



Civic University Agreement

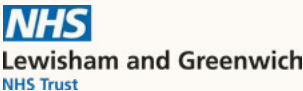
Together we will drive civic
innovation for our borough,
region and beyond



Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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Our agreement

Led by Goldsmiths, University of London, this Civic University Agreement sets out a connected vision for how we will work with partners to make our local area a better and more equitable place. This means further integrating social value and innovation into the core of what we do as a university. We are determined to unlock the full potential of our teaching, research, knowledge exchange, workforce and estate, as well as our cultural offer, to make a transformative impact in Lewisham, South East London and beyond.

Goldsmiths brings significant social, economic and cultural benefits to South East London. A knowledge and culture hub for our borough and region, we are deeply invested in co-producing world-class education, research and culture with the communities around us. Analysis has shown that the university contributes around £93m annually in Gross Value Added (GVA), supporting a wide ecosystem of jobs and local businesses. Our work with local schools reaches thousands of young people each year, giving them an insight into university life. Goldsmiths also contributes to the area through a range of cultural and engagement initiatives, through its groundbreaking research and through its graduates and alumni, many of whom settle locally. According to analysis by Novuna conducted in 2023, Goldsmiths is the UK university with the fourth highest proportion of graduates starting their own business.

Goldsmiths also helps to bring the world to Lewisham, welcoming scholars and students from across the globe each year. These staff and students are active citizens and valued members of our global/local community. The London Growth Plan notes that 'London's universities and research institutes produce

discoveries and inventions that change the world'. Goldsmiths is no exception, with our research and knowledge exchange generating societal impact across our strength areas in the arts, humanities, social sciences and computing. In 2027 Goldsmiths will be opening a new learning space in Catford, working closely in partnership with Lewisham Council to bring new energy and opportunities to this part of the borough.

Alongside our partners in this Civic University Agreement, we are committed to working on a shared vision aimed at improving the lives of those living, working, learning and visiting our local area. We are proud to be based in one of the most diverse, vibrant and culturally rich parts of London and we are proud to be working to further unlock the potential of our area and the people who live, work and study there. Our overarching aim is to co-create better places that allow people to thrive and fulfil their full potential: nurturing empathy, community and belonging. In doing so, our work will also reflect commitments to equality, diversity, and social and environmental justice.



The vision

Our vision draws on shared principles across the partnership and on Goldsmiths' approach to civic responsibilities and engagement. Working strategically and in partnerships, we aim to play our maximum possible role in co-creating Lewisham, South East London as an economically vibrant, socially inclusive, culturally rich and diverse place – making our area a better place to live, work, visit and study and creating the conditions in which more people can thrive.

Our priority areas for focusing this work are:

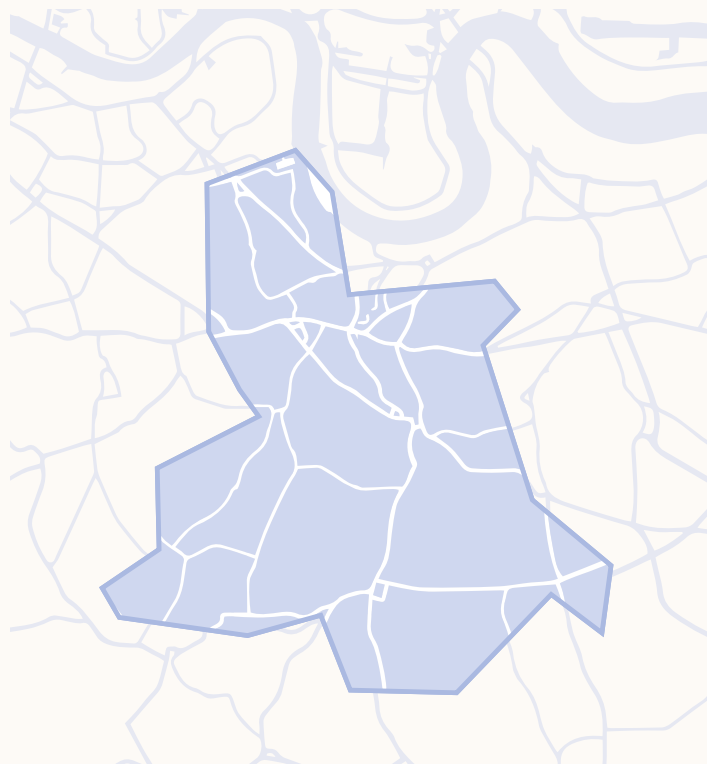
1. Inclusive education and opportunity for life
2. Shared prosperity, jobs and fair growth
3. Culture, community and belonging
4. Climate action, sustainability and good health



Geographic reach

The CUA will focus on our immediate shared civic context: the London Borough of Lewisham. Our underpinning aim is to improve lives and make this immediate local context a better place to live, work, visit and study. Whilst keeping our focus on Lewisham, we will also explore opportunities to work with a wider network of partners and communities across South East London, Greater London and the South East.

