

Channel 4 – Best & Worst Places To Live 2007

Newham: 3rd Worst

Situated in east London, Newham is one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse boroughs in the UK, and is set to be one of the host boroughs for the 2012 Olympic Games being held in London. Indeed, an 80,000-seater stadium is set to be erected in Stratford for the occasion.



Phil and Kirstie's View

Just a few miles to the east of the super-rich City of London, Newham has to face lots of challenges. Health, unemployment, crime and teenage pregnancy levels are alarming. It has many of the downsides of living in London and few of the benefits - except the kind you get off the social. Hopefully the local regeneration project will help give Newham some new hope.

Area Guide: Newham

Certainly, sport and recreation is a central theme throughout Newham, which is home to football club West Ham United. Despite being one of the more densely populated areas of London - its population is around 254,000 people - nearly 10 per cent of the borough is green space and more than 20 parks fall within its boundaries, providing more than enough room for outdoor activity and simultaneously giving childhood obesity a good kick in the nether regions.

A treasure trove of Norman churches and Victorian architecture, Newham's heritage is clear and disparate. The oldest tidal mill in Britain resides here, as does the North Woolwich Old Station Museum, the only steam railway museum in London.

Overlooking the Thames, Newham - which found itself positioned fourth in the corresponding list for 2006 - has an average house price of just over £225,000, although that's surely counter-balanced by the cost of insurance in an area where the rate of robberies per 1,000 of the population is nearly ten times the national average.

In terms of education, girls learning at Newham schools have recorded an average score of 393 at GCSE and Key Stage Four level, which places the borough above the national average score of 385 among female pupils.

It seems, though, that such educational achievements are far from a guarantee of a bright, prosperous future. Unemployment among women of working age in Newham is at a rather alarming 17.3 per cent, compared with the mean national rate of 4.8 per cent. Nevertheless, the average hourly rate among female residents is higher than the average across the UK, faring better than their male counterparts in this respect at least, while people who are actually working in Newham have an even greater share of the spoils.

What Newham residents say:

I have lived in Newham my whole life and was quite shocked by this article, it seemed very patronising to people that live in my borough, especially the way it said, "Hopefully the local regeneration project will help give Newham some new hope." Yes crime levels are high etc., but cross the river to Woolwich, where I go to uni, and the area seems TOTALLY deprived; everyone on benefits! 'Ads' like this just make people who live in the borough worst about their means of life, it's a shame we can't all be brought up in a rich environment, but don't put us down. I have passed my A levels with flying colours and now study at uni, passing with 1sts, so Newham can't be so bad!

If you are young, have kids, are working, Newham is the best place to be because of the accessibility to schools, transport, childcare, holiday activity. But, if you feel you want to live in the dull countryside then it is not the place for you. I've lived in Newham for over 30 years and had all my kids here. I love Newham; if I have to leave, I would rather leave the country. Most of my best memories are in Newham. The Newham council are trying their best and I think they are doing a good job and will get there in the end. For those of you who have lived here and who choose to 'slag' Newham, what positive contribution have you made? Life is not about take, take and take, you have got to give something too. God bless Newham!

Would Kirstie & Phil be as smug if they had to live in any of the 10 worst places? All these programmes do is make deprived areas feel more deprived and make people who invested there worry about their investment - which could lead to less investment.

I was born in Newham. I went to school in Canning Town and have lived in Upton Park on the same road for the past 39 years. My extended family live in Upton Park. As a long-standing and long-suffering resident of Newham, I feel I am well qualified in giving an informed opinion of how Newham has changed over the years. After reading the numerous comments it appears there are two schools of thought which are diametrically opposed: either you love Newham or you want to leave ASAP. I belong to the latter.

What Newham residents say:

Good transport links, ethnic diversity, relatively cheap housing and the Olympics in 2012 does not make up for the horrendous social, housing, educational and economic problems that Newham has to contend with. Coupled with some appalling personal hygiene habits of some of the residents (hopefully minority), Newham, in my opinion, is one of the least desirable places to live in the UK.

