another shared, "It's important for my children—one has a well-paid job but still can't afford a house, and my other child can't get a job and lives with us."

It's not just about money either; the stress is taking a toll on mental health. People are cutting back on leisure and sport services due to cost of access, and this is hurting community wellbeing too.

Economic pressure is also linked to crime. Shoplifting and burglaries were mentioned as becoming more common, and some people talked about a "brain drain," where skilled individuals are leaving Bradford for better opportunities elsewhere.



There was a lot of discussion about what could be done, but everyone agreed it's complicated, especially when it comes to things like price controls.

So, what can we do?

When it came to solutions, people had plenty of ideas. Suggestions included teaching budgeting and food-growing skills, and looking at how raising the minimum wage affects affordability of current prices. There were also calls for local price controls and more research to understand what works best.

Residents called for more job and educational opportunities be made available locally to enable people to gain more skills and be paid better wages. There were also suggestions to work more closely with shops, faith and community groups and engage community/elders in discussions and decision making processes.

Access to Education

Residents told us education isn't just about classrooms – it's about giving people the tools to thrive. Right now, too many barriers are holding people back, and communities are feeling the impact. Challenges around access to education affect everything from job prospects to crime rates. Language was seen as a key barrier, especially for recent migrants and current English-only classes are just not working for everyone, with many highlighting the need for more community-based learning that feels accessible and practical.

Participants felt there aren't enough local training options, so people often have to travel to other cities to get the courses they need. This makes it harder for communities to build skills that match local jobs. Special Educational Needs (SEN) support was also flagged as a major gap. Families spoke about slow diagnoses, limited help, and extracurricular activities that are simply too expensive. People want schools to be more inclusive and offer programmes that every child can access.

One of the most worrying problems is what happens when students leave secondary school. There's very little tracking or support during the transition to college, and this often leads to high dropout rates. When young people fall through the cracks, they become more vulnerable to crime and unemployment. Another concern was the lack of options for certain qualifications for careers like medicine not being provided at the local university causing barriers for those who cannot afford to live away from home.





“ Accessible workshops like this are a great way to engage with the community and ensure our voices are heard. ”

Employment and Skills Provision



Finding work is a huge challenge for many people in Bradford. Groups told us about the same issues over not enough jobs, being blocked from working because of asylum status, and the struggle of having no experience. Childcare came up a lot too – parents need jobs that fit around school hours, but those are hard to find. Discrimination and qualifications not being recognised were also seen as significant barriers to employment.

Across all ages, people spoke about feeling hopeless and disconnected. For those who don't speak English well or lack digital skills, even applying for jobs online feels

impossible. And with the economy so flat, finding work, even entry-level jobs, seems daunting.

People told us they want jobs and training, but also opportunities that make sense. There were calls for more skills-based training, shorter courses, and qualifications that employers actually recognise. Some suggested training community ambassadors and creating youth-led projects with the council. Others talked about improving Bradford's image to attract businesses and stop young talent leaving the city.



People feel frustrated with online-only applications and the lack of clear information about where to find jobs stating employers assume everyone has a smart phone and knows how to use it. For many, the cost of living is the biggest barrier to planning for the future, skill building, or accessing educational opportunities

So, what can we do?

Groups said schools should teach practical life skills like managing money and avoiding loan sharks. They want more English classes, especially at higher levels, and workshops to help people transition into work. Childcare, flexible jobs for older people, and better support for those with special educational needs were all mentioned.

Housing came up too, because high rents and limited social housing make it even harder for families to cope. People want action, not excuses.

Inclusion & Belonging



Communities told us that feeling included and having a sense of belonging is really important. They want their 'culture' and 'faith' to be recognised and respected and see strong action against discrimination. Many participants shared that they often felt left out, unheard, and isolated. They don't always have access to spaces where decisions are made, and there's a lack of understanding about their culture in local services and official settings. Discrimination came up a lot, along with bullying in schools and misunderstandings in institutions. The groups told us there's a real need for cultural awareness training and better inclusivity in public services.

Digital exclusion is another big issue. Many communities struggle with poverty, lack

of devices, and low digital skills. They suggested more training and support to help people get online and stay connected.