Our focus will be local, but we will draw on ideas, networks and perspectives from across the nation and indeed across the globe as we seek to make our area a better place. Our collaboration with Future Arts Centres, a national network of over 180 arts centres across the UK, will help us to achieve this broader perspective. We will align with regional and national strategies for growth and development as well the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.



About the CUA partners

The Albany is a performing arts centre that exists to inspire, develop and support creativity in South East London.

Goldsmiths, University of London – with leading research and high-quality teaching, Goldsmiths offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the arts, humanities, social sciences, business and computing.

The Horniman Museum and Gardens is located in the Forest Hill area of Lewisham. It aims to connect us all with global cultures and the natural environment, encouraging us to shape a positive future for the world we all share.

Lewisham College Lewisham College, part of NCG, offers full-time and part-time vocational and technical courses for 14-18s and adults in a range of subjects, including Diplomas, Apprenticeships, T Levels, Access to Higher Education and professional courses, as well as employability programmes and English, Maths, ESOL and supported learning courses to enable students to gain the qualifications, professional skills and confidence they need to achieve their career ambitions.

Lewisham Council is the local authority for the London Borough of Lewisham. They deliver a huge range of services to support the residents, businesses and students of the borough to thrive, working closely with the community and anchor institutions of the borough to maximise their collective impact.

Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust is responsible for: Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich; University Hospital Lewisham; a range of community health services in Lewisham; some services at Queen Mary's Hospital in Sidcup.

Lewisham Local is the borough Voluntary Sector Infrastructure support organisation focusing on connecting individuals, organisations and businesses to the community, and increasing awareness of the good causes and needs in the community. It promotes an asset-based model that uses the reciprocal sharing of time and skills to help each other across the borough.

The Migration Museum is creating a landmark cultural institution for the nation that explores how the movement of people to and from Britain across the ages has shaped who we are – as individuals, as communities, and as a nation.

NHS South East London Integrated Care Board (SEL ICB) is a statutory NHS organisation responsible for planning and funding health services across six boroughs: Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham, and Southwark.

Phoenix Community Housing is a not-for-profit resident-led housing association based in south London. They own and manage more than 7,600 homes in the Lewisham wards of Bellingham, Catford South, Downham and Grove Park. They are building new homes with an emphasis on sustainability and high-quality design.

Trinity Laban is the UK's only Conservatoire of music and contemporary dance. Their innovative course provision, exciting performances, groundbreaking education, and community and social inclusion work make Trinity Laban a leader in the advancement of creative artistic practice.

999 Club From their centre on Deptford Broadway, 999 Club offer services for homeless people. As well as people who sleep rough, they support those who are vulnerably housed, sofa surfing or living in temporary accommodation.

Associate members

In addition to the core partners on the previous page, we are delighted to launch this refreshed CUA in association with Future Arts Centres, a network of over 180 arts centres across the UK. This partnership with Future Arts Centres will help us to align our local civic work with a national perspective, exploring how our work in South East London resonates with issues impacting towns and cities right across the UK.

As our CUA progresses, we will seek opportunities for wider collaboration and to bring a wider range of regional perspectives into our conversation – with a view to fostering dialogue and innovation that links the local to regional, national and international perspectives.

Future Arts Centres

Future Arts Centres is a UK network that champions the unique importance of arts centres at a local, regional and national level. The network advocates that, by offering outstanding artistic experiences for everyone in our communities and by operating as robust social enterprises, arts centres present a fantastic model for the cultural venues of tomorrow.



1. Inclusive education and opportunities for life

Education is the bedrock on which fairer societies are built. Access to a rich, diverse and fulfilling education – including the opportunity to keep learning and re-skilling throughout your life – is a fundamental right that everyone should have access to. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals challenge us to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. We mean to rise to this challenge, playing our maximum possible role in ensuring that people in our area can fulfil their full potential in life and helping them to develop the skills that they need to thrive. Through outreach and widening participation initiatives, equity-focused education, work placements and skills programmes across disciplines, we will work to address some of the structural inequalities that affect people's life chances, making social mobility a cornerstone of our approach to social innovation.