Many of the problems that Newham encounters are also present in other deprived communities in inner cities in the UK, but the problems in Newham are particularly severe. It really is a nightmare of Elm Street proportions!

There seems to be a sizeable minority of residents who are intent on making the lives of decent law abiding citizens a misery. If you enjoy foul language, fly tipping, beggars, con artists on Green Street, dodgy DVD sellers, public spitting, residents throwing rubbish in the street reminiscent of Dickensian London, graffiti and loud music in the early hours of the morning, or feel the urge to frequent the numerous pound shops and tyre shops, then Newham is the place to be! Newham has gone down in my estimation. It really is a tragedy of Shakespearean proportions. The amount of litter strewn across the roads of Newham, especially Green Street, is an eye sore created almost exclusively by the inhabitants who live there. Billions will be spent on the Olympics in Stratford but it will have no effect on the people who commit the aforementioned antisocial behaviour with impunity. The contributors who gave Newham 5 stars are obviously in need of an eye test.

The Olympics will benefit Stratford but I fail to see how it will benefit other parts of Newham. It won't improve the crime rates, educational achievements, antisocial behaviour, housing or health problems of the inhabitants of the rest of Newham.

I am sure that many residents of Newham wish to reside in a relatively clean environment with good schools, housing, amenities and low crime levels. The only way they can achieve this is to leave Newham. The reasons they stay is primarily because of economic circumstances and possibly wanting to be near family and friends. Think very carefully before you move to Newham, You have been warned!

What Newham residents say:

With property still affordable, I would recommend for young professionals or people starting families to buy here, as the area will be even more fantastically re-generated for the Olympics.

The only thing that gets me though, is the amount of dog mess on the streets-but then again, you find it in Kings Rd too, so that does not change wherever you go in London.

I just moved to Stratford, after spending about 10 years in West London trying to get on the property ladder, I've been living here for about 8 months and the neighbours are quite nice, people around are friendly. Unlike the snobbish ones I had in the west. The neighbour helped us to find a nearby nanny whom she uses, I've been invited to a couple of barbecues with the neighbours and I learnt a few things about other cultures. I've been made very welcome and the kids love it. Touch wood I think this is home, and there are a couple of good schools around if you put your name on the list very early. I think it depends on the individual; I prefer it here to West London and during the school breaks there are a lot of activities organised by the Newham Council; I would not change it for the world. I would like to invite Phil & Kirstie to spend a weekend in Stratford, I'm sure you guys will enjoy it.

Having moved here 2 years ago from West London just before our daughter was born, we are amazed how many decent people we have met since. One of my neighbours even gave me a card to welcome me to their road, and to this day they have not missed either my daughter's birthday, or Xmas to buy her a present- you just could not get this kind of warmth in West London!

Channel 4 – Best & Worst Places To Live

Andrea Dean says, “The *Location, Location, Location: Best and Worst Live* programme has been running for three years now (2005, 2006, 2007), and judging by viewers' reactions, you don't always agree with the outcome. However, the results are compiled on a strictly scientific basis. Here's how...”

Statistician's Viewpoint & Overview

Head statistician Dr Marc Farr, Honorary Professor at University College London, was given the task of analysing all the data to produce the lists of [40 Best and Worst places to live in the UK](#).

Despite the seeming enormity of the project, he reckons that it was all pretty straightforward, 'It took a team of up to seven researchers several months to gather all the data,' he says. 'And we introduced some new variables, such as life expectancy and suicide rates, that weren't included [last year](#). But fortunately there weren't many problems. The only slight difficulty is in comparing data which has been gathered in different ways in different parts of the UK - for example the Scottish education and exam system is different to that in England and Wales.'

So, how did they do it? All the UK's 434 local authorities were judged on exactly the same criteria - crime, education, employment, environment, lifestyle and health, using the most up to date official statistics. Once the research team had collated the data, a consultant statistician was called in to analyse it.

