basic | beɪsɪk

adjective

forming an essential foundation or starting point; fundamental

(Oxford English Dictionary)

1. basic shouldn't mean average, basic means what is essential to each person's diverse needs

2. inadequate basic support forces people with special needs and disabilities to struggle alone

3. feeling alone takes a toll on your mental health

4. mental healthcare is welfare, and welfare leads to mental health

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1. basic shouldn't mean average, basic means what is essential to each person's diverse needs

Access to education, housing and healthcare are fundamental needs. Yet, they are often designed for the "average" person in mind. "Basic" services are therefore often inadequate and inappropriate for people with special needs and disabilities.

Welfare and social support must be designed for the diverse needs of people for it to be truly basic.

Lily | ˈlɪli
mother of a child with special needs

"In the area, there is no support for kids with special educational needs (SENCO) in schools. Even if we live here in Heath, we moved the kids to a school out of the borough."

Figure 1. Victorine's journey down the stairs from her 1st floor apartment

Victorine | vɪkˈtəːrin

suffers from a spinal condition and lives with her two teenagers who are her carers

"My flat is on the first floor with 17 stairs and, since my health condition more than three years, I have only been allocated first floor temporary houses. In total, I have been waiting 15 years for a permanent house "

2. inadequate basic support forces people with special needs and disabilities to struggle alone

Amber's life changed dramatically 3 months ago due to an accident. She lost her job and had to move to the ground floor of her home.

She is in dire need of an adapted house but the waiting list is very long. This means she has to move out of the borough and out of London for an appropriate house, forcing her to leave her friends and her community.

Amber | ˈambə
lives alone and suffers from spinal injury

"I have no choice, I will be alone"

3. feeling alone takes a toll on your mental health

Mental healthcare must become a pillar of basic social support. People need mental health support not only to face life's struggles but also to accept help when they need it.

At the same time, basic social services like housing, legal support, livelihood opportunities, security, and education, can enable mental health when designed with people's diverse needs in mind. People with disabilities and special needs, and people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, must be included in the decision-making process.

Daisy | ˈdeɪzi
single mother of 2 children on the autism spectrum

"In the past I attempted to end my life but now I realise my kids need me and they are vulnerable."

Rose | rəʊz
mother of a child with cerebral palsy

"I don't have time to think about my wellbeing. I can't get depressed; I don't have a choice because my kids depend on me."

I can't express myself and my issues...it's a physical and mental battle... I have no choice, I will be alone.... don't have time to think about my wellbeing...i am alone... I can't express myself and my issues...it's a physical and mental battle... I have no choice, I will be alone.... don't have time to think about my wellbeing...

4. mental healthcare is welfare, and welfare leads to mental health

Mental healthcare should be a pillar of basic social support. People need mental health support not only to face the multiple barriers to prosperity in their lives but also to accept help when they need it.

At the same time, basic social services like secure livelihood opportunities, legal support, education, housing, communal spaces, and security, can enable mental health by alleviating barriers to prosperity. For these to truly help, they must be designed with people's diverse needs in mind. Providing support for and including people with disabilities and special needs in the design of basic social support is therefore a critical part of prosperity.

Figure 3. The wheel diagram designed by the Barking & Dagenham's team of citizen social scientists, which illustrates the intersecting relationship between barriers to prosperity and mental health

what does basic mean to you?

(type or write your thoughts here and share it with us if you'd like!)

If you could speak to a policymaker now, what would you say?

"If MPs had listened to those parents who have children with learning disabilities, there would be more spaces for children with learning disabilities. When you are going to a school or park, you see a normal park designed for normal children, and you see that your child cannot do anything because it wasn't developed for special needs. You won't bring your child to the park! But this child deserves a park. This child deserves to have education for special needs."

- Victorine NGOBO

Victorine NGOBO

Citizen Social Scientist in Barking and Dagenham.

A divorced mother of two girls and an everlasting student. From a Finance background in France, I have started from scratch in England - from an ESOL course to a Masters course in Public Health. I have contributed as a Stop Smoking Champion and as a Child Weight Management volunteer in my borough. I am currently studying for a Diploma in Reflexology and holistically supporting women who have faced and are facing domestic violence, offering mental health support and reflexology. This project enabled me to realise my dream as a researcher. I always wanted to hear from my fellow citizens' voices, histories, and experiences.

It is not a community without citizens, and it cannot change without listening to citizens' voices.

PROSPERITY IN EAST LONDON 2021-2031

Prosperity in east London 2021-2031 is a 10-year mixed-methods study tracing the effects of large-scale and long-term urban regeneration on local communities in east London. The study equips local residents with the tools to examine prosperity in their communities, producing citizen-centred insights on people's lived experiences of regeneration.

During wave 1 of the qualitative research, which took place between September and October 2021, 10 residents from 10 areas in east London, were employed and supported by east London community organisations: Compost CIC, Hackney Quest, and Leaders in the Community, to engage in 3-months of part-time research and training. Through UCL's Citizen Science Academy, they received practice-led training on research design, ethics, qualitative data collection, and social impact strategies. The teams carried out interviews and walking ethnographies exploring obstacles to prosperity in their different neighbourhoods, and are currently involved in presenting this research to policymakers.

Managed by the Institute for Global Prosperity's (IGP) Prosperity Co-laboratory UK (PROCOL UK) in partnership with the UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies, the study was co-designed with members of the London Prosperity Board – a cross-sector partnership between the IGP, UCL East, London government, public agencies, businesses, the third sector, and local communities in east London, to change the way decision-makers think and act for prosperity.

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