Lewisham and South East London offer a rich and inspiring context within which to learn. This is already an area of notable educational attainment, with higher than national average participation and progression rates. It is home to great schools and colleges, inspiring cultural institutions and leading universities. Nonetheless, not everyone is able to benefit from this learning environment. Inequality remains a significant issue, particularly in some of the digital, creative and cultural sectors which will shape the economies and jobs of the future. There is evidence of a decline in numbers of young people from ethnically diverse and less economically advantaged backgrounds choosing to study subjects in the creative arts and humanities. This impacts progression into associated careers. We are committed to working with partners to do all that we can to redress this, ensuring that people can make education choices that match their hopes, aspirations and ambitions.



The London Growth Plan notes that 'London's universities lead the UK on social mobility'. At Goldsmiths, we recognise our role as part of a wider higher education sector seeking to ensure that people from all backgrounds receive the support they need to navigate a path to and through higher education and into rewarding lives and careers. Alongside fee waivers and bursaries, we run a range of initiatives such as summer schools, taster days and mentoring programmes which help to demystify university life and offer openings into higher education. Our Goldsmiths Equity Awards provide financial and individualised educational support to Global Ethnic Majority students to offset systemic inequality. Initiatives such as Alchemy, a creative music making and mentoring programme, and our Schools Studio Programme, which provides mentorship to 16-18 year olds in local schools and colleges, demonstrate our commitment to working in partnership with schools, colleges and young people in the area. Our stewardship of Arts Council England's national Artsmark accreditation scheme gives us unique insight into the importance of creative education in schools.

We will:

Work on initiatives fostering social mobility, ensuring people have access to the skills and knowledge that they need to thrive regardless of their background. This will include heightening existing outreach and widening participation programmes that prepare learners for the changing world of education and work that they will face in the twenty-first century – including digital literacy and AI.

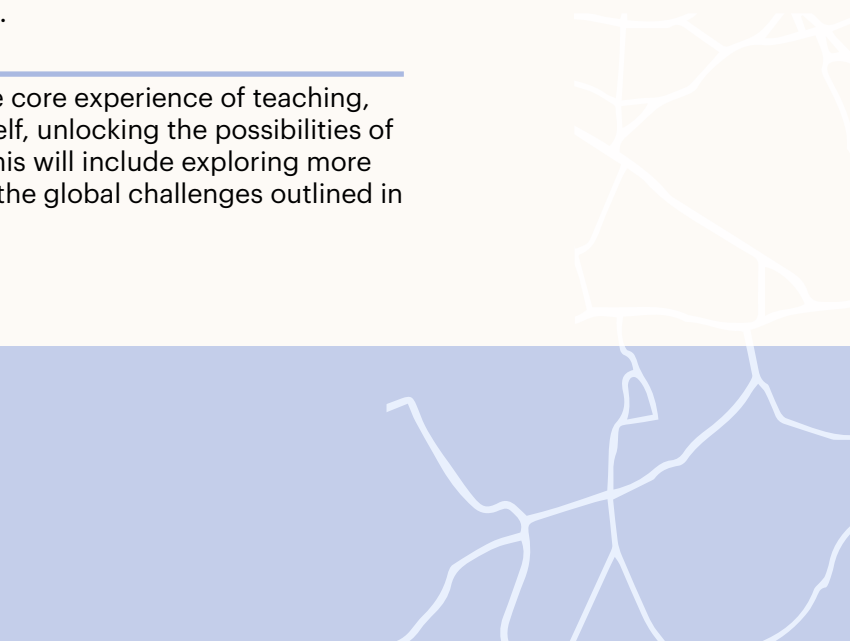
Develop programmes and policies with education providers across the South East, providing pathways across FE and HE education that give people the skills and experience that they need in order to thrive. This will include broadening our existing collaborations on initiatives such as mentoring, T-Levels and work placements.

Work with Adult Learning Lewisham, Lewisham College and other adult education providers to ensure that we are offering an ambitious and coordinated approach to progression and lifelong learning.