A representative sample of a thousand people across the UK, aged 18 upwards, were asked which of the six criteria would be most important to them if they were to consider moving home, and to then rank the rest in order. Overall they prioritised them in order as: Crime; Environment; Lifestyle; Health; Education; Employment.

The results of this survey were used to weight the criteria in order of importance to the homebuyer.

Crime, Environment & Lifestyle

Crime

The research centered on victim crimes - those that directly affect the safety of people and their possessions. The victim oriented crimes included in the data are violence against the person, sexual crimes, robbery, burglary, theft of car and theft from car. The methodology here was to add up victim crimes and express them as a percentage of the population.

Environment

This category was measured by reviewing four criteria for each local authority - hours of sunshine, access to parks, recycling and carbon emissions. The Met Office provided figures of average sunshine hours for all UK counties. Each local authority was then assigned a figure from the corresponding county that it fell into geographically.

When assessing parks, the data consisted of two parts - number of sites and total area they amounted to. It was combined with the population figures of each local authority, resulting in the final calculation of the number of hectares per head of population. And, finally, an index was created for the size of parks per head of population.

For recycling, figures for total household recycling management rather than municipal waste were used, and carbon emission levels were sourced from DEFRA and focused on the end user ie individuals rather than emissions from power stations.

Lifestyle

The aspects that form the lifestyle category are access to culture and leisure, number of retail outlets, and number of bars, cafes, restaurants and places of accommodation.

Culture and leisure includes measures such as access to museums, concert halls, cinemas, theatres, gyms and sports facilities. To assess sports resources, the team calculated the actual number of public facilities in each local area and to make it comparable, they chose those that all four UK countries include in their figures - sports halls, swimming pools, ice rinks, bowling centres, pitches and athletic tracks. The researchers were careful to find out how many actual pools there are in each local authority and not just the number of leisure centres as one centre could contain three pools.

Information on retail outlets - which included anything from a corner shop to a department store - was provided by the Office of National Statistics, as were figures for catering and accommodation establishments.

Health, Education & Employment

Health

This is a new category that was considered a relevant social factor when someone considers moving into an area. It comprises life expectancy, teenage pregnancy, infant mortality and suicide rates. Most of this information was gathered from the Office of National Statistics in England and Wales, and the relevant bodies in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Education

The team measured and compared the percentage of 15 year olds in each local authority achieving five or more GCSEs (or equivalent) at grades A*-C for each of the 434 local authorities. Only local education authority-maintained state schools were included, as their catchment areas directly affect property prices. Scotland use a system called Standard Grades, which can be equated with GCSEs.

For higher education, figures were collected for those possessing higher degree qualifications ie at NVQ 4 equivalent and above: eg HND, Degree and Higher Degree level qualifications or equivalent.

Employment

For this category, the percentage of economically active people in employment was calculated. This segment of the population is basically the number of people who are in employment or those who are fit to work and actively seeking employment. Economically active does not include those who are retired, on incapacity benefit, full time students (unless they have part-time jobs) or those who choose not to work ie stay-at-home mothers.

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The Best: Edinburgh

Storming into the top spot in the 4Homes chart, Scotland's capital and second largest city is probably best known for the annual Edinburgh Festival, when roughly half a million tourists flock to the city to see world-class theatre, comedy, films and music. But what's it like to live there full-time?



Phil and Kirstie's View

This year's very best place to live winner is Edinburgh, Scotland's capital city. It's the flower of Scotland - and the rest of the UK now! So swing your chariots in this direction! Edinburgh tops our countdown and ranks highly in ALL our 6 categories. What makes it even more a winner is that the typical house goes for just £205,000! That's £5,000 below the UK average.

It also has amazing lifestyle on offer, with far and away the highest number of shops, bars and restaurants in our top ten, and for culture vultures there are more museums and galleries here than any other Local Authority.