So, what can we do?

There was a clear call for change. People want fair representation on councils, community centres to reopen, and more opportunities for intercultural activities. They also want their cultural and religious diversity to be recognised. Things like dietary needs and religious holidays matter. People also spoke about the need for more research into the barriers that stop this from happening.

Neighbourhoods and the Environment

People across the groups told us the state of our streets and spaces really matters. Litter, fly-tipping, and dog mess are big problems. They're not just unpleasant, they lead to health issues and rat infestations. Noise is another concern, with fireworks going off late at night and rubbish being burned during the day. Illegal vehicles such as quad bikes and motorbikes also came up a lot, causing both safety risks and noise pollution.

Many felt that community spirit has faded, with neighbours living in silos and not connecting and a real need to rebuild that sense of belonging.

One of the biggest gaps people talked about was spaces and activities for young people every night of the week, not just now and then. They also want to see paid youth and community workers who can engage young people positively and reduce anti-social behaviour. Building understanding between younger and older residents was seen as key to creating stronger, more united communities. In

some areas – in Baildon for example – people also raised concerns about limited provision for older residents, calling for a balanced approach to intergenerational development.

So, what can we do?

Residents want to see action, not excuses. They called for stricter fines for littering and anti-social behaviour, better street cleaning, and improved waste management. More police presence and street cameras were suggested to make people feel safer. Community-led ideas were popular too – things like Neighbourhood Watch groups and clean up days. Other suggestions included creating community gardens and projects that bring different generations together, using multi-lingual communication so everyone can access services, and having community development workers to support local initiatives.

Transport

Transport came up as a real challenge for many people. Residents told us that public transport just doesn't match where people live or need to go. This means long journeys and lots of hassle getting to school, work, and essential services. Buses often run infrequently, especially at busy times, which makes things even harder for parents and students.

Cost is another major issue. Travel is expensive, and for families already struggling with tight budgets, paying for transport to school, college, activities, or even to buy healthy food is a real burden. In some areas, like Holmewood, the problem is worse because there aren't

supermarkets nearby and buses are unreliable, so getting basic necessities becomes a challenge.

People also pointed out that schools aren't always placed where the population needs them. This means children have to travel further, which adds to both time and cost.

So, what can we do?

There were calls for better planning and mapping to make sure services and schools are located where they're actually needed.



Adequate Housing

Affordable housing came up as a major concern for people, especially younger residents and families with several children. High rent and the lack of social housing mean that many were spending a huge chunk of their income just to keep a roof over their heads and this was putting a huge pressure on household budgets. For many, finding a decent home that doesn't 'break the bank' feels almost impossible. People told us that these challenges make it harder to plan for the future and add to the stress of everyday life.

People told us that housing isn't just about having somewhere to live – it affects everything else. When rent takes up most of your money, there's little left for food, bills, or childcare. It adds stress and uncertainty, and for bigger families, the problem is even worse because there simply aren't enough homes that meet their needs.

Affordable housing isn't just a wish – it's a necessity. Without it, families struggle, young people can't get a foothold, and communities feel stuck.



Acknowledgments

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About HDRC Bradford

Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) Bradford is part of the Health Determinants Research Collaborations | NIHR and hosted by Bradford Council, in collaboration with our partners, Bradford Institute of Health Research, University of Bradford, University of Leeds and University of York.

The aim of the Bradford HDRC programme is to sustainably transform the council, so it becomes evidence-led, and data driven, at all levels of decision-making to improve the wider determinants of health and reduce health inequalities.

The determinants of health refer to social, economic and environmental factors that can effect the health of people in our communities, such as housing, poverty, education, social care, access to green spaces, diet, and the air we breathe. Our research is focused on these topics, with the aim of understanding how these factors influence the health of Bradford residents and what policies can be put in place to improve health and reduce inequalities.

Our vision is for Bradford Council to be a local authority leader in generating and using research to support decision making and democratic accountability. We will transform our understanding of what works best for who so that we make better and more cost-effective decisions, improve services and improve the health of all our citizens and communities.

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**Health Determinants Research
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is part of the National Institute of
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Bradford Institute of Health Research,
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