Support teachers and education leaders – fostering innovation and supporting retention in the sector. We make the most of shared expertise in this area across different education providers and ensure that opportunities for knowledge exchange with education research, including links to the Artsmark programme, are maximised.

Continue our work on building Creative Skills Pathways that enhance social mobility in the arts and break down the barriers to careers in the cultural and creative industries. This includes working with the Lewisham Cultural Education Partnership to champion creative education in schools and building on Goldsmiths initiatives such as Alchemy and our Schools Studio Programme.

Embed civic participation and creative thinking in the core experience of teaching, learning and research programmes at Goldsmiths itself, unlocking the possibilities of using the city as a lab and London as a classroom. This will include exploring more collaborative PhDs and taking a local perspective on the global challenges outlined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



2. Shared prosperity, decent jobs and fair growth

Lewisham and South East London have a diverse and vibrant local economy, centred on independent businesses and SMEs. Lewisham itself is home to one of the Mayor of London's first Creative Enterprise Zones – a recognition of the extraordinary cluster of creative businesses and entrepreneurs based in the borough. As the Inclusive Economy Lewisham Strategy notes, 20% of Lewisham's businesses are in the creative, cultural, and digital sectors. A significant proportion of these have links to Goldsmiths. Lewisham and South East London are also undergoing significant regeneration, with improving transport links, developments and infrastructure projects driving inward investment and encouraging more people to visit, live, work and study in the area.

There is much to celebrate. However, recent years have also brought challenges. As we continue to recover from the shocks of the global pandemic, the Cost-of-Living-Crisis and Brexit, partnership is more important than ever. We have a shared responsibility to strive towards the UN's Development Goal of 'promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all'. In our local area and beyond, there are challenges to achieving this. In 2025, Lewisham ranked within the 20% most deprived local authorities in England and the 7th most deprived borough in the capital. Goldsmiths itself sits in New Cross, which Lewisham Council's Inclusive Economy Lewisham strategy calls one of Lewisham's most 'challenged areas in terms of poverty, barriers to prosperity, and lack of economic opportunity'. Across our borough and across South East London, economic inequality is a major issue. Pockets of wealth and poverty sit side by side, and there are many in our communities who do not benefit from the affluence that exists close to them. The world of work is itself also changing rapidly. As the 2025 London Growth Plan notes, 'the transformation of work including flexible working, artificial intelligence and the gig economy' are rapidly reshaping the world of work and the fabric of our cities.

We are already rising to these challenges. Lewisham's third largest employer, Goldsmiths has been an accredited London Living Wage Employer since 2016. The university boosts the local economy, providing good quality jobs, supporting local business and acting as an engine of fair and inclusive local growth, supporting regeneration and innovation for Lewisham and South East London. Goldsmiths is also working with Lewisham Council to develop a new student learning space in Catford, in the south of the borough. Demonstrating the power of partnership, this represents a major investment in Catford's future – with around 600 students bringing new energy and footfall to the town centre and a boost for local businesses.

Goldsmiths runs a student staff programme providing students with local well-paid flexible work at above London Living Wage. We host regular Meet the Buyer events to help local small businesses make procurement links to large public sector organisations and the university has also developed a portfolio of business support programmes which bring together expertise from across Goldsmiths to provide creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation that supports local business and SMEs. These programmes have supported over 700 businesses locally over the past three years.

Working with initiatives such as the Lewisham Strategic Partnership, Lewisham Creative Enterprise Zone and the Thames Estuary Production Corridor, we will continue to unlock the full benefits of our university as an ethical employer and anchor for regional growth, innovation and entrepreneurship, supporting a thriving and inclusive local economy.



Work strategically with Lewisham Council, local businesses and local communities to maximise the positive impacts of our learning space in Catford, ensuring that this initiative reaches its full potential in spearheading inclusive development in the area.

Further mobilise our research and innovation expertise to support local businesses and SMEs, especially those in the creative and digital sectors and those led by female and/or Global Ethnic Majority entrepreneurs. This includes exploring the possibility of an Enterprise Space to act as a 'front door' to Goldsmiths for local businesses wishing to engage in innovation and knowledge exchange.

Work with partners to foster inclusive growth and regeneration, supporting initiatives that bring inward investment to our area and promote Lewisham and South East London as a good place to live, work and visit. This includes supporting the Back the Bakerloo campaign to bring the Bakerloo Line extension to South East London.