And the biggest plus for living here? Well you'd be a resident of one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. Edinburgh's got the highest concentration of listed buildings in the UK. How appropriate then, that it should be top of our list of the Best & Worst Places to Live in the UK 2007!

Area Guide: Edinburgh

Edinburgh's beloved Old Town, with its medieval road plan and Reformation era buildings, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. But a £20 million regeneration programme announced in June 2007 will see a series of rundown buildings between the Royal Mile and Market Street transformed into a brand new quarter, set to include 80 flats and a budget hotel. Locals aren't pleased, but if you're planning to move, you could snap up some brand new housing in the picturesque heart of the city.

Also a World Heritage Site, the New Town, built from 1765 onwards, and originally designed to be purely residential, followed a grid-like street layout like modern day New York when first built, much of which you'll still find intact today. These days, the New Town is known for its shops - the famous Princes Street being retail Mecca for visitors and locals alike.

The South side, Edinburgh's less famous and primarily residential district, can nevertheless boast famous residents: if you like the sound of having authors J. K. Rowling, Ian Rankin, and Alexander McCall Smith for neighbours, this is the place to be. To the east, the port of Leith was controversially merged with Edinburgh in 1920 and has enjoyed a growing profile since the 1980s as an excellent environment for white-collar workers.

A prosperous city, just over half of Edinburgh's residents work in professional occupations or as senior management, with just 1.9 per cent of the town's population claiming job seekers allowance. This is reflected in higher property prices than the national average. In fact, prices there have climbed steadily for the last five years, with the average Edinburgh home now over the £200,000 price barrier.

Think that's too expensive? It's still half the cost of a home in London, so if it's capital city living for you, this is certainly one you can afford to buy in. And for that alone, Edinburgh deserves its place as the pick of the crop.

Children take protest to Channel 4

October 17, 2007

Children and young people from Newham protested outside Channel 4's head office today after learning that the borough has been rated the third worst place to live in the country.



Pupils from Tollgate Primary School in Plaistow and Gallions Primary School in Beckton went to the television station in Horseferry Road, central London to tell them their programme "The Best And Worst Places To Live In The UK" is wrong.

The children sang the Newham Song, which was penned by Tollgate School and includes the lyrics: "Newham is the place to be, There's lots to do and lots to see, Every type of people live in Newham, Our citizens are from all around the world, We all live in harmony, like one big family".

Members of the Ascension Eagles, the country's top cheerleading groups who are based in Custom House, provided an amazing acrobatic performance in front of the Channel 4 staff and people walking past.

Ayesha Khanom, Carole Myers and Emmanuel Osei Tutu, members of Track 12 - a group of people whose individual goals Newham Council will follow in the run-up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games - also went along to provide their support.

They and the children presented the Channel 4 staff with a hamper of food items that are either produced or sold in Newham, including Indian sweets and syrup from Silvertown firm Tate & Lyle, a CD of the Newham Song and publicity material about Newham.

Sir Robin Wales, Mayor of Newham, said: "It is very commendable of these children and young people to go to Channel 4 to make their views heard. Newham is a vibrant, exciting and happening place and these youngsters all agree with that.

"Like any inner city borough, we will have problems, but it's the way we tackle these issues, through partnership working among the council, police, health, education, voluntary sector and community involvement that perhaps the programme makers should have also considered."

Shara Brice MBE, Director of the Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders said: "Every community has its challenges but it is how people respond that determines the real heart of a community. The programme paints a bleak picture of our community and that's an injustice to all of the innovative people and positive developments that make Newham an exciting place to live.

"In fact, in the world of cheerleading, if you want to be part of Britain's best cheer squad, you need a Newham postcode. Every week, we get calls from people who want to join the Ascension Eagles. Sometimes they pretend to have a Newham postcode, or they start a family search to see if they can find a relative who lives in Newham. In the world of cheer, a Newham postcode trumps a posh London postcode every time!"