Support initiatives tackling employment inequalities for local residents, including those most disadvantaged in the labour market. This will include supporting ethical work placements, applying our research expertise and curriculum to local challenges, and supporting pathways into good jobs, including the jobs and industries of the future.

Continue to work with partners to support and drive innovation in the Creative Sector. This includes heightening our contribution to the Lewisham Creative Enterprise Zone, alongside creative and digital strategies from the GLA.

Continue our work on breaking down structural barriers to good jobs and, particularly careers in the cultural and creative industries – using our research, knowledge exchange, policy influence and local partnerships to help make these industries more equitable and inclusive.

Work with partners to advocate for the value of international students, who bring skills, knowledge and investment to our area as well as being valued members of our community.

Convene Innovation Summits to bring together thought leaders from across London, the South East and beyond, sharing good practice, developing new ideas and sparking collaboration, including around funding opportunities.

3. Culture, community and belonging

In 2022, Lewisham was London's Borough of Culture. A year-long programme of cultural activity built on the borough's well-established reputation as a place of cultural and creative radicalism, reaching more than 400,000 people and leaving a significant legacy. South East London is increasingly noted as a cultural and creative hub. Lewisham boasts a number of notable cultural organisations, from the Horniman Museum to Trinity Laban and the Albany and Goldsmiths itself. Local festivals such as Deptford X and the Catford Arts Trail help to illuminate the creative scene and bring art and culture to the streets. Across the wider region, too, art and culture is flourishing. South East London incorporates everything from the creative hotbed of Peckham to Greenwich's museums and heritage sites and Design District. The cultural and creative sector is transforming the way that we think about whole areas of the city and is often at the leading edge of making them better places to live, work and visit.

Culture can help improve our sense of wellbeing and help to foster deeper and richer encounters with place, community, heritage and belonging. It can also provide a means to ask critical questions and to drive social and political action: acting as a catalyst to change society for the better.

Building on the legacies of Lewisham's year as London Borough of Culture as well as initiatives such as our new learning space in Catford, we will continue to support and celebrate the diverse communities, heritage and cultures of our area, with a particular focus on social justice, race justice, and decolonising. We will support pan-London initiatives such as the Greater London Authority's work on Diversity in the Public Realm and work together on projects that foster ethical placemaking, pride in place and heritage-led regeneration.

One of London's most proudly diverse and multicultural areas, Lewisham is also the first London borough to be awarded the title of Borough of Sanctuary. The signatories to this agreement are exploring how together we might contribute yet further to the campaigns and initiatives aimed at supporting this initiative and unlocking the true potential of our area as a space of sanctuary and welcome. In a climate of hostile political rhetoric around migration, we will work to ensure that our civic context is one that supports people, values their contributions and allows them to thrive, whatever their background or geographic point of origin.



We will:

Work with the Lewisham Cultural Partnership and others to embed the legacies of Lewisham's year as London Borough of Culture, maximising the role of culture as a driver of community cohesion, regeneration and cultural activism.

Work on initiatives that build community cohesion, belonging and pride-in-place. This will include initiatives focussed on anti-racism and celebrating the diverse heritage of Lewisham and South East London via projects that empower Global Ethnic Majority communities and creatives.

Work with schools, colleges and museums and cultural organisations on initiatives focussed on decolonising curricula and curatorial policy. This will include collaboration on cultural programming, research and other initiatives developed with local partners.

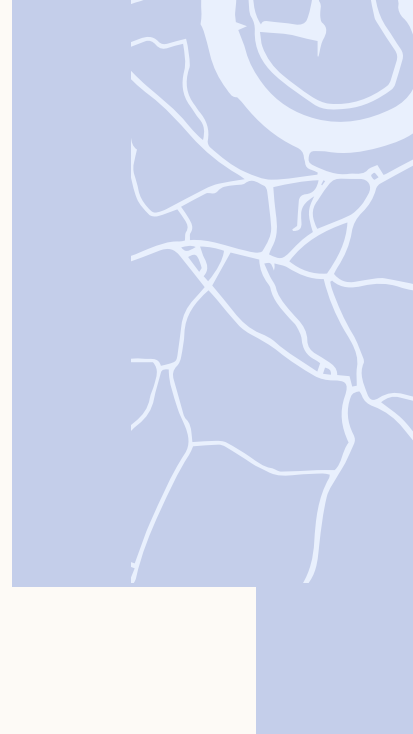
Build on existing research and cultural links to support pan-London race justice initiatives such as the Greater London Authority's Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm.

Work to maximise the role of culture as a means of fostering civic participation, debate and exchange. We will use our partnership with the Future Arts Centres network of over 180 UK arts centres to explore and optimise the potential of the arts to drive 'creative democracy'.

Enhance our role as a knowledge and culture hub for our local area, including via our new learning space in Catford, supporting local communities by offering access to cultural, research and space assets.

Work with partners on initiatives to support migrants and refugees and heighten Lewisham's work as a Borough of Sanctuary, drawing on Goldsmiths' research expertise and insights on migration and ensuring a positive local and regional impact from the work of the new Goldsmiths Migrant Futures Institute.

Continue to unlock the power of volunteering and local giving, creating new and better opportunities for people to volunteer their time and supporting organisations that coordinate opportunities across the charity/third sector. This will include expanding our Civic Days volunteering programme.





4. Climate action, sustainability and good health

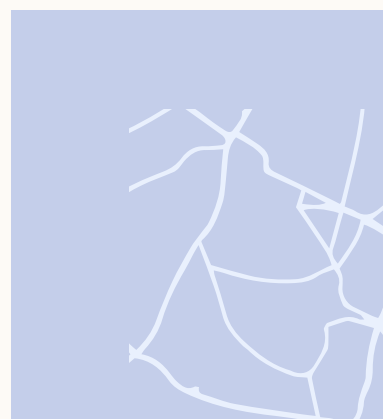
The Climate Emergency is one of the most pressing issues facing humanity today. As we see our planet change around us and strive for more sustainable and regenerative ways of living, we become aware of a responsibility to create a world and environment that fosters sustainable health and wellbeing. The actions that we take today are essential to shaping the 'Sustainable Cities and Communities' called for by the UN Sustainable Development Goals and creating a liveable world for generations to come.

Goldsmiths is working to address the challenges of the climate and nature emergency. Alongside efforts to decarbonise our estate, our research and knowledge exchange activities in recent years have included major projects on behaviour change and sustainable travel, explorations of the intersections of human and 'more-than-human' communities and studies of environmental crime and airborne violence. Changes to our curriculum have seen the climate crisis deeply embedded in the educational experience of students at Goldsmiths. With our partners, we will continue to work to create healthier and more sustainable futures: reducing our emissions, protecting biodiversity and green and blue infrastructure, offsetting the impacts of global heating and building the climate and nature crisis into curricula and education programmes and helping to influence behaviour change, inform and empower communities to make change happen.

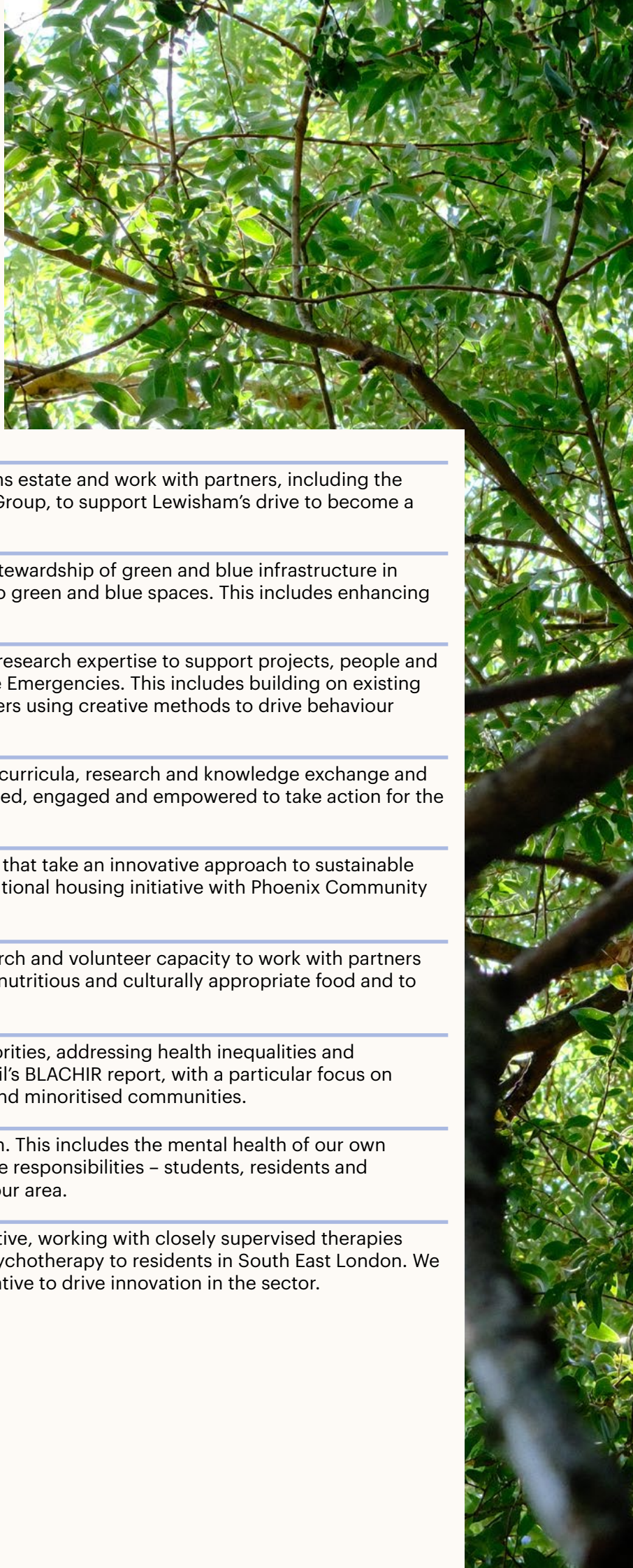
The impacts of climate change are not experienced equally. They are closely linked to wider social inequalities, including health inequalities. The Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review (BLACHIR) report has explored health inequality as a driver of poor health outcomes both locally and further afield. This has in turn informed strategic action to address these issues, with a focus on prevention and holistic good health awareness. Food Justice is a key focus, and partners in Lewisham are working to ensure that as many people as possible can enjoy reliable and fair access to food

that is sufficiently nutritious, sustainable, culturally appropriate and affordable, whilst also having opportunity to grow, prepare, cook, eat and share food with their families and communities.

Among the health challenges facing us, mental health is a major area of concern. Recent years have seen a surge in people reporting mental health challenges and making use of services in this area. This is particularly true of young people and the people most impacted by COVID-19 lockdowns. The London Growth Plan notes that 'poor health, including mental health, is keeping growing numbers of (particularly younger) Londoners out of work'. Many in our local communities are impacted by social isolation and associated impacts on mental health, including students. We are already working to address these issues - supporting a range of initiatives that help to foster good physical and mental health. Goldsmiths is collaborating with Phoenix Community Housing on a pioneering intergenerational housing initiative, Melfield Gardens, which sees students living alongside older Phoenix residents in a new development built to Passivhaus ecological standards in the south of Lewisham. We are also piloting Wellbeing Clinics aimed at connecting staff and student expertise at the university to local mental health needs.



We will:



Continue our drive to decarbonise the Goldsmiths estate and work with partners, including the Lewisham Strategic Partnership Climate Action Group, to support Lewisham's drive to become a carbon neutral borough.

Protect and enrich local biodiversity and foster stewardship of green and blue infrastructure in our local area, promoting access to nature and to green and blue spaces. This includes enhancing biodiversity on the Goldsmiths campus.

Unlock the power of Goldsmiths innovation and research expertise to support projects, people and organisations addressing the Climate and Nature Emergencies. This includes building on existing projects with Lewisham Council and other partners using creative methods to drive behaviour change and support climate action.

Embed the Climate Emergency into educational curricula, research and knowledge exchange and cultural policies, ensuring that people are informed, engaged and empowered to take action for the future of the planet.

Share and disseminate knowledge from projects that take an innovative approach to sustainable living – such as our Melfield Gardens intergenerational housing initiative with Phoenix Community Housing – to drive wider societal change.

Support Food Justice initiatives, unlocking research and volunteer capacity to work with partners on helping more people have access to healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and to combat food poverty.

Continue to work collectively on local health priorities, addressing health inequalities and supporting actions outlined by Lewisham Council's BLACHIR report, with a particular focus on addressing health inequalities impacting Black and minoritised communities.

Support initiatives that foster good mental health. This includes the mental health of our own stakeholders and communities for whom we have responsibilities – students, residents and employees – as well as the wider community in our area.

Pilot a community-facing Wellbeing Clinics initiative, working with closely supervised therapies students and staff to provide counselling and psychotherapy to residents in South East London. We will share knowledge and learning from this initiative to drive innovation in the sector.

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p15 and p16 "Listening Like a Tree